

The women working in male-dominated sectors

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

Complete the table with five jobs that are traditionally considered men's jobs and five that are traditionally considered women's jobs.

| jobs for men | jobs for women |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plumber • • • • • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nurse • • • • • |

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

seafarer assessment be short on embark on positive action raise eyebrows
gender imbalance recruit manual handling daunting welder male-dominated

1. making you worried because you think that something will be very difficult or dangerous to do

2. consisting mainly of men _____
3. the process of making a judgement or forming an opinion, after considering something or someone carefully

4. shock or surprise people _____
5. start a new project or activity, usually one that is difficult and takes time

6. when there are either more males or more females _____
7. someone who works at sea _____
8. physical work that needs to be done by a human rather than a machine

9. someone whose job is to join pieces of metal together by heating them and pressing them together

10. not have enough _____
11. the practice of giving special benefits to people from a group that was treated in an unfair way in the past

12. a new member of a company or an organization _____

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Not just jobs for the boys: the women working in male-dominated sectors

Industries that have been traditionally populated by male workers are making a concerted effort to attract more women into their workforces, but are they going far enough?

Ellen Manning

4 February, 2020

- 1 An apprenticeship is daunting for anyone. But what about when you're a woman about to enter a sector that's male-dominated? According to government figures, 49% of apprenticeship starts in 2017/18 were by women and 51% by men – the first time that more apprenticeships had been started by men than women since 2009/10. That may sound like it isn't an issue, but that's not the whole picture. A report in 2017 by the Young Women's Trust not only highlighted that male apprentices earned more than women – £7.25 versus £6.67 per hour – but that women apprentices are also focused in relatively few sectors. "In key sectors such as engineering, men outnumber women 25 to one," it warned.
- 2 It's a situation Evie Hammond, in her third year of an apprenticeship as an instrumentation, control and automation engineer at Severn Trent, witnessed first-hand. The 21-year-old had taken A levels but decided university wasn't for her. Her interest in electrical engineering led her to apply for an instrumentation apprenticeship at Severn Trent, but it was only when she got to the group assessment stage that the reality of being a woman hit her. "I expected going into engineering it would be male-dominated, but I didn't realize quite how male-dominated it would be."
- 3 Hammond, who did her training at the Make UK Technology Hub, said: "I'm the only girl on the teams I'm in, but they don't treat me any differently. Some of the jobs are physically challenging, but I get the same chances as everyone else." She may be accepted at work but admits she encounters raised eyebrows when people hear she works at a sewage-treatment works. "I've had it before when I say: 'I'm an engineer', and I'm told: 'No, you're not; you're female'."
- 4 She's not alone. When Tia Boulton-Crowe, 21, embarked on an apprenticeship in land-based technology, including working with farm machinery, not everyone was accepting. "There was a lot of judgment before people really knew who I was and what I knew. It was only the minority, and once I proved myself, I gained so much respect."
- 5 Of course, there are physical challenges, too – something maritime apprentice Stacy Gregory experienced. Her chosen industry is no stranger to gender imbalance, with 2% of seafarer positions held by women. Gregory, who recently graduated from P&O Ferries' apprenticeship scheme, says: "There was a lot of manual handling involved, which was a bit of a struggle, like pulling heavy ropes along decks and throwing heaving lines. I definitely feel you have to prove yourself more as a woman in a male-dominated industry. I just had to get stuck in."
- 6 Getting stuck in is exactly what got welder Chloe Sales, 24, her apprenticeship in the first place. Sales, who was named 2020's Stem Apprentice of the Year by Stoke-on-Trent College – where she was the only apprentice female welder – says: "I was working in a warehouse, and they were short on welders, so I said: 'Will you let me have a go?'" She enjoyed it so much she planned to put herself through a college course – prompting her then-employer to offer her an apprenticeship. For her, the fear is that being a woman will mean she's treated differently. "When I first started, I think they were nice to me because I was a girl, but when I'd been there a few months, I said: 'Give me some of the rubbish jobs'."
- 7 It's clearly possible for women to take on roles in male-dominated areas, but could it be easier? The Young Women's Trust report called for the government to consider additional payments for employers recruiting women apprentices in male-dominated sectors and said employers should make "greater use of positive action", including setting targets, reserving places on training courses and adapting language used in job adverts.
- 8 One company actively trying to attract more women is Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR). Just 5% of Britain's 19,000 train drivers are women – something GTR is trying to change. Its target is that by 2021 at least 40% of applicants for train-driver roles will be female, and its steps to achieve this include a school outreach programme, all-female assessment centres for trainee drivers and a Women's Network Group

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that pairs up new female recruits with another woman in the company.

- 9 But for some female apprentices, success is more dependent on their own mindset than external influences. "As a woman in this type of career, you have to be able to hold your own, have a good sense of humour, laugh at yourself and definitely be strong willed," says Gregory. Boulton-Crowe agrees. "It was daunting being a female going into a 'man's world', but I learned so

much. I became a stronger and more confident individual. Apprenticeships are a great way to get your foot in the door – you're learning while earning a wage, and in some cases, completely thrown in at the deep end, but it's 100% the best way to learn, as scary as it is!"

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3 Comprehension check

Answer the questions using the information from the article.

1. What professions and industries do the four female apprentices in the article work in?
2. On average, how much less do female apprentices in the UK earn an hour than male apprentices? How much would this be over a 40-hour week?
3. What challenges have these four young women come up against in their choices of profession?
4. What type of character do young female apprentices need to have in order to succeed in a male-dominated industry?
5. What positive action does the Young Women's Trust want employers and the UK government to take to encourage more young women to start apprenticeships in male-dominated industries?
6. What positive action is one transport company implementing to address the gender imbalance in apprentices in their company?

4 Useful phrases

a. Find the following phrases in the article.

1. have a lot of experience of _____ (para 5)
2. start doing something, usually work, with energy and enthusiasm _____ (para 5)
3. be as good as someone more experienced or stronger _____ (para 9)
4. get an opportunity to start working in an organization or business, especially when this will give you more opportunities in the future _____ (para 9)
5. made to deal with something difficult before you are prepared for it _____ (para 9)

b. Use the phrases to talk about the article.

c. Now use each phrase in further sentences of your own.

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5 Discussion

- Why do you think that the jobs you wrote down in task 1 and the jobs in the article are often thought of as being 'male' or 'female' roles?
- Can you think of any legal restrictions, or other types of restrictions, that may exclude a women doing a 'male' job, or vice versa?
- Talk about any men you know who work in typically female-dominated sectors or women who work in typically male-dominated sectors.
- What advice would you give to a young woman who wants to enter a typically male-dominated profession?
- What do you think about companies and organizations taking positive action to address gender imbalance in their workforces?
 - o Is it necessary?
 - o Does it work?
 - o Who does it benefit?

6 Webquest

Search for adverts for typical male or female apprenticeships (including the positions from task 1 and those mentioned in the article). Decide whether the wording is inclusive and equally encouraging to both male and female applicants. If it isn't, decide how it could be rewritten.

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KEY

1 Warmer

Teacher's note: This task is meant to introduce the topic of stereotypes so students should not try to make their answers politically correct. Instead they should think about how the average person, or perhaps somebody from an older generation, would be likely to answer. Whether they think this is right or wrong will be addressed in later tasks.

(Possible answers)

| jobs for men | jobs for women |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> plumber builder firefighter high-level manager financial adviser engineer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> nurse personal assistant (secretary) cashier receptionist shop assistant primary-school teacher |

2 Key words

- daunting
- male-dominated
- assessment
- raise eyebrows
- embark on
- gender imbalance
- seafarer
- manual handling
- welder
- be short on
- positive action
- recruit

3 Comprehension check

- Evie Hammond** is an instrumentation, control and automation engineer at a sewage-treatment works. **Tia Boulton-Crowe** is in the land-based technology sector. Her job includes working with farm machinery. **Stacy Gregory** works as a seafarer on ships and recently graduated from P&O Ferries' apprenticeship scheme. **Chloe Sales** is a welder.

- Female apprentices earn an average wage of £6.67 an hour; male apprentices earn an average of £7.25. So female apprentices earn an average of 58 pence less per hour. This works out to £23.20 per week.
- Some people are not accepting when they hear that they are working in what is thought of as a male profession. Some people don't believe them when they say what they do. They feel they have to prove themselves. They sometimes think that they are being treated differently by their trainers. The jobs are sometimes physically challenging.
- They need to have a sense of humour, be able to laugh at themselves and be strong-willed.
- They want the government to give employers additional payments when they recruit female apprentices in male-dominated sectors. And they want employers to set targets for how many female apprentices they employ, reserve some apprenticeship positions for young women and change the language that they use in job adverts to encourage women to apply.
- GTR wants at least 40% of train-driver applications to come from women by 2021. To achieve this, they are going to schools and talking to young women, they have set up all-female assessment centres for trainee train drivers as well as a Women's Network Group, which pairs new female recruits up with a female mentor who already works in the company.

4 Useful phrases

- be no stranger to
- get stuck in
- hold your own
- get your foot in the door
- thrown in at the deep end

6 Webquest

Teacher's note: If students aren't sure where to start, direct them to some of the following websites.

www.getmyfirstjob.co.uk/

www.apprenticeship.gov/become-apprentice

www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide