



GLOBAL WOMEN IN PR

ANNUAL INDEX 2019

#GWPRAnnualIndex



## ABOUT GWPR



GWPR is a global membership organisation for senior women in PR. Our international community provides members with networking opportunities, insights and thought leadership on key issues; from flexible work practices and gender pay equality, to creating a more balanced boardroom and a better working environment.

We are a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting female talent in the PR industry and an important sector group of ICCO - the International Communications Consultancy Organisation.

By creating a global community of senior PR women actively working together, GWPR is helping promote the changes that are needed to shape the PR industry for the 21st century.

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## INTRODUCTION

This report highlights the findings of the first ever GWPR ANNUAL INDEX aimed at tracking and measuring the position of women working in the PR 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, when it comes to the boardroom the figures tell a different story, with men occupying the majority of seats at the table.

### Boardroom diversity

There is a compelling business case for inclusion and diversity in the boardroom. Management consultancy McKinsey<sup>1</sup> has widely reported that companies in the top quarter for gender diversity in their executive teams are 21% more likely to outperform on profitability and have a competitive advantage. Research by Catalyst<sup>2</sup> also highlights that diverse boardrooms are more successful at retaining talent and those with at least 30% women offer a more positive environment for innovation. Whilst corporate leaders are increasingly accepting the business argument for gender diversity in the boardroom, however, progress around the world remains slow. At the current rate of change, according to the World Economic Forum<sup>3</sup> it will take 108 years to close the overall gender gap and 202 years to achieve equality in the workplace.

### The PR gender gap

In spite of being a profession dominated by women the global PR industry is not blazing the trail for gender equality in the boardroom.

In this our first report 678 PR professionals around the world have provided us with their views on why they believe not enough women are reaching leadership positions and what needs to change. We have analysed the barriers to women getting into the boardroom, asked what we can do to break these barriers down and highlighted why businesses would benefit from these changes. We have examined the work environment and the work; benefits on offer that can help women in their career progression – like flexible working. We have taken an in-depth look at the impact of caring responsibilities - both parenting and beyond - such as looking after older family members.

And finally we have asked about sexual harassment in the work place and the PR industry's policy on dealing with this. Our results form a unique analysis of the global landscape for women working in PR and, as our understanding grows, the GWPR ANNUAL INDEX will become the definitive 'go to' reference report on gender issues affecting the industry.

We strongly believe that by having a better understanding of gender inequality in the workplace we can start to make the changes needed that will be better for both business and the next generation of PR women.

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<sup>1</sup> McKinsey&Company - Delivering through Diversity Report 2018 | <sup>2</sup> Catalyst (the global non-profit working to help organisations accelerate progress for women at work) - Why Diversity & Inclusion Matter Report 2018 | <sup>3</sup> World Economic Forum - Global Gender Gap Report 2018

## TOP LINE FINDINGS

In spite of the global PR industry being two-thirds female, three in five of PR professionals surveyed with a main board structure think their boardroom is male dominated



# 64%

believe having more women in the boardroom helps improve business profitability and 81% believe more should be done to help women get there

The biggest barrier to women progressing into senior positions is childcare and caring responsibilities (80%)



# 47%

of women surveyed want remote working and 40% would like flexible start and finish times

Flexible working is thought by 70% to be the key to breaking down boardroom barriers for women

39% of respondents believe women with children are promoted more slowly, whereas being a father only affects the career progression of 2% of men



A third of women surveyed had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace – 60% of these did not report this

A quarter of parents surveyed get no paid parental leave from their organisations – only 28% of fathers are offered paid parental leave

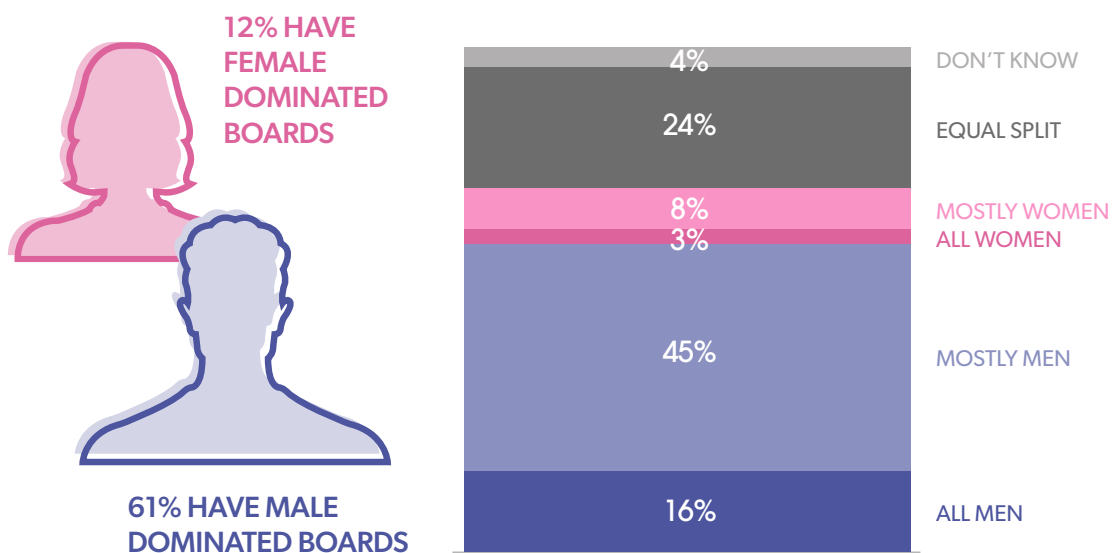
# A BALANCED BOARDROOM – BENEFITS & BARRIERS

Despite the global PR industry being two-thirds female, previous research has shown that when it comes to leadership positions, men are far more likely to have a seat at the boardroom table. With this in mind, we wanted to highlight the business benefits of having women in the boardroom and to understand first-hand how those in the industry feel about the make-up of their own boards. We also researched what initiatives should be introduced to reduce the barriers women in the industry face when it comes to securing boardroom roles.

## Three in five work in companies where the board is male dominated

Looking into the gender split of main boards, three in five (61%) work in companies where the board is male dominated. Almost half (45%) say their board of directors<sup>1</sup> is mostly made up of men and one in six (16%) state their board is made up entirely of men. Male dominated boards are particularly prominent in India, where over three-quarters (78%) stated their company’s board is primarily, or entirely male. By contrast in the UK this drops to 55%.

Which of the following best describes how your board of directors is made up?<sup>\*</sup>



<sup>\*</sup> of those who have a main board

Almost half (46%) of those surveyed, who work for organisations with a board of directors, feel the gender split on their board is unfair; just a fifth (20%) feel their board equally represents different genders.

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



## Why do we need more women in the boardroom?

Our research reveals that respondents believe there are significant business benefits to having greater gender equality in the boardroom. Almost three-quarters (72%) of those surveyed feel that having women in the boardroom helps to improve the productivity of the company; whilst seven in ten (70%) feel a better balanced boardroom helps to improve the creativity of the company. In addition almost two thirds (64%) believe that having women in the boardroom helps to improve profitability. The profitability argument is felt very firmly by those working for companies outside Europe (81%), compared to 59% of Europeans.

Despite the value placed on having women in the boardroom and the important benefits for business, **four in five (81%) believe that more needs to be done to ensure women have a greater presence in the boardroom.**



64%



believe that having women in the boardroom helps to improve profitability

70%

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



72%

feel having women in the boardroom helps to improve company productivity

## What are the barriers to the boardroom?

Looking at the potential barriers women face when it comes to progressing into senior positions, **four in five (80%) believe the biggest barrier is that women are most likely to take on childcare and caring responsibilities.** Related to this, over two-thirds (67%) feel that the lack of work / life balance in a senior role prevents women getting into the boardroom. A similar number (65%) believe that a lack of flexible working and family-friendly policies prevent women from progressing into senior positions.

In addition to caring responsibilities there is also felt to be inequality when it comes to promotion and recruitment. Three in five (61%) believe there is a lack of transparency which creates a barrier for women attaining more senior positions. A similar proportion (60%) feel that women tend to be less proactive than men when it comes to asking for a promotion. In addition, over half (52%) of those surveyed believe there is an unconscious bias towards promoting men in organisations, which hinders female progression.

**Four in five (80%) believe the biggest barrier is that women are most likely to take on childcare and caring responsibilities**



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



**80%**

Women predominantly taking on childcare or caring responsibilities



**67%**

Lack of work / life balance in a senior role



**65%**

Lack of flexible working or family-friendly working policies



**61%**

Lack of transparency around recruitment and promotion



**60%**

Women tend to be less proactive about asking for promotion





## Breaking the barriers to the boardroom – what can be done?

So, what are the initiatives most likely to help get more women into boardroom roles? Offering flexible working comes out top, with seven in ten (70%) respondents saying this would be beneficial. Other initiatives that were felt would have an impact include having more female role models at senior levels (66%) and mentoring schemes for women (53%). In addition, over half (54%) feel there needs to be more recognition from senior members of staff regarding the issue of gender inequality.

### Top 5 initiatives to get more women into the boardroom:

70%

Flexible working practices

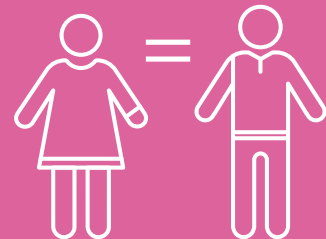


66%

More senior female role models

54%

Senior recognition of the issues around gender inequality



53% Mentoring schemes



51% Shared parental leave

## One in three feel women are promoted more slowly

Over a third (35%) of PR professionals feel that women are promoted more slowly at their company than men, and women with children even more slowly (39%). The key reason given for this is that women take on the lion share of caring responsibilities. By contrast just 2% of PR professionals believe men are promoted more slowly as a result of becoming fathers, starkly highlighting the inequality between mothers and fathers in the workplace.

Over a third (35%) of PR professionals surveyed feel that women are promoted more slowly at their company than men, and women with children even more slowly (39%).



## Summary

Despite PR being a predominantly female dominated industry, the gender breakdown in the boardroom does not reflect this. Those working in the industry recognise the importance of greater representation of women in more senior positions and the business benefits of having a balanced boardroom. It is felt strongly that more needs to be done to ensure greater presence of women in boardroom roles. By implementing initiatives such as flexible working practices and mentoring, as well as gaining recognition from those at the top about these gender issues, the PR industry can work towards breaking down the barriers that are preventing women from reaching the top.

## Opinion

The time for talking about gender imbalance in the top leadership is over. The PR industry needs to act now. We must steer the conversation towards pledges and specific action plans.

We need to make a formal commitment to increase gender diversity on our boards. Once the diversity goal is set, we must actively identify and invest in women employees to harness their potential to become leaders. How do we do it? By creating opportunities for their growth. That means more mentorship initiatives, equal pay, flexible hours for women who need to balance work and childcare, and returnee programmes.

It is also critical for organisations to eliminate gender stereotypes and change mindset. Sexism is still an issue in many companies. We should therefore make our leaders and managers the champions of diversity by undertaking training on unconscious bias and similar prejudices. This will establish behavioral standards and build an inclusive culture where women employees feel valued, respected, and encouraged.

Furthermore, research has shown that women employees tend to be apologetic about their ambitions and less likely to self-promote than men. But the truth of the matter is that women are their best advocates and they need to be more assertive and demanding.



**Nitin Mantri**  
President, ICCO  
Group CEO at AvianWE India

## WORK ENVIRONMENT / FLEXIBLE WORKING

The opportunity to be able to work in a supportive work environment which encourages employees and allows for a good work-life balance is commonly thought not only to enhance the happiness of the individual, but also their opportunity to progress.

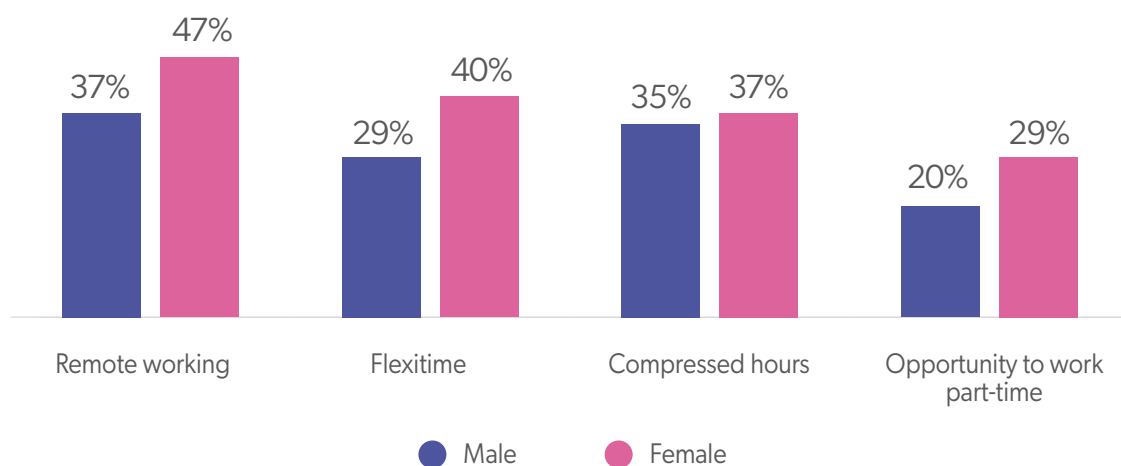
We have, therefore, examined different work benefits and looked at which benefits most help an individual's career and personal life; in particular from a gender perspective.

### Flexible working is one of the most desired workplace benefits

The opportunity to work remotely is desired by nearly half (46%) of those surveyed, the most popular type of flexible working. This was rated as more beneficial than flexitime - the ability to have flexible start and finish times (39%) - or the opportunity to work compressed hours (e.g. 10 hours a day 4 days a week) (37%). Only three in ten (28%) said they would like the opportunity to work part-time.

Not surprisingly, there are also some gender differences within the desire to work flexibly. Nearly half (47%) of women surveyed want remote working from their workplace compared to just 37% of men surveyed. Women are also far more likely to value flexible start and finish times (40% - women, 29% - men) and the opportunity to work part time (29% - women, 20% - men).

#### Flexible working desired by men and women from their workplace



So, what do global organisations currently offer PR professionals? Encouragingly, remote working is offered to half (51%) of the respondents. The countries offering the biggest opportunity for remote working were Germany (74%) and the UK (66%). The opportunity to work compressed hours was the least likely benefit to be offered to employees, with only 18% of the those surveyed being offered this.

## Three in five think flexible working helps retain female talent

Not only is flexible working perceived to be healthy for creating a good work/life balance, it is also believed to benefit career progression and encourage staff retention.

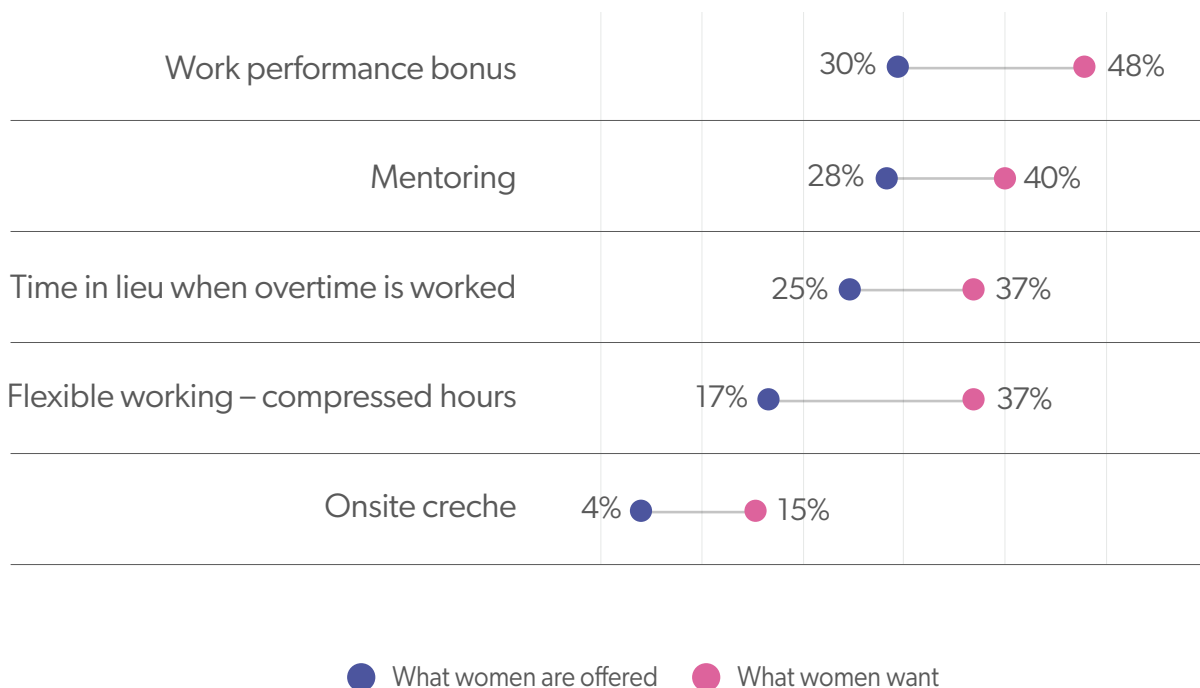
Nearly a fifth (17%) of respondents think that flexible working speeds up career progression in the PR industry, while a quarter (23%) think that it helps women progress into boardroom positions. This is especially true in India where 34% believe this to be the case - the country we found most likely to have male dominated boardrooms (78%). Another important benefit of flexible working is that it is thought by three-fifths (60%) of our respondents to help with retaining female talent.

There is, however, some hesitation by companies to fully accept flexible working. A fifth (19%) of respondents feel that flexible working is perceived negatively by their company. **Women are more likely to believe this (20%) than men (14%).**

## Other workplace benefits on offer

Other benefits desired in the workplace include work performance bonuses (48%), training opportunities (44%) and mentoring schemes (40%). Training opportunities are the most likely of these benefits to be on offer (52%). However mentoring schemes are not widely available in organisations (30%).

Work benefits wanted and what's on offer for women

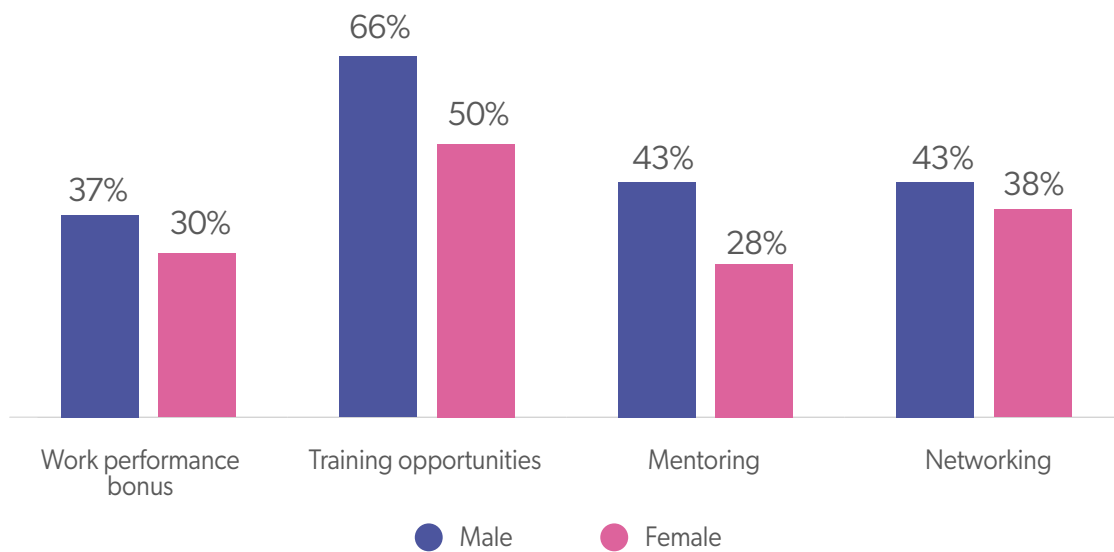




## ... how does this differ between the sexes?

The accessibility to these work benefits differs significantly between men and women. Men are far **more likely to have access to the more career-focused benefits** which are traditionally thought to **enhance their career**. For example mentoring schemes (43% - men vs 28% - women) and networking events (43% - men vs 38% - women). Men are also more likely to be offered a work performance bonus (37% vs 30%).

### What men and women are offered by their workplace



## Summary

The ability to be able to work flexibly is considered to have major benefits, especially for women working in the PR industry. Whilst it is commonly accepted that flexible working helps employees balance their work and home life; this research illustrates the additional benefits of flexible working which include helping women to progress their careers and better retention of female talent. Additionally, the research has shown there is an imbalance in work benefits offered to men and women, that can affect career progression.

## Opinion

It's unacceptable that men are far more likely to have a seat at the boardroom table, that 60% of women feel they can't ask for a promotion, and that 37% of men are more likely than women to get a performance bonus. We simply cannot wait for the industry to catch up. Instead, we must identify where we can make the most immediate impact. And ensure each employee can play a role in shaping a better path forward. It's our job as leaders to make sure that happens.

For me, that has meant ensuring gender equity at the leadership level and across the company. WE's staff is 72% women and its leadership team is 50% female, and it's still not enough. We also stand committed to creating an inclusive workplace, where everyone is celebrated and respected. With the right actions, we can move the needle of true change. Actions such as investing and prioritizing employee resource groups for diversity and inclusion, which help nurture connections and build greater awareness. Actions that hold us accountable to larger industry barometers, such as the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index.

Our 2019 Brands in Motion global study found that brands must build a relationship with consumers based on mutual respect. The workplace is no different — to succeed as a company, it takes creating a culture of mutual respect for everyone within it.



**Melissa Waggener Zorkin**  
Global CEO and Founder, WE

## IMPACT OF CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

Caring responsibilities can add pressure when you are working and often lead to a battle in daily priorities.

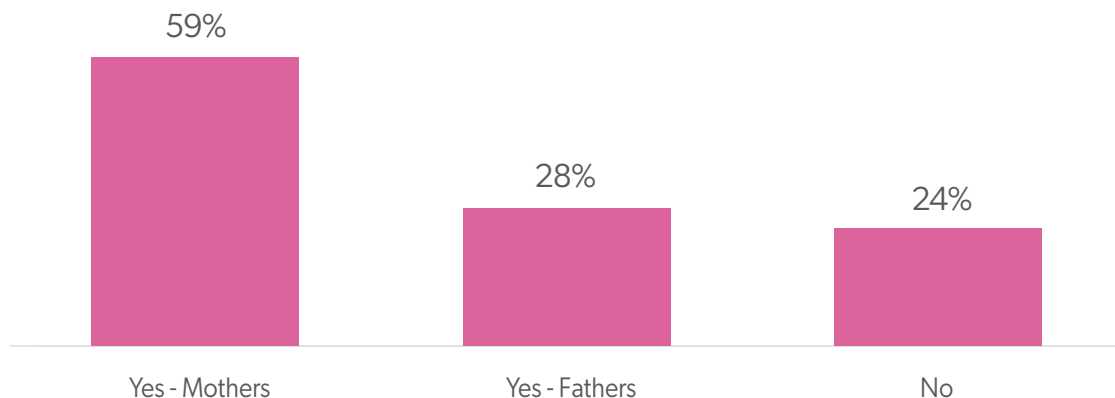
Childcare responsibilities in particular are often quoted as a barrier to women progressing in the workplace. This led us to examine more closely how this can affect career progression and also the impact of other caring roles. These barriers may start as early as pregnancy but can continue throughout an individual's career.

### A quarter of parents don't have access to paid parental leave

Shockingly, a quarter (24%) of parents who were surveyed stated their company does not offer paid parental leave following the birth of a child. Mothers are most likely to receive paid leave (59%), but fathers are far less likely to get this benefit (28%).

On average mothers receive 22 weeks of pay whilst on parental leave, while fathers receive just 10 weeks on average.

#### Paid parental leave offered by their company



### Experiences during Pregnancy

We asked mothers if they believed pregnancy had a negative effect on their career. One in six (16%) felt they had missed out on a promotion because of being pregnant and 14% said they were taken off high revenue projects.

Some of the personal accounts of what happened to those surveyed when they were pregnant were quite shocking. These included organisations increasing their workload and even being fired.

## What were your experiences of pregnancy at work?

"I was pressurised with extra work and a mentally taxing environment. It was done so that I would leave."

"I was refused an appraisal, despite overachieving my targets"

"I've been fired"

"My job contract was revoked"

## Childcare responsibilities

Of those surveyed, 55% have had to take on some caring responsibilities whilst working, with two-fifths (41%) caring for children. Despite the frequency of this caring responsibility, 36% have to take most of the childcare responsibilities on themselves, **rising to 42% among women surveyed.**

Having this extra responsibility can have a negative impact on career progression, most commonly mentioned is having missed out on a promotion (35%), as well as having to work part-time (34%) and feeling excluded from their team (30%).

## Other caring responsibilities

Caring responsibilities are not just limited to childcare. One in five (19%) say they are also responsible for looking after older family members. Non-European countries are the most likely to have this extra caring responsibility compared to those in Europe (23% vs 12%). The negative impact on a career is very similar to those who have childcare responsibilities.

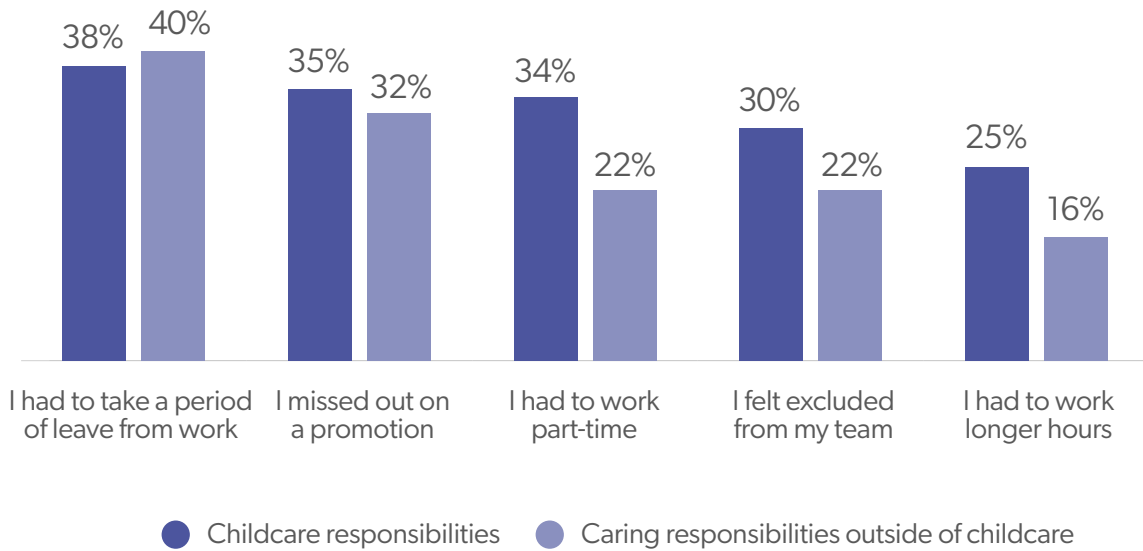
When looking at caring responsibility at a total level, **35% feel having a caring responsibility has negatively impacted their career.**

Over a third feel having caring responsibilities has negatively impacted their career



## A third feel they have missed out on a promotion

The negative impact caring responsibilities have on a career





## Summary

Caring responsibilities are a barrier being faced by a large proportion of those surveyed and are having a significant effect on their careers. The barriers can be as severe as missing out on promotion and being asked to leave a company. This, above other factors, appears to be the most important barrier to women progressing in their career.

## Opinion

As the saying goes, "To be the future, you have to see the future". The research states 66% of those surveyed say they want more senior female role models. When three in five still work in companies where the board is male dominated, agencies can't just talk about change, they have to be the change themselves. Make bold choices. Lead by example.

The research reveals women are less confident to ask for promotion. Agencies need to proactively recognise and promote female talent at all levels of the organisation.

As 80% believe the biggest barrier to the boardroom is taking on childcare and caring responsibilities, agencies must create progressive employment strategies from flexible and remote working, to shared parental leave and return to work programmes, allowing them opportunity to juggle their many lives.

It will pay dividends. 64% of those surveyed believe having women in the boardroom helps to improve profitability, 70% say it improves creativity in the company, and 72% feel it helps improve productivity.

I'm proud to work for an agency with a female Global CEO and a truly balanced senior leadership team. There's always room for improvement, but we strive to be the change.



**Rachel Friend**  
CEO UK & Ireland  
Weber Shandwick

# SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In the years following the ground-breaking 'Me Too' and 'Time's up' movements, taboo topics of conversation surrounding sexual harassment and assault have been brought to the fore. Individuals are now being encouraged to speak up about their experiences to give those previously silenced a voice. With this in mind, we wanted to understand the experiences of those working in the PR industry and the processes that are in place to support individuals.

## A third of women surveyed have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace

**Globally, a third of women (33%) surveyed have experienced sexual harassment, or experienced inappropriate sexual behaviour in the workplace.** For over a quarter (29%) of women this took place in a previous working environment, while for 7% it occurred in their current workplace.

Over half (51%) of women surveyed who have experienced sexual harassment at work stated they experienced this from a colleague, whilst two-fifths (41%) claimed the inappropriate behaviour was from their boss. A quarter (25%) have experienced inappropriate advances from a client.

### Who behaved inappropriately towards you?



## Three in five did not report sexual harassment to their employer

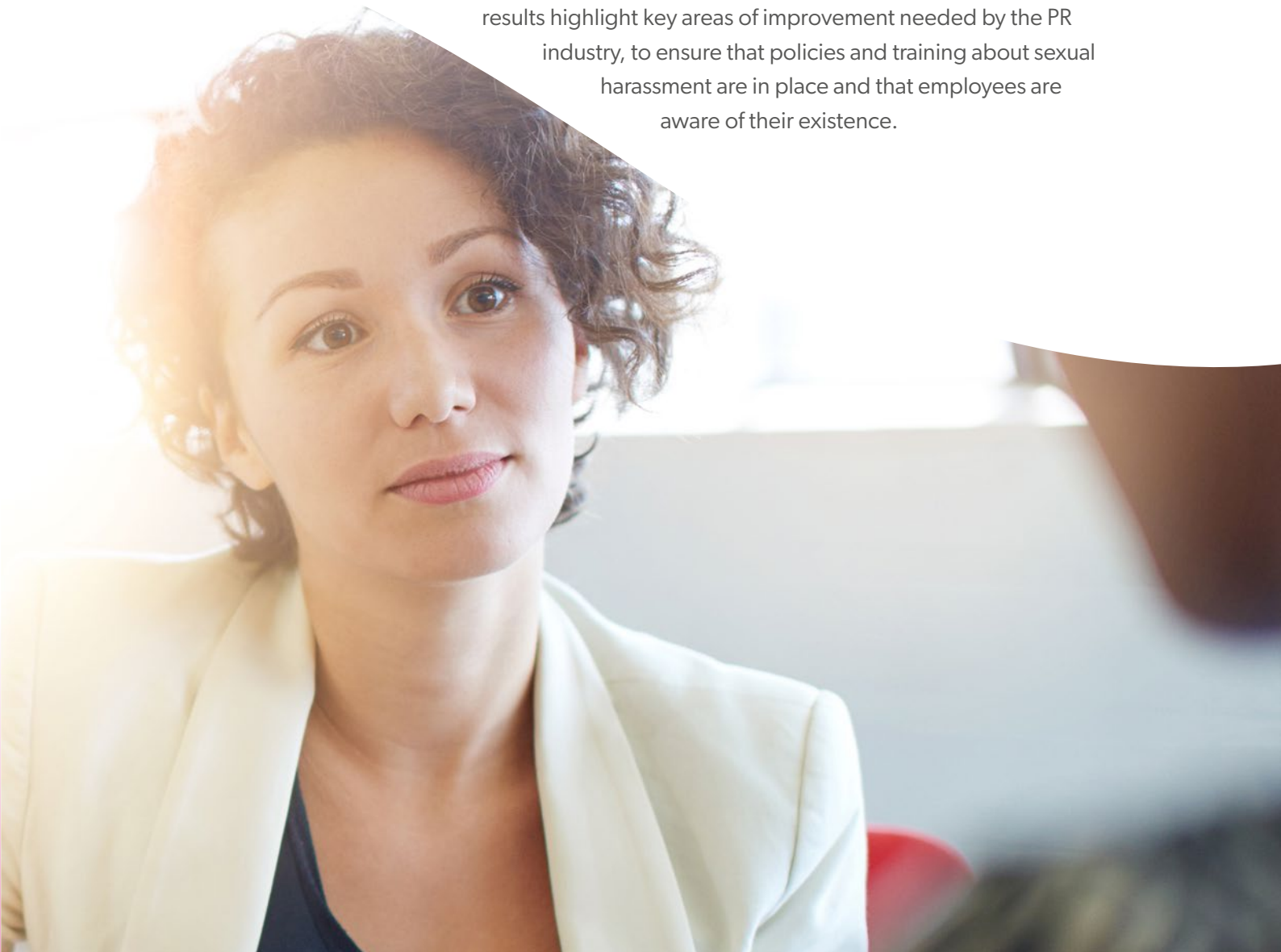
Speaking to their employers about experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace is not widely happening; with three in five (60%) stating they did not report it.

This may be due to having no formal procedures in place to report these instances. **Over a third (35%) believe their company does not have policies, or training in place to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace.** Improvements in internal communication may be necessary and could help open conversations around sexual harassment at work, with almost a fifth (18%) of those surveyed stating they are uncertain if these policies exist.

Respondents in Russia (63%), France (58%) and Germany (40%) are among the most likely to say their companies do not have formal sexual harassment policies in place. By contrast, only 27% of respondents working in the UK and 6% in India don't have policies in place.

### Summary

Despite the progress being made to open the conversation around sexual harassment in the workplace in the post #MeToo world, our results highlight key areas of improvement needed by the PR industry, to ensure that policies and training about sexual harassment are in place and that employees are aware of their existence.



# METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE

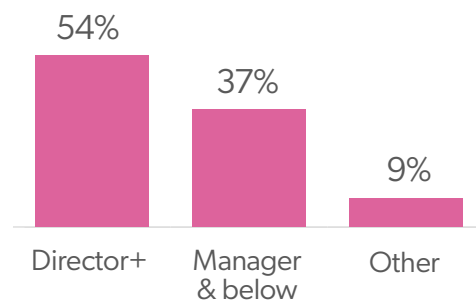
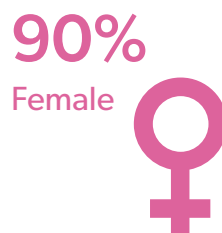
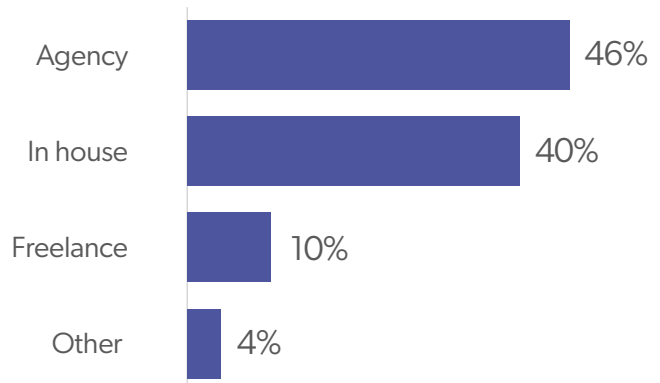
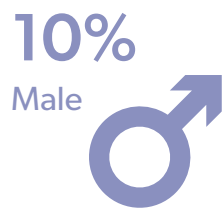
## What did we do?

Responses were collected via an online survey designed by Opinium which was distributed by Global Women in PR through their global networks. Fieldwork took place between 12th July – 16th August 2019.

## Who did we speak to?



We spoke to **678** PR professionals around the world



## 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.

[www.opinium.co.uk](http://www.opinium.co.uk)

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