

Workplace discrimination at a three year high for young women

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The number of young women being discriminated against at work is on the rise according to new research from the charity [Young Women's Trust](#). Rates of discrimination are at a three year high (53% of young women said they have experienced this in 2024, up from 42% in 2022) and for racially minoritised young women, the picture is bleaker as the percentage rose by two fifths from 44% in 2022 to 61% in 2024.

Managers responsible for recruitment and HR decisions were also surveyed and 3 in 10 confirmed that they were aware of instances of young women being discriminated against in the past year.

The research found that discrimination is multilayered with young women reporting prejudice based on age (28%), sex (16%), appearance (18%), for having caring responsibilities (25%) and because of a long term mental health condition (35%). For black young women racial discrimination rose to 39% up from 31% in 2022 and for Asian young women rates have increased from 24% in 2022 to 31% in 2024.

Evidence of pay discrimination continues and despite it being illegal, almost a quarter (23%) of young women said that they have been paid less than male colleagues who do the same or similar work. This has been disappointingly consistent for the last three years (24% in 2022 and 23% in 2023).

From an employer perspective, 1 in 10 (10%) HR decision makers admitted that they were aware of women being paid less than men for jobs at the same level. When asked about gender pay gap reporting, almost a fifth (19%) don't think that their organisation takes the reporting seriously enough.

Furthermore, almost 3 in 10 (28%) young women said that women are not given the same opportunities as men to progress in their organisation. This was mirrored by feedback from HR decision makers with an almost identical proportion (27%).

Sexual harassment is a devastatingly common feature of working life – over a quarter of young women told us they had experienced this. A third (33%) of HR decision makers also agreed that sexist behaviour still exists in their organisation

Whilst discrimination is spiralling, almost a fifth (18%) of young women say that they don't know their rights in relation to workplace discrimination. Almost a quarter (24%) say that if it did happen they wouldn't feel comfortable to challenge or report it and almost 2 in 5 (38%) would not feel confident to challenge pay inequality.

Sharron from Enfield has experienced discrimination in many different forms and it's meant the road to finding a job that she wanted has been difficult. She said: "When you have an English sounding name like mine, the job application process is fine. But, as a woman of colour, it's a totally different story when you get to the interview stage.

"I remember applying for roles in the City and when I got into the interview room the change in behaviour of the panel was alarming. I would do my research before interviews and see the lack of diversity and inclusion in their policies, and at the leadership level, and I just knew what I was going to be up against. Sometimes the discrimination isn't overt but when interviews last just 10 minutes and you get the feeling they're just going through the motions, you just know it's got something to do with race. Then there's been other roles where I have been called derogatory names and when I made a complaint to management nothing was done. It's totally deflating and demoralising to apply for jobs when you know you're going to get to interview stage only to be rejected. Thankfully I'm now working in the youth and social care sector which is much more diverse and I've built my resilience and feel much more supported."

This new data highlights the desperate need for more protection for young women in the workplace and stronger enforcement. As the Government looks to strengthen and simplify enforcement of worker's rights as part of its Employment Rights Bill and plan to Make Work Pay, Young Women's Trust are calling for young women to be part of the design of the enforcement system to make sure it's accessible and effective.

Young Women's Trust are also urging employers to act now and address discrimination – creating workplace cultures where unfair treatment is not tolerated. Resources for employers are available [here](#).

Claire Reindorp, Chief Executive at Young Women's Trust, said: "Discrimination should have no place in our workplaces but the reality is that as a young woman in 2024 you are more likely than not to be experiencing it. We cannot accept that this is just a normal part of working life. Its harmful effects will scar young women well into their futures, from shattered confidence and poor mental health to a lifetime of lower pay. Most urgently, we must address the deeply alarming rise in racial discrimination that Black and Asian young women are facing at work. Only then will we have a workforce with equal chances to contribute and succeed, for the benefit of everyone."

Read the full report [here](#).