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## Methodology

This report has been compiled using data gathered between March and April 2017 from respondents in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia. Women comprise 55 per cent of our survey group, men 45 per cent, five per cent were aged 25 or under, 56 per cent 26 to 40, 34 per cent 41 to 54 and five per cent 55 plus.

# INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to our Asia Gender Diversity Report 2017. We have gathered insights from men and women across the region to get their opinion and views on Gender Diversity in today's world of work.



The benefits of gender diversity are much better understood today than in years past but we are still struggling to increase the number of women in line management and senior management roles.

Men hold the top role in 80 per cent of the organisations our respondents work in – slightly up on 79 per cent last year. And in 63 per cent of cases, our respondents report to male line managers – a slight improvement on last year's 67 per cent.

We know gender diversity brings a greater range of ideas and possible solutions to the table to help companies gain a competitive edge in a fast changing world. We also know that as Japan grapples with the implications of an aging population and workforce, other countries in the region suffer from a lack of cross-generational coaching and learning as the numbers of young workers outweigh their experienced and older counterparts. Would a logical solution to this issue be to include women in the talent pool at all levels?

Our research suggests more attention needs to be paid to what happens from the ground up including helping all employees understand the business

benefits of gender diversity as well as creating pathways to success that discourage gender bias. Flexible work policies that focus on outcomes rather than hours in the office should also be part of the mix and available to both women and men.

Male respondents rated the provision of flexibility working arrangements almost as highly as women. Curiously, half our male respondents can access flexible work options in their current job compared to only 40 per cent of female respondents.

We are seeing increasing numbers of women in China and Japan opting not to get married and have families. On the flip side, our ongoing research at Hays consistently shows younger men placing greater importance on work-life balance and their access to parental leave. And our aging population could see employees of either gender take on elder care responsibilities – although research shows women provide the bulk of this care now.

Hopefully our insights will bolster the work currently being carried out by many organisations to promote gender diversity while encouraging others to start that journey.

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## Thank you

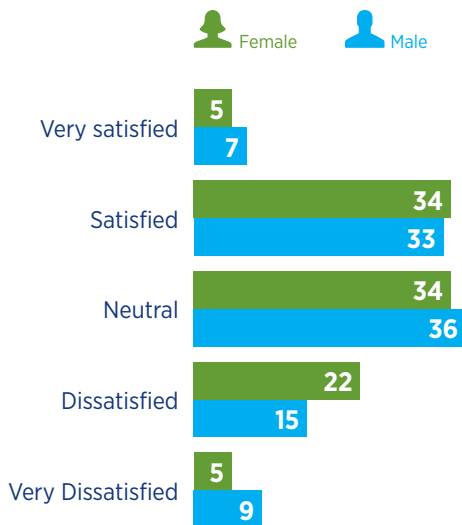
We want to thank all those who completed our diversity survey and also our profiled interviewees. Diversity is of ongoing importance to employer organisations in our region and sharing your insights and experience helps keep this subject top of mind.

Disclaimer: The 2017 Hays Asia Gender Diversity report is representative of a value added service to our clients and candidates. Whilst every care is taken in the collection and compilation of data, the guide is interpretive and indicative, not conclusive. Therefore information should be used as a guideline only and should not be reproduced in total or by section without written permission from Hays.



# CAREER AMBITION

How satisfied are you with the level of seniority you have in your current organisation (%)?

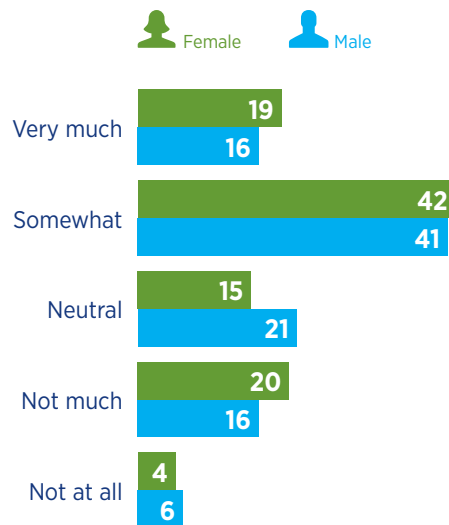


Only a third of female and male respondents are satisfied with their current level of seniority.

More women than men are dissatisfied with their career advancement (22 per cent versus 15 per cent), but a greater percentage of men are “very dissatisfied” (9 per cent compared with 5 per cent of women).

Of those who are dissatisfied, the leading reason was that their current employer provides only limited opportunities to progress (55 per cent of men and 42 per cent of women). Only two per cent of women and six per cent of men blame their own underperformance in their current role for their lack of progression.

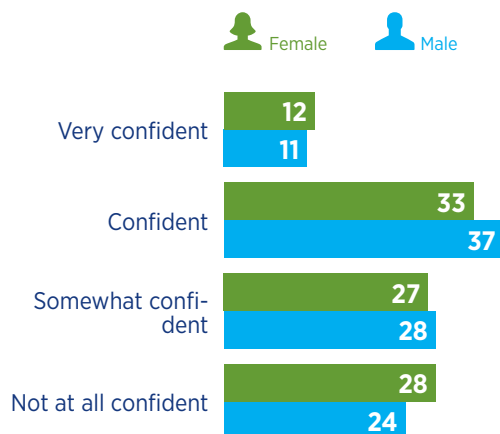
Do you believe you have the opportunity in your current role to sufficiently promote yourself & communicate your ambitions (%)?



Most respondents (42 per cent of women and 41 per cent of men) feel their employer only “somewhat” provides them with the opportunity to sufficiently promote themselves and communicate their ambitions.

A further 20 per cent of women (versus 16 per cent of men) say their current workplace offers little opportunity to promote themselves and their career goals.

How confident are you that your line manager knows what your career ambitions are (%)?



More men than women are confident that their line manager knows what their career ambitions are but only slightly, 37 per cent versus 33 per cent. A significant 28 per cent of women and 24 per cent of men are not at all confident their manager understands their ambitions.

This result contradicts the notion that men are far better at speaking up and expressing what they want than women and points to the need for organisations to make it easier and acceptable for team members to voice their aspirations.

Our results also show most respondents blame their lack of career progress on their employer.

Employers need to be transparent about how employees can access opportunities to progress. Organisations also need to encourage employees to take responsibility for driving their career rather than just looking to the organisation to do it, as was the tradition in Asia in decades past. Line managers in particular need to be empowered to encourage their direct reports to speak up about long-term career goals.

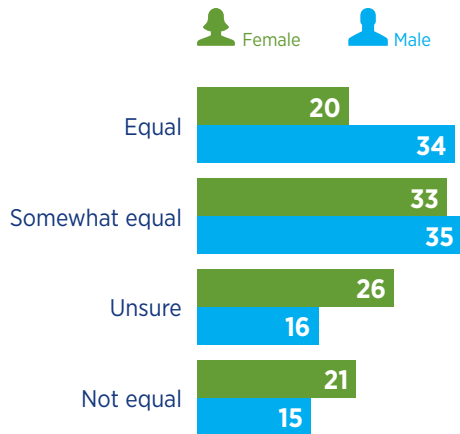
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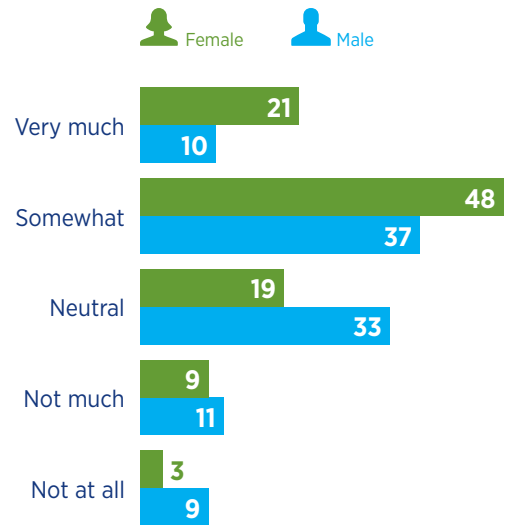
# EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Do you think you and your equally capable colleagues are paid/rewarded in an equal manner regardless of gender (%)?



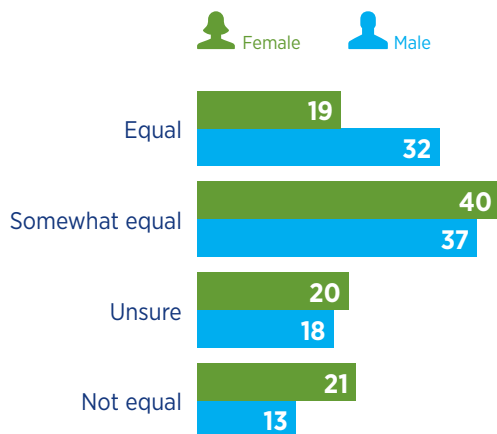
When it comes to pay, 21 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men do not believe men and women of equal merit are remunerated in the same way. The highest proportion of women (33 per cent) and men (35 per cent) believe women and men are rewarded only “somewhat” equally.

Do you think women encounter barriers outside of their control in regards to getting paid in an equal manner with men (%)?



Not surprisingly, 21 per cent of female respondents think women “very much” encounter barriers to equal pay outside their control, versus only 10 per cent of male respondents. Most respondents (48 per cent of women and 37 per cent of men) believe women encounter some barriers to equal pay outside their control.

Do you think you and your equally capable colleagues have the same career opportunities open to you regardless of gender (%)?



When it comes to men and women of the same capability having equal access to opportunity, most female respondents (40 per cent) say this is only “somewhat” true while 21 per cent say access is not equal. Nearly a third of male respondents (32 per cent) believe access is provided equally to men and women, although 37 per cent believe this is only somewhat true.

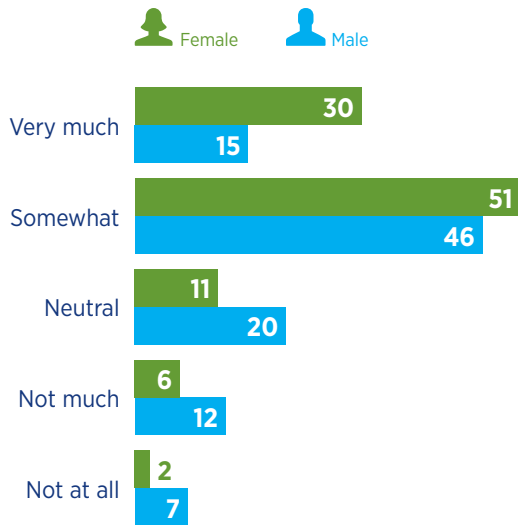
The research points to two important issues:

- Companies need to review if the way they identify and promote high-potential employees is skewed towards male success.
- Organisations should also review if their recruitment and promotion processes for more senior roles are equitable in terms of gender. This includes making every effort possible to include women on shortlists for manager and senior manager roles.

It is in the interests of all organisations to be able to recruit and promote from the largest pool of talent and that means ensuring female talent is visible.

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

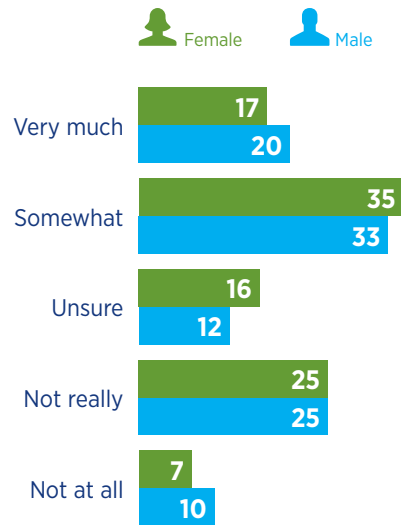
Do you think women encounter barriers in their career progression (%)?



More than half of female respondents (51 per cent) and 46 per cent of men concede women face some barriers to career success due to their gender.

A further 30 per cent of female respondents believe women “very much” encounter barriers to career progression, but only 15 per cent of men share this view. Another 12 per cent of men responded, “not much” and seven per cent “not at all”. Not surprisingly, only two per cent of female respondents disagree that women encounter particular career barriers due to gender.

Do you think your organisation has equal opportunity or gender diversity issues that need to be addressed (%)?

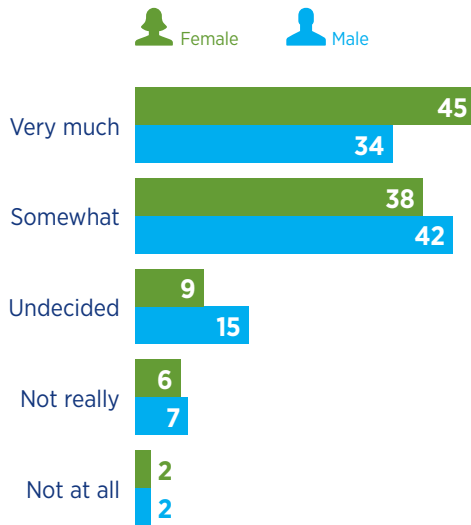


Surprisingly, more men than women (20 per cent versus 17 per cent) believe their organisation “very much” has issues to address. However, the highest proportion of female respondents (35 per cent) and male respondents (33 per cent) answered “somewhat” while a quarter of both men and women answered “not really”.



# FLEXIBLE WORKING

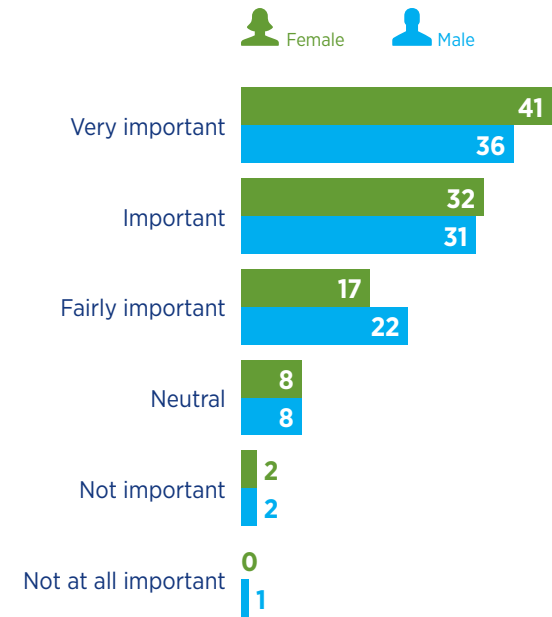
**Do you believe shared parental leave and more shared responsibility associated with child rearing, would help break down unconscious biases and improve gender diversity (%)?**



Both women and men are supportive of more shared family responsibilities as a way of helping to address equality in the workplace.

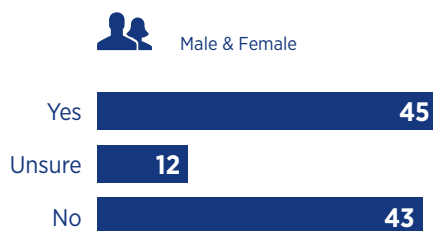
Most female respondents (45 per cent) said such an initiative would “very much” boost efforts to address unconscious bias in the workplace and improve gender diversity while just over a third of men agree.

**How important is it to you that agile / flexible working options be available to you in your organisation (%)?**



While more women than men value working flexibly arrangements, the numbers were significant for both genders. Approximately 73 per cent of women say working flexibly is very important or important with men not far behind at 67 per cent.

**Is a flexible working option available to you in your current organisation (%)?**



The rising popularity of flexible working practices is reflected by nearly half of male and female respondents indicating that some form of the arrangement is available within their organisation.

Employers across Asia are now coming to the realisation that offering flexible working arrangements is part and parcel of today's modern workplace. Differing types of flexible working practices generally include telecommuting or flex-place options, part time employment, flexible leave, job sharing, career breaks and phased retirement. The introduction of flexible working practices enables employers to drive attraction and retention of talented employees, as well as maintaining and improving staff engagement where concerned. Benefits to the bottom line can also be achieved through less staff turnover and time wasted at work.





# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In what areas do you believe gender diversity programmes would have the greatest positive impact (%)?

## China



Male & Female



In what areas do you believe gender diversity programmes would have the greatest positive impact (%)?

## Hong Kong



Male & Female

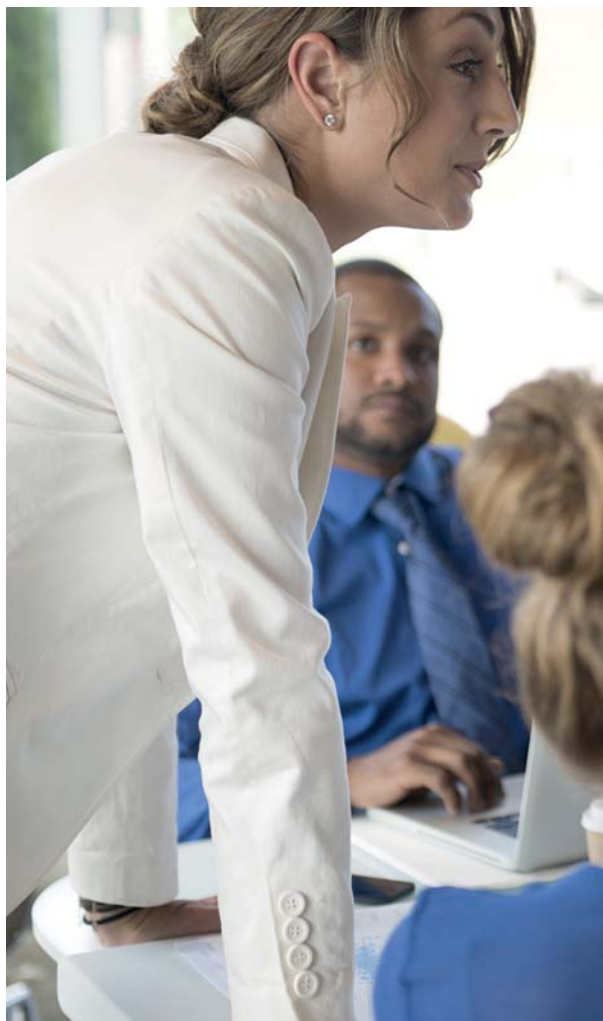
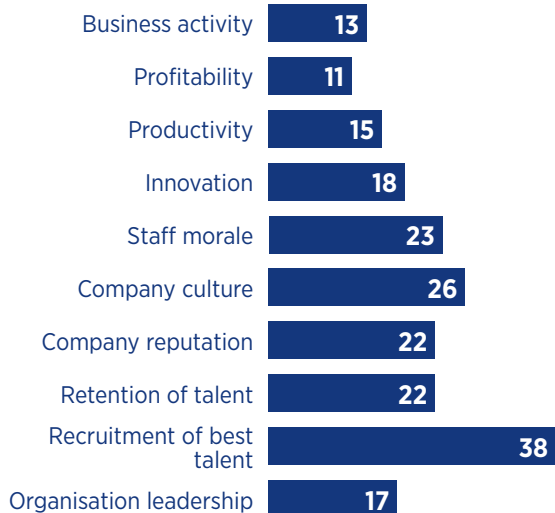


In what areas do you believe gender diversity programmes would have the greatest positive impact (%)?

## Japan



Male & Female



# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

**In what areas do you believe gender diversity programmes would have the greatest positive impact (%)?**

## Malaysia

 Male & Female



**In what areas do you believe gender diversity programmes would have the greatest positive impact (%)?**

## Singapore

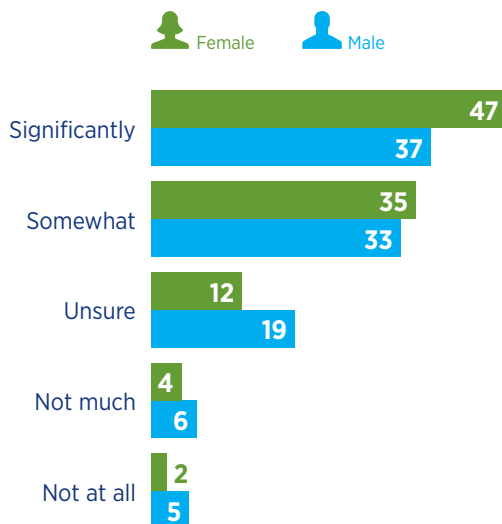
 Male & Female



We wanted to know what gender diversity programs would benefit an organisation and have a positive impact for both female and male employees.

The majority of respondents in China, Malaysia and Singapore nominated a company's culture as the most useful benefit to them. In Hong Kong, the top answer was a company's reputation whilst in Japan, it was the recruitment of best talent.

**Do you believe greater gender diversity in the workplace would improve an organisation's success (%)?**



Tellingly, our respondents believe there is legitimacy in the fact that if organisations respect and value the diversity by both women and men, it widens their pool of talent that can foster an environment of innovative thinking and allowing for the creation of relationships with a wider group of clients.



**Explore the main findings from each of the five Asian countries we operate in and hear from five leading Hays employees who share their opinion on three key questions from a personal and working perspective.**



# CHINA HIGHLIGHTS



## CAREER AMBITION

Approximately 22 per cent of female respondents are dissatisfied with their current level of seniority compared to only 15 per cent of male respondents. Of those, a high 61 per cent of women blame their lack of career progression on a lack of opportunities from their current employer compared to half of men giving that answer. Nearly a quarter of women say there is little opportunity for them to promote themselves or communicate their ambition in their current role compared to only 12 per cent of men.

More females in China than anywhere else in the region (35 per cent) hope to reach director level within seven years.

It was also found that more males in China than anywhere else in the region (49 per cent) have designs on reaching the C-suite

within 10 years.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

In China, men are the most senior person in the organisation for 77 per cent of survey respondents and in 54 per cent of cases their line manager is also male.

Nearly a quarter of women say gender barriers to promotion “very much” exist in today’s workforce and 55 per cent see gender barriers as “somewhat” of an issue. Approximately 37 per cent of men agree there is “somewhat” of an issue.

A significant 30 per cent of female respondents do not believe they are rewarded equally to their male colleagues despite having the same ability and a further 44 per cent say the system is only “somewhat” equal showing they have doubts.

A total of 24 per cent said barriers to equal pay outside a woman’s control very much exist in China compared to only seven per cent of men, while 52 per cent of women see some barriers compared to 44 per cent of men.

## FLEXIBILITY AND DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The majority of female respondents say implementation of flexible working policies for working parents would be the diversity and inclusion initiative that would benefit them most. It was found that most men

answered, access to mentoring schemes and active sponsorship. Both female and male respondents believe the greatest business impact of gender diversity is company reputation.

A total of 62 per cent of respondents work for organisations that offer parental leave for fathers that is the highest in the region. A further 11 per cent say men receive the same leave entitlements as women. Another 11 per cent say no leave is offered to fathers while 16 per cent are unsure of what is offered.

Only 13 per cent of women and 17 per cent of men believe accessing flexible work options is very much a career-limiting move.

# Q&A WITH LEADING CHINA EMPLOYEE



**Jessica Wang**  
Business Director  
Hays Beijing

Jessica has over 15 years of professional recruitment and management experience mainly in the China market. She joined Hays in 2013 and is currently Business Director for Hays Beijing. Prior to joining Hays, she worked for a leading search firm specialising in IT, banking and corporate functional roles across China for 12 years.

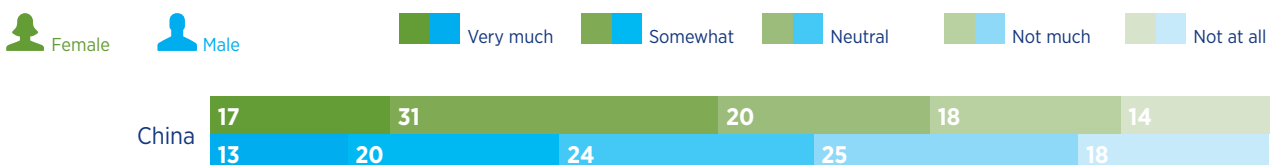
**1) With nearly half of China respondents believing that opting to work flexibly is a career-limiting move, do you personally believe this is the case and have you seen an increase in the amount of organisations offering flexible working options in China given its rise in popularity?**

The global rise in the trend of flexible working conditions, is also starting to permeate in China. More so within MNCs, we are seeing this becoming a pervasive factor of acceptable ‘working culture’. However, for local China organisations, it is the opposite where there might be a ‘team cohesiveness’ expectation for being seen and heard within the office environment.

For GenY and GenZ as they enter into the workforce or starting their corporate careers, there is no longer the cultural obligation to conform to the norms of the past. They expect career development and advancement whilst having the flexibility to manage their schedules and time off.

Flexible working options is relatively popular in MNC IT and bank sectors amongst all industries. One high profile IT MNC has initiated a program called “Connected Workplace”, where the company allows employees the freedom to choose where and how they work. Mobility is seen as the standard rather than the exception. This has translated into a mobile workforce which has resulted in tremendous growth in their business locally.

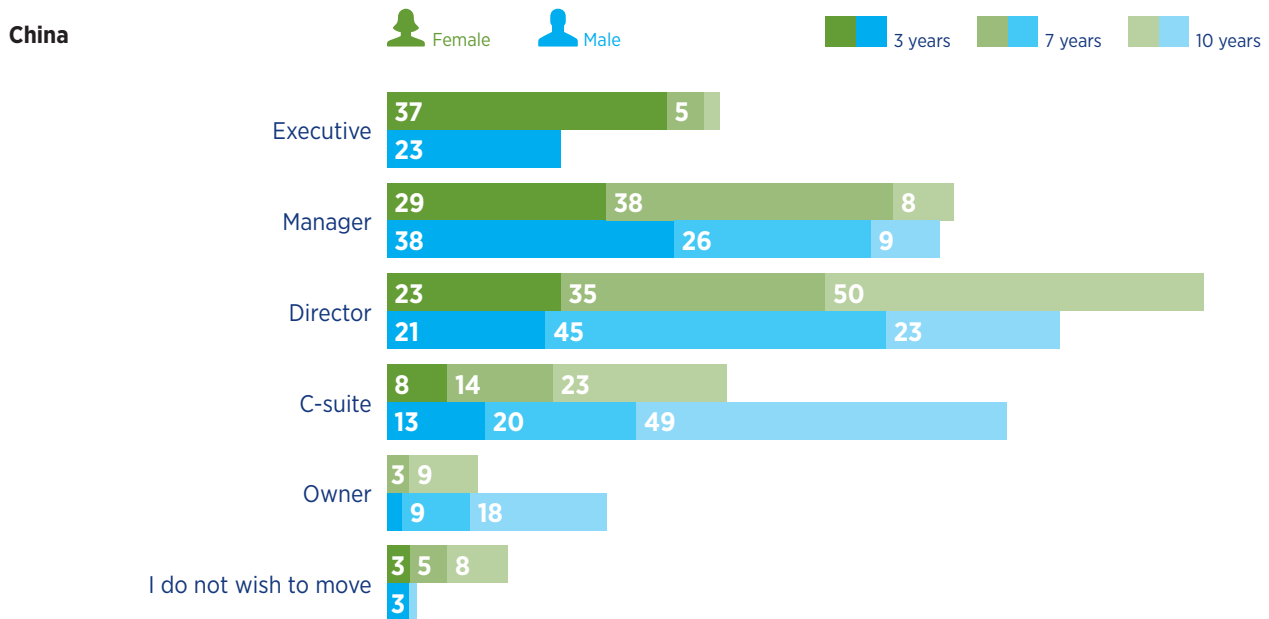
**Do you think opting to work flexible is a career-limiting move (%)?**



**2) When you commenced your professional working career, did you set yourself goals of reaching a level of seniority by a certain timeframe and does any of the findings below surprise you in terms of the career ambitions that females and males in China have set themselves?**

I have always strived to do the best in everything I do, whether it is at work or outside of it. I have also been extremely lucky to have worked for two companies which gave me the room to grow whilst working for leaders who provided valuable consul and mentorship which includes Hays. It does not surprise me to see how ambitious people are here in China. I do not see a separation in ambition between males or females. In some ways, females are even more aggressive in wanting to develop their careers to establish their own identity, but also a way to validate their own worthiness. Overall, there is definitely a strong desire to get ahead and climb up the corporate ladder as quickly as possible. Someone like myself who has been very stable and developed over time is rare these days.

**Please select the seniority level you would like to achieve in 3 years, 7 years and 10 years' time (%)?**

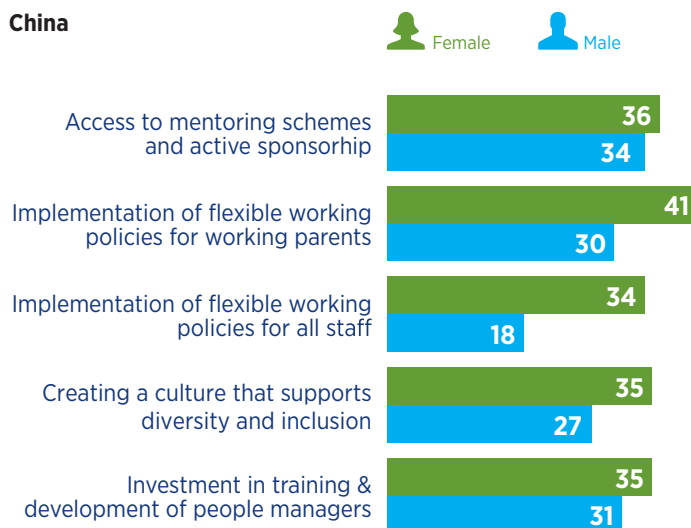


**3) From each of the resources listed below, what would you say has benefited you in your career to date and why?**

I mentioned in the previous question that I have been lucky to have had strong mentors in my career. So, I believe wholeheartedly in this. It does not necessarily mean having a formal mentoring relationship. However, a high level of trust and understanding creates a unique dynamic where there is open dialogue and conversation, whether it is brainstorming new ideas or coming up with a solution or working through a problem.

I try and foster the same type of environment within my own team. The old adage of “my door is always open” rings true and one in which that I am committed to.

**If D&I programmes do or did exist in your organisation, which of these resources would be useful to you in realising your career ambitions (%)?**



# HONG KONG HIGHLIGHTS



## CAREER AMBITION

A massive 86 per cent of women say they've been held back by limited opportunities to progress with their current employer versus 68 per cent of men citing that reason.

Only 35 per cent of female respondents say their current employer offers the opportunity for them to promote themselves and communicate their ambition. A further 26 per cent say such opportunities only "somewhat" exist where they work. Men did not fare much better with 40 per cent reporting opportunities are limited where they work and only 20 per cent working in places where they can promote themselves and their career goals.

Women and men are equally satisfied with their current level of seniority (43 per cent).

Our survey found 15 per cent of male respondents and nine per cent of female respondents expect to reach the C-Suite in three years with another 22 per cent of women planning to reach that level in seven years and 17 per cent in ten years.

Another 30 per cent of women plan to reach director level within ten years versus 35 per cent of male respondents. Half of male respondents plan to reach manager level in seven years.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Hong Kong has the highest proportion of men in the region leading companies at 89 per cent.

A total of 20 per cent of women say gender barriers are "very much" an issue in today's workforce and another 50 per cent see some issues. Most men (46 per cent) agree there are some issues while 29 per cent hold no view.

Just over 19 per cent of women do not think men and women of the same ability are paid equally and 35 per cent are uncertain with another 27 per cent saying equal treatment is only "somewhat" a reality.

## FLEXIBILITY AND DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Women in Hong Kong believe that the implementation of flexible working policies for working parents would help them to realise their career ambitions. For our male

respondents, they indicated that the investment in training & development of people managers is the No.1 key resource they consider, vital to realising their career goals.

According to our respondents, 47 per cent of their organisations offer parental leave to men and in 12 per cent of cases, both men and women are entitled to the same amount of leave. A hefty 29 per cent are unsure of what leave is offered while 12 per cent say no leave is offered to fathers.

Only 15 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men view accessing flexible work arrangements as a career-limiting move. Both genders believe there would be some detrimental impact (44 per cent of women and 27 per cent of men).

## Q&A WITH LEADING HONG KONG EMPLOYEE



**Kuan-Yu Shen**  
Senior Manager  
Hays Hong Kong

Kuan-Yu joined Hays in Hong Kong as an Associate Consultant in 2014 and is now the Team Manager for Accountancy and Finance, managing a team of six consultants. Kuan-Yu decided to join Hays right after graduation from university because she wanted a lucrative, people-facing job, and relocated to Hong Kong as it was deemed to be the best place to further her career in Asia.

**1) With the vast majority of both female and male Hong Kong respondents believing that opting to work flexibly is a career-limiting move, do you personally believe this is the case and have you seen an increase in the amount of organisations offering flexible working options in Hong Kong given its rise in popularity?**

I'd say for an industry like recruitment, which is highly competitive and very fast-paced, I do believe the option of working flexibly would be a career-limiting move for myself. If you factor in that in Hong Kong where it is a skill shortage market complemented by increasingly high expectations from employers, I believe it's quite important for me to be at the office, work my standard hours (or more), and use these hours to actively meet candidates and/or clients. In general for Hong Kong, I haven't seen an increase in banking and financial services organisations offering flexible working hours, however across all industries including the commercial space, there is indeed a spike in companies offering flexible hours for mothers, or the option to work from home a couple of days a week.

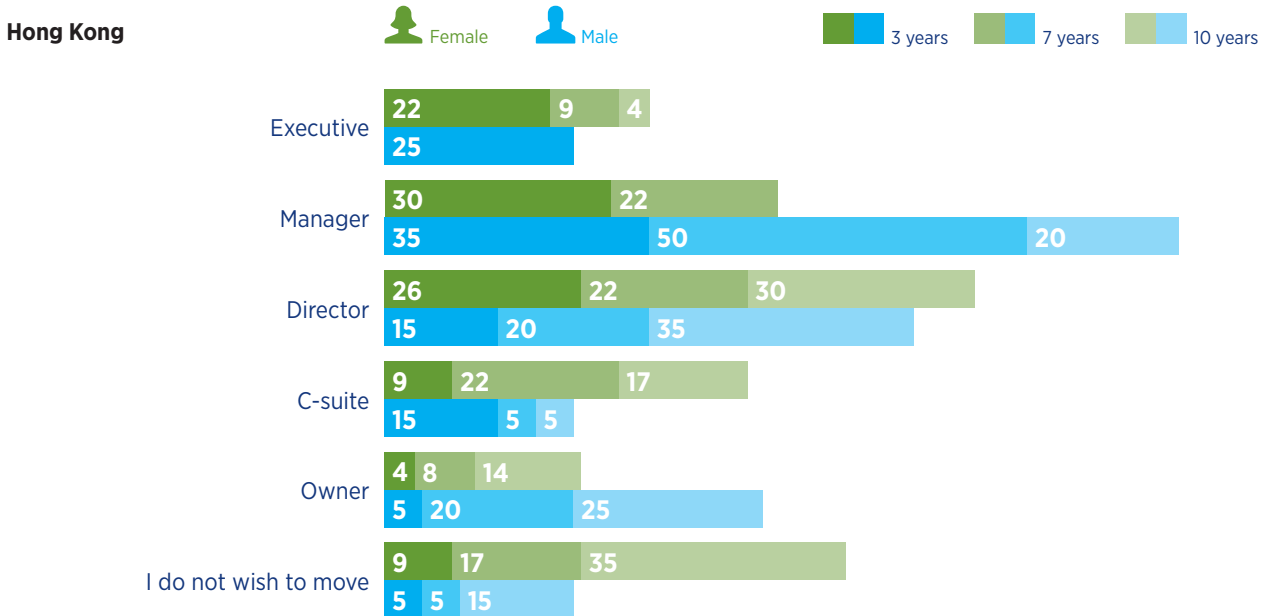
**Do you think opting to work flexible is a career-limiting move (%)?**



**2) When you commenced your professional working career, did you set yourself goals of reaching a level of seniority by a certain timeframe and does any of the findings below surprise you in terms of the career ambitions that Hong Kong females and males have set themselves?**

I definitely did, which is why I chose recruitment as my career fresh out of college. I set myself the goal of reaching a first level managerial position within three years, and then director level within six years. The below findings therefore don't surprise me at all, because it is definitely evident that a rising number of Hong Kong females are as ambitious if not more ambitious than their male counterparts. I believe there are a couple of reasons driving this, one of which could be a natural response to societal gender norms which are becoming more and more balanced, but I personally believe there are just more females who genuinely want to make a difference in the companies they work for.

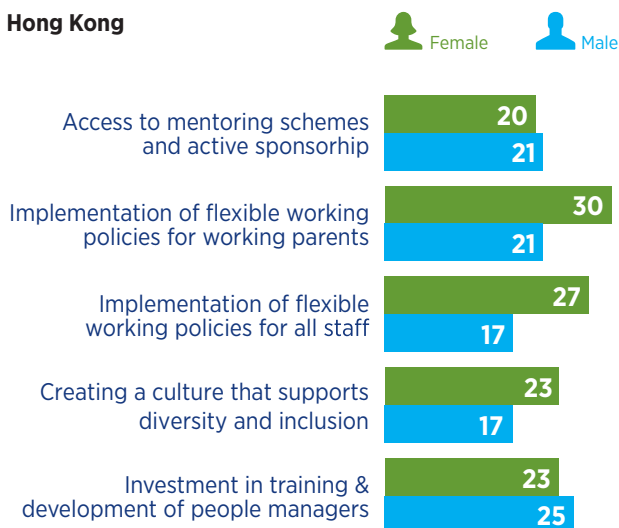
*Please select the seniority level you would like to achieve in 3 years, 7 years and 10 years' time (%)?*



**3) From each of the resources listed below, what would you say has benefited you in your career to date and why?**

I would say investment in training and development of people managers would be the biggest one to me and so far in my career, because this is something my manager and managing director really prioritise at Hays Hong Kong. There is in place, a personal development plan with my Managing Director and I really appreciate this because it gives me a chance to have a very honest conversation with him and to myself, in terms of what my strengths and weaknesses are as a people manager and most importantly what I could improve on. These also aren't just conversations we are having, but they are conversations plus actual leadership / developmental tools that many large organisations have in place to further and progress the careers of their workforce.

*If D&I programmes do or did exist in your organisation, which of these resources would be useful to you in realising your career ambitions (%)?*



# JAPAN HIGHLIGHTS



## CAREER AMBITION

In Japan, 29 per cent of women are dissatisfied with their current level of seniority versus 21 per cent of men. Only 18 per cent of women are satisfied versus 23 per cent of men.

A total of 27 per cent of women blame their lack of progression on the limited opportunities offered by their current employer – the lowest proportion of women citing that reason across Asia. Most women (35 per cent) say they made the wrong career move by joining their current organisation (an equal proportion of men cite that reason). In comparison, 29 per cent of men say their current employer offers only limited opportunities to progress.

More than a third (38 per cent) of women say their current role “somewhat” offers sufficient opportunity for self-promotion and to

communicate their ambition and 29 per cent say little opportunity exists. For men, 33 per cent answered “somewhat” while 32 per cent were neutral in judging the opportunities offered by their current employer.

The highest proportion of female respondents (48 per cent) in the region aspire to become a manager within three years while 30 per cent plan to reach director level in seven years and 23 per cent the C-suite in 10 years. Among male respondents, 31 per cent plan to reach director level in the next three years and 30 per cent within seven years with 28 per cent aspiring to make the C-suite in seven years and a further 33 per cent within a decade.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Men hold the most senior role in 80 per cent of respondent organisations as well as 76 per cent of line manager roles.

Not surprisingly, Japan has the highest proportion of respondents in the region who say men and women are unequal (26 per cent) when it comes to accessing opportunities to progress.

Surprisingly, 21 per cent of male respondents say gender barriers are “very much” an issue in today’s workplace compared with only 18 per cent of women. Most women (42 per cent) and 34 per cent of men see some issue while 11 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men don’t see much of an issue.

When asked if men and women of equal ability are paid the same, only 12 per cent of women thought this true compared to 29 per cent of men. Curiously more men (26 per cent) than women (25 per cent) don’t believe people of the same ability are paid equally regardless of gender.

## FLEXIBILITY AND DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Women in Japan rank implementation of flexible working policies for working parents as the most useful diversity and inclusion initiative for their careers. Male respondents also nominated implementation of flexible working policies for working parents along with implementation of flexible working policies for all staff.

Only 25 per cent of respondents say their organisation offers parental leave to men and 19 per cent that men and women are offered the same amount of parental leave. A large 42 per cent of respondents don’t know if leave is offered to fathers while 14 per cent say no leave is offered to men.

A total of 20 per cent of women and 24 per cent of men fear accessing flexible work options could be a career-limiting move. Both genders believe there would be some detrimental impact (29 per cent of women and 28 per cent of men).

## Q&A WITH LEADING JAPAN EMPLOYEE



**Saehena Hong**  
HR Team Manager  
Hays Japan

Saehena joined as an Associate Consultant in 2013 and landed her first people management role in 2016 as Team Manager. Whilst Saehena personally recruits for bilingual HR candidates specialising in the industrial sector, she currently manages the Hays Human Resources and Office Professionals Teams in the Japan head office.

**1) With nearly half of respondents in Japan believing that opting to work flexibly is a career-limiting move, do you personally believe this is the case and have you seen an increase in the amount of organisations offering flexible working options in Japan given its rise in popularity?**

We are seeing a higher number of directors and senior executives who are benefiting from flexible working options in comparison to their previous generation.

In this candidate-short market, my clients are becoming increasingly creative in terms of the types of flexible working options offered in that they don’t have to be a formal company-wide policy but exceptions tailored to the situations of the individuals concerned.

Offering this type of flexibility could work as a huge selling point in securing top talent against competitors. Candidates in Japan often receive 2-3 job offers at a time and employers who can provide both career development opportunities and a family-friendly lifestyle are most likely to be the No.1 choice for candidates.

**Do you think opting to work flexible is a career-limiting move (%)?**





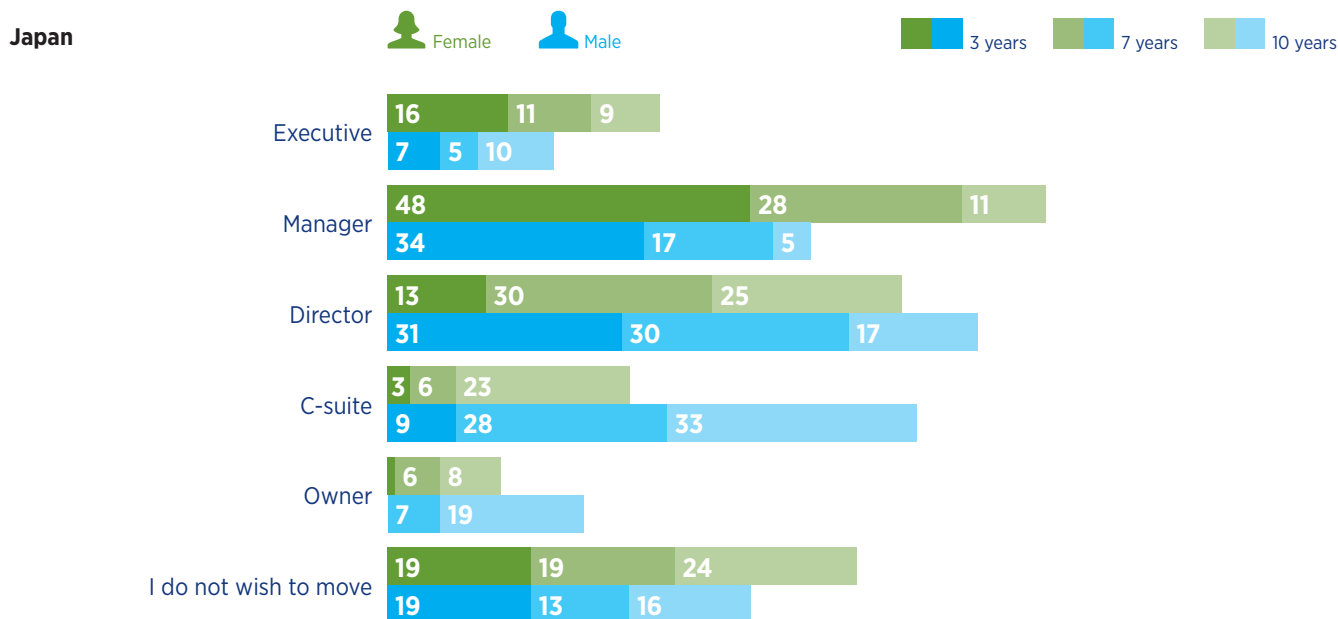
**2) When you commenced your professional working career, did you set yourself goals of reaching a level of seniority by a certain timeframe and does any of the findings below surprise you in terms of the career ambitions that Japan females and males have set themselves?**

I aimed to become a Manager within the first 3 years as this seemed clear and achievable in Hays Japan.

Having graduated from one of Japan's leading universities, I found that a lot of my female classmates cared more about where they could work, rather than how far they could progress. There is definitely more pressure on male workers to reach a certain level of seniority in their careers than their female counterparts.

As two-thirds of the female workforce aim to reach manager and director levels at some point in their careers, Japan's labour market is clearly full of untapped potential. The question then is how to tap into this potential so that more young female university graduates can realistically create a path-way in reaching C-level.

**Please select the seniority level you would like to achieve in 3 years, 7 years and 10 years' time (%)?**

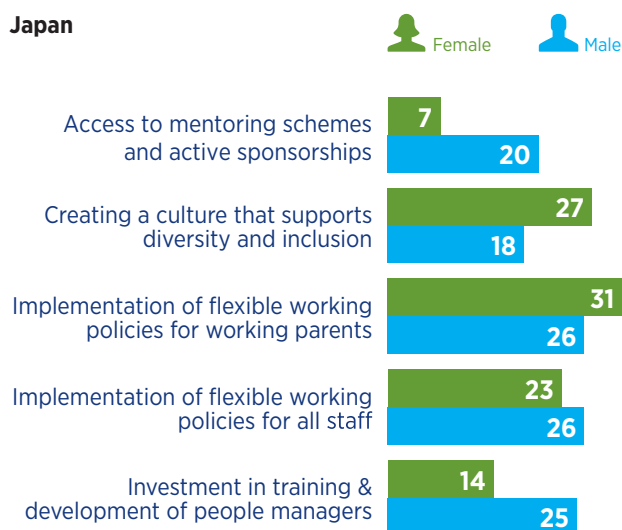


**3) From each of the resources listed below, what would you say has benefited you in your career to date and why?**

Working in an environment where the creation of a culture that supports diversity and inclusion has been a huge benefit to my career. This resource has helped to create a range of role models and mentors in the business where there is no one uniform way of becoming successful. If everyone in a leadership role had exactly the same profile in gender, age and nationality, I would have quickly given up knowing I am not one of them. However, seeing so many different backgrounds and profiles in leadership roles, I learned to develop my own path to the level I'm at now by delivering results.

The investment in training & development of people managers has also been a huge help as this helped me to become ambitious at an early stage of my career. Knowing firmly as to what level of investment and training I would receive on my road to becoming a manager, it was easier for me to make a number of personal decisions that would assist me in achieving this accomplishment.

**If D&I programmes do or did exist in your organisation, which of these resources would be useful to you in realising your career ambitions (%)?**



# MALAYSIA HIGHLIGHTS



## CAREER AMBITION

Across all Asian countries, Malaysia has the highest proportion of female respondents satisfied with their current level of seniority (49 per cent) – 10 percentage points higher than male respondents. A further 10 per cent of female respondents are “very satisfied” compared with six per cent of male respondents.

Of those dissatisfied, an equal number of women and men (50 per cent) blame limited opportunities to progress where they work. The second most cited reason for both genders was that they made a wrong career move in joining their current organisation – 37 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men.

A quarter of both female and male respondents say their current role delivers the opportunity to promote themselves and communicate their ambition. However,

the majority of women (54 per cent) and men (40 per cent) say opportunities only “somewhat” exist.

31 per cent of female respondents aim to reach director level within seven years, while 29 per cent want to hit that goal in three years and an equal proportion within a decade. A total of 21 per cent of women want to reach the C-suite within seven years and 22 per cent within ten years. The highest proportion of male respondents (49 per cent) in the region want to own their own business within a decade (compared with 19 per cent of women) while 39 per cent plan to have reached the C-suite within seven years.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Malaysia has the highest percentage of female leaders in the region at 24 per cent but men are still found at the top in 73 per cent of cases. Men comprise nearly 57 per cent of the line managers where our respondents work.

Only 12 per cent of female respondents believe “very much” there are gender barriers in today’s workforce, while 44 per cent “somewhat” believe gender barriers exist and 15 per cent “not much”. The highest proportion of male respondents, 45 per cent say barriers “somewhat” exist while a third had no view.

When it comes to equal pay, 35 per cent of women and 33 per cent of men say people of equal merit are paid equitably. However,

more men (22 per cent) than women (16 per cent) say conditions are not equal while nearly a third of both men and women say rewards are only “somewhat” equal.

## FLEXIBILITY AND DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Women in Malaysia believe that the implementation of flexible working policies for working parents would help them to realise their career ambitions. For our male respondents, they indicated that the investment in training & development of people managers is the No. 1 key resource they consider, vital to realising their career goals. Both male and female respondents believe company reputation is the leading benefit that gender diversity offers to an organisation although men also nominate “innovation”.

Half of our respondents work in organisations offering parental leave to men and only seven per cent for employers that offer equal amounts of parental leave to fathers and mothers. A large 31 per cent say no leave is offered to fathers and 12 per cent are unsure.

Respondents from Malaysia were the least concerned in the region about the negative impact flexible working arrangements could have to one’s career. Only 11 per cent of women and 12 per cent of men saw it as “very much” career-limiting.

# Q&A WITH LEADING MALAYSIA EMPLOYEE



**Natasha Ishak**  
Manager  
Hays Malaysia

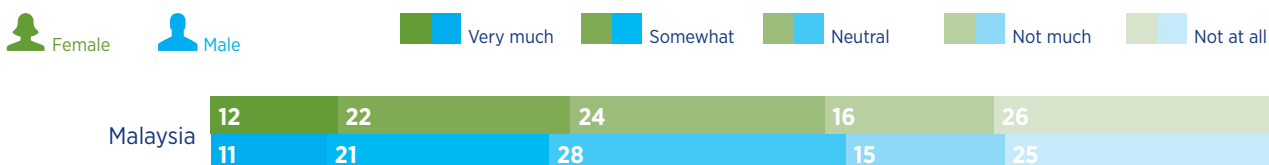
Natasha has been with Hays Malaysia now for nearly five years. Natasha started originally as an Associate Consultant, with the sole objective of building and strengthening the Hays Banking function in Malaysia. In total, Natasha has been promoted four times and now manages the following functions with a team headcount of 16; Accountancy & Finance, Banking & Financial Services, Finance Technology and Insurance.

**1) With Malaysian respondents less inclined than the rest of Asia in believing flexible working is a career-limiting move, what are the advantages of flexible working practices and have you seen an increase in the amount of organisations offering flexible working options in Malaysia given its rise in popularity?**

Flexible working options not only creates a better work-life balance environment for employees, it also creates a feeling of being trusted by the employer enough to operate remotely but still getting the work done.

When the basis of trust is mutually strong between both employers and employees, it creates a positive motivation for one to work harder and it creates more accountability on getting the work done.

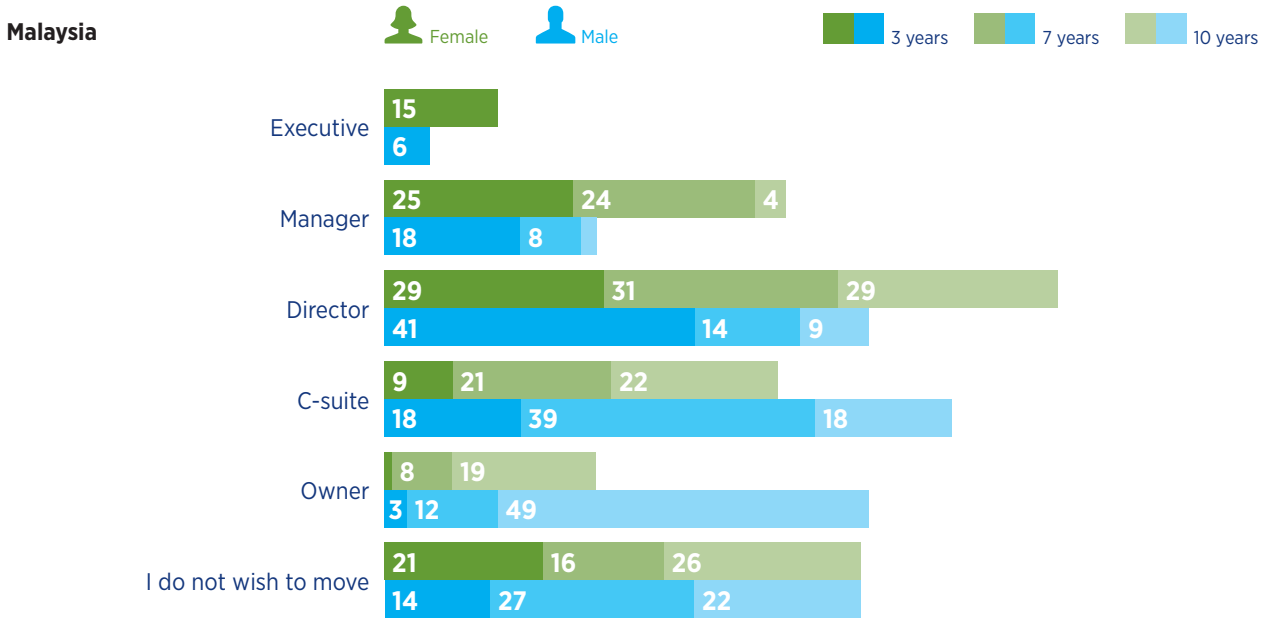
**Do you think opting to work flexible is a career-limiting move (%)?**



**2) When you commenced your professional working career, did you set yourself goals of reaching a level of seniority by a certain timeframe and does any of the findings below surprise you in terms of the career ambitions that Malaysian females and males have set themselves?**

Yes. I did set myself a personal goal to reach a certain career level by a certain age that has contributed to where I have got to today. In terms of the findings uncovered, it does not really surprise me as it is an Asian culture and convention that drives males to be more ambitious in their career undertakings in comparison to women. However, that movement is beginning to shift now and we are starting to see more women wanting to go further in their career, a lot faster.

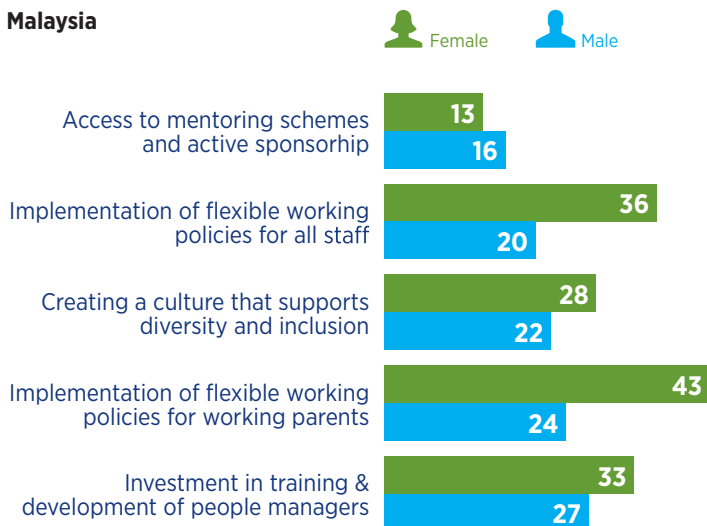
*Please select the seniority level you would like to achieve in 3 years, 7 years and 10 years' time (%)?*



**3) From each of the resources listed below, what would you say has benefited you in your career to date and why?**

For me personally, 'culture that supports diversity and inclusion' as well as 'investment in training and development' has definitely helped me in my career growth. It is important for an organisation to recognise that diversity can be very beneficial to their business as different characters and backgrounds bring about different mind sets and thought processes.

*If D&I programmes do or did exist in your organisation, which of these resources would be useful to you in realising your career ambitions (%)?*



# SINGAPORE HIGHLIGHTS



## CAREER AMBITION

When it comes to feelings about their current level of seniority, 10 per cent of female respondents were very satisfied and 32 per cent satisfied. Another 25 per cent were dissatisfied. Only 8 per cent of male respondents are very satisfied, 38 per cent satisfied. And 15 per cent dissatisfied. A bigger proportion of men than women (11 per cent) are very dissatisfied.

Of those who are dissatisfied, most respondents cite a lack of opportunity to progress in their current organisation as the reason – 58 per cent of women and 76 per cent of men.

Most respondents (51 per cent of women and 38 per cent of men) believe their current role only “somewhat” provides the opportunity for them to promote

themselves and communicate their ambition. Another 23 per cent of women and 14 per cent of men say the opportunity “very much” exists. However, 16 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men say “not much” opportunity exists.

Most female respondents and an equal proportion of male respondents (34 per cent) expect to reach director level role within three years. The majority of men (39 per cent) expect to make director level within seven years and 30 per cent the C-suite within that time compared with 17 per cent of female respondents. Another 34 per cent of men expect to reach the C-suite within 10 years compared with 24 per cent of female respondents setting that goal.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Singapore had the second-highest proportion of men in the top job (82 per cent) and men occupy 65 per cent of line-manager roles.

Yet, Singapore also has the highest proportion of respondents who believe men and women can access opportunity equally (27 per cent). However, 55 per cent of female respondents believe gender barriers “somewhat” exist compared with 34 per cent of male respondents. The number of men and women believing “very much” in gender barriers was equal at 15 per cent.

When it comes to pay, 31 per cent of women do not believe people those of equal ability are paid equitably regardless of gender and 23 per cent of men hold that view. Another 30 per cent of women and men believe conditions are somewhat equal while 21 per cent of women and 36 per cent of men say people of the same ability are paid equally regardless of gender.

## FLEXIBILITY AND DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Implementation of flexible working policies for working parents and investment in training & development of people managers are both as important as each other for women to realise their career ambitions. For men, they nominated investment in training & development of people managers as their number one resource.

A total of 58 per cent of respondents work for an organisation offering parental leave to fathers and 11 per cent for employers that offer the same amount of parental leave to both men and women. Another 20 per cent are unsure of what leave is offered while 11 per cent say no leave is offered to fathers.

Women and men share similar views about the impact that working flexibly could have on their career. A minority believe the introduction of flexible work practices is very much a career limiting move (21 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men).

# Q&A WITH LEADING SINGAPORE EMPLOYEE



**Katy Cheney**  
HTS Operations Director  
Hays Singapore

Katy joined Hays Singapore in May 2016 as the Asia Operations Director for Hays Talent Solutions. Katy is responsible for ensuring Hays teams based on site and in Centres of Excellence, delivering excellent customer service and value-add solutions to regional and local clients.

### 1) With over half of respondents in Singapore believing that opting to work flexibly is a career-limiting move, do you personally believe this is the case and have you seen an increase in the amount of organisations offering flexible working options in Singapore given its rise in popularity?

No, I don't believe that flexible working is necessarily a career-limiting move. Flexible working allows employees to continue to contribute to an organisation and further develop their skills when traditional full time employment is not an option for them. In some circumstances, it may take longer to gain the relevant skills and experience to progress but this isn't always the case; especially as the employee may be gaining valuable new skills when undertaking the activities that led to their request for flexible working e.g. parenting, part-time studies or voluntary work.

Organisations in Singapore are beginning to see the benefits of offering flexible working options, however this still isn't the norm and it certainly isn't as prevalent as in other countries. I hope that the Singapore government's recent focus to develop the country's HR skills will result in the HR function taking a more proactive approach to convincing the business of the value of introducing flexible working policies to both employees and the business itself.

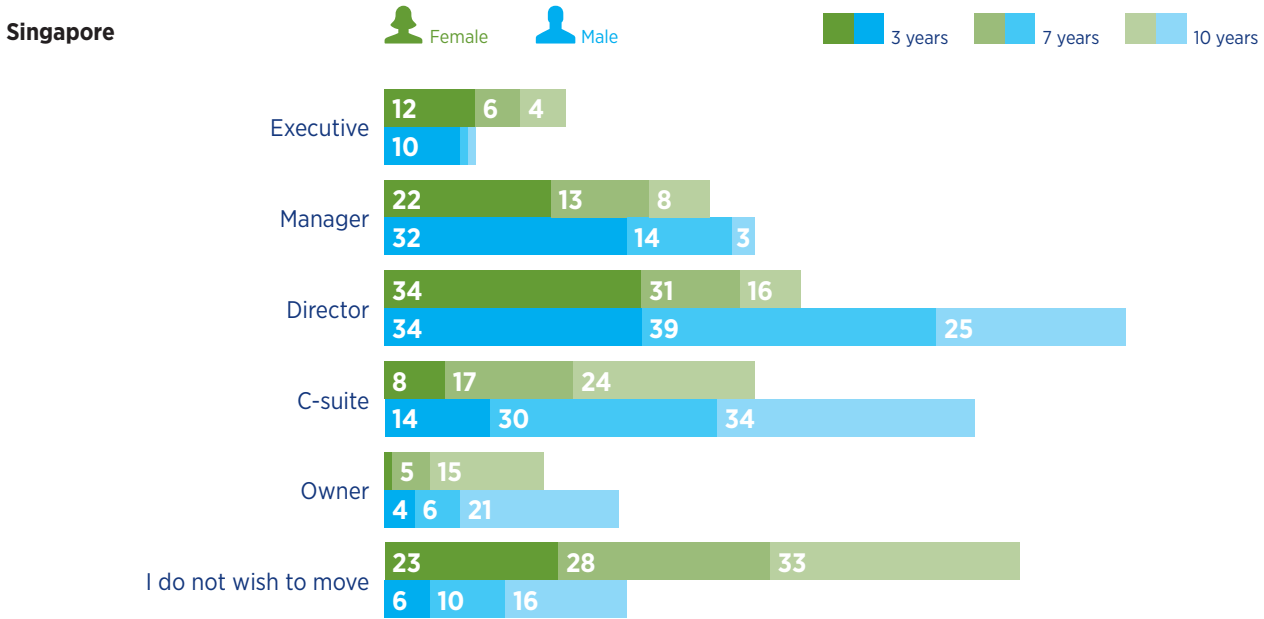
**Do you think opting to work flexible is a career-limiting move (%)?**



**2) When you commenced your professional working career, did you set yourself goals of reaching a level of seniority by a certain timeframe and does any of the findings below surprise you in terms of the career ambitions that Singaporean females and males have set themselves?**

When I was at school in the 80's, the key message to us was to no longer expect a 'job for life' with stepwise career progression; and to focus on developing a 'portfolio career'. As a consequence of this, I have always approached each new opportunity (jobs and projects) with a view as to what new skills or experiences I can gain from them. This approach has meant that I have taken several sideways moves which I believe have helped me to become a more rounded and valuable employee. In the long term, the broadening of my skill set has also enabled my progress into more senior positions. I am surprised by some of the results displayed below. Whilst I expected there would still be a difference in the aspirations of males and females, I am disappointed that the disparity is still so great, particularly at the Director and C-suite level and also that so many females versus males have no desire to progress beyond their current level.

*Please select the seniority level you would like to achieve in 3 years, 7 years and 10 years' time (%)?*

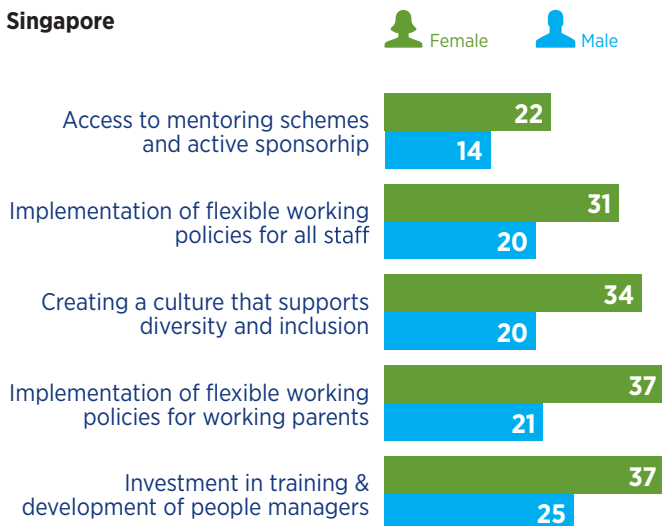


**3) From each of the resources listed below, what would you say has benefited you in your career to date and why?**

I have definitely benefited from working for organisations that have had a strong culture supporting D&I. Hays and some of my previous employers have very capable and supportive female leaders who are role models. Some of them have also acted as informal mentors helping me to advance my career. I have also worked on a number of multi-regional projects which have involved dealing with stakeholders in very different time-zones. The support of my manager in allowing me to flex my hours and work from home when I needed to, enabled me to manage client requirements at both ends of the day and still fit in my personal needs. This trust goes a long way towards building loyalty and commitment as well as a positive business outcome.

Hays has a strong focus on investing in the training and development of its staff, in particular its people managers. I've received some very beneficial training that is helping me to improve my management skills and in turn, is enabling me to provide my team with the coaching and support they need to develop and progress.

*If D&I programmes do or did exist in your organisation, which of these resources would be useful to you in realising your career ambitions (%)?*





# INTERVIEW WITH A LEADING WOMAN 1

Tan Yen Yen is the President for Vodafone Global Enterprise, Asia Pacific. She was Regional Vice President and Managing Director of Asia Pacific (South) for SAS Institute. Prior to joining SAS, Yen Yen was Senior Vice President of Applications for Oracle Asia Pacific and Vice President and Managing Director for Hewlett-Packard Singapore.



## Tell us about your progression into your leadership role?

I have progressed through the ranks of Hewlett-Packard where I became Managing Director of HP Singapore which is a significant Hewlett-Packard entity for the company globally. The progression through the years has largely been a result of a rich and wide range of experiences in sales management, business unit management, channel management, P&L accountabilities and my ability to lead and over achieve results for the corporates.

## Did you always aspire to reach a leadership role in your career?

I'm not a deliberate person and I don't go out there to position myself to be one. I find that it's important to work hard and prove yourself, only then will opportunities come your way. There is no breakthrough or greatness achieved without hard work. In that, I belong to the old school of thought.

Mentors have been instrumental in helping me at various stages of my career to make the right career decisions as well as supporting me to build my leadership capability over the years.

## What role should employers play in providing a clear path to the top for women - what they need to do / achieve to progress from the executive ranks to the C-suite if they choose?

I would like to answer this in two parts. Employers should promote a diverse and inclusive culture that enables talented people from diverse backgrounds to succeed and progress.

For example at Vodafone, our diversity & inclusion strategy outlines our ambition to be a company that empowers all diverse employees to be at their best. Improving diversity and enhancing inclusion across the business has been an ongoing priority

for the board and there is a genuine will and commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive culture across Vodafone. Board level commitment to diversity is key in providing a path to the top for women.

Some of the things that Vodafone does to provide a career path to the top for women include:

- Providing family friendly and flexible work practices to enable employees to balance the demands of work and home.
- Actively seeking to identify top female talent and provide development opportunities to support their career growth.
- Focus on eliminating unconscious bias through training at all levels of the organisation to ensure that there are no unconscious barriers to diverse talents progressing.
- As a Global Impact Champion for HeForShe, our CEO has set the tone that male colleagues should actively support gender diversity.

To go back to the original question, women have already demonstrated their expertise, drive, commitment and leadership capability. In order to progress to C-suite, it is important to have developed a strong and capable team to support your vision. One area women tend to struggle with more than men is promoting their achievements and actively working to raise their profile in the business. This is key to progressing to the C-suite - the leadership of the business needs to know who you are, what you're about as a leader, your track record of exceeding expectations and the true value of what you bring to the table.

## What advice do you have for female professionals who are in, or are looking to work in, a management or leadership role?

Learn to establish your professional network to enrich yourself and build your professional profile. Early in my tech career, I was in Singapore Computer Society for the IT professional and Singapore Infocomm Technology Federation (SiTF) where I eventually became the first female SiTF Chairman.

I believe leaders must develop genuine interest in people. It's my job to maintain a work environment that keeps our people happy and productive at work. This philosophy of staying close to employees, provides me a solid grounding from which viable strategies are crafted.

As women leaders, we are more self-aware, more collaborative and empathetic in the way we manage our relationships.

## In your opinion is there a difference between how men and women plan to progress in their careers?

Women compared to men tend to underestimate their abilities. I believe you have to be comfortable in your own skin, and that will in turn exude self-confidence and power.

## Are you surprised that across Asia, 20% of male respondents said their organisation has equal opportunity or gender diversity issues that 'very much' need to be addressed, compared to 17% of female respondents?

I have never felt that a glass ceiling existed in my career. Singapore is a meritocratic society, where women are given equal opportunities at higher education and at work.

Singapore women are very blessed. Because of the small size of country, most of us have the support of extended family and domestic helpers which allowed us to be at peace at work knowing our children are well taken care of.

However, there are some aspects by which Singapore lags behind our neighbouring countries. A case in point being the under-representation of female directors on public-listed boards. This is quite surprising considering the high number of highly educated senior women leaders.

## Have you encountered any gender specific challenges or obstacles in your career?

I can't think of a big hurdle per se in my career. I guess in my child bearing years and when the kids were young, I made the concerted effort to move from an Asia Pacific to ASEAN/Singapore role in Hewlett-Packard. This is so I would travel less and had more time with my 4 young children. Hewlett-Packard is very supportive in helping working mothers that enabled me to continue working and not disrupt my career whilst balancing my role as a mother.

## How can employers ensure that any employee - female or male - who chooses to work flexibly isn't limited in their future career growth and development?

In some organisations, staff who work flexi hours are wrongly seen as being less committed, less available and less ready for seniority. In this new internet age of borderless global world, where the office is no longer, the place where work starts and ends, the 'command and control' rigid style of management is less effective. Hence there is definitely a need for corporate leaders to be coached on the new way of working so that flexi workers are not disadvantaged in any way in their career progression. Communication with the advent of technology could be a tool for constant collaboration and interaction.

# INTERVIEW WITH A LEADING WOMAN 2

Priscilla Hua joined Merck in 2013 and currently holds a dual role as Regional Recruitment head of APAC and the Country HR Head for China. Merck is a leading science and technology organisation in healthcare, life sciences and performance materials operating in 66 countries with over 50,000 employees.



## **Tell us about your progression into your leadership role?**

I spent two years as the Staffing Manager in B&Q before I took the role as HR Director for Staffing and Employee Relationships, and then HR lead for the Corporate Functions in 2008. In 2010, I joined Wal-Mart Global Sourcing as China HR Director, leading the HR team in Shanghai and Shenzhen.

In 2013, I joined Merck as Country HR Head for China and HRBP lead for China Life Sciences. I was the regional HRBP for the Life Sciences Lab Products team from 2014 to 2015. My role has expanded recently as I now oversee the Talent and Acquisition of talent for APAC.

## **Did you always aspire to reach a leadership role in your career?**

When I first started in HR, I had no idea how far I would be able to go. I took it upon myself to set a clear career path I could take that would enable me to reach my current position. Central to my success was seizing every opportunity I could to advance my career. My aspiration to become a leader developed gradually during my early years in HR where I undertook a number of different roles and jobs. It was during this time that I realised how rewarding it is to lead a team to achieve goals set for teams and the company and to also bear witness to the growth and development of the people I worked with.

## **What role should employers play in providing a clear path to the top for women - what they need to do / achieve to progress from the executive ranks to the C-suite if they choose?**

Fair treatment for male and female employees is a must. At Merck, Diversity & Inclusion are powerful words and are also

translated into powerful actions. It really stems from something that is deeply rooted in our values and culture, namely respect for each individual, which is at the heart of who we are.

A big part of our future success depends on our ability to attract and retain diverse talent and foster a strong inclusive environment. We all play a role in that and must each take ownership in building the next generation of Merck.

From an employee perspective, employees own their own development, and need to take responsibility to achieve their career goals or to become the person they want to be. It is important to keep learning, and to keep believing in yourself.

## **What advice do you have for female professionals who are in, or are looking to work in, a management or leadership role?**

First of all, be curious. The world is changing, new topics are being defined, and new megatrends are emerging. Curiosity will keep you agile to learn new ideas and technology, adapt to new way of doing things, and to acquire more diversified exposure and experience.

Secondly, be creative, always have an open mind and step out of the comfort zone to think about how you can improve. Creativity helps people to think differently and better deal with uncertainty. What is more important is you should not be afraid of doing the wrong thing if you want to be creative.

## **In your opinion is there a difference between how men and women plan to progress in their careers?**

Gender should not drive career planning. It is more important for people to consider the different life stages, for example. Both males and females should strive to keep balance between work and life, particularly in life stages when they get married or have children.

## **Are you surprised that across Asia, 20% of male respondents said their organisation has equal opportunity or gender diversity issues that 'very much' need to be addressed, compared to 17% of female respondents?**

No, what I believe is that equal opportunity or gender diversity issues do exist in Asia, however, it differs from country to country. In some countries the situation is better, for instance because women are more independent and powerful, while some other countries might still need to fight for women rights.

## **How can employers ensure that any employee - female or male - who chooses to work flexibly isn't limited in their future career growth and development?**

I personally think there should be a mechanism in place, such as policies or rules to provide guidance for people to follow. Moreover, people need to be supported to build up the mindset that workplace diversity & inclusion actually makes the organisation stronger and more creative so that we can all achieve the same goal.

## **When women go on parental leave, do you believe they should indicate to their employer if they still want to be considered for promotion?**

Women should in all cases, have the right to be fairly selected for promotion regardless of going on parental leave. However, it can be helpful to know as it could well be that many managers are guilty of making assumptions that a woman with small children won't want to take on a bigger role.



# CONCLUSION

Our research shows employers need to build career pathways that start from the ground up to provide women with equal access to success.

We have again seen a chronic shortage of female role models in our 2017 research starting at line management level and more women than men dissatisfied with their current level of success.

The leading cause of dissatisfaction for both genders is limited opportunities to progress and few or no opportunities to showcase their skills and communicate their ambition. The fact such a significant proportion of men and women both feel this way provides the space for employers to create something employees will embrace regardless of gender.

The high proportion of male line managers seen in this year's research also points to the need for people management training that helps all managers feel comfortable and able to encourage female self-promotion, which is not a cultural norm in Asia.

Another way to support this is to help everyone from the C-suite down understand the bottom line benefits gender diversity brings to any business but to their organisation in particular.

The old adage, 'what gets measured, gets done' points to the need for employers to set clear metrics for the gender diversity initiatives they deploy and report on these as they would with any business initiatives.

Metrics are a powerful way to tell a story in business terms. Only a small minority of our respondents fail to see the positive business impacts gender diversity offer.

Our respondents believe the key benefits are improvements to company culture and reputation as well as a greater ability to attract and retain the best talent.

The 2017 research also points to another area where companies could gain an advantage for their employer brand and ongoing staff morale and that is flexible working policies.

As reported, a clear majority of both female and male respondents describe flexible working practices as important to them. We anticipate this will only grow as younger employees reach the life stage where they want to start families while more senior employees face the pressures of providing elder care.

Developing processes that maintain productivity levels and line manager visibility while enabling employees to take career breaks, work varied hours or work from home is challenging.

However, our research shows the rewards are there for those organisations that invest the time and energy to innovate their work practices.

Gender diversity has stalled the world over despite legislative incentives and some modest improvements in female representation at board level including in our region.

Our research suggests it's time to relook at how gender diversity goals can be threaded throughout the organisation in line with the career and life stages of employees regardless of gender.

We also need to promote a better understanding of what gender diversity delivers to all employees as well as the organisation.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### PLACE LINE MANAGERS ON THE FRONT LINE

Our research shows the majority of line managers are men. At the same time, only a third of women are confident their line manager knows their career ambitions and 28 per cent are not at all confident. Training should be provided to all line managers, regardless of gender, on how to encourage female direct reports to set and share ambitious career goals and to understand the steps involved in reaching those goals. Managers should also give support to recognise and address any cultural bias they may hold about women who put themselves forward for added responsibilities or promotion.

### SET BUSINESS METRICS FOR GENDER DIVERSITY

Gender diversity initiatives should be measured in the same way as any other business initiative. Targets and success metrics should be developed and then reported on. These should include a return on the financial investment made by the company. All this should be championed and communicated to employees across the organisation by the CEO and C-suite. Managers at all levels should also have gender diversity metrics included in their key performance indicators and be asked to report on these.

### SHOWCASE FLEXIBLE WORK POLICIES

Share positive stories about workplace flexibility including higher levels of return to work after career absences. Profiling male employees taking parental leave and senior leaders accessing flexible work options could also help to promote a positive message. Managers and employees who have collaborated on creating ways of working flexibility that are respectful to both parties should also be showcased. Our research shows that both genders highly value an organisation that offers flexible work options and only a minority of respondents believe accessing flexible work is a career-limiting move.

### MENTORSHIP MATTERS

The value of mentorship cannot be underestimated. Mentees value hugely, the supporting mechanism that mentors provide in creating a positive experience of growth and development for an individual's career as it also empowers and gives them confidence. Research has proven that valuable mentoring is built upon mutual learning, active engagement, and the determination to develop and grow the leadership capabilities of mentees. Organisations should therefore look to have in place, mentorship or associated programs that are designed to accelerate the careers of high-performing individuals that can also be used as a powerful retention tool.

### TRAINING BUILDS AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Gender diversity in the workplace can be described as the equal treatment and acceptance of both males and females in an organisation. Organisations themselves, require a workforce that can think and approach problems differently, can challenge the status quo, and come from different backgrounds. This will help both men and women to build a rewarding career and achieve their full potential.

In enabling employees to reach their full potential, training and development initiatives that educate, inform and support employees on Gender Diversity topics should be in place to ensure an inclusive environment is created at all levels and functions within an organisation.



# ABOUT HAYS IN ASIA

Our passion lies in helping people develop their professional careers, in whatever sector they work in; this principle is what makes Hays the world's leading expert in powering the world of work.

Hays is the world's leading professional and skilled recruitment company operating across 33 countries.

We continue to strengthen our position in Asia operating across 6 countries from 13 offices. Our headcount continues to grow as we aim to help substantially more companies achieve their goals and support more people to find the right jobs to transform their lives.

We are accredited with the world-leading ISO 9001:2008 certification in all our operational countries in Asia including China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Japan.

Our extensive candidate database allows our consultants to search millions of candidates globally using Google® search technology to find the best people in the fastest timeframe. In addition, our exciting collaboration with LinkedIn® provides real-time data on the active candidate market, behavioural trend analysis for future movers and an additional talent pool of millions of potential candidates. We are proud to be the number one most followed recruitment agency on LinkedIn with 1.5+ million followers.

## 4,400+

People placed in permanent jobs each year

## 700+

Temporary workers paid each week

## 600+

Staff in Asia

## 13

Offices across the region

## 10

Years of experience



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