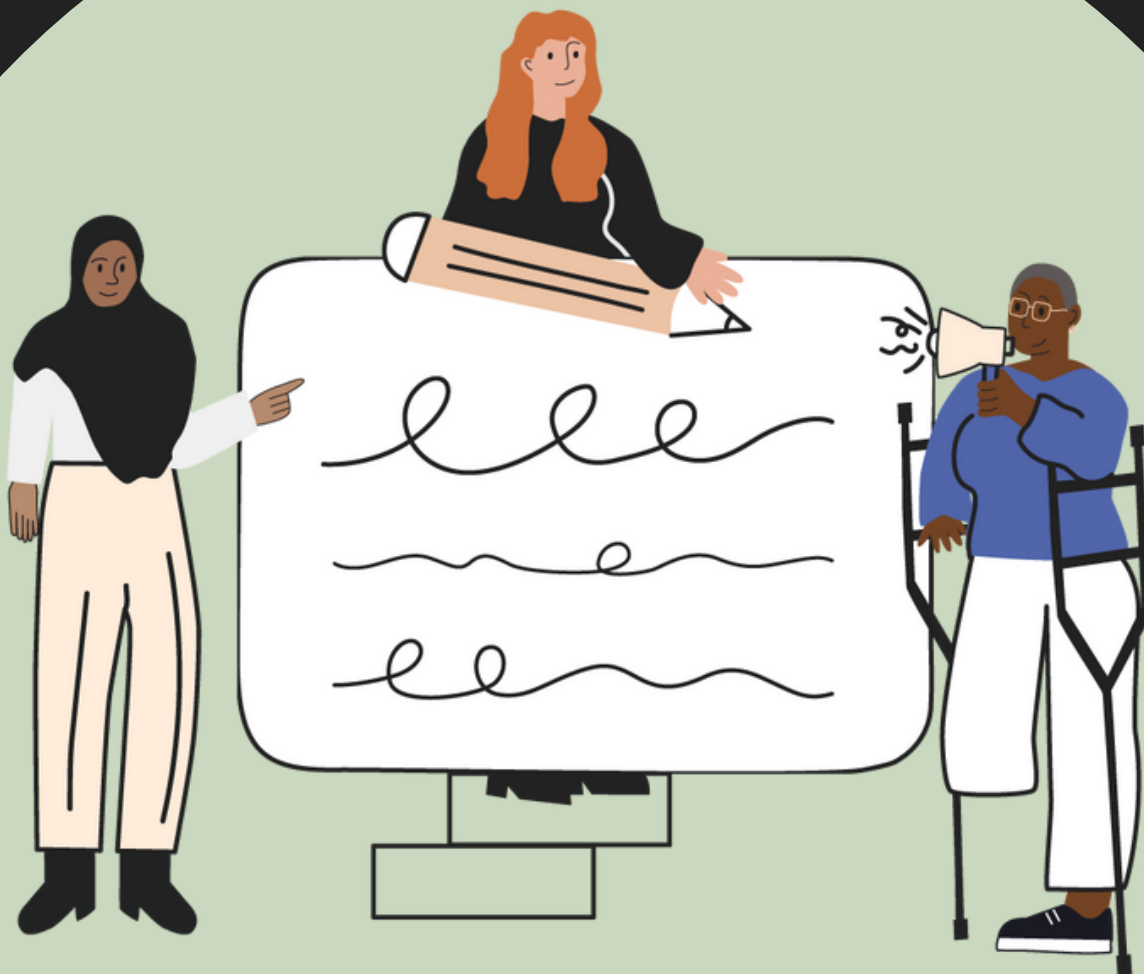


What Women Want 2023

A global report revealing what women and marginalized groups want and need to thrive in the workplace



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An introduction from the CEOs and co-founders of WORK180

In 2021, our first What Women Want Report arrived in the wake of devastating news from the World Economic Forum (WEF): The pandemic had increased the number of years it will take to eliminate gender inequity from 99.5 to 135.6 years. This meant that despite the hard work of our team, partners, and the employers we work with, yet another generation of women were set to face a career filled with barriers. And, for the companies entering another year of unknown economic challenges, it meant losing the diverse array of minds needed to survive such trying times.



**Gemma Lloyd and
Valeria Ignatieva**

Unfortunately, the year that followed saw the aftermath of the pandemic continue to have an insidious impact on the careers of women. For example, the additional [512 billion hours of vital \(yet unpaid\) care work](#) that pushed many women out of the workforce has since resulted in a [regression in views on gender norms](#). According to the UN report, the damage of this perception is already evident in areas such as the workforce, leadership and political participation, education, healthcare, home, and beyond.


The ongoing impact of the pandemic over the last year was also compounded by a multitude of global economic shocks and setbacks to equity, all of which hit women hardest — especially those also facing prejudice against elements of their identity such as their age, race, religion, or sexuality. This included a looming global recession, rising prices of resources, the reversal of Roe Vs Wade in the US, and ongoing attacks on human rights highlighted by the death of Mahsa Amini in Iran.

While the latest [WEF Global Gender Gap Report](#) tells us that the length of time it will take to achieve gender parity has decreased to 132 years, this pace of progress is unacceptable. The voices in this report make it clear that women are still being held back and pushed out of the workforce. One in five of this year's survey participants left their company in 2020–22 with no future role, a statistic accompanied by stories of stress, burn out, and increasing reports of false promises when it comes to true workplace flexibility.

But what this report also reveals is that women are determined to thrive at work. They're ready for new opportunities, want to develop their careers, and are looking for employers who are committed to this cause. This report is here to help such employers build and benefit from a diverse workforce, providing the facts and insights they need to focus their efforts and have a real impact.

Because when we know better, we can do better.

A few key findings

 48%

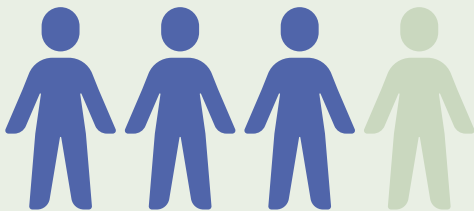
Between 2020–2022, less than half of the respondents remained with their employer.



The number of respondents saying they're open to opportunities with a new employer has risen by 7%, year-on-year.



Four in five said they want to know what employers are actually doing to create a diverse and inclusive workplace.



Flexible working remains important to workers, with three quarters of respondents saying it's a priority over a top of market salary.

While flexible working remains important to women, it's no longer the most in-demand employee offering.

Respondents tell us the priority is now women in leadership positions and paid leave entitlements.



The report confirms a concerning trend of employers failing to deliver on promises of workplace flexibility, and accusations of deception.

Almost 30% of respondents said they have never felt able to bring their whole selves to work. This figure increases significantly for those who do not identify as 'White only', and increases again for those aged over 56.



Note: When citing insights or data from this report, please link to and credit the [WORK180 What Women Want Report 2023](#).

About the report

About the author

WORK180 promotes organizational standards that raise the bar for all women in the workplace. We endorse and support companies that are truly committed to the careers of women and marginalized groups, and make it easy for candidates to find them.

Our work with employers focuses on [10 key standards for driving workplace equity](#). These standards are informed by diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) experts; our community of women and employers; and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. As a result, they provide a clear focus for any company committed to creating a workplace where all women can thrive.

To find out how each of these standards helps drive equity in the workplace, please [visit the WORK180 website](#).

About the data

The data in this report is the result of a global WORK180 survey, circulated both in and outside of our community of women. While the majority of respondents do identify as women, our survey was open to anyone who wished to share their voice.

Dates of survey:

August 1st – 31st, 2022

October 1st – November 2nd, 2022

Total number of survey respondents: 615



In order to identify progress and setbacks towards equity in the workplace, the survey repeated questions from the initial survey circulated in 2021 (the results of which are available to [read in our 2021 report](#)). New questions were also included that allowed a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of women.

Additional steps were also taken to reach a wider array of experiences, which led to triple the amount of participants than in 2021 and a rich array of perspectives. We'd like to thank all survey participants, as well as those partners and organizations who actively supported the circulation of our survey:

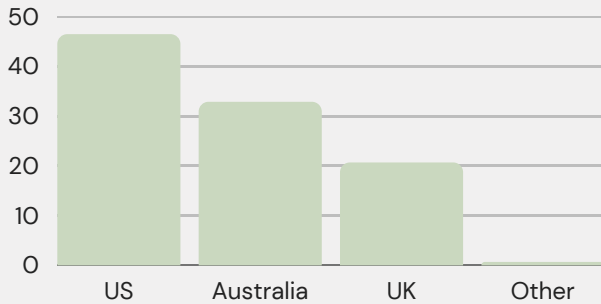


We'd also like to invite any communities or organizations interested in having their voices represented in WORK180 research and advocacy efforts [reach out to us](#).

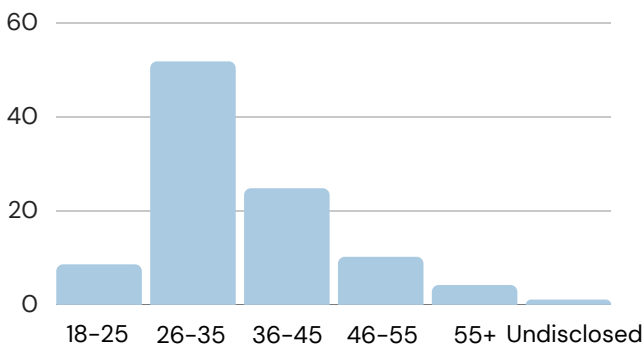
Participant demographics

The demographics of all survey respondents have been collected and presented to help readers view the report findings with an all-important intersectional lens. To aid in this intersectional reading, we have also actively amplified the voices of those underrepresented in their regions throughout this report wherever possible.

Where respondents live



Age categories of respondents



Gender

- 85.5%** Identify as a woman
- 11.7%** Identify as a man
- 0.3%** Identify as non-binary
- 0.8%** Also identify as transgender
- 1.6%** Preferred not to say
- 0%** Opted to provide an alternative identifier that was not listed

Employment status

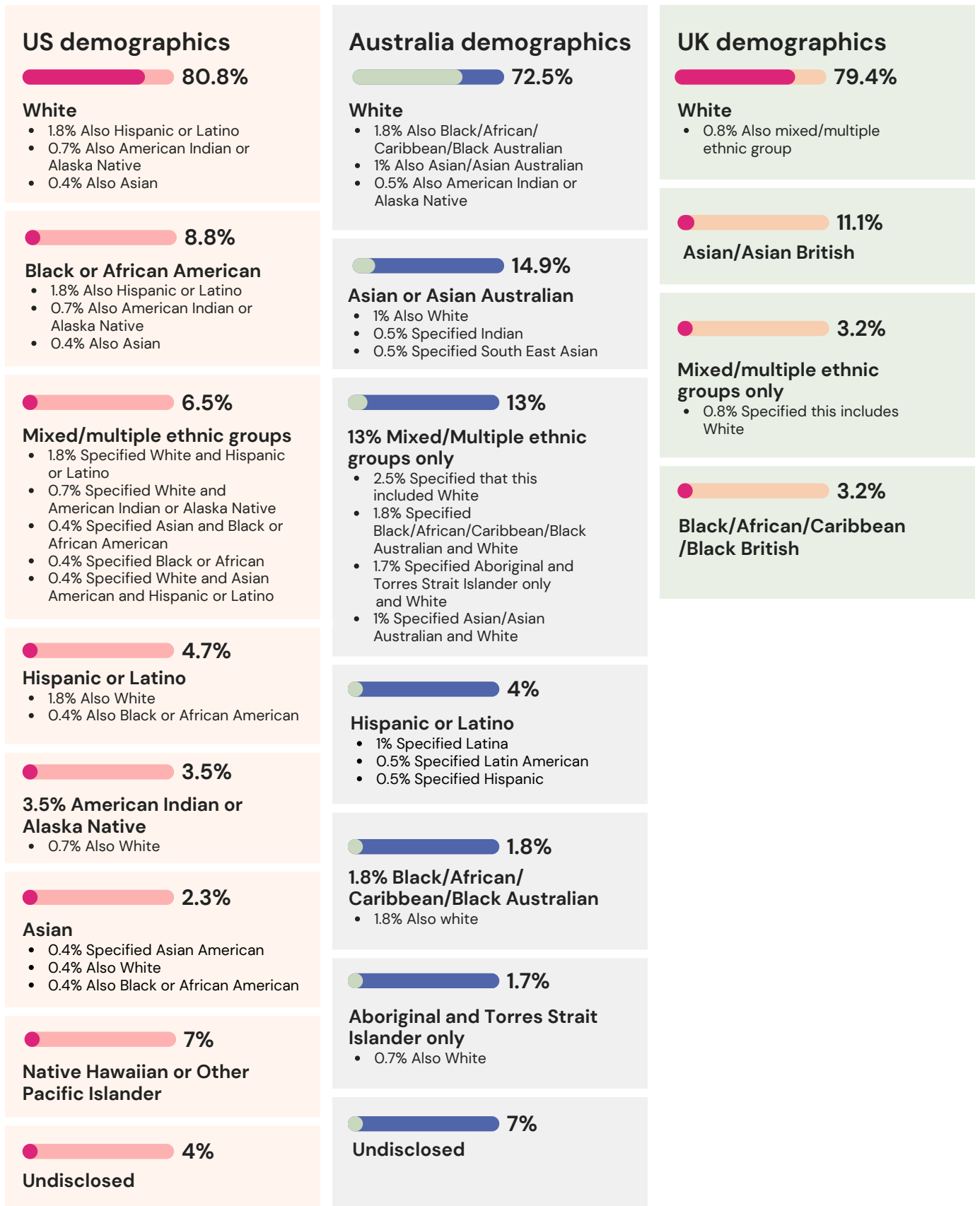
- 39%** Currently employed and open to new opportunities
- 29.4%** Currently employed but not looking for opportunities right now
- 24.6%** Currently employed but actively looking for a new opportunity
- 6.3%** Not currently employed
- 1%** Undisclosed

Current career stage

- 24.1% Established**
Satisfied with where they're at for now
- 19.2% Leveling up**
Focusing on moving to the next stage of their career
- 18.4% Ready to make a change**
Considering a new employer, role, or industry
- 12.7% Returning to work**
Have had a period of absence as a result of health, parental commitments, travel, sabbatical, or other
- 11.7% Leadership and beyond**
Focusing on senior leadership opportunities, including board placements
- 8.5% Starting out**
About to enter the workforce or in an early stage role
- 4.1% Scaling back**
Looking to reduce their workload and find greater flexibility
- 1% Other**

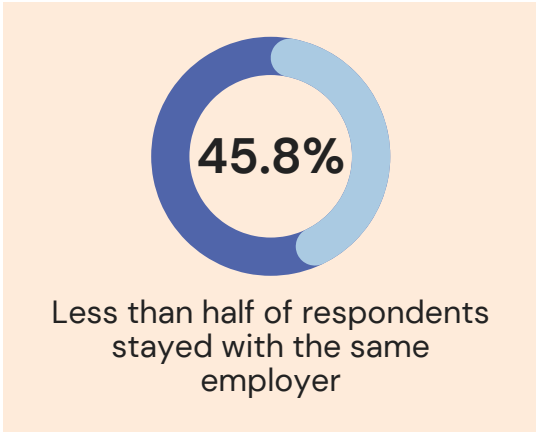
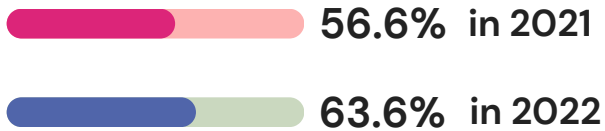
Race and ethnicity

To ensure inclusivity, the survey invited participants to detail how they identify in terms of race and ethnicity. In respect of this, any language used by participants has not been amended. Please also note that the totals of all demographic responses do not equal 100% as respondents were able to select multiple options.



What a difference a year makes

Comparing the 2021 to 2022 survey employment demographics alone, there's been a clear shift in the wants and needs of women in the workplace. The number of people now open to opportunities has risen by 7%.

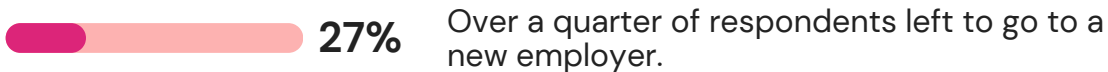


8.4% of respondents were made redundant or their contract was not renewed. **This figure rose to 12.2% for those with a disability.**



One in five respondents successfully negotiated new arrangements with their employer (21.3%) in order to manage the additional personal and/or family needs posed by global events.

54% of those who managed to negotiate new arrangements actively said they were proud of the way their company handled the events of the last couple of years.



And 18.4% of respondents left or took a break from employment in order to manage personal needs. This figure rose by a further 5.2% for those women who don't identify as 'White only'.



"I applied for flexible working on my return from maternity leave. This was denied and then I was moved to a new team where my request could have been accommodated but [the company's] flexible working rules meant I couldn't apply for another 12 months."

Woman aged 26–35 years who identifies as belonging to mixed/multiple ethnic groups

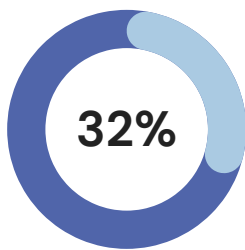
(Respondent took a career break to manage personal and/or family needs and has since returned to their previous employer)

Here's what happened for the majority of parents, guardians, and carers

24.6% negotiated new arrangements with their current employer

22.9% left to go to another employer

20.6% left their employer with no future role in place



32% of those who left their role explicitly said that they did not feel supported by their employer



"I was in a global team with childcare responsibilities and there was a great expectation of availability when it was a big struggle at home."

White woman aged 36–45 years
(Respondent left their employer and found new employment)



"While certain benefits and accommodations were made, I was upset with the lack of transparency in compensation and misleading conversations regarding career development."

Asian/Asian Australian woman aged 25–35 years
(Respondent was made redundant during 2020–22, is currently employed, and now ready to make a change)



"I was so overworked and burnt out from managing an organization and a homeschooled child through COVID, I ended up in hospital."

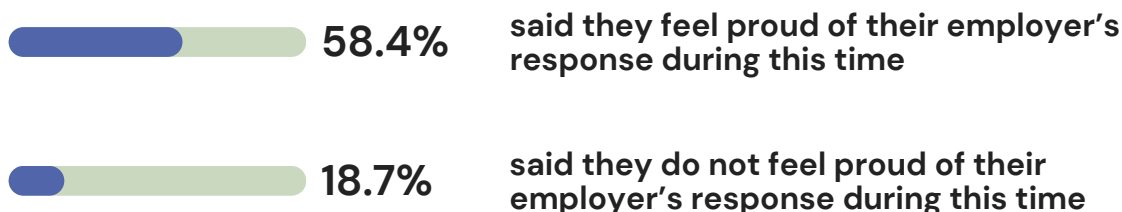
White woman aged 36–45 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent found new employment and was able to negotiate new arrangements with their employer to accommodate personal and/or family needs)

Women's perceptions of employers over the last two years

- 60% of all respondents said they felt supported by their employers during this time
- 23.1% did not feel supported by their employers

When broken down by demographic, these statistics were similar across the board. This was with the exception of those who identify as non-binary or preferred not to disclose their gender; 36.7% of these respondents reported not feeling supported by their employers.

We also asked all survey participants to share whether they were proud of the way their primary employer responded to local and global events of 2020–2022



Those who reported a lack of pride were significantly more willing to share the reason why they were disappointed in their organization. These detailed responses held a number of common themes:

1. Words were not backed up by action, both in terms of internal and external commitments.



"There were many emails telling us to look after ourselves, take breaks, etcetera. But the workload doubled so it was very hard to do anything other than work longer and harder!"

White woman aged 46–55 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent stayed with their employer but is currently open to new career opportunities)

2. Similarly, there was a disconnect between the positive promises and policies set by leadership and the actions by line management.



“I felt supported by the company itself — [for example] provision of an employee assistance helpline — but not necessarily by the people above me. More training is needed.”

White woman aged 36–45 years

(Respondent stayed with their employer but is currently open to new career opportunities)

3. Many respondents accused employers of falsely offering flexibility within the workplace, with reports of misleading policies or the use of flexibility to advantage the employer.



“My employer really looked after us during COVID, but now is not being supportive of reducing the long hours I work under the guise of “flexibility”, which is affecting my work-life balance.”

White woman aged 36–45 years
(Respondent stayed with the same employer but is now open to new career opportunities)



“[The] workload increased and I got the impression from leaders that they considered the fact that we were all working from home as a great opportunity for us to work even longer hours with even less support.”

White woman aged 46–55 years
(Respondent stayed with the same employer but is now open to new career opportunities)

4. A waning in commitment towards positive steps taken and promised during the pandemic.



“Excellent communication and engagement [from my employer] took place in 2020. It has now waned. The organization is being impacted by rapid changes in the economy, technology driving change in the sector, and volatility in employment with attrition rates at a peak. The organization needs to step up to meet these challenges and has been behind the curve over 2021 to present.”

Woman who identifies as White and a race, ethnicity, or origin not listed in our survey, did not disclose their age, and who has parenting responsibilities
(Respondent stayed with the same employer but is open to new career opportunities)

5. Insufficient resources, recognition, and support necessary for employees to thrive or achieve a work-life balance.



“I’m grateful to have remained employed and having survived the many rounds of redundancy. However, I didn’t feel supported at all [during 2020–2022]. I gave up 10 days of annual leave to help support the balance sheets of the company. I worked the 10 days of annual leave, as it was made clear to us that that was the expectation. I’ve never worked so many hours and weekends like the last two years and it seems like there is no recognition from the employer.”

Woman who identifies as White and a race, ethnicity, or origin not listed in our survey, aged over 56 years, and who has parenting responsibilities
(Respondent currently employed but open to new opportunities)



“I always feel like I have to put work ahead of the other parts of my life that make me whole.”

White woman aged 36–45 years who is an unpaid carer
(Respondent currently employed but actively looking for a new opportunity)

6. Fears of speaking up or sharing their voice.



“I have never felt comfortable bringing myself to work. I’ve always put on a professional front because I’m a minority usually judged.”

Black woman aged 26–35 years with parenting responsibilities and a non-apparent disability
(Respondent remained with the same employer and is focusing on moving to the next stage of their career)

 78.2%

 28.1%

In fact, despite 78.2% of people agreeing that they shouldn't have to hide elements of their identity, 28.1% have never worked somewhere they've felt comfortable being their true self.



“I did suffer silent discrimination as a new Australian, [but] could not complain for fear of losing casual jobs. (I’m 63 years old and blind from left eye due to macular degeneration.)”

White woman over 56 years with a visible disability
(Respondent is currently unemployed following their contract not being renewed, and is open to new opportunities)



“I was emotional once at work during my divorce and was labeled as emotional and difficult to work with. It had a huge impact on my career but I didn't know for several years why I wasn't getting promoted until a manager that was leaving told me what was being said about me by two of the management team. Now I keep myself to myself and just get on with the job.”

White woman aged 36–45 years with parenting responsibilities
(Having recently returned to the workplace after a period of absence, the respondent is employed but looking for new opportunities)



"I work in male-dominant engineering companies so I have to act like 'one of the guys' at first to fit in. Only over time can I start showing my true self to a certain degree. Even then things like empathy and kindness are looked at as weaknesses in many instances."

White woman aged 26-35 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently employed and open to new opportunities)



"I'm gay and neurodiverse and I don't often meet people who are open to seeing the good side of those things in the work place!"

White woman aged 46-55 years with a hidden disability and parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently employed and open to new opportunities that allows them to scale back)



"I mostly have to watch what I say, when and how. Some of the things I say that are immediately dismissed can be repeated by male colleagues, and suddenly they are an insight."

Woman who identifies as White and a race, ethnicity, or origin not listed in our survey, aged 46-55 years, and is an unpaid carer
(Respondent is currently employed but actively looking for a new opportunity)



"As I suffer from a disability, I do feel it is still stigmatized. It's not anything my employers have done, but what society has ingrained in my beliefs."

Woman who identifies as White and mixed/multiple ethnic groups, aged 18-25 years, and has a non-apparent disability
(Respondent is employed but currently open to new opportunities)

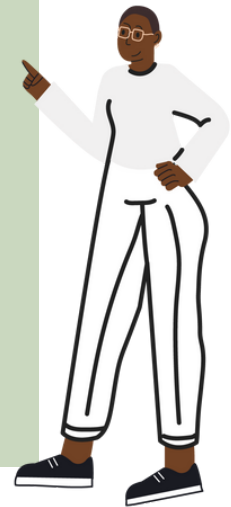
↑33%

The percentage of those who have never felt able to be their true self at work increases by 33.1% for those who do not identify as 'White only'



“Being one of the youngest and as well as a double minority (black/woman) has been a struggle on occasions. More so I’ve put these limitations on myself than felt them directly from the company based on society ‘norms’ and what’s appropriate/not appropriate in the workplace such as colored hair or wearing braids etcetera. I’m always cautious of my appearance in the workplace.”

Black or African American woman aged 26–35 years
(Respondent is currently employed but looking for opportunities in leadership and beyond)



“I have ADHD and I don’t feel confident telling my boss.”

Hispanic or latina woman aged 36–45 years
(Respondent is currently employed but looking for new opportunities that allow them to level up)



“The microaggressions made about stereotyped minorities made me feel like I couldn’t be my true self. This became truer when some of these behaviors were called out and the perpetrators would try to defend their intent to excuse the harms they caused.”

Asian/Asian Australian woman aged 25–35 years
(Respondent chose to leave their employer during 2020–22 and was also made redundant during this time period)



“There were elements of exclusion that are present with senior leaders and others in relation to my gender and ethnic background.”

Southeast Asian woman aged 36–45 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is employed and not currently looking for new opportunities right now)

↑ 48%

And for individuals of all races and ethnicities over 56, the number of respondents who said they have never felt able to be their true selves at work increased again to 48%



“[There are] preconceived notions on what should be presented to clients, like my skin color has been called out in the past.”

Woman who identifies as White and a race, ethnicity, or origin not listed in our survey, is aged over 56 years, and who has both parenting and unpaid caring responsibilities

(Respondent is currently employed and open to new opportunities)



“I work in transport and 'normal workplace behavior' is male behavior, established over 200 years or so of literally no women working in the sector. This will take a long time to shift.”

White woman aged over 56 years

(Respondent remained with the same employer but is preparing to retire after several incidents of unfair treatment)



“The more senior you are, the harder it is due to perceptions as a leader — especially a female leader.”

Asian woman aged 46–55 years

(Respondent is currently employed and open to new opportunities in leadership and beyond)



“Black people code switch. It’s normal life.”

Black woman aged 26–35 years

(Respondent chose to leave their employer for another role during 2020–22)

Respondents revealed the psychological strain imposed by workplaces where they feel unable to be their true self...



“As a gay woman I feel I have to repeatedly ‘come out’ to be my full self and then always feel judged.”

White woman aged 36–45 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent currently unemployed and in the process of returning to the workplace)



“I think there is still a stigma around mental health, and I am worried I would be treated differently if it was known more widely.”

White woman aged 36–45 years
(Respondent is currently employed but open to new opportunities)



“[I was unable to be my true self at work due to] comments from older colleagues at work against LGBTIQ+ folk and negative comments on people taking maternity leave.”

White woman, aged 26–35 years, with a non-apparent disability
(Respondent currently employed and not looking for new opportunities)



“I couldn’t say that I wanted to be a mum for fear of being made redundant.”

White woman aged 36–45 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently unemployed and in the process of returning to the workplace)

“

“In my early career, I had managers openly tell me I needed to be more like person X. And it took a long time to shake the feeling that all managers expected me to be anyone but myself.”

Woman of mixed/multiple ethnic groups aged 36–35 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently employed and open to new opportunities that allows them to level up)



“

“People’s perception of my commitment to work is reduced when they learn of my caring responsibilities, even though my performance ratings were excellent.”

White woman aged 46–55 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent currently employed and open to new opportunities in leadership and beyond)

Of course, there are employers getting it right when it comes to supporting employees to be their true self at work:

“

“I don’t have to worry about how to wear my hair. I love Christ. So I don’t have to worry about hiding my Christian beliefs. It’s actually encouraged. My experience as a black woman, married, with a child opens doors when engaging with clients. I cook for holidays and engage in conversations with producers about music, theater, life etc because we are in the POSITIVE entertainment industry.”

White woman aged 26–35 years
(Respondent is currently employed and open to new opportunities)



“My current company allows me to be my true self at work (and working from home). There is trust and flexibility among our management team that allows me to use my strengths and openly admit my weaknesses. I also feel empowered to speak as a woman and feel heard.”

White woman aged 26–35 years
(Respondent is currently employed and open to new opportunities)



“[The company’s] diversity of staff at work meant I didn’t feel the need to “fit in” to a particular ‘type’.”

Woman aged 46–55 years who identifies as mixed/multiple ethnicities
(Respondent remained with the same employer from 2020–22 and is not currently open to new opportunities)



“While I work in a traditionally male dominated environment (highways) having been in the company for many years I can see the differences that have occurred. For example, when starting, although not in a ‘traditional’ female role, I’d always be the one asked to cover reception if the receptionists were away. Now I can’t think of roles in my service that don’t have both men and women carrying them out, whether that’s as receptionists or highway inspectors.”

Woman aged 46–55 years who identifies as mixed/multiple ethnicities, including White and Asian/Asian British
(Respondent remained with the same employer from 2020–22 and is not currently open to new opportunities)



Now we know better, we can do better

What can more employers do to improve? Now we know better about the experiences of women, it's time to look to the future and ask how employers can do better.

We asked respondents to tell us what they value most in an employer. This began by asking them to rate the importance of a range of offerings proven to create a workplace where all employees can thrive...



Employer offerings in order of global importance

1. Paid leave entitlements
2. Career development opportunities
3. Women in leadership positions
4. An inclusive culture
5. Flexible and remote working options
6. Competitive remuneration
7. Transparency on pay gap and action plans
8. Commitment to diverse hiring
9. Employee support services (such as mental health programs)
10. Paid parental leave entitlements
11. Employee-led groups to champion under-represented voices
12. Social impact programs, community or volunteer options
13. Private healthcare entitlements
14. Staff engagement scores
15. Childcare support options

Here's what women want the most in...

The USA

1. Career development opportunities
2. Women in leadership positions
3. Paid leave entitlements
4. Competitive remuneration
5. Transparency on pay gap and action plans

Australia

1. Paid leave entitlements
2. Flexible and remote working options
3. An inclusive culture
4. Women in leadership positions
5. Career development opportunities

The UK

1. Paid leave entitlements
2. Career development opportunities
3. Women in leadership positions
4. An inclusive culture
5. Flexible and remote working options

Please note: The following segmentations of responses have been provided to aid and encourage an intersectional reading of the top employer offerings per region, provided on page 20.

The top employer offerings according to...

Respondents identifying as a woman or gender diverse:

1. **In joint first place:** Women in leadership positions and paid leave entitlements
2. **In joint second place:** Career development opportunities and an inclusive culture
3. Competitive remuneration



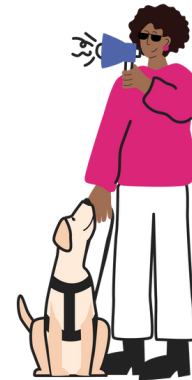
People of color*

1. Career development opportunities
2. Paid leave entitlements
3. An inclusive culture
4. Flexible and remote working options
5. Competitive remuneration

*While this report recognizes the limitations of the term 'people of color', it has been used here to refer to the respondents who do not identify as 'White only'. This is to enable a view of the results from the perspectives of those without the societal privileges afforded to 'White only' individuals in our three key regions.

Respondents who have a disability (both apparent and non-apparent):

1. An inclusive culture
2. Paid leave entitlements
3. Women in leadership positions
4. Flexible and remote working options
5. Transparency on pay gap and action plans



The number one employer offering by age group:

- 18-25** Paid leave entitlements and an inclusive culture take joint first place
- 26-35** Career development opportunities
- 36-45** Paid leave entitlements and flexible and remote working options take joint first place
- 46-55** Flexible and remote working options
- 56+** Paid leave entitlements and an inclusive culture take joint first place

To better understand these priorities, we explicitly asked respondents to describe what they want to see from an employer. From the responses, we saw five key themes:

1. **Equal access** to career development opportunities

2. **Genuine** flexible working policies

3. Parental leave policies that **support gender equity**

4. Increased **empathy** and mental well-being

5. Transparency and **proof** of progress

Respondents generously shared their insights to help employers understand the need of each offering, as well as guidance on how to get it right. So let's take a closer look at what women said about at each offering...



1. What women say they want:

Equal access to career development opportunities

Responses from around the world make it clear that women are feeling frustrated and stunted in their careers.

“

“[I want to see employers offer] more opportunities for immigrants and non-English native speakers, more Latinos/ Hispanic representation in leadership positions [...]”

Hispanic or Latina woman aged over 36–45 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is returning to work after the employment contract was not renewed/reduced)



“

The other challenge — which I found - was that, despite everything, you can't be as committed to your role when you have young kids. You HAVE to go home and look after them. It's not like missing dinner or drinks when work needs you. That is tough to navigate. I sit at board tables with a group of men with wives who are the primary carers and don't get how exclusionary their behavior can be when they make important meetings over dinners - or golf days - or overnight conferences. My husband also works at a senior level - so it is a constant 'who's day is more important' if our daughter is unwell or we have to organize things for her.”

White woman aged 36–45 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently employed but open to new opportunities in leadership and beyond)

“



“As a black woman, [I want to know] how equal and fair are the opportunities for me to engage in. Is this workplace truly fair, considerate, interested in mentorship and promoting employees and specifically minorities?”

Black woman aged 26–35 years with parenting responsibilities and a non-apparent disability
 (Respondent is currently employed and open to new opportunities)

“

“[The biggest barrier to gender equity] is the same as for all forms of equity – the pernicious habit of recruiting and promoting people who are seen as nice, fitting into the team, fun to work with, likely to be popular. All of which translates into recruiting more people of exactly the same type.”

White woman aged over 56 years
 (Respondent remained with the same employer but is preparing to retire after several incidents of unfair treatment)

“

“I feel like opportunities are less for me as a part time member of staff than they are for a full time equivalent. I am part time as I earn less than my husband and so it falls on me to be primary caregiver for our child”

White woman aged 36–45 years with with parenting responsibilities and a non-apparent disability
 (Respondent is currently employed and scaling back to reduce your workload and find greater flexibility)



Many respondents asked employers to mitigate ageism by actively offering opportunities to older employees.

“

“I have never felt respected as a woman. Companies always gave males the offers of job development and most of it was done at 'Happy Hour' times when I went home to the family. Then when I started to mature, younger people were offered and I then felt overlooked.”

Woman aged over 56 years who identifies as White and a race, ethnicity, or origin not listed in our survey
(Respondent is unemployed but in the process of returning to the workplace)

“

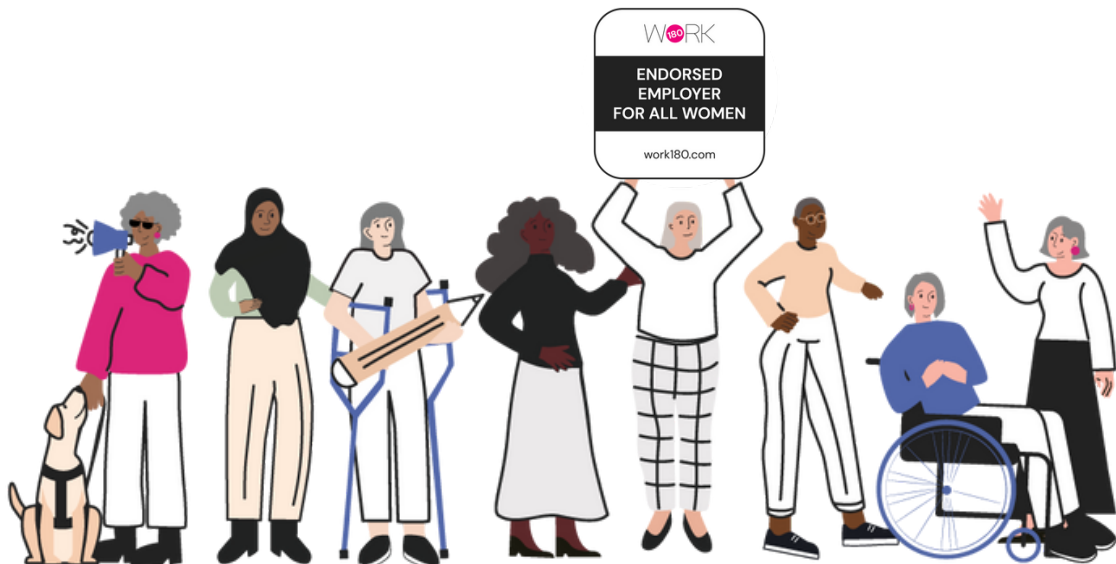
“What I find as a senior is that employers tend to treat senior men differently than they do women. Women over 50 tend to be discriminated against when seeking employment opportunities.”

Black or African American Women aged over 56 years
(Respondent was able to negotiate new arrangements with their employer during 2020–22 and is now focusing on senior leadership opportunities within their current organization)

“

“[Employers need to] consider what older women can bring to a workplace and [provide] opportunities for their development, and [offer] menopause support.”

White woman aged over 56 years with a non-apparent disability
(Respondent is currently employed but looking for new opportunities)





“[I’d like to see employers] giving opportunities to all ages and genders for talent to come forward.”

Woman aged over 56 years who identifies as White and a race, ethnicity, or origin not listed in our survey (Respondent currently unemployed and in the process of returning to the workplace)

Here’s what women want from career development opportunities:

- Formalized training and development opportunities (especially mentorships)
- Equal access to opportunities. For example, development opportunities to also be available for part-time employees
- Transparent and structured pathways to progression, including succession plans that drive diversity
- Training and mentorship across the board for people of all ages and career stages who are often overlooked



“Rather than having exclusive graduate schemes, offer them to those that were not able to attend university due to cost/family commitments etcetera.”

Woman aged 26–35 years who identifies as mixed/multiple ethnic groups and has parenting responsibilities (Respondent took a career break to manage personal and/or family needs but remained with the same employer and is not looking for opportunities right now)



To find out more about how employers can actively progress the careers of women and marginalized groups, read **Five Ways to Develop Diversity (Without Relying on Recruitment)**.



2. What women say they want: Genuine flexible working policies

From remote working to adjusted hours, flexibility can encompass a number of offerings and was important to the majority of respondents.

 **75%** of all respondents said flexible working is more important than a top of market salary



"I would like to work three days per week but there is a 'business need' for a minimum of four days and that is considered a privilege. I often work on that day off too."

White woman aged 46–55 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently employed but looking for new opportunities)



"I said [to my employer] that I was able to work a compressed four day week because the fifth day I could split over the four days and [I] was able to do a couple of hours at home on the fifth day while my daughter I was caring for slept. They told me it would affect my well-being too much. The drop in salary would affect my well-being."

White woman aged 26–35 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently unemployed and in the process of returning to the workplace)

As we saw in 2021, the most in-demand variation of flexibility continues to be around working hours. However, the responses highlighted a concerning trend of employers making false promises of flexibility.



"[Employers need] to be more open to different ways of working and that a neurodivergent person may work better/easier if they are allowed to work in a way that fits them rather than a 'sit at a desk from 9–5."

White woman aged 36–45 years with with parenting responsibilities and a non-apparent disability
(Respondent is currently employed and scaling back to reduce their workload and find greater flexibility)

““

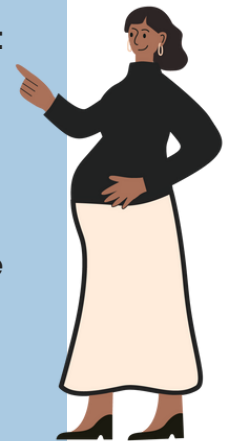
“There are still employers I think expecting bums on seats from 9–5 instead of truly embracing flexible working practices beyond part time working days (so you are not expected to be available and online on your days off and that's how flexibility may be viewed). In line with paid mental health days, to attract talent, employers need to consider what true flexibility looks like beyond the above perspective.”

Asian woman who did not disclose their age and has unpaid caring responsibilities
(Respondent is currently employed but open to new opportunities)

““

“Unfortunately, the idea that women are expected to work as if they are not parents is the biggest barrier [to gender equity]. Progressive fathers are part of the puzzle, however, it also means that employers then need to understand when fathers have to leave early/start late, work from home to participate in school/daycare drop off/pick up and when children need to be picked up sick. Employers must make flexible arrangements for all parents and not just women as that will disadvantage women if their partners cannot get the same carer flexibility.”

Latina woman aged 36–45 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently employed but looking for new opportunities)



““

“When I was child free I never felt discriminated against, felt I had equal opportunities to develop etcetera. As soon as I had children, I was seen as a "mum", no one believed I should or could have ambition and I had to fight tooth and nail for any opportunities. No opportunity for flexible working, manager actively booking meetings to clash with the one morning per week I dropped off at school. Huge cost of childcare was an almost unbearable burden.”

White woman aged 46–55 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently employed and focusing on senior leadership opportunities, including board placements)

Here's what women want from flexible working policies:

- Genuine part-time positions that don't require employees to condense full-time hours into part-time weeks (particularly in leadership roles)
- Standardized four-day working week
- Openness to job sharing, especially in senior positions
- Ability to flex time around personal commitments, including child care
- Flexibility and sabbatical opportunities to also be available for non-parents
- Opening opportunities to part-time employees
- Active promotion of flexibility for all to remove stigma and increase uptake for men and individuals in positions of leadership



To find out more about why and how to implement flexible working policies that benefit the employer and employee, read our report [Flexible Working versus The Great Resignation](#).



“My current employer makes me feel like it's ok to be a single mum (of a child with autism) and offers so many support channels (if needed) and many flexible work arrangements to enable me to juggle all of my hats.”

White woman aged 36–45 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently employed but open to new opportunities that allow them to scale back)



“Following the initial lockdowns, [Woolworths] has also supported a truly flexible work life and celebrates when people [achieve this]. For example, someone answered the phone recently and said she wasn't able to talk as she was about to watch a movie with her daughter during school holidays. She wasn't on leave – just focusing on what matters most. The fact that she felt comfortable saying that and the other worker understood goes to show how good the business is at flexibility without judgment.”

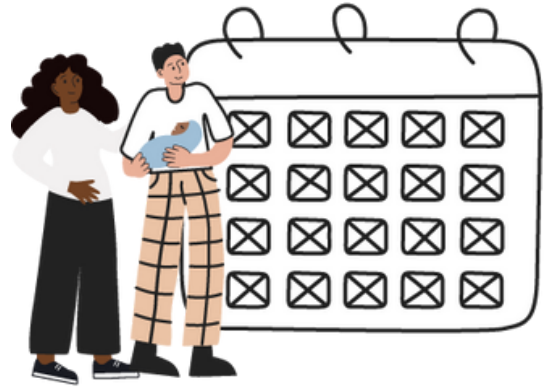
White woman, ages 46–55 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent currently employed and not looking for new opportunities right now)

3. What women say they want:

Parental leave policies that support gender equity

A large proportion of respondents — both parents and non-parents — confirm that their career has suffered due to antiquated presumptions that women will and/or should sacrifice their careers to be a primary parent.

Respondents are calling out for parental leave, flexible working, and career development policies that help them progress despite this barrier. But what really stood out was the demand for employers to introduce policies and actions that actively break down this barrier.



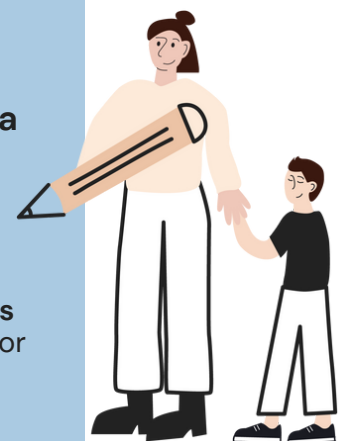
“The lack of genderless parental leave, and how short it is, creates an expectation that women will be taking significant time away from the workforce. And due to the lack of childcare options if their parental leave is not long enough, it negatively impacts their income and their Super [pension/401k]. It also creates a bias toward an unbalanced workload at home if both parents are not involved with/learn caregiving. This means that once women return back to work, they are often juggling more as well.”

White woman aged 26–35 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is currently employed and not looking for new opportunities right now)



“I've spent the last four years and two workplaces trying to establish myself and feel ok about starting a family and taking maternity leave, but I'm about to move to a third place as I still haven't found somewhere supportive of that without bias.”

White woman aged 26–35 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent currently with their new employer and not looking for new opportunities)





“I’m not a parent, but I’m about to start IVF [In vitro fertilisation] and in a really tricky position. My current role is a second 12 month fixed term contract that will wrap up in a few months with a likely new 12 month contract to follow, so I don’t qualify for paid maternity leave. And I’m close to getting a role at a new business but I feel severe guilt about starting somewhere knowing I’m doing IVF so;
 a) I’ll need some time off for some of the procedures and
 b) if all goes well, I’ll go on maternity leave in the first 12 months of employment. I’m so torn as to what to do and hate that I feel guilty for trying to start a family when males in my position wouldn’t think twice about starting a new role.”

White woman aged 36–45 years
 (Respondent is currently employed but actively looking for new opportunities)

Here’s what women want from parental leave policies:

- Genderless parental leave policies
- No minimum waiting periods for policies, which often discourage women from pursuing new career opportunities
- Return-to-work schemes
- Leaders to remove taboos and stigma attached to shared caring responsibility:
 - Actively encourage the use of policies supporting parental leave for everyone, especially those traditionally expected to deprioritize family life (such as men and those within leadership positions).
 - Lead by example, demonstrating use of gender-neutral parental leave policies and flexible working options.



Leading employers get it, which is why parental leave was the top policy improved by WORK180 Endorsed Employers in the last year. To learn more about why and how employers are prioritizing this policy, read our report [Six Pressing Reasons to Improve Your Parental Leave Policy](#).



“[We need] structures that truly enable and encourage men to work in partnership with women when it comes to balancing home and work commitments. Employers need to ensure they approach this in a more gender neutral way, recognising and enabling the responsibility of parents through flexible working, employee support, parental leave options, etcetera, and not just focussing on mothers. This is key for helping women return to work and feeling like they can take on senior roles.”

White woman aged 26–35 years with parenting responsibilities
 (Respondent is currently employed and not looking for new opportunities right now)

4. What women say they want:

Increased **empathy** and mental well-being

With many respondents reporting high levels of stress and burnout during the last few years, the outcry for empathetic management and active mental health support is unsurprising.



“I work with so many clients where people are being burned out by poor management and leadership related to workload expectations and resource management; ethical leadership is so important to everyday working life.”

White woman aged over 56 years
(Respondent is currently employed but looking for new opportunities in leadership and beyond)



Here’s the mental health and well-being support women are looking for from employers:

- Formalized mental health support:
 - Mental health leave days
 - Support beyond employee assistance programs (EAPs) and/or phone lines, such as paid counseling
 - Active promotion of work-life balance
 - Policies to promote mental health, such as genuine flexible working policies
- Employee-led groups that support and champion under-represented voices
- Higher wages to align with the cost of living
- Adequate training and communication of policies for managers to both ensure consistent implementation and encourage take up



“[I’d like to see employers offer] mental health days, for sure. As a woman, a wife, a mother...I get drained and exhausted. Between personal and professional life, sometimes a day to breathe is necessary...not a vacation, it is a day to decompress from stress and get some peace.”

Black or African American Woman aged 26–35 parenting responsibilities and a non-apparent disability
(Respondent who remained with their employer but is currently open to new opportunities)



5. What women say they want:

Transparency and **proof** of progress

From employee offerings to the salaries of fellow employees, women want information to help them ascertain whether workplaces will work for them. This includes a strong desire to see demonstrable action from employers when it comes to issues that matter to them.



Four in five said they want to know what employers are actually doing to create a diverse and inclusive workplace



84.2% of participants said gender equity in the workplace is an important issue to them



81% said they want to know what employers are doing to reduce their gender pay gap

To better understand your organization's gender pay gap and get actionable advice, [watch our free 30-minute webinar](#).



"Salary negotiation [is the biggest barrier to gender equity in the workplace]. It could be more transparent for everyone to know how much the company is open to paying the role, independent of the negotiation skills of the person."

Hispanic or latina woman aged 36–45 years

(Respondent is currently employed but looking for new opportunities that allow them to level up)



"I want open transparent pay gap reporting like they do in the UK, and flexible working conditions."

White woman aged 26–35 years with parenting responsibilities

(Respondent is currently employed but looking for new opportunities in leadership and beyond)



“[The top question I ask a potential employer is] what are your paternity leave arrangements? (I am not a man, and probably not going to have any more children, but how they address paternity leave shows me their values. To be equitable to women, they need to be equitable to men as well in non-traditional ways and this supports that equity).”

White woman aged 36–45 years with a hidden disability, parenting responsibilities, and is an unpaid carer

(Respondent is currently employed but looking for opportunities that allow them to level up)



“A lack of transparency is a barrier [to gender equity]. If people were able to understand why a person was selected (irrespective of gender) then it wouldn't matter if gender wasn't 50/50. Unconscious bias of the hiring people also affects gender equality. I think the recruitment process is dated and again, salary and benefits should be up front.”

Woman of mixed/multiple ethnic groups, aged 46–55 years, with parenting responsibilities

(Respondent is currently unemployed but ready to make a change into a leadership role that also allows them to also scale back)



“[I want employers to remove] prejudice towards mature workers, with transparency around recruitment and ensuring workplaces have equal ratios of mature workers as other staff, with credible evidence to support this.”

Woman aged over 56 years who identifies as White and a race, ethnicity, or origin not listed in our survey

(Respondent is currently unemployed but returning to the workplace after a period of absence)



“I'm not interested in seeing rainbow logos promoting alleged company values – I want to see the policies which give equal access to parental leave and other benefits for LGBTQIA people, for example. Blacking out your logo in support of BLM doesn't impress me, hiring people from more diverse backgrounds and promoting them to management/leadership positions does.”

Woman who identifies as both White and Asian aged over 36–45 years

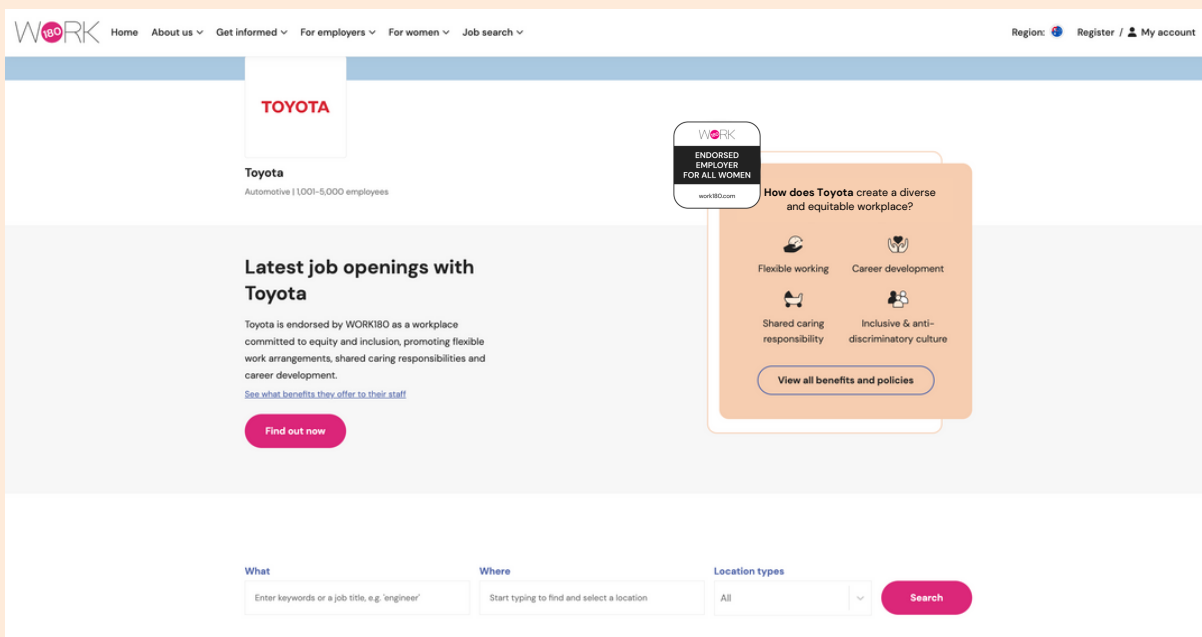
(Respondent is currently employed but not looking for new opportunities right now)

Whether the information women want to find is openly provided by employers or not, candidates are actively looking for it. Here's what respondents say they're doing before applying for roles with a new employer:

- 52.5% explore potential employer's social media platforms
- 42% use WORK180 to view a potential employers' benefit, policies, and the experiences of current employees
- 40% check employee review platforms
- 34% reach out to current employees for their first-hand experiences
- 33% ask around for insights within their own networks

The leading employers we work with don't shy away from sharing what makes them a great workplace, or the ways in which they're trying to improve their diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Explore our transparent directory of Endorsed Employers

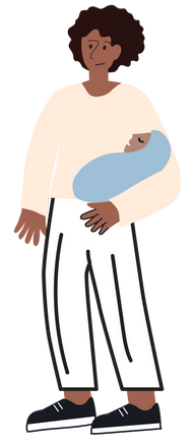


We asked respondents to share the top question they'd ask to determine whether a workplace was a good fit for them, and transparency was top of the list:



"Please provide me with examples of how you demonstrate equity in the workplace."

Black woman aged over 56 years with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent is retired from 34 years in the military and has established their own business)



"[In an interview], I usually ask for more insight into the last time a female was promoted from within the company to a leadership role and what percentage of the female workforce have been promoted to a leadership role in the past year."

White woman aged 36–45 years
(Respondent is currently employed but open to new opportunities that allow them to level up)



"Do you have existing portfolios of your current employees you could show me who represent the values and [diversity and inclusion] of the organization along with the stories about their time with the organization? Reasoning: I would like to hear from the employees and find out some factors for example."

Asian/Asian Australian woman with unpaid caring responsibilities
(Respondent recently returned to work following a period of absence as a result of health, parental commitments, travel, sabbatical, or other, and is now employed but open to new opportunities)



Leading employers go beyond what women know they want...



They say you can't be what you can't see. As discussed by leading employers in a recent [WORK180 think tank](#), organizations have a responsibility to both raise awareness and change perceptions that may be putting women and marginalized individuals off applying for certain roles. So as well as being transparent around benefits, policies, and targets, workplaces need to play their part in showing what's possible.

"The woman generally takes on more childcare responsibilities. When I go back to work I will have to juggle pumping [for breastfeeding] at work plus childcare drop off and pick up and usually construction hours are very long. I personally have never seen anyone do this at work so I can't picture how it's going to work."

Woman who identifies as mixed/multiple ethnicities, aged over 26–35 years, with parenting responsibilities
(Respondent currently employed but looking for new opportunities)



75% of respondents agreed that hearing about the experience of other women is helpful when considering a new employer and/or industry

Here's how other employers are showing what's possible and changing perceptions



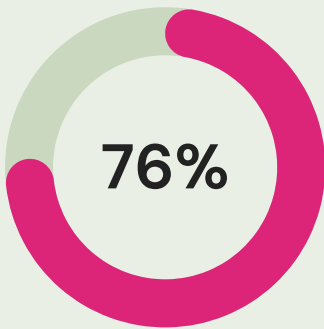
To find out all the ways that WORK180 helps organizations know better, do better, and be seen better by women around the world, [head to our website.](#)



“Roles that have traditionally been male or female, need to show that anyone can do it. For example, STEM careers are predominantly male and EA / Administration roles are predominantly female. There is no reason why we can’t show great examples of the opposite sex doing these roles to show diversity.”

White woman aged 36–45 years

(Respondent currently employed but looking for new opportunities that allow them to level up)



of respondents said it would be helpful to instantly be able to identify great workplaces for women and 85% said they want to know what benefits and policies an employer offers before they apply for a role. **That’s why WORK180 is used by women around the world.** Our endorsement is synonymous with employers committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and our platform is a trusted place to find out more about them.

The screenshot shows the WORK180 website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, About us, Get informed, For employers, For women, and Job search. On the right, it shows the user's region and options to register or log into their account. The main content area features a section titled "Diversity and equity at WORK180" with a list of 10 key standards: Flexible working arrangements, Shared caring responsibility, Inclusive & anti-discriminatory culture, Career development, Representative leadership, Pay equity, Inclusive hiring practices, Employee support & safety services, Employee voice & Employee resource groups, and Strategic commitments. A callout box states: "As a WORK180 Endorsed Employer, WORK180 is committed to ensuring all their employees can thrive. Check out the strategies they have in place across our 10 key standards for driving equity in the workplace." Below this, the "Flexible working arrangements" section is expanded, showing a table of strategies in place:

Strategies in place at WORK180	
Formalized policy related to flexible working arrangements in place	
Flexible work options offered:	
Areas of focuses	
Flexibility type	Availability
Compressed working week	Role / team dependent
Flexible start and finish times	Role / team dependent
Job sharing arrangements	Role / team dependent
Part-time contracts	Role / team dependent
Rostered days off	All employees
Time-off in lieu of overtime	All employees

Is your organization eligible for endorsement?

Employers that meet our minimum standards receive an exclusive badge, which they can display to help women recognize them as a great workplace.

Their employer profile, job ads, and employee stories are also promoted across our platforms and among our highly engaged community of women.

If you work for a great employer

If you want to find a great employer

Take our endorsement check

Explore roles with Endorsed Employers



“The endorsement really helps us build brand awareness among diverse talent pools, but it’s not just a sticker or a badge. To become an Endorsed Employer, you need to be serious about creating a work culture where all women can thrive.”



Kate Llewellyn
Inclusion Manager at Lloyds Banking Group

Let's keep the conversation going

Our global What Women Want survey created a safe space for women to share what they want from employers. For more opportunities to share your voice and hear from other women in the workplace, join our community newsletter.

Join now

If you'd like to be kept up-to-date with insights and resources to help you and your team build and benefit from a diverse workforce, sign up to our free HR newsletter.

Sign up

To find out how WORK180 can help your organization become an employer of choice for women, arrange a call today.

Request a call

