



# Global Women in PR

## Annual Index 2022

#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.

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 more groups developing in North 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 career progression and the working environment. The boardroom continues to be dominated by men (64%), despite the global industry being 2/3 female.

We highlight the well-researched fact that companies with a balanced boardroom are more successful on many levels.

**We aim to empower the next generation of female leaders to inspire them to fulfil their potential.**

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### OUR SUPPORTERS



## INTRODUCTION

The **Annual Index** is a GWPR (Global Women in PR) report measuring the position of women in PR around the world. This research-based report is part of a five year plan to help us understand the issues affecting women in the industry and to measure the progress towards gender equality.

This is the fourth edition of the GWPR Annual Index and what has become increasingly clear from our annual research is that progress towards equality continues to be extremely slow.

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

According to the McKinsey Women in the Workplace 2022 report if companies don't take action, they risk losing not only their current women leaders but also the next generation of women leaders. Young women being even more ambitious and placing a higher premium on working in an equitable, supportive, and inclusive workplace.

We found that it's becoming increasingly important to PR women that they work for companies that prioritize flexibility, employee well-being, diversity, equity and inclusion.

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



## Discrimination in the workplace

Also for this year's Annual Index we decided to take a look at discrimination in the workplace. Worryingly we discovered that over half of PR women say they have experienced some kind of discrimination.

Gender discrimination was at the top of the list, but surprisingly the second most common form of discrimination was ageism.

The issue of ageism in PR is a very real one and important to acknowledge in an industry where talent retention is a big challenge. The situation is much worse for those working in agency, rather than in-house. Only 35% of PR agency women think they will still be working in an agency when they reach 50 years of age.

## Flexible working

On the positive side our GWPR research clearly reveals the 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.

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

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



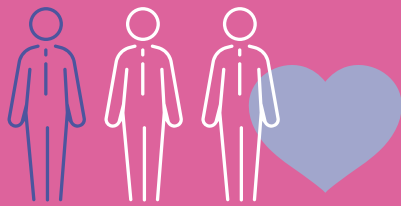
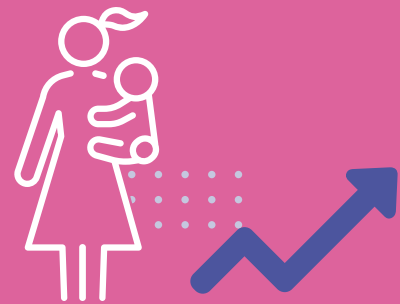
**Angela Oakes,**  
**Co-founder & Joint President, GWPR**

## TOP LINE FINDINGS



The Covid pandemic has dramatically changed the way women in PR work – **92%** are working flexibly and 81% are working remotely

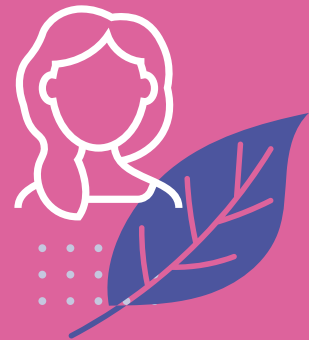
Both provide golden opportunities for women with a whole range of benefits - **71%** believe it allows for caring responsibilities while progressing a career



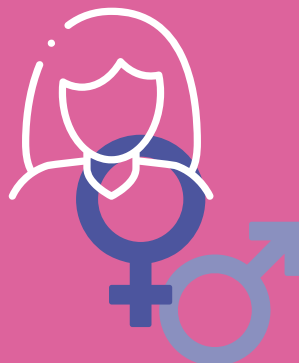
Employers' attitudes to flexible working are also changing, with a higher recognition of the positive benefits – **2/3** now view positively



Gender equality in the boardroom remains elusive and **50%** believe women with children are discriminated against in terms of career progression



Over half of PR women have experienced workplace discrimination - **23%** claim this was age related, second only to gender discrimination (27%)



There is still a lot to be done by organisations in terms of D&I policies and only **1/3** include age targets in their policies

It appears flexible working is here to stay, as the same proportion (92%) expect to be working flexibly in the future.



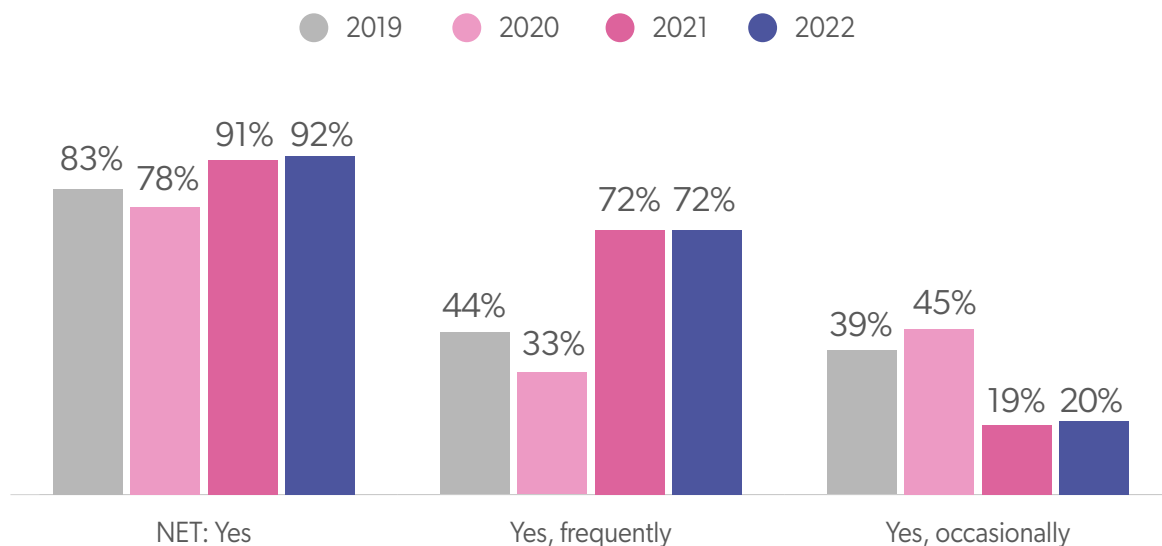
## THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Flexible working appears to be here to stay, with the level of flexible working remaining the same after a steep rise following the Coronavirus pandemic. We are seeing some small shifts in the perceptions of people who work flexibly, with slightly fewer associating it with slower career progression. There have been further increases in PR professionals reporting a positive perception by their company of the benefits of flexible working.

### Flexible working practices are maintained post-pandemic and are anticipated to remain

Last year we observed a significant increase in the number of PR professionals working flexibly (91%), up from 78% the previous year, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. **Levels of flexible working have been maintained this year with 92% currently working flexibly. It appears flexible working is here to stay and the same proportion (92%) expect to be working flexibly in the future.**

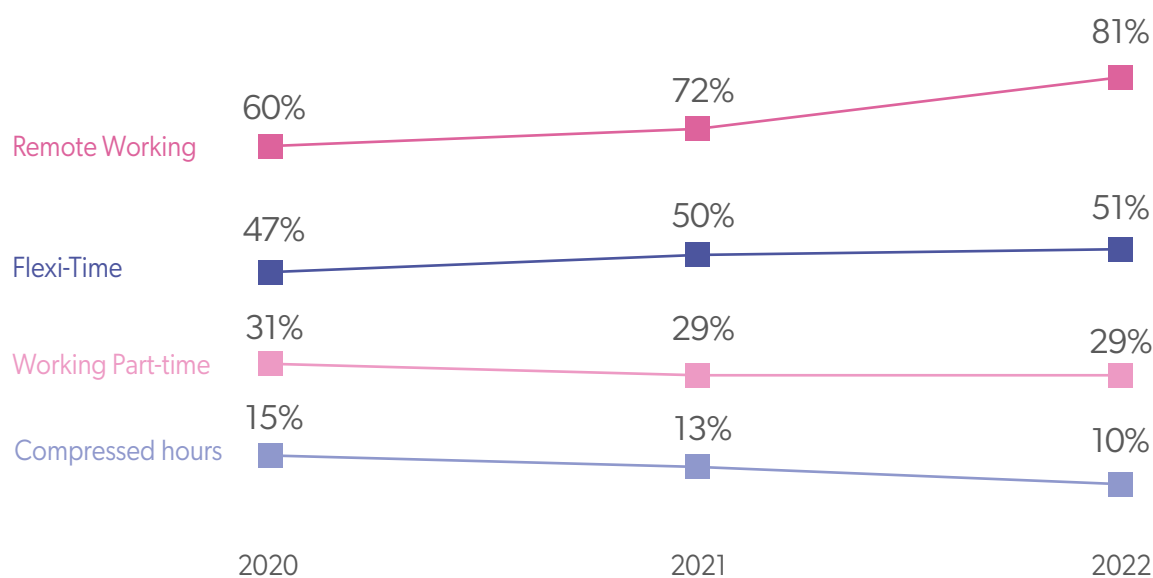
Flexible working in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022



In line with the findings from 2021, over the next twelve months, PR professionals expect to be working remotely for an average of three days per week. Interestingly, there is a slight drop in expected full-time remote working (5 days a week). 16% expect to do this over the next 12 months, compared to 21% in 2021.

When it comes to the opportunity for flexible working, we can see an increase in the number of PR professionals being offered remote working - now 81%, up from 72% in 2021 and 60% in 2020. The opportunity of working flexi-time (51% vs. 50% in 2021) and part-time (29% both 2022 and 2021) are maintained this year. Similar to last year the opportunity of working compressed hours is declining.

### Flexible working offered by organisations in 2020, 2021 and 2022



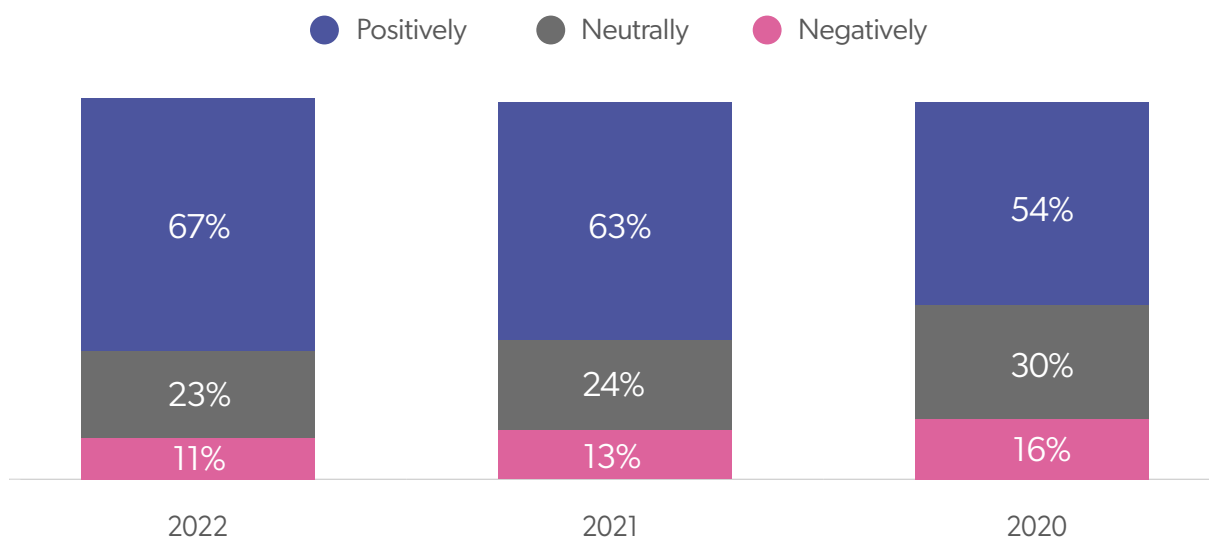
And over half (56%) of PR women expect to be working remotely 2-3 days a week during the next year.

## The benefits of flexible working are becoming increasingly apparent

Encouragingly, with flexible working becoming more normalised in the world of PR, the benefits and positive perceptions of this way of working, particularly for women, are increasing over time. Last year we observed a significant increase in positive perceptions of flexible working at PR companies (63% vs 54%). Similarly this year, whilst not as marked, we see a further increase in positive perceptions (67% vs 63%). Interestingly, those working agency-side are more likely to report a positive perception (72%) to flexible working, compared to in-house (61%).



### How is flexible working generally perceived at your company?



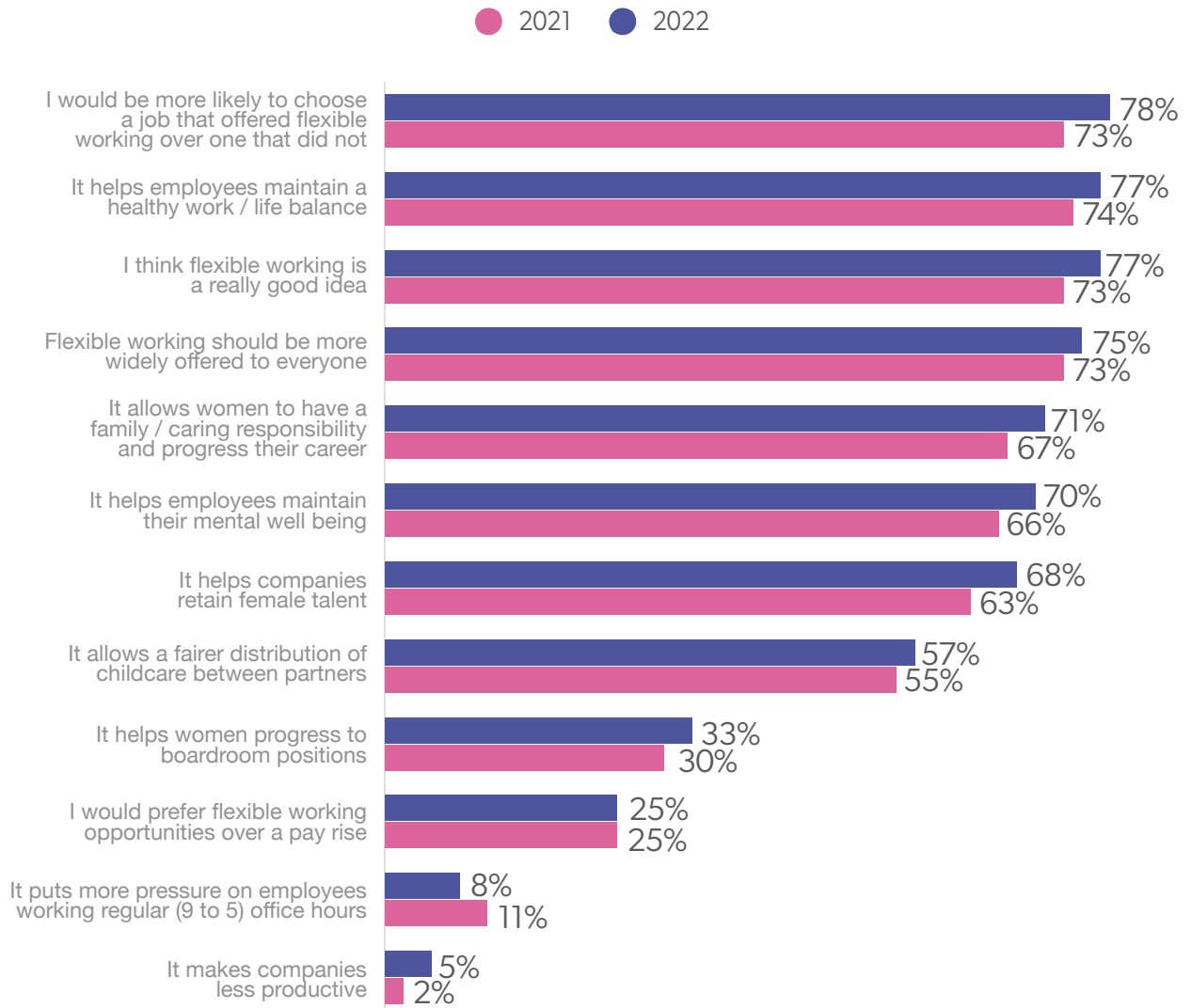
Encouragingly, the benefits of working flexibly are becoming stronger with time, with some directional shifts in benefit recognition compared to last year. With regard to wellbeing, over three-quarters (77%) feel it helps employees maintain a healthy work-life balance, up from 74% in 2021. In addition, seven in ten (70%) believe it helps employees maintain their overall mental wellbeing, up from 66% in 2021.

Thinking specifically about the benefits for PR women, 71% believe flexible working allows women to have a family, or take on caring responsibilities and still progress in their careers; up from 67% last year. Whilst 68% agree that it helps retain female talent (increasing from 63% in 2021).

One third (33%) believe that flexible working helps women progress into the boardroom, a small increase from 30% last year.

Flexible working continues to be desired and an important consideration when making decisions about changing jobs, with more than three-quarters (78%) saying they would be more likely to choose a job that offered flexible working over one that did not – up from 73% last year.

### Which if any of the following statements do you agree with about flexible working?



## However, overall flexible working is still associated by some with slower career progression

Despite flexible working becoming more cemented in the PR industry and the benefits well-understood, 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, a quarter (25%), believe they progress more slowly, a slight reduction from 28% in 2021, in line with 2020 responses (25%). Therefore whilst we acknowledge the real benefits to women of flexible working, there is still a view that career progression can be inhibited.

### OPINION

## Why the workplace is the best place to address mental health with flexible working playing a major role

I'm not surprised that GWPR's survey found most employees feel flexible working has helped them maintain their overall mental wellbeing. I've heard similarly from those at my own agency — women in particular. At this point, pandemic or not, we've adopted a hybrid working model with many offerings and benefits specifically made to support mental health and to build flexibility into the workday.

In many western countries, suicide is the biggest killer of 15- to 40-year-olds. How did we get here? While I've been involved with mental health initiatives for many years, I dug in particularly hard the last couple of years, when we saw the tangible effect the pandemic was having. I sit on the board of a mental fitness charity called Gotcha4Life that has a vision of zero suicides. They believe no one should worry alone and they reframe "mental health" as "mental fitness." It allows us to talk about it more positively, and just like physical fitness, mental fitness can't be achieved overnight. We need to work on it regularly — not just as individuals and friends, but also as employers and colleagues.

As adults we spend more time with our co-workers than with any other people in our lives, including our family. This makes the office a fantastic place to address mental fitness and wellbeing and to combat stigma by being vulnerable and having open conversations.

I often bring up the fact that if someone needed to take two weeks off because they broke their leg, we'd send them flowers and chocolates. But if they needed to take two weeks off to tend to their mental health, it's likely we'd not even call, let alone send anything. There are all kinds of positive side effects to addressing mental health in the workplace — employee retention, better morale, higher productivity etc. — but more than anything, it's about being good to our fellow humans when they most need our support.



**James Wright,**  
Global CEO of Red Havas

# BOARDROOMS & BARRIERS

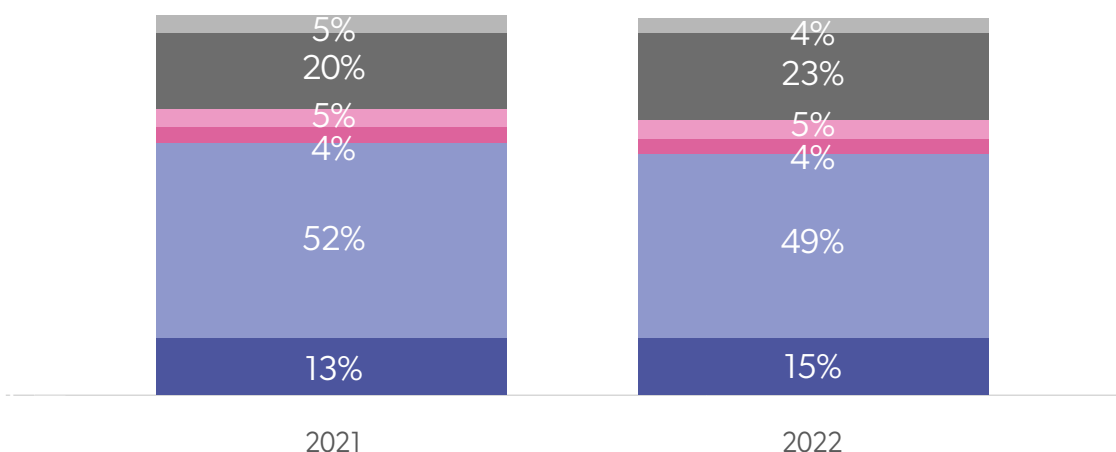
The gender split in boardrooms continues to see very little change. We know it will take some time to see any tangible differences. Overall men are still far more likely to hold boardroom positions (64%), and women are still thought to be promoted at a much slower rate than their male counterparts. This year we see more of a focus on women not pushing themselves forward for promotion being a barrier to entry into the boardroom. Encouragingly, once again we see the importance and benefits to business that comes from having women in the boardroom.

## Two-thirds of PR women continue to work in companies where the boardroom is male dominated

Looking into the gender split of boardrooms, two in three (64%) PR women work in companies with a male dominated board, slightly down from last year (66%). Half (49%) say their board of directors is mostly made up of men, and one in seven (15%) 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% again this year, having dropped from 14% back in 2019.

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

- All men
- Mostly men
- All women
- Mostly women
- Equal split
- Don't know



Again this year, over half (54%) of those surveyed that have a board of directors<sup>1</sup> feel the gender split on their board is unfair.

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

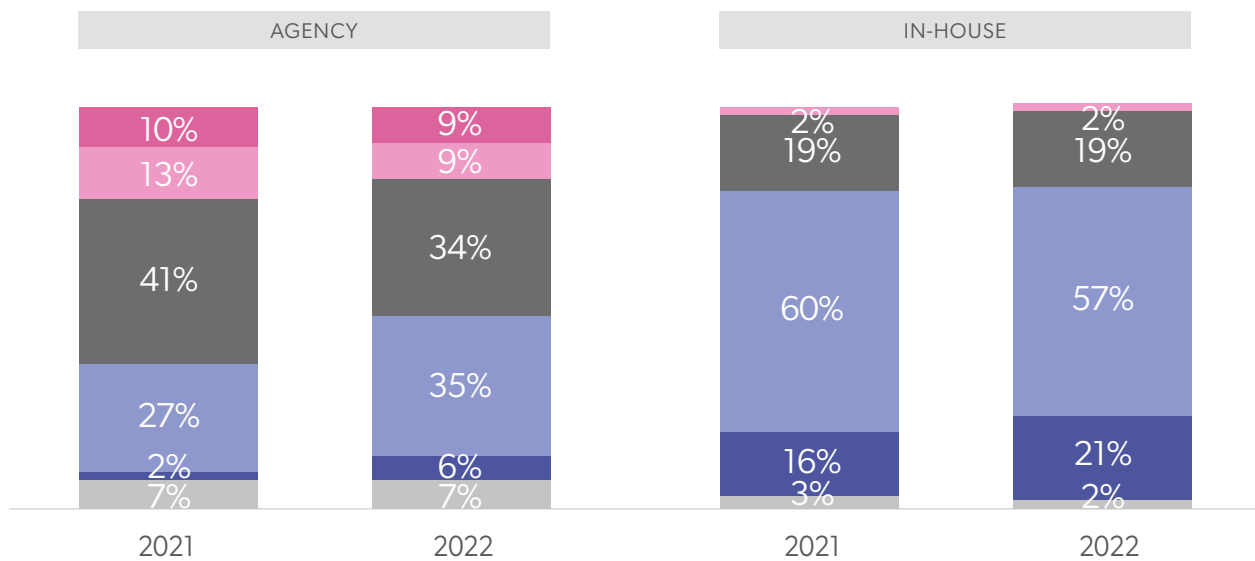
## Almost half believe women are promoted more slowly - this situation is much worse in-house than in agencies

The proportion of PR professionals who feel that women are promoted more slowly at their company remains consistent with last year (45% versus 44% last year). As we saw last year, progression for PR women working in-house appears trickier. Those working in-house were more likely to think women are promoted more slowly at their company compared to those in agencies (58% vs 31%).

When it comes to comparing mothers and fathers, the gender difference in relation to career progression continues to be stark. **Half (50%) of PR professionals feel mothers are promoted more slowly, compared to just 4% of fathers.**

### What is the gender split of your board?

● Don't know ● All men ● Mostly men ● Equal split ● Mostly women ● All women



## Despite this, the prospect of women in the boardroom is a positive one for business

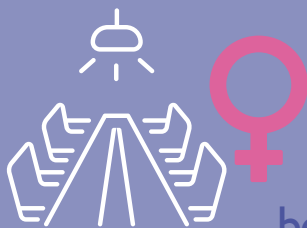
Despite the relatively low levels of PR women in boardrooms, we can this year highlight, once again, the growing importance of female boardroom presence and the significant benefits of greater gender equality in business.

Almost eight in ten believe that having women in the boardroom helps improve working practices and the creativity of companies (both 79% respectively). Just under three quarters (73%) believe that having women on boards clears barriers to promotion for other women, although this has decreased from 81% last year.

Almost nine in ten (89%) believe more needs to be done to ensure women in the PR industry have greater boardroom presence, similar to last year.

This once again clearly highlights the need for businesses to take note of the barriers to women progressing and to continue addressing them sooner rather than later, so that businesses can start to see the positive impact of women in their boardroom.

Almost eight in ten believe that having women in the boardroom helps improve working practices and the creativity of companies



79%

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

79%

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



77%

feel having women in the boardroom helps to improve company productivity

## The barriers to women entering the boardroom are consistent with previous years, suggesting there is still work to be done

Looking at the potential barriers women face when it comes to progressing into senior positions, **the biggest barrier is believed to be childcare or caring responsibilities (89%)**, which continues to increase year on year, from 86% last year and up by 11% when compared to 2020 - perhaps another lingering outcome of the Covid pandemic. Related to this, 75% feel that the lack of flexible working and family-friendly policies prevent women from progressing into senior positions (74% last year).

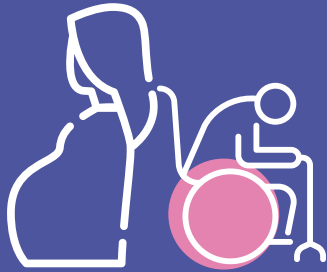
In addition to caring responsibilities, there is also a feeling of inequality when it comes to promotion and recruitment. Seven in ten (71%) feel that women tend to be less proactive about asking for promotions than men (up from 67% last year). A similar proportion (70%) believe there is a lack of transparency around recruitment and promotion, which creates a barrier for women attaining more senior roles (again up from 67% last year). Two thirds (66%), down from 72% last year, believe the lack of work-life balance in a senior role prevents women from getting into the boardroom, moving down from the third barrier to the fifth barrier this year.

Despite the above, three fifths (63%) believe that progress is being made to remove barriers that prevent women progressing into senior positions; consistent with last year (62%).

Three fifths believe that progress is being made to remove barriers that prevent women progressing into senior positions



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



**89%**

Women predominantly taking on childcare or caring responsibilities

**75%**

Lack of flexible working or family-friendly working policies



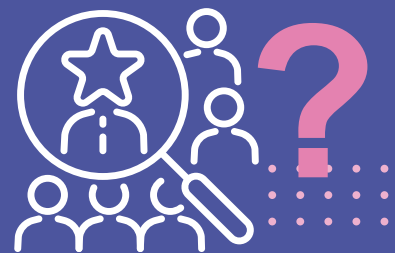
**71%**

Women tend to be less proactive about asking for a promotion



**70%**

Lack of transparency around recruitment and promotion



**66%**

Lack of work / life balance in a senior role





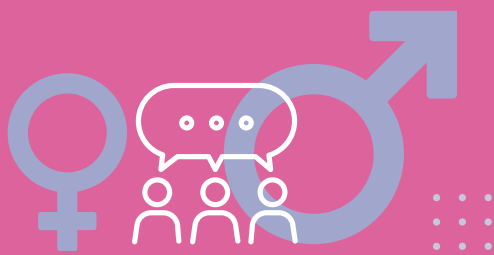
## More needs to be done to break down boardroom barriers

Flexible working practices continue to be considered the best initiative to enable more women to take on board room roles (71%, up from 67% last year). Other initiatives identified to help women's career progression are having more senior female role models (68%), more senior recognition of the issues around gender inequality (63%) and mentoring schemes (62%).

Top 5 initiatives to get more women into the boardroom:



**68%** More senior female role models



**63%**  
Senior recognition of the issues around gender inequality

**62%** Mentoring schemes



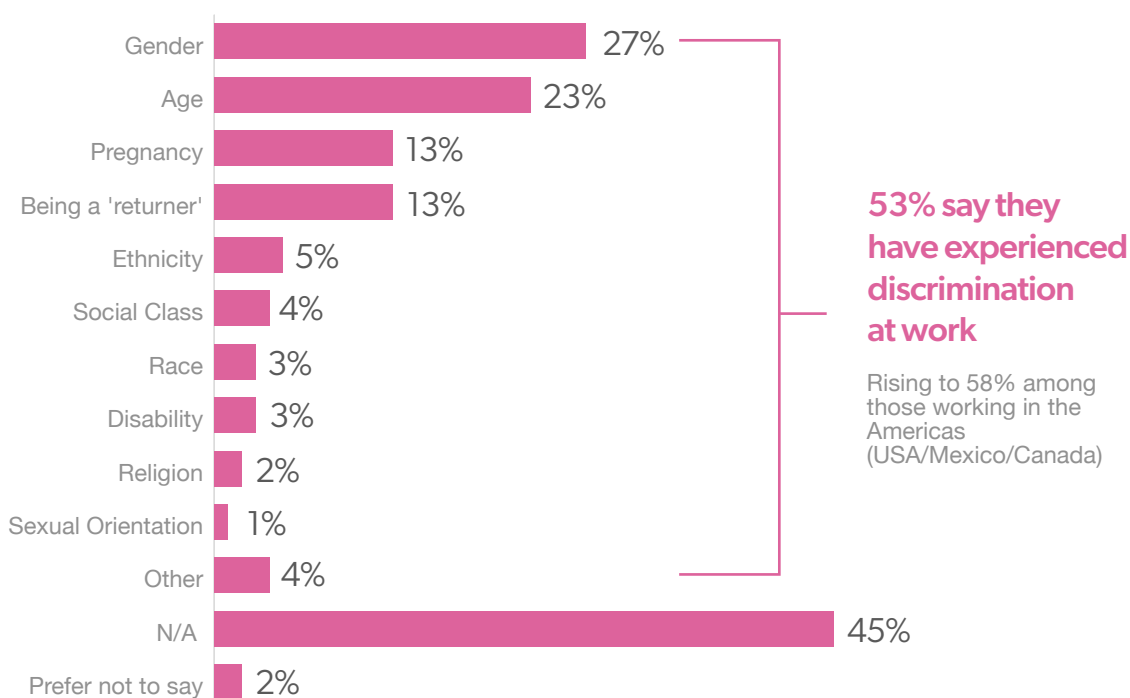
**54%**  
Training opportunities

## DISCRIMINATION AND AGEISM

### Globally, more than half of female PRs have experienced workplace discrimination

Over half (53%) of women in PR across the globe have experienced some sort of discrimination against them in the workplace – with gender (27%), age (23%), pregnancy (13%) and being a 'returner' from maternity leave (13%) cited as the main reasons for discrimination. Part-time workers report that the most prevalent reason for the discrimination they experienced was being pregnant (19%). Interestingly, discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, race, disability, religion and sexual orientation remain low – all less than 10%.

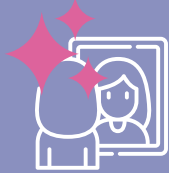
#### Discrimination faced in the workplace



Worryingly, over half (53%) of those who experienced discrimination say they were overlooked for a promotion or a pay rise, with this experience being more prevalent amongst PR women working in agencies (60%). Nearly half (46%) also report that workplace discrimination affected their overall confidence and mental wellbeing.



**53%**  
Overlooked for promotion/pay rise



**46%**  
Affected confidence/wellbeing



**28%**  
Excluded from important meetings



**26%**  
Missed out on job opportunities



**25%**  
Felt judged on looks/beliefs/values



**25%**  
Treated as if less intelligent



**24%**  
Important tasks were taken away



**21%**  
Had to leave the company



**9%**  
Excluded from social events

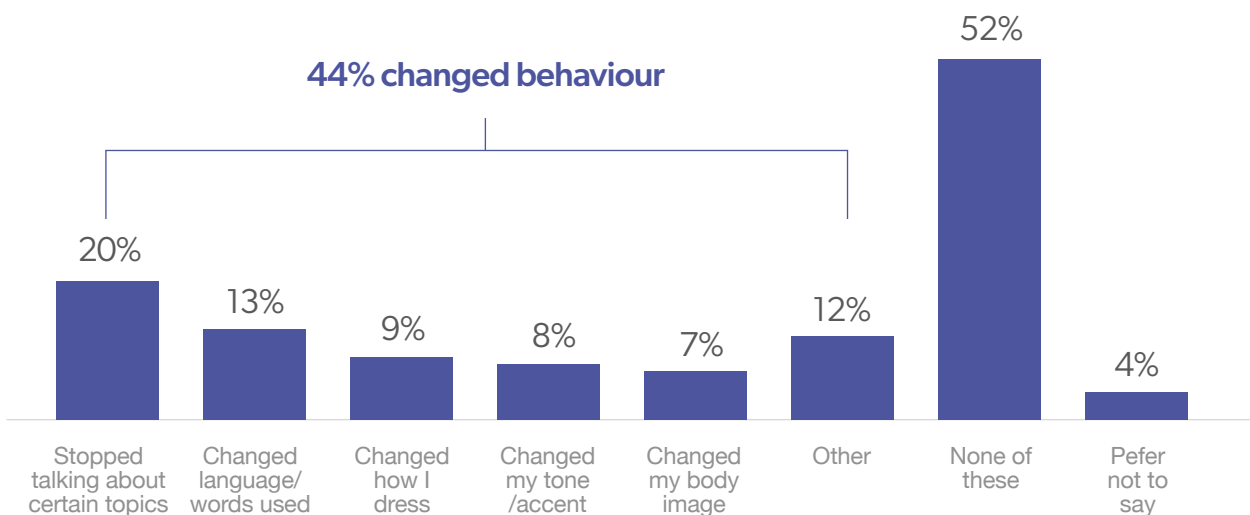


**9%**  
Raised a grievance

Just 6% said it didn't impact their career

As a result, more than 2 in 5 (44%) of those who experienced discrimination say this impacted both how they communicate and their appearance. 1 in 5 (20%) say they stopped talking about certain topics, and 13% changed the languages or words they use. Additionally, 8% changed their tone / accent. From an appearance perspective, one in ten (9%) changed the way they dress, and 7% changed their body image, for example by removing piercings or going on a diet.

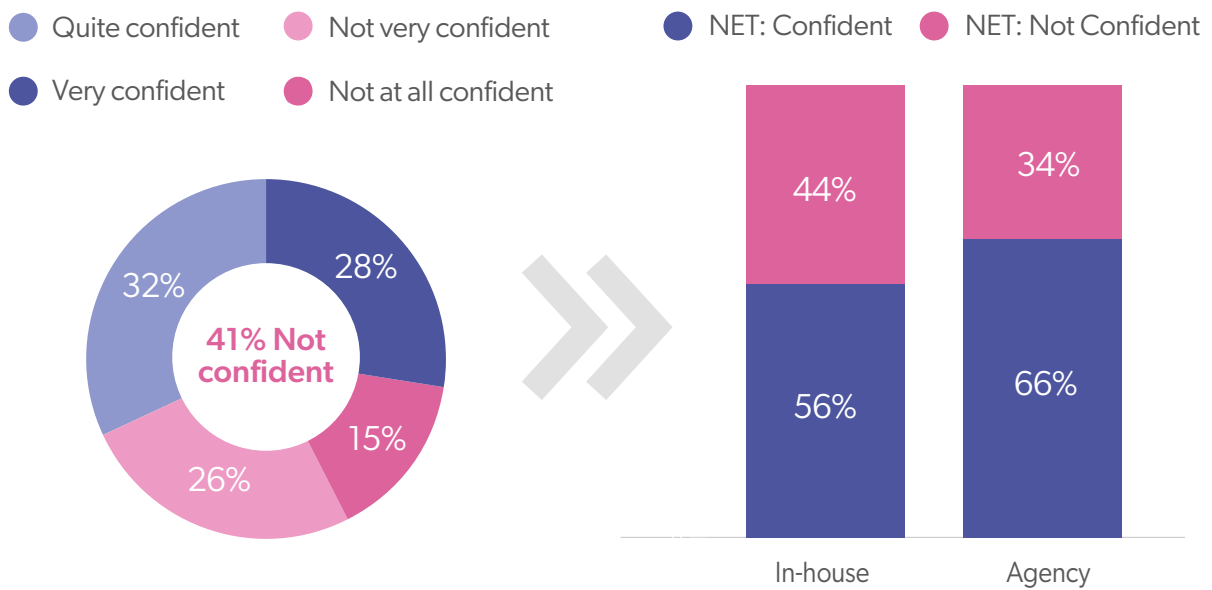
### Impact of discrimination on behaviour



## Three-fifths state their organisations have D&I policies in place, with gender equality being the top target

Considering over half of the women in PR have experienced some sort of discrimination in the workplace, it is encouraging to see that 3 in 5 (60%) feel confident about knowing where to go to raise grievances in their organisation. This is higher for those working in agencies (66%), compared to those who work in-house (56%).

### Confidence in raising grievances

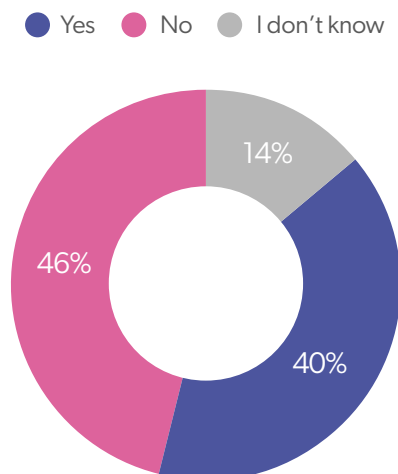


3 in 5 feel confident about knowing where to go to raise grievances in their organisation

Three in five (62%) state that their companies have diversity and inclusion policies in place. This rises to 3 in 4 (74%) among those who work in-house, and just over a half (55%) for agency workers. Looking at specific D&I targets for which employers could be held accountable; gender equality (62%), disability (54%) and sexual orientation (51%) were the most common; just a quarter (27%) included targets for social class diversity and only 37% set age targets in their policies. The lack of focus on age is particularly worrying when we have seen that for PR women this was cited as the second most common form of discrimination they experienced.

Almost half (46%) of respondents say their workplace does not offer unconscious bias training, while 1 in 7 (14%) are uncertain, and only 40% say that such training is available.

**Does your workplace offer unconscious bias or inclusion training to employees?**



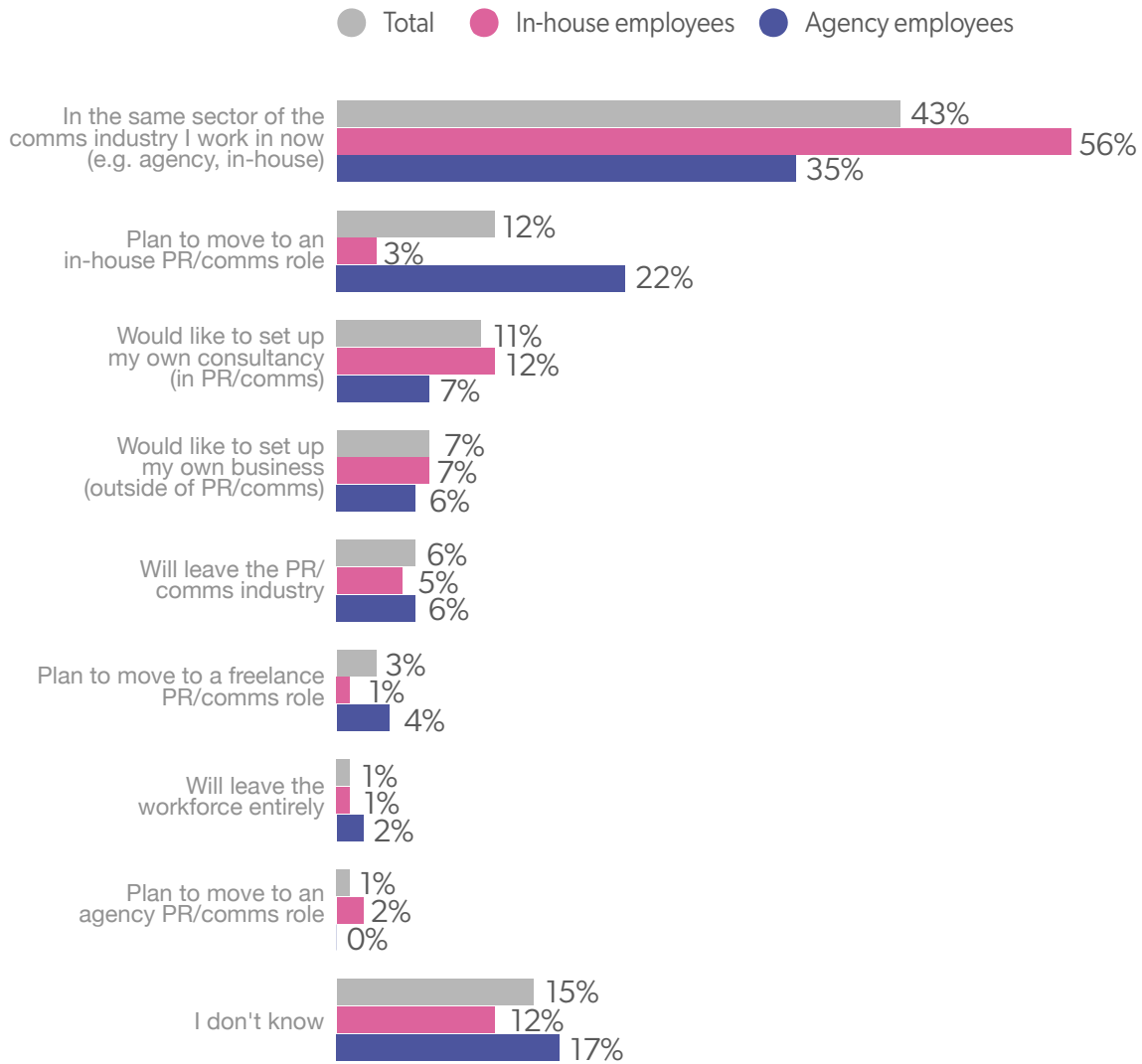
**Just a third of agency workers see themselves working in agency roles in their 50s**

From what we have learnt so far about age discrimination it's not surprising that PR women are not confident about staying in the industry for the whole of their career. In particular just one-third of PR women working in agencies see themselves there beyond 50 years of age.

PR agency women also believe that in-house communications is a less ageist environment. 22% say they plan to move to an in-house role in their 50's. In contrast only 2% of in-house PR's would consider moving to an agency role at this stage of their career. Just 1 in 10 (11%) would like to set up their own consultancy.

Only 2 in 5 (43%) of those under 50 years of age think they will be in the sector they work in now when they reach their 50s. This is higher for in-house (56%) PR women than agency (35%) PR women.

### Where do you see yourself working at 50+



So what are the best initiatives employers could use to encourage PR women to stay in their roles as they get older? Flexible working opportunities and recruitment policies around age are the top initiatives employers should have in place (both 71%). This is followed by offering more training and skills development (58%) and recognition of care giving demands (55%).



## What can employers do to help keep women in the PR and communications industry as they get older?



**71%**

Provide flexible working opportunities

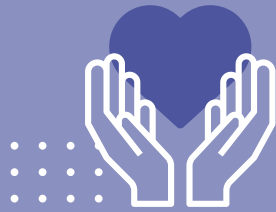
**71%**

Have a recruitment policy that doesn't discriminate on the basis of age



Offer more training/skills-development opportunities

**58%**



**55%**

Have more of an understanding of caregiving demands and better support in place

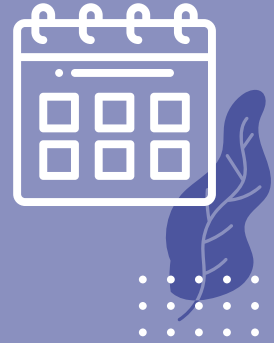


**46%**

Promote an open, supportive environment to talk about issues older women face

**35%**

Offer paid leave for carers

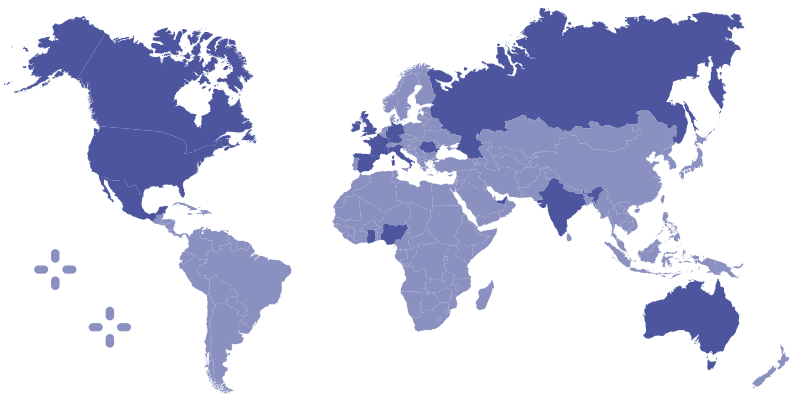


# METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE

## 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 of women working in senior roles in PR and Communications. Fieldwork took place between August and September 2022.

## Who did we speak to?



We spoke to **437** PR professionals around the world

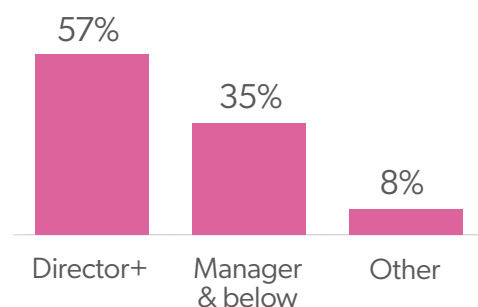
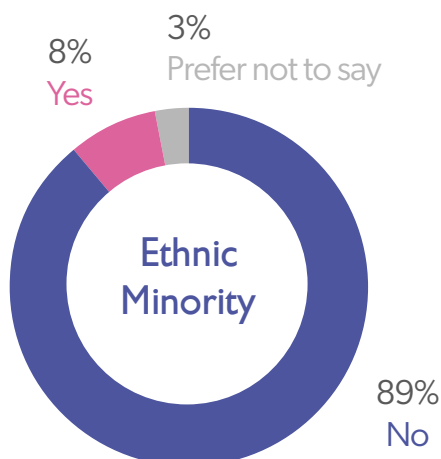
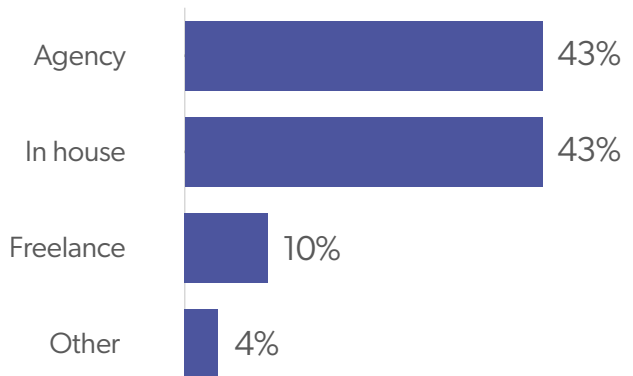
Respondents were highly experienced and working at a senior level. Over half (57%) were at board director level and 49% had over 15 years experience in the PR industry



**47%**  
No children



**52%**  
Have children





## ABOUT OPINIUM



is an award winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on 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 work with organisations to define and overcome strategic challenges – helping them to get to grips with the world in which their brands operate. We use the right approach and methodology to deliver robust insights, strategic counsel and targeted recommendations that generate change and positive outcomes.

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