

## Preventing sex discrimination

All employers should take steps to try to make sure sex discrimination does not happen at work.

As an employer, you should:

- aim for a culture where everyone accepts that sex discrimination is not acceptable
- recognise and promote the benefits of a diverse and inclusive organisation

[Find out more about improving equality, diversity and inclusion](#)

## Steps for preventing sex discrimination

Many ways to prevent discrimination apply equally to all 'protected characteristics'. You can find out more in our advice on [preventing discrimination](#).

Measures that are specific to preventing sex discrimination include:

- stopping inappropriate behaviour
- being aware of common stereotypes
- considering issues that can particularly affect women
- creating ways for employees to be heard
- providing equal pay
- gender pay gap reporting

If you're a small organisation with limited resources, there's still a lot you can do to prevent discrimination. Making your organisation more inclusive does not have to be costly or complicated.

## Stopping inappropriate behaviour

Managers have a responsibility to tackle any inappropriate language or behaviour in their teams.

You should make it clear that sexist language and behaviour is not acceptable. This includes:

- inappropriate, offensive or negative terms about women or men
- things some might consider as 'banter' or jokes

Avoid words and phrases that reinforce negative stereotypes about women or men.

## Being aware of unconscious bias and stereotypes

Avoid making decisions based on assumptions. This can include:

- [unconscious bias](#) – when someone's thoughts or decisions are influenced by beliefs or assumptions they might not be aware of

- sexist stereotypes – having a fixed view of what someone's like or what they can do because they're a man or a woman

Examples of unconscious bias could include:

- a manager not realising they've ignored an idea from a woman then accepted the same idea from a man
- automatically asking a man to do any lifting that's needed, without considering if a woman could do it equally well

Examples of stereotyping could include:

- being surprised when a man asks to work part time so they can look after their children
- thinking that women are less suited to leadership roles than men

## Considering issues that can particularly affect women

Sex discrimination can happen to both men and women. However, some work decisions are likely to affect more women than men.

For example, women are generally more likely to have childcare or other caring responsibilities. If you do not offer flexible working or different working patterns, that's more likely to affect women.

## Check your policies

You should check all relevant policies to make sure they do not discriminate. For example:

- absence
- dress code
- flexible working
- part-time working
- performance and reward
- recruitment

Having up-to-date and inclusive policies can help to:

- prevent discrimination
- improve your reputation as an employer

For example, you could consider including a statement about flexible working in job adverts. This would let applicants know you're open to different ways of working.

## Consider new policies

You could develop new policies to help remove any disadvantage that women might experience. For example policies around:

- menopause
- pregnancy and maternity, including breastfeeding

## Creating ways for employees to be heard

This can include setting up ways for people to share experiences, raise concerns and support each other.

For example:

- setting up a support network, for example a women's network or carers' network

- holding activities and events for everyone, for example around the menopause or men's health
- having a menopause and wellbeing champion – find out more about [supporting staff through the menopause](#)

If you do these things, make sure you:

- give people the time to be involved
- actively listen to concerns raised
- take steps to resolve issues

## Providing equal pay

Make sure you know your responsibilities around equal pay.

By law, men and women must get equal pay for doing 'equal work'. The law also applies to contractual terms and conditions.

[Find out more about equal pay](#)

## Gender pay gap reporting

The 'gender pay gap' is the difference in average earnings between women and men. Employers with more than 250 employees must report their organisation's gender pay gap.

[Follow the gender pay reporting guidance on GOV.UK](#)

## Get more advice and support

If you need help to deal with any challenges in your organisation, you can:

- [contact the Acas helpline](#)
- [get tailored support for your organisation](#)

Related content

[Preventing pregnancy and maternity discrimination](#)