



CULTIVATING FEMALE TALENT IN ENERGY:

what the sector can do to resolve the barriers faced by women in middle management.

POWERful WOMEN

BAIN & COMPANY 



About POWERful Women

POWERful Women is a professional initiative working to increase the representation of women at the top of the UK energy sector. Our goals are to see 30% of executive board roles and 40% of middle management roles filled by women by 2030.

We do this in three ways: campaigning and reporting (for example, annual board statistics, the Energy Leaders' Coalition, company pledges), supporting women in their careers (for example, through our mentoring programme, POWERful Connections) and providing practical support to companies committed to better gender diversity and inclusion (for example, through D&I working groups and sharing good practice)

More information: www.powerfulwomen.org.uk

POWERful WOMEN

About Bain & Company

Bain & Company is a global consultancy that helps the world's most ambitious change makers define the future.

Across 63 offices in 38 countries, we work alongside our clients as one team with a shared ambition to achieve extraordinary results, outperform the competition, and redefine industries. We complement our tailored, integrated expertise with a vibrant ecosystem of digital innovators to deliver better, faster, and more enduring outcomes. Our 10-year commitment to invest more than \$1 billion in pro bono services brings our talent, expertise, and insight to organizations tackling today's urgent challenges in education, racial equity, social justice, economic development, and the environment. Since our founding in 1973, we have measured our success by the success of our clients, and we proudly maintain the highest level of client advocacy in the industry.

More information: www.bain.com

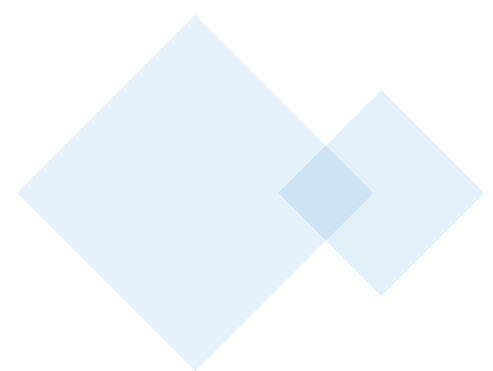
BAIN & COMPANY 

TABLE OF CONTENTS



7	Introduction
8	Executive Summary
15	Chapter 1: Methodology
19	Chapter 2: Women's attitudes to the energy sector
20	<i>Women are strong advocates of the energy sector but are less likely to recommend the industry or their organisation to other women as a place to work and less likely to champion it as they become more senior</i>
25	Chapter 3: Company action on diversity and inclusion – what commitments and policies exist and are they being used?
26	<i>Energy companies have the will – most have diversity and inclusion commitments in place</i>
28	<i>Energy companies have the will – most have gender diversity and inclusion policies in place</i>
29	<i>The delivery gap – policies exist but are not being used</i>

33	Chapter 4: Career barriers for women in middle management - and what makes a difference
37	<i>Equal access to effective professional development</i>
50	<i>Experiencing flexible working in practice</i>
56	<i>Visible female role models</i>
60	<i>Supportive and inclusive culture</i>
69	Chapter 5: Recommendations for the sector
72	<i>CEO and leadership team ownership</i>
72	<i>Equipping managers with necessary skills and courage</i>
72	<i>Questions company leaders should be asking of their organisations</i>
73	<i>Applicability of recommendations to other underrepresented groups</i>
73	<i>Every one of us can contribute</i>
75	Appendix: survey and interview demographics
76	References
76	Further Reading
77	Acknowledgements



In 2021 **only 14%** of executive director roles in the UK energy sector were held by women



INTRODUCTION

The energy sector faces immense challenges in securing the best talent as it transforms and upskills for the energy transition. Yet women are still under-represented in the industry.

The latest annual board statistics published by POWERful Women (PFW) and PwC UK show that in 2021 only 14% of executive director roles in the UK energy sector were held by women and 62 of the 80 largest employers had no female executive directors on their boards¹.

The current gender balance falls far short of the charter commitment made by PFW's Energy Leaders' Coalition² to have 30% of executive board roles and 40% of middle-management roles in their UK energy companies filled by women by 2030.

When it comes to gender balance through all levels of organisations, it is harder to gather data but in 2019 women were reported to comprise 22% of the global energy sector³ and make up an average of 23% of total employees across 135 international energy companies⁴.

Because of the smaller number of roles and their visibility, the issues around executive level gender balance have been studied in more detail. **We therefore decided to invest in understanding and addressing the barriers women face in mid career, before the executive level.**

Supporting women in middle management is both an investment to grow the pipeline for senior leadership and an end goal in and of itself.

Our approach with this study, for which POWERful Women has partnered with Bain & Company, is to hear the voice and capture the authentic experience of women in energy middle management in the UK, and to compare this with the UK industry more broadly and the experience of men. We have used a mix of data surveying and one-to-one interviews.

Our goal is to better understand the barriers women face in arriving at, moving through, and rising from middle-management positions and to catalyse change to resolve those barriers. We want to support leaders and companies on their journey, helping them to ask the right questions, to measure how well interventions are actually delivering results (and thus a return on their investment) and to gain a deeper understanding of how they can increase retention and progression of women in their company.

Diversity and inclusion are business critical for the UK energy sector, particularly as it navigates the energy transition to Net Zero. Without diversity of skills, experience and ideas, we won't have the innovation or technical and commercial capability, nor will we be able to connect with a changing and diverse customer base. Inclusion is central to delivering diversity goals – attracting women to the industry, retaining them and supporting them to succeed requires a robust and effective approach to inclusion to create the kind of supportive culture where everyone is valued.

While our study focuses on women, we believe that our findings and recommendations are relevant for supporting other underrepresented groups too, and that the better outcomes we hope to see will benefit **everyone** in the workplace.

Thank you for joining us on our journey to understand and support women in energy middle management.

*Ruth Cairnie, Chair, POWERful Women & Olga Muscat, Partner, Bain & Company
April 2022*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We listened to the individual and collective voices of women working in energy middle management in the UK through one-to-one interviews and a comprehensive industry survey. The results have given us some fascinating and at times startling insights into women's lived experience in the energy workplace and the barriers they face – whether they want to succeed in their current roles or progress through middle management to senior leadership.

There's a diversity and inclusion delivery gap

On a positive note, the energy sector excites women, and commitments on diversity and inclusion have been made by companies and leaders. However, these commitments are not being cascaded effectively to all levels within organisations. A variety of policies are in place to support people's careers, but they are not being used by many women - not because they have little need of or appetite for such policies but because they are often either reluctant to use them or the policies just do not deliver in practice what they are meant to.

Policies are often not well or consistently implemented by line managers and – critically – not backed-up by an inclusive and supportive company culture, which contributes to the low uptake:

- » Access to and the quality of 'on-the-job' coaching, mentoring, sponsorship and other professional development are inconsistent for many women.
- » Whilst flexibility and family support policies, such as part-time working, are available, there is a fear that they can lead to reduced career opportunities. Women experience assumptions, sometimes "paternalistic" and derived from "benevolent sexism", about what those working flexibly can and want to do.
- » A lack of accessible role models is hindering women's aspiration and confidence in being able to progress.

This delivery gap can partly be attributed to company culture. Many women just do not feel respected and included, which hampers their progress, and also their willingness to champion their organisation to other women as a place to work, even though they are motivated by the sense of purpose they derive from contributing to the energy transition.



Inclusive cultures make the difference...

to women...

It is important to inculcate a supportive culture and inclusive behaviours in companies and by managers and leaders. This will ensure that strong policies and initiatives not only exist but that their uptake is encouraged, supported and celebrated, to truly make them feel recognised.

... and to companies' attractiveness

The data revealed that effective and usable diversity and inclusion policies that deliver in practice increase the attractiveness of an organisation as a place for women to work.

In summary, our research suggests that the UK energy sector is investing in diversity and inclusion initiatives but is not getting the return it should because female talent is not being sufficiently cultivated and is even being lost to rival companies or sectors. The barriers and shortcomings we heard about in the interviews and the survey are not, unfortunately, a surprise. The question is, therefore, why have we not succeeded in removing them so far?

The quest for talent, even across other industries, is intensifying and so 'hunting' for talent from other companies and industries is an ever less viable option. **Our conclusion is that organisations need to work harder at 'cultivating' the talent they have, to create the workforce they need** for the energy transition and to fulfil all that society requires from them.





Recommendations:

There is no one size fits all solution

Each organisation is different and requires solutions tailored to its particular circumstances if the delivery gap we have identified is to be closed. Closing the delivery gap will enable better retention and cultivation of talent for the energy transition and improved business performance.

But all solutions have common elements

If an organisation is to close the middle-management gender gap it requires the visible attention of the CEO and the leadership team. All bespoke solutions require leadership from the CEO if they are to be properly tailored to an organisation's strategic objectives and its specific circumstances. This is doubly so if the solutions call for changes to the organisation's culture.

Every organisation's actions need to be based on accurate data about how policies designed to achieve greater gender parity are delivering in practice.

From our research it is clear that, for significant numbers of women in energy, commitments and policies are just not delivering as intended. It is not evident that the detailed reasons behind this are fully appreciated by many organisations.





So what should your organisation do to **close the delivery gap?**

1. **CEO and leadership team should take ownership** of closing the middle-management gender gap by ensuring solutions are tailored appropriately to the needs of their organisation.
2. **Managers should be equipped with the skills and courage required** to enable them to hold the necessary conversations (for example on women's development and flexible working) to close the delivery gap.

3. **Ask the right questions to close the delivery gap.** The leadership of the organisation needs to regularly ascertain the answers to the key questions that formed the basis of our research in this report, to ensure policies remain relevant and are delivering the planned outcomes:

- **Target Setting** - What targets (including annual targets) has your organisation set regarding diversity at middle-management level and how do they benchmark with POWERful Women's target of 40% by 2030?
- **Regular feedback** – What do your female middle managers tell you about how your organisation's diversity and inclusion policies are delivering in practice, in particular to provide:
 - » Equal access to effective professional development
 - » Flexible working in practice
 - » Visible female role models
 - » A supportive and inclusive culture
- **Performance Monitoring** – Are your targets, including the more detailed KPIs set to reach these targets, being delivered in each part of your organisation?

4. **Diversity more broadly.** You should consider adopting the same approach for other underrepresented groups, since all the indications are that the same techniques could have equally beneficial effects.

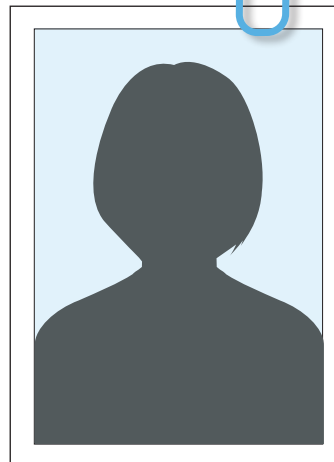
5. **Every one of us can contribute towards creating a diverse and inclusive workplace for women in middle management.**

We recommend that all those employed in the energy sector seek to be agents of change in closing the delivery gap:

- » Encourage your organisation, leaders and managers to ask these key questions and to report on progress.
- » When you see an initiative not working, say something.
- » Reach out and support women in your company, peer group or network, even if you're not the most senior.
- » Speak up and speak out – your voice matters!

CASE STUDY

"Sophie*" is a marine engineer. She left her previous employer because she felt the work environment was so male dominated that she felt intimidated, and her confidence suffered. She has relevant vocational skills and qualifications (from her years in the armed forces) that her company doesn't recognise in its pay grades, so she's stuck at her current level unless she gets another degree to tick a box or changes functions. She is the only technician of her discipline at her company. She feels that her line manager is a barrier to her pursuing roles in different functions because she's good at her work and someone would have to be hired externally to replace her specific discipline experience. She feels her line manager doesn't understand she might want to discuss her challenges and interests with others, let alone pursue other roles.



In addition to her challenges with her line manager and lack of progression due to her qualifications, Sophie is raising her young children while her husband is away working on oil rigs. The hours and work travel to be on site are challenging for her. Her male manager is very close to her two male teammates, and she feels like an outsider given how those three men socialise and communicate. She is disproportionately relied upon for the site visits while her peers are allowed to work remotely more to be with their families, and she doesn't feel her extra effort is recognised.

Despite these professional and personal challenges, Sophie values the sense of belonging she found in a professional women's network she joined, appreciates the sponsorship of the head of the company, and finds great purpose in her energy transition work.

*All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the interviewees

CHAPTER

1

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

The analysis in this report is based on two types of research. Firstly, a series of in-depth one-to-one interviews with women in the UK energy sector to discuss their experiences in middle management, including the barriers to career progression that they have encountered and initiatives or support they either have found or would find useful.

Secondly, an industry survey undertaken by Bain & Company of around 4,700 UK employees across a range of industries, including energy, and at various career stages.

The aim of both exercises was to gain rich qualitative as well as quantitative results – to hear authentic viewpoints and experiences from those directly working in energy at this level, backed up by critical data analysis across a wider range of industries. It was done to help us develop a better picture of what can be done to effectively support and progress women in middle management in our sector.

The interviews (one-to-one)

The interviews focussed specifically on women in the energy sector and were conducted over a period of four months in 2021 by representatives of POWERful Women and Bain & Company.



Thirty-two in-depth one-to-one interviews were conducted, with interviewees selected to ensure diverse results in terms of energy sub-sector (see Appendix), location, types of company (from large suppliers to start-ups) and with a range of roles, career levels and experience, from less than 10 years to more than 20.

The interviewers posed a set of questions to each woman:

1. What are the key drivers keeping you engaged in your career in the sector?
2. What has made the biggest difference to your career to date?
3. What support would you have valued that you did not receive?
4. What are the barriers that you faced/are facing and how have they affected your career in the sector?
5. What support would you want from your organisation?
6. What are the initiatives that need to be reinforced?

Their responses are captured in the case studies and quotes throughout this report.

Through these one-to-one interviews we aimed firstly to gain insights into women's overall career ambitions and what is keeping them engaged and/or progressing in the sector and their careers. The interviews then helped us understand the challenges they are facing, the support that they need but haven't had during their careers, and why.

Women's experiences are of course varied but these confidential interviews gave us insight into how companies can better nurture women's careers.



SURVEY RESULTS

The UK industry survey – 'Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace 2021' – was undertaken in June 2021 and posed questions on the following topics:

- ◆ Individuals' **willingness to promote their organisation** to others (and specifically to other women) as a place to work.
- ◆ Their **aspirations and confidence** to progress to more senior roles.
- ◆ Their organisation's **attitudes towards diversity and gender parity**, such as the setting and communication of targets, leadership priorities, etc.
- ◆ The **availability and uptake of gender parity and diversity policies and programmes** within the organisation they work for – initiatives used by employees or ones that should be on offer, and the effectiveness of them, including measures to support professional development, address unconscious bias, flexible working, etc.
- ◆ **Inclusion and culture within their workplace** – i.e. the ability to be one's authentic self, feeling heard and valued and the role modelling of behaviours by their employer.
- ◆ **Day-to-day experiences** of inclusive and non-inclusive behaviours such as being discouraged from speaking in meetings and work not being acknowledged.

Creating an Employee Net Promoter Score ('ENPS')

From the first of the above questions, we created an 'Employee Net Promoter Score' or 'ENPS' for each respondent, which we then used throughout the survey to create an extra layer of analysis of the rest of their answers.

Net Promoter Scores are typically used in market research to measure customer loyalty to a product or service⁵. The Employee Net Promoter Score applies the same principle to measure employee loyalty and we used it to measure how people's views on their companies' diversity and inclusion policies and culture correlate with engagement with their company.

To create each individual's ENPS, we asked "How likely are you to recommend your organisation as a place to work to a friend or colleague?" and also "How likely are you to recommend your organisation as a place to work to a female friend or colleague?"

The respondents rated their answer on a scale of 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely). Those who answered 9 or 10 are "promoters" and those who answered 0-6 are "detractors." Within the set of respondents, the percentage who were promoters minus the percentage who were detractors results in the Employee Net Promoter Score (ENPS).

The higher the ENPS (the percentage shown in some charts in this report), the more strongly women are advocates for their organisation as a place to work. A lower ENPS indicates they are more negative about a career with their organisation or in the energy sector. For reference, an ENPS of around -2% is average for UK industry as a whole.

When applied to the survey results, we were able to find out how the presence and effectiveness of certain policies correlated with women's willingness to advocate (generally and to other women) a career with their company. In other words – to what extent do specific diversity and inclusion (D&I) policies and a supportive culture increase the attractiveness of a company as a place to work and help a company attract and retain female talent, thereby securing a return on its investment in D&I programmes?

4700

Survey responses
from men and
women based in
the UK

150

working in
the energy
sector

Survey response rate and demographics

The industry survey captured responses from some 4,700 individuals (men and women⁶), the vast majority based in the UK, with at least 150 of the respondents identified as specifically working in the energy sector, giving us a statistically valid sample for energy and a rich comparison to other sectors. The detailed survey demographics for workplace and for individuals (in energy) can be found in the Appendix.

The survey results were collated by Bain & Company on behalf of POWERful Women. A joint working group has analysed the outputs of the survey and the interviews and compiled the recommendations in this report.

CHAPTER

2

WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TO THE ENERGY SECTOR



Women are strong advocates of the energy sector but are less likely to recommend the industry or their organisation to other women as a place to work and are less likely to champion it as they become more senior

We started by wanting to understand what attracts women to the energy sector as a career. How enthusiastic are women about working in energy and why?

We spoke to some extremely passionate and talented women who value the sector and its importance to everyday life. In particular, they feel a sense of purpose and are motivated by the role the energy sector plays in improving sustainability. They want to mitigate climate change and enable the transition to Net Zero, advancing clean energy technologies and “keeping the lights on”.

Women found their jobs fascinating and were attracted by the variety of interesting challenges and roles that working in the industry promised at an exciting time of innovation and transformation. Several spoke of the opportunities in energy tech, large-scale infrastructure, new career pathways and transferable skills.

They talked about playing a part in making change happen and the satisfaction of solving problems. They have ambitions to succeed, wanting to learn and progress out of a sense of personal and professional pride and told us that being in the energy sector has given them valuable exposure to important and high-level projects and people.

So, women are a motivated and a talented part of the energy industry. But how engaged are they? Does this enthusiasm translate into them being willing to recommend a career in the sector to their friends or colleagues, and particularly to female friends or colleagues?

“I have always been so enthused by the energy sector. I get to work on some big deals and figure out some big problems, now even more so as the industry faces new challenges and is such a focus of attention. It’s really exciting!”

“I used to have a good job in academia working on electrical engineering, but I decided to move into the industry because I want to work directly on the energy transition.”

We asked respondents:

How likely are you to recommend your organisation to a friend or colleague as a place to work?



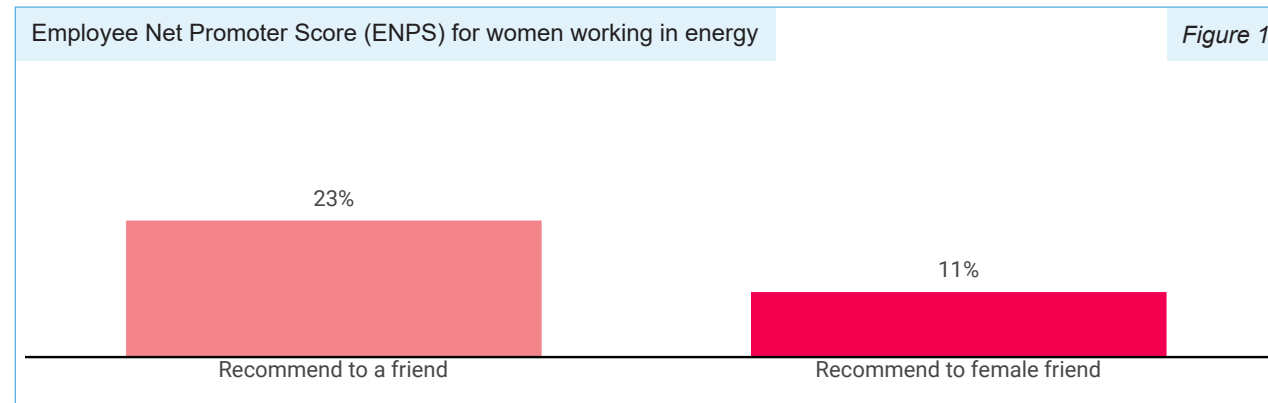
And how likely are you to recommend your organisation to a female friend or colleague as a place to work?



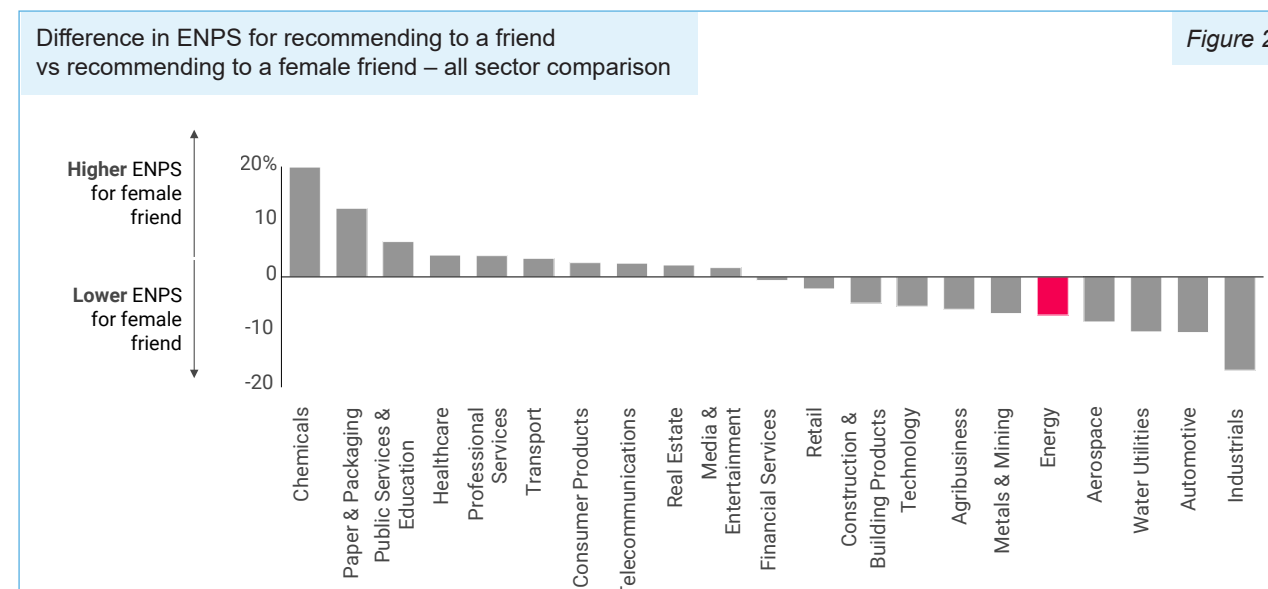
The 0 to 10 rating determined to what extent they were advocates or **'promoters'** for working in their organisation and the sector or, conversely, **'detractors'**.

In our survey, the women in energy had an Employee Net Promoter Score of 23%. This puts the energy sector in the top quartile for ENPS (or likelihood of recommending one's organisation to others) compared to other industries. **Women in energy are strong advocates for their companies compared to women in other sectors.**

However, when it comes to women recommending their company to a female friend or colleague, the energy sector performs less well – the ENPS goes down to 11%. **This gap is bad news for the energy sector's ability to attract female talent.**



When looking at all industries, we found that this 12% gap between women's advocacy for their company to any friend or colleague versus advocacy to a female friend or colleague is larger for energy than most other sectors (fig. 2).



EXPLAINER: WHAT IS AN EMPLOYEE NET PROMOTER SCORE ("ENPS")?

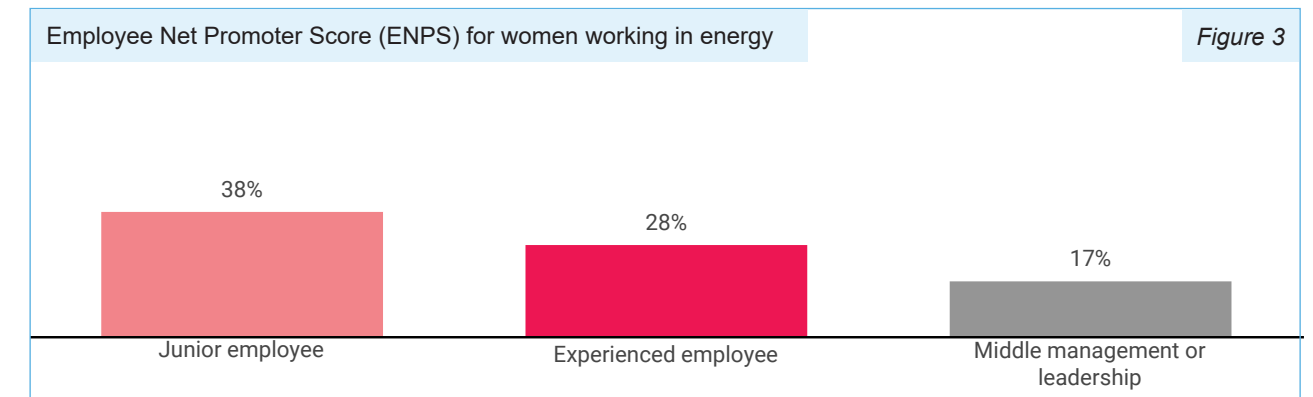


Employee Net Promoter Score is a marketing research concept used to measure loyalty. We created an ENPS based on responses to two questions:

"How likely are you to recommend your organisation as a place to work to a friend or a colleague?" "How likely are you to recommend your organisation as a place to work to a female friend or colleague?"

The higher the ENPS percentage (as shown in the charts), the more strongly women are advocates for their organisation as a place to work. A lower ENPS score indicates they are more negative. For reference, a score of -2% is the average for UK industry as a whole.

Women in energy are not only less likely to recommend working at their company to a female friend or colleague, but also less likely to recommend it the more senior they become. In our survey, women in junior roles had the highest ENPS scores and women in more senior middle-management and leadership roles had the lowest (fig. 3). This decline in advocacy was not found in other sectors.



KEY TAKEAWAY:



The energy industry is viewed as an attractive and exciting sector, with interviewees citing the vital nature of energy, the critical role it plays in addressing climate change and the variety of challenges it presents.

However, whilst positive about the sector overall, women working in energy are less likely to recommend it to other women, and their advocacy falls as they become more senior in their career. The next sections in this study seek to explain why and explores how women's advocacy can be increased.



CHAPTER

3

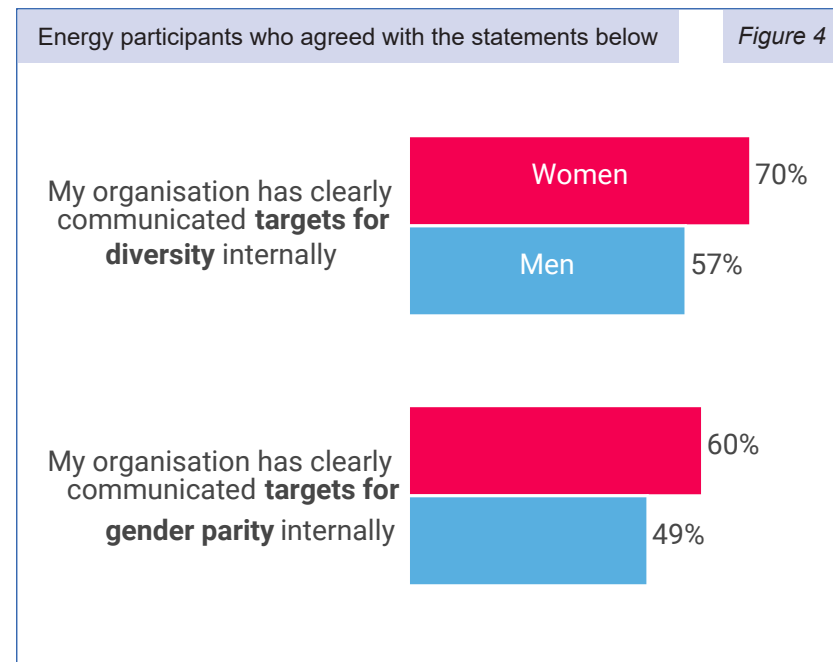
COMPANY ACTION ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

– what commitments and policies
exist and are they being used?

Energy companies have the will – most have diversity and inclusion commitments in place

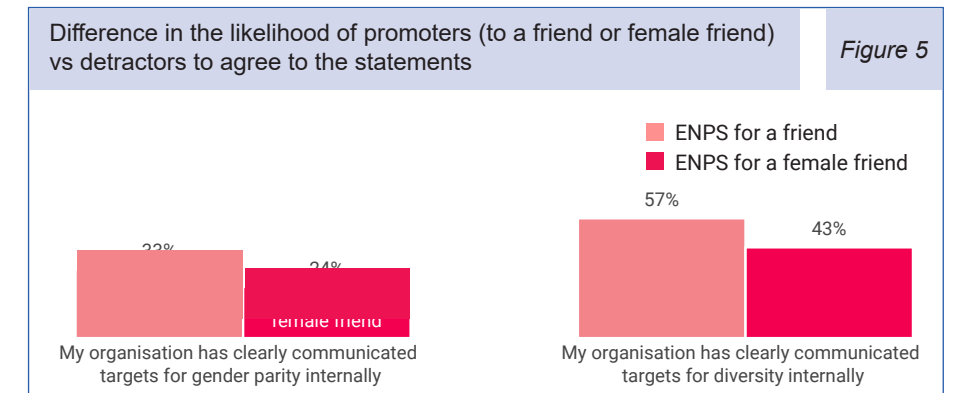
The good news is that a majority of our energy sector survey respondents, both male and female, believed their employer has clearly communicated targets for diversity and gender parity and is working towards these commitments. This view is higher amongst female respondents.

More than two thirds of women say their companies have targets for diversity and more than half say they have targets for gender parity.



How does this affect the attractiveness of a company as a place to work?

We found a strong correlation between these responses and people's willingness or otherwise to recommend working for their company. We looked at how likely women promoters were to agree with the same statements and how this differed from women who were detractors. Women working in organisations with clearly defined diversity and gender parity targets were more likely to recommend their organisation to a friend or colleague and, importantly, to a female friend or colleague.



It is clear that most energy companies have made diversity leadership commitments and these commitments increase the company's attractiveness as an employer for women.

EXPLAINER: WHAT IS A PROMOTER AND WHAT IS A DETRACTOR?

A promoter is a survey respondent who rated their willingness to recommend their company to a friend or colleague highly, with a score of 9 or 10 out of 10. Detractors are those who rated their willingness at between 0 and 6.

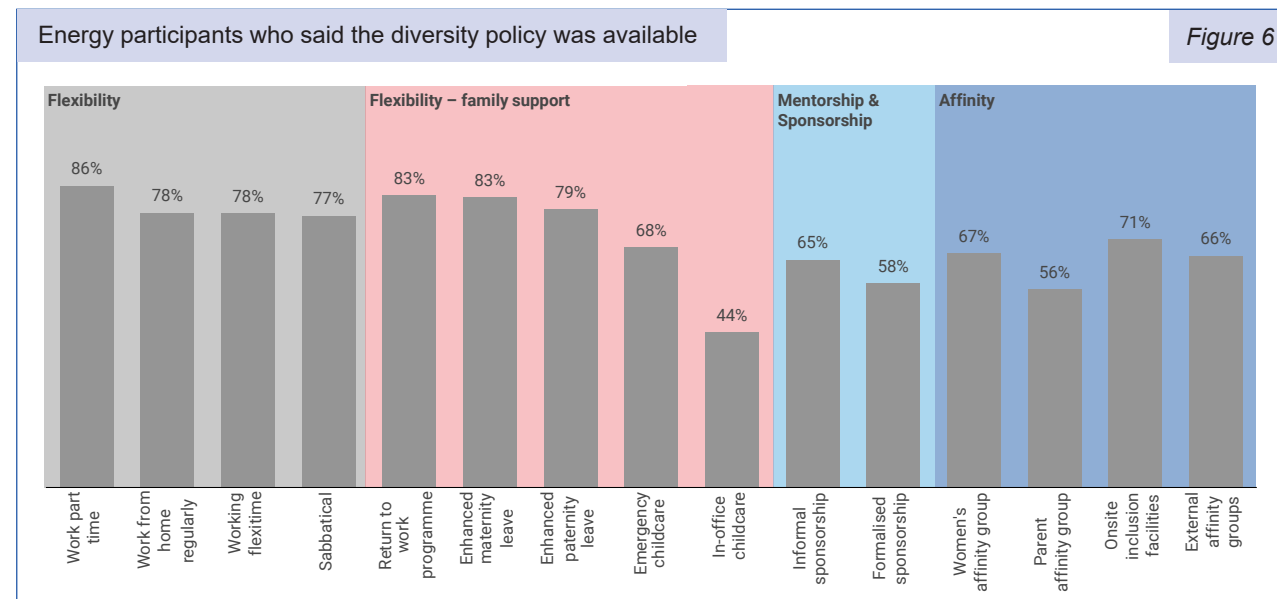




Energy companies have the will – most have gender diversity and inclusion *policies* in place

More good news came when we asked about the existence of policies for achieving these targets and commitments to improve gender diversity and inclusion. A clear majority of the energy employers have a variety of initiatives on flexibility, family support, sponsorship and affinity groups.

The availability of all except in-house childcare was mentioned by more than half of respondents and some policies, like part-time working, return to work programmes and enhanced maternity leave, were referenced by a very high number of people in the energy sector.

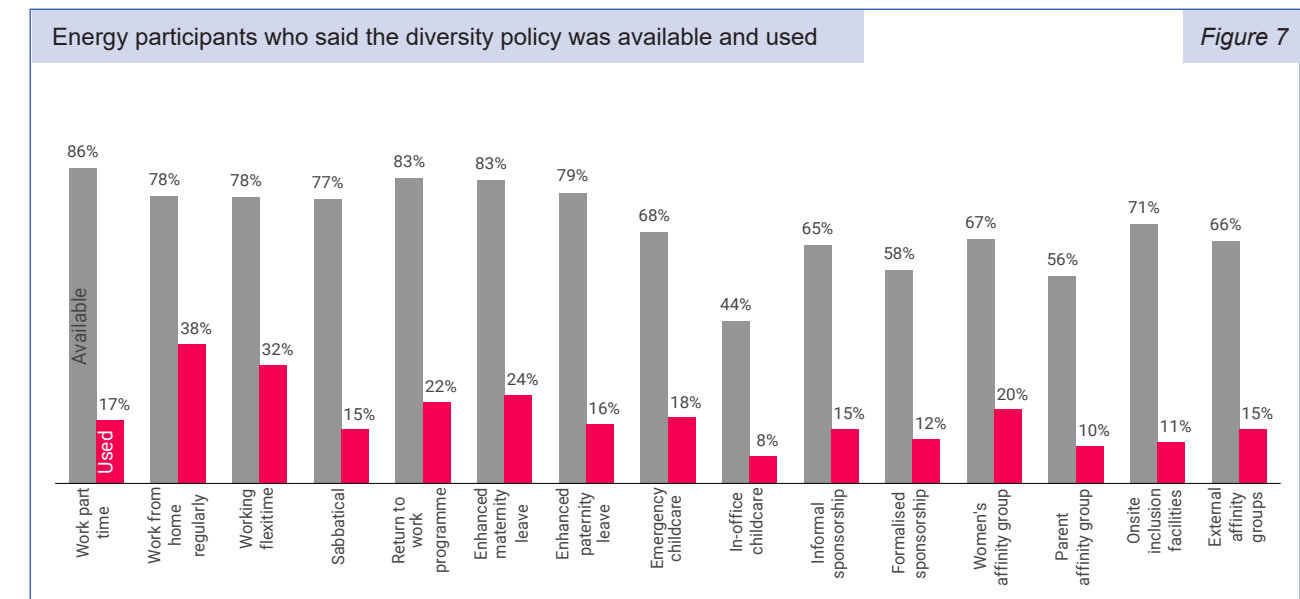


It appears that most energy employers have put a good number and variety of gender diversity supporting policies in place and our research also showed that the energy sector is doing better on this than other UK sectors.

The delivery gap – policies exist but aren't being used

Management teams have made commitments and put policies in place, but have these had the desired impact?

When looking at the uptake and use of all the available policies there is a delivery gap, with a much lower percentage of women in the survey reporting actually using the policies.



In the interviews, women's experience reinforced the survey findings.



"My company set up a formal mentorship scheme as part of a talent programme. I was selected but my mentor never invested the time."

"One company I worked for offered a leadership scheme, which was for training future middle management. However, the selection process was very ad hoc, it was difficult to get in, and some of those who were successful were still waiting for a middle management position. It felt more of a tick box exercise."

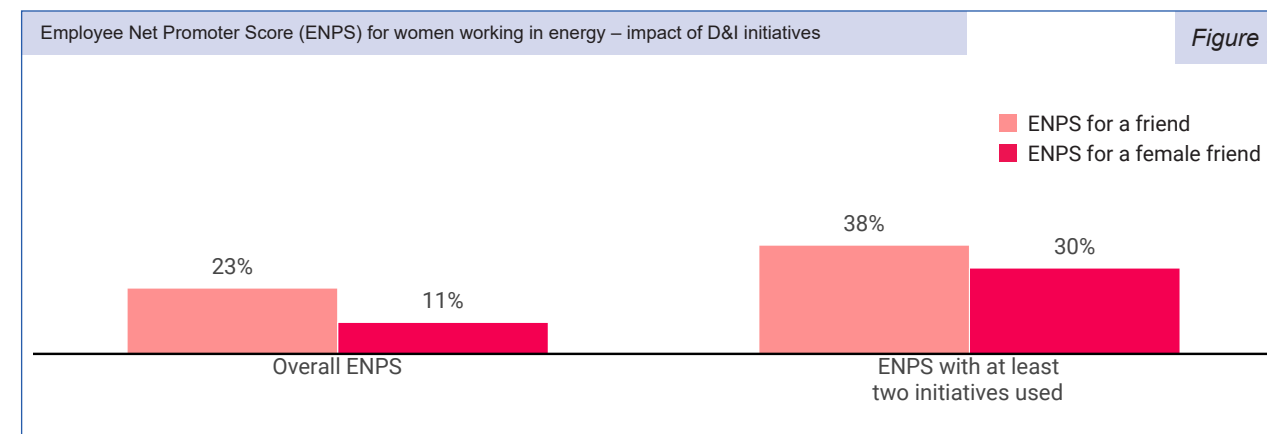
"I've been in my job for two years and work on great projects, but I need to think about the future. The company I work for only offers statutory maternity policy, so I don't think I'll stick around when it's time to start a family. I'll definitely be judging potential employers on how their policies actually work."

"I was able to switch to part-time when I came back from maternity leave, but my 4 days always ended up being 5 in practice and I felt my flexible hours were questioned by colleagues. Going part-time meant I had to make a trade-off between progressing my career and juggling family and childcare."

How does delivery affect the attractiveness of a company as a place to work?

Is there a link between these responses and people's willingness or otherwise to recommend working for their organisation? To answer that question, we again compared how 'promoters' and 'detectors' replied. We found that Employee Net Promoter Scores rose by around 15 percentage points when women used two or more of these diversity supporting policies. They were also more willing to advocate working for their company to other women in particular.

The effective use of diversity policies in organisations increases the attractiveness of a company and of energy as a sector for women.



KEY TAKEAWAY:

The good news from our industry survey is that a wide variety of diversity and inclusion commitments and policies exist in UK energy companies. However, their uptake by women lags behind their availability. This was reinforced in the interviews where, for example, several women working in energy voiced concern that when policies on flexible working are taken up, it negatively impacts their career progression. As a result, companies are not getting enough return on the investment they are making in diversity and inclusion.



So let's see why this is happening. In the next chapter we reveal what women said about why they aren't taking up these career-supporting policies. They told us about the barriers they had encountered – both culturally and in terms of the effective delivery of D&I policies by their employers – and what would really make a difference to them and their careers.



CHAPTER

4

**CAREER BARRIERS FOR WOMEN
IN MIDDLE MANAGEMENT**
- and what makes a difference



Career barriers for women in middle management - and what makes a difference

From our interviews and survey, four key themes emerged about the barriers women face in their careers at middle-management level, how this affects their advocacy for their company as a place to work and what policies and behaviours would make a positive difference.

The actions for successful delivery are:

- 1 Equal access to effective professional development
- 2 Experiencing flexible working in practice
- 3 Having visible and relatable senior female role models
- 4 None of this will work, though, without a supportive and inclusive culture, which is the fourth theme. Likewise, the culture won't make a difference to women's careers if these key practical policies aren't effectively and consistently implemented.



1

Making a difference to women's careers: **equal access to effective professional development**

The first of the key themes that emerged is the importance of professional development. What do we mean by professional development?

It encompasses:

- A. **Coaching:** on-the-job development achieved through regular, honest, transparent, and timely two-way feedback on areas of strength and areas for further improvement

- B. **Learning:** more structured development such as internal and external courses and training

- C. **Mentorship, sponsorship and networking:** Access to career advice from internal and external mentors or sponsors and professional networks

- D. **Development opportunities:** Access to opportunities such as high profile projects, lateral role changes to develop different capabilities, and promotions



Women discussed the barriers they had encountered when trying to access professional development. For example, when discussing **coaching**, women highlighted:

- » not getting the conversations they need – a lack of constructive, positive or honest feedback from their line managers to help them develop, and not enough opportunity to provide their managers with the same in return.
- » a workplace culture that made such challenging conversations difficult because colleagues and managers lacked the skills and courage (we explore the cultural dimension in more detail below).

“Professional development and feedback can become a box-ticking exercise rather than being open and communicative within a culture.”

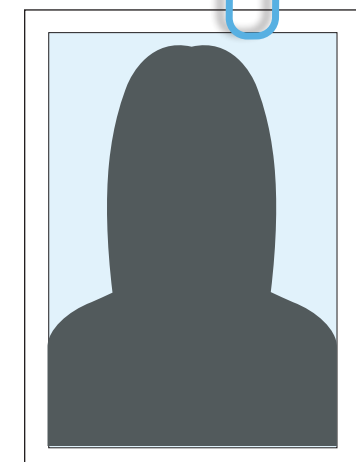
“I felt the previous manager just wanted me to stay and keep doing the same role. My asks fell on deaf ears and my aspiration was not supported by management.”

“I would like to see more of a culture of giving and receiving honest direct feedback. Supervisors need to build the courage and skills for listening and giving and receiving feedback, not avoiding difficult conversations, even when there’s a platform set up to try to help you.”



CASE STUDY

“Marie” was stuck for a while on an engineering level – the company did not really advertise opportunities for progression. At this point she booked a day with a female coach and paid for it herself. This was a real turning point for her. The coach helped her work through her career challenges and opened her eyes to wider opportunities, including introducing her to companies she would not have considered before. She says that her company definitely would not have paid for a coaching session – in that company, the only option for promotion was for someone more senior to retire.





When it came to more structured learning, particularly through **mentorship, sponsorship and networking**, a strong message from women was the absence of formal processes for professional development in their company, and a lack of consistency in how they are implemented by line managers:

- » Mentoring, although widely available, is not working for women in practice – the programmes and their value are not being communicated, and mentors are not following up or making the time for the mentees. As a consequence, women are being forced to look outside for direction or mentoring on leadership skills.
- » There is difficulty finding sponsorship or finding the right sponsor with whom “you can be your authentic self”, even though sponsorship is fundamental to career development. This was backed up by the sector survey, where 58% of women in energy said their company has formal sponsorship but only 12% were benefiting from it.
- » There is a lack of formal career support, direction, clear paths and criteria for promotion, highlighted by women in both technical and non-technical roles such as legal counsel or finance.
- » Women do not have the same access as men to senior leadership or social events for networking, affecting their development and progress. (Again, this is covered in more detail in the culture section below.)



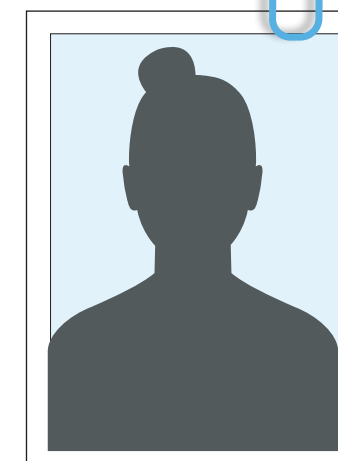
“The organisation lacked management throughout, lacked sponsorship, and wasn’t investing in women to give them the guidance they needed.”

“The credentials you need to progress are quite arbitrary. It feels like it’s less about my educational qualifications and more about what you need to say to get ahead or who you know. So currently in this environment I don’t feel like I can succeed being who I am because the value I bring isn’t understood.”



CASE STUDY

“Natalia” is fifteen years into her career working at a major energy company. She’s an engineer and entered the industry in oil and gas. She’s engaged by the breadth of career opportunities working in a large energy company and she plans to continue her career in energy, but she is truly demoralised by the male dominated culture. After she was chosen for a talent development programme, she was assigned a formal mentor, but he never invested much time in her. Her line manager lacks the skills and interest to manage people well – they aren’t curious and open to what her goals are, and they try to impose a fixed view of what opportunities they think she should pursue, as if her personal needs and desires aren’t important to them. As a result, she’s making a lateral move out of engineering and into operations where she hopes her new line manager will be more supportive and invest more in her.



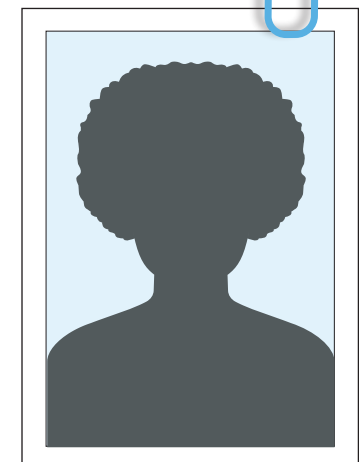


Women spoke of unequal access to **development opportunities**, citing:

- » not being assigned to high profile projects
- » lack of opportunity to shadow more senior or challenging roles before applying, or to gain experience
- » no formal leadership tracks where those identified for development could be given special projects and roles to apply for
- » lack of transparency on the promotion process, particularly recruitment into leadership, and the criteria for success. This led to a feeling that the process is not open to everyone and had to be initiated by women themselves – and yet asking for a promotion was often an awkward conversation that could even be perceived negatively.

CASE STUDY

“Phoebe” left school at 16 and has built her career in business development at energy utility companies. She works hard but feels that her managers often hold her back from growth opportunities. For example, when she brought in a big client, they wouldn’t even let her shadow the team that served the client. While they said that it was because it was “not her job,” she feels that she is given fewer opportunities because she’s young and female. She recently changed jobs looking for a more inclusive corporate culture.



SURVEY RESULTS



Women with access to **professional development support** are more likely to be advocates of their organisation

Our wider industry survey found that only about 60% of women in energy are confident that they will progress in their careers and the level of professional development that a woman receives is highly correlated with her confidence of advancing in her career.

For women, regular coaching from supervisors and having a senior sponsor to help find opportunities were the most powerful factors in boosting their perception of the likelihood of their advancement. For those who spoke of their lack of confidence in advancing their career, not being motivated or encouraged by colleagues was a major driver.

For respondents who were confident that they will be able to advance in their career (~60%) the difference between men and women in what they considered important for the development of their careers was not materially different.

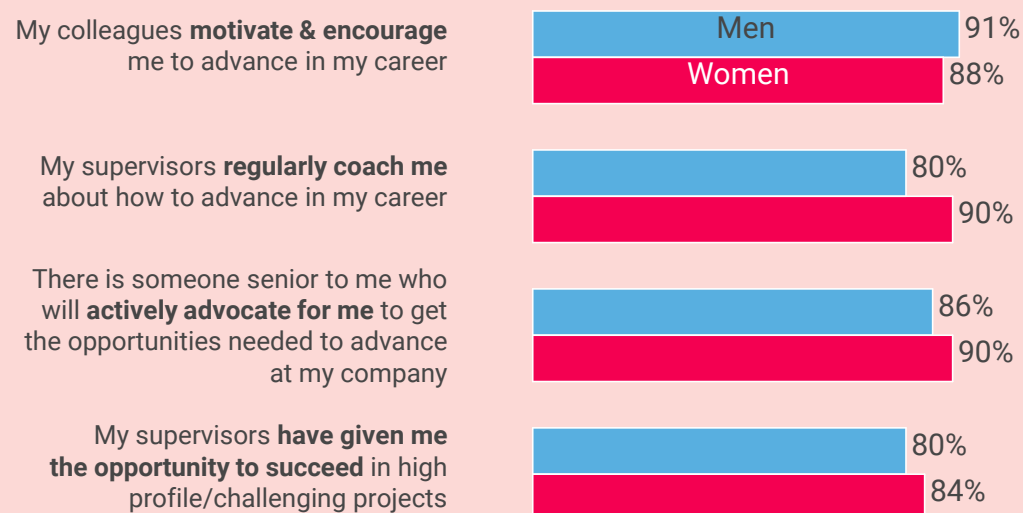
However, for respondents who did not consider themselves confident in career progression (~40%) the importance of all aspects of development, but particularly coaching and having an advocate, was more important for women than men.

These results would suggest there is much to be gained by organisations helping employees less confident of career progression to become more confident through development and the prize is greatest with women employees.

CONFIDENT of career advancement (~60%)

Energy participants who cited the following factors as significant in impacting their confidence to reach a senior leadership position

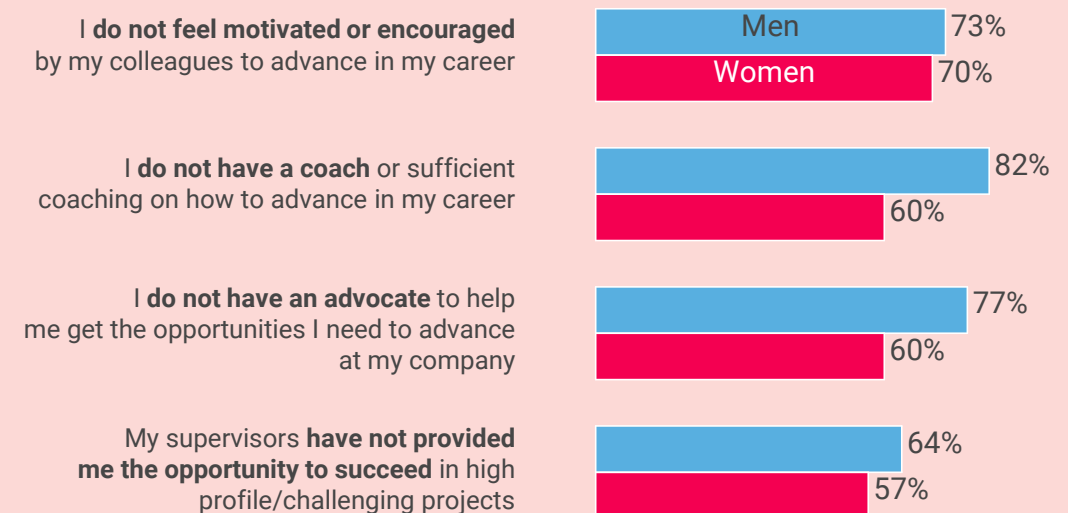
Figure 9



NOT CONFIDENT of career advancement (~40%)

Energy participants who cited the following factors as significant in impacting their lack of confidence to reach a senior leadership position

Figure 10



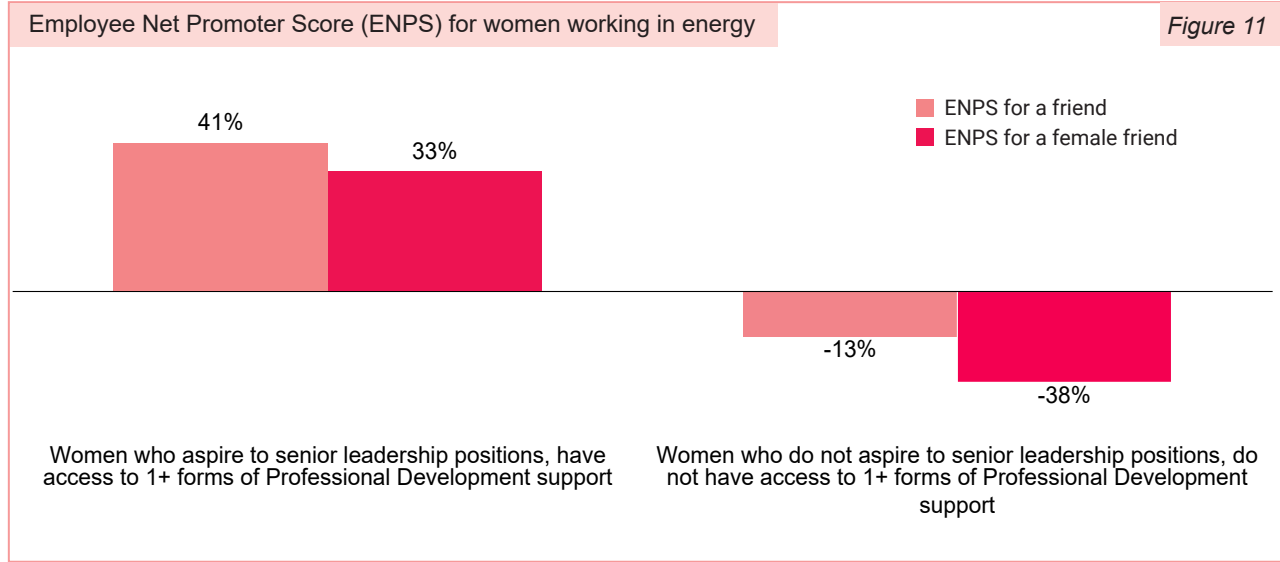


SURVEY RESULTS




How does this affect the attractiveness of a company as a place to work?

When it came to specific diversity and inclusion policies and initiatives, we found that women in energy who have confidence in the likelihood of their progression and have access to professional development are more likely to be promoters of their organisation as a place to work than women who do not. This is also the case when recommending it specifically to female friends.



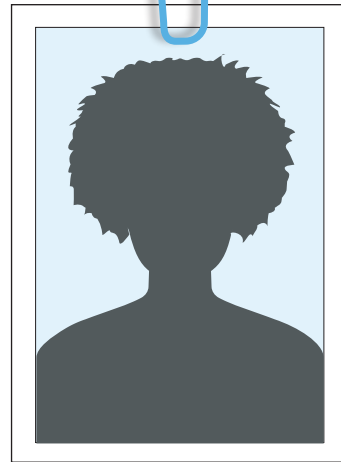
KEY TAKEAWAY:

Both male and female energy employees with access to professional development are more likely to be more confident of career advancement. But the interviews revealed that for those who do have access, the provision hasn't been systematic or consistent across the board.



Some of the things women told us they need:

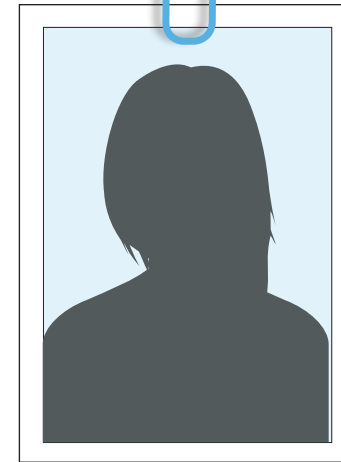
- ☑ A culture of dialogue and feedback with line managers and in which colleagues have the courage and skills to have direct, difficult but useful conversations.
- ☑ More networking opportunities recognising that these might need to be different for men and women.
- ☑ More transparency in internal promotion and development opportunities, and clear, consistent and structured career progression processes.
- ☑ Better formal mentoring programmes and sponsorship within their organisation and for existing programmes to be better communicated and followed-through.
- ☑ More informal mentoring and industry-wide external mentoring programmes aimed at women in middle management.
- ☑ Career talks (in companies or in the industry) to share career stories and pathways, including for example women's experience with career breaks.
- ☑ Exposure to senior management to learn and to be stretched.
- ☑ More secondments and the opportunity to shadow a role before applying for or doing it.



CASE STUDY

“Meera” is a chemical engineer in the energy sector and thinks that some of the things that she has done on her own – acquiring new skills, making connections with senior leaders (in the absence of a formal mentoring scheme) – should have been done in a more systematic way by her organisation. They should be thinking more about how to retain their talent. Other industries value these sorts of skills, she says, and she knows people who have moved out of the energy industry to work as energy consultants for banks, for example. She feels that her organisation should give people the chance to talk about their aspirations and encourage them to move from technical into business or strategy roles. Yet this kind of move can be frowned upon. She would like to see senior leadership taking an interest, asking what her aspirations are and creating a fast-track scheme to help her development.

“Getting onto a special project helped progress my career. I worked with the Board for a year and got a huge amount of value out of that because I got to understand how senior management made decisions and also got a lot of visibility for myself.”

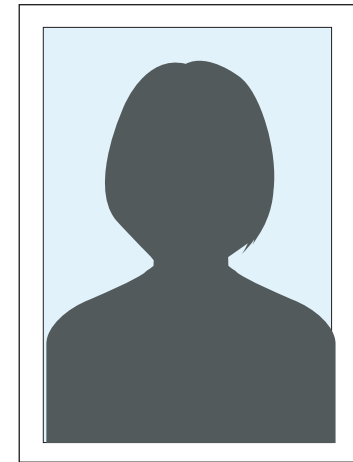


CASE STUDY

“Annie” has benefited from two very senior people in her organisation taking an interest in her and her career, particularly after she returned from having children. One of them gave her an opportunity outside her role, for a secondment into another part of the business. The other pushed her to come up with a clear development plan, not taking ‘I don’t know’ for an answer. As a result, she has identified five or six roles that she might be interested in working towards, and also the gaps in her development to get there.



“One Managing Director I had set up catch-ups with all his staff posted abroad. He asked me to forget he was my MD, and talk about my aspirations. I discussed further study, he gave objective advice and this led to me doing an MBA. It was a pivotal moment that helped me crystallise what I wanted.”



CASE STUDY

“Katherine” has been working in energy for 12 years and in the clean energy sector for the last five. She feels supported in her role – her Managing Director shows implicit trust that has allowed her to thrive, – and she is currently focusing on gaining more experience in her current job rather than continuous progression. But she has never had any formal mentoring and so she is working on her own networking as she thinks she needs more visibility. She has also felt that promotion processes at work are closed to her. She stresses that she does feel valued but would appreciate more transparency in internal processes and opportunities.

“Many women lack technical skills from their schooling and so are overlooked for certain roles. But companies should be upskilling their people. When I was told there was no budget for training I had to pay for an Excel course myself.”

2

Making a difference to women's careers: experiencing flexible working in practice

To pursue a career successfully, it is essential for employees to be able to manage their job around their different life stages, especially when they have caring responsibilities and when raising a family, and to do so without experiencing penalties or unequal opportunities.

When we interviewed women about barriers to their career progression, many mentioned the inadequacy in how various flexibility policies are put into practice. Women also talked about the need for inclusive culture to support flexible working and their concerns that starting a family would affect their careers.

"More women take time off for children and that stunts their career from an operational perspective. For couples, women are more likely to go part-time than the men. I think front line operations offer less flexibility."

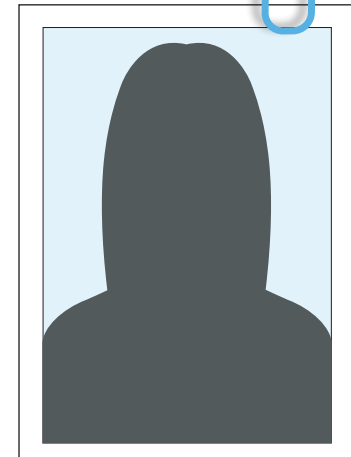
"Hours required and travel are huge barriers to my retention and advancement due to childcare needs and travel logistics"

While most women said that their companies allowed flexible working and they appreciated this, they felt it was not implemented in a systematic or supportive way. The issues women raised fell into three categories:

1. A fear of being **perceived as not committed or working well** when they work flexibly and therefore passed up for promotion in favour of less-qualified or experienced male colleagues. Some women feel that if they work part-time or flexibly in other ways, they are considered less ambitious and capable by their manager and potentially given fewer stretch assignments and opportunities.

"I was immediately on the back foot because all roles are advertised as full-time and I had to make the case for part-time, although in reality I'm still covering a full-time role but in 3 days. I don't think I'll go much further until I increase my hours again. Not because I don't want to progress but because the company has now 'written me off'."

CASE STUDY



"Sonia" is part of a very female team in a male-dominated organisation. In her previous company she had a manager who believed in her and gave constructive positive and negative feedback, which she found very helpful. In her current company, however, she feels like she is being patted on the head and given no authority or autonomy. She and her female colleagues have noticed that since a man joined their team, they have all been treated more seriously.

At the stage she is currently at in her career, she has done the training, got the experience, had a family, returned to work, and feels that she could really start moving forward again – but finds that there is very little support. "I feel that now I'm part time I'm treated a bit like I'm on the scrap heap – not worth bothering with."

For Sonia male dominance is a real blocker – she feels the senior men in the organisation like what they know, generally favouring other men. They are also older and seem to have no concept of the challenges of having small children, which was especially clear during Covid when they didn't appreciate the difficulty of working from home while looking after children.

2. Male and female employees need to be **able to 'lean in and lean out'** of their careers at different life stages, but women report that they aren't getting the chance to do this, even with flexible working policies. Critically they need to be able to have open discussions about this. Juggling home life and work is making many women's levels of resilience thinner than they used to be and yet they still felt pressure to say yes to things at work

“I wanted to go for role that was supposed to be flexible but was told it required me to be in the office at 8.30 in the morning. I couldn't physically do that, so the managers wouldn't let me apply.”

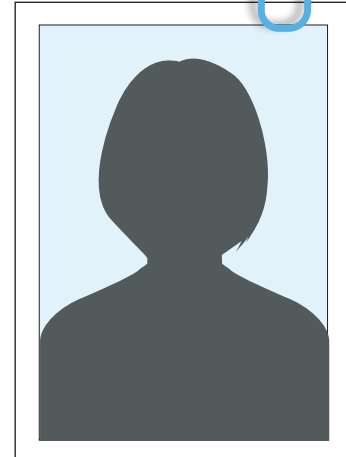
“I want to get to board level, but not if it means working 15 hours a day and every weekend. The higher you get, the higher the expectations and pressure – I don't want to be burned out.”

3. **Benevolent sexism** - women reported supervisors, sometimes with the best of intentions to be helpful and kind, making assumptions about the women's preferences and goals without actually seeking to understand what the woman wants. Sometimes managers act on these assumptions, for example in staffing the woman on less challenging assignments or assuming that women with children would be inflexible about work hours. Whilst well meant, this benevolent sexism can impact women's their career engagement and prospects.

“I was happy returning to my role after maternity leave and I still want to advance my career. However, I am worried that my managers aren't giving me the opportunities to progress and develop because they are making assumptions about me – like that I don't want to travel.”

CASE STUDY

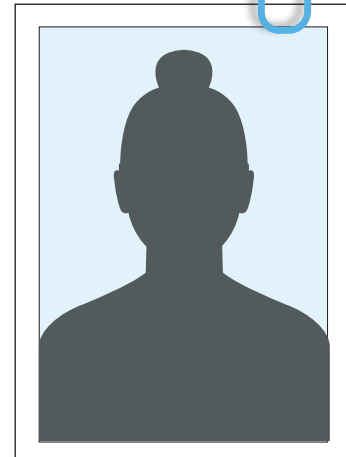
After eight months maternity leave, “Lise” wanted to return to the office three days a week and work from home two days a week. This was agreed locally but the HR division was very resistant, saying they were worried about setting a precedent. She had to push hard on health and wellbeing in order to get agreement, which didn't make her return very pleasant.”



CASE STUDY

“Dayana” wanted to have a child and come back to work, but she found that returning and having to juggle everything was a big shock. “I can't do my job, be a good mum and push my career at the same time. I just want to come in and do the day job every day and not screw up - I don't want to work 24/7 to climb the ladder.”

But for Dayana that doesn't mean she doesn't want to progress in the future and now she is worried that she will be overlooked for promotion in four or five years' time. For now, at this stage in her life she is happy to stay at the same level: “Perhaps I could have just a sideways move into something that isn't super challenging so that I can still grow and develop, but also manage all my other commitments” she says.



SURVEY RESULTS



Our industry survey supported these perceptions of inequality of opportunity and sometimes poor attitudes to flexible working. Of those who had indicated that flexible working (working part-time, from home and/or flexitime) was available at their organisation, we asked to what extent they agreed with the following statements:

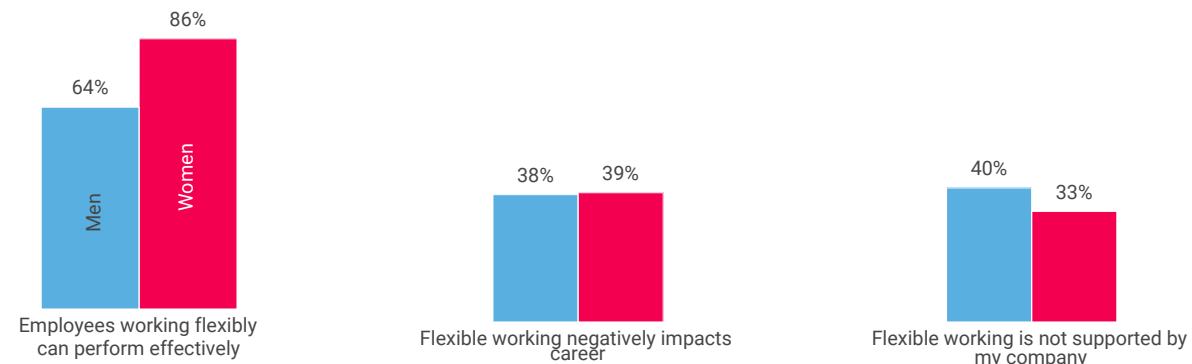
- » employees working flexibly can perform effectively at their job
- » flexible working negatively impacts career trajectory

The results showed that flexible working is viewed as effective, but career limiting:

In addition, around 30-40% of energy employees believe that flexible working is not supported or encouraged in their organisation.

Energy survey respondents who agree with the statements below

Figure 12



“We need equity not equality – treat individuals how they would like to be treated rather than treating everyone identically. This doesn’t happen. They don’t take individual preferences into account. They just project based on what they did or think you want.”

“The STEM returners programme has been brilliant. It has looked at our skills and helped women find roles where they can demonstrate their value. I really like that it gives me and other women a chance to not just get back to work but to eventually rise up the ladder.”

GOOD PRACTICE

Some of the things women told us they need:

- ☑ Flexible working to be more consistently available and the policies to be effectively implemented in practice, particularly for working mothers.
- ☑ The flexibility to ‘lean in and out’ of work and, in consultation with their organisations, decide for themselves when they are doing so, rather than supervisors making at times ‘paternalistic’ assumptions about what they want or don’t want (such as travel or stretch assignments).
- ☑ Not to be considered less ambitious because they are part-time and to be offered suitable development opportunities and responsibilities, even if they are working flexibly.
- ☑ At the same time, not to feel like they have to say yes to everything in order to look ambitious but rather to be able to carve the path that works for them.
- ☑ Not to be disadvantaged when they come back from maternity leave by, for example, being forced to step down a role because their previous role has been taken.

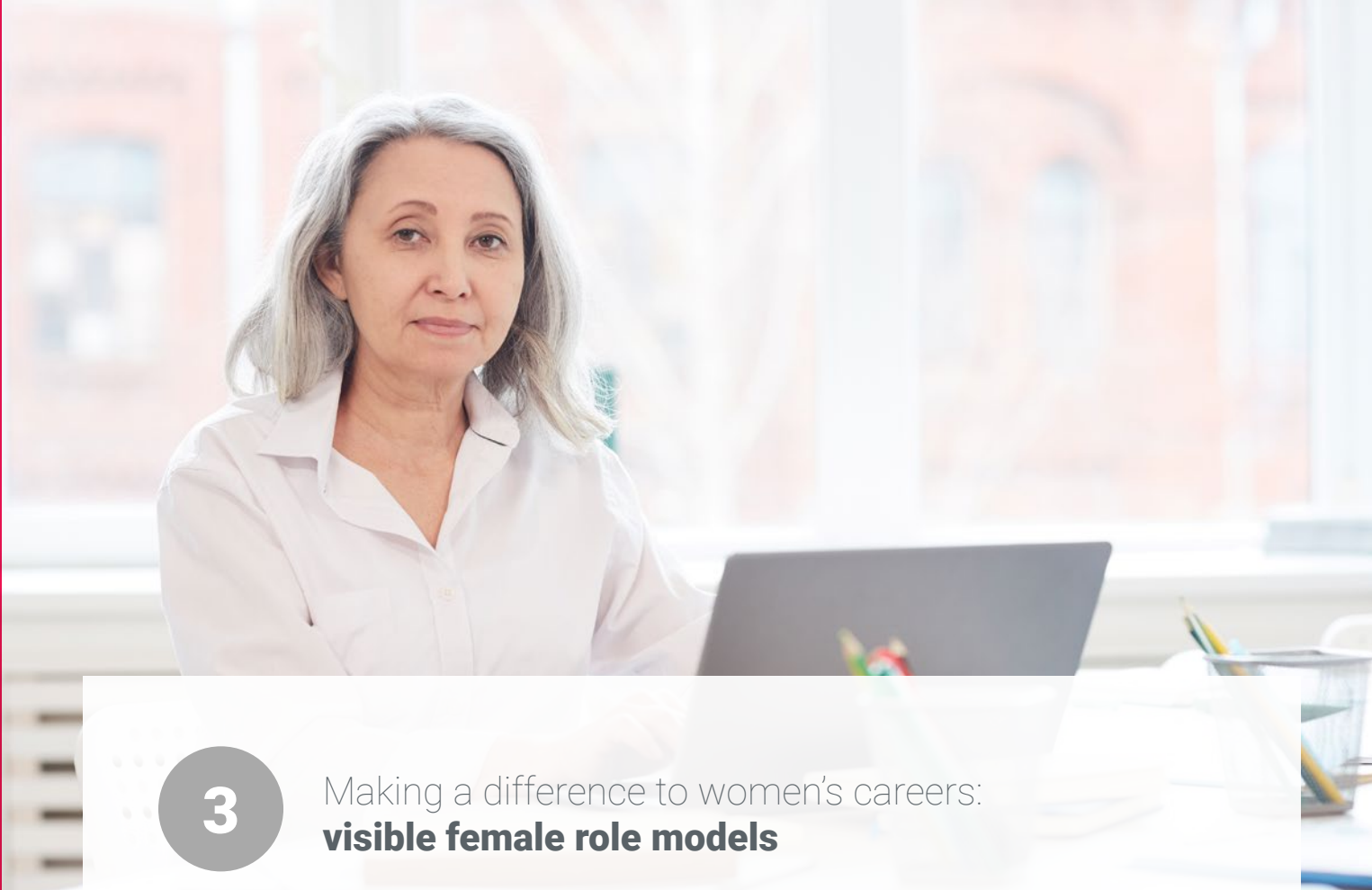
“Flexible working supports women but helps family in general by levelling the playing field. Working from home and being able to fit work around home during Covid has helped propel my career in the past year”

GOOD PRACTICE

KEY TAKEAWAY:



There is a deficit when it comes to communication, culture and delivery of flexible working. Flexibility exists and energy sector employees, both men and women, appreciate the policies for giving them the ability to combine work with other responsibilities in their lives, such as returning after maternity leave or caring for a relative. But women perceive that taking up flexible working puts them on the back foot and limits their career opportunities. Flexibility is not always consistently delivered or supported by managers who sometimes make assumptions about what working women can or can’t do or want without discussing it with them – there is insufficient curiosity and acknowledgement of individual women’s preferences. Consequently, women aren’t sufficiently able to use flexible working policies to ‘lean in and out’ of their careers as they need to.



3

Making a difference to women's careers: **visible female role models**

Why are role models important? People learn from other people and women in the workplace benefit from having someone whose experience they can engage with and draw from. Seeing a successful woman in a leadership position demonstrates a potential navigable career path to the top and gives other women more confidence that they too can get there.

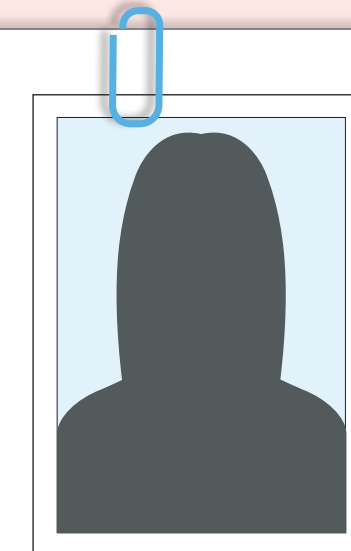
In our interviews, unfortunately many women said their careers:

- » lacked female role models that they could relate to (not just in technical roles but also in non-technical and specialities like legal, finance, commercial and HR)
- » lacked female role models that they could turn to for mentoring, sponsorship or career discussions in network groups, for example
- » felt that to progress you have to be inauthentic and untrue to yourself to conform to male-dominated behaviours.

“I am a lawyer and there just aren't the visible female role models in my company or industry. I have potential to go onto the Board but progression to be geared to women in the tech sector – even when you look at the imagery of women in energy, it's women in hard hats.”

“You can support each other, but there are few women to look up to.”

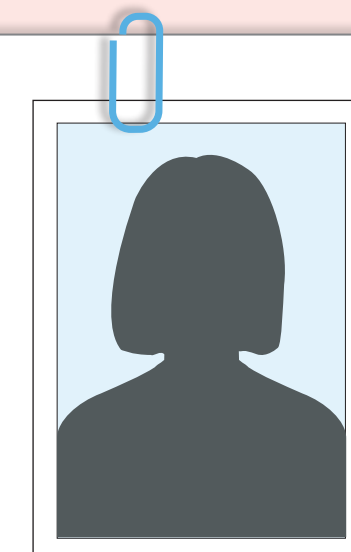
CASE STUDY



“Oksana” has worked in the nuclear sector for eight years and says it's really lacking female role models. There are few women overall and she is the only one in middle management. “So there is nothing for me to aspire to – to look at and say “I can do that...” And that also means not enough gender peer-to-peer support, to help me navigate things – because life is different for men and women. “

Generally, Oksana feels supported in her organisation but she has had to look outwards to gain mentoring, leadership experience and opportunities through volunteering. Because there aren't many women in her company, she also feels that starting a family might negatively impact her career. She wishes she could have more support and thinks that more female role models would really help.

CASE STUDY



“Angela” has been working in a highly male-dominated energy company where men often go on golf holidays, play football and enjoy other activities where most women do not participate. She feels that this ‘club’ and lack of similar networking opportunities for women has impacted her career growth.

She tried to have conversations about promotions but felt that the subject was often taboo. When asking for promotion she was given negative feedback on areas that had never been brought up in previous performance reviews.

Angela feels that she doesn't see anyone like her in senior positions nor has she met anyone with a career path like hers, which makes her feel limited in her options. The few women in her company that are in leadership roles seem to participate in the men's activities like playing football. The culture makes her feel that who she knows is more important in getting promoted rather than performance and skills.

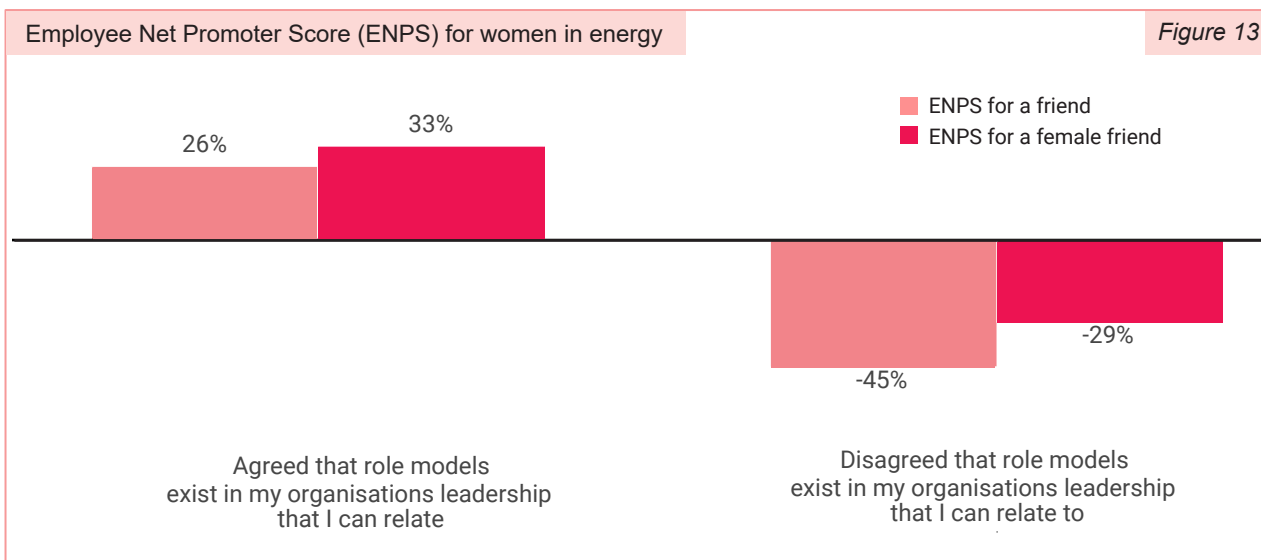
Angela would value female role models and having more visibility of other people like her to understand the career paths they followed. She also believes that there needs to be a proper process for progression, based on merit and not who knows who.

SURVEY RESULTS



The results of our market survey gave further insight on this, revealing that less than half of women in energy had role models they could relate to in their organisation.

The visibility of senior level female role models that women can relate to in their organisation was also shown to increase the attractiveness of energy and makes women more likely to be an advocate for working for their company, particularly to women.



To support me, my company could have visibility of role models and career profiles of people who have done things differently, taken career breaks, and so on. Having those examples and showing progression would be good.”



Some of the things women told us they need:

- To see more visible role models in their organisation in management and leadership roles.
- To see women in senior roles working flexibly.
- To have more exposure to leadership teams and particularly women on leadership teams.
- For senior women to actively mentor and help progress women, for example by joining diversity and inclusion groups and women's circles, which would make these forums even more valuable as a support network for women's progression.
- To be introduced to more female role models across the industry – and to women who are more like themselves, rather than women who have succeeded only by mirroring their male counterparts.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Female role models are important to women in middle management but they are lacking in the energy sector. Those who do have relatable role models in their organisation's leadership are more likely to advocate for their company as a place to work, particularly when recommending it to other women. For companies, therefore, focussing on highlighting female success stories and connecting senior women with those in middle management is important for attracting and retaining the talent they need.



4

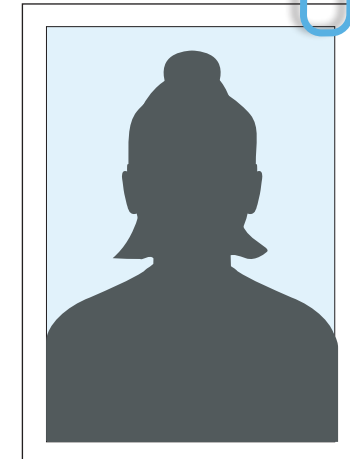
Making a difference to women's careers: **supportive and inclusive culture**

The culture of an organisation is a major factor in women's advancement within the energy sector. Equal access to professional development, effective flexible working and visible female role models – the policies that our research found make the biggest difference to women's careers – are either amplified or undermined by the behaviours and culture in a company. Training on things like unconscious bias, for example, won't be effective unless the cultural mechanisms are there inside an organisation and inclusive behaviours are exhibited by leaders and managers.



CASE STUDY

"Carrie" is in middle management two levels below the C suite at an energy company. She feels that to progress she would need to sacrifice her work life balance and flexibility and even "sell her soul" to manoeuvre to get noticed by the decision makers in the C suite. She also feels that the value proposition she brings in terms of skills and experience is under-recognised relative to the men in middle management whose backgrounds are more similar to those in the C suite. Those men are also louder and more visible in the boys' club culture. She dreams of a work culture in which women's different value proposition and needs are acknowledged and respected.





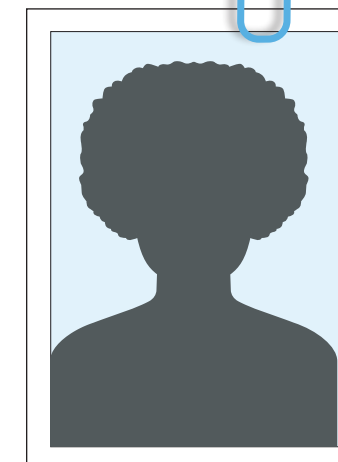
When we asked women about their career and workplace experience, they spoke strongly and passionately on **three main barriers** stemming from corporate culture:

"If the women in the team raise a concern, they feel like they are patted on the head, treated as emotional females. A company discussion forum on gender targets showed unconscious bias, such as jokes that when women become mothers their memory goes; an assumption that once you have children you're not committed to the role."

"After I had my first child, I was exhausted and found it a shock to the system returning to work. It would have helped having someone check in with me more regularly. My line manager didn't seem to understand how things had changed for me or what he could do to help."

1 A lack of recognition and respect for the value that individual women bring.

- » Interviewees spoke of insufficient support from line managers in terms of both inclusivity and career development. And those women who had been supported said it was rarely systematically or consistently applied – it felt like it was only by chance.
- » There was felt to be a lack of genuine curiosity or care from line managers about what matters to their female reports or truly listening to an individual's needs, rather than making assumptions.



CASE STUDY

"Ada" has worked in the industry for 14 years and has experienced unconscious bias. She has had to decide not to focus on it in order to succeed – "if I do, I'll see bias and barriers everywhere and it would change my outlook and make me less positive". For example, in one role she agreed to travel for work to an unstable part of the world and her manager asked her whether she really wanted to go. She wondered if he would ask this of a male staff member. She is in a very male-dominated culture where she has been on the receiving end of aggressive behaviour from a contractor. In another role she was the first woman in the job and there was no locker room for her to get changed in.

"I am happy, ambitious and want to grow my technical career, but the unconscious bias is still very real. I have been mistaken for the IT help when preparing for a meeting presentation and called "petal."



2 A "boys club" workplace culture where:

- » who you know seems to impact career progression much more than how good you are;
- » misogynistic comments or actions are sometimes not acted upon, even when reported;
- » women miss out on social networking opportunities because male colleagues naturally gravitate towards different types of joint activities from which they feel excluded.

"Those three guys are thick as thieves and I'm not in the clique so I don't have much voice in how things should be done. They only listen to me one on one, not in the group."

"Sometimes the negative, competitive culture can create a survivor mentality where you do whatever you can to please, to the extent of starting to tear down other women."

"Women making it to exec level have less of a voice than the men. They are more there for optics but not allowed to provide diversity of thought."



3 Unconscious bias where:

- » women who are quieter than others are passed over for opportunities and unsupported, and feel pressure to adopt more aggressive attitudes in order to be heard;
- » assumptions are made about women's roles, such as always taking notes in meetings, being in a support or admin role or that women are better at some (for example non-technical) roles.

"Emails opening with 'Hello Gents' is something that exemplifies the culture in the energy industry."

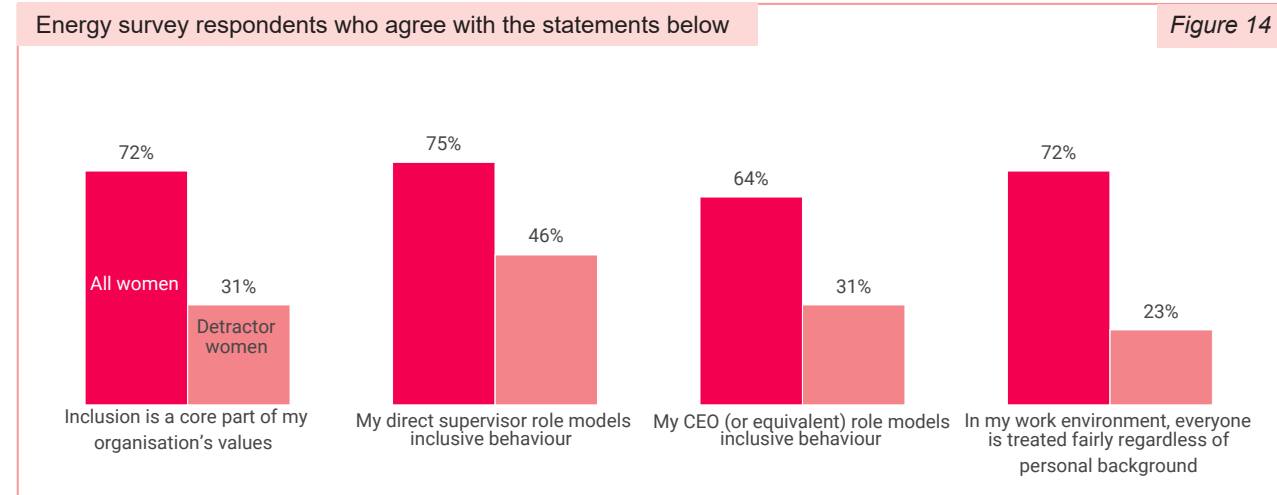
"I feel that as a woman there is pressure to act in an aggressive, alpha male kind of way. Senior female managers in the organisation are all hyper assertive. And people tend to wear the same uniform even when it's not necessary. I find it hard to be taken seriously if I'm not and so in certain meetings I will wear a high-vis jacket just to blend in more. You have to look the part, act the part. I think looking and acting differently has held me back."

SURVEY RESULTS



In the industry survey we asked similar questions about culture, unsupportive behaviours, and unconscious bias to investigate the effectiveness of line managers and leaders in creating an inclusive culture and a supportive workplace environment.

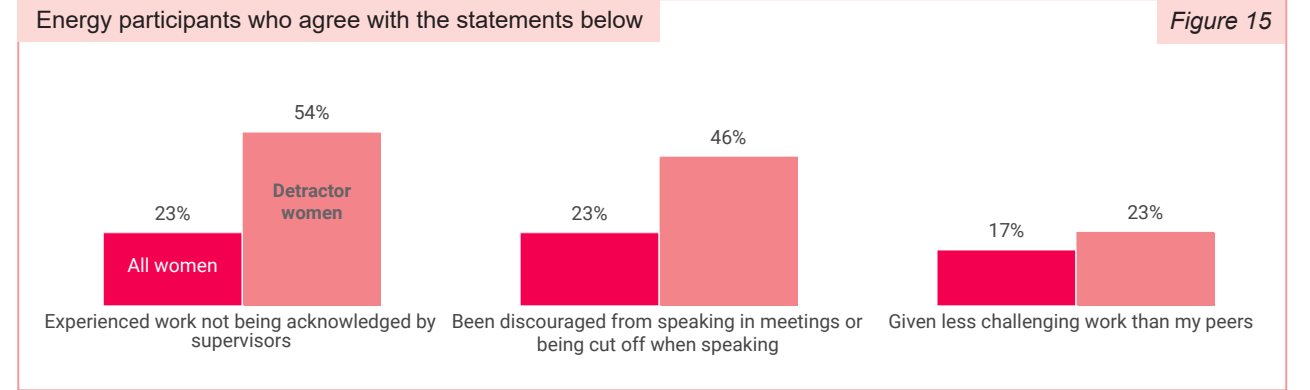
A majority of the women in energy we surveyed believe that inclusion is a core part of their organisation's culture, that it is role modelled at the top and that everyone is treated fairly (fig. 14). However, these figures still leave room for improvement for companies to become more inclusive.



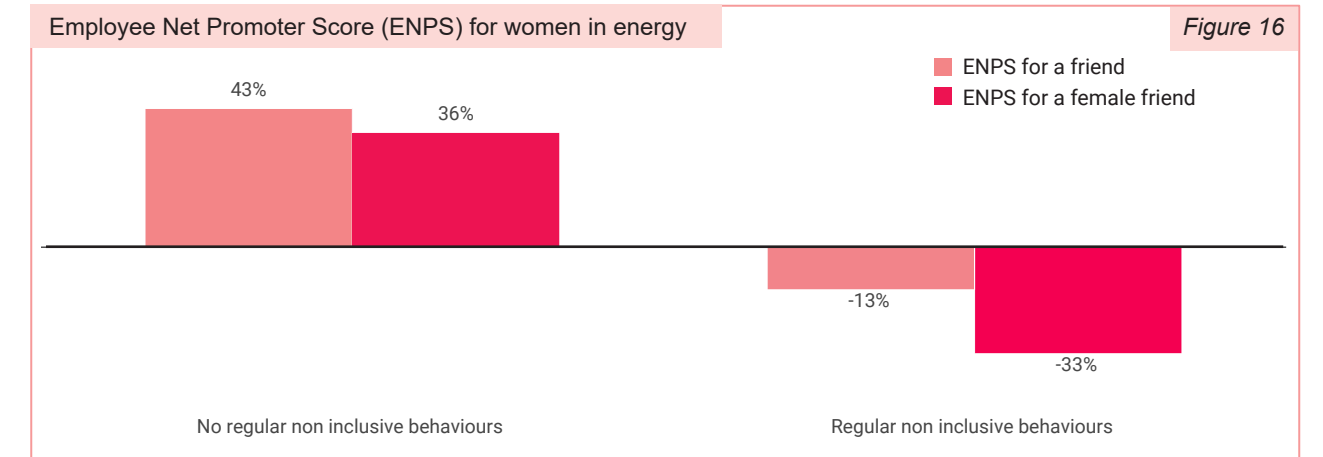
We asked whether women had personally experienced or seen colleagues impacted by any of these in the past three years:

- » Experienced work not being acknowledged by supervisors
- » Been discouraged from speaking in meetings or being cut off when speaking
- » Given less challenging work than my peers

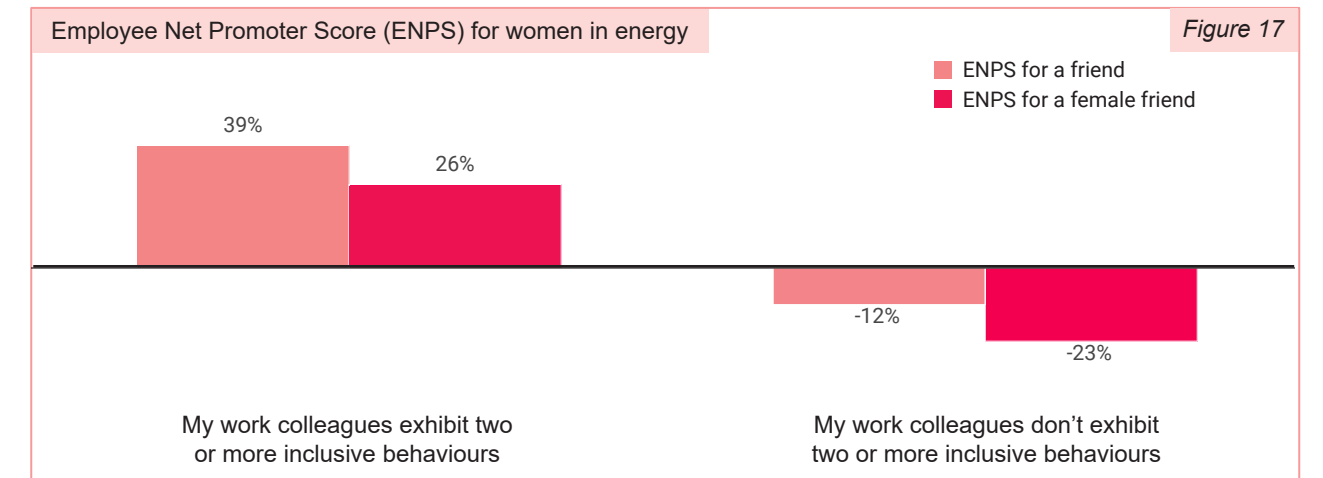
One in four women in energy reported they experienced non-inclusive behaviours such as lack of recognition from supervisors, difficulty getting their share of voice in meetings, or being less challenged in their work assignments (fig. 15). The experience of such unsupportive behaviours is highly correlated with dissatisfaction.



And, unsurprisingly, those regularly experiencing unsupportive behaviours are real detractors of their organisations as a place to work (i.e. 0-6 on whether they would recommend it), especially to other females (fig. 16). We see here lack of recognition and support having a significant impact on women's endorsement of their organisation or sector and the attractiveness of companies as employers of choice for women.



Finally, a woman experiencing two or more inclusive behaviours is highly correlated with her advocacy for her company (fig. 17).



Inclusion in company values, leadership behaviours and work environment has a major impact on women's advocacy for their organisation and working in the energy sector. Women in energy who are promoters are more likely to work in an inclusive culture. Inclusive culture is fundamental to engaging with and cultivating women in middle management, as it is for all employees.

What kind of workplace culture do women need?

The need for a truly inclusive culture is a crucial and common thread that came up in both the quantitative surveys and the interviews. But what exactly does that entail and which specific behaviours need to change or be embedded? A recent report by Bain & Company Fabric of Belonging⁷ delves deeper into the meaning of an inclusive culture and what inclusive behaviour means. This is likely to vary for different organisations but it can help to understand a company's culture, which inclusive behaviours are enriching it, and which still need to be embedded.

Our interviews conducted with women in middle management were valuable in uncovering some truly inclusive behaviours they desire and which will also support and facilitate the effective implementation of the three key diversity policies we've already identified as mattering most.

Professional development can be supported by these inclusive behaviours:

- ☑ Reviewing social and community events and behaviours to ensure they are not skewed in favour of men – making women a part of the conversation and decision making.
- ☑ Managers helping build a culture where individuals are celebrated and cultivated and not expected to change their personalities to progress further.
- ☑ Reviewing and incorporating clear, transparent and fair policies for promotions based on merit – addressing unconscious bias and calling out behaviour that isn't inclusive.

"Having that support from your line manager in the background makes you feel empowered to make decisions and lead, as I can always ask someone and get their support. Not everyone else in my cohort has that and I see the difference."



"I need my line manager to be curious about my experience and how I feel. I'm delivering projects excellently, but I'm not sure he is conscious of how I'm being held back."

Flexibility can be supported by these inclusive behaviours:

- ☑ Identifying, acknowledging, and addressing unconscious biases towards women working flexibility.
- ☑ Embedding a fair and transparent culture where women are asked/given a choice about work and the ability to 'lean in' and 'lean out' of their careers without disadvantage.

The visibility of female role models can be supported by these inclusive behaviours:

- ☑ Encouraging and highlighting women in senior roles, particularly those working flexibly.
- ☑ Encouraging senior colleagues to actively mentor and help progress women.

"My male project manager and mentor has made all the difference. He is more aware of there being sexism since he's been working with me. There is something to be said for being seen."



"It would be good to get people from outside to talk to companies like mine – to open their eyes to different models and experience and spell out in black and white the challenges that women face. If it's a man delivering the message, this could show that this isn't just 'a group of whingeing females' in their business but is a common experience across different organisations. They could share examples of businesses that do it well."

We should finish by noting that, while we haven't broken down our survey and interview results into further minority groups, women from different backgrounds – for example women from ethnic minority backgrounds or disabled women – are likely to experience the above issues to a greater degree. They will have even fewer opportunities, will experience more barriers to promotion and less access to mentoring and sponsorship, see even fewer relatable role models and be less likely to experience inclusive behaviours or a supportive workplace culture. We provide thoughts on addressing this in our Recommendations.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

The energy sector has made major inroads when it comes to an increased focus on and awareness of inclusive behaviours and culture. Nevertheless, women told us the boys' club remains a significant issue in parts of the energy workplace. Many interviewees mentioned not having the same access to senior leadership or social events for networking with senior leaders. Women also spoke about lack of formal or informal support from their direct supervisors – including little inclination to properly listen to women's wishes rather than make assumptions. This made them feel unrecognised, undervalued and held back in their careers.



And yet an inclusive workplace culture has a positive impact on the attractiveness of an organisation as a place to work, particularly for women. Company leaders should therefore look at these inclusive behaviours as growth and training opportunities for their managers, with measurable objectives, if they want to retain and attract the talent they need.



CHAPTER

5

RECOMMENDATIONS
for the sector



So what's next for energy companies, leaders and managers?

There is no one size fits all solution

Each organisation is different and requires solutions tailored to its particular circumstances if the delivery gap we have identified is to be closed. Closing the delivery gap will enable better talent retention and cultivation for the energy transition and improved business performance.

But all solutions have common elements

If an organisation is to close the middle-management gender gap it requires the visible attention of the CEO and the leadership team. All bespoke solutions require ownership from the CEO if they are to be properly tailored to an organisation's strategic objectives and its specific circumstances. This is doubly so if the solutions call for changes to the organisation's culture.

Managers should be equipped with the skills and courage required to enable them to hold the necessary conversations (for example on women's development and flexible working) to close the delivery gap.

An organisation's actions need to be based on accurate data about how policies designed to achieve greater gender parity are delivering in practice.

From our research it is clear that, for significant numbers of women in energy, commitments and policies are just not delivering as intended. It is not evident that the detailed reasons behind this are fully appreciated by many organisations.

What can your organisation do to close the delivery gap?

1 CEO and leadership team should take ownership of closing the middle-management gender gap by ensuring solutions are tailored appropriately to the needs of their organisation.

3 Ask the right questions to close the delivery gap:

Based on what women told us they need, here are some key questions energy company leaders can ask of their organisation to start to address the barriers, to create fair and equal opportunities for women and to get the return on the investment they have already made in diversity and inclusion:

TARGETS FOR THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN MIDDLE MANAGEMENT:

- What do our targets (in percentages) need to be annually to 2025 and by 2030?
- Will these be adequate to enable us to then meet our Executive Management targets?
- Will these be adequate to enable us to deliver on our energy transition and energy security of supply challenges?
- How close is our target to the 40% by 2030 advocated by POWERful Women?
- What share of our targets is to be delivered organically by cultivating existing talent rather than by recruitment?

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS:

- Are we on course to meet our interim and final targets?
- How does performance differ among our business units and functions?
- Are we measuring or reviewing performance often enough to achieve our targets?
- What do we need to do differently to stay on track, including based on feedback?

REGULAR DIRECT FEEDBACK TO BE ASSESSED AND ACTIONED:

- Professional development:**

What do our women say (and how has their assessment changed since last surveyed) about how well we help them develop professionally through:

 - On-the-job coaching?
 - Formal learning and training?
 - Mentoring, sponsorship and networking?
 - Fair and transparent access to development opportunities?
- Flexibility in practice:**
 - What do our women say (and how has their assessment changed since last surveyed) about the attractiveness and effectiveness of flexibility options on offer (such as part time working, maternity, homeworking, flexible hours)?
 - What percentage of our women believe using flexibility options sets their career back (and how has their assessment changed since last surveyed)?

2 Managers should be equipped with the skills and courage required to enable them to hold the necessary conversations (for example on women's development and flexible working) to close the delivery gap.

- Accessible female role models:**

What do our women say (and how has their assessment changed since last surveyed) about access to relevant:

 - internal role models they can relate to?
 - external role models they can relate to?
- Supportive, inclusive culture:**
 - What are the behaviours that our women tell us they would like ...
 - » leaders to change (say, as of next Monday morning) to make them feel more included?
 - » managers to change and develop to make them feel more included?
 - Specific behaviours to enquire about include:
 - » Do they feel respected, valued and equally assessed?
 - » Do they feel listened to and supported?
 - » Are they able to have meaningful and honest conversations about how their career progression and 'leaning-in and leaning-out' can be aligned, and given opportunities when they lean back in?
 - » Do they get opportunities to network that are suitable for women, allowing them to be part of conversations and decision-making?

4 Diversity more broadly: Have you considered the impact of these recommendations on other under-represented groups, for example women from ethnic minority backgrounds or disabled women, and if you can adopt the same approach?

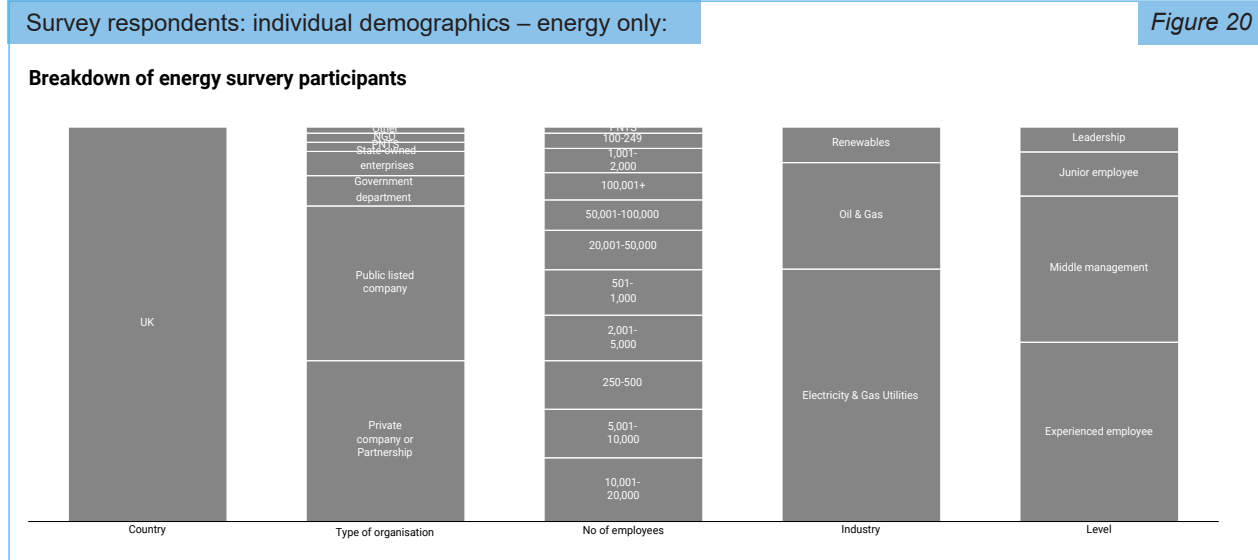
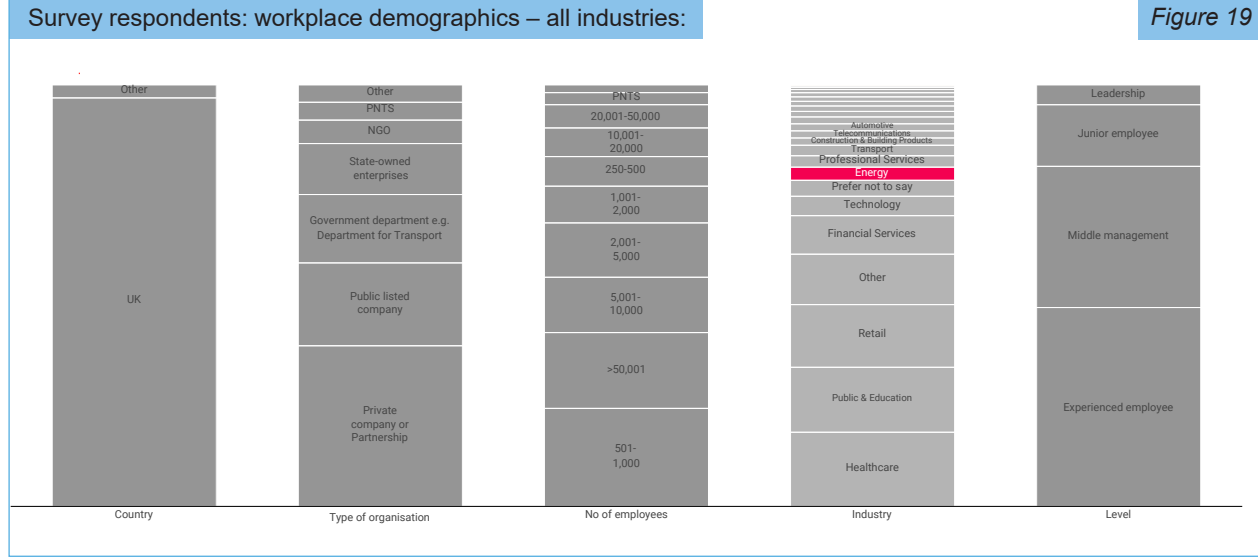
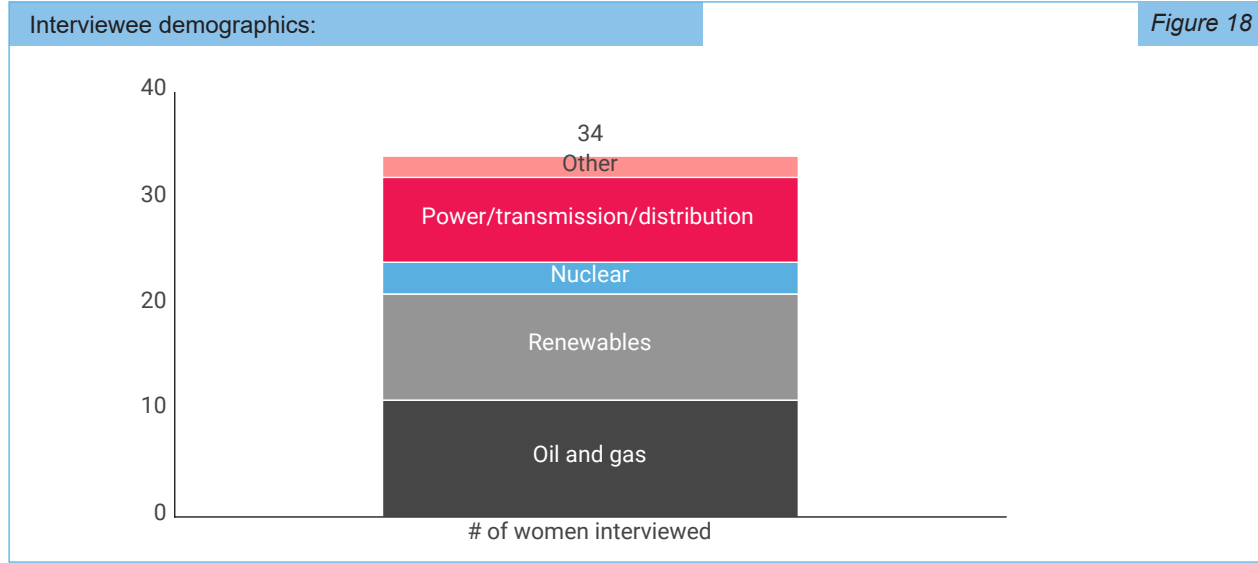
5 Every one of us can contribute towards creating a diverse and inclusive workplace for women in middle management.

We recommend that all those employed in the energy sector seek to be agents of change in closing the delivery gap:

- ✓ Encourage your organisation, leaders and managers to ask these key questions and to report on progress
- ✓ When you see an initiative not working, call it out
- ✓ Reach out and support women in your company, peer group or network, even if you're not the most senior
- ✓ **Speak up and speak out – your voice matters!**



Appendix



REFERENCES

1. POWERful Women's Annual Board Stats 2021:
<https://powerfulwomen.org.uk/board-statistics-by-company-2021/>
2. Charter of the Energy Leaders' Coalition:
<https://powerfulwomen.org.uk/energy-leaders-coalition/>
3. Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective
– International Renewable Energy Association (IRENA), 2019
<https://irena.org/publications/2019/jan/renewable-energy-a-gender-perspective>
4. Status Report on Gender Equality in the Energy Sector -- C3E and IEA
<https://www.globalwomennet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/c3e-data-report-en-1.pdf>
5. Definition of Employee Net Promoter Score –
<https://www.netpromotersystem.com/about/employee-nps/>
6. This was based on self-identification as male, female or other and also had the option 'prefer not to say'.
7. Fabric of Belonging, Bain & Company
<https://www.bain.com/insights/the-fabric-of-belonging-how-to-weave-an-inclusive-culture/>

FURTHER READING

- » Eight Behaviors of the World's Best Managers, Ryan Pendell, 2019
- » Fabric of Belonging: How to Weave an Inclusive Culture, Bain & Company, 2022
- » The Power of Difference, Simon Fanshawe, 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

POWERful Women would like to thank the co-authors of this report for their analysis, insights and commitment to steering this project to completion:

- Francis Gugen, POWERful Women Board Member
- Elizabeth Baxter, POWERful Women Board Member
- Olga Muscat, Partner, Bain & Company
- Maham El-Shoura, Associate Partner, Bain & Company
- Grace Kimberley, Project Officer, POWERful Women
- Rubina Singh, POWERful Women Board Member
- Georgina Worrall, Project Manager, POWERful Women
- Nick Wayth, Chief Executive, Energy Institute
- Anna Stanford, Communications Adviser and report editor, POWERful Women

Our grateful thanks also to the following for being part of our interviewing team:

- Lamé Verre
- Emily Bourne
- Charlotte Starkmann

and to all the women and men who contributed to our interviews and wider research.

Working to increase
the representation of
women at the top of the
UK energy industry

POWERful Women

61 New Cavendish St,
London W1G 7AR

@ info@powerfulwomen.org.uk

www.powerfulwomen.org.uk

@_PfWomen

POWERful WOMEN

BAIN & COMPANY 

Published: April 2022