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Belgrade

AmCham Survey: **Initiatives for Empowering Women in the Workplace**

**SHE
KNOWS**

**Economic
Empowerment
of Women**



Centar za razvoj Jablaničkog
i Pčinjskog okruga

ERSTE
Bank

Contents

I.	INTRODUCTION	5
II.	SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE STRUCTURE	5
III.	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	7
IV.	CULTURE OF SUPPORT FOR WORKING WOMEN	8
V.	WOMEN'S SUPPORT PROGRAMMES	9
VI.	OBSTACLES IN THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT	10
VII.	GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION	11
	a. Share of women in new hiring	11
	b. Approaches to hiring women	11
	c. Proportion of women in managing positions	12
VIII.	ADVANCEMENT	12
IX.	PAY AND WORKING HOURS GAPS	14
X.	STAFF PROFILES	17
	a. Average age and working experience	17
	b. Educational attainment	19
	c. Managerial positions	19
	d. Hiring issues	20
XI.	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	21
XII.	COMPETENCIES	22
XIII.	SUPPORT FOR FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES	24
XIV.	GENDER EQUALITY SUPPORT MECHANISMS	25
XV.	SMALLER VS LARGER COMPANIES	27
XVI.	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR THE JABLANICA AND PČINJA DISTRICTS	30
XVII.	FINDINGS OF THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY	31
	a. Impact of society and family	31
	b. Impact of the business environment	32
	c. Individual expectations	32
XVIII.	CONCLUSIONS	34
XIX.	RECOMMENDATIONS	35

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the findings of a survey undertaken by AmCham Serbia into initiatives to empower women in the workplace. The research is part of *Ona zna* ('She Knows'), a broader project that seeks to enhance women's economic inclusion by delivering support across a range of areas whilst dismantling obstacles and dispelling gender stereotypes in the workplace. This effort is funded by USAID and implemented by Impact Hub Belgrade in partnership with AmCham, the Jablanica and Pčinja Districts Development Centre (CRPJO), and Erste Bank.

The summary explores ways in which companies support women and identifies the remaining obstacles, focusing especially on vulnerable populations of women, such as women aged 45 and above and pregnant women. The findings emphasise the importance of fostering an inclusive business environment conducive to women's entrepreneurship and professional growth, as this will be a key step in achieving gender equality and economic justice in Serbia.

The survey largely covered AmCham member companies, generally large multinational firms whose policies and best practices can serve as examples to others in developing supportive environments for women.

II. SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE STRUCTURE

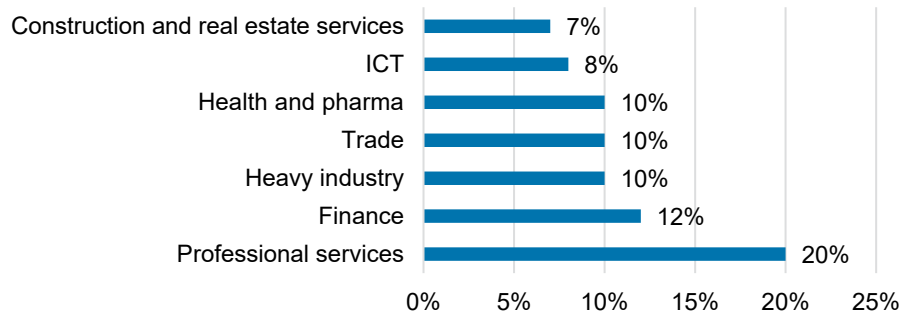
Fieldwork took place from **March to May 2024**. Data were collected using online questionnaires, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews. The sample comprised AmCham member companies and businesses active in the Jablanica and Pčinja districts. A total of **78 completed questionnaires** were collected.

The surveyed firms operated in **a variety of sectors**, including professional services, finance, heavy industry, trade, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, information and communication technology (ICT), and construction and real estate services.

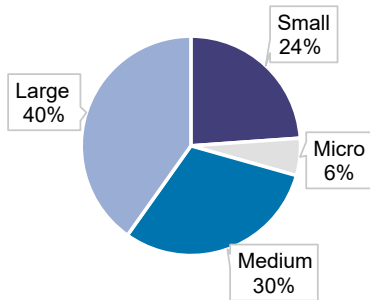
Medium-sized and large companies accounted for as many as 70 percent of the sample.

The majority of the firms were active in **global or regional markets**.

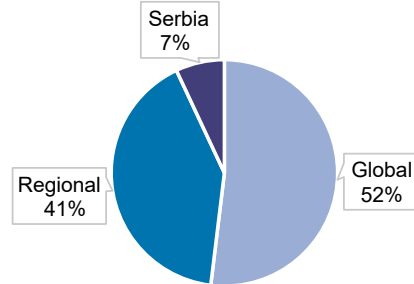
Company sector



Company size



Company market



III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Existing women's support programmes. An assessment of support programmes currently available to women in the workplace has revealed a variety of approaches, not all of which are equally effective. Most respondent companies had women's empowerment policies and initiatives on their agendas, largely drawing on standards introduced globally by their parent multinational firms. These policies encompassed a broad range of actionable programmes and strategies, including mentoring, skills training, gender equality in hiring and advancement, and a workplace culture supportive of women.

Companies that have deployed women's empowerment programmes tend to achieve better results in terms of greater female representation at various levels of the organisation, a more encouraging working environment that promotes staff motivation, and project an image as desirable employers that foster diversity and inclusion.

Obstacles in the business environment. Although some progress has been made with supporting women in the workplace, further improvements depend on the identification of obstacles they continue to encounter in this context. These barriers include gender biased hiring and advancement policies, shortage of opportunities for professional development, absence of gender equality in balancing family-related and business responsibilities, and lack of support and mentoring for women on paths to leadership.

These obstacles ought to be explored from a variety of perspectives, including the experiences of working women, assessment of company policies and practices, and the broader social and economic context.

Need for continued improvement of support programmes. The survey has found an obvious need to continue improving support programmes for women in the workplace. Here, efforts could include revising existing policies and practices to remove gender inequalities, strengthening support and mentoring programmes to help women gain skills and use opportunities to advance, and developing new initiatives aimed at meeting the specific needs of women in the workplace.

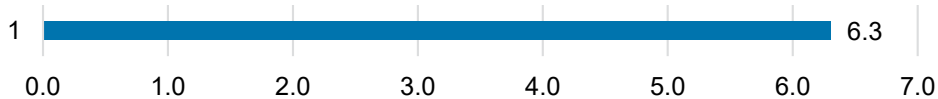
Crucially, companies should recognise the importance of continuously improving their women's support programmes to ensure an inclusive and enabling working environment where all staff enjoy equal opportunities to succeed.

IV. CULTURE OF SUPPORT FOR WORKING WOMEN

The culture of support for working women received the average score of 6.3 on a scale from 1 to 7. Here, managers and chief executive officers (CEOs) tended to award higher scores, with minimal variation between sectors: in heavy industry, for instance, the average score was 6, whilst in trade it stood at 6.8.

The average score awarded by women was 6.2, whilst for men the figure was 6.9.

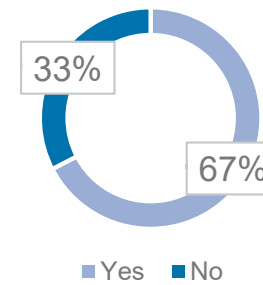
Score for culture of support for working women



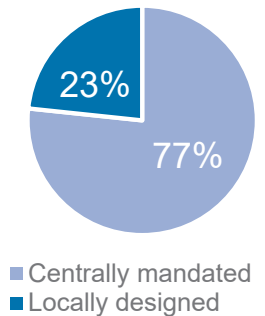
V. WOMEN'S SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

Most companies (67 percent) claimed they had policies or initiatives in place to empower women and overcome the gender gap, whilst the remainder (33 percent) did not. These policies and initiatives were the rarest in construction and real estate companies (at 33 percent), whilst 100 percent of all financial service firms had such mechanisms in place. Women's empowerment policies were generally centrally mandated by the global headquarters of these firms, which came as no surprise as the sample contained many medium-sized and large companies that are often part of large international corporations.

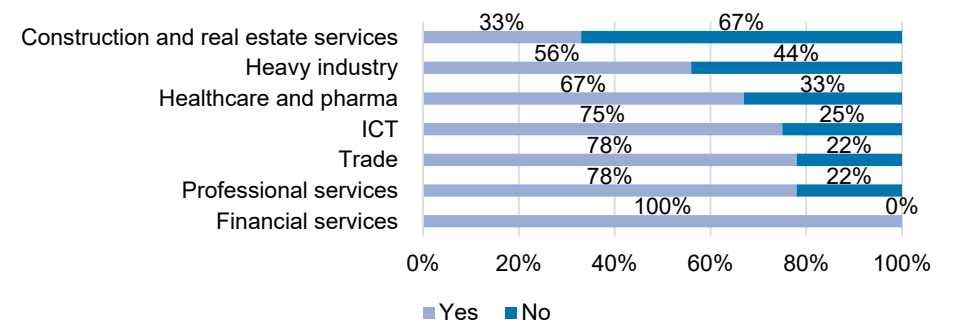
Women's empowerment policies and initiatives



Politics and initiatives by level



Policies and initiatives by sector

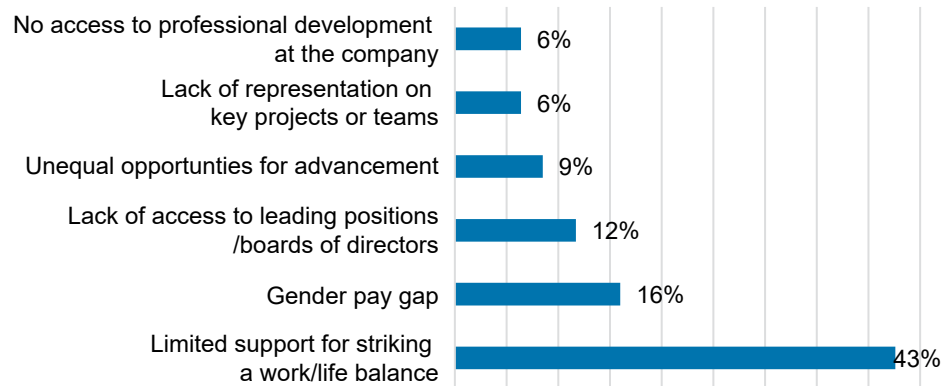


VI. OBSTACLES IN THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

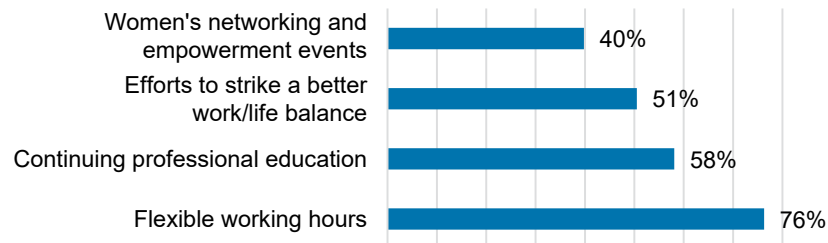
The most common challenges faced by women in the workplace were limited support for striking a work/life balance, gender pay gap, and restricted access to leading positions. **Gender-sensitive language was used by 44 percent of these companies**, with 23 percent not using it at all.

The companies tended to use flexible working hours, generally in the form of sliding work schedules and hybrid work. This flexitime was used by both men and women, with staff generally working one-half of their hours remotely.

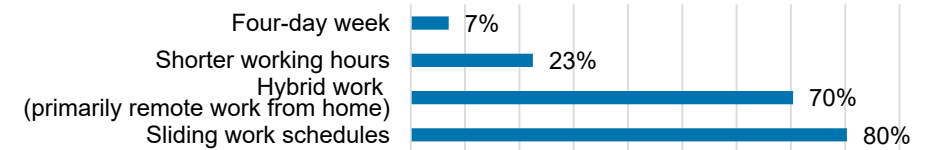
Challenges faced by women in companies



Initiatives introduced by companies to empower women in the workplace



Types of flexitime

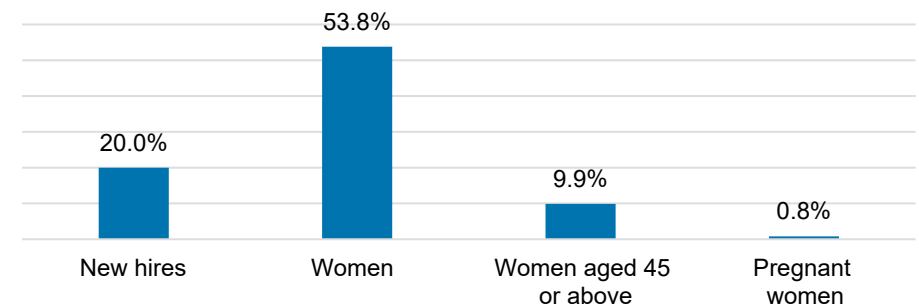


VII. GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

a. Share of women in new hiring

The number of new hires in any company depends on its size. In 2023, the percentage of newly hired staff stood at 20 percent on average, with women accounting for 54 percent of this group. However, **women aged 45 and above made up no more than 10 percent of all new hires. Pregnant women accounted for 0.8 percent on average**, meaning that 18 companies hired a pregnant woman, in contrast to 82 percent that did not do so. In general, over the past three years the number of women newly hired by companies has either increased (as was the case in 55 percent of the firms) or remained the same (42 percent).

Share of women in new hiring



b. Approaches to hiring women

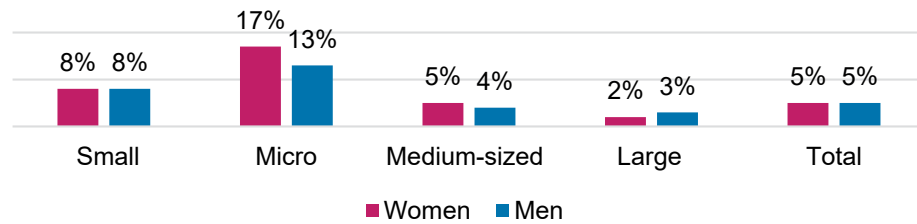
The companies generally hired women aged 45 or above by advertising vacancies (in 40 percent of all cases) or based on word-of-mouth recommendations (27 percent).

c. Proportion of women in managing positions

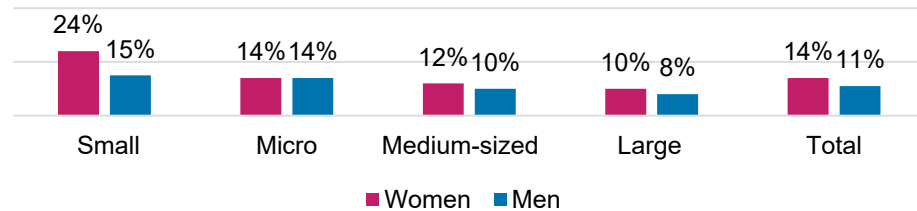
Women slightly outnumbered men in managing roles, whilst both genders were equally represented in top management positions. Staff evaluation was widespread in these businesses, and **76 percent of all firms regularly assessed staff** in contrast with 18 percent that did not. These evaluation systems can **go a long way towards making selection for management roles more equitable and balanced**, as was indeed borne out by the findings of the survey.

Large sectoral variations were found with gender representation in top management. **In industries traditionally recognised as predominantly female, such as finance, professional services, and healthcare and pharma, women accounted for a greater number of these roles.** By contrast, in sectors viewed as primarily male, including heavy industry, construction, and ICT, more top managers were men.

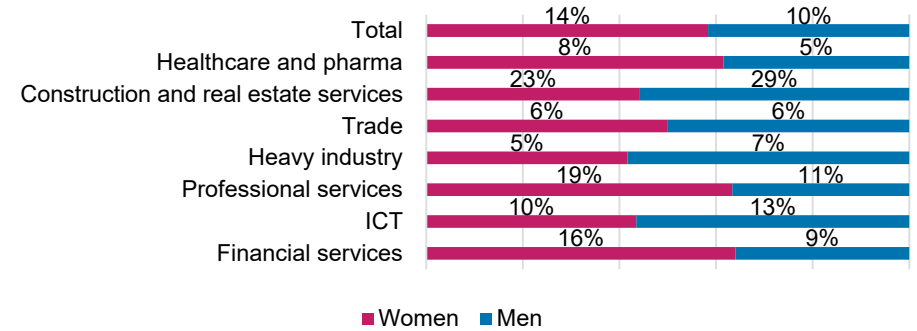
Top management as percentage of total staff



Top management as percentage of total staff



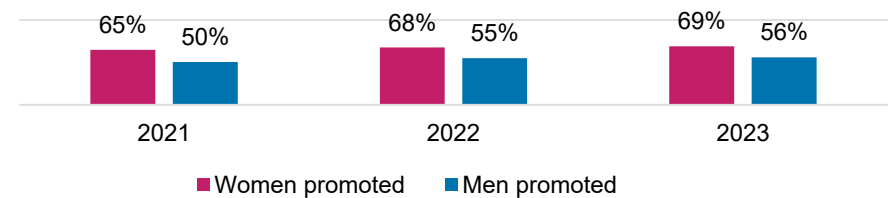
Managers vs total staff



VIII. ADVANCEMENT

Over the past three years, both men and women registered a greater incidence of advancement, although the survey found **more women were promoted than men**. It ought to be noted, however, that the sample comprised a larger proportion of firms in sectors seen as primarily female, such as professional services and finance.

Advancement



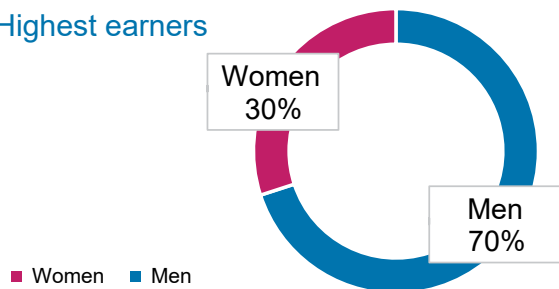
IX. PAY AND WORKING HOURS GAPS

The gap in average incomes between men and women remained wide, **with men's average earnings exceeding those of women by as much as 24 percent in median terms**. This difference was particularly notable in micro and large companies. **Most firms (64 percent) did not track gender-disaggregated earnings, meaning they lacked the data to make any adjustments to salaries.**

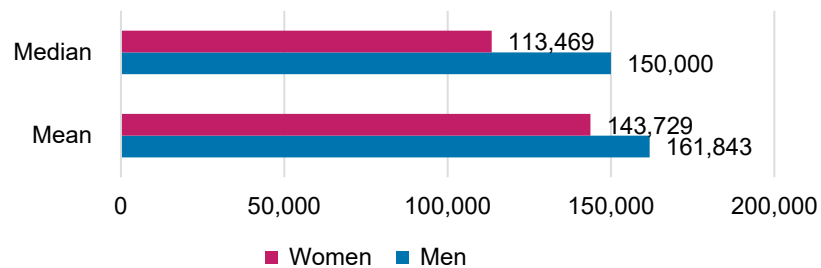
The pay gap was also significant in **individual sectors**. In industries generally seen as dominated by women, such as finance, men earned on average RSD 40,000 more than their female peers. In construction and real estate services the difference was RSD 84,000, whilst in ICT it was RSD 66,000.

The survey found that a man was the highest earner in 70 percent of the companies, whilst a woman commanded the highest salary in no more than 30 percent of the firms.

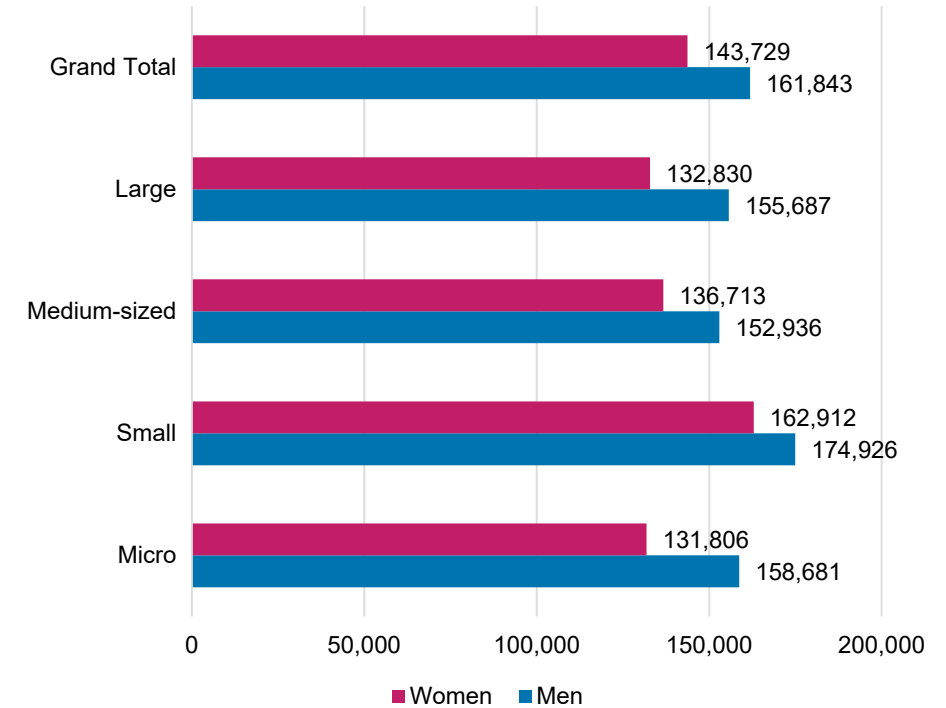
Highest earners



Earnings

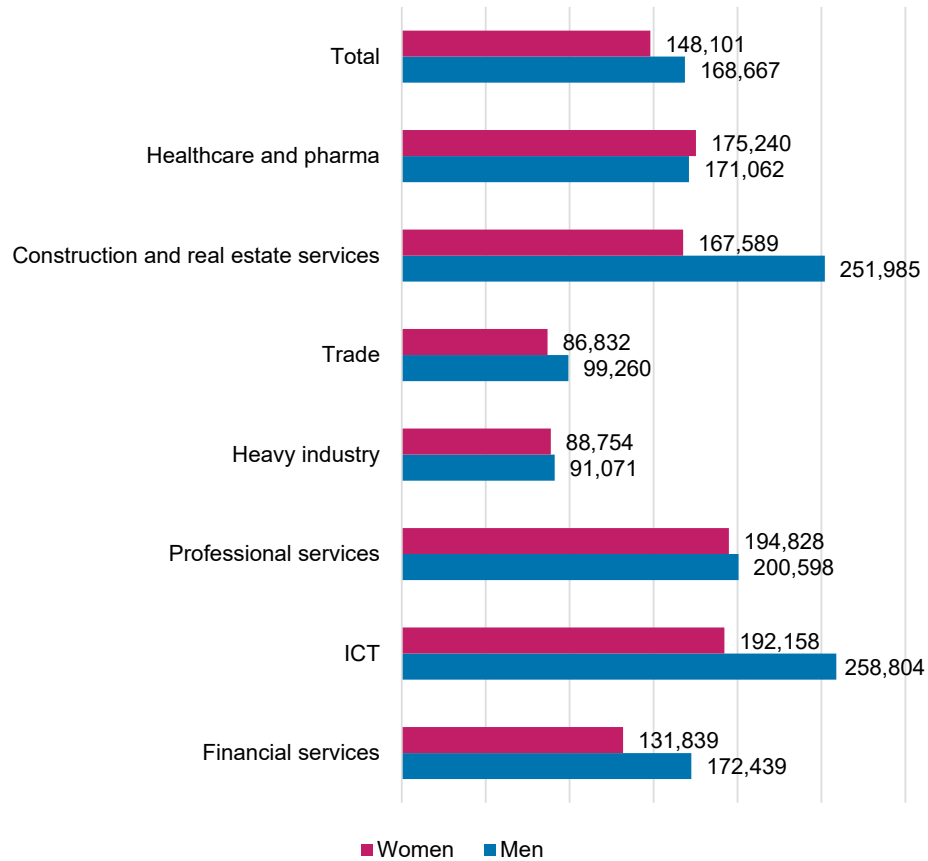


Earnings by company size

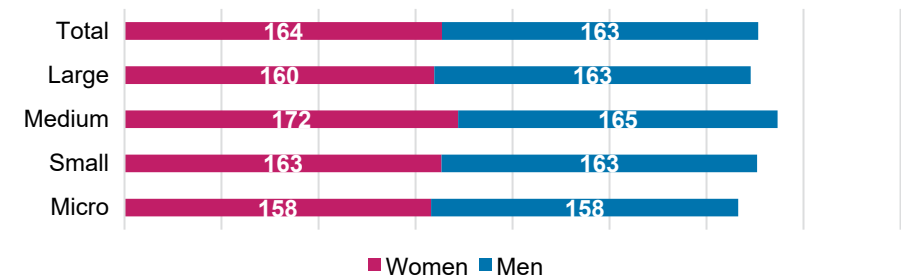


On average, men and women worked the same number of hours every month, but slight variations in working hours were found for different company sizes. In medium-sized firms, women worked several hours more than men each month, whilst in large companies men worked several hours more than women.

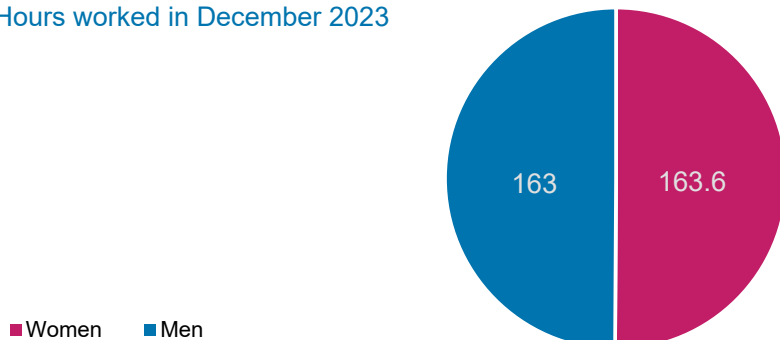
Earnings by industry



Hours worked by company size



Hours worked in December 2023



X. STAFF PROFILES

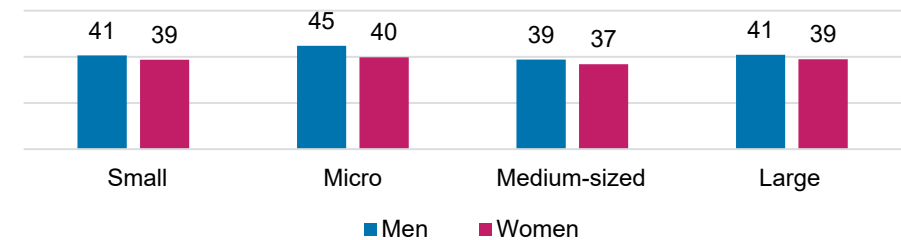
Men and women differed greatly by average age, working experience, educational attainment, and representation in managerial roles.

a. Average age and working experience

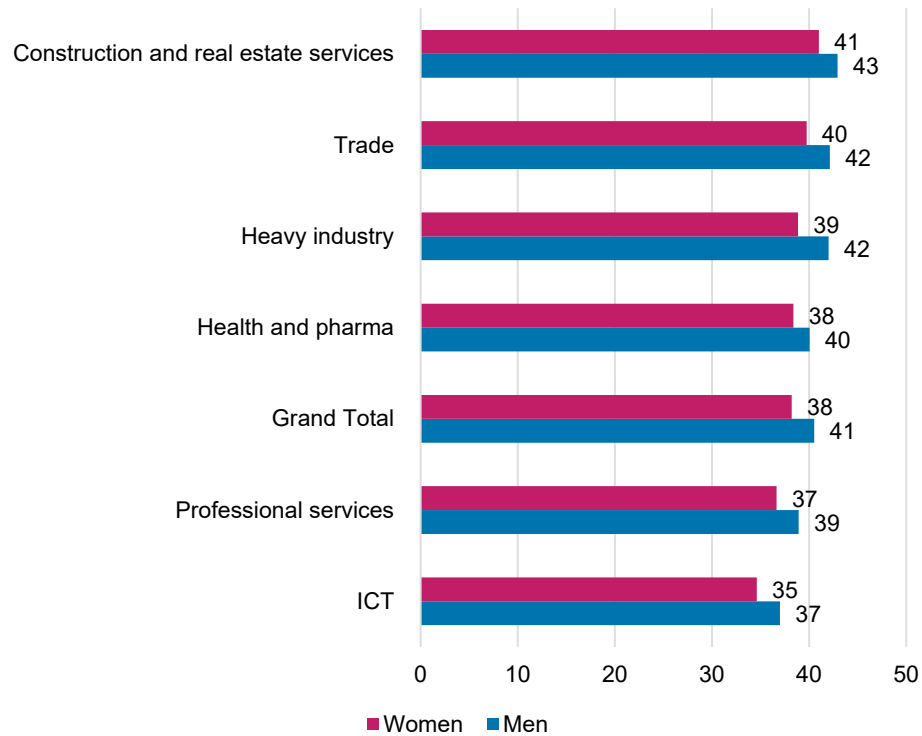
The average age of a male employee was 40.5, whilst for women the average age was 38. The youngest women were found in medium-sized firms, especially in ICT and professional services, whilst the oldest were employed in micro-enterprises, in particular construction and real estate services. Similar findings were identified for men.

On average, men generally took on managerial roles after spending an average of 14 years in employment (in 49 percent of all cases), whilst women tended to become managers after no more than eight to ten years (32 percent). This trend may be the outcome of specific policies (such as quotas) designed to increase the share of women in managerial positions.

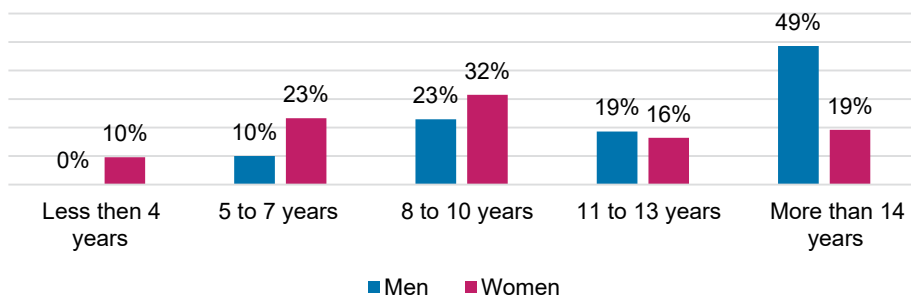
Average age by company size



Average age by industry



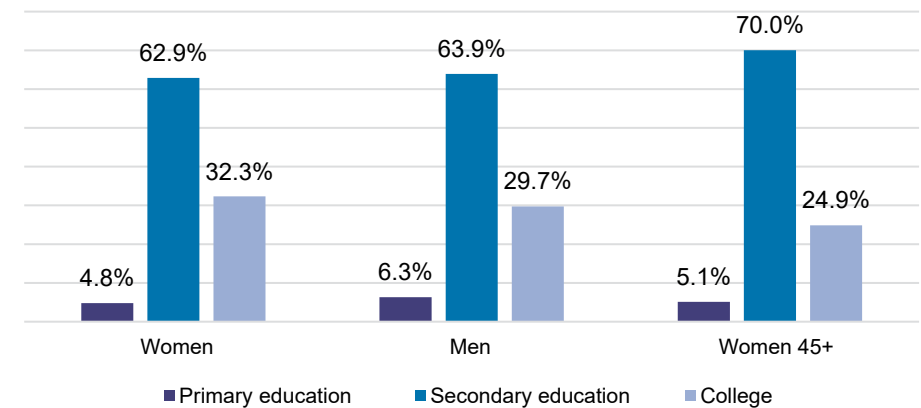
Average manager working experience



b. Educational attainment

Educational attainment was fairly similar for both men and women. Most staff of both genders had secondary school diplomas only. However, women were more likely to have higher educational attainment (college, undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees) than men (at 32.3 vs 29.7 percent). Women aged 45 and above generally had only secondary education (70 percent). Men outnumbered women with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees by 52.2 to 42.9 percent.

Staff by educational attainment



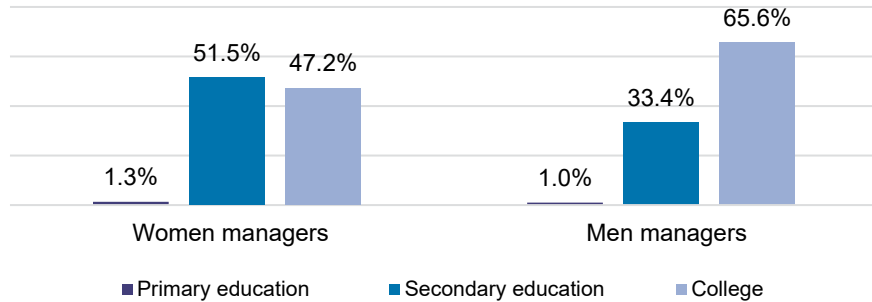
c. Managerial positions

As many as 52 percent of all women in managerial roles had secondary education only, suggesting these were lower-ranked positions that did not require university degrees. Whilst 47.2 percent of women with higher education (college, university, master's, and doctoral degrees) served in managerial roles, the figure for men in the same category was 65.6 percent.

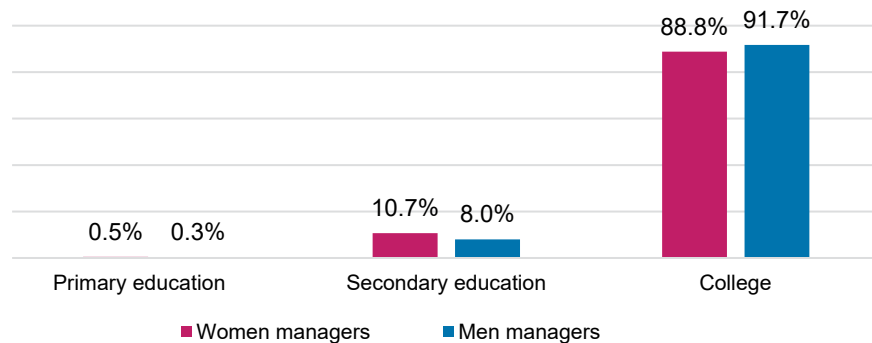
Excluding large retail chains changes the picture somewhat, with the proportion of women with secondary school diplomas falling to 39.2 percent and the share of women with university degrees rising to 59.2 percent. Men exhibited a similar trend, with the share of secondary school graduates dropping to 55 percent and the proportion of university degrees increasing to 44 percent.

University-educated women accounted for 88.8 percent of all managers, whilst for men the share was 91.7 percent. Women with secondary school diplomas made up 10.7 percent of all managers, in contrast to 8 percent for men.

Staff and managers by educational attainment



Staff and managers by educational attainment- without large retail chains



d. Hiring issues

The respondent companies reported finding it difficult to identify suitable candidates, both men and women, for positions requiring specialised expertise, such as IT professionals, engineers, financial professionals, digital professionals, and pharmacists, with the primary reason cited being a lack of appropriate qualifications. Other positions difficult to fill due to limited interest in the workforce included operational roles in administration, support jobs, field workers, butchers, and drivers.

XI. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

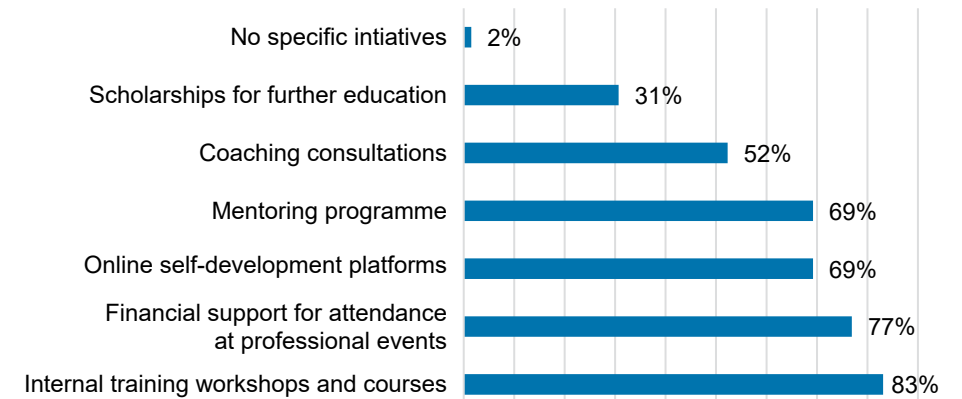
The survey found women invested much more time in professional development than men in 2023, with an average of 393 hours for women vs 171 hours for men. These professional development activities included various types of support provided by companies to their staff.

Common types of support offered by businesses included:

- **Internal workshops and courses:** 83 percent of all companies offered internal training sessions and courses, the most popular type of development support.
- **Financial support for attendance at conferences, seminars, and professional development events:** 77 percent of all firms provided financial support to their staff to allow them to take part in relevant professional development events.
- **Coaching:** 52 percent of all firms offered individualised coaching to their staff to help them develop skills.
- **Scholarships for further education or advanced studies:** 31 percent of the firms provided scholarships to help staff finance formal education or advanced studies. This was the least common form of support.

The data suggest the importance these companies devoted to continuing professional development and upskilling of their staff, with particular emphasis placed on internal workshops and support for external events. Women were obviously more likely than men to take advantage of these opportunities for personal improvement, which could help them climb the corporate ladder more quickly.

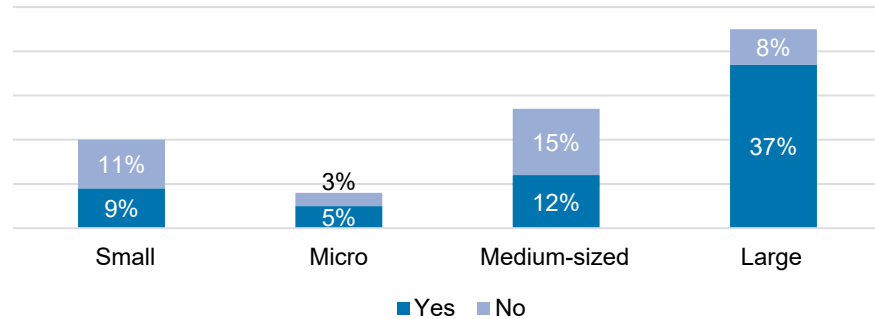
Initiatives in support of professional development for staff



XII. COMPETENCIES

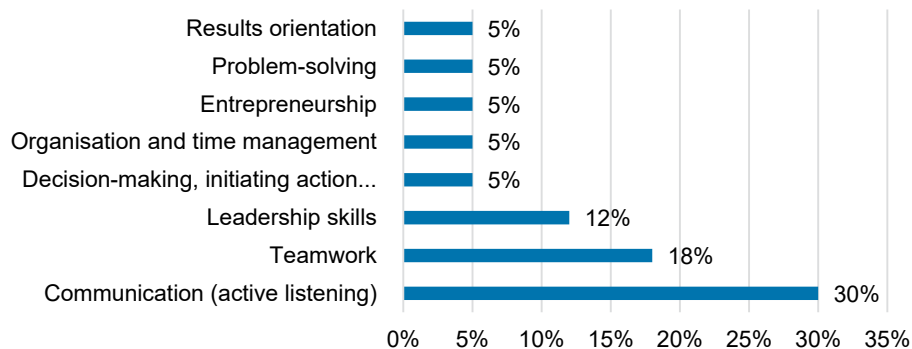
Most respondent companies (63 percent) had competency management systems in place, whilst many (37 percent) still lacked such arrangements. Interestingly, the larger a firm, the more likely it was to have introduced a competency management system.

Competency management

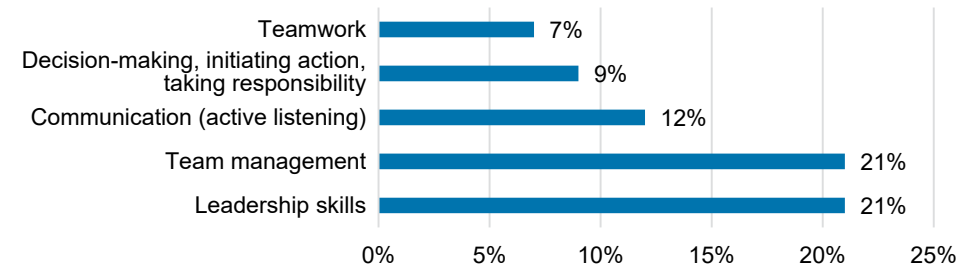


Communications skills were in greatest demand, as reported by 30 percent of those polled, followed by teamwork at 18 percent and leadership skills at 12 percent. These competencies were seen as key for working effectively in today's business environment. They were followed by decision-making, organisation and planning, entrepreneurship, problem-solving, and results orientation. Key managerial competencies focused on leadership skills (21 percent), building efficient teams (21 percent), and communication (12 percent), with decision-making and teamwork at the bottom of the list.

Key competencies in staff selection and development planning



Key competencies in manager selection and development planning



A comparative assessment of the key competencies in men and women managers suggests **decision-making came first for both genders**. For women, teamwork was in second place, and for men it was leadership skills. These leadership skills were in fourth place for women, whilst for men teamwork came fourth. Interestingly, resilience was reported as a competence for women but not for men, suggesting gender-based differences in focus on skills development.

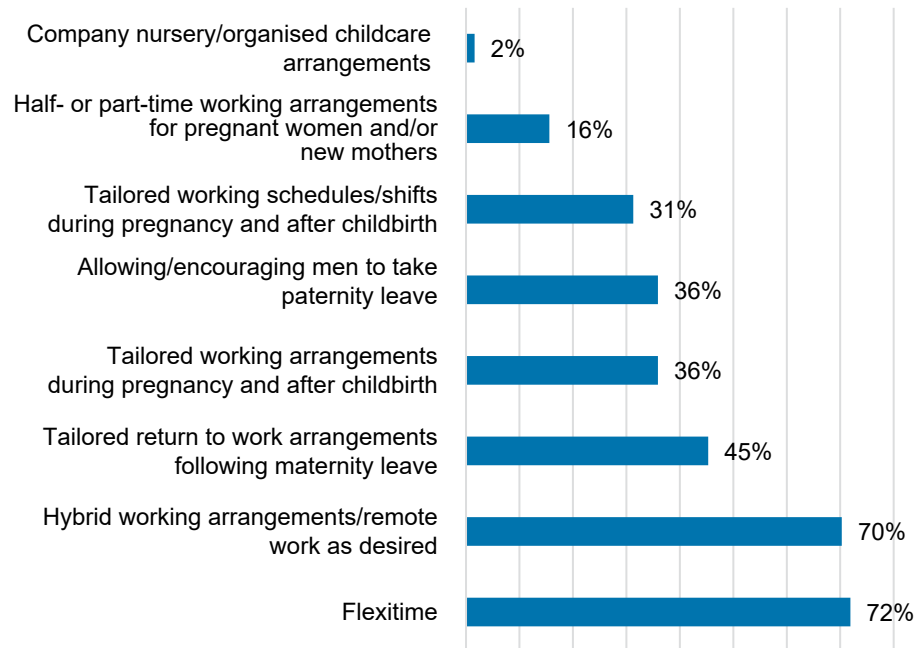
Key competencies - Woman and men managers



XIII. SUPPORT FOR FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Balancing work and personal life proved to be a major challenge for women in the workplace, with companies seeking to support their staff in achieving this equilibrium. Common incentives in this regard include flexitime (72 percent) and hybrid working arrangements (70 percent) that allow staff to combine office attendance with remote working from home. In addition, slightly under one-half of the companies offered modified or reduced working hours during pregnancy as initiatives to help staff cope with family responsibilities. These policies both made employees more satisfied and productive and contributed to creating an inclusive working environment.

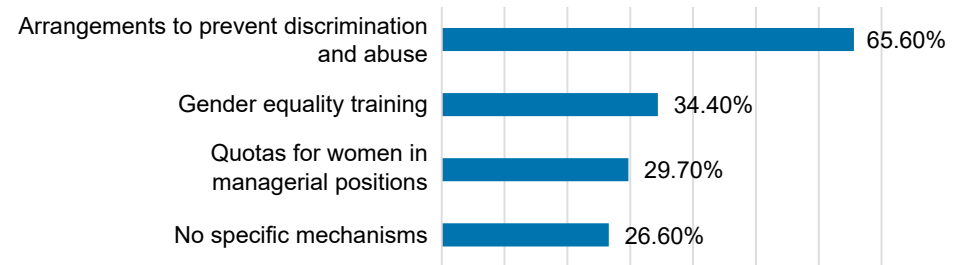
Support offered to staff



XIV. GENDER EQUALITY SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Most (66 percent) corporate mechanisms designed to reduce prejudice and improve gender equality focus on implementing anti-discrimination and anti-abuse policies. In addition, one-third of the companies (34 percent) offered gender equality training, and 30 percent applied mandatory quotas for women in managerial positions.

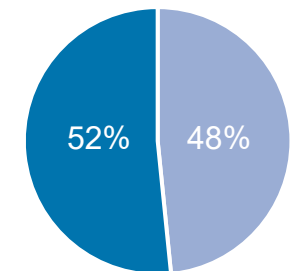
Mechanisms of gender equality



Although companies have made efforts to institute various policies in support of gender equality, **progress in attaining gender objectives is rarely monitored.** As many as 97 percent of firms that do track the achievement of these goals use women in leading positions as a key progress indicator. This finding highlights the importance of monitoring and evaluation for achieving gender equality in organisations.

Does your company measure progress in achieving women's empowerment and gender equality objectives?

- Yes
- No

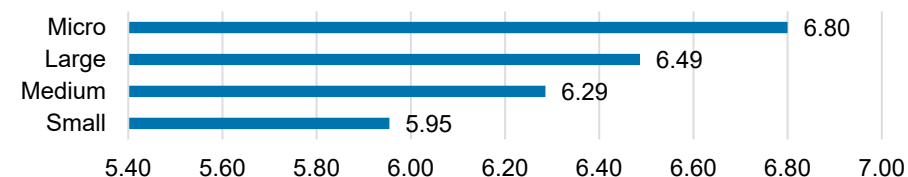


Key progress indicators tracked by the company



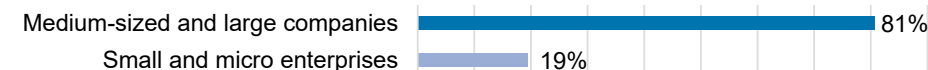
XV. SMALLER VS LARGER COMPANIES

Culture of support for working women



The survey has revealed a **significant difference** between small and large companies in terms of existing women's empowerment policies and initiatives. The findings suggest that **large and medium-sized companies generally have such mechanisms in place, in contrast with small and micro enterprises which tend to lack these measures.**

Women's empowerment policies and initiatives



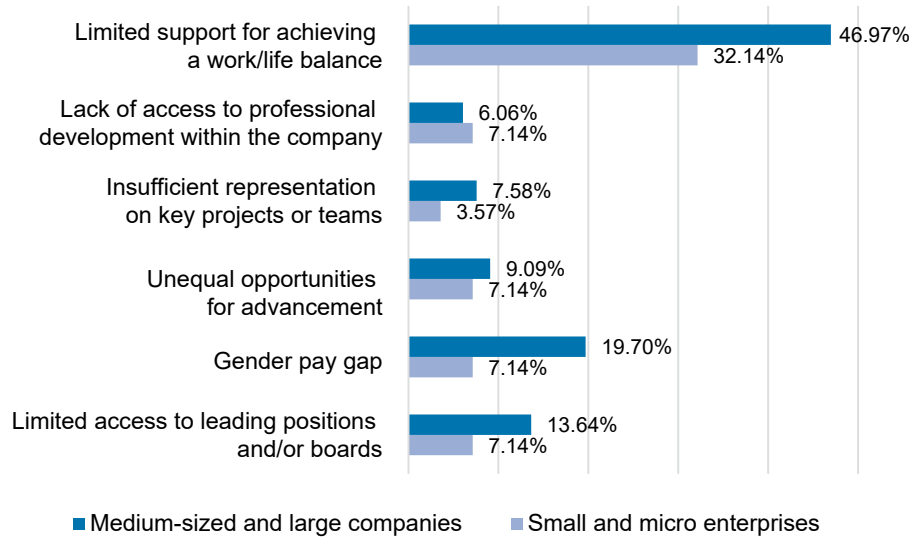
The challenges faced by women were generally quite similar regardless of company size. Nevertheless, **pay gaps** tended to be more pronounced in medium-sized and large firms.

Women's empowerment initiatives were quite similar across both larger and smaller companies, with **flexitime** identified as the primary such policy.

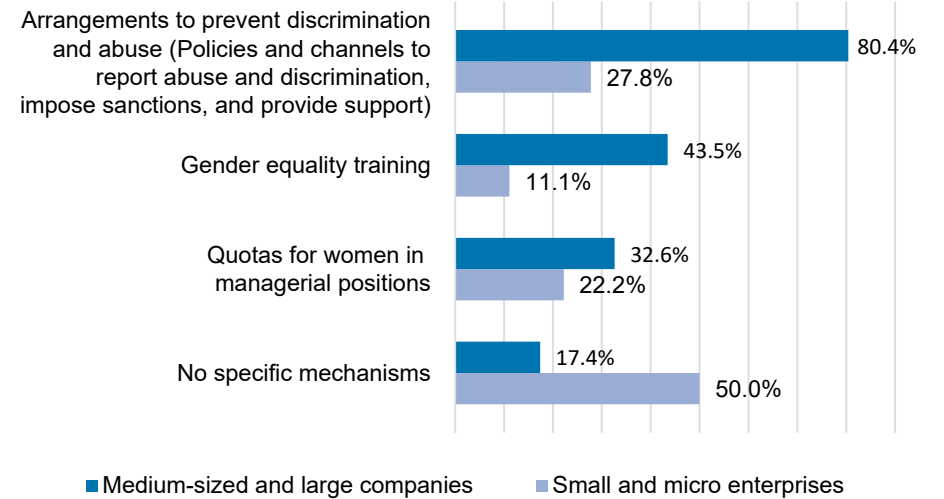
Support for reconciling work-related responsibilities with private ones varied. Small and micro enterprises tended to focus on **hybrid working arrangements**, with particular emphasis on more personalised options available during pregnancy and after childbirth. Conversely, medium-sized and large companies **more commonly allowed men to take paternity leave** whilst also being somewhat readier to offer flexible working hours.

Initiatives to dispel prejudice and achieve and maintain gender equality in the workplace tended to be present mainly in medium-sized and large companies. These policies were not as common in small and micro enterprises (as they were reported by 50 percent of respondents in this category), with the finding additionally borne out by the fact that **small firms generally did not track progress in achieving women's empowerment and gender equality objectives** (67 percent), whereas large companies did track and measure improvements in this area.

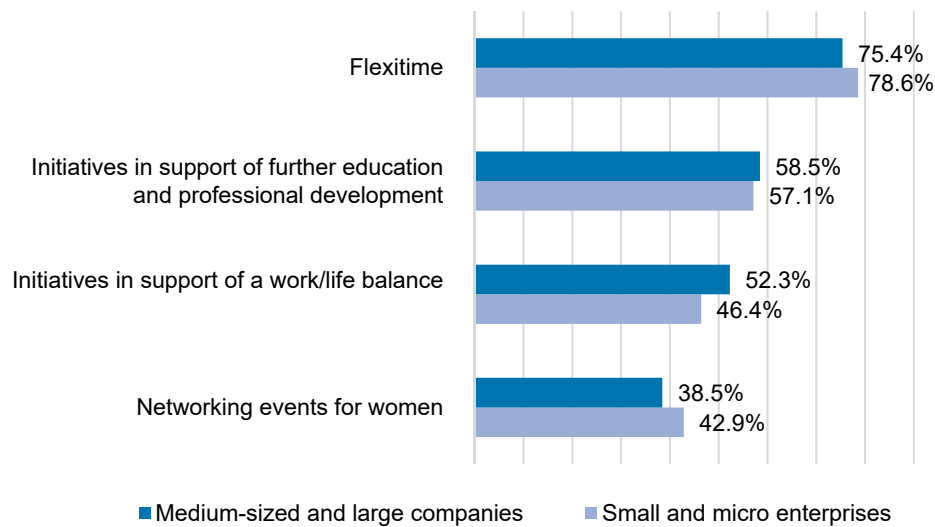
Key challenges faced by women in company



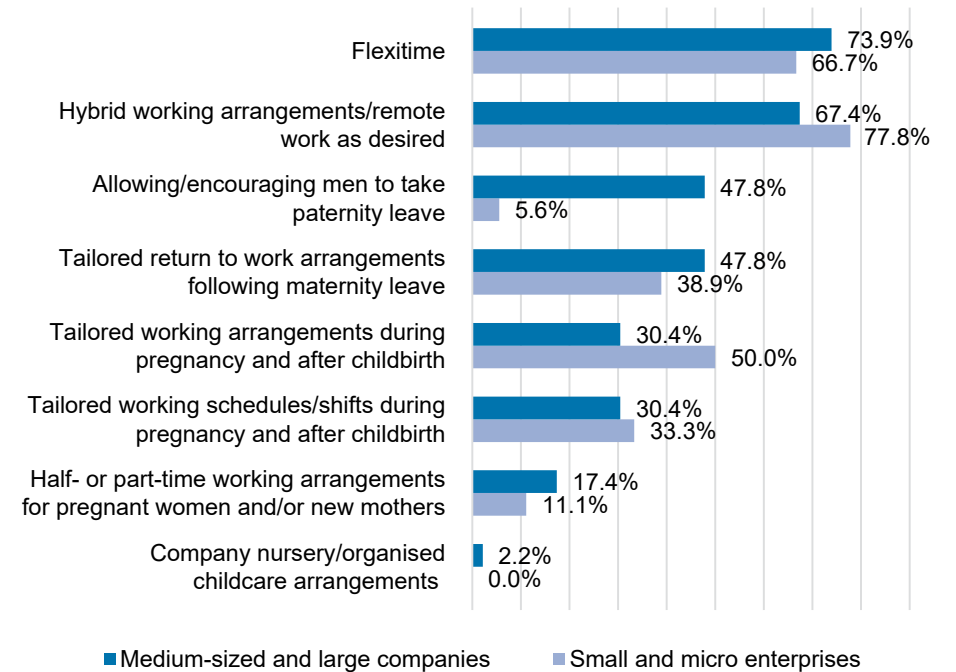
What mechanisms does your company use to dispel prejudice and achieve and maintain gender equality in the workplace?



Company initiatives in support of professional growth/development



Staff support in balancing work and family responsibilities



XVI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR THE JABLANICA AND PČINJA DISTRICTS

A total of four companies were surveyed in the Jablanica and Pčinja districts, a sample insufficiently large to derive conclusions for the two areas, but selected findings are shown in this report to provide a general overview of women's empowerment initiatives in this region.

The four companies rated the environment for working women in the Jablanica and Pčinja districts with a **mean score of 5.0 on a scale from 1 to 7**, a slightly lower result than for the sample as a whole. Three of the four companies (75 percent) did not have any initiatives in place to empower women and overcome the gender gap. All four firms in these districts denied having mechanisms to dispel prejudice and achieve and maintain gender equality in the workplace, which also meant they did not track progress in this area either.

The percentage of new hires in these four companies was 10.5 percent, lower than for the overall sample; moreover, three of the four firms did not hire any women at all in 2023. One, however, did hire a large number of women, having found suitable individuals via the National Employment Service. The companies based in these districts found it difficult to fill positions requiring advanced qualifications (such as engineers and pharmacists), citing the lack of appropriately qualified and skilled candidates. In common with the general sample, at 41.3 years old on average, male new hires were older than their female peers, whose average age was 37.3.

In the four local companies, men earned only slightly higher wages than women (by 4 percent). However, both genders were equally represented in the top earners category, where two companies reported paying the highest salaries to men, and two to women. At 168, the average number of hours worked per month was the same for both men and women.

XVII. FINDINGS OF THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY

The qualitative part of the survey, which included **focus group discussions with 12 women in managerial and executive positions in human resources departments, as well as four in-depth interviews with managing directors and heads of human resources**, provided insights into how businesspeople viewed and perceived gender equality in the workplace.

The findings seem to suggest that companies **promoted gender equality in general**. When selecting candidates, the firms emphasised competencies, experience, and skills. Key qualities reported as driving professional advancement included personal ambitions and readiness to continuously invest in career development.

The interviews and focus group discussions identified factors able to significantly affect the position of women in the workplace. A major determinant was the **cultural context**, which made itself felt at three levels: society and family, company, and the personal level.

This comprehensive approach permitted a better understanding of the complex dynamics affecting gender equality in the workplace and underscored the importance of viewing this issue in the broader socio-cultural framework.

a. Impact of society and family

At the level of society and family, the research discovered that **expectations women faced from their social circle, as well as women's own expectations of their roles in society and family, had powerful effects**. Women are often assumed to put family ahead of their careers and give up on professional advancement to dedicate themselves to motherhood. This assumption, coupled with cultural and biological factors, often leads to direct pressure on women from their families, which may affect women's career choices.

An example cited by a participant clearly illustrates how social expectations and family pressure may affect women's decision-making in the workplace. Although a woman was directly offered a promotion at her company, she did not take up the position immediately but wished to consult her family first. After speaking with her husband, she chose to refuse the offer as the man did not agree.

The qualitative survey emphasised the role of women in society as mothers and pillars of the family, which made it more difficult for them to focus on their professional development. Moreover, successful businesswomen may be perceived by other women to be less good as mothers, which can additionally affect women's perceptions and choices in the workplace.

Generational changes were also in evidence, however, with men increasingly prepared to shoulder a part of the burden of caring for children and the family. Examples of men taking paternity leave to help their wives in parenting roles or allow them to go back to work more quickly suggest traditional gender roles are evolving and families are turning to partnership for support.

The findings underscore the complex interplay between societal expectations, family roles, and professional development, as well as the need for continuous promotion of gender equality across all segments of society.

b. Impact of the business environment

The respondents noted that **traditional business models, especially in smaller communities, may prove challenging for women who seek leading roles**. Cultural factors, such as stereotypical gender roles and expectations associated with women, may pose obstacles to their advancement.

One particularly important challenge is the **lengthy absence of women from work when on pregnancy or maternity leave**. Their unavailability at this time can affect the pace at which they advance in their careers and their ability to rejoin the firm at the same level or in a position similar to the one they occupied before taking leave. Men are often automatically assumed to be suited to leading roles whilst women are expected to do more to earn those positions, which may be unfair and onerous for women who choose career advancement.

All these challenges highlight the need for changing cultural norms and fostering a more inclusive business environment that appreciates a variety of talents and perspectives, regardless of gender. Education, sensitisation, and implementation of policies that promote gender equality and work/life balance may be key for dismantling obstacles to professional development of women in the workplace.

c. Individual expectations

The respondents felt women often had a deep-rooted need to prove their worth through professional development and set the bar high for what, to them, constituted success. This could be a double-edged sword, in that, on the one hand, it can motivate women to continuously improve and seek to attain their goals, whilst, on the other, causing strain and hurting women's self-esteem if expectations go unfulfilled or if achievements are perceived as insufficient.

The discussions observed women sometimes lacked self-esteem in business contexts, especially in situations where they needed to fight their way into senior positions. This lack of positive self-evaluation was particularly apparent in cases where women had to negotiate for positions or benefits, as they were more likely to settle for the first offer without holding out for more.

As an example of good practice, the mentoring support for women returning to work after a period of maternity leave has been highlighted. In this case, colleagues are organized with the support of the human resources department and management to appoint a person who will provide support to the returning colleague. Mentors play a crucial role in easing the adjustment process after returning to work, helping colleagues adapt more quickly to changes that have occurred in the work environment during their absence.

XVIII. CONCLUSIONS

The survey has provided deeper insights into the initiatives and practices that companies deploy to support and empower women in the workplace. The findings suggest progress in dispelling gender-based prejudices and dismantling obstacles, but at the same time highlight the ever-present challenges that require continued work.

- **Work/life balance.** The respondents self-assessed the environment for working women at their companies as 'very good' (6.3 on a scale from 1 to 7). That being said, the score awarded by men was 6.9 and that reported by women 6.2. Although the respondents believed the environment was supportive, women did face a variety of challenges in the workplace. The most common issue was being able to strike a balance between work and personal life, with flexitime (sliding work schedules and hybrid work) often deployed as a strategy to overcome this problem.
- **Gender pay gap.** Women often earned less than men (by 24 percent), with men generally being the top earners in their firms (this occurred in 70 percent of all cases). The pay gap was particularly pronounced in predominantly male industries, such as ICT and construction.
- **Advancement into managerial positions.** Women are promoted to managerial roles just as men are, but this takes less time than for men. At times, women have advanced into managerial positions with fewer than four years of service, and the average time needed for promotion was five to seven years. Conversely, men receive promotions after five to seven years of service, and commonly only after they have been with the firm for 14 years. Notably, some companies tracked women in leading positions, which allowed the survey to capture data showing women in top management had become as numerous as men. It is still unclear, however, whether this convergence in numbers has been accompanied by a narrowing of the pay gap in leading roles.

- **Education and investment in professional development.** Women were better educated than men, with 61 percent holding university degrees as compared to 39 percent of men. Women also tended to invest more time in continuing professional development than men.
- **Company initiatives in support of women.** Most companies had policies in place to empower women and overcome gender gaps, with these initiatives commonly mandated by their global head offices. The policies included quotas for women in managerial positions, gender equality training, and support for women rejoining the firm after maternity leave.
- **Cultural factors and self-esteem.** Cultural factors, such as family and societal expectations, may adversely affect the self-esteem of women in business contexts. Direct pressure from families for women to devote themselves to the home rather than their career is detrimental to their advancement in the workplace, as is the assumption that women somehow have to earn their positions.
- **Need for awareness-raising and support from men.** Men ought to be sensitised to the challenges women face in the workplace and be supported to actively help create a more inclusive working environment if true equality is to be achieved.

In general, the findings of the survey highlight the need for continued work on dismantling gender inequalities in the workplace and supporting women so they can achieve their full professional potential regardless of gender stereotypes and obstacles they face.

XIX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the survey informed the following recommendations for companies that can help empower women and secure gender equality in the workplace. **General recommendations** include keeping staff and company officers better informed and educating society at large about the key issues and challenges faced by women and options for overcoming them. This can be achieved through surveys, debates, workshops, lectures, and other awareness-raising activities highlighting the importance of the topic, both in-house and outsourced to other providers.

Additionally, this section also provides a list of specific recommendations that firms can adopt to enhance gender equality and empower women in the workplace.

1. **Develop and apply gender equality strategies.** Develop and apply comprehensive gender equality strategies covering all aspects of doing business. The strategies ought to include objectives, monitoring metrics, and regular reviews to ensure effectiveness.
2. **Track and close gender pay gaps.** Set up systems for regularly tracking salaries to identify and close gender gaps in companies that currently lack such monitoring arrangements. Ensure transparency in setting salaries and promote equality of remuneration for both genders.
3. **Offer flexitime and hybrid work.** Introduce policies that allow flexitime and hybrid working arrangements where possible. These measures help staff better reconcile private and professional responsibilities.
4. **Ensure inclusive hiring processes.** Make sure recruitment and selection are inclusive by focusing specifically on increasing the share of women in the workplace, including women over 45 years of age and pregnant women. Set quotas for women in managerial positions.
5. **Support women's professional development.** Organise training events and mentoring for women to strengthen their leadership roles, self-esteem, and negotiating skills. Promote a culture of learning and continuous professional development. Invest in education and professional development of working women and encourage them to undergo additional training and development programmes to enhance their skills and improve their competitiveness in the labour market.
6. **Support men in taking on family responsibilities.** Encourage men to take on an equal role in the family, including by using paternity leave. Promote equality in parental rights and responsibilities.

7. **Raise awareness of gender issues.** Hold workshops and lectures and organise campaigns to raise awareness of gender equality amongst staff. Educate employees about the stereotypes and prejudices that affect women in the workplace.
8. **Track progress and transparency improvements.** Regularly report progress in achieving gender equality within the company. Ensure transparency of gender policies and practices.
9. **Break down cultural barriers.** Seek to dismantle cultural barriers that prevent women from achieving their full potential. This includes sensitising families and society at large about the importance of supporting women in their professional ambitions.
10. **Support women in returning to work.** Set up support programmes for women rejoining the company after maternity leave. These could include flexitime, mentoring, and re-integration programmes.

Implementing these recommendations will help companies create a more inclusive and just working environment, and one in which women will be empowered to achieve their full professional potential.