

Call for focus group participants: Women Workers' Health and Safety

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) is hosting a series of focus groups to help us better understand women's experiences of health and safety in the workplace, their engagement with the safety agenda in their unions, and how the trade union movement can better support them.

We are seeking women from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences to take part and share their views, to help inform our work.

Women's health and safety has for many years been overlooked. These focus groups aim to put a spotlight back on the topic of gender in occupational safety and health.

Union safety reps

TUC research shows only 20% of union safety reps are women, despite women making up a majority of union members. If we are to increase their number, we first need to better understand why fewer women are becoming safety reps, and why those who do to take on the role step forward. To identify the barriers and appeals of the role, we need to hear direct from women reps and non-reps.

Occupational health and safety

We know there are health and safety concerns which disproportionately, or exclusively, affect women workers. We also know that traditionally, they've been given less attention.

A previous TUC Report on Gender and OSH outlined some of the key issues, with advice for reps <https://www.tuc.org.uk/resource/gender-occupational-safety-and-health>

Focus group participants

The proposed focus groups seek to better understand how we encourage more women to become safety reps, and which OSH concerns all reps require support from unions on. The proposal is to bring together:

- Women safety reps, established and new
- Women union reps with roles other than health and safety
- Women union activists with no formal rep role
- Women trade union educators

We will seek to ensure participants reflect the diversity of our movement, including with regards to age, ethnicity, location and union/sector.

Questions and scope

The focus groups will invite participants to share thoughts and experiences, using a questions including but not limited to the following:

- What attracted them to the role of union safety rep?
- Have they considered becoming a safety rep, and if so, did anything put them off?
- What do they understand the role of a safety rep to be?
- What are their own experiences of health and safety at work, and what issues are brought to them by members?
- To what extent does gender, and sexism, play a part in their experiences of work, health and safety?
- What advice would you give to anyone thinking of getting involved?
- What can we do to make involvement a realistic opportunity?
- What support should unions offer?
- What needs to change?

Participants will also be invited to reflect on the TUC's existing 'GOSH' [checklist](#) and consider its relevance for their workplace.

Dates

Focus groups will be facilitated by the TUC, and all affiliates are invited to refer participants. Dates for focus groups:

- Thursday 21st April 2022 12:00 – 13:30
- Monday 25th April 2022 12:00 – 13:30
- Monday 25th April 2022 18:00 – 19:30
- Wednesday 27th April 2022 18:30 – 20:00
- Saturday 30th April 2022 11:00 – 12:30

Participants will be offered a voucher to thank them for their time.

Please RSVP with the date and time you can make to Shelly Asquith sasquith@tuc.org.uk with a few words about your union and role (e.g. safety rep), if you have one.

Confidentiality

Participants can take part and express views in confidence. Focus groups will take place remotely online, and will be facilitated by the TUC. The findings of focus groups will help inform the TUC's work, but any contributions will be attributed anonymously. Participants will not be named in any report or publication, unless permission is explicitly granted.