

# Women continue to face barriers in recruitment and progression

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## Profile

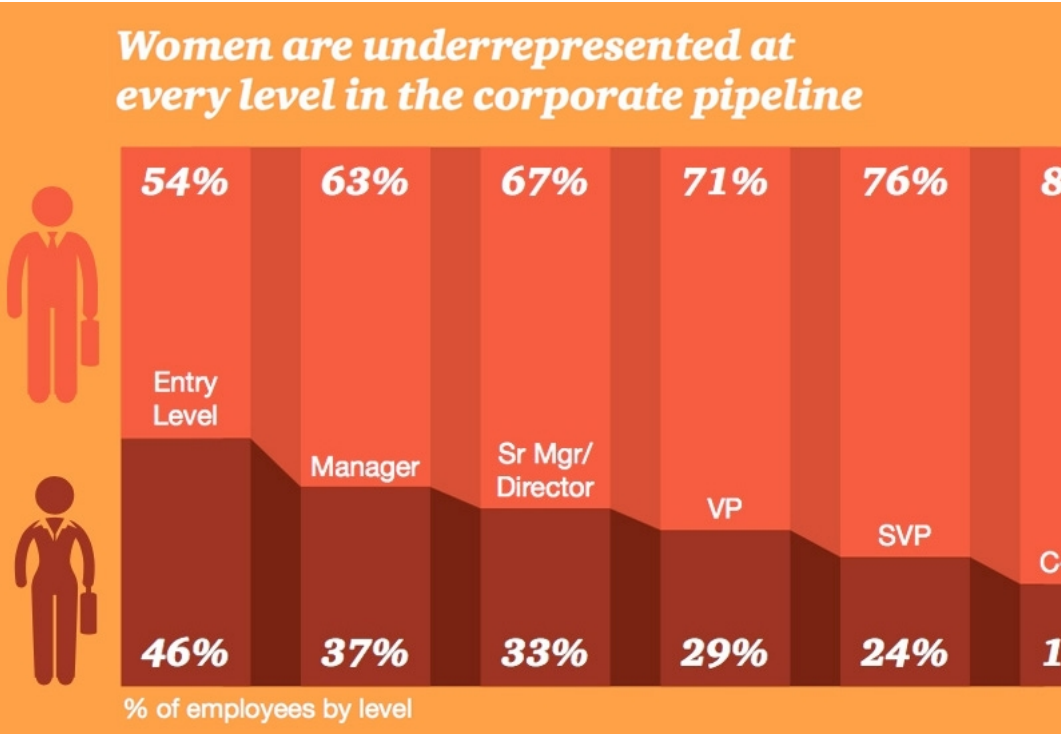
PwC

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Women remain chronically underrepresented throughout the corporate world, with the top of the business remaining a male dominated arena. In a new report, professionals and employers express their views on a range of issues that are perceived as limiting the opportunities of women to achieve their goals in business, as well as the practices businesses are implementing to reduce the stubbornly wide gulf.

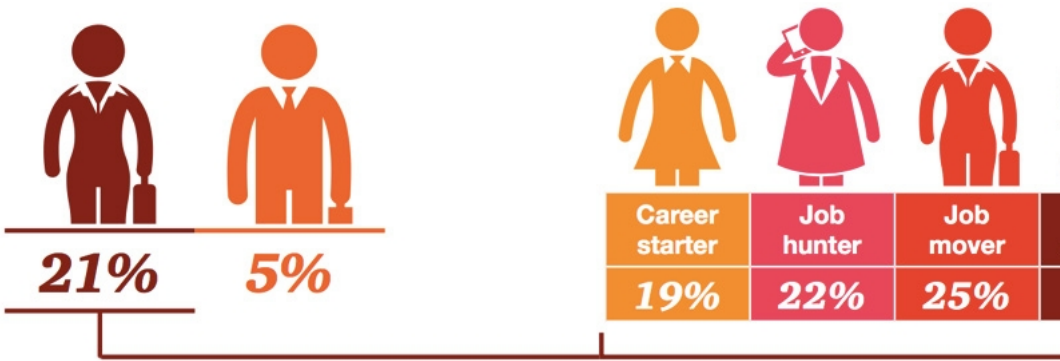
PwC has released a new study into the representation of women across the corporate business world. The study is based on a survey of 328 respondents representing organisations headquartered in 18 different countries among 4,792 employees from 70 countries – 82% of the respondents were female and are currently employed to start their first job.



According to the data, women seeking employment within the corporate world are considerably less likely to find themselves in the higher echelons of the business world. At entry level there is a discrepancy of 4% on par with men, this reaches 13% by managerial level, 17% by senior manager/director level, 21% at vice president level and 26% at senior vice president level. When it comes to boardroom positions, the discrepancy at the C-suite is 13%.

The discrepancy, even at the start of the corporate ladder, creates pipeline issues which lead into subsequent employment challenges within organisations. The current issues within businesses more widely, particularly in attracting and retaining skills whose automation remains too difficult, means that retaining and developing people – has become more important than ever. The current trend within the corporate realm, which considers men as the default, means that talented women are finding their skill sets and potential underutilised or left to waste.



respondents who answered yes



While there is a 4% discrepancy at the start of the pipeline, which becomes increasingly skewed towards n reasons for the discrepancy are not themselves clear. One area of concern is that there is discrimination and biases at play in the recruitment process, which may correlate with lower levels of entry in both the hiring p also during promotion cycles.

The research itself identified that women (21% versus 5%) are more likely to have personally felt gender d during the hiring process. Differences exist at different stages in respondents' careers. 19% of career starte instance, noted discrimination, while for job hunters, it stood at 22% – job movers, however, noted the high perceived discrimination at 25% of female respondents. At the senior hire level 27% of female respondents they do not believe that they have the same chances as men.

The research also noted differences between generations and geographic regions. 28% of female millennis instance, expressed the belief that employers are biased in favour of male candidates – which has increase 2011 – and is slightly under the 30% of all women surveyed. The problem is more severely perceived in a countries, including in Switzerland (46%), Brazil, Ireland, the US (40%) and the UK (38%).

What do you feel are the most significant barriers to increased levels of female experienced hires			
	Employer	Male	
Lack of sufficient candidate pool	38% (1)	26% (4)	
Our industry sector is not viewed as attractive to women	24% (2)	22% (5)	
Women do not pursue career opportunities as aggressively as men do	21% (3)	30% (3)	
Lack of adequate skills/experience	20% (4)	16%	
The impact of gender stereotypes/assumptions in the recruitment process	18% (5)	35% (1)	
Concerns over cost and impact of maternity leave	16%	33% (2)	
Interviewers have a tendency to select candidates that are similar to themselves	15%	21%	
Organisational diversity policies are not sufficiently effective	13%	14%	
Recruitment/Headhunter agencies do not refer enough female candidates	13%	7%	
My organisation is not actively doing enough to attract and recruit women	12%	6%	
Other	7%	8%	

Other barriers

As noted above, the structural decline in pipelines between levels within the business, means that for employers there are fewer and fewer women to select for promotion. In total, 38% employer respondents say that there is a sufficient number of candidates in the pool. Another barrier noted by respondents, 24% of employers, by 22% of male respondents and 22% of female respondents, is that the industry sector is not viewed as attractive to women. One area in which there was relative agreement between the three groups, employers at 21%, males at 30% and females at 29%, is that women do not pursue career opportunities as aggressively as men do.

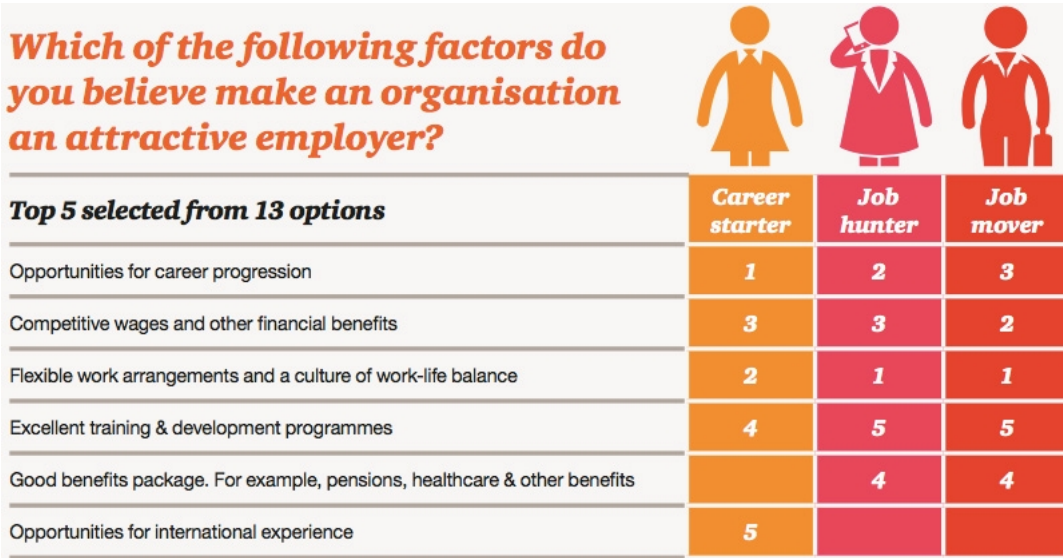
One area in which a large group of women (45%) point out key concerns, and something with which a third of male respondents agree, is the impact of gender stereotypes/assumptions in the recruitment process. Concerns over the cost of maternity leave, follow as a key concern for 42% of women – particularly women in the US face challenges of business respondents themselves see it as a barrier.

<b><i>Has your organisation introduced any of the following diversity practices?</i></b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No but exploring</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
We train our recruitment professionals so they are equipped to focus on driving more inclusive recruitment efforts	<b>49%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>26%</b>
We ensure diversity of interview panel/interviewers throughout the interviewing process	<b>52%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>27%</b>
We review role descriptions to ensure use of inclusive language	<b>48%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>28%</b>
We train all of our interviewers in unconscious bias	<b>46%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>28%</b>
We have established recruitment targets for our experienced hire recruiting	<b>46%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>30%</b>
We leverage our in-house diversity employee resource/affinity groups to support with more diverse recruitment	<b>42%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>31%</b>
We now recruit from a broader number of universities at campus/graduate level (e.g., expanding beyond top tier universities)	<b>45%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>35%</b>
We passively manage a diverse candidate pipeline of potential hires	<b>36%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>37%</b>
We leverage diversity associations to access diverse talent segments	<b>36%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>37%</b>
We require diverse slates of candidates for all leadership positions (e.g., 30% must be female)	<b>38%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>39%</b>
We undertake early attraction efforts (e.g., target teenagers during school years, rather than depending on a campus/graduate pipeline) to make our organisation and sector more appealing	<b>36%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>40%</b>
We have introduced 'Blind' applications (for example removed names, gender, age, university details from resume)	<b>27%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>49%</b>
We offer enhanced referral benefits for diverse hires as part of our employee referral scheme	<b>28%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>48%</b>
We offer head hunters/recruitment agencies enhanced commission for diverse hires	<b>26%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>53%</b>

While the problem persists, companies, in recent years, have begun to explore ways to reduce the discrepancy in the business case [for increased female representation](#), among others, driving businesses forward.

The top most cited diversity practice implemented at businesses is to 'train our recruitment professionals so they are equipped to focus on driving more inclusive recruitment efforts', implemented at 49% of organisations, followed by 25% of respondents that are exploring the practice. 52% of respondents say that they ensure diversity of interview panel/interviewers throughout the interviewing process, with a further 21% saying that they are exploring

implemented include 'offering head hunters/recruitment agencies enhanced commission for diverse hires', a respondents, the 'introduction of "'blind' applications', cited by 27% of respondents, and 'leveraging diverse associations to access diverse talent segments', cited by 36% of respondents.



What makes an attractive employer

The research also asked employees and potential employees what factors they believe makes an employer

The number one cited response for career starters is 'opportunities for career progression', the factor comes job hunter, third for job mover and forth for career returner.

'Competitive wages and other financial benefits' comes third for career starts and job hunters, and second f and career returners. Flexible work arrangements and a culture of work-life balance comes second for career but first for job hunter, job mover and career returners.

Says Bob Moritz, Global Chairman of PwC comments, "When you look at what drives job satisfaction, people seek opportunities for career progression. Putting in place formal career progression plans is one way of making employees remain motivated and committed to the organisation. Career progression plans aren't simply a policy they're there to help each employee reach its full potential. Looking forward, this will be increasingly important work to attract and retain the best talent in a highly competitive world. Having this mindset will help CEOs complete talent market as opposed to half of it."

**Related:** ['Women aspiring executive roles face structural barriers'](#) and ['5 tactics to cultivate a pipeline of quality executives'](#).

