

[Home](#) : [Harriet Harman: The BBC is "wasting a lot of talent" by not valuing older female news readers](#)

## Harriet Harman: The BBC is "wasting a lot of talent" by not valuing older female news readers

David Woods, 04 January 2010

 Be the first to comment on this article



**Equalities minister Harriet Harman (pictured) has attacked the BBC for employing female news readers 10 years younger than their male counterparts, saying it is "wasting talent" and upsetting viewers.**

Speaking on Radio 4's *The World This Week* yesterday, Harman said: "To be a BBC news presenter as a woman you have to be 10 years younger than the men, and on ITV it is again 10 years younger.

"It is an old fashioned attitude which thinks that you can't value the experience and wisdom of an older woman, and that if she is looking a bit wrinkled that this is a worry.

"There is nothing wrong with a woman looking like an older woman because there are a lot of older women watching TV and recognising their lives on the screen.

"I think it is partly the failure to recognise the serious contribution women can make, and the feeling that somehow they have to be looking very youthful and that just really doing the job really well isn't enough. They have to be looking very good and the feeling that once they're older they're not looking so good which I don't accept at all, they just look older.

"I mean they can look fantastic, look at Joan Bakewell, Arlene Phillips, they look absolutely brilliant. Some of the older men don't look too great but that doesn't seem to be a problem."

Harman's outburst comes despite reports the BBC is poised to recruit Julia Somerville (62) Fiona Armstrong (53) and Zeinab Badawi (50).

Bettina Bender, partner at law firm CM Murray, said, "The BBC and other broadcasters risk being at the receiving end of both sex and age discrimination complaints by those female presenters who are edged out once they reach a certain age.

"In view of the salaries some of these female presenters command, these claims could be substantial (particularly if the presenter in question is unlikely to work again and will thus suffer extensive loss of potential income).

"The BBC and other broadcasters would do well to change their recruitment and retention policy of female presenters without delay, as failing to do so will leave them exposed to costly claims, not to mention unfavourable publicity."

### RELATED MEDIA

- » [Government to investigate inequality](#)
- » [Diversity Gender: Women raise the bar](#)
- » [Government to answer to EC for alleged equality directive implementation failures](#)
- » [Editorial: Concentrate on improving HR talent](#)
- » [Talent Management: Untapped potential - Britain's missing talent](#)

### LATEST NEWS

- » [Looking forward to the challenges for HR in 2010](#)
- » [HR Magazine Features List 2010](#)
- » [It remains to be seen if mandatory equal pay audits make it into Equality Bill](#)

**28%**  
MADE PAY  
**INCREASES**  
AS PLANNED.

all info straight into your inbox

**NEWS BY EMAIL**  
SIGN UP FOR IT



### POLL

**Do you plan to recruit new members of staff in the first half of 2010?**

- Yes  
 No

VOTE

### DIRECTORY

What are you looking for?

GO

Product/Service  Company

The capacity  
to be cost efficient.



Discover  
the new E-Class Estate >> Mercedes-Benz