The STEM Returners Index

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Founder and Director
STEM Returners



STEM RETURNERS



STEM Returners

Our purpose:

Enabling professionals to return to an equitable & inclusive STEM sector.

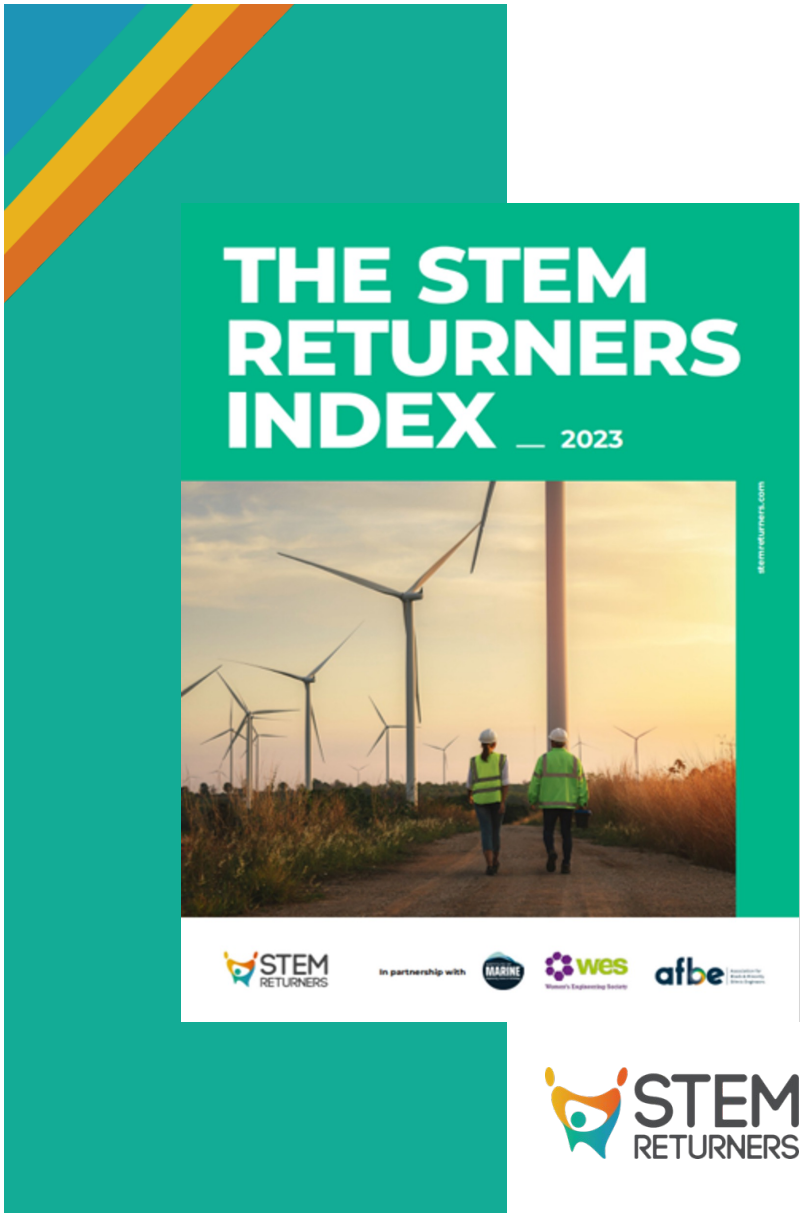
Our vision:

To enable, challenge and change the STEM sector until inclusion & diversity becomes the norm.

Our mission:

We provide STEM returners opportunities for employment that industry would traditionally not offer. We connect businesses with returners who would be unsuccessful through their standard recruitment channels. We coach and support the returners and work with companies willing to become more inclusive. We challenge industry to become the equitable sector that we all need.

STEM RETURNERS



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Highly skilled STEM professionals get overlooked when attempting to return from a career break, struggling to make progress via traditional recruitment channels.

Unconscious bias at the shortlisting stage, hiring pressures leading to assumptions made on limited information, and the common misconception that a ‘CV gap’ equates to a deterioration of skills.

This is why we’ve launched an annual piece of research – **The STEM Returners Index** – to further understand these barriers, to track the progress STEM industries are making with solving these issues, and campaign for change.

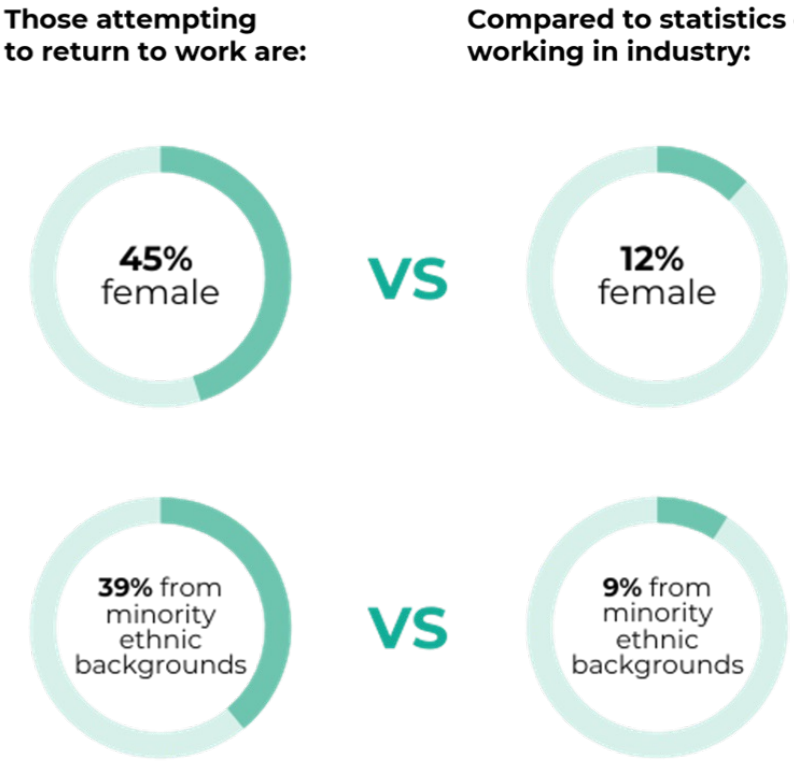
2023 Results

THE UK ENGINEERING WORKFORCE IS 89% MALE AND 91% WHITE

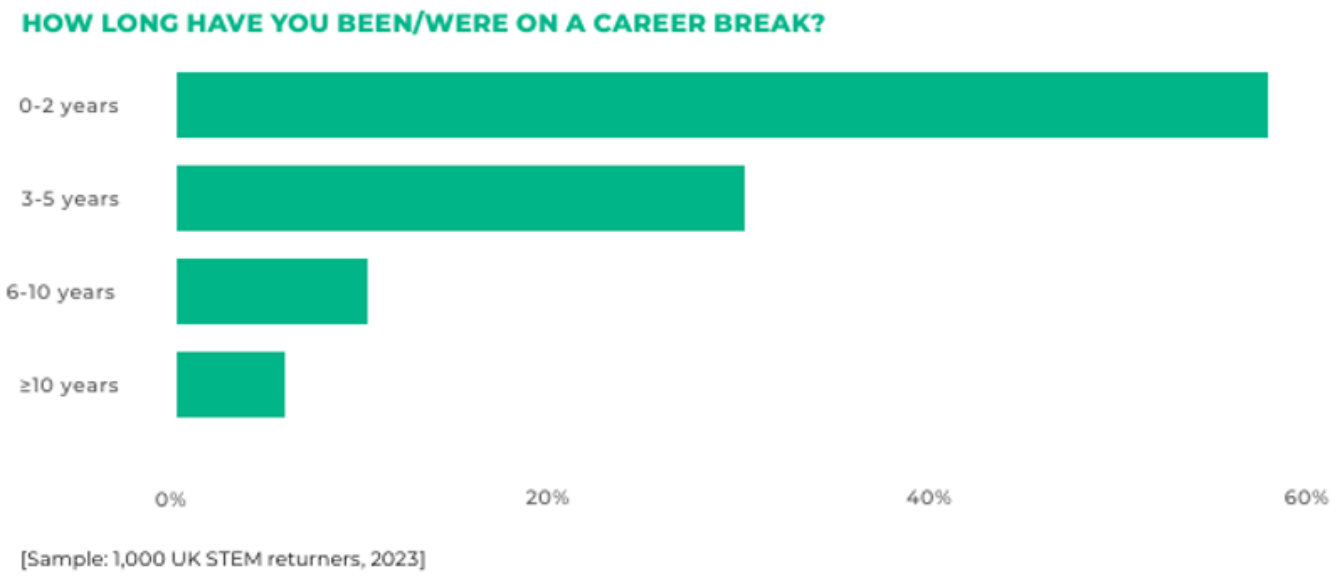
THE STEM RETURNERS INDEX 2023

#TheSTEMReturnersIndex

STEM RETURNERS



Barrier – Career break length



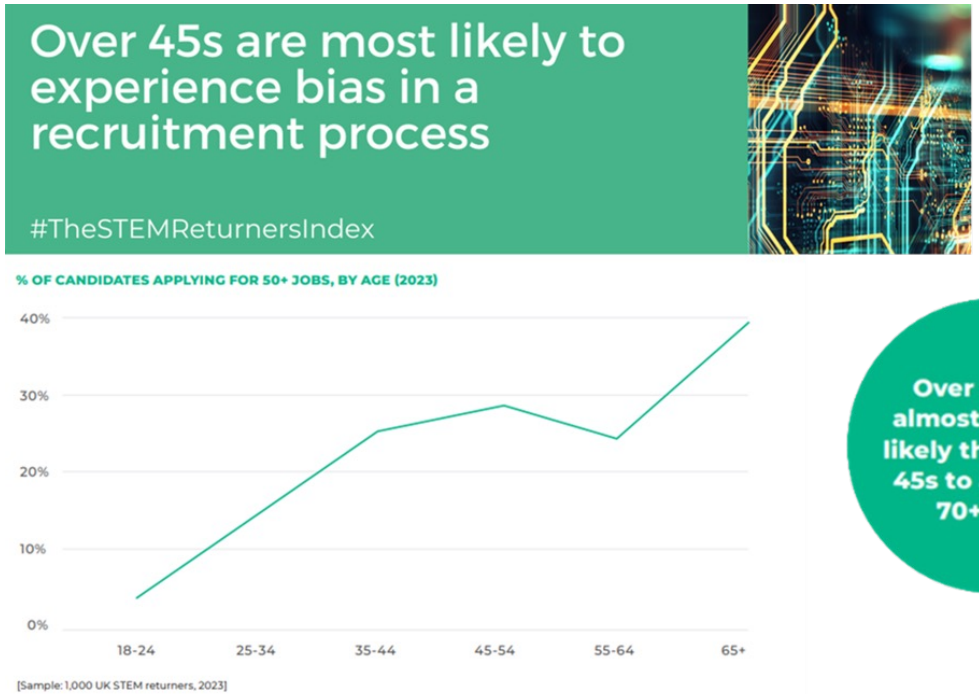
[Sample: 1,000 UK STEM returners, 2023]

Despite **86%** of career breaks lasting less than 5 years, **38%** of candidates feel they have received bias related to lack of recent experience.

Barrier – Age

“There was clear age bias. And the longer I was out of the workplace the worse this became. Mentally it is very difficult to handle so much rejection”

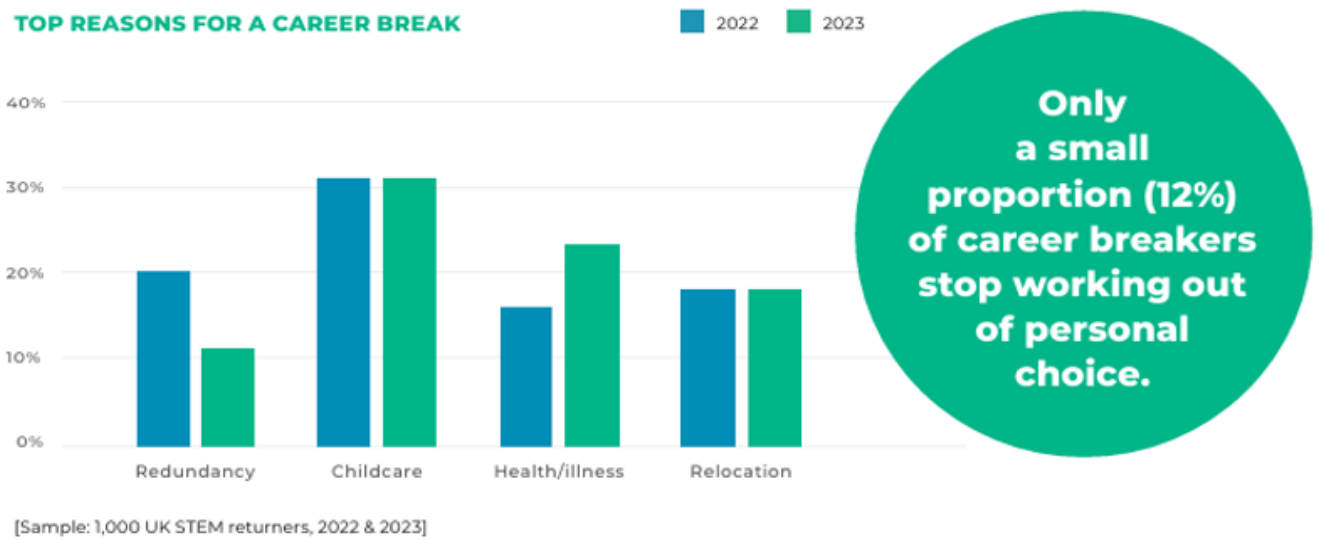
(Returner, 2023)





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Barrier – Caring Responsibilities



[Sample: 1,000 UK STEM returners, 2022 & 2023]

Women are most likely to take a career break to fulfil childcare responsibilities, with **47%** of female survey respondents citing this as their primary reason, compared to **17%** of men.

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Barrier - Feedback



> Then I would hear absolutely nothing back, not even a rejection, just nothing at all.
> To say it was disheartening is an understatement.
>
> Karen

> I was unemployed from Sept 2020 to March 2022. I tried everything to find a job, even applying for trainee engineering positions. After the frustration and exasperation, I gave up looking for a job related to engineering.
>
> Francis

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Barrier – Low Confidence



30% of returners say their personal confidence has been affected by the recruitment challenges they face, and their low confidence remains a barrier of its own.

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Barriers you can remove

Inclusive adverts

Ring fence roles

Hiring Manager buy in



Feedback

Returner appropriate interviews

Mentoring & Coaching support

STEM RETURNERS

Returned to Rail



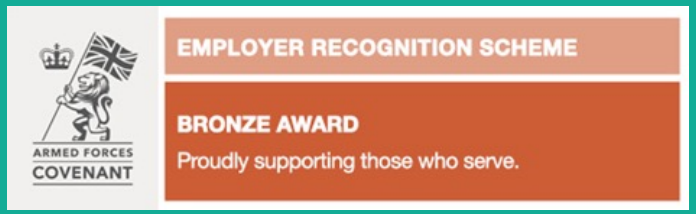
“I knew I had enough experience since my apprenticeship to succeed, my knowledge and work ethic would be a benefit to the industry, but I just couldn’t secure a role.
Even though I applied for lots of jobs through agencies, it is extremely hard to be taken seriously in a male dominated field.”

“It’s incredibly rewarding to go full circle and come back to the industry, I did my apprenticeship 10 years ago. I am really enjoying it – I am on site every day, all day.”

Jenne - SCS Railways

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