



MPOWER



WOMEN'S CAREERS AND ASPIRATIONS SURVEY

A Summary of Findings and Recommendations

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Prepared by MPOWER for
Convergence
Partners



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INTRODUCTION

The progress of women in the New Zealand workplace has been, as elsewhere in the western world, slow, gradual and uneven.

Yet there is little robust evidence to show the extent of the issue and the reasons for it, and a widespread perception in both business and academic circles that women's voices need to be heard more clearly regarding their career experiences and aspirations.

To try to understand what is actually happening in the workplace for women in this country, Massey University's People, Organisation, Work and Employment Research (MPOWER) Group collaborated with executive recruitment firm Convergence Partners to develop a national online survey of women's careers.

The Women's Careers and Aspirations Survey was designed to provide a comprehensive snapshot of women's current career status and plans, and to identify key challenges to their career progress and what would help them advance in the workplace.

The Survey was launched in late October 2016 through a feature and link to the study in the national newspaper *The Sunday Star Times*, as well as through the Survey partners' networks (including the Ministry for Women and the Human Resources Institute of NZ (HRINZ)), and closed a month later with 828 respondents. A further 200 women completed the Survey just after the cut-off date.

This report looks at the demographic and vocational makeup of the women who responded – as well as the key insights into their careers, and their thoughts on what should be done about the issues they raised. From those findings, emerge key recommendations for the business community and the Government on positive actions that will improve women's ability to achieve their career aspirations. A more detailed academic report is also available.

Our fervent wish as the Survey partners is that the messages voiced in the Survey – along with the actions we perceive to be a logical development of what it tells us – are considered, discussed, and debated, not just among women's groups but across the wider business community.

Words are important but only actions bring change. We trust you will support the momentum gained from the revelations in this report.



Professor Jane Parker
HR Management & Employment Relations
Massey University



Dave Rees
Partner
Convergence Partners



THE SURVEY

The Women's Careers and Aspirations Survey included questions on a wide range of topics, including asking women for their views on:

Their career progress to date;

The importance of a career or job vs family or lifestyle interests;

Their workload and career/job flexibility;

The significance of organisational challenges to the progress of their career and that of other women in their workplace, and what support they received;

The relationship (if any) between those challenges and supports to their career advancement, their intentions around moving on to another job, and their career/job and life satisfaction;

Their career aspirations and the factors that shaped those aspirations; and

The relationship (if any) between women's seniority at work and organisational performance.





62.7%

of respondents believe
organisations can do more
to advance women leaders.



WHO RESPONDED

A total of 828 women responded to the Survey, though a few did not answer every question.

All were engaged in the labour market, with more than 99% in paid work as employees or in self-employed roles. While not a perfect representation of the make-up of women in work, the Survey response provides a good cross-section of the NZ female workforce on a number of demographics and the quantity of replies enabled robust statistical and qualitative analyses.

General profile:

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL



Most respondents had some form of tertiary qualification - 29.4% had a Bachelor's degree, with 21.9% holding Masters degrees and a similar number with postgraduate diplomas or certificates.

TWO-FIFTHS

perceived that they had the primary responsibility for household work, while another 37.6% said the responsibility was shared.

DEPENDENTS

52.3% of respondents had no dependants; of those who did, the most common was one dependant and dependants were more likely to be children than elderly or disabled.



Around

ONE THIRD

of respondents were from Wellington and slightly fewer were Aucklanders, with Canterbury the next largest region (10.6%)



ETHNICITY

80.1% = NZ European
4.4% Maori
3.1% Asian
0.5% Pacific peoples

CARER ROLES
Two-fifths of the respondents identified themselves as the primary caregiver (40.4%).

73.9%

of respondents were married or had partners, with 23.7% being single

AGE

Most respondents were between 35-44 years (35.4%) or 25-34 (29.4%). Just 4.6% were in the 15-24 year bracket (compared with 16.2% of the national female population).

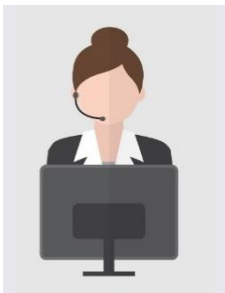


WHO RESPONDED

Work profile:

Job status:

Three-quarters described their job status as permanent, while 7.5% were self-employed.



Organisation and sector profile:

Organisation size:

More than a quarter of respondents worked in organisations with more than 2,000 staff; organisations with 201-500 staff and 101-200 staff were next most represented (12.6% and 11.7% respectively).



Work experience:

Most respondents showed "stickability" in their roles - 44.3% has been in their job 1-5 years and one-fifth for more than five years. Just over half had worked overseas.



Sector:

Most respondents worked in the Services sector; with 14.7% in Education and Training, and 14.3% in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services.



Work hours:

Most (64%) worked more than 40 hours a week; a quarter worked 30-39 hours a week.



Salary:

Almost one-third (31.2%) of respondents earned more than \$100,000 a year; slightly fewer (29.8%) earned \$50,000-\$80,000 per year.



Occupation:

More than 85.4% identified as Professionals or Managers and 8% as Clerical and Administrative Workers.





SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

The Survey responses confirmed many commonly held perceptions of the status of women in the workplace, but also revealed some interesting new findings as follows:

Household responsibilities

Two-thirds of respondents work 40-49 hours a week, while just over two-fifths (42.1%) have primary responsibilities for household work. Typically, the lower the position in the management hierarchy, the more household responsibility held.

Women with dependants and those without share similar profiles in terms of their aspirations to senior career roles. Of those who say that they have the primary caregiver role in the household, only 17.1% are content to remain within their current role in the workplace.

Perceived career success

Only 14% of respondents feel that their career is "ahead of schedule". Two-fifths (43.6%) feel it is "behind schedule", with some dissonance between their hopes for coming years and their recent work experiences.

Those women who feel their career is "on track" or "ahead of schedule" often believe their career/work choices are constrained, or that they had made sacrifices to get to where they are.

Turnover intentions

More than one-third (37.9%) of respondents are thinking of leaving their current job and organisation; only just over a third are content to stay where they are.

Turnover intentions are strongly linked to women's perceptions of barriers relating to personal circumstances and organisational barriers such as cultural fit and mentoring. Perceptions of the fairness (or lack of) of workplace processes and outcomes, low levels of empowerment and difficulty getting developmental assignments are also factors spurring women to seek career moves.

Management experience

Job seniority is at relatively similar levels for single women and those who are married or who have partners.

Overseas experience is linked to the nature of women's career aspirations: women with overseas experience tend to aspire to executive roles, while those without it generally aspire to senior management positions.





SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

Other findings - initiatives suggested by respondents:

Respondents suggested a wide range of initiatives to support the advancement of women in their workplace, including:

More formal and informal mentoring;

More flexible work arrangements (FWA) and better work/life balance provisions;

Cultural initiatives to foster greater inclusiveness and support for women;

Formal and informal networks and support groups within the organisation;

More women-only training and development;

More championing of women into leadership roles and gender-aware succession planning;

Encouragement of management styles that help progress women's advancement;

Greater recruitment and selection of women into management roles, more diversity of representation at different organisational levels, and use of quotas and targets for women;

Remuneration transparency and closure of the pay gap between men and women; and

More highlighting of women's successes and female role models.





"I was expected to go to secretarial college, get married and leave work to raise children, so I consider my career pretty successful. I have a PhD, have been a CE and have changed career direction a couple of times.

I define success more in terms of doing things I'm interested in rather than a traditional career trajectory. And I do have male friends who have followed the more traditional path who actually had a much smoother ride to the big salaries, simply because they were a better "fit". Nothing personal, but this does result in income discrepancies which still have a big impact on our lives.

My ability to sustain a good standard of living in 'retirement' will be impacted by that. There is a narrow window between being 'too young', 'too focused on family' and 'too old'. I think this is decreasing, but hopefully this study will contribute to that."

Diversity Manager, 55-64 years



RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

The Survey findings suggest a number of courses of action to improve women's situation at the workplace. These form the recommendations of the Survey partners.

Recognition of the issue and development of responses

There needs to be wider recognition by organisations employing staff of the nature and scale of the imbalance between men's and women's career progress.

That recognition, acknowledgement and acceptance of the problem should lead to the development of a comprehensive, long-term response to address the imbalance and bridge the gap between women's current job status and career aspirations.

A multi-sector approach is emphasised, involving not just the workplace but also educational and government agencies, and specialist career advisers.

Career development initiatives

There needs to be increased awareness of what already exists in workplaces and beyond to assist women in their career development.

Career development measures should cater for the wider group of women with career aspirations, not just women in senior roles or those seen as having high potential.

Organisations need to develop a better internal understanding of what constitutes career development in their workplace, as well as what inhibits career advancement and what supports it. There needs to be more active listening to women and responding to the issues they raise, and better monitoring and benchmarking of women's engagement within their organisation's workforce.

