Working Women In South Africa Report

2024



Key insights and actionable strategies for business owners and HR leaders

This report is brought to you by:

RecruitMyMom
Trusted Professional Skills

A note from Phillipa Geard
CEO and Founder of RecruitMyMom and RecruitAGraduate

RecruitMyMom launched in 2012, fuelled by my passion for making it easy for businesses to source and hire valuable, skilled mothers in an economy desperate for top-calibre skills. RecruitMyMom embarked on an ambitious vision to educate employers on the value of retaining and attracting this untapped pool of resources by offering different working arrangements - hours or locations of work.

Fast forward to COVID-19, the most effective overnight educator of how and why remote working can and does work, and the working landscape shifted permanently. The power struggle between employers and employees persist in the ongoing debate over whether remote, hybrid, or in-office work setups will prevail.

I am energised and excited by the insights from the Working Women 2024 report, where we aimed to explore the effects of economic conditions and changing work arrangements on South African women. Our goal was to research what women require to thrive in the evolving economy and provide these insights to businesses and HR managers to assist them in knowing why they are vital to our economy and how to attract and retain female talent.

This report is primarily about economic forward-thinking. Multiple global studies show that diversity benefits businesses, particularly at senior levels. it is positive for profitability, inclusion, belonging, innovation, reputation, and the list continues.

Yet in South Africa, the female workforce lags, with only 15% of executives in the entire executive population of all JSE-listed companies being female. This is despite:

- Women display great ambition to develop themselves: the gender parity index for enrolment by higher education institutions is University (1.5), TVET Colleges (1.4), CET Colleges (2.2), 56.4% of the matrics who wrote the 2023 NSC exams were girls.
- Women want to work: our research shows that 92% of women want to work at all stages of life, and despite the prevailing thinking, most want to work full-time in a hybrid manner that delivers financial reward.
- Women are qualifying at higher rates than men: the majority (52%) of people with post-secondary education are women, and within STEM 47% of African universities' STEM graduates, undergraduates and postgraduates, are women. Female candidates attained 66.4% of the 2023 NSC matric distinctions.

The bottom line is that more women are obtaining qualifications than men, and our data shows that women are ambitious and want to have careers. They are motivated by financial independence, the need to support dependants and self-worth.



To ignore the values and needs of skilled women in the workplace is to do so at one's peril, as demonstrated by 45% of working women currently looking for alternative employment.

These findings will benefit your future talent planning and organisation.

PGeard

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Section 1
Executive Summary

- How to Harness the Potential of Skilled Women for Business Growth in South Africa
- Key Research Findings
- Strategies for Success: Attracting and Retaining Skilled Women
- Conclusion: A Strategic Imperative for Business Growth
- A Note From a Client: Natasha Netha, Employee Experience Director at Onafriq



How to Harness the Potential of Skilled Women for Business Growth in South Africa

Skills shortages, second only to the impact of load-shedding, pose a significant threat to business growth in South Africa. Tapping into the underrepresented skilled female workforce and implementing solutions to attract and retain these women throughout their various life stages offers a compelling business growth solution.

Increased gender equality is leading to a surge of women entering the workforce. As South Africa grapples with a critical skills shortage, especially at the management level, companies can adapt to this demographic shift to ensure sustained growth.

The Challenge: A Skills Shortage and Underutilised Talent Pool

South Africa faces a pressing need for a skilled workforce to drive economic growth. Fortunately, a substantial, underutilised talent pool exists within the country—skilled women. Despite having more women with post-secondary education than men, the women's labour force participation rate lags behind men by 10.6 percentage points. Businesses can tap into the valuable and educated female workforce to bridge the skills gaps.

The Opportunity: Skilled Women Who Want to Work

RecruitMyMom is an award-winning and female-focused recruitment company that has successfully placed skilled women into work since 2012. RecruitMyMom and its clients recognise that women, particularly mothers, bring unique skills and perspectives to the workplace.

Our research indicates that women are ambitious and need to work. Addressing barriers to female career advancement and offering meaningful benefits can unlock the full potential of this skilled labour force.



Key Research Findings

1. Women are educated

66% of respondents have post-education tertiary education.

2. Women are ambitious

78% aspire to grow in their careers across all age categories.

3. Job dissatisfaction is high

45% of women currently working indicate they are looking for another job.

4. Women are financially driven

The ambition for career growth and financial stability drives a desire to work. With 80% having dependants and 37% being sole-income earners, financial reward is essential.

5. Location working preference

59% of respondents prefer hybrid working arrangements, 33% prefer remote working, and 8% prefer solely in-office work. Younger women with dependants have a marginal preference for remote working, and women in townships have a marginal preference for solely in-office working.

6. Working hours preference

55% of women, regardless of age, seek full-time hours. This finding comprises 32% seeking full-time hours and 23% seeking full-time hours with a reduced work week. The remaining 45% of women seek reduced hours per day.

7. Seniority at work increases the desire for flexibility

At an executive level, 59% of women seek flexible hours, including reduced work weeks and reduced hours. In contrast, entry, mid and senior levels are more evenly split between desiring full-time hours and reduced hours.

8. Almost half of skilled women have career pauses

49% have had a career pause ranging from motherhood, mental health, retrenchments and further studies. 95% returned to work after the career pause.



Strategies for Success:
Attracting and Retaining Skilled Women

To harness the value of the underrepresented skilled female workforce, businesses can:

1. Address barriers to career growth: According to women surveyed, the primary barriers include a shortage of internal career opportunities, insufficient mentorship and networking, and issues related to pay discrimination. Addressing these specific challenges, as well as others identified, will help retain women.

2. Offer benefits that resonate: Offer meaningful benefits for women, including competitive salaries, medical aid and flexible working options.

3. Embrace relevant, flexible work arrangements: Provide flexibility within the desired hybrid setting to accommodate women's preferences, especially addressing senior executive level requirements.

4. Future pipeline retention planning: Implement strategies to retain women during child-rearing years to build a robust future managerial pipeline.

5. Embrace career pauses: Recognise that half of women have career pauses. You can ensure a diverse and skilled workforce by retraining and upskilling them rather than overlooking them.

Conclusion:
A Strategic Imperative for Business Growth

In conclusion, businesses prioritising recruiting, retaining, and advancing skilled women can address the pressing skills shortage and position themselves for sustained growth. Recognising and accommodating the unique needs of this workforce is not just a matter of diversity and inclusion; it is a strategic imperative for unlocking the full potential of the South African economy. Embracing skilled women is an ethical and wise business decision for a prosperous future.

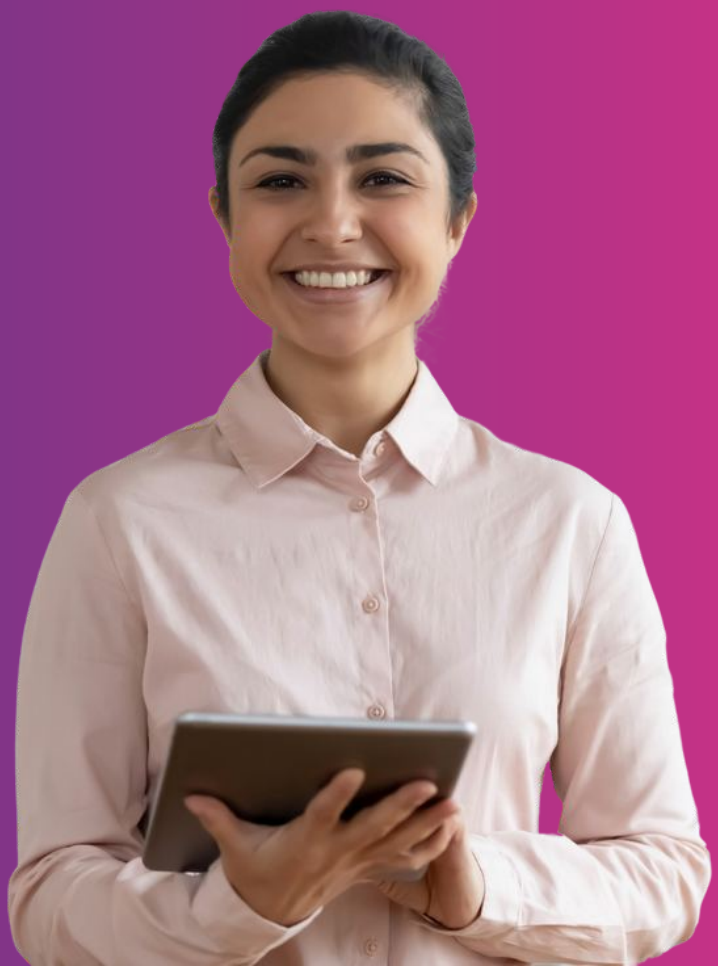
A Note From a Client
Natasha Netha, Employee Experience Director at Onafriq



Having an inclusive workforce, across all parameters be it gender, ethnicity or experience, ensures that various perspectives are voiced, heard and considered. This contributes to more meaningful business solutions for clients, delivering products that address the needs of the communities you serve, a better corporate culture and improved relations with your stakeholders - all of which positively contributes to the bottom line.

Section 2
About This Research

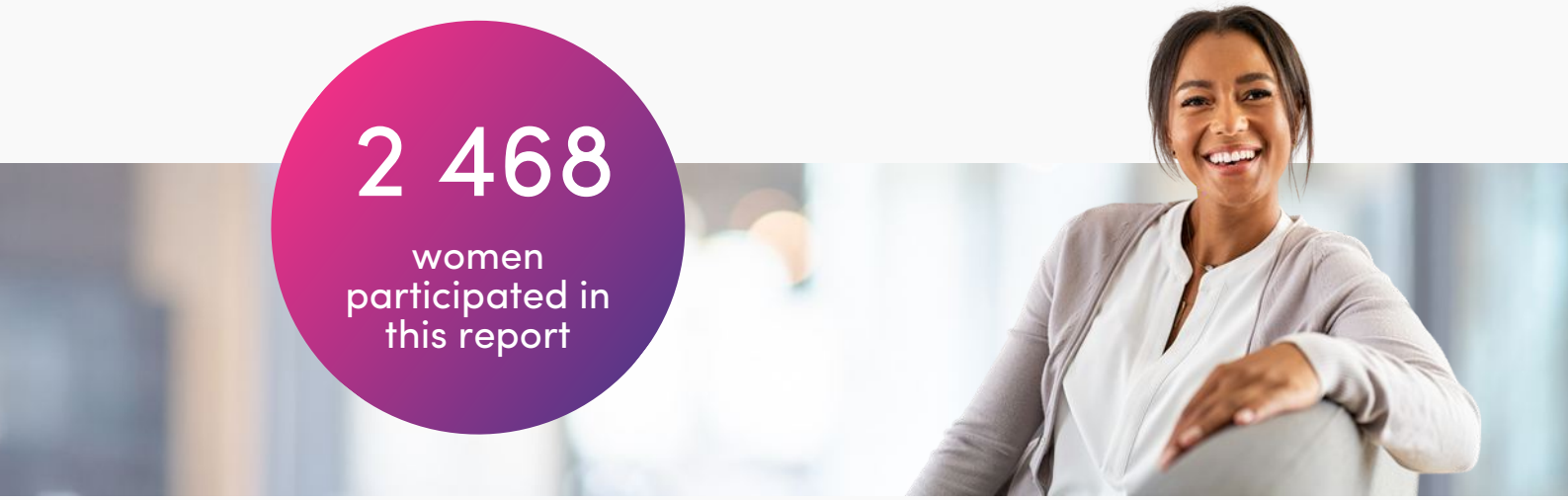
- The Motivation Behind This Research
- Research Methodology
- Race
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- Location
- Industries Represented
- Company Size
- Education
- Seniority at Work



The Motivation Behind This Research

Welcome to the heart behind this report, exemplifying RecruitMyMom's dedication to advancing women in the professional sphere. As an award-winning and recognised female-centric recruitment agency, we aim to effect substantial change in the lives of South African women.

Culminating in late 2023, RecruitMyMom undertook the country's most extensive survey on working women, unearthing unexpected insights that shape the narrative of this report. This report, centred on the business advantages of attracting and retaining female talent, provides strategic insights on achieving this end. Join us as we delve into the rich insights within the female professional landscape.



Research Methodology

2,468 Women completed the research study. The target population was skilled women in South Africa, where skilled was defined as someone who had attained at least a matric or AS level as part of their education. The sample included women aged 18-64, as 65 and above is the conventional retirement age in SA.

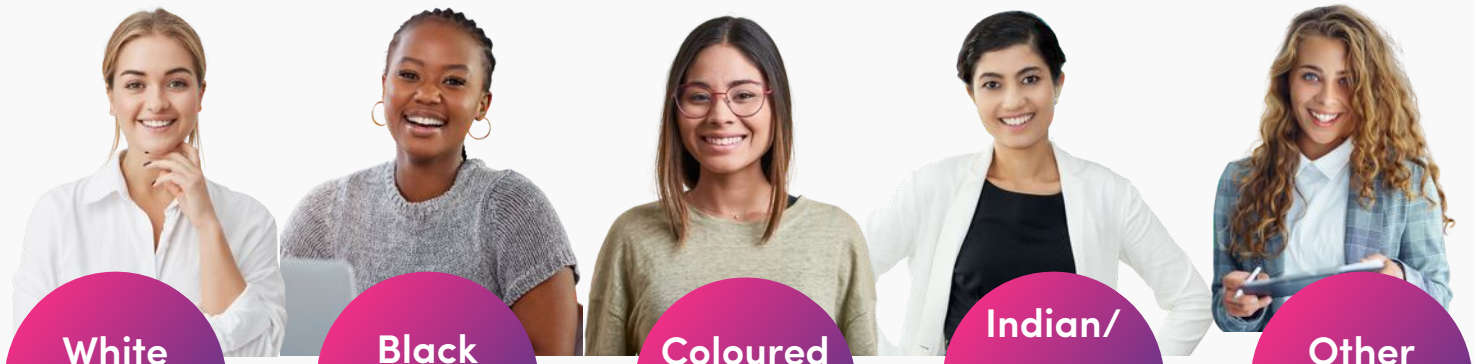
A convenience sampling method was used. Several business owners who target a female audience collaborated and shared the research link with their networks. In addition, it was shared via RecruitMyMom's social media networks, including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram and respondents were requested to complete the research via an email newsletter.

We collected the responses online during November 2023 using a self-administered questionnaire.
A combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions was asked to indicate preference and gain deeper insights into selected topics related to working women.

The research was collected anonymously.

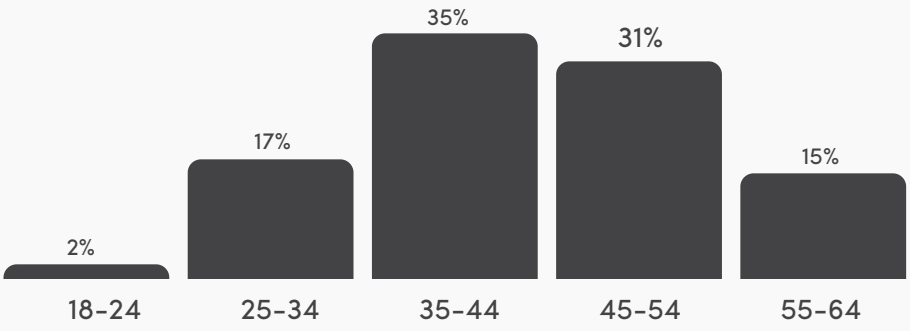
Race

While this report does not fully mirror the demographic distribution of racial groups in South Africa, where the black population constitutes over 80%, it does include all major racial groups in the country. Furthermore, comparing the racial distribution in our survey with the demographic composition of individuals with tertiary education in South Africa (the focus of this research) we further diminish disparities, thereby enhancing the overall representativeness of the report.



Age

Percentage of respondents by age bracket



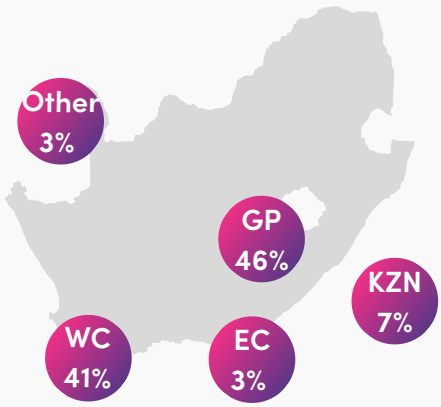
This report excludes women aged 65 and older. Even though many women over 65 years are still economically active, the exclusion of this age group is rooted in the conventional retirement age of 65 in South Africa.

Location

This report covers all the provinces in South Africa, with 94% of women surveyed residing in Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

The provincial data aligns with national employment data, where 58% of employed individuals reside in these three provinces.

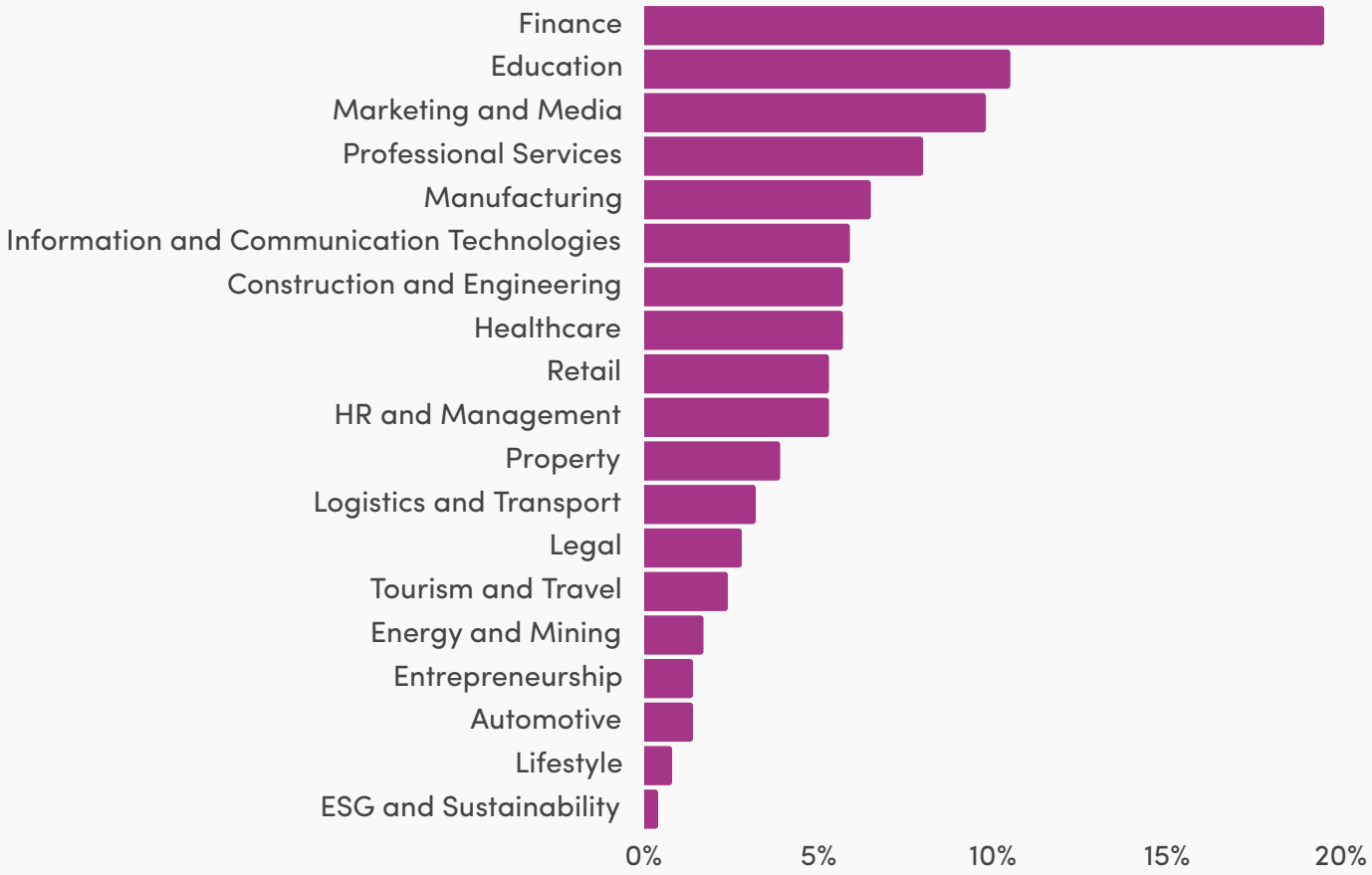
Percentage of respondents by province



Industries Represented

Participants come from diverse industries, rendering the findings of this research relevant to the general workforce.

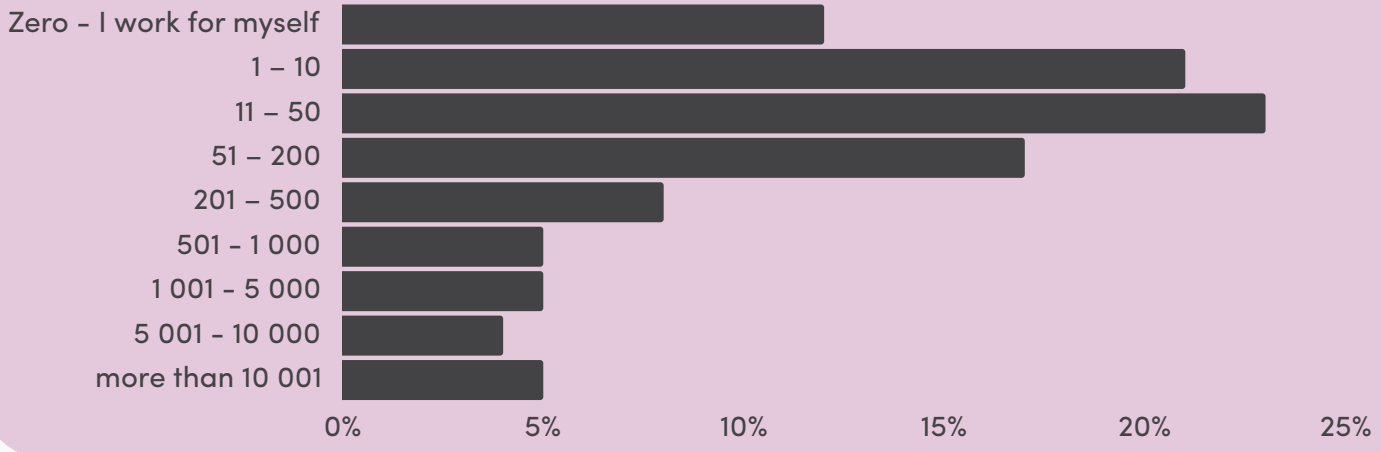
Percentage of respondents by industry



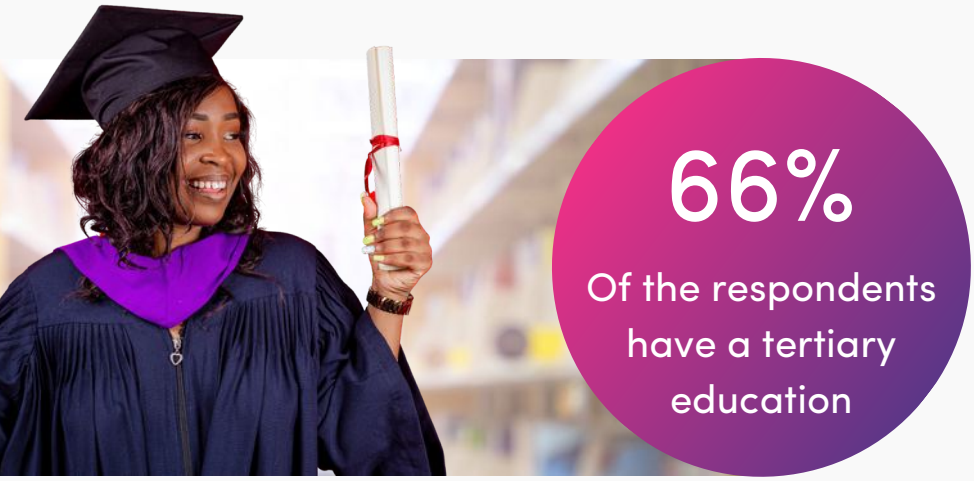
Company Size

While most respondents are employed in SMEs, the notable representation of women in large organisations ensures that the research findings apply to women across companies of all sizes.

Current company size of respondents who are working

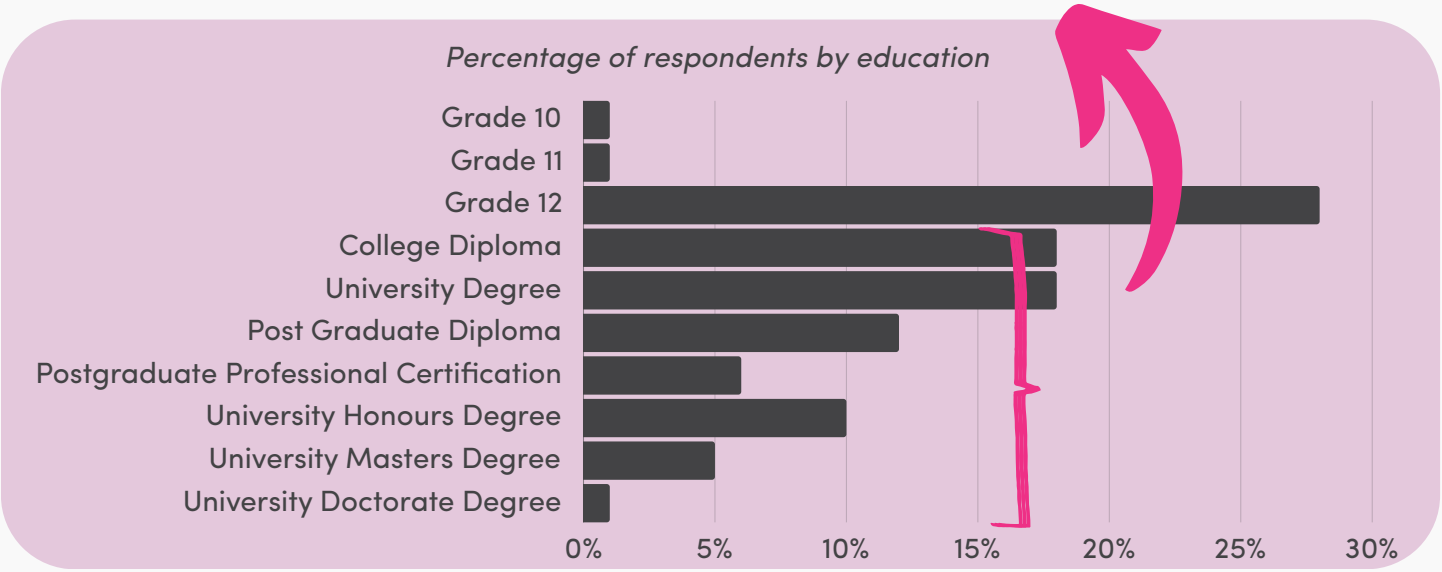


Education



91% of respondents have completed at least Grade 12, and 66% have pursued tertiary education.

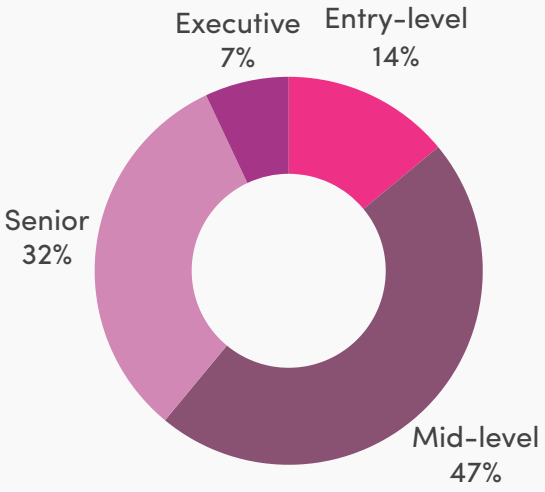
The skilled female workforce in South Africa is the primary focus of this survey.



Seniority at Work

The majority of this sample, 47%, are currently mid to senior level. A significant proportion of the participants occupy senior roles (32%), with executives (7%) and entry-level (14%).





Section 3
Strategic Benefits of Employing Female Talent

- Women are Outpacing Men in Education
- Women are an Underutilised Resource Pool
- Tap Into the Richness of Diversity



Women are Outpacing Men in Education

In South Africa, a notable shift is underway as women outpace men in educational achievements. Presently, 52% of individuals with post-secondary education are women, signalling a significant presence in higher learning. 47% of African universities' STEM graduates across all levels are women. The gender parity index for enrolment by higher education institutions is University (1.5), TVET Colleges (1.4), CET Colleges (2.2), 56.4% of the matrics who wrote the 2023 NSC exams were girls. This data paints a compelling picture of women's growing educational prowess and achievements in South Africa.

Tertiary education attainment by gender in the South African population



More women hold a tertiary education in SA.
Source: StastSA 2022 Census

Portion of 2023 matriculants with distinctions by gender



In the 2023 matric results, girls attained 66.4% of the distinctions.
Source: gov.za

Women are an Underutilised Talent Pool

The current labour force participation rate for women in South Africa is 54.3%, 10.6 percentage points lower than that of men at 64.9%. Over the past decade, there has been a four percentage point increase from 50.3% in Q2:2013 to 54.3% in Q2:2023. Among different age groups, women aged 35-44 exhibit the highest participation rate at 72.7%, but this is still 12 percentage points lower than men in the same age category. Overall, women across all age groups are less likely to be in the labour force than men, with the largest gap in the 45-54 age group at 15.5 percentage points. Source: StatsSA

Tap Into the Richness of Diversity

There are several proven benefits to improving gender diversity in companies. The diversity quotient measures the inclusivity and variety within a workforce, reflecting the richness of perspectives and experiences contributing to organisational success. Reduced staff turnover and increased creativity, innovation and job satisfaction are just a few advantages of embracing diversity as a strategy.

By embracing diversity, an organisation improves its profitability, reputation and ability to attract and retain top female talent

Section 4
Factors Influencing Women's Workforce Participation

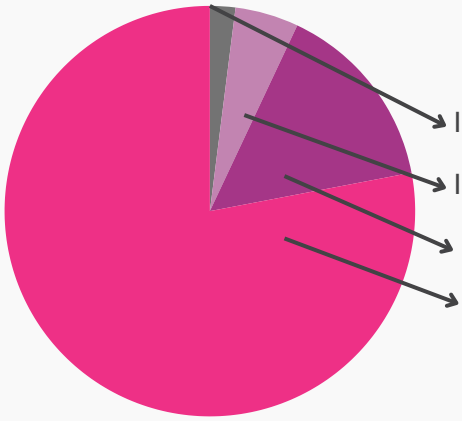
- Women are Ambitious
- Women are Highly Motivated to Work
- Women are Financially Driven



Women are Ambitious

Women want to work and are ambitious in their career growth, with 78% of women saying they want to progress. This goal demonstrates a strong drive and dedication to their careers, benefiting employers who value women in the workplace.





- I no longer want a career, I aspire not to work - 2%
- I want to take a step back in my career - 5%
- I want to remain at this level in my career - 15%
- I aspire to advance in my career - 78%

98% of women want to work

Women are Highly Motivated to Work

Women identified their need for financial income, self-worth, purpose (contribution to society) and social interaction as the primary motivators for working. Financial income is by far the most prominent reason.

"I love working and being self-sufficient in terms of earning a salary, knowing I can take care of myself and my family. I also enjoy the mental stimulation I get from working and the opportunity to gain knowledge."

"Work provides me with a level of purpose apart from being a wife and mother. When working, I am productive, and this creates fulfilment for me."



"I love being part of a team and contributing towards something."

Women are Financially Driven

The overwhelming majority of women cited financial income as their primary or secondary motivation for working. Respondents expressed a desire for financial independence and/or the need to support their family's financial requirements.

Financial Independence

Based on the findings, it is evident that women have varied perceptions of financial independence. For some, it is the freedom to spend their income as they choose; for others, it is the ability to retire comfortably, and for another group, it signifies the ability to meet monthly expenses.

"For financial independence. To be able to just have financial stability. To be able to have a decent place to stay and a decent lifestyle."

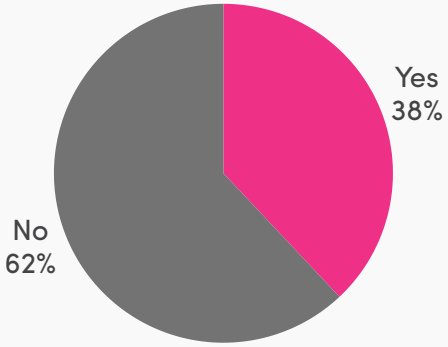


"To develop myself and to have financial independence."

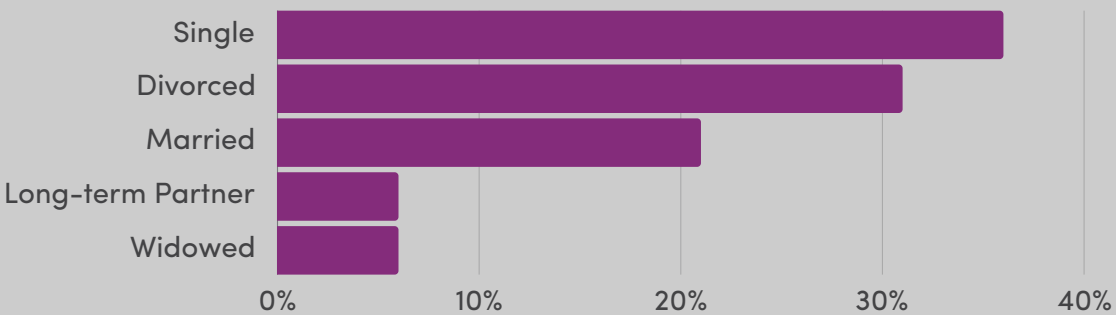
Financial Independence for Sole Income Earners

38% of working women in South Africa are the sole household income earners, making financial independence vital for them and their families. Furthermore, 21% of sole-income earners are married and financially support their spouses/partners.

Percentage of women who are sole income earners in the household

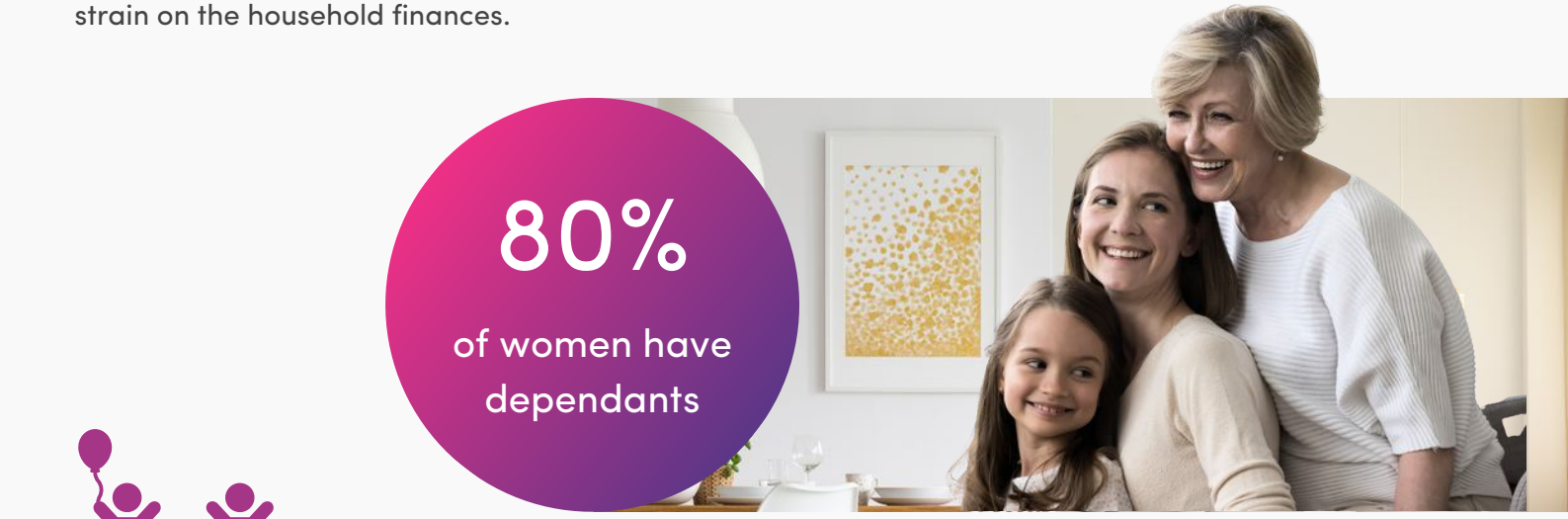


Marital status of sole income earners



Family Support Needs

A substantial number of women cited wanting to work to earn an income to support the household and their families. Considering that 80% of women have dependants, it's crucial to emphasise the significance of earning an income. Notably, 62% of these women with dependents are mothers. Additionally, 28% of women with dependants are responsible for caring for their children and other relatives, adding additional strain on the household finances.



80%

of women have dependants

62%

62% of women with dependants solely have children as dependants.

A considerable segment, comprising 28% of women with dependants, care for both children and other relatives.

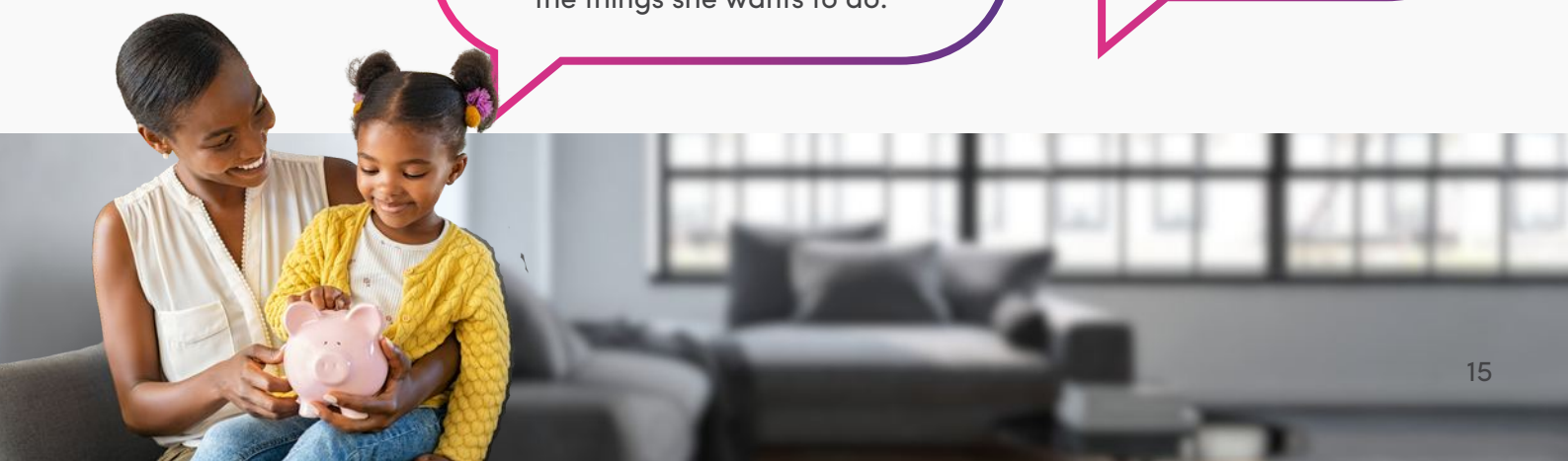
28%

‘Sandwich Generation’

This demographic is "sandwiched" between the responsibilities of caring for both younger and older generations, facing the challenges and demands associated with assisting family members in different life stages.

“I want to work so that I can support my daughter and make sure she can do all the things she wants to do.”

“I need the extra money as we are taking care of family members.”



Section 5
Five Strategic Interventions to Attract and Retain Female Talent

1. Retain Skills by Addressing Barriers to Career Advancement
2. Offer Benefits That Resonate With Women
3. Embrace Relevant, Flexible Arrangements
4. Retain Women Through the Child-Rearing Years to Grow Middle and Senior Talent
5. Give Due Consideration to Those With Career Pauses



1 Retain Skills by Addressing Barriers to Career Advancement

78% of women indicate that they aspire to grow in their careers. This is not tied to a particular age group or life stage. Women have indicated that lack of internal opportunities is their most significant barrier to career advancement. Furthermore, the research reveals that almost 50% of women seek a new job. Knowing that women want to advance in their careers, an effective strategy will be to retain this talent instead. Also, in this section, we look at other barriers to career advancement and how employers can gain by removing these barriers for the women in their organisations.



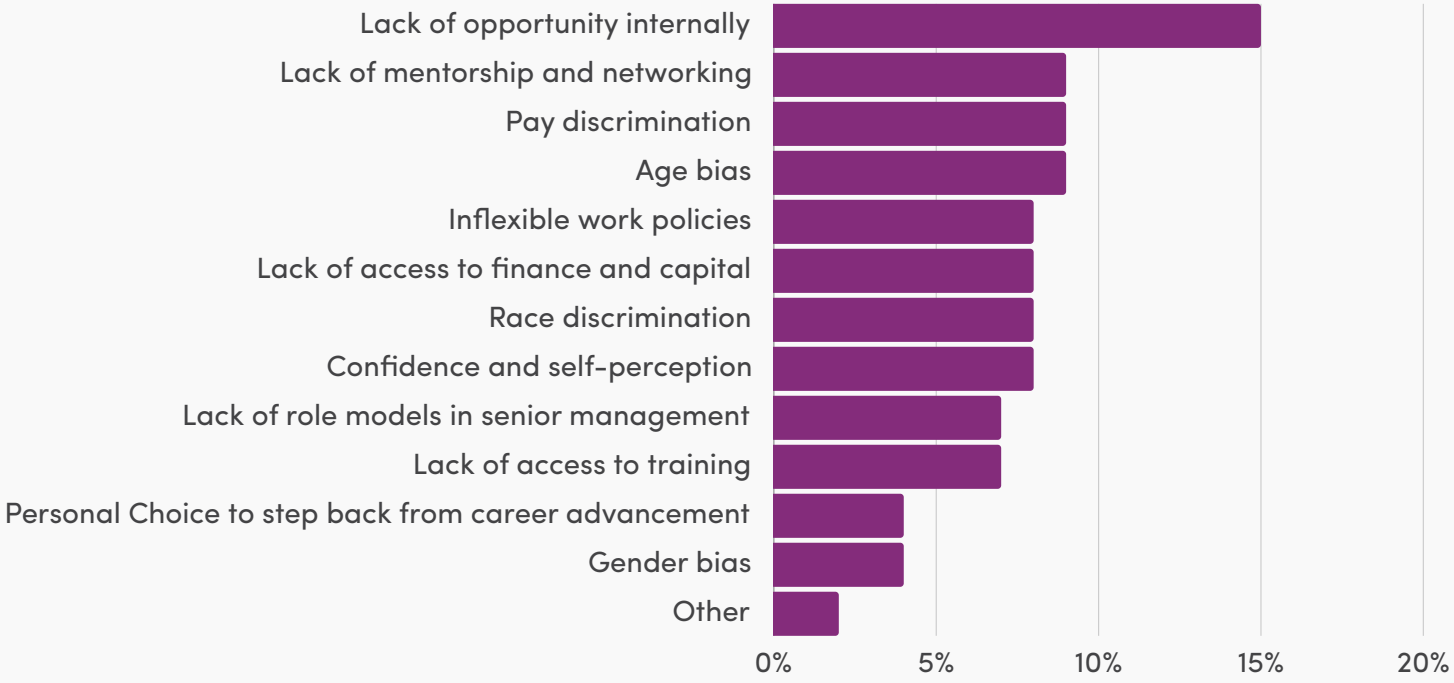
In this section, we explain:

- What Women See as Barriers to Career Advancement
  - Growth Opportunities Don't Have to Mean Upwards
  - Mentorship and Networking Enhance Women's Business Capability
  - Build Trust by Adopting Transparent Pay Structures
  - Embrace Age Diversity in Teams

What Women See as Barriers to Career Advancement

Lack of opportunity internally, lack of mentorship and networking, and pay discrimination stand out as the primary obstacles hindering career advancement. These challenges align with global barriers faced by working women, emphasising the shared struggles experienced by skilled women in South Africa. Notably, it is uplifting that many women do not perceive gender bias as a significant barrier to their career progression.

Perceived barriers to career advancement



Growth Opportunities Don't Have to Mean Upwards

Given women's desire for professional growth and career advancement, identify strategies to improve career development. 45% of women are looking for another job, potentially due to lack of internal growth.



Career advancement doesn't solely entail moving upwards; it involves horizontal expansion in today's dynamic workforce. It is vital for businesses to fairly reward high performers, irrespective of their managerial status, preventing employee dissatisfaction and turnover.

Training, mentorship, and development pave the way for employee growth. Engage in open discussions with skilled staff about their aspirations, and if their goals extend beyond your company, support them in their onward journey.

Mentorship and Networking Enhance Women's Business Capability

Mentoring interventions significantly enhances women's business capabilities, offering valuable knowledge and industry insights. Seasoned mentors act as reliable guides, providing encouragement and advice to help mentees advance professionally. This connection fosters increased self-confidence, leadership skills, and an expanded professional network. Additionally, exposure to successful women at all life stages who have shattered glass ceilings serves as inspiration, showing that neither gender nor motherhood is a barrier to achievement. Beyond inspiration, mentors and role models facilitate solid professional networks, connecting mentees with influential figures, fostering partnerships, and providing valuable career guidance.

Build Trust by Adopting Transparent Pay Structures

Claudia Goldin, the Henry Lee Professor of Economics at Harvard University, announced as the 2023 Nobel Prize winner, finds in her research that motherhood precipitates career interruptions, reductions in hours, and increasing preferences for flexibility that help explain the widening gender gap for female MBAs compared to male MBAs studied.

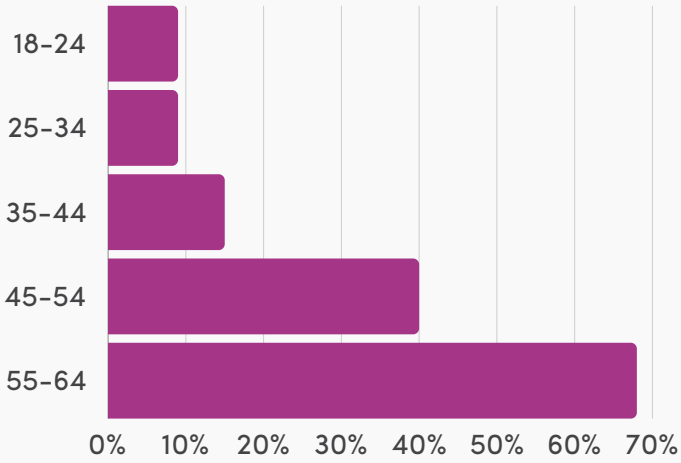
The pay discrimination barrier will be overcome if the company is transparent in how it remunerates its employees. If women perceive they are underpaid vs. men but are not, then it is in the interest of the company to dispel this belief. If pay discrimination is in place, it is again in the interest of the company to correct it.



Embrace Age Diversity in Teams

Ageism can affect both younger and older women. Post the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO has released an ageism report and says, "Ageism often intersects and interacts with other forms of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, including ableism, sexism and racism. Multiple intersecting forms of bias compound disadvantage and make the effects of ageism on individuals' health and well-being even worse." Embracing age diversity in a business is excellent for diverse thinking, training and development and innovative problem-solving.

Age bias as a career barrier. Source: WHO



Ageism is seen as a barrier to career growth across all age groups (18-64) in this research, particularly over 45 years. Given that people live longer and many women find themselves with empty nests nearing their fifties, this is a new season of renewed focus on building a career and not slowing down. These over 45's bring both maturity and experience to the labour force.

Due to the historical context of South Africa, we see that race discrimination is still a significant barrier to career growth. The research indicates that race discrimination is a barrier perceived by all the race groups in South Africa.

2 Offer Benefits That Resonate With Women

When women apply for jobs, the primary factor they consider is the salary, which supports financial independence being one of the main factors influencing women's participation in the workforce (see the discussion on page 14). That being said, money is not the only deciding factor. Offering benefits that resonate with women is guaranteed to attract women to an organisation and retain valued talent through the different stages of life.



In this section:

- The Role That Salary Plays in Attracting and Retaining Female Talent
- The Advantages That Flexibility Can Have for Companies
- Top Benefits Women Want
- Benefits That Hold Less Significance for Women
- A Note From Kirk Kruger - Executive Consultant at BluePoint Reward Consulting

The Role That Salary Plays in Attracting and Retaining Female Talent

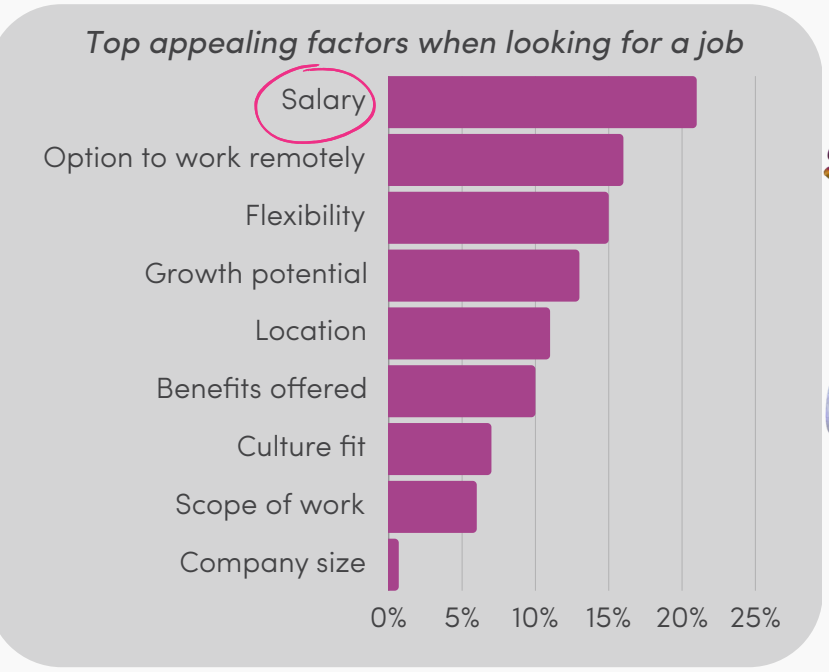
Attract:

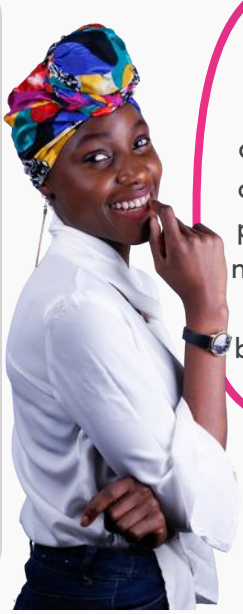
Advertising a competitive salary is a perfect way to attract top-calibre women to a job. Candidates are looking for job security, and offering the right salary is an excellent way to reduce their risk of moving jobs.

Retain:

Boost retention by conducting a salary review for your talented female staff. Aligning women's compensation with industry standards shows commitment to fair pay and reduces the likelihood of them seeking other opportunities. Investing in their well-deserved remuneration reinforces their value, fostering a motivated and dedicated workforce for long-term success.

21% of women in the workforce are actively seeking new employment opportunities, with a primary focus on competitive salary offerings





"To be a present mom when my child is sick as opposed to taking a full day off work because the child is sick. Being able to plan my day according to my most productive hours, being able to balance being a single mom and a career woman."

The Advantages That Flexibility Can Have for Companies

Flexibility and the ability to work remotely are ranked as the second and third most desirable aspects of a job. This is not new news.

On the other hand employers can misunderstand the concept of flexibility. There is a whole array of types of flexibility, from micro-flexibility that gives women the freedom to 'run the odd errand' to fully remote with flexible hours, and a myriad of options in between.

Empowering women to negotiate the type of flexibility that benefits both employers and employees holds significant potential for retaining high-calibre female talent.

Top Benefits Women Want

When asked to rank expected benefits in order of importance, four clearly stood out as more important than others. The key benefits women prioritise include:

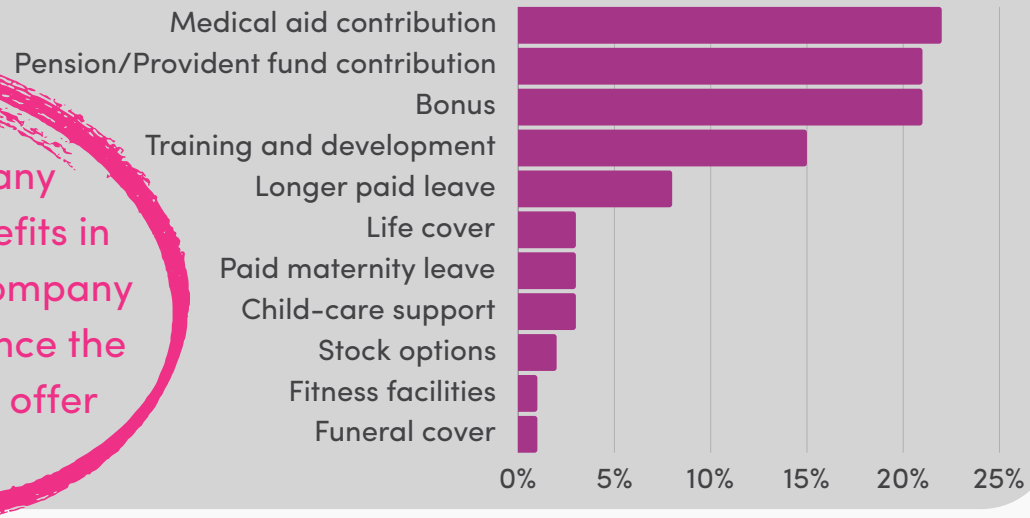
#1 Medical aid contribution

#2 Pension/Provident fund contribution

#3 Bonus

#4 Training and development

Top benefits when looking for a job



Incorporating any or all of these benefits in the total cost-to-company package will enhance the appeal of the job offer

Benefits That Hold Less Significance for Women

Anti-perks are benefits that will not make a notable difference in the decision-making process when women evaluate job opportunities.

Surprisingly, this includes paid maternity leave, with only 3% of women noting it as the most crucial benefit. Other anti-perks this study uncovered are:

- child-care support (3%)
- stock options (2%)
- fitness facilities (1%)
- funeral cover (1%).

Offering these as part of the compensation package will not significantly impact attracting top-calibre female staff.

Paid maternity leave is an anti-perk

A Note From Kirk Kruger
Executive Consultant at BluePoint Reward Consulting

Over the past three decades, businesses have increasingly adopted a Total Reward approach to attract, engage, and retain the talent needed for business success. The Total Reward approach recognises that a competitive salary is not the only way for a company to ensure that they have the right people in the organisation. Leading companies have adopted a more holistic and integrated approach to pay and benefits to help them win the war for talent.

The main pillars of Total Reward are:

- Guaranteed Pay - a market-aligned salary.
- Variable Pay - annual short-term incentive and long-term equity participation.
- Benefits – non-monetary benefits such as medical aid, retirement funding, and study bursaries for employees and their children.
- Work-Life Effectiveness – employee assistance programmes, a flexible work environment along with flexible hours, and a competitive range of leave options.
- Recognition – recognising employees "in the moment" through cash and non-cash awards.
- Talent Development – providing effective development programmes for employees to grow and to create a talent pipeline for the company.

The first edition of RecruitMyMom's Working Women's Report is a valuable reflection on how the Total Reward approach is experienced by female professionals in South Africa. The findings provide executives with up-to-date insights into what matters to female employees in their companies.

Understandably, the majority of women cited financial income as their primary or secondary motivation for working. This is magnified in the South African context, where many females are responsible for supporting children, a partner, and extended family. The drive towards greater pay equity and the need for listed companies to publish metrics related to pay equity makes it even more important for companies to ensure that guaranteed pay is aligned to market benchmarks and does not unfairly discriminate between male and female colleagues.

In addition to the need for fair and responsible pay for females, the report also highlights that 78% of women indicated that they aspire to grow in their careers. This again highlights that no single part of the Total Reward approach will address the full spectrum of needs expressed by female employees. In addition to competitive and equitable remuneration, companies should have a clear plan on how they will recruit, develop, and promote female talent. It is important to not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Line Managers and HR leaders should focus on development plans that are specific to each employee.



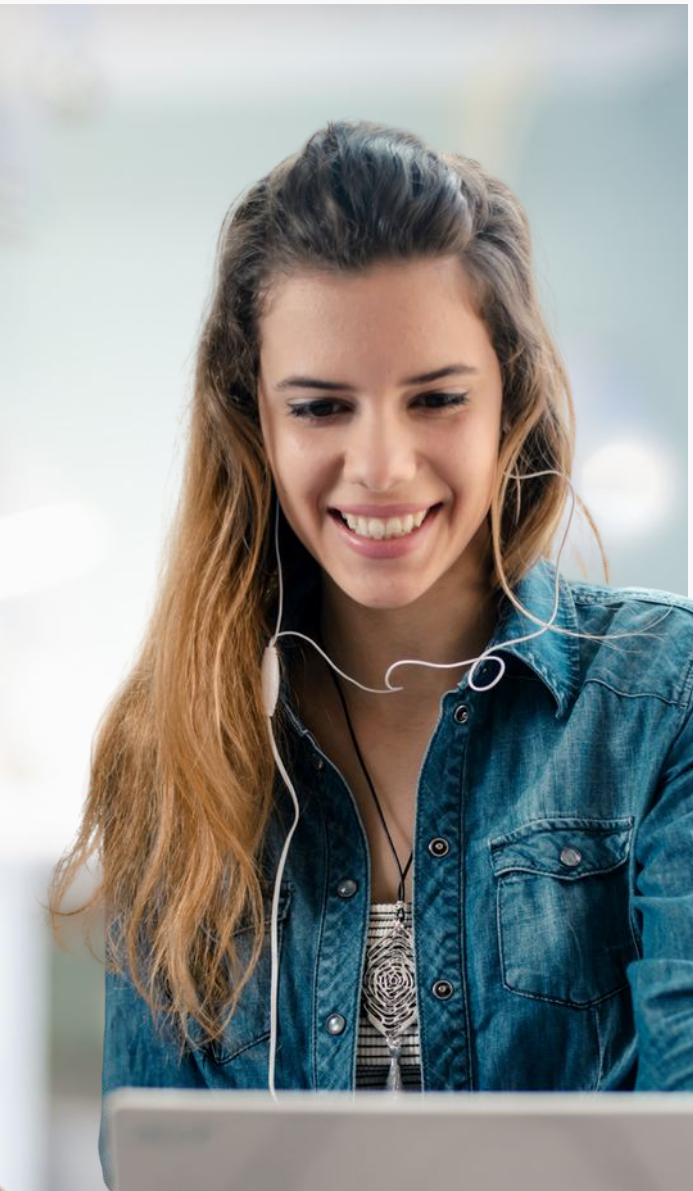
Another key finding from the report is that flexibility and the ability to work remotely are ranked as the second and third most desirable aspects of a job. COVID-19 showed companies that work hours and workplace can be fluid, without necessarily denting productivity. Unfortunately, many companies have since returned to a more traditional definition of workplace and work hours.

The report has shown that companies not giving serious thought to hybrid work and flexible work hours are doing so at the risk of ignoring what high-calibre female talent sees as very important.

3 Embrace Relevant, Flexible Arrangements

Attracting and retaining top-tier talent is a goal shared by every forward-thinking company. Embracing flexible work arrangements positions you as a progressive and inclusive employer, making your company inherently more appealing to skilled professionals, especially women. The talent pool is rich with exceptional female professionals, and by offering flexibility, you send a powerful message that you understand and respect the diverse needs and aspirations of your workforce.

An essential consideration is that 80% of women have dependants. By embracing flexible work arrangements (in whatever form works for your company), you align with the realities of modern life, acknowledging the responsibilities and priorities that your team members balance. This alignment fosters a supportive and inclusive workplace culture and directly contributes to increased loyalty, productivity, and overall job satisfaction among valuable employees.



In this section, we look at :

- Women's Preferred Workplace Locations
- Broaden the Talent Pool With Remote Working
  - Women’s Preferred Workplace Locations by Province
  - Women’s Preferred Workplace Locations by Dwelling Type
- Women’s Preferred Working Hours
  - Marital Status and Preferred Working Hours
  - Age – Varying Needs Through Life Stages
  - Seniority at Work – At Executive Level, More Women Prefer Flexibility
- A Note From the Director of 4-Day Workweek SA, Karen Lowe

Work Location Preferences

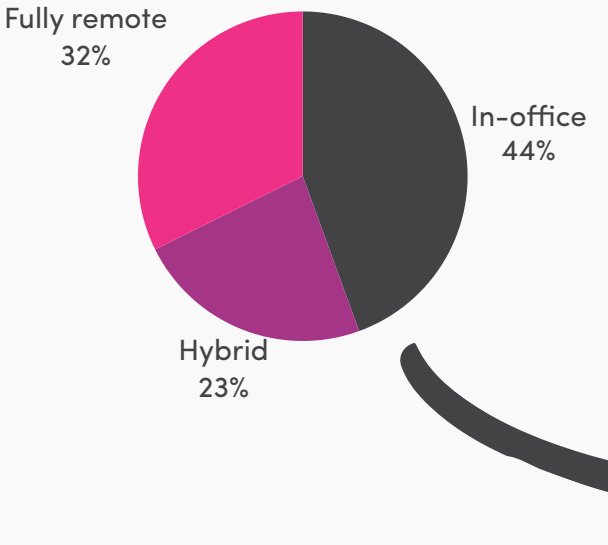
Champion success by aligning with the preferences of the female workforce. Data shows that only 8% of women prefer to return to the office. Proactively adopt remote or hybrid work policies to attract and retain topcalibre female talent. Embracing flexibility positions you as a progressive and inclusive employer.

92%

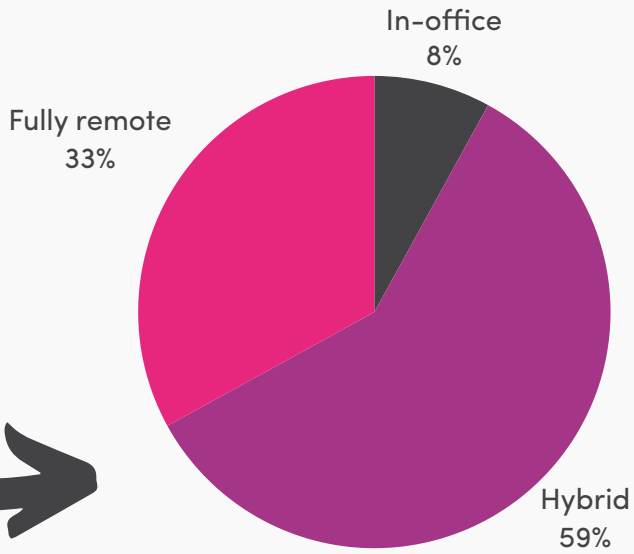
of women want flexibility where they work



How women currently work

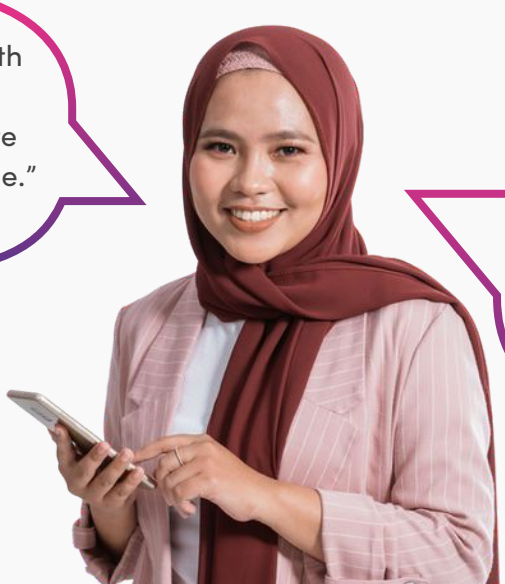


How women want to work



59% of women prefer hybrid working, 33% prefer remote working

"Time to get on with the job with less interruptions. More relaxed feel at home."



"For me, the advantages of remote work give a more balanced work/home life and a more relaxed demeanour instead of rushing to and from work to get things done."

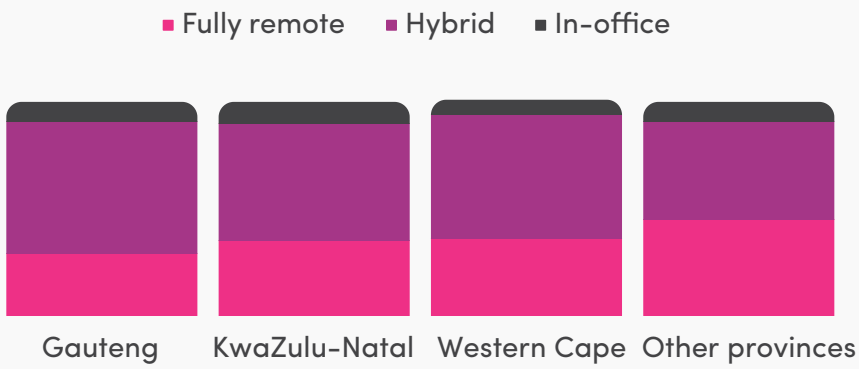
Broaden the Talent Pool With Remote Working

Women's Preferred Workplace Locations by Province

Businesses can tap into a wider talent pool by offering fully remote work opportunities and enabling skilled women from various regions and remote towns in South Africa to apply for work.

Employers can offer remote working to expand the talent pool outside of the leading business centres in South Africa and attract skilled talent.

Preference of where to work according to province



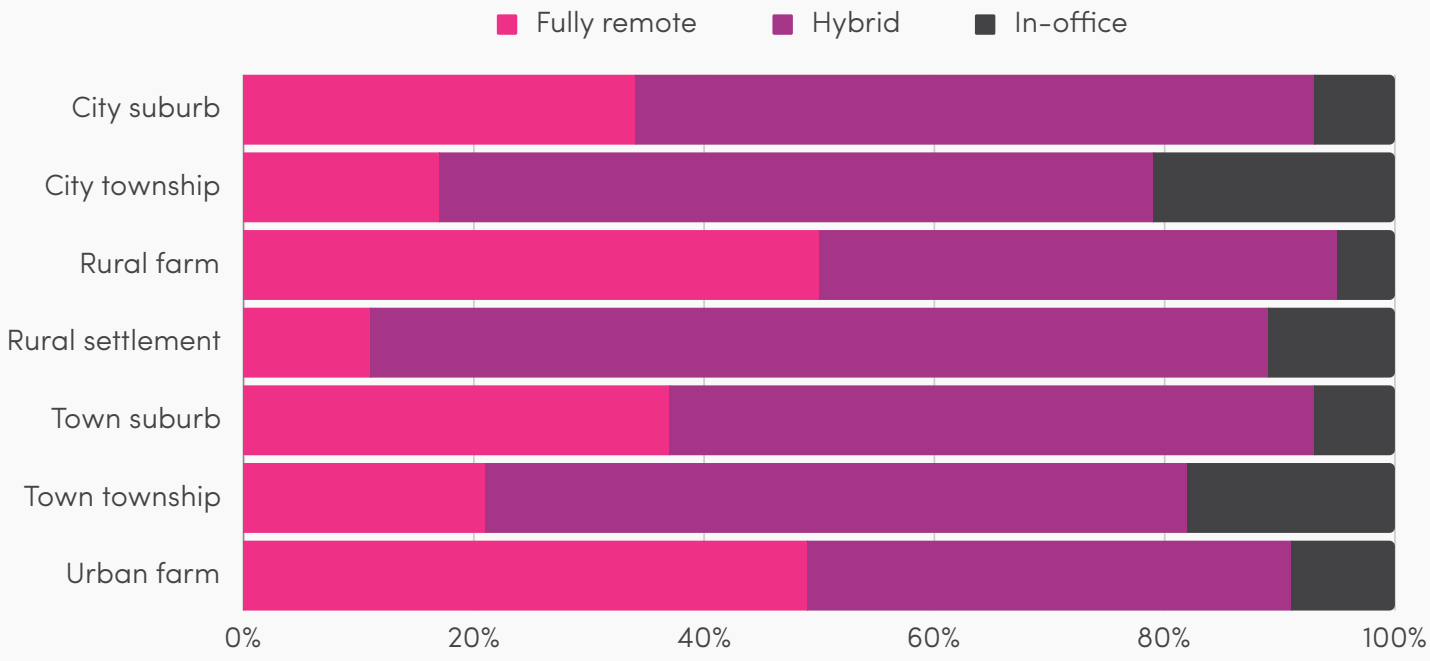
Women in Gauteng are less interested in remote work than the rest of the country.

Other provinces desire to work fully remotely more than Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape.

Women's Preferred Workplace Locations by Dwelling Type

Women residing in townships are more inclined to want to work in the office than other dwelling types. However, more township dwellers still prefer hybrid working. As expected, women on rural and urban farms prefer fully remote work arrangements.

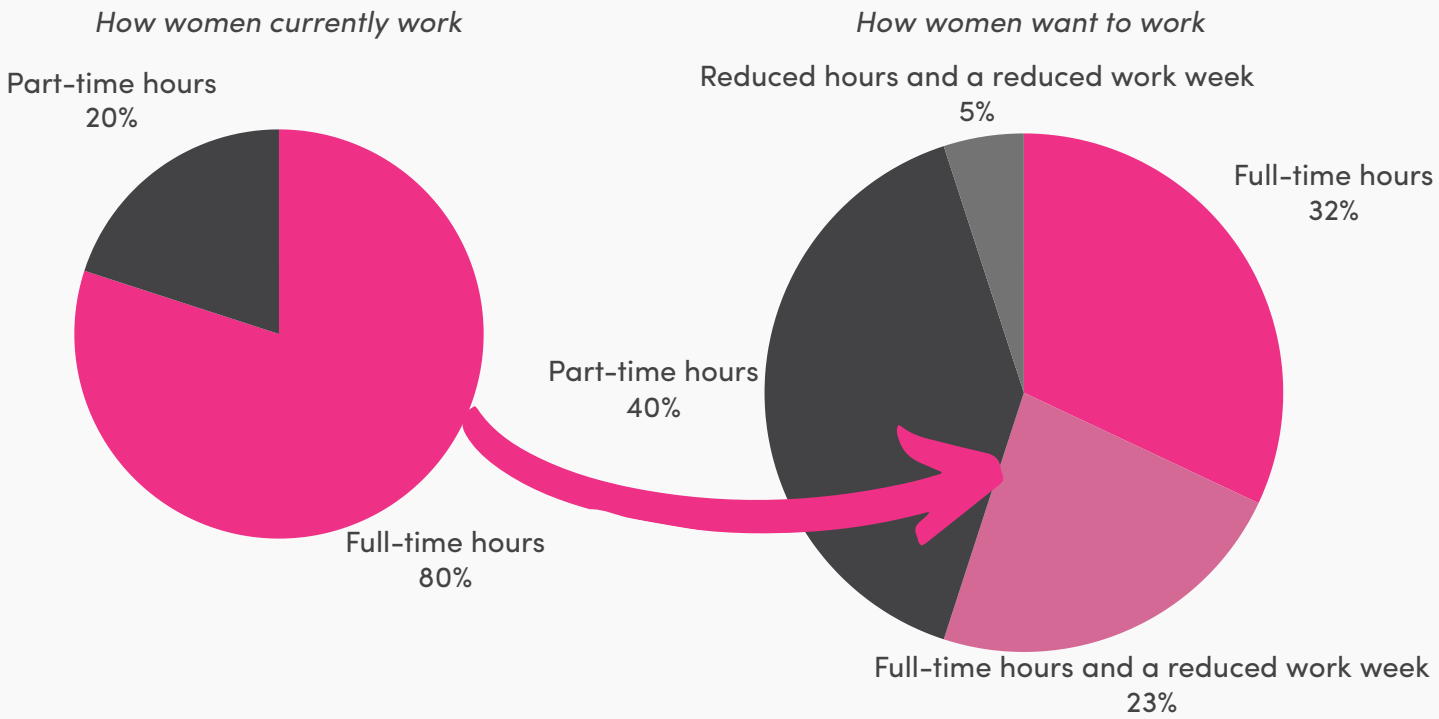
Women's preferred workplace locations by dwelling type



Preferred Working Hours

An interesting finding is that more than half, 55% of women, prefer to work full-time hours, with 23% preferring full-time hours and a reduced work week. A significant portion of women, 40%, prefer working part-time. These findings indicate that the 4-Day Workweek movement is gaining popularity in SA.

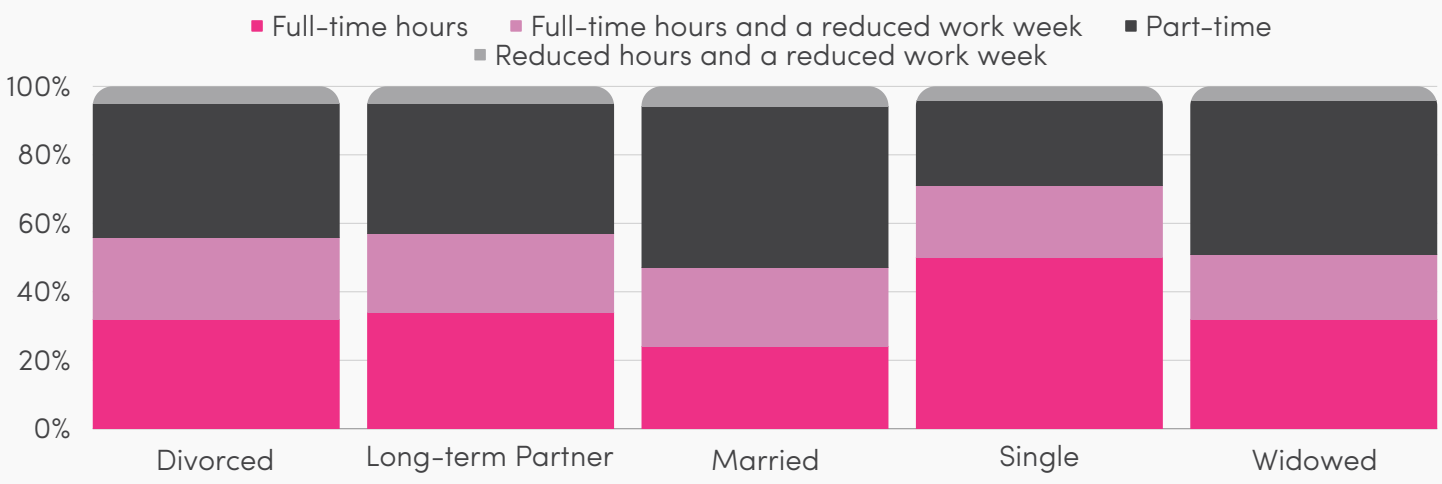
To further understand the preferred working hours among women, this report examines the impact of marital status, age and seniority at work.



Marital Status and Preferred Working Hours

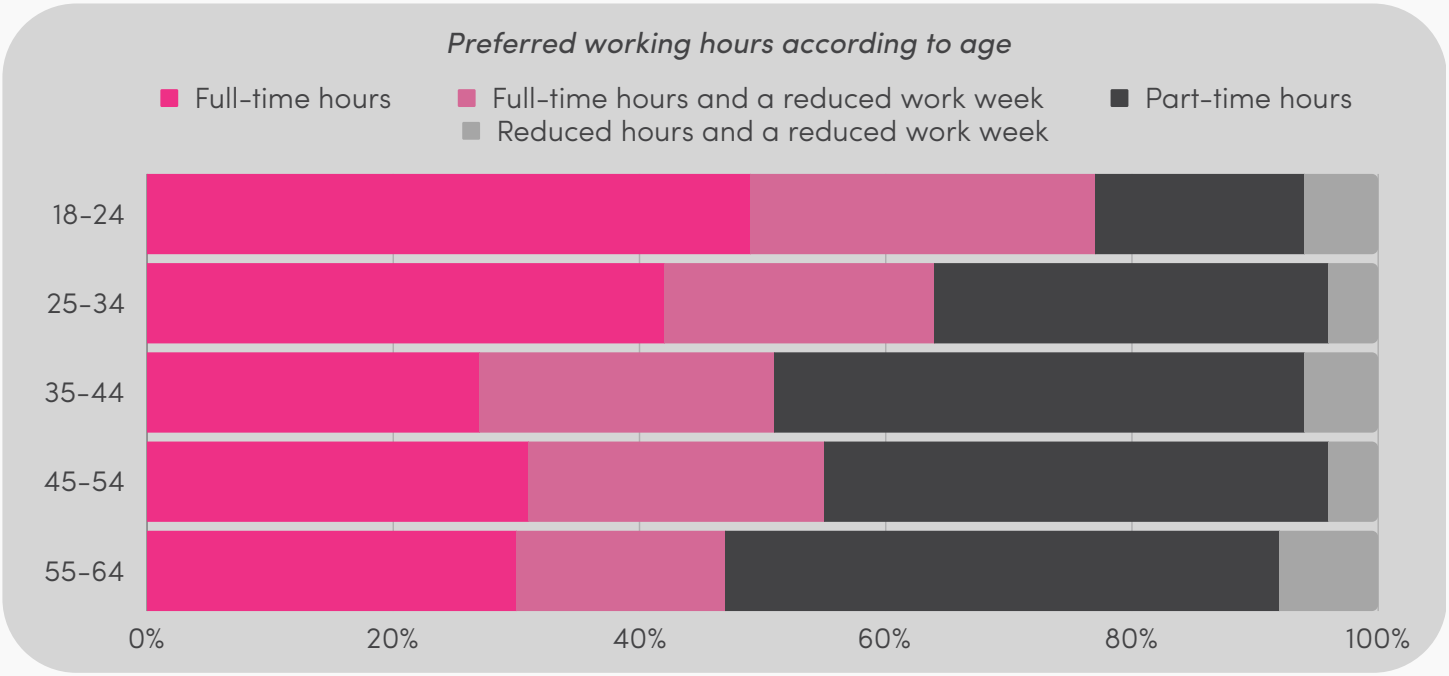
71% of single women prefer full-time work, and considering that 20% of the respondents are single, this enlightens us on why the need for full-time work is higher than expected. 47% of married women and 45% of widowed women prefer part-time hours.

Preferred working hours by marital status.



Age – Varying Needs Through Life Stages

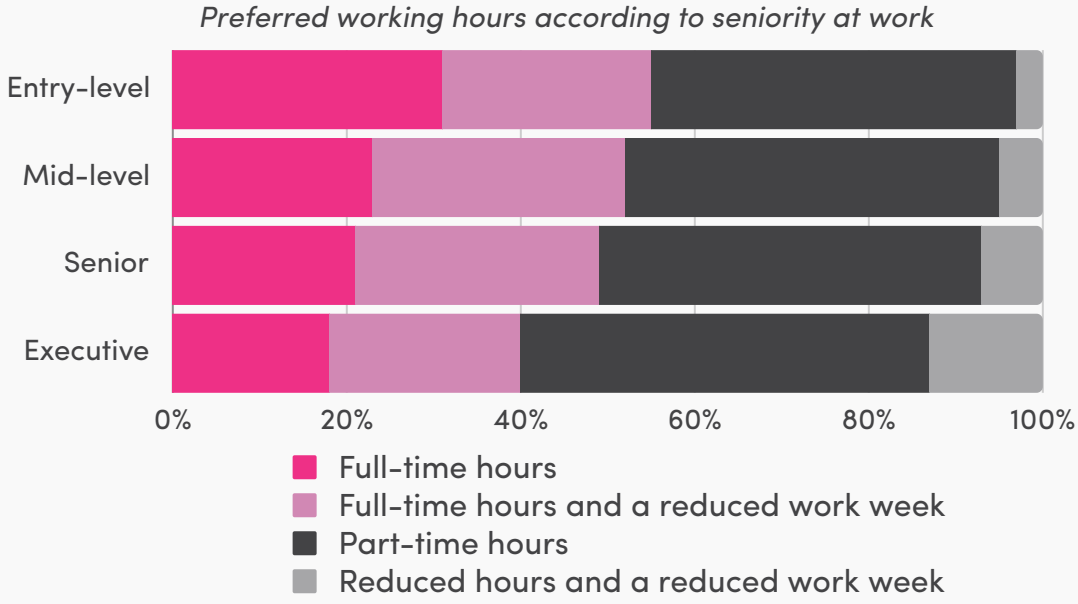
Irrespective of age, women express a preference for working full-time hours. This makes sense, given the financial drive and desire for career growth among women. Younger women exhibit a greater preference for working full-time hours, with 77% of those aged 18-24, 64% aged 25-34, and 55% aged 45-55.



Seniority at Work – At Executive Level, More Women Prefer Flexibility

The more senior the role, the more women value flexibility with 60% wanting part-time hours or reduced hours and a reduced week. When attracting and retaining senior women in the organisation, integrate flexible work arrangements. To enhance retention strategies for senior and executive staff, consider offering reduced hours or a shortened work week. This approach aligns with the evolving needs and preferences of skilled women in the workforce.





A Note From the Director of 4-Day Workweek SA, Karen Lowe

The first edition of RecruitMyMom's Working Women's Report is an insightful read and provides business owners and HR executives with valuable insights into how to attract and retain female talent.

One of the key findings, that is particularly noteworthy, is that more senior working women are expressing a strong preference for reduced working hours as a key benefit.

There are several global studies and trends that suggest a broader appeal for reduced working hours and flexible arrangements amongst professionals, including senior women. The global shift towards flexible work, with many employees expressing a desire for continued flexible work arrangements, is a sentiment that is likely to resonate strongly with senior women seeking a better work-life balance and greater control over their schedules.

Senior working women must often juggle demanding professional and personal responsibilities, and the appeal of a reduced work week lies in its potential to offer them the flexibility needed to excel in both domains. There is mounting evidence to suggest that business owners should not underestimate the importance of flexible work arrangements in retaining and promoting women, particularly those in senior leadership roles.

The first 4-Day Workweek Pilot in South Africa clearly demonstrated the positive impact a 4-day work week had on employee well-being and overall job satisfaction. In my experience, this trend is not isolated to South Africa; globally, there's a growing recognition of the appeal of reduced hours and flexible work arrangements for attracting and retaining top and senior female talent.

Embracing these progressive workplace policies fosters a healthier work-life balance and positions companies as leaders in creating inclusive environments. I encourage all business owners to consider how these insights might positively impact a shift in workplace practices that resonate with the evolving needs and aspirations of women in leadership positions, contributing to a more dynamic and equitable professional landscape.



4 Retain Women Through the Child-Rearing Years to Grow Middle and Senior Talent

In this section, we look at the needs of working mothers. 89% of women with tertiary education are mothers. Companies in South Africa risk losing out on the valuable contributions these educated and skilled mothers bring to the workplace unless their needs are respected.

When women pause their careers to have children, businesses lose over one-fifth of their female talent. This pause indicates a significant loss of talent and a brief stop in career advancement for women, unless flexible work arrangements can retain the talent.



In this section, we look at:

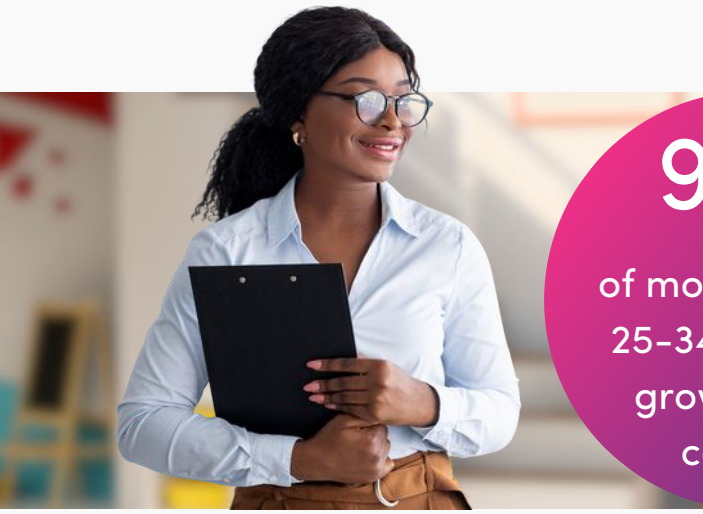
- Understanding Why Women Take a Career Pause
- Disprove Assumptions About What Mothers Desire

Assumption: All Mothers Want Remote Work

Assumption: All Mothers Want to Work Part-time

- What Makes a Job Appealing for Mothers Aged 25–34
- Fostering Career Growth for Mothers: Enhancing Diversity in Senior Staff

Understanding Why Women Take a Career Pause



92%

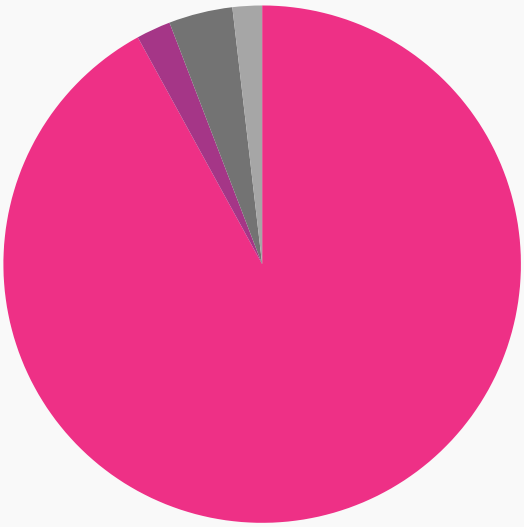
of mothers aged 25-34 aspire to grow in their careers

21% of women took a pause to raise children. Many women chose to spend some time at home with the goal of returning to their careers, while others felt forced to take a break because their careers did not allow for flexible work arrangements.

Naturally, having a child causes one's priorities to change, with a greater focus on family life. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that 92% of young mothers have ambitions for professional advancement, indicating their dedication to career advancement in addition to their parental duties.

Employers stand to gain a great deal from helping to keep these skilled mothers employed.

Career aspirations of mothers age 25-34



"Having children and choosing to stay at home to raise them."



"I fell pregnant with my first child and didn't go back to work because I had no flexibility, so I left my job."

Disprove Assumptions About What Mothers Desire

Mothers need flexibility to integrate their work life and home life. But what does this flexibility mean? It is widely believed that mothers choose part-time work until their children are older or that they would rather work from home so they can spend more time with their family. Surprisingly, this study shows that both presumptions are false. Let us explore more deeply the real preferences of mothers for where and how they work.

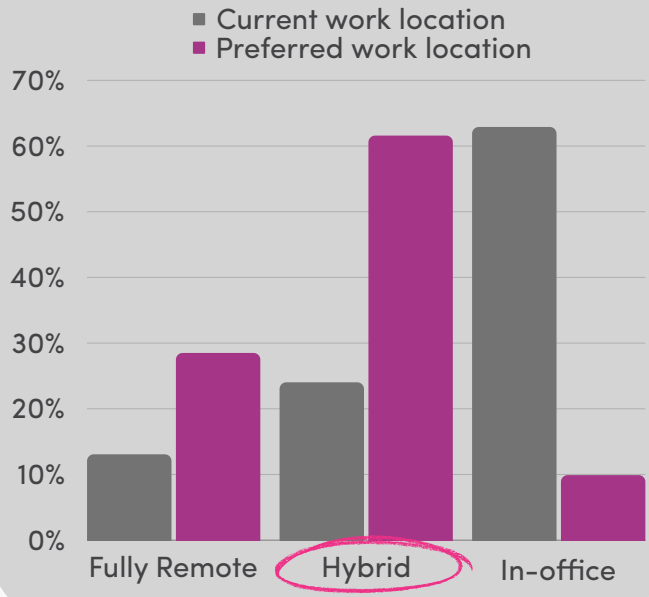
Assumption: Mothers Want Remote Work

Mothers tend to prefer working remotely over working in an office. Still, more than 60% say they would instead have a hybrid working model which combines in-office and remote working. Discuss the needs and preferences with your female employees in order to better understand them rather than assuming anything.

60%

would rather work in a hybrid model

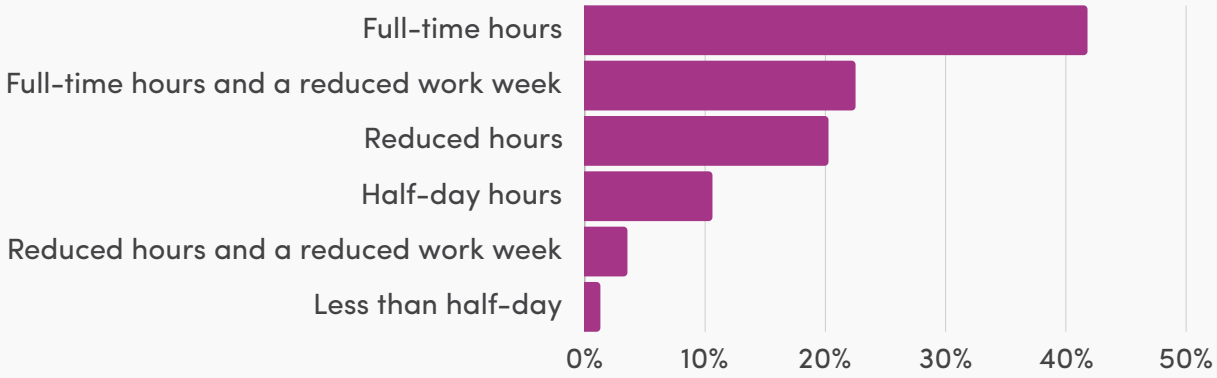
Work location for mothers between the ages of 25-34



Assumption: All Mothers Want to Work Part-time

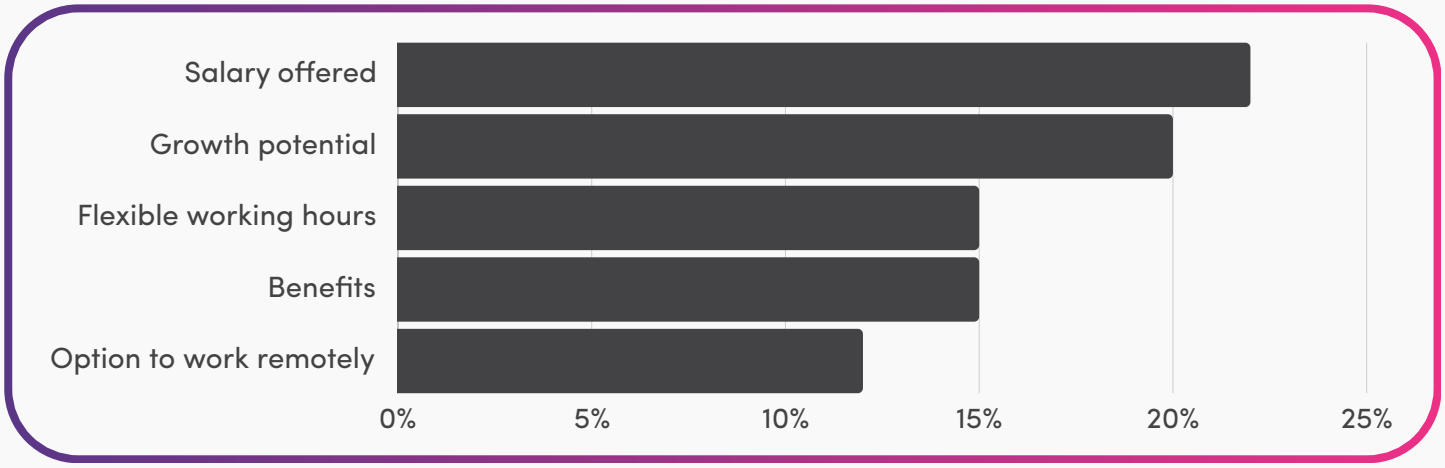
42% of mothers want full-time hours, compared to the 11% of women who want to work half-day. The reduced work week trend is the second most desirable work arrangement, with 23% of women opting for full-time with a reduced work week. This indicates that the 4-Day Workweek concept is desirable to women.

Preferred working hours for mothers between the ages of 25-34



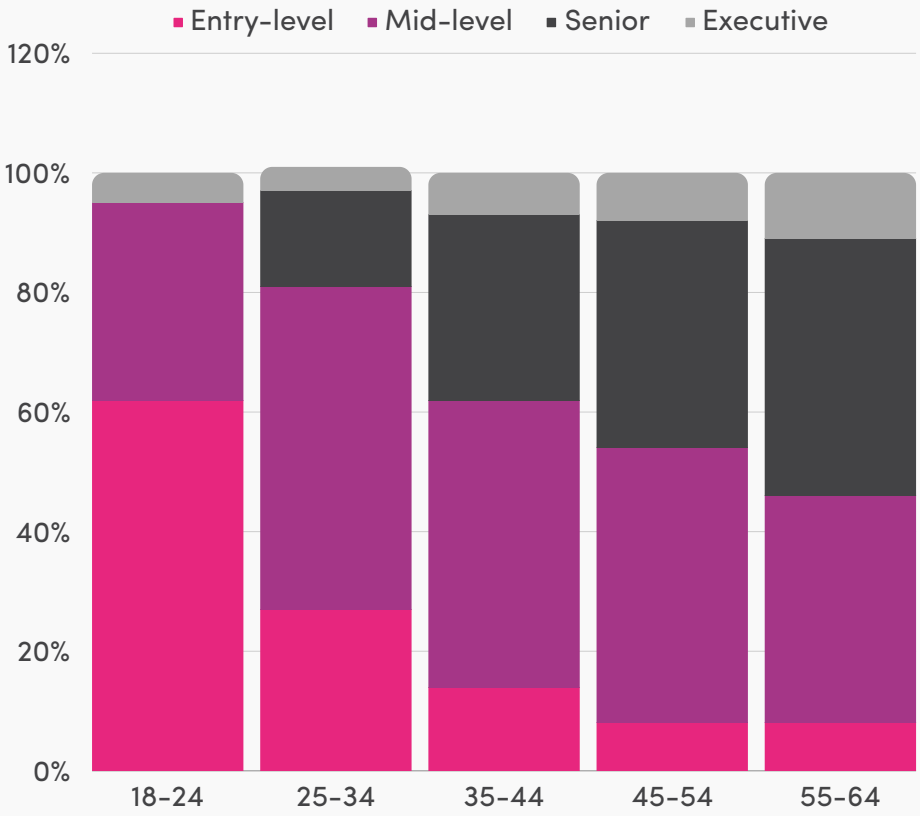
What Makes a Job Appealing for Mothers Aged 25–34

As previously mentioned, over 90% of mothers want to advance in their careers. This is in line with their preferences when assessing the appeal of a job, where salary is still the most important factor (22%), which supports the results of the study for women as a whole. Interestingly, growth potential is the second most enticing benefit for mothers, coming in at 20%.



Fostering Career Growth for Mothers: Enhancing Diversity in Senior Staff

McKinsey identifies a key obstacle known as the 'broken rung,' wherein women often miss the crucial initial step to a managerial role. This problem is especially difficult for women during the child-rearing years, when they are transitioning the move from entry- and mid-level to senior roles.



More than 80% of mothers between the ages of 25 and 34 are currently employed in entry- and mid-level positions; this group could one day provide a talent pool for executive and senior roles in your company.

Maintaining this group of women becomes essential to your organisation's growth.

In South Africa, a noticeable gender disparity persists in senior management roles, with women comprising only 32% of managerial positions across the labour force in 2021.

A Note From Prof. Mark Smith
Dean of Programs emlyon business school
Former Director Stellenbosch Business School

The report from RecruitMyMom shows both the enormous contribution but also the enormous potential of women in the workforce for South Africa. Yet it also shows the double burden that women face as mothers and carers as they take on the lion's share of unpaid care work that supports our society.

A fairer distribution of this unpaid work between women and men is a key part of the solution. However, the rollout of innovative, flexible working arrangements has the potential to provide women, and indeed men, with the capacity to build careers and families – both essential for the economy and society. And, as the report shows, an active and fulfilling role in the economy is what most of the women in the survey aspire to.

Traditional perspectives on working women have seen them as second earners primarily caring for their family and not necessarily seeking a career. What this report shows is that most women do have dependants, and many are also sole earners for their household. This finding further underlines that flexible working is essential to both supporting the working women in the economy as well as freeing up the untapped capacity of those women facing barriers to enter work. Such innovations include the scheduling, duration, and location of work.

The 4-day week, teleworking and flexible scheduling are all good examples of such innovations. These initiatives have benefits for employers and their organisations in terms of better talent retention, reduced turnover and greater loyalty and they can benefit both women and men – a potential route to a more equal sharing of unpaid care in the home, strong families and a stronger society.



5 Give Due Consideration to Those With Career Pauses

A pause or gap on a CV is often an alarm bell for employers. A pause may indicate health issues or a lack of professional continuity and reliability, or an employer may be concerned that a candidate has skill decay in rapidly evolving industries or that knowledge may need to be updated.

Probing questions and thorough background checks will reveal more about the reason for a career pause. This research finds that 49% of women have taken a career break.

Overlooking this substantial demographic due to career pauses represents a missed opportunity for businesses seeking to tap into the complete spectrum of talent. Training, returnships, and on-the-job development are ways to get female talent work-ready rapidly after a break.

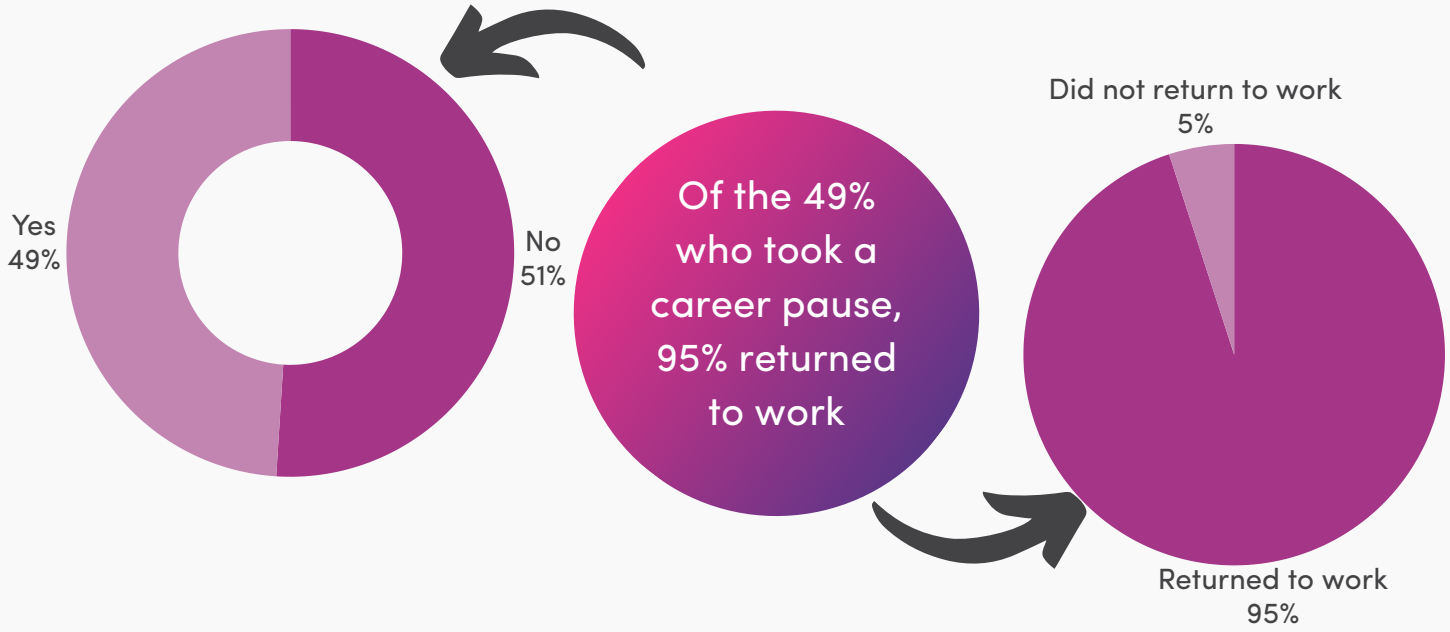


In this section:

- Most Skilled Women Who Take a Career Pause Return to Work
- Reasons Why Women Take Career Pauses
- Motherhood Is the #1 Reason for Taking a Career Pause
- Normalise Mental Health Breaks
- Do Not Misinterpret Retrenchment on a CV
- A Pause to Pursue Further Studies Is Advantageous to Employers
- Strategically Support Career Pauses to Retain Female Talent

Most Skilled Women Who Take a Career Pause Return to Work

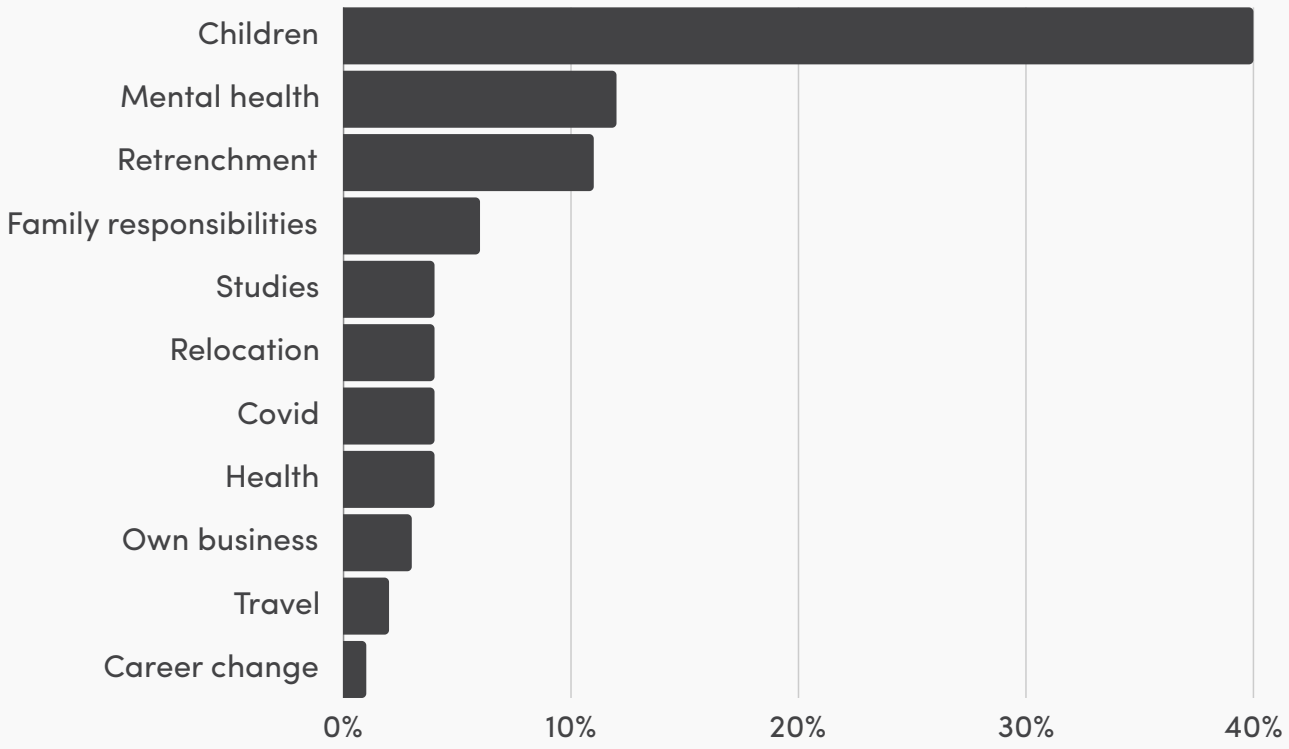
49% of respondents have taken a career pause at least once, and 95% return to work.



Reasons Why Women Take Career Pauses

It is important to note that career pauses are only sometimes negative. There are legitimate reasons for career pauses, such as further education, travel, family responsibilities, health, the impact of COVID-19 or personal development.

Top reasons why women take career pauses



Motherhood Is the #1 Reason for Taking a Career Pause

39% of women who took a career pause did it to be a stay-at-home mom for a period. Enabling women to work flexibly after a child's birth will assist with retaining top talent. The shift to remote work during the pandemic has allowed women to take on more roles, leading to increased time spent with children and potential changes in the gender wage gap. Many women want to continue work but find inflexible work policies force them out of the labour force. See page 24 for preferred flexibility.



"My employer at the time was not open to flexible work hours when my first child was born".

Normalise Mental Health Pauses

12% of women took a career pause to focus on their mental well-being. COVID-19 worsened depression and anxiety, with fear, uncertainty and social and economic disruptions arising during the pandemic for many South Africans. Returning to work helps build confidence, resilience and a sense of purpose. For this reason, employers should not overlook a mental health pause on a CV.

"Resigned voluntarily. I wanted a more flexible role with less pressure. Returned to the same company to assist with various projects that suited me."

"Having worked for over 16 years, coupled with 12 years of non-stop schooling. I was emotionally, physically and mentally drained from these long years of being in the rat race. So after the last company I worked for closed down, I took time off, got married and relocated."

"After 17 years in a finance environment, I had to take a break to rejuvenate myself."



Do Not Misinterpret Retrenchment on a CV

In the face of retrenchment, where 11% of skilled women find themselves, it is essential to highlight their unique resilience. Understanding that retrenchment is seldom a reflection of individual performance but rather stems from external factors like economic shifts, post-COVID-19 impacts, budget constraints, and employer changes can reshape the narrative surrounding career pauses.



"I was retrenched and after several attempts at job-hunting, attending numerous interviews and being rejected based on being overqualified, I became self-employed."

"Company closed and could not renew my contract."

A Pause to Pursue Further Studies Is Advantageous to Employers

4% of women take a career pause to study further. Certain career pauses can prove advantageous for employers, such as those taken to pursue further studies. When asked about the most important benefits sought in a job, 15% of women highlighted training and development as their top priority—offering educational support and a possible career pause to study benefits both the employee and the employer in the long term and enables the company to retain talent rather than lose it.

Strategically Support Career Pauses to Retain Female Talent

Sometimes, an employee requests a career pause for travel, studies, mental well-being, raising children, family responsibility or maternity leave. Rather than lose the talent, offer them a career pause where they can return to the company at the same level job or a higher level if gaining the qualifications from which they are leaving. In the case of motherhood, offer them flexible ways of working (hours and/or location) to benefit both the employee and the company.

Retaining the skills of a talented employee far outweighs the cost of attracting and training new talent.

Section 6
Closing Remarks

- A Note From Prof. Anita Bosh
  Research Chair: Women at work
  Stellenbosch Business School



A Note From Prof. Anita Bosh
Research Chair: Women at Work
Stellenbosch Business School

A hearty congratulations to RecruitMyMom for undertaking a study to explore women's work preferences. As an underutilised yet vibrant resource, women remain incredibly resilient in the South African labour force. We can securely state that South African women are outperforming men in most areas of formal studies. This means that there is a strong pipeline of talented women that are ready and able to take up employment and progress in their careers.

It comes as no surprise that the respondents in the Working Women in South Africa Report rated a salary as the top item in attracting and retaining them. South Africa has more women-headed households than households headed by men. In households where there are two parents present, a dual-income is necessary for the majority of families to make ends meet. Being able to take care of themselves and their families, not only through caregiving or mothering, but also as economic providers to families, is central to women's identities.

The idea that all women yearn to be full-time homemakers is challenged by the findings of the report. The role of being a good mother is often conflated with full-time availability to nurture children, erroneously leading to a belief that relationships and children suffer when women work. Whilst some South African women require flexibility in working arrangements, they remain committed employees, with the majority of the respondents in the report indicating that they prefer working full-time. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, employers have been challenged with requests for work flexibility – it is therefore not a women's issue but rather a matter of shifting workplace practices overall.

The Working Women in South Africa Report provides facts that challenge commonly held assumptions. Women remain an indispensable resource to businesses across our nation. RecruitMyMom has been a forerunner in showcasing their talent and leading the way towards employment practices that match people and their needs with business imperatives.





RecruitMyMom
Trusted Professional Skills

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