

REED  
IN PARTNERSHIP



# Shifting Stereotypes

Gender and job roles



Policy & Research  
[reedinpartnership.co.uk](http://reedinpartnership.co.uk)

# OUR REPORT

The theme of International Women's Day 2019 was **#balanceforbetter**. In the organiser's words: "Balance is not a women's issue, it's a business issue." Both men and women can benefit from greater gender balance in the workplace and everyone has a part to play.

As a public services provider, we decided to take a look at this issue.

This report looks at the influence of gender on choices of occupation and job sector. It considers some of the factors behind women's and men's job choices and how these are reflected in the preferences of jobseekers who use Reed in Partnership's services.

We also take a look at one of the key issues for the future of work - automation - and look at what the latest research suggests this might mean for the jobs that men and women do.

Lastly we highlight the business case for gender balance at work, suggesting some of the ways in which employers and employment support providers can widen choice and opportunity for jobseekers.



## Key points

- 1** The labour market is far more diverse in gender terms than it has been in the past, but there are many sectors where only a small proportion of the workforce is either male or female. The reasons for this include deep-rooted social attitudes, educational choices and barriers to women in particular sectors, such as the availability of flexible working.
- 2** Analysis of the job goals and outcomes of jobseekers supported by Reed in Partnership illustrates how these differ by gender, with women more likely to go into administrative or care roles and men more likely to go into transport or logistical roles.
- 3** High-quality careers advice has a crucial role to play in challenging gender stereotypes in the labour market. The more that employers can engage with schools to give young people real life insights into the jobs they might do, the more young people have the opportunity to learn about a wide range of careers and occupations, rather than following deep-rooted social "norms" that can be reinforced by family, friends and the media.
- 4** Research on the effect of automation and artificial intelligence on the labour market suggests that greater gender balance can help us meet the challenges of the future. The care roles that are most often performed by women already pose recruitment challenges, and are likely to be an area of increased demand because of the ageing population. Female representation in some of the key ICT roles that will influence the future economy is very low. This suggests that greater diversity in both care and technical roles can be of benefit to both male and female workers and the economy as a whole.
- 5** Greater gender diversity in job roles has been shown to boost productivity and can help employers address scarce skills by drawing on a wider talent pool, as well as contributing to closing the gender pay gap.
- 6** From parents and schools through to Government, employers and employment support providers, everyone has a part to play in widening the career choices of both men and women. For example:
  - Employment support providers can address stereotyping and help individuals seeking work to access information and support to help them find a job that best meets their needs.
  - Employers have an important part to play in the way that they recruit, the language they use to describe jobs and identifying why men or women might not be joining or staying at their organisation, such as a lack of access to flexible working, for example.

# INTRODUCTION

The gender make-up of the workforce has changed dramatically in recent decades, with the female employment rate standing at 72.1% in the three months to June 2019, compared to 56.5% forty years earlier<sup>1</sup>.

Yet, despite the diversity of job roles that men and women now perform in the UK economy, there remain significant differences in the occupations and sectors that men and women as a whole tend to enter - both in the UK and globally.

There are many deep-rooted reasons why this is the case, with social, educational and structural factors at play, framing the context in which a woman is more likely than a man to choose to work in the care sector, for example, or a man more likely to work in construction.

One of these factors is the limiting attitudes to gender that emerge early on in life and can hold women and men back. As the gender equality roadmap published by the Government Equalities Office argues: "Fixed ideas about behaviour and character that are based upon gender may be empowering in some respects, they may also limit aspirations, opportunity and potential. It is important that people are able to exercise choice over their lives, but also that these choices are not constrained by expectations that are wholly based upon their gender."

In the labour market, gender stereotypes can combine with other factors, such as a lack of access to flexible working in some sectors, to impact on the sectors that men and women work in.

In some sectors - such as care, construction, digital or engineering - there is a powerful argument that a lack of gender balance may hinder our ability to address current and predicted skills shortages. There are implications for the ability of employers to recruit from wide talent pools.

There is also a growing debate about our gendered view of skills as automation and artificial intelligence (AI) impact on the workplace jobs and tasks of the future. The FT's Sarah O'Connor writes<sup>2</sup> that, while some see an increased role for AI as dealing a blow to women in the workplace, it may be men who are in danger of being left behind. Skills traditionally more identified with, and encouraged in, women - such as emotional intelligence and empathy - may become a more pronounced advantage as machines become better at technical and cognitive tasks.

As a national provider of both employment support services and youth services, Reed in Partnership helps individuals to overcome barriers to move from unemployment and into work, as well as supporting people at all life stages to consider the full range of their career and training options.

We support people with significant barriers into jobs and training, sometimes after a lengthy period out of work. We often have to help them overcome barriers such as disability, homelessness, debt or low levels of skills or confidence. They often have disabilities or long-term health conditions, are from BAME communities or are aged 50 or over. We recognise that people have both multiple identities and often a number of sources of disadvantage. In terms of both gender and other identities we work to prevent stereotypes or a lack of access holding back any individual.

This report studies the sectors and occupations that men and women go into in the UK, both looking at official data and the preferences expressed by jobseekers being supported by Reed in Partnership. We discuss some of the factors behind these choices and look at the role that employers and employment support providers can play in challenging a stereotypes and providing a full range of opportunities for all jobseekers.

**"Fixed ideas about behaviour and character that are based upon gender may be empowering in some respects, they may also limit aspirations, opportunity and potential. It is important that people are able to exercise choice over their lives, but also that these choices are not constrained by expectations that are wholly based upon their gender."**

**Government Equalities Office**



# 1 Job sectors and gender: the state of play

There has been significant change in the gender balance of the workforce across jobs and occupations over the past two decades.

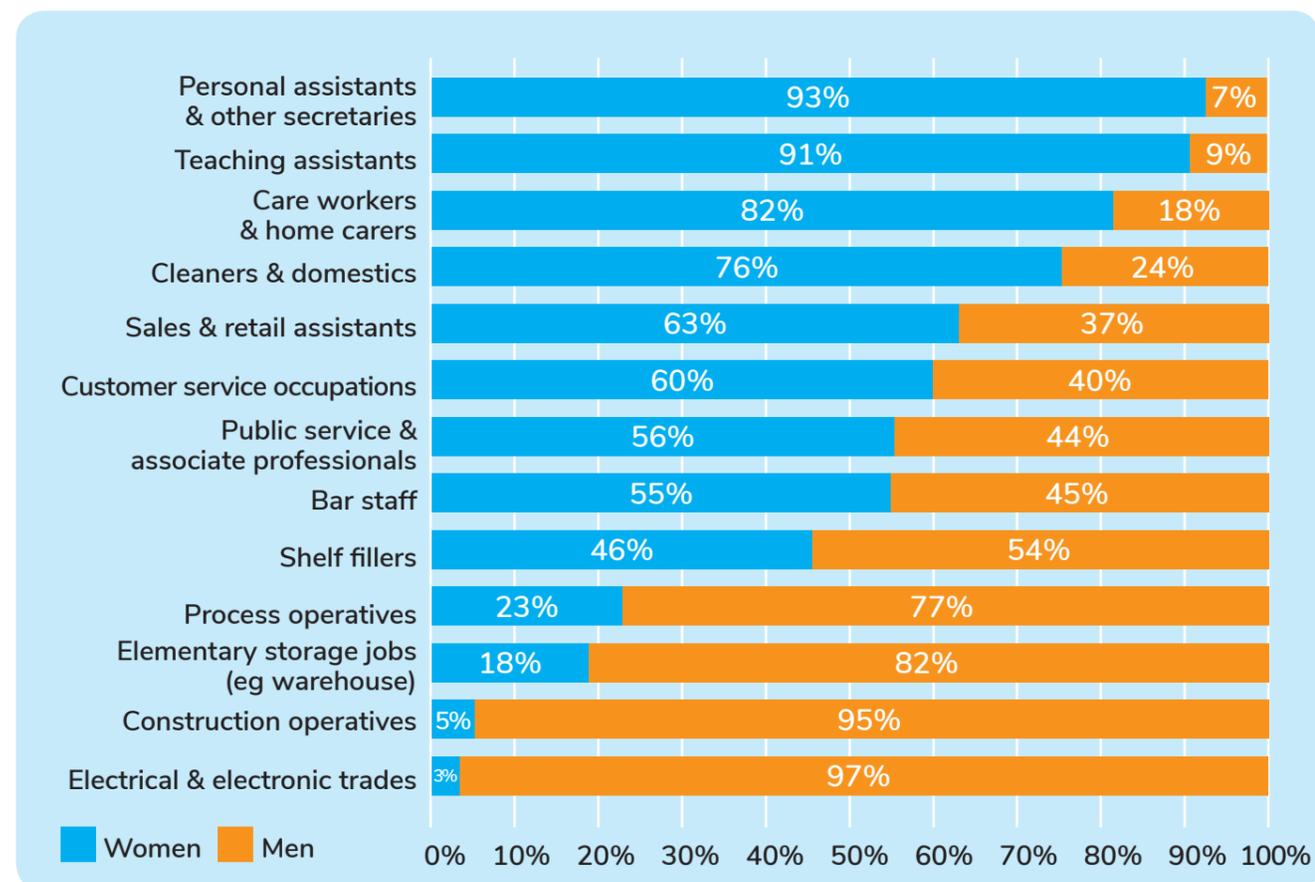
For example a greater proportion of women work in graduate-level jobs than men and a greater proportion of women (22%) than men<sup>3</sup> (19%) work in high-skilled professional occupations<sup>4</sup>.

While the under-representation of women in leadership roles across the economy is well documented (only 28% of Chief Executive and senior officials are female<sup>5</sup>) 41% of the next tier of functional manager and director roles are held by women.

Some sectors - notably retail, customer service and hospitality - are major employers of both men and women. But overall, there are big differences in the sectors and occupations in which men and women tend to work (Chart 1 shows some examples).

Data from the Office for National Statistics shows that the most common sectors of employment for women in the UK are health and social work, the wholesale and retail trade and education. For men, the most common sectors also include retail, alongside manufacturing and construction. More than three-quarters (79%) of jobs in health and social work and 70% of education jobs are held by women, while 86% of construction jobs and 77% of roles in transportation and storage are done by men<sup>6</sup>.

Chart 1: Gender breakdown of example occupations



Source: Employment by occupation (EMP04), Office for National Statistics, September 2018

By occupation, men are more likely than women to be working in skilled trades, as process or plant operatives and in associated professional or technical occupations. Women are more likely to work in administrative and secretarial roles, caring, leisure and other service occupations or sales and customer service<sup>7</sup>. It remains the case that a large proportion of the female workforce, especially older women, is concentrated in sectors known as the “five Cs” – cleaning, catering “cashiering” (retail), clerical and care.

There are many factors that tend to reinforce the over-representation of men or women in particular sectors or occupations. For example:

- The working environment in some very male-dominated sectors such as construction, where informal methods of recruitment and unconscious bias are among the issues deterring women.<sup>8</sup>
- The lack of availability of part-time or other flexible working hours in some male-dominated occupations, as well as part-time working as a barrier to progression.
- Perceptions about men and women’s suitability for caring roles that have historically deterred men from entering certain education or health roles in greater numbers, such as nursing or the early years education workforce for example, of whom only 3% are men.<sup>9</sup>

## Men into nursing

Almost nine in ten (86%) of nurses are women, according to the ONS. In an article for the Royal College of Nursing<sup>10</sup>, Dr Heather Whitford and Dr James Taylor point out that this has not always been the case: “A millennia ago it was the norm for men, albeit under monastic orders, or in a military context, to provide care for the poor, sick or the injured.”

In their study<sup>11</sup> they found that the perception of nursing as a female profession was a powerful deterrent for men, despite the fact that nursing was viewed by men as a worthwhile profession with financial security.

However, there is evidence that the number of men applying to study nursing is increasing. NHS England<sup>12</sup> recently released data from UCAS showing that there had been a 19% increase in male 18-year-olds applying to study nursing between 2018 and 2019.

## Our data

We wanted to look at the extent to which the job goals and outcomes of the people we support into employment reflected the gendered patterns of employment in the economy as a whole, to help us understand the issue better.

We selected a sample of 500 people who we had supported to find employment over the 12 months to the start of April 2019. We randomly selected people who had received support through our DWP ESF Work Routes services, in order to ensure that the sample covered people from different areas of England rather than one geographical area.

This sample will not necessarily be typical of the job entries of our participants overall, which tend to vary significantly by region, the type of employment support programme and particularly the jobs available in that local economy. However it helps to give an insight into the variations in the types of jobs that men and women are more likely to seek and achieve when entering the labour market from unemployment or inactivity.

### Our findings - job goals

Firstly, we looked at the job goals identified by these participants. When a jobseeker accesses a Reed in Partnership employment service, an important part of initial action planning is to identify their job goals, which they will regularly review and update with their personal Employment Adviser. As well as one-to-one sessions with their Adviser, most jobseekers will take part in a course to help them identify their job goals, covering aspirations, skills, personal qualities and interests. This helps them to uncover their transferrable skills, identify personal qualities and interests and develop an action plan from their realistic job to their ideal job.

Of course the initial job goals people identify and are supported to achieve will depend on a wide range of factors, a crucial one being the jobs available in the local economy.

The majority of people we support are those who are trying to overcome significant barriers to employment in their local labour market (such as disability, health barriers or personal circumstances) often after a lengthy period of unemployment or labour market inactivity. This means the majority of jobseekers we support will be looking for an entry-level job in their local area.

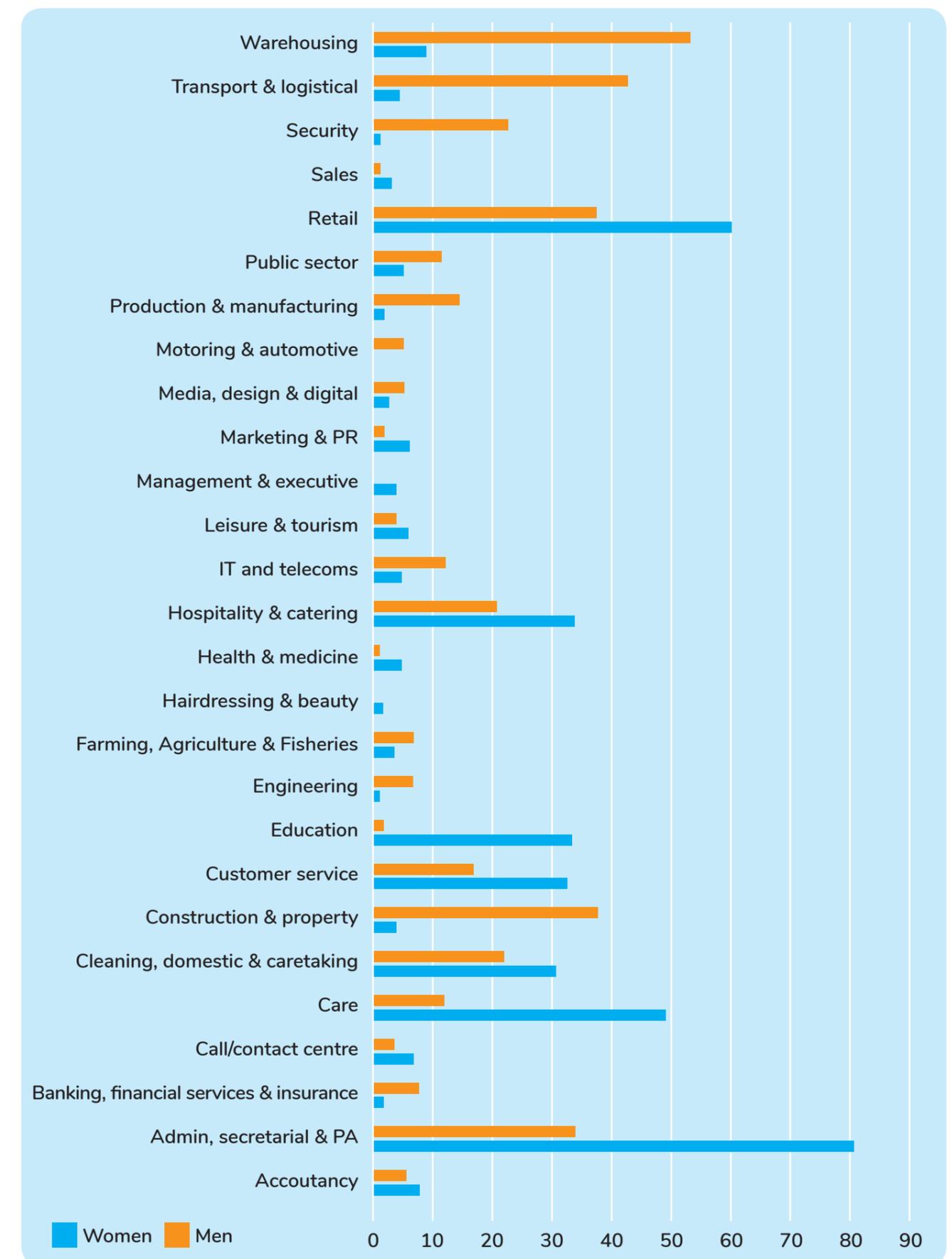
Chart two shows the main job goals of the 500 participants by gender.

This reveals that men are most likely to identify a warehouse, transport or logistical job as a goal, followed by retail and construction. In contrast, the top job goal listed by women is an administrative role, followed by retail then care roles. The top ten by gender are shown in Chart 1.

Table 1: The job goals of 500 Reed in Partnership participants by gender

Women	Men
1. Administrative role	1. Warehousing
2. Retail	2. Transport & Logistical
3. Care	3. Retail
4. Education	4. Construction and property
5. Hospitality & Catering	5. Administrative role
6. Customer Service	6. Security
7. Cleaning, domestic and caretaking	7. Cleaning, domestic and caretaking
8. Warehousing	8. Hospitality & Catering
9. Accountancy	9. Customer Service
10. Call/Contact centre	10. Production & Manufacturing

Chart 2: The job goals of 500 Reed in Partnership participants by gender



Note: participants may have only one or a number of job goals. This chart shows 810 job goals in total of 500 participants.

## Job outcomes

We then examined the job roles that these participants achieved.

Charts three and four show job outcomes for women and men. Administrative and care jobs are the two most significant employment destinations for women, while the men in the sample were more likely to find a transport or logistical job role. One feature of the findings below is that women are slightly more concentrated into a smaller number of job types - namely administrative, care, retail, hospitality/catering and cleaning roles.

Of course these broad job sectors hide the diversity of roles that individuals have achieved, from forklift truck drivers to photographers, educational special needs assistants to lifeguards. But some findings include:

- A far greater proportion of women (16%) than men (3%) have secured care roles.
- While only a small number of participants have secured managerial roles, the proportion (2%) is the same for both genders.
- While 3% of men have entered an engineering role, no women have.
- Warehouse roles are much more likely for men (11%) than women (2%).
- While 1% of women entered construction roles, 7% of men did. In contrast 7% of women entered roles in the education sector, compared to 1% of men.



Chart 3: Job sector outcomes for 250 male participants

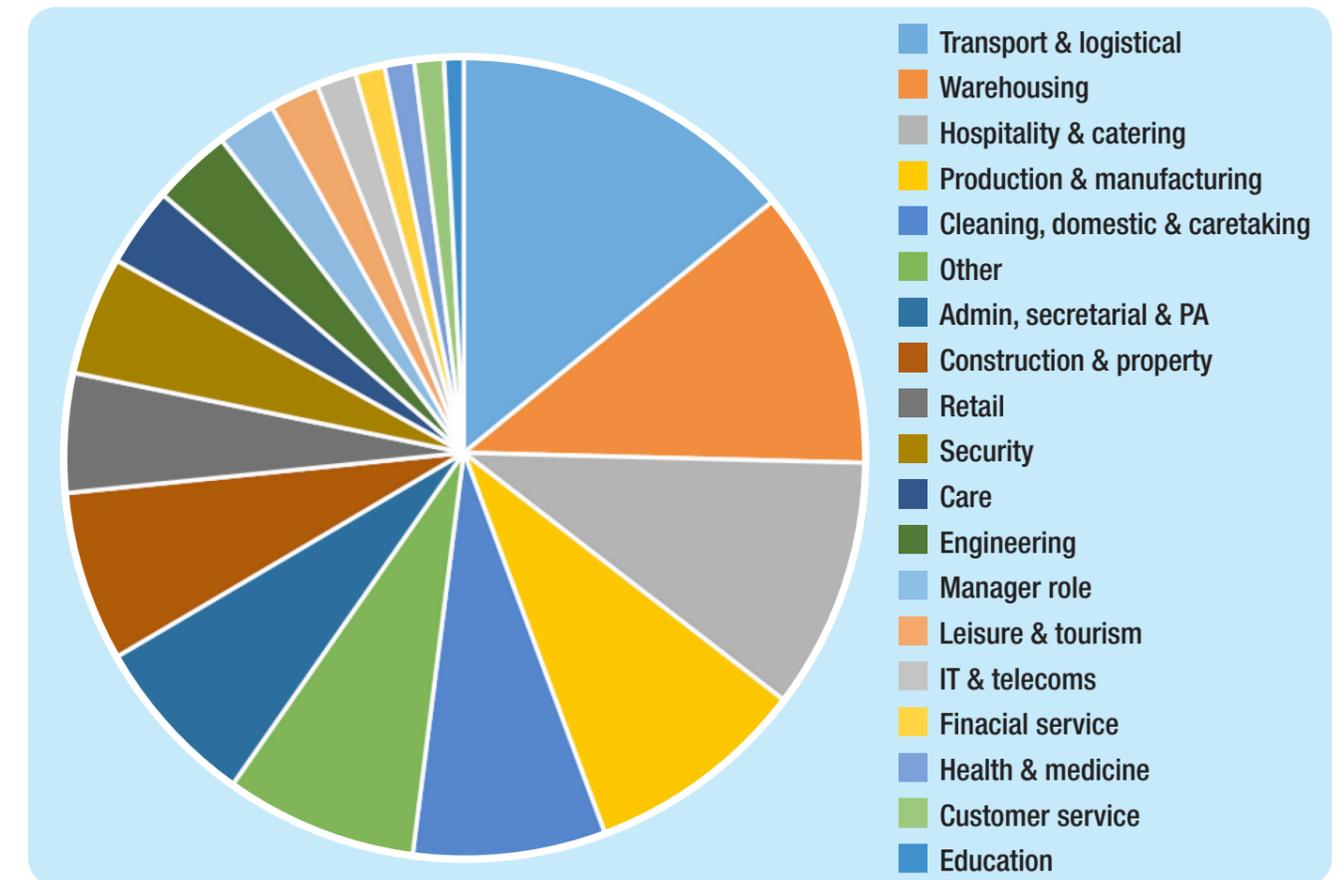
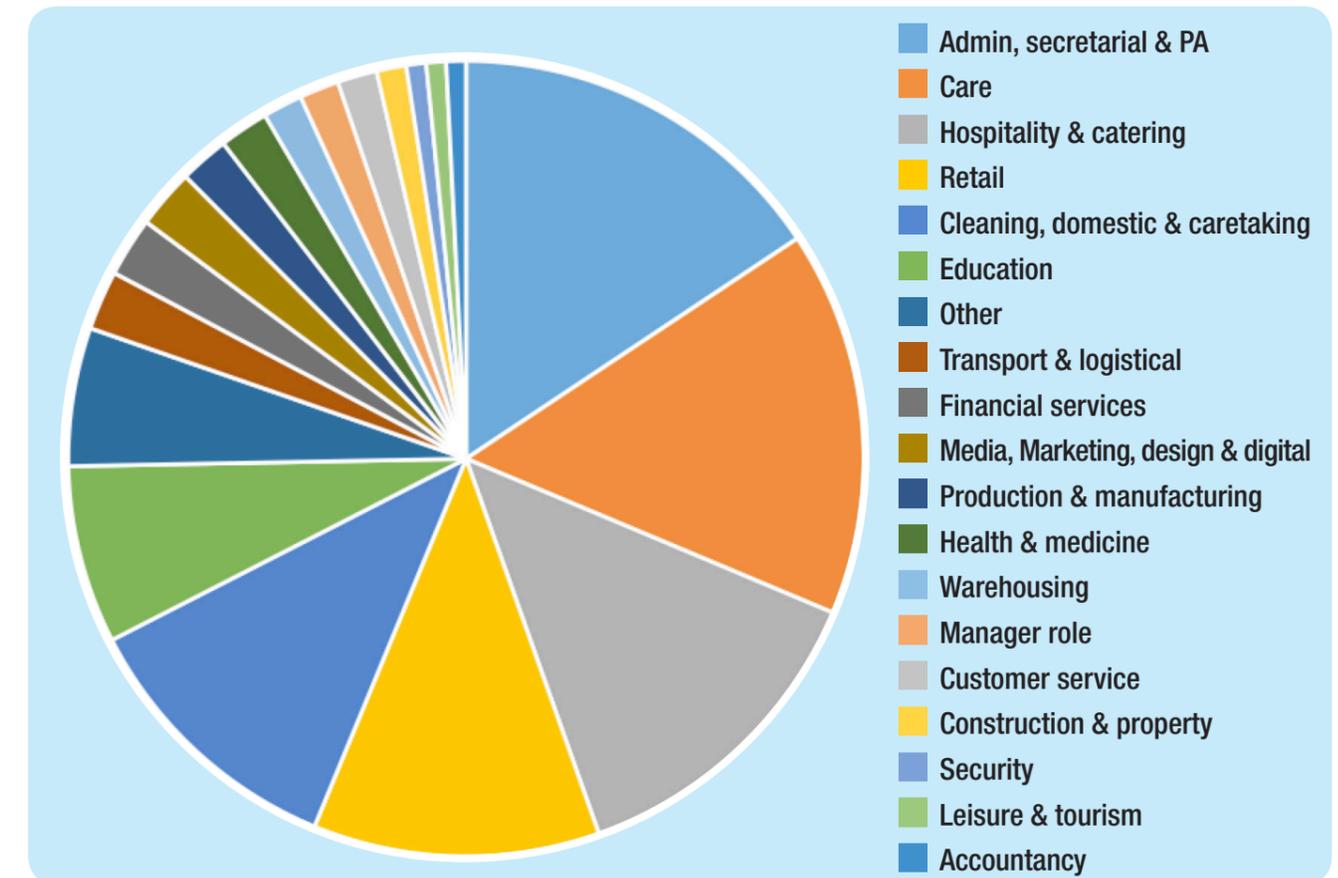
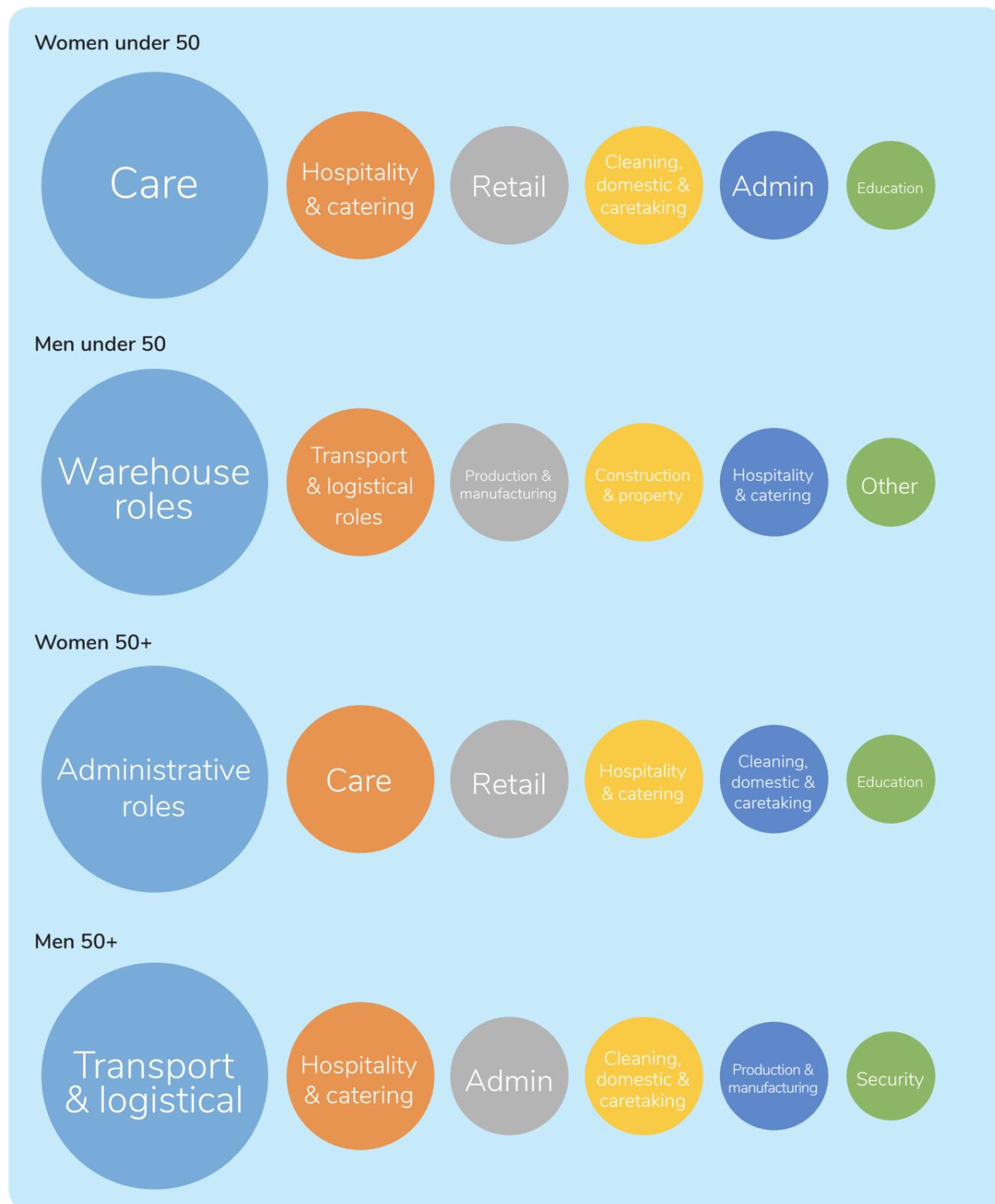


Chart 4: Job sector outcomes for 250 female participants



Analysis by age shows up some variations. Given the size of the sample, we have split it into two age groups - under the age of 50 and aged 50 and over. This suggests that women aged under 50 are more likely to enter care work, while for those aged 50 or over administrative roles are most common. For men under 50 the most common job was a warehouse job, while for those over the age of 50 it was a transport or logistical role, followed by hospitality and catering.

Chart 5: Top six job entry sectors of 500 Reed in Partnership participants by age



Overall, our findings confirm that the gender patterns we see across the economy are very much reflected in the experience of the people we help to find employment - often their first job role after a long period of unemployment.

All of the individuals in our sample above are likely to have overcome significant barriers in order to enter employment, an achievement to be celebrated. There is nothing wrong with supporting a female job seeker into a retail role or a male participant into construction, particularly when an individual has expressed a preference for that sector.

By looking more closely at the role of gender in employment patterns, however, we can learn more about the reasons behind these choices and explore whether the various stakeholders involved - employers, employment support providers and individuals themselves - can do more to ensure that stereotypes around gender do not play a part in narrowing employment choices. The next two chapters look at some of the factors behind this issue, then considers some of the actions we can take to promote gender balance in the workplace.



## 2 Education, careers advice and the challenge of automation

This chapter looks at some of the broader causes of gender imbalance in labour market sectors as well as some of the challenges of the future.

### Are social attitudes changing?

While social attitudes have developed over the past few decades, many people still believe that there are jobs that either men or women are “unsuited” to doing.

The 2018 British Social Attitudes Survey contained a question about this issue for the first time, asking respondents whether they thought men and women were suited to doing all jobs or only some of them<sup>13</sup>.

As many as one in five (20%) people thought that there were only a few jobs that men and women were equally suited to doing.

There are signs that stereotypical views about gender and jobs are far less common amongst the younger generation, with the proportion of 18-34 year olds who believe that men and women were equally suited to doing all or most jobs reaching 86% compared to 69% of 65-74 year olds.

Yet a surprising survey carried out by the Young Women’s Trust in 2015<sup>14</sup> found that young women were actually more likely than their mothers’ generation to see certain occupations as unsuited to women. For example, more than half (52%) of young women thought that young men were more suited than young women to being electricians, compared to 26% of older women.

### Education and career aspirations

While personal preferences play a part, a range of influences play a role in career and job choices. These include parenting, play and nursery education, careers advice and guidance, training and further/higher education through to experience of the workplace itself.

A recent project by charity Education and Employers<sup>15</sup> and other partners saw 20,000 primary school children drawing a picture of the job they want to do when they grew up. It showed that children have strong ideas about which jobs are “female” or “male” by the age of seven. More than four times the number of boys as girls wanted to become engineers, while nearly nine times as many girls as boys wanted to become. Gender equality campaigning charity the Fawcett Society has launched an expert Commission on Gender Stereotypes in Early Childhood<sup>16</sup> to build a new consensus on the impact gender stereotypes have and how to end them.

Similarly, a report by WorldSkills UK and the Careers and Enterprise Company, *Closing the gender gap: Exploring gender differences in careers advice and aspirations*<sup>17</sup>, found that gender stereotypes are still very much embedded in the career aspirations of young people. More than half (56%) of young women felt that their career options are limited by their gender compared to 37% of men.

Traditional divisions along gender lines in school subject choices are changing, with girls now representing 48% of GCSE entries in STEM subjects (although subject choices vary significantly by gender)<sup>18</sup> and tending to outperform boys. But at ‘A’ level and degree level the proportion of young women pursuing STEM subjects is much smaller: only 14.2% of those achieving a first degree in engineering are female, for example<sup>19</sup> although other STEM areas, such as biological sciences, are dominated by women<sup>20</sup>. It should be noted that the gender gap here is not an attainment gap, with women tending to outperform men in most subjects.<sup>21</sup>

“While girls should be encouraged to pursue their talents wherever they lie, choosing science subjects at A level is a good predictor of future job opportunities and STEM careers can come with a 19% pay premium.”

Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018

The gender divide in vocational education is wider still.

While more than half of apprentices are female, men and women choose very different subjects. Only 3.8% of successful applicants to construction, planning and the built environment apprenticeships are female and 6.7% in engineering and manufacturing technologies. In contrast, women make up 90% of health, public services and social care and 73% to education and training apprenticeships.

The Young Women’s Trust’s work in this area highlights that women are losing out in pay terms when it comes to apprenticeships, with young female level two and three apprentices receiving a mean hourly pay of £6.85 an hour compared with £7.12 for their male counterparts.<sup>22</sup>

### Careers advice is key

In its 2018 Youth Voice Census report<sup>23</sup>, Youth Employment UK found that at every stage of education, young women are getting lower access to careers support than young men.

For both young men and women, however, a huge gulf remains between them and the advice, guidance, workplaces and encounters needed to equip young people for their working lives.

The Youth Voice Census showed a huge demand from young people for more practical information on a range of career pathways, with the lack of information meaning that young people rely on the advice of parents and friends and the internet. As the report says, “you can only choose what you know exists”.

On page 18 we look at how our Young Careers service sought to challenge gender stereotypes in careers and apprenticeships.

## GENDER, SKILLS AND AUTOMATION

Given the importance of gender as an influence on the occupations people choose and the sectors they work in, what implications does automation and the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) have for job roles predominantly done by men and women?

Assessments of the current and future impact of automation on the labour market vary dramatically in their implications for both the number and the nature of jobs. In his paper on the future of jobs for the Corporate Research Forum<sup>24</sup>, author Steven Toft summarises the last five years of predictions and analysis, starting with the work by Oxford academics Carl Frey and Michael Osborne in 2013 which found that 47% of US jobs were at a high risk of automation. This remains one of the most pessimistic assessments of job losses, partly, as Toft explains, because it focused on the automation of whole jobs rather than tasks within jobs, many of which may become automated in a way that changes jobs without them necessarily disappearing. For example a further assessment by McKinsey Global Institute in 2017 estimated that less than 5% of jobs could be fully automated but that 60% could see up to a third of their tasks replaced by technology.

An analysis by PWC looks at both the potential job displacement and creation of AI and related technologies, estimating that a 20% share of existing jobs likely to be displaced by AI over the coming 20 years will be approximately equal to the jobs created.

### Hands, heads and hearts

In a speech in September 2018, Bank of England Governor Mark Carney<sup>25</sup> identified one of the features of the current wave

of technological change is its reach into “heads” (Cognitive tasks), as opposed to the traditional view that AI simply replaces “hands”. “It may be left to people to provide “hearts” - that is tasks that require emotional intelligence, originality or social skills such as persuasion or caring for others”, he said.

As Carney commented, some of the higher estimates of job losses have been based on the technical feasibility of automation rather than the economic feasibility. “For example, it may be possible to automate the pouring of drinks in bars, but doing so may not present a cost saving over hiring bar staff to do the job, let alone the ancillary benefit of being able to tell them your troubles.”

This has led the FT’s Sarah O’Connor to describe the skills and competencies most often attributed to women in the workplace, such as emotional intelligence or caring for others, as potentially “the robot-proof skills that give women an edge in the age of AI.” However, she argues: “For too long we have talked about “soft skills” with connotations of femininity and a lack of rigour. Let’s call them what they are: “robot-proof skills” that neither men nor women can afford to face the future without.”

### The digital skills gap

In contrast, a recent report from the World Economic Forum<sup>26</sup> focuses on the risks posed to women’s progress in the labour market

because, as demand for AI skills expands across a range of sectors, the small presence of women working in AI and related fields will put them at a disadvantage.

In the UK, 83% of ICT graduates and 84% of the ICT workforce are male.<sup>27</sup> While only a small proportion of the overall workforce is likely to be working specifically in AI, for example, even in a decade’s time, it is clear that women entering the ICT workforce in larger numbers would help meet the rapidly growing demand for workers in the sector.

### Risks and opportunities

PWC’s analysis suggests that, in the long run, more jobs currently done by men than women are at risk of becoming obsolete through technological developments, with 34% of jobs performed by men compared to 26% of those done by women at risk.<sup>28</sup>

Sectors most at risk include manufacturing and transport and storage, where men are a significant majority of the workforce. The healthcare and social work jobs that are less automatable are done predominantly by women and are predicted to grow significantly.

Job opportunities are also predicted to grow in professional, scientific and technical roles. As PWC writes: “The sectors that are likely to benefit the most from AI are highly “human” sectors and highly technical sectors.”

However, gender impact assessments of the susceptibility of jobs to automation vary significantly. Recent analysis by the Office for National Statistics<sup>29</sup>

finds that women account for 70% of people in jobs with a high risk of automation compared to 43% of jobs at low risk. A recent report from the Institute for Public Policy Research<sup>30</sup> find that 64% of workers in roles with “high potential” for automation are women, while 36% are men.

It is clear from the work done on the impact of automation so far that it is low-skilled workers of both genders and those in the most vulnerable position in the labour market who will be most at risk. A concerted effort to support people with access to the skills they require will be needed.

But the implication of a gender-based analysis is that demand for workers in currently female-dominated care occupations and male-dominated technical and ICT roles both look set to grow. Taking steps to encourage greater representation of men in care roles and women in technical roles will help to equip the workforce for future changes.



### 3 Ideas for action: Shifting stereotypes, supporting the individual

Men and women's ideas about the jobs they would like or expect to do are influenced by a complex web of social and labour market factors.

For employment support providers, it is important to successfully assist jobseekers to find employment that meets their personal needs. These include ensuring they are better off financially in work and their skills, interests and practical needs are met - for example health considerations and travel-to-work distance. It will often be the case that the job role that meets an individual's needs is a job that is most dominated by people of the same gender. Yet for our wider economy and society there are significant benefits to greater gender balance.

#### The business case for widening choice and diversity

From the employer's perspective, particularly those in sectors where skill shortages are a key business issue, many are focused on the issue of diversity as a way to ensure they are drawing from a wide pool of potential employees. A convincing business case increasingly links performance with diversity – not just at the top of organisations but across teams, occupations and sectors. Across the economy, the benefits of doing so are:

- **Boosting productivity and economic growth.** Consultants McKinsey estimated that bridging the gender gap in work would add £150 billion to the UK economy by 2025. As the CBI says: "Gender diverse businesses are more likely to attract and retain top female staff, tap into the needs of customers and suppliers and foster inclusive organisational cultures that promote innovation. Indeed, research shows that businesses in the top quartile for levels of gender diversity are 15% more likely to outperform their rivals".<sup>31</sup>
- **Addressing skills shortages.** By increasing gender diversity across different occupations, businesses can benefit from a more diverse talent pool. A report by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training found that the top five occupations across the EU with critical skills shortages are highly gender segregated: ICT professionals; medical doctors; STEM professionals; nurses and midwives; and teachers<sup>32</sup>. One Government report highlighted a lack of gender diversity as a major barrier to the UK achieving the skilled digital workforce it needs<sup>33</sup>. With 72% of large firms and 49% of SMEs having digital skills gaps, it highlighted the under-representation of women in the talent pipeline as a key bottleneck for the sector. In social care, where men make up only 18% of the workforce, it is projected that an increase of 40% in the workforce by 2035 may be required to serve the needs of the ageing population.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile Reed in Partnership Employment Advisers report demand from employers for more male care workers, particularly where working with male clients, as well as firms who would welcome more applicants for security roles from women.
- **Narrowing the gender pay gap.** The concentration of men and women into different sectors is the most significant identifiable factor behind the gender pay gap, according to a recent analysis by the Office for National Statistics<sup>35</sup>. The ONS also highlighted that occupations with the smallest gender pay gap have equal employment shares between men and women. An IPPR analysis of organisations' gender pay gap reports found that seniority and occupational segregation were the two most commonly cited causes of organisational pay gaps identified by employers. The gender pay gap is wider for women in their 40s and 50s, who also tend to be more concentrated in a narrower range of sectors than their counterparts in their 20s.

#### Empowering individuals

However convincing the business case for attracting more men into care or more women into engineering, for example, this is an issue with a long-term pipeline that will not be changed by one-off campaigns or initiatives. It will involve addressing social attitudes, educational choices and parental influences on young people's career choices.



## Reed in Partnership's Young Careers service

Young Careers is the name for two of the careers clusters (groups of schools and employers working together on careers) that Reed in Partnership ran in London between Autumn 2016 and March 2019. It was funded by the Greater London Authority and the European Social Fund. The overriding goal was to help young people successfully make the transition from secondary school to work or higher/further education, by developing sustainable relationships between schools and employers and supporting teachers to deliver high-quality careers guidance. Throughout the pilot scheme, a priority was placed on addressing the needs of each pupil by actively seeking to challenge stereotypes around gender, disability, race and social class and raise aspirations. Our research showed that a desire to increase the diversity of the future workforce was a major factor for many of the employers involved.

Essential to this was engaging a wide range of employers across different sectors who helped young people undertake practical activities that increased their understanding of sectors that they may have assumed were unsuitable or unattainable for them. It also involved engaging with parents and challenging pre-conceived ideas about apprenticeships, for example.<sup>36</sup>

While engaging female students in STEM activities was a priority - particularly for the one of the two career clusters that had a specific ICT focus - other work has involved employer engagement with Black Caribbean boys and free-school-meal eligible white boys, who have been shown by research commissioned by the London government to face a range of challenges that can hinder their achievement and be disadvantaged by race and class stereotypes<sup>37</sup>. Activities included:

- TfL promoting engineering and other STEM careers through its STEM ambassadors and Innovate TfL challenge.
- Practical activities such as workshops, student visits to hotels and careers activities with hotel group Marriott, demonstrating that hospitality careers can involve finance, sales or engineering jobs.
- Workshops and activities on tech roles from organisations such as Uber, Addison Lee, Instagram and the armed forces.

“I liked how the two women linked their career path to their early life. They told us about their life and encouraged us to have open options and try everything, because then you know if you like it or not.”

Student feedback on a Young Careers event



It is crucial to support the individual choices and preferences of job seekers. To better inform and support these choices, employment support providers, careers advisers and others should consider how they address the influence of gender stereotypes on training and work choices.

For individual job seekers, considering a sector or occupation that might suit a person's skills and interests can widen their options and help them find a job more easily where there are vacancies in sectors they may not normally have considered.

We have compiled some of the ways in which both employment support providers and employers can support individuals in this way. Firstly, two of our customer case studies below show how considering a sector that might not at first have sprung to mind has led to positive outcomes. We also describe how our Young Careers service in London has worked with young people to improve their understanding of a wider range of sectors in partnership with employers (see page 18).

## CASE STUDY

### Eric

Eric was unemployed for two years as he had to resign from his previous job as a warehouse assistant so he could care for both his parents who were unwell. When his parents passed away, Eric was ready to look again for work, but he lacked confidence and was concerned that his age and length of unemployment would pose barriers. Through the ESF-funded Work Routes 50+ service provided by Reed in Partnership, Eric received support and help with preparing for work, including CV help, mock interviews and intensive job search.

While his identified job goal had been to work in a warehouse again, Eric's employment adviser David picked up on the way that Eric spoke about his caring duties, and as sad as his experience had been, he had felt good about being there for his parents. His adviser suggested to him that he should consider working in the health and social care sector, an option that Eric had not previously considered. With intensive job search help and training sessions around confidence and motivation, Eric successfully secured a role as a care assistant, a job that he feels passionately about.



## CASE STUDY

### Sharon

Sharon had been out of work for 26 years. After years of not working her confidence was low and her mental health had seen better times. After being referred to Reed in Partnership's Better Working Futures programme in the North East, she says of her adviser, Helen: "What Helen did from the start was listen: she asked me the right questions about my background, where I wanted to be and what my barriers to employment had been, I suffer with arthritis and a number of other ailments that affect my back, knees and hands so I needed a role that would strike a balance of walking, standing and sitting."

"We established that security would be a perfect route way for me as I wanted to use the skills and experience that I enjoy - seeing different places, meeting new people, interacting with people in need and dealing with challenging and complex situations. Helen referred me to an SIA (Security Industry Authority) course which was great. Over ten days I learnt so much about myself, skills I never thought I had and skills I felt were useless. I am now waiting for my SIA badge after successfully passing the course exams. I am now looking forward to getting started with applying for security vacancies and having a stable future."



### What can employment support do?

- Challenge stereotypical language when it occurs.
- Provide personalised support to help individuals identify their goals, barriers and transferable skills in an evidence-based way.
- Be aware of barriers that might be linked to different individual characteristics, such as disability, race or age and give personalised support to overcome these barriers.
- Use non-gendered language in the way that jobs are described and positive images of non-stereotypical people for a particular occupation or sector in training materials.
- Avoid making assumptions around caring responsibilities but focusing on positive, practical help and support to find appropriate flexible work or childcare.
- Value voluntary experience and skills as well as paid work.

## What can employers do?

- Publicly demonstrate a commitment to diversity in the way that they advertise and recruit.
- Check the wording of job advertisements for gender-specific or non-inclusive language and check that recruitment practices encourage a diverse range of applicants.
- Understand and take action to address the factors that may make it less attractive for a woman or man to perform a particular role (the working environment, a lack of working time flexibility or long hours for example).
- Get involved in helping local schools with their careers advice and guidance to help improve young people's understanding and play a part in developing a diverse future workforce.

“Publicly demonstrating your commitment to diversity would help to convince people that yours is a business where they will be welcomed as an equal and can realise their full potential.”

PWC<sup>38</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Female employment rate (aged 16 to 64, seasonally adjusted), Office for National Statistics, July 2019
- <sup>2</sup> “The robot-proof skills that give women an edge in the age of AI”, Sarah O’Connor, The Financial Times, 12 February 2019.
- <sup>3</sup> Skills and Employment Survey 2017, Cardiff University, 2017
- <sup>4</sup> Women and the economy, House of Commons, March 2019
- <sup>5</sup> Gender pay gap in the UK, Office for National Statistics, October 2018. Other sources paint a worse picture: Cranfield School of Management’s Female FTSE Board report 2018 revealed that only 6.4% of FTSE 250 executive board directors are female.
- <sup>6</sup> Women and the economy, House of Commons, March 2019
- <sup>7</sup> Gender segregation, underemployment and subjective wellbeing in the UK labour market, D. Kamerāde and H Richardson University of Salford, Manchester
- <sup>8</sup> Women in Construction: The race to gender equality, Randstad, 2018
- <sup>9</sup> “Why we are campaigning for more men in early years education”, The Fatherhood Institute, May 2019.
- <sup>10</sup> “Why do we need more men in nursing?” RCN, August 2018 at [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk).
- <sup>11</sup> Pre-registration nursing recruitment and retention: Under-representation of men, influences and causes, NHS Education for Scotland, 2018.
- <sup>12</sup> “Young male nursing applicants surge after ‘We are the NHS’ recruitment campaign”, NHS England, February 2019.
- <sup>13</sup> British Social Attitudes 35 Report: Gender, 2018
- <sup>14</sup> The clock turns back for young women, Young Women’s Trust, 2016
- <sup>15</sup> Drawing the Future: Exploring the career aspirations of primary school children from around the world, Education and Employers, 2018
- <sup>16</sup> See: <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/the-commission-on-gender-stereotypes-in-early-childhood>
- <sup>17</sup> Closing the gender gap: Exploring gender differences in careers advice and aspirations, World Skills UK and the Careers and Enterprise Company, 2018
- <sup>18</sup> See: <https://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/statistics/analysis-of-gcse-stem-entries-and-results-2/>
- <sup>19</sup> Key facts for diversity and inclusion in engineering, Royal Academy of Engineering, 2017
- <sup>20</sup> Opportunities and outcomes in education and work: Gender effects, UKCES, November 2015
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Equality at Work? Positive Action in gender segregated apprenticeships, Young Women’s Trust, 2018.
- <sup>23</sup> Youth voice census report 2018, Youth Employment UK, 2018
- <sup>24</sup> The future of jobs, work and working, Corporate Research Forum, 2018

- <sup>25</sup> “The future of work”, Speech by Mark Carney, Bank of England, September 2018
- <sup>26</sup> *The Global Gender Gap Report 2018*, World Economic Forum, 2018
- <sup>27</sup> *Promoting integration and diversity in the digital labour market*, Empirica, February 2019.
- <sup>28</sup> *Will robots really steal our jobs?* PWC, 2018
- <sup>29</sup> *The probability of automation in England: 2011 and 2017*, ONS, 2019
- <sup>30</sup> *The future is ours: Women, automation and equality in the digital age*, IPPR, July 2019
- <sup>31</sup> *What your business needs to know about gender pay gap reporting*, CBI and CMS, 2017
- <sup>32</sup> Cited in *Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market*, European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017
- <sup>33</sup> *Digital skills for the UK economy*, ECORYS UK, 2016.
- <sup>34</sup> *The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England*, Skills for care, 2018
- <sup>35</sup> *Understanding the gender pay gap in the UK*, ONS, 2018
- <sup>36</sup> *Engaging employers in school careers advice: A report on our Young Careers Service*, Reed in Partnership, 2018
- <sup>37</sup> *Boys on Track: Improving support for Black Caribbean and Free School Meal Eligible White Boys in London*, Will Millard, Kate Bowen-Viner, Dr Sam Baars, Anna Trethewey & Loic Menzies, 2018
- <sup>38</sup> *No holding back: Breaking down the barriers to diversity*, PWC, 2017

[reedinpartnership.co.uk](https://reedinpartnership.co.uk)  @ReedPartnership

Reed in Partnership Ltd. Registered Office: Academy Court, 84 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1DT. Company Number: 851645. Registered in the UK

**We provide public services that change people's lives for the better**