## Introduction

Understanding retention ................................................................. 06  
Key data at-a-glance ........................................................................ 08  
The Retention Matrix™ ................................................................. 09  

## Part 1: Who's leaving?

Challenging preconceptions .......................................................... 13  
The impact of age ............................................................................ 14  
The impact of age: Women in their 20s ....................................... 15  
The impact of age: Women in their 30s ....................................... 16  
The impact of age: Women in their 40s ....................................... 17  
The impact of age: Women in their 50s ....................................... 18  
The impact of age: Women in their 60s ....................................... 19  
The impact of perimenopause and menopause .......................... 20  
The impact of children ................................................................. 22  
The impact of ethnicity ................................................................. 24  
A note on intersectionality ............................................................ 28  
The problem isn't me. It's you. ..................................................... 29  

## Part 2: Why are women leaving?

The factors at play in The Retention Matrix™ ................................ 31  
Charting the journey towards the exit .......................................... 32  
What we can learn from those who have already left .................. 35  
What about flexibility? ............................................................... 37  
The factors at play in The Retention Matrix™: Rankings ............... 38  
The five big factors: Prospects for career progression ............... 39  
The five big factors: Organisational culture ............................... 43  
The five big factors: Support from line manager ......................... 47  
The five big factors: Amount of work .......................................... 51  
The five big factors: The day-to-day work itself ......................... 56  
Case Studies .................................................................................. 60  

## Part 3: Recommendations

Part 3: Recommendations ............................................................... 66  

## Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology .............................................................. 70  
Appendix 2: A note on definitions ............................................... 73  
Appendix 3: Contributors and thanks ......................................... 74
About Encompass Equality

Encompass Equality is the leading provider of practical solutions to advancing gender equality in the workplace.

We work with organisations to support the attraction, retention and progression of women through:

- Data and benchmarking
- Research and consulting
- Development programmes that focus on inclusive and modern leadership
- Talks and workshops on topics such as allyship, sponsorship, reverse mentoring, menopause in the workplace, personalised flexibility and job sharing.
- Coaching for line managers, teams and individuals including confidence, crucial conversations, the caring juggle and resilience and well-being.

Achieving gender balance in the workplace isn’t about fixing the women, it’s about changing the system to ensure that everyone can reach their full potential. Every organisation is different, as are the views of every individual employee. We work collaboratively with organisations to understand the situation for them, and support the implementation of bespoke solutions which improve systems and processes to drive long-term change.

We’re here to support you

If you’re interested in finding out more about why women leave your organisation and what you can do to retain them, we’d love to hear from you.

www.encompassequality.com
hello@encompassequality.com
07966 279689

“The research conducted by Encompass Equality has played an important part in our ongoing efforts to achieve gender parity within our organisation. The insights that came from the interviews they conducted with women in our organisation were very powerful, and the report was clear, comprehensive, and full of genuinely useful analysis and recommendations.”

Helen Grysztar, Learning and Talent Development Director, Opel Vauxhall Finance (now Stellantis Financial Services)
When you are new to a job you get the opportunity to delve into what has gone before. When I joined the global law firm Clifford Chance in August 2022, I had that benefit, and listened to stories from our past to understand how we can drive inclusion today.

One comment from a senior woman lawyer stuck with me. She described how – many years ago – the partners at the firm thought the way to keep women lawyers was to offer part-time working. She explained: “That was well-meaning and was trying to encourage female lawyers to stay in the firm, but it was simply assuming that’s what they wanted.”

Fast-forward to today and Clifford Chance has moved the dial through consultation with colleagues and recommendations from data-driven research. Like many organisations, these insights have led to increased women’s representation in senior leadership roles, a wide range of provisions – from support for carers, increased parental leave for fathers to menopause awareness campaigning and more.

So we have seen progress but there is much more to do, and we cannot stand still. We continue to consult and look for opportunities to take action that is based on data-driven research. It is why Clifford Chance is pleased to sponsor this report Why Women Leave.

The findings of this study of around 4,000 women suggest that the wide range of support we give as organisations is important. However, this has to go hand-in-hand with organisational change.

The report outlines that the top factors that influence women to stay or leave an organisation relate to workplace culture opposed to what some may traditionally perceive to be “women’s issues”.

Among the 15 main factors explored in this research that influence women’s decisions about whether to stay or go, some of the most prominent are support from line managers, the day-to-day work itself, and the team people work with. They’re shown to have a greater impact than caring responsibilities and menopause.

What these findings highlight to me is that the issues impacting our female colleagues’ decisions to stay or go are not that dissimilar to any gender. So ensuring women have a comparable cultural experience in the workplace as other colleagues becomes all the more important.

As this report aptly outlines in the recommendations section: “If you have women who are not feeling motivated by the day-to-day work they are doing, have a line manager they can’t communicate with or a lack of flexibility around how they do their job, then having a menopause offering is not going to stop them from leaving.”

At Clifford Chance, we recognise there is always work to be done to ensure we have an organisational culture that allows everyone to be their best selves. As society changes, so do our organisations and the expectations of our people. It is a permanent campaign.

That is why research like this is important. It keeps us live to the ever-changing factors that our organisations should consider when trying to create a culture in which colleagues feel valued.

When we get it right, colleagues will want to stay. If they stay, we naturally build our organisations’ diverse succession pipeline for our senior leadership levels. With this retention comes diversity of thought leadership, which has a positive effect across all, not just women.
Introduction
Understanding retention

Over the last few years, news about the persistence of a gender pay gap in organisations has triggered ever-increasing levels of criticism and dismay. Why, people ask, is this still happening? Some blame a lack of ambition, others, more simply, sexism.

The response from many organisations has been to set targets for female representation at the highest levels of their company. But, as research by the Financial Conduct Authority recently concluded, these targets are often unsustainable and sometimes even counterproductive. They lead to short-term fixes such as the recruitment of female NEDs or a large number of junior men. This can create an impression of gender balance where none actually exists and distracts the leaders of organisations from the work that really needs to be done.

Our experience tells us that for every organisation paying lip service to gender balance, there’s one that’s genuinely committed to the cause. What they need isn’t the threat of increasing vilification; it’s knowledge. They know what they want to achieve; what they don’t know is how to achieve it.

Our belief is that any efforts to close gender pay gaps must be rooted in a deeper understanding of the central issue of retention. After all, why solve your shortage of senior female talent by hiring women in from elsewhere when you might be able to stop your best female talent from leaving in the first place? It’s with that in mind that our research set out to answer one question: why do women leave?

We break down our response to that question into three parts:

- **Part 1** challenges preconceptions by looking at the women themselves in an attempt to understand whether certain groups are more or less likely than others to say that they’re thinking of leaving their organisation. What common characteristics do they share and what does this tell us about who organisations should be directing their efforts towards?
- **Part 2** addresses the reasons why women leave, shifting the focus onto things that organisations do or don’t do and, by implication, should or shouldn’t do. Having done so, it looks again at the women but this time through the lens of a specific issue. Who, precisely, is this most likely to affect? It also seeks to deepen the understanding of the issues themselves, chiefly through the lens of the other issues that correlate with them. At the end of Part 2, we pull back a bit to tell the story of two real, but anonymous, organisations at either end of the spectrum in terms of the scale of the retention challenge.
- **Part 3** draws together everything that’s been discussed into recommendations about the steps that those charged with closing gender pay gaps can take.

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The key to retention isn’t to fix women, it’s to fix organisations

The most important conclusion of this report is also the simplest: in attempting to understand why women leave their employers we tend to put all our focus on the women themselves. We decide that the important thing is to understand as much as we can about the challenges women face and then to devise systems and services to support them. There’s nothing wrong with these initiatives in themselves; they’re well-intentioned and often well-executed. But they usually have a fundamental flaw at their heart, because they start with the assumption that the problem is the women. That the women need helping. That women need fixing.

Our survey of around 4,000 women squarely challenges that assumption. For a start, we find that personal circumstances (factors like childcare and menopause that are traditionally associated with women) are secondary to organisational factors. Whilst they do have some impact on a woman’s likelihood to leave, particularly in specific age groups, the top 5 factors across all four sets of rankings on page 38 are organisational issues not women’s issues.

For example, all else being equal, age has little bearing on a woman’s propensity to leave. Menopause, while it can be a big issue in itself, does little to change it. Having children actually makes women slightly more likely to stick with their current employer than they are if they don’t. Other caring responsibilities barely move the needle. Nor do combinations of these things do much to alter the likelihood that women will head for the exit door. There’s an important caveat to this which is ethnicity: white women are markedly less likely to say that they’re thinking of leaving than women from ethnic minority backgrounds. But the answer to why women leave doesn’t appear to lie with the women themselves.

That’s reinforced by what women tell us when we ask them about the various factors that influence their decisions to stay with, or leave, their employer. Although things like menopause, childcare, eldercare, or physical and mental health issues are clearly something that many women are contending with, they tend to sit behind a long list of other factors in terms of the influence they have on decisions about whether to stay or go. The big deal, they tell us, isn’t their personal circumstances, however bad they are. The big deal is line management. It’s culture.

In other words, we need to face the other direction: we need to see the retention of women as a systemic and cultural challenge which will, in turn, benefit all employees. We need to fix organisations and focus on these five big factors that we cover in detail in Part 2:

- Prospects for career progression
- Organisational culture
- Support from line manager
- Amount of work
- The day-to-day work itself.

If you’re focusing on those, you’re looking in the right direction.
Key data at-a-glance

On average, women are 38% likely to leave their employer in the next two years. One ethnic group where this was significantly higher was black women who are 49% likely to leave.

Prospects for career progression
70% of women say that their prospects for career progression have a "huge" or "significant" impact on their decision about whether to stay with or leave their employer.

Organisational culture
65% of women who have left their employer say culture had a "huge" or "significant" bearing on their decision to leave.

Support from line manager
82% of women say that the support they get from their line manager has a "huge" or "significant" bearing on their decision to stay or leave.

Amount of work
31% of women in our survey claimed to be overworking by at least 10 hours per week.

The day-to-day work itself
85% of women say that the day-to-day work itself has a "huge" or "significant" impact on their decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer.

Organisations need to have a greater focus on flexibility in terms of how employees work. There is still a surprising amount of resistance around things like compressed hours, nine-day fortnights or job-sharing.

Offering support to women around specific personal challenges is still important, not least because it’s likely to be an indicator of bigger and more important things like culture. However, the effect of these will be limited if the five big factors remain unaddressed.
The Retention Matrix™

At the heart of this report is a device we’ve created to help employers to understand the challenges that women face in balancing the varying demands of their personal and professional lives.

It recognises that for many women, decisions about whether to stay with, or leave, their employer present themselves as a matrix of balancing factors. This most obviously manifests itself in relation to specific challenges, such as the financial decision many women face in balancing the costs of childcare with the salary and benefits they receive from their employer. But we think it also plays out at a wider level, taking into account the multiplicity of factors that influence decisions to stay with, or leave, an employer.

Critically, there are two dimensions at play here: the weight that any single factor carries on decisions about whether to stay or go, and how women feel about it. A useful way to visualise this is a scatter chart onto which each factor can be placed according to both the scale of the impact it has on decisions about whether to stay or go, and how people feel about it at the moment. Throughout this report, we show this as The Retention Matrix™, with the impact of each factor shown on the vertical axis, and the extent to which that impact is currently positive or negative shown on the horizontal axis. In that way, we can easily see that a factor that carries relatively little weight and about which sentiment is relatively neutral will have far less of a bearing on women’s propensity to leave than a factor that carries a lot of weight and about which sentiment is either strongly positive or strongly negative.

The central vertical line on the chart is fixed; it denotes neutral sentiment (neither positive nor negative). The horizontal line, on the other hand, shows the average impact score and therefore moves depending on the data we’re showing. The resulting four “quadrants” give us the opportunity to more easily understand where retention efforts should be directed. Most importantly, they allow us to show what we’re calling the “high risk zone”, in which a factor carries above average weight in terms of its impact on decisions about whether to stay or go and is also viewed negatively. To reinforce this point, we’ve shown an “exit” arrow pointing towards the top-left corner of the chart. The more a factor moves in the direction of the exit, the more women themselves are likely to head for the exit. We explain how we assign “scores” for both sentiment and impact to each factor on the next page, but it’s the positioning of each factor relative to the others that’s more important in this report than the scores themselves.

We’re showing how The Retention Matrix™ looks, across all 3,916 respondents to our survey, on the chart on this page.

Another thing to point out is that there are some factors over which an organisation has much more control than others. Leaders can, for example, do a lot to influence culture, but can’t stop the menopause from existing even if they are able to provide support to those who experience symptoms. Finally, it’s important to say that those more personal factors (menopause, childcare, physical or mental health issues, and eldercare) never sit on the positive side of the matrix because while their existence can be a positive thing in a wider context (caring for elderly relatives can be a very positive experience) they never have an actively positive impact on women’s ability to keep working. Indeed, we ask a slightly different question about them to account for that dual reality. In some ways, their inclusion on the chart is problematic because not everybody is experiencing these things, but we believe they belong here partly for precisely that reason (to show, for example, how big an issue menopause is generally, relative to something like line management) and partly because, having included them in the matrix, we’re then able to show how things change when women are experiencing them.

Note: for further detail on how we created The Retention Matrix™ and how it evolved throughout the course of this research, please see Appendix 1: Methodology
The Retention Matrix™

A note on the scoring of factors

The positioning of each of the factors shown on the Retention Matrix™ is determined by two scores: one for impact (how much it affects decisions about whether to stay or go) and one for sentiment (the extent to which women are positive or negative). Those are scores that we’ve created by applying multipliers to the actual responses women gave us (so, for example, a response of “huge impact” to the impact question would be given a multiplier of 3, while “significant impact” would be given a multiplier of 2), then multiplying those by the number of women who responded in that way, and then creating an average across all responses.

The resulting score isn’t, in itself, especially meaningful at this stage, which is why we don’t show it on the chart, though it may become more so if this becomes a longitudinal study. It’s simply a mechanism through which to compare views about factors and to represent those views visually.
“This is an incredibly insightful piece of research which reveals why management training, transparency, open communication, encouragement, integrity, humility and trust are among strong leadership skills that need to be ingrained throughout an organisation’s culture. Not only would it help prevent talented women leaving the workplace, it would also attract them to join your organisation. This evidence demonstrates why we must continue to take concerted action if we are to address the persistent inequalities that are holding women back.”

Anthony Painter, Director of Policy and External Affairs, Chartered Management Institute
Burnout is an occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.
Challenging preconceptions

While it’s not the main aim of this research to quantify the overall scale of the retention issue where women are concerned, it would be remiss of us not to do so even fleetingly. In our survey we asked women how likely they were to leave their organisation within the next two years, thereby creating a variable that has an ongoing and central function within this report. The reason we chose two years rather than one is because we were keen not to miss those women who already know they want to leave but suspect that it will take more than a year for them to do so, whether for practical, emotional or other reasons. In other words, we were interested in women’s intent to leave as much as their committed action to do so.

At first glance, the news here actually looks reasonably encouraging. Against a backdrop of media reports that sometimes make it sound as though women are about to resign, en masse, from the workforce if a long list of requirements isn’t met within the next few weeks, the average respondent to our survey said that they were 38% likely to leave in the next two years. This being the first time we’ve conducted this study, we don’t have historical data to compare that with, but we suspect the number is lower than many might expect. Indeed, while much of our report focuses on what goes wrong at work, our survey also reveals much that is positive about women’s experience. For example, 67% of women speak positively about the culture of their organisation, 74% speak positively about the support they get from their line managers, and fully 82% speak positively about the team they work with.

What the overall propensity to leave figure gives us is a useful benchmark for comparison throughout this report, and also a benchmark for any future research where we may, for example, be interested in how women’s propensity to leave has varied over time, or how it might compare to men.

There is, however, an important caveat: a number of organisations helped us with our research by distributing the survey to their female employees, and although it was made clear to all participants that their anonymity would be protected, there is quite a marked difference between the responses of those who came in through partner organisations and those who received the invitation to participate via other channels, like social media, in terms of how they answered this question. In fact, if we look only at responses from those who came from other channels, and therefore whose participation was outside of the auspices of their employer, the chances of leaving increase from 38% to 53%. The reasons for that are quite interesting in themselves – the clear implication being that women simply didn’t trust what they were being told about anonymity – but this isn’t our main concern here. What we do need to understand is that the 38% figure is almost certainly a fairly conservative estimate of the situation. Still, for anyone who thinks that the retention of women is an issue that’s running wildly out of control, or has ended up with the idea that most women hate their job, it’s the first of a number of pieces of evidence in this report that paint a positive picture of women’s experience of work.

Setting aside the scale of the retention problem, the more instructive analysis occurs at the next level down because it’s in the differences between the way various cohorts of women answer the question about how likely they are to leave that we start to find a more powerful and important story emerging.
The impact of age

Over the last few years there has been a growing focus on what we often refer to as the “perfect storm” of challenges for women in midlife, as ongoing childcare pressures start to combine with growing pressure at the other end of the care spectrum – eldercare – at the same time as many women are experiencing perimenopause or menopause symptoms.

Needless to say, how women respond to that perfect storm in terms of their decisions to stay with or leave their employer can have a profound impact on the pipeline of senior female talent within an organisation. However, while our survey does reveal some evidence of an increasing inclination to leave among women in their forties, the increase is so small as to be virtually insignificant and is barely any higher than we see among women in their late twenties.

Indeed, while some semblance of a pattern can be observed from Figure 2 – pointing to the inclination to leave rising gently in the late twenties before falling away, rising again between the ages of 35 and 50, and then falling a little more sharply – the overriding conclusion here is that age, in itself, has very little bearing on a woman’s propensity to leave her employer.

That’s not to say that women of differing ages don’t have differing experiences – we discuss those over the following pages – it’s just that those differences don’t add up to much of a difference in how likely they are to leave.

Figure 2: The impact of age on the chances of women leaving their employer in the next two years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage likelihood of women leaving in the next two years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or older</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age has very little bearing on a woman’s propensity to leave her employer.
The impact of age: Women in their 20s

For women in their 20s what matters most are their prospects for career progression and their salary and benefits. On average, they’re considerably more positive than the whole sample about their prospects for career progression, and that the whole sample are also slightly more positive about culture, but tend to be a bit more negative about their salary and benefits.

Childcare, eldercare and menopause have much less of a bearing at this stage than they do later, though physical and mental health issues do feature to some extent.

Bear in mind that what we’re describing here and on the pages that follow is the situation for the average respondent in our survey. The experiences of individuals will, of course, vary and sometimes do so considerably. The purpose of the exercise is to look at retention through the lens of age (and subsequently of other things) to see what that reveals.
The impact of age: Women in their 30s

88% of women in their 30s say that the support they get from their line manager has a “huge” or “significant” impact on decisions about whether to stay with, or leave, their employer.

76% say they feel “very positive” or “positive” about support from their line manager at the moment.

As they move into their 30s, support from their line manager becomes the biggest factor influencing women’s decisions about whether to stay or go. Four other factors – the team they work with, flexibility (in terms of location), salary and benefits, and the day-to-day work itself – are also uppermost in their minds.

It’s at this stage of life (unsurprisingly) that we see childcare become a much bigger feature. It still sits below most other factors in terms of the impact it has on decisions about whether to stay or leave, but is very close to moving into the upper left quadrant, which would indicate that it had become a high-risk factor where retention is concerned. Indeed, the important thing to point out here is that Figure 4a illustrates the situation for all women in their 30s. If we filter out women who don’t have children, childcare moves to become a high-risk factor, as indicated in Figure 4b.

The good news is that, overall, women in their 30s remain positive about all of the factors that matter most to them, albeit to varying degrees. The support they get from their line manager remains one of the factors about which they’re most positive, joined now by the flexibility that they have to work from locations other than the office. It’s here that we see the team they work with start to become the single most positive factor in women’s minds.

On the other hand, views about career progression have deteriorated somewhat, although this has less of a bearing on decisions about whether to stay or go than it did earlier.
The impact of age: Women in their 40s

Now in their 40s, there haven’t been significant changes to the things that matter most: line management is still the single biggest factor influencing decisions about whether to stay or go, and remains something about which women tend to speak positively. Culture has once again come to the fore.

The notable thing about women in this age group is that they’re less positive than women in any other age grouping about the factors that matter to them. That’s not the case uniformly: in fact, they’re ever so slightly more positive about flexibility in all its guises and about their salary and benefits. But menopause has started to appear as a counterweight to these: it’s still seen to be a factor that carries less weight than others, even among women who say they are experiencing perimenopause or menopause symptoms, but it’s an unsurprisingly bigger feature than it was before. And there’s been a further deterioration in views about prospects for career progression, to the point where this is starting to look as though it could be a priority. The amount of work is starting to slip in that direction, too, albeit to a less pronounced degree.

Figure 5: The Retention Matrix™: Women in their 40s

38% of women in their 40s say they feel “positive” or “very positive” about their prospects for career progression; compared to 65% among women in their 20s
The impact of age: Women in their 50s

The biggest change among women in their 50s is that menopause (unsurprisingly) has become a much bigger feature in a woman’s life. It still has a relatively small bearing on decisions about whether to stay or leave, but its impact has grown.

The other notable thing is the further deterioration in both the importance and sentiment attached to prospects for career progression. It speaks to the idea that some women may have either lost hope of further progression in their career by the time they get into their 50s, or simply care less about it. Indeed, we know from qualitative research elsewhere that there are some women in this age group who talk of being comfortable where they are and don’t want to have conversations about where they want to go next. Still, for those who are interested in seeing their careers advance, it’s fairly damning evidence of the extent to which that possibility seems to have diminished.

At the other end of the spectrum, the team they work with remains an important factor to women and is also the one about which they’re clearly the most positive.

Figure 6: The Retention Matrix™: Women in their 50s

42% of women in their 50s say that menopause symptoms feature to a “large” or “very large” extent in their lives at the moment.

47% of those say that menopause has a “huge” or “significant” impact on decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer.
The impact of age: Women in their 60s

By the time they get to their 60s, those women who remain in the workforce have become more positive about most of the factors we are looking at. What matters most now is the culture of the organisation and the day-to-day work itself, but the team they work with continues to be really important and remains the thing about which women are more positive.

Childcare commitments have eased considerably by this point, but eldercare commitments, which came to the fore in their 50s, remain. Flexibility (in all its forms) matters a bit less, relative to other things, than it did earlier in their careers, and is something that women are generally still positive about.

Figure 7: The Retention Matrix™: Women in their 60s

82% of women in their 60s say that they feel “positive” or “very positive” about the team they work with.

73% say that the team they work with has a “huge” or “significant” impact on their decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer.
The impact of perimenopause and menopause

If the revelation that age has relatively little bearing on a woman's inclination to leave her employer was surprising then the data about menopause is likely to be even more so. Nothing here should detract from the excellent work that's been done to raise awareness of the challenges that many women face in trying to balance their menopause symptoms with their work, and nor is it meant to downplay what women are going through. However, menopausal symptoms don't appear to have a direct impact on a woman's propensity to leave her employer. On average, we know that women are 38% likely to leave their employer in the next two years. We can see in Figure 8 that those who are experiencing symptoms have the same percentage likelihood of leaving.

Menopause is a major feature in many women's lives and one that's been conspicuously absent from mainstream conversation (at least within the working world) until recently. Its impact can be profound, its symptoms multiple and often debilitating, particularly when set within the context of the work environment. So it should be a matter of concern for any organisation that claims to have the welfare of its employees at its heart. Indeed, given how many women menopause affects (approximately 30% of all respondents to our survey currently in employment) the importance of acknowledging and supporting women at this stage in their lives seems hard to overstated. Culture, then, has an important role to play here and the message we are hearing is that the way they are supported by their organisation is more important to women than how they deal with the symptoms themselves.

What women are telling us seems fairly clear. The problem isn't my menopause. Whilst efforts designed to support me as I go through it are still very welcome and appreciated, this shouldn't distract you from the other important work that needs doing.

Figure 8: The impact of menopause on the chances of women leaving their employer in the next two years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage likelihood of women leaving in the next two years</th>
<th>39%</th>
<th>38%</th>
<th>38%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Among the respondents to our survey currently in employment, around a third (30%) said they were experiencing perimenopause or menopause symptoms, two-thirds (62%) said they were not, and 8% said they didn't know.
The impact of perimenopause and menopause

At the risk of stating the obvious, the biggest difference between those who aren’t (left chart) and are (right chart) experiencing perimenopause or menopause symptoms is that, for those who are, menopause has become both a bigger feature of their lives (shown here in terms of having increasingly negative sentiment attached to it) and a bigger influence on their decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer. That last point is worth emphasising in light of the overall data which suggests that menopause doesn’t impact propensity to leave: It might not affect the outcome much – but it does change the balance.

In fact the matrix, while still adding up to roughly the same outcome, has changed in a number of important ways: for a start, those experiencing symptoms are slightly more negative about virtually all of the factors. Setting aside the menopause itself, the biggest of those is their prospects for career progression, which has tipped into negative territory. But the availability of special leave is another factor about which sentiment has deteriorated more than most, pointing to the idea that some women experiencing symptoms are feeling constrained by their inability to take time off to deal with them. Having said that, the important factors like support from line managers are still viewed overwhelmingly positively. And it’s worth pointing out that even among women experiencing perimenopause or menopause symptoms, those symptoms are only the 11th most important factor influencing their decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer.

34% of women experiencing perimenopause or menopause say they feel “positive” or “very positive” about their prospects for career progression; compared to 51% among women with no symptoms.
The impact of children

Having established that neither age nor menopause symptoms in their own right have a significant bearing on propensity to leave, it may come as less of a surprise that the same is true of children. In fact, while the differences between women with children and those without is relatively small in terms of their propensity to leave, what may come as a surprise is that it’s the women without children who are slightly more likely to leave. Having children might actually engender staying. Nor, up to a point, does this change much depending on how many children you have: women with two or three children are very marginally more likely to leave than women with only one child, but the difference is insignificant.

We do need to bear in mind that here we’re looking at women who are back in the workplace after maternity leave and have decided to continue working. We know there will be plenty of women who are not in work for whom the impact of children and childcare costs has meant they could not return after maternity leave.

When we consider why having children might actually engender staying, factors such as security and certainty with a current employer (e.g. agreed working arrangements around childcare) and maternity rights in relation to future children (that could change on moving employers), might explain why this is so.

Before going any further, it’s worth acknowledging that women with children are more likely to work part-time. 95% of respondents without children told us that they work at least 35 hours per week, while 72% of women with children said the same thing. It’s not a huge difference, but we have to acknowledge that something has changed (i.e. moved to part-time rather than leaving).

Still, the idea that those with children are less likely to leave is interesting. So, why is that? As the charts on the following page reveal, it’s not because women with children are more positive about work. Anecdotal evidence may seem to point to a newfound appreciation for work among women with children (“I come in to the office for a break from it all!” or “I get to feel like an adult again”), but that’s not what the data tells us: while there aren’t huge differences, women with children tend to be more negative than those without about most factors on The Retention Matrix™, most obviously where childcare is concerned.

At the very least, what we can say about motherhood is that, rather like the menopause, it needs understanding and supporting but isn’t a marker for propensity to leave in the way you might assume.
The impact of children

As with the menopause, the biggest difference between those without children and those with children is also the most obvious: childcare. For those with children, the impact of childcare on decisions about whether to stay or leave increases dramatically, making it the most obvious priority from a retention perspective.

What can be done about it is a different matter though, and comparisons between those with and those without children, in terms of the factors shown on The Retention Matrix™, initially appear to do little to shed any further light on this. However, closer inspection reveals one important difference. Women with children are markedly more likely than those without to say that the ability to

work flexibly in terms of time is more important to them. That’s not to say that flexibility from a location perspective isn’t also important (in fact it’s even more important) but rather that its importance doesn’t change much when women have children, whereas flexibility from a time perspective does. The good news is that women with children feel positively about their ability to work flexibly in terms of time, presumably because what was previously a theoretical possibility is now more widely accepted. And it’s also worth pointing out that even among all women with children, childcare is the 9th most important factor influencing their decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer.

71% of women with children say that the ability to work in a flexible way has (or would have) a “huge” or “significant” impact on decisions about whether to stay or leave their employer, up from 58% among women with no children.
The impact of ethnicity

So far, we've revealed that neither age, menopause symptoms or children have any meaningful bearing on women's overall propensity to leave their employers. All subtly influence how women feel about work and what matters most to them in terms of their decisions about whether to stay or leave, but none do much to change the outcome of those decisions.

There is, though, one important identity characteristic that has much more of a bearing, and that's ethnicity. White women are significantly less likely than women from ethnic minority groups, and particularly women who identify as “black/African/Caribbean/Black British” (hereafter “black”) to say that they expect to leave their employer in the next two years.

We do need to sound a note of caution here, because while women from all other ethnic groups combined make up a proportion of our sample that's broadly representative of the countries in which those respondents work (about 13%), the numbers for some groups, and particularly for black women, are small. Still, the differences are far greater than those we've become used to seeing for most other personal/identity characteristics.

The increase in propensity to leave among “Asian” or “other ethnic groups” are not particularly notable (they're about as big as the difference between those with and those without children). However, things start to increase more meaningfully among those describing their ethnicity as “mixed/multiple ethnic groups” and even more among black women. In fact, black women are nearly 12 percentage points more likely to say they’re thinking of leaving in the next two years than white women. That’s a far greater difference than we’ve seen in comparing responses through the lens of any other personal/identity characteristic.

At which point, it seems relevant to bring the propensity-to-leave number itself back into focus, having discussed it briefly at the top of this section: across the whole sample, on average, black women told us that the chance of them leaving stood at 49%, but if we look only at respondents who came directly to our survey (who weren’t contacted about it by their employer) then the number rises very sharply to 67%. In fact, the number for Asian women is 40% across the whole sample (which is only slightly higher than the average) but 62% among those who responded directly. We’re used to the idea that women who respond directly tend to be more negative but not to this extent. Whatever the reason for that, what’s abundantly clear is that ethnicity is the one personal/identity characteristic towards which retention efforts should be targeted.

So, how does work look through the lens of each ethnicity group?
The impact of ethnicity: White women

We start by looking at white women because our data shows they are more positive than any other ethnic group about work: across the majority of the retention factors they’re more likely to speak positively, the most notable of which is salary and benefits. We didn’t ask women how much they’re paid, but we did ask them to describe their level of seniority on a scale of 0-100 and know that 48% of white women chose a number of 50 or above, compared to 36% of Asian women and 34% of black women. So, it’s entirely possible, and even likely, that an ethnicity pay gap feeds into these sentiments.

A number of other areas stand out: white women are markedly more likely than those from other ethnic groups to speak positively about the team they work with, the support from their line manager, their prospects for career progression and the culture of the organisation. Broadly speaking, the more something matters, in terms of decisions about whether to stay or leave, the more positive they are about it.

The one exception from the perspective of sentiment is menopause symptoms, which white women are slightly more likely to say feature in their lives than those from other ethnic groups. Of course, at this level that’s as likely to be a result of the make up of the sample as anything else. Indeed, if we only look at women who say that they’re currently experiencing perimenopause or menopause symptoms, white women are less likely to say these feature prominently in their lives.

Beyond these factors, because white women make up the overwhelming majority of our sample and are therefore much closer to the average, there’s little more that’s distinctive about them as a group.
The impact of ethnicity: Asian women

Compared with white women, The Retention Matrix™ for Asian women shows a notable skew towards the exit.

In sentiment terms, the biggest difference concerns the salary and benefits factor and views about the team that women work with. The former of those is arguably the greater cause of concern because it's also the factor that has the greatest impact on decisions about whether to stay or leave among Asian women. If retention efforts are to be directed towards Asian women as a group, then the data suggests that they're best to be directed here.

But the answer isn't necessarily simply to pay Asian women more, because alongside salary and benefits we find elevated levels of interest in prospects for career progression. What we see here may be a story about money, but it's just as likely to be one about ambition.

Something else stands out: accepting that the make up of our sample may have a role to play here, Asian women are substantially more likely than white women to say that childcare, physical or mental health and eldercare issues carry weight in their decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer. These personal factors still sit some way behind those related to work, in terms of the impact they have, but the greater weight compared with white women is significant, and adds to the overall difference in the matrix.
The impact of ethnicity: Black women

We see the same general difference towards the exit for black women as we see for Asian women, though we know that the overall impact (in terms of propensity to leave) is greater here.

The story behind it is familiar, too: salary and benefits are viewed more negatively and carry greater weight in decisions about whether to stay or go than they do for white women. But the really striking thing here is the extent to which prospects for career progression has a greater weight, compared with white women. The same is true of Asian women, but the difference isn’t as dramatic.

Indeed, while we need to be cautious because of the relatively small number of women in our sample who describe themselves as black, that trend plays out more generally: there are much greater differences between factors here, in terms of the impact they have on decisions about whether to stay or go, than there are among Asian women. The net effect is that the average factor is considered less impactful among black women than it is among Asian women, but that only serves to illustrate more clearly where attention needs to be directed.

Indeed, alongside salary and benefits and prospects for career progression, organisational culture stands clear of other factors in terms of its importance. There’s better news in this respect than there is in relation to salary and benefits and prospects for career progression, and it’s worth noting that black women are more likely to speak positively about culture than Asian women, but what’s striking is how much more important this is than some of the other factors (like line management or team) that tend to assume greater prominence for other ethnic groups.

Figure 15: The Retention Matrix™: Black women

82% of black women say that their prospects for career progression have a “huge” or “significant” impact on their decision about whether to stay with or leave their employer, compared with 68% of white women.
A note on intersectionality

To a very large extent, the impact of each of the things mentioned on the previous pages carries through into an intersectional view of propensity to leave: nothing has a really significant bearing until you introduce ethnicity into the picture. So, for example, women with children who are also experiencing menopause symptoms are roughly in line with the average in terms of the likelihood that they’ll leave in the next two years (in fact they’re slightly lower than average, at 37%). You can even introduce being a carer into that mix and it doesn’t have a massive impact, dropping the likelihood down a little further to 35%.

But mix any of these with ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) and the situation does change. We have to be extremely cautious here because the numbers in our sample quickly get small, but if, for example, we look at the views of women who are black, are experiencing menopause symptoms and have children, the likelihood of leaving rises to 56%.

It’s important to acknowledge that there are intersectional lenses that are completely missing from our survey – things like disability or neurodiversity – that we’d like to add into any further research on this topic. Nevertheless, what the data already tells us unequivocally is that, with the exception of ethnicity, personal/identity characteristics have far less of a bearing on propensity to leave than you might imagine.
The problem isn’t me. It’s you.

With one important exception, the conclusion of this section of our report is very clear: women’s propensity to leave their employer is not determined by personal characteristics such as age, motherhood or menopause.

Secondly, retention initiatives designed to target specific groups of women – such as mothers, or those experiencing menopause symptoms – are secondary to organisational factors such as culture or line management.

That’s not to say that the initiatives themselves are unimportant, or that the needs of individuals should be ignored. Indeed they have an important role to play when it comes to thinking about how line managers can better understand the people that work for them.

There is an important exception here which is ethnicity. This is the one personal/identity characteristic that appears to have a meaningful bearing on a woman’s propensity to leave her employer. There would appear to be some justification for designing initiatives that are rooted in an understanding of the particular experiences of specific ethnic groups.

Still, that shouldn’t distract from the broader message that women, throughout our survey, seem to be spelling out quite plainly: the problem isn’t me, it’s you.

In the next section of our report we respond to that message by coming at things the other way round; starting with looking at what goes wrong (and what goes right) and then moving on to understand who that impacts most.
Part 2: Why are women leaving?
The factors at play in The Retention Matrix™

In this section of our report we turn our attention towards the reasons why women leave, starting with the factors at play in The Retention Matrix™ and trying to understand what configuration of those factors most engenders and inhibits retention.

In doing so, we have segmented our sample into four broad categories based exclusively on their propensity to leave:

**Stayers**: women who say the probability of them leaving in the next two years is between 0% and 25%

**Likely stayers**: women who say the probability of them leaving in the next two years is between 26% and 44%

**Undecideds**: women who say the probability of them leaving in the next two years is between 45% and 55%

**Likely leavers**: women who say the probability of them leaving in the next two years is between 56% and 74%

**Leavers**: women who say the probability of them leaving in the next two years is between 75% and 100%

We will occasionally make reference to a sub-set of the leavers, those who are at least 90% likely to leave, where it helps to reinforce the point being made by analysis of the wider group.

We will also draw on data from a group of women we have yet to mention in our report: those who have already left their employer. It’s worth pointing out that there’s a limitation here because none of these have yet gone on to work for another employer. Some have set up their own business, others are freelance, while some are unemployed, however they do allow us to see retention (or rather its failure) as a matter of certainty rather than conjecture.

We start by looking at The Retention Matrix™ as seen by each of our main groups to chart the journey towards the exit. We go on to look at the factors that are revealed by that analysis as being most important, taking each in turn and looking in greater detail at who is most impacted by them.

Finally, we choose two real but anonymised organisations that participated in our survey, to illustrate the differences between the two in terms of their employees’ experience of the factors at play in The Retention Matrix™.
Charting the journey towards the exit

As you might expect, The Retention Matrix™ for stayers looks overwhelmingly positive. The factors that matter most to them – the support they get from their line manager and the team they work with – are also those about which they’re most positive, but all the other factors within their organisations’ control look firmly planted in positive territory. Personal factors, particularly childcare and physical and mental health, do feature to some extent but none are more impactful on decisions about whether to stay or go than even the least impactful factor within the organisations’ control.

Among likely stayers the situation still looks very positive, but what’s notable is that a few of the most important factors – salary and benefits, the day-to-day work itself, and culture – have started to slide a little to the left, which is to say that views about them have deteriorated a bit. At the same time, women have become quite a bit less positive about the amount of work they’re being asked to do and their prospects for career progression. They’re not yet negative about any of these, but the direction of travel isn’t good. Still, they remain very positive about their line manager (if slightly less so than stayers) and even more positive than stayers about the team they work with.
Charting the journey towards the exit

By this point retention is really in the balance. What’s changed here is that salary and benefits, the work itself and flexibility (from the perspective of location) have drawn up alongside support from line manager as the most important factors influencing decisions about whether to stay or go. That’s a bit of a problem because they, like pretty much everything else, are things that women now feel less positive about. The biggest changes in sentiment have been about salary and benefits, prospects for career progression (which now sits very close to negative territory), culture and training and development. The impression here is of a career that’s stalling.

Women are now more likely to leave than they are to stay, and The Retention Matrix™ reflects this. Salary and benefits is now the single most important factor in terms of its impact on decisions about whether to stay or go, and hangs in the balance in terms of women’s feelings about it. But the biggest deterioration compared with undecideds has been in feelings about organisational culture, which started out being one of the things women were most positive about. They’re still positive, but much less so. Most pressingly, women are now negative about both the amount of work they’re being asked to do, in relation to their contracted hours, and their prospects for career progression. It’s a toxic mix that might be even more problematic were it not for the fact views remain generally positive (although less than they were) about line managers, flexibility (from a location perspective) and the team women work with.
Charting the journey towards the exit

By the time women consider themselves at least 75% likely to leave, the Retention Matrix™ has deteriorated to a considerable degree. There are now four factors, all of them things within the organisation’s control, that sit in the top-left quadrant, meaning they have an above-average impact on decisions about whether to stay or go, and are also things about which women feel negative.

Most problematic are feelings about prospects for career progression, which have seen a further significant deterioration and are now creating strong momentum toward the exit. But views about culture have also deteriorated sharply to the point where culture is now something about which women speak negatively. Indeed, by looking at the change between stayers and leavers, Figure 17 illustrates the extent to which these two factors really stand out in terms of the scale of deterioration.

Meanwhile, women continue to feel more and more negative about the amount of work they’re being asked to do and are now negative about how they’re being compensated for it. And although they remain positive about their line manager, their views have further deteriorated, making this one of the factors that has changed most for the worst compared with stayers.

Figure 17: Change in sentiment between stayers and leavers

How to read the chart in Figure 17

What we’re showing in Figure 17 is the difference between the views of stayers (those who are no more than 25% likely to leave) and leavers (those who are at least 75% likely to leave) in terms of how they feel about each factor. Unsurprisingly, views about virtually every factor deteriorate to some extent (bear in mind the distinction between some of the personal factors and the others as described in our introduction), but what the chart shows, for example, is that views about prospects for career progression deteriorate more than anything else.
What we can learn from those who have already left

At this point it’s helpful to hear from women who took the step that our last group (leavers) are close to doing and left their employer. As we said in the introduction to this section, the limitation here is that we only heard from women who had left but who hadn’t gone on to work for another employer, at least not yet. Nevertheless, their input provides a useful mechanism for validating our assumptions about the factors that matter most and that we should go on to look at in greater detail in the rest of this section of our report.

Two things really stand out above all else: culture and support from line managers. The first of those was a factor that we had already seen move inexorably toward (and eventually into) the top left-hand quadrant of our Retention Matrix™ as we progressed through the journey towards the exit, from stayers to leavers, over the previous pages.

Line management also stands out as a reason for people having left their employer. That’s interesting because while views about line management did also deteriorate on the journey towards the exit, they still ended up firmly in positive territory. Are we to assume that somewhere between being fairly sure they will leave and actually leaving, women suddenly flip into feeling actively negative about the support they get from their line manager? It’s certainly possible, although even if we zoom in further on the “leaver” group (discussed on the previous page) and look at women who say they’re 100% likely to leave in the next two years then views about line managers are still, just, in positive territory. Would their views about line management really be so different from people who have taken the next step and left? We suspect not. More likely, people who have left are still faintly positive about line management, even if it’s one of the main reasons they left. In which case, the clear implication is that it’s not enough for line management to simply be OK, given the importance of the role it plays in retention. It needs to be something about which people are really positive. After all, across our whole sample support from the line manager is seen to be the single biggest influence on the decisions about whether to stay or go.

Figure 18: The reasons women gave for having left their previous employer.

We asked respondents to tell us about the scale of the impact that each factor had, and then converted their answers into a score in the same way we did for The Retention Matrix™.
What we can learn from those who have already left

Career progression shows up here, too, in third place behind culture and line management. If it’s a surprise that it doesn’t feature even more prominently (i.e. ahead of culture and line management) then it’s worth remembering that while views about career prospects do deteriorate more than any other factor as we chart the journey towards the exit, it’s never considered to be the most impactful factor. Still, it clearly deserves to be the focus of further analysis.

The amount of work that people are asked to do, relative to their contracted hours, is another very prominent factor. It sits fifth among the reasons women give us for having left their previous employer and showed up consistently on the previous pages as an issue. Indeed, further data on this factor, which we’ll discuss later, confirms that this is an important area of focus.

Influenced by the views of those who have left their employer, the final factor that we believe requires deeper analysis is the day-to-day work itself. Giving it a more prominent position in our analysis than salary and benefits may be controversial, given the way the latter showed up on the journey towards the exit that we mapped out earlier in this section. But it’s our belief that salary and benefits is a trigger for, rather than an underlying cause of, women leaving. Look at what women who have already left say: they place it seventh among the factors that caused them to leave their last job, which seems at odds with its prominence on The Retention Matrix™ over the preceding pages. The thing about salaries and benefits are that they’re easily comparable. If, for example, someone was thinking of leaving because they didn’t like the culture of their current organisation, or didn’t feel they were getting the support they needed from their line manager, what mechanism do they have for making reliable comparisons about how things would be if they moved somewhere else? By contrast, salary and benefit comparisons are black and white: I earn X here and I know I’ll earn X+Y there.

So, salaries and benefits are important, and employers would do well to neutralise their potency as a trigger by making sure they remain competitive, but they’re perhaps not quite as important as the day-to-day work itself. It’s a factor that consistently shows up as one of the most impactful on The Retention Matrix™, which stands to reason given that it’s the heart and soul of the matter: it’s the job you do. In the course of our wider research we’ve heard so many women express views along the lines of “I’m really a bit fed up with it all, but I love my job.” Or, by contrast, “Everyone’s great, but I’m just a bit bored of the job.” And those who have left confirm that it’s one of the biggest reasons they did so.

Over the following pages, we look in greater depth at each of these big five factors in turn — prospects for career progression, culture, line management, amount of work, and the work itself. In each case we consider the relative importance of each factor according to some simple criteria, who feels most positive and negative about it, and which other factors views about it most strongly correlates with.
What about flexibility?

Flexibility doesn’t feature as one of the five big factors that we analyse in more detail. To some extent, that’s because we’ve separated flexibility into two distinct parts: flexibility in terms of where employees work “Flexibility (location)”, and flexibility in terms of how (which most usually means when) employees work “Flexibility (time)”. Were they to be combined, it’s likely that flexibility would feature more prominently. Anecdotal evidence certainly suggests that it really matters.

But it’s also because of the point we’ve reached in the evolution of flexible working. The ability to work from locations other than the office is something that the Covid pandemic accelerated dramatically, to the point where most people speak very positively about it. Indeed, except in situations where companies are starting to put pressure on employees to return to offices, it’s now something that’s quickly become expected and is seen by some as “table stakes”.

By contrast, while the other dimension of flexibility (how you work) is seen to have less of an impact on women’s decisions about whether to stay or leave, it is something about which they feel much less positive. What’s emerging here, we suspect, is a clearer view about the extent to which flexibility has been truly embraced from a cultural point of view. Our research — both for this report and elsewhere — strongly points to the idea that the compulsion on organisations to permit and enable flexibility from one dimension (location) is giving a greater impression of a shift in their culture than is actually the case. Many women who now enjoy the opportunity to choose where they work tell us that they meet a surprising amount of resistance when they try to have a conversation about things like compressed hours, nine-day fortnights or job-sharing eg flexibility from a time perspective.

What we’re saying, then, is that companies may be enjoying a moment of relative “slack water”, during which the ability to work from different locations is now in place, and the demand for increased flexibility in terms of how and when employees work has not yet gathered momentum to the same extent. That could change, and change quickly. Growing pressure on a return to offices or growing pressure on organisations to demonstrate a deeper cultural commitment to flexibility would, we suspect, propel it much further up the list of factors that need to be considered. Indeed, in many organisations, that’s probably already the case.

76% of women say the ability to work flexibly from different locations has a “huge” or “significant” impact on their decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer. 75% of women feel positively about this.

65% of women say the ability to work in a flexible way from a time perspective has a “huge” or “significant” impact on their decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer. 51% of women feel positively about this.
The factors at play in The Retention Matrix™: Rankings

The following four sets of rankings are referred to throughout this report to illustrate the impact of factors, how women feel about these factors (ie sentiment), how sentiment deteriorates when comparing stayers versus leavers and reasons for leaving. Throughout the next section of the report, we look at these rankings through different lenses and spotlight five big factors for organisations to consider: prospects for career progression, organisational culture, support from line manager, amount of work and the day-to-day work itself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact ranking (whole sample)</th>
<th>Positive sentiment ranking (whole sample)</th>
<th>Sentiment deterioration ranking (stayers vs leavers)*</th>
<th>Reasons for leaving ranking (women who have left an organisation)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Support from line manager</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Prospects for career progression</td>
<td>Organisational culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The day-to-day work itself</td>
<td>Flexibility (location)</td>
<td>Organisational culture</td>
<td>Support from line manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Team</td>
<td>Support from line manager</td>
<td>Training/development</td>
<td>Prospects for career progression</td>
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<td>4. Organisational culture</td>
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<td>5. Salary and benefits</td>
<td>The day-to-day work itself</td>
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<td>6. Flexibility (location)</td>
<td>Special leave</td>
<td>The day-to-day work itself</td>
<td>Flexibility (time)</td>
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<td>7. Amount of work</td>
<td>Training/development</td>
<td>Salary and benefits</td>
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<td>8. Prospects for career progression</td>
<td>Flexibility (time)</td>
<td>Team</td>
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<td>9. Flexibility (time)</td>
<td>Salary and benefits</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Flexibility (location)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Special leave</td>
<td>Amount of work</td>
<td>Special leave</td>
<td>Physical or mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Training/development</td>
<td>Prospects for career progression</td>
<td>Flexibility (location)</td>
<td>Training/development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Childcare</td>
<td>Eldercare</td>
<td>Physical or mental health</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
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<td>13. Physical or mental health</td>
<td>Menopause</td>
<td>Menopause</td>
<td>Special leave</td>
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<td>14. Menopause</td>
<td>Physical or mental health</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
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<td>15. Eldercare</td>
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*Stayers - women no more than 25% likely to leave.
Leavers - women at least 75% likely to leave.

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The five big factors: Prospects for career progression

70% of women say that their prospects for career progression have a “huge” or “significant” impact on their decision about whether to stay with or leave their employer. But only 45% say that they feel positive to any degree about those prospects.

Prospects for career progression earns its place as one of our big five factors by virtue of being the factor about which sentiment deteriorates most between stayers and leavers. It ranks 11 out of 15 factors in terms of positive sentiment across the whole sample, coming last of the factors that are within an employer’s control, and gets rapidly worse as women move towards the exit.

Impact ranking (whole sample)
This describes the relative importance of each factor in terms of the impact it has on decisions about whether to stay or go, where 1 has the biggest impact.

Positive sentiment ranking (whole sample)
This describes how positively or negatively women feel about a factor, relative to others, where the top ranked factor (1) is the one about which women are most positive.

Sentiment deterioration ranking (stayers vs leavers)
This describes the relative deterioration in sentiment attached to each factor between stayers and leavers. The top ranked factor (1) is the one about which sentiment deteriorates most. Stayers = women no more than 25% likely to leave. Leavers = women at least 75% likely to leave.

Reasons for leaving ranking (women who have left an organisation)
This describes the reasons women gave for having left their previous employer, where 1 is the biggest reason.

Impact ranking (whole sample)
Positively sentiment ranking (whole sample)
Sentiment deterioration ranking (stayers vs leavers)
Reasons for leaving ranking (women who have left an organisation)

5 big factors
- Prospects for career progression
- Organisational culture
- Support from line manager
- Amount of work
- The day-to-day work itself
The five big factors: Prospects for career progression

How views of different groups vary

Concern about prospects for career progression is not shared evenly throughout our sample though. Indeed, comparisons with the next factor we look at in depth (culture) show the extent to which this is the case: there are more bold colours (positive and negative) on the chart than there are on the corresponding chart for culture, meaning that experiences are more varied here.

Broadly speaking, women become more downbeat about their prospects for progression as they get older and more senior. This is particularly the case among 55-59 year-olds, those with children and those who are experiencing perimenopause or menopause symptoms, but it is also evident to some extent among anyone who isn’t young, white, relatively junior, and without additional responsibilities at home. It’s worth acknowledging that the situation among 55-59 year-olds may be considerably more complex and nuanced than the way it’s presented here. For example, it seems plausible that some of those women may have said that they felt negatively about their prospects for career progression without any sense of injustice attached to that sentiment, while for others there may be an acute sense of injustice.

Worth mentioning here are the differences between the views of part-time and full-time workers, which serves as a reminder that moving to part-time work doesn’t equate to giving up on career ambitions. The frustration among those who feel that their career has been derailed by moving to part-time might not have a huge bearing on their decision about whether to stay or go (it’s a factor that carries much less weight for part-time workers than it does for full-time workers) but that’s not to say that it’s not there.

The strong impression that the sentiment variation chart gives is of women’s careers being derailed, whether because of the growing number of obstacles they face in their personal lives, a lack of support from within their organisation, or the more general persistence of outdated attitudes towards them.

How to read this chart

The orange colours show a more negative sentiment than the average whereas the blue colours show a more positive sentiment than the average. The more bold the colour, the more deviation from the average.

A note on contracted hours:

We’ve divided women into part- and full-time here, to make things simpler, but actually asked women more precisely how many hours they worked rather than whether they were part- or full-time. Part-time here refers to anyone who works fewer than 35 hours/week, full-time to anyone who works 35 hours/week or more.
**The five big factors: Prospects for career progression**

**Correlation with other factors**

There's an especially strong relationship here between views about prospects for career progression and those about training and development, the latter being a factor that has flown slightly under the radar so far in our report. Indeed, it's one of the strongest correlations we see anywhere in our data. While that stands to reason, it's also a useful reminder that career progression isn't always simply about promotion: women want to feel as though they're learning and growing; that they're moving forward even when they're not moving up.

What's notable is that the correlation is stronger with training and development than it is with salary and benefits, ranked third here. That suggests that women's sense of progress is influenced more by what they're learning than what they're earning, behind which may be a recognition that training and development drives progress while salaries and benefits merely measure it. Nevertheless, there is a moderately strong correlation here.

Between those two sits culture, which speaks to the idea that a woman's ability to progress in her career is part of what constitutes good culture (or at least a good indicator of it), or indeed that good culture is seen as a pre-requisite for career progression.

Culture might remove some of the barriers that can stand in the way of career progression for women by creating a conducive macro-environment, but the micro-environment around a woman clearly matters too, as the correlation with support from line managers (while slightly weaker) appears to testify.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Factors most strongly correlated with views about prospects for career progression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Training and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=3</td>
<td>Salary and benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=3</td>
<td>Support from line manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The day-to-day work itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Availability and/or extent of special leave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to read this chart:

What we're showing here is the relative correlation between factors in terms of how women feel about them. So, the factor that most strongly correlates with views about prospects for career progression is training and development. That correlation doesn't imply causation in either direction. We're not saying, for example, that positive views about training and development cause views about career progression to improve, or vice versa, it simply implies that there's a relationship between the two. Our ranking then offers a simple view of the relative strength of the relationship in each case.
“We try to ensure that everyone has a career pathway and encourage movement not only upwards but forwards. It is not necessarily about promotions but about feeling valued. Some simple questions like ‘What does a career path look like for you?’ or ‘What development might you need?’ and really listening to the answers might be all that is needed to keep your people feeling engaged and happy. And don’t just ask the question once. Often assumptions are made about women who have caring responsibilities, regardless of whether they have a newborn baby or older kids. Our priorities and career aspirations change regularly, depending on the life stage you’re at. Just because I had a baby ten years ago, it doesn’t reflect my current career aspirations today.”

Bethan Gill, Associate Director, Inclusion, Grant Thornton UK LLP
The five big factors: Organisational culture

Rankings

1.8 times more likely to leave
Women who view the culture of their organisation negatively are 1.8 times more likely to leave their employer (68% chance of leaving, compared with the 38% average).

84% of stayers say they feel positively about the culture of their organisation. Only 34% of leavers say they feel positively about culture. (See page 31 for definitions)

Organisational culture:
Factor rankings out of 15 (see page 38 for rankings lists)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact ranking (whole sample)</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This describes the relative importance of each factor in terms of the impact it has on decisions about whether to stay or go, where 1 has the biggest impact.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive sentiment ranking (whole sample)</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This describes how positively or negatively women feel about a factor, relative to others, where the top ranked factor (1) is the one about which women are most positive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentiment deterioration ranking (stayers vs leavers)</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This describes the relative deterioration in sentiment attached to each factor between stayers and leavers. The top ranked factor (1) is the one about which sentiment deteriorates most. Stayers = women no more than 25% likely to leave. Leavers = women at least 75% likely to leave.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for leaving ranking (women who have left an organisation)</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This describes the reasons women gave for having left their previous employer, where 1 is the biggest reason.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared with the "prospects for career progression" factor, experiences of culture are more consistent. Still, they aren’t entirely, so the chart on the following page shows once again, menopausal women stand out as having a more negative experience of culture than women who aren’t experiencing menopause symptoms, furthering the sense that while menopause may have little bearing on a woman’s propensity to leave, it is a time during which women are less likely to be happy at work.

Beyond that, a similar pattern emerges to the one we saw concerning career progression: generally, young, relatively junior, white women are the most likely to speak positively about culture. There is, though, an important difference: while part-time workers were more likely than their full-time counterparts to feel negatively about their prospects for career progression, the opposite is true when it comes to culture. Here, it’s part-time women who are more positive.
The five big factors: Organisational culture

How views of different groups vary

We can't be certain why part-time workers are more positive about culture than those who work full-time, but we might speculate that they're less exposed to toxic cultures than full-timers or that they're predisposed to thinking more positively about culture precisely because they're able to work part-time around whatever else is going on in their lives. It might also be that this is evidence of what we talked about earlier: part-time workers enjoying work more as a contrast to their parenting responsibilities. We know that women with children are generally more likely to speak negatively about most of the factors in our report, but the distinction between full-time and part-time might be important here.

Finally, once again, there's a distinct worsening of views about culture as women go through midlife or are mid-career. Those feelings do improve as women come out the other side of mid-age, but persist until they reach the very highest echelons from a seniority perspective. This last is interesting and speaks to the relationship between culture and prospects for career progression that we'll discuss on the following pages: the point in their careers when women are most positive about culture is the point where they reach the top. The implication is that the most senior women in an organisation might have a distorted view of the culture being experienced by most women, and might, therefore, downplay the challenges women face in getting to the top. After all, they managed it didn't they? Which isn't to say that they can't or shouldn't be allies to those women still climbing the ladder. On the contrary, these are people through whose experience something about the real-world formula for success can surely be deduced, even if some of them might need to help to see how they avoided obstacles (such as discrimination in whatever form) that other women encounter. For example, a white woman might have made it to the top without encountering many barriers and have very positive views about culture as a result, failing to realise that the experience of black women is very different.

Figure 20: Organisational culture: How the views of different groups vary from the average

How to read this chart

The orange colours show a more negative sentiment than the average whereas the blue colours show a more positive sentiment than the average. The more bold the colour, the more deviation from the average.
The five big factors: Organisational culture

Correlation with other factors

The most striking thing about culture is that there’s a moderately high level of correlation between it and virtually every other factor. Indeed, because of that, we can learn as much from the things that show a relatively low degree of correlation with culture as we can from those that show a high level of correlation.

Among those that have a relatively low degree of correlation and are therefore not shown on the table to the right are salaries and benefits, challenging any notion that making women feel more valued by paying them more is an easy route to improving views about culture. Perhaps more surprisingly, flexibility from the perspective of location is another, which hints at the idea that either a) post-pandemic it’s no longer seen as anything special, or b) employees can easily spot when flexibility is tolerated out of necessity rather than embraced. Either way, there’s a weaker correlation here than there is with flexibility from a time perspective. We see a bar being raised here, in which being able to work from home is now seen as “table stakes” and the real differentiator is a willingness on the part of the organisation to go a step further and countenance different ways of working such a compressed hours or job sharing.

The last of the relatively low correlations is with the team people work with, which serves as a very useful reminder of the difference between macro- and micro-culture. women can be, and very often are, extremely positive about the team around them but much less so about the culture of the wider organisation. Indeed, our strong sense – informed not only by this survey but also our wider research – is that a positive micro-culture among team members often develops as a direct reaction to perceived failings in the wider macro-cultural environment. For example, in the absence of a clear set of values, teams implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) create their own.

Among the factors that are most strongly correlated with views about culture we find the closely related factors of prospects for career progression and training and development. The message is clear: a good culture is one in which women are able to move forward and up, and are not held back for whatever reason. The subtext here is likely to say “relative to men” but we don’t know that for certain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Factors most strongly correlated with views about organisational culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>=1</td>
<td>Prospects for career progression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=1</td>
<td>Training and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The day-to-day work itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=3</td>
<td>Ability to work in a flexible way (time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=3</td>
<td>Amount of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=3</td>
<td>Support from line manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Availability and/or extent of special leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The team I work with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What we can also say is that a big part of a woman’s reading of the culture of an organisation comes from her heads-down experience of doing her day-to-day job. Again, we can’t be certain from our survey exactly what constitutes a good day-to-day experience, but the words we hear cropping up again and again in our conversations with women on the topic are “interesting”, “challenging”, “space” and “support”. Indeed, the last of those is where the line manager, another strong correlation here, comes in.

The last thing that’s worth mentioning here is the correlation with the availability and/or extent of special leave, which feels like a money-where-your-mouth-is challenge on culture. It suggests that good culture might not simply be about making work a great place to be, but also recognising that work sometimes needs to be a great place not to be.
“We have five simple winning behaviours that we all live and breathe by at Wickes which are the bedrock of our culture. These are Authenticity, Be At Your Best, Humility, Winning and a Can Do Spirit. They were developed through conversations with colleagues and are aspirational values for us all to live by. They are championed everyday by our leaders and, every month, awards are given out to individuals based on demonstration of these behaviours which keeps them alive in the business.”

Ben Jackson, Head of Inclusion and Diversity, Wickes
The five big factors: Support from line manager

Rankings

1.7 times more likely to leave
Women who view the support they get from their line manager negatively are 1.7 times more likely to leave their employer (64% chance of leaving, compared with the 38% average).

84% of women say that the support they get from their line manager has a "huge" or "significant" impact on their decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer. 74% say they feel “positive” or “very positive” about that support at the moment.

Support from line manager:
Factor rankings out of 15 (see page 38 for rankings lists)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Impact ranking (whole sample) This describes the relative importance of each factor in terms of the impact it has on decisions about whether to stay or go, where 1 has the biggest impact.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Positive sentiment ranking (whole sample) This describes how positively or negatively women feel about a factor, relative to others, where the top ranked factor (1) is the one about which women are most positive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sentiment deterioration ranking (stayers vs leavers) This describes the relative deterioration in sentiment attached to each factor between stayers and leavers. The top ranked factor (1) is the one about which sentiment deteriorates most. Stayers = women no more than 25% likely to leave. Leavers = women at least 75% likely to leave.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reasons for leaving ranking (women who have left an organisation) This describes the reasons women gave for having left their previous employer, where 1 is the biggest reason.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The five big factors: Support from line manager

How views of different groups vary

Support from line managers really stands out in terms of the impact it has on decisions about whether to stay or go, ranking number 1 in this respect among all factors. Thankfully, it’s also one of the factors about which women tend to be most positive, even if sentiment deteriorates significantly between stayers and leavers. But there are differences here. Once again, young and junior women are more likely than older and more senior women to speak positively about the support they get from their line manager, as are white women, those without menopause symptoms, children or caring responsibilities. It all adds up to a sense that the quality of line management deteriorates as managers are asked to deal with the impact of personal factors on professional lives, and that it needs tailoring to individuals.

That’s arguably best illustrated by what happens from both an age and seniority perspective: our data suggests that approaches to line management that work for young, junior employees don’t continue to work as those employees get older and more senior.

The quality of line management deteriorates as managers are asked to deal with the impact of personal factors on professional lives.

How to read this chart

The orange colours show a more negative sentiment than the average whereas the blue colours show a more positive sentiment than the average. The more bold the colour, the more deviation from the average.
The five big factors: Support from line manager

Correlation with other factors

The factor with which support from line managers most strongly correlates – the team I work with – reminds us of the vitally important role of the line manager beyond the immediate relationship they have with any single person that reports to them. More often than not, they’re also the line manager for most of the people in a team. They therefore have a much more pervasive influence on an individual’s working life than we tend to give them credit for.

Seen in that way, a line manager can be understood to have an important influence on culture, perhaps not in the macro-sense (unless they are sufficiently senior), but certainly in terms of the micro-culture around a person. And although, as we mentioned previously, the two levels of culture can be quite distinct from each other, they can be viewed quite differently. A good impression about the culture of a team may create a halo effect through which views of culture more widely are seen. The bigger the team that reports into a line manager, the more that’s presumably likely to be the case. If everyone around you behaves in a certain way, it’s not unreasonable to assume that this is how everybody in the wider organisation behaves.

But if that’s a matter of perception, then the relationship between organisational culture and line managers could also be rooted in a more straightforward reality; that good line management has the best chance of existing when set within a wider organisational culture that supports it.

Beyond that, it’s clear that there’s a strong relationship between line managers and the all-important question of prospects for career progression, the training and development that supports it, and the amount of work that people do. This last isn’t as strongly correlated with line management to the extent that some of the other factors in the table are, so we should remember that there’s a lot about a job that isn’t connected with line managers, but it would be churlish to suggest that the link isn’t a very important feature of anybody’s day-to-day experience of their work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Factors most strongly correlated with views about support from line managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The team I work with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Organisational culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Prospects for career progression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Training and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The amount of work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I’ve observed a crucial factor that often goes understated but holds immense importance for women with caring responsibilities: line management support. The quality of this support, which we sometimes take for granted, plays a fundamental role. It impacts both flexibility in balancing responsibilities and career development opportunities. Navigating through a large and complex organisation can be challenging without the guidance, support, and advocacy of a line manager. They help connect the dots, introduce mentors and sponsors, and unveil hidden opportunities within the organisation.”

Aneta Weedon, Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (EMEA), MUFG
The five big factors: Amount of work

Rankings

Amount of work:
Factor rankings out of 15 (see page 38 for rankings lists)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7       | Impact ranking (whole sample)  
This describes the relative importance of each factor in terms of the impact it has on decisions about whether to stay or go, where 1 has the biggest impact. |
| 10      | Positive sentiment ranking (whole sample)  
This describes how positively or negatively women feel about a factor, relative to others, where the top ranked factor (1) is the one about which women are most positive. |
| 5       | Sentiment deterioration ranking (stayers vs leavers)  
This describes the relative deterioration in sentiment attached to each factor between stayers and leavers. The top ranked factor (1) is the one about which sentiment deteriorates most. Stayers = women no more than 25% likely to leave. Leavers = women at least 75% likely to leave. |
| 5       | Reasons for leaving ranking (women who have left an organisation)  
This describes the reasons women gave for having left their previous employer, where 1 is the biggest reason. |

The factor rankings box on this page might initially appear to do little to justify the inclusion of amount of work in the list of the five big factors on which we’ve decided to focus: it’s only the 7th most impactful factor on decisions about whether to stay or go. But the positive sentiment ranking starts to tell the story here: this is something about which women feel relatively negative and which becomes a high-risk factor sooner than most others. Moreover, as we’ll show on the following pages, we know that there’s a very strong correlation between the amount of work women do and their propensity to leave.

31% of women in our survey claimed to be overworking by at least 10 hours per week.
The five big factors: Amount of work

How views of different groups vary

In terms of sentiment variation, the first thing to focus on here is the difference between part-time and full-time workers. The former, presumably because time is not just an explicit but almost an existential aspect of their employment contract, tend to feel much more positive. The result, confirmed by our data, is that they’re less likely than their full-time equivalents to be overworking. Indeed, while the opportunity to work part-time is doubtless a powerful retention tool, the thornier questions concern the notion of “full-time” work. If part-timers are able to ring-fence their hours so effectively, why shouldn’t full-timers be able to do the same? After all, while time may be a less important contractual consideration than it is for part-timers, it is an explicit part of an employment contract!

Beyond that, some of the familiar patterns start to emerge: young, junior women are more likely to speak positively about the amount of work they do than older and more senior women. There are clear peaks here in terms of negativity, between the ages of 45-49 and a seniority level of 70-79, after which feelings tend to improve. Do women become more tolerant of overworking or does overworking ease off? Our data broadly suggests that the former of those applies where seniority is concerned — the most senior women are no less overworked but more comfortable with it — while the latter is true where age is concerned; older women are less likely to be overworking. However, for reasons that aren’t completely clear, concerns about the amount of work seem prevalent among fewer groups of women from an ethnicity perspective than concerns about the other factors we focus on.

Figure 22: Amount of work: How the views of different groups vary from the average

How to read this chart

The orange colours show a more negative sentiment than the average whereas the blue colours show a more positive sentiment than the average. The more bold the colour, the more deviation from the average.
The five big factors: Amount of work

Quantifying the problem

In addition to asking about the amount of work women were doing as part of the factors at play, we asked a couple of additional questions – one about the number of hours women were contracted to work and one about the number of hours they typically worked – at a different point in our survey. That allowed us to conduct some more straightforward analysis about the relationship between amount of work and propensity to leave.

The correlation is one of the clearest we’ve seen anywhere in our data: the more women work beyond 40 hours per week, and relatedly the more they overwork, the greater the likelihood that they’ll leave. By the time someone’s working 80 hours a week, or 40 hours of overtime, they’re 57% likely to leave. There may be relatively few women at that extreme end of the spectrum (about 0.5% of our sample) but the problem kicks in pretty quickly: Figure 24 shows that most of the increase above the average likelihood of leaving of 38% has happened by the time women are overworking by 10 hours (something that about 25% of our sample say they’re doing).

In the legal services sector, for example, the proportion of women overworking nearly doubles, and while the impact of overwork on propensity to leave is blunted to some extent (presumably by the expectations of employees in that sector) it’s not dramatically reduced. Women in the legal services sector who overwork by an average of 20 hours are only about three percentage points less likely to say they’ll leave than women across the whole sample.
The five big factors: Amount of work

Correlation with other factors

Beyond the top two factors in the table to the right, correlations with the amount of work factor are relatively weak. The idea that there’s a correlation between amount of work and the day-to-day work itself probably isn’t particularly newsworthy, but it’s a reminder that enjoyment and volume are closely connected: doing too much of something you enjoy doing is a much better experience than doing too much of something you don’t.

The second – organisational culture – is arguably more instructive. There are, of course, plenty of practical, unpredictable or unavoidable influences on the amount of work someone needs to do. Things go wrong. Things don’t happen when they’re supposed to. The demand on any individual’s time is often hard to control. But the influence of the cultural context in which these things happen can be profound. At its most extreme it can account for a situation like the one that has been known to exist in Japan, where a word – karoshi – was created to describe death by overwork. Plainly, overwork isn’t always connected to a genuine demand for someone’s time.

If there’s a silver bullet concealed anywhere within this report, it may just be here. As we showed on the previous page, the degree of overwork has a clear influence on the likelihood that someone will leave their job, and while it can be incredibly difficult to control all the influences that lead to someone overworking, culture ought to be a relatively easy way to make headway. After all, if culture is, to any significant extent, driven by the behaviour of leaders, then the impact on the retention of women of something as simple as a CEO leaving work “on time” could be profound. We’re speculating here, but hopefully not unreasonably.

Beyond that, correlations with the amount of work factor become appreciably weaker. The presence of salary and benefits on this list probably isn’t much of a surprise, although the relative weakness of the correlation might be more so. It suggests that paying someone more in the hope that they’ll feel better about working long hours isn’t as effective as addressing the cultural influences on the prevalence of overwork in the first place. Or to put it more bluntly, the best way to deal with overwork is not to try to make people feel better about it, but to stop it happening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Factors most strongly correlated with views about amount of work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The day-to-day work itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Organisational culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Salary and benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ability to work in a flexible way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Availability and/or extent of special leave</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
“Post-pandemic we may have gained more flexibility over where we work but this research confirms that our culture of long hours and overwork continues unabated, damaging individuals’ ability to perform at their best and shortening careers. The challenge remains for leaders and employers to offer greater flexibility over when people work; but to do this they have to also look more critically at how work gets done. Only then will we free people’s time up during the working day so they can achieve more, today, tomorrow and over the longer term.”

Helen Beedham, Organisational expert and author of The Future of Time
The five big factors: The day-to-day work itself

Rankings

85% of women say that the day-to-day work itself has a “huge” or “significant” impact on their decisions about whether to stay with or leave their employer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor rankings out of 15 (see page 38 for rankings lists)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact ranking (whole sample)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This describes the relative importance of each factor in terms of the impact it has on decisions about whether to stay or go, where 1 has the biggest impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive sentiment ranking (whole sample)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This describes how positively or negatively women feel about a factor, relative to others, where the top ranked factor (1) is the one about which women are most positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentiment deterioration ranking (stayers vs leavers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This describes the relative deterioration in sentiment attached to each factor between stayers and leavers. The top ranked factor (1) is the one about which sentiment deteriorates most. Stayers = women no more than 25% likely to leave. Leavers = women at least 75% likely to leave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for leaving ranking (women who have left an organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This describes the reasons women gave for having left their previous employer, where 1 is the biggest reason.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, among the factors in focus here, there's the day-to-day work itself. It's the second most impactful factor on decisions about whether to stay or leave, after line management, and one about which women generally feel fairly positive. Indeed, the deterioration in views about the day-to-day work between stayers and leavers is nothing like as pronounced as it is about line management, which adds up to a really positive message: by and large, women really like their jobs.
The five big factors: The day-to-day work itself

How views of different groups vary

The message that women really like their jobs is not true for all women though. Here we see a reversal of one of the main trends we’ve observed in relation to other factors – that younger and more junior women tend to be more positive than older and more senior women. The opposite is true when it comes to views about the work itself: broadly speaking, women get happier with the work the older and (particularly) the more senior they get. The difference between the most junior and the most senior is especially stark. No wonder everyone’s trying to get to the top!

The other thing worthy of mention here is that women with children are more positive about the day-to-day work itself than those without. This topic has cropped up a number of times throughout our report: we’ve observed, on the one hand, that women with children are generally less likely to speak positively about any given factor, but we’ve also observed that they tend to be a bit more positive about culture. And now we know that they’re also more likely to be positive about the day-to-day work itself. That helps to build a picture of work as a welcome counterbalance to motherhood in the lives of women, but one in which questions about many important things – like career progression – are met with unsatisfactory answers.

Figure 25: The day-to-day work itself: How the views of different groups vary from the average

How to read this chart
The orange colours show a more negative sentiment than the average whereas the blue colours show a more positive sentiment than the average. The more bold the colour, the more deviation from the average.
The five big factors: The day-to-day work itself

Correlation with other factors

Although we didn’t ask about what made for a good experience of the day-to-day work itself, our data suggests that there’s a strong correlation with the amount of work that women do. There’s a risk of this presenting a slightly depressing picture about work, because it gives rise to the idea that the best thing women can say about work is that it doesn’t go on longer than it’s supposed to. But that’s misleading on the one hand (we simply don’t have data about some other aspects of the day-to-day work) and somewhat glib on the other. After all, there surely isn’t any shame in admitting that work competes for the time of employees with other things that are of even greater importance in their life, like their family and their health, and therefore that the amount of work they do is bound to have a bearing on their feeling about the work itself.

Behind that are two factors that collectively describe the environment in which work is done: the culture of the organisation and the team that people work with. These are the water to the swimmer: the environment that envelops the worker and has a direct bearing on how work is experienced.

Prospects for career progression appear to matter here, too, which is less obvious: it suggests that what women see ahead of them when they lift their heads up to see where they’re going has a direct bearing on their feelings about the work they’re doing; that they need to know what it’s all for in quite personal terms. Training and development could be seen in that context, too; in the sense that they provide women with the key to move forward – to move on to other things. But there’s likely to be something more practical going on here, too: training and development is a part of what enables people to excel at the job they’re doing, which presumably has a bearing on how much they enjoy it. And, even more prosaically, it gives them a break!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Factors most strongly correlated with views about the day-to-day work itself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Amount of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Organisational culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The team I work with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Prospects for career progression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Training and development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“We want to give autonomy to all our colleagues so that they feel empowered to control their own time and space when it comes to prioritising work. We also recognise that there is a correlation between level of workload and whether or not an individual feels their work is adding value to the organisation, which may impact their decision on whether they stay or leave the business.”

Mairi Brighton (she/her), Experience Manager, pladis
In this section of Part 2, we look at data from two specific organisations that participated in our research – the ones which women tell us they’re most and least likely to leave – in the hope that it will bring to life and reinforce some of the things we’ve already discussed in this report. We protect the anonymity of these organisations by referring to them as Organisation A and Organisation B.
Organisation A
(the organisation which women are most likely to leave)

Women from Organisation A are, on average, 48% likely to leave within the next two years. That’s 10 percentage points higher than the average across our whole sample. Based on what we know about the positive bias among women who came to our survey after being told about it from someone within their organisation (rather than directly by us), it’s possible that the “real” answer is nearer 65%.

So, what’s going wrong? The first thing that stands out is that the Retention Matrix™ for all respondents from Organisation A (right) looks not dissimilar to the “leavers” group from our whole sample (page 34), a group of people who are at least 75% likely to leave. A propensity to leave figure of 48%, high though it is, is ought to result in a Retention Matrix™ that paints a more positive picture than the one we see on this page. That leads us to conclude that either a) Organisation A’s employees are showing a considerable degree of loyalty against the backdrop of challenging working conditions, or b) they are indeed considerably more than 48% likely to leave but are scared of saying so.

The factor that immediately stands out here is salary and benefits – it has a greater impact on decisions to stay or leave than anything else and sits just in negative territory. But there are also problems here in terms of women’s feelings about their prospects for career progression, the amount of work they’re asked to do, and their opportunities for flexibility in terms of how and when (rather than where) they work. Indeed, this last is where Organisation A is most obviously different from the average organisation: employees are significantly less positive about it than they are across our whole sample. They’re clearly being given a greater degree of flexibility in terms of where they work – though that’s also something about which they’re significantly less positive than the wider market – but appear to be given much less flexibility in terms of things like the time they work or the opportunity to do part-time or compressed hours (e.g. working 9-day fortnights).

Mercifully, those factors are counterbalanced to an impressive degree by women’s positive feelings about the support they get from their line manager and the team around them. It’s a familiar story in which the micro-environment (the people and/or part of the business immediately around you) is seen to be positive despite concerns about the macro-environment (the wider organisation). Indeed, we often see the former reinforced as a direct reaction to the latter. But that most commonly happens in response to a poor organisational culture, and while culture isn’t something about which Organisation A’s employees are overflowing with praise, it’s nevertheless something that’s viewed positively by the average employee.

*NOTE the propensity to leave figure and the Retention Matrix™, while clearly related, are not the same thing and are based on different questions in our survey. While it’s possible to infer something about any group of employees’ propensity to leave simply by looking at the Retention Matrix™, the relationship between the two can throw up surprising results as it does here.
Organisation A
(the organisation which women are most likely to leave)

If we play the story forward at Organisation A and look only at those who are most likely to leave, the first thing we notice is a major deterioration in views about career progression. This has become the most important factor and is now something that’s viewed very negatively. The issue about flexibility has also become considerably more acute. At the same time, physical or mental health issues have grown in prominence and now have a greater bearing on decisions about whether to stay or leave.

Broadly-speaking, the more something matters, the more likely women are to feel negatively about it. But what appears to be pushing women toward the exit more than anything else is the sense that they’ve run out of road with their employer: their prospects for career progression are limited, they’re not being paid as much as they want, and they’re frustrated with not being able to flex the hours or days they work to the extent that they’d like. On top of which, they feel overworked and no longer speak favourably about the culture of the organisation.

What Organisation A has going for it is that, even among women who are very sure they’ll leave, what we might call the “head-down environment” is one they still like. They speak positively about the team they work with, their line manager, the day-to-day work itself and the flexibility they have to work from different locations. It’s the “head-up” environment (what they see when they look at the organisation around them and stop for a minute to think about what they’re being paid and where they’re heading) that’s the problem.

The general advice to Organisation A, in terms of how it addresses the retention of women, would therefore be concerned with addressing this head-up environment and not attempting to tinker too much with the day-to-day, except in respect of the amount of work that’s expected of people. More specifically, it would be to think carefully about the career paths for women in its organisation and understand how it can a) deepen its understanding of how these look today, and b) devise better paths for the future. At the same time, it needs to pay close attention to its competitiveness from a remuneration perspective and become more open-minded about introducing more flexible working practices (such as part-time working, jobsharing or compressed hours) to sit alongside the work it has already done in terms of allowing people to work from other locations.

It’s likely that those will all have a positive impact on perceptions of culture, but Organisation A should prepare itself for having to dig deeper on this front.

Figure 26b: The Retention Matrix™ for Organisation A (leavers only – women who are at least 75% likely to leave)
Organisation B
(the organisation which women are least likely to leave)

Women from Organisation B are, on average, 26% likely to leave in the next two years. That’s 12 percentage points lower than the average across our whole sample and means that, overall, women at Organisation B sit on the cusp of the “likely stayer” and “stayer” categories that we identified earlier in this report. The reality may be somewhat worse than that, because of what we know about women who answer our survey at the request of their employer, but unless Organisation B’s employees are more prone to this sort of under-statement than employees from other companies (for which we have no evidence) then the result, even in relative terms, is very impressive.

Straight away we can see the skew away from the exit that was so badly lacking for Organisation A. There’s a very strong correlation here between the impact of a factor on decisions about whether to stay or leave, and how positively women feel about it. The key here is a small cluster of very impactful and positive factors: support from line managers, team, and culture. The first two of those are factors to which we’re used to seeing very positive sentiment attached, though they’re viewed even more positively at Organisation B. But what stands out here is to see culture alongside those: it’s here that the biggest variance from the average organisation exists. That variance doesn’t exist to anything like the same degree in terms of how much of an impact culture has on decisions about whether to stay or go – it’s really all about how much more positively people view culture.

Other things stand out in terms of their variance from the average across our whole sample, chief among which are the day-to-day work itself, the amount of work expected of women, and prospects for career progression. All are viewed much more positively than they are in the average organisation. While we have to be careful about saying anything that would compromise the anonymity of Organisation B, there may be cultural and practical barriers to overwork at play here that don’t exist in other places, making the “amount of work” factor more positive. If that is the case, it’s a useful reminder of the positive impact that cultural barriers to overworking can have.

At the other end of the spectrum, employees of Organisation B are significantly less likely to speak positively about their ability to work flexibly from the perspective of location, but the factor is quite a bit less important to them, possibly because they understand there to be practical constraints on the organisation’s ability to permit flexibility of this type. Women here are also markedly less likely to speak positively about salaries and benefits. It’s a factor that matters quite a bit to them, and stands out as being the one thing that most obviously requires attention, but it’s so effectively counter-balanced by positive feelings about the other most important factors that its effect is neutralised to a considerable degree.

Figure 27a: The Retention Matrix™ for Organisation B (all respondents)
Organisation B

(the organisation which women are least likely to leave)

Organisation A and B might look quite different when seen through the eyes of their respective employees, but once women start heading for the exit door at either organisation some similarities emerge. Chief among those is a concern about salaries and benefits, although in the case of Organisation B this stands out even more: it's by far the most important factor and one that's now viewed negatively. Here, too, we find concerns about flexibility from a time perspective, giving rise to the idea that these are women who are really struggling to fit work around the other commitments in their lives, or who need more space to cope with things like menopause or other physical or mental health issues. Indeed, these last are starting to feature quite a bit more prominently among leavers at Organisation B.

But there the similarities end. For a start, concerns about career progression are nothing like as prevalent here. And while the amount of work that they’re asked to do is something about which leavers at Organisation B do feel quite negatively, it’s not a factor that carries quite as much weight as it does in Organisation A.

However, what’s really striking here is what happens to views about culture as women head toward the exit door. They certainly become less positive than they are among all employees – though they remain firmly in positive territory – but the bigger change is that culture moves from being the second most important factor in shaping decisions about whether to stay or go and becomes the ninth most important. The strong impression that leaves is of Organisation B being seen by everybody – even those on the way out of the door – as a good place to work, but of some quite specific things going wrong to an extent that good culture is no longer powerful enough as a factor to counterbalance sufficiently.

The obvious conclusion is that, unlike Organisation A, what’s not needed here is some sort of root-and-branch reform of the macro-environment in which women are working, but rather a few targeted solutions to specific issues. Organisation B looks like a good place for women, in which a few things have a tendency to go wrong.

Figure 27b: The Retention Matrix™ Organisation B
(leavers only – women who are at least 75% likely to leave)
Part 3: Recommendations
Part 3: Recommendations

No two organisations are the same and so, whilst we have provided a number of recommendations in this section of the report, any female retention strategy should be considered alongside your own organisation's data to enable you to select and prioritise the areas where you should make an investment.

This report has focused on five big factors for you to consider:

- Prospects for career progression
- Organisational culture
- Line management
- Day-to-day work itself
- Amount of work

The following section contains some suggestions of ways in which you can address these factors. As these are all big topics in themselves, the aim here is to provide a starting point. If you would like a tailored set of recommendations for your organisation, we would be delighted to discuss this with you.

Be curious and understanding

Whether this is through day-to-day manager conversations, surveys, stay interviews or focus groups, be curious and actively listen to what you are being told. Sometimes organisations don’t want to ask their women what they need in case they get flooded by requests to change things. Forward-thinking organisations are those that entertain every possibility. Don’t shut the door before you’ve even opened it and don’t be limited by ‘it will be too hard to change things around here’. Ditch the way things have always been done and move to the future with a new perspective and an understanding of the needs of all your people.

Learning and development really matters

Views about career progression deteriorate more than anything else as women progress from being what we call ‘stayers’ to ‘leavers’. Women need to feel that they’re moving forward even when they’re not moving up. There is a clear correlation between training and development and culture, so if you give attention and investment to this, organisational culture will evolve as a result. Often when organisations are dealing with cost pressures, training and development is an area that gets cut. Don’t be too hasty in this regard otherwise you will end up spending more in recruiting and training new employees and you’ll have lost the female talent you have invested in so far.

Pay more attention to job design (how and when work is done NOT where)

In our experience, organisations with a flexible and agile working culture are those that are ahead of the curve when it comes to retaining women (75% of women in our research said they feel positively about this). However, when it comes to flexibility from a time perspective rather than location, just over half of women in our sample (51%) said they felt positive about it. It is this that needs to be considered in the future. Throwing out the rule book and thinking more creatively about ways of working will not only improve feelings about the day-to-day work itself but also how your employees manage any overwork. Consider splitting roles up in a different way - whether that is job sharing, compressed hours, four day week or any other way to balance the commitments that women can often face outside work. Many women who work in this way say they wouldn’t have been able to continue working if they hadn’t had this flexibility. In this research, views about culture are also linked to women’s experience of their day-to-day work; the ability to do that work at a time to suit them, to do an amount of work that’s commensurate with their contract, and to feel supported and understood by their line manager. Organisations would do well to think more about personalised flexibility and creating a workplace that is designed around each of your people.

What does a ‘typical’ career path look like?

How does your organisation support career paths for women? Is it a one size fits all culture? What gets in the way for women? Do you have a formal sponsorship programme in place? Be prepared to address any barriers where they exist and listen and act on the feedback you receive. Is there an opportunity to rethink what this looks like so that it doesn’t fit stereotypical norms? Our research shows an important link between prospects for career progression and culture. Get one right and there’s a good chance that views about the other will improve.
Part 3: Recommendations

Rethink line management training
Support from the line manager is the top-ranked factor in terms of the impact it has on decisions about whether to stay or leave and generally experiences of it are positive. But it isn’t equally positive for everyone, and our research gives rise to a sense that the perceived quality of line management dips when it needs to encompass the intersection between work and personal challenges such as caring responsibilities or menopause. Effective line manager training or coaching is therefore critical: line managers need to be helped to support not only the professional but also the personal. Reverse mentoring can be a useful tool here. Particular attention should also be paid to understanding of the intersection of different ethnic groups through allyship programmes or similar.

Assess the amount of work
There’s a very strong correlation between the amount of work people do – and particularly the amount of overwork they do – and propensity to leave. Make no mistake about it: the more women are overworking, the more they’re thinking of leaving. The notion of “full-time” work needs looking at here: working hours may be every bit as explicit for full-time workers as they are for part-time workers from a contractual standpoint, but they’re often more readily overlooked in reality, and full-time easily comes to mean “as much time as we need you for”. We would recommend ‘personalising flexibility’ for individuals as much as possible and using things like job-sharing as an effective tool for retaining women. There are, of course, many practical challenges to overcome here, but it’s important to address overwork from a cultural perspective, too. And be careful not to assume that the allowances are made because of the nature of the work and the salaries women are paid. Be mindful, too, of the amount of work women are doing over and above their contractual work. Not in all cases, but it is often women that take on additional office ‘housework’ or chairing women’s committees that are voluntary roles in addition to the work they are paid to do. Taking on these additional responsibilities as well as additional responsibilities in the home can have an impact.

Keep a careful eye on the day-to-day experiences of your women
Younger and more junior women tend to be more positive about most of the big factors in this report than their older and more senior counterparts. However, when it comes to the day-to-day experience, this is not the case. Therefore thinking about the day-to-day experiences of younger, more junior women (and things like the team they work with) may pay dividends. As with the note on personalisation above, it pays to really understand what works for each individual rather than treating everyone as a group. The more they feel like they’re the future of your business, the more they’ll want to stay. In the same vein, consideration should be given to the experiences that other women may be facing. For example, childcare has a bigger impact amongst women in their 30s and menopause for women in their 50s. For women in their 40s, line management is the single biggest factor influencing decisions about whether to stay or go. And for women in their 60s, what matters most is the culture and day-to-day work. See Part 1 for more detail.

Focus on women’s initiatives but through an organisational lens
There’s nothing wrong with offering a wide range of services to support women as they deal with challenges like the menopause, but the hard reality is that, where retention is concerned, the experience they have when they return to their desks matters much more. Focusing on organisational cultural issues will help to create a workplace that is better for everyone, and not just women. When creating a female retention strategy, focus on initiatives that support women where this has an impact on the overall culture of the organisation, e.g. creating menopause awareness sessions for all employees and line managers (not just women of a certain age) or offering special leave as part of your well-being culture for all employees. If you have women who are not feeling motivated by the day-to-day work they are doing, have a line manager they can’t communicate with or a lack of flexibility around how they do their job, then having a menopause offering is not going to stop them from leaving.

If you are interested in finding out more about why women leave your organisation and what you can do to retain them, we’d love to hear from you.
In addressing the challenges women can sometimes face, it is essential to move beyond mere lip service and focus on actionable support. Our actions as an organisation, particularly those taken by line managers, are crucial in ensuring the well-being and success of individuals. The effectiveness of initiatives around things like menopause lies not in webinars or superficial gestures but in our genuine understanding and support when someone needs time off, is struggling at work, or feels anxious about performing tasks due to symptoms.

Our firm’s balanced gender statistics may be attributed to the presence of more women in leadership positions, who can possess firsthand knowledge and provide more empathy. This ongoing evolution is crucial for promoting equality and fostering a supportive work environment for all.”

Charlotte Rees-John, Head of Consumer Goods and Services, Irwin Mitchell
Appendices
Appendix 1: Methodology

Who we surveyed

Over the course of about six weeks from early-April to mid-May 2023, we surveyed 3,916 women about how likely they were to leave their employer and the factors that influenced their decisions about whether to stay or go. The charts here show a breakdown of that sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 28: Age</th>
<th>Figure 29: Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Group</strong></td>
<td><strong>Asian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or older</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 30: Children</th>
<th>Figure 31: Experiencing perimenopause or menopause symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Has children?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A NOTE ON SAMPLE: Out of 4,102 respondents, 3,916 respondents specified ‘Female’ in answer to the question ‘How would you define your gender identity?’ As this particular research focuses on factors that impact the retention of women in the workplace, 144 respondents that specified ‘Male’ were filtered out. A very small sample of respondents answered ‘Non-binary,’ ‘Trans woman’ or ‘Prefer to self-describe’ (less than 1% of our total sample) and so that has been reserved for future, more in-depth analysis where more meaningful comparisons can be made.
Appendix 1: Methodology

We then asked women about their employment status, at which point the survey split: women who were currently working for an employer (89% of our sample) were asked to tell us about their employer and then were asked questions about the factors that impact their decisions about whether to stay or leave. Women who were not currently working for an employer (the majority of whom were now freelance or self-employed) were asked to tell us about the reasons they left their previous employer.

**Figure 33: Women who told us about their current employer: Sector**

- Financial and Insurance: 42%
- Professional Services: 26%
- Goods Production and Distribution: 14%
- Other (inc. telecoms media & tech): 12%
- Public Sector, Charity and Healthcare: 7%

**Figure 34: Women who told us about their current employer: Size of organisation**

- Large (more than 1,000 employees worldwide): 88%
- Medium (50-999 employees worldwide): 9%
- Small (2-49 employees): 3%

**Figure 35: Women who told us about their previous employer: Sector**

- Public Sector, Charity and Healthcare: 29%
- Other (inc. telecoms media & tech): 26%
- Professional Services: 19%
- Financial and Insurance: 14%
- Goods Production and Distribution: 11%

**Figure 36: Women who told us about their previous employer: Size of organisation**

- Large (more than 1,000 employees worldwide): 63%
- Medium (50-999 employees worldwide): 26%
- Small (2-49 employees): 11%

Note: Professional Services includes legal, accounting, management consulting and other professional services. Goods Production and Distribution includes manufacturing, retail, food and agriculture, energy and resources, and transport and logistics.
Appendix 1: Methodology

How The Retention Matrix™ evolved

As explained in the Introduction, at the heart of this report is a device we’ve created to help employers to understand the challenges that women face in balancing the varying demands of their personal and professional lives. This evolved throughout the course of our research from an original see-saw version (shown below) to The Retention Matrix™ scatter chart that we use throughout this report. Whilst the see-saw was a very useful way to visualise the situation, its use was limited because it’s hard to draw the chart precisely. We’ve included it here because the concept in arriving at The Retention Matrix™ as it now stands is important, and also because it’s a device we used when talking about our research plans before launching our survey and is therefore something with which people are already familiar.

The following chart shows the original see-saw onto which factors of varying weight are placed, and where the positioning of each of those factors is determined by how women feel about it, with neutral sentiment placing it at the centre (on the fulcrum) and increasingly positive or negative sentiment moving it towards either extremity. In that way, we could see that a factor that carries relatively little weight and about which sentiment is relatively neutral will have far less of a bearing on the direction in which the see-saw tilts (stay or leave) than a factor that carries a lot of weight and about which sentiment is either strongly positive or strongly negative.

We’re showing how that see-saw looks, across all 3,916 respondents to our survey, below. Broadly-speaking, the see-saw is balanced towards women staying, because there’s more weight on the positive side than there is on the negative. What may have been lost in conceptual accessibility of the see-saw, we gained in precision with The Retention Matrix™.

Figure 37: The Retention See-Saw (for all survey respondents)
Appendix 2: A note on definitions

A note on the definitions and terminology used throughout this report:

- “Ability to work in a flexible way” or “Flexibility (time)”: Respondents were given examples of compressed hours, job-sharing and part-time.

- “Ability to work flexibly from different locations” or “Flexibility (location)”: Respondents were given examples of hybrid and from home.

- “Carer”: Anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, mental health problem or addiction, and cannot cope without their support. A ‘partial’ carer is someone who gives regular support to elderly relatives or others although not in the capacity of a carer.

- “Childcare commitments”: Commitments the respondents to the survey had or have, not the support offered by the employer.

- “Culture”: We did not provide respondents with a definition of culture in the survey but the Chartered Management Institute defines the culture of an organisation as its personality and character and says, “Organisational culture is made up of shared values, beliefs and assumptions about how people should behave and interact, how decisions should be made and how work activities should be carried out. Key factors in an organisation’s culture include its history and environment as well as the people who lead and work for it.”

- “Ethnicity”: Throughout this report we have used the UK government’s style guide on writing about ethnicity, including how we describe ethnic minorities and different ethnic groups. This can be found at https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity.

- “Eldercare or other caring commitments”: Commitments the respondents to the survey had or have, not the support offered by the employer.

- “Special leave”: Respondents were asked about the availability and/or extent of special leave (with examples given of maternity, parental, carers, menopause and wellbeing leave).

- “Menopause”: This refers to perimenopause or menopause symptoms, not the support offered by the employer.
Appendix 3: Contributors and thanks

This research has been undertaken by Encompass Equality Ltd, and sponsored by Clifford Chance LLP.

A big thank you goes to NatWest for supporting us with the launch event, and to Lisa Webb of PinkFrog for her support with the report design.

We are very grateful to the 3,916 individual women who gave their time to answer our survey.

In particular, we would like to thank the people we interviewed for the report, and the following organisations and networks for their help in distributing our survey:

- Auto Trader Group plc
- BAE Systems plc
- BNP Paribas
- Clifford Chance LLP
- Chartered Management Institute
- Coventry Building Society
- Diversity Project
- Fitch Solutions
- Grant Thornton UK LLP
- Healthcare Businesswomen’s Association
- Irwin Mitchell LLP
- MUFG
- NatWest Group plc
- PGIM
- pladis
- PwC UK LLP
- Reed Smith LLP
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