

# Gender & Diversity In Aviation Survey

2024



## About the Survey

2024 marks the ninth year of our focus on gender and diversity issues within the Aviation industry. We began the survey in 2015 to highlight the under-representation of women in senior Aviation roles. Our responses this year continue to emphasise the need for ongoing education and engagement on diversity issues. One comment received stated that *“The Aviation industry compared to other sectors has a DEI mountain to climb...”*

We are grateful to all respondents who shared their insights with us. Your feedback and comments ensure we can continue to monitor trends, assess current attitudes and highlight the evolving diversity profile of the Aviation industry.

The survey was conducted during the summer and early autumn of 2024, covering various aspects of diversity including gender, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation in the Aviation sector.



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## Introduction

The Aviation sector continues to demonstrate resilience and adaptability. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported industry-wide revenue passenger-kilometres increased by 8.6% in August 2024, compared to the previous year. Total capacity, measured in available seat kilometres, grew by 6.5% year-on-year. Growth in the sector brings both opportunities and challenges for workforce diversity.

As we launch our ninth annual report on diversity and inclusion in Aviation, we see incremental progress in overall workforce diversity. However, leadership diversity shows stagnation or even regression in some areas. The need for sustained investment in diversity initiatives remains critical, especially at senior levels.

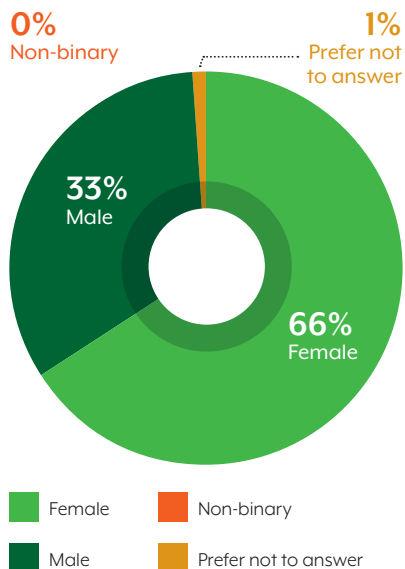
From the beginning, the purpose of the annual survey was to generate interest in the topic of gender and diversity and to facilitate conversation and dialogue within the Aviation community. This aim seems apt given the reporting obligations set out in the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), which are due to be introduced in the near future. Reports are not instruments of change but they give access to information, data and increased transparency that can lead to action and change in attitudes and approach. Our survey aims to monitor annual changes and the impact of these changes on diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the comments we hear from members of the Aviation community first-hand of their experiences, some of which are hard-hitting home truths.

*“Given the lack of progress over the years, it is hard to maintain momentum and continue to push the diversity agenda forward – one step forward, two steps back.”*

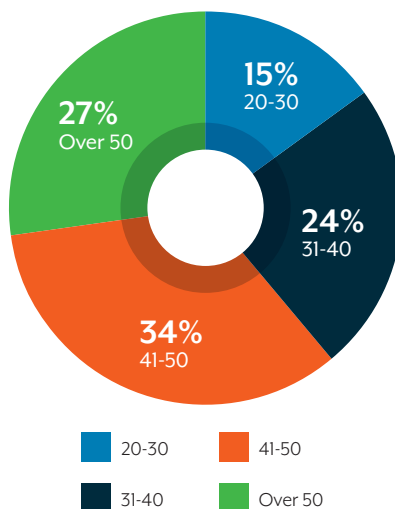
*“Diverse teams bring together a range of perspectives, experiences and ideas. This variety can lead to more innovative solutions and creative approaches to problems.”*

## Profile of Participants

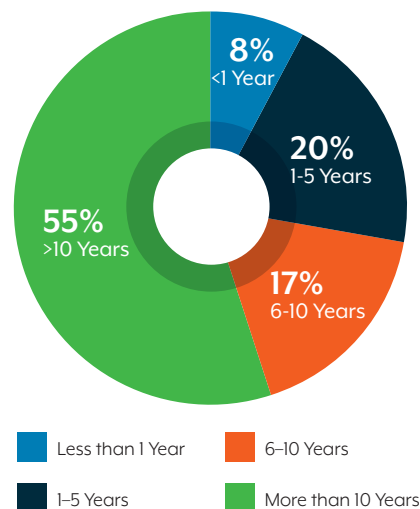
### Gender



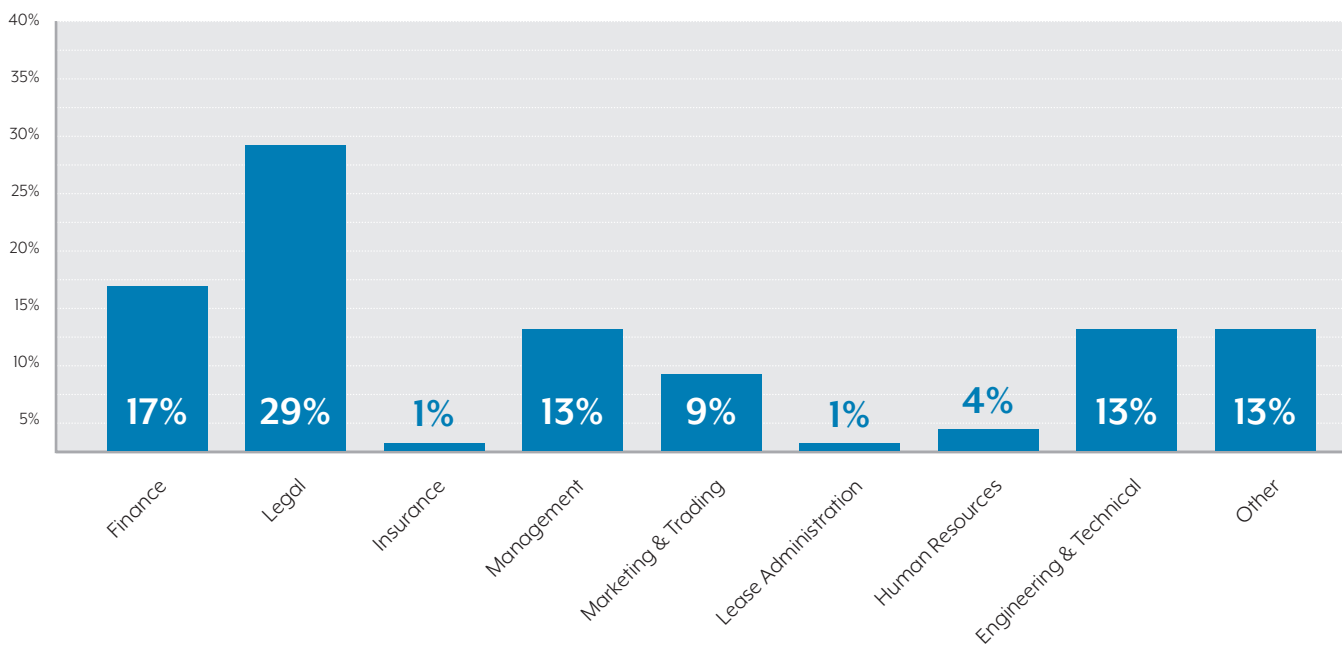
### Age



### Time in the Aviation industry



## Business area



“It’s a male dominated business with a high element of boys club toxicity.”

“There are nuances within the Aviation sector and some areas are better than others.”

## Aviation Industry – On the Road to Diversity?

The latest data presents a nuanced picture of diversity in the Aviation industry. While there are signs of progress in some areas, others show stagnation or even regression. 35% of survey respondents now identify as belonging to a minority group, up from 30% in 2023. These findings reflect a growing representation of diverse talent entering the workforce, suggesting that ongoing recruitment efforts may be yielding positive results.

However, the overall diversity profile of the general workforce has seen minimal change. 59% of respondents reported that over 30% of their employees identify as female or part of a minority group, a marginal increase from 58% last year.

Where the industry faces its greatest challenge is in leadership diversity, a persistent issue that continues to resist change. Only 17% of companies have achieved the generally-accepted target of 30% diversity representation in their C-suite, down from 20% in 2023. There is still a long way to go, and the year-on-year decline highlights the structural barriers that continue to impede the upward mobility of minority groups into key decision-making roles.

Board-level representation remains another area of concern. Only 10% of companies report more than 30% diversity on their boards, up slightly from 9% in 2023. Such minimal growth underscores the need for more robust strategies to foster diversity in leadership positions.

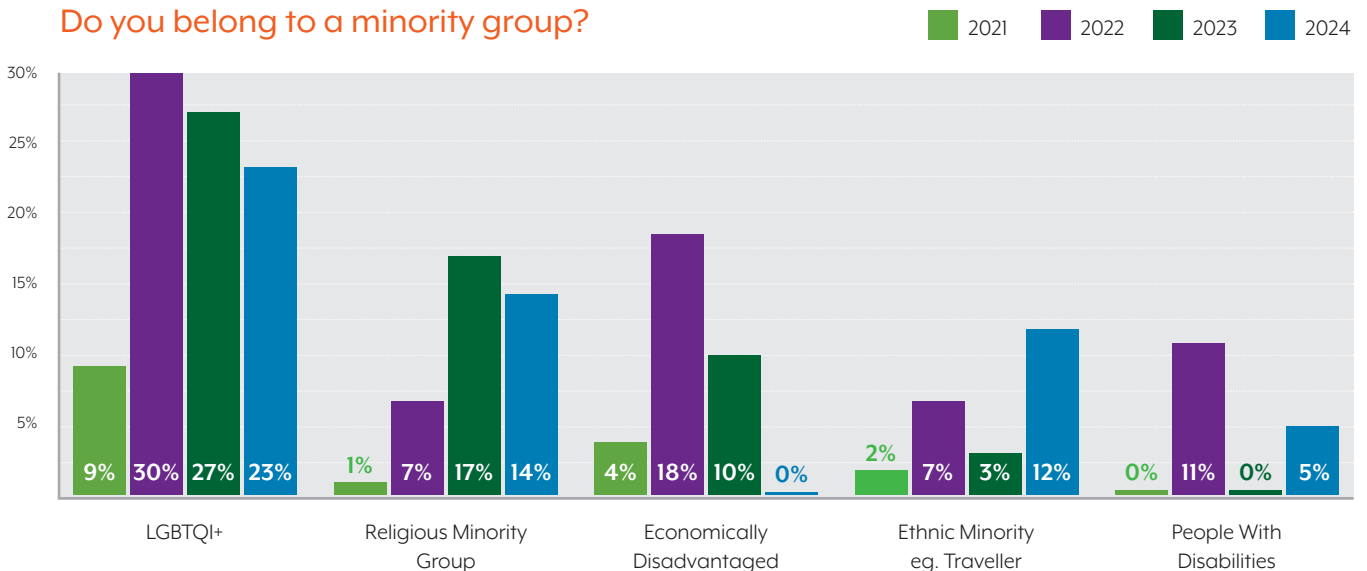
Without intentional action, such as targeted mentorship programs, unbiased recruitment processes, and accountability at the executive level, the Aviation industry is unlikely to attain the 30% target.

Notably, 2020 marked the high point for diversity in the C-suite and boardrooms, where representation peaked at 22%. The key question now is why the industry has struggled to maintain that momentum.

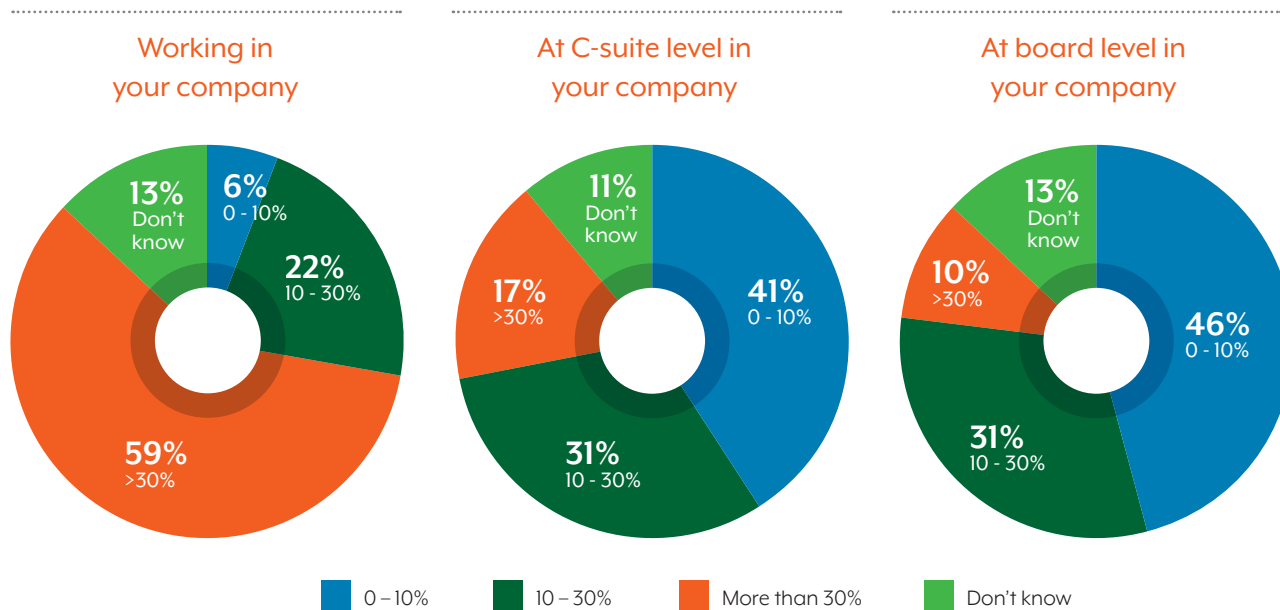
We also asked respondents about improvements in diversity over the last 12 months at senior levels in their organisations. 17% reported an improvement at C-suite level, while just 10% reported an improvement in the composition of their non-executive board. These modest gains, while encouraging, reflect a much slower pace of change than the industry requires. Achieving real progress in this area requires full commitment and buy-in to understand current workforce percentages by gender and diversity. It also involves conducting gender pay gap reporting, analysing the results, and developing programs that introduce necessary supports while sponsoring and mentoring minority candidates.

*“The main focus has to be on sustaining a balanced representation in C-suite and at board level. Progress is easily eroded and undermined and there is a continuing need for visibility of successful diversity candidates.”*

### Do you belong to a minority group?



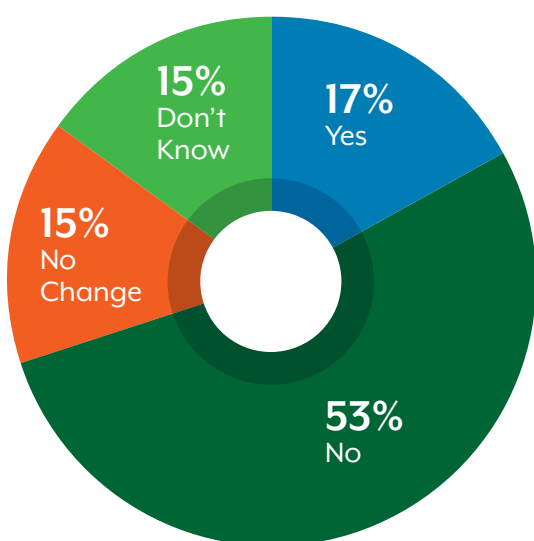
Percentage of employees who identify as female or as a member of minority group:



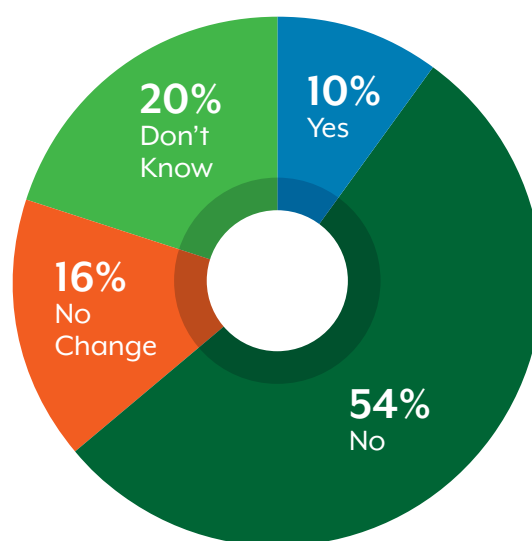
*"A more diverse workforce will bring new ideas and thinking. There are too many grey men..."*



Has the composition of the C-suite in your organisation changed in the last 12 months, leading to a better balance of members who are female or from minority groups?



Has the composition of the non-executive board in your organisation changed in the last 12 months, leading to a better balance of members who are female or from minority groups?



## ESG with Emphasis on 'Social'

The new Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) will require detailed, harmonised sustainability reporting across the EU by July 2024. Companies within the scope will need to produce their first reports early in 2025. Europe is leading the way in ESG by making reporting obligations under the CSRD a legal requirement. CSRD aims to increase and ensure access to high-quality, reliable and comparable information regarding the performance and impact of companies on a wide range of environmental, social and governance issues.

The new reporting standards known as the "European Sustainability Reporting Standards" (ESRSs) set out the information to be contained in a CSRD compliant sustainability report. Social is one of the three pillars of the Topic Standards and datapoints to be reported relate to (i) own workforce, (ii) workers in the value chain, (iii) affected communities, and (iv) consumers and end-users. The points of impact and intersection across the Aviation and wider community are significant.

The reports are subject to external assurance on a phased basis moving from limited to reasonable. Companies who have championed the topic of gender and diversity, put in the effort to date and proactively advocated for equality, should reap the benefits when reporting obligations start to apply.

The growth of sustainability reporting is a global phenomenon, with disclosure frameworks emerging worldwide, not just in the EU. The CSRD is expected to be followed by additional frameworks for action in the future. In the Aviation industry in particular, the prescriptive environmental standards will be of significant concern to stakeholders but the social standards will also require attention. When available, the reports will provide the industry with unprecedented access to information which can be benchmarked and compared across the sector.

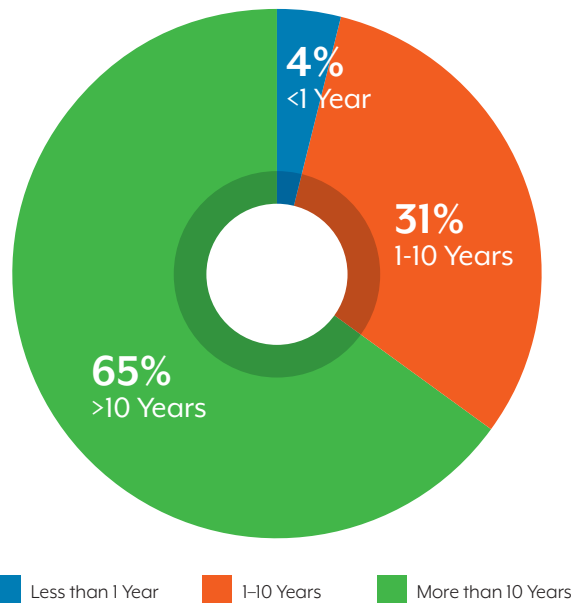
*"Pay gap analysis and public/media focus helped tremendously."*



How would you rate the overall workplace culture in your organisation in terms of supporting diversity and inclusion?



How long has your company been established in Ireland?



## Gender Pay Gap

Since our last report, the landscape of gender pay gap (GPG) reporting has continued to evolve. Organisations with 250 or more employees have been required to report annually on their GPG since December 2022. In 2024, organisations with 150 or more employees are required to report, and the threshold will reduce again to organisations with 50 or more employees in 2025.

Given this expanded requirement, we were surprised to see a decrease in the number of companies conducting a gender pay gap analysis in the last 12 months. Our survey showed that only 18% of respondents conducted an analysis in 2024 compared to 29% in 2023.

Of the organisations who undertook gender pay gap reporting in both 2022 and 2023, 28% reported that the statistics had improved year-on-year. For the majority, 62%, there was no change and 10% reported that the statistics in their company had changed in a negative way.

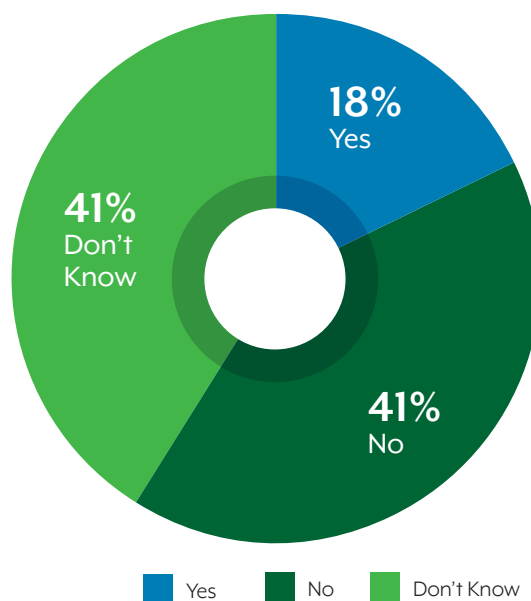
These findings highlight that mandatory reporting alone does not guarantee progress. It is crucial for Aviation companies to not only meet reporting requirements but to also take proactive steps to reduce their gender pay gap.

Effective strategies could include:

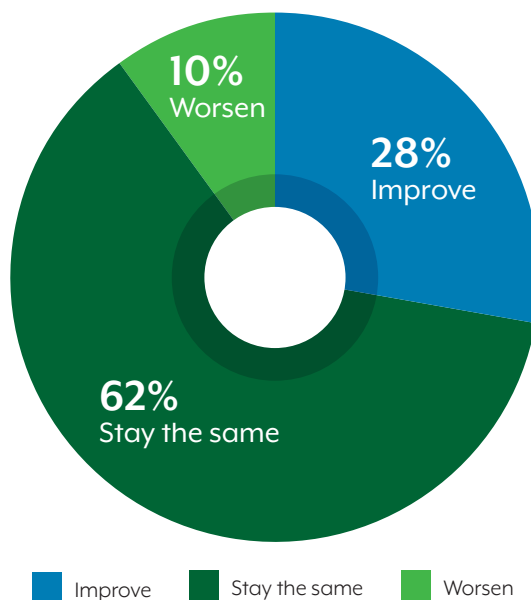
- Targeted recruitment and retention initiatives for underrepresented groups
- Addressing unconscious bias in hiring, promotion, and pay decisions
- Setting measurable targets for gender diversity at all levels

By prioritising pay equity and gender diversity, the Aviation industry can build a more inclusive and competitive sector. Companies that lead in this area are likely to see benefits in innovation, employee satisfaction, and overall performance.

Has your company conducted a gender pay gap analysis in the last 12 months?



If your organisation undertook gender pay gap reporting in 2022 and 2023, did the statistics improve, worsen or stay the same?



*“Frankly as a senior female I am tired of fighting the tide and plan to exit in the next two years.”*

*“More can be done. Open mindsets required.”*

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committees

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are no longer optional components of modern business strategy. They have emerged as critical drivers of organisational success and are core parts of CSRD mandatory reporting with external assurance requirements. Yet, as businesses continue to navigate complex operational landscapes, there is a risk that support for gender and diversity might be deprioritised.

Our survey data highlights a notable decline in organisations with a dedicated DEI committee, falling from 43% in 2023 to 39% in 2024. The downward trend is even more pronounced when compared to the 51% reported in 2021. This raises questions about the sustained commitment to diversity at the highest levels of organisations and existing staff and recent recruits who do not relate to DEI issues.

Despite the decline in DEI committees, their value is widely recognised: 67% of organisations without one believe they would benefit from it, up slightly from 66% last year. The disconnect between awareness and implementation highlights a critical challenge in translating DEI awareness into concrete action.

It is encouraging to see that many organisations report positive DEI cultures. 44% of respondents said they would rate their workplace culture as good in supporting diversity, with 17% saying it was excellent. However, the picture is not uniformly positive. With four out of ten respondents (40%) saying 'fair' (22%) or 'poor' (18%), there is still scope for considerable improvement.

36% of companies have implemented DEI training programmes in the last 12 months. While this could reflect a growing awareness of the importance of diversity in shaping organisational culture, there is still considerable room for improvement in both scope and reach.

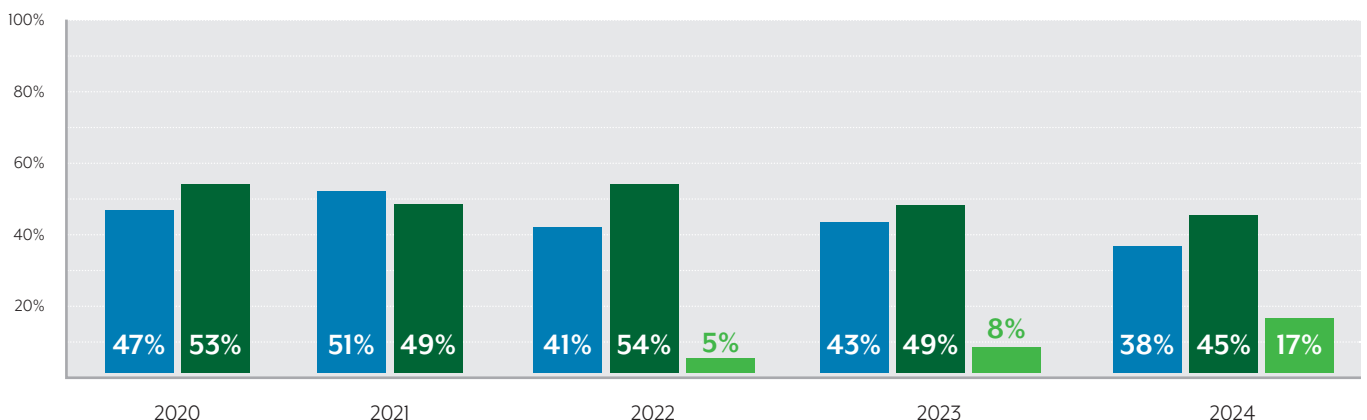
Our survey also shows that mentorship programmes, designed to support career advancement for women and minority employees, are offered by only 28% of organisations. We recognise that some industry bodies offer mentor programmes and employees may be encouraged to seek mentors outside of their own organisations. However, the low level of initiative within companies to develop and promote mentor programmes is an area of opportunity for businesses to consider for 2025 to support career development for all employees.

In summary, while some progress is being made, the data reveals a disconnect between understanding the value of diversity and taking concrete steps to embed it within organisational structures. Bridging this gap will be critical for businesses aiming to unlock the full potential of a diverse workforce.

*“The Aviation industry compared to others has a DEI mountain to climb.”*

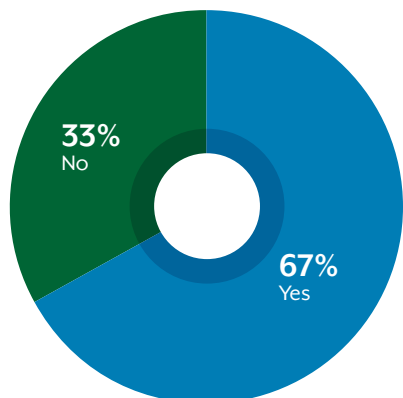
### Does your company have a gender & diversity, or diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) committee?

Yes No Don't Know

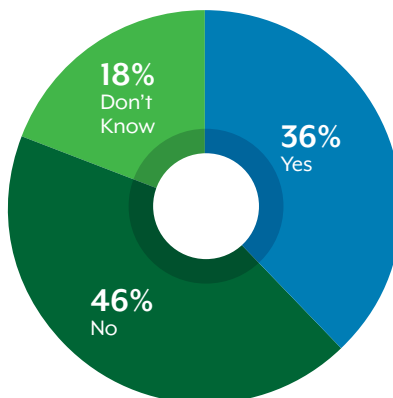




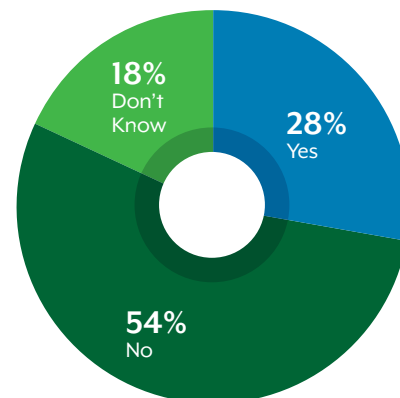
Do you think your organisation would benefit from a diversity & inclusion committee?



Has your company implemented any diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training programmes in the last 12 months?



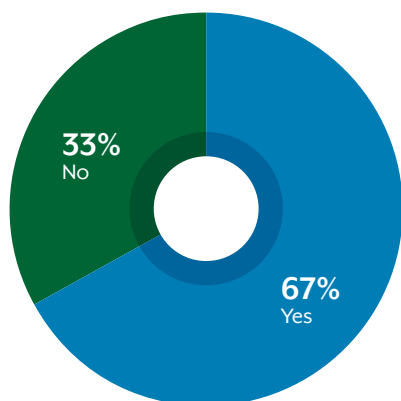
Does your company offer mentorship programmes aimed at supporting career advancement for women and minority employees?



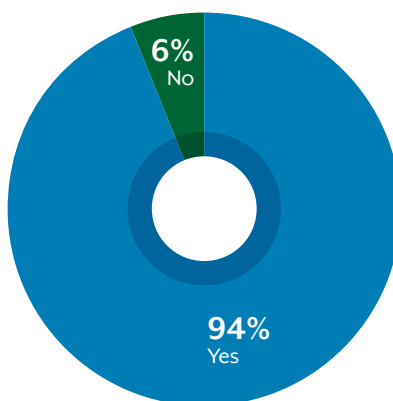
Yes No Don't Know

*"I feel the Aviation industry is particularly tokenistic regarding DEI. For instance, pride celebrations and decorations without any attempt to improve outcomes for minority groups."*

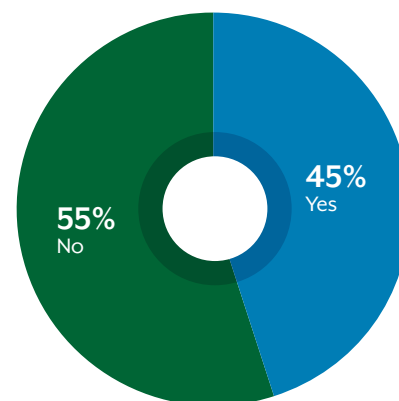
Does your organisation have its corporate headquarters and senior management team located in Ireland?



Do you currently have an option of remote or hybrid working?



Is the promotion track clear and transparent in your current organisation?



Yes No

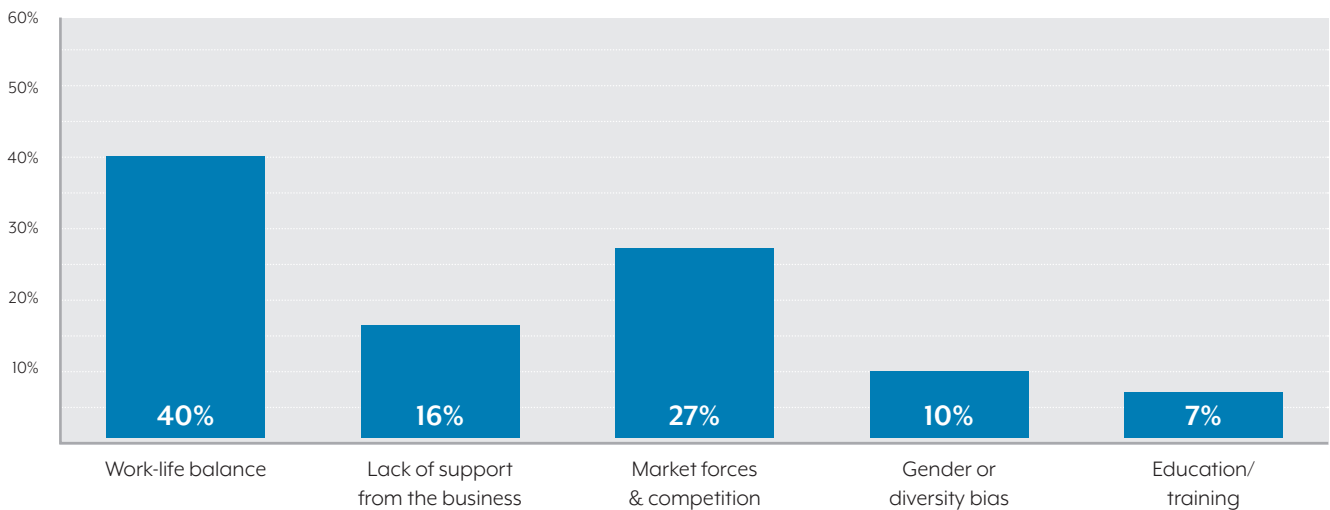
## Career Progression

Work-life balance remains the most significant challenge to career progression, cited by 40% of respondents. While this is a slight decrease from 44% last year, it still represents a substantial concern. The Aviation industry's global nature and 'always on' culture continue to pose challenges for employees seeking to balance professional and personal responsibilities. The minimal year-on-year change indicates that while some progress has made, organisations have yet to fully address this critical barrier to employee satisfaction and career growth.

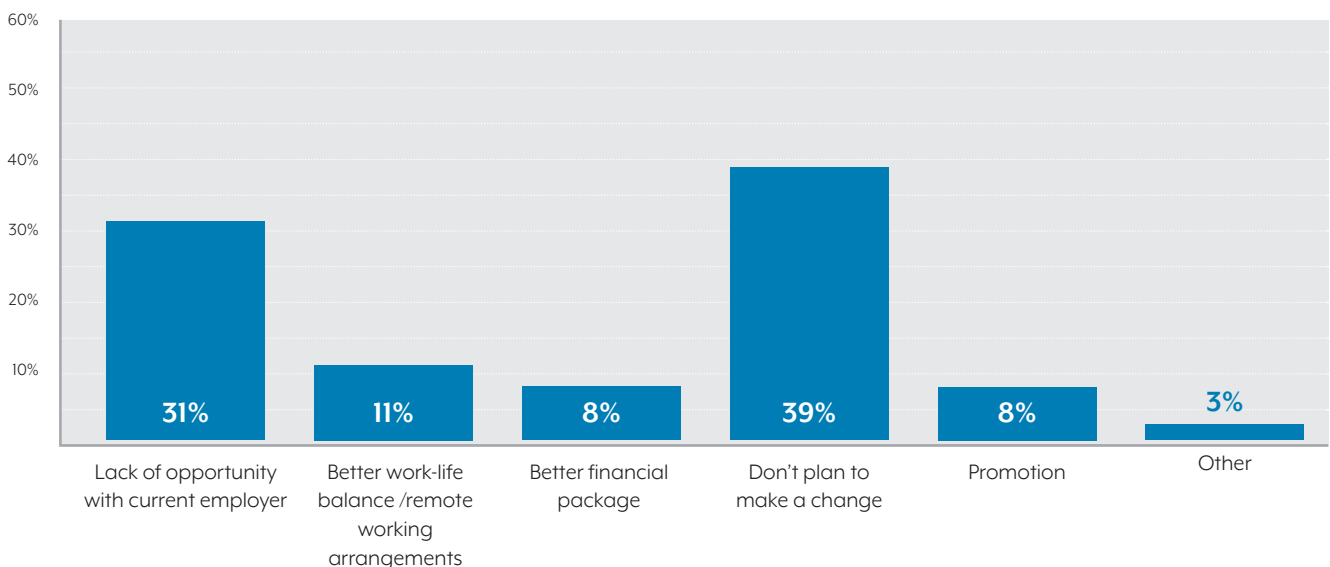
Interestingly, there has been a shift in motivations for changing employers. Financial incentives have become less important, down from 26% to 8% year-on-year. Lack of opportunity is now the primary reason for job changes, rising from 25% in 2023 to 30% in 2024. The suggestion is that career development and progression opportunities are increasingly valued over immediate financial gain.

While 84% of organisations saw promotions in 2023/2024, only 31% reported an equal number of men and women being promoted – a 1% increase on last year. Such minimal improvement underscores the slow pace of progress in the industry.

### What is the single biggest challenge to your career progression in 2024/2025?



### What would be the main reason for you to change employer in 2024/2025?



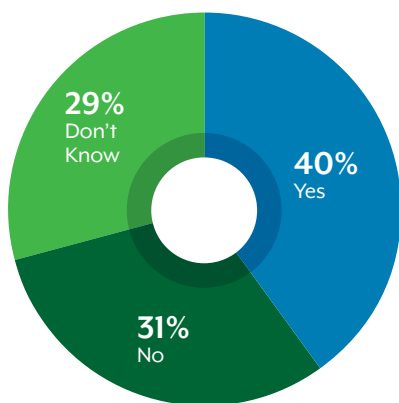
The lack of clarity around promotion tracks also remains a concern. Less than half (45%) of respondents feel that their organisation's promotion track is clear and transparent, a marginal improvement from last year's 44%. The data suggests that many employees still struggle to understand their career progression paths, potentially hindering diversity in leadership pipelines.

On a positive note, 40% of companies provide support for employees returning from extended leave.

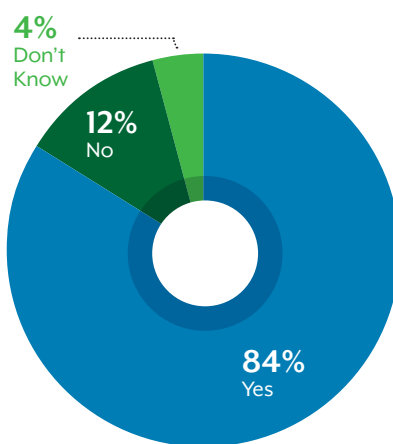
Expanding and refining these support systems could be a key differentiator in attracting and retaining talent, particularly among demographics that have historically faced challenges in maintaining career momentum alongside personal commitments.

Overall, our findings reveal that work-life balance, promotion equity, and career transparency remain critical challenges. As the Aviation industry continues to evolve, tackling these interlinked issues will be critical for organisations to effectively compete in the global talent market.

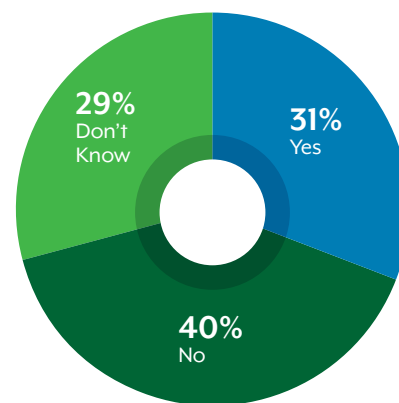
Does your company provide support for employees returning to work after extended leave (e.g. maternity/paternity leave, medical leave)?



Did promotions take place in your organisation in 2022/23?



Were there an equal number of men and women promoted in your organisation in 2022/23?



Yes No Don't Know

“I am regularly at meetings where I am the only woman. Most of the time it doesn't bother me but it does get lonely at times.”

“This industry needs a talent refresh – a fresh outlook and a more modern approach to management and culture. Serious progression on diversity would be very welcome in this regard.”

## Conclusion

The Aviation industry stands at a crossroads. While there has been some progress in building a more diverse workforce, leadership diversity continues to lag significantly behind. The decline in C-suite diversity and minimal changes at board-level suggest that structural and cultural barriers remain deeply entrenched.

If the industry is serious about transforming its leadership landscape, companies must go beyond surface-level initiatives. They must create pathways for diverse talent to rise through the ranks, ensuring that diversity is not only represented at entry levels but is also embedded in the core of executive leadership. Without these efforts, the Aviation sector risks missing out on the proven benefits of a diverse and inclusive leadership team, from enhanced decision-making to better financial performance.

The message is clear: diversity cannot remain a checkbox item. As the sector continues to recover and faces new challenges, the value of diverse perspectives in leadership becomes ever more critical. We encourage companies to use these insights to review and strengthen their diversity and inclusion strategies, ensuring they are creating truly inclusive environments that foster growth and innovation.

By embracing diversity and inclusion not just as ideals but as strategic imperatives, the Aviation industry can unlock new perspectives, drive innovation, and better reflect the global community it serves.

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## About Our Team

Our award-winning advice on Aviation financing transactions ranges from cross-border legal and tax structuring and regulation to alternative funding and joint ventures.

We also advise on contentious issues such as bankruptcy and insolvency. Along with leading local and international lessors and financiers, we also work closely with credit agencies and government bodies.

Learn more:  
[MHC.ie/Aviation](https://mhc.ie/Aviation)

## What Others Say About Us

Our Aviation & Asset Finance Team

”

*“This is a very strong team.”*

*“Excellent, user friendly, great turnaround times.”*

Legal 500, 2024

Our Aviation & Asset Finance Team

”

*“It is a very strong and cohesive team with a nice balance of experienced and younger lawyers.”*

Chambers & Partners, 2023

## Our Team



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