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marie claire

THINK SMART, LOOK AMAZING

5 Amazing Women In Engineering Tell Us What It's Really Like

To celebrate Women In Engineering Day, we found five incredible women who can't enough of their jobs...



It's **National Women In Engineering Day** - but according to new research by Reed.co.uk, for every eight men in engineering, there's only one woman. Which is why - in a bid to fight back against gender stereotypes and encourage more women to consider engineering as a viable (and exciting) career choice, we hunted out five women at the forefront of the industry...

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Eulogy

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Kirsty Singer, 30, Senior Structural Engineer at Fairhurst

'I've been working in engineering for eight years now. I originally wanted to become an architect, but I did a work placement at a Structural Engineering company and it was just so much better! So I studied engineering at university, and went from there.

'These days I basically spend my time working with architects and design teams to ensure buildings don't fall down. Three quarters of my day is in the office, but 25 per cent of the time, I get to go to building sites or participate in design meetings. Those are my favourite things to do - I love getting to see what I've designed being built. Every day is so varied - I never know what I'll be doing, and that makes it really fun.

'It doesn't surprise me that there are eight male engineers to every woman - I feel totally outnumbered, all the time. There's only one other woman in my office. But that doesn't mean engineering is a 'male' job at all. The problem is just that there isn't enough done in schools to explain what engineering actually involves. Nobody knows what engineering *is*, so they just assume it's a job for the boys. In actual fact, I think women can potentially bring more to the role than men anyway. Our social skills are invaluable when it comes to communicating, and there's nothing a man can do that I can't.'



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Jen Murley, 20, Health and Safety Intern at EDF Energy

'At college, I didn't even know what 'engineering' really meant - but I wasn't sure what I wanted to do when I left school, and I knew there was money in it. I think I pictured myself under a car covered in oil. I didn't know that there were actually tonnes of different types of engineering out there, and that I could basically pick and choose until I found my dream career.'

'In my current company, there are a fair few women - but I'm still the only one in my team. You get used to it quickly though - and after a couple of weeks, the guys get used to you too. Depending on their age they either treat you like a daughter or a sister.'

'That said, I have had a few comments. In a previous company, I'd be told things like, 'are you sure you wouldn't prefer to be a singer?' or 'I hope your cooking is better than your engineering'. You can't let that get you down though - you just have to work harder to prove them all wrong. I'm quite little, and I was nervous about not being able to lift as much as the guys, and before I learned how to weld, I was scared I'd burn my hand off! But somehow I was quickly top of my class, and soon lads were coming to me for help. That's definitely been a highlight.'



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Joanna Flowers, 36, Service and Repair Engineer at British Gas

'I didn't ever plan to become an engineer. I worked on cruise ships, but when I was 28 I started to miss my mum, so I came home - where I found work in the call centre for British Gas. But I hated being sat behind a desk all day, so when I saw that they were advertising internally for female engineers, I thought I'd give it a go. Three months later, and I'd been accepted onto a training course in Leeds.

'These days I work from home, which is great because I have a two year old son, and it allows me to be flexible. As soon as I get up, I log onto my laptop and see what jobs have been assigned to me. Every day is so varied - one minute I could be fixing an old lady's thermostat because she can't read the numbers, the next, I could be wading through mud to replace some piping. But that's what I love about it - you never know what you're going to be doing.

'My friends love the fact that my job is so practical - and that I'm always on hand to fix their boilers! And my mum is so proud - she tells everybody she meets about me. More people need to know that women can do this job - I think people are put off by the idea that there might be loads of heavy lifting involved, but it's important to realise that men have to ask for help too!'



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Claire Gott MBE, 26, Civil Engineer at WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff

'It sounds really cliched, but I became a civil engineer because I wanted to make a difference - both in the UK and internationally. We're responsible for designing, developing and creating the infrastructure that makes up society, and it's amazing to bring hospitals, schools and public buildings to life. I'm currently working on redeveloping London Bridge station, which is incredible.

'I feel so lucky to be part of a generation which is really changing things for women in engineering, so I rarely feel outnumbered. On site in London, the male-female ratio is about 50:50 - I know that's not the case everywhere, but I feel like it's proof that things are getting much better. Essentially, I think it all comes down to education. Girls - and boys - need role models who they can look up to in every industry. No child should ever be told that they can't do something, whether that's because of their GCSE results, or because of their gender.'



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Chloe Cook, 19, Apprentice Engineer at ESG Rail

'I've only been doing this apprenticeship for six months so far, but I love it. I've been moving around between different departments, trying to find out what area I'd like to specialise in, and that makes it so interesting. That said, some forms of engineering are much harder than others. I'm currently doing electrical, which feels like wizardry to me!

'I didn't do any science Alevels - I opted for PE and photography instead - but that hasn't held me back, so I won't let being a woman jeopardise my career prospects either. And finding a job was made easier by Women In Rail, who supported me throughout the process. The thing is, women are just as good at engineering as men - we're just not taught that it's a viable option for when we leave school - whereas guys are. That said, some of my friends don't get it. But six months ago, neither did I, so it doesn't bother me when they raise their eyebrows.'