



Global Women in PR

Annual Index 2021

#GWPRAnnualIndex



ABOUT GWPR

Global Women in PR exists to champion, connect and support women in senior PR and Communications roles. We inspire women to become leaders and promote public relations as an important global industry.



Who We Are

A global membership organisation for women in senior PR and communications roles. GWPR comprises national networking groups, whose members come from agencies, in-house and independents, plus individual members.

There are GWPR national groups and affiliates across Europe, Russia, India, Africa, the Middle East, Central America and Asia Pacific. We are expanding fast with groups developing in North and South America.

We are a not-for-profit organisation driven by our desire to change the landscape to benefit women working in our industry.

We are an inclusive organisation that celebrates diversity and works to engage with the leaders in our industry and other business leaders.

A key focus for GWPR is the issue surrounding leadership and gender equality - from flexible working practices to pay incentives and the working environment. The boardroom continues to be dominated by men (66%), despite the global industry being 2/3 female.

We highlight the value the PR industry brings to the global economy and its role in contributing to business success, plus the well-researched fact that companies with a balanced boardroom are more successful.

We offer support to the next generation of female leaders to inspire them to fulfil their potential.

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For further information please contact: info@globalwpr.com

OUR
SUPPORTERS



What people think,
feel and do

INTRODUCTION

This report highlights the findings of the third GWPR ANNUAL INDEX aimed at tracking and measuring the position of women working in the PR and Communications industry globally.

Sponsored and conducted by leading research agency OPINIUM, the GWPR ANNUAL INDEX is part of a five year plan to understand the issues affecting women in the industry and measuring their progress around the world towards gender equality.

Despite the global PR industry being two-thirds female the boardroom tells a different story, with men occupying the majority of seats at the table.

Our annual research allows us to examine the issues, identify solutions and encourage change, so we can inspire more PR women to reach positions of leadership.

Only around half of PR professionals claim to have a good work-life balance. One thing organisations can do is to set clearer boundaries for flexible working.



Hybrid working - the Covid effect

The Covid-19 crisis has put extraordinary pressure on companies and employees. The pandemic has shaken the global economy and turned peoples' lives upside down, both at work and at home.

Over the past 18 months there has been a fundamental change in the way people work. Companies have embraced flexibility and remote working at levels that would have seemed impossible just a few years ago.

It will take time for the full impact of the pandemic to be realised, but one thing is clear: hybrid working is here to stay. So, has the pandemic and the changes in working practices improved the situation for women working in the global PR industry?

On the down side flexible working can quickly turn into an "always on" 24/7 work culture and burn out. According to management consultancy McKinsey one in three women say they have considered downshifting their career, or leaving the workforce this year*. Only around half of PR professionals claim to have a good work-life balance. One thing organisations must do is to set clearer boundaries for flexible working.

On the positive side our GWPR research clearly reveals there is a huge and growing demand amongst PR women for flexible and remote working. Flexible working is recognised as helping with mental well-being, giving women a better work/life balance and being most beneficial to women with children. The fact that childcare responsibilities continue to be seen as the biggest barrier to women getting into the boardroom means this is particularly significant.

It will be fascinating to see what the long-term impact of Covid will be on the PR workplace of the future.

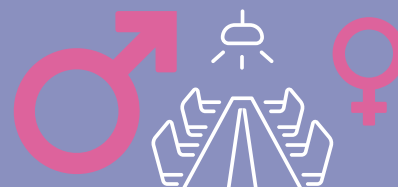
Let's also hope that the growing focus of organisations on equality and employee well-being will create more caring, connected and inclusive workplaces that will benefit both business and the next generation of PR women.



By Angela Oakes,
Co-founder & Joint President, GWPR

TOP LINE FINDINGS

The boardroom continues to be dominated by men (66%), despite the industry being 2/3 female, slightly worse than 64% in 2020



73%

would be more likely to choose a job that offered flexible working over one that did not; up from 69% in 2020

67%

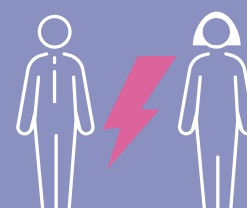
believe flexible working is the most important initiative to help women progress their career

On average respondents believe that in the next year they will be working remotely **3 days a week** with 21% expecting to work remotely full time



33%

A third have taken time off work due to work related stress and anxiety an increase from 27% last year



33%

A third say there is a gender pay gap in favour of men at senior management level in their organisation – an increase from 27% in 2020

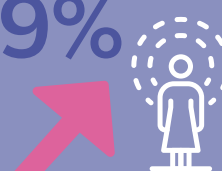
41%



Two fifths of women reported that having caring responsibilities had negatively impacted their career

The majority believe more needs to be done to ensure women in the PR industry have greater boardroom presence

89%



Since the start of the pandemic,
we've seen a significant
increase in the number of PR
professionals working flexibly



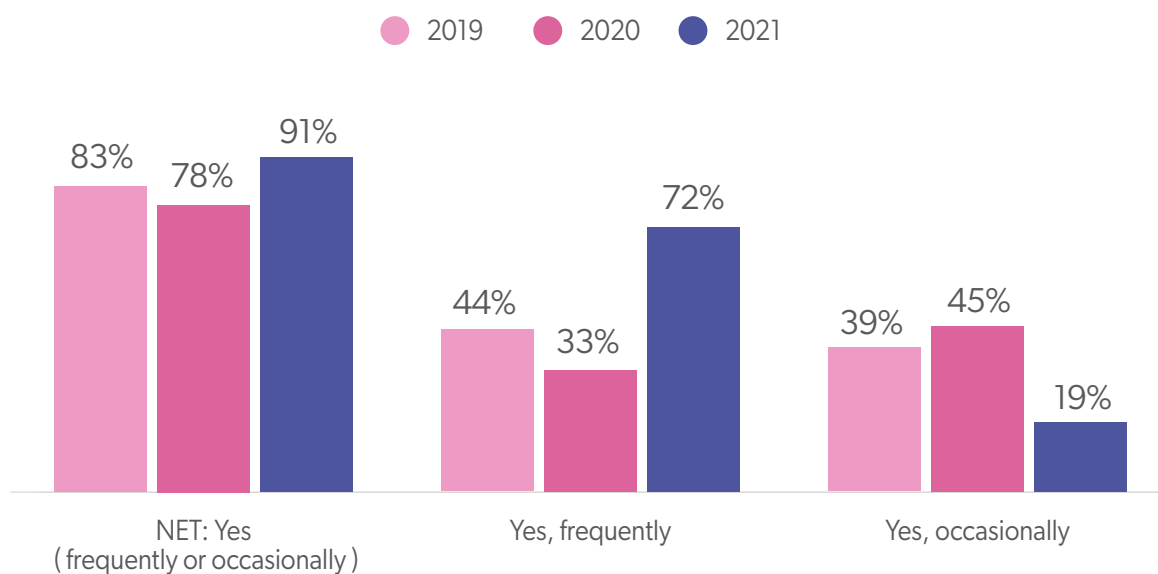
WORK ENVIRONMENT

There have been further increases in flexible working, particularly in those doing so frequently

As expected, since the start of the pandemic, we've seen a significant increase in the number of PR professionals working flexibly (91%), up from 78% last year, with 72% doing so frequently and 19% occasionally. Prior to the Coronavirus lock down, 70% said they worked flexibly, with only 32% doing so frequently and 38% occasionally. PR professionals expect this to continue with 91% also expecting to be working flexibly in the future as the pandemic eases.

Interestingly, this year those working in an agency are more likely to be working flexibly than those working in-house (96% vs 88%), whereas last year the opposite was true with 83% in-house working flexibly compared to 72% in an agency.

Flexible working in 2019, 2020 and 2021

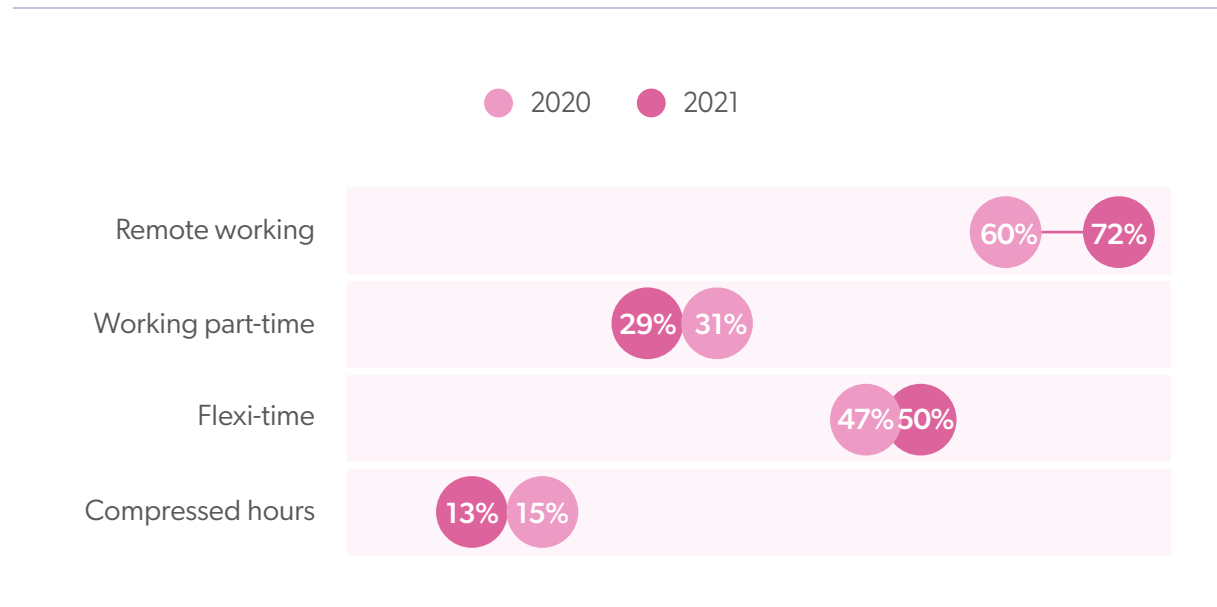


The opportunity for remote working is on the increase (up 20%) and expected to stay

Over the next twelve months, PR professionals expect to be working remotely for an average of three days per week. And 21% expect to be working remotely full time ie. five days a week.

When it comes to the flexible working opportunities being offered, again we see an increase in the number of PR professionals being offered remote working, up to 72% from 60% last year. We also see a slight increase in those being offered flexitime (50% vs 47%). Whereas for both working part-time and being offered compressed hours we have seen a slight decline since 2020. Whilst 29% are being offered the opportunity to work part-time, only 12% of PR professionals are currently working part-time.

Flexible working in 2020 and 2021



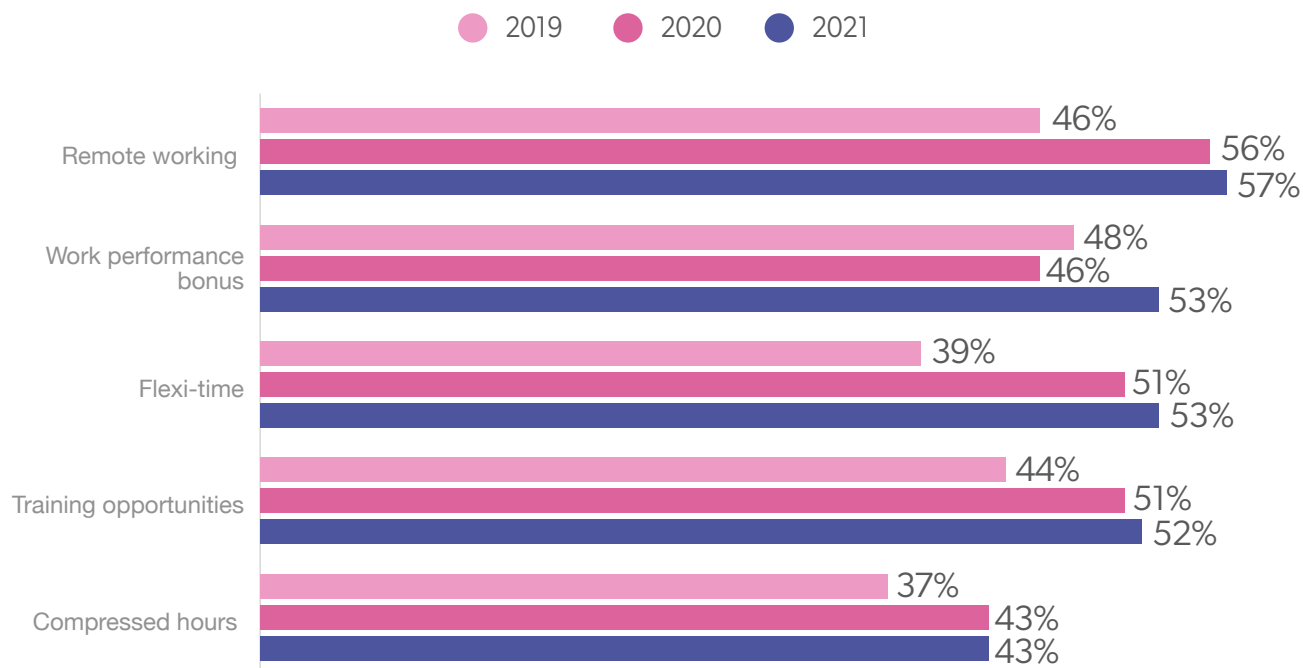
Remote working is the benefit most requested by PR professionals.

Remote working remains an important part of working life. It is again the top benefit PR professionals want to be offered (57% vs 56% last year), followed by work performance bonuses and flexitime (both 53%). Work performance bonuses have seen the largest increase this year, up from 46% last year. We also saw a slight increase in the number of PR professionals wanting to be offered flexitime (53% vs 51% last year).

In addition, 73% say they would be more likely to choose a job that offered flexible working over one that did not (up from 69% in 2020). This is most strongly felt in Germany (90%), in comparison to Mexico (59%).

Training opportunities also remain a wanted benefit for just over half (52%) of PR professionals. This remains stable compared to last year (51%), having seen an increase since 2019 and the start of the pandemic (44%).

What do PR professionals want from their workplace?



73% say they would be more likely to choose a job that offered flexible working over one that did not



However, flexible working is still associated with slower career progression, despite an increase in PR professionals reporting a positive perception towards it and the benefits being well-known

Despite the continued increase in flexible working opportunities and their appeal, there is still work to be done to ensure flexible working doesn't have a negative impact on career progression. **When asked how flexible working impacts the careers of PR professionals, almost three in ten (28%) believe they progress more slowly**, having slightly increased from 25% last year. Those working agency side are more likely to believe flexible working impedes career progression than those working in-house (31% vs 23%). This was also felt more strongly by PR professionals working in the UK (47%).

On the other hand, encouragingly, there's an increase in the number of PR professionals who report that flexible working is perceived positively within their company. Over three fifths (63%) report a positive perception compared to 54% last year. Interestingly, those working agency-side are more likely to report a positive perception (68%) compared to in-house (54%).

Many recognise the benefits of working flexibly, particularly for wellbeing. Almost three-quarters (74%) feel it helps employees maintain a healthy work-life balance. Two thirds (66%) believe it helps employees maintain their mental wellbeing.

Flexible working is also felt to be particularly beneficial for women. Two-thirds (67%) believe flexible working allows women to have a family or take on caring responsibilities and still progress in their careers. A similar proportion (63%) agree that it helps retain female talent. Three in ten (30%) feel it helps women to progress into boardroom positions.

A quarter (25%) of PR professionals would even prefer flexible working opportunities over a pay rise, increasing to 36% in Germany.



When asked how flexible working impacts the careers of PR professionals, almost three in ten (28%) believe they progress more slowly

WORKPLACE WELLBEING

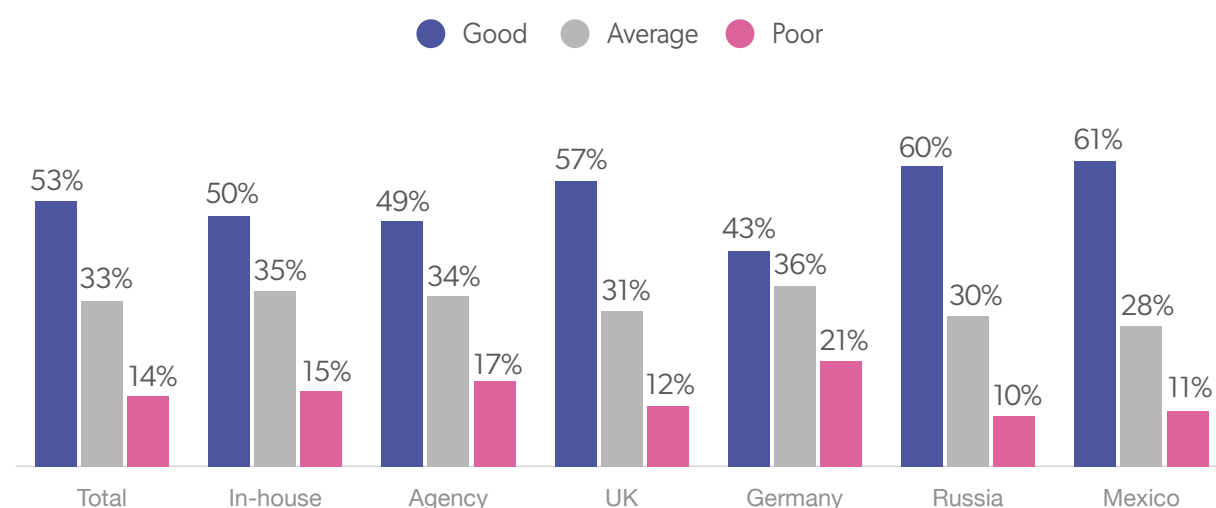
2021 has been another challenging year for those in the PR sector. The struggle to find a good work/life balance continued for both agency and in-house professionals, with the time taken off for work related stress growing year-on-year. Workplaces must continue to recognise the everyday battles their employees face, and ensure they are supporting them as much as possible by introducing initiatives to help improve wellbeing.

Only around half of PR professionals claim to have a good work-life balance

Over half (53%) of PR professionals think they have a good work/life balance, similar to last year (52%), with just under one in six (14%) believing their work/life balance is poor, a slight decrease from last year (16%). There is little difference between those working in-house (50%) and agency side (49%) when it comes to feeling they have a good work/life balance.

Those working in Mexico are most likely to consider themselves as having a good work/life balance (61%) and those in Russia are not far behind them (60%). Worryingly, a fifth (21%) of PRs in Germany say they have a poor work/life balance.

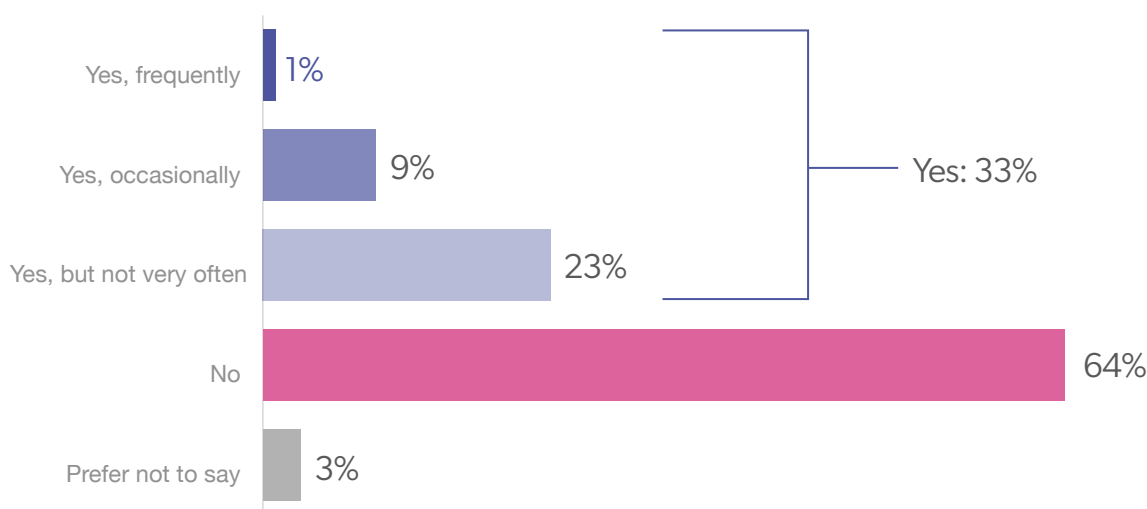
How would you describe your work/life balance?



A third have taken time off work due to work-related stress or anxiety

Whilst the majority (64%) of PR professionals have not taken time off work due to work related stress and anxiety, the number of professionals who have done so is up year-on-year (33% 2021 vs 27% 2020). Whilst this absence is not very frequent, the growth has come from those who have taken time off occasionally.

Have you ever been absent from work because of work-related stress, or anxiety?



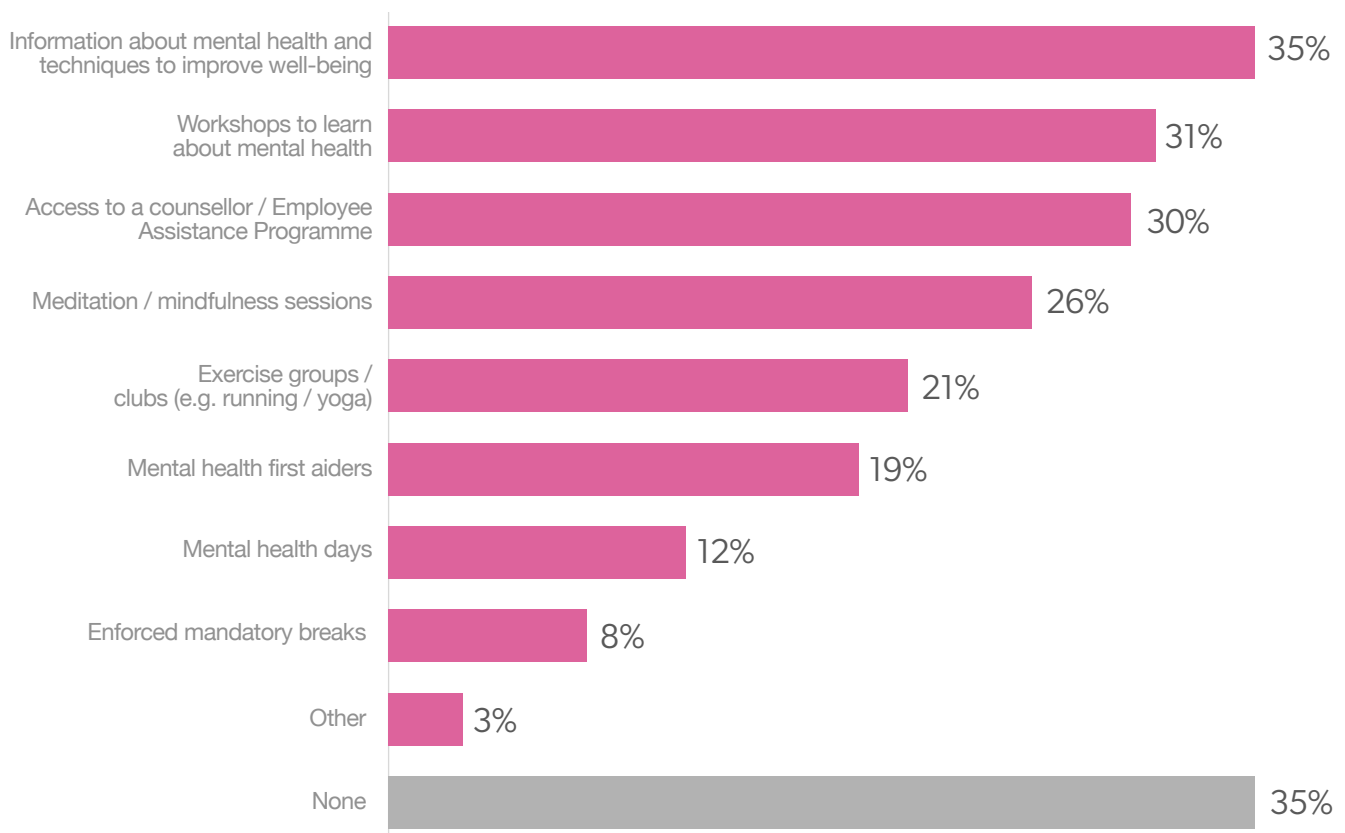
Last year, we found that PR professionals working in-house were more likely to have taken time off work because of stress, compared to their agency counterparts. **This year, the gap has closed completely with a third (32%) of both in-house and agency-side professionals saying they have taken time off for their mental health.** The most likely PR professionals to have taken time off for stress are those aged 18-34 (51%) and freelancers / independent consultants (37%).

Over a third are not offered any mental health initiatives at work

For many, the pandemic has blurred the lines between work and home life, which has brought with it negative effects; especially on mental health. It is, therefore, crucial that workplaces do their bit to help improve and maintain the mental wellbeing of their staff. **When asked if their companies offer any mental health support initiatives, over a third (35%) say they there are none offered at work,** similar to last year. The UK sets a good example though, as only 15% of UK PR's say they are not offered any mental health support initiatives – though this still leaves room for improvement.

Amongst those who do have mental health initiatives in place, information and techniques to improve wellbeing are the most common types of support offered (35%). This is followed by workshops to learn about mental health (31%) and access to a counsellor or employee assistance programme (30%). A quarter (26%) can join meditation or mindfulness sessions, whilst on the more physical side, a fifth (21%) are given the option to join exercise groups or clubs. Access to a counsellor or employee assistance programme has seen a significant drop in the last year (down 7%).

Does your company offer or have in place any of the following mental health initiatives?



BOARDROOMS & BARRIERS

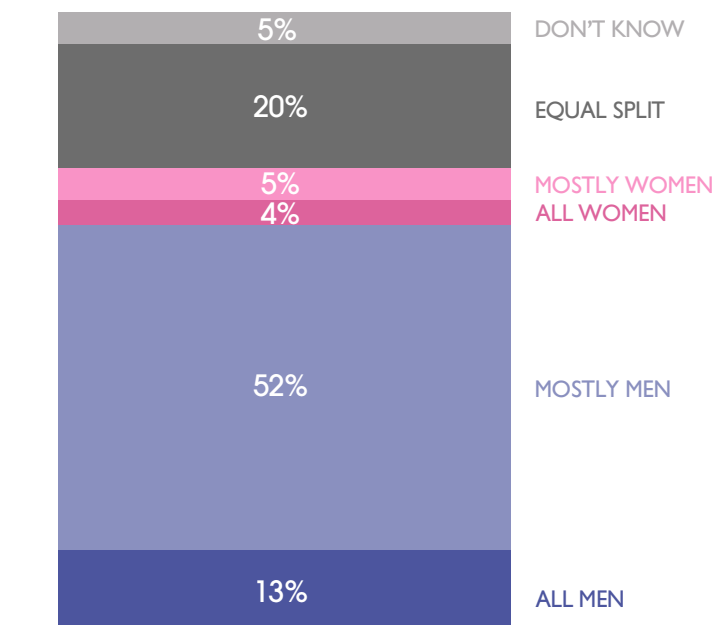
The gender split in boardrooms has seen very little change. Men are still far more likely to hold boardroom positions (66%), and women are still thought to be promoted at a much slower rate than their male counterparts. However, it is encouraging to see that the importance and benefits to business of having women in the boardroom continues to be highlighted. We need to continue to focus on these to help create change sooner rather than later.

Two-thirds continue to work in companies where the boardroom is male dominated

Looking into the gender split of main boards, two in three (66%) PR professionals work in companies where the board is male dominated, similar to last year (64%). Over half (52%) say their board of directors is mostly made up of men, and one in seven (13%) state their board is made up entirely of men. Disappointingly, the number of PR professionals who say that their board is made up of mostly or all women remains at 9%, having dropped from 14% in 2019.

Which of the following best describes how your board of directors is made up?

Over half (54%) of those surveyed that have a board of directors¹ feel the gender split on their board is unfair, increasing from 46% last year.



¹ Defined as those who are answerable to shareholders and responsible for the strategic direction of the company

Over two in five believe women are promoted more slowly - this situation is much worse in-house than in agencies

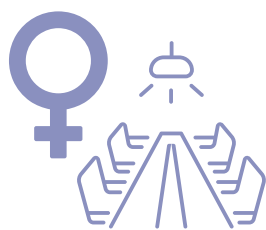
There's a slight increase in the number of PR professionals who feel that women are promoted more slowly at their company (44% versus 39% last year). Those working in-house are twice as likely to think women are promoted more slowly at their company compared to those in agencies (56% compared to 27%). **Women working in PR agencies are twice as likely to be promoted faster than those working in-house** and also twice as likely to reach a boardroom position.

When it comes to comparing mothers and fathers, the gender difference continues to be stark. **Half (51%) of PR professionals feel mothers are promoted more slowly, compared to just 4% of fathers.**

The prospect of women in the boardroom is a positive one for business

Despite the relatively low levels of PR women in boardrooms, we can highlight, once again, the growing importance of female presence and the significant benefits of greater gender equality in business.

Over four fifths (83%) of PR professionals believe that having women in the boardroom helps improve both the productivity of the company and the creativity of the company. These have both increased from 76% and 80% last year. When it comes to working practices, 82% believe that having women in the boardroom can help improve company working practices in the PR industry. Four-fifths (81%) of PR professionals believe that having women on boards clears barriers to promotion for other women.

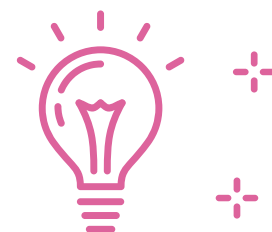


83%

feel having women in the boardroom helps to improve company productivity

83%

feel having women in the boardroom improves the creativity of the company



82%

believe that having women in the boardroom helps to improve working practices in the PR industry

Furthermore, a significant 89% believe that more needs to be done to ensure women in the PR industry have greater boardroom presence, showing the same response as last year. This clearly highlights the need for businesses to take note of the barriers to women progressing and address them sooner rather than later.

The barriers to women entering the boardroom continue to be the same

Looking at the potential barriers women face when it comes to progressing into senior positions, **the biggest barrier continues to be childcare or caring responsibilities (86%)** – up by 8% when compared to 2020 - perhaps another outcome of the Covid pandemic. Related to this, 74% feel that the lack of flexible working and family-friendly policies prevent women from progressing into senior positions. A similar number (72%) believe the lack of work-life balance in a senior role prevents women from getting into the boardroom.

In addition to caring responsibilities, there is also a feeling of inequality when it comes to promotion and recruitment. Two in three (67%) believe there is a lack of transparency, which creates a barrier for women attaining more senior roles. The same number of respondents (67%) feel that women tend to be less proactive than men when it comes to asking for a promotion.

The biggest barrier women face when it comes to progressing into senior positions, continues to be childcare or caring responsibilities (86%)



The top 5 barriers preventing women from progressing into senior positions are:



86%

Women predominantly taking on childcare or caring responsibilities

74%
Lack of flexible working or family-friendly working policies

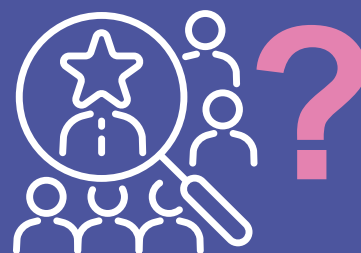


72%

Lack of work / life balance in a senior role



67%
Lack of transparency around recruitment and promotion



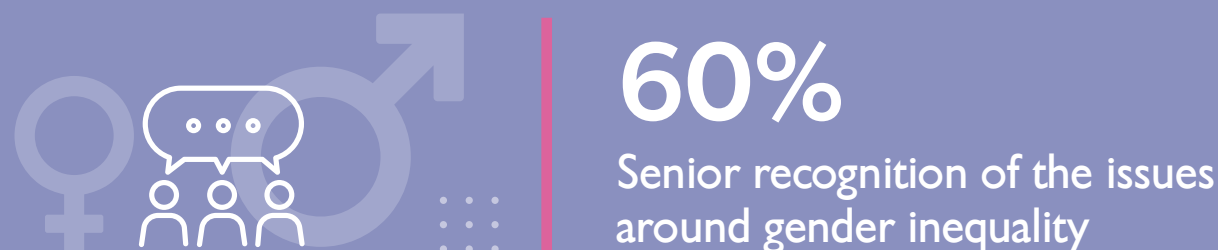
67%

Women tend to be less proactive about asking for a promotion

More needs to be done to break down boardroom barriers

Flexible working practices are considered the best initiative to enable more women to take on board room roles (67%). This has reclaimed the top spot from 2019 having overtaken 'having more senior female role models' (65%). Other initiatives identified to help women's career progression are mentoring schemes (62%), more senior recognition of the issues around gender inequality (60%) and training opportunities (56%).

Top 5 initiatives
to get more
women into the
boardroom:





Flexible working practices are
considered the best initiative
to enable more women to
take on board room roles

IMPACT OF PARENTHOOD/CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

The caring responsibilities of women have continued to increase in 2021. Despite this greater responsibility, the impact on their PR careers isn't seen to be as negative as last year. Hopefully, the negative impact continues to decrease with the re-opening of schools and the absence of Covid lockdowns.

Two fifths of women reported their caring responsibilities had a negative impact on their career

Almost two-thirds (65%) of all respondents have had to undertake caring responsibilities during their career whilst working – an increase of 7% year-on-year. Most commonly, these caring responsibilities have been carried out alone (37%), or equally shared between themselves and a partner (33%).

Two fifths (41%) of women reported that these caring responsibilities have had a negative impact on their career. Pleasingly, this negative impact has decreased when compared to the 47% reported last year.

Childcare responsibility is only expected to increase post-pandemic with a quarter (27%) of mothers working in PR saying they will be taking on more childcare responsibility. However 16% anticipate taking on less childcare responsibility and 58% expect there to be no change.

When asked how their child caring responsibilities have had a negative impact on their career, 43% of women said they had to take a period of leave from work. These caring responsibilities have also impacted women's relationships with their team. Two fifths (40%) said they couldn't attend social team building events, with a quarter (26%) feeling excluded from their team more generally.

Considering the cost of childcare, it is estimated that a fifth (20%) of parent's monthly salary (after tax) goes on childcare.

Three fifths of women with children said they experienced negativity in the workplace when pregnant

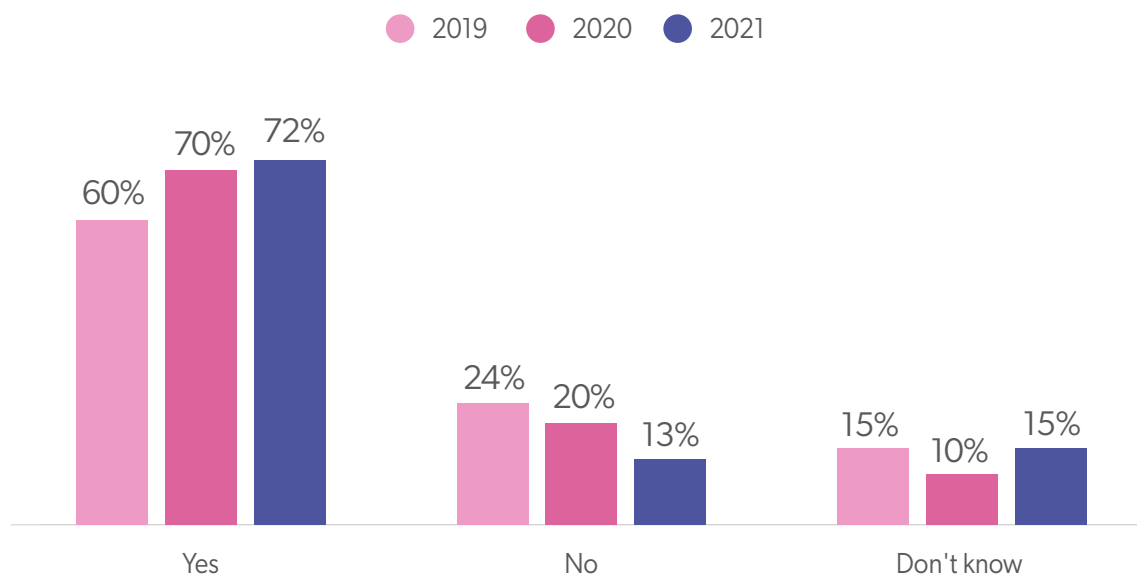
Three fifths (60%) of women who worked during their pregnancy experienced negativity in the workplace at this time – an unfortunate increase of 7% when compared to 2020. Three in ten (30%) said that people felt their career was no longer a priority, a quarter (24%) didn't feel supported, and a similar amount (23%) said people treated them differently.

Unfortunately, after returning from maternity leave many of these sentiments appear to continue. A fifth (22%) of women felt that colleagues did not think they were prioritising their career when they returned to work, 17% didn't feel supported and 16% said people treated them differently.

A positive shift for parents: Now less than a sixth of parents said their company does not offer paid parental leave

In 2020, a fifth (20%) of parents surveyed said their company does not offer paid parental leave following the birth of a child. In 2021, just under one in six (13%) claim this to be true - highlighting a clear move in the right direction for parents. **We can also see that the increase in paid parental leave has gone up by 20% in three years - from 60% to 72%.** However, there still seems to be a disparity based on the gender of new parents. Seven in ten (71%) say their company offers paid parental leave for mothers, whilst two fifths (40%) say this is offered to fathers.

Paid parental leave offered by companies



71% say their company offers paid parental leave for mothers, whilst 40% say this is offered to fathers.

THE GENDER PAY GAP


Despite the majority of the PR and Communications industry being female, there is a continued perceived gender pay gap in favour of men at senior and middle management levels. This has also started to trickle down into junior levels as we saw an increase in the number of PR professionals who perceive a gender pay gap at junior levels. However, many do not have access to the salary levels in their organisation.

A third now perceive there to be a gender pay gap in favour of men in senior management

A third (33%) now say there is a gender pay gap in favour of men at a senior level, and over a quarter (28%) at middle management level. These have both increased from 27% and 22% last year.

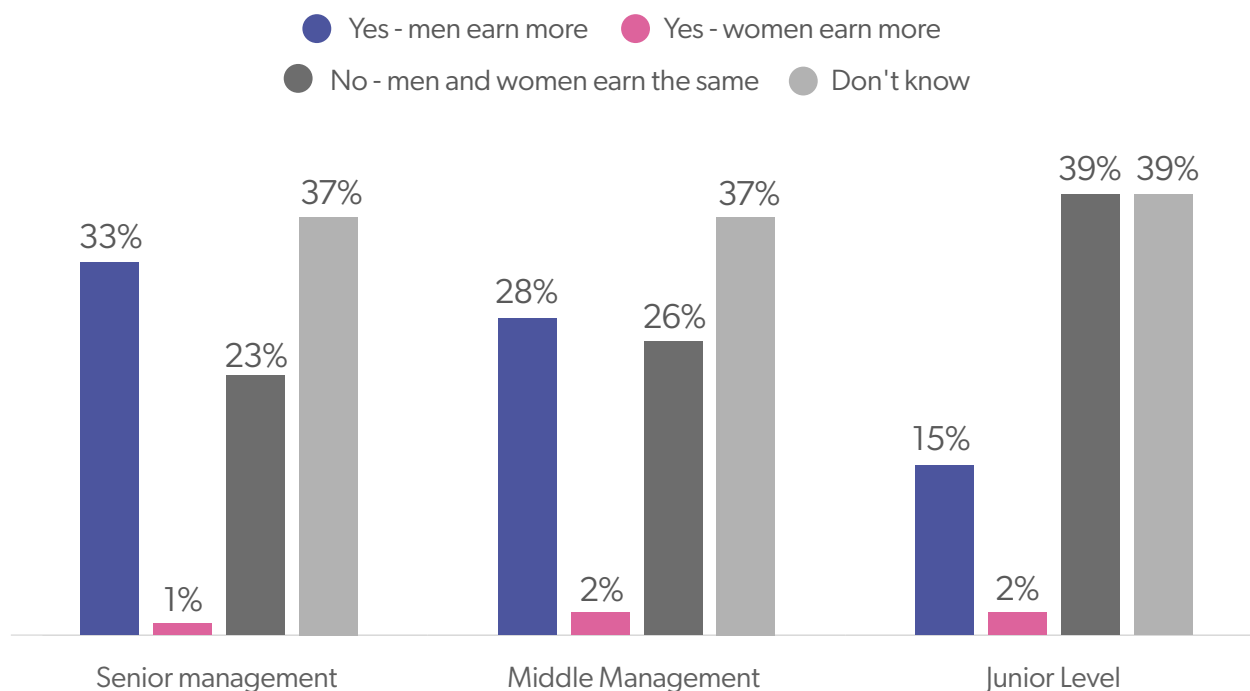
At a junior level, pay between the genders appears to be more balanced with two fifths (39%) stating that men and women are paid the same at this level. However, this has decreased from 47% last year and could be starting to show that the pay gap is slowly trickling down to more junior levels. Over one in seven (15%) report that men earn more than women on average at a junior level, which has increased from 9% last year.

There also continues to be limited knowledge about salary levels, with 37% saying they don't know whether there is a gender pay gap at senior and middle management levels, and two fifths (39%) unaware of whether there is a gender pay gap at junior levels. **The gender pay gap appears to be bigger amongst in-house PR professionals compared to those in an agency.** Two fifths (42%) of in-house workers state that men earn more in senior management positions than women, compared to 24% in an agency.



Despite the majority of the industry being female, there is a continued perceived gender pay gap in favour of men at senior and middle management levels.

Does your organisation have a gender pay gap that you know of?



When asked if their company has disclosed their gender pay gap, only 17% of PR professionals said they had, with 9% having to do so by law and 8% doing so despite not needing to publish these figures. This is slightly up from 14% last year. A quarter (26%) are unsure of whether their company has disclosed their gender pay gap. Those in the UK and Germany are most likely to have had this information disclosed (32% and 31%), meanwhile just 6% of those in Russia say they have been given this information.

On a more positive note, over half (55%) of those we spoke to say their company has gender equality, diversity or inclusion policies in place, a slight increase from 52% last year. However, 15% say they don't know if their company has any of these policies in place.

APPENDIX: SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Earlier in the year (June 2021) we conducted research among 130 PR professionals globally to explore the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace. The key findings from this research have been included in this report.

The most common forms of sexual harassment experienced in the global PR workplace were identified as:

68%

Making sexual comments about appearance, clothing, or body parts.



66%

Telling lewd jokes, or sharing sexual anecdotes.



45%

Staring in a sexually suggestive or offensive manner, or whistling.

40%

Inappropriate touching, including pinching, patting, rubbing, or purposefully brushing up against another person.



18%

of respondents believed that telling lewd jokes, or sharing sexual anecdotes did not constitute sexual harassment, whilst almost 1 in 10 (8%) were unsure.

13%

of PR professionals have experienced attempted, or actual sexual assault in the workplace.

In total **52%** felt they had experienced sexual harassment working in PR.



54%

Over half (54%) said this sexual harassment took place in the office.

32%

A third of respondents said their most recent experience of sexual harassment was while they held a junior position.

Two thirds (66%) of those who experienced sexual harassment said it was committed by a colleague. In more than a third (35%) of cases this was a senior person who was not their individual line manager.



Personal experience of sexual harassment was not likely to be reported and there were very few cases of organisations internationally taking action on sexual harassment (just 7%).

The most common reason given for not reporting sexual harassment was not thinking the incidence was serious enough.



46%

of respondents



The vast majority - 95% of respondents - agreed that organisations should have sexual harassment policies in place. Around two-thirds (62%) were aware their organisation had a policy.

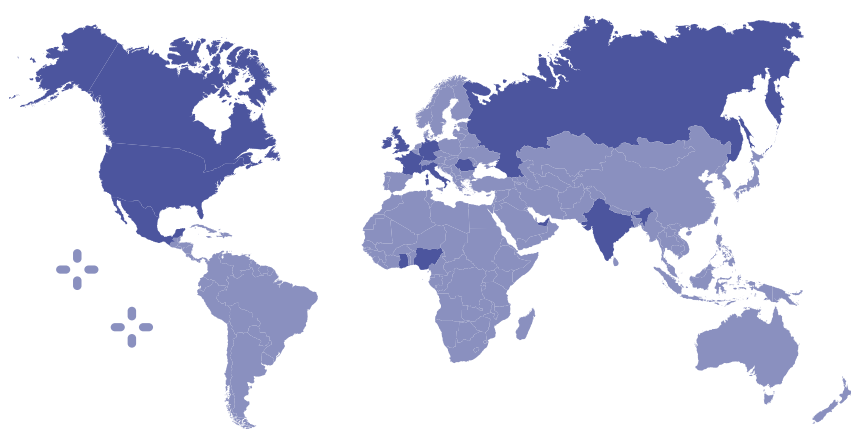
METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE

What did we do?

Responses were collected via an online survey designed by Opinium which was distributed by Global Women in PR through their global network.

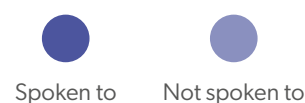
Fieldwork took place between July and September 2021.

Who did we speak to?

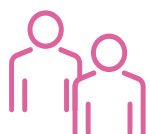


We spoke to **430** PR professionals around the world

Over half of the respondents (52%) were at board director level and 48% had over 15 years experience in the PR industry



47%
No
children



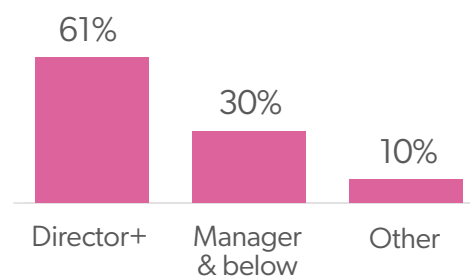
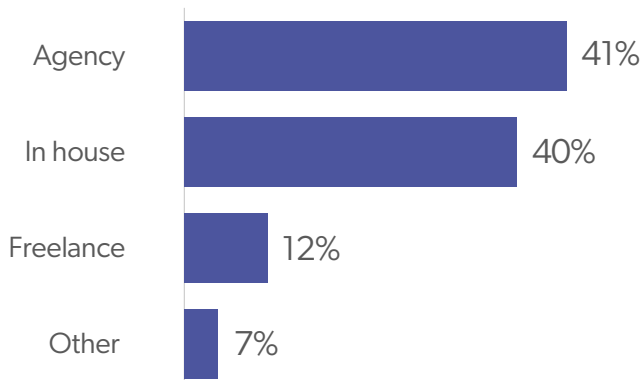
53%
Have
children



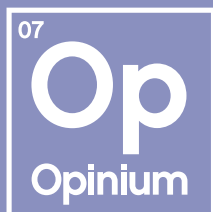
3%
Male



97%
Female



ABOUT OPINIUM



Opinium is an award-winning strategic insights agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends upon the ability to stay on the pulse of what people think feel and do. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter.

We help our clients harness the power of insight to build, grow, promote and make strategic business decisions.

With over 10 years of experience conducting research for PR, we pride ourselves in getting to know our clients' needs and the issues their brand and industry faces. We have extensive experience researching wide ranging topics amongst consumers and B2B audiences around the world and converting their opinions into compelling thought leadership for agencies and end clients alike.

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