

ROBERT WALTERS WHITEPAPER

GENDER DIVERSITY AND TALENTMANAGEMENT IN COMPANIES IN SWITZERLAND



ROBERT WALTERS

EMPOWERING
WOMEN

An aerial night photograph of a city, showing a dense grid of buildings and streets. The lights are blurred, creating a bokeh effect, with warm yellow and orange tones from streetlights and building lights contrasting against the dark blue of the night sky.

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- 04 Why female leaders continue to be underrepresented
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SPECIALIST PROFESSIONAL RECRUITMENT



INTRODUCTION



„In times of talent shortage companies need to find different and innovative ways of attracting top talent as well as creating strategies to develop their future leaders. Encouraging gender diversity has an important role to play in helping businesses achieve this. Identifying and

combating gender bias and supporting women to become future leaders may be the decisive factor in the struggle for talent. We hope that this research provides you with interesting and valuable insights into gender diversity in Swiss companies.”

Nick Dunnett

Managing Director Germany & Switzerland

METHODOLOGY

Robert Walters surveyed 200 companies within different sectors to gain data on the topics of gender diversity and female leadership. 75% of all survey respondents were female and 25% were male. Our research set out to identify how efficiently companies apply gender diversity strategies and actions in order to empower their female employees as leaders and guarantee the compatibility of family life and their careers.

SMEs in particular in Switzerland experience difficulties retaining well-educated and highly qualified female employees. Contributing support with personalized training and development programmes to provide a path to leadership positions for female staff, regardless of whether they have taken a career break to start a family, may be key to securing and retaining top talent. Even though the number of women working in part time positions in Switzerland is high, this working model is rarely seen among professionals in management level positions. This whitepaper discusses the most reasonable strategies to secure female top talent, how to keep those high potential staff in the company and ways to achieve a balance between professional and private life for professionals in Switzerland.

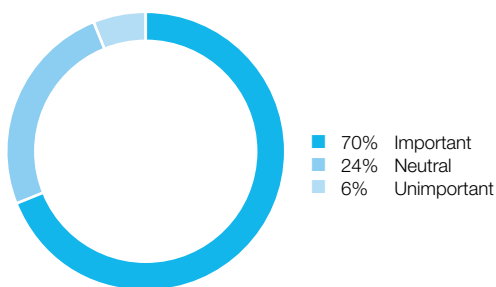


01 OVERVIEW

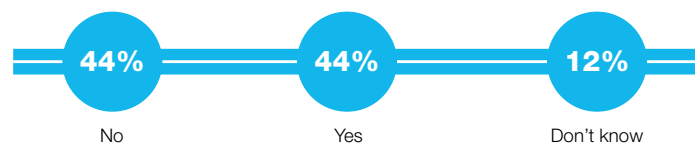


84%
believe that women are
under-represented in leading
positions.

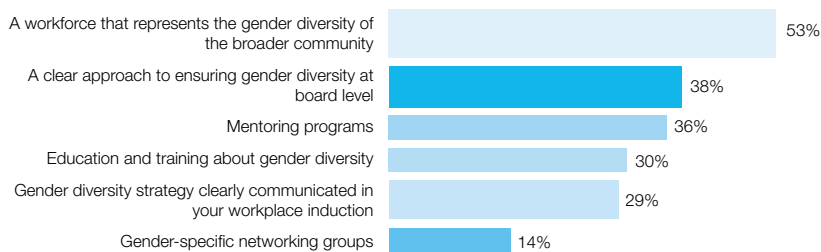
How important is it to you, that businesses
have clear policies on gender diversity and
equality?



Do you feel that your current employer has clear policies on
gender diversity, equality and inclusion?

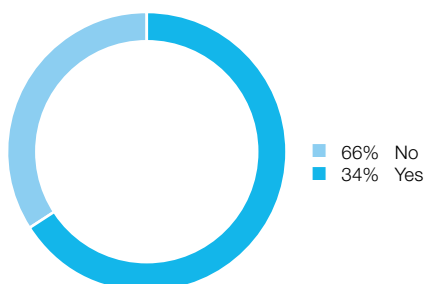


Importance of the following gender diversity policies and strategies
to you:*



84%
desire flexible working arrangements
for working parents.

Would you change jobs for an employer with a
better maternity policy?



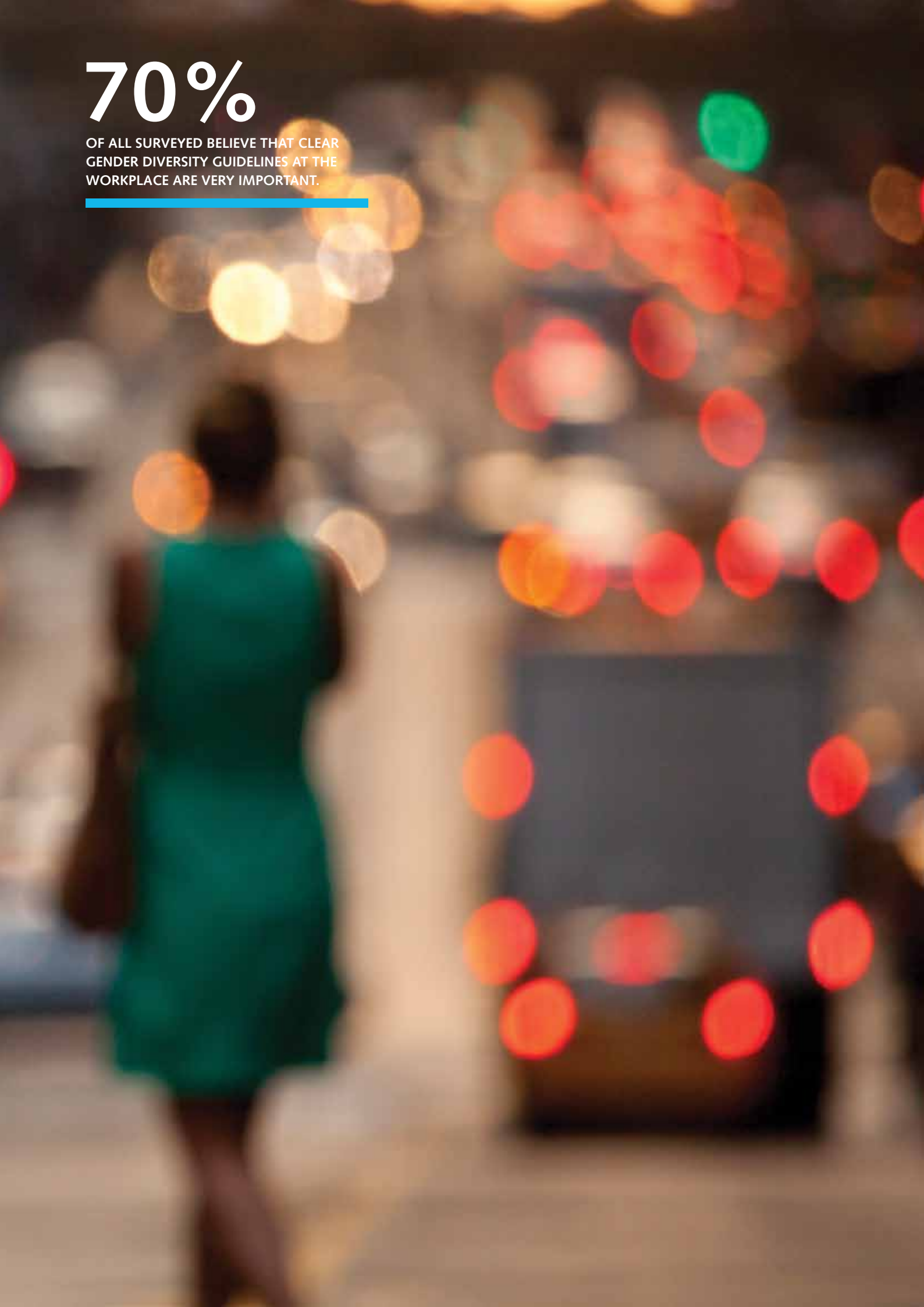
Top 3 career goals

- 1 Working in a job, you find fulfilling and rewarding
- 2 A good work life balance
- 3 Achieving a senior/leadership role

*Multiple choice question

70%

OF ALL SURVEYED BELIEVE THAT CLEAR
GENDER DIVERSITY GUIDELINES AT THE
WORKPLACE ARE VERY IMPORTANT.



02 GENDER DIVERSITY GUIDELINES IN COMPANIES

In the face of a growing talent shortage in Switzerland and Europe, employers need to question how to encourage and support their top female talent in order to keep them in the company.

Our survey revealed that small and medium-sized companies as well as larger corporations in Switzerland encourage gender diversity and transparency within promotion processes, but only a few implement these strategies stringently.

70% of the surveyed participants underline the importance of gender diversity guidelines.

44% state that their current employer does not follow clear gender diversity guidelines.

36% don't feel that the management culture at the current job is open and transparent.

Gender Diversity measurements strengthen the employer brand

Companies which fail to implement clear and effective guidelines regarding gender diversity are likely to put themselves at a disadvantage when looking to recruit top talent, lagging behind their competitors.

As a result companies will face two challenges: first, they need to develop effective strategies to ensure gender diversity within their company. This can be achieved by offering regular training, coaching and mentoring to top female talent within the business, highlighting opportunities and encouraging career progression. Secondly, companies need to demonstrate their commitment to these strategies at senior management level and actively communicate them to existing and potential employees. Developing clear policies and guidelines (e.g. flexible working hours and the option to work from home) and promoting these to candidates during the hiring and on-boarding processes is an essential part of this.

36%

believe mentoring programmes are very important when it comes to gender diversity policies and strategies.

53% of the respondents considered it very important that their employer makes it clear that gender diversity is a priority. Companies should not underestimate the importance of clearly communicating the company's philosophy and a strong employer brand to the market when looking to secure and retain top talent.



„Without clear policies on how to achieve gender diversity, businesses are unlikely to accomplish it, and are likely to fall behind their competitors as the global war for talent grows.”

Christian Atkinson, Director

03 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Expectations and demands of Millennials have shifted in comparison to previous generations with work life balance now a high priority. Simultaneously, professionals put great value on training and further qualification with many candidates discussing the potential a role has to offer these factors at a job interview.

Teamwork and a fulfilling and rewarding job count the most

27%

of the women surveyed rate a good work life balance as their top career goal.

Our previous whitepaper "Recruiting professionals in a candidate short market"² already underlined the fact that offering attractive salary packages and prestige symbols such as a company car or mobile, are not sufficient anymore. Professionals pay more attention to flexible working hours, autonomy and a solid work life balance.

This whitepaper confirms this point of view: 78% of the surveyed women and men are looking for a workplace that offers fulfilling and rewarding work. Regardless of gender, 63% desire an open feedback culture in their company. A company supporting teamwork and solidarity in the

workplace is important to 69 % of professionals.

Competitive pay and bonuses are also considered important for 50% of the surveyed women and 35% of the surveyed men.

Top 5 factors at the workplace:*



1. Fulfilling and rewarding work
2. A company supporting teamwork and solidarity in the workplace
3. Open feedback culture
4. Good work life balance
5. Flexible working practices



1. Fulfilling and rewarding work
2. A company supporting teamwork and solidarity in the workplace
3. Open feedback culture
4. Good work life balance
5. Working for a company with positive brand values and ethical business practices

*Multiple choice question

What were the attitudes of women towards “career progression” and “career goals”?

The female leaders we surveyed mainly work within the areas of sales & marketing (14%), HR (27%), accounting & finance (19%) and project & change management (4%). Of those surveyed, 30% work as executive, 54% as manager and 15% as director.

As women move into more senior positions the importance of fulfilling and rewarding work grows. 49% of the surveyed managers and 71% of the surveyed directors underline this saying that fulfilling work was a priority.

Conversely the higher the position of our female participants the less important they considered a good work life balance: 59% of the surveyed female managers and 44% of the female directors consider a good work life balance important to their career.

Employers should note that personalized training programs (49%) and formal leadership training sponsored by the employer (51%), were regarded by women as the most important opportunities to develop their career. 49% of the surveyed women are looking for a mentor or sponsor at senior management level because they believe that this is essential to help them develop their career. Many larger companies and corporations already offer these personalized training and career development programmes, especially for potential female leaders. Medium-sized companies will need to catch up with this, as the offer of structured training programmes could offer a decisive advantage when looking to secure top talent.



„Particularly in the case of medium-sized companies with a regional focus, businesses should follow the needs of their employees regarding flexible working models, childcare and personalized training. By implementing these policies, businesses will be in a position to compete with larger and international competitors in the on-going „war for talent“.

Nick Dunnett, Managing Director Switzerland & Germany





62%

OF ALL SURVEYED DESIRE THE
OPPORTUNITY TO COME BACK TO WORK
IN PART TIME.

04 WHY FEMALE LEADERS CONTINUE TO BE UNDERREPRESENTED

84% of survey respondents feel that women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions in Switzerland.

Are women in leading positions underrepresented?



66% of the surveyed women state that a clear preference in promoting men over women by the management is the main reason for women being underrepresented in leading positions and 36% of the men surveyed agreed. 64% of the men believe that it is difficult to return to work after having children, 57% of the women surveyed also held that opinion.

The suggestion that the lack of female leaders is caused by a workplace culture that does not actively foster diversity, inclusion and equality was also widely supported by our survey respondents. 48% of female and 44% of male respondents cited a lack of female role models as playing a key role in women being underrepresented in leadership.

41% of women and an equal number of men felt that “poor maternity and paternity policies” played an important role in limiting the number of women in senior roles (48%) as well as “poor leadership and career progression strategies” (44%).

What are the most important reasons for accepting a new job?

Both men and women regard fulfilling work and self-realisation as top priorities in a role. 25% of the surveyed women would change jobs in order to find a role where they could achieve this. Another 22% said that a better work life balance, flexible or remote working are essential when choosing a new role. Conversely, men are more likely to prioritise additional responsibility or a greater influence over decision making within the business (44%) when looking to change roles. However, 20% of the surveyed women also regarded this as a priority.

Highly skilled women will play an important role in overcoming talent shortages, which are likely to persist in Switzerland owing to demographic shifts. Smaller and medium sized businesses looking to secure top female talent will need to ensure that structured career progression programmes are in place in order to remain competitive.



„Companies, that fail to identify what factors motivate professionals applying for a new role will most likely lose the „war for talent“. Employers that consequently and strategically focus on the requirements and desires of female candidates will win over the best high-potential women.”

Katy Friedman, Group Talent Director

05 FAMILY POLICIES AND WELL BEING IN THE WORK PLACE

As described before, a good work life balance— regardless of gender – is a higher priority for millennial professionals than for older generations. For millennial professionals from this generation being satisfied with their job is not only linked to fulfilling daily work; flexible working conditions, working as a team, an open feedback culture and the mood within the company also play pivotal roles. Especially for professionals planning to have a family it is essential to know how their career will continue to progress after they have children.

84%

think that flexible working arrangements are important for working parents.

45%

desire the offer of onsite child-care facilities or subsidised child-care.

62%

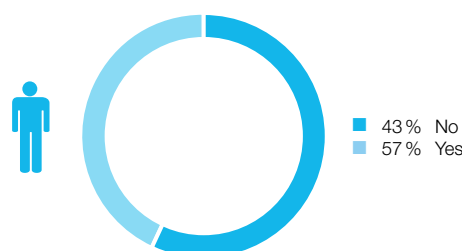
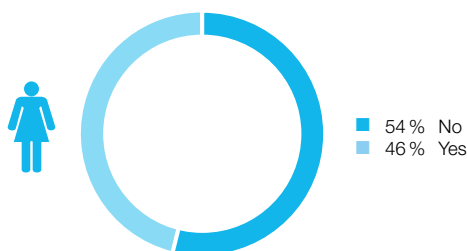
want the opportunity to return to work part-time.

33%

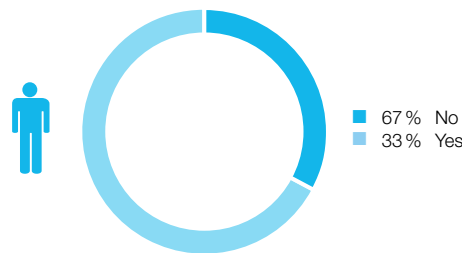
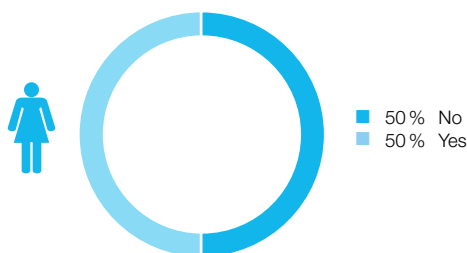
would like to maintain regular contact with their employer during maternity or paternity leave.

Companies offering this kind of support will have more satisfied employees, improve employee retention levels and strengthen the solidarity and identification of their employees with the employer brand.

Have you taken time out of your career for travel/ to start a family/ to pursue a personal passion or ambition?



Did you find it difficult to return to work at the same level?



Returning to the work place after taking time out remains challenging for women

Our survey reveals that 57% of the men and 46% of the women we surveyed had taken a break from their career (for travelling, starting a family or for personal interests).

80% of the men said that they had found it easy to return to work at the same level when they re-joined the workforce. However, 50% of the women found it difficult return to work at the same level, and an additional 46% felt disadvantaged compared to their peers. Women broadly felt that they were regarded as less flexible, despite their high performance, after starting a family.

The majority of those surveyed regard flexible working arrangements for parents as essential and 50% of employers currently offer this. However just 10% of employers provide onsite child-care facilities or subsidised child-care. It is likely that employers who do not offer suitable concessions to allow staff to find a balance between work and home life will struggle to attract top talent in future. However, smaller and mid sized firms are only rarely offering flexible and mobile working arrangements, sometimes due to a lack of infrastructure or more often the knowledge of how to implement them effectively.

High value placed on time out of the office



42 %

pointed out the desire for annual leave over and above statutory requirements.



35 %

wish to get financial support for the health insurance.



24 %

desire healthy eating initiatives such as fresh fruit, free breakfast or delivered lunches at work.



21%

would look for break out areas in the work place/ longer breaks/ exercise or play sports.

06 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENDER DIVERSITY STRATEGIES

1 Implementation and subsequent promotion of mentoring programs

Two-thirds of all women who participated in our survey desire mentoring programs. Ideally, senior women should function as role models and offer mentoring from the background of their personal career path. Offering programs with a thought through and solid concept behind them should be a long term policy for all organisations - not merely something that is put in place for a change to the company's image. Employers should survey their female employees regarding the content and structure of these mentoring programs. Doing so would underline the importance of the opinion of their female employees and emphasise the company's strong internal communication and feedback culture.

2 Offering child-care – optional: Company sharing

Running an onsite child-care is impractical for most smaller businesses. Nevertheless, these firms rely on the flexibility and presence of working parents. One solution is to cooperate with other small firms in the area to co-fund childcare services, sharing costs while attracting working parents and encouraging employee satisfaction.

ABOUT US

Robert Walters is one of the world's leading specialist professional recruitment consultancies and focuses on placing high calibre professionals into permanent, interim and temporary positions at all levels of seniority. The Switzerland business recruits across accounting & finance, banking & financial services and sales & marketing, and is registered with SECO and the Swiss Commercial Register (CH-020.3.033.164-5). We now operate across 27 countries.

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