
BFAWU Women Members Network September 2025

The impact of the rise of the far right

Where branches have a majority migrant workforce, they don't feel the impact of what is going on in communities as everyone feels like they are together, in a bubble.

There was a general feeling though as women that the flags, how they have been put up, where they have been put up and how they have been painted everywhere causes intimidation and definitely hasn't made us feel any safer in our communities.

There is a lot of confusion about why the flags are being flown, is it due to football, or the Women's rugby that is happening right now or is it down to racism and if it is the latter, does that extend to all migrant workers and their families?

There was a discussion about the additional impact on Trans Women and their safety after the Supreme Court ruling and the increase in rhetoric and activity from the far right since then, it may be worth holding a Foodworkers and Allied trades support Trans Rights to remove some of the rhetoric that is being circulated that we can't support women and trans women simultaneously with similar and different issues that are faced by them.

Other issues affecting Women in the Workplace

The workforce in the industry is ageing, which means there are an increasing number of members with health and mobility issues relating to not only their age, but years of working in the food industry and the toll it can take.

Hot flushes which aren't helped by the temperature, especially in summer months, or the area of work, for example being near an oven will naturally be warmer generally than working in chilled areas.

Sore backs, legs and feet (musculoskeletal issues) from repetitive work, long hours walking on hard floors, standing for long periods and bending, twisting or lifting products or ingredients.

There is a sort of equality in the age-related issues as male members also suffer from heat related issues as well as musculoskeletal ones, which should help with collectively pushing for policies to be put in place in workplaces to support workers experiencing them. Perhaps we could have a set of template policies for reps to be able to use to initiate discussions with their employers, collating what is already in place across branches would be a good idea.

Network Attendance going forwards

We should do some work on the best time to hold meetings, it would be a good idea to survey women members about whether these networks are the best way to bring them together, what barriers are in place for being more active, either through engaging with the network meetings or within their branches and then develop a plan to build on activism.

It may be a good idea to have sessions where we discuss specific topics like pensions, menopause, period poverty, sexual harassment, maternity leave, pregnancy and caring responsibilities, covering rights and issues that may happen and how to challenge them if they do may be worth exploring so there is a reason to turn up, without losing the safe space for women members to talk to each other and build support systems.