

Gender & Diversity In Aviation Survey

2023



About the Survey

We began this survey in 2015, and 2023 marks the 8th year of our focus on gender and diversity issues within the Aviation industry. My sincere thanks to everyone who contributed their insights to the survey this year.

We commenced the survey to draw attention to underrepresentation of women in senior roles in Aviation. *“There is illiteracy in our industry on Gender and Diversity”* was one of the many comments in the survey this year which starkly highlights the need for continued focus, further education and serious and sustained engagement on this issue.

The report would not be possible without you and your honest feedback and comments. They help all of us involved in this sector to assess current attitudes, monitor trends and highlight the current status of the gender and diversity profile of the Aviation industry.

The survey was carried out during the summer of 2023 and covered diversity issues including gender, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation in the Aviation industry.



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Introduction

People are resilient and this is reflected in the rebound of the Aviation sector. IATA reported industry wide revenue passenger-kilometres increased 28.4% year-on-year in August 2023 and compared to 2019 levels, passenger traffic recovered to 95.7%. To quote Alastair Campbell, who recently spoke at our Financial Services Insights series, we need a lot of *“perseverance”* – a combination of resilience and perseverance – in Aviation and the area of gender and diversity. The industry continues to undergo significant challenges and new opportunities and headwinds continue to emerge. We aim to monitor how these changes impact diversity, equity and inclusion within the workforce in this sector.

As we launch our 8th annual report looking at the issues of diversity and inclusion across the Aviation industry, we take a hard look at the statistical information. Once again we raise the topic of the real need for investment and support initiatives to drive further integration of women and minority groups at all levels in the Aviation industry, especially at senior levels.

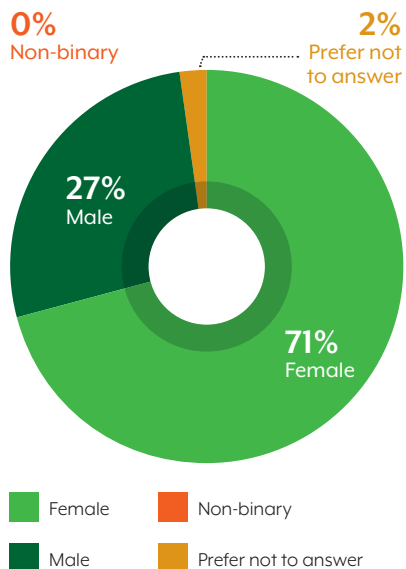


“It is our turn to make a difference.”

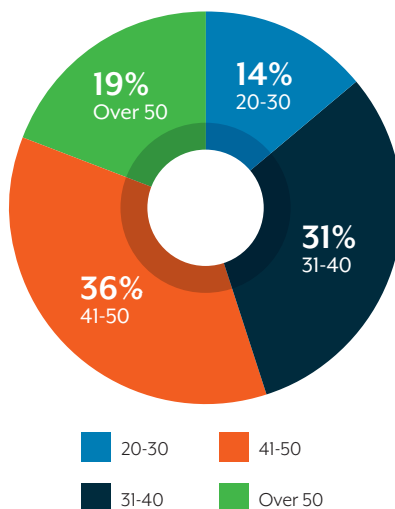


Profile of Participants

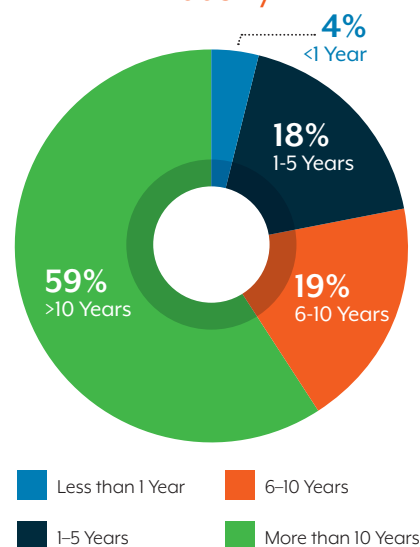
Gender



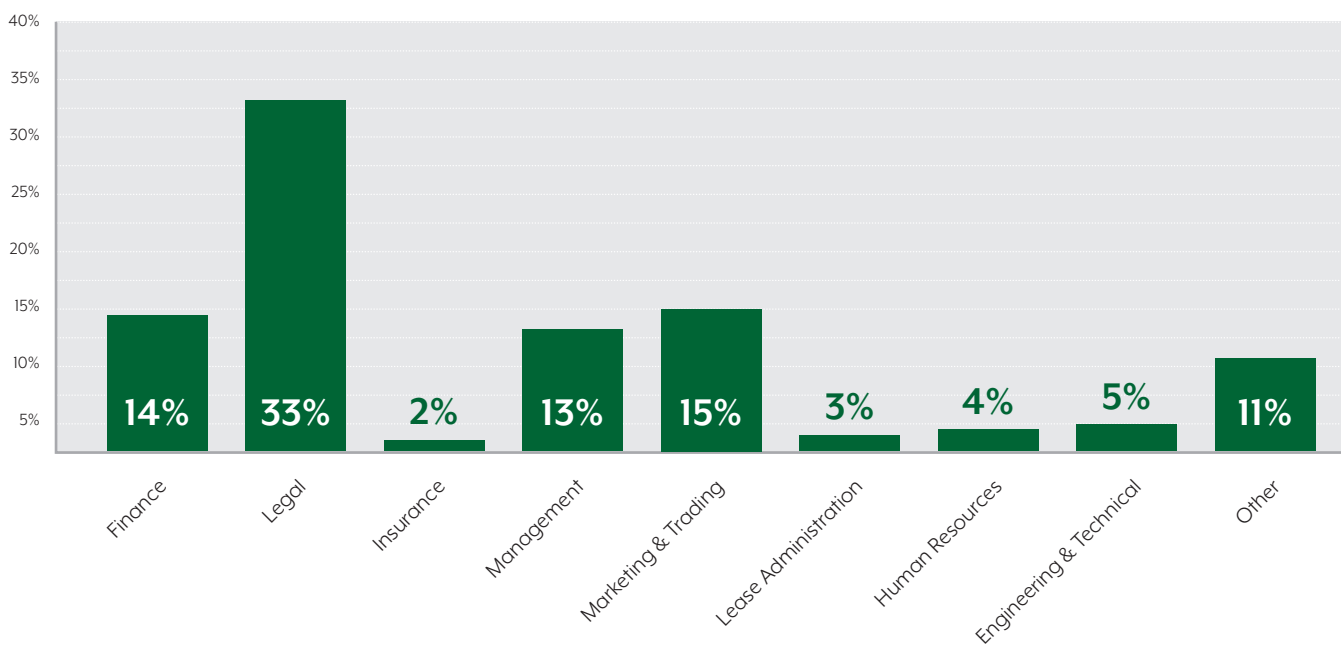
Age



Time in the Aviation industry



Business area



“Diversity and discrimination isn’t just about gender. I have found that it is fashionable to discriminate based on age.”



Aviation Industry – On the Road to Diversity?

This year's data indicates over 30% of respondents identify as belonging to a minority group. The data also reveals some progress year-on-year in the overall profile of the industry, but it highlights that recruitment and promotion at higher levels of leadership remains difficult and overall has stagnated.

It is encouraging to see a modest improvement in general workforce diversity, with 59% of respondents this year indicating that over 30% of their employees identify as female or part of a minority group, up from 56% last year. This suggests that initiatives to enhance diversity at entry and mid-levels within organisations might be bearing fruit.

Also promising is the growth in diversity within the C-suite, where representation of individuals identifying as female or from minority groups rose to 20% this year from 18% last year. While not large, this change is significant because C-suite roles are prestigious, few in number and highly visible internally and externally across the industry. It is also significant as C-suite leaders direct on strategy and planning, and influence company policies and culture.

However, the situation seems to regress at the board level. Representation almost halved, dropping from 16% to 9%. This could have significant repercussions for the Aviation industry where diversity of candidates and experiences at board level are essential for good corporate governance.

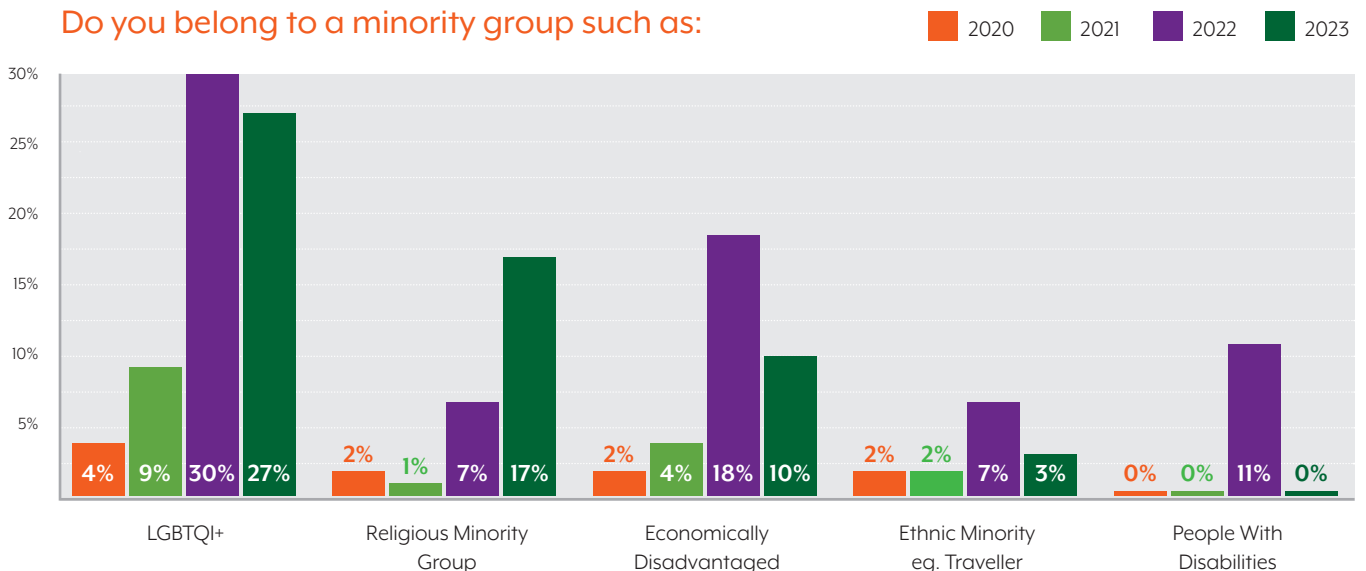
The 30% Club report (March 2023) emphasises the difference that gender diversity makes to running corporate boards, with significant findings that women place greater emphasis on emerging issues, notably company culture and employee development.

Overall the response to the question of whether there has been a change in the last 12 months to the composition of number of gender and diversity candidates at board level and C-suite was a resounding NO! These statistics highlight a critical disconnect in the pathways through career. While there might be a diverse pool of talent at lower levels, this isn't translating into increased diversity in the upper echelons of leadership.

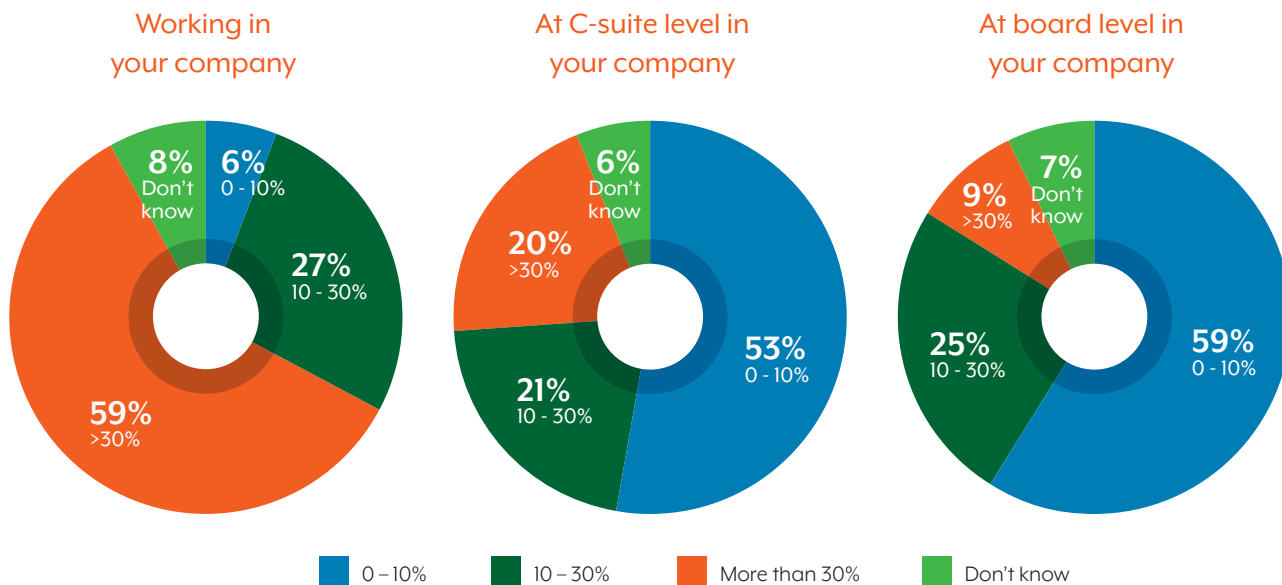
Our survey results year-on-year underscore the need for intentional, targeted actions to promote diversity at the highest ranks of corporate leadership structures. This is to ensure progress is not only visible at entry and mid-tier levels but also reflected where strategic decisions are made. This discrepancy points to a potential barrier in career advancement and access to leadership roles for women and minority groups, an issue that companies must address as part of their broader diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies.

“Strong diversity numbers at junior level but unrepresented at senior level.”

Do you belong to a minority group such as:

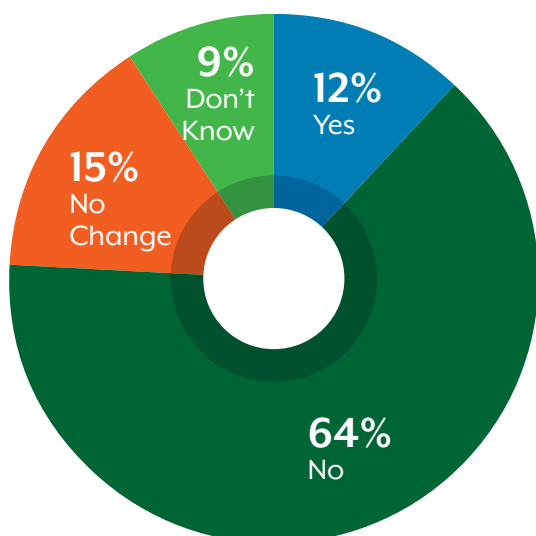


Percentage of employees who identify as female or as a member of minority group:

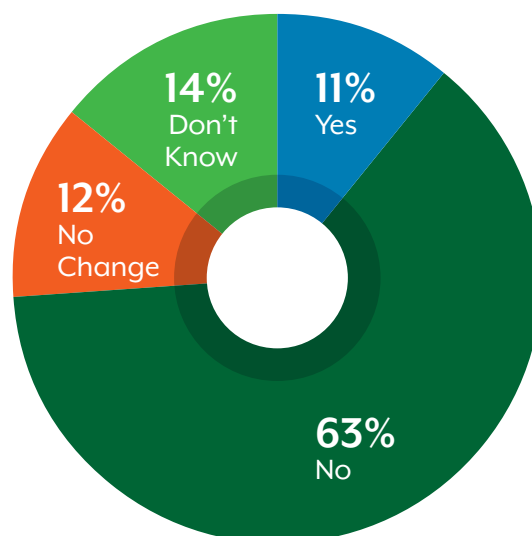


“There are still limitations to promoting women in to senior roles in Aviation. There is greater representation at junior levels but the challenge remains to women getting roles in C-suite and senior management.”

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?



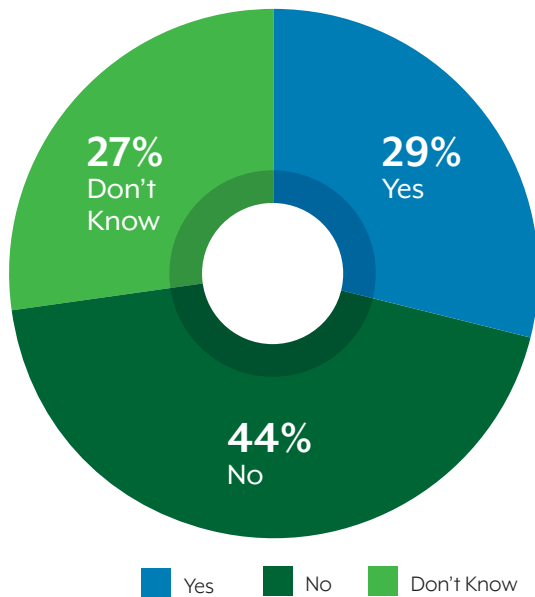
Gender Pay Gap

The commencement of the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 in May 2022 marked a significant step forward in highlighting pay disparity in Ireland, where the gender pay gap stands at an average of 14%.

Organisations with over 250 employees reported on their gender pay gap for the first time in 2022.

In light of this, it's encouraging, although not surprising, to observe a substantial uptick in the number of companies undertaking gender pay gap analyses over the last year — a jump from 11.25% in 2022 to 29.41%.

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



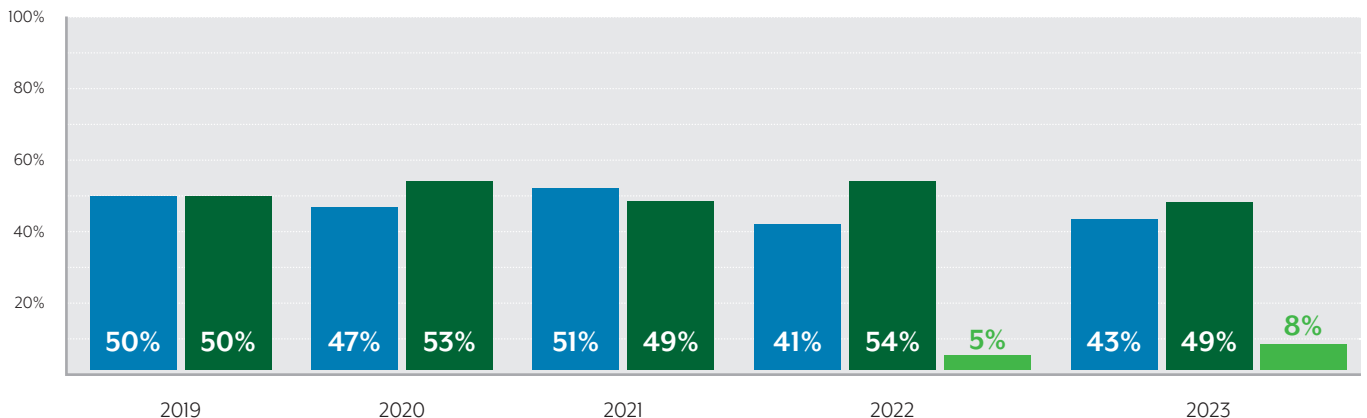
A key takeaway from the first year of gender pay gap reporting is that it provides very useful data for employers in identifying where the gaps exist and using this information to identify and analyse the underlying reasons for such gaps. Importantly, the data also assists employers to take steps to reduce or eliminate gaps, review job specifications, evaluate comparable roles by removing gender stereotyping and consider organisational remuneration practices.

To enhance the work of gender pay gap reporting, there is a new EU directive on pay transparency fast approaching. It will require employers to share information about how much they pay women and men for work of equal value and take action where gender pay gap exceeds 5%. The transposition deadline is 7 June 2026.

A brief summary of the new EU directive, when implemented, is that employers will be prevented from asking job applicants about their pay history. In addition, existing employees will be entitled to ask for information on average pay levels, broken down by sex, for categories of employees carrying out equal work. It will give employees access to the criteria used to determine pay and career/pay progression, which is required to be objective and gender neutral. Once implemented, if the gender pay gap report reveals a pay gap of more than 5% that cannot be justified by objective, gender-neutral criteria, employers will be required to take action in the form of a joint pay assessment carried out in cooperation with workers' representatives. It could also result in employers being subject to discrimination claims.

Does your company have a gender & diversity committee?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know



Gender pay gap reporting is now a reality and large businesses such as airlines and financial institutions will be reporting again this year and considering the report in the context of the implications of the new EU directive on pay transparency. The threshold for gender pay gap reporting reduces to 150 employees in 2024, and to 50 employees in 2025.

Diversity & Inclusion Committees

The link between businesses that have embedded diversity at all levels of their organisations and improved financial performance has been well documented. One of the ways that businesses can help encourage diversity and foster cultural change is the creation of a diversity & inclusion committee to help spearhead initiatives.

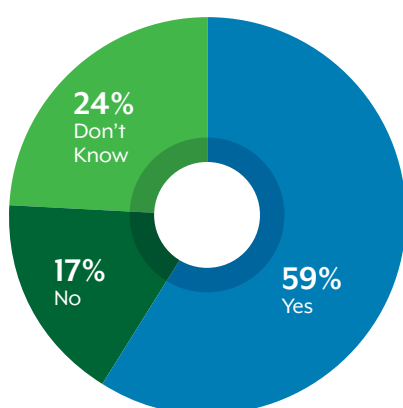
This year we have seen a modest increase in the reported existence of diversity & inclusion committees to 43% – up from 41% in the previous year although still notably lower than the 51% reported in 2021.

Of those who don't have a diversity & inclusion committee, 59% state that they believe their organisation would benefit from one.

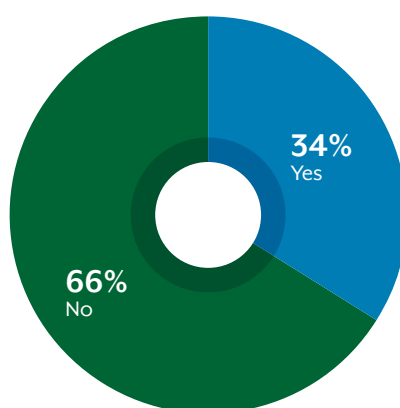
Interestingly, among those without a diversity & inclusion committee, there's a slight downturn in the conviction about its potential benefits – 59% this year compared to 66% previously. This dip could signal growing scepticism or a shift in focus despite the established correlation between organisational diversity and better financial outcomes.

It is crucial for companies to recognise not only the ethical imperative but also the substantial business advantages of fostering a diverse and inclusive environment. Enhanced training on diversity and inclusion at the leadership level is useful and helpful, as leaders need to fully grasp and appreciate the business case for diversity to truly commit to driving organisational change.

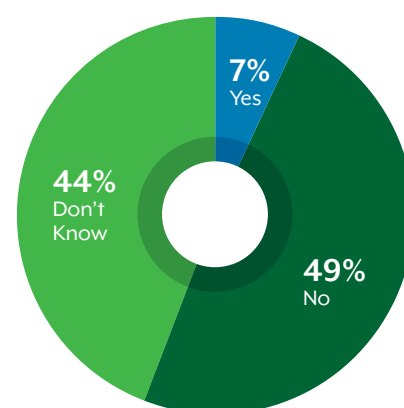
Do you think your organisation would benefit from a diversity & inclusion committee?



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



Does 'working from home' shield employees from discrimination and unconscious bias due to lack of visibility?



Yes No Don't Know/Other

"It is becoming harder to convince men – who dominate in C-suite and boards – that gender equality is still an issue in 2023."



Career Progression

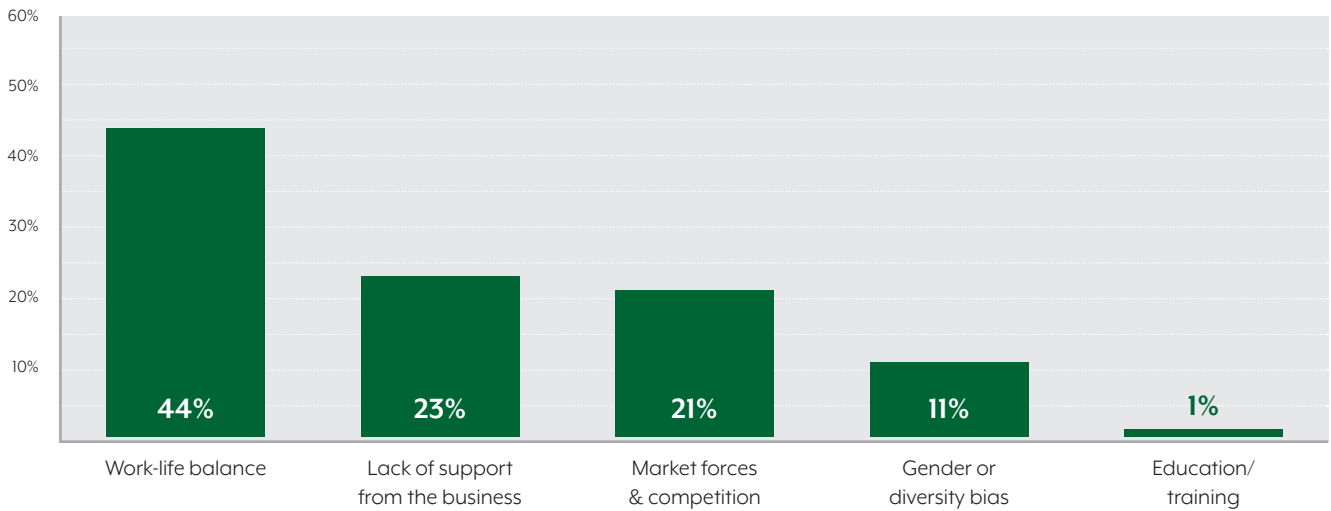
A question in the survey was what is the biggest challenge to career progression? The majority of replies (44%) cited work-life balance, highlighting the ongoing struggle employees face in juggling professional and personal responsibilities. Aviation is a global industry and timezone agnostic. Those engaged in transactional practices are subject to the expectation of being “always on”.

To attract and retain talented professionals, Aviation companies may need to rethink the approach to work and culture and consider policies that offer greater flexibility and supports or alternative fixed working arrangements.

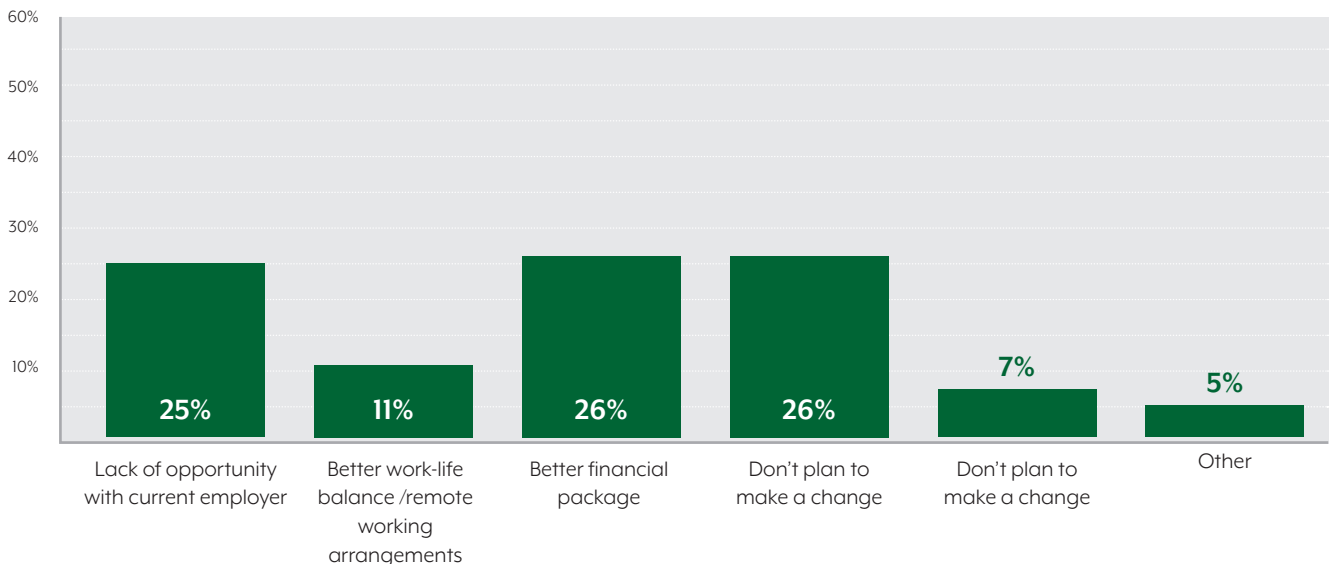
The second biggest challenge was reported as lack of support from the business (23%). Market forces & competition also remains a challenge, although there has been a slight decrease from 28% to 21%.

“Women have not achieved equal recognition and representation at senior levels in this industry despite laws on equal pay, non-discrimination in workplace and publicity on gender pay gap.”

What is the single biggest challenge to your career progression in 2023?



What would be the main reason for you to change employer in 2023/2024?



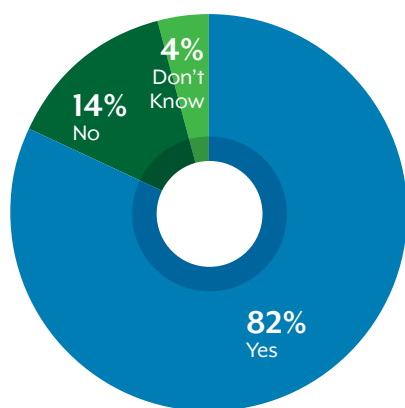
In 2023, we have seen a notable and encouraging decrease in the reporting of gender or diversity bias as a career progression hurdle — down from 25% to 11%. This suggests that efforts to address workplace equality may be having a positive impact, which is very encouraging though it should not give rise to complacency.

Based on survey data, 80% of Aviation companies had a round of promotions in 2022/23. This is indicative of the resilience of the industry. There was an increase in respondents observing an equal gender ratio in promotions — up to 30% from 25% — but materially tempered by a significant proportion that remain unsure of the gender split of candidates (34%). This uncertainty might indicate a lack of transparent communication from companies regarding promotion practices or candidates self-selecting out of the process.

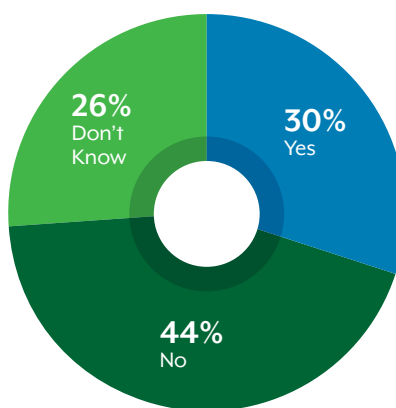
The shift in primary motivations for changing employers is striking; financial incentives have dramatically declined in importance (58% to 26%), overtaken by a perceived lack of opportunity (25%). This shift may reflect a changing workforce ethos where career development and progression opportunities are valued over immediate financial gain.

Lastly, the slight increase in respondents believing the promotion track is clear and transparent is minimal at best (33% to 34% affirming). With two-thirds still perceiving a lack of clarity (66%), companies need to address this gap in understanding. Clear, transparent pathways for advancement are crucial for employee retention and satisfaction, and here it seems, much improvement is still necessary.

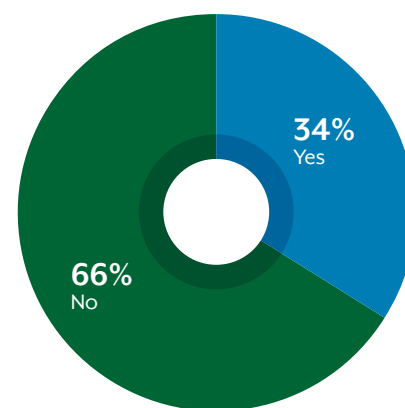
Did promotions take place in your organisation in 2022/23?



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



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



■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know

“The challenge remains to women getting roles in C-suite and senior management.”

“The last year was the year I realised things weren't changing when it came to gender diversity and going out on my own was the only way I was ever going to be a CEO!”

Conclusion

It is not surprising that as a legal professional I am passionate about equality. *#Embrace Equity* was the campaign slogan of International Women's Day 2023. It asked that we imagine a world that is diverse, equitable and inclusive.

Our world is diverse. We should use this diversity constructively to work to achieve a greater sense of inclusiveness. Looking back over the last eight years of this survey, I remain committed to highlighting the important issue of gender and diversity. I recognise based on the survey results the slow pace of change and low percentage improvement of diversity candidates in Aviation. However, sharing the results can help to effect change in trends and attitudes.

Average percentage representation in the upper echelons of the Aviation sector who contributed to our survey at less than 30% should not become normalised. Flatlining is not good enough. The 2023 survey reflects the recent experiences across the industry at a particular point in time. The aim of the survey is to raise awareness and to encourage companies to take a hard look at their culture and structures. Where barriers are disclosed, then the work should start to dismantle them. The fundamental issue of equality should be recognised and embraced as an inherent part of the fabric, culture and personality of every organisation.

The successful few diversity candidates should be applauded but they cannot effect change alone. Good corporate governance guidelines emphasise the need for diversity on boards and regular rotation of members to ensure access to new skillsets and diversity of thought and experiences. Businesses benefit from selecting and engaging the best to assist with new strategies and better culture. If we do not encourage and support diversity, the issue of underrepresentation will not go away.

In 2023 we have not seen significant improvement or steady incremental changes to the percentage representation of gender and diversity candidates in Aviation, this is the reality and experience of our respondents, at least for now! There are no excuses not to try to make a difference. I am not discouraged and will continue to work to bring attention to this issue. At Mason Hayes & Curran, we will continue to support the amazing efforts of groups like AWAR, IATA, IWAR and Propelher in their initiatives and programs engaging with diversity candidates. I am confident that the many hands involved will lighten the load overall and work will continue!

On a personal note, I wish to convey my thanks to all those in the industry who continuously advocate for equality. I encourage everyone to get involved and I urge you to continue to engage with your colleagues, create or join diversity committees and external associations, raise awareness, seek out support and speak up for change where it is needed.

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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.

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What Others Say About Us

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 Aviation & Asset Finance Team



"The legal advice and support we have received from Christine and her team over the years has been invaluable."

Legal 500, 2022

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