



Women @ Work 2026:

A Global Outlook

Key findings at a glance

Now in its sixth year, the 2026 Deloitte Global Women @ Work: A Global Outlook survey sought the views of 7,500 women in workplaces across 15 countries.¹ This report sets out the survey findings, providing a data-driven, global insight into women's experiences at work and on aspects of their lives that can impact these experiences, such as domestic responsibilities and health.



1. Career plans

- Over half (54%) of women surveyed say they are happy with their current job and have no plans to leave.
- Although 43% of women surveyed say they want to leave their current job, only 20% of women are actively looking for a new role in another organization.
- Most women surveyed plan to stay with their employer for over a year: 29% plan on staying for one to two years, 24% for three to four years and 16% plan on being there in five years' time.
- Of those who say they want to leave their current job, 45% cite lack of career progression as a main reason, followed closely by the ability to earn more money doing the same job for another employer (42%). This is followed by a lack of flexibility around working hours (33%) and a struggle to balance work and home life (33%).
- 17% of women surveyed changed jobs in the past year. For 36% of them, the main reason was being able to earn more money doing the same job for another employer, followed by a struggle to balance work and home life, and lack of career progression (both cited by 34%).



2. Flexible working

- Almost half of women surveyed (49%) have a formal or informal flexible working arrangement. Of these, 48% say that it makes them more productive at work.
- However, only 26% of all women surveyed say that flexible working is openly discussed and supported in their company; and the same proportion describe applying for a flexible working arrangement at their company as being easy.
- Only 15% of women surveyed say that flexible working is available to all at their employer, regardless of caregiving status.
- 80% of women surveyed believe that flexible working negatively impacts career progression at their company—and 85% believe their workload would not be adjusted if they reduced their hours.

1. The findings reflect the views of survey respondents and should be interpreted as survey-based insights rather than as being representative of all women globally. Additionally, they do not establish that any unlawful activity, retaliation or legal wrong doing occurred. No women from Deloitte were polled as part of this survey.



3. Working as a parent

- 13% of all women surveyed became a parent (whether or not for the first time) in the last five years, with almost all (92%) of these women taking maternity/parental leave for this child.
- Among women who took maternity/parental leave, around eight in ten (84%) took the full amount of leave they were entitled to by their employer.
- Around two-thirds (67%) of women who became a parent in the last five years whether or not for the first time say that they had a partner at the time who took paternity/parental leave; of these, 40% said their partner took their full statutory paternity/parental leave, while 20% only took part of their entitlement.
- 37% of those who took maternity/parental leave for this child describe their experience returning to work as being all positive. 11% say that they seamlessly transitioned back into their job, while 39% say that it took time to regain their confidence. However, only 14% say their career has progressed as they would like it to since they returned from maternity/parental leave.



4. Non-inclusive behaviors

- A third of women surveyed report that they have experienced non-inclusive behaviors at work over the past year, with some saying they experienced more than one type.
- 21% of women surveyed say that they experienced microaggressions, 11% say they experienced bullying, 2% say they experienced sexual harassment and 4% other types of harassment.
- 54% of women surveyed believe that they can report non-inclusive behaviors at work without any career impact or reprisals.
- 49% of women surveyed say that they believe that action would be taken if they did report such behaviors.



5. Personal safety

- 45% of women surveyed say they are concerned about at least one aspect of their workplace-related personal safety—namely when at work, or traveling to, from, or for work.
- 23% of women surveyed say they are concerned about their personal safety at work, 9% are concerned about their personal safety when traveling for work on business trips. And 20% say they are concerned about their personal safety on their commute to and from work.
- Finally, 10% of women surveyed say they have dealt with clients or customers who have harassed them or behaved towards them in a way that made them feel uncomfortable.



6. Life concerns

- Nearly seven in 10 (69%) women surveyed say they are concerned about the cost of living, while 63% say they are concerned about future financial security.
- 58% say they are concerned about the ability to learn new skills needed for future job security, and 57% are concerned that AI may replace their job. The same proportion also say they are concerned about job security.
- 56% say they are concerned about their mental health. Just over half of women surveyed (51%) say they are concerned about their physical health.



7. Access to and experience of care

- The cost of care for children and adults is a concern for 46% of women surveyed.
- Only 27% of women with children under the age of 18 say they have access to affordable childcare. And 14% say they may need to give up work due to the cost of childcare.
- 43% of women with children under the age of 18 have had to unexpectedly take time off work for caring responsibilities in the past year. 31% of them gave their employer a different reason due to concerns about negative career impact.
- 32% of women surveyed with adult caring responsibilities have had to unexpectedly take time off for caring in the past year. 23% of them gave their employer a different reason due to concerns about negative career impact.

Returning to work after an extended career break for caring reasons:

- 24% of women surveyed have taken an extended break from their career of three or more years to care for children or adults.
- Of these, 30% were able to return to a similar role at the same level and pay.
- However, 23% returned to a role at a lower level and/or lower pay. 11% were unable to return to a role that used their qualifications or skills so took a role that didn't require these. And 15% chose to return in a reduced capacity—such as fewer hours or responsibility.



8. Domestic responsibilities

- 51% of those women surveyed who live with a partner or spouse and have children under the age of 18 say they hold primary responsibility for childcare—5% say this is held by their partner/spouse.
- 46% of those women surveyed who live with a partner or spouse and with other adult family members who require care say the majority of the caring responsibility for them sits with them—13% say this is held by their partner/spouse.
- 42% of women surveyed who live with a partner or spouse say they bear the greatest share of household responsibility for cleaning and other domestic tasks. 11% say this falls to their partner/spouse.
- 11% of women surveyed who live with a partner or spouse are the household primary earner. While these women hold the most significant household responsibility for adult care (36% compared to 26% who say it is held by their partner/spouse) and managing finances (42% compared to 25%), this is not the case for the other household tasks examined in this report.



9. Mental health

- 44% of women surveyed rate their mental health as good, 23% average, while 33% rate it as poor.
- 31% of women surveyed say they have taken time off work in the past year due to challenges with their mental health.
- 30% say their mental load is good, while the same proportion (30%) describe it as poor.
- 53% of women surveyed say that the combination of having to do their job and their home responsibilities does not feel manageable, while 47% say it does.
- Just over half of respondents (54%) say their stress levels are not higher than a year ago, though 44% of women surveyed said the contrary.
- A majority of women surveyed (71%) say they do not feel burned out, though this was not the case for the 29% who say they do.
- Although 45% of women surveyed say they get adequate support for mental health from their employer, this was not the case for 53%.
- More than half of women surveyed (54%) say they do not feel comfortable talking about their mental health at work in general, for example with colleagues, while 43% say they do.
- Half of women surveyed say that they would not feel comfortable disclosing mental health challenges as a reason for their absence from work, compared to 46% who would.



10. Women's health

23% of women surveyed have experienced health challenges as a result of menstruation, perimenopause, menopause, or fertility challenges.

Menstruation:

- 13% of women surveyed say they have experienced menstruation-related health challenges.
- Of these women, 35% experience high levels of pain or discomfort but don't take time off work for it. 19% have taken time off but didn't disclose the reason to their manager.
- 10% believe that previous disclosure had a negative impact on how their employer regarded them—and 17% say that such disclosure didn't result in any employer support at work to help them deal with their challenges.
- Only 15% say they have been able to access workplace accommodations. And 13% say they have previously disclosed to their employer and received support at work to help them deal with these challenges.

Perimenopause:

- Four percent of women surveyed say they have experienced health challenges related to perimenopause.
- 28% of these women say they experience high levels of pain or discomfort but don't take time off work for it. 21% say they have taken time off but didn't disclose the reason to their manager.
- 23% say that previously disclosing these challenges as the reason for time off work did not result in employer support at work to help them deal with their challenges. And 13% believe that previous disclosure negatively impacted the way their employer regarded them.
- 27% say that perimenopause-related anxiety has undermined their confidence in their ability to do their job. 21% say they are considering leaving their job due to their symptoms. And 16% say they wanted to progress at work but decided that their symptoms will make that too difficult.
- 32% believe that these health challenges have had an adverse impact on their career progression. And 16% say they have left a job due to these challenges.
- Only 20% say they have been able to access workplace accommodations. And 13% say they have previously disclosed to their employer and received support at work to help them deal with their challenges.



Menopause:

- Five percent of women surveyed say they have experienced health challenges due to menopause.
- 30% of these women say they experience high levels of pain or discomfort but don't take time off work for it. 16% have taken time off for it but didn't disclose the reason to their manager.
- 16% say that previous disclosure as a reason for time off work did not result in support from their employer at work to help them deal with their challenges.
- 22% believe that menopause has had an adverse impact on their career progression. 9% say that they have left a job due to pain or discomfort associated with menopause.
- 16% say that menopause-related anxiety has undermined their confidence in their ability to do their job. 14% are considering leaving their job due to their symptoms. The same proportion (14%) say they wanted to progress at work but decided their symptoms will make that too difficult.
- 13% say their symptoms coincided with a pivotal work point, such as a promotion.
- Nearly a third (32%) say they have been able to access workplace accommodations and 17% say that previous disclosure resulted in employer support at work to help them deal with their challenges.

Fertility challenges:

- Two percent of surveyed women say they have experienced fertility challenges.
- 39% of these women say they experience high levels of pain or discomfort from these challenges but don't take time off work.
- 30% say they have taken time off but didn't disclose the reason to their manager—most commonly (for 49% of respondents) due to a concern that disclosure would negatively impact their career progression.
- 21% say they have previously disclosed their fertility challenges as the reason for taking time off work but that it didn't result in any employer support at work to help them deal with their challenges. 13% say they believe that previous disclosure negatively impacted their career progression.
- 32% say they believe that their fertility challenges have had an adverse impact on their career progression and 12% say they have left a job due to the pain or discomfort associated with such challenges.
- Only 18% say they have been able to access workplace accommodations, while 16% say that previous disclosure to an employer resulted in support at work to help them deal with their challenges.



11. The five factors enabling women's success in the workplace

- A regression analysis of how long the women surveyed expect to remain at their employer, along with the drivers that influence how long they plan to stay, shows that five factors are the strongest predictors of how long women are likely to stay with an employer, namely:
 - Career progression opportunities.
 - Flexible working.
 - A safe and inclusive workplace culture.
 - Mental health support.
 - Opportunity for work/life balance.
- These five factors present the greatest chance for employers to retain women to aid in the success of their business.



Contents



1 Career plans

The majority of women are happy with their current jobs and not planning to leave

Just over half (54%) of women surveyed say they are happy with their current job and have no plans to leave.

Four in 10 (43%) women surveyed say they want to leave their current job, although only two in 10 reported that they are actively looking for a new role in another organization. 12% say they want to leave but are not currently looking for another role, and 10% say they want to leave but do not think they will get another job in the current economy so are staying where they are for the time being. Finally, around one in 20 of women surveyed are worried that they will lose their job in the next six to 12 months.

When asked about how long they plan to stay with their employer, 13% of women surveyed say they plan to be there for less than a year. Most (29%) plan to stay for one to two years, with just under a quarter saying they will be there for three to four years. 16% plan to be with their employer in five years' time.

How long do you think you will stay with your current employer?

Less than a year



13%

1-2 years



29%

3-4 years



24%

5 years or more



16%

Base = 7,500

54%

of women say they are happy with their current job and have no plans to leave



Lack of career progression is the top reason for looking to leave, with lack of flexibility and work/life balance also playing a role

45% of those women surveyed who want to leave their current job cite lack of career progression as a main reason, followed closely by the ability to earn more money doing the same job for another employer (42%). Challenges with flexibility and work/life balance also feature in the top four main reasons, with 33% citing a lack of flexibility around working hours and 33% citing struggling to balance work and home life as a main reason. Travel and resultant challenges with home responsibilities is cited by two in 10 (23%); while burnout and feeling that their job or workplace is detrimental to their mental health is a main driver for 17%.

For women who have recently left another job, challenges with work and home life played a role

17% of women surveyed have changed jobs in the past year. While lack of career progression was one of the top reasons (for 34% of these women), the same proportion cited struggling to balance home and work life; and the most cited main reason (for 36% of respondents) was that they could earn more money doing the same job for another employer. Flexible working also played a role, with 31% citing a lack of flexibility around when they work. And, for a quarter, traveling and the challenges with balancing home responsibilities was a main reason to leave their former employer.



What are the main reasons for leaving your previous role?

I can earn more money doing the same work for another employer

36%

I'm struggling to balance my career alongside my home life

34%

My career isn't progressing

34%

Lack of flexibility around when I work (e.g. my working hours, days I work etc.)

31%

Base = 1,272



What factors make you want to stay with your employer for more than three years?

Women are taken seriously **74%**

My workplace is a good place for women to work **65%**

Everybody is treated fairly **62%**

I have a good work/life balance **56%**

My job/workplace is supportive of my mental health **54%**

Base = 3,011

Reasons for staying are varied and primarily relate to workplace culture

Just under three-quarters of those women surveyed who plan to stay with their current employer for more than three years attribute this to women being taken seriously there, with just under two-thirds citing their workplace as being a good place for women to work. A belief that everyone is treated fairly also plays a key role for just over six in 10, while a good work/life balance is cited by 56%. Finally, a job/workplace that is supportive of their mental health is cited by 54% of respondents as reason for staying.

Sentiment about the workplace primarily reflects these reasons for staying

Most women surveyed report positive sentiment about their workplace, with just under three-quarters saying their workplace is physically safe and 69% agreeing that women are taken seriously there; 68% say their workplace is a good place for women to work and the same proportion say they would recommend their employer to other women. The ability for women to progress to leadership positions also scores highly for just under two-thirds, with around the same number agreeing that everyone has equal opportunities to succeed.

Despite this, just 44% of women surveyed describe their loyalty to their employer as good, with around three in 10 saying it is poor. 42% say their work-life balance is good, while a third describe it as poor. Four in 10 describe their sense of belonging at work as good, while 27% say it is poor. And 44% say their job satisfaction is good, compared to 23% who say it is poor.



2 Flexible working

Flexible working is a reality for almost half of women

Almost half of women surveyed (49%) have a formal or informal flexible working arrangement (such as an ability to vary start and finish times or a reduced presence). Modifying working hours (sometimes known as flex-time) while continuing to work their contracted number of hours is the most common arrangement, cited by just under six in 10 of those who work flexibly. Just under two in 10 of those who work flexibly say they work part-time/reduced presence and 15% work a compressed week (where they work full-time hours over fewer days).

Almost half of women surveyed who work flexibly say that it makes them more productive at work.

But challenges with access and concerns about perception remain

Only around a quarter of women surveyed say that flexible working is openly discussed and supported in their company, with the same proportion describing applying for a flexible working arrangement at their company as being easy. 15% of women say that flexible working arrangements are available to all regardless of caregiving status, with the same proportion saying that varied options are available.

Alongside this, eight in 10 women surveyed believe that flexible working negatively impacts career progression at their company and 85% believe that their workload would not be adjusted if they reduced their hours.

What kind of flexible working arrangement do you have?

Flex-time (e.g. I have been able to modify my working schedule while continuing to work my contracted hours during the standard work week)

59%

Reduced presence (also known as part-time) (e.g. I work less than standard weekly hours)

19%

Compressed work week (e.g. I work the equivalent of a standard work week in fewer than five days)

15%

Job share (e.g. I share the responsibilities and duties of one full-time position)

13%

Base = 3,687



Which of the following statements do you agree with?

Flexible working is openly discussed and supported in my company

26%

It is easy to apply for a flexible working arrangement at my company

26%

I work flexibly and it makes me more productive at work

24%

Flexible working does not negatively impact career progression at my company

20%

Base = 7,500

Many of those who don't work flexibly would like to—but barriers exist

Of the 51% of women surveyed who do not work flexibly, only 16% say they are not interested in flexible working—the majority say they would like to work flexibly but are unable to do so. For example, just over a quarter say they would like to but cannot afford to take a cut in pay; and 23% say that, while they would like to work flexibly, their employer does not permit it for any role. 22% say that they believe their current role could be done while working flexibly, but that their employer will not let them work this way.

Concerns about perception are also present for some, with just under two in 10 women who do not work flexibly but would like to do so saying they are concerned that their colleagues would think negatively of them, and the same proportion expressing a concern that their employer would think that they weren't serious about their career. 17% share the same concern when it comes to the perception of clients/customers.

The majority of women surveyed have not experienced significant recent changes to working location

Around six in 10 women say that their employer has not made any significant changes to where they work from over the past year.

For those who have experienced changes it is a varied picture. Indeed, one in 10 women say that they are now able to work flexibly between their home and office locations if they wish to; while around this proportion (11%) say that they used to be able to work flexibly but are no longer permitted to do so. 8% of women say they used to work in a hybrid way but are now required to be on site full time, compared to 5% who used to have to be on site full time but can now work remotely all or some of the time should they wish to.



3 Working as a parent

The majority of those who took maternity/parental leave in the past five years took the full amount to which they were entitled by their employer

13% of women surveyed say they have become a parent (whether or not for the first time) in the past five years; of these, nearly all (92%) took maternity or parental leave for this child. Of those who took such leave, 84% say they took the full amount they were entitled to by their employer.

Just over half of these women say that their maternity/parental leave was fully paid, while around three in 10 say it was partially paid; 9% took maternity/parental leave that was not paid.

Which of the following statements do you agree with?

I took the full amount of leave I was entitled to by my employer

84%

My maternity/parental leave was fully paid

57%

My maternity/parental leave was partially paid

34%

My maternity/parental leave was not paid

9%

Base = 883



Four in 10 partners took their full statutory entitlement for paternity/parental leave

67% of the women surveyed who became a parent in the past five years say that they had a partner at the time and that they took paternity/parental leave.

When it comes to the amount of paternity/parental leave taken by their partner, 40% of these women say their partner took their full statutory leave, while 20% say they only took part of their entitlement. When considering perceived impact of taking such leave, 20% say that their partner feels that colleagues made negative assumptions about their ability to take on certain tasks after they returned, while 14% said their partner was worried that taking parental/paternity leave would have a negative impact on their career.

Less than four in 10 women surveyed who took maternity/parental leave say their return to work after maternity/parental leave was all positive

Experience of returning to work for those women who have taken maternity/parental leave in the past five years is varied, with only 14% saying that their career has progressed as they would like it to since they returned. 37% describe their experience of returning to work as being all positive. 11% say that they seamlessly transitioned back into their job, while just under four in 10 say that it took time to regain their confidence. Finally, a quarter of those who have taken maternity/parental leave in the past five years saw the level of responsibility and tasks assigned to them increase, compared to less than two in 10 (18%) who experienced the converse.

When it comes to how these women believe they were perceived after their return to work, those who reported a negative experience were in the minority—with only 11% saying they believe they were taken less seriously since they returned from maternity/parental leave, and 14% feeling that colleagues made negative assumptions about their ability or willingness to take on certain tasks.

Thinking about your most recent child, which of the following apply to your partner's parental/paternity leave?

My partner's leave was fully paid

48%

My partner's leave was partially paid

43%

My partner took the full statutory entitlement

40%

Base = 646



4 Non-inclusive behaviors

Did you experience any of the following behaviors at work and did you report them to someone in your organization?

Experienced Reported

Sexual harassment

2% 

73% 

Other types of harassment

4% 

62% 

Bullying

11% 

43% 

Microaggressions

21% 

36% 

Base = (experienced) 7,500, (reported) 2,468

Microaggressions are the most experienced non-inclusive behavior at work

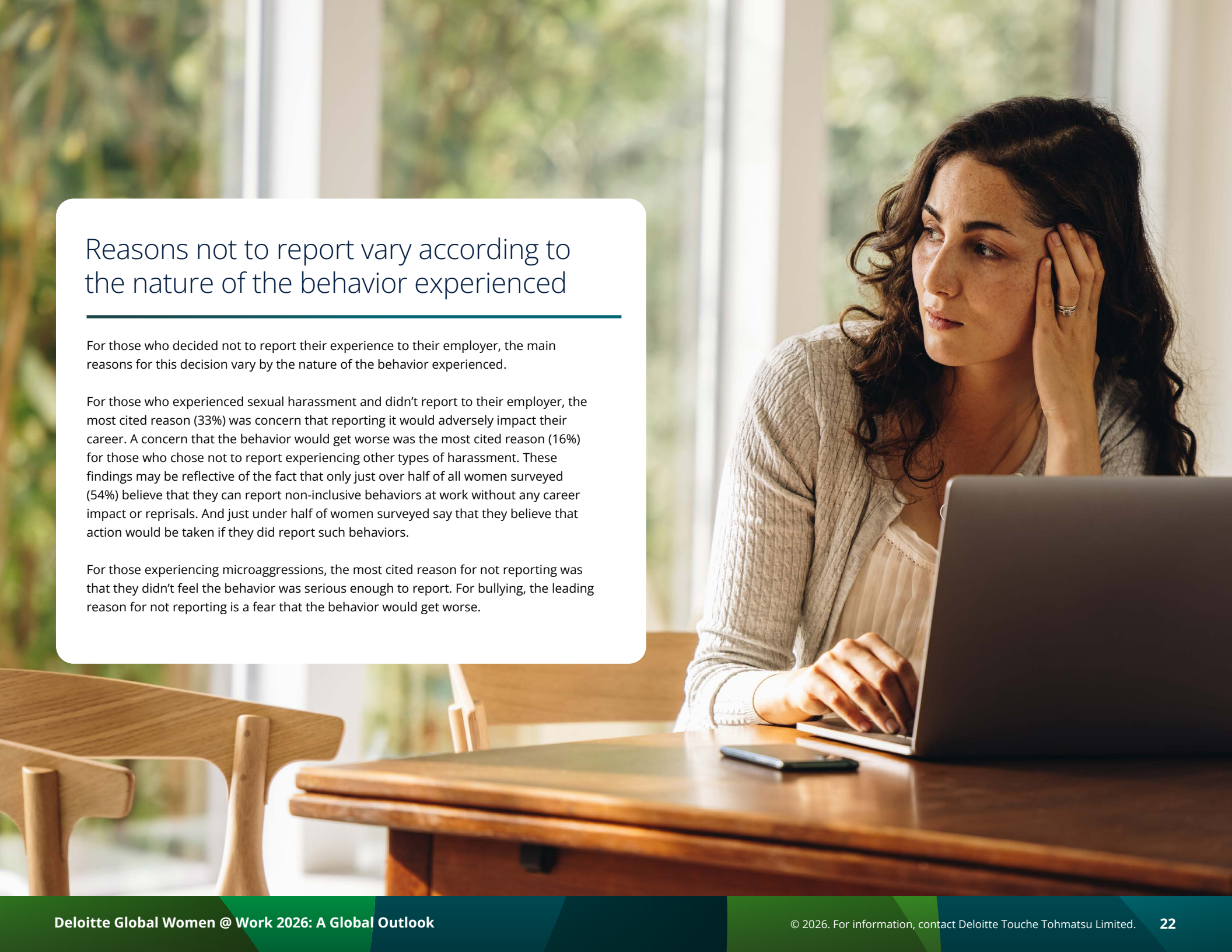
A third of women surveyed report that they have experienced non-inclusive behaviors at work over the past year, with some saying they experienced more than one type: 21% of women surveyed say that they experienced microaggressions, 11% bullying, 2% sexual harassment, and 4% say they experienced other types of harassment.

Yet microaggressions are the least likely behavior to be reported at work—and satisfaction with action taken is lowest

The two percent of women surveyed who said they experienced sexual harassment were the most likely to report this to their employer—with 73% saying they reported it at work and 14% saying they were satisfied with the actions taken by their employer.

Around six in 10 of those who experienced other types of harassment reported it to someone at work, with 29% saying they were satisfied with the actions taken by their employer following their report.

The number who reported their experience to their employer drops significantly when it comes to bullying and microaggressions, with 43% of those who say they experienced bullying and 36% of those who say they experienced microaggressions reporting it to someone at work; this steep decline is also seen in satisfaction with the resultant action taken by their employers, with 11% and 9% respectively saying they were satisfied.



Reasons not to report vary according to the nature of the behavior experienced

For those who decided not to report their experience to their employer, the main reasons for this decision vary by the nature of the behavior experienced.

For those who experienced sexual harassment and didn't report to their employer, the most cited reason (33%) was concern that reporting it would adversely impact their career. A concern that the behavior would get worse was the most cited reason (16%) for those who chose not to report experiencing other types of harassment. These findings may be reflective of the fact that only just over half of all women surveyed (54%) believe that they can report non-inclusive behaviors at work without any career impact or reprisals. And just under half of women surveyed say that they believe that action would be taken if they did report such behaviors.

For those experiencing microaggressions, the most cited reason for not reporting was that they didn't feel the behavior was serious enough to report. For bullying, the leading reason for not reporting is a fear that the behavior would get worse.



5 Personal safety

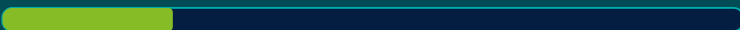
45% of women surveyed say they are concerned about at least one aspect of their workplace-related personal safety—whether that be at work, or traveling to, from or for work

More than one in five women surveyed (23%) say they are concerned about their personal safety at work, while nearly one in 10 (9%) are concerned about their personal safety when traveling for work on business trips. For some, safety concerns also extend to journeys to and from work, with two in 10 saying they are concerned about their personal safety on their commute. One in 10 say they have dealt with clients or customers who have harassed them or behaved towards them in a way that made them feel uncomfortable.

More than three in 10 of those women surveyed who expressed concerns about their personal safety at work, or traveling to, from, or for work say this concern is based on previous experience.

Which of the following statements do you agree with?

I am concerned about my personal safety at work

23% 

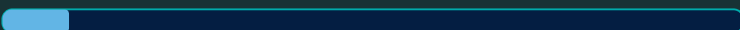
I am concerned about my personal safety on the journey to or from work

20% 

Customers/clients have harassed me or made me feel uncomfortable

10% 

I am concerned about my personal safety on business trips

9% 

Base = 7,500





6 Life concerns

Cost of living is the most cited concern for women surveyed

The cost or affordability of living is the most cited life concern for women surveyed² (cited by 69%), followed by future financial security—cited by 63%. Work-related factors are also something many are concerned about, with 58% of women surveyed saying they are concerned about the ability to learn new skills needed for future job security and 57% saying they are concerned that AI may replace their job—concerns about job security are also cited by the same proportion. Mental health is a concern for 56% of women surveyed, ahead of physical health (51%). Finally, the cost of care for children or other adults is something 46% of women surveyed are concerned about.

Top concerns cited

The cost or
affordability of living

69%

My future
financial security

63%

My ability to learn
new skills needed for
future job security

58%

That AI may
replace my job

57%

My job security
(e.g., being laid off)

57%

My mental health

56%

My physical health

51%

The cost of care (for
children/other adults)

46%

Base = 7,500



2. This finding is consistent with data from Deloitte Global's 2026 Gen Z and Millennial Survey that found that cost of living is a top concern cited by 38% of Gen Zs and 42% of millennials.

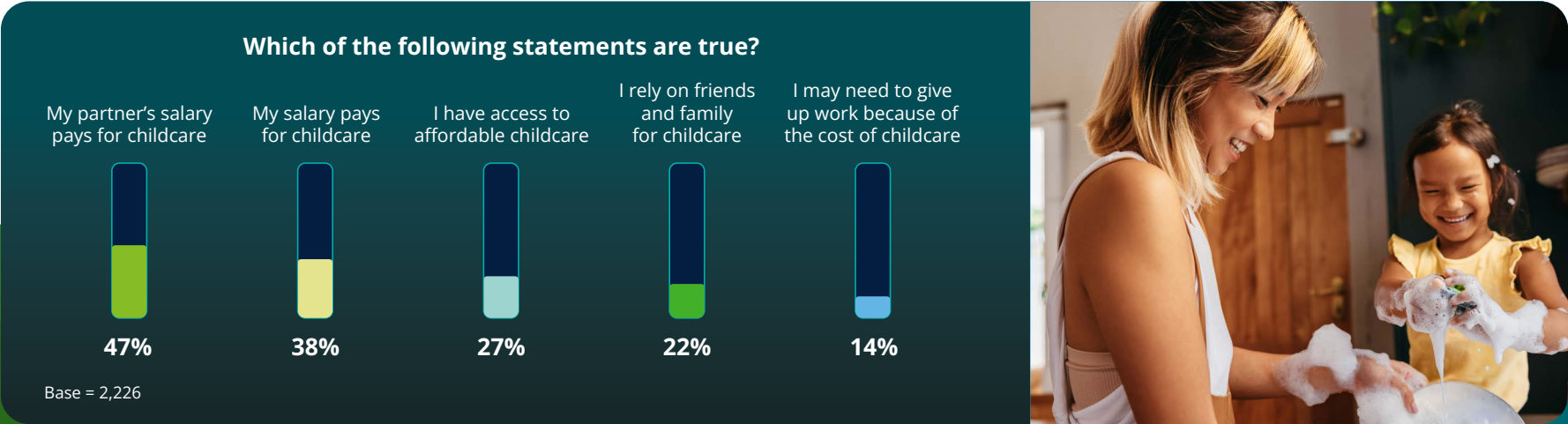


7 Access to and experience of care

The availability and affordability of childcare is impacting women

Only around a quarter (27%) of women surveyed with children under 18 say they have access to affordable childcare. 22% say they rely on friends and family for childcare, while 12% say that if they were unable to rely on friends and family for this, they would need to give up work—and the same proportion say they have reduced their working hours to care for their children. 14% say that they may need to give up work due to the cost of childcare. The availability of care is also a challenge for some, with more than three-quarters of women surveyed with at least one child under five saying that it is not easy to find pre-school childcare places where they live.

Some of the women surveyed who reduced their hours to care for their children said they did so as they wanted to spend more time with their children—indeed, this was the case for just under a third of them. For others, however, affordability was a factor: 28% say that if they hadn't reduced their hours their monthly salary would have been completely used up by childcare costs, and just under a quarter (24%) say that they couldn't afford childcare to cover their full-time working hours.



A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a brown ribbed sweater, hugging a child with dark hair from behind. The woman has her eyes closed and a gentle smile, conveying a sense of love and care. The child is wearing a grey sweater. The background is dark and out of focus.

Some women surveyed have had to take unexpected time off work to care for children or adults

Around four in 10 women surveyed with children under 18 say they have had to take time off work unexpectedly for caring responsibilities over the past year, with these women taking an average of 5.2 days off for this purpose—less than half were paid for it. Worries about perceptions at work also exist for those who had to take time off, with around three in 10 giving their employer a different reason for taking the time off due to concerns about negative career impact, while around two in 10 gave a different reason due to a concern that judgements would be made about their ability to do their job.

Around three in 10 women surveyed with adult caregiving responsibilities have also had to take unexpected time off in the past year, taking an average of 4.1 days—only half of these women were paid for this time off. Concerns about negative perceptions again exist when it comes to disclosing the reason for this time off: approximately a quarter (23%) of those who took time off say they gave a different reason due to concerns about negative career impact and around two in 10 (19%) gave a different reason due to concern about judgements being made about their ability to do their job.

Taking an extended career break for caring had a negative career impact for some

Just under a quarter of women surveyed have taken an extended break from their career of three or more years to care for children or adults.

Only three in 10 of the women surveyed who took an extended career break reported that they were able to return to a similar role at the same level and pay—while just under a quarter (23%) reported returning to a role at a lower level and/or lower pay. A further 11% say they were unable to return to a role that used their qualifications or skills and so took a role that didn't require them; and 15% say they chose to return in a reduced capacity, such as fewer hours and less responsibility.

Around two in 10 used the opportunity to change career path or role when they returned to work.





8 Domestic responsibilities

Women surveyed hold the most responsibility for many household tasks

The data shows that women living with a partner or spouse hold the greatest share of responsibility for most tasks at home. For some tasks, this includes women who are the primary earner in the household.

Caring for children and adults show some of the largest differentials

When it comes to childcare, just over half (51%) of those women surveyed who live with a partner or spouse and have children under the age of 18 report that they have the greatest responsibility for childcare, compared to 5% who say this is held by their partner/spouse. Around a third say they share this responsibility equally with their partner/spouse, while 8% rely on a friend or family member. 2% rely on a paid individual.

A similar pattern is seen for adult care; 46% of those women surveyed who live with a partner or spouse and other adult family members who require care say most of the household responsibility sits with them, compared to 13% who say this is held by their partner/spouse. Around four in 10 (37%) share the responsibility equally with their partner. Only 2% say that they pay someone for this role.

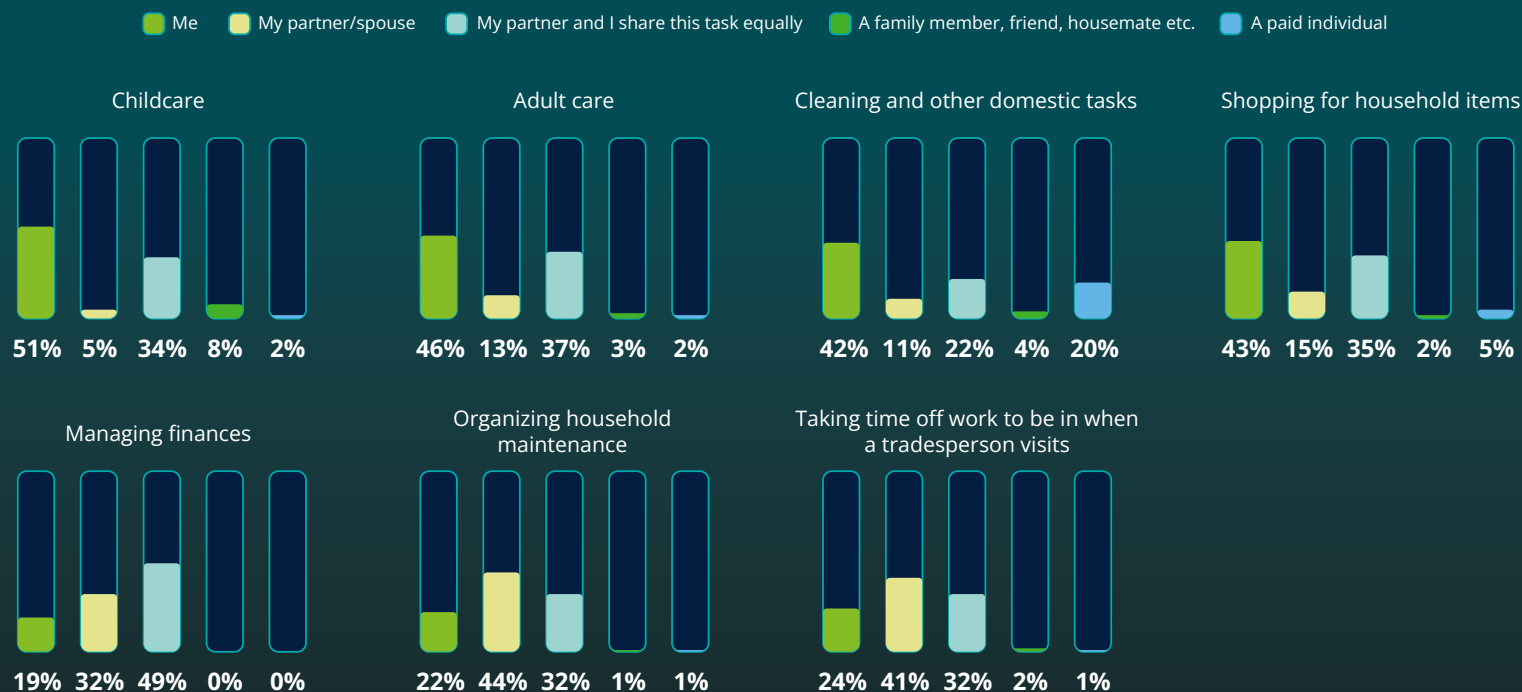




Women surveyed also hold the greatest share of responsibility for many non-caring tasks

Women surveyed who live with a partner/spouse also report holding the biggest share of the household responsibility for non-caring tasks. Indeed, 42% say they bear the greatest responsibility for cleaning and other domestic tasks, compared to 11% who say this falls to their partner/spouse and 22% who share the task equally and two in 10 pay for help. 43% of women surveyed who live with a partner or spouse say they hold the greatest responsibility for shopping, compared to 15% who say this falls to their partner/spouse, while 35% say they share the task equally.

In your household, who has the greatest responsibility for each of the following tasks?



Base = Women living with a partner (childcare) 2,029, (adult care) 1,210, (all other tasks) 5,087

Women surveyed who are also the primary earner see a more even distribution of household responsibilities

11% of those women surveyed who live with a partner/spouse are also the primary household earner. These women hold the greatest share of household responsibility for only two of these tasks—namely adult care (36% vs 26% who say this is held by a partner/spouse, with 24% saying this is shared equally) and managing finances (42% vs 25% who say this is held by their partner/spouse, while 33% say this is a shared responsibility).

All other household tasks covered by this research show a more even distribution of these tasks. When it comes to childcare, 24% say they hold the greatest responsibility, while 18% say this is held by their partner/spouse and 35% say this is a shared responsibility. 15% say they hold the greatest responsibility for cleaning and household tasks, with 20% saying this is held by their spouse, a further 20% saying it is shared with their partner/spouse and 39% employing a paid individual. 33% share responsibility for shopping with a partner/spouse compared with 23% who hold this responsibility alone and 30% who say this is held by their spouse. The primary earners surveyed also say that their partners/spouses are more likely to hold the greatest share of responsibility for organizing household maintenance (55% vs 20% of primary earners) and taking time off to be at home for when a tradesperson visits (45% vs 26% of primary earners.)





9 Mental health

Around three in 10 women surveyed describe their mental health, mental load and ability to switch off as poor

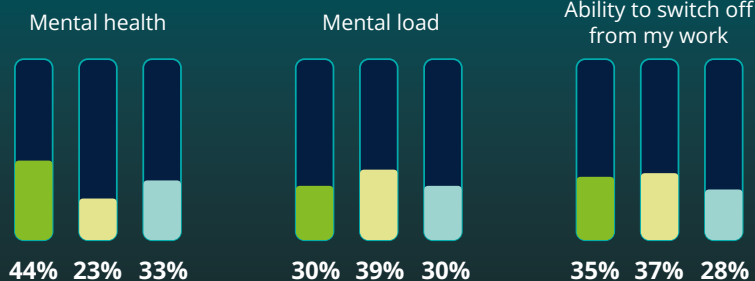
44% of women surveyed rate their mental health as good and 23% say it is average, while a third describe it as poor. Alongside this, three in 10 women surveyed rate their mental load³ as good—the same proportion who rate it as poor. And, while 35% of women surveyed rate their ability to switch off from work as good, 28% rate it as poor (with 37% rating it as average).

Just over half (51%) of women surveyed say they feel concerned about their mental health, and around the same proportion (49%) say their mental health has not improved in the past year. 53% of women surveyed say that the combination of having to do their job and their home responsibilities is not manageable, with 44% saying their stress levels are higher than they were a year ago, compared to 54% who say the contrary. While a majority of women surveyed do not report feeling burned out (71%), nearly one in three say they do, while 27% say they regularly work more than their contracted hours.



How would you rate the following aspects of your life today?

Good Average Poor



Base = 7,500

³Also known as the 'hidden load', mental load is the unseen but often significant cognitive/emotional labor in managing a household, alongside a workload. A 'poor' mental load would indicate that mental load is too high.

Workplace support and comfort to discuss mental health at work is a challenge for many

When it comes to the workplace, while 45% of women surveyed say they get adequate support for mental health from their employer, 53% say this is not the case; and while 46% say they would feel comfortable disclosing mental health challenges as the reason for their absence from work, half say they would not. More than half of women surveyed say they would not feel comfortable talking about their mental health at work, compared to 43% who would. Around three in 10 women say they have taken time off work in the past year due to challenges with their mental health.

Of the half of women surveyed who are not comfortable disclosing mental health challenges as the reason for a work absence, a quarter say that this is due to the information being private to them, while around the same number say they do not believe the workplace is an appropriate place to discuss their mental health. However, concerns about workplace impact and stigma also play a role for some—with, for example, 18% citing concern as to how they would be perceived or treated by colleagues while 15% shared the same concern about how they may be perceived or treated by their manager. 17% of respondents worry about potential discrimination or retaliation.





10 Women's health

Just under a quarter (23%) of women surveyed say they have experienced health challenges as a result of menstruation, perimenopause, menopause, or fertility challenges.

13% of all women surveyed say they have experienced health challenges as a result of menstruation, for example due to painful periods and conditions such as endometriosis or polycystic ovaries.

Of these, just over a third (35%) say that they experience high levels of pain or discomfort but don't take time off work for it, while around two in 10 (19%) say that they have taken time off for it but didn't disclose the reason to their manager. This was most commonly related to them not feeling the need to disclose the reason for their absence (for 37%), followed by a lack of comfort about speaking about personal issues at work—cited by nearly three in 10 (27%). The same proportion say they didn't disclose as their manager is a different gender and they felt uncomfortable discussing it with them. More than one in 10 (16%) say their workplace culture does not encourage openness about these topics, while 17% are concerned that speaking up would impact their career progression.

Among all women surveyed who have experienced health challenges as a result of menstruation, one in 10 also say that they believe that previous disclosure had a negative impact on the way their employer regarded them, 17% say that it did not result in any support from their employer at work to help them deal with their challenges, and only 13% say that they feel comfortable discussing this issue and its impact with their manager.

Some of these women believe that these challenges have adversely impacted their careers, with 14% saying they believe that they have had an adverse impact on their career progression and 4% saying they left a job due to the pain or discomfort experienced.

Only a small number of these women say they are getting support in the workplace to help them deal with these challenges: 15% say they have been able to access workplace accommodations to help and 13% say that, when they previously disclosed their menstrual health challenges as a reason for taking time off, their employer was supportive.



Which of the following statements on menstruation apply to you?

I experience high levels of pain or discomfort but don't take time off work for it

35%

I have taken time off for this issue, but didn't disclose the reason to my manager

19%

I have previously disclosed this as a reason for taking time off, and my employer did not provide support

17%

I have been able to access support at work/ through my workplace health benefits

15%

I have been able to access workplace accommodations such as a flexible schedule

15%

Base = 942

Perimenopause-related health challenges are impacting career progression and choices for some

Four percent of women surveyed have experienced health challenges related to perimenopause—that is, the period leading up to menopause that is associated with physical and hormonal changes.

Of those experiencing perimenopause-related health challenges, just under three in 10 say they experience high levels of pain or discomfort but don't take time off work for it. Around two in 10 (21%) say they have taken time off for symptoms but didn't disclose the reason to their manager. The most cited reason for this lack of disclosure is a lack of comfort speaking up about personal issues at work (for around four in 10), while 33% say their workplace culture does not encourage openness about these subjects—and almost three in 10 (28%) did not feel the need to disclose the reason for their absence. However, a quarter of those who didn't disclose say that they were concerned that doing so would negatively impact their career and two in 10 (18%) feared that it would make them vulnerable if their organization were to make layoff decisions.

Nearly a quarter (23%) of women surveyed who have experienced health challenges with perimenopause say that previous disclosure when taking time off had not resulted in support at work to help them deal with their challenges and one in 10 say they feel comfortable discussing their challenges with their manager. 13% say they believe that previous disclosure when taking time off negatively impacted the way their employer regarded them.

Some also believe that these challenges have adversely impacted their careers—nearly a third believe that it has had an adverse impact on their career progression. And 16% say they have left a job due to pain or discomfort associated with perimenopause.

Only two in 10 say they have been able to access workplace accommodations such as a flexible schedule, while 13% say that previous disclosure when taking time off resulted in employer support.



Three in 10 women surveyed who experience high levels of pain or discomfort related to menopause do not take time off work for it

Five percent of women surveyed report experiencing health challenges due to menopause. Of these, three in 10 say they experience high levels of pain or discomfort but don't take time off work for it; while 16% have taken time off for such pain and discomfort but did not disclose the reason to their manager. The most cited reason for this lack of disclosure is that their workplace culture does not encourage openness about menopause (for 36%), with a third saying that they don't feel comfortable discussing these issues at work—and 23% did not feel the need to disclose the reason for their absence. However, the same proportion did not disclose due to concerns that doing so would negatively impact their career, and 18% were concerned that disclosure would make them vulnerable should their organization make layoff decisions.

16% of women surveyed who suffer health challenges due to menopause say that previous disclosure to an employer when taking time off did not result in support at work to help them deal with their challenges and eight percent believe that previous disclosure had a negative impact on the way they were regarded by their employer. Only nine percent say that they feel comfortable discussing the issue—and its symptoms and impact—with their manager.

Again, as with menstruation challenges and perimenopause, some of these women believe that their symptoms have adversely affected their careers—with 22% saying that they believe that menopause has had an adverse impact on their career progression and nearly one in 10 (9%) saying that they have left a job due to the pain or discomfort associated with menopause.

However, compared to menstruation challenges and perimenopause, significantly more women—nearly a third of respondents—have been able to access workplace accommodations such as a flexible schedule. 17% say that previous disclosure resulted in support from their employer.



Symptoms are also impacting career decisions for some

Around two-thirds (68%) of the women surveyed who have experienced challenges with perimenopause or menopause were unaware of what the symptoms were in advance, with just over a quarter saying they experienced symptoms without knowing that they were due to perimenopause or menopause. Two in 10 of those who have experienced perimenopause and 16% of those who have experienced menopause say they felt listened to by medical practitioners when they first consulted them on their symptoms.

Symptoms are impacting career decisions for some, with around a quarter of the women surveyed who have experienced challenges with perimenopause or menopause saying their symptoms make them so tired they feel unable to do their job; and 27% of those experiencing perimenopause and 16% of those experiencing menopause saying that related anxiety has undermined their confidence in their ability to do their job. Indeed, around two in 10 (21%) of those experiencing perimenopause and 14% of those experiencing menopause are considering leaving their job due to their symptoms, while 14% say that they had wanted to progress at work but have decided that their symptoms will make that too difficult. For 13%, their symptoms coincided with a pivotal point in their career—being given a more senior role at work.

35% of those women surveyed experiencing menopause say they feel comfortable discussing their symptoms with colleagues, although this drops to 26% for those experiencing perimenopause. While just 14% of women surveyed experiencing health challenges with perimenopause say that their workplace recognizes perimenopause and provides information on it for employees, 34% of women experiencing menopause say that their workplace encourages conversation about it.

Which of the below statements do you agree with?

■ Perimenopause ■ Menopause

I was aware of what perimenopause/ menopause symptoms were before I went into perimenopause/menopause

32%

33%

I feel comfortable discussing my perimenopause/ menopause with colleagues

26%

35%

I experienced symptoms without knowing it was perimenopause/ menopause

28%

26%

My perimenopause/ menopause symptoms make me so tired I feel unable to do my job

28%

25%

Perimenopause/ menopause-related anxiety has undermined my confidence in my ability to do my job

27%

16%

Base = (perimenopause) 315, (menopause) 392

Many of those experiencing fertility challenges are working through high levels of pain or discomfort without taking time off

Two percent of women surveyed say they have experienced health challenges related to fertility. Of these women, around four in 10 (39%) say they experience high levels of pain or discomfort but don't take time off work for it, while three in 10 say they have taken time off as a result of symptoms but didn't disclose the reason to their manager. The most cited reason for this lack of disclosure when taking time off—for nearly half (49%)—was a concern that doing so would negatively impact their career progression, while 30% cite a workplace culture that does not encourage openness on this topic. The same proportion didn't disclose as they were worried that it would make them vulnerable should the organization make layoff decisions.

Around two in 10 of the women surveyed who have experienced fertility challenges say that previous disclosure did not result in any support from their employer at work to help them deal with their challenges, 13% say that they believe that previous disclosure had a negative impact on the way their employer regarded them, and just 9% say that they feel comfortable discussing this matter with their manager.

Nearly a third (32%) of those experiencing fertility challenges believe that this matter has had an adverse impact on their career progression, and 12% say that they have left a job due to pain or discomfort associated with their fertility challenges.

In terms of support at work to help them deal with their challenges, just 18% say they have been able to access workplace accommodations, and 16% say that previous disclosure resulted in their employer providing them with support to help with their challenges.



Which of the following statements on fertility challenges apply to you?

I experience high levels of pain or discomfort but don't take time off work for it

39%

I believe that this issue has had an adverse impact on my career progression

32%

I have taken time off for this issue, but didn't disclose the reason to my manager

30%

I have previously disclosed this as a reason for taking time off, and my employer did not provide support

21%

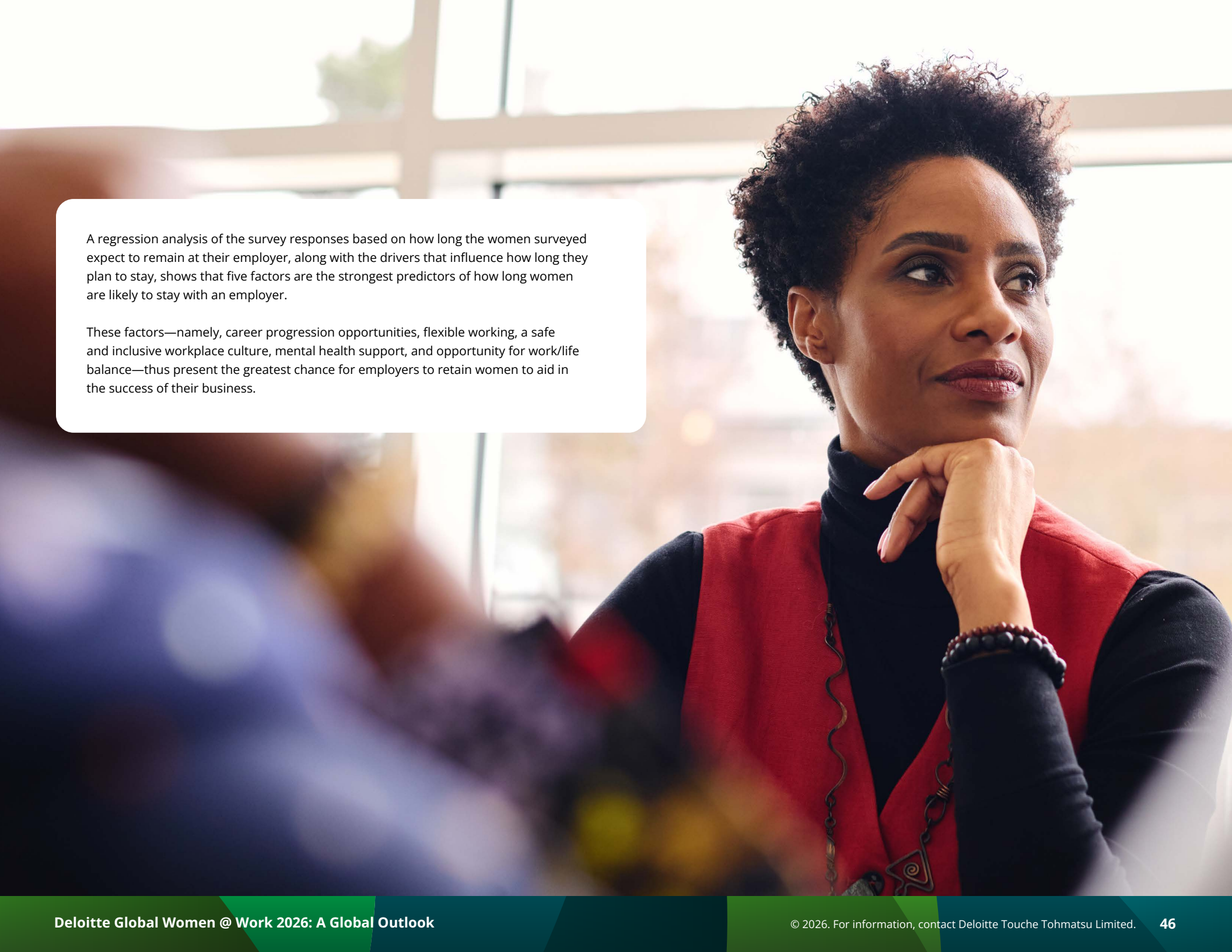
I have been able to access workplace accommodations such as a flexible schedule

18%

Base = 173



11 The five factors enabling women's success in the workplace



A regression analysis of the survey responses based on how long the women surveyed expect to remain at their employer, along with the drivers that influence how long they plan to stay, shows that five factors are the strongest predictors of how long women are likely to stay with an employer.

These factors—namely, career progression opportunities, flexible working, a safe and inclusive workplace culture, mental health support, and opportunity for work/life balance—thus present the greatest chance for employers to retain women to aid in the success of their business.

Authors



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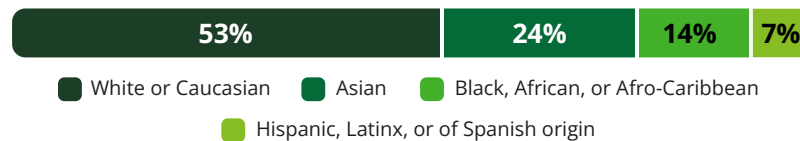
Deloitte Global Inclusion Leader

Methodology

Deloitte Global surveyed 7,500 women across 15 countries and seven sectors between May 2026 and June 2026.

Countries surveyed: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

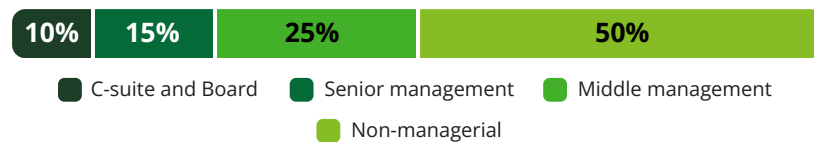
Ethnicity



Age



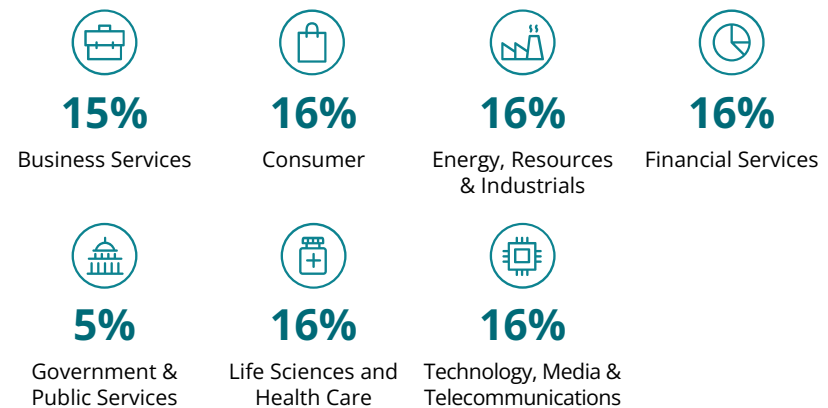
Seniority



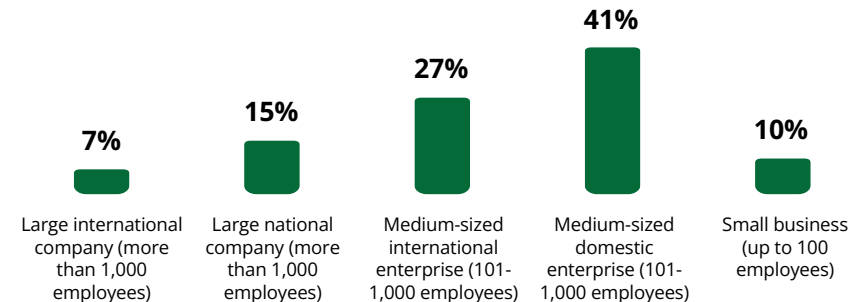
Employment Status



Sector of organization



Company profile





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