

UNLOCKING AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

AUGUST 2023

INTRODUCTION

In late 2022, Chartered Accountants Worldwide's (CAW) global ED&I task force partnered with Magenta – a specialist research agency – to conduct the first global study to map the career journeys of women in the profession and identify the barriers and opportunities for employers to open career pathways for women to progress into more senior positions.

You can read the full report here and watch the research webinar here.

The survey found that while some in-roads have been made, there is still much to do for the profession to both attract and retain female talent – especially mid-career. The survey also indicated that **8 in 10 women felt they had a lot to offer the profession despite being a parent** and that ambition doesn't reduce with parenthood, with **7 in 10 stating that they believe they can obtain a senior position.**

However, a **lack of confidence to progress** their career came out as the number one barrier for women, with **31% citing it as blocking their progression. 29% of women felt that the management style** of their superiors and company culture were **prohibitive to their career** and **25% of women** stated that a **lack of time off to care for children was a barrier for them.**

Networking also felt exclusive to many women because of the times these events took place, meaning they were unable to make connections for work because of family commitments.

Indeed, throughout their career, **women are significantly more likely to experience impediments to their career progression.**

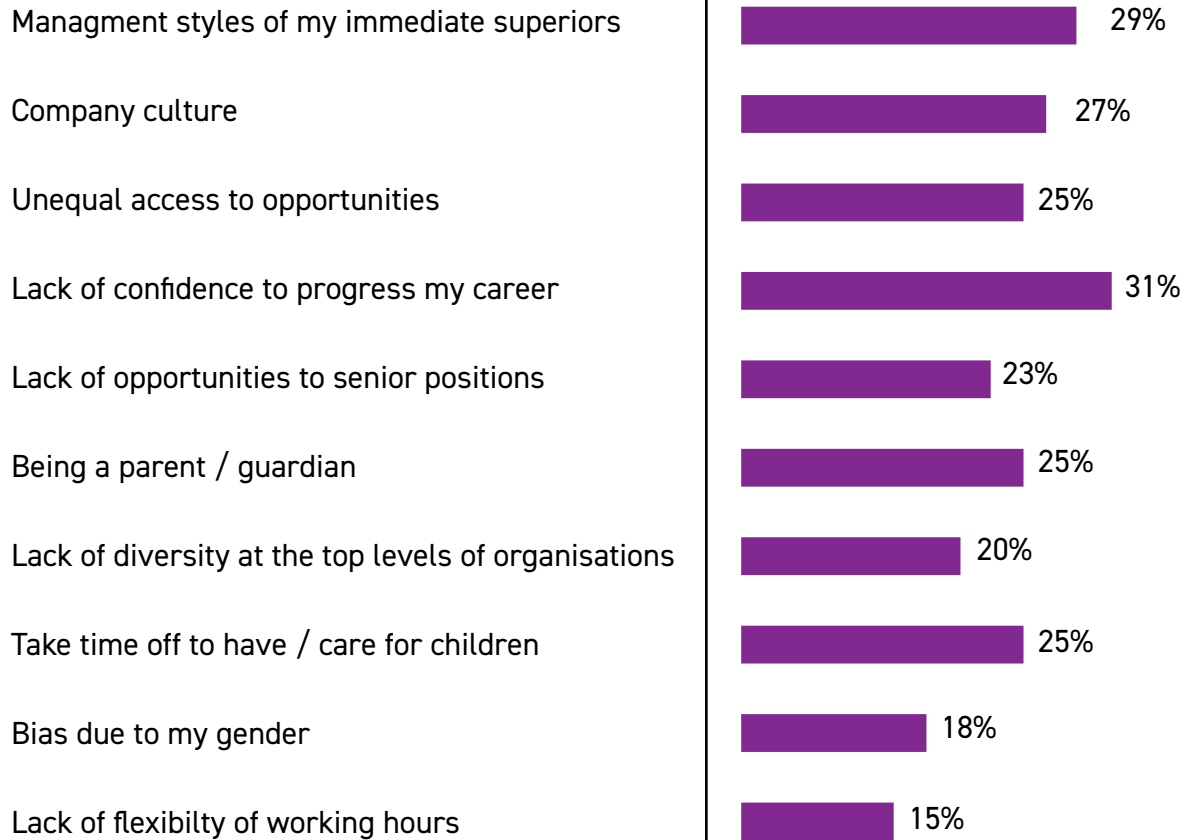
Conversely, by the time men reach their late career, they are significantly more likely to claim that they have not experienced any barriers to their career (29%*).

There are some key opportunities that the profession could embrace to ensure mid-career women stay motivated, are able to progress and remain a valuable resource to employers. For example, **over 1 in 3 mid-career women (36%) highlight flexible hours or working location as an important enabler for career progression.** Furthermore, 3 in 4 mid-career women (75%*) currently acknowledge that a supportive line manager and/or being given the opportunity to work on new projects that allowed them to develop their skill-set as having the biggest impact on their career progression and **67% stated that they would love a mentor to support and guide them.**

Lastly, the ability to work flexibly and in a hybrid manner while remaining visible and valued by senior managers was something many women cited as being something that would make a huge difference to them.

TOP 10 BARRIERS TO CAREER PROGRESSION

More than 3,500 mid-career men and women took part in the study across 8 countries that included over forty in-depth interviews. 74% found it easier to work flexibility / at home.



Source: Magenta

Women: Mid-career



TOOLKIT

Employers can play a hugely significant role in changing workplace culture, to ensure their people, no matter what their background, thrive. Chartered Accountants Worldwide has put together this toolkit for employers, so that you can start those conversations and embed the right practices and processes on how best to support your female talent. This is not an exhaustive list, rather a guide to set you on the right path or assist your thinking if you've already started your journey.

We hope that this toolkit will help your organisation drive change and support your female talent to thrive by embedding good practice; addressing the workplace culture; developing confidence and training opportunities and to think about the right networks and opportunities required to support your female workforce.

** Source: Adapted from Deloitte Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Maturity Model.*

LEVEL 1: FOUNDATION LEVEL COMPLIANCE

Adhere to diversity-related laws and regulations and consider talent acquisition and establishing a positive external employer brand.

POLICIES SHOULD BE AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

Company policies should be easy to access for everyone, at any time. This enables staff to quickly check how issues will be dealt with should they arise. This should also provide the necessary reassurance for those who may wish to challenge any inappropriate behaviour that it will be dealt with sensitively and confidentially.

ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE

Review and enforce equal access to opportunities and experiences for all staff.

FACILITATING MORE DIVERSITY IN RECRUITMENT

Training for staff to counter unconscious bias – focus on the abilities and experience of the candidate.

ESTABLISH A DISCRIMINATION EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR ALL

Ensure an ongoing (mandatory) programme of education about discrimination in the workplace covering all its different forms, and ensure there is an appropriate policy and procedure for handling issues.

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICIES

Clear, inclusive and accessible parental leave policies.

ALLOW FLEXIBILITY FOR STUDY TIME

Consistent provision of study time within the working day to support the opportunity for employees of all genders to learn and enhance the opportunity to pass.



LEVEL 2: STRENGTHENING INCLUSION

Programmes and approaches that support ED&I, including mentoring programmes, initiatives to address unconscious bias, and the establishment of Employee Resource Groups, ED&I events etc.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING SUPPORT

Support for those struggling with work and exam pressure and, in particular, to support those who fail exams.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & BROKERING RELATIONSHIPS

Facilitate job swop/shadow opportunities so women can fill gaps in their CVs. Create opportunities for networking events across the industry with diverse speakers in attendance.

CONFIDENCE DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

Empower and support women in self-promotion and being able to speak out about their skills, interests and support needs. This includes any observation of unfair opportunities. Confidential chat function, coaching and mentoring.

REVIEW PROVISION OF NETWORKING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Ensure opportunities for networking and professional development are available at different times of the day and in a variety of settings that enable working parents to attend.

TRANSITION BACK TO WORK PROGRAMMES

Comprehensive transition back to work programs which cover: time management, changes in tech, how to stay visible and in touch on shorter hours.

NETWORKS FOR WORKING PARENTS

Buddy system/mentoring for parents to tap into for support and encouragement and comfort, to know they are not alone.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS MORE MOTIVATIONAL THAN RESPONSIBILITY

Mid-career women are more likely to be interested in roles that offer work-life balance, flexibility in working location and roles that are less demanding.

FACILITATE COACHING AND MENTORING SUPPORT

Provide opportunities for women to understand what further career options are available to them through building a network of diverse ambassadors who are open to mentoring support.

LEVEL 3: INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE CULTURE

ED&I is viewed as integral to the business strategy, and non-inclusive behaviours are not tolerated. Leaders step up by challenging the status quo and addressing barriers to inclusion.

FOSTER A CULTURE OF SUPPORT

Create best practice protocols and develop a culture which empowers all employees the ability to call out inappropriate behaviour of unfairness without fear of it hindering their career.

EMBED GOOD PRACTICE

Across the organisation, inclusive attitudes and behaviours need to be embedded as standard practice.

CHAMPIONING SENIOR TEAMS WHO PARENT

Case studies and examples of successful leaders who also share parenting duties.

NORMALISATION OF PARENTING NEEDS

Clear and overt encouragement of flexi-time for all. Valuing quality over quantity of hours.

SENIOR COLLEAGUES LEADING BY EXAMPLE HAS IMPACT

A company culture is set by senior leadership teams, and their attitude and behaviour has an impact on the way others behave. Witnessing a senior colleague call out inappropriate behaviour empowers women to do the same.

FACILITATE WIDER OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT ROLES

Secondments in different parts of the organisation. Job swaps/shadow opportunities, allowing women to experience different areas of the business.

FACILITATE MENTORS, AMBASSADORS and CHAMPIONS

Empower women in more senior roles and provide training on how to become an effective ambassador/champion/mentor.

SUPPORTIVE MANAGERS THAT BROADEN THEIR EXPERIENCE HAVE THE BIGGEST IMPACT

Develop the inclusive leadership capability of leaders.

USEFUL LINKS

Organisations across the profession are at different stages of their ED&I journey, so here is a useful link to what others are doing so we can share good practice and drive-up awareness.

Forbes:

How To Support Women In The Workplace And Be An Ally (forbes.com)

Lean In:

6 Ways That Women Can Champion Each Other at Work (leanin.org)

McKinsey:

Women in the Workplace | McKinsey

UN Women:

Five ways to build gender equality and sustainability | UN Women - Headquarters

Accountancy firms that champion women:

Accountancy firms lead the way in female representation - AAT Comment

Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland:

<https://www.icas.com/about-us/governance/diversity/icas-documents>

Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales:

<https://www.icaew.com/insights/diversity-and-inclusion/welcome-inclusion>

McKinsey & Co.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/diversity%20and%20inclusion/diversity%20wins%20how%20inclusion%20matters/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters-vf.pdf>

Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand:

<https://www.charteredaccountantsanz.com-tools-and-resources/practice-management/diversity-equity-inclusion>

Chartered Accountants Ireland:

<https://charteredaccountants.ie/diversity-and-inclusion/resources>

