

# *Diversity, Inclusion & Law*

**LEGAL LEADERS MAKING MEANINGFUL CHANGE**



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There is a moral imperative for the legal sector to uphold the rule of law and to reflect the diverse communities it serves if there is to be continued public confidence in the profession.

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I. STEPHANIE BOYCE, IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF ENGLAND AND WALES



# Foreword

After the glowing reception to our inaugural DEI Index in 2021, I am delighted to welcome you to our second edition. Building on over a decade of work by Obelisk Support championing a more diverse legal profession, this report spotlights and celebrates the legal leaders driving sustained change.

There have been steady improvements in recent years – for gender-equality, for example, women continue to break new ground, such as the historic appointment of Dame Sue Carr, the first woman to hold the 755-year old role of Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales overseeing the judiciary. Succession from one woman to another is becoming more common: the Law Society of England and Wales saw I. Stephanie Boyce, the Society's first Black president, handed over in 2022 to another "first" – Lubna Shuja, the first practising Muslim president. At Vodafone, in 2023, the veteran general counsel Rosemary Martin handed the reins to another woman - former EasyJet general counsel Maaïke de Bie.

The general picture remains mixed – whilst women make up most solicitors in the UK, they remain underrepresented in senior ranks: 31% of partners in private practice, 30% of judicial or 31% of general counsel at FTSE 100 companies. This mixed pattern is replicated across all areas of DEI work.

In-house lawyers have a central role in driving diversity both inside their organisation and in the wider society. Recent research by the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) showed that General Counsel are having success in promoting DEI practices among their own teams, demonstrating that leadership from the top does matter but they are facing more barriers in influencing corporate culture more broadly. In fact, the research shows that "the bigger the company and law department,

the more likely general counsel are to report success across the board in advancing DEI goals and programs."

As well as promoting diversity and inclusion in their own organisations, as buyers of legal services, they hold the purse strings and are in a strong position to influence the behaviours of their private practice counterparts. General Counsel who request their law firms to track and report DEI data observed significant progress being made in advancing DEI objectives. However, only about 38% of all general counsel reported that they challenge their law firms to provide DEI reports. As such, if more GCs were to ask for this information, it's clear that DEI progress would advance across the profession.

So much has been achieved in recent years to advance diversity and inclusion in the corporate world but progress is never to be taken for granted. Whilst businesses are more conscious than ever of the need to reflect society better and of the benefits of a more representative workforce to their wider performance, the winds of resistance to this change can be felt, still, across the world. As recently as at the time this report went into print, the US Supreme Court overturned long-established US policies on positive discrimination by ruling that race can no longer be considered as a factor in university admissions. This will likely create a ripple effect into the workplace and organisations being challenged around their DEI practices and policies which makes spotlighting sustained good practice and a long-term commitment even more important. How we respond - and how we remain committed in the face of backlash will show us how structural the changes already achieved really are.

**Dana Denis-Smith**  
CEO, Obelisk Support



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# Introduction

Around the world, there is a historic and significant shift underway. Conversations and initiatives focused on improving Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) in the workplace and society continue to expand and evolve, with organisations across all sectors globally forecast to spend \$15.4 billion on DE&I related efforts by 2026.<sup>1</sup>

Considering the deep-rooted connection of the legal profession with social justice, our sector holds immense potential to effect meaningful change. Steady progress is being made as more in the legal industry recognise that greater diversity, equality and a true sense of belonging for all are absolutely crucial in shaping a robust and fair legal system that reflects the society it serves at both entry and senior levels.

This comes at a time when many business leaders are not only expecting their legal partners, vendors and external associates to espouse and actively advance DE&I, but are also implementing accountability mechanisms when these expectations are not met.<sup>2</sup> Research consistently affirms that organisations boasting diverse workforces hold a competitive edge and typically outperform their counterparts.<sup>3</sup> This is often due to their ability to approach challenges from a variety of angles, drawing on a wide array of experiences and skill sets.

## HOW FAR HAS THE LEGAL SECTOR IN THE UK COME?

It has been encouraging seeing the legal industry come together across in-house teams, law firms and the judiciary to move the needle forward. More than 100 years have

passed since women were first admitted to practice both as barristers and solicitors in England and Wales, yet we are still seeing notable breakthroughs.

One significant stride forward for women's representation in the judiciary has been the recent appointment of Dame Sue Carr as the first ever first female Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales. Equally, Lubna Shuja has broken through multiple barriers as the first Asian, first Muslim and seventh female president of the Law Society of England and Wales – all made even more noteworthy when we consider that she is the 178th person to attain this role.

In-house legal teams have also been demonstrating clear momentum in leading DE&I organisational shifts. Chief Legal Officers and General Counsels, thanks to their unique positioning, have been actively shaping their companies' policies and practices, using their advocacy to drive substantial change in their business communities and the legal profession at large. Beyond their traditional responsibilities, in-house legal teams have been ensuring their companies adhere to local employment and equality laws, as well as meet regulators' requirements to demonstrate progress in diversity. For example, the Financial Conduct Authority requires listed companies to report progress towards targets to boost the representation of women and ethnic minorities.<sup>4</sup>

There has also been a firm commitment to enhancing diversity and inclusion with the introduction of the Mansfield Rule in the UK.

To achieve Mansfield Rule Certification, law firms and in-house legal teams are required to demonstrate year-long progress in increasing diversity when hiring for leadership roles and consider candidate pools that are at least 30% female, from minority ethnic backgrounds, with disabilities, or who identify as LGBTQIA+. This national move symbolises an industry-wide shift in mindset away from 'tokenism', toward a true commitment to improving the diversity profile of senior leadership in the law.<sup>5</sup>

### A CONSIDERABLE JOURNEY AHEAD

Despite ongoing improvements, however, there is still a long way to go. Official statistics on the diversity of the judiciary in 2022 revealed a marginal increase in the proportion of women, however, they continue to be underrepresented in the court judiciary and even more so in senior roles. Women constitute only 35% of court judges and fill half of tribunal judge positions. This proportion significantly decreases for higher court appointments, where women represent only 30% for the High Court and above. Looking at the intersection of gender and ethnicity, white men comprise over half of the judiciary and white women constitute over a third. Both ethnic minority men and women represent only 5% of judges each.<sup>6</sup>

In September 2022, the Law Society released a summary of data illustrating the evolution of the solicitors' profession in terms of size and structure.<sup>7</sup> This indicated a 2% increase in solicitors with practising certificates (PC holders) in England and Wales from the previous year. The number of female PC holders has risen three times faster than their male counterparts, making up 53% of those practising. This is noteworthy, given that women continue to be underrepresented in senior roles. The representation of individuals from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds has also seen growth, reaching 18% of those with known ethnicity. However, the representation of ethnic minorities in full

equity partnerships in the UK has only seen a 1.1% increase from 2021 to 2022.<sup>8</sup>

Disabled lawyers and those educated in state schools continue to be significantly underrepresented in the legal industry compared to the UK workforce average. Research highlights that the largest firms employ the fewest disabled lawyers and that small, one-partner firms have over four times more partners from Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds.<sup>9</sup>

### A CLOSER LOOK AT THE DATA

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) survey for 2021 (with some late entries gathered in 2022) found a "slow but steady" improvement in diversity among all lawyers since the last survey in 2019.<sup>10</sup>

Women now constitute 52% of lawyers employed in law firms under SRA regulation, a slight increase from 51% in 2019, compared to 48% of the workforce. However, when considering higher-ranking roles, disparities become more evident. Female solicitors make up 61%, while female partners only constitute 35%.

As we work hard for greater representation of women in the legal profession, it is also essential to consider and strive for the inclusion of individuals who identify beyond the traditional binary notions of gender. Organisations like the SRA are including this in their research, but we are only just starting to scratch the surface of understanding and addressing the issue.

In terms of ethnic diversity, Asian lawyers have seen an increase, now making up 12% of the profession compared to 11% in 2019, which is a notable contrast to their 7% representation in the UK workforce. Black lawyers now constitute 3% of the profession, up from 2% in 2019, which aligns with their representation in the UK workforce. Lawyers from Multiple/

Mixed backgrounds have seen a rise to 3%, up from 2% in 2019, which is slightly higher than their 1% representation in the UK workforce. The representation of lawyers from other minority groups remains unchanged at 1%.

There has also been a slight increase in the number of disabled lawyers, rising from 4% in 2019 to 5%. However, their representation in the profession is still considerably lower than their presence in the broader UK workforce. As of 2021, 14% of the UK workforce reported having a disability, highlighting a significant disparity in representation within the legal field.

Another area researched by the SRA was social mobility. While the legal profession should be open to anyone with the required skills and potential, regardless of socio-economic background, there's a notable discrepancy between the proportion of lawyers from a 'privileged' background, defined by factors such as parental occupation at age 14 and attendance at fee-paying schools and the broader UK population. Compared to the national workforce, where 37% come from a professional socio-economic background, the legal field is more skewed with 58% of lawyers originating from that demographic. Additionally, 22% of lawyers attended an independent or fee-paying school, a figure that has remained unchanged since 2019 and significantly exceeds the national average of 7.5% of the workforce who attended such schools.

### BEYOND DATA: THE COMPLEXITY OF INTERSECTIONALITY

As we unravel the data on discrimination, it's important to remember the multifaceted nature of these issues. Indeed, tracking varied forms of discrimination is crucial, but it can prove challenging when we consider more complex phenomena like intersectionality. This offers a lens to understand how multiple forms of discrimination may interlock and amplify within an individual's experience.

Recognising intersectionality is a stepping stone towards comprehending the layered complexities of prejudices within the legal profession. We do not only need to tackle the blatant forms of discrimination, but also the subtler ones emerging from the convergence of different identities.

### A STEADY SHIFT FROM INTENT TO ACTION

A deeper understanding of these issues and more action is needed to truly bring about a meaningful shift. Encouragingly, we are now seeing a move beyond a superficial "tick-box" mentality, with an emphasis on bringing about authentic change by proactively dismantling the obstacles that hinder genuine diversity, equality and inclusion.

**This report highlights the organisations, in-house legal teams and law firms that are 'walking the talk', confronting these barriers head-on and using their positions of influence to drive forward progress.**

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# Leaders setting new standards

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Although the battleground has shifted, the battle is not yet won. ”

LADY HALE

## BARCLAYS PLC

Barclays is committed to building a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace, with Ray Dempsey Jr. as their Group Chief Diversity Officer since 2021. They employ a sustainable model of DE&I, implementing measures at every level of the company and soliciting regular stakeholder feedback to evolve as social views change.

Barclays focus on six key areas of diversity (disability, gender, LGBT+, multicultural, multigenerational and socio-economic inclusion), which are embedded through Employee Resource Groups. In 2015, Barclays were the first financial services company to sign up to the UN's HeForShe campaign. Since then, they have empowered men on the topic of gender equality as a UN 10x10x10 HeForShe Impact champion.

This year, Barclays held their inaugural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Awards, recognising the industry's diversity heroes and inclusivity trailblazers. They have also received considerable public recognition for their DE&I efforts, being listed in The Times Top 50 Employers for Women and the top 10 of the Working Mother Media and AVTAR Group 100 Best Companies for Women in India.

Barclays achieved a 28% global representation of women in senior leadership, aiming for 33% by 2025. However, the gender pay gap was 35.9% in 2022, a slight improvement of 0.4% from 2021, highlighting an ongoing focus area for the bank.

## BAYER

Bayer continue to make diversity and inclusion a priority, driving initiatives across culture, talent, business and brand. Their goal is to achieve gender parity at all management levels by 2030. Supporting this vision, they've established the globally sponsored 'Grow-all-in' Business Resource Grip to reinforce I&D objectives and provide executive education.

Bayer is committed to empowering women, especially in STEM fields. Future talent programmes inspire women to enter STEM roles, while private medical policies are under constant review to ensure optimal coverage for women's health topics. Also, maternity offerings have been enhanced to foster a supportive work environment.

Internationally, Bayer champion women's rights and education, pledging to provide access to modern contraceptives for 100 million women annually by 2030. They're a founding supporter of the Female Science Talent programme, aimed at boosting female leadership in science through mentorship, personal development trainings and networking opportunities.

In 2022, Bayer's workforce was 60% female, with women making up 52% of senior leadership and 60% of the graduate intake. Women received 59% of promotions. Their mean gender pay gap was 10.1%, with a median of 8.75%. The mean and median bonus pay gaps were 10.1% and 17.5% respectively, marking a substantial improvement from the 2021 figures.

## KPMG

As a Times Top 50 UK Employer for Women in 2022, KPMG continue to confront biases. To tackle areas that have historically lacked female representation, KPMG developed two insight programmes for female undergraduates. They've also partnered with STEM Women, IT's Not Just for the Boys and Women in the City Afro-Caribbean to reach over 200 girls in more than 30 UK schools and colleges.

Their 'It's Her Future' professional development initiative has led to 95% acceptance of female job offers in technology and 44% of technology promotions going to women. They also offer mentoring, executive learning, a female coding bootcamp and a tailored leadership development plan. There is also coaching for working parents, paid

leave for miscarriage and agile working opportunities.

KPMG has set a target of at least 40% female colleagues by 2030. As of 2022, firm-wide representation of female employees stands at an encouraging 49%. They bolster inclusion with their Ally Advocate programme, supported by senior directors and partners.

Though 28% of current KPMG partners are female, women comprise 44% of UK Board members, 50% of graduate and apprentice new joiners and 48% of promotions. Between 2021 and 2022, KPMG successfully reduced the pay gap by 2.6% to 20.9%. In terms of mean gender pay, they reduced the gap by 4.9% to 32.1% in 2022.

## SAINSBURY'S

Ranked 27th/400 for the most female-friendly businesses globally and third place in the FTSE Women Leaders Review, Sainsbury's is close to their 50% female senior leaders goal with a current 44.2% rate.

Sainsbury's enforce a Sustainable Sourcing Policy mandating all suppliers to meet their Ethical Trade Code, ensuring fair treatment and equal pay. They promote the UN Women's Empowerment Principles among suppliers and prefer sourcing from female-led producers where feasible. They also partner with female-founded brands like Howdah, Amandla and Yoni.

Sainsbury's has developed a guide to aid their

employees during the menopause transition. To support parents, they have introduced an extended period of 26 paid weeks for maternity and adoption leave.

In 2022, Sainsbury's reported a mean gender pay gap of 8.5%, median of 6.3% and a gender bonus gap of 46.4% mean and 31.7% median. Women held 37.9% of upper quartile positions, down from 39.6% in 2021. The same year, gender pay and bonus gaps were 8.5% and 38.7% respectively, with a median pay gap of 4.7% and bonus gap of 17.1%. The disparities result from more women in part-time roles, men in senior positions and fewer women in specialised, premium salaried roles like drivers and bakers, which are 90% male.

## STARBUCKS

Starbucks operate with a human-centric philosophy, focusing on "one person, one cup and one neighbourhood at a time". Committed to equality, they've maintained 100% pay equity since 2018. Through the Women's Leadership Network, the company fosters career development for top-performers via external speaker-led sessions and networking opportunities.

However, as of 2023, a mean gender pay gap of 14% and a median gap of 18.7% were reported, with a mean bonus gap of 41.6% and a median of 16.9%. This represents a mean improvement of 2.2% since 2021. Striving for balance, Starbucks ensure diverse shortlists for senior leadership positions and

offers flexible working for head office roles. They also promote diversity through their future talent leadership programme.

Employee compensation is calculated based on individual experiences through an offer standards calculator, with clear procedures for annual pay raises and bonuses. Parental support is also a priority, as seen in the shared six-month paid parental leave policy.

Externally, Starbucks champion global female empowerment through their foundation's partnership with the Malala Fund, aiming to empower at least 250,000 women in coffee, tea and cocoa growing communities by 2025.

## TESCO

Tesco celebrate diversity and were among the first to voluntarily disclose gender pay gap data. By 2025, Tesco aim to raise the female representation of top global leaders to 35%. In 2021, women composed 54% of external senior appointments, while internal senior management promotions rose from 38% in 2021 to 46% in 2022.

Committed to supporting women's health, Tesco joined the EveryWoman Promise, encouraging women to attend health screenings.

Despite progress in other areas, the gender pay and bonus gaps at Tesco still need significant attention. In 2022, the median gender pay gap was 18.6% (an increase from 17.6% in 2021) and the mean was 12.1% (a slight rise from 11.7% in 2021). The median

gender bonus gap in 2022 was 35.8% and the mean was 57.3%, both increasing from 2021. Women constituted 17% of the highest pay quartile.

Tesco offer a Learning Management System for self-improvement and promote their Driver Academy to women, with an increase in female drivers to over 50%. In 2023, Tesco launched a Women's Network for peer support. They also collaborate with the Federation of Wholesale Distributors' Women in Wholesale network to accelerate the development of high-performing female staff.

They provide free sanitary products at all sites and offer maternity policies above statutory requirements, inclusive of those adopting or undergoing fertility treatment.

## VODAFONE

Recognised as a Times Top 50 Employer for Women in 2022, Vodafone aim to be at the top of the list by 2025. They champion gender parity, with initiatives like a 50% female graduate recruitment policy and partnerships aimed at boosting female-owned businesses in their supplier base.

Having already met their goal of 30% female leadership by 2030, they've raised the bar to 40%. Vodafone hosts four employee-led networks fostering career advancement, engaging over 2,000 members across 21 markets. Their global retention programmes include 16 weeks of paid parental leave, flexible work arrangements and the ReConnect initiative for career returners. Notably, they offer a Domestic Violence and Abuse support policy, granting ten days of safe paid leave.

Vodafone promote global gender equality through initiatives like Vodacom's Mum & Baby service, impacting 1.9 million South African parents. They sponsor significant women-centric events and run the Women First in Entrepreneurship Programme, training 36,000 women. Their annual #CodeLikeAGirl workshops engage 1,000 girls in STEM.

Despite these progressive strategies, the 2021 mean hourly pay gap grew from 9.6% to 10.4% in 2022 and the median hourly pay gap increased from 12.4% to 13.2%. However, female representation in the upper pay band improved slightly from 29.5% to 30.6%. Vodafone continue to address pay equity through its FairPay Principles.



# *Leaders driving industry-wide change*

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It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.

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MAYA ANGELOU



**BT**

In 2021, BT launched their diversity Manifesto, which plans to accelerate growth through responsible, inclusive and sustainable technology. Their evidence-based and intersectional approach recognises the diverse needs of their colleagues to ensure BT deliver a positive impact to wider society.

BT's Gender Equality Network (GEN) represents their members effectively to help shape their D&I plans. Subsequently, the gender pay gap at BT was 6.1% in 2022, down 0.6% from 2021. Additionally, BT's manifesto

states they aim to achieve a 50% gender split by 2030. As of March 2023, the gender split at BT is 34.8%, which is a fall from 34.9% in March 2022. As such, whilst BT has pledged to achieve an equal gender split, it is worth evaluating whether their initiatives are working.

However, BT openly support gender equality both in and out of the workplace. The award-winning 'Not Her Problem' campaign, launched by EE in 2022, tackled sexist hate during the women's Euros 2022.

**DIAGEO**

One of two FTSE 100 companies with majority female board representation, Diageo ranks second globally and first in the UK in Equileap's 2023 Gender Equality Report and tops the FTSE Women Leaders Review 2023 for female board representation. Their 'Society 2030: Spirit of Progress' goals aim for 50% female leadership by 2030, more female-owned suppliers and 50% women beneficiaries from community programmes.

Diageo fosters employee development through the Spirited Women network for health education and internal mentoring. They have revamped recruitment with a Hiring for Performance toolkit and a Spirit of STEM Scholarship at Herriot-Watt University, complemented by a Bright Network partnership for Women in STEM and more.

These efforts led to a 75% female graduate hire rate in the UK and Scotland in 2022.

As a founding member of the United Nations' Unstereotype Alliance, Diageo has trained almost 2000 marketers to combat gender stereotypes. They support staff with 'Thriving Through Menopause' guidelines, equal parental leave policies and resources for returning parents.

Their Board Diversity Policy ensures at least 40% female representation on the Board. Historic appointments in 2021 included the first female Master Blender in Johnnie Walker's 200-year history. By 2022, 64% of the Board and 44% of senior roles were female-led, leading to a median pay gap of 4.3% and a mean gap of 0%.

**HP**

HP's Chief Diversity Officer, Lesley Slaton Brown, is driving innovation to promote diversity, targeting 50% women in leadership by 2030. Already, 46% of their Board directors in 2021 were women, marking a 10% rise since 2015. HP's 12-month development programme, Catalyst, has seen 89% women participation since 2017, yielding a 76% retention rate and 38% promotions. They also have international initiatives in India, Mexico and Costa Rica.

HP aim to fill 30% of technology and engineering roles with women by 2030; by 2021, 22.7% of these positions were already held by women. They also partner with

nonprofits like Girls Who Code, Black Girls Code and Girl Rising. In 2021, they launched two Life centres in Mexico, offering free entrepreneurial courses to over 6,000 women.

HP is recognised for their flexible work policies and support for working parents, retaining their 27-year US ranking as a Best Company by Working Mother Magazine. Notably, in 2022, they welcomed back 100% of their maternity leave returnees. However, HP's 2022 UK gender pay gap stands at 9.4% and the bonus gap at 11.5% mean and 28.4% median, revealing an imbalance that requires attention.

**ITV**

Led by Ade Rawcliffe, ITV's DE&I team is working to address structural inequalities through their Diversity Acceleration Plan. On-screen, there's been a shift towards representing contemporary British audiences. Structurally, by diversifying their Management Board and senior leadership teams, ITV ranked 5th in the FTSE Women Leaders 2021 report.

In 2022, ITV's intersectional data revealed that 8.7% of colleagues identify as women of colour, above the national average of 7%. While they exceeded their 50% female workforce target in 2022, reaching 53.7%, there is still some work to be done; women represented 49% of managers and 46.2% of senior leaders in the same year.

Their staff Women's Network offers development programmes and inspirational events, while a Smart Working approach supports parents. These efforts saw ITV winning the 2022 DataIQ Award for Best Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

ITV reduced the national median gender pay gap from 15.4% to 11.9% in 2021 and further to 9.2% in 2022, compared to the UK's 14.9%. In 2021, 45.1% of women occupied the upper quartile pay band, with 59.6% in the lowest. This shifted slightly in 2022, where 44.2% of women were in the upper and 59.5% in the lower quartile. Though there were fewer women in senior roles, ITV recognise this could be due to extended family leave and caring responsibilities.

## JAGUAR LAND ROVER

Jaguar Land Rover has a target of achieving a minimum 30% female representation in all senior leadership roles by 2026. To achieve this, they are firstly addressing hiring practices through their STEM Ambassador programme, skills sessions and employer events to encourage female students into the sector, alongside the introduction of diverse interview panels.

Jaguar Land Rover offer the Gender Equality Network, their largest network, providing

educational opportunities and networking for female staff. The Network's inaugural conference, 'Be the Change', was held in 2022. The Women in Engineering and Allies network also facilitated 20 informative Lunch & Learn sessions in 2022.

In 2022, women comprised 20% of the workforce and 16% of the upper pay quartile. However, a 0.9% mean and a 0% median gender pay gap existed, largely due to higher female promotion rates.

## KANTAR

Megan Cross, Kantar's Inclusion & Diversity Lead, has cultivated a culture of belonging with an international aspiration to achieve 50% representation of women in the highest earning roles and to shift representation in the top 300 leaders.

Women of Kantar is a network that delivers development opportunities and Disruption Talks on topics such as menopause. For carers, there are flexible working policies and return-to-work programmes.

Women seeking developmental opportunities were granted the ability to do so from 2021 through the launch a global mentoring programme that pairs high-performing women with alumni from the Kantar Empowering Growth leadership development programme. Moreover, the recruitment team use Textio, an augmented writing

tool, to remove biased language from job descriptions.

Kantar provide client resources like articles on gender-inclusive branding and an 'Inclusion Index', which tracks diversity progress in comparison to industry norms across 24 industries and 14 countries. This helps companies benchmark their equity and inclusion efforts.

In 2021, despite a 3% dip in overall female representation, women's presence in senior roles increased to 41% with over 50% receiving promotions across all pay brackets. In 2022, women occupied 42% of the top pay quartile and there was a 5% mean and 3% median gender pay gap companywide. Although women constituted 51% of company departures, they represented 63% of new hires.

## PWC

Steered by Helen Ewin, Senior Manager of Global Inclusion and Diversity, PwC adopt a strategy of action, accountability and advocacy for diversity. By 2025, they aim to achieve 30% female partners, 43% female directors and 50% senior managers. At present, 40% of the internal admission to partnership comprised women and 23% of PwC's global partner population are women.

They run initiatives like the Audit She campaign, inspiring more women into the sector through relatable video series and the Tech We Can Champions network, delivering school lessons to encourage girls into tech. Their Women in Business programme supports female undergraduates. PwC also offer flexible contracts, as well as

private medical cover for those undergoing menopause.

The UK gender pay gap has seen a reduction, with a median of 5.9% and mean of 8% in 2022, down from 6% and 9.4% respectively in 2021. Women made up 41% of the top pay quartile in 2022.

To address pay gaps linked to underrepresentation of women in senior roles, PwC have implemented leadership programmes, rewards for diversity target achievement, fair work allocation with career defining projects, recruitment tool revisions to avoid unintended bias and invested in progression coaches.

## SKY

Sky is committed to reflecting Britain's diversity and enacting meaningful change. Their goal includes achieving 50% women in head of department and lead roles, currently at 39% and ensuring 50/50 gender balance on vacancy shortlists. They aim for 60% of Drama & Comedy commissions to feature a female writer.

Sky run several initiatives, such as the Women in Leadership programme, which sponsors and trains the next generation of female leaders, seeing 30% of participants being promoted to 'Head of' level. The Women in Technology & Engineering programme offers paid skills training and the Upskilling & Encouragement initiative offers training to female Software Developers. Their Get into

Tech initiative has helped over 200 women start tech careers through free training, while the Women into Home Service programme has helped more women secure higher-paid roles, increasing female representation from 2% to 12%.

The gender pay gap has decreased, from 11.7% (mean) and 10% (median) in 2020 to 9.8% and 6.9% respectively in 2021. Bonus disparities presented a mixed picture, with the mean bonus gap growing from 25.6% in 2020 to 36% in 2021, as the median bonus gap shrank from 33.6% to 28.7%. The proportion of women in the upper quartile has increased to 35% in 2021 and women make up 26% of their tech roles.



# Leaders creating safe, supportive workspaces

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We need diversity of thought in the world to face the new challenges.

”

TIM BERNERS-LEE

## ABRDN

Abrdn rank first in Citywire's 2022 Alpha Female report for the highest proportion of female fund managers among firms with over 100 managers. Their strategy has delivered measurable results, with the plc Board achieving 50% female representation in 2022, surpassing their 40% target set for 2025 and up from 45% in 2021. Furthermore, senior leadership met the 40% women target, with a rise to 41% in 2022 from 36% in 2021.

Their 'Future Leader' global talent cohort comprises 56% women, whilst the blended working policy and equal parental leave support a better work-life blend. Online learning during parental leave, women-specific 'Accelerate' courses and returner

programmes that retained 75% of the cohort further demonstrate their commitment to DE&I.

Female representation saw a growth from 45% to 61% in the graduate intake between 2021 and 2022. However, female trainees and interns saw a slight decrease to 17% female trainees and 45% of female interns in 2022.

Pay disparity reduced with the mean average pay gap dropping from 33.3% in 2021 to 28.7% in 2022 and the median pay gap from 25.1% to 24.2%. Lastly, women representation in the upper pay quartile slightly increased to 27% in 2022 from 26% the previous year.

## ACCENTURE

Accenture's commitment to accelerating equality has driven steady progress. They are on track to achieve their goal of having 30% women managing directors by 2025, with the current percentage standing at 29%.

Balancing work and life commitments has been made easier through their shared parental leave and flexible working arrangements. Furthermore, they've fostered an entrepreneurial spirit among women, partnering with Springboard Enterprises to create a network for female entrepreneurs. The 'FutureofU' initiative provides resources to smooth the return to work, with a focus on digital skills education.

The pay gap witnessed a slight decrease from 2021, with the median dropping to 16.4% in 2022 from 16.1% and the mean from 20.2% to 19.2%. The bonus pay gap saw a similar trend, with the median decreasing to 26.1% and the mean to 52.1% in 2022.

In terms of representation, 50% of the Board of Directors are women, as are new hires, with 46% of recent promotions also going to women. Women make up 25% of the Global Management Committee, reflecting Accenture's substantial progress towards gender equality.

## ASCENTIAL

Ascential is committed to creating a diverse environment for employees, customers and wider society. Aiming for 50% female senior leadership by 2030, they track brand progress and partner with relevant charities. Key initiatives include an employee-led EmPower Women's Network, which unites and inspires female staff; conducting bi-annual Inclusive Representation Content Audits across all their brands; and sponsoring Goals4Girls, a development programme for women and girls through football.

While the 56% female workforce increased to 58% from 2021 to 2022, the percentage of women in Senior Leadership decreased from 40% to 33%. To address these concerns,

there is an established Women in Leadership committee.

This widening gap extends to pay, where the mean gender pay gap of 25% and median of 17% in 2020 remained at a mean of 25% and increased to a median of 18% in 2021. Moreover, there is a discrepancy in bonuses, with a mean gender bonus gap of 60% and a median of 30% in 2021. However, there was a shift in 2021, with more women in the upper pay quartiles (48%) compared to 45% in 2020. As a result, Ascential has devised an action plan which includes a new Inclusive Recruitment toolkit to remove biases from recruitment, a flexible working policy and a women's mentoring platform.

## BURBERRY

Burberry's internal Diversity & Inclusion Council and Cultural Advisory Council ensure an equitable environment. They maintained a leading position in the FTSE 100 for women in leadership for a third consecutive year, according to the 2020 Hampton-Alexander Review, with women making up 50.4% of the Executive Committee and Direct Reports team.

Women comprise 77% of their global workforce and 27% of executive leadership, with women at half of the Board and in at least 50% of senior and higher paid UK positions. All Talent Acquisition team members completed unconscious bias training in 2021 and they use a gender decoder with standardised interview forms.

Burberry provide a dedicated menopause support site, along with specialist BUPA care for UK colleagues. Their Global Parental Leave Policy supports all new parents, offering 18 weeks of full-paid leave and an option to work 80% hours at full pay for a further four weeks.

They work with The Prince's Trust Women Supporting Women initiative, enabling hundreds of women to access virtual interviews, online courses and education support. Their gender pay gap in the upper quartile has decreased, with a median of 8.8% and mean of 14.7% in 2021/2022, down from 12.3% and 22.5% respectively in 2020/2021. They currently have four times more women working part-time.

## JOHN LEWIS PARTNERSHIP

Sharon White, partner and chairwoman of John Lewis Partnership, emphasises the humanity and equality envisioned for the brand.

The organisation's Gender Equality network focuses on male advocacy to support the progression of female partners, while the Working Parents network offers peer support groups. John Lewis provide equal parental pay and leave, paid pregnancy loss leave, free counselling and vacancies with hybrid working.

Moreover, the gender pay gap has reduced from a median of 6.4% and a mean of 9% in 2021 to a median of 5.8% and a mean of 7.9% in 2022. This closing gap is driven by a higher proportion of female partners in entry-level roles. There were 48.48% women in Executive, Director, or Level 4 roles; 41.7% women were promoted to Executive, Director, or Level 4 roles; and 46% of women were in upper quartile roles.

## J.P. MORGAN

Committed to be the most diverse and inclusive asset manager, J.P. Morgan was a Times Top 50 employer for women in 2022 and invested \$1.1 billion with women-owned businesses in 2022. Their initiatives, such as Women on the Move and the US-based Founder Catalyst programme, foster women-run businesses, promote financial health and career growth. The Working Families Network offers subsidised emergency childcare, while the ReEntry Programme aids professionals returning to work, with 85% of participants gaining full-time employment in 2022.

They partner with 100 Women in Finance, mentoring around 250 female entrepreneurs and support Black and minority ethnic women via Capital Enterprise's OneTech programme. Graduates can join the Tech

Connect Programme to learn essential skills, advancing female technologists.

There were slight decreases in female representation on the global board and Campus & Internship Class in 2021-2022, but J.P. Morgan reported 99% gender pay equity in 2022. They also saw a reduction in both median and mean hourly and bonus pay gaps from 2021 to 2022. Globally, 23% of J.P. Morgan fund managers are women, managing or co-managing 36% of assets.

Their Executive Director Sponsorship aids female staff in Latin America and Canada, providing skills development opportunities. Since 2018, this initiative has seen 100% retention and over half of the participants promoted to Managing Director.



# Legal leaders driving DE&I initiatives

“

Inclusion is not tolerance, it is unquestioned acceptance.

”

UNKNOWN

## ANGLO AMERICAN PLC

Anglo American pride themselves on their diversity and equality. Richard Price, General Counsel, is responsible for the corporate governance and equality initiatives at the company. In recent years, Anglo American has been publicly recognised for their efforts; they were placed at number 31 of the Top 50 Inclusive Employers in the UK in 2020 – a 12-place improvement on 2019 and received a score of 82.83% on the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index (GEI) in 2023, up from last year's 81%.

Richard is driving initiatives globally, setting up General Counsel on Diversity and Inclusion in South Africa, having discussions in Switzerland and implementing company-wide diversity policies. Anglo American's female

representation at Band 5 and above currently stands at 32%, on track to meet their target of 33% by the end of 2023.

Anglo American has set up women's networks in the UK, South Africa, Chile and Brazil to implement their DEI values and support their workers. Through increased efforts to create a more psychologically safe workplace and placing importance on intersectionality, Anglo American is striving to improve their female representation. Whilst 55% of their total working population are women, women only represent 29% of those in senior management positions as of 2022 and these figures are not an improvement on the 2021 gender pay gap reporting.

## ARUP

The Group Board at Arup, which includes General Counsel Margot Day, sets DE&I policies, implemented globally via guidelines and procedures. Their Total Inclusion Strategy outlines inclusion goals, measured through Pay Gap Reports and firm representation assessments.

Arup focus on attracting, developing and retaining women at all levels, particularly into leadership roles. They foster a diverse talent pipeline through external collaborations offering work placements, mentoring and initiatives like Future Females Engineers, which enhances employability and networking opportunities. Since 2019, they've conducted Inclusive Hiring training to increase female representation.

In 2022, women made up 38.8% of Arup's staff, up from 33% in 2017. Women held

28.2% of leadership roles, a rise from 22% in 2017. Despite improved representation in upper pay grades, the gender pay gap was 15.8% in 2022, likely due to fewer women in top roles. The gender bonus gap was 26.9%, despite equal bonus distribution, revealing a need for improved female representation in senior roles.

To improve these figures, Arup's Group Board aims for 40% representation of both men and women and 20% any gender at all levels. They achieved 39% female representation in UK, India, Middle East and Africa in 2022.

They also partner with My Family Care to support parents and caregivers, provide inclusive leave policies and promote hybrid working through their Work Unbound programme to enhance diversity.

## DENTSU AEGIS NETWORK

Dentsu's employee network, ONE, promotes and celebrates gender equality throughout their company. Through bias mitigation, education and public campaigns, Dentsu aim to achieve 50% women-identifying in Director & Executive levels by 2030.

Dentsu has publicly demonstrated their commitment to gender equity, for example through pledges for International Women's Day made by Alison Zoellner, General Counsel and launching their 'Women and Leadership programme'. The programme trains women across the company, providing them with tools, skills and a support network for progressing into senior leadership roles.

Whilst Dentsu have achieved gender parity across their organisation, their aim is now to increase gender representation at executive levels by 2025. Women at Dentsu made up 36.2% of people at executive levels in June 2022, up from 32.5% the previous year.

Dentsu has been publicly recognised for their effective DEI initiatives. Dentsu's policies support reproductive rights and education surrounding removing unconscious bias, which saw them being listed in the Top 30 Employers for Working Families. Additionally, their flexible and family-friendly policies and practices help to retain female and carer talent at all levels.

## GOLDMAN SACHS

Guided by Group General Counsel Kathryn Ruemmler, Goldman Sachs advances DE&I via educational programmes, forums, conferences and client events. They've established over 80 global inclusion networks, including a Women's Network and a Working Parent Forum.

Goldman Sachs signed the UK Women in Finance Charter in 2018 and achieved their goal of 30% women in UK senior roles earlier than the 2023 target. They're upholding this standard while aiming for 40% female representation among their vice presidents by 2025.

Their 10,000 Women initiative supports global women entrepreneurs by offering business opportunities and capital access. Additionally, through their In The Lead platform and One Million Black Women initiative, they're

investing resources to narrow opportunity gaps for Black women and other ethnic minorities.

In 2022, Goldman Sachs International's mean hourly pay gap rose to 53.2% from 51.3% in 2021. Despite women constituting 65% of the lowest-paid quartile, they represented just 23.2% in the highest-paid quartile, up 0.8% from 2021. While Goldman Sachs has advanced intersectional women's prospects, more work is needed.

Nonetheless, Goldman Sachs' DE&I efforts have earned accolades, including placements on INvolve HERoes Role Model Lists, The National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations' Empowering Women Entrepreneurs Award, Bloomberg's Gender-Equality Index and Equileap's Top 100 Global.

## MAN GROUP

The Man Group focus on both external and internal DE&I initiatives, partnerships and programmes designed to attract and develop more diverse talent. Tania Cruickshank, Group General Counsel and Luke Elliot, CEO, are the forces behind Drive, their global internal DE&I network. Drive aims to advance efforts in promoting inclusion through education, resources and peer engagement throughout the firm, including regular Lunch & Learn and expert speaker sessions.

They support working parents and employees with family commitments with their substantial parental leave policy, lack of restrictions on reasons for requesting flexible working and their returner programme in partnership with Women Returners. This aims

to recruit professionals seeking to return to work after career breaks, which resulted in the recruitment of four female returners during 2022.

In 2018, Man Group signed the Women in Finance Charter, making women's representation in senior management a key priority. They partnered with the Versity Project's Pathway programme in 2022. By 2020, gender parity was reached on their Board of Directors and by 2022, they attained 30% female representation on the Executive Committee. Despite this, only 26% of senior roles are filled by women, contributing to a 26.3% median gender pay gap in 2022, a slight increase from 2021.

## UNILEVER

In their DE&I efforts, Unilever favour a holistic approach that eliminates bias and discrimination, accelerates diversity in leadership and removes barriers for those with disabilities. Maria Varsellona, the Chief Legal officer, sits on Unilever's Global Diversity Board, which is responsible for the vision and target setting.

Unilever achieved gender balance at management level in 2019 and 2020. In 2022, women represented 54% of management employees. As such, Unilever is now focusing on accelerating representation of women at senior leadership levels and is making progress towards this goal.

They use the Gender Appointment Ratio (GAR) to show leaders their five-year appointment record, aiding unbiased hiring and promotions. They also mandate

'balanced slates' to include under-represented groups in candidate pools, ensuring equal opportunities.

Unilever advance women leaders via a tailored online coaching programme, including training and career development strategies. Their policies, such as the Maternity and Paternity Support Programme and Global Parental Coaching Programme, aid working parents, leading to their inclusion in the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index 2022.

Women constituted 23% of their Leadership Executive and 31% of senior management in 2022, with an overall workforce representation of 36%. Despite women's average pay being 28% higher in 2022, Unilever attributes this to men holding 79% of lower-paying blue collar roles, possibly skewing the pay gap.

# Looking to the Future

For over a decade, Obelisk Support has pioneered flexible legal work that is great for business, good to people and always #HumanFirst. We're driven by a clear purpose: to retain exceptional legal talent in the law, including those who are often marginalised by traditional practice.

Founded to enable more women lawyers to pursue their legal careers alongside caring responsibilities, we have since broadened our scope. Today, our model includes all lawyers who want to work differently. This includes those who have taken a career break for any reason, disabled lawyers and legal professionals facing discrimination owing to ageism, social background, ethnicity. We've supported a network of more than 2,000 lawyers, covering over 20 sectors and 18 essential practice areas for corporate legal teams.

## **BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE, VALUES-DRIVEN AND PURPOSE-LED LEGAL PROFESSION**

Obelisk Support has been a pioneering voice for diversity and flexibility in the legal profession, offering innovative ways of working long before they became mainstream. We understand from our experience at the coal face that there is a real difference between supporting inclusion and taking positive action to make it happen.

Today we continue championing new ways of work that open opportunities more fairly for everyone in the law – helping to create a legal sector that better reflect the diverse community we serve. In 2022, **70% of our active roles were truly flexible**, allowing legal consultants to work either part-time or flexi-hours.

## **ENCOURAGING POSITIVE DIALOGUE AND BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS**

Beyond the cultural change that we support through our daily work, we are also a vocal champion of diversity, equity and belonging in the legal profession. The global pandemic was a driver for positive change, bringing remote work into the mainstream and injecting a sense of urgency into boardroom conversations about diversity and inclusion. We are actively building on this momentum through a number of initiatives.

Through this report, we are shedding light on the influential roles that legal leaders have to play in accelerating progress. We believe it's essential to acknowledge and uplift those teams that are the driving force behind systematic organisational transformations. By spotlighting their initiatives and triumphs, they can be role models in our profession, the wider business community and our society, setting a precedent as change agents.

The Obelisk Support **Women Who Will** initiative is now in its third year. This unique initiative not only recognises progress in female leadership in law, but also fosters a supportive network for female leaders, encouraging them to serve as role models and catalysts for a more inclusive and diverse profession.

Our founder and CEO, Dana Denis-Smith, continues to passionately advocate for diversity in the law – as a speaker at events, a contributing author to several books on diversity on the law and an elected member of The Law Society Council to represent women in law.

As the only 100% female-founded independent legal service provider, we are committed to building an inclusive legal profession where equality for all is possible in both opportunity and outcome.

In our active legal consultant base during 2022, we had:

**15%**

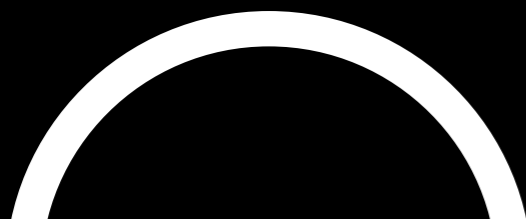
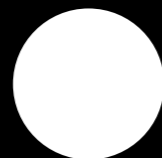
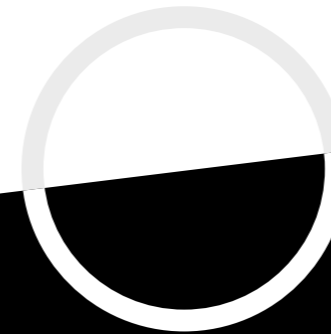
returners,  
compared to the industry  
average of 1.5%

**40%**

aged over 50 years,  
compared to the industry  
average of 13%

**65%**

women



# Final thoughts

In the past, the legal profession was largely viewed as 'exclusive'. It was mainly accessible to those from a limited demographic who had privileged socio-economic backgrounds, financial resources, connections and had attended certain educational institutions. It was all too often geared towards those who could seamlessly integrate into a traditional work schedule, free from significant responsibilities or constraints.

Today, however, we are making progress in acknowledging and breaking down the systemic biases that have and continue to exclude people from the profession. We are seeing a shift towards greater inclusivity, opening up opportunities for more people to not only become lawyers and thrive in their careers, but also feel that they truly belong and are valued in the legal profession.

As we continue to advance, it is important to celebrate the teams driving systematic organisational change. Through the publication of this report, we hope to look deeper into what organisations and legal leaders are doing to make a difference, so we can all learn what is moving the needle and making tangible impact.

Collaboration is key going forward. By working collectively, learning from each other and building on successful practices, we can continue to break down the barriers that have historically limited access to the legal profession. Our focus is not just about bringing about change, but more importantly, it's about understanding and perpetuating what works. Together, we can ensure that the legal profession continues to evolve in a way that's representative of and accessible to all facets of society.



“

Yes, we are still far from seeing balanced representation across the judiciary, business leadership and professions. Yet still we move forward step by step, towards a future-facing profession where men and women have true equality of both opportunity and outcome.

”

DANA DENIS-SMITH, CEO OBELISK SUPPORT





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