Spot

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

EXAMINING THE MOTIVATIONS AND CONTEXT
FOR WOMEN'S AND MEN'S CAREER CHOICES

introduction

The Spot the Difference Study aims
to offer a new perspective on an
age-old issue. We will not propose
a list of recommendations. Rather,
we will explore the factors that impact
the career choices of women and men
and the reasons why these choices
are often so different. We aim to offer
organisations perspective on the
current efficacy of their workplace
policies and who they are
really benefitting.

Spot the Difference focus

Which factors are most influential when women and men make their career choices and how they differ between genders?
We explore the following in particular:

- How effective are corporate policies and from whose perspective?

- Which factors influence career choices?

- Does society dictate that men and women will forever make different choices?

- Are corporate policies really making an impact to enable both genders to reach their potential?

Gender diversity in the workplace has been a topic of discussion in the corporate world for some time. One consistent challenge has been to present recommendations which specifically resolve some of the issues faced by women and men at work.

Such recommendations are absorbed into corporate diversity agendas and prioritised by many organisations. Some have a dedicated diversity department that sets goals and launches initiatives to drive sustained diversity across the organisation.

However, we should not be complacent. The media are often full of headline-making progress, the appointment of a female CEO, or the recipient of a diversity award, but , after a while, momentum is lost. After a burst of progress in the last decade, progress has slowed.

So, what is stopping us from progressing further? What are the major barriers to sustainable equality in the workplace ecosystem? Surely, in the digital age, and with changing family structures and more gender balance across public life, equality is possible? If equality and diversity policies are stronger than ever, perhaps the problem lies elsewhere: in the choices that men and women are making?

focus & USP

The study has been commissioned by BP and explores which factors are most influential when women and men make their career choices and how they differ between genders.

WE ARE EXPLORING THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS IN PARTICULAR:

• The principal factors which impact career choices

• How effective company policies are in guiding these choices

• How impactful corporate diversity policies are in informing the career choices of women and men

• To what extent these policies are effective relative to other societal influences

6000+
ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

43% 👤 57% 👤

30+
SECTORS ENCOMPASSED

20
INTERVIEWS

60
COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

13
COMPANIES

Enquiry

While this research seeks to identify how men and women differ in the choices they make, it also uncovers similarities. Some of the most significant findings are areas of congruence that run contrary to conventional assumptions.

Additional querying through a generational lens evaluates whether some of the differences diverge or converge.

For the purpose of this study, a gap of 3 percentage points or less is considered a notable "similarity" while a gap of 4 percentage points or more is considered a notable "difference".

involvement

**KIRSTY BASHFORTH**
QUAYFIVE LTD
SpotDiffUK Project Director

Kirsty advises companies on performance improvement through organisational culture. She spent 24 years at BP, and as well as running QuayFive is a non-executive director of Kier Group, an independent governor of Leeds Beckett University and has an Economics degree from Cambridge University.

ERICA D'ERAMO
BP PLC
SpotDiffUK Project Manager

Erica has spent 15 years with BP in a variety of office and field-based engineering, finance and management roles across multiple countries.

She has worked extensively on gender and generational dynamics throughout this time. She has a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Pennsylvania State University in the US.
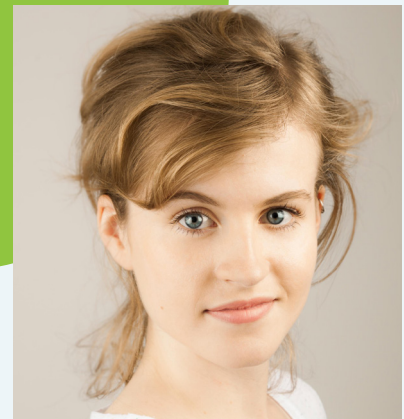
HELENA ECCLES
THINK FUTURE
SpotDiffUK Research Advisor

Helena is Founder of the Think Future Study which explores how students, particularly women, feel their university experiences shape and influence their personal and professional aspirations. She advises major companies on how to conduct research projects at scale and attract and retain top female talent.

Helena is a graduate in Modern and Medieval Languages from Cambridge University and starts work with McKinsey in February 2018. She is a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Community.

Insights Committee

Providing governance and oversight of the survey, insights and report

TIM COBLEY, Rio Tinto
LUCY KNIGHT, BP
OLIVIA PERKINS, Kier Group
MARJORIE STRACHAN, RBS
STEVEN WEBB, FTSE 250 Exco

Participating Organisations

Alpha Financial Consulting, BP, BSI, Centrica, Diageo, Fidelity, IBM, Kier Group, Lookers, NEST, Rio Tinto, RBS and Wessex Water.

forew●rd by BP

Diversity and Inclusion has been a focus in the corporate world for many years. We have seen significant changes in society and as a result our thinking has evolved. We are seeing more practical and fit-for-purpose approaches in the workplace to ensure equal opportunity and inclusion for all employees.

We know from research that gender and ethnically diverse companies are more likely to outperform their less-diverse peers*. We also know an inclusive organisation cultivates a productive and fulfilling environment for employees to work and develop.

The business case for diversity has long been established, however, there is still more for business and society to learn. It is critical we understand more deeply the corporate and societal causes and effects that are driving employee choices.

BP's D&I chronology

2002
Sir John Browne CEO Berlin speech
"The business case for diversity"

2006
Wins Catalyst award

2012
Sets global goals for gender

2016
Commissions research to reflect
on progress and opportunity

2017
Emphasis on inclusion as underpinning
for sustained diversity

2020
An aim of diversity at most
senior levels –25%

With these factors in mind, we commissioned
Spot the Difference to gain insights on differences
and similarities beween women's and men's
career choices, including:

- How they perceive their organisation's
  Diversity and Inclusion policies

- What factors influence their career aspirations
  and decisions

- How they view their organisation's progress
  toward gender balance.

While it might be early to draw final conclusions
and make recommendations, the findings of this
research provide new perspectives. There are
two initial thoughts I would like to share:

- First, we need to be far more aware
  of generational differences as we consider
  and formulate diversity and inclusion policies

- Second, we need to reflect on the efficacy of
  current practices, as some well-intended policies
  may have negative, unintended consequences;
  what makes a good headline may not always
  serve the long term purpose of a more inclusive
  environment.

My thanks go to those organisations and individuals
who participated. I hope you find the insights
gained stimulating and useful.

**HELMUT SCHUSTER GROUP HRD
BP PLC**

executive summary

Similarities between men and women in the workplace:

- their definition of personal success and fulfilment
- how prepared they feel to take on new roles
- the reasons for changing jobs or sectors
- the driving factors for their career aspirations

Societal factors

The relationship between societal factors and the effectiveness of corporate initiatives is complex and evolving. There is evidence of some social norms breaking down and a demand for policies to keep up with those changes.

Age

WOMEN and **MEN** at the start of their careers reported being as ambitious and financially driven as each other, however their choices and definitions of personal success diverged with age.

Where the differences emerge

Beneath the headlines, there are differences between men and women in five main areas outlined below. These differences also vary with age.

Defining success

WOMEN reported greater emphasis on development and relationships.

MEN reported greater emphasis on financial measures.

Aspiration and ambitions

WOMEN showed greater variance in their aspirations over time. They were more likely to take a leave of absence, and more likely to cite fulfilment as a reason to return.

MEN showed a smaller variance in aspirations over time. They were less likely to have taken a leave of absence and more likely to have returned for financial reasons.

Sources of support

WOMEN reported using wider sources of support and guidance, a greater range of reasons and timeframes to seek it, and used it for personal credibility.

MEN reported using a narrower set of sources from which to gain support, fewer occasions to seek that input and used it to build technical skills and their personal credibility

Confidence in the system

WOMEN responsed show less trust in the fairness and effectiveness of the system and were less likely to see a clear career path ahead.

MEN responsed show more trust in the fairness and effectiveness of the system and were more likely to believe they are offered high visibility roles.

Views of progress

WOMEN cited gender-based initiatives having greater potential business impact, but had less confidence in their current effectiveness.

MEN reported higher confidence that gender balance is a priority for management and cited more overall progress.

where men and women are similar

Career aspirations, expectations and choices

Overall, women and men reported similar definitions of personal success, satisfaction and fulfilment.

Top 2 elements defining personal success

SENIORITY AND STATUS

BEING FINANCIALLY STABLE

56%
98%

59%
98%

Top 4 categories when asked "what gives you a sustained sense of satisfaction and fulfilment in the workplace?"

- Monetary compensation
- Being trusted to deliver
- Making a difference
- Finding your work fun or enjoyable

71% FEMALE
76% MALE

I AM OFFERED ROLES FOR WHICH I AM SUITABLY QUALIFIED

The majority of both men and women felt prepared for roles they were offered, with the reasons for changes in career aspirations highly aligned. The majority of both men and women who moved company or industry cited financial or advancement opportunities, as their reason for change.

Top 3 reasons for change in career aspiration:

• Bad experience at work
• Personal progress and promotion
• Having children

64%   72%

Why move?
% of respondents who stated their primary reason for moving company or industry was "financial or advancement opportunities"

where men and women are similar CONT.

Corporate initiatives and policies

Both men and women reported broadly similarly positive views of the value, direction and impact of corporate gender-based initiatives.

Men and women cited similar policies which they felt most aided progression and had similar views of the value added

The same **TOP 2** most impactful policies aiding progression

• Professional training
• Flexible working

(rated top by both men and women)

53% FEMALE

51% MALE

(agree or strongly agree that family-focused policies positively impact business performance.)

"There are concrete practical steps that we could put in place, for example, we could remove names from CVs when assessing a role so you can't tell the gender."

FEMALE 20s

The results reflect alignment between men and women on which policies can be most effective, as well as the importance of consistent application, regardless of gender, in order for these policies to be effective. Such policies included flexible working arrangements, tapering hours for retirees, and anonymising applications.

"If gender equality is the aim, policies directed at supporting families, rather than only supporting new mothers, would be a good place to start."

MALE 30s

societal factors

A complex and evolving picture emerges concerning the influence of societal factors on perceptions, priorities and choices. The data shows that societal factors cannot be ignored in the workplace. However, the data also shows that societal norms are shifting.

Both men and women cited societal change and further progress toward gender equality in the workplace as being interdependent.

Some societal norms are contradicted

When defining success, men were more likely to cite family responsibilities than women. Men also reported marriage to be a more significant influence on their aspirations than women (albeit both at low levels).

This finding remains consistent at more detailed levels when accounting for men and women who are the primary earner in their family unit.
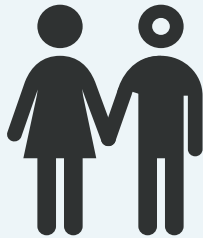
Personal definitions of success

More **MEN** cited
• Having children
• Being a supportive spouse

More **WOMEN** cited
• Intellectual fulfilment
• Respect in chosen field
• A job I enjoy
• Ability to travel

82% FEMALE
87% MALE

BEING A SUPPORTIVE PARTNER OR SPOUSE
(important / very important)

61% FEMALE
68% MALE

HAVING CHILDREN
(important / very important)

"Until companies make it as attractive for men to take an equal role in child care we will continue to see gender imbalance. In summary, companies are creating environments where it is acceptable for women to both provide childcare and work but not for men"

MALE 40s

Moments influencing a change in aspirations

5% FEMALE
9% MALE

**GETTING MARRIED**
(share of response when asked for top 3)

societal factors

## Some societal norms are corroborated

On a macro level, far more men reported being the primary earners and men were more likely to cite financial reasons for returning to work following a leave of absence. Respondents also reported a perceived negative impact from flexible working arrangements despite technological advances.

What were your primary reasons for returning to work?

28% FEMALE
37% MALE

BEING THE PRIMARY EARNER

46% FEMALE
28% MALE

PERSONAL FULFILMENT, CHALLENGE OR GROWTH
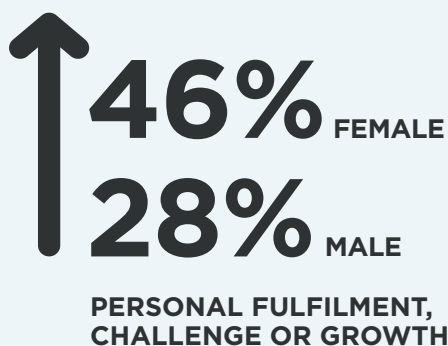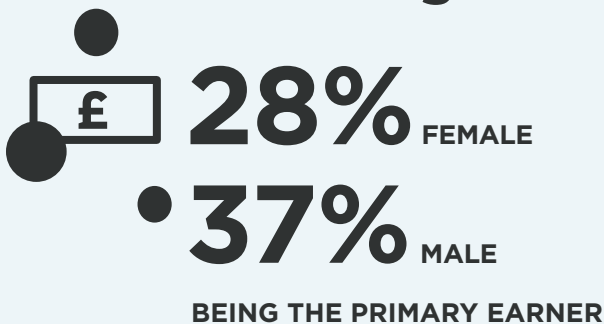
"I feel a large part of the problem is actually that we create a 'white male' culture and instead of resolving this, we teach people to behave like white males to succeed"

MALE 40s

53% FEMALE

38% MALE
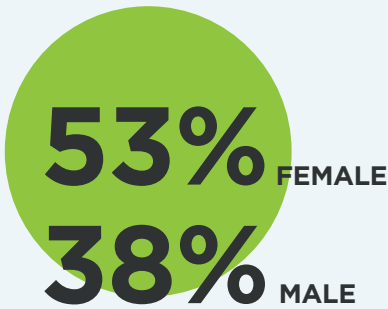
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS
Corporate policies which have benefited your career progression
(% of respondents that included this policy)

"Every time anyone talks about women's initiatives, it's always tied to children and maternity pay, maternity leave, anything to do with kids or flexibility to do with family, being a wife, being a mother; and speaking as a single, childless woman in her 30s, that disenfranchises me and other single women because they feel overlooked."

FEMALE 30s

Policy relevance and application

The data shows an inconsistent picture of understanding, application and relevance of family-friendly policies, with many references to flexible working policies only understood to apply to women with children, thereby creating a sense of exclusion and special treatment.

Several references were made to the need for tapering hours for those in retirement in order to maintain vital experience and in recognition of the tendency of more and more workers to live longer beyond retirement age. Respondents also emphasised the need for a work environment more conducive to "returners".

where the differences emerge

While there is consistency across the headline definitions of success reported by men and women, there are some key differences.

Women were more likely to cite development and relationships as indicators of success, while men showed comparatively greater focus on monetary aspects.

defining success

What gives you a sustained sense of satisfaction and fulfilment in the workplace?

(% of responses within top 3 elements)

MONETARY COMPENSATION	46%	54%
BEING GIVEN DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITES	28%	21%
SENSE OF COMMUNITY OR CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH COWORKERS	24%	15%

MEN were more likely to change industry or company due to

• Company or industry instability

• Uncertainty

WOMEN were more likely to change industry or company due to

• Workload or time commitment

• Culture

• Change in personal circumstances

• Difficult relationship with boss

"While at work I want to climb as high as I can in my career and my motivation is money so I can better enjoy my off time."

MALE 20s

"It's very difficult to have career progression in a culture that is not supportive so one needs to have confidence to make a decision to leave if all other avenues have been exhausted."

FEMALE 40s

aspirati○ns
and ambiti●ns

More women reported chang
in their aspirations and views
of success over time than men.
They were more likely to have
had a career break and cited
different reasons for returning.

Volatility of
career aspirations

MY PERSONAL DEFINITION OF A
SUCCESSFUL CAREER HAS REMAINED
CONSISTENT THROUGHOUT MY CAREER

28% **37%**

MY LEVEL OF AMBITION
HAS NOT CHANGED SINCE
BEGINNING MY CAREER

37% **42%**

"As I have aged my levels of ambition have not necessarily changed, but rather the ambitions themselves have broadened..."

FEMALE 30s

"Ambitions have changed depending on the direct team leader. Where these team leaders have been poor I have found myself losing ambition and drive."

FEMALE 20s

What was your primary reason for returning to work?

BEING THE PRIMARY EARNER

28% 37%

PERSONAL FULFILMENT, CHALLENGE OR GROWTH

46% 28%

aspirati ns and ambiti ns

Women were more likely to report changes in aspirations and views of success over time than men. They were more likely to have had a career break and cited different reasons for returning.

Moments influencing a change in aspirations

(share of responses when asked for top 3)

28% FEMALE

24% MALE

HAVING CHILDREN

8% of MEN have taken a career break compared with **25% of WOMEN**

Of the women who took an extended leave or career break, **54%** cited parental leave as the reason, while **4% of MEN** that took an extended leave or career break did so for parental leave.

"Having a family did not change my drive or career ambition, however, it changed the hours I am available. I have had to work smarter and flexibly and have found great success working with leaders who have open minds about how work gets done."

FEMALE 30s

30% FEMALE

35% MALE

PROGRESS AND SUCCESS AT WORK

"My ambition actually increased once I got married and had children. I was more confident and more able to prioritise my time and productivity."

FEMALE 40s

18% FEMALE

11% MALE

MAJOR LIFE DISRUPTION

s urces of supp rt

Men and women reported consulting different sources when making career choices. Women consulted more widely to inform their career decisions and at earlier stages of the decision process.
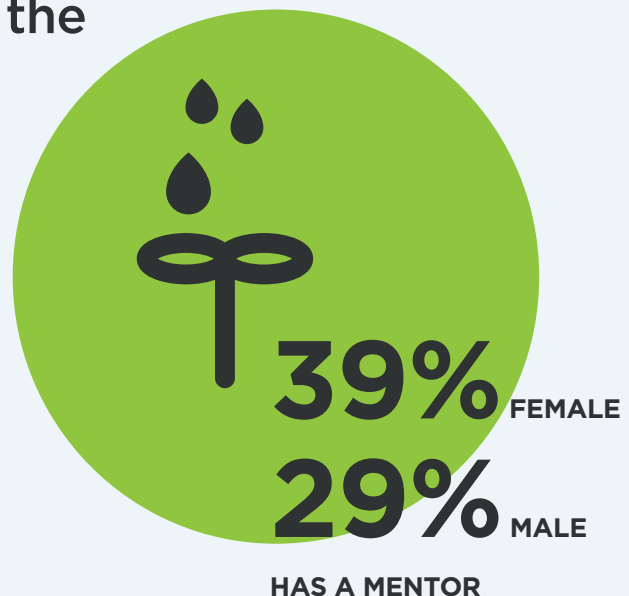
More likely to consult for guidance

MEN
• Partner or spouse
• Direct line manager

WOMEN
• Other family members and friends
• Mentors and coaches
• Networks

39% FEMALE

29% MALE

HAS A MENTOR

"I'm constantly talking to people about what I'm going to do next... I talk to my boss, my colleagues, my friends, and to some degree my family. I have some mentors as well, so i'm always looking for new people to talk to."

FEMALE 20s

"The major impact recently has been having a great mentor, line manager and network of support which has put me in a position to take a senior leadership role. I feel I may have been able to do this myself, but I needed a push from others to believe in myself again."

FEMALE 30s

Female respondents were more likely to believe that a wide range of people are able to hinder or support their career
(strongly agree / agree)

	Female	Male
INCLUSIVENESS OF TEAM HIGHLY INFLUENCES ABILITY TO PERFORM	43%	37%
LINE MANAGER POSITIVELY INFLUENCES CAREER CHOICES	65%	53%
THERE ARE INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS OF MY ORGANISATION WHO ACT AS A SPONSOR OR ADVOCATE FOR MY CAREER PROGRESSION	46%	41%

h○w supp●rt is valued

More men cited the increased personal skillset that development and support helped them build. They were more likely to reference the skills that line managers helped them build as well as opportunities managers made available. They reported feeling supported when their manager helped them find development opportunities and their next roles.
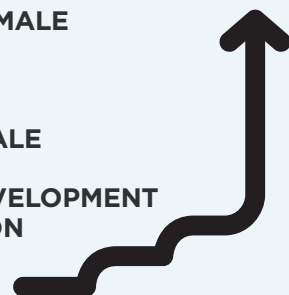
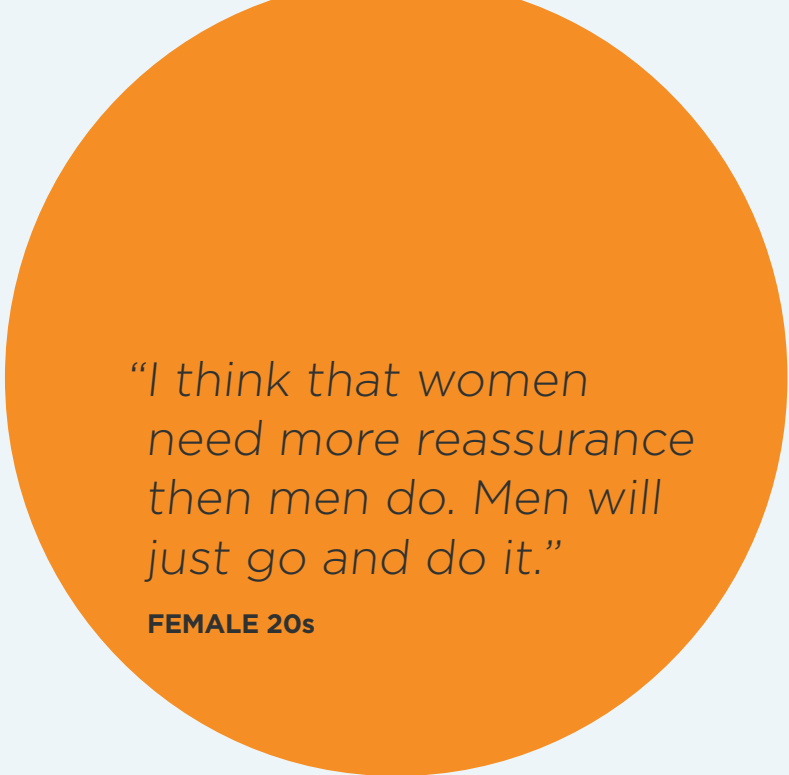**Thinking of your personal definition of success, what do you most value today?**
(share of references in top 3 picks)

75% FEMALE

65% MALE

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ACCREDITATION**

"I think that women need more reassurance then men do. Men will just go and do it."

FEMALE 20s

More women reported professional development and accreditation as measures of success and cited the increased credibility and confidence these resources gave them. They were more likely to recount receiving support from their manager in the form of listening and providing feedback on development gaps. During interviews, women felt supported when their manager answered technical questions and set up regular meetings to provide direct feedback.

"Accreditation is a way of showing people that don't know you what you're capable of…"

FEMALE 20s
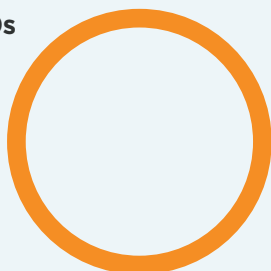
"Senior female sponsors have had a strong impact on me through their support for opportunities, development etc. Negative senior males have had an equally disabling and confidence-diminishing impact on me through my recent career (5 years)."

FEMALE 20s

the matter of age

The youngest age range of professional women reported higher focus on status and prestige compared to the same age-range of men.

IMPORTANCE PLACED ON STATUS/PRESTIGE
(aged 18-24)

63% **58%**

IMPORTANCE PLACED ON HIGH SALARY
(aged 18-24)

88% **75%**

More women than men cited accreditation and professional development as valuable in defining personal success. This difference increased with age, peaking at 55-59.

68% FEMALE

46% MALE

PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION AS AN ELEMENT IN DEFINING PERSONAL SUCCESS
(aged 55-59 stated Important / very important)

32% 40–44

23% 50–54

OLDER WOMEN REPORTED HAVING TAKEN FEWER EXTENDED LEAVES OR CAREER BREAKS

THE LIKELIHOOD OF MEN TO AGREE THAT FINANCIAL REWARD IS FAIR INCREASED WITH AGE while there was no clear age correlation for women.

WOMEN RESPONDENTS UNDER 35 WERE MORE LIKELY THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS TO CITE CHILDREN AS IMPORTANT. Beyond that age, men were more likely to cite them as important.
(elements that define personal success)

BEING A SUPPORTIVE PARTNER increased for men and decreased for women with rising age
(elements that define personal success)

"Companies with more progressive and forward-thinking attitudes to commitments at home are more likely to get the best out of their employees."

MALE 40s

confidence in the system

Fewer women than men said they believe the current workplace environment will recognise their worth, enable them to succeed and allow them to fulfil their potential.

15%

Women were more likely than men to disagree with the statement that they understand their development and career progression path.

41% FEMALE

35% MALE

I FEEL ABLE TO FLEX THE PACE OF MY CAREER AND NOT LOSE CREDIBILITY LONG TERM
(disagree / strongly disagree)

"Personally, the more I see of what goes on the further up the chain the more I am put off progressing. I just can't be bothered with that level of politics."

FEMALE 30s

The findings indicate that women and men feel similarly prepared to take on new roles. However, women reported accessing a wider set of resources to feel supported when taking on new roles

Women reported less positive views than men in the following three areas:

- The clarity of their career path
- The impact of flexing their careers
- The opportunity to access high profile roles

"I've always been relatively ambitious and keen to be at executive level. Having kids hasn't changed that. But it has made me more weary of the corporate world, hierarchies and outmoded working practices that slow us down."

FEMALE 30s

47%**FEMALE**
52%**MALE**

I AM OFFERED HIGH VISIBILITY ROLES WITH CHALLENGING OBJECTIVES
(agree / strongly agree)

35

views of impact and pr gress

Male and female respondents perceived the value and impact of gender initiatives differently.

More female respondents believed that business performance benefitted from gender-based initiatives. Male respondents believed more strongly than women that these policies are currently successful.

72% FEMALE
53% MALE

GENDER-BASED INITIATIVES HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE THE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF MY COMPANY
(agree / strongly agree)

50% FEMALE
73% MALE

WOMEN CURRENTLY BENEFIT FROM DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PROGRAMMES WITHIN MY COMPANY
(agree / strongly agree)

"There is now no difference between men and women in career progress. The perception is lagging behind the reality. In my industry, it's not a problem anymore."

MALE 50s

54% FEMALE

68% MALE

GENDER PARITY IS FOUND BY MANAGEMENT TO BE CRITICAL FOR THE COMPANY
(agree / strongly agree)

41% FEMALE

49% MALE

FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES AND PRACTICES ARE INCREASING GENDER PARITY IN MY WORKPLACE
(agree / strongly agree)

18% FEMALE

28% MALE

POSITIVE-ACTION POLICIES THAT DRIVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ARE A GOOD THING
(neutral / disagree / strongly disagree)

More men trusted that management are prioritising gender equality and that women are benefiting from this. Men reported less support for positive action policies than women.

"It has gotten better, but I think people are perhaps celebrating before the job is done. It just feels like progress has been made, but there's a long way to go."

MALE 20s

so what?

Social change and corporate policies

Responses have indicated that corporate policies are lagging behind the way we currently live and work, and do not yet sufficiently encompass the following:

- dual income careers
- variances in career pace
- flexible working
- impact of personal life on workplace priorities

The diversity label is now counter-productive

Policies and initiatives labelled as gender-based are sometimes viewed as discriminatory and excluding. Other best practices are perceived to be applied only to women with children and not to the wider working population, thereby creating "diversity fatigue".

Younger generations expect policies and initiatives to be applicable for all.

The impact of personal advisors

Women's confidence to make ambitious choices can be significantly impacted by those from whom they seek support and advice.

These advisors have a role, beyond passively acting as a sounding board. They can provide the proactive encouragement that enables women to fulfil their potential.

Perspective matters

The pool of respondents is made up of currently active employees within international corporations and their views are therefore within that context. The sense of progress on workplace gender balance inferred from the overall results must take into account the more positive view of the significant share of older male respondents in order to avoid unconscious complacency. Policies crafted by a diverse team have a greater chance of increasing inclusion and opportunity for all.

Definitions of success, support and ambition are received with differing interpretations, and recommendations from this work should consider a 360° view of these terms to overcome unconscious biases.

"'One size fits all' management won't really work. This may not be a gender issue at all, but should look at how everyone can fulfil their potential."

FEMALE 20s

"Affirmative action/gender specific programmes, in my view, are beginning to become less effective. What is required is flexibility which is open to everyone."

FEMALE 20s

"Two key individuals made a significant impact early on in my career by giving me the confidence in my ability and identifying transferrable skills which enabled me to successfully apply for roles where I did not have direct experience."

FEMALE 40s

"Trying to change women won't work. Change the expectations and the system."

FEMALE 50s

CONTACT

For further onformation on the contents
of this report or the full survey contact

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