

DWP's work to improve gender equality

Insights into the issues

In the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) we employ around 90,000 people and 64.6% of our employees are female. However, in 2017 women only accounted for 39.2% of our senior civil servant level. We set ourselves a target for gender parity in these roles and over the last 5 years we have exceeded it, successfully increasing that representation to 52%.

Our gender pay gap, a result of the structure and gender composition of our workforce and exacerbated by the proportion of men in higher paid grades and roles, is something we continue to tackle.

Implementing improvements for inclusion

Our annual 'People Survey' provides us with inclusion data that can be drilled down by protected characteristic, grade, geographical location, and more at a granular level. This has helped to inform our strategy for gender parity, which uses management information, technology, and data analysis to define a clear picture of the gender equality status and the areas of challenge in the organisations. The data we collect enables us to identify gaps and challenges, focus on key areas to build our goals and objectives and ensure we make evidence-based decisions around future initiatives for targeted improvements in diversity and inclusion.

We continually review our recruitment, progression, and development process to sustain gender parity at our most senior level. Each area has an individual plan to address agreed actions, demonstrating how we intend to make improvements, when we intend to make them and by who. It is regularly reviewed with measures of progress. For example, we continue to champion practices we believe should be as standard, such as name-blind recruitment, executive level sign-off on senior appointments, diverse panel make-up, and all male shortlists by exception only. We also have a range of ongoing initiatives in place such as the Crossing Thresholds programme, a women-into-leadership course. We're piloting a new Beyond Boundaries programme, Future Leaders Scheme and Senior Leaders Scheme. And, during the pandemic, we tailored our recruitment practices to include pre-recorded interviews, where candidates were invited to record their interview at a time that suited them. We know this particularly benefited women, who were more likely to have caring commitments to fit around.

To ensure that we are fostering an inclusive organisational culture where women can progress and develop, we promote participation in our wide range of employee networks aimed at minority groups. We have specific networks for women, race, LGBT+, social mobility and more recently menopause. And we also have advocate and ally groups, for instance our new Men's Network is working closely with our Women's Network. Recognising that women as a group are intersectional and

diverse, we have recently refocused on specific intersectional traits, for example bespoke support for black, Asian, and minority ethnic female colleagues to reach senior levels.

Our award-winning Digital Voices programme, which aims to build confidence and engagement skills for women in digital roles continues into its 5th cohort, helping under-represented women in the digital sector to become more visible.

Between December 2021 and February 2022, we delivered listening sessions facilitated by the Women's Network and Business in the Community, to capture insight regarding women's safety and explore areas for improvement to address topical concerns in the wake of recent tragedies such as the Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa killings. As a result, we produced the DWP Colleague Safety product, a summary of guidance, available for colleagues and line managers.

Making an impact

The commitment to our gender parity target is supported at the highest levels. Simon McKinnon, DWP's Chief Digital Information Officer is also the Gender Champion and supports our long-standing commitment to significant investment in talent schemes for under-represented groups.

DWP has now been included in the [Times Top 50 Employers of Women 2022](#) list for the 4th year running. We made the choice to apply for inclusion in the Times Top 50 list as a means of benchmarking ourselves against employers in both the public and private sector. As the largest government employer of women, it's amazing to be recognised for all the progress that has been made in the last few years.