

Benchmarking the RACHP industry's benefits and attitudes towards women to close the gender gap

1. Executive summary

This report summarises the findings from the Institute of Refrigeration's (IOR's) Women in Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heat Pumps (WiRACHP) group network survey, which questioned men and women on their perceptions and understanding of the RACHP industry's benefits for and attitudes towards women and what should be done to close the gender parity gap.

It also examines what are the most female-friendly practices which promote diversity and inclusion within the sector's workplace and further investigates whether respondents are likely to recommend the industry to others. Finally, this report makes recommendations to push improvements forwards based on what the respondents consider to be the most valuable workplace practices with regard to accommodating the diversity of today's workforce and attracting more female talent into the industry.

2. Introduction

Women are significantly and visibly under-represented in the refrigeration industry. Preliminary evaluation from research presented on behalf of the International Institute of Refrigeration (IIR) by Ina Colombo, Catarina Marques, Miriam Rodway, Judith Evans, Graeme Maidment, Andrea Voigt and Fred-Arne Moundjimbi Mombo demonstrated that only 6.13% of women are members of national refrigeration associations, organizations or institutions across the world.

In the UK, only 12.37% of all engineers are women (Engineering UK 2018). Supported by the IOR, the group WiRACHP aims to engage and attract more talented females and make this industry more appealing to all. In order to achieve that, the group adopts measures that follow the objectives set by the IOR. Some of the approaches taken by the group include:

1. Promotion of the range of available careers and encouragement of career progression for women through networking, mentoring and learning.
2. The sharing of experiences of women working in RACHP in order to create role models who can attract more talented females. This is achieved through forums and features in magazines, representation at events and also through outreach programmes in schools and colleges. Social media and networking are also used to ensure a wider impact; i.e. through links with the Women's Engineering Society (WES) and Women in Building Services Engineering (WiBSE), as well as the utilisation of social media including the LinkedIn group WiRACHP, which now boasts over 700 members.

3. A survey to help the sector attract more women and girls into the industry by benchmarking the industry's benefits for and attitudes towards women and exploring what should be done to close the gender gap. The survey also aims to establish what are the most female-friendly practices which promote diversity and inclusion and use these to make recommendations to push improvements forwards, taking as the base what women believe to be the most female-friendly practices.

This report summarises the results collected from the survey as defined in point 3.

3. Research Aims:

1. Collect data to benchmark the industry's benefits for and attitudes towards women and explore what should be done to close the gender gap.
2. Establish what are the most female-friendly practices that promote diversity and inclusion and use these to make practical recommendations to push improvements forwards.
3. Repeat the survey next year, taking as the benchmark what were believed to be the most female-friendly practices, carrying out further research to analyse if things have changed and determining what those changes are.

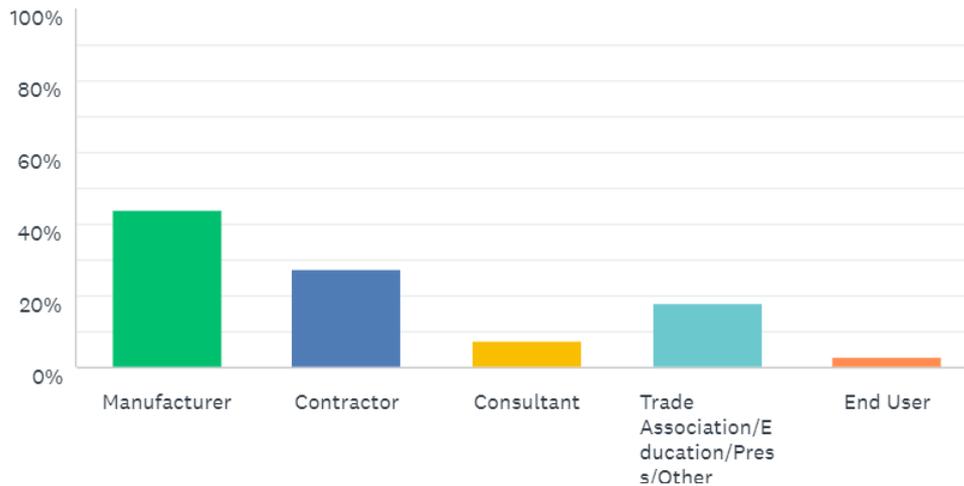
It is expected that this survey will be the first of many to come in future years. The outcome of the current research serves not only as a point of reference but as industry guidance for the future, to help the sector improve and ensure it offers an attractive package to women so that they are inspired to join and stay in the industry.

4. Survey Results

Part 1. Demographics

The survey received 143 responses from 100 different companies. In terms of gender, the number of male and female respondents was very similar, with a slightly higher response rate in men resulting in a 13% discrepancy. Regarding company size, 58% of companies represented in the sample had a workforce of between 1 and 249 employees, while 16% had between 250 and 500 employees and 26% more than 501 employees.

The largest number of responses in terms of business type came from manufacturers, which accounted for 44% of all respondents. Contractors accounted for 27%, trade association/education/press/other accounted for 18% and the final 10% of responses came from end users and consultants. Gender differed marginally amongst some business types such as manufacturing, but saw a significant gender imbalance among contractors (with 11% more males) and trade association/education/press/other professionals (with 12% more females).



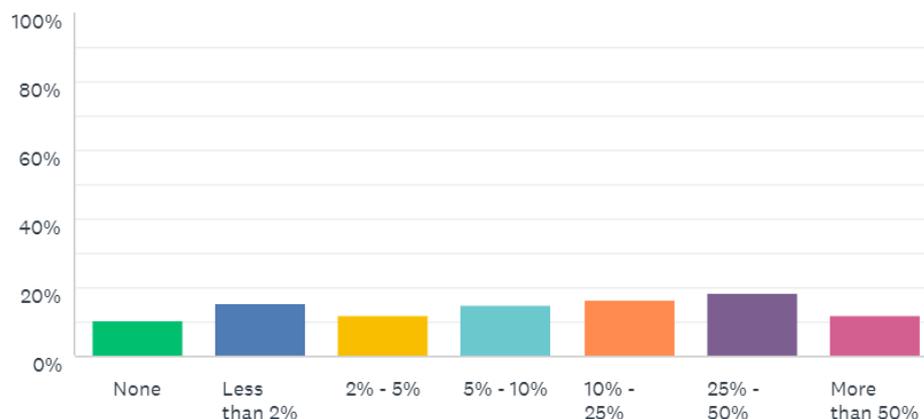
When asked about job positions, almost half (46%) were in management positions, while the rest came from technician, marketing, sales and admin positions. The number of those in management appeared equal between genders; however, 12% more of those in senior management positions were males. Notable differences between gender also included 17% of male responses being attributed to the role of technician with a figure of 0% for females, while 9% of female respondents worked in admin with a figure of 0% for males.

	Male responses	Female responses
Senior Management	34.27%	21.82%
Management roles	11.11%	21.82%
Engineering management	6.94%	7.27%
Engineering	13.89%	10.91%
Technician	16.67%	0%
Marketing	5.56%	12.73%
Sales	11.11%	16.36%
Admin	0	9.09%

60% of respondents confirmed that 25% or less of the employees within their workforce were female. Only 7% of respondents agreed that more than 50% of those employed in their organisation were female, while 33% said that between 25% and 50% were female.

Part 2. The roles for females working in RACHP

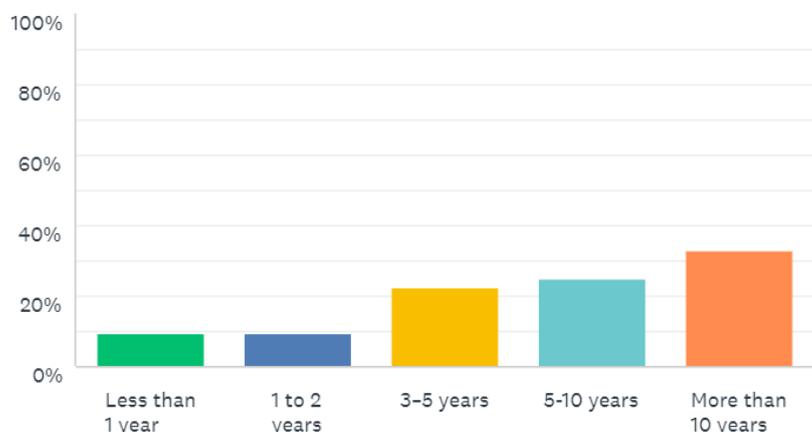
Q1. Out of all female staff in your company, approximately what percentage are in skilled/professional roles?



According to just under 11% of respondents, no females occupy skilled positions within their organisations. Paradoxically, a similar number of respondents (12%) stated that more than 50% of their skilled workforce are female, although this tends to be linked with small companies where the owners are female. The majority of respondents – nearly 69% – confirmed that the percentage of females in skilled/professional roles within their organisation accounts for less than 25%.

The heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration (HVACR) sector appears to be failing to recruit female engineers, but it also seems to have very poor diversity amongst other professional roles, including accountancy, marketing, HR, project management, law and management – all of which seemed to be reserved for men. In general, the industry’s gender pay gap is a direct reflection of this.

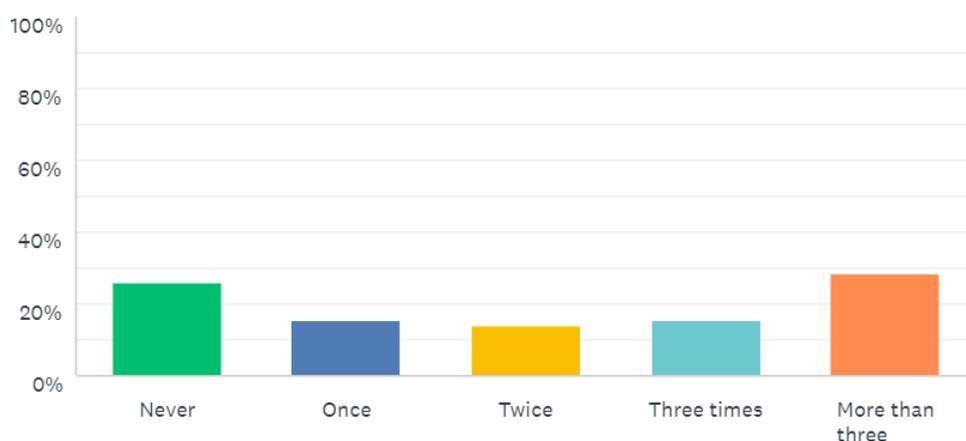
Q2. How long have you been working in your organisation?



A higher percentage of respondents (33%) have been working with the same organisation for over a decade than for any other time period. Overall, however, the results show that the vast majority (81%) have been with their current employer for at least three years. This was equally true across both genders, with 83% of men in their current employment for three years or more and 78% of women employed for at least the same time period.

This reveals that employee retention does not pose a problem for the industry and points to the presence of plentiful career opportunities and workplace benefits which ensure job satisfaction and discourage staff members from looking for employment elsewhere. However, the fact that there were few respondents who have been with the company for an extended period of time could indicate that there is a dearth of young people in the industry today, suggesting that perhaps more could be done to attract them to it.

Q3. How many times in that period have you received a merit pay increase?



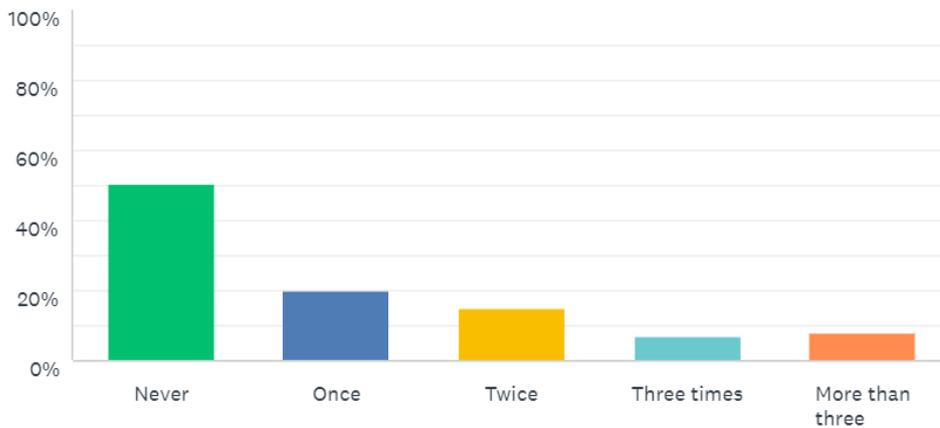
72% of respondents reported having been awarded a merit pay increase during the time they have been working for their respective companies. Nearly 29% of respondents received a merit salary increase more than three times, indicating that there are ample opportunities for professional development and incremental pay increases in a number of organisations.

While a considerably higher number of men (32%) than women (24%) reported that they had received more than three pay increases, almost three times as many women (24%) as men (9%) had received exactly three pay increases. A greater proportion of women (16%) than men (15%) had also enjoyed a single pay increase during their time with their current employer.

This demonstrates that both genders are the recipients of merit pay increases; however, there could potentially be a barrier that prevents women from getting further increases beyond three years.

On the whole, this is positive news for women looking to enter the RACHP industry, since they can feel confident that their earning potential will increase with time and hard work.

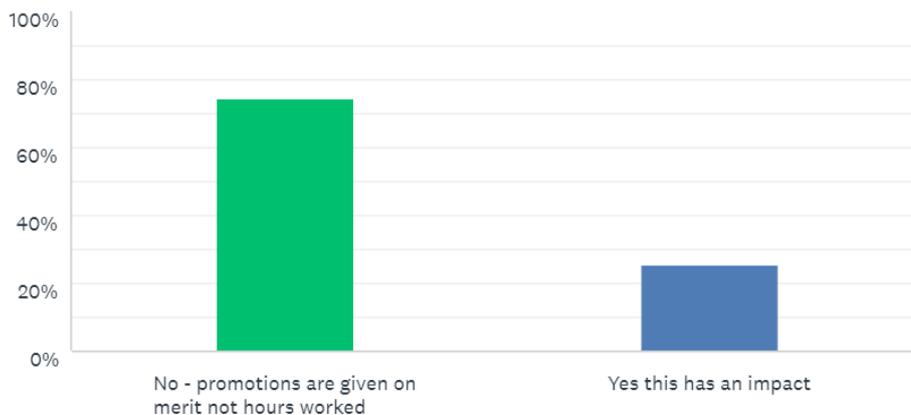
Q4. How many times in that period have you been promoted?



While half of respondents (50%) reported that they had never been promoted at their current place of work, female respondents were slightly more likely to have enjoyed a promotion during that time. Only 46% of females had never been promoted, compared to 54% of males, while more women had been promoted once (26% compared to 15%), three times (8% compared to 6%) and four or more times (8% compared to 7.7%) than their male counterparts.

This demonstrates that while the RACHP industry is a male-oriented one, there is no gender discrimination when it comes to promotions and that, in fact, women are more likely to be promoted than men. However, it is important to note that this only seems to be true up to certain level of seniority, as a considerable number of respondents (30%) confirmed that less than 2% of leadership roles are currently filled by females within their organisations (see question 10).

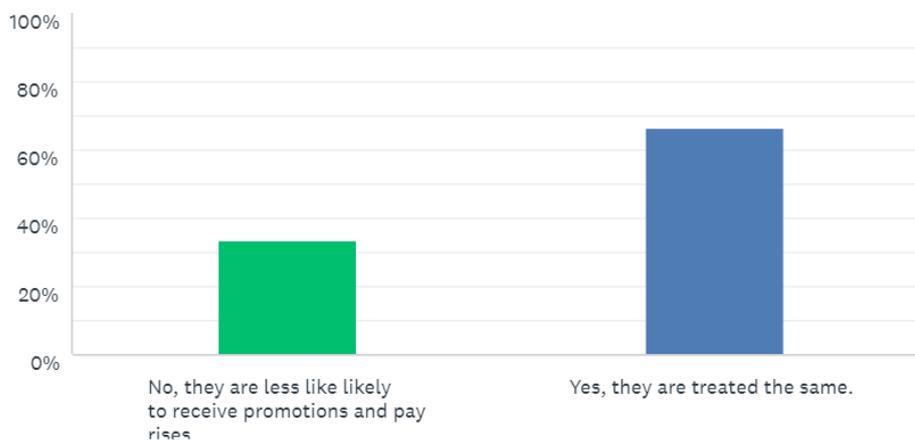
5. Do you think your organisation is less likely to promote those workers that are unable to work overtime due to caring responsibilities?



The vast majority of respondents (74%) believe that promotions are based on merit/outcome, rather on the number of hours worked/in front of a desk. This was slightly truer of male respondents, but fairly consistent across both genders (78% for men and 70% for women). However, this suggests that there is still a significant percentage of women (30%) who believe that caring responsibilities could be prohibitive in receiving a promotion.

This draws attention to an underlying concern which needs to be addressed in order to reassure females coming into the RACHP industry that they should not feel that their value will be underappreciated should they need to take on caring responsibilities, and that doing so will not harm their career prospects.

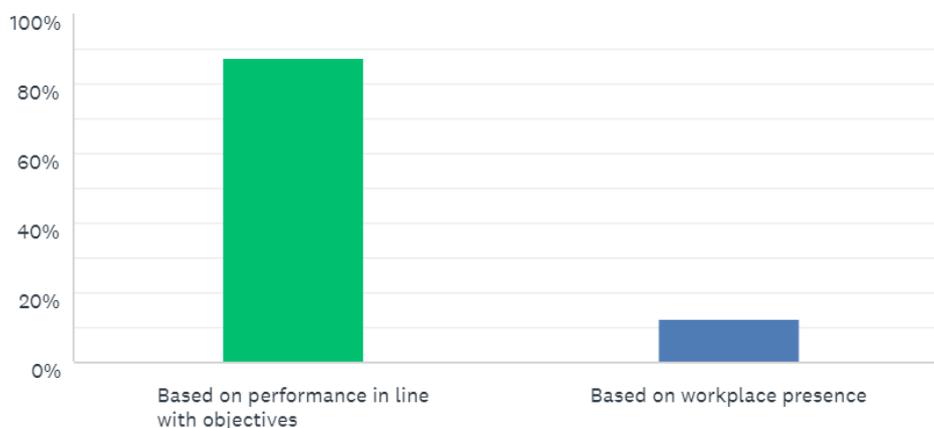
Q6. Do you think those working compressed or unusual hours will receive promotions and pay rises in line with those working the more usual 9 to 5 day?



Exactly two-thirds of respondents believed that those on irregular hours enjoy the same opportunities for promotion and career progression than those on fixed 9-to-5 contracts. This was reflected evenly in the answers of both genders, with 69% of men and 64% of women stating that they believe both types of workers are treated the same by their employers.

This highlights the notion that generally, anyone wishing to eschew the traditional 9-to-5 dynamic of employment in favour of a more flexible arrangement in line with a more 21st century approach should not be disheartened from embarking on a career in the RACHP industry, since companies working in the sector are, by and large, accommodating of the individual needs and preferences of their workforce.

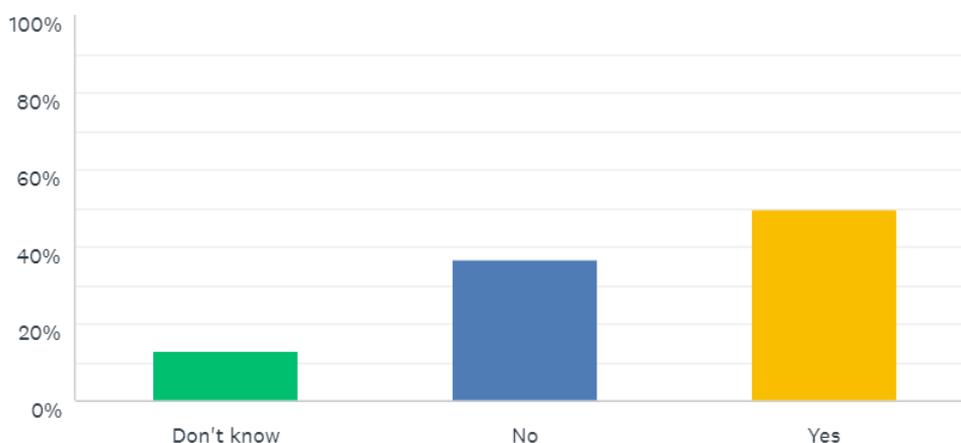
Q7. How does your organisation measure employee career progression? Does your company measure team members by their performance, results and output, or by their presence in the office or the hours that they work?



An overwhelming majority of respondents (88%) believe that promotion opportunities are based on performance, results and output rather than workplace presence. This was true for both men and women, with 88% of the former and 87% of the latter responding that performance formed the basis of promotion decisions.

This is encouraging news for anyone looking to enter the industry who may not be able to commit to a full-time role or an orthodox, 9-to-5 working arrangement due to other life commitments. That could be especially pertinent for women who are more likely to take on caring roles than men and therefore may wish to balance their work schedule with their care-giving obligations, without passing up the opportunity to progress in their chosen field. Equally, this approach to employee career progression seems to disprove the historically-held belief that part-time jobs are less senior or downgraded in comparison to full-time roles.

Q8. Do you think your organisation provides you with a clear path for career progression and growth?

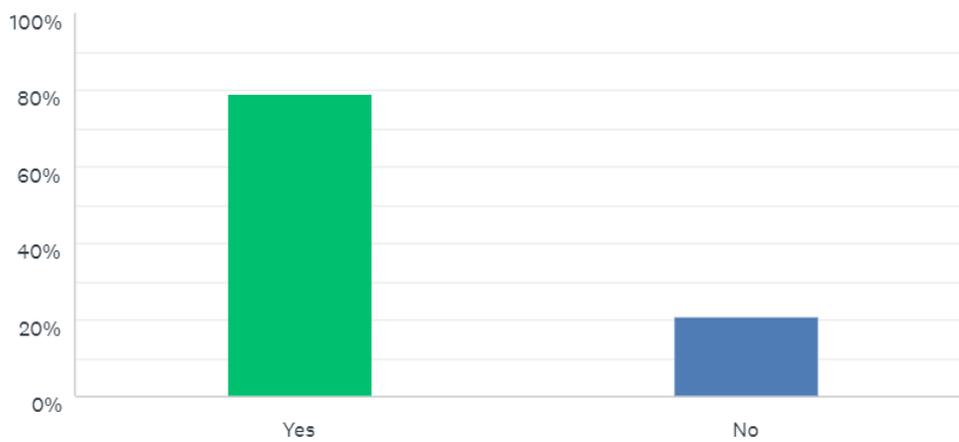


Exactly half of respondents said they believe that their employer provides them with a clear path for career progression and growth, which is significantly higher than the percentage of those who did not (37%). This

belief was reflected across both genders, as 51% of men and 49% of women believe that development in their role is clearly mapped out for them.

However, the fact that over a third of both genders (36.92% of men and 36.73% of women) believed that career progression was not obvious in their workplace demonstrates that there is certainly room for improvement in this area. Companies could be more proactive in advertising the opportunities for promotion and personal growth within their organisation, thus attracting new individuals to join the team and incentivising existing employees to challenge themselves to reach their full potential.

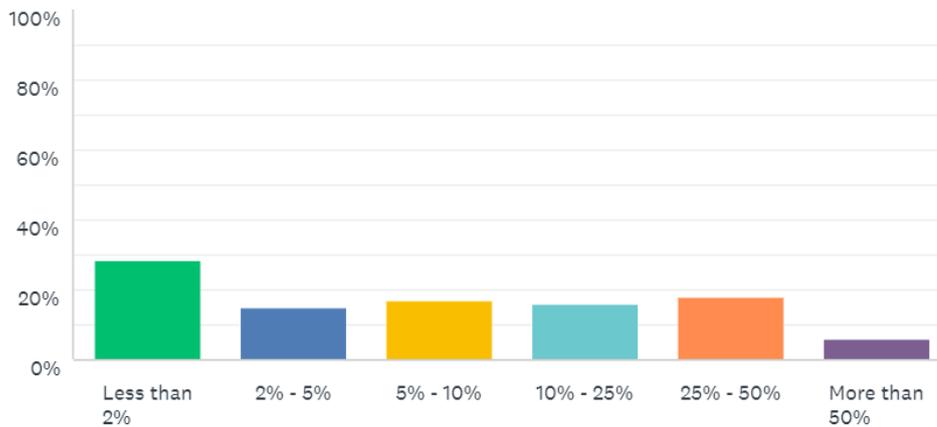
Q9. Do any females in your organisation hold leadership positions?



An overwhelming majority of respondents (79%) indicated that women held leadership roles within their current organisation. That consensus was common to both male and female respondents, with 80% of the former and 78% of the latter stating that leadership roles were occupied by women in their place of work.

This is a very positive indicator for any females considering a career in the RACHP industry, since it demonstrates that it is eminently possible for females to excel in the sector. The fact that only a small minority of organisations did not yet have any females in leadership roles is a strong indicator that hard-working and ambitious women looking to get ahead in their industry will have abundant opportunity to do so in the sector.

Q10. If yes, what percentage of your senior leadership team are female?

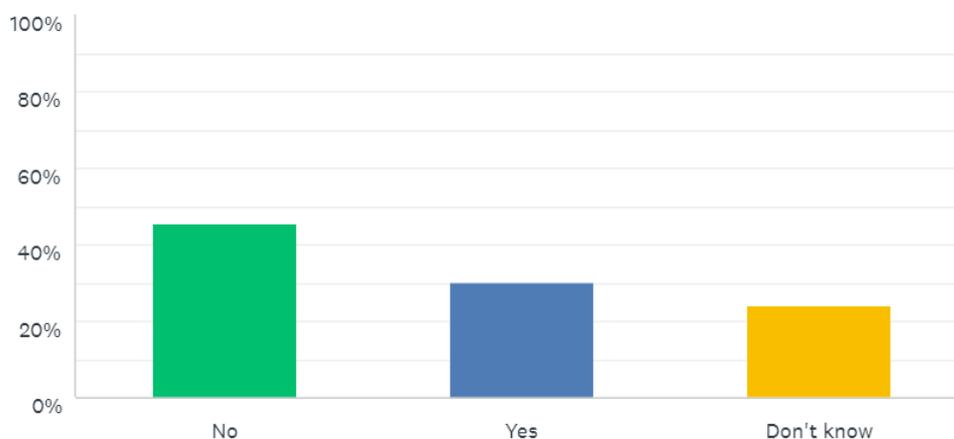


The most common response was that less than 2% of leadership roles are currently filled by females, with nearly 30% of survey subjects choosing this answer. This demonstrates that there is plenty of room for improvement in achieving a gender equilibrium in management roles and suggests that individual companies may need to do more to retain and attract talented females into the industry.

However, the second most common response (from 18% of interviewees) was between 25% and 50%, showing that strides are being made towards correcting the current imbalance. A slim minority (6%) of respondents said that over half of all leadership roles were occupied by females, showing that the potential for females to excel and outperform their male counterparts does exist.

Part 3: Addressing social norms, cultural biases and stereotypes

Q1. Do you think gender diversity is identified as a priority on your company’s strategic agenda?



Given that almost half of all respondents (45%) do not believe that gender diversity is a priority for their employer, it is possible that companies could do more to enhance the prevalence of females in the workplace.

Considering the low numbers of women working within the industry, gender diversity could be given further consideration at a strategic level to encourage the industry as a whole to move in the right direction.

Q2. Give details of any programmes that your organisation uses to actively promote gender diversity within the organisation.

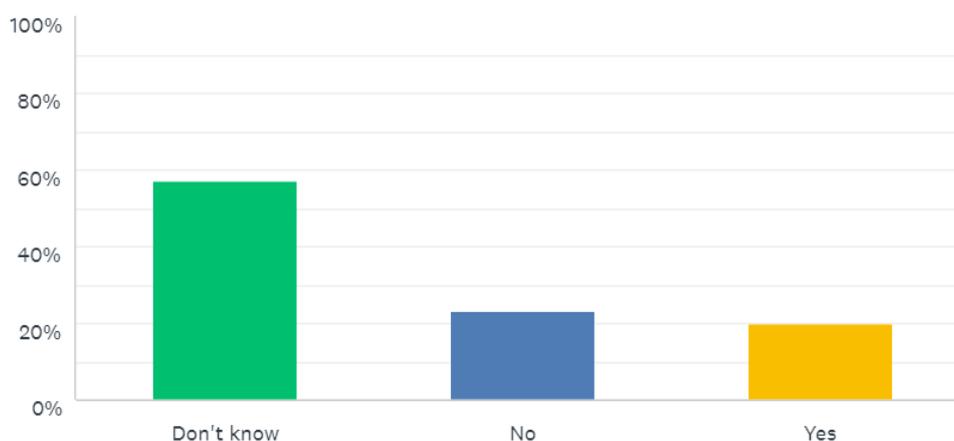
The answers to this question varied significantly depending on gender.

The majority of men said that there were either no programmes in place, or that they were not aware of or could not remember the details of them. Only one male respondent mentioned WiRACHP by name, while several pointed towards the company’s prioritisation of ability above gender when hiring new staff or promoting existing employees.

The female respondents, on the other hand, were able to give much fuller and more comprehensive responses. Only three female said that their employers did not have any gender diversity programmes in place, while three said that their companies operated a gender-neutral policy when it comes to recruiting and promoting talent. Several others were able to name specific incentives or organisations to which their employer was committed or affiliated, including mentions of WiRACHP, Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (WiSTEM) and CaRe working groups.

This demonstrates that the majority of companies do not have gender diversity policies in place, which is an indicator of a lack of urgency and commitment from the industry on how the issue is being handled. The fact that almost all of the males were either unaware or unclear on the details of these schemes could suggest that more training or awareness initiatives could be launched to increase understanding of the subject.

Q3. If you are aware of programmes being run in your organisation, do you think they are improving gender diversity within the organisation?

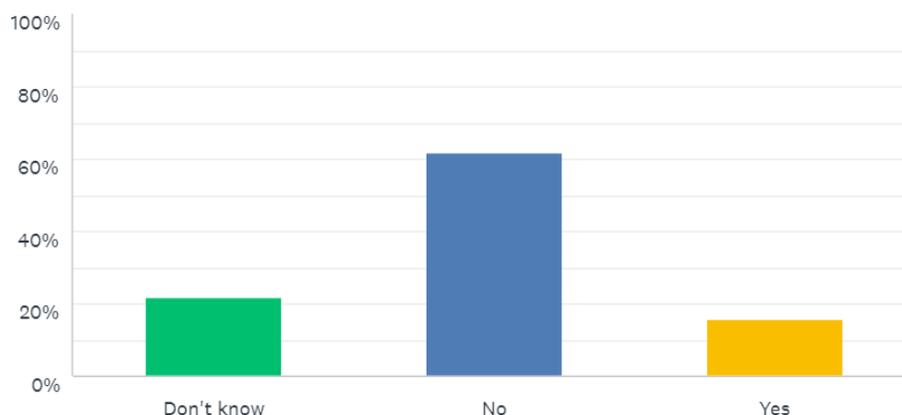


Over half of all respondents (57%) said that they did not know whether gender diversity programmes in place within their current organisation were effective in addressing the issue. Both genders shared this viewpoint, with 59% of men and 55% of women claiming that they were not aware if the programmes had achieved their aims of increasing gender diversity in the workplace.

This points to the idea that not only is more work needed to publicise the initiatives themselves, but also their outcomes. If companies can illustrate that the measures they are implementing are having real, tangible effects on gender diversity in the workplace it could be highly influential in attracting more females into the industry.

While there is some positivity to be taken from the fact that a minority of 20% said they thought such measures were already effective, it's disheartening that a significantly higher percentage of women than men (30% compared to 18%) said that they were not effective. With almost a third of the females surveyed indicating that they had no faith in the current measures' efficacy, more work must be done to improve both awareness and effectiveness of gender diversity programmes.

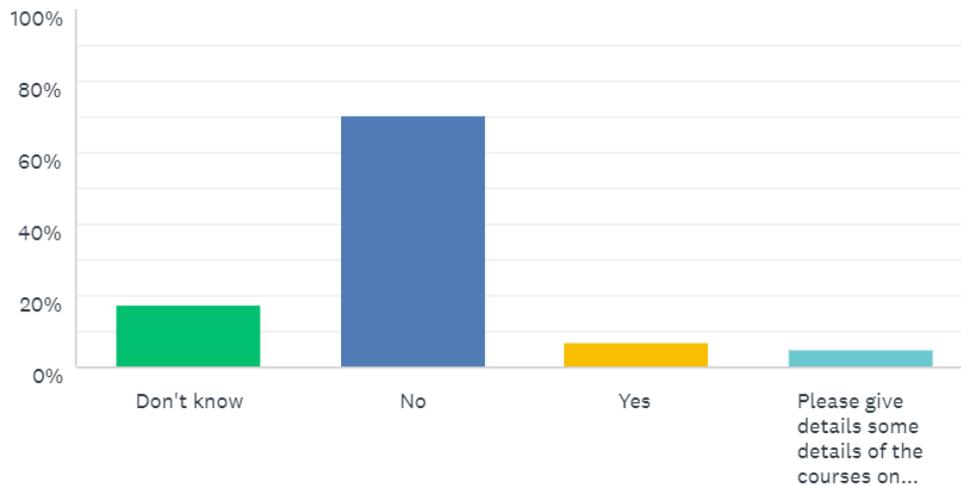
Q4. Does your company provide sensitivity training to minimise conscious and unconscious biases against women and minority groups?



Less than a fifth of respondents (16%) said that their current employers provide sensitivity training aimed at minimising both conscious and unconscious biases against women and other minority groups. This shows that while such training is currently only offered by a minority of forward-thinking companies, there is already a blueprint for other companies to follow and a platform from which the issue can be expanded and explored.

On the other hand, 62% said that their current employers did not provide such training, indicating that there is a long way to go before the practice becomes standard across all organisations in the industry.

Q5. Does your organisation provide leadership workshops designed specifically for women?

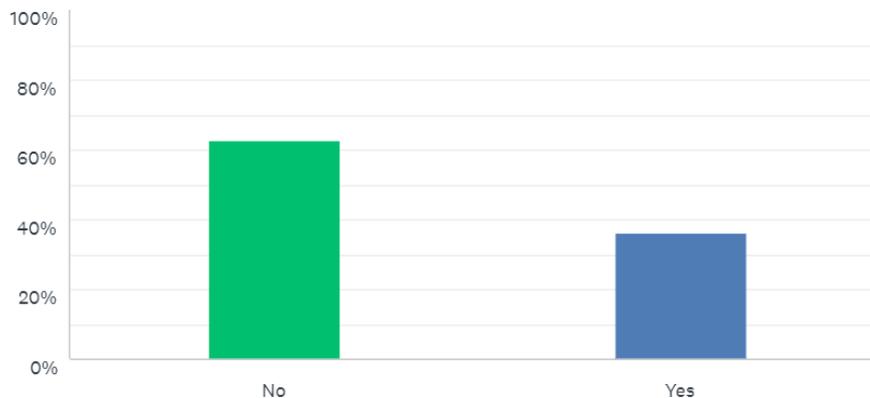


A strong majority of respondents (71%) said that their company did not offer leadership workshops aimed specifically at women, with slightly more women (81%) than men (62%) answering in the negative.

However, respondents were given the chance to expand upon their answers and two respondents did name specific leadership workshops aimed at females, although these referred to initiatives offered by the Institute of Refrigeration (IOR) through WiRACHP, rather than by the individual companies themselves.

Among the other answers returned were the notions that female-oriented workshops were not necessary and that workshops were offered to both men and women alike, thus promoting equality. This highlights that the provision of such workshops is not a priority for employees in the workplace and that there seems to be a latent lack of education across the workforce about the unique challenges women face in the workplace, leading to the fear that offering female leadership training might be construed as giving preferential treatment to one gender over another.

Q6. Have you encountered pay inconsistencies between genders for similar roles and experience within the industry in general?

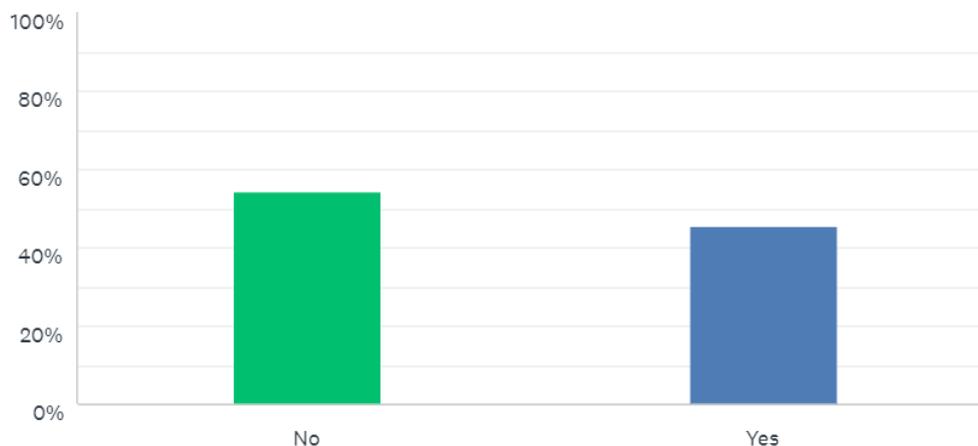


The majority of respondents (63%) reported that they had not encountered pay inconsistencies between employees of different genders but with similar roles and experiences. This was even more pronounced among male respondents, with 76% saying they hadn't experienced those inconsistencies and just 24% saying they had. Tellingly, a slim majority of the female respondents reported the opposite, with 54% saying that had encountered such inconsistencies in the past, compared to 46% who had not.

This question also allowed for respondents to expand upon their answers. Two males said that their company did not disclose information about employee salaries and so were unable to make an informed decision, while one said that the idea of such inequality was a myth and one more said that it was a real problem.

Several women reported having experienced pay inconsistencies at their roles with previous employers, while two said that such a state of affairs was endemic across the industry. However, none of them reported suffering from such a situation at their current place of work, suggesting that perhaps the practice is becoming less common. Furthermore, there seems to be evidence to suggest that the equal pay gap between genders is narrowing within the HVACR industry, which will contribute to closing the gender pay gap on the whole.

Q7. Have you ever witnessed prejudice/discrimination/inequality against a female working in the industry because of their gender?



A majority of respondents (55%) said that they had never witnessed prejudice, discrimination or inequality exercised against a female working in the industry solely because of their gender. There was, however, a marked difference in the responses between men and women on this question, with over two-thirds of men (68%) saying they had never witnessed such an occurrence and almost two-thirds (63%) of women saying they had.

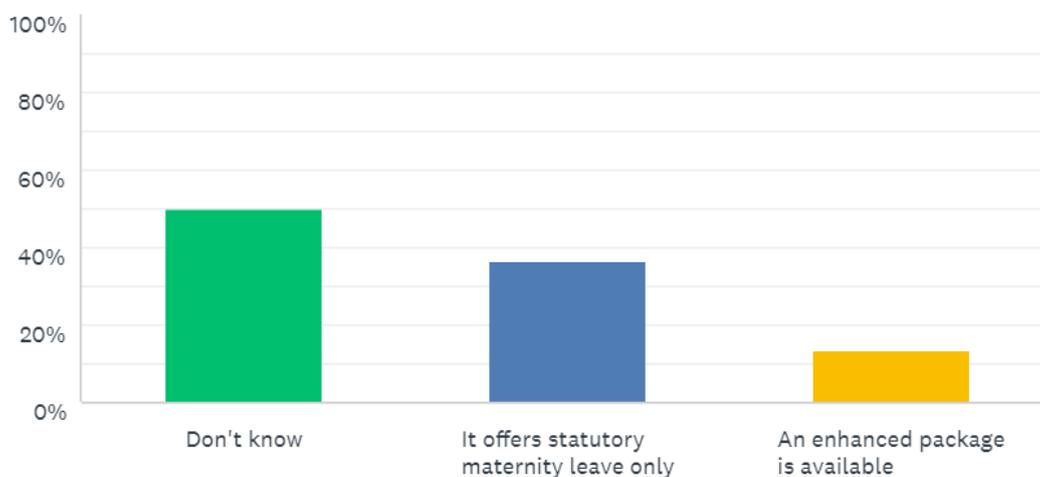
Again, respondents were offered the opportunity to expand upon their answers and the few men who did comment said that such discrimination was normally confined to private conversations, with one male saying that all females in his working experience had been treated with respect and assistance.

The female responses were much more detailed and numerous, with almost all commenters relating at least one personal anecdote of how they had experienced prejudice against their gender. This had been witnessed at all levels of the business, from CEOs to engineers to customers, while it was also noted that a few women were not believed to be able to perform engineering tasks and others were overlooked due to perceptions about their likelihood of becoming pregnant.

The anecdotal evidence provided by female employees demonstrates that gender discrimination in the workplace certainly has been a problem in the past and continues to be one with some companies. However, the fact that over a third of women interviewed (37%) said that they had never once witnessed such acts take place suggests that the situation is improving as a whole. Continued emphasis on raising awareness over these issues can only help to continue that diminishing trend and eradicate gender bias from the workplace, once and for all.

Part 4 Work-life balance

Q1. What is your company's maternity leave policy?



50% of respondents were aware of their maternity policies. Out of respondents that did know their company's maternity leave policy, 73% said their company only offers statutory maternity leave, while a more modest 27% reported that an enhanced package was available to them.

It seems possible that companies are not making a significant effort to publicise their maternity policies and there are clear variances in the maternity leave packages offered by different companies within the sector.

Q2. After the first six weeks of maternity leave, how many weeks does your company offer at each level of pay?

59% of those who answered the question on full pay said that after the first six weeks of maternity leave, their company does offer a number of extra weeks at full pay. The largest majority of employees (37%) reported that they receive between 5 and 10 weeks, 21% reported that they receive between 21 and 25 weeks and 36% reported that they receive less than 4 weeks.

40% of those who answered the question on full pay said that after the first six weeks of maternity leave, their company does offer a number of extra weeks at half pay. The largest majority reported receiving between 5 and 10 weeks (40%), while 20% received between 16 and 20 weeks.

45% of those who answered the question on statutory pay said that after the first six weeks of maternity leave, their company does offer a number of extra weeks at statutory pay. 33% reported receiving less than 4 weeks, 27% reported receiving between 5 and 15 weeks and 40% reported receiving between 31 and 46 weeks.

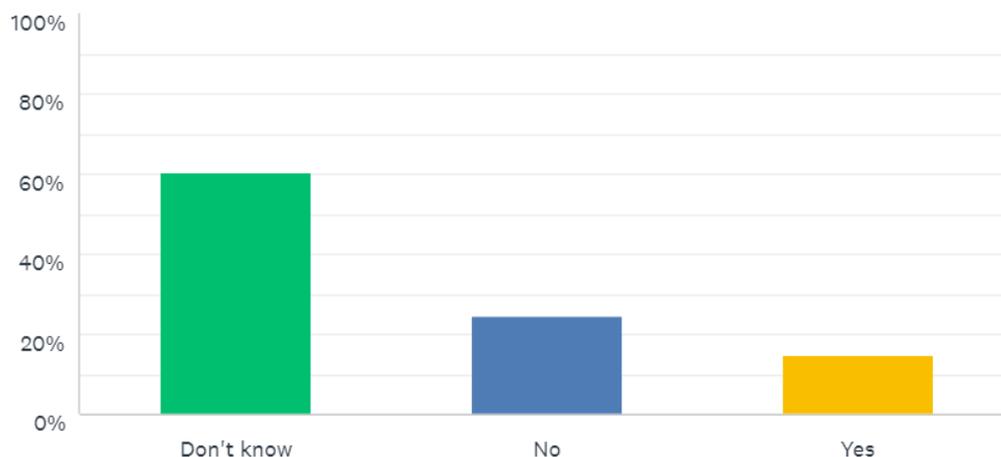
Q3. When returning to work after maternity leave, does your employer offer maternity-related incentives?

More than half (54%) of respondents confirmed that their companies offer agreed flexible working arrangements on return to work after parental leave.

In terms of return-to-work incentives, almost half (43%) of companies offer no related incentives, while only one company offers phased transitions with full pay. None of those surveyed offer a return-to-work bonus, as occurs in other industries which are becoming more mindful of parenting-package incentives.

This evidences that companies could be doing more in order to cater to female needs in order to entice mothers to return to work after a period of leave and thus retain their talent.

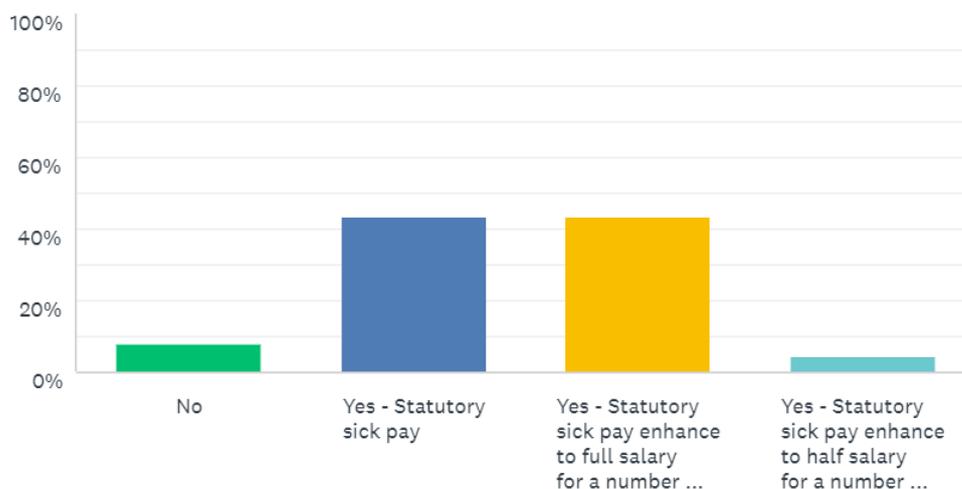
Q4. Is the above matched for shared parental leave?



63% of employees say that their workplace is offering the same policy for paternity leave and maternity leave, while 37% say they are offering different policies for both.

When looking at the breakdown for genders, 67% of males don't know what their company's paternity leave policy is compared with 53% of females. These figures highlight that companies could make more of an effort to publicise their parental leave policies more in line with the way in which other benefits (such as annual leave) are promoted.

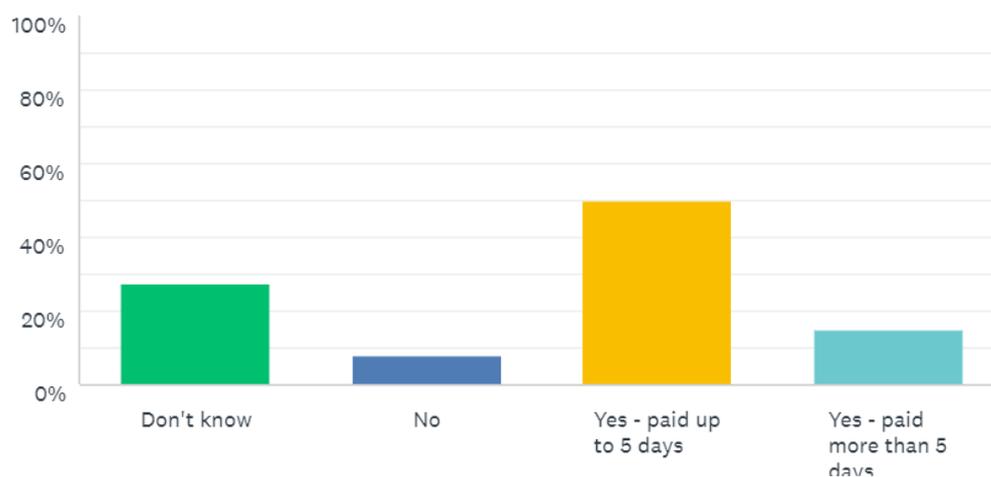
Q5. Does your employer offer sick pay?



Over 90% of respondents confirmed that their employer offers sick pay, with 44% of them receiving statutory sick pay only, another 44% receiving statutory sick pay enhanced to full salary for a number of weeks and a small number of employees (5%) receiving statutory sick pay enhanced to half salary for a number of weeks.

This means that almost half of companies (49%) offer an enhanced sick pay above statutory requirements, while the rest only provide statutory requirements and a small number do not pay it at all. Given that less than half of companies are offering more than the bare minimum in terms of sick pay benefits, this is something which may need to be addressed within the sector, although factors such as company size should be taken into account.

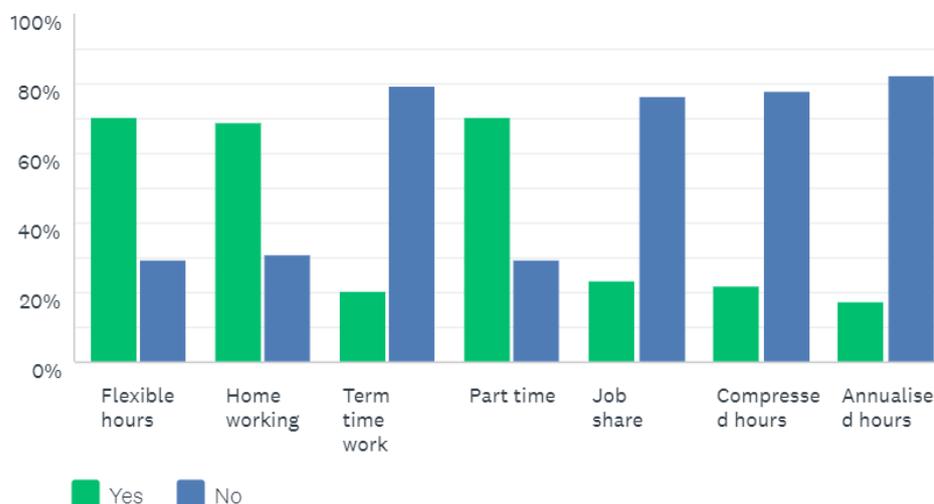
Q6. Does your employer offer compassionate paid leave?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Don't know	27.27%
▼ No	7.95%
▼ Yes - paid up to 5 days	50.00%
▼ Yes - paid more than 5 days	14.77%

Over a third (64%) of respondents confirmed their employers offer paid compassionate leave, with 50% of them receiving up to 5 days, while 20% said their company offers paid compassionate leave for more than 5 days. These are promising figures which show that companies have been active in putting together a policy which allows for compassionate paid leave.

Q7. What type of flexible working options does your employer offer?

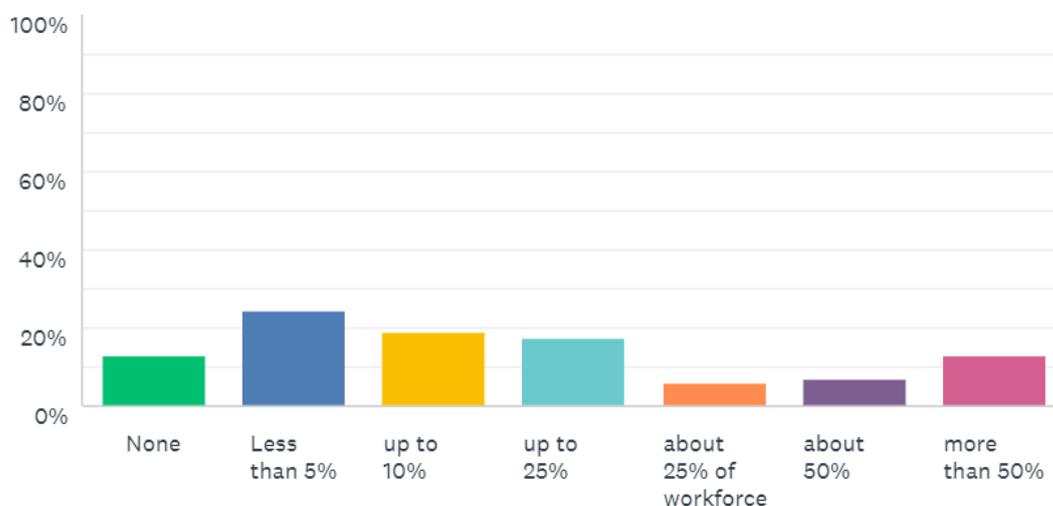


According to the respondents, the provision of flexible working options seems to be common practice within the RACHP sector, as employers offer a number of different working arrangements to suit a diverse workforce. For example, over two-thirds of employees said that their employer offers flexible hours (71%), home working (69%) and part-time work (70%).

The results show that most industry organisations are forward-thinking and provide an accommodating workplace to meet employee requirements through flexible working practices.

Flexible working options seem to be extended practice within the industry, including less commonly known practices such as job share (23%), compressed hours (22%), term-time work (20%) and annualised hours (18%). This suggests that the benefits these flexible conditions provide to the workforce are welcomed by employers, as they can help to boost employee engagement and loyalty.

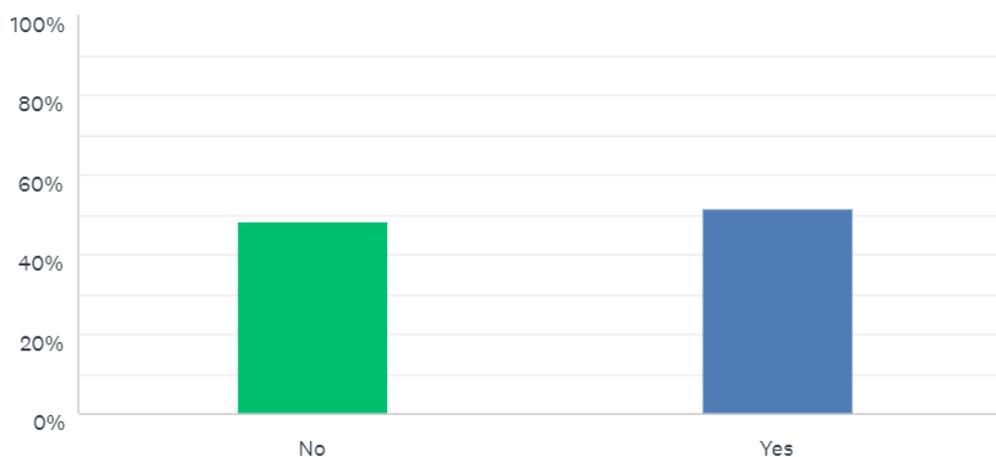
Q8. In your opinion, what percentage of the total workforce in your organisation receive flexible working benefits?



In contrast to the results of Q7, there does not seem to be a widespread use of the flexible working packages offered by employers amongst employees within the sector. Over half (55%) of employees are of the opinion that less than 10% of their company’s workforce have access to flexible working hours, with this figure rising to 80% for less than 25% of the workforce. Just 1 out of every 5 respondents estimates that around 50% or more of their workforce have access to flexible working hours.

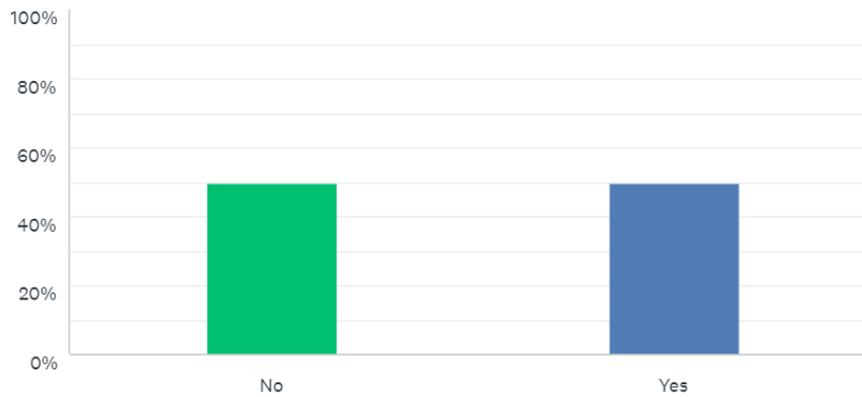
This signals that more work needs to be done throughout the sector to guarantee that flexible working arrangements are not only offered on paper, but also promoted and encouraged within the workforce by showing employees that they can still reach their career goals while balancing work and life commitments.

Q9. Does your company offer private health insurance?



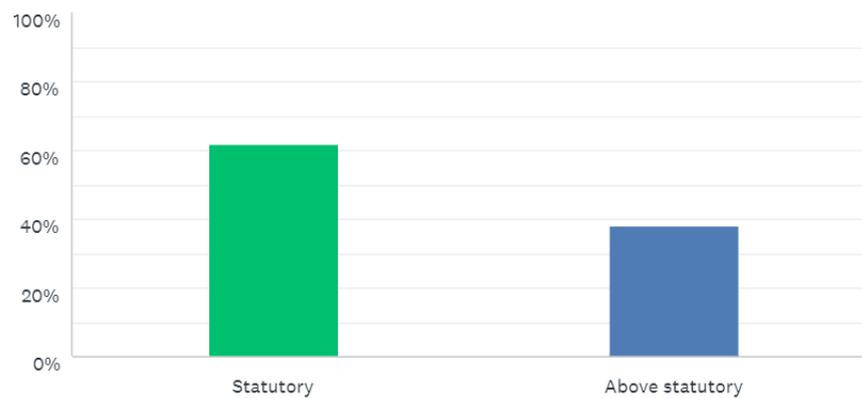
The industry seems to be lagging behind in terms of private health insurance, with almost half of the respondents saying it is not part of the benefits package offered by their employer.

Q10. Does your company offer life assurance?



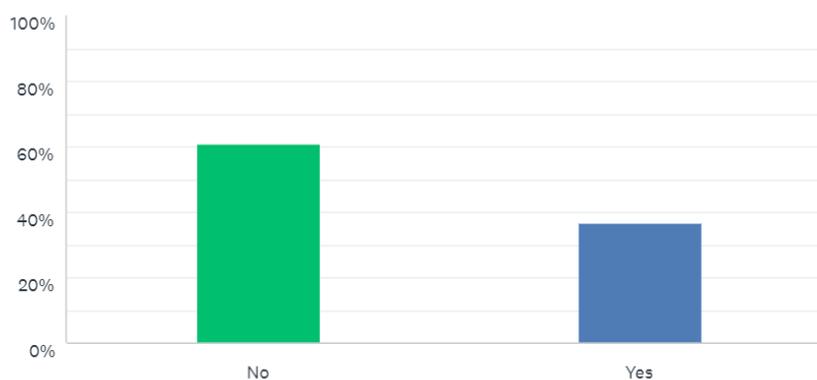
Similar to private health insurance provision, life assurance is only received by half of the survey's respondents.

Q11. What is your employer's contribution to your pension scheme?



62% of respondents affirm that their employer's contribution to their pension scheme is only that which is required by law. Only 38% benefit from further voluntary contributions from their company.

Q12. Has your company made any improvements to the benefits they offer in the last 3 years?



In the last 3 years, 38% of employees obtained an enhancement of their work benefits packages. Some of these improvements included additional or more flexible holidays with the option to buy or sell days, the introduction of a wellness programme, an increase in private health benefits, death in service payments and enhanced maternity and shared parental pay.

The answers did not reflect equally in both genders, with 46% of men and only 28% of women stating that their employers had made any improvements. This might suggest that the industry could be lagging behind current trends in introducing measures and benefits to bridge the gender pay gap since it became compulsory for companies with more than 250 employees to report their gender pay gap figures by the end of every financial year.

Part 5: Pushing for Change

Q1. Overall, which are the areas you value the most when joining a company or staying with a company? Please rank, with 1 being the most important and 4 being the least.

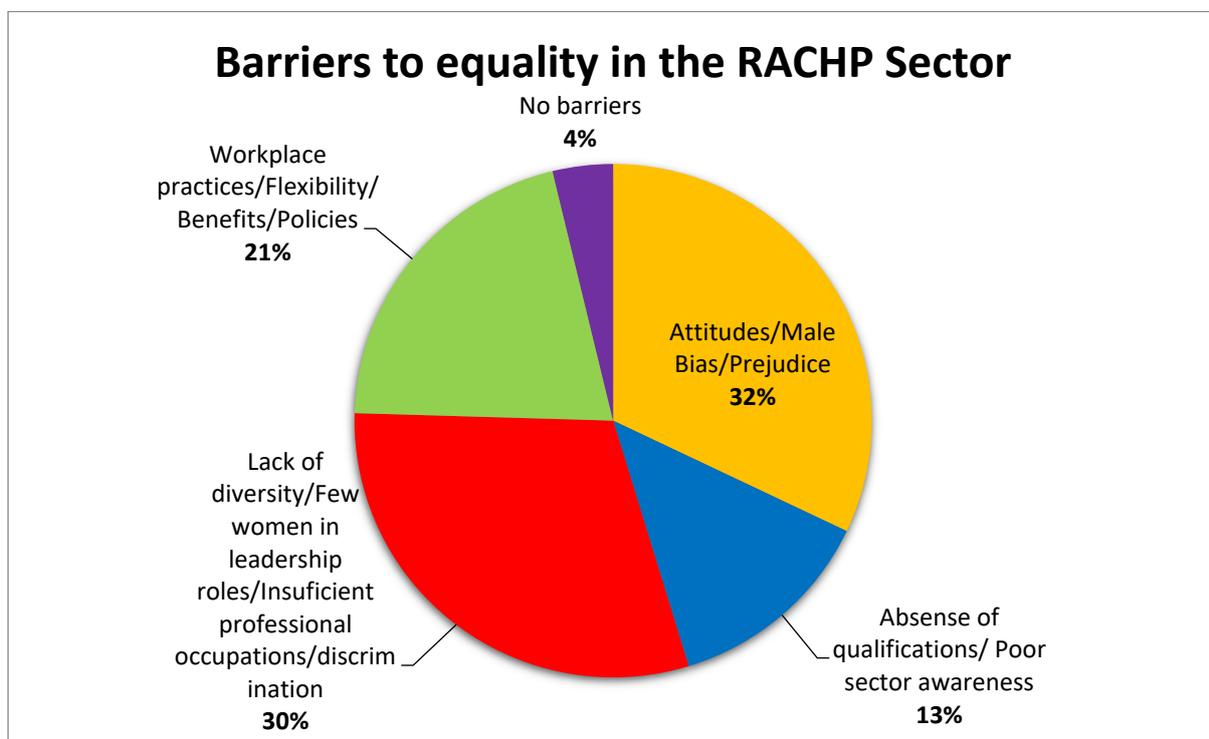
Demographics ie company size; business type, gender diversity etc.							
	1	2	3	4	TOTAL	SCORE	
Q1: Male	12.90%	25.81%	38.71%	22.58%	43.06%	2.29	
Q1: Female	18.75%	15.63%	28.13%	37.50%	44.44%	2.16	
Better paying roles ie defined career progression path; senior leadership positions available for women; gender diversity at board level							
	1	2	3	4	TOTAL	SCORE	
Q1: Male	46.67%	26.67%	16.67%	10.00%	41.67%	3.10	
Q1: Female	40.63%	40.63%	15.63%	3.13%	44.44%	3.19	
Addressing social norms, attitudes and stereotypes ie gender diversity being a business top priority; company training to reduce biases; leadership training for women.							
	1	2	3	4	TOTAL	SCORE	
Q1: Male	0.00%	10.34%	41.38%	48.28%	40.28%	1.62	
Q1: Female	3.03%	21.21%	27.27%	48.48%	45.83%	1.79	
Work-life balance ie flexible working arrangements; maternity package; health insurance							
	1	2	3	4	TOTAL	SCORE	
Q1: Male	41.18%	32.35%	8.82%	17.65%	47.22%	2.97	
Q1: Female	38.24%	26.47%	29.41%	5.88%	47.22%	2.97	

There doesn't seem to be much difference between males and females in terms of the factors that they value when joining a company. 'Better paying roles and a defined progression path' (i.e. senior leadership positions available for women, gender diversity at board level) is the top most valued factor with an average score of 3.15 and is highly valued by both genders, while 'work-life balance' (i.e. flexible working arrangements, maternity packages and health insurance) is the second most valued factor, with both genders scoring 2.97.

The third most valued factor is ‘demographics’ (i.e. company size, business type, gender diversity etc) with an average score of 2.22.

‘Addressing social norms, attitudes and stereotypes’ is the least valued factor, with an average score of 1.71. However, there is a significant difference between the answers of both men and women. While 24% of females ranked addressing social norms, attitudes and stereotypes within the top 2 factors, only 10% of males did the same, which highlights a potential difference in how each gender values this.

Q2. What do you think are the barriers to equality in the RACHP sector?



Respondents were asked to comment on what they see as the barriers to equality in the RACHP sector. According to the sample, the major barriers to equality in the RACHP sector (from 32% of respondents) are considered to be outdated attitudes, male bias and prejudice. A few of the reasons cited for this included ‘*the ‘old boys’ mentality that women can’t be engineers or technical advisors*’, ‘*a general ‘boys’ club’ attitude*’, ‘*an ageing workforce complete with an old school mindset*’, ‘*the old school are still in senior management positions*’ and ‘*a continued perception that women have little technical knowledge*’. Unsurprisingly, some of the comments reveal implicit unconscious bias including ‘*the only barriers to women entering the industry are limitation to competence, drive or motivation*’ and ‘*a high percentage of women are still not ready to take on masculine engineering duties*’.

An equally significant portion of respondents (30%) commented on a lack of diversity, few women in leadership roles, insufficient professional occupations and discrimination as barriers to entry in the RACHP sector. Reasons for this include: ‘*recruitment agencies in the sector can typically be male-biased*’, ‘*there are very few*

women working in the industry in technical roles, making it difficult to prove overall that women in our industry can be equal to or better than the males', 'magazines in the RACHP sector generally portray men in key roles, which can be off-putting for women', 'it is still a male-dominated industry, where women are not seen as equal in terms of pay, ability, strength and knowledge' and 'the lack of diversity in current leadership teams is uninviting, as it is the lack of demonstration of value of diversity. There are no practical tools to reduce biases in external hiring and internal team building'. As a result of few women in leadership roles, respondents affirmed that they felt the males in leadership roles in their companies were always more inclined to pick other males for promotions and the gender imbalance also meant that there were not enough women voicing current workforce diversity concerns.

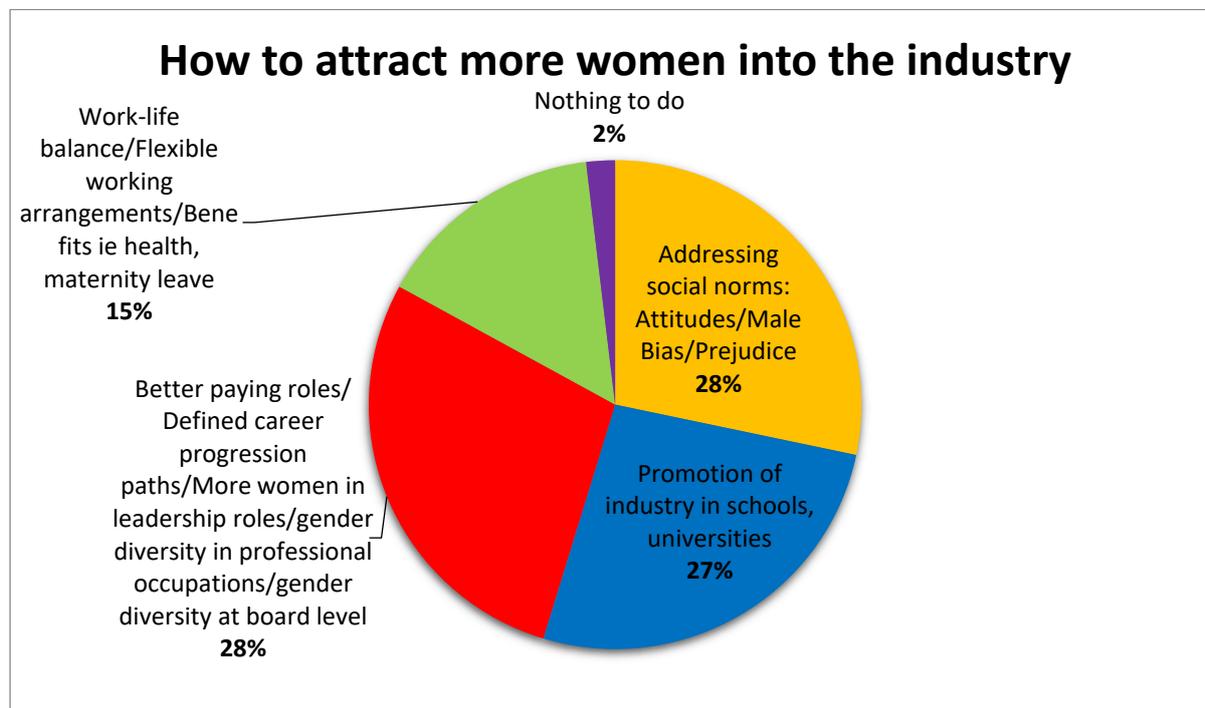
21% mentioned workplace practices/flexibility/benefits and policies as barriers to entry in the RACHP sector. Reasons cited for this include: 'the working patterns were established 100 years ago for a mainly male workforce and have not changed to meet the needs of females in the workplace', 'the RACHP sector is 20 years behind other sectors in terms of gender equality. Only white males get promoted by other white males to the next career path', 'tools available don't make it very easy for a woman to do the servicing' and 'the challenge to allow flexible working conditions post maternity leave are still a real challenge for many businesses, especially in senior roles. Companies that can help individuals plan a long-term future will always attract the more ambitious and high-performing women'.

In terms of working practices, one respondent also noted 'inbuilt biases in working practices such as PPE sizes, product design, service provision, etc' while another one stated that 'women are unable to provide continuity of service to customer expectations because their response times, out of hours works/emergencies and speed of response both in physical site and electronic communications are not comparable to men'. This last comment suggests that there is room for improvement with regard to correcting existing biases towards women's capabilities and the positive benefits of flexible working arrangements.

13% highlighted a lack of qualifications and poor sector awareness of the industry amongst both genders as barriers to entry in the RACHP sector. Females were specifically highlighted as being less likely to join the sector and less likely to have the experience needed to progress to senior positions. Another point highlighted was that there isn't enough awareness of the industry at school leaver level and that it is viewed as a 'dirty industry', so clearly more could be done to change this perception.

Just a small 4% of respondents felt that there were no barriers to entry in the sector for females.

Q3. What do you think needs to be done to attract more women into the industry?



Respondents were asked to comment on the actions they think could be taken to attract more women into the RACHP industry.

28% are of the opinion that better paying roles, defined career progression paths, more women in leadership roles, gender diversity in professional occupations and gender diversity at board level could help to attract more women into the RACHP industry. Paradoxically, when respondents were directly asked in question 30 to punctuate what they value most when joining or staying at a company, ‘Addressing social norms, attitudes and stereotypes’ was the least valued factor, with an average score of 1.7 behind ‘Work-life balance benefits’ (2.97) and ‘Better paying roles and gender diversity’ (3.14). It would appear that when respondents are prompted to elaborate on their answers, taking measures to address discrimination and prejudice becomes a priority.

More female role models in senior positions, more females at board level, better mentoring opportunities and a clearer understanding of career paths were suggested as possible solutions to this. Attracting women into the industry for different occupations (i.e. HR, accountants, marketing, law or IT) was also highlighted as an important objective as opposed to the sales and admin roles that many women end up in when joining the industry.

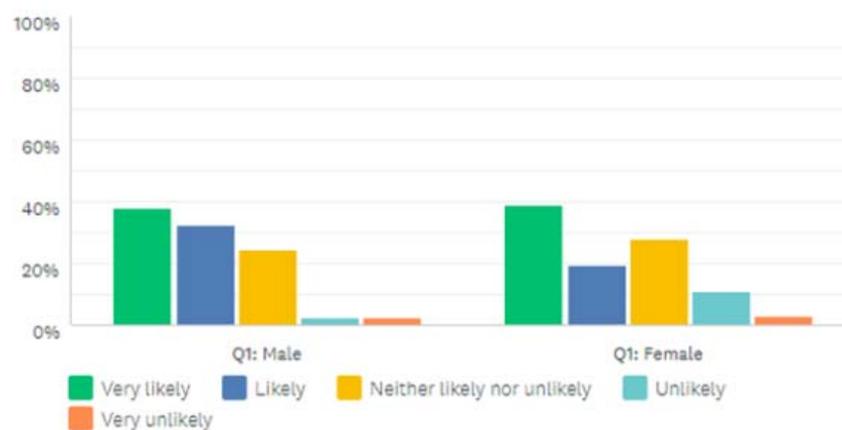
Another significant number of respondents (28%) are of the opinion that addressing social norms including attitudes, male bias and prejudices could help to attract more women into the industry. Some suggestions for addressing this included work shadowing programmes for younger women, wage transparency within organisations, workshops, unconscious bias training, and media (such as social media and magazines) showing successful women engineers in the RACHP sector.

27% suggested the promotion of the industry within schools and universities could help to attract more women into the sector. Actively promoting internships for women in university courses, collaboration with schools to attract young women into the sector and showing children that it is an industry that is interesting and multi-skilled, taking in various industry job roles, were suggested. It was also suggested that increasing the presence of groups like WiRACHP in schools could help to develop an interest in engineering at a young age.

15% think that work-life balance/flexible working arrangements and benefits (i.e. health and maternity leave) could help to attract more women into the sector. Some of the suggestions for solving this included more flexible working, better parental leave benefits and the creation of better working conditions.

When looking at the suggestions given by males compared to those given by females, there are some noticeable differences. While both genders are of the opinion that better promotion of the industry (not just to females, but in general) is needed, a number of women raised concerns about improving workplace practices and conditions and dealing with bias and prejudice against women in the workplace.

Q4. How likely are you to recommend the RACHP industry to your friends or family?



	VERY LIKELY	LIKELY	NEITHER LIKELY NOR UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	VERY UNLIKELY	TOTAL
Q1: Male	37.84%	32.43%	24.32%	2.70%	2.70%	50.68%
Q1: Female	38.89%	19.44%	27.78%	11.11%	2.78%	49.32%

60% of males are likely to recommend the RACHP industry, while 58% of females said they would be likely to recommend the industry to friends and family. The results for both genders are similar and indicate that both genders would be as equally likely to recommend the industry to their friends and family.

Also, the range of reasons provided to recommend the industry were commonly shared amongst both sexes, including being a ‘great sector with plenty of opportunities’ (48%), ‘growing industry’ (17%), ‘pays well’ (9%) and ‘skills shortage’ (9%).

By contrast, 14% of women said they were unlikely or very unlikely to recommend the industry compared to 5% of men. The reasons given included ‘male-dominated when compared to other sectors’ (9%) and ‘poor standards compared to other trades’ (4%).

It appears that the RACHP sector is generally well-liked by those working on it and considered as a kind of hidden gem with great potential; for example, respondents made such statements as *‘I love this hidden industry’*, *‘it’s a job for life’*, *‘we help the world function’*, *‘it is a tight-knit, friendly and supportive industry’*, *‘it is a growing industry that needs new blood’*, *‘the range of opportunities is far more diverse than many other ‘traditional’ industries’*, *‘the importance of cooling is felt by everyone in their daily life’*, and *‘it’s a worthwhile occupation that impacts health and wellbeing whilst providing opportunities to reduce the impact on carbon footprint’*.

5. Recommendations

The results of the survey show that many of the respondents clearly value the industry and are positive about the benefits and opportunities it can offer. The majority are satisfied that there are abundant opportunities for women to excel and prosper alongside their male counterparts, which is reflected in the fact that a strong proportion of both males (60%) and females (58%) said that they would recommend a job in RACHP to their friends and family. Furthermore, the fact that there are a number of varied workplace benefits already in place is an attractive factor for those who wish to work on their own terms without relinquishing their future prospects.

This is undoubtedly positive news for anyone considering a career in the industry, but it should also be noted that a large percentage of respondents hold strong views on what it is required to address the gender gap. Consequently, while many respondents express an appreciation for the industry, others are concerned about their employer’s current efforts toward supporting women and making the workplace more equitable. The biggest barriers to increasing the number of women coming into and staying in the industry are lack of awareness of the sector amongst women, insufficient existing diversity in women’s roles and in leadership positions, poor uptake/availability of flexible working practices and benefit packages within organisations and unconscious bias affecting the workforce.

The survey data points the way toward a number of practical actions that can build greater balance and raise awareness and concerns about how to close the sex gap. Bearing in mind the urgency of the situation and the need for practical solutions, several road-tested examples of best practices for moving in the right direction to achieving a more equal balance in the workplace are provided below:

a) Better roles for females working in RACHP

1. Develop defined career paths for each role/occupation within organisations
2. Offer better paid roles with equivalent pay to male counterparts
3. Creation of guides on how to become a corporate board member
4. Institute technical women’s career development programmes

5. Establish formal mentoring programs focused on advancement
6. Strengthen the senior female pipeline to retain female talent through female leadership programmes
7. Implement “promote from within” structures to help women to progress
8. Increase female representation across the organisation by setting targets at each level and holding the leadership accountable

b) Addressing social norms, bias, prejudices and stereotypes

1. Develop a ‘Gender Balance Strategy’ as part of the organisation’s corporate goals
2. Establish female recruitment targets
3. Promote cultural change by implementing unconscious bias training across the organisation to get people to understand that they have unconscious bias
4. Compile a compulsory shortlist of a strong female and male when recruiting

c) Work-life balance

1. Offer female-friendly benefits packages to retain talented females (i.e. enhanced parental leave)
2. Extend availability of flexible working and remote working to accelerate women’s careers
3. Offer health, pension, life insurance and sick pay leave benefits which encourage long-term employment and employee retention
4. Eliminate perceptions of flexible working as a privilege or career sacrifice (i.e. that it precipitates slower progression, lower pay or downgraded job roles)

d) Promotion of the industry among school-age girls and women

1. Develop unbiased, objective recruitment processes and adverts to:
 - a. Avoid employees unconsciously hiring someone in their own image
 - b. Ensure job profiles invite as many women as men to apply for the job vacancy. The Gender Insights Report (2019) carried out by LinkedIn confirmed previous research showing that female candidates only apply for jobs if they think they fulfil 100% of the requirements, while men usually apply if they fulfil 60%
 - c. Remove gender bias wording by eliminating ‘macho’ terminology on recruitment ads. According to Gaucher, Friesen and Kay, ‘ambitious, assertive, decisive, determined and self-reliant’ are adjectives that invite a male-gendered response, while words like ‘committed, connect, interpersonal, responsible and yield’ are considered female-gendered
2. Promote the diverse number of occupations within the RACHP industry
3. Advertise female-friendly benefit packages
4. Promote leadership roles for women
5. Use female role models working at board level to encourage other women to join the sector

6. Conclusions

The survey indicates the RACHP industry represents an exciting and attractive opportunity for young people of both genders. The fact that women are more likely to have received a promotion than men, and that more women reported having been promoted once (26% of females compared to 15%), three times (8% compared to 6%) and four or more times (8% compared to 7.7%) demonstrates that there is ample opportunity for career progression for ambitious females. It is also important to note that 30% of respondents confirmed that less than 2% of leadership roles are currently filled by females within their organisations which demonstrate a lack of gender parity in more senior positions.

The opportunity for progression is also reflected in the statistics regarding salary. Around three-quarters of all respondents said that they had received a pay increase during their time with their current employer, and in fact women were once again slightly more likely to have done so than their male counterparts (72% of men had received a pay increase, compared to 76% of women). While a higher percentage of men (32%) had received over three merit pay increases compared to women (24%), which could confirm the existence of a glass ceiling stopping women from advancing their positions at work to more senior/board roles.

Indeed, this last point does highlight the fact that historically, the industry has suffered from an ‘old boys’ club’ and ‘men’s work’ reputation. An underlying bias attitude towards women regarding technical ability, competence, strength and availability to work at the required pace is also responsible for preventing the industry from becoming more female-friendly. Addressing attitudes and changing what is portrayed to be an endemically old-fashioned mentality appear to be a priority for the industry’s workforce.

Despite recent developments, the RACHP industry needs to do more to attract talented women at all levels and occupations. Although it has gradually been improving through the actions of some progressive employers, it is still lagging behind some other, more female-friendly industries that are going above and beyond to proactively address gender diversity and overcome blind spots in the women’s struggle for equality in the workplace.

In the UK, almost 80% of companies pay men more than women and the mean national average gender pay gap currently stands at 17.4%. It is therefore not surprising that the RACHP industry is also suffering from the same societal barriers which have contributed over the years to create the gender imbalance, from gender biases to inflexible working conditions.

In order to overcome the current challenges, the industry must heavily invest in initiatives that are aimed at creating an ideal environment for women to thrive, from equal pay to recruitment to promotion and advancement. A diverse array of benefits **does** exist across the industry, including options such as flexitime, core hours, part-time, flexible working, working from home, compressed hours, annualised hours, job share and term-time working. However, these benefits are not standardised across the sector and their availability appears to be rooted in a ‘legacy mindset’, which in turns is responsible for a low uptake of them and a failure to cater to the needs of a diverse and modern workforce.

In order to drive change, current workplace practices must be redesigned to accommodate equal opportunities, clear career paths, working flexibility and better access to training and development. Determining how to introduce these employer-specific and industry-wide actions to improve benefits for and attitudes towards women in order to close the gender gap without harming essential business' economic structures is critical for the recruitment of a talented and diverse workforce, as well as their well-being and the prosperity of the sector.