



Women In Work

A STUDY INTO WOMEN'S THOUGHTS OF
THE WORKPLACE IN 2020



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Secondly, thank you to our amazing team who worked really hard to make this project happen.

And last but not least, thank you to everyone who has supported and promoted this study.

WHAT IS GLOW?

GLOW (Growing Leaders with Opportunities and Willpower) is an unincorporated association that aims to inspire, educate, support, and give individuals the courage to be a next-generation leader in their chosen industry with diversity and equality in mind.

Since March 2019, GLOW has been focused on a variety of different projects:

Women In Business:

The event that started it all! In collaboration with the University of Sussex Business School, Women In Business was designed to inspire, encourage and connect young women into the world of business. With two panels of entrepreneurs and business professionals, this event celebrated the rise of gender equality in the business world as well as encourage others to feel the fear and do it anyway!

You Belong On The Board:

Starring our founder, Catherine Park, and Managing Director of Aviatrix Market Research Consultancy, Helen Bailey, this podcast focuses on the discussion between Generation X and Generation Z women and how they can work together to encourage the next generation of women to get the top job or even start their own business. The conversation features real stories and experiences that these women have had. They tell their stories in the hope that other women learn from them and use the lessons they have learned.

The Forgotten Class Of 2020:

In this social media series, Helen Bailey and Catherine Park interviewed GCSE, A-Level and Degree students about their experiences during the Coronavirus pandemic and how it impacted their final year of education. They all had amazing stories to tell and now we want to share them with you! Check them out on GLOW's IGTV and YouTube!

With a range of events, workshops and online resources, our team of volunteers will continue to deliver a variety of projects and activities in order to start making a better future for tomorrow!

Got an idea you want to collaborate on? Want to use our services? Want to find out more? Get in touch by emailing us at GLOW.GrowingLeaders@gmail.com



You Belong On The Board:

The Forgotten
Class of 2020

15th August 2020

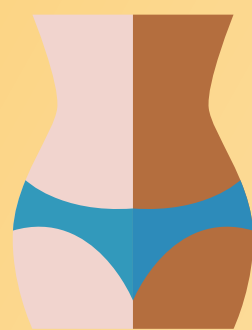
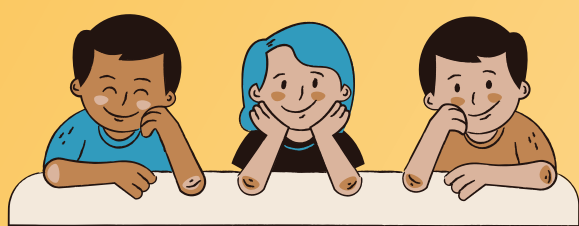
WHY THIS PROJECT?

According to PwC's Women in Work Index in 2019*, they identified the gender pay gap as one of the main contributors that is holding back progress in the UK for improving conditions for women in the workplace. We, however, believe there is more to consider, such as: passion; unpaid care work; diversity; mental health; culture; and more.

Whilst it is up to the government to enact policies, companies and employers are required to put this into practice and are vital in effecting change. While these effects are still being felt, more practical things can be done by employers to ensure that no one feels disadvantaged as a result of their gender or any other characteristic.



The topics that have been picked for this project have been selected due to their relevance to work and they help us understand how women are treated in the workplace and the experiences that they have. Some topics have specifically been chosen due to their relevance to women.



This project, which accompanies the rich body of research there is in this area, aims to help understand some of the specific areas that women face at work, which may help or drawback from their experience. This will allow GLOW to tailor future projects to benefit young women as well as provide a journal with research and stories to support or educate anyone who reads it. In the second part of this journal, you will find interviews with seven participants who were gracious enough to give their stories. We hope this can help inspire other women in their journey.

Your background should never determine your success and one should fight in the face of adversity.

PART ONE:

RESEARCH

By using Qualtrics, we distributed eight short surveys every two days over the course of sixteen days to our participants. We took their answers and analysed the results. Check out what we found out!

From August 2020, we started inviting individuals to participate in the Women in Work study to which 71 people signed up. From there, we started collecting the data from the 7th of September 2020. We asked questions from eight core topics:

- 1) Starting your Career;
- 2) Successes & Passions;
- 3) Difficulties & Unpaid Care Work;
- 4) Diversity & Inclusion;
- 5) Children;
- 6) Menopause;
- 7) Mental Health;
- 8) Workplace Culture.



The surveys were open to our participants until the 14th of October, after which point they were closed and we started analysing the results with the Data and Analysis functions in Qualtrics and using formulas in Excel.

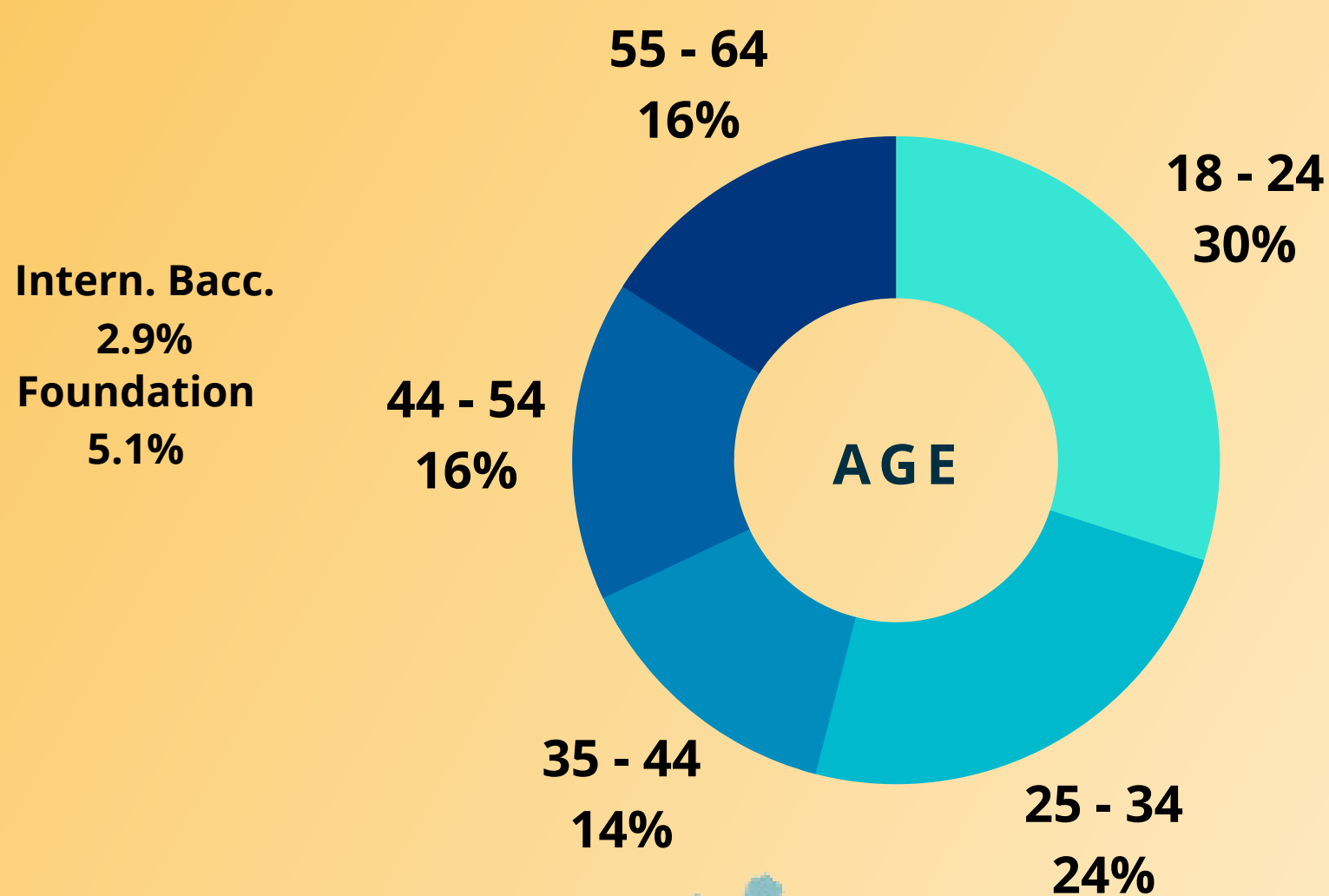
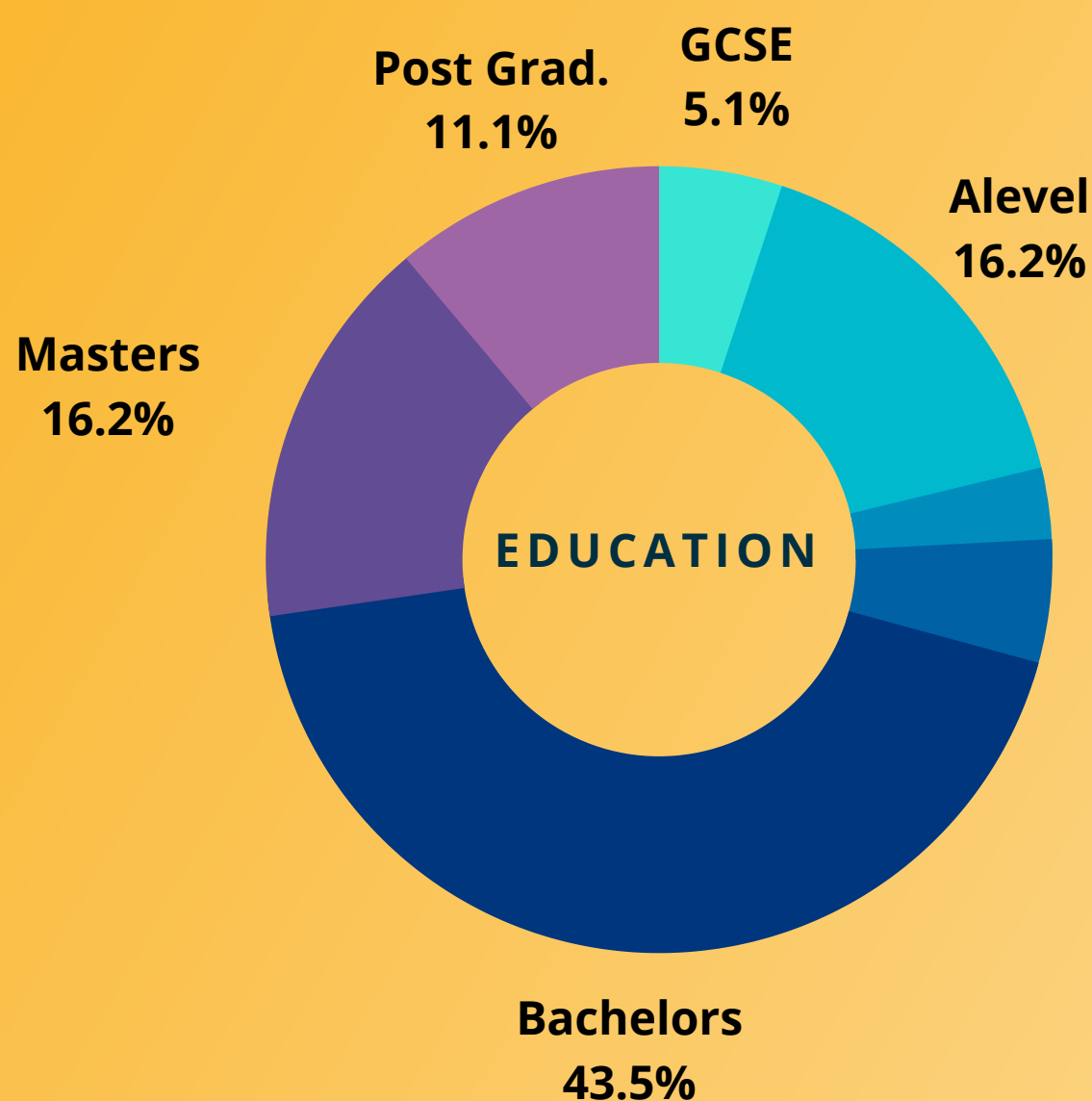
The purpose of the research part of this study was to get an understanding and an overview of the thoughts and feelings of women in 2020 and to see if there were any dominant thoughts or trends within the data. An example of this would be that 97% of participants believed that companies should ensure that employees go through unconscious bias training.

Whilst not all participants decided to do every survey, each survey's results have been hugely beneficial to this study and have allowed us to see multiple different perspectives, which was our goal when we started this study. The results were compared with the demographical information which was optionally provided by the participants at the start of the study.

We hope that you find the information as enlightening and impactful as we did.

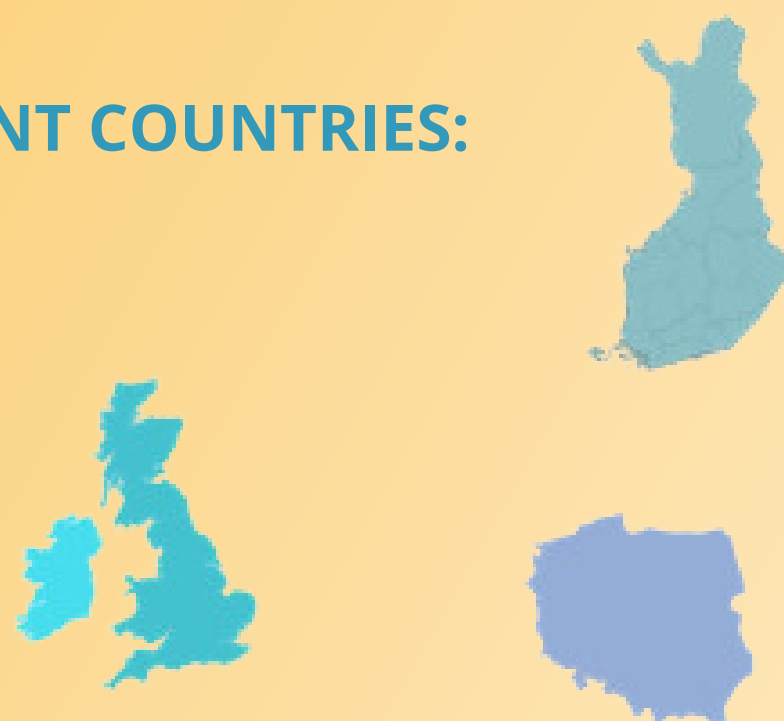
DEMOGRAPHICS

Before starting the analysis, we asked our participants to tell us about themselves in order to understand the group's demographics. This has helped us understand the opinions of our survey group.



OUR PARTICIPANTS LIVE IN FIVE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES:

'United Kingdom' (85%);
 'Ireland' (6%);
 'Finland' (3%);
 'Canada' (3%);
 'Poland' (3%).

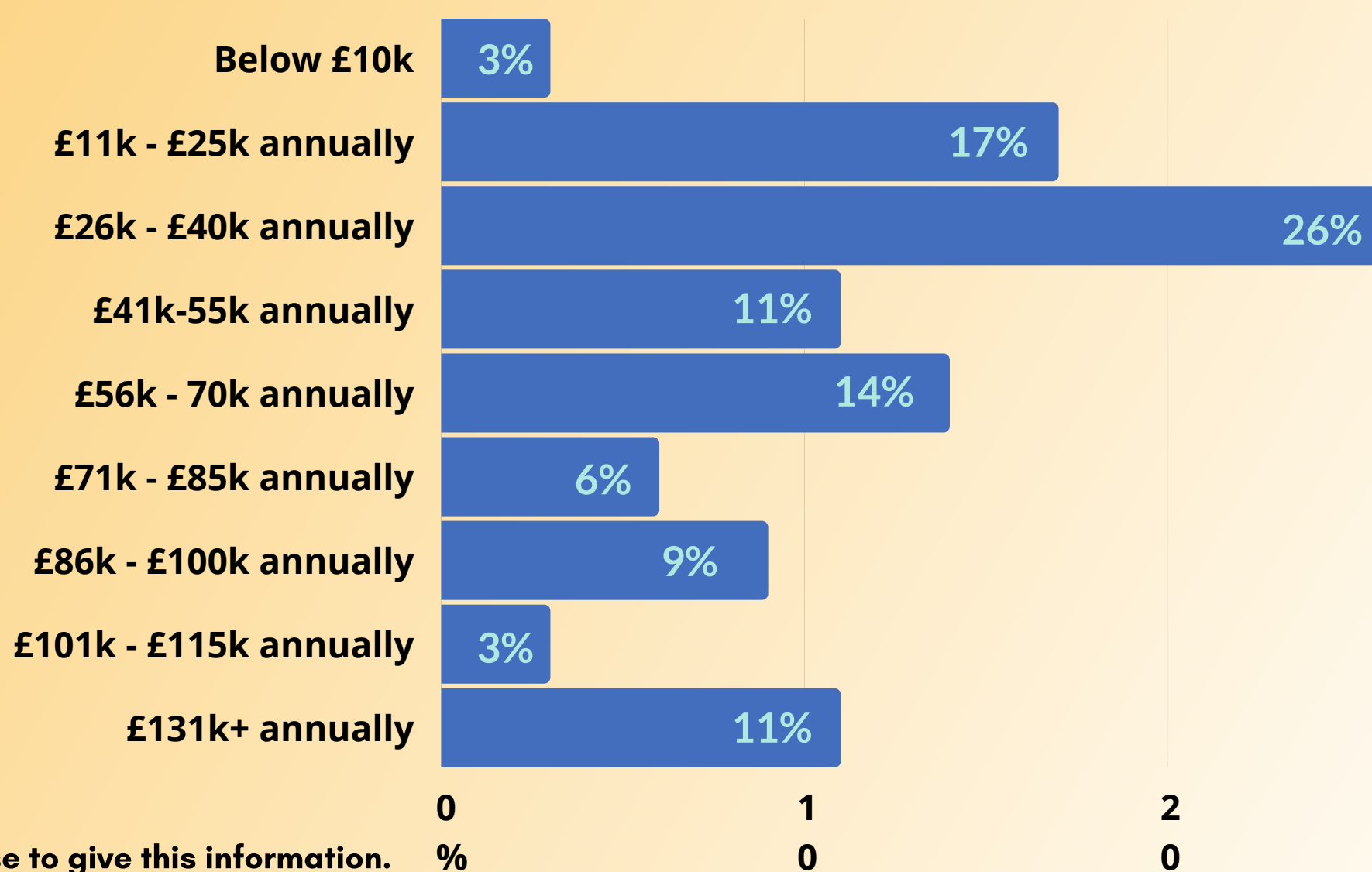


ETHNICITY

Whilst 57% of our participants identify as 'White' or 'White British', we had individuals who identified as 'Indian' (5%), 'Black Caribbean-Canadian' (3%), 'Chinese' (3%), 'Polish' (5%) and 'Asian' (5%).

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Below are the household incomes of our participants:



CHAPTER ONE:

STARTING YOUR CAREER

THE KEY STATISTICS:

79% of women started working before 20 years old.

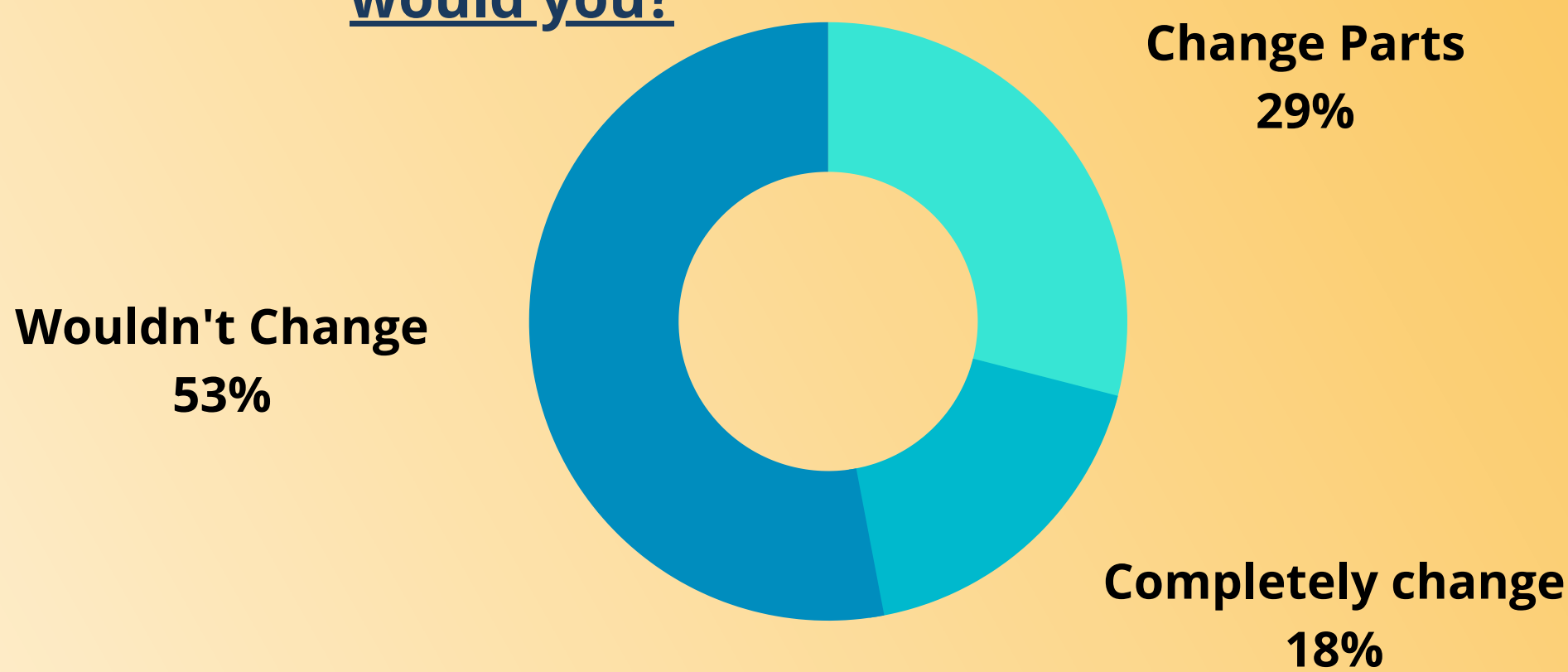
With current 18 - 24 year olds having the youngest average starting age of 16.

Current 55 - 64 year olds started their first jobs the latest. They averaged at 19 years old.

53% of women said if they got the chance, they would not change any part of their career.

This includes 100% of women between 55 - 64 saying they would not change anything.

If you could go back in time and change your career path, would you?



When asked what advice they would give to themselves when they started their career, the most common themes were:

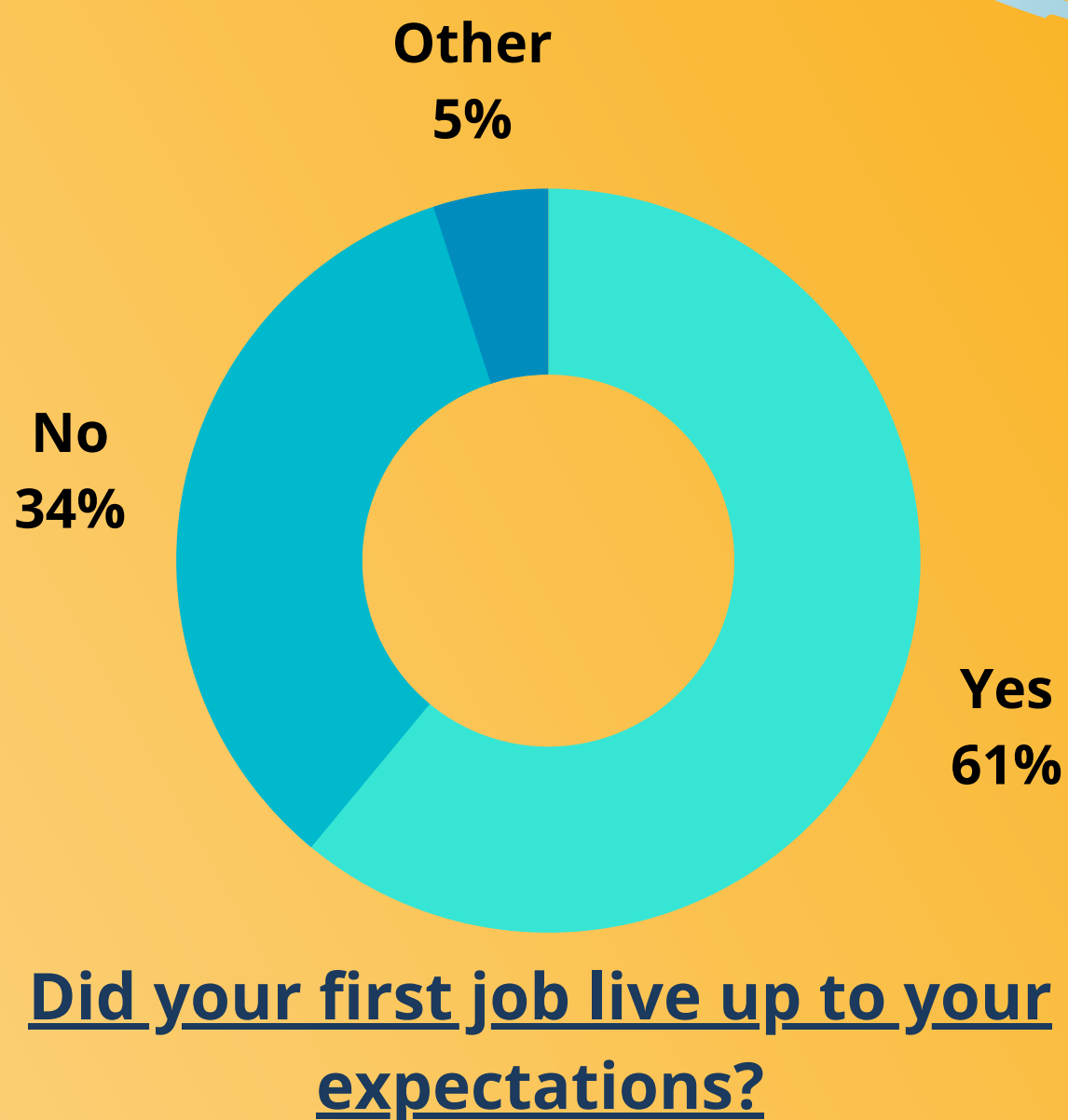
Confidence (34%)

Setting Boundaries (11%)

Bravery (11%)

Taking Risks (8%)

Do what you're interested in (8%)



'If you're offered a seat on a rocket ship, don't ask what seat! Just get on.'

Sheryl Sandberg

We started the study by asking our participants about the early steps into their careers and their reflections from when they started working. We wanted to focus on the start of participant's careers as we wanted to understand whether it had an impact on them in the future.

79% of participants had their first job before they turned twenty years old.

We started by asking when they started working. From nine years old to 24 years old, we had a variety of ages. Our mean average was 17 years old, and our most common answer was 16 years old. A key finding in our research was that 79% of our participants had their first job before they turned 20! When comparing our data to the participant's demographics we also saw interesting results.

When looking at the current ages of our participants, our 18 - 24 year olds had their first jobs the earliest, averaging at 16 years old. This contrasts the 55 - 64 year olds who started their first jobs the latest with an average of 19 years old.

When comparing this data to the household incomes of the participants, we found out that on average those earning between £26k - £40k annually had their first jobs the earliest averaging at 16 years old. This contrasts those earning £101k + annually who started working the latest, averaging at 19 years old.

61% of participants said their first job lived up to their expectations.

Work is a key part of the human experience, therefore, growing up, individuals may have had thoughts and expectations of the working world. We, therefore, asked our participants if their first job lived up to the expectations they had for it. Overall, 61% said that their first job lived up to their expectations. Interestingly, those whose highest level of education was either GCSE's, A-Levels, or a Foundation Year averaged with 93% saying their first job lived up to their expectations. Some of the first jobs that these individuals counted in their careers included: waitressing; retail assistant; office administrative assistants; apprentice chef; a nursery nurse; and a Woolworths Saturday job. In comparison to those whose highest level of education is a Bachelors, Masters or Postgraduate degree, only 43% said their first job lived up to their expectations. Some of the first jobs they counted in their career included: waitressing; marketing assistant; departmental associate; managerial roles; teacher; researcher; and accountant.



A key question we asked our participants was if they got the option to start their career again, would they change their career path. 53% of our participants said no they wouldn't change anything. This includes 100% of 55-64 and 70% of 18 - 24 year olds saying they wouldn't. They made notable comments like: being at the start of their careers, therefore, they're still looking for their next step; others said it was part of their journey into becoming the person they are today; some disliked education and were eager to start earning; some love the careers they're in; some knew they needed certain qualifications to get where they are today; and some saw their past experiences as grounding for future important life decisions.

Interestingly, 64% of 25 - 44 year olds said they would change at least a part of their career paths. When we asked them what aspect they would have changed, we got a mix of responses: they would've studied something different or even stayed in education longer; some would have gained more experience or been more adventurous and confident; some would have started in their current industries earlier; others wanted to try a different aspect of their industry; and some said they would've started a business sooner.

34% would have told themselves to be more confident when they started their career

Our last key question was, if you could give one piece of advice to yourself when you started your career, what would it be? 34% of our respondents said something about having more confidence, with comments like 'You are stronger than you know', 'Believe in yourself', 'be more confident, no one has all the answers, most people are faking it', 'there are no wrong moves', and 'you have the power to leave your job and go somewhere else'. A further 11% said to set boundaries, 11% said to be brave, 8% said to take risks, and finally 8% said to do what you're interested in.

OVERVIEW:

- 18 - 24 year olds had their first jobs the earliest, and 70% of them wouldn't change their career paths;
- 55 - 64 year olds had their first jobs the latest, and 100% of them wouldn't change their career paths;
- Only 43% of those whose highest education is a Bachelors, Masters, and Postgraduate Degree said their first job lived up to their expectations;
- 93% of those whose highest education is GCSEs, A-Levels or a Foundation year said their first job lived up to their expectations.

Check out the next section, Chapter Two: Successes & Passions.



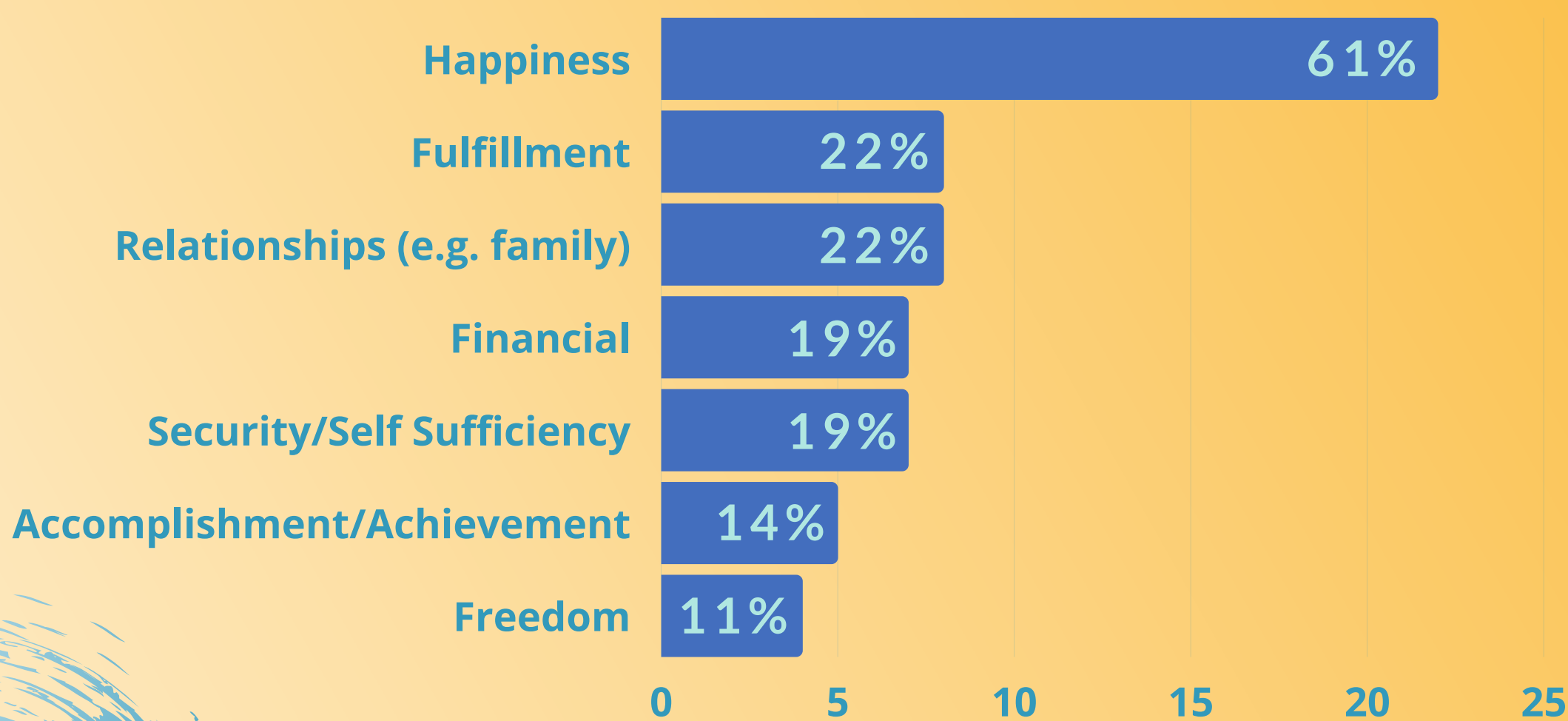
CHAPTER TWO:

SUCCESSSES & PASSIONS

THE KEY STATISTICS:

89% of respondents said they needed to feel successful in their work in order to be happy.

Some themes when describing 'personal success':



61% of women included 'happiness' or a similar term when defining personal success...

This dropped to 14% when defining job success.

In the last year, have you felt passionately about your job?

Yes, all the time	8%
Yes, most of the time	36%
Yes, some of the time	36%
Yes, but rarely	6%
No	6%
Other	8%



86% said they had, at some point, lost passion for their work.

'Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you.'

Oprah Winfrey

Our second survey focused on participants' views, experiences and definitions of success and passion in the workplace. We wanted to discover how these concepts and ideas varied or were consistent across our different demographics. We also hoped to identify what is important to people, both within and outside the workplace, whether these areas overlapped and how a loss of success or passion could affect these values.

61% of respondents defined personal success as including 'happiness' or a related term.

We first asked participants to define what personal success meant to them in five words or fewer. The most common response was 'happiness' or a related term at 61%. It was a steep drop off to the second most common answer of 'fulfilment' and relationships (such as 'family') both at 22%. Followed by answers related to finances and those relating to security or self-sufficiency both at 19%.

These answers were particularly interesting when contrasted with our second question where participants were asked to define what job success meant to them. The most common answers here were finance-related or recognition at work both at 22%. This was closely followed by opportunities for advancement at 19%. Meanwhile happiness and other related terms were cited by only 14% of those who responded.

Less than a quarter of those who included happiness, or a similar term, when describing personal success went on to include it in job success. This statistic was particularly interesting considering that the vast majority of respondents (89%) stated they needed to feel successful in their job in order to be happy. This was a statistic that remained consistent across all demographic groups.

This was also reflected during some of our later interviews. When asked about happiness at work Chloe stated "you're not always expected to enjoy work. It's a job and you make money and that's the way I think that we were brought up to view work."

Only 8% of respondents said they felt passionately about their job all the time.

Following our questions about success, our next question asked respondents to define passion in five words or less. Unlike success, there was no clear majority answer. The most common responses were excitement or enthusiasm at 31%, love at 25%, and motivation/drive at 19%.



Other common definitions included joy/happiness, desire/want, and fulfilment at 14%, 14%, and 11% respectively. Although there were many other varied and unique answers from our respondents.

We followed this question by asking participants if they had felt passionately about their job in the last year. Just over 1/3 (36%) said yes, most of the time. Another 36% stated yes but only some of the time.

Only 8% of those surveyed said they felt passionate about their job all the time. While conversely, only 6% said they rarely felt passionate and 6% said they had never felt passionate about their job within the last year.

The vast majority of respondents said they had at some point in their life lost passion for their work at 86%. Meanwhile, only 3% said they had never had a passion for their work at all.

We then asked participants what they did when they lost their passion. Over half suggested that they had changed their career in some way, which included actions such as: quitting their job; or moving or altering their role within that job.

17% said they re-evaluated their life in some way or took time to reflect on their life and work. While only 6% said that they specifically approached their manager about this loss of passion.

Half of women altered their career (quit or changed roles) after losing passion for their job.

The final question for successes and passions asked participants what their current priority was in terms of their career. A quarter said they were looking to develop their skills or pursue further education. While 17% cited financial incentives and 11% were aiming for advancement such as a promotion.

OVERVIEW:

- 89% of participants needed to feel successful in their job in order to be happy.
- Half changed their job in some way after losing passion.
- 'Happiness' was a frequently used term when describing success, particularly personal success.
- These answers suggest that feeling successful or passionate about your job is often important to women in the workplace.
- 86% of respondents had lost passion for their job at some point with the most common response to this being to try altering their career in some way.
- These findings were often consistent across demographic categories.

Check out the next section, Chapter Three: Difficulties & Unpaid Care Work.



CHAPTER THREE:

DIFFICULTIES & UNPAID CARE WORK

THE KEY STATISTICS:

The key themes of perceived difficulties faced by women in relation to their career were:

Family obligations and maternity (70%)

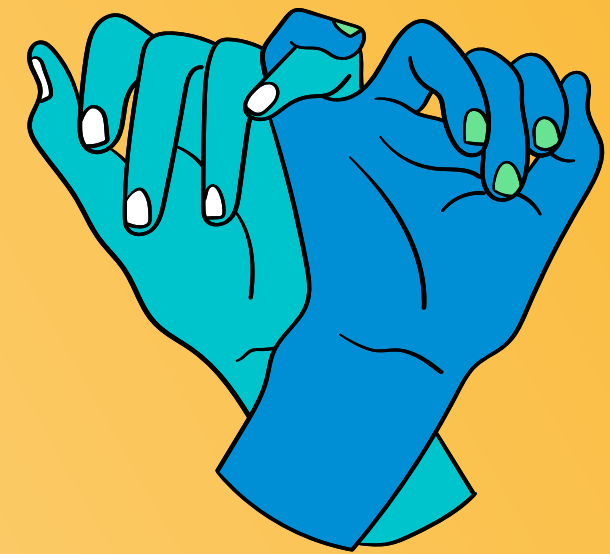
Misogyny (53%)

Lack of confidence (37%)

Credibility (37%)

Gender inequality (27%)

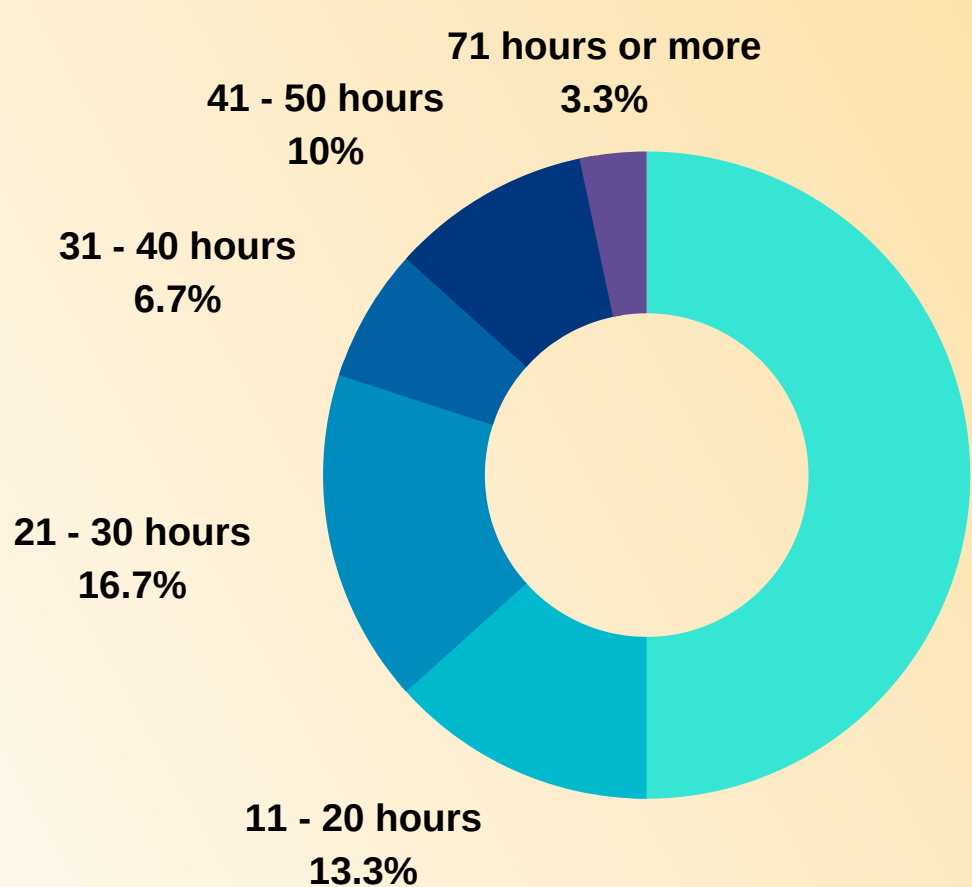
Societal expectations (20%)



50% of respondents spend 10 or fewer hours undertaking unpaid care work, yet 20% are found to take 31 or more hours a week.

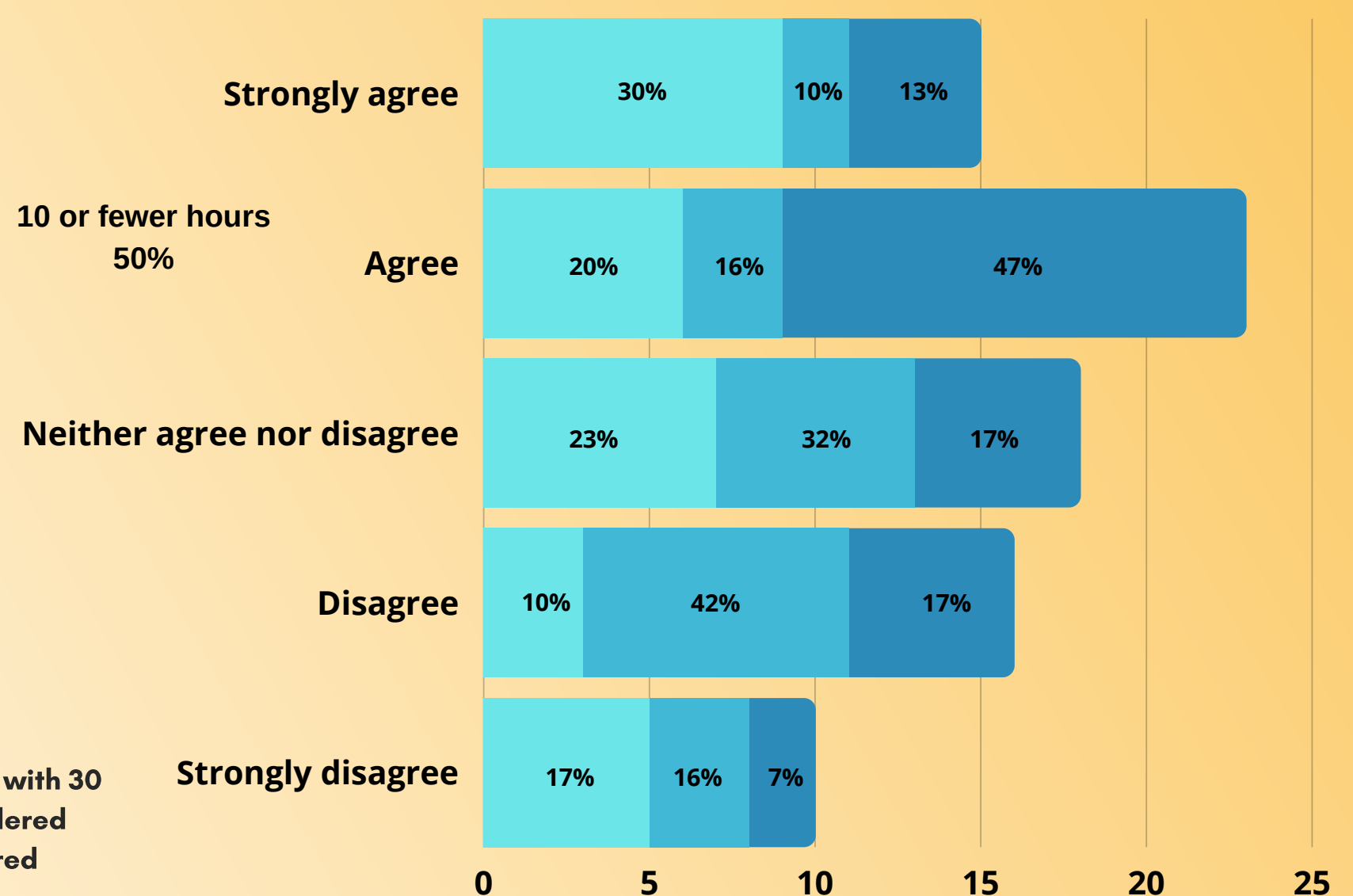
73% agree or are unsure that they undertake the most unpaid care work in their household, of which 58% agree or are unsure that it hinders their job.

60% agree that they have enough leisure time.



Hours spent doing unpaid care work in a week

Most unpaid care work? Hinder your job? Enough leisure time?



Data collected between 7th September - 14th October 2020 with 30 respondents. Question regarding whether unpaid work hindered their job, was only displayed to 19 respondents, who answered affirmatively to doing the most unpaid care work.

"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."

Shirley Chisholm

First African-American woman elected to US Congress

Our third survey focused on ascertaining women's views about perceived difficulties that they believe would arise in relation to building a career and the relationship this poses with, what is termed as, **unpaid care work**.

Unpaid care work is a term adopted by feminist economists to give credit to work done in the house and is, traditionally, undertaken by women. As a result, this used to be a hindrance on their paid careers, and therefore, was considered an aspect of importance as a potential barrier.

Family obligations was identified as the most prevalent factor when discussing difficulties for women and work.

The first question asked respondents about difficulties for career progression and 37% stated that family obligations and maternity were key factors, followed by misogyny (20%) and a lack of confidence (13%). Words such as 'childcare', 'responsibilities' and 'confidence' were present in many responses. These themes continued in the next two questions with family obligations dominating the responses at an average of 70% across all three questions. 53% of these respondents were 45 or older and of all the respondents who mentioned this theme, 47% have children. This is interesting as even those who do not have children identified family related obligations and maternity as one of the largest perceived contributors to a lack of female progression at work.

It is noteworthy that five of the six key themes all follow from stereotypical or societal factors, and suggest that a majority of hindrances are not naturally occurring, and therefore, it is simply certain attitudes that need to change; having a child does not need to necessarily hinder the chance of a woman progressing at work.

We then asked how much **unpaid care work** participants undertake in a week and 50% stated it was only 10 or fewer hours, of which respondents were either 18 to 24 years old (36%) or 25 to 34 years old or 55 or older (54%). Those who were in the age groups between 35 to 54, who contribute to 23% overall, typically seem to be spending more hours doing **unpaid care work** (45% of these respondents spend 21 to 30 hours and 29% spend 41 to 50 hours). Looking at the latter group who spend 41 hours or more, all of them have more than one child; this could explain the increase in hours of **unpaid care work** though, importantly, it cannot be said to be the only reason.

50% of respondents stated they spend 11+ hours on **unpaid care work** in a week.

For our research, it was logical to then ask if the respondents agreed that they did the most **unpaid care work** in their household. Historically, it has always been known that women did most of the housework. 30% of the respondents strongly agreed with 23% unsure and 17% strongly disagreeing. In reference to those who agreed and strongly agreed, their stated times did range from the lowest to highest groups that we presented, and therefore, there does not seem to be a standard amount of time across respondents.

75% of those who disagreed and strongly disagreed stated that they spend only 10 or fewer hours on **unpaid care work**, with about 20% being 18 to 24, which could be understood as they may be living with their parents and household work is shared by more individuals, and 30% being 45 or older, with the possibility of fewer individuals in the household.

The 73% who answered affirmatively or were unsure about the previous question were asked if they felt it hindered them in their job. It is a welcome statistic that the majority (42%) of respondents do not feel **unpaid care work** has such an effect on their job. Yet for the 26% that it does, they suggested more needs to be advocated about the benefits of sharing housework, for example. Though 32% were unsure and this does suggest that, overall, **unpaid care work** does not have as big an impact on work as originally predicted according to the responses received.

The last question then focused on whether the respondents felt like they had enough leisure time for a hobby; these revealed some interesting parallels. The justification for such a question is that those who do paid and unpaid work should also have vital leisure time for recuperation to be said to be having a healthy work-life balance. Some respondents strongly agreed that they spent the most time on **unpaid care work**, yet also strongly agreed they had enough leisure time. Likewise, this pattern was seen with a few respondents who agreed with both questions. It is a welcome statistic, additionally, to see a majority of respondents (47%) agreeing that they have enough leisure time, as it is important to instill a healthy balance. There is evidence that there are contextual factors in play and that there may not be a direct correlation between doing **unpaid care work** and an impact on your job and leisure time, yet it could show that, from these respondents, it is becoming easier to establish a good balance between the both.

OVERVIEW:

- Six key themes, including family obligations, misogyny and a lack of confidence, were identified as main factors for difficulties when it came to career progression.
- A key age group, 34 to 54 years old, seem to spend the most time undertaking **unpaid care work**.
- A majority of respondents do not believe it hinders their job or that they have less leisure time.

The findings from this survey have been surprising, as it was hypothesised that there was a correlation between unpaid and paid work; the higher the **unpaid care work** undertaken by an individual, the higher the impact on their paid job and leisure time. While this was present, for some respondents, a good number of participants seemed to have a good balance, though the difficulties identified still show that more needs to be in terms of actively advocating the removal of societal barriers and norms, such as the idea that you can't have a child and progress at work.

Check out the next section, Chapter Four: [Diversity & Inclusion](#).



CHAPTER FOUR:

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

THE KEY STATISTICS:

60% of participants think their current employer could do more to support diversity and inclusion in their workplace, with 19% of those stating that what they currently have in place is not sufficient.



54% of participants stating that they consider diversity and inclusion statistics when looking for a job.

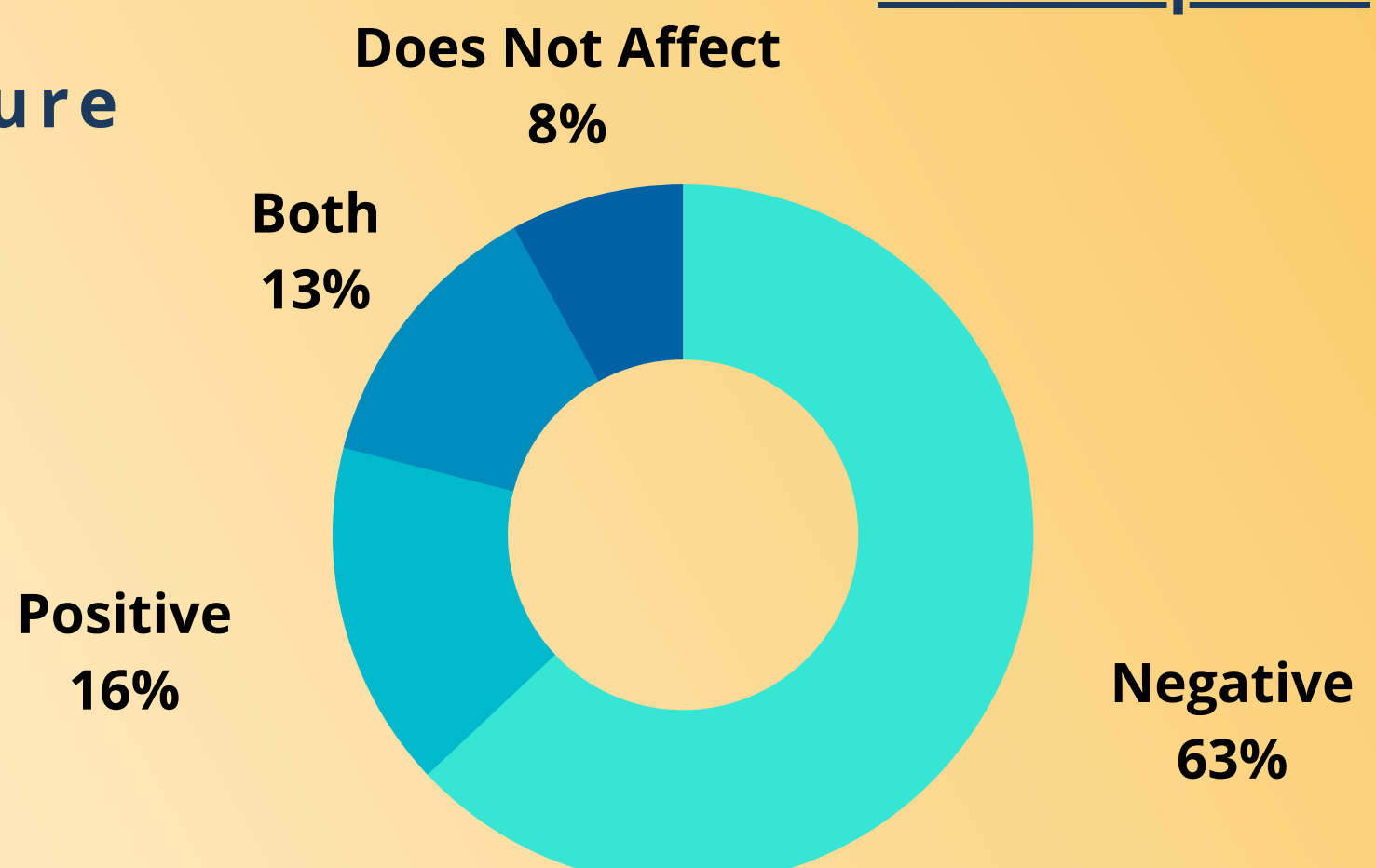


47% of those who don't consider them said they would consider them in the future.

63% of participants think that in 2020, stereotypes negatively affect women in the workplace, whilst 16% said they positively affect women and 13% said they both positively and negatively affect women.

How do stereotypes affect women in the workplace?

97% of participants believe that companies should ensure that employees should go through unconscious bias training.



'Diversity is not how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness'

Ola Joseph

In this section, we asked our participants about **diversity** and **inclusion** (D&I) in their workplaces with topics surrounding D&I statistics, **stereotypes** and **unconscious bias**. We wanted to approach this topic as D&I is becoming a critical factor in the workplace that is impacting everyone in the working world.

60% of participants said their employer could do more to support D&I

We started this section by asking our participants to what extent did they think their current employer was supporting D&I in their workplace. We had a large variety in our data with 40% stating 'they have lots in place to support D&I in the workplace', 49% stating 'they have enough in place, but they could do more', and 11% stated 'they have something in place but it is not sufficient'.

When looking at the **diversity** of our group, we have some interesting findings, where 100% of those aged 55 or older stated that their companies have lots in place to support D&I, whereas 86% of 25 - 34 year olds stated that their employers could do more. Whilst this age disparity is an interesting revelation, a greater one can be found when we look at household income. 57% of those earning more than £86k annually said their employer has lots in place to support D&I, and 55% of those earning less than £40k a year also said their employer has lots in place. This greatly contrasts the 88% of those earning between £41k - £70k who said their employer could do more to support D&I. The question is, why is there such a difference in this demographic?

54% of participants said they considered D&I statistics when job hunting

Our second question for participants asked whether they considered an employer's D&I statistics when job hunting. The results were fairly split, with 54% saying they do, and 46% saying they do not consider these statistics, therefore we followed up to find out more.

Those who do consider the statistics said: they value seeing gender and ethnic **diversity** in senior leadership; they find a company more trustworthy, innovative and ethical by publishing these statistics; others are more concerned about positive **discrimination** and choose to focus on reviews to see if they value **diversity** or just fill quotas; and they wouldn't feel comfortable working in an all-male environment.

Out of the 46% who do not consider these statistics, 47% said they would consider them in the future. Individuals stated that: they only learnt about them after their last job; they ask questions and get to know their team during their interview instead; they think there are more important issues to consider instead; and some think the job search is already difficult enough therefore adding this would make it almost impossible.

Another topic we asked our participants was surrounding **stereotypes** in 2020, asking if they thought **stereotypes** affected women in the workplace today. 63% of our participants said **stereotypes** had a negative effect on women, and they provided us with examples like: being bossy; not being good with technology or mathematics; seen as the office organisers; being studious; assuming they can't do something physical; being judged for their looks; being ignored in meetings; being over-reactive; having a perceived bias towards men for promotions; being expected to be nurturing and coaching; being emotional or hormonal; being feisty; being unfairly judged; having been assumed to be a secretary/assistant; personal protective equipment not fitting; supporting **women's networks** suggests that you hate men; being deemed as 'inexperienced' or not being taken seriously. In fact one participant commented that they had seen people refusing to hire women between 20-30 because that is the average age that women have children and that is detrimental to businesses. Another individual commented on the feminine/feminist **stereotype** that women get along, support each other, are nice and kind which is proven false in many workplaces with intra-sexual competition, lateral / horizontal hostility & 'girl hate'.

Whilst the majority said that **stereotypes** negatively affected women, it's important to note that: 16% said they had a positive affect; 13% said they had both a positive and negative affect; and 8% said they do not affect women. The groups with the highest number of participants saying that **stereotypes** negatively affected women were: those over 45 years old (80%), and those under 24 years old (75%). Whilst the highest number of individuals who stated that **stereotypes** positively affected women was the 35-44 year olds (24%).

97% think companies should ensure employees go through **unconscious bias** training

Lastly, we asked about **unconscious bias**, which are learnt **stereotypes** that are automatic, unintentional, deeply ingrained, universal, and able to influence behaviour. We asked whether our participants thought companies should ensure that their employees go through **unconscious bias** training. This was one of our most decisive responses as 97% said yes, they think they should.

OVERVIEW:

- 86% of 25 - 34 year olds said their employer could do more to support D&I;
- 47% of those who did not consider D&I statistics said they would consider them in the future;
- 80% of those over 45 said **stereotypes** negatively affected women.

Check out the next section, Chapter Five: Children.

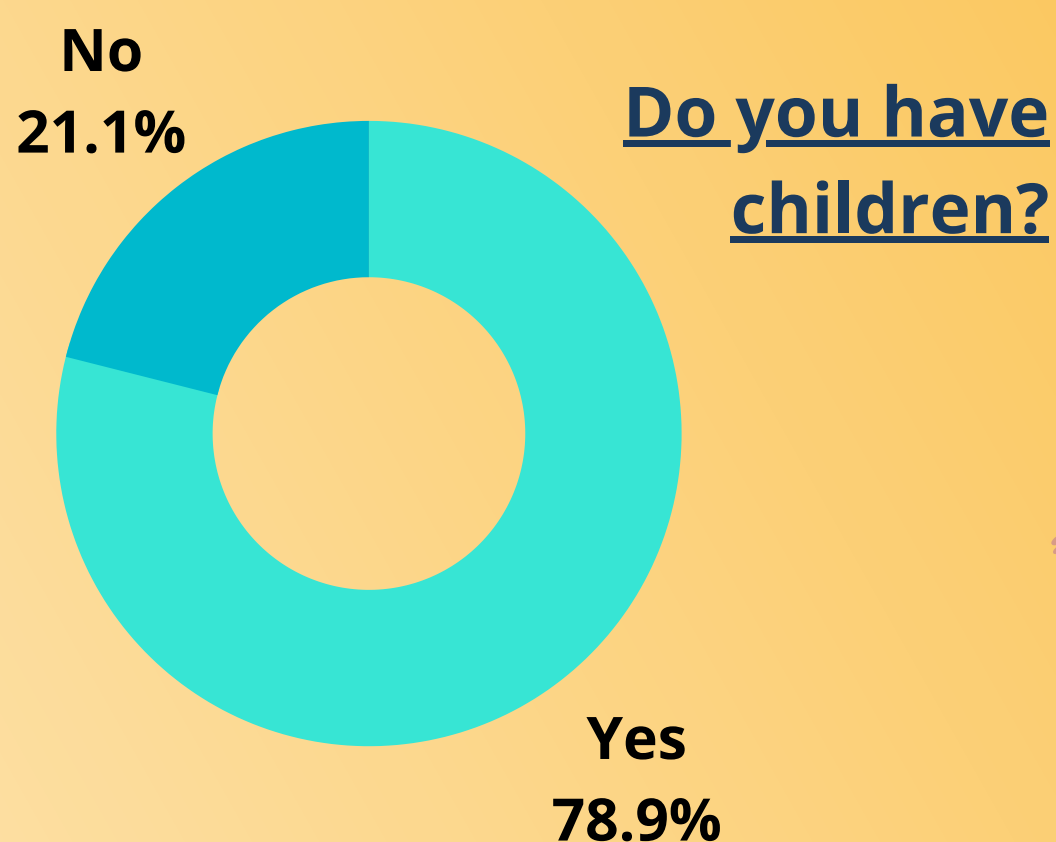


CHAPTER FIVE:

CHILDREN

THE KEY STATISTICS:

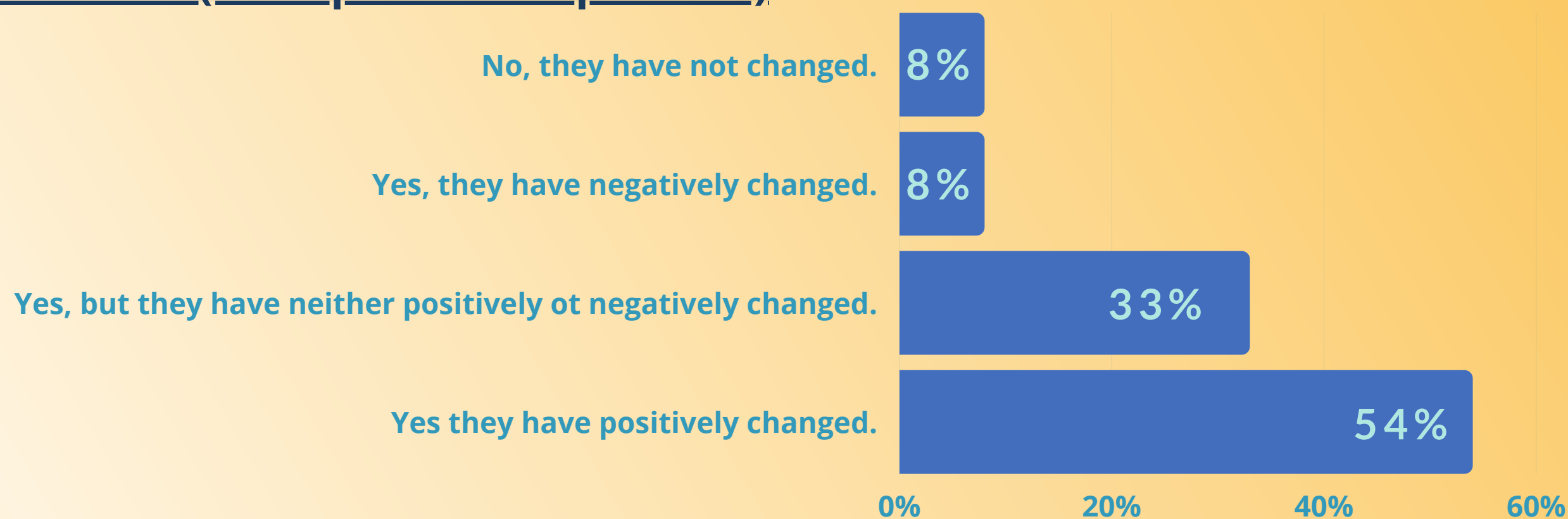
92% of participants who have children (79%) think their priorities surrounding work have changed since having children.



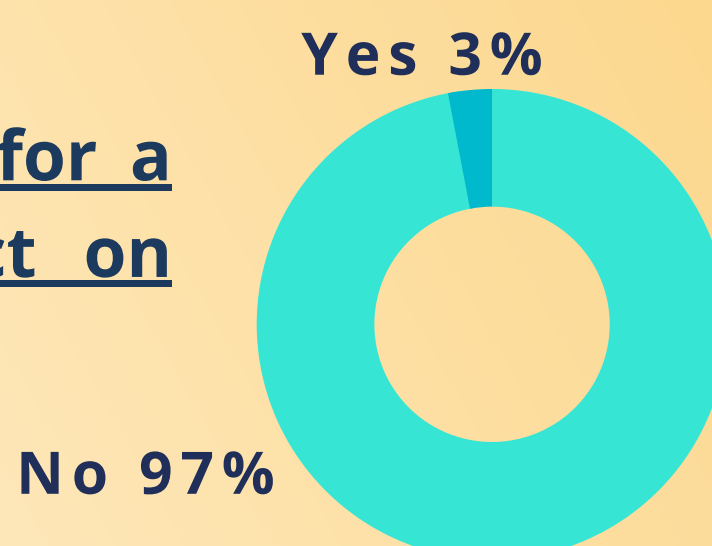
For participants who had children, the average maternity leave was 11 months, the shortest maternity leave being 3 months and the longest 1 year.

25% of participants who have had children, had longer than a year break in their career after having one or more of their children.

Do you feel like your priorities surrounding work have changed since having children? (multiple choice question)



Do you think a man as sole carer for a child would face the same impact on their career as a woman?



'Each gender goes through different stigmas'

Study Participant

In this section we decided to focus on the influence of having children on a woman's career. 37.5% of participants had one or more children at the time of answering these questions.

Average maternity leave was 11 months.

The shortest maternity leave taken by participants in the study was 3 months, whilst other participants did not go back to work after having one of their children. For those who did, the longest maternity leave was 1 year.

When breaking this down into different age groups, we found the group with the highest average maternity leave was 35 - 44 years olds with the average of 11.75 months. The group with the lowest average was 55- 64 years olds with 3.75 months. Interestingly, the averages greatly differed which meant there was no increase or decrease of average maternity leave corresponding to increase or decrease of age groups.

Our next focus was whether priorities changed for women since having children.

The majority of participants (54%) experienced a positive change in their priorities. 31% of participants experienced their priorities changing but it was neither a positive or negative change. In fact only 8% of participants did not experience any changes in their priorities and 8% observed a negative change.

The three main themes participants focused on when they described the change in their priorities were: efficiency; work; and time off. Participants who reported better efficiency, where they mentioned that since they had more responsibilities at home and work, they had to be more efficient and be more focused while working. Another priority that resurfaced was time off. Time off from work became more important, where participants wanted more flexible working and the ability to fit around kids schedules and holiday periods. Moreover, time off for themselves became more important as they appreciated social connections and time for self-care. The last major theme was priorities at work. Participants reported less interest in career progression, change of expectations at work, or even switching to self-employed to gain more control and independence.

97% of participants agreed that a man having children has a different impact on their career than a woman having children,

While elaborating on the different impacts on a woman's and a man's career after having children, participants mostly focused on maternity leave which is considerably longer than paternity leave. This impacts the development and progression of their careers, as maternity leave is not the only career break mothers and pregnant women can be expected to take.

The differences felt by the participants referred to the assumption that mothers would take on less extra hours. They would want flexible working and take more time off which could influence a number of opportunities, for example the chances of being promoted. Some participants also believe these differences could be mitigated depending on the decision of who will be the primary caregiver. Just as women struggle with many potential impacts of having children, so can men.

Participants debated on the increased pressure on men to provide for the family and the reverse of what women are experiencing. As people find it understandable for women to change working patterns after having children, this consideration is not granted to fathers. They are expected to resume working as usual which results in less family time.

53% of participants without kids think there is no perfect time to have kids or that there are always advantages and disadvantages.

Our last question for the participants was: 'In terms of your career, when do you think is the right time (if there is one) to have kids?' We analysed the results for all participants, so both those with and without kids, and the most popular theme in all three groups was the lack of there being a right time. There are always advantages and disadvantages at every stage of anyone's career and it is more of a personal choice and situation rather than universal conditions. The second most popular answer, for those participants without children, was that the right time would be at the beginning of their career (17%). The third theme was the opposite of the second most popular answer where 12% of participants without children think that the best time, career wise, to have children would be when you have an established career, job security and stable finances.

The results are more balanced for the participants with children. All of the following themes were focused on by 18% of participants each: 'established career/ job security/ stable finance', 'beginning of the career', 'no right time' and 'in your thirties'. 4% of participants were unsure if there is a right time to have kids in terms of your career.

OVERVIEW:

- The average maternity leave for participants with kids was 11 months.
- 54% of participants felt like their priorities surrounding work positively changed since they had children.
- The largest difference in impact of having children on a woman's career vs. man's career is career breaks.

Check out the next section, Chapter Six: [Menopause](#).



CHAPTER SIX:

MENOPAUSE

THE KEY STATISTICS:

24 respondents, who had not experienced menopause yet, were asked what they understood of it:

Definition (79%)

Causes of menopause (75%)

The symptoms (87.5%)

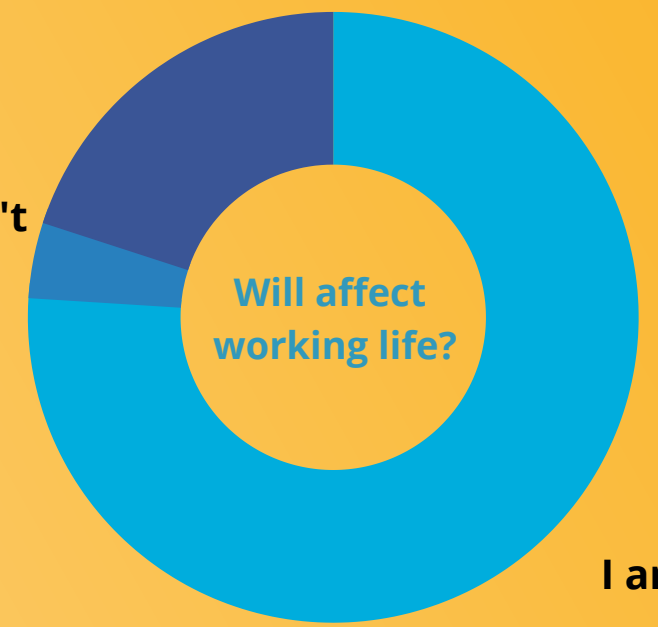
The varying level of severity of symptoms (46%)

How to treat the symptoms (29%)

I have little to no understanding of menopause (12.5%)

It will negatively
20%

It won't
4%



I am unsure
76%



- Key themes about menopause and work:
- Lack of understanding by employers (27%)
- Fear (23%)
- Makes working difficult (18%)
- Unsure of the impact (23%)

Please note, not all respondents chose to answer.

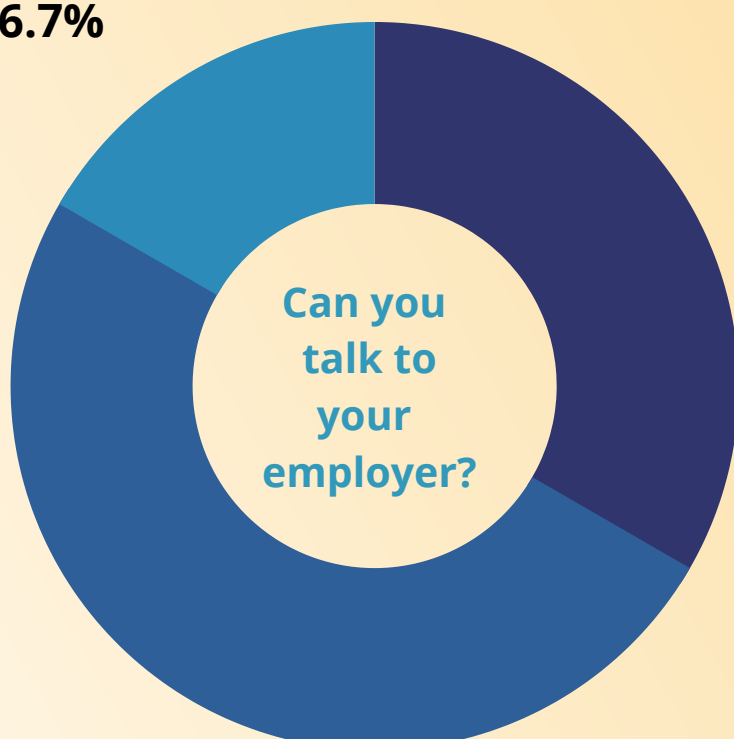
42% of respondents would feel comfortable talking to their employer about menopause, with 33% only about taking sick days.

Of the respondents who are going through menopause or know a colleague who is:

50% stated that the symptoms did impact their work negatively;

Only 10% felt like they were supported at work.

Not at all
16.7%



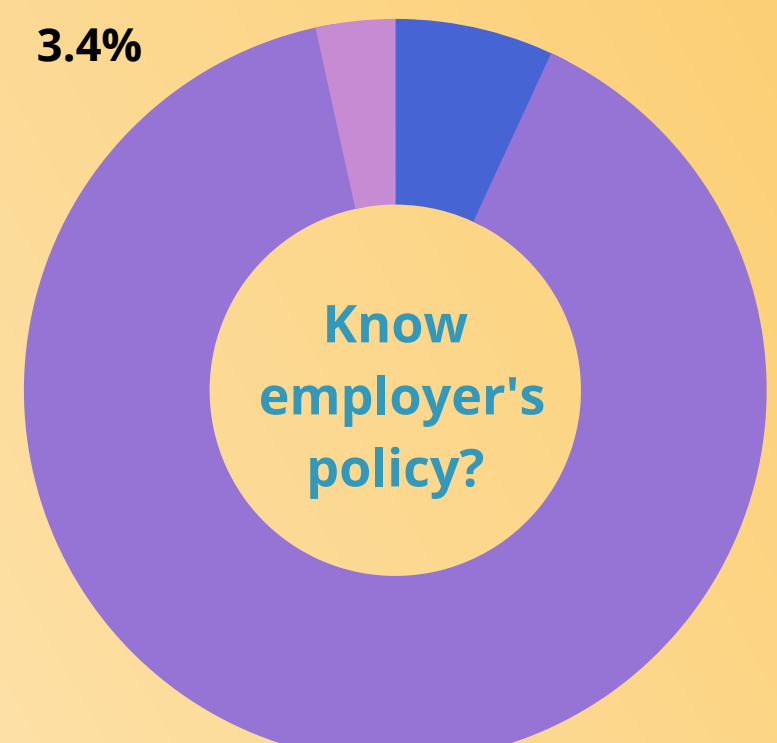
Can you talk to your employer?

Yes, only symptoms
50%

Data based on respondents who answered affirmatively to experiencing menopause.

Yes, but not comfortable
3.4%

Yes, but don't need
6.9%



Know employer's policy?

No
89.7%

Data based on 30 respondents. Not all respondents chose to answer.

"It's still a slightly taboo topic but the more we talk about it the less taboo it becomes."

Sarah Churchman

Head of Diversity and Inclusion at PwC

Our sixth survey focused on the relationship between menopause and work and whether respondents, firstly, felt it had or will impact their work and, secondly, if employers are doing enough to support their employees when they are going through menopause.

This is an important aspect to ask about as all women will, at some point, go through menopause and if it is having an impact on their work, provisions need to be put in place to support those who need it. We, therefore, wanted to ascertain whether that is desirable or not.

A majority of respondents knew the definition, symptoms and causes of menopause.

This analysis is best split into two sections: those who have not started menopause or do not a colleague who has; and those who have been or are going through menopause. Our study involved respondents from a wide range of ages, and therefore, the latter group is smaller than the former.

In relation to the first group of respondents, they were asked what they understood of menopause. 87.5% stated they knew what the symptoms were and 79% knew the definition, with a minority unaware of the factors we provided. If respondents knew a colleague who had started menopause, some of the awareness could have resulted from that. Importantly, all women experience menopause differently and some experience it earlier than others so, generally, the impact it will have is purely subjective.

These respondents were also asked about their understanding of the relationship between menopause and work. The most prevalent theme was concern and a lack of understanding by employers (27%), as well as fear (23%). Of the respondents who stated the first theme, 83% stated they did not know their employer's company policy to support those going through menopause, with 17% stating they knew but did not feel that they needed it. These statistics just show that it is possible that employers don't actually have anything in place to support those going through menopause, yet it is desirable. 23%, also, stated they were unsure of the impact that menopause would have, and of these respondents, 100% stated they did not know their employer's policy. This affirms the previous statement.

Nearly 90% of respondents did not know their employer's policy for supporting them if they are going through menopause.

Lastly, we asked these respondents how they believe it will affect their work. 76% stated they were unsure, of which a majority of respondents were 18 to 24 year olds and 25 to 34, and 20% stated it will negatively affect their work. Of those 20%, 80% stated they would be comfortable talking to their employer about menopause related issues; this is surprising.

If these respondents believe it will have a negative impact, and they would talk to their employer about it, then something has to be in place for them.

In relation to the second group of respondents, the average age of the respondents was 55. They were asked how supported they felt at work, and only 10% gave an affirmative response. In terms of the impact that it had, 50% stated that the symptoms they had or are currently having have negatively impact their work. Respondents stated they felt 'extreme tiredness' and often had 'headaches', with a couple of respondents stating they did not experience or have not experienced any symptoms yet; this affirms the previous idea that menopause affects women differently.

They were then asked if they felt like they could talk to their employer about it. 50% stated they could but only if a part of it was bothering them, with 33% only about taking sick days, yet those who stated this have not asked their employer for sick days. Of the 50%, however, a majority of the respondents have asked for a couple of sick days. None of respondents we asked, however, used their annual or unpaid leave for menopausal related issues.

Only 10% of respondents going through menopause feel supported at work.

Lastly, they were also asked if they knew their employer's company policy with 80% stating they did not. This survey has shown that menopausal symptoms, and the affect that they may have on women while working, is not very well discussed. It seems, overall, that the respondents are unsure of the effects due to it not being an immediate phase in their lives, but for those who it is, it seems that more needs to be done to increase awareness in the workplace. Women should not feel ashamed for asking for sick days or support should they require it.

OVERVIEW:

- A majority of respondents were aware of the main factors surrounding menopause, including the medical definition.
- A majority of respondents are not aware of their employer's policy for support for menopause.
- Menopause affects women differently.

The results from this survey have not been as surprising, as it was hypothesised that a majority of respondents would not be aware of the support or feel comfortable approaching their employer about it. In saying that, however, it is good to see that a number of respondents do feel comfortable, but it is clear that the issue is still stigmatised. Martin-Campbell (2019)* of EY discusses how change will come in the workplace, as menopausal women are a large part of the working demographic, and therefore, more will keep expecting support from their employers. It is an issue, alongside the menstrual cycle and pregnancy, in relation to work, that needs destigmatising. The only way to effect change is to keep talking about it.

Check out the next section, Chapter Seven: [Mental Health](#).

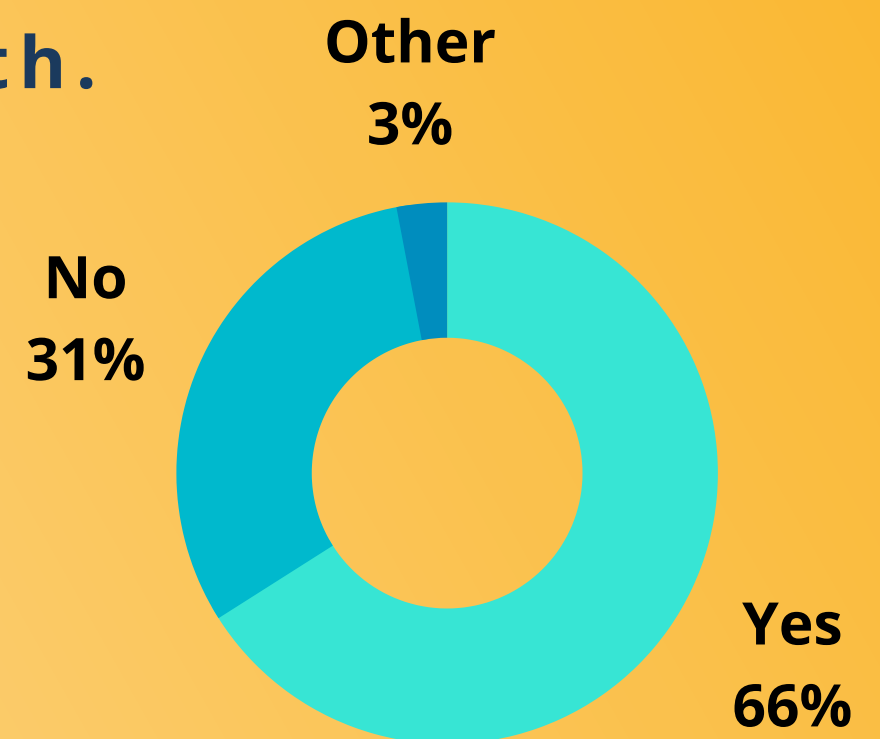


CHAPTER SEVEN:

MENTAL HEALTH

THE KEY STATISTICS:

90% of women said their mental health is affected by their job but only 48% said their employers have enough in place to support their mental health.



Do you feel able to talk to your employer about your mental health?

The most common themes of how work affected participants' mental health were:

- Work gives a sense of achievement and structure
- Being torn between family and work
- Work provides necessary social interactions



Employers support employees mental health with:



- Mental health first-aiders
- Various wellness programmes
- Regular check-ins with supervisors

Employers lack of support for employee's mental health was portrayed as:

- Lack of anonymity when trying to reach out
- Unclear access to resources
- Stigma around not coping well with mental health
- No resources for mental health support available at all

'I enjoy what I do. I am meeting lots of people, but most of all I think the fact that, while I am doing my job, I feel that I am making a difference.'

Study Participant

This section's focus is on **mental health** (MH), how it is affected by working conditions, and how companies and employees care for it. It is important to ask our women about MH as their time at work will occupy a large amount of their life so how it affects their MH is important.

90% of participants said their job affects their **mental health** with 3% saying it only negatively affects vs 21% who said it only positively affects.

When describing negative influences from work, an overwhelming majority of participants mentioned some kind of anxiety, work pressure, and high expectations. Some participants used these to refer to the job itself, whilst others used these to refer to juggling responsibilities at home and at work. The theme of being torn between work and family appeared a lot and participants felt like trying to balance those different responsibilities made them feel like they were failing at both.

Out of the 66% of participants who stated that their job only positively or positively and negatively influenced their MH, these were the three most common themes that they stated which positively influenced their mental health from their job:

- Achievements at work boost their **mental health** and increase confidence and self-worth;
- The job improves **mental health** by giving them purpose;
- The social side of working improves their **mental health**.

66% of participants said they feel like they could or they already did in the past talk to their employers about their **mental health**. The distribution of the answers was very uneven within different age groups. The highest (100%) was in the 55-64 age group. The lowest (43%) in the 25-34 years old group.

52% of participants admitted their employer has nothing or not enough in place to support employees' **mental health**.

To answer the question 'Has your employer put enough in place to support your **mental health**', we gave the participants a range of answers. The statement which the highest number of participants (33%) chose was very pleasantly surprising: 'Yes, they have got lots in place to support employees' **mental health**'. Participants who felt their employer was doing enough for their **mental health** mentioned resources like: **mental health** first aiders; counselling services; **support networks**; online resources; or regular chats with their managers. It was also interesting to see no correlation between the workplace support for MH and income brackets, industry, or the location of the participants. The industry's range was incredible as it included: Finance; Technology; Healthcare; Education; Entertainment; and Media.

Participants who felt their employers were not doing enough or nothing to support their MH, mostly admitted they are scared of being judged. They also mentioned being overworked to the point where there is no time for self-care activities at work, or there are minimal resources available to them and those that are available are not really helpful or are very difficult to access.

A very common theme was the stigma connected to MH where participants reported that struggling with MH at work makes their employer think they are weak or are not coping with work, which could negatively influence their progress at work. This is the opposite of the participants who felt their employers supported their MH enough. We can see that participants who don't feel like their employer has enough in place are mostly from education, hospitality and charity industries and were mostly (78%) from households with incomes below £55k per year.

89% of our participants stated that their working environment does influence their **mental health**.

Participants reported a variety of environmental influences on their mental health ranging from their actual physical environment to the mood of their co-workers.

The most common characteristics of a positive environment, which improves participant's **mental health**, are: supportive colleagues; positive social environment; and flexibility with changing the physical environment.

One of the most common features participants focused on, which caused the working environment to negatively influence their **mental health**, was a poor physical environment. A key example was an office with no windows or plants. Another focus was on the lack of control over participant's work environment. The physical attributes of the environment were not the only ones negatively affecting the participants. An unwelcoming team and supervisor were also often mentioned as a negative effect on **mental health**.

There was no significant relationship found between participants claiming positive or negative influences from their working environment on their MH and their demographics, like: household income; age; or industry.

OVERVIEW:

- 90% of participant's jobs affect their **mental health**
- 33% of participants do not think their employer has enough in place to support their **mental health**
- 66% of participants feel like they can talk to their employer about their **mental health**

Check out the next section, Chapter Eight: Workplace Culture.



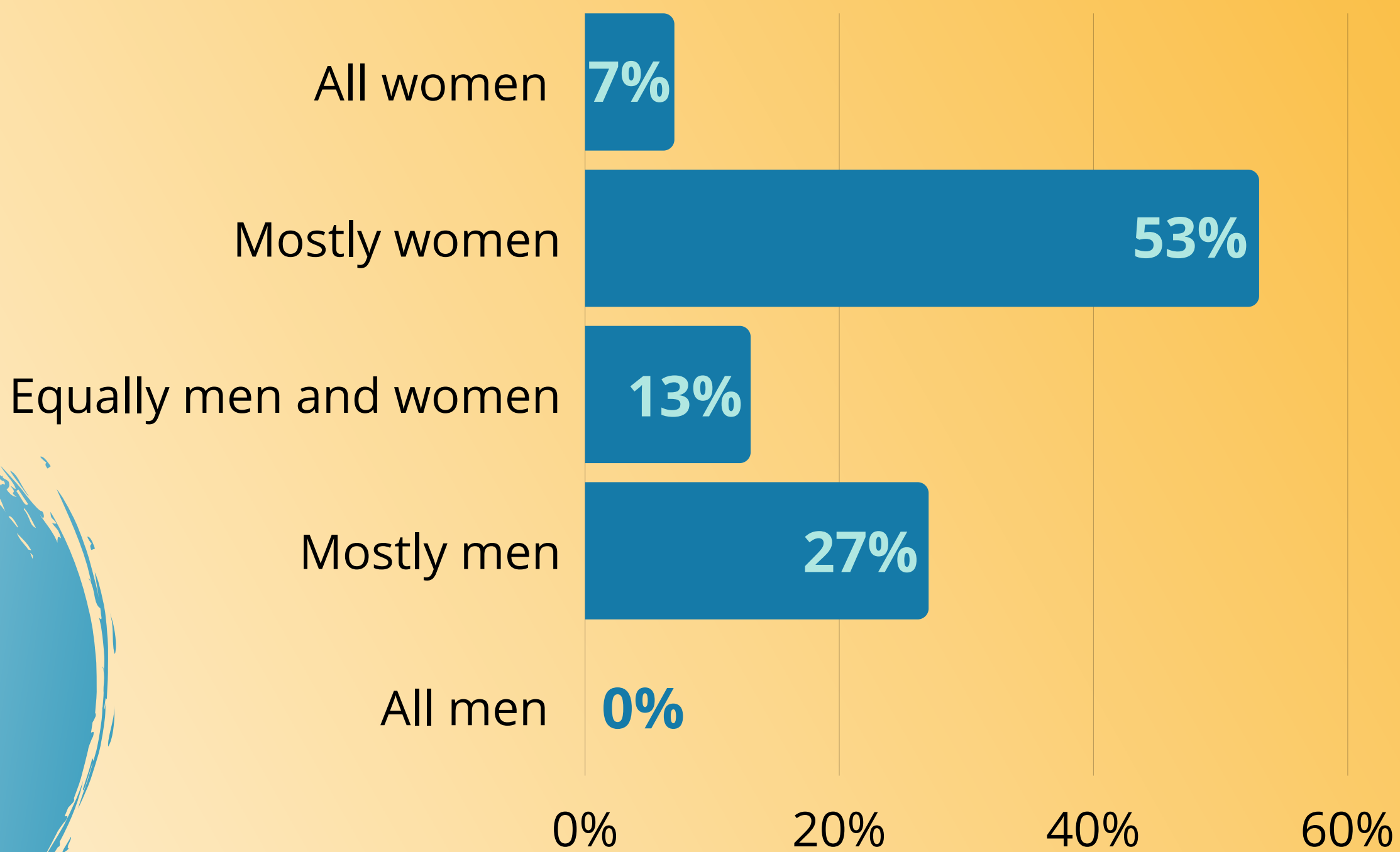
CHAPTER EIGHT:

WORKPLACE CULTURE

THE KEY STATISTICS:

90% of respondents said that workplace relationships are **greatly important** to working life.

A majority (53%) of respondents' core workplace relationships were mostly women and some men.



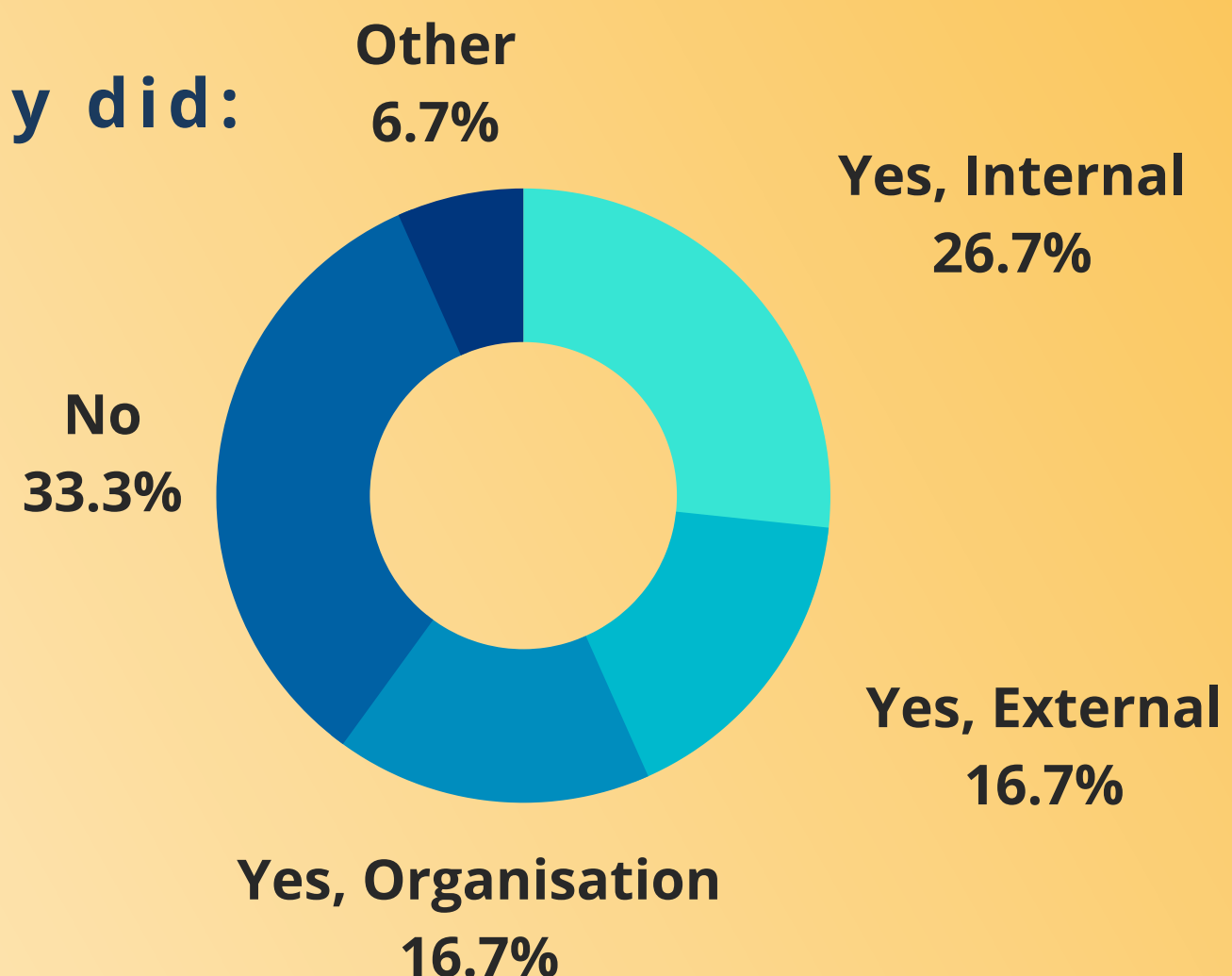
1/3 of women said they currently do not have a business support network.

However, of those who said they did:

26.7% had internal company employee networks

16.7% had networks external to their work

16.7% were part of organisations designed to create networking opportunities.



'Performance more often comes down to a cultural challenge, rather than simply a technical one.'

Lara Hogan

Our final survey was on the topic of Workplace Culture. Here we explored the impact of workplace relationships and support networks on women. It is important to focus on culture as, we believe, it may largely affect an individual's experience of the workplace.

90% of respondents stated that workplace relationships were greatly important to them.

First we asked our participants whether workplace relationships were important or unimportant to their working life. An overwhelming 90% stated that they were greatly important. No one said that they were unimportant.

When asked why workplace relationships were important the most common response revolved around happiness at work as 40% cited happiness or enjoyment in their response. Some other answers included that: they were important for support or help (17%); or that they increased productivity or the standard of work (24%).

We also asked respondents whether their core workplace relationships were mainly male or female. Interestingly the most common response was mostly women, some men at 53%, followed by the opposite mostly men, some women at 27%. 13% had equal men and women, 7% had all women while 0% had all men as their workplace relationships.

These ratios were largely reflected in the different levels of education and income with the noticeable exception of those with post-graduate degrees where two out of three reported their workplace relationships were mostly men. While those in the highest income bracket (131K+) all stated their core workplace relationships were mostly men, some women. It is important to note the sample size as both groups only consisted of 3 women, however it makes for an interesting finding nevertheless.

All participants with a household income over 131K said their workplace relationships were mostly men.

Next we asked participants about their business support networks. 60% of women said they had some form of business support network. These were broken down into: 27% internal company employee networks; 17% an employee network external to where they work; and another 17% said they were part of an organisation designed to create networking support sessions. It is however important to note that one third of respondents stated they had no form of business support network.

We then asked participants to describe the benefits of having business support networks, the answers included that: they are great for support; for bonding; and for meeting people beyond your immediate team.

Whilst some drawbacks included that it could be time consuming or expensive to take part, a couple of respondents cited the fact that COVID-19 made taking part in these networks much more difficult and that they were less effective virtually.

0% of those surveyed said that support networks have a negative impact on women's progression.

Finally, we wanted to see what the long-term and short-term impacts of support networks were on women in the workplace. When asked about their impact on the well-being of women, 87% included long-term positive impact while 40% included short-term positive impact (23% said both). Whilst 7% said short-term positive and long-term negative.

When asked why support networks have a positive impact on the well-being of women the most common response was that they were useful for support or advice (37%). Other common answers were that: they provided relationships/connections (20%); motivation (10%); improved mental health (7%); and that they help with career progression (13%).

When asked about the long and short-term impact on the progression of women we saw relatively similar answers with 90% including long-term positive and 37% including short-term positive (33% included both).

When asked why support networks helped with women's progression, some of the most common themes that emerged included: they provided support (30%); could give advice (13%); access to networking (13%); or access to opportunities (3%). Some other benefits included: providing women with confidence (17%); as well as skills, motivation, and empowerment all at 7%.

For both questions only one person said there was neither a long-term positive or negative impact. Whilst only one said there could be a short-term negative impact on women's well-being, no one said there was a negative impact of support networks on women's progression, both long-term or short-term.

Some other interesting stand-alone answers included that: business support networks helped women break into male spaces; helped foster a sense of belonging; but also that sometimes the benefits depended on the individual.

OVERVIEW:

- Workplace relationships were important to the vast majority of those surveyed
- One third of respondents have no form of business support network
- Most women agreed that these networks had a positive long or short term impact on women's wellbeing and progression at work

That's the end of Part One! Please do check out Part Two which contains the stories of seven brilliant women.



PART TWO:

TELLING YOUR STORIES

After the completion of our final questionnaire, we moved onto the second part of our study. We conducted a number of interviews to further explore the topics we had already covered as well as providing an opportunity for individuals to tell their own stories of their experiences in the workplace.

These interviews followed a semi-structured interview format. A majority of the questions related to the eight categories that we were already exploring, which allowed for more in-depth exploration of them as well as a more personal side to women's experiences that is impossible to show with the data alone.

In October, we extended the invitation to take part in the interviews to the women involved in the questionnaires, we had seven people who agreed to be interviewed. We then proceeded to conduct these interviews over the next few months. By this point, our analysis of the Part One data was well underway and we were able to incorporate some of our findings into the questions. Through this, we were able to expand on these findings and see if any of the results were surprising to the interviewees.

A key aspect of Part Two was allowing those involved to tell their own stories. This was a particularly exciting part for us as we were keen to hear about the experiences of women at different stages of their careers and in different industries.

We are immensely grateful for all those who gave their time to take part in an interview. These conversations allowed for a more personal side to the study which was not possible through the data from questionnaires alone. We believe when presented alongside this data, it provides an interesting insight into some of the shared and unique experiences of women in the workplace.

We hope that you enjoy reading some of the stories from:

1. **Sophie**, who owns her own creative brand and marketing agency;
2. **Nadine**, who started out as a chef and now helps others cope with stress;
3. **Mahta**, who works as a project manager whilst having her own business;
4. **Chloe**, who talks about her experiences working in the hospitality industry;
5. **Lizzie**, who is taking steps towards her career in conservation;
6. **Kate**, who talks about the importance of different relationships in her career;
7. **Nancy**, who discusses the effects of the pandemic on her part-time jobs and graduate recruitment.

STORY ONE: SOPHIE

Sophie started working very early in her teenage years. Before starting her career in journalism and progressing into content marketing, Sophie travelled the world teaching English as a foreign language. After experiencing the corporate world, she decided to start her own creative brand and marketing agency. In her business Sophie is very conscious of employees' mental health and the risk of burnout in the creative industries.



Tell me about your first job:

I was a cleaner for a nursery that my mum's friend ran. I was 14 or 15 and it was a great first job at about £6 an hour. I got my friends to come with me for moral support, and sometimes they even did some of the work for me!

After that I worked in bars for about two to three years and then I went to Uni, where I worked as a carer - that was the most rewarding job of all.

What was your biggest lesson from your first job? Did your first job impact how you work today?

It gave me a strong work ethic and my parents always taught me the importance of working hard. I had to work if I wanted to have the kind of life I wanted.

I didn't really start my career properly until I was about 25, and before that I was teaching English as a foreign language. I was just travelling around while working, experiencing things, learning about new cultures, and being curious about the world. That was the most important thing to me back then, although I still always worked hard.



53% of women would not change their career path if given the option to go back. What do you think about that?

I agree. I've already done something to do with psychology and human behaviour, I'm fascinated by the human experience - it's why I love communication and what I do so much. I've always been interested in it, but when I was younger I just wanted to do what was easy, and I was naturally good at English and writing, so I did that.

Then I went into a career in journalism and transitioned from journalism into content marketing and worked my way up very quickly within the agency world. I wouldn't change my path, but I am always looking to evolve it and discover new opportunities and areas for growth.

If you could go back to your past self, what advice would you give to try to help yourself out in the future?

Believe in yourself - you ARE worthy.

I was only 21 when I moved to Prague. I was meant to move in with my boyfriend, but we broke up shortly after we arrived. I stayed for another 2.5 years anyway, found a job and created a life.

I then moved to China when I was 23 completely by myself. So I look back on my younger self and I want to tell her, 'you're way more of a badass than you realised you were. You're worthy, what you're doing takes courage.' It was really impressive.

I went the path I went because that was the only path I knew how to go, and I pushed myself out of my comfort zone a lot. I don't know why, it just felt really important to never allow myself to stay stuck, to always be growing and curious.

I don't have any regrets or anything that I wish I'd known because all the lessons came at the time I needed them (some had to come a few times more!) I'm happy I learnt as much as I did, and I grew as much as I did.

To me life is about experiences. It's not about what it says on your degree certificate or the numbers in your bank account. It's not about your job title or the prestige that you get, it's about how much experience you have and how much you take that experience and learn and grow from it and then how you are with others, how you pay it forward.



How do you think work influences mental health?

Businesses have the potential to have a really positive impact on people's lives, which of course includes their mental health. However, I don't think many businesses do. Instead, they treat people like they are a commodity, something to be extrapolated from.

Often, the needs of the business come before the needs of the individual, especially in the creative industries.



Would you say it sometimes depends on the industry?

Yes, I definitely think industry has an impact. Different industries have different challenges, which lead to degrees of impact. But in general, I think it's pretty unanimous that traditional approaches to business, where they treat people as cogs in the machine, are often terrible for mental health.

I run my own creative brand and marketing agency and there is a huge problem with mental health in the creative industries. The creative brain is like a sponge - and we can either feed it or squeeze it.

In my experience, many companies focus too much on what can be taken out rather than the importance of putting back in. They squeeze and squeeze until there's nothing left.

Creativity on demand leads to burnout.

Would you say that working for a company that is productive and mental health is important for you?

Yes 100% and running a company that's proactive in mental health.

Do you think it is possible to have a successful business while cultivating a culture of mental health?

I think it's absolutely possible. It's just not an easy thing to do. There isn't really a blueprint for it, because I think businesses are still very much in that

investigation stage of how you actually strike that balance. Even those businesses that have done a good job of giving their employees a really great working environment, like Google for example, still have the expectation of very long hours, working weekends, not having a great deal of separation between work and life - that is not good for mental health. It's a really tricky balance.



At The Joyful, we're constantly investigating how we can improve work/life balance for our teams, to be flexible to suit all of their needs, and to understand that each of them is different. It's extremely important to us that we create an environment for our people to thrive.

What would you say, as a business owner, businesses can do to support mental health?

First of all, creating a policy that really destigmatizes mental health in general, and gives people complete and 100% permission to talk openly about any challenges they are experiencing. We need to allow people to take time out when they need to, in the same way you would if you had a physical illness.

It's actually about treating the two as the same, and not differentiating physical and mental health. And removing the shame associated with the latter.

Also it's important to harbour a culture of well being. Not just a bean bag or a football table in your staff room, but having an actual focus on what well-being really means, how we can practice emotional and mental hygiene on a daily basis and how we can support one another in a team to do that.

Do you have anything else you would like to add about mental health?

I think it's really important that businesses start to understand the impact of the traditional business paradigm on the health of their people. This striving, 'hard' working culture we're trained into from such a young age.

We never ask our children 'who do you want to be?' We say, 'what do you want to be?' and we condition them to believe the 'what' is most important. That their job title defines their worth.

It's extremely toxic to the individual, but it's also a really damaging way of societal growth as well, because it shows that we have to be looking outside of ourselves for happiness and fulfilment, which I don't believe is the case at all.

The most important thing for businesses to understand is every individual is unique and everybody's story is important and experience is valid. There isn't one size fits all, even though there is this structure that we're all supposed to fit into... that structure is bullshit.

I'm really excited to see many businesses changing that and starting to push those boundaries and push those parameters to create something new, and do business differently. We can have fun with it too. It doesn't have to be so serious, we don't have to get on the ladder and just keep climbing.

I'm really excited to see many businesses changing that and starting to push those boundaries and push those parameters to create something new, and do business differently. We can have fun with it too. It doesn't have to be so serious, we don't have to get on the ladder and just keep climbing.



76% of women said that stereotypes negatively affected women in the workplace. Do you know of anyone that has been affected by this?

Oh god yeah, I know quite a lot of people who've been made redundant when they had children.

I had a boss who told us all that we wouldn't be able to figure out that the internet was unplugged 'because you're women', which is ridiculous.

As a business owner, do you think about / look at your clients' and partners' ways of conduct and their Diversity and Inclusion practices?

We only work with businesses that are doing more than selling a product or service. We work with businesses that are not just inclusive, but who are actively trying to make the world a better place.

We've turned down some really big projects because of the way that they were conducting themselves on an environmental level, and on a human level. Diversity and inclusion is absolutely paramount in this.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing women today in the workplace?

Having kids, definitely. The world of work is still not set up for women to thrive in their career and be a mother.

A lot of the women I know who have a career and have children say they feel like they're not good enough at anything they do. They're not good enough at work, they're not good enough with their kids, they're not a good enough wife, they're not good enough in whatever, because there are all these different pressures that are put on women to be all of these things for everyone.

Were there any moments where you felt unsuccessful at work?

So many! More than I felt successful!

Have you ever heard of something called Imposter Syndrome?

It's that pesky doubt that creeps in the more successful you become. It's the voice in your head that says 'who do you think you are?' The fear that soon everyone will find out you're a fake, even though you've been working your whole life to get where you are.

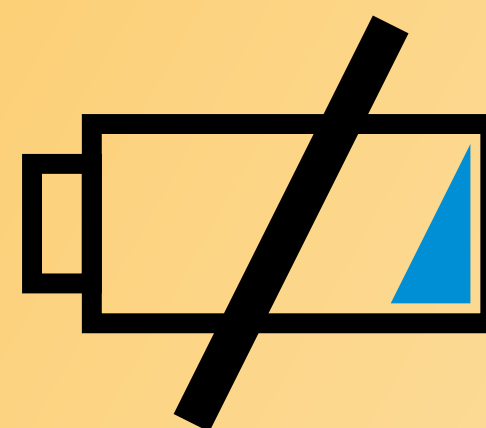
There've been some quite difficult times with employees; partnerships that haven't gone well; clients that haven't been happy.

Because we started a business built from our passion to make a change in the industry, it felt like a personal attack and a personal insult. It's really hard as a business owner not to take things personally.



Have you ever felt like you lost passion for your work?

Yeah! I have lost passion for my work, even while running my own business. I think it's so easy to get caught up in the chaos of it all and the intensity and overwhelm. Sometimes it all gets too much, which is the importance of practicing emotional hygiene. I'm not somebody who stays in that space very long. Either I do something and change it or I decide that I'm going to choose it, and then choose differently, if that makes sense.



It's about thinking differently and choosing to show up in a different way. If there are things that I'm doing that are making me unhappy, then can I do something about that? Could someone else support me who maybe enjoys that thing that isn't really my thing. I think that's it. You can make any situation in life whatever you choose it to be, and generally, I choose to make things as good as they possibly can be.

Can you tell us about a time where you faced a real challenge at work or a point that was difficult to get past?

Many times! I feel like there's always a challenge to get past, in one way or another. We had a challenge recently with an employee and that was quite difficult. It was quite painful as well, the aftermath of it was quite painful.

When it comes to other people it's always the more difficult part when you're trying to navigate someone else's experience and someone else's feelings. You try to do your best without hurting anybody.

Do you have anything you would like to share that you wish that people were aware of?

I think the most important thing in life, in general, is to follow your joy as much as you possibly can and know that you're worthy of that joy. Because it's one thing to have a dream and know what you need to do, the steps you need to take to get closer to that. But it's something completely different to believe closer to that. But it's something completely different to believe that you're actually worthy of taking those steps. If you don't believe you're worthy of taking those steps, then your brain will find amazing ways to sabotage you.

I think the most important thing for any young woman to realize is they are absolutely worthy of whatever it is that they want to achieve with their lives. They should never let anyone else tell them anything other than that. Don't let anyone tell you what your life is supposed to look like or what success looks like or what you should be doing. Don't let people tell you what you should do, even when you have to fight for it.

Don't follow someone else's dream for you.



STORY TWO: NADINE



Nadine started her career at 16 as a chef. Since then she has had many different career changes including becoming a nursery school teacher and working in sales. She's now self-employed and runs her own business in helping others reduce and cope with stress.

You started your career as a chef, how does that differ from what you're doing now? What skills have you taken forward?

I learned so much when I did an apprenticeship for three years. I did it when I left school, so I was 16. I was in a massive kitchen working with 40 busy chefs. It was how to work hard, how to take orders. You had to do what you're told instantly. How to get on as a team as well, and how to work with people and produce something wonderful, you know, I learned.

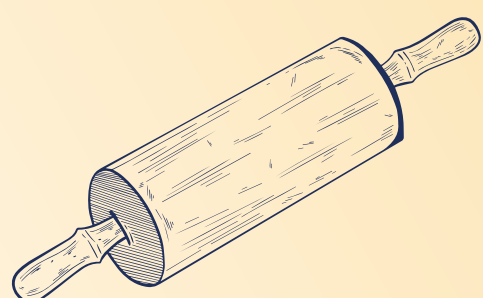
When I think back, and it was a long time ago when I did that, it was a different world. I was a very different person, and I have learned along the way. I think the stress that I encountered in that job, because it was very stressful, I didn't realize how damaging that can be. I now run a business where I help people reduce stress and I know I've done that for a reason. Come to that path and come to that way of doing things, because I needed it myself. So it's quite nice to always come full circle if you like.

How would you advise your younger self around stress and your choices? Would you do things differently?

I've got to be honest I was advised my younger self by lots of older people at the time, don't do it! It wasn't just the stress, it was because it's a man's world and we all really find it hard. I didn't listen to anything. I would advise myself everything I was told. Don't do it. It will be hard. You will struggle, you're young and you're female. It's all a different world. But I wouldn't change it to be honest. But that would be the advice I would give... Think long and hard, maybe there's another way to get what you want.

Do you think schools should emphasize all the different opportunities available for young people?

I've had this conversation with a lot of my friends who are a similar age and going through the same experience, and quite a lot of us feel the same. We didn't know what was out there. We weren't aware of the opportunities that we had. And again, as I say touching on that confidence as well, we didn't feel we could step into lots of things. We were quite limited in what we thought our abilities were. I'm not sure where that came from, but it's quite a common feeling in my friends. If we had that confidence and knowledge that we've got now, we could have done a lot more, so it was quite limited I feel.



What do you think affected your confidence?

It's quite interesting actually because to be honest, I thought I was quite confident then. But looking back, I really wasn't, but I thought I was. Cocky I think, probably more than confident. But I think it was really more a question of just not knowing, and I felt I was very keen to get working and, to be honest, to get earning some money. I think that was a bit of a pressure as well. It's like, get out there and get on with it, you know, rather than stay in education. So I think if I had been able to stay in education and experience more of that, I would have built my confidence and maybe, like so many people do now, have work experience and have that opportunity to go and try things, and see whether that works for me or not, because if I just gone and tried, you know, being a chef, I might have gone 'oh no, not doing that again'.

Do you think being happy in your job is important to you now?

It's a really good question because I used to think 'all I want to do is be happy'... Again, I have learned through time that happiness isn't what it's all about. I feel you can go through periods of unhappiness and it makes you stronger, it makes you better.

I think I was scared of being unhappy, I think that was more it. Happiness is very important I feel, but it's also important, I think, to not necessarily just be happy, but be comfortable. I think contented, if you like, and that is different than happiness.

It's taken me quite a lot of years to learn that there is a difference, so you can go through periods of unhappiness and trauma, sometimes, and even depression, I suffered a lot with depression in the past, but that is okay, because sometimes that brings you forward to another place and you do things that you wouldn't have done.

61% of people described personal success as happiness or a word that's very similar. How does that make you feel?

When you said personal success, in my head I was thinking personal success makes me happy. How can you not feel happy when you have successes and it's down to you? So it does, it's my joy, it's my bliss. It's that, you know, my happy place if you like. But there's quite a lot of things I have learned over the years, there's so many things that can make me happy, and that's good, but it's getting that balance and it's remembering to tap into them, because I think it's very easy, especially when you're working hard, to forget to do things that make you happy. And so it's not just about work, it is about time out as well and again that balance of getting that right.

Have you had any points where you've lost passion?

I was a nursery school teacher for thirteen years and I went into that with so much passion with the joy of working with the children. The wonderful way that their minds are and just spending time with young children was just bliss for me.

But I found as I was learning more and as I studied and sort of went up the ladder, more to management level, I was spending less and less time with the children as there was more paperwork to do.

I think the education system has gone that way quite a lot anyway. I wanted to spend my time with the children, giving my expertise to them, not do paperwork. Actually the more paperwork that I was asked to do, the more I lost my passion. I really felt that I was losing my joy of the job, actually, and what I was doing it for, and I questioned that big time. You know, what am I doing this for. It's not about writing reports. It's actually about spending time with the children and quality time, and I felt that was getting taken away from me. So I definitely lost my passion, which was very sad actually.



When you had this realisation and this reflection on where you were, what did you do about it?

After a long time I left. It was the hardest decision I've ever had to make in my life actually. I was in my 40s, I was at a certain age where I didn't know what I was going to do next.

That's scary, but the sadness of actually going... I really loved what I was doing for quite a long time, and then I gradually felt it was being sort of taken away from me and it just took me such a long time to recognize how sad I was feeling and how I had lost my passion, like you say. And then do something about it because

I didn't want to go, I wanted it to come back, but in reality it wasn't going to and that the situation wasn't going to change.

Without a doubt, I did suffer when I had made that decision, but looking back, again with hindsight, it was the right thing for me to do because I've moved on. But it was tough, it was really hard, but that was my solution. Unfortunately, to back away and leave it. I couldn't put it right so I came away I think if I had someone supporting me at the time, I might have tried to find other ways to stay in that profession, but I came across brick walls most of the time. I didn't feel supported in that role at all. I would've liked a bit more of that I think.

'We know we're gonna have to work hard, we're going to have to prove ourselves'. The women that were doing really well, it was because they worked a lot, lot harder.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing women in the workplace today?

It's going to sound very sexist of me, but I think it's still a man's world in a lot of ways. It shouldn't matter what sex you are. It shouldn't matter at all, it should be equal but I have never experienced that actually. I have never felt equal and I've not seen it around me. There is a difference between men and women, and that's a fact, can't get away from that, but I think in the workplace, especially when men and women are doing exactly the same job, the equality needs to be there and there should not be any difference at all, but I really feel that it is still there and I'm surprised, actually.

When I was a chef back in the early days as an apprentice, it was a man's world, and it has changed. But for me, I don't think enough. I think that inequality is still there and it's still apparent, and I unfortunately think women sometimes are still held back, which I think is a great shame and a waste of women. Women are brilliant! They're a valuable resource!

Delving into 'man's world', what do you think employers should be doing to conquer and change that so then we do have the equality that we want to see?

It's more infant education and have more of an open mind and actually just thinking. There is no reason why a man and a woman can't do the same job and it works both ways, you know, it definitely does. There are jobs that were, again coming back to the teaching profession, a majority of women, and especially when we had teaching assistants. There were males that applied and they [recruiters] were sort of like 'oo that's a bit different' but you know they could do a really good job. They had value. So again, just try to take that gender away and just look at the person and the skills, and the abilities that they can bring to the workplace in whatever they're doing. Just looking at the person as a whole really rather than what sex they are. If employers could do that a bit more, and I think they are, but just really work on that one.

Have you ever been faced with stereotypes either directly or indirectly in the workplace?

Yes, I definitely did. The system in being a chef, you have a definite hierarchy, you work up the ladder so to speak. You got to be a sous chef, head chef, now that's sort of the top of the ladder and they were men.

It was very hard to get a woman up there. It's happening now, we're seeing lovely women on the television, the chefs are celebrated and they're brilliant. But when I was in that profession, the attitude was 'you're never going to get there because you're a woman or if you do you've got to work so much harder to get noticed, to get acknowledged'. And I have to be honest, the women that I worked with accepted that and just went 'we know we're gonna have to work hard, we're going to have to prove ourselves'. The women that were doing really well, it was because they worked a lot, lot harder.



What do you think employers should do to help individuals feel as though there is less of a disadvantage for women?

I'd like to say listening, understanding and giving their employees a voice. I have worked with companies where they do any new ideas, they'll give the staff a chance to put things forward. It just makes everyone feel empowered and valued, and actually it's really encouraging because you get some brilliant ideas from everybody.

I've worked in and got involved in sales quite a lot back in the 80s and 90s, and good sales teams were people that had regular meetings and let everybody have a voice and everyone come up with new ideas and that works really well. The ones that were led by the person at the top who say 'I know what to do, do what you're told' didn't do so well. With a sales environment, it's very easy and very quick to see the results, so that was quite an interesting experience for me to go through. The people that listened, and the bosses that actually led rather than told people what to do: follow my example; this is how I do it; and I will listen to you. They were the successful ones. That's what I would advise, actually listen and value what people have got to say.

How much do you know about menopause?

Well, I'm 55 which probably says it all. But I have actually had hormone problems since my early 20s, so hormone imbalance is something that I do know quite a lot about and how it can affect people. I've learned a lot over the years for my own reasons, for my benefit, and again to share that knowledge with people and just go 'you can manage this, you can manage that, it can be okay'.

I think there's a bit of a stigma around it. Again with the fact that women have children and that sometimes can go against them a little bit, they also suffer menopause and the attitude that it's the crazy old lady sort of thing.

There is a bit of almost dismissal with it 'oh she's menopausal', you know that kind of thing, and within the workplace I think that's a bit unforgivable actually. I've struggled with hormone imbalance for a long time, so my emotions have been all over the place. I can't necessarily say that was menopause when I was young, but it was the same thing that I was going through, and the way that it has been managed has varied. Again just someone caring and understanding to just go 'well you know, it's okay to have a bad moment, it will pass, doesn't mean you're a bad worker'. There are times where we're not firing on all cylinders, and for that to be recognized and allowed for, would be beneficial as well.



Do you think that managers should go through training to understand menopausal symptoms?

Definitely, again it's that education and understanding, isn't it? I've learnt a lot for my own personal reasons, and I see things in a different way. It's not a bad thing, it's not necessarily something to be feared. Go back to some of the old tribal ways of looking at it, it's something to be celebrated. It's a passage in a woman's life, it's something that's really valuable and important. Just looking at that in a different way makes you feel different, makes you feel a bit more powerful, a little bit more useful.

I think about how this changes life, because that's what it is, it's another stage of life. It doesn't have to be such a bad thing because it's got a bad reputation as it's got that attitude around it. My experience now and what I've learnt is that it really doesn't have to be that way, and if you look at it differently, you manage it all differently. It's a lot to do with your mindset, so education is key definitely.

Do you think there's a difference between opposite sex and same sex working relationships?

When I was in a sales environment, there was definitely a different energy around the male sales teams and the female sales teams, and some of the companies I've worked for kept them separate on purpose and some integrated. For me, as an almost people watching it experiment, it was fascinating to see how people fire off each other, you know. It's almost like a sexual energy (if I'm allowed to say that). The flirting that goes on and with sales, there's a lot of flirting going on. Whether it is male, female, whatever the connection is because you're sort of selling yourself, you're selling your personality, so it really is quite interesting to watch that.

What were the key observations that you noticed when you were in sales and you saw the different teams?

Sometimes I felt that I wanted to be in the male environment, I wanted to be in that energy. Sometimes I didn't want to be with the women, I wanted to be with the men, because they seemed to be a bit more go getting and a bit more forceful, and I quite liked that when I was in that environment and success was simpler if you like.

Then with the women's groups, it was a lot more talking about your feelings and emotions and that kind of thing, but there is, as I say, a place for both. So when I saw and was involved in the mixed teams, then you're getting it all.

I think maybe it's something to play around with. If I had a company and I was trying to work out what's the best grouping, I think I'd jiggle it around a bit and observe. You just don't know because it's about personality as well. Certain people bounce off each other better than others, so it's interesting to be in that position to have that opportunity to look at it and use it for good.

'I think there's a bit of a stigma around it. Again with the fact that women have children and that sometimes can go against them a little bit, they also suffer menopause and the attitude that it's the crazy old lady sort of thing.'

STORY THREE:

MAHTA



After having multiple jobs throughout her career so far, Mahta has worked in hospitality, project management, and has her own business; Mind Over Matter. Whilst she has many reflections from her career so far, she believes that building meaningful relationships, being adaptable, and investing in yourself to be vital.

Could you tell me about your first job?

I worked for a really amazing restaurant, which doesn't exist anymore, called Piccadilly circus. I was really chuffed that I managed to get a job in the heart and the City of London, Central London.

They were a Japanese restaurant, the gentleman who ran it was a very, very wealthy man and if you know where Piccadilly Circus Lights are, we were literally by the lights so if you looked out of the window of the restaurant, the Pepsi Cola light will be to your left. What was exciting about it, is that it was, it had what is called a 'Tatami', so traditional Japanese dining where we walked around with just socks and our Kimonos and we served people on the floor, so it was very, very exciting.

What key skills do you think you learned from that job?

It's only until I came out of that sector, and I went into other areas, that I understood how much I had picked up. Key things were like the ability to speak and engage with people. You don't have to be happy all the time, but you have to have a more optimistic outlook on situations, because you're customer facing.

Communication, we say this but it's not about your ability to just talk, it's about your ability to understand different people. Sometimes people have language barriers, they can't read the menu. You have to be a bit more creative about the way you describe something or explain it.

Your memory. I would rock up to a table with maybe seven or eight people and maybe I'd forgotten my notepad and pen, so I can't even write down their order. This is before you had personal display pads right, I mean they had them but they weren't that popular at that time. So I'd have to memorize seven people's orders, so I don't have to make them wait for me to go and come back, and we're talking starters, mains, and desserts. I do that from memory and then walk back to the till and then pop it all in, so that the order goes through to the kitchen.

When people are not very nice to you, because people have different perceptions of people who work in the hospitality industry. I was fairly young, so I probably wouldn't take the type of offense that maybe someone that's a bit older and more resilient, I kind of took it with a pinch of salt, you know, someone's having a bad day. But some people can be quite horrible and quite rude and quite obnoxious, and the skill that I definitely built up was not taking things on board, you know that thick skin, customer service first, and putting on a smile, and dealing with that kind of negative engagement without taking it on board for the rest of the day. If we walk around today expecting people to be nice to us all the time, because we are working in a corporate environment where they have to be professional, that's very different to someone who's a customer and doesn't have to be nice to you as a waitress or hostess.

If you got the option start your career again, would you change it? And why?

The short answer is no, however there's a caveat because there always isn't there? I'd maybe not change the roles that I took on, but I probably would change some of the decisions that I made whilst I was in those roles. Most of the roles I've been in, I've always kind of been pulled into a managerial/supervisor role and I had lots of opportunities where people wanted to put me on management training programs. I love working with people and I don't actually mind managing them, but I think the people manager aspect where you have to really develop somebody or someone keeps letting you down, doesn't come in and keeps calling in sick and that sort of stuff. I didn't think that I would enjoy that element of it, but I didn't realize the other benefits, so when these offers came up, I'd immediately put my hands up and say 'is there anything else that I could do that could help you progress me that doesn't involve managing people?' That was a kind of a grave mistake because I kind of felt like I didn't have the autonomy to manage people the way I wanted and I didn't realize really early on in my career that I could develop my own management style and do it my way. So I think no I don't regret the kind of roles that I went into, but the change that I would make is that I would say yes to the opportunities to go into managerial roles because of the skills that I could develop earlier on in my career.

Who is your role model for success?

My mother, and the reason why I say my mother is because, as cliché as it sounds, I heard someone speaking years ago and they said 'people who are role models should be people that you can touch and feel and see and experience'. So when this question is often asked, people want you to throw out a celebrity name or a well-known person, but I can't touch or feel or experience any of those people right? I can maybe see their highlight reel, but I can't see what they're like at their worst. So I can't really consider that person a role model because part of what I consider a role model is how someone overcomes adversity. Yes, they're successful, but what have they done to get there. So my mum is a freedom fighter from East Africa and worked as part of a particular organisation for the independence of Eritrea during the war with Ethiopia, and my dad was a soldier. Those are people who I see as being role models because they've had to reinvent themselves, and they've done it all without kind of losing their mind. I think because I've been kind of up close and personal to that, you know, adapting to new countries, new languages, reinventing themselves from a career standpoint, their approach to raising their children. There's just been so many ways that if you compare those personality traits to, you know, a multibillion pound CEO of a company they wouldn't, in terms of mental toughness, be worlds apart right? They just have to apply their mental toughness to different scenarios, that's all.

There's also a lady from the movie *Hidden Figures* who, during segregation and before the Civil Rights Movement, managed to, because of their brilliance and genius, work for NASA and they were able to get the first American astronaut to the moon using their mathematical calculations. But why I admire this real life character is because she could see the future, so what she did is she reinvented herself in her career before she was done out of a job. Before her whole department and her team were completely removed, she said 'okay, this is what is going to be the next big thing' so she went to a library, she took out every single book known to man relating to it, and then she studied at home and taught herself the new kind of software that was coming out. So by the time they said 'we're shutting you down', she was like 'okay great no problem, but I hear that you've got this other department', they were like 'you can't work there, because you don't know how to manage those new computer systems', she was like 'but actually I do, if you give me a shot I'll show you'. She was able to teach herself and then position herself for an opportunity that she knew was going to come up, but no one had given her. Then she went and she knew it better than the people who had actually developed the computer system, and she was able to bring her entire team from the existing department to the new department, so I admired her because she was able to predict the future and then she prepared herself for it.

Do you consider being happy as important in your job?

I think happiness is overrated. A very controversial statement but let me tell you why. I'm a massive fan of etymology and looking at the root origins of words and how we define them. Happiness, by definition for me, has always had a temporary meaning, so it's feeling in the moment and having some kind of emotional chemical reaction to something. You know, someone praises your work, it makes you feel happy temporarily, but then two hours later you're in a meeting and someone's criticising you all of a sudden, and you're sad, right? So the point about happiness is that it's temporary. The alternative term that I use, and I do this with my friends and family when they say 'oh, you know, pursuit of happiness', and I'm like no, you shouldn't pursue happiness, you should pursue joy, contentment and gratitude. The reason why you should pursue those things is because joy comes from within, happiness comes from without. So when people ask me 'are you happy at work', I have to do extreme accountability where I have to look at: what are my expectations from work; and what am I doing to meet those expectations. I try and remove, as much as I can, the outside sources, but in the real world, there are things within our environment that we cannot control that are going to affect our mood. There's nothing to take that away, but to answer your original question, happiness at work is really important but I'd like to look at it more as a 'are you still passionate about what you do, are you quite joyful, are you investing in yourself, are you looking within, and are you reflecting rather than this idea that if I move on to another company or to another team, that I'd be happy there'. Something a really wise friend has always told me, when I say I'm going to immigrate, I'm going to go somewhere else and go for another company, which was something I use to say a lot years ago, and

he said 'no, you should stand still, because you can't run away from yourself'. That's what I think about happiness at work, you can't run away from yourself, so it's about reflecting and making sure: am I still passionate; am I doing all I can to enjoy myself; am I adapting.

Don't focus too much on your outside environment.



Can you tell me about a time where you faced a challenge at work or a point that was difficult to get past?

About 11 years ago, I was in recruitment consultancy in Canary Wharf. Long story short, I got a job at a software company but then the company that I was with had been bought by my new company, so by the time the contract came through it ended up stating the company that I was leaving. The most random thing ever, which was fine, to a degree, but it meant some of the toxic culture within management around nepotism was back.

I remember loving the fantastic start-up culture, brilliant love this company, right? Next thing I know, they've got rid of the MD and they bought in someone from the old company with the toxic culture. This gentleman was not from the UK, he was from France, but he came from a sales background. He wasn't a Managing Director, so his focus was on sales, and he bought in a whole bunch of people that he had connections with. I remember one particular person, a really cool guy I got on really well with him, but he wasn't particularly competent. It was a known thing within the team, but he was the program manager and I acted as the project manager/analyst. I remember the customer said 'we don't want him, we want her'. He was taken off the project, and he couldn't really be client facing anymore, so I took on more of the things that he would have done just to get the project through. Then he worked side by side with me and my colleague doing our role and then before I knew it, I was in a meeting and they said 'we're going to restructure'.

My manager said 'it's like an informal restructure', which means they were not going to go through a consultation phase, and 'we want David to come into the team to do your role' and I was like 'yeah cool no problem', but I also knew there wasn't enough project work for the technical stuff. Before I knew it, I became reduced to a PA and all of my technical tasks were given to him. So I spoke up about it and this female manager took me aside and said 'you know Mahta, we don't have a choice, we have to put him in it', because he's been in the company so long, they can't afford to pay him the redundancy, like the pay-out would be huge. So I said 'okay, but what happens to me? I don't want to be reduced to a PA or an admin person... I still want to do the technical elements in my role' and she said 'Well, we don't really have a choice... we're drawing up a new job description'. So I requested that we go through a formal consultation, and I can see what options are open to me. They didn't like that.

I remember when he first sat us all down, he approached me and said 'oh, you seem to have a good relationship with everyone, could you please schedule one to ones with everyone, so that I could get to know the team' and I was like 'yeah sure no problem'. So I did it for the whole team, and then when I sat in my one to one, I'll never forget, he asked me 'what do I want to do?' and I said 'I want to do the role that my manager's doing', because we were growing so she needed another person to do her job, which is like a delivery manager essentially, and I knew it had a lot of travel and I love traveling. So I said this and he said 'oh but I heard that you've got a young girl', at the time my daughter must have been four, and he's like 'well, you know, my wife is at home with the children, I have four children and I just would not wish that on her. When you're a mother, you can't take on a job where it involves lots of traveling and time away from your children... trust me I don't even sometimes get to see my children'. I said 'oh, me, her father and my sister, who's staying with us at the moment and she really, really helps out, so travel's never been a problem for work'. But he completely pushed back on me getting promoted and taking on a role that would involve more traveling because I'm a woman, I have a child, and I should stay home with my child basically.

He pulls me into a room when the consultation thing happens months later, and he said 'we're not having a consultation', and he fired me on the spot. I remember thinking 'whaaaaat'. I burst out crying in the room. I didn't expect to get fired at all, I thought he was going to talk to me about the consultation. But his issue was that he wanted to change the job description, but he didn't want HR to know and I was making a bit too much noise about it because I didn't want to accept the new job description, so he fired me on the spot. Subsequently, I had to go to a tribunal. That was my most challenging and it was probably the hardest as I had no job and no money coming in to look after my family and I didn't know why I was being fired. I had never been fired from a job ever in my life... I think my ego took a bit of a hit as well.

Once the disclosure of the documents took place, they decided to settle out of court, but it was a ridiculously small amount, but for me I knew I hadn't done anything wrong, and it was clear they gave this man my job and didn't want me to say anything. I wouldn't wish that on anyone, it was a huge challenge, but it taught me a lot about how to navigate those situations. I would have done a lot of things differently, I would have, maybe, asked for a meeting with his manager and, on the quiet, had a conversation. I just literally didn't see it coming.

When looking at the biggest difficulties women are facing today. Do you think these things still happen? Or do you think there is a new focus?

I think some of it is old hat right? They manifest themselves in different ways, but they're fundamentally the same thing. People are competing, some have a little bit more of a competitive advantage, because of whatever characteristics they have or demographic they come from. I can't imagine that they're new things. I can imagine that they are demonstrated differently now or they manifest in different ways, but they're the same thing, right? It's someone's too old, someone's too young, someone's too dark, someone's a woman, someone's disabled... you know, all of that human instinct to only deal with things that people feel comfortable with, or that they feel like they can influence or understand and can relate to. Maybe there are like a whole set of new problems that I don't know about, but I would say the things that women have to focus on now, whether you're early or a bit more seasoned, is how do I become adaptable.

We did a conference and one of the keynote speakers was asked the same question and her answer was perfect... 'learn how to adapt'. It's the same as saying 'learn how to reinvent yourself', but try and see it before everybody else, so you can invest in yourself, upskill, and then position yourself, so when that opportunity comes around you're the best fit.

Alternatively create the opportunity. I think the problem is same for everyone in the sense that men can also get left behind if they don't reinvent themselves. It happens to companies all the time when they decide 'okay we're not going digital because we were not ready', and they want to remain with the archaic ways of doing things, well they lose market share, then they lose customers and then they file for administration... It's kind of the same mindset like 'have I got my finger on the pulse, am I doing the things that I'm passionate about, do I understand what's coming or am I just always in the moment', and the ways people do that practically is talk to people, learn about your job, and understand what's happening in the industry, and take courses.

There are real practical ways that you can manage this on a daily basis, which doesn't involve you focusing on your gender, your ethnicity, your skill set because these things are never going to go away. That's why I tell people you get what you focus on.

What do you think employers should do to encourage and give employees the opportunities to do these things?

I think the reason why there's less focus on developing people, if I'm being a pessimist, is because what happens if I put on or give access to a lot of this training? Somebody becomes more valuable. If I have learnt new skills or become an expert in a certain field, I become more valuable, which means: employee retention could be a challenge; I could leave to get more money somewhere else; or six months before my appraisal I could start saying 'are you going to promote me because look at all these amazing new skills that I have'. So employers can definitely invest in upscaling your training, but for any employee, in the back of my mind, it's great that these things are on offer, and I would do them, but you should never do them with the proviso that your employer is going to give you a better opportunity or they're going to promote you. You should always do it with a growth mindset, so I want to get good, I have that curiosity, I want to learn, right?

Another way is creating a development plan and within that you have goals. They could be the business goals, so whatever the business wants you to achieve, and then they could be your personal development goals. So employers can not only ensure that they have development plans available, but they should have regular meetings about them. It's really helping you with the practicalities of realising your vision, but what they will always say to you is 'you need to give me an end goal to work towards'. Managers should absolutely be able to develop you for that, but I don't think that's the caliber of managers today... It's just that the focus for them, because of time or whatever, is not 'how do I develop my people', the focus is 'how do I get my status reports out' or 'how do I make sure my people are delivering'. I think employers can do all of those practical things, but just in yourself, as an employee, be realistic about why you're doing it, and what you're realistic going to get out of it.



97% said employers should focus unconscious bias training. What are your thoughts?

I love this question because I've experienced a lot of it at work. The first thing I say is there's no such thing as unconscious bias. To be unconscious means to be semi-dead, so there's no such thing as unconscious bias. Maybe some subconscious bias, but I think the level of awareness that people have on issues now, it has become more of a choice. So that training is not very effective, however it is very beneficial because people come into it with a certain openness. They can actually go away from that training and do a lot of self-reflection and say 'well how does what I've learned and this reflection change my behaviours'.

There are little things that will help people develop better relationships at work, absolutely, but I've always said, and I said this in my current company which didn't go down too well, it doesn't mean anything unless you put your money to it, and you have to put a number. I don't mean just a number for the money, but a number for a target. Some companies might say 'by 2024, we want 30% of our female workforce to be in management roles'. Fantastic, lovely, altruistic ambition and goal to have and it's great that these targets have been set, so I have nothing against that. I think my challenge lies in where is the money and the programs, because a company can only show that they care in two ways: if they put an actual tangible target towards it, like they have; and then they put a budget so that the practicalities of achieving that metric are there. So when you asked what can employers do, what I would like to see on a real practical level is a clear number. Let's be clear when you look at management roles, they don't say senior management roles, like executive level, they don't say board members, they just say management.

So you could be a bloody supervisor, you could be a manager of one, right, but you have very little autonomy and decision making power... You're not a board member. So, my question is: what does that 30% represent; what is the breakdown of it; and what are the resources that sit behind that metric, so what's your budget on an annual basis, what kind of programs do you have running, can you see those programs actually having an output. So if I ran training for **unconscious bias** for the next four years, what is the change in behaviour that I'm measuring? If you want to do the work, you have to do the work is what I'm saying, you can't just be seen to do the work.

How impactful do you think workplace relationships are on female employee retention and job satisfaction?

Hugely! One of my biggest life lessons is, people use the buzzword network, but in effect it's just building relationships with people and trying to maintain them, right? I used to be a Youth and Community Development Worker, and they put me on this course at Brunel university. One of the key competencies was 'does this person know how to build and maintain relationships.' You had to demonstrate in your everyday interaction with young people, where you're trying to effect change in their life, you have to build and maintain relationships with them, because that's how you build trust... That applies to everything in life. In the workplace situation, you don't just network because someone might put in a good word for you and you get that promotion or that bonus or whatever the case may be. All those things are good and well, definitely, but in all sincerity, if your intention to building those relationships is just progression, then you're not really building any meaningful relationships or connections with people.



90% of respondents said workplace relationships are greatly important and related it to progression. How does that make you feel?

It's very understandable... A friend of mine, who's an anthropologist so he studies human behaviour and human existence, and I had an open conversation about how people play roles in their everyday life, right? I said 'it's great playing a role if you're at work and I understand why people feel the need to do that, but I don't personally feel that comfortable. I think when you're at home, you should be able to take off the mask. You shouldn't have to perform and just be yourself, right?', and he said 'that's not necessarily true, we're all playing a role, even when we come home'. I said 'what do you mean? Do you mean the role of a father and the role of a husband?'. He said 'well yeah there's that, but we are never truly ourselves unless we're on our own'.

My takeaway from that conversation and what you've just said to me, that makes perfect sense. I'm not shocked by it. That's kind of human nature, because we come to work and sometimes we play a role, but I think that is a really short-term way of thinking, it's not long term thinking. If you're in an industry where it could be quite incestuous, it could be a small, niche industry potentially, then you're always going to cross paths with somebody. People know whether you've tried to build a genuine relationship with them, right? They understand what your intentions are, they might pretend like they don't, but generally they do, let's be honest.

Let's say I have a good relationship with someone because I want to get a progression. They've put in a good word for me and I never emailed them again, I never call them again, or I see them and I barely say hello to them in the lunch hall, because I've got what I wanted... then six months later, I apply for a job and they're the manager of that department... This is a hypothetical, it hasn't happened to me, but that's how I look at life. Even if your intent is for progression, at least try to build a genuine relationship and a connection with somebody, because you don't know what you're going to get out that relationship. You know, your intent is progression but what if you learn a new skill, what if you make a friend, God forbid, you make a genuine connection.

I think I look at life like that. Time is so short, life is so precious, why do we want to be playing a role all the time. If we like someone, then just genuinely try to connect with them and if out of that, they can put in a good word or a reference or help me apply for a job... That's great, but let me try and get both, why not, it's all about relationship building.



Any final comments?

Something that I learnt a long time ago is that you're only as good as the impact you have on other people or your only reference point is what other people say about you... As much as we sit here in this society and say 'don't focus on what other people think or say', if you put a positive spin on it, these people could become your ambassadors effectively. So instead of you having to sell yourself at every given opportunity, if you build good relationships, if you make an impact, if you look for opportunities to be of service to that person, to help that person, instead of just coming at it from a 'take' perspective, a little bit of give as well, you know 'what can I do for you, what can you do for me, how can I help you'. If you come at it like that, you never have to tell people how amazing you are because everyone you interact with will do that for you.

STORY FOUR: CHLOE

Our next interview comes from Chloe who has worked while being a student. She talks about the difficulties of the hospitality industry and well as being a young person in the workplace.



What was your biggest lesson from your first job?

I think probably the biggest lesson I learnt was that you might be the only person someone sees. When you work in hospitality you are, I don't want to say responsible, but you are in part responsible for making that person have a good time once you are there. And for some people, because we have quite a few older people that come in, you could be the only person that person sees that day. You're trying to put a smile on their face and if that's not something that's a concern then there's an issue.

Being in hospitality, you're there to make people's lives a bit easier or a bit better in the time that they are with you.

Especially as a woman, say I go to a pub and they're not inviting, it sort of makes you feel on edge and uncomfortable, and one of the big things that I've learnt is that you, as a woman, should be able to go somewhere and feel comfortable.

If you could give one bit of advice to your past self what advice would you give?

Just try and enjoy it more, because I think when I first started it was very much it's a job and it's stressful sometimes, but I think if

I could go back and be like chill out a bit, it's okay if you are overwhelmed. I think that would be something I would definitely want to say to past me.

Do you think enjoyment is something people should get from work?

Yes, if you are going to succeed in whatever area you are going into, if you don't enjoy it you are not going to put the effort in to get to a point of success. And if you don't enjoy it, you are not going to want to put in the work, you're not going to be as motivated to do these things.

But you're not expected to enjoy work. It's a job and you make money and that's the way I think that we were brought up to view work.

Can you tell me about a time where you faced a challenge at work, or a point that was difficult to get past?

I'm still in my first job, I've been working there for years and I've moved up the ranks. I've found a big challenge was adjusting to that role. So for example I worked in the kitchen and I went from basically washing up all the time, and that was it, and then as I worked there longer I have progressively moved along the line, so now if I work in the kitchen I work on the fryers and adjusting to that role, especially if your busy, I've found really, really challenging.

So, is it changing roles you've found challenging?

Yeah, I also work in the bar as well as, so I moved up the ranks there as well. So now I am considered a supervisor and if I am in charge that puts a lot of pressure on me, sometimes it makes stuff very difficult because you've got people that don't get it and they are not necessarily the nicest people in the world, and so dealing with people in itself is such a challenge in itself sometimes.

Would you say when 'dealing with people', does that tend to be the customers or colleagues or a bit of both sometimes?

Sometimes a bit of both. I would say 9 times out of 10 it's the customers but every so often, because I am quite young, we had members of staff in the past that are not accustomed to being told what to do. Especially from someone who is my age, sometimes people think that age is more important than experience, and it makes life very difficult because there is no clearer way of putting it. If someone's not a fan of you that's a different thing all together, but if they condescend and take away from the way that you work and the position that you have, it makes it really difficult because you're trying so hard to mitigate any issues, sometimes that's just not possible.

So, do you think being a younger age has been quite a challenge you've encountered

Definitely. I a) don't look my age and b) am young anyway, and the fact that some people just don't take me seriously because I look like a child. It's like: I know what I am doing, I have been doing this for a very long time. It's so difficult because it's not like I am pulling things out of nowhere, I know what I am talking about. It just grates sometimes.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing women today in the workplace?

Pay is probably the biggest thing. The fact that you can do the same job as a man as well, or better, and you don't get paid the same in some places is just ridiculous. It should matter what sex or gender or whatever you are, if you do your job right and are good at it, that should be the thing that's merited not any other aspect of it. If you can do your job that should be the important part.

What do you think that employers should do to address the challenges that women face?

Be more fair. I think sometimes it's almost like the way they look at it is that women are just complaining for the sake of it, and I think that sometimes they need to realise we are coming from a place that we deserve this. We are not asking for the world, we just want to be treated the same, and it shouldn't be as hard as it feels like to get that level of common courtesy.

Do you think that companies should ensure that employees go through unconscious bias training?

I don't know to be honest. I think if it's an issue that they have found in that company, seeing people not get picked for certain roles and things because of pre-existing stereotypes, then I think it is something that's required in those areas, but I am not sure if every employee should have to go through it. Because I feel like, I don't know maybe it's an unpopular opinion, but I don't think every single employee has an unconscious bias that's negatively effecting the way they work. I don't know, it's a difficult one.

Are you saying it could be perhaps utilised when a workplace has a bit of a problem?

Yeah, I think so because I think a lot of places it is an issue and, in those places, it needs to be tackled, but I don't feel like every single company across the world has these issues. I know it would probably be easier to be a blanket across the whole lot, but I feel like, if it's not a pre-existing issue within the company, then drawing light to it might bring it forward and have the opposite effect.

Perhaps, if it brings people's attention to something that they weren't 100% aware of, then it might end up either: overdoing it and making people feel like they can't say anything to anyone very much, that you can't talk about stuff; or on the other hand, it'll make people aware of the things they're doing, and they might not know how to tackle that. So it may end up exacerbating the situation. I don't know it's difficult.

97% of the people that we surveyed did think that people should go through unconscious bias training, why do you think that so many people thought that it should be?

A good question. I don't know, maybe they've experienced unconscious bias. In my opinion, I would say that's probably why because they've experienced it, or they feel like they've experienced it. And so, because of that, they sort of feel like it's a wider issue across the nation and so should be tackled in a way like that.

Do you think that diversity quotas are a good thing or a bad thing?

I think they're good because it allows for people that maybe wouldn't have been looked at, but it's difficult to put into words. I think sometimes more emphasis is put on the diversity than being good for the job, because I think that should be the merit not any other thing. I don't think any other thing should matter, obviously unless they're like on a registry list or something, that's a different sort of thing. Your culture, your skin colour, your sexuality, your gender shouldn't influence people's employment.

Do you think those sorts of things should be taken into account at all when employing people?

I don't think so, I think it should genuinely be if you're good for the job or not. Yeah because otherwise you're just employing people for the sake of employing them and that's not fair. Well I don't think it's a fair way of doing it.

Do you think having children has an effect on a woman's career?

Definitely, 100%. In some places it influences the way that they are treated. Obviously having a child is a massive deal and it changes stuff, and you're not able to work, you get your maternity leave and stuff like that. Men now get paternity leave which is amazing, because it was ridiculous that they didn't get any. That's just a whole separate point all together. But, you know, for some women you are out of work for an entire year and that's a very long time to be out of a role. If you go back to work after that time, it's different. I think to say that it doesn't impact would be ignorant because I think that it definitely does.

Would you say that that impact is largely positive and negative?

In some cases, I would say largely negative because some employers are not understanding of the fact that having a child is a massive deal. There're not many things that are bigger in life for some people than having children and it is going to make a difference, and, in some places, they are not particularly forthcoming with support for that.

'We all want equality for everyone and the only way for that to happen is with important things, like children, and that the level of equality is there. I don't think it's fair to just say that it's not okay that you're the father and you're the primary caregiver.'

Do you think employers should be giving support?

I think because in the world of work a year is a very long time and you could go back and have to relearn everything, cause it's all changing, and sometimes I think that some employers don't bare that in mind. They just sort of expect you to be on it as soon as you go back, and that's not necessarily the reality of the situation. It should be considered ok to need time to get used to it, because if you've gone from seeing your beautiful little human every day all day for months, and then suddenly going back to work and not having that, I think that's definitely something that should be supported by employers. The fact that it takes a while to readjust to the situation.

What are your thoughts on the father being the primary care giver?

I think that if that's what they both agree to or if they're in a situation where he's a single father, then they should be giving the same support as women would get, because if they're the care giver then they are the care giver. It's important to make sure that they don't feel alone whilst dealing with that. I definitely think it should be the same level of support, because you can't treat one person one way and the other another way. We all want equality for everyone and the only way for that to happen is with important things, like children, that the level of equality is there. I don't think it's fair to just say that it's not okay that you're the father and you're the primary caregiver, because you should be able to make that decision as parents. If that's what works for you, then that's what works for you.

How much do you know about menopause?

I know about the symptoms, hot flushes and things like that. Not that much to be honest.

Would you say that you know a lot about how it impacts women or just on a symptomatic basis?

Mostly on a symptomatic basis I would say.

Would extent do you think individuals need to know about menopause?

I think there should be at least a basic understanding because some of the symptoms can mess with the way that you are, and sometimes your ability to work, and if there was a least a basic understanding other than 'oh you're going through the change'. That would be beneficial to people who either work with people at that age, or just so that in the future, they know a little more about what's going on with them.



Do you think that managers in particular should go through training to understand menopause and its symptoms?

I think so. I think that would be beneficial, especially if you have quite young managers they might not totally understand, and so people feel kind of isolated in that situation where they've not got someone that they can explain what's going on with them to.

Would you say, from your experience, that people going through menopause in the workplace feel comfortable talking to others about it?

I work in a place where its mostly women so I'm in a slightly different situation. People talk about stuff cause that's what they do and, you know, there are people that have worked there for years and they're more willing to talk about it. But if you went in somewhere with more men, you wouldn't feel as comfortable to talk about it.

Do you think the balance of men to women has an impact on that?

Yeah. Similar to how if you have got bad cramps or you're feeling sick or something like that, it gets treated like taboo if there are males in the vicinity, but if you're in a mostly female environment you feel more comfortable talking about it.

You mentioned that you have a female manager, do you think that also makes people feel more able to discuss things like menopause?

I would say so, she's also going through it as well. I work with my mum and she's going through it and, you know, they can chat about how it is that day and things like that, because there's that common ground.

What parts of your life do you think influence your mental health the most?

Work, definitely because its stressful. Especially at the moment its not the easiest and people, at the moment, are quite impatient. Over the Eat Out to Help Out scheme, people were quite patient but it's getting to a point where people are past that now and they don't always respond in the nicest ways.

Uni, I started my masters in September and so its stressful. There's no way around it. It's a step that I knew I was going to have to take and, you know, it is what it is. Uni is stressful there's not much more to say about that one.

Have workplace relationships helped or hindered your progression?

They have definitely helped. Like I said earlier about being happy in your work, if I had a different group of people that I work with then I am not sure I would be as happy and feel as comfortable as I do at work, and I think that alone would have made life harder and I would not have progressed as far as I have.

'If I had a different group of people that I work with then I am not sure I would be as happy and feel as comfortable as I do at work, and I think that alone would have made life harder and I would not have progressed as far as I have'

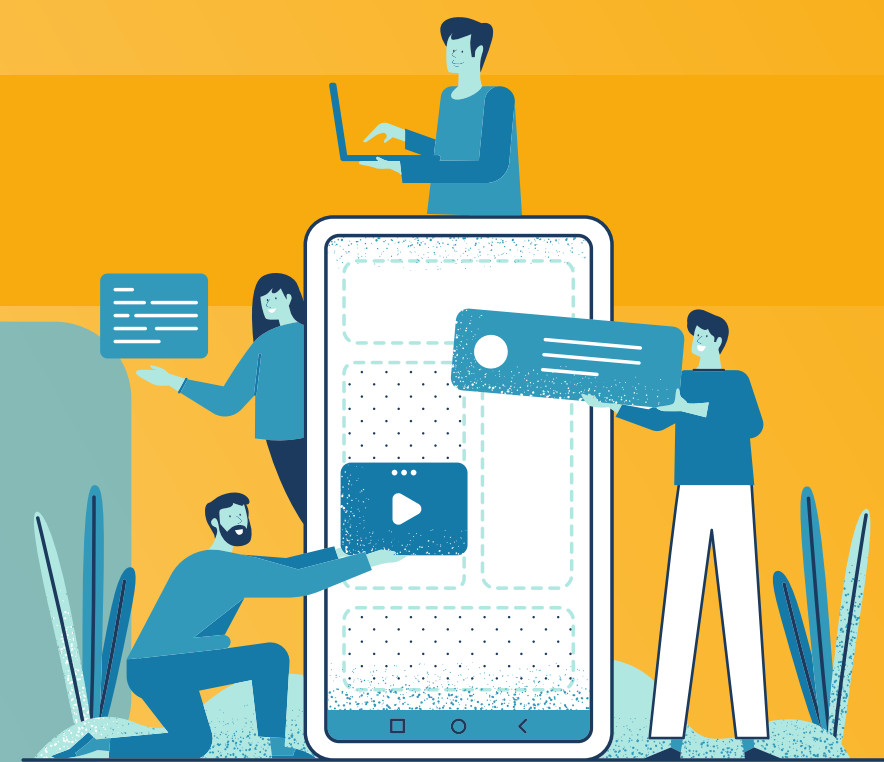
Do you think that male-female working relationships are different to female-female or even male-male?

Yeah, I've been friends with people that I've worked with and I think that the majority of the best friendships or relationships have been with women, and I think there's that level of common ground. It's bizarre because I am closer away from work, I've got closer, better friendships with men than I do women, but at work, whether it's because there's not as many men, I have had better connections with women. So, I would say yeah there is definitely a difference.

STORY FIVE:

LIZZIE

Lizzie started her career in marketing after finishing her degree in Business. After exploring a few different roles she discovered her interest in social enterprises. She talks about her hopes for a future career in conservation as well as the importance of a welcoming company culture.



Could you tell me about your first job?

My first actual job I was a paper girl. I think I was about 13, so that was my first job that I got paid for. I think my first, what felt like a 'real' job, was when I was eighteen. I decided I wasn't sure enough to go to University, so I decided I would go and do a ski season. I just thought it sounded really fun, I really like Chalet Girl as a film, it didn't feel like a real job when I was out there! It felt like a real job when I was applying, I had to go through a whole assessment day, interview process. It was quite formal; I bought my first suit for that interview day, so that feels like my first real job.

I originally started my Uni course as a physicist, and then I switched to studying business and ended up with a degree in business. But whilst I was studying my degree, I decided I may as well try and get a job that was slightly related to this. I emailed every marketing agency in Brighton and asked all of them if they would give me a job or an internship, I said I would work for free. I started working for a really small start-up agency, just one day a week, and did three months with them and then got paid after that. That's, I guess, the beginning of where I started my career in marketing.

If you had the option to start your career again, would you change your career path?

I think this year I have sort of decided that what I really would like to go into is conservation, specifically marine conservation. I sail, and I think conservation is something that I am really interested in. I guess that's where the social enterprise stuff comes from now, but I think if I had known that when I was making that decision to do a degree in business, looking for my first job or my first internship, I probably would have looked for something like that. But I think that the world's changed so much even in the last 5 years since I've been working and when I was at Uni, not that people didn't care about the environment but people didn't care as much as it wasn't a big deal. I have a cousin starting at Uni who's started doing environmental science and I don't remember anyone in school even talking about climate change or caring about any of that.

I've just quit my job. I've been looking at what I can do with the skills I have without having to completely restart at this point in my life, or retrain, or go back to Uni. I've been talking to a lot of people who run social enterprises, a lot of entrepreneurs, and so many of them lack marketing skills and so many lack digital skills. They just don't have the skills that I have so I think it's a real double-edged sword you know. If I had known when I had started my career that I would want to go into conservation, maybe I would have done a degree in marine conservation or found a job in that, but right now I am finding what I do know quite valuable to people who are doing these things, so I guess that's kind of nice to know it's not a waste and I can be useful

with these skills. I'm interviewing after this call with a marketing agency who specialise in social enterprise and conservation companies, which is great! It is exactly what I would like to be doing and using those skills, but I get to feel like I am having an impact.

How would you say your career priorities differ from say 5 years ago?

5 years ago I was just starting out in my career, I think I probably did care a lot more about having a more structured career. I think I saw a lot of people joining the big corporates and having a big career path and top salaries and that kind of ladder. I think that's where I thought I was heading. I don't want to say the word idolise, but I guess I idolised London living and city life and that's where I really wanted to go and wanted to do. I think I've done the corporate thing now and I really didn't like it, so I guess trying different things has led me to where I am now.

Would you say you're at a point where you are prioritising happiness over financial incentives?

Yeah and I think when you look at work-life balances as well, in a big company the real asset there is people power, the more they can extract from you the better. My boss would ring me up at half past 6-7 o'clock when I had been out of work for a couple of hours because he's had an idea and he couldn't wait to the next day. For quite a while I would pick up the phone because I was thinking what have I done, what's gone wrong. I was a bit panicked by my boss ringing me. It's not that it was anything important, it's just that he didn't have any respect for the fact that, yes people enjoy their jobs and they want to work and they work hard, but they don't want to be working at half past 7 at night. There's a kind of boundary.

I like working from home, I like flexibly working. It's not that I don't think about work in the evenings, it's just I don't want to feel like I am under pressure to if that particular day I don't want to. It is probably more about choice. I got back into work one day after my boss had called me and I hadn't picked up the phone and I went: "ah I was in the gym" and he said, "oh but you didn't call me back" and I was like "well after the gym I had a shower and then I had dinner and by then it 9 o'clock, do you want me to call you?" and he was like "yes, I do". And I'm just like really?

Can you tell me about a time when you faced a challenge at work or point that was difficult to get past?

I guess I have done a lot of things that I have never done before and that's always quite challenging. In my first job after I graduated, I was a marketing and events manager at a small company, so I was doing 12 peoples' jobs at a large company, which is great because I got to do so many different things but juggling that all was a challenge.

I think being so early in my career as well it's a challenge taking on that kind of role with such a large responsibility.

Working with people who are much older and much more experienced and happen to be the authority figure, because you're the one running the event for a thousand people having never done it before, your expected to still know exactly what you are doing that's very challenging. Its all about pretending and being really prepared.

If you could go back to that time, would you do anything differently?

I think if I could go back to a time when I started something new, I might have admitted to the people who were working with me that I had no idea what I was doing. At the time my kind of go-to when I was working was to give me the things you've got, and I see what I can do with it, and if I hit a road block I will bring it up.

But I did so many things wrong that they needed re-doing completely, which wasted so much time that I didn't have because I was learning how to do something completely new that if I had said "how do you normally do this?" or "how did the last person do this?" it would have really helped me not waste all that time and energy. And all the stress of having to redo stuff in less time, under that pressure. So yeah: asking for help.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing women today in the workplace?

I think the biggest challenge facing women is being able to put yourself out there. I feel it right now when I am applying for things and not feeling like you can apply for things because you're not qualified enough, and I think back to when I applied for jobs that I didn't think I was qualified for and then when I think, on reflection, I was actually over-qualified for that job. Why did I think I was not qualified for it at the time? And really putting yourself out there and feeling confident in yourself, not necessarily for new jobs, but for anything: taking on a new project; feeling like you can assertively say 'yes I can do this'; even if you have to ask for help saying 'yes I know how to manage a project, I can do it'. I think it is the biggest challenge feeling like you can put yourself forward and having the confidence to do that.

Do you have any idea why that might be?

Yeah for sure. A lot of my closest friends are men and I'll be like 'I'm thinking about applying for this job', and they're like 'you should absolutely do it, go ahead, why not!' They bolster me up more than I bolster myself because they're always like 'go ahead do it!' Because they just would think 'what have you got to lose?', and I'm like 'oh well what if they don't like me?' Yeah, I think having them is great for confidence because they have so much confidence in themselves when I wouldn't have confidence in myself.

Do you think that's something women struggle with more than men?

I don't know. I think it is a difference in the way that people are raised, I think that is what we are taught. Gender roles have changed so much since I was born but I think when you're a child and you're given, I'm not saying its bad to be a girl with dolls and things, but I think you're taught to want to be a family orientated home maker type personality. Whereas men are given the types of toys and encouragement 'you can be anything you want to be, you can go be an astronaut'.

I have had it in the past where I've been with boyfriends and their siblings have been like 'well when are you going to start having children? Well I was 24 when I had...' and I'm like 'well it's different goals'. Women's achievements are not attributed necessarily to workplace accomplishment, so because of that we don't think about accomplishment in the same way and we don't seek it out as much. Might be why women feel less confident to go seek it out because they're taught they don't need it. Maybe.

What do you think employers should do to address the biggest problems facing women today?

It's very hard. I think part of the issue that employers have in certain industries is not hiring enough women. I think creating an environment that women want to work in is going to be very difficult. It depends what industry you're in because I know there's a lot of industries where you get men who really like the laddish sort of 'toxic-masculinity' type of culture. They're not going to want to change it to bring more women in.

My brother worked at a company where it was very laddish. They had a Friday weigh-in and the person who had lost the least weight that week or was the heaviest at the weigh-in that week had their name written on the board that was 'fatty of the week'. And I was like 'you are lucky there are no women in that office', and he was like 'this culture has developed because there are no women in the office'. Even if women went into that office they wouldn't last very long, I wouldn't want to be involved in 'fatty of the week'. I have a lot of friends who are engineers, from being a physicist at the start of my career, who would love to have more women in the workplace because they self-identify as feminists and appreciate that **diversity**, especially in technology, is really important because there's so many things that are designed for men, just purely because there's only men in the room designing them. Without women in the room you're not going to design products catering for the female market. But it is so difficult because there's this 'I don't want to join that because it's so male, I'd be the only woman'.

I have a friend who is a physicist and she worked really hard to get in with the men at the company. Her boyfriend joined the company afterwards and in week one he was invited to their football match and drinks. She was like 'it's so disheartening because I am friends with these guys now but it took me so many months to get close enough for them to want to hang out with me because I am a woman', which I find really disheartening. This is not really things that employers could do, it's just the complaints that we have.

So doing something to address male dominated workplace cultures could be something employers could do?

Yeah for sure **workplace culture** I think is the big issue.

During our study some **stereotypes** or attitudes that individuals listed when asked about **stereotypes** regarding women were: bossy; office organisers; being worse at maths and technical roles; and not being listened to. What do you think of these?

I was really rubbish at maths, which is part of the reason I left physics, but having left I am probably much better at maths than most people in business. Although I did some contracting the other week and I was talking about websites and how the specific website builder works and how it functions, and the guy was like 'well how do you know this?', and I am like 'well, you know, I have built websites using this'. It's my job, I build websites, and I can code in four languages. And he was like 'wow,

that's really impressive', and I was like 'thank you for acknowledging I know what I am talking about'. I think that's the only time I have ever really had people say they don't think I have got the technical skills.

How do you feel about diversity and inclusion statistics?

Well I don't think they look great in general. As I was saying earlier, the more diverse a group of people there is, the better the diversity of thought you get and the better products you get. I think it is reasonably shocking from a lot of levels and I think this year people are starting to wake up and think 'we have got to do something to get more people a seat at the table, especially higher up in senior positions'. It is going to take quite a lot of time. I listened to a podcast where they were talking about the state of publishing and how there's very few people of colour in senior leadership positions, and they were saying we only promote internally so it's going to take time to get these people up to the top of the ladder, but it's not really fast enough to have a real impact when it needs to be having an impact.

What are your thoughts on the currently workplace rules and procedures around maternity and paternity leave?

I don't think anyone gets enough paternity leave. I have had friends who have had babies this year, during the COVID crisis, who were expecting to be around beyond 2 weeks and they've loved being able to work from home and be around the kids in the really early development stages. My dad, as well being a consultant, has worked for a lot of companies and I hear a lot about them and he said that he's got companies he works with who've stopped hiring women who are about mid-twenties, because its cost them too much money when they go on maternity leave for 9 months. They continue having to pay for that 9 months but they also have to employ a 2nd person to cover.

I do appreciate if you are a small company and you've got to get someone else in to do one person's job, but to stop hiring people completely has just such a negative impact on career progression. If you stop hiring people at the age at which they are most looking to have kids, that stagnates a career.

If you could change the rules around maternity and paternity leave, what would you change?

I would make paternity leave longer. Or, I'm a big fan of flexible working. A lot of people have moved towards more flexible working from home, especially this year, and a lot of companies have said they are going to stick with it. So even just making paternity leave longer or making it 3 month, but from the second it's flexibly from home. Obviously it's not doable for every kind of job, but that's something I would like to see. I don't know how I would fix the issue of maternity leave, it's really long and some employers can't afford it.

Could you tell me about a time where work has positively affected your mental health?

I think I really like feeling like I have an impact. I like to be able to look at my work and say 'this has had an impact on this person or that person or this issue'. My last job, not the one I just quit but the one I enjoyed before that, I was running events, teaching these students how to get their social enterprises out there, and build them, and being able to see what they came back with and the impact they have had, I think that really has a great impact on me because I can look at that and say that happened, not just because of me, but it was successful in part because of the work that I do. The work I do is meaningful. I think that has a really good positive impact.

Could you tell me about a time where work has negatively affected your mental health?

My last job I quit because I had cultural issues, but we had an office in a warehouse with no windows and people weren't supposed to be getting up from their desks because of COVID. We were all sat in corners, we didn't have see-through screens but we did have screens up, so I was kind of in a cubicle in the corner of a room inside a warehouse. It was always really cold and no-one else seemed to feel the cold. I was right next to a door that I was constantly closing because of a draft. I was just sat like 'this is miserable'. I have got no windows, no natural light and that was really hard.

I reported my boss for bullying, not because of me, but there was another marketing girl my age and they would would scream in her face and yell at her. She hadn't done anything wrong, if anything my boss had not approved something on time, so it didn't go out on time and she'd forgotten all about it. It wasn't the person being screamed at's fault at all. It's not nice to have somebody else upset and that miserable at work talking to you, so I raised it. I know whistle-blowing is a bit of an issue sometimes, but I thought if it was me and I didn't feel like I could speak up, I would rather someone spoke up for me. I got yelled at for taking holiday to go to the dentist! Yeah, I was quite miserable there.

Were they company-wide issues or would you say it was one specific person?

Definitely company wide. If anyone in my office put a holiday form on my bosses desk he would crumple it up and throw it at them. I think it goes back to work-life balance issues, they'd always ask people to justify their holiday, but I am entitled to this holiday.

Did anything come of you raising that complaint ?

Turned out the director had brought in the senior marketing manager from another company that they used to work at together. I didn't know this at the time, so I complained to the director and I said 'I think this is an issue and I would like to raise it now', but I didn't know the formal HR procedure and I also didn't want to raise it because it wasn't an issue with myself. So I think she said something to the senior manager, but I don't know, nothing was ever told back to me. It did improve a bit, but also the senior marketing manager tripped over and broke her shoulder and had to work from home for quite a long a time, so that had an impact on her behaviour with not being in the office. But as far as I know because there was no formal procedure taken when I would expect a normal company, if the word bullying is said, for them to take it quite seriously. If the other girl had left and tried to sue the company for the fact she was mistreated, she could have done, if a complaint is raised and nothing has formally been done about it. You would expect them to take it more seriously, but they didn't.

Was that a factor in making you leave?

Yeah definitely.

Were there any employee support networks in place that you could turn to?

Not that I know of.

STORY SIX:

KATE

Our next interview comes from Kate who tells us about her early career experiences after her librarianship degree, and what she learned that was important to her. She also tells us about her experiences after having her children and the advice she would give to those going through motherhood.



Could you tell me about your first job?

My first proper job was after I'd done my degree where I was working for a Food Research Association. Then I started in a new company to develop some software, and I did marketing and training. I had to devise a training program for this new brand of software that was going to be marketed to the library marketplace. The reason that I got the job was because I had a degree in librarianship and I knew how to do a bit of programming. It was great, because it was a really small team, and I was setting something up from scratch, so there's lots of scope for creativity. It was my baby, if you like, so I could do whatever I wanted.

What do you think your biggest lesson from that job was? What have you taken forward?

I think that creativity was really important. Bravery, and the courage to think 'I'm going to do it this way' and I think that comes from creativity. Having a creative idea about something, and just being given permission to just run with that, is just such a beautiful thing, because you're bought into it. It's your idea, and you're going to give it everything that you've got.

I think I try to instil that responsibility in the people that I manage, to try to get them to sort of build their little empires or their activities, so that they've got the scope for creativity. I'm encouraging that rather than just saying 'do this' which is so unsatisfying as an employee, isn't it?

What's their reaction to allowing them to foster that creativity?

That's interesting actually, because everybody's so different. I'm thinking of a previous team that I've managed where some people liked roles. I think particularly if you're working part time, you just want to come to work, do the job, go home, you don't actually want to overly engage with it, and for some of those people, it hasn't really helped them to get into the job. Saying 'you know what, this is all yours, over to you. You can do it however you want', and they kind of look at you and just think you're the manager, manage me, tell me what to do', which is fine as well, because I can, but just personally speaking, I know how frustrating that can be. So yeah, I think it's not everybody's cup of tea is it? But there's only one way to find out, and usually if I'm managing someone new, I will ask them directly, 'how do you like to be managed? What's your work style?' Just ask some clear questions, because sometimes people are just there because they've got to work to earn the money, and they don't care what the job is. They just want to come and do the work, get money, go home, and that's fine too.

If you've got the option to start your career again, would you change your career? And why?

No, I wouldn't. I've really enjoyed all the jobs that I've done, and if I haven't enjoyed them, I've gone and looked for another job somewhere else. But I think if I had the opportunity to speak to me in the past, I would have said 'please go out and get another job after you've had children more quickly', because I had about five years where I didn't work, I had three children, and that really set me back. I would say it's only in the past five years that I've got back up to earning what I was earning before I had children. That's huge as well, because you think 'gosh, before I had children, there was only me to look after, and now I've got to share my income with all these other people'.

But yeah, I would have probably gone back to work sooner. But I think that was, for me, an issue because I didn't have the confidence. I wasn't getting enough sleep at night. It's quite a struggle, because you have to devote yourself to bringing your children up, or you don't have to, but I did, and then you kind of forget about you in the midst of that. You know, if someone asks you the question 'how are you?' you kind of reel with shock and just think 'oh, gosh, yes, but actually I have got something to say, somebody is interested', you know? I think you end up putting yourself last. I would have said to myself, even if it's just a one day a week thing, just stay in the job market. It's good for space and confidence.

Would you give the same advice to any new mothers that want to get back into their careers?

Yeah, I would. I would say it doesn't really matter what you do, but just cling on, in however tenuous a way, to just having a job whilst you're bringing up children. I mean, sometimes it really doesn't work financially does it with childcare, you might basically be paying for childcare whilst you're at work, and then you're not actually making any money. But I would say even if it's just one day a week, just look at it. Look at it as CPD for you, so that you haven't got a blank CV, and more than that, so that you've got that confidence, you've got that escape, and that sense of you as a working person.

Do you think having children has an impact on a woman's career? And if so, what impacts?

Yeah, I think it does. We've just spoken about the fact that it can create a pause in your career, and it can set you back if you're not careful. But I think in terms of your self awareness, when you go back to work, I think having been a parent... now this is a bit of a contentious comment, but reflectively, I think possibly being a parent might make you a better manager.

I think because you're used to thinking about the things that you say from the point of view of the person who's on the receiving end of them on a more regular basis, so you know, you're kind of managing your relationships at home as much as you are at work. And so, yeah, I think it builds your self awareness, and it necessarily means that you need to get better at communicating.

Although I know lots of women who didn't take time off to bring their children up, and for them it hasn't been an issue. But I think if you do choose to take time off to look after your children when they're small, then yeah, it does have an impact, which isn't all negative, because obviously you've put your children first or before work at one point in your career.

I don't know whether you kind of reap the benefits of that, possibly you set unrealistic expectations that you then can't meet when you go back to work.

Who is your role model for success?

I haven't got anyone specifically in mind, but there have been people that I've come across in my working life who I've really admired. When I was working at a County Council, somebody who was managing a new team actually recognised my strengths and brought me into a team of social workers as a workforce development person. I really admired the way that she ran the team. She was quite strong willed. She was a love her or hate her person, but I really admired the fact that she was always very direct, so you were never left wondering what she really meant. I suppose I really, I admire directness, and yet she was compassionate. So, yeah, I think directness and compassion are both things that I really value or have valued from managers.

The other person recently that I've met that I was really wowed with was our head of English. She's just got such a wonderful way with words, and she was just very, very good at making a point, very eloquently and very gently, because, obviously as head of English, she's got a fantastic vocabulary and that was amazing to behold. I thought 'wow, yeah I should start using the words that exist in the world. Choose my words better, because they'll come across in a more effective way'.

Then recently, Kamala Harris becoming Vice President. That was hugely exciting and very empowering as well, just thinking 'yes, great!' We've got somebody who isn't just going to be, you know, the First Lady, they're actually potentially going to be, I mean, she could be President! Let's face it, Joe Biden's quite old, isn't he? I found that quite inspiring as well. I think it's a good time for women in the world.

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing women today in the workplace?

I think it is the balance of childcare and trying to do it all. Yeah, trying to be all things to all people and keep everybody happy.

With that in mind, what do you think employers should do to address that challenge for women?

I think providing options for parents of both sexes to have equality in the workplace, so either one being able to choose to take care of a newborn baby or maybe to the family. Also providing equality of opportunity for either parent to take leave if a child sick or whatever. Flexible working as well, I think it has helped and would typically help, but during lockdown it has been really, really hard for everybody, because although we might say 'yes, give us flexible working, let's work at home', but we don't mean that we want to work from home whilst educating our kids in the same room. So I think, yes, flexible working, but that means not just working at home, it means working at work as well.

What do you think you would do if you were a single parent in the current situation we're in?

I'd be completely stuffed right now. My ex lives in New Zealand, and if my boys were younger and needed my input, I'd have to do that whilst working full time, because I have to work full time to bring in an income to live. I'd just have three boys rollicking around the place, because I couldn't call on usual childcare because my mum's all locked up and shielding, so I don't know what I would do.

What unpaid care work do you engage in every week?

Bearing in mind that my children are older now, but nonetheless I still need to get my youngest up to check his teams site to see if there's any work on there. Just keep making sure he's not gaming instead of doing work. There's a certain amount of childcare that you still need to do when they're teenagers. Shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing? Yeah. Multitasking? Yeah. Hanging out washing in between meetings, that kind of thing, which we all do I expect.

Then obviously, at my age, my parents are now older, so it's kind of checking in with my mum, doing shopping for her when she needs it, taking her to hospital appointments, and so on. I think typically, I understand that for women that can be an issue that as your children get older, your parents get older, so you just transfer from being a carer for your children to a carer for your parents..

'I found that quite inspiring as well.

I think it's a good time for women in the world.'

During lockdown, do you think the amount of unpaid care work that you do has increased, decreased or stayed the same?

Increased, because we're all at home all the time so we're having breakfast at home, lunch at home, dinner at home, so there's more washing up, more cooking needed, more shopping needed. Yeah, so I'd say more.

How do you think this impacts your ability to work?

Yeah, I think it's balanced out, because when I was at work, I would have natural breaks in-between meetings, and so I might walk across campus for a meeting with an academic, I might drive to a networking event, so I would have lovely gaps in-between things. Whereas now, I'm just literally back to back, so when you say back to back, it is back to back.

What I've done since recovering from COVID, and coming back to work is I've made absolutely certain that I'm taking a one hour break at some point in the day, because it doesn't happen by wandering up to the watercooler or going into the cafe to get a coffee. I think, yeah, fitting in the washing and the shopping and things like that, instead of having a conversation with someone at the cafe really.



Have you ever been faced with a stereotype in the workplace? And if so, can you tell us about it?

I didn't have very many work clothes in my first job, because as you know, you build up your working wardrobe as you go along. So I had one suit that I'd had the interview in, which had a smart jacket and skirt matching. Then the rest of my wardrobe was one pair of smart trousers, borrowed blouses from my mum, and things like that.

I was doing a demo for a client where I had a pair of smart trousers and a borrowed blouse. I was doing the demo to the customer, and afterwards the director said 'Oh you know Kate, our clients expect to see women wearing skirts when they're doing that sort of formal meeting, and I do expect you to wear a skirt'. I only had one skirt!

Luckily for me, my manager was walking past the door and overheard what the director was saying to me, and he called me over afterwards and said 'are you okay?' I said 'yeah, no, I'm fine', because I didn't know what to expect. I just thought 'oh, God, how am I going to get the money for more skirts', and I felt a bit affronted that he obviously didn't like my trousers! My manager said 'oh, gosh, you know, that's a real infringement, you know it's really discriminatory, he can't say that to you'. He went and spoke to the director, and the director called me in and apologised to me, which is a good thing.

If that sort of thing happened now, obviously, I would understand that was completely unacceptable, but because it was my first job and I was in learning mode, I just took it as a 'oh, okay, so I've got to get some more skirts, right, okay'. And I think that's really hard, isn't it? Because you kind of are potentially exploited when you're new, and you're learning.



What would you advise to people going into their careers now, if they do face any stereotypes/discrimination?

Go to your line manager, and get them to deal with it for you on your behalf, because otherwise, you know, you haven't really got the power in that relationship. Especially if you're a newbie straight out of Uni and it's the director as well. I mean, you could front it out with them. I certainly wasn't confident enough to do so at that point in time, and also, potentially, he might have taken it the wrong way and I wouldn't have got the result that I wanted, although deserved rather because I didn't really know that it was even an issue. I hadn't come across it before, so I hadn't thought of it at all as discrimination.

We found that 63% of the women that partook in the survey actually said that stereotypes negatively affect women in the workplace. How does that make you feel?

It is a sad truth, and I think it is balancing out over time, but I think it is quite difficult because it really varies from person to person. There are lots of men who actually themselves might be working in sectors which are dominated by females, and I think they feel a lot of this sort of discrimination themselves, because sometimes they might communicate in a sort of, I don't know, a typically male boomy voice, which they can't help, but it can be perceived in a different way.

I think it's been interesting for me actually getting to know people that work in sectors like health care who are men, as they say a lot of the things that we might say as women working in male dominated sectors about the way that they communicate being misinterpreted.

I think, from my own experience, the way that I prefer to communicate is quite gentle, and quite open and honest. I don't like to use jargon, and I think sometimes people think less of you because of that, but it's a choice, you know, I'm choosing to be myself. I don't want to lose who I am in any relationships that I develop with clients or with colleagues. Also, I've seen the way that women who have tried to kind of ape men's communication style who have ended up being... ostracized.

I think sometimes it's really hard for women to be credible, even now. It isn't always because a lot of men are really, really great and are as passionate about equality as women are, but you do still come across some who will look at any opportunity to have a pop at you, whether it's that you're too soft, that you're too pushy, you know? Again it's about the language, the perception of behaviours that a man can do it, but if a woman does it then she's interpreted as pushy or overbearing. If a man does it, it's just well, that's what men do.

If you try to be, I suppose for myself, I tried to be true to my own character and relate human to human. I think eventually that does build trust because I'm being genuine and I'm being who I am, and people will get to know me and get to trust me for that, whereas, and obviously my role is all about relationship building, I feel if I was to put a veneer of business jargon and kind of think too much about how I am with people and try to be something that I'm not, then that will come across as ingenuine and destroy the trust and the relationship.

I suppose it means that it takes longer to build that relationship, because people might think that you don't know you're talking about, because you're not doing the typical man thing of showing off or being mouthy and loud.

What do you think that we can do to help battle the stereotypes and encourage people to be their true selves, even if it's not the quickest route to success?

I think generally a lot more could be done to bring people together, perhaps socially or sharing different ways of being, so whether you're from a different culture, or from a different gender, or have a different view about life, providing opportunities where people can meet to talk about their culture, or their way of being, so that you get to see the human in people that you're working with. Particularly if you think about cultural differences, it's always really, really fascinating to hear about other people's celebrations that they have throughout the year, and I think that's something that employers could do a lot more to stimulate people within their teams to share if they're celebrating Diwali, or just to say, 'okay, it's Diwali this week, what are we going to do?'

If I think about my mother in law, she's very quite right wing, and she'll say things about immigration that I passionately disagree with, however, the people that she works with and people that she knows as neighbours. She gets to know the human and she gets to know about 'they do this, and they're doing that today, and oh aren't they great!', because she knows them on an individual level, it breaks down all those barriers and she accepts them as an individual. But I think when we look at people as groups of others, we don't kind of include them in our lives, and then we end up seeing the difference rather than feeling the similarity, and I think that's as true of different cultures as it is of men and women working together happily in the workplace.

STORY SEVEN: NANCY



Nancy is an English Literature graduate, who has worked while being a student. They discuss the difficulties of working in many different roles and finding a graduate role in their area of interest. They also discuss the effect of the Pandemic on their career journey.

In terms of starting your career, could you tell me about your first job?

My first proper job was my part-time job when I was 16, well just turned 16, and I worked there for about 10 months when I was still at University. I worked Saturdays, and I did day shifts. I still do not have a full-time job. I've only done part-time jobs and am still applying for full-time.

Yeah, and that was the start of my work life. Well technically, my first job was at Clintons but I was only there a week. So I consider Smiths my first job, since I was 16. I've been working in different jobs since I was 16.



You say that you are still looking for a proper graduate job, what area are you looking to work in? Has the pandemic affected this?

Before the lockdown and the pandemic, I was sure but during the pandemic, I've have been less and less sure, but I think I still want to go into kind of like project management and something that I can utilise being organised really, because I like to be organised and I want a job where I can kind of put that to use.



It's been way harder. I literally have had, just before this all started, I was having more luck and had interviews, and then everything's gone out the window. It's been like a ghost town, how every single one of the interviews I was meant to have, have been cancelled or postponed for like a year. I've done applications but I never hear anything back, even when I chase it up.

I find it's been so much harder and I find there is barely anything out there really, especially for the area that I want to work in.

Are you currently working part-time anywhere at the moment?

At the moment I'm working two jobs. For one of them, I work at a supermarket as an online shopper, you know people who do their shops online, I shop for them, and then I'm also an English literature tutor. I get to choose of my accord and I do it for a company, but it's always kind of like private tutoring because I decide what to teach, I decide who to tutor, and I do it online over a video platform. So those are my main two jobs.

I've got two other jobs, but one of them I'm still furlough for which is the hotel I work at or worked at, and the other one is an exam invigilator, but obviously all exams are cancelled for the moment so there's nothing to invigilate. So, yeah, at the moment I've got two jobs. I enjoy that I can charge the amount I want. It is just sharing my knowledge really, I quite like doing it. I quite like the supermarket job as well. I'm pretty happy doing those two at the moment and, as I said, I have done so many applications. I am happy to just have those two jobs.

In your supermarket job, do you believe you faced a challenge that you don't think would have been faced by male colleague?

Not at the supermarket, I haven't really experienced anything. I mean apart from when I did some shifts at Christmas and got some really stressy customers because, you know, a lockdown. Apart from that, at the supermarket, I haven't experienced anything, no.

More of a general question, what do you think are the biggest challenges facing women today in the workplace? (pre-pandemic)

I think oversexualisation is quite a big deal. Quite a big area that affects women. For example, I've worked in pubs, bars and hotels and the female colleagues are just made to feel so uncomfortable, especially if you're a bartender or something and people will say things that are inappropriate.

I've been touched at work, I've been grabbed, I've been threatened, and yeah, I don't think it would happen to a man really.

Did you ever raise this with management?

I did and to be honest, I wish I hadn't, because even though my immediate manager in that job was really nice, everybody else treated me like a whistle blower, because in hospitality there's like an atmosphere that we all get abused but we don't mention it. I've had so many shifts where so much bad stuff happened and I didn't say anything but, actually in this respect, it's my parents wanting to bring it up because they were like 'this isn't fair'.

Other women and other female colleagues are going to be put in a situation where we weren't actually meant to be put in it in the first place. I felt like I was treated like a whistle blower and that made me feel even worse, and it's just a very stressful environment. I felt like I wasn't getting any support apart from that manager who then quit the next month. So that was about it. Yeah, I don't really feel very supported.

Do you believe this is an expectation in the hospitality industry?

When I first joined the job, we were asked to wear makeup, do our hair, but they aren't really allowed to do that now, but I saw men, actually, most of the male colleagues were quite neat, but there was a couple that were not, but no one would say anything. For example, and this might be a bad example, but someone like Boris Johnson; he's quite scruffy. If a woman looked like that they would be torn apart. Whereas, it doesn't seem to be the same for men.

It was definitely like that at work. We were supposed to look a certain way and when you're doing a 14 hour shift or 15 hour shift plus the same makeup on all day, you're probably going to start looking a little bit dead before the end of the shift, but you're still expected to look alive at 3am in the morning when you've been awake for so many hours, and there's a lot that is expected. It is almost like robotic in a way.

In terms of unpaid care work, if undertaken mostly by women, do you think this has a positive or negative effect on them?

I think in some cases it could have a negative effect because if a woman feels like she has to be at home doing all the housework and caring, she might not be able to have time to have a career, or she might feel like she's not really allowed one if the husband's going out for work, which I think is unfair. She should have the same opportunities.

I mean, some women might choose to stay at home and they might choose to be a stay at home mum. I think it's negative if they feel forced into it. If they choose it, I think it is up to them but yeah if they're forced into it because the husband doesn't really do anything apart from go to work, get home, and go to sleep, which I know to be fair to them will be tiring, but if they literally don't do anything and it's all put on the wife, just cause they are a woman, to keep the house flowing, then I think that would be unfair and negative in that respect.

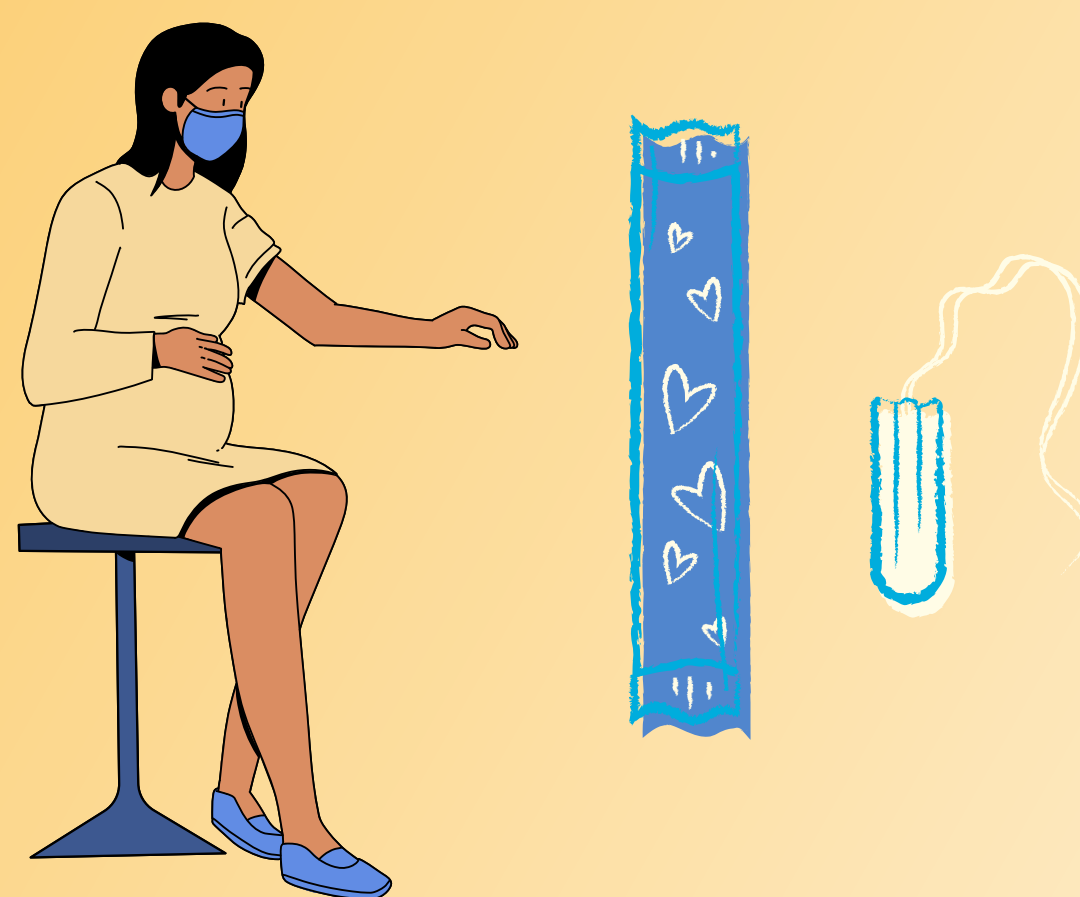


N.B. When searching for graphics of cleaning or housework, the majority of pictures displayed were of women undertaking these tasks. There was minimal male representation.

Do you think societal expectations of women are still at play today?

I was actually talking to my mum about this the other day and she said something, I can't remember in what respect it was related to, but something about some employers were less likely to hire a woman, because they're going to go and get pregnant. She said it like that because it still happens and a woman is less likely, because they have like their monthly menstrual cycle and some businesses think women are more likely to be going off ill with pain, so therefore will not hire them. I've actually heard that happen to people before. So I think their careers can definitely be affected just by being a woman.

Also, I was saying this the other day and other people may agree with me, if a man is called forward thinking and has leadership, a woman is called bossy for exactly the same thing, and I think it's just unfair. It's like double standards, a woman should not have to take on male attributes to get further in the workplace. She shouldn't feel the need to be masculine. I mean she can if she wants to, but only if she wants to, it shouldn't have to feel forced. I think that's unfair.



Do you think that there is also a problem with women hating women or women putting women down?

Yeah definitely, because I know that internalised misogyny in general is quite big, but I think you see it in lots of places now. Especially online when a girl will be shamed for something by another girl and it will be out of jealousy, and I just think it happens quite a lot in general.

I think that some believe they have to follow certain rules and if they don't, they'll be shunned like some women, and that is out of jealousy to see other free girls being free. That's how I see it. It's different with everyone, of course.

It is the idea that girls are supposed to act like women from a very young age, but boys don't have to act like men, which, in my opinion, neither should be acting like adults because they are not. They should be themselves and be kids. It's not fair to force young children into such strict things at such a young age. It just kind of strips them of their childhood and their innocence. I think it's just unfair to put these kind of stereotypes on them.



Going back to school life - what is your opinion of the uniform policy that is enforced against girls?

Girls are meant to feel bad for having a body, basically. Yeah, that always annoyed me so much and my sister. My mum would walk me home from school at age 12 and sometimes men would be peeping and getting out of the window of their car - it's disgusting. They always say it's a compliment, well I don't take it as one, it's scary. It's not right, and why are girls being shamed for the way someone else is reacting - completely unfair in my opinion.

It definitely links to life as well, because in one of the jobs I had I was told that I couldn't wear an outfit I had on. I came in the next day and someone skinnier girl than me was wearing the same outfit. So essentially, I was told I couldn't wear it because of my body shape. That really annoyed me because it felt like I was basically being shamed for my body, and I think that starts at school and never really stops.



Do you think your background should be a factor that employers should take into account?

Personally yes, because it kind of links to the phrase 'it's not what you know, it's who you know'. There are so many smart, well-meaning people that, because of their background or they're poor or can't go to a reputable school as they can't afford to go to one, are kind of left in the lurch. For example, student finance. I got more than my friends because at the time with my parents' work situation, I was entitled to more than my friends were. I think that would only be fair, really, because some of my friends have quite rich families that were paying it all for them, whereas I didn't. I just think if that is applied to Uni, you need the same kind of process applied to jobs.

I mean, I'm not saying you should give someone a job over someone else because they came from a really poor background, but it should be taken to account. Along with ability and everything else.

Could you tell me a time where your work positively impacted your mental health?

My supermarket job at the moment is quite positive because I get anxious and bored quite easily. This job, because I'm actually going to work, leaving the house and walking, and they have their little cafe there and everything, I actually feel like I have this little bit of normality left.

My **mental health** is quite up and down, so I'm quite happy to go to a job where I'm distracted, and it is the same with the tutoring. It tires me out but to be honest, I'd rather be tired than depressed, so I would say my current jobs are actually keeping me sane.

Do you feel like you could go talk to someone at work about your mental health?

No, not personally. I don't really portray what I would call 'traditional signs' because I've got bipolar, and my moods are very up and down. I snap but I also have nightmares and stuff like that, but I don't present any kind of typical depression symptoms, so I'm not going to feel understood.

Unless they have PTSD themselves, I don't think and I don't expect them to, understand me. So, to be honest, I'd rather not bring it up at work.

Do you feel like if you did tell your manager about your mental health, you would be treated differently?

I don't think so. I'm not ashamed of it at all. I don't think they would treat me differently because I don't act any differently. My job has only known about my physical health, not my **mental health**.

I haven't really felt the need to tell them about my **mental health**, because even though I've had panic attacks at work. I think they can recognise what a panic attack is, and I'm not the only one at work that gets them, so I feel like I wouldn't be treated any differently even if I told them.

Do you have any further comments about stress and mental well-being?

Some places and some shopping malls have quiet spaces and I feel like there should be more places like that in reach for people, just to have five minutes away and a chance to breathe. I mean when I just felt like a lot of jobs don't have that in that respect and I think there needs to be more done.

Have you ever been faced with a stereotype directly or indirectly in the workplace? If you have, could you tell me about it?

It's not a very good **stereotype** and it's not very big, but one is that I'm now blonde. So I've had people assuming that I'm stupid, at the hotel, because I'm blonde. Well, I'm not. At the hotel, it is four and half stars and I've had people assume, because I work there, I have money and that I'm rich myself and that my family's rich. I get them commenting on things about me that they don't know. I earn barely anything and I do really long hours and it is not what they think. The people seem to see things through rose tinted glasses... I mean, that's all I'd really say I've experienced **stereotype** wise. But yeah, I think, mainly for the way I look and in the job I do.



GLOSSARY

Here is a glossary of all the key words and phrases we have used in this journal article.

Discrimination: Discrimination is treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021)

Diversity and Inclusion: Diversity refers to the traits and characteristics that make people unique whilst inclusion refers to the behaviours and social norms that ensure people feel welcome. It includes: culture, race and ethnicity; disability; religious or spiritual beliefs; gender, including transgender; intersex; generational; and sexual orientation and identity (Agile Alliance, 2020)

Employee Network Groups/ Employee Support Networks: This refers to anything that allows employees and/or entrepreneurs to meet so that they can form professional relationships. This allows individuals to achieve their personal and professional goals, access business opportunities and new connections.

Menopause: Menopause is when a woman stops having periods and is no longer able to get pregnant naturally. It is a part of ageing and naturally occurs between the ages of 45-55 (NHS, 2018)

Mental Health: A state of well-being in which the individual realises their abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community (World Health Organisation, 2019)

Primary Caregiver: Primary caregiver means the primary person who consistently assumes the role of providing direct care and support of the individual to live successfully in the community without compensation for providing such care (LawInsider, 2021)

Stereotype: A set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021)

Unconscious Bias: Unconscious Biases are learned stereotypes that are automatic, unintentional, deeply ingrained, universal, and able to influence behaviour (Kent Safeguarding Children, 2020)

Unpaid Care Work: Unpaid Care Work can include, but is not limited to: caring for dependents, the sick and the elderly, and household work (OECD Development Centre, 2014)

Workplace Culture: Workplace culture is the shared values, belief systems, attitudes and the set of assumptions that people in a workplace share (Forbes, 2018)

Workplace Relationships: Workplace relationships are unique interpersonal relationships with important implications for the individuals in those relationships, and the organisations in which the relationships exist and develop.

THANK YOU

This study was completed by the Women in Work team at GLOW, each have worked tirelessly for months to help put this together and help make a difference to you. We wanted to add a final page to just say thank you to each member of the team but also for them to provide their thanks to those that supported them!



Catherine Park:

What an inspiring group of people! Getting to hear the thoughts and opinions of over 71 women plus the stories from those courageous enough to give them has been so enlightening! I want to take this chance to thank every single person who took part in order to make Women in Work happen! You are all incredible!



Agata Mlynarczyk:

It has been a privilege to be a part of this project and see everyone getting so involved! I would like to personally thank everyone who completed our surveys. Moreover, big thank you to Sophie who I had an absolute pleasure to interview. Sophie is not only an amazing role model career wise, she is also such a lovely person!



Frances Friend:

This has been such an amazing project to be a part of. Thank you so much to all of the people who gave their time to participate in Women in Work. The responses and stories have been so fascinating to read and I hope you all find the results as inspiring as I have!



Simran Shah:

I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of this project, hearing all the enlightening stories about our participants, and working alongside the others to produce this journal. The collection of experiences will not only help to inspire young women at the start of their careers but also reassure them that the uphill struggle is worth it. Thank you to the Women in Work team and all the participants for making this project possible.

If any topics or themes discussed in Women in Work resonated with you or if you have any feedback about the study, then please email GLOW.growingleaders@gmail.com and tell us your thoughts. We would love to hear from you!

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