



Women in the Workplace

2020

salt™

Introduction

Companies are actively trying to improve their gender diversity and businesses are trying to close the gender gap. As a global recruitment agency, we are often involved in conversations surrounding inclusion, as well as hiring and retaining female talent. Talking to job seekers, we noticed that although more conversations are happening, there is still a disconnect between 'talking' and action. In fact, women are still underrepresented in the workplace, globally.¹

We conducted a survey with our global audiences to delve deeper into gender equality in the workplace. This survey was undertaken in partnership with **Dr Terri Simpkin**, founder of **Braver, Stronger, Smarter** and Principal Consultant at Mischief Business Engineering. As an Associate Professor at Nottingham University, Dr Terri is currently researching the imposter phenomenon in women and frequently advises on workplace challenges.

The benefits of hiring a diverse team have been proven. A study from the University of Illinois in Chicago reported that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are **15% more likely** to have higher financial returns.²

Salt's survey, however, highlights that there is still a long way to go until women have equitable opportunities to men in the workplace. We have explored reasons that contribute to this inequality, such as unconscious bias and the imposter phenomenon. Another factor we investigated was the gender gap and causes for it, especially with a 'leaky female pipeline' affecting most companies, with fewer women in senior positions.

Our research emphasises the importance of strong leadership. Shockingly, over 80% of both men and women felt their skills were underutilised at work and 85% of men and women said they would leave

a role if they felt their capabilities were not recognised. The report highlights the need for change in regard to leadership and employee engagement, especially in this employee-driven market.

We produced this report to share the full results with you and highlight common challenges companies need to focus on to improve their hiring and retaining of talent. Similarly, employees can use this report to influence their employers or managers. Information collected here can be used as insights for your job search and to determine what makes an inclusive environment and what to look for in a new employer.



About the authors



Terri Simpkin

Founder and CEO of
Braver, Stronger, Smarter



Dr Terri Simpkin is the founder, CEO and principal consultant at Mischief Business Engineering, and an Associate Professor at the University of Nottingham. She is an industry experienced academic with a background in leadership, strategic human resources management and general management. Her areas of expertise include emerging leadership paradigms, inclusion practices and the nature of talent challenges in industry 4.0 — the second machine age. She is currently undertaking a long-term research programme into the impostor phenomenon in women.

Mischief Business Engineering (UK and Australia) have been working with businesses, governments, industry associations and educational institutions for over fifteen years. Mischief designs and delivers

Salt is a global, award-winning digital recruitment agency, connecting people and businesses within Creative, Marketing, Sales, and Technology. Over 250 consultants cover permanent as well as contract roles from offices in Auckland, Cape Town, Dubai, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, London, Melbourne, New York, Singapore, and Sydney.

At the forefront of Salt's brand, is the commitment to diversity and inclusion. Salt has been an advocate for diversity and gender equality for years and it is part of its recruitment ethos. Salt sees the need to foster conversations on diversity and inclusion, advise clients on how to build diverse teams, and promote its own diversity agenda in the market to set a positive example.

For the past few years, Salt has been running a role model campaign,

bespoke consultancy and workplace programmes that create opportunities for people and organisations to be better. The flagship is Braver, Stronger, Smarter — an evidence-based suite of programmes aimed at leveraging diversity and inclusion practices in organisations and diminishing impostor experiences for individuals.

Terri is currently working with representatives from the digital infrastructure sector investigating the global data centre skills and labour landscape. She has experience in public, private and third sector work, and brings a creative and academically grounded view of the world to projects.

To find out more about Terri's work, visit: www.braverstrongersmarter.com

publishing monthly interviews with inspiring "Women in Tech" from companies including Uber, Depop and Mettle who talk about their challenges, and share their experiences and career advice. Salt hosts regular events and has dedicated a section of its company blog to discussing inclusion in the workplace.

A fantastic acknowledgement was winning the Employer Award by Women in Tech, making Salt Recruitment Agency of the Year. As members of Diversity Works and various industry bodies (RCSA, APSCO, ASA), Salt ensures ongoing development and best practice across the globe.

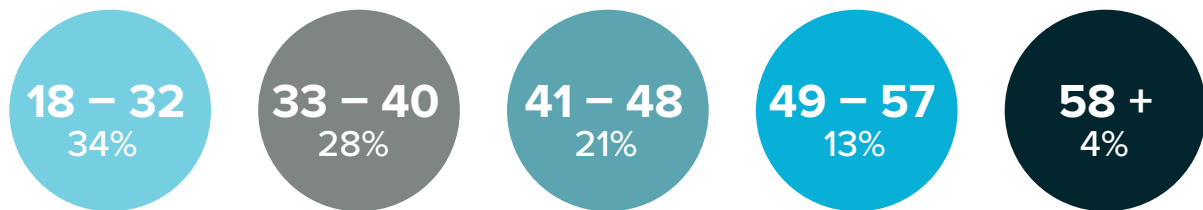
To find out more, go to www.welovesalt.com or email contact@welovesalt.com

Who took part

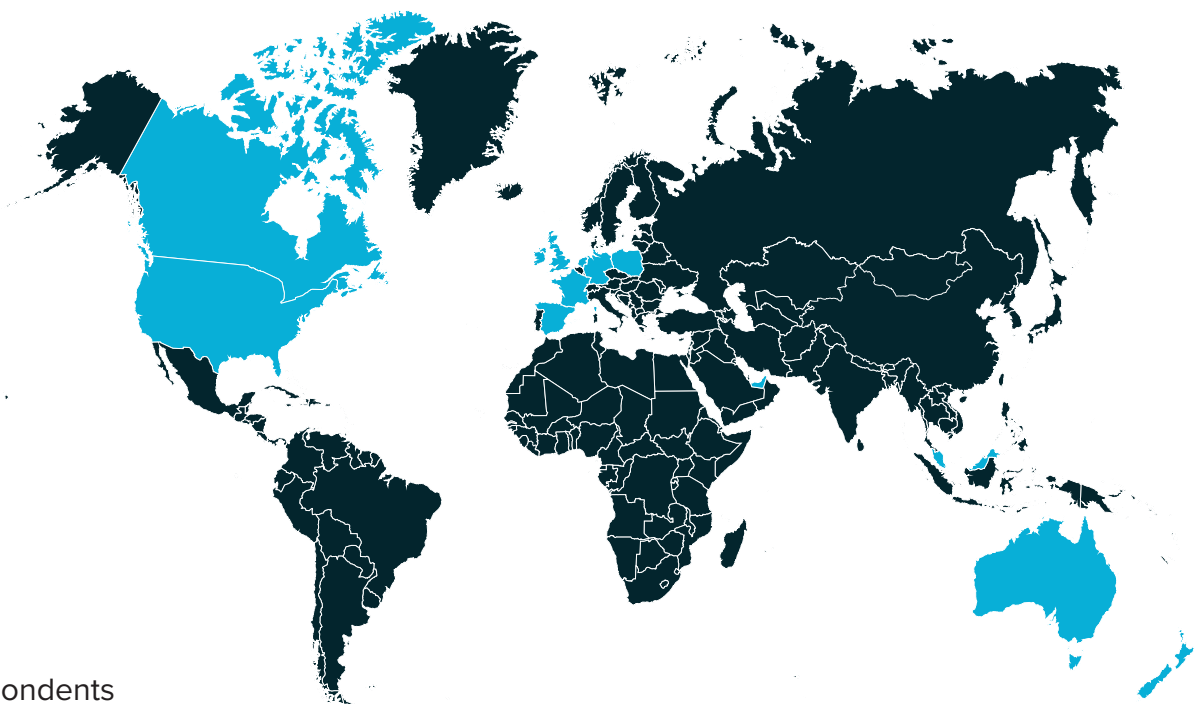


*2% preferred not to say

Ages



Respondents from



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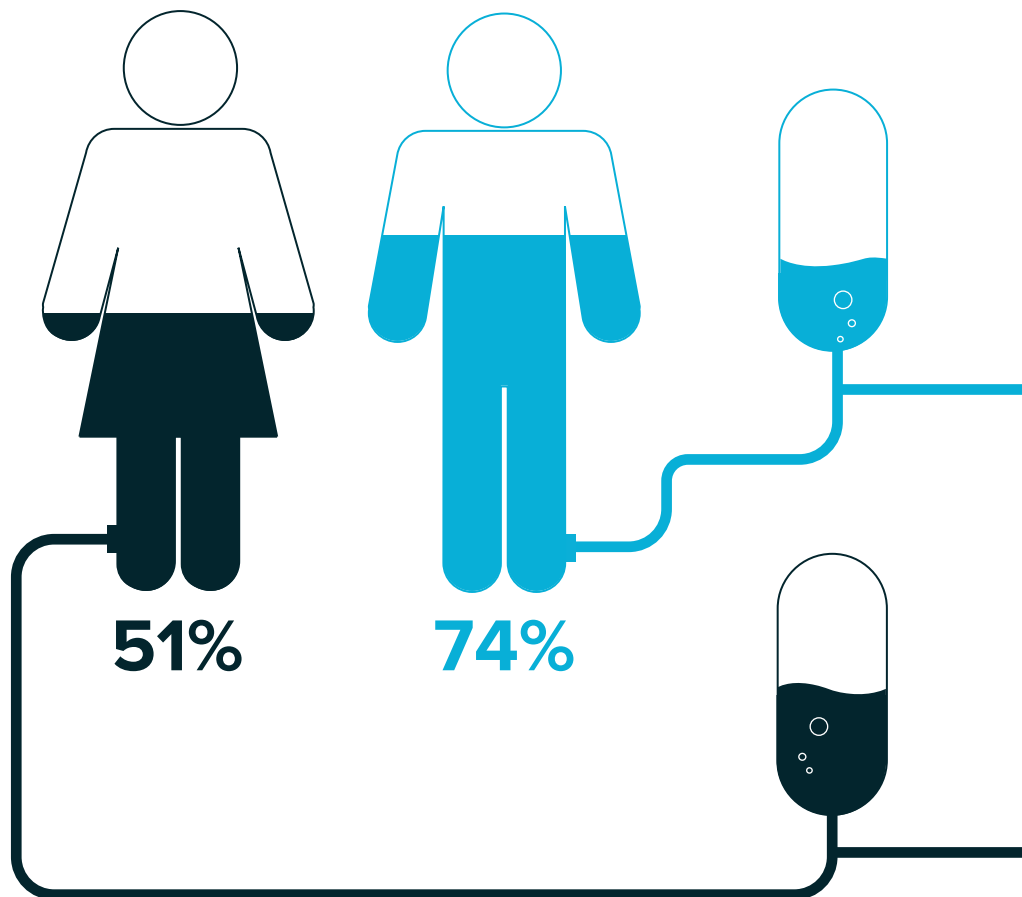
Salaries and Promotions

Only 51% of women feel comfortable asking for what they're worth compared to 74% of men.

Our survey suggests that women are less comfortable with asking for rewards or pay that they believe reflects their worth to their organisation. This is consistent with research that finds women often underestimate their value in comparison to men.

Pay negotiations and bonus structures have also been found to be gender-biased against women³, and where this is the case, they experience a 'gender double bind'. The system may implicitly work against women and a discomfort with being upfront about asking for what they want also diminishes their opportunity to seek just rewards and pay.⁴

With the World Economic Forum estimating that it will take 257 years to economic participation parity with men, there are several factors that contribute to a gender pay gap.⁵ A recent study of students at Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania highlighted that **57% of**



men negotiated their starting salary, while only 8% of women did so.⁶

The Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organisation found that gender differences in negotiation are not so general, but rather depend crucially on the gender composition around the table. Women typically ask for lower compensation when the company's representative is a man.⁷

Imposter Phenomenon

You've probably noticed that imposter phenomenon (also known incorrectly

as 'imposter syndrome') has received a fair bit coverage in the media lately, although it doesn't show what a debilitating and long-term experience it can be — limiting careers, sapping motivation and suppressing potential.

Best described as an often illogical sense of fraudulence affecting individuals at work, people do not believe they are deserving of their careers, success or positions. Its impact on the individual and organisations can be huge, and that's where HR departments have an important role to play.⁸

Employers must take steps to better structure remuneration negotiations, bonus structures and other benefit processes to strip out implicit bias, and to encourage more transparent value determinations.

Only 62% of women feel comfortable stating their value to their employer, compared to 82% of men.

People in general are more comfortable with stating their worth to an employer they already know and work for. However, when applying for a promotion, women are still less comfortable with clearly articulating their worth than men.

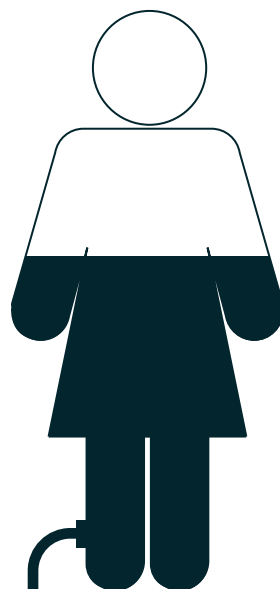
This is consistent with research that suggests that women routinely understate or are less robust in highlighting the value of their contributions in comparison to others.

46% of women and 66% of men feel comfortable asking their manager for a promotion to fully utilise their capabilities.

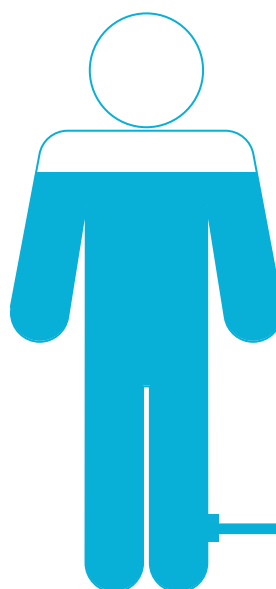
Research conducted in Australia⁹ suggests that while women and men equally ask for promotions and pay rises, women have been found to ask for less or negotiate less strenuously, due to social expectations.

Women may fear managerial backlash, rejection or being perceived as pushy or too forthright. Socially, asking for 'more' is often considered 'not lady-like' — it is contrary to the expected 'role' identity and so to be considered socially acceptable, women may ask for less.¹⁰

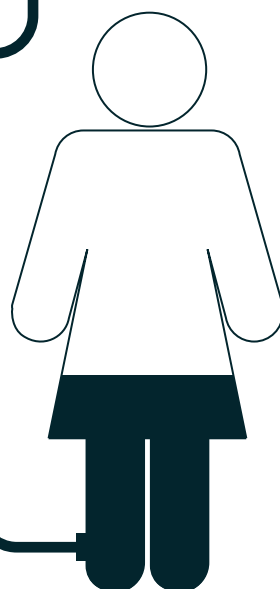
Remember, this isn't necessarily something that is consciously considered, it is part of what is called



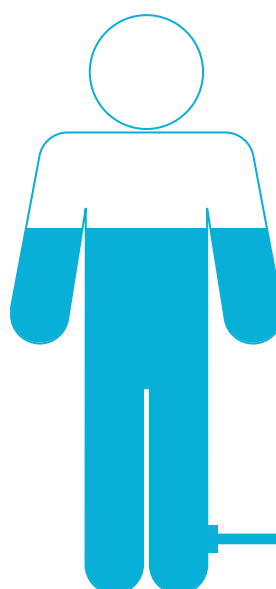
62%



82%



46%



66%

implicit or unconscious bias. This has implications for all workplaces. Transparency and equity of remuneration and benefit structures must be robust, but social expectations of women and men, particularly where remuneration is left to managerial discretion, must be examined and moderated out of negotiations for all employees.

For business leaders, this prompts the question, why do women feel less comfortable in pursuing promotional opportunities?

Those charged with human resources management, succession planning and organisational development must seek to understand how behaviour, systems and processes may be preventing women from bringing their whole suite of capabilities to the organisation.

This finding should be of key concern to organisations that wish to improve inclusion, productivity, engagement, and retention of women, and the latent talent that may be going unrecognized, undervalued or lost to competitors.



Leaky Female Talent Pipeline

A raft of research has identified a ‘leaky female talent pipeline’¹¹ where women are less visible in senior roles. This in turn contributes to other structural issues such as the gender pay gap, under-representation of women in executive roles and a diminished presence on boards.¹²

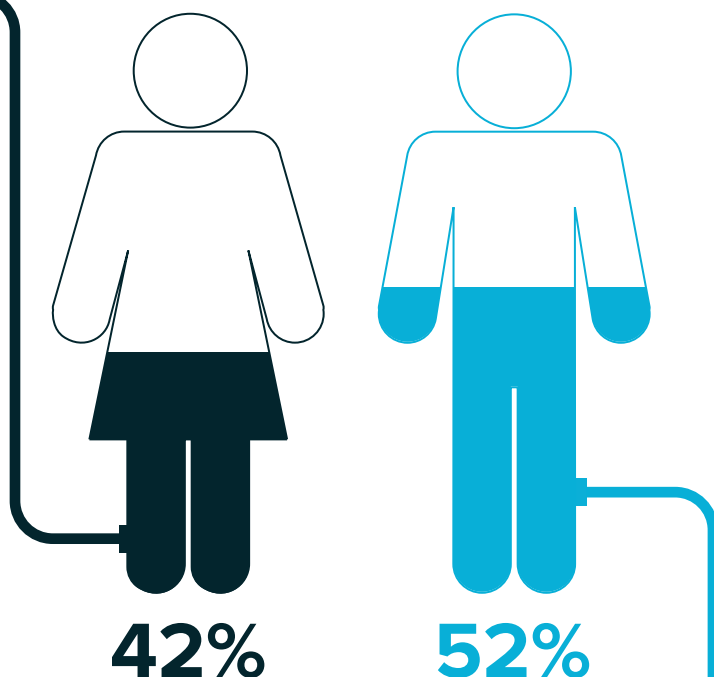
Companies should do everything they can to create equal opportunities and make their workplaces more fair — starting with putting best practices in place to get bias out of hiring and promotions. When you take bias out of the equation, women will finally get the equal chance they’ve always deserved. Everyone will.

Sheryl Sandberg and Rachel Thomas
Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead

Career Growth and Support

I believe that my organisation's advancement processes give me adequate support to get ahead in my career.

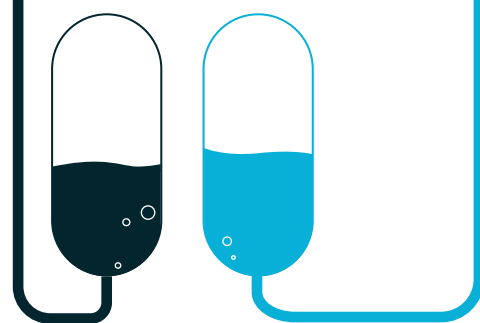
42% of women and 52% of men agree.



Offering people an opportunity to fully realise their potential is key to organisational effectiveness.¹³ This requires a well-functioning suite of practices and processes such as workforce planning, succession planning, and talent management.¹⁴ However our respondents suggest that they may be under-supported to achieve advancement within their organisation.

Just over half of the men in this survey indicated that they had support to get ahead in their careers, compared to 58% of women who don't believe their organisation's advancement processes supported them to get ahead in their career.

It is widely accepted that current pressures on workforces such as skills and talent shortages and an aging working population are putting strain on organisations to meet organisational objectives. However, these issues will be exacerbated by a workforce that feels unable to explore and realise advancement potential. This is particularly so when considering the 'leaky talent pipeline' of women advancing through middle management into senior leadership, as experienced in many sectors.¹⁵



Only 40%
of both men and women feel that their skills are fully utilised

What is Unconscious Bias?

Unconscious bias is when background experiences and social and environmental influences shape our choices. Typically, this is not a problem, but it is when we favour or discriminate against people because of these influences.

It can have a big impact on people-related decisions at work, especially when it comes to recruitment, promotion, performance management, and idea generation. When bias is prevalent, your organisation will struggle to hire diverse teams, and efforts to improve workplace inclusion will be of limited success.¹⁶

This underutilisation of skills affects innovation, productivity, profitability, and positive customer experience.

Full utilisation of capacity is a key factor in both organisational and personal effectiveness. For organisations, the inability to harness the talent and value that people bring to their roles diminishes efficiency and increases costs of doing business.

For individuals, underutilisation impacts negatively on motivation, organisational commitment and increases attrition.

Overall, it's bad news that universally, regardless of gender, only 40% of respondents believed that they were being fully utilised by the demands of their current role.

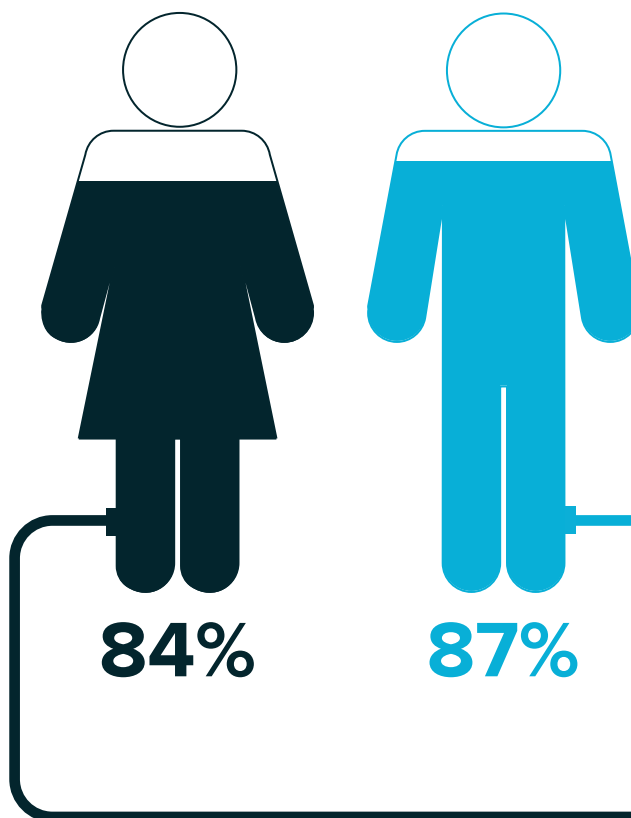
Three quarters of the UK workforce believe that they could do their job in four days rather than five¹⁷ and while our data illustrates underutilisation, stress brought about by 'long hours

culture'¹⁸ is a global concern. In an industrial landscape that demands invention, creativity and diversity of thought and action, committed employee input is undermined by a sense of underutilisation.

84% of women and 87% of men believe they could offer more value ... if their organisations let them!

It could be argued that the role of management is to provide their people with the tools and capacities to do their job well and then get out of their way. This data illustrates that over 80% of all respondents believe they have more value to give if only they were offered the opportunity.

Frustration, demotivation and a lack of organisational commitment are associated with an incapacity to fully realise potential. This finding suggests that overwhelmingly, people believe themselves to be capable and willing, but unable to employ their full suite of capabilities.



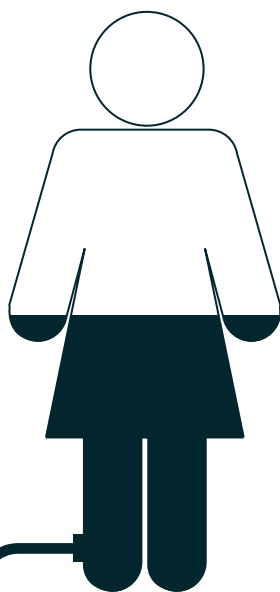
These questions should be high on your leadership agenda:

- How much satisfaction could individuals find in their work if allowed to bring their full capacities to their roles?
- What could be achieved if organisations let their people work at their full potential?
- What positives could be delivered in terms of productivity, health and well-being and growth (personal and organisational)?

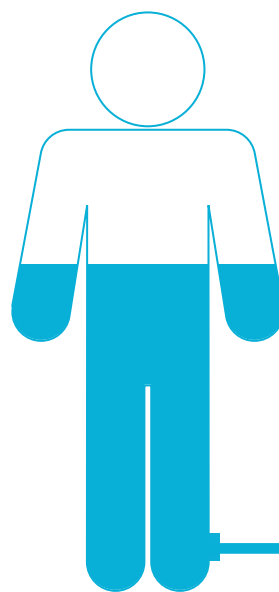


Workplace Culture

I believe I am able to progress on recognition say **46% of women and 55% of men.**



46%



55%

This is consistent with research¹⁹ that illustrates that women are promoted at a slower rate than men as they move from entry-level into higher level roles. This has structural implications for organisations from employee engagement and satisfaction with career progression opportunities, through to inclusion at senior leadership levels and gender pay gaps.

Examining the gender split, there is consistency with the data suggesting that women are less comfortable with asking for a promotion (46%) than men.

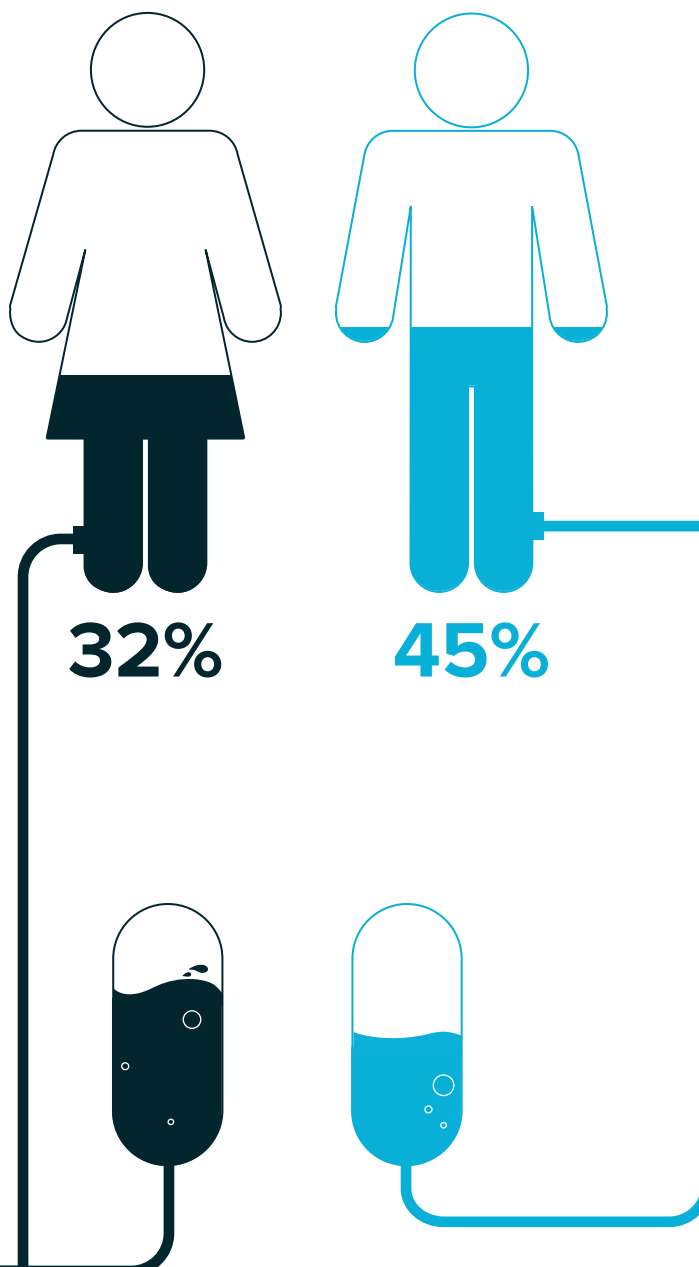
However, it appears that men are more confident in asking for a promotion (66%) than simply relying on systemic recognition of capabilities.

My potential is recognised through my organisation's advancement promotion procedure say only 32% of women and 45% of men.

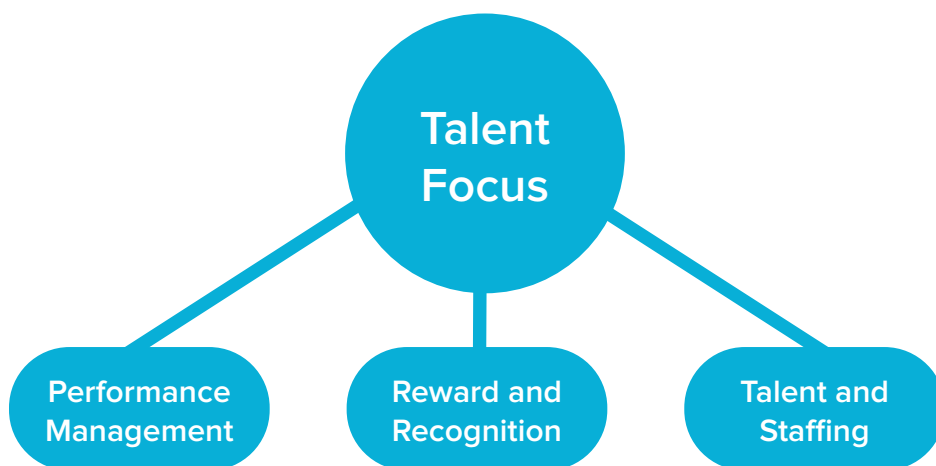
Previous research has found that men advance on potential, but women advance on experience. In simple terms, men are expected to develop into a role whereas women are expected to have demonstrated achievement prior to being considered for advancement.²⁰

The data here is consistent with previous research²¹ suggesting that only a third of women believe that their potential or latent talent is being recognised, utilised and rewarded in organisations.

Nearly three quarters of female respondents believe that their organisation's structures for managing career advancement are failing to recognise their potential.



Key Driver of Employee Engagement: Trends in the Global Engagement Report²²





85%

of both men and women would leave a role if they felt their capabilities were not being recognised.

Churn, talent wastage and disengagement are central concerns for organisations, particularly those where competition for talent is robust, such as the STEM sectors.²³

This is detrimental to a business that loses employees to competitors and has to invest in recruitment, onboarding and training to replace the lost talent.²⁴

Reducing attrition by recognising, rewarding and fully utilising the whole suite of capabilities of all people is self-evident but clearly, respondents are suggesting that they will, and do, take their capabilities elsewhere if they are not recognised.

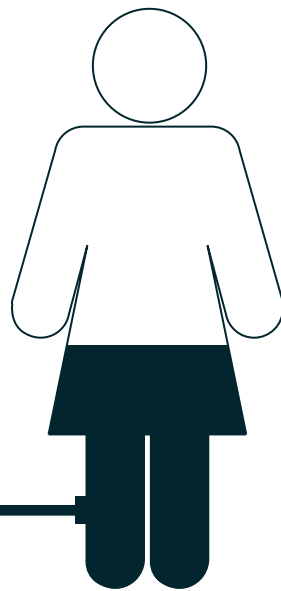
It is an employee driven labour market and organisations that fail to fully engage their workforce will bear the brunt of their workforce finding opportunities elsewhere.

The performance review and appraisal process fully recognises the value of my achievements to the organisation say 39% of women and 42% of men.

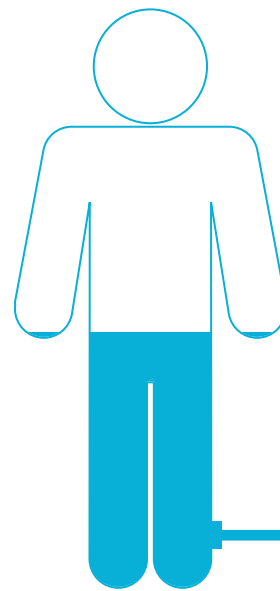
It is interesting to note that in its Top 10 HR key initiatives for 2019, Gartner found that only 27% of HR leaders were prioritising performance management and the priority placed last in the top 10 of key initiatives.²⁵

Performance management systems have been criticised for decades.²⁶ Both practitioner and academic assessments of the effectiveness and efficiency of appraisals, performance reviews and planning have found that they can be overly bureaucratic, time-consuming, poorly implemented, and are often seen as a necessary evil by both managers and employees alike.

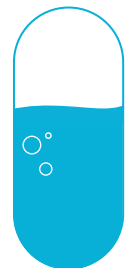
Implications for HR structures include a failure to capture the full range of capabilities available to the organisation from the current workforce (particularly women) and diminished efficiency of succession planning, learning and development planning, and a failure to fully engage employees.²⁷



39%



42%



Women are less likely to find that the processes are effective for them, especially those who experience 'Imposter Phenomenon'. It can be highly uncomfortable for them to talk about their achievements and they tend to dismiss them completely, take all responsibility for any failures and attribute their successes to others or to luck.



Summary and Outlook

As our survey demonstrates, there is still a lot of work to do in making the workplace an equal environment for both men and women. Strong leadership is vital to ensure that there are equal opportunities and processes in place that enable employee engagement and career development.

Management and human resources alike need to ask themselves:

How much latent talent, capability and human capital is being lost due to ineffective talent management processes?

How many women, in particular, are being disadvantaged due to a lack of recognition of potential?

By doing this, it sheds a light on broader questions about the embedded nature of unconscious bias that is fuelling limiting beliefs, such as the imposter phenomenon.²⁸

This report focusses on the reality of equality in the workplace. Although we are making progress in some areas, there are many factors which affect women's progress in their careers, such as negotiation procedures, unconscious bias and slower promotions for women. The good news is — these things can be changed.

In 2020, we will see a lot of companies still actively hiring more female professionals, but more will start to realise that they need to take a closer look at their culture, and ensure it enables everyone to thrive and progress in their careers, in order to retain that talent.

Similarly, jobseekers don't just focus on salary and benefits anymore but value culture, work environment, flexibility and policies, more than before, especially with Generation Z entering the workplace.

In a competitive, candidate-driven market, there is pressure for companies to meet these expectations, or otherwise lose out on attracting the best professionals.

It is important that everybody in the workplace realises the impact they all can make on gender equality and diversity, sometimes with the smallest actions. Whether that's being supportive of other colleagues, speaking up when you see something wrong or talking to HR or a manager so your company is aware of what is going on.

Whatever situation you're in at the moment, we hope you found this report insightful and that the results help you to encourage or create equal opportunities for everybody in the workplace moving forward.

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