

## **A BLUEPRINT FOR BALANCE.**

**Unlocking the six  
key areas to  
achieving gender  
balance.**

CMI's research charts employers' current approaches to achieving gender balance and showcases the best-in-class practices that are starting to achieve real change. From our survey of managers, in-depth interviews and employer best practices conversations, it's clear that organisations have much more to do to close the gap between rhetoric and reality.

**For the full report and recommendations on  
CMI Women's Blueprint for Balance,  
visit [www.managers.org.uk/brokenwindows](http://www.managers.org.uk/brokenwindows)  
[@cmi\\_managers](https://twitter.com/cmi_managers) and [#CMIWomen](https://twitter.com/CMIWomen)**

# BALANCED RECRUITMENT

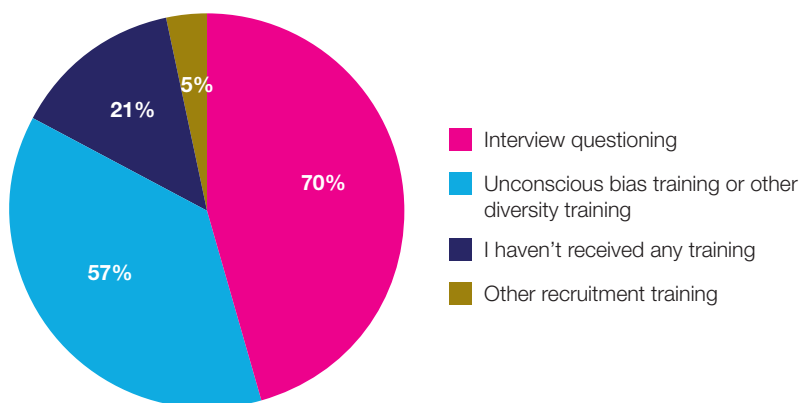
**As the first step in the employment cycle, recruitment is a critical area of focus for gender balance. Most managers regard their recruitment processes as fair but it's clear that adoption of leading practices to ensure real fairness and gender balance remains low. Supporting middle managers during the process is the key to balanced recruitment.**

Leading employers use a range of measures throughout the recruitment cycle to create balance. They include using gender-neutral job descriptions, blind-sifting applications, and insisting on diverse candidate lists.

Employer interviews also highlighted the need to think differently about the capabilities and experience needed for the job role: recognising that candidates may bring relevant skills from different contexts, or that sometimes the best hire is the person who will excel in the role in six months' time, not today. Strengths-based job descriptions paying particular attention to behaviours, rather than a checklist of competencies, can encourage more female applicants.

While these practices may take some time and effort to implement, identifying and attracting a gender-balanced candidate pool is essential for improving hiring rates of women.

Recruitment tops the list when managers score their organisations



**Figure 1:** Managers receiving training on balanced recruitment

against the six areas of the Blueprint for Balance, with just over one third giving their organisation top marks for recruitment. But it's equally clear that many organisations could do much to improve their recruitment.

Fewer than half of managers (48%) say that they have diverse panels when recruiting candidates. And just under one in five (19%) of managers involved in recruitment report reviewing CVs without names or other gender identifiers.

Perhaps as a result, "that" 62% of women and 42% of men have witnessed gender bias in recruitment/promotion decisions.

More encouragingly, a large proportion of managers report having received training that can support gender-balanced recruitment, such as interview questioning (70%) or unconscious bias training (57%).

However, just over one in five don't receive any training at all.

## Confronting apathy

Individual managers need support from HR and leaders to make positive change, while also calling out apathetic attitudes to balanced recruitment. One female managing director in financial services cited management apathy as a block to hiring more women: "I hear them complaining 'Oh my God, now we've got to make sure we've interviewed a woman.' They are simply ticking a box."

Harvey Nash, the global professional and executive service firm, always raise the question about balanced recruitment with clients. "We were talking to a female HR director at a large publically-quoted organisation and mentioned we do a lot of work around gender diversity," says Nigel Parslow, Harvey Nash's managing

director. “Her response was that this had no consequence for her recruitment search. That was the end of that relationship.”

By contrast, another client in the technical industry has insisted on having at least one qualified woman on its list for any role for many years and as a result they now have more than 30% female technical staff. In real terms, Parslow says that’s three to four times the national average in that space. “Their motto is positive action, not positive discrimination.”



### Sky’s focus on 50/50

As part of its strategy to achieve a 50/50 gender balance in their senior leadership team, Sky committed to 50/50 shortlists for all senior roles. This was supported by efforts to attract talented women through targeted marketing, along with a dedicated Women in Leadership Sponsorship & Development programme.

“Our biggest driver is to reflect UK society, so the right thing to do is aim for 50/50, which gives us a really clear goal” said Katrina Watson, an inclusion consultant at Sky. Through a business-led approach with leadership accountability and working in partnership with HR, Sky adopted a balanced recruitment process that included 50/50 short lists and diverse interview panels. This approach has seen female representation in their senior leadership team increase by a third, from 29% to 39%.

Middle managers also work with the recruitment team during the recruitment process to reinforce Sky’s commitment to gender balance.

“It’s getting the middle manager layer to engage in conversations about balanced recruitment,” said Watson. “This gets them thinking not just about how to replace a current role, but about the make-up of their team, what kind of skills would best support and enhance their current team instead of replacing like for like. It’s having a trickle effect; new managers coming up see that this is just how we hire at Sky.”



### Getting balanced recruitment right

When an individual leaves a team at short notice, middle managers can face a problem: find a quick replacement versus taking the time to pursue balanced recruitment. According to Rachael Hanley-Browne, head of leadership consulting at executive search firm Harvey Nash, balanced recruitment can take up to two to four weeks longer than traditional recruitment.

Harvey Nash is the only recruitment business to have earned National Equality Standard accreditation based on its efforts at meeting client demands for more diverse shortlists and contractors, particularly in the STEM space. “Our recruitment consultants are asking themselves if they are challenging clients to push them for the ‘real’ criteria for the role, if they are using fair processes in selection versus just looking for the ‘typical’ candidate,” says Hanley-Browne.

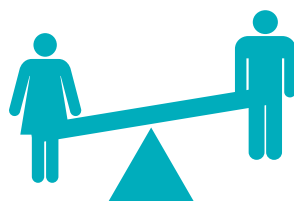
When recruiting for its own organisation, Harvey Nash applies the same best practice for gender balance as it does

with its clients, resulting in a diverse team, not only in terms of gender, but also age, race and ability. The firm follows a robust and fair recruitment process that relies on gender-neutral language in job descriptions, gender-balanced short-lists, and having candidates meet several team members to ensure there is a broad range of feedback on a candidate’s fit.

“We measure the gender balance on all of our internal searches,” says Hanley-Browne. “We look at how many women we’ve interviewed and appointed and discuss this internally at team meetings. We look for non-traditional evidence of competencies, such as experiences as a governor or finance committee member at a school.”

Adopting a broader view of experience and a longer-term perspective in finding the right fit are hallmarks of effective balanced recruitment. Bringing more women into the business is not enough to ensure a diverse and inclusive team. Offering a solid onboarding process that helps new people develop good connections and adapt to a new work context are also fundamental parts of Harvey Nash’s internal hiring practice.

### SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS



### BALANCED RECRUITMENT

- Mandate diverse interview and selection panels for all roles, especially senior posts.
- Use blind CVs and insist on diverse candidate lists.
- Stop seeing career breaks as a shortcoming. Recognise the value of alternative skill sets and experience.