



# Global Women in PR

# Annual Index 2024



[#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.

Founded to connect, champion and support women in senior PR and Communication roles, GWPR is a not-for-profit organisation driven by a desire to change the landscape for women working in our industry.

There are GWPR national groups and affiliates in the UK, across Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Central America, Australia and Asia and we are expanding fast with new groups developing in Turkey and New York.

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

With boardrooms continuing to be dominated by men (64%), despite the global industry being 2/3 female, a key focus for GWPR is the issue surrounding leadership and gender equality - from flexible working practices to career progression and the working environment.

We highlight the well-researched fact that organisations 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.

GWPR | Erskine House, 59 Davies Street, London, W1K 5JT | [www.globalwpr.com](http://www.globalwpr.com)

For further information please contact: [info@globalwpr.com](mailto:info@globalwpr.com)

 [globalwpr](https://www.instagram.com/globalwpr)  [globalwpr](https://www.facebook.com/globalwpr)  [globalwpr](https://twitter.com/globalwpr)  [global-women-in-pr](https://www.linkedin.com/company/global-women-in-pr)

## OUR SUPPORTERS



# INTRODUCTION

**As you read through this year's findings, the big questions we need to ask ourselves is what we can collectively do to enable more women in PR and communications to not just stay, but also succeed in their careers. The career progression of women in the industry is being impacted by various factors:**

## Career Breaks

This year's index saw the inclusion of a new section on career breaks to understand if and how career breaks impact returnees. The impact on women is at many levels, including salary, promotions and level adjustments. Also of concern is that more than a third of women reported taking career breaks for mental health reasons.

## Workplace Harassment

Last year, over 50% of women said they faced harassment at the workplace. The trend continues this year with some big differences – women reported facing more of each form of harassment, and more women are choosing not to report it because of fear, lack of awareness, retaliation, mental health and not being taken seriously. A third of women either left or were asked to leave their organisation when reporting harassment.

## Ageism

In the age group where we have the most experienced women, we are losing them – a fifth of women say they would like to move out of PR/Comms after 50, while a fifth in agencies say they would like to take on in-house roles.

## Policy Support

Whilst women believe they are becoming more assertive and proactive in asking for promotions, more women believe that caring and family-friendly policies are impeding their progress into senior roles. Organisations do not seem to be doing enough in this area.

Women  
continue to want  
more flexibility at  
work

Women continue to want more flexibility at work and, for the first time in our Index, there is a big desire across levels for compressed hours, indicating perhaps that long work hours and the demands of our industry leave little time for personal commitments. Whilst there are also positive shifts in some areas, these are small percentages and not enough to celebrate. So, what do we need to do to retain women in PR and communications and help more women progress into senior positions? The answer perhaps lies in the responses in our survey – flexible working practices, senior role models, recognition of the issues around gender inequality by leaders, mentoring programmes and training.

“I think it’s true to say that we (women) are generally more effective communicators, have greater emotional intelligence, are more empathetic and have better relationship-building skills than men. These have become indispensable assets in an industry that thrives on establishing and maintaining connections,” says PRovoke Global Head of Features + EMEA news Maja Pawinska Sims.

We hope this year’s Index will highlight the challenges as well as the opportunities to drive the changes needed to make a real difference for women working in our industry



**Melissa Arulappan**  
GWPR Executive Board Member and  
Board member of GWPR India



# ERA OF ALLYSHIP

Having read the latest findings from Global Women in PR Annual Index, in the context of (at the time of writing) the election of a new U.S. president, the rights of women around the world are on my mind. Like many, I worry that we're entering a new era, where the gains towards equality we've fought for now over many decades – at work, home and in society – are evaporating.

Let's take that little word, era. As it captures perfectly, in a neat acronym, what for me are the key take outs of this year's report.

E is for erosion, the slow and toxic wearing away of women's faith in the workplace systems designed to level our professional playing field. Witness the small but telling increase in the proportion of women who feel promotion prospects are slowing down - 46% this year, versus 43% last; while flexible working victories gained during Covid are also believed to be viewed less favourably now by employers, down from 66% to 61%.

R is for reluctance. Despite more than half of us (52%) experiencing some form of harassment at work - and I can't believe I just wrote that - the number of women reporting it has dropped significantly year on year, from 46% to 37%, primarily due to the negative impact it might have on their career (46%). Speaking again of an erosion of belief in the protocols - where they exist - designed to protect our workplace rights.

More optimistically, does the antidote for this lie in the A? Allyship. And in particular, senior women pointing the way forward (and calling out the BS as we go). I think so, and so do 71% of this year's respondents, who believe more senior female role models will finally help blow open those boardroom doors.

This ambition is captured brilliantly by Gloria Steinem, arguably the world's most famous feminist and advocate for women's rights. Admittedly an obvious go to when you need a validating quote, but in this case she nailed it when she said: "The future depends entirely on what each of us does every day."

As a senior woman, I for one am determined to leave this industry in a better state than which I found it. Let's make the next era the era of allyship.



**Jo Patterson**  
Managing Director | she/her/hers  
Zeno London | +44 (0)7803 229 013



# TOPLINE FINDINGS

**Flexible working is still common** but there has been a small decrease from 2023 in line with organisations' mandating a greater return to the office.

And yet flexible working remains an important requirement and there has been a sharp rise in those wanting to work remotely. The reason given is **better work/life balance**.



For the first time compressed hours (**31%**) are more popular than working part-time (**24%**).

Women continue to experience **slower career progression** than men, with an increase reported this year.

Whilst the importance and benefit of having women in boardrooms remains high, **boardrooms overall continue to be very male dominated**. Agency boardrooms are shown to have a better balance.



**Almost two fifths of women in PR have taken career breaks** with the impact on their careers being overlooked for promotion and lower pay on returning.

**A fifth of agency professionals** see themselves moving to in-house roles by the age of 50.

Half of female PR professionals have experienced harassment or inappropriate behaviour at work, with a third leaving their organisation as a result.



Among those who have experienced harassment, only a third have reported it - a notable decrease from our 2023 survey.

# THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

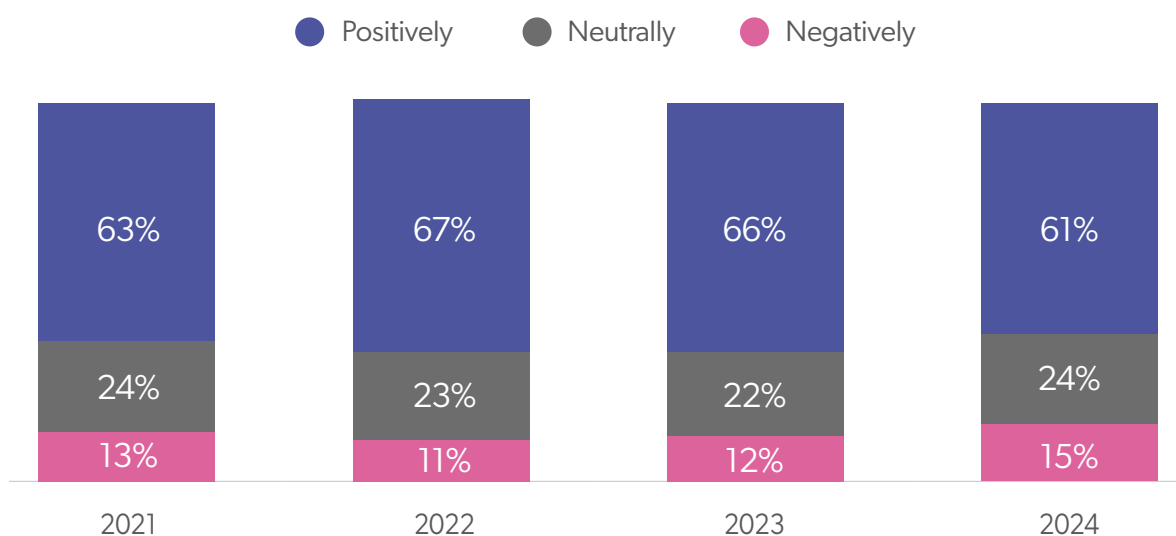
## Flexible working practices remain common but reveal a decrease since last year, aligned with a less positive view by organisations

Flexible working continues to be a significant part of the working environment. It is something favoured by PR professionals with seven in ten (68%) expressing that they want flexible working (working remotely at least one day a week) – a sharp increase from 47% in 2023. There’s also a significant increase in the desire to work compressed hours (full-time hours over fewer days) from 18% in 2023 to 31% in 2024. Interestingly, this was a trend across all age groups.

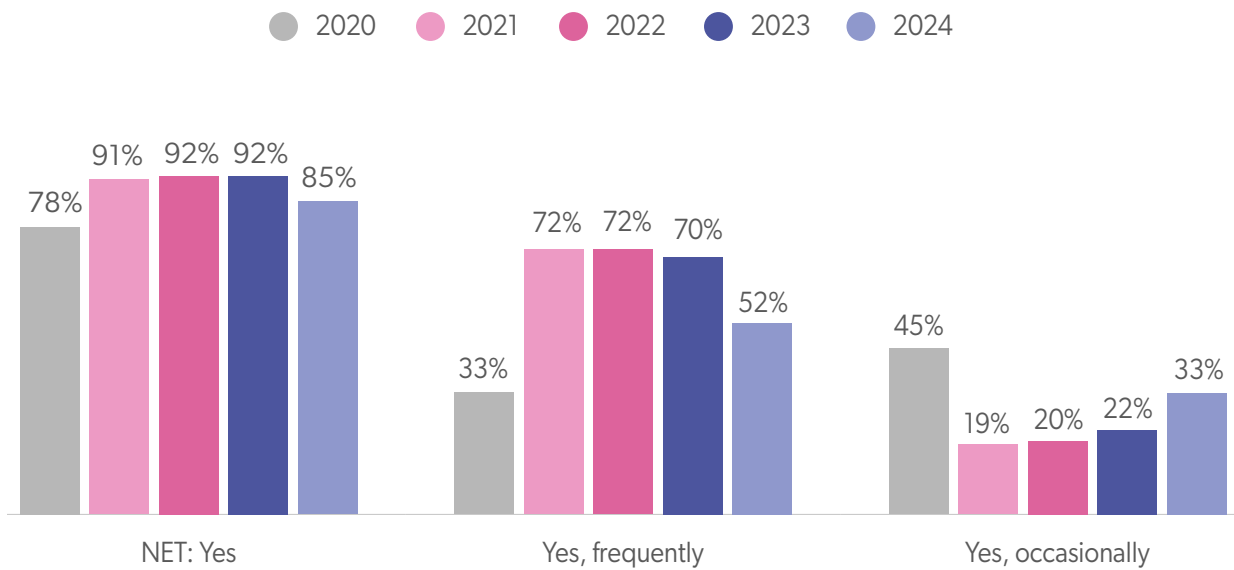
Overall, most organisations view flexible working in a positive light although there has been a slightly negative shift this year with fewer respondents believing their organisation view it positively (61% vs. 66%). This shift is largely observed from those working in-house (29% vs. 21%) and freelance (38% vs. 26%). Responses from those working agency-side remain consistent. Considering differences among PR professionals working for clients or in-house teams in different industries, flexible working is generally perceived as a positive by those working in entertainment, creative and sport (77%) and hospitality, travel, and transportation (73%). Those working in healthcare, life sciences and wellbeing were the least likely to report that flexible working is perceived positively in their organisation (64%).

This dip in the view of flexible working is corroborated by the decrease of PR professionals who currently report working flexibly compared to last year (92% vs. 85%).

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



## Flexible working offered by organisations in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024



## Flexible working continues to be seen positively by PR professionals, most commonly because of benefits to work/life balance

PR professionals continue to have a strong positive outlook on flexible working. Seven in ten (77%) feel it helps them maintain their mental wellbeing, up from 72% in 2023, and four in five (82%) feel it helps maintain a healthy work-life balance. Seven in ten (70%) still believe that flexible working is a really good idea although this is down from 77% in 2023.

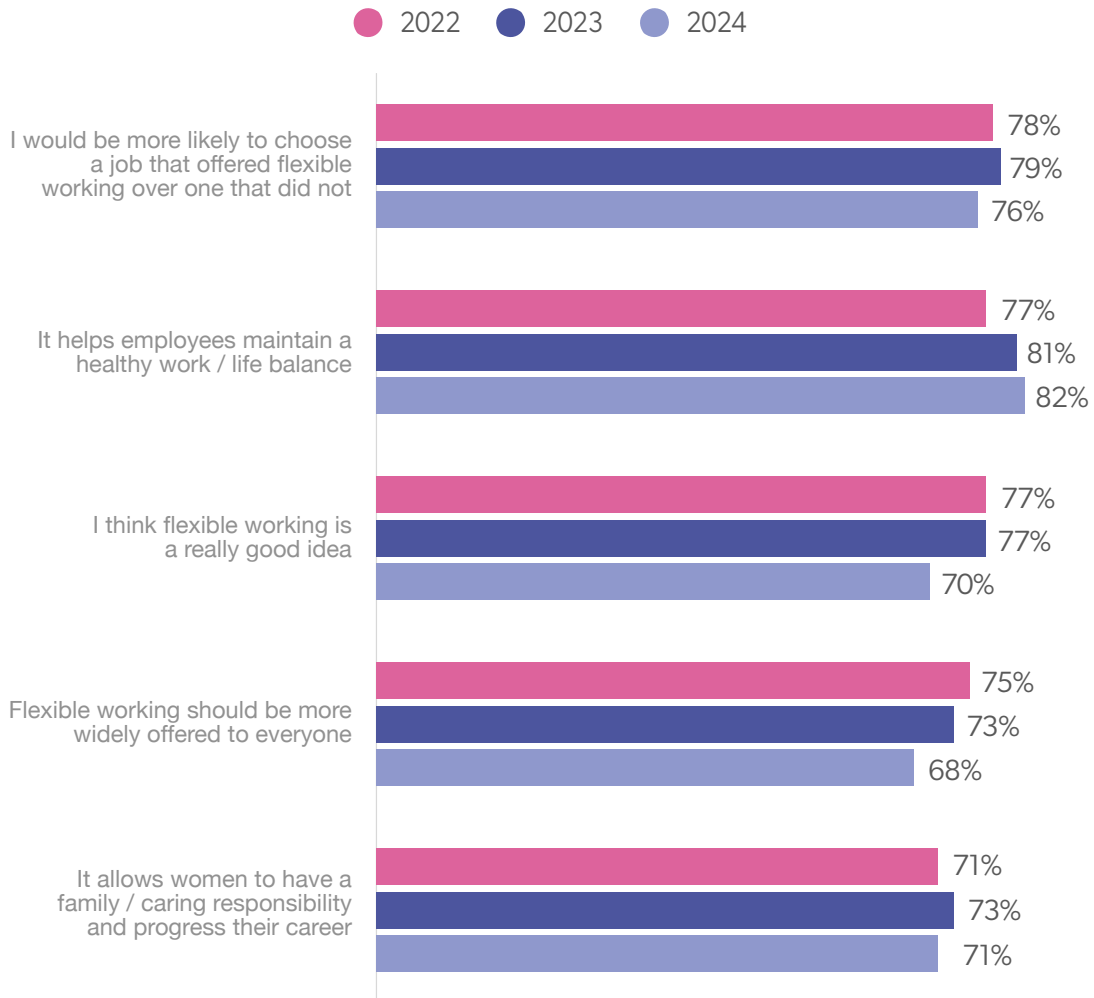
Seven in ten (71%) continue to believe that flexible working allows women to have a family or take on caring responsibilities and still progress in their careers, and a further seven in ten (70%) believe that it helps retain female talent. Three in ten (31%), however, believe that flexible working helps women progress into the boardroom, which is a small decrease from last year (35%).

Whilst flexible working continues to be desired by many and is an important consideration when looking at a new job, this sentiment saw a decrease when compared to last year (76% vs. 79%).

PR professionals continue to have a strong positive outlook on flexible working



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



## 2024 saw an uptick in the association between flexible working and slowed career progression

Despite flexible working being seen in a positive light with the benefits well recognised, it continues to be associated with slower career progression. When asked how flexible working impacts the careers of PR professionals, over a quarter (26%) believed they progress more slowly, an increase from 23% in 2023. This belief is more likely to be held by PR professionals working in education (30%), hospitality, travel, and transportation (27%) and healthcare, life sciences, and wellbeing (27%).

# BOARDROOMS & BARRIERS

## Career progression for women working in-house remains much slower when compared to those working in agencies

The proportion of PR professionals who feel that women are promoted more slowly has increased slightly from last year (46% vs. 43%). Those working in-house believe women are promoted more slowly compared to those working in agencies (57% vs. 31%).

## Three-fifths of PR women continue to work in organisations where the boardroom is male-dominated

Sadly there has been no significant change in 2024 in the gender split in boardrooms. Three in five (61%) respondents report boardrooms to be male-dominated. The majority of PR professionals consider the gender split of their organisations to be unfair (52%). This is more prominent amongst in-house PR professionals (62%) than those working on the agency-side (26%).

This year, there has been a slight decrease in the number of equally split boardrooms (24% vs. 26%). One in ten (11%) say that their board is made up entirely of men, although, encouragingly, this is the lowest over the past four years. 10% report that that their board is mostly made up of women,

Comparing in-house and agency, agencies consistently have a stronger representation of women, with nearly a quarter (23%) reporting their agency's board is female-dominated, compared to just 5% of in-house PR professionals. Agency PR professionals were also more likely to report an equally split board (40%) than their in-house equivalents (18%).

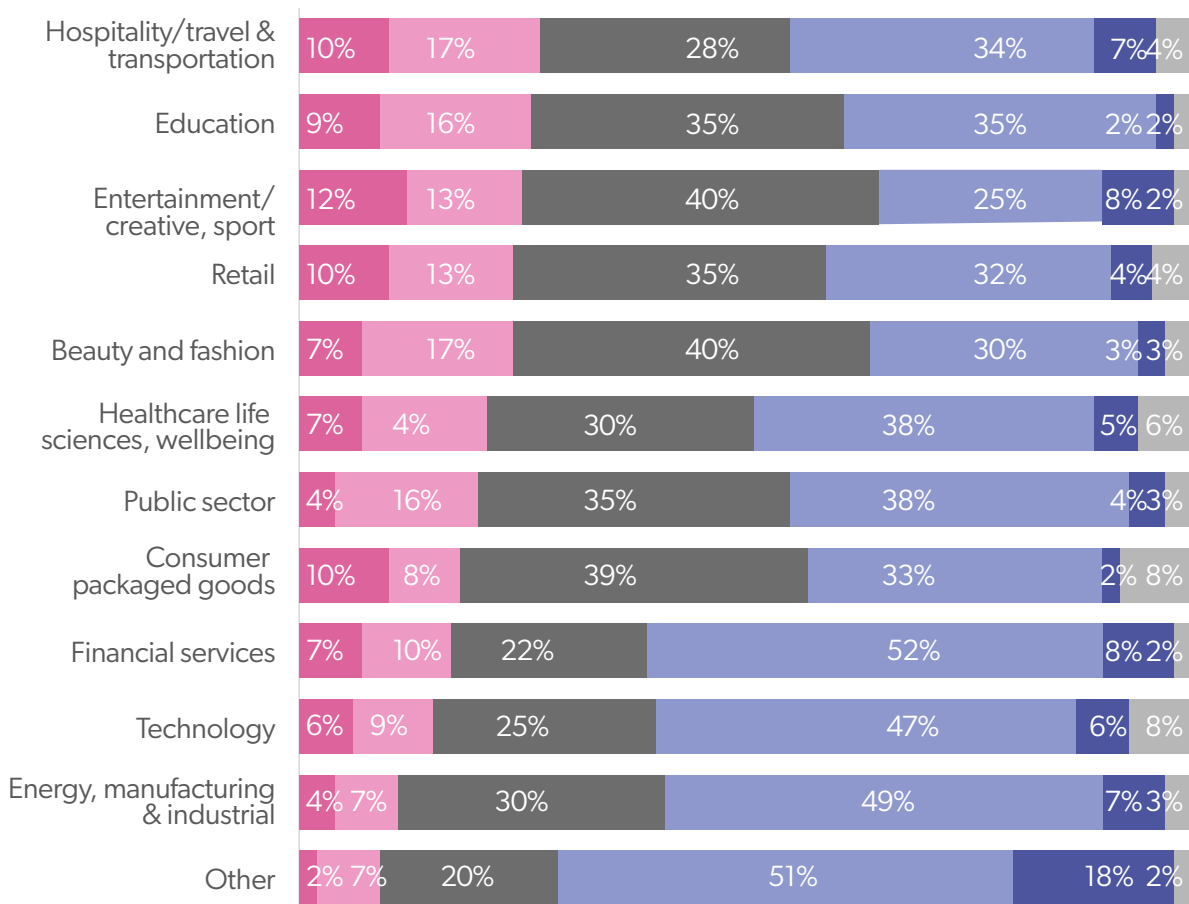
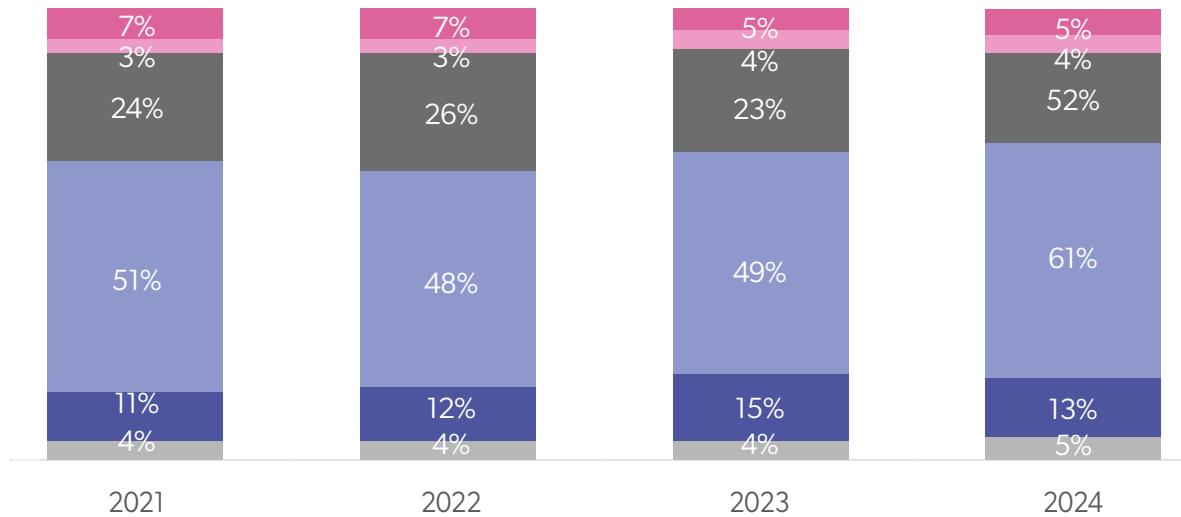
Looking at the different industry sectors, hospitality, travel, and transportation PR professionals reported their boards to be female-dominated (27%), whilst those working in financial services reported their boards were male-dominated (60%).

Sadly there has been no significant change in 2024 in the gender split in boardrooms



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

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



**The results this year continue to emphasise the significant benefits in growing female representation at board level.**

Eight in ten believe having women in the boardroom helps improve working practices (80%) and the creativity (80%) of organisations – an increase from 79% and 76%, respectively from 2023. Meanwhile, three quarters (74%) believe that having women on boards clears barriers to promotion for other women – an increase from last year’s findings (72%).

Moreover, an overwhelming nine in ten (91%) believe more needs to be done to ensure women working in the PR industry have a greater boardroom presence.



**80%**

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

**80%**

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



**80%**

feel having women in the boardroom helps to improve organisation productivity




## Barriers to women entering the boardroom remain consistent with previous years, showing there is still much to be done

Looking at the potential barriers women face when it comes to progressing into senior positions, the strongest perceived barrier continues to be childcare or caring responsibilities (88%). Linked to this, 76% feel that the lack of flexible working and family-friendly policies prevents women from progressing into senior positions (up from 74% last year). It is important to highlight that flexible working does not necessarily translate into family-friendly policies.

There is a disparity when it comes to promotion and recruitment. Nearly seven in ten (68%) feel that women tend to be less proactive about asking for promotions than men, which is notably down from 74% in 2023. A similar number (72%) also believe there is a lack of transparency around recruitment and promotion, which creates a barrier for women looking to move into more senior roles.

Continuing a year-on-year increase, nearly seven in ten (68%) believe the lack of work-life balance in a senior role prevents women from getting into the boardroom – just like last year, this is the fifth most quoted barrier.

Three-fifths (60%) believe that progress is being made to remove barriers that prevent women from progressing into senior positions, although this is slightly down since last year (63%).



Nearly seven in ten believe the lack of work-life balance in a senior role prevents women from getting into the boardroom

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



**88%**  
Women predominantly taking on childcare or caring responsibilities

**76%**  
Lack of flexible working or family-friendly work policies



**72%**  
Lack of transparency around recruitment and promotion

**68%**  
Women tend to be less proactive about asking for a promotion

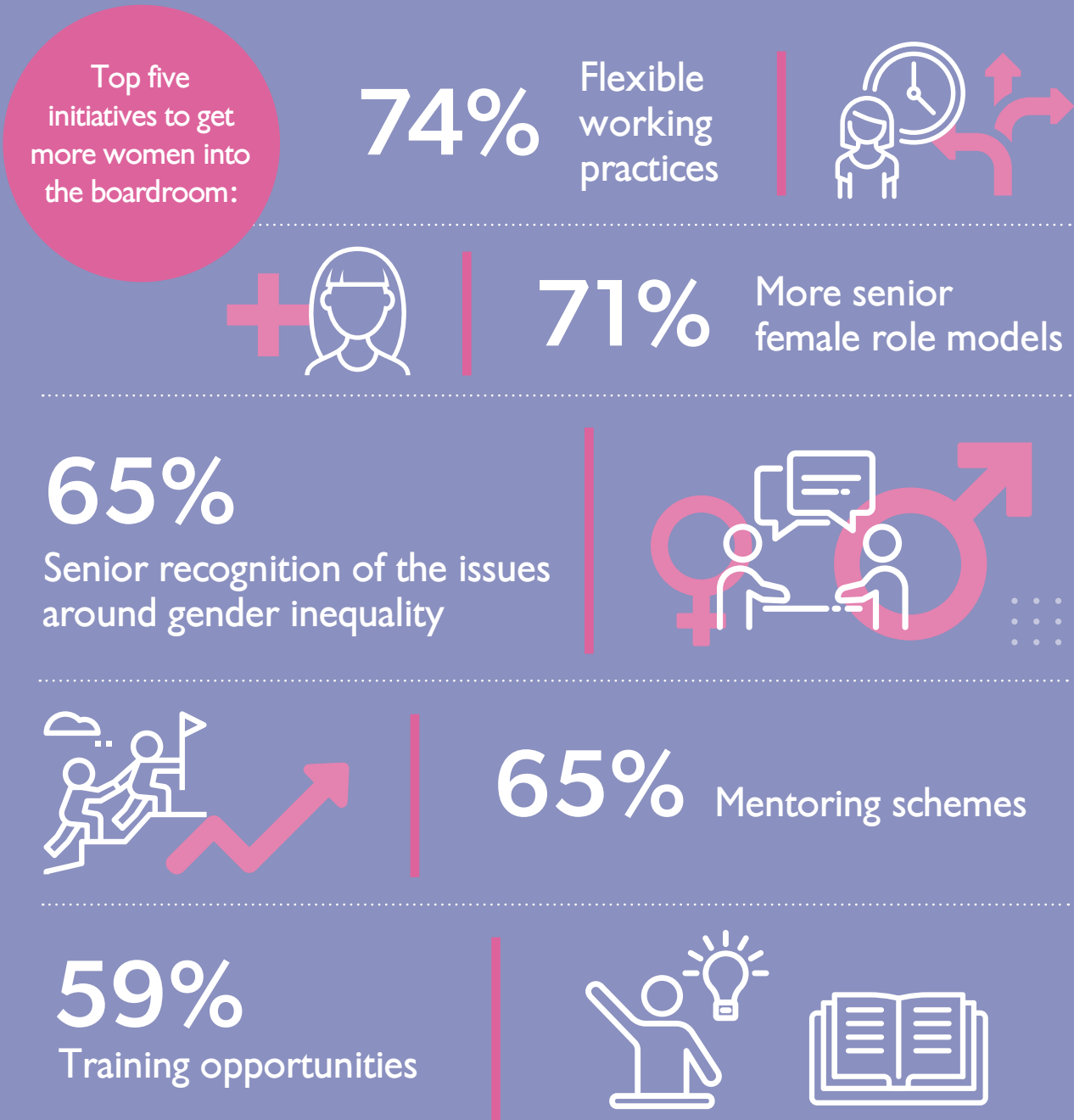


**68%**  
Lack of work-life balance in a senior role



# Flexible working practices and female role models are considered to be key in encouraging more women to take up board positions

Flexible working practices continue to be considered the most effective way to enable more women to take on boardroom roles (74%). Other initiatives identified to help women’s career progression include having more senior female role models (71%), better senior recognition of the issues around gender inequality (65%), and mentoring schemes (65%). This is in line with results seen in 2023, suggesting that continued effort in enabling women to progress into senior positions is needed.



# CAREER BREAKS

## Over a third of women in PR who have taken a career break experienced lower pay than expected and/or returned to work at a lower level

Almost two fifths of women in PR have taken a career break (37%) - over a third have taken a career break in the past (34%), while 4% are currently on a career break. Two-fifths (40%) of senior level PR professionals report having taken a career break, notably higher than those at a mid (33%) or junior (16%) level. In-house PR professionals were more likely to have taken a career break (37%) than their agency equivalents (28%). Freelance PR professionals were by far most likely to have taken a career break (55%). Amongst those who have taken a career break, most (36%) did so for six months to a year, followed by more than a year (31%), two-three months (19%), and four-five months (14%). On an average, women in PR have taken eight months off as a career break.

Women who have taken a career break did so primarily for childcare (39%) and stress/mental health (35%). Other reasons are less prominent, with almost one in ten (9%) taking a career break for reasons related to education, 8% did so for caring duties, 8% did so due to illness and 7% did so due to moving house.

Among those who have taken a career break, over a third (35%) experienced lower pay than expected on their return to a job, rising to 45% of women in a mid-level position and less prominent for those in senior positions (29%). Similarly, the same proportion (35%) had to start work all over again at a lower level, and almost a quarter (23%) were not considered for the role they applied for. Over one in six (17%) were overlooked for a promotion following their career break.

These discrepancies do not seem surprising as over half of women in PR (51%) report their organisation does not offer any programmes for people returning from career breaks although almost two-fifths (39%) cite their organisation offering alternative working arrangements (such as part-time or flexible working). Just 13% cite mentorship schemes, and a similar proportion (12%) mentioned a dedicated training for career break returnees.

Women who have taken a career break did so primarily for childcare and stress/mental health.

# AGEISM

## One fifth of agency workers see themselves moving to in-house roles before they reach the age of 50


Over a third (36%) of female PR professionals see themselves working in the same PR sector when they reach 50 years old - a slight decrease from last year when we saw 39% planning to do so. This rises to 47% amongst those working in-house but drops to 27% amongst those who work agency-side.

Interestingly, those working in technology PR both in an agency and in-house, were least likely to believe they would be working in the same setting they are in currently when they turn 50.

One in ten (11%) report that they plan to move to an in-house comms role, which rises to one in five (22%) of those who currently work in an agency. Only two per cent in-house plan to move agency-side when they're 50, suggesting that in-house roles are more desirable the further senior PR professionals are in their careers. Additionally, a fifth (20%) will leave PR – including those planning to set up a business outside of PR (9%), leaving the industry without other plans specified (8%), and leaving the workforce (3%). An additional fifth (20%) are not yet sure what their plans are.

Of those looking to leave PR by the time they're 50, half (51%) reveal that they want a better work-life balance, followed by two-fifths (42%) who say they would like to build a more varied career and another two-fifths (40%) who say that they would want to try something new.

Three in ten (29%) of those looking to leave PR express that they don't think there are many suitable roles for older women in PR, highlighting that opportunities narrow as female PR professionals get closer to 50.



Of those looking to leave PR by the time they're 50, half reveal that they would want a better work/life balance

# HARASSMENT

## Half of PR women have experienced harassment or inappropriate behaviour in the workplace, and only a third reported it

Last year, we asked female PR professionals about their experience of harassment or inappropriate behaviour whilst at work.

Over half (52%) of those surveyed experienced harassment or inappropriate behaviour at work, in line with last year's results (53%). This includes one in ten (10%) who have experienced it at their current workplace, in line with last year's 11%, and two-fifths (38%) who have experienced it in their previous place of work, in line with last year's 39%. Harassment was most likely to be experienced by PR professionals working in education PR (60%), entertainment, creative, and sport, public sector (both 56%), and financial services PR (55%).

Amongst this group, the most common types of harassment were psychological (61%), power (58%), and personal (48%). Other types of harassment experienced by women in PR included sexual (33%), which shows a notable increase from 27% in 2023, discriminatory (29%), physical (8%), and online/digital (4%). All forms of harassment have seen an increase since our last survey.

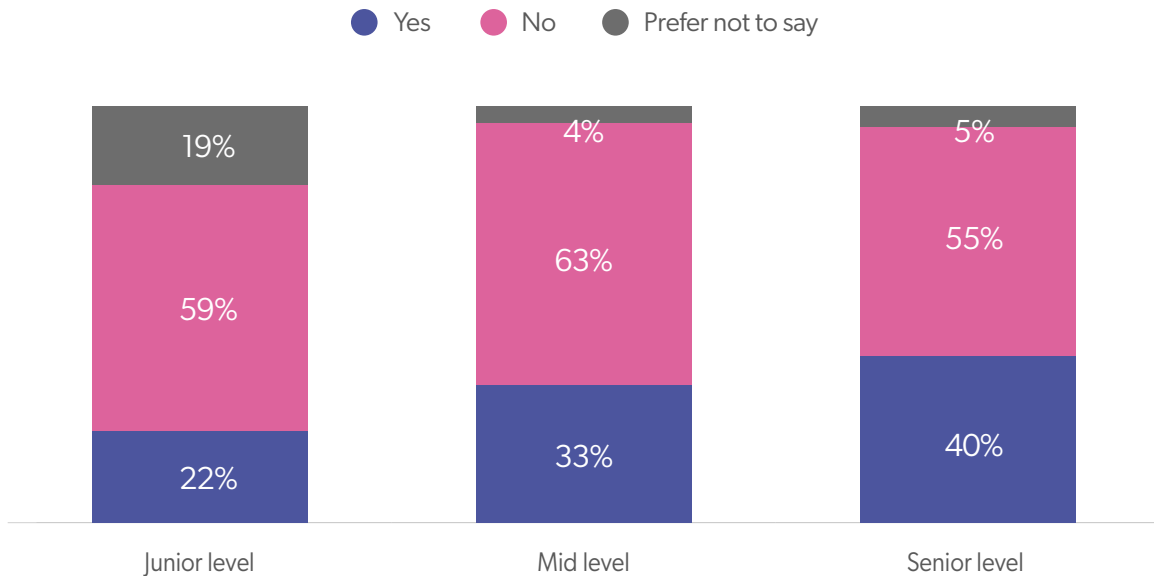
The experience of harassment is pervasive across all levels of seniority – with 33% experiencing it as a junior, 38% at a mid-level, and 27% at a senior level. Worryingly, bosses were the most likely to act inappropriately (66%), followed by a colleague (48%) and a client (30% for those working in agencies).

Just over a third (37%) of those who suffered harassment in the workplace reported this to their employer which is a significant decrease compared to last year's 46%. Mentions of reporting the incident to their employer from in-house professionals saw a notable drop since last year (32% vs. 49%), with those working agency-side now more likely to report (39% vs. 33%). Those who experienced harassment as a junior (22%) were less likely to report this than those at a mid-level (33%) or in a senior position (40%).



Just over a third of those who suffered harassment in the workplace reported this to their employer

## What was your job seniority at the time of the incident / Did you report this experience?



### A third of harassment reports resulted in the employee leaving the organisation

Disappointingly, a third (33%) of those who reported harassment either left the company or were encouraged to leave, and a similar proportion (32%) said that nothing happened as a consequence. Just one in seven (16%) reported internal disciplinary procedures once the incident was reported, slightly up from last year (11%). One in ten (12%) reported that the perpetrator left or was encouraged to leave the business, which, again, is slightly up from last year (10%).

Whilst only a third (37%) chose to report the harassment, most chose not to (57%) - up from 47% in 2023. Of those who did not report, this primarily came from fear of potential negative impact on their career (46%) or not thinking it was serious enough (30%). A similar proportion simply didn't know what action to take (28%), a quarter (24%) feared retaliation, and 20% wanted to protect their mental health.

Nearly three in ten did not know what steps to take to report harassment, not surprisingly since only two thirds (66%) of all female PR professionals state that their organisations have policies or training in place to deal with harassment or inappropriate behaviour. One in seven (16%) stated that their workplace had no such policies. In-house PR professionals (74%) reported their organisations had these policies in place - more than those working in agencies (61%). There are small encouraging signs as the number of organisations with harassment policies in place are up since last year (from 59%) and the number without is down (from 23%).

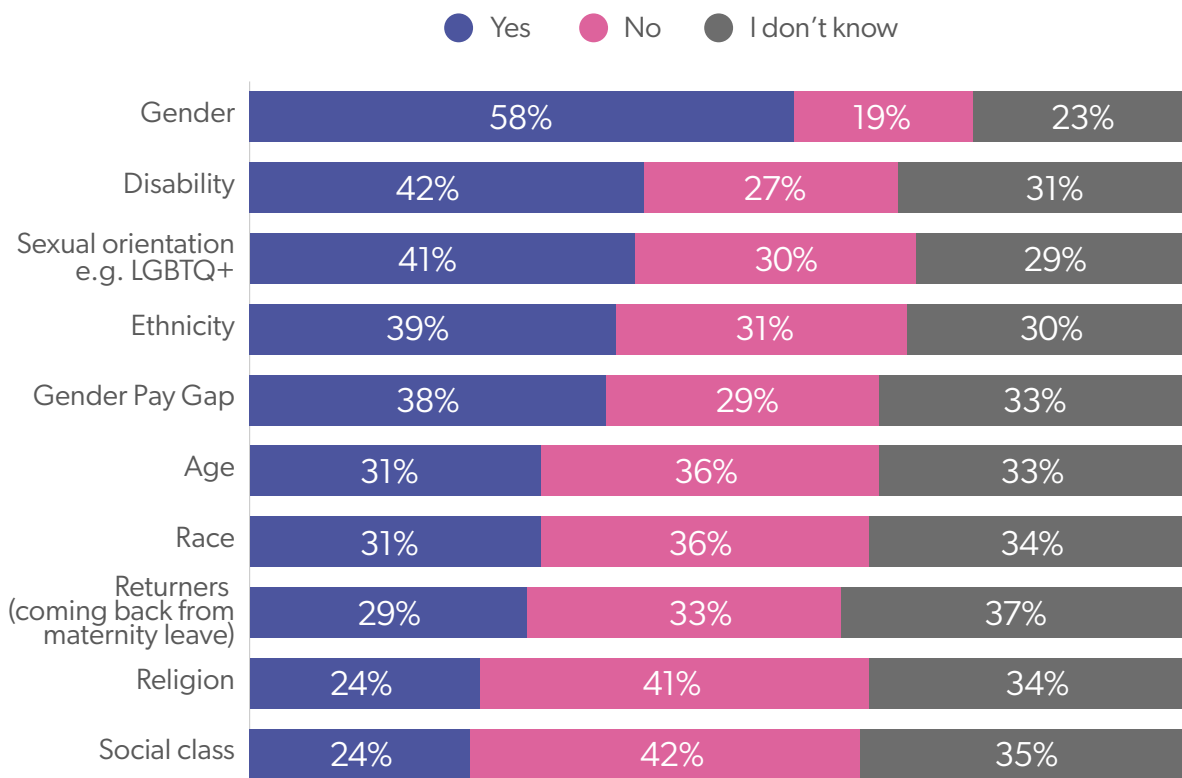
# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

## In-house professionals are much more likely to have diversity policies in place compared to those working in agencies

Almost two-thirds of in our survey (65%) report that there is a Gender Equality / Diversity / Inclusion policy in place in their organisation, rising to almost three-quarters (74%) of those working in-house, compared to just 57% of those working in an agency. Almost a fifth of women (18%) reported their place of work does not have any such initiatives/policies and a similar proportion don't know (17%), of whom most fell in the junior level (38%).

Of those in an organisation that has a Diversity & Inclusion initiative, almost two-thirds (58%) have targets related to gender, followed by targets on disability (42%), sexual orientation (41%), ethnicity (39%), gender pay gap (38%) and age (31%). On the other hand, social class and religion were least likely to have targets in place, with many reporting there are no such targets at all (42% and 41%, respectively).

**Does your organisation have targets related to any of the following in their Diversity & Inclusion policy?**



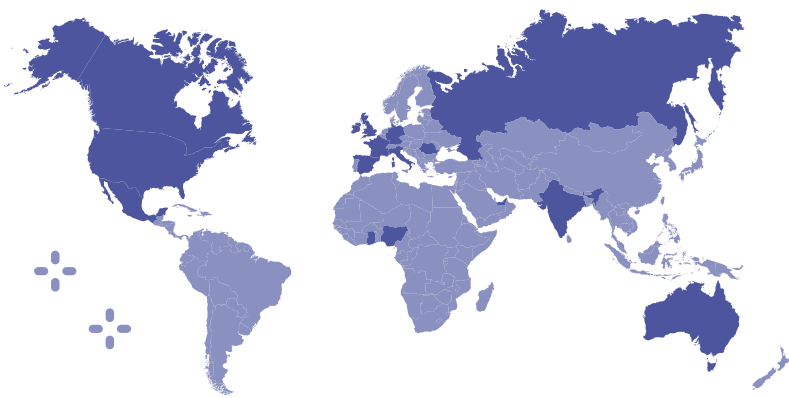


# METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE

## What did we do?

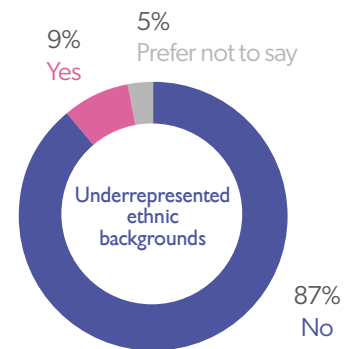
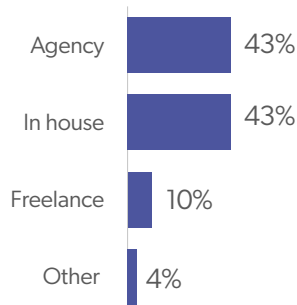
Responses were collected via an online survey designed by Opinium which was distributed by Global Women in PR through their global network. Fieldwork took place between August and September 2024.

## Who did we speak to?

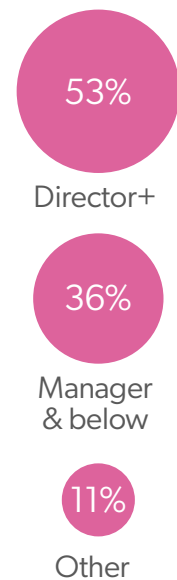
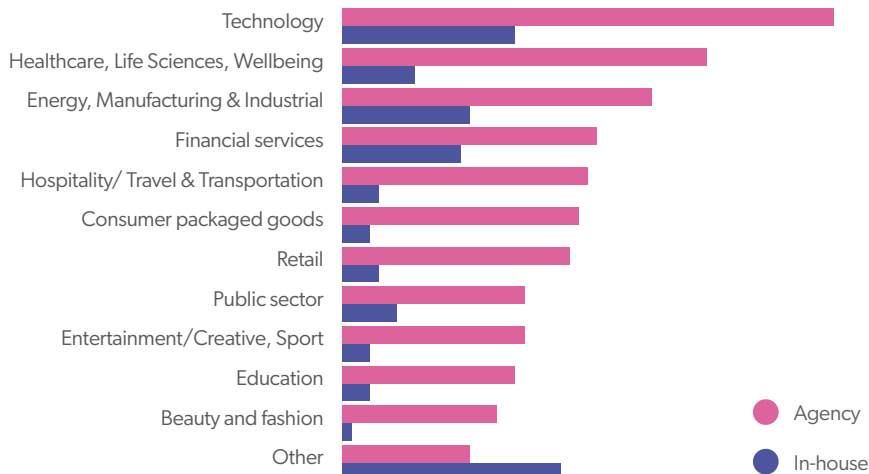


### We spoke to 976 Female PR professionals around the world

Respondents were highly experienced and working at a senior level. Over half (53%) were at board director level and 48% had over 15 years experience in the PR industry.



## What industry do you work in?



# ABOUT OPINIUM



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.

[www.opinium.co.uk](http://www.opinium.co.uk) | [research@opinium.co.uk](mailto:research@opinium.co.uk) | 0207 566 3190

## Contacts



**James Endersby**  
[jamesendersby@opinium.com](mailto:jamesendersby@opinium.com)



**Ellie Arkuszewska**  
[elizaarkuszewska@opinium.com](mailto:elizaarkuszewska@opinium.com)

