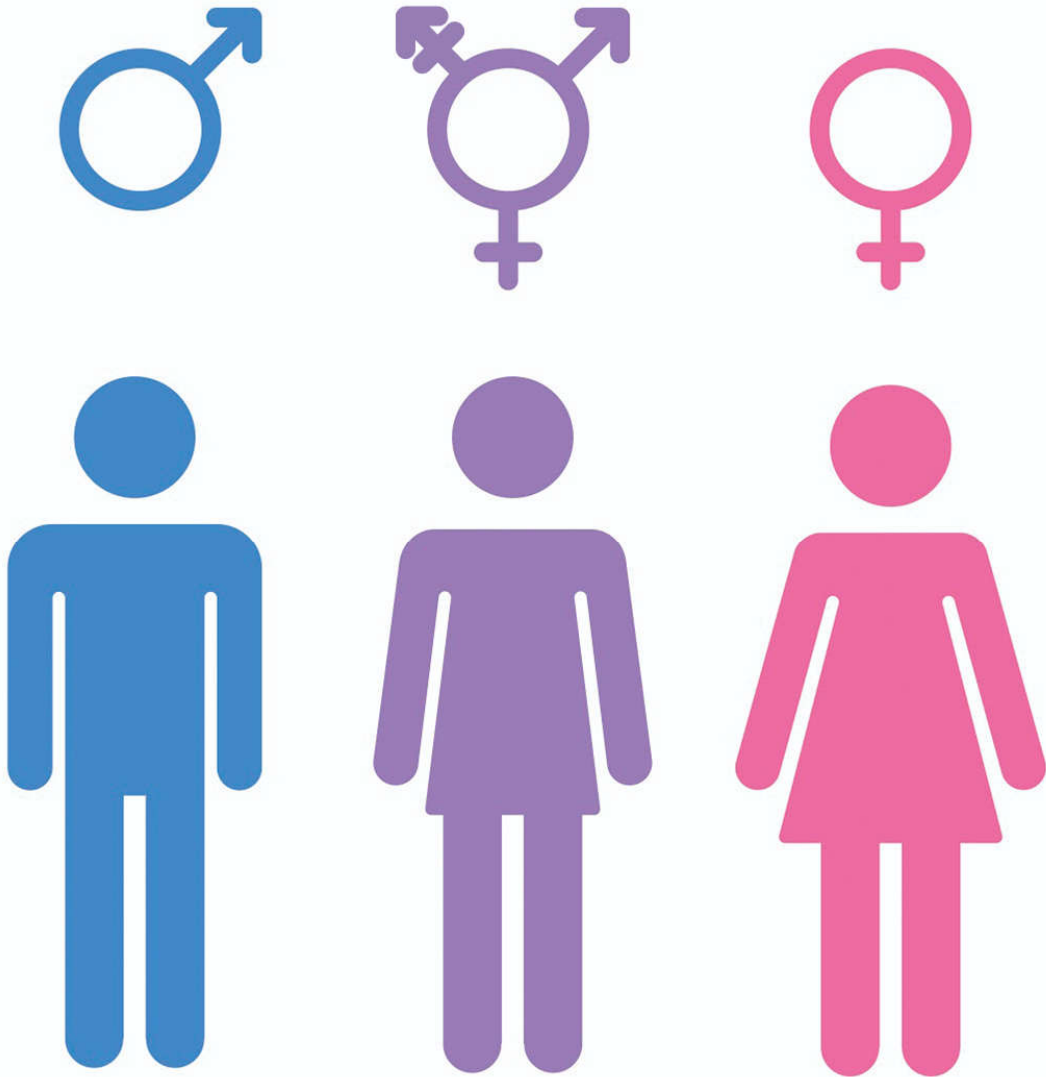# Creating cultural change to support gender equality in engineering (and in the oil, gas and pipeline industry)

By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Initiatives such as policies against harassment and discrimination, recruitment quotas, and female-oriented programs and networking opportunities have been introduced over the last couple of decades in order to foster better working environments for women in the Australian pipeline and gas industry. However, gender equality is still a work in progress.

A survey of employees in the Australian pipeline and gas industry was conducted to explore the experiences of current members of the industry with regards to gender equality. The results are presented in this paper in the format of stories direct from the survey respondents. The stories follow six themes:

1. Assumptions and stereotypes
2. Mentoring, sponsorship, training and promotion opportunities
3. Parenting and marital status
4. Sexual harassment, assault and bullying
5. Incident reporting and the failure of systems
6. Positive stories and progress made to date

The learnings from these stories are summarised in 20 findings:

1. A large majority of female respondents had encountered a range of negative biases.
2. Men had also experienced negative stereotyping.
3. There is a compounding effect of the negative assumptions and stereotypes, which affect behaviour, confidence, happiness and overall wellbeing.
4. A large number of women had missed out on opportunities (mentoring, sponsorship, networking, promotions), and this had affected their career development.
5. Some women had benefited from female-focused opportunities.
6. Some men felt excluded from female-focused events, and disadvantaged by quotas.
7. Hostile attitudes have arisen regarding the selection of 'token' women.
8. Certain opportunities exclusive for women have not made up for disadvantage experienced elsewhere.
9. Gender-specific initiatives are contributing to a gender divide that makes it difficult people of all genders to work together towards gender equality, and contributes to the exclusion of other genders (e.g. non-binary).
10. Both men and women experienced assumptions about their work ability because of their family life.
11. Both men and women reported struggles with accommodating parental duties around work duties, and having to decline work and industry opportunities.
12. More than one in five survey respondents had experienced physical sexual harassment or assault. More had experienced verbal, online or intimidating forms of sexual harassment.
13. Both men and women had experienced bullying, or experienced an aggressive culture. This emerged in the form of verbal abuse, belittling, physical harassment or threats, being spoken over or completely ignored.
14. Some women feel that they are being pitted against other women to compete for a few female positions.
15. Many women reported changing their behaviour and ambition due to concerns for their safety.

16. Despite the institution of policies against harassment and discrimination, there were many responses that described a gap in the execution of those policies, because of dismissive or defensive responses of managers, HR, and their colleagues.
17. Opinions on the progress made in the industry span from individuals believing sexism is still a big problem, to others who believe it no longer exists, and even to some who believe that it has reached a point of 'reverse sexism'.
18. Some individuals had excellent things to say about their companies and praised their leadership for focusing on gender equality. This shows that this puzzle can be solved and that these companies have a competitive advantage over others.
19. There are supportive men in this industry who have gone above and beyond in recognising their own privilege and are comfortable working alongside women.
20. A story-based approach to gender equality confronts the situation by attaching a person to the problem, rather than being "political". It has been proven to be an effective, compelling and creative way to instigate compassion and understanding.

Overall, these findings demonstrate the prevalence of gender-biased attitudes and draw attention to a sometimes hostile culture for women *and* men to work in. These findings also demonstrate that experiences and opportunity have significant effect on behaviour, development and wellbeing.

This paper provides 12 recommendations for individuals, companies and the industry to work together on a journey towards gender equality.

For individuals:

1. Listen to others. Seek to understand their perspective. We each have unique human experiences and our own history. Other people may have had very different experiences to yours, but that does not make them any less valid.
2. Question your assumptions. Have a conversation. Examine your bias with constant vigilance.
3. Find adjectives to add to your own vocabulary that aren't associated with traditional stereotypes. Remove gendered language from your written and spoken word when communicating to diverse audiences.
4. If you see an incident of gender bias, stereotyping, discrimination or harassment, question it, call it out, and support the victim.

For companies:

5. Foster a culture of open minded and curious conversations surrounding difficult topics. Create safe spaces of open engagement without fear of repercussion.
6. Regularly audit your systems and policies to ensure they are meeting their intent.
7. Support working parents. Provide equal opportunity parental leave for both parents. Allow flexible working. Establish check-in programs for people on parental leave.
8. Invest in initiatives that involve both genders.

For the industry:

9. Perform further research to understand specific issues for the industry.
10. Promote events to actively support gender equality (e.g. education seminars on how to identify and call out bias and discrimination).

11. Support initiatives that encourage women to enter the community and improve their presence within the industry. Then support initiatives that allow people of all genders to learn, work and participate in the industry together.
12. Celebrate progress in diversity, inclusion and equality.

Acknowledgements

Thank you *very very* much to every person who responded to our survey.

We would especially like to thank those who so bravely shared confronting stories of sexual assault and harassment, and those for whom answering the survey may have triggered difficult and dark memories or emotions.

The anonymity of the survey prevents us from saying this to the individuals directly, so to those people, we say: *We hear you. We support you.*

We hope we have represented your voices accurately here.

We would also like to thank those who provided feedback and survey responses regarding our "*Let's Talk*" presentations.

Also, thank you to Josh W. for reviewing this report and Briony, David F., Donny, Huw, Ben N., and Caleb for being all-round positive supporters.

And finally, a thank you to Josh E. for keeping us fed when we made a deep dive into the stories and started writing this paper, and to Kristina for being so patient when Margaret edited this while on holiday.

CONTENTS

1 BACKGROUND

Last year, we (the authors) were sharing stories of times we had been harassed or experienced bias because of our gender. We realised that we had quite a few stories. When we shared our stories with some of our colleagues, responses mostly followed three themes: those who said, "Oh me too!", those who said, "Oh wow, I didn't realise that happened!", or the occasional response of "You're making a big deal out of nothing!"

We know the facts: only 13% of the current Australian engineering workforce are women[1], there is significant attrition of women over the age of 30 from engineering[2,] and sexual harassment still occurs in many workplaces[3]. However, even though these facts are widely published, a few people we spoke to believe that gender discrimination is an inflated issue: they said it doesn't exist, or "it's not that bad". We also heard that "it is better than it was", so we shouldn't complain. We heard that gender quotas were "discrimination against men".

We recognised that we might be biased; having experienced gender discrimination ourselves, we might think the problem is worse than it is. We set out to investigate the prevalence of it in our industry – the Australian pipeline and gas industry. We created a survey and sent it to as many people in the industry as we could.

We had not *hoped* for stories, but as they started coming in, we realised that there were a lot of them. We had predicted that there would be stories from female engineers, but we soon found that gender-biased experiences are not exclusive to engineers: they are also common to management, administration, finance, IT, and many other roles within our industry. Furthermore, we found that gender-biased experiences are not exclusive to women. Men and non-binary people are experiencing the effects as well.

Of those who were dismissive about gender discrimination, we noticed that they were the ones who were unlikely to have stories. They have never experienced gender bias, so they don't realise what it looks like, and they don't believe how much it affects those who do experience it. They were sometimes quick to judge based only on their own knowledge or experience, and appeared less curious to understand the experience of others.

We decided to talk about gender bias with our team, and then with our whole organisation. We used storytelling techniques to share our own personal stories. Question and answer sessions following the presentations allowed respectful discussion of topics our colleagues might otherwise have felt uncomfortable raising.

Those presentations took a lot out of us. We were brave, we were raw, we were vulnerable; but we were also empowered and inspired. We found that by sharing our stories we were able to build empathy and investment amongst our colleagues, of all genders. Many who had been indifferent to

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[1] Romanis, J. (2022). *Women in Engineering,* Engineers Australia

[2] Professionals Australia (2021). Women in Engineering - an action plan for addressing the key drivers of attrition of women from the Engineering workforce, Professionals Australia.

[3] Jenkins, K. et al. (2020). Respect@Work: *National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*, Australian Human Rights Commission.

the topic learned to recognise bias, and understood the need for change. In addition, we were able to provide an emotional catharsis for many women who had had similar experiences. We were told, "I didn't think I was *allowed* to feel upset by those things", "You've put into words what I've felt for years", and, many times: "thank you."

With these presentations, we demonstrated that a cultural shift could be initiated amongst a supportive workforce that was willing to listen. We hope that this paper can accelerate a similar cultural shift in the wider pipeline and gas industry, building on the initiatives that are already underway, and the achievements of those who came before us.

We hope that when you read this paper, you will take the time to reflect on your own contribution to gender equality, and what you might do differently in the future. We hope that we can inspire more people to tell their stories, to be brave and vulnerable, and to listen to others' stories with an open mind and an open heart. Ultimately, we hope that we will all be able to respect and understand each other a little bit more.

2 METHODOLOGY

A survey was used to capture the variety of experiences with gender equality or inequality in the gas and pipeline industries in Australia.

We distributed the survey to personal contacts, to our colleagues, and to the Australian Pipelines and Gas Association (APGA) Women's Pipeline Forum (WPF). The survey also featured in industry newsletters, industry CEO Messages, and an article in The Australian Pipeliner magazine. We used email and LinkedIn, and we also requested that the respondents share it with anyone else they knew in the industry. We thank everyone that helped to broaden the reach of our survey, and helped to achieve such a great level of engagement and response.

In total, 130 respondents provided over 930 stories across the 15 questions. The questions are listed with their quantitative results in section 4.2. Two questions were added after the survey was initially released, as a result of feedback from survey respondents:

1. Do you think your experience in the industry has been different to that of a family member/friend/partner/colleague because of differences in gender? (If yes, please elaborate why)
    o   111 responses were received
2. Have you ever observed any of the above gender-related issues happen to someone else? (If your response is 'yes' please tell us the story of when/how/why this happened, including your reaction)
    o   55 responses were received

Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

We collected quantitative statistics, which are presented in Section 4. These corroborate many of the statistics that are already published[4,5]. The more compelling results are the qualitative data we collected in the form of stories. These stories are presented in Section 3

according to six themes which resonated with us after reflecting on the stories received:

1. Assumptions and stereotypes
2. Mentoring, sponsorship, training and promotion opportunities
3. Parenting and marital status
4. Sexual harassment, assault and bullying
5. Incident reporting and the failure of systems
6. Positive stories and progress made to date

In Sections 5 and 6, we summarise the findings, and provide recommendations for individuals, companies and the industry to consider.

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[4] Broderick, E. et al.. (2022). "Everyday Respect: *Report into Workplace Culture at Rio Tinto"*, Rio Tinto.

[5] Mettam, L., Folkard M.J., et al. (2022). "Community Development and Justice Standing Committee Report 2 *'Enough is Enough': Sexual harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry",* Legislative Assembly Western Australia.

3 STORIES FROM THE INDUSTRY

3.1 ASSUMPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES

"Belonging is the opposite of fitting in. True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are, it requires you to be who you are." – Brené Brown

A significant number of the stories received from the survey revolved around assumptions: assumptions of gender, assumptions of competence due to gender, and assumptions of certain skills due to gender. Expectations relating to clothing, appearance, facilities and equipment were all affected by gender stereotypes.

On their own, many of these assumptions were minor, but many recipients alluded to the compounding effect of all of those reminders that they were different to their colleageus: as they accumulated, these comments and situations affected the recipients' emotional state, their perception of inclusion and worth, their confidence in their own competence, and their comfort in being themselves.

"So many experiences of getting told we're different in a variety of subtle ways."

3.1.1 The Industry Stereotype

"Sometimes, being different feels a lot like being alone." – Lindsay Stirling

33% of female survey respondents reported having their gender assumed incorrectly because of stereotypes about male/female job roles, compared to 2% of male respondents.

"On my first day working for an engineering firm, I was chatting in reception with the other 5 new grads starting in my team that day (all male). The HR person opened the door and said welcome, come on in. We started to file through the door and she stopped me and said "Sorry, who are you here to see?" I said I was one of the new engineering grads. She said "No you're not". None of the male grads had to even say their name, she just assumed they were all meant to be there."

"[Industry Association] did it when setting up my membership. I have a gender neutral first name so they assumed that I must have made a mistake selecting Miss rather than Mr."

"I answered a phone call from a colleague with whom I had been corresponding by email. When I answered the phone my colleague asked to speak to me. I said, "yes, I'm speaking, that is me", and he replied, "no I want to speak to the mechanical engineer", and I replied again, "yes, that is me". There was an awkward pause and then an "oh, ok"."

"I regularly am referred to as Mr xxx by people who do not know me personally, despite a very feminine name. One day I even had someone phone me; after confirming I was indeed the name they were looking for, they stated "but you are a woman..." I confirmed I was, they then said "Sorry", then hung up."

"I have a unisex name, so that combined with being in engineering means this happens every time I'm working with someone new, who hasn't spoken to me or met me in person. I'm pretty sure even [my industry association] addresses emails to me as Mr."

"When I send an email to vendors or clients who are not familiar with my name, they always reply to me: Mr…"

"Not so long ago I arranged a Design Review meeting. The meeting room was at our offices and I got everything set up nice and early. I was in the room waiting for everyone to arrive when the first of the client's attendees arrived. They sat down without introducing themselves. Being the organiser and host of the meeting I offered to get them a drink and they accepted. When I got back from the kitchen they impatiently asked when the engineering team was expected to arrive, clearly assuming I was an administrative assistant or the like. I have […] literally watched jaws drop as I start providing technical input to the conversation."

"Standing in a circle of men on site discussing an issue with a contractor, my colleague told the contractor to pass the paperwork onto his team admin... so they passed it to me. (Being the only female in sight obviously made me the team admin.)"

"I've been the only woman in the meeting on countless occasions and received action lists and follow up emails addressed to "Gents" after meetings where I've made significant contributions. Less so nowadays but so often in the past. In fact it happened last year and I wrote to my colleague who was responding and asked him to do me a favour and thank the Lady for this email!"

3.1.2   The Competence Stereotype

"A woman must be twice as good as a man to get half as far" - Fannie Hurst

76% of female respondents reported that people had assumed their skill level because of their gender. In every case, the perception was that women were less intelligent or less competent than their male counterparts.

"Working as a production engineer on site, the maintenance manager assumed I would not be able to successfully complete a project and would suggest for me to contact a supplier and then would go back to the supplier and tell them to ignore my emails. I was made to feel that I wasn't capable of working or making improvements on the production line which ultimately caused me to leave that role."

"I have a Diploma in Business Management but as I work in an administration role, it's commonly assumed I have no tertiary education and therefore my opinion isn't important."

"Reviewing technical documents or writing/editing documents. I'm very experienced in this […] I'm very good at editing [but] it's assumed I don't know what I'm doing. As someone who works in administration it's assumed I'm uneducated and that I'm "just an admin assistant". I have a Bachelors in Business and more than 20 years of business experience."

"In many situations I have been assumed to be less experienced or knowledgeable than I am, particularly in my experience in the pipeline industry. It has often come as a surprise to people that I have several relevant degrees or that I have an academic background that can back up my professional experience. This experience is the norm."

"It comes across as mansplaining most often, when someone would request something in a normal manner from my male colleagues but they feel like they need to explain my job back to me first. Or as "oh, [male engineering colleague] usually does this for us, he can show you" when I was the one who trained "him"."

"Had a new starter come in and mansplain to me about how a system that I was the SME in (and had helped design) worked."

"One day while working on a main road as a trainee, I was carrying equipment for gas main flow stopping out to the excavation site. As I walked from the truck to the excavation (about 10m away) a man in a suit stopped me and said, "are you sure you know what you are doing with those?" I'd been working on the network for 3 years at this point."

"A member of a client company questioned my request for information and told me I should "check with the engineer" because he didn't think I should need it - I was the engineer and I did need that information."

"When I […] travelled with male colleagues, it was assumed that I was the more junior person."

"I was told that I didn't understand commercial matters because it is "men's business!""

"The manager believed I would not understand mathematics - too complex.'"

"Got a call from a contractor looking for me but when I answered he assumed I was an assistant and asked to speak to my boss."

"I have observed micro-aggressions happening to others, typically dismissing others' opinions without consideration, interrupting them, assuming a lower level of competence and not giving credit (or directing credit elsewhere) for good ideas/solving problems. There are no specific events that stand out, it is a relatively common occurrence and it's difficult to 'prove' if the perpetrator is singling out people or if they are just rude in general. To some extent I would say it is encouraged by, or a result of, a sort of macho/patriarchal culture throughout the industry, which to me doesn't feel strong (compared to like... a football team), but is always present below the surface. This feels (to me) less strong at my workplace but is more evident when dealing with people from other companies, especially from older men, and from sole trader type contractors (where there is less of an organisation in the background)."

3.1.3   The Skill Stereotype

"Both men and women should feel free to be sensitive. Both men and women should feel free to be strong. If we stop defining ourselves by what we are not and start defining ourselves by what we are, we can all be freer." – Emma Watson

24% of male respondents reported experiencing stereotyping due to their gender: they were assumed to be stronger and more experienced, but less emotionally intelligent than women. Female respondents also reported assumptions around their ability as cooks, cleaners and administrators.

"As a male I believe that I'm perceived / expected to be outspoken, a natural leader, resilient (tough) and insensitive emotionally. The reality could not be further from the truth - my real skills lie in listening, vulnerable / emotional communication and so forth."

"In a group of varied genders, it could be daunting and unfair for someone to assume you have the most experience in the group because you are a male."

"Having a colleague ask me to bake a cake for a meeting. When I suggested he make the cake his response was that he was a man and doesn't know how."

"I usually feel that because I am male and have no kids I am not allowed to say no to anything because it will be seen as weak, not being committed, not being a team player, or some other similar judgement."

♀ "I am assumed to be the one to take notes in meeting, tidy up the meeting room/kitchen, help the caterer, organise work outings, etc."

♂ "I have had a lot of assumptions about my emotional intelligence and ability to communicate effectively that I largely see as a gender based assumption, I've had assumptions about my skill level being low for personal hobbies based on gender."

♀ "As a graduate engineer it was suggested by a colleague and then approved by a director that I would take over the administration responsibilities until they found a suitable candidate. They never asked me if I was okay with this. There were other graduate engineers who could've helped with the responsibilities. They were all male though and it was either assumed they wouldn't want to or wouldn't be good at it."

♀ "As a graduate I was made to get coffee, process staff expenses and other administration tasks and I noticed male graduates did not have to do this. They were given opportunities to go into the field and I wasn't."

♂ "As a male at times it is presumed by both females & males that I can fix/renovate/replace/build things - cars, bikes, around the house. I'm not inept with my hands, but my skills lie elsewhere, and working with my hands is not my forte."

♀ "I have been told I need to be more confident […] However, I have noticed men in the office that do the same thing and yet I haven't heard them being told that they lack confidence. It seems that my "lack of confidence" is more obvious solely because I'm a woman."

3.1.4   Clothing and Appearance

"The noise of a woman's appearance drowns out all other information, and becomes a type of silencing." - Anna Goldsworthy

18% of men responded "yes" to whether they had received comments on their appearance, while 60% of women responded "yes". The majority of comments on men's clothing were compliments, or due to unusual clothing choices. In comparison, women's stories varied considerably. In many cases, comments that were framed as a compliment were sexually suggestive or intended to make the recipient feel uncomfortable.

♀ "I prefer it when you wear high heels", "You look sexy in those safety glasses".

♂ "I have worn some loud shirts in the past which have attracted comments (all positive). I suspect a woman wearing colourful clothes would not get the same comments. I imagine this is a different experience entirely for women."

♀ "I once went into my office wearing a below-the-knee pencil skirt that fitted nicely, not too snug, and because it was hot, a camisole under a cardigan I took off. I had to ask a tech for a drawing review but they were out in the workshop that day, so I went out to ask. I stuck to the visitor path where PPE is not required, like everyone else from the office, and proceeded to ask my question. A week later my boss gets a call that I was "inappropriately dressed", "behaving inappropriately", "causing a stir" and "making a name for [my]self". She had to listen to my protests that I didn't need boots/long sleeves to walk on the visitor path, then had to explain that my 23-year-old, curvy-fit, triathlon-racing body was unfortunately not bound by the same rules as everyone else and I had to just "protect the old-fashioned folks"."

♀ ""I do enjoy when you walk in front" or "you have a nice sway to your hips when you walk" or "shouldn't that belt buckle be a picture of a pussy [sic] not a horsie?""

♀ "At the time I didn't really realise how wrong it was... I worked at a chemical factory for vacation work. My supervisor (male) told me there were a few conditions to my employment, one of which was to arrive wearing a short ('above knee' in his words) skirt to the factory in the morning and that I could change into my overalls (high-viz) when I got there. I did that for a few days until I realised that I was attracting all kinds of undesirable stare-downs when I walked through the gate and that my male counterparts were arriving in their overalls!"

♂ "One day, I was told "Today, you are looking debonair". Apparently I was well dressed on that day."

♀ "Once on a training course I was asked to stand up and leave the classroom due to the way I was dressed; 3 years later, it happened again with the comment of "I will ask you to please change the way you dress" (I was showing absolutely no skin, actually I had the same clothes that another female colleague had, but somehow a 1.76m tall confident female engineer has to tone down)."

♀ "I've been asked if I'm wearing a thong after climbing a ladder on site."

♀ "One time, when I went to [my director's] office, he told me to shut the door behind me, asked me to turn around and commented how my butt looks nice in the skirt that I was wearing. I told him that it's inappropriate and left his office. He proceeded to tell me that I should be happy being complimented."

♀ "I wonder if men feel the pressure to be "camera ready" at all times WFH, or if they think about how tight the pants they're wearing are today or whether their shirt button is closed because "that one guy" will be in the meeting. I wonder if men feel insignificant when they've gained weight and aren't the eye candy in the room any more, and if it's any harder for them to be taken seriously or made friends with."

"A male colleague frequently commented on my weight and the food I ate and how it might affect my weight. This was continuous and eventually led to an eating disorder which I am still struggling with today."

"I have been told I "don't dress girly enough" and that I "don't look like a real woman" because I don't wear makeup."

"Making the transition from a fully field based role to a mixed field office role brought these two comments: "You're going to be in the office now, you'll need to start wearing makeup" and "If you start wearing makeup no one will ever take you seriously"."

3.1.5   Facilities and Equipment

"We are constantly trying to fit into a world that doesn't fit us" – Survey Respondent

In our naivety (we had assumed these troubles were in the past) we did not ask about the provision of facilities (bathrooms), equipment and uniforms in the survey, so we cannot provide a meaningful statistic. However, some stories were provided anyway, and these indicated that companies did not provide facilities and/or equipment suitable for women.

"Clothes were only available in men's style which were neither comfortable nor flattering."

"I've been told that the toilets are not gendered but in the same sentence been told that they would advise I hold on until the admin building is open as they have seen things they didn't want to in there."

"Many sites put up a shutdown village which did not have women's toilets"

3.1.6   The Death by a Thousand Cuts

No one in a position of power along the pipeline has consciously decided to filter women out of the STEM stream, but the cumulative effect of many separate but related factors results in the sex imbalance in STEM that is observed today – Jacob Clark-Blickenstaff[6]

The "*death by a thousand cuts*" describes lots of small bad things happening, none of which are fatal by themselves, but which add up to a slow and painful demise. Any one of the stories presented in this section is a small cut – small comments, small situations. The people who experienced them went on with their day. But when these experiences start to add up, it becomes harder and harder to ignore.

Men and women alluded to ongoing effects on behaviour: hiding their feminine traits, changing the way they behave around their colleagues, and ongoing emotional stress. We expect this has resulted in some people leaving the industry altogether (we cannot state this for certain because we have only surveyed those who are still working in the industry).

"Men always ask why a woman gets so upset over "just a little comment", but I face 1-2 little comments every day. That's 5-10 per week, or 250-500 per year. I'm sorry if little comment 4,326 pissed me off."

"I have felt like 'hiding' my femininity and emotions over the years so that it can be less construed as a weakness. Answering this survey has been confronting for me as I read back all these negative experiences I have had over the years."

"I believe that male dominated industries hurt men too - there is often very little space available for effective mindful communication or emotional expression, both things that I value highly."

[My lack of confidence] could be a bit of a female trait (through learning and experience - as a woman there is more on the line if you get something wrong).

"I think the extra time spent feeling out of place and always a little uncomfortable adds up over time. This time could be spent on better, more worthwhile things, but you can't really ignore your feelings."

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[6] Blickenstaff, J. (2005). "*Women and Science Careers: Leaky Pipeline or Gender Filter?*", Gender and Education. Vol 17, No. 4, pp. 369-386.

♂ "Probably the biggest difference [between my experience and a woman's] would be the lack of distraction/disruption of these gender-related issues which allows me to focus wholly on work related/technical related areas. If everyone feels safe, supported and fulfilled in their work, I'm a strong believer it allows people to perform at their best, which is in the interest of the company and the employee."

♀ I had to work extremely hard to get to where I am now and I work extremely hard to deliver! I'm not saying my male counterparts do any less - I just feel like I have to add in a few extras because I am female - like being prepared for those who doubt what I am saying or doubt that I have the ability to do the job

♀ "People don't understand the way it sticks with you and builds a little bit towards your tough shell but also steals a little bit of your positivity and light."

♀ "You continually have to prove yourself no matter your age or position. A male client once told me that if he meets a woman executive in our industry he knows she is exceptional because only the exceptional women survive."

3.1.7   A Note on the Reinforcement of Stereotypes

"Our minds, society and neurosexism create difference. Together, they wire gender. But the wiring is soft, not hard. It is flexible, malleable and changeable. And, if we only believe this, it will continue to unravel." – Cordelia Fine

We hear the above stories and it makes sense that women who are told they are less capable would be less confident in meetings, that they would be more risk-averse. It makes sense that women who don't have access to suitable facilities, who are expected to do extra work, who don't feel like they fit in, would be more stressed, that they would appear to be more emotional. It makes sense that they might even decide to leave the industry after a while. One can see how biases can cause stereotypes to be reinforced.

Cordelia Fine investigates "essential differences" between sexes in her book[7], and shows that there is very little unbiased scientific backing to those supposed differences. However, there is proof that once supposed gender differences become known, they interact with our minds and help to *create* those differences. Fine explains, "When the environment makes gender salient, there is a ripple effect on the mind. We start to think of ourselves in terms of our gender and stereotypes, and social expectations become more prominent in the mind. This can change self-perception, alter interests, debilitate or enhance ability, and trigger unintentional discrimination. In other words, the social context influences who you are, how you think and what you do. And these thoughts, attitudes and behaviours of yours, in turn become part of the social context."

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[7] Fine, C., (2010). "*Delusions of gender: the real science behind sex differences.*" Icon Books, London.

Women and men are thus being affected externally (from the preconceptions of the people around them) and internally (from their own knowledge of the expected social identity of their gender). Stereotypes which may originally have been unfounded are reinforced and exacerbate gender inequalities. It is important that we all start to question our assumptions and preconceptions, to allow ourselves the opportunity to freely develop our skills, abilities and possibilities free from imagined limitations.

3.2 Mentoring, Sponsorship, Training and Promotion Opportunities

"Nothing is more expensive than a missed opportunity" - H. Jackson Brown Jr.

Opportunity (to have training, to network, to be mentored, to be promoted) is critical in determining personal growth and career progression. This section explores the dichotomy in the stories that were received about opportunity: there is both advantage and disadvantage to women. It suggests that there are some sections of the industry that are still excluding women, while other sections of the industry are proactively working to right past wrongs. Both of those (the old-school bias, and the proactive actions) are having an effect on women and men alike.

3.2.1 Missed Opportunities

"The tragedy in the lives of the people is in what does not happen, rather than in what does happen" - Ethel Carnie

Many people reported having missed out on an opportunity (mentoring, training, networking or promotion) because of their gender. Predominantly, these were women. This is likely to be a direct result of the attitudes presented in Section 3.1, and the effect is that women are not experiencing the same development or career progression as their male counterparts.

3.2.1.1 Mentoring and Sponsorship

"It's not who you know, but who knows you" - Susan RoAne

31% of women reported having missed out on a mentoring, sponsorship or development opportunity because of their gender, compared to 9% of men. A mentor will provide guidance and support to a mentee, while a sponsor will advocate for the other person when they are not in the room. Often, women do not have mentors or sponsors unless they have joined a female-specific program.

"The manager prefers to take male engineers with them for site visits"

"Time spent in mentoring is not always equal - I have witnessed senior managers talking to male colleagues about work at networking opportunities then only want to talk to me about their grandkids, or mention that they regret not having more children."

"Men tend to sponsor men over women. (Similarity bias). Women are over-mentored and under-sponsored. Proactive sponsorship of women, from men, is key."

3.2.1.2   Job Development Opportunities

"Life is a series of experiences, each one of which makes us bigger" - Henry Ford

Women are missing out on significant development opportunities within their jobs (site visits, international postings, more detailed work) at a much higher rate than men. This is due to safety, logistics, and stereotypes.

"Opportunities to work overseas are not given to the females as the company can't be bothered dealing with female safety."

"Two graduate engineers, one man and one woman, started at the same time in the same role for a major operator. Because of the limited bedspace offshore and the company policy of not having mixed-gender rooms, there were far fewer opportunities for the woman to gain offshore field experience than the man. The male crews on the rig would complain when a woman would go offshore as the whole bed allocation would have to be shuffled."

"A few years back we had 3 graduate Engineers start with us at the same time, one of which was female. The roles assigned to the males Engineers were site based and in Quality Control and Subcontractor Management. The female Engineer was based in the office doing data entry. She quit after 6 months."

3.2.1.3   Networking and Social Events

"It's not what you know, but who you know" - Anonymous

Women are kept on the outside of social circles in work settings due to inappropriate work activities and an exclusive "boy's club" mentality. 44% of women had been excluded from a work-related social or networking event because of their gender (compared to 13% of men).

"When I started work as a graduate the (informal) Christmas Drinks were at a topless bar! (I didn't attend)."

"I have recently come to learn that a senior member of staff at my company (visiting from interstate) has been inviting male graduate engineers in our office to a strip club when he visits. I doubt this is an invitation extended to his female colleagues (I'm aware that this is not the solution, I hope this behaviour stops)."

"I feel like I have been not invited to events, or not welcomed at events (i.e., end of project drinks) because the rest of the team is male, and because it is a 'boys club'."

"I have missed out on social events with colleagues because they were doing "guy things". In general I wouldn't mind (e.g. for a bachelor's party) but it's isolating when you're the only person to miss out."

"All the guys would go for lunch or to the pub and I wouldn't get an invitation."

"Footy, golf, pub crawls, late night whisky sessions. Even the random lunches that the "boys" go on together, I miss out. Partly because I'm part time and they "don't predict my presence" (even though office days are the same), but I think the office doesn't see me as "one of the boys"."

3.2.1.3.1 Golf

"Golf provides a unique opportunity to bond with individuals for a significant amount of time" - Bill Walsh

Golf was disproportionately represented amongst the stories of exclusion: 18% of female respondents have been excluded from "golf days".

"I have been excluded from golf days and deliberately took lessons so I could join but my colleagues still didn't invite me to join them."

"Women don't get invited to golf days or other activities that are seen as "men" things to do."

"All of the managers (my peers) went for a golf afternoon, and I was the only person that wasn't invited. Yes I can hit 200 yards, but they never even asked if I was interested."

3.2.1.3.2 Menstruation

"Talking about the ooze that leaks out of our orifices is uncomfortable for everyone involved."—Binati Sheth

Women are also missing out on events and opportunities because of menstrual pain, and are struggling to talk about it with their male colleagues.

"Menstrual pain affects a lot of us and our ability to live and work normally."

"[I have had to decline an opportunity] due to period pain and cramps."

3.2.1.4 Recruitment and Promotions

"The best person for the job"

Despite many organisations priding themselves on employing and promoting candidates based on their 'merit' (their individual skills, attributes and qualifications), women are missing out on promotions and employment at a much higher rate (10%) than men (2%). (This is despite gender quotas resulting in claims of female candidates being promoted without 'merit' – see section 3.2.3.1 below).

Evidence demonstrates that cultural assumptions and stereotypes can sway managers' recruitment, selection and promotion decisions in an unconscious fashion, making it difficult for managers to determine which candidate truly has 'merit' and which does not[8]. Choices are affected by:

- Similarity bias (we are more likely to favour people like ourselves)
- Experience bias (we are more likely to hire and promote people like the people who have been in the role before)
- The 'paradox of meritocracy' (opportunities accrue to employees that have had other opportunities)
- The 'confidence gap' (a lack of confidence, resulting from having missed opportunities before, holds people back from looking for other opportunities)

The stereotypes discussed in section 3.1 and the stories here indicate that gender has a significant impact on the perceived 'merit' of individuals seeking promotion.

"Yes, I believe at my previous employer I was not considered for certain management/ leadership roles even though I had expressed my interest in taking them on. The technical management team was 100% male and it was clear to me that females were not being considered for key positions in that team. I left."

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[8] Foley, M; Cooper, R; and Mosseri S (2019). *Gender equitable recruitment and promotion: Leading practice guide*, WGEA Commissioned Research Paper, The Australian Women's Working Futures (AWWF) Project, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

♀ "I missed out on a clear promotion into a role in which I was already acting because I had recently hired a young-middle-aged man into the team who automatically got it ahead of me without interview."

♀ "I was told by a male manager that "I needed to work extra hard and get used to staying late and buying ready meals (instead of going home to cook) if I was going to meet the same achievement levels of my male peers.""

♀ "I had questions about whether I could lead a team of operators at age 26 when a male colleague with the same background was already in the role. They could not bring themselves to "expose me to that environment", being the only woman on-site at night with 30 blokes."

♀ "When I got [promoted to] engineering manager I was told that I was clearly a junior and it would be a stretch role for me. I had been a Senior Engineer for 7 years in 3 different cities with up to 8 staff (layered) under me. My competition was 2 boys who had been Senior Engineers for 2 years and it was "a close race"."

3.2.2   Additional Opportunities

"A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could." - Zig Ziglar

25% of women reported having had *extra* opportunities for mentoring or development because of their gender, compared to 11% of men. Largely, the opportunities received by women have come in the form of female-centred inclusion initiatives.

3.2.2.1   Acknowledging the male advantage

Successful men share their stories of success; successful men are granted the privilege of individuality. Somewhere, it was decided that a woman who claws her way to a podium must speak for us all. - Anna Goldsworthy

Fewer men self-reported extra opportunities (11%), than women reported missed opportunities (refer earlier sections). However, a number of men reflected on their in-built advantage.

♂ "I was able to create a lot of rapport with lecturers/professors at university and I attribute some of this to us being the same gender and able to build those relationships. I did not have the same relationships with my female lecturers and I saw this as due to differences in personalities. I can now see how my gender has advantaged me in creating these relationships with lecturers."

♂ "I have not missed out, however, upon reflection, I was probably given extra mentoring by a previous senior engineer as he saw some of himself in me."

♂ "As a teenager in high school, nobody batted an eyelid when I said I wanted to pursue engineering as a career. At all stages of my education the opportunities required to get into engineering were handed to me with no question or significant effort required on my part, which certainly is not the experience some of my female colleagues have had."

♂ "I was immediately accepted into the industry as a male; my female colleagues have had to prove themselves over longer periods."

♂ "Some of the best engineers I have met have been females. Unfortunately though, they have only got to the position they have due to having to make a number of sacrifices and fighting for everything they have earned (when it would have been easier for a male to achieve the same things)."

♂ "Males in the industry are certainly typical, so consciously or not I have been seen by others to fit, so it has been one less obstacle to climb.... it may also mean I've had less support at times because he is a-typical he should know how to do it, right?"

3.2.2.2 Women-only leadership programs

"In the future, there will be no female leaders. There will just be leaders." – Sheryl Sandberg

Female survey respondents were positive about the existence of women-only leadership programs and mentoring opportunities within the industry. As noted above, many women miss out on these opportunities unless they have joined a female-specific program.

♀ "I think being female has actually opened up some extra mentoring opportunities because there are programs open for women, support for women to sign up to these and I think there are some great champions, both male and female, for women in the industry."

♀ "I have completed some women's only leadership and mentoring courses. I think if they were advertised as general/for everyone I wouldn't have put my name down for it as I would have thought others were more suited. However, as it was women's only, I thought I made a good candidate. This has since validated my belief that I have leadership skills and I am more likely to put my name down for others."

The APGA as an organisation has also seen improvement in female participation in the industry following the establishment of the Women's Leadership Development Program in 2019. The

following statistics for number of female contacts from member companies have been provided by the organisation:

- *2018: 18.75% women (346 out of 1845).*
- *2020: 24.78% women (531 out of 2143).*
  - *Of this 531, over half (279) are profiles created since January 2019.*
- *2022: 25.9% women (677 out of 2612).*

3.2.3   Missing the Mark

"Impassioned characters never attain their mark until they have overshot it" - Sophie Swetchine

While female-centred inclusion initiatives have been generally well received by women, claims of discrimination against men have arisen, and many women have been told that they have not earned their positions. This has resulted in a further effect on both men and women's behaviour and feelings of inclusion in the workplace.

"Had a large debate with another colleague around gender targets. They (male) couldn't understand why gender targets were needed and felt disadvantaged that as a graduate there was a target to get 50% female applicants but yet females weren't represented as 50% in the university course. They couldn't understand why having a higher target actually promoted females to pursue engineering as a legitimate career course if there was equal chance of securing employment at the end."

3.2.3.1   *"Reverse Sexism"*

"A world full of empowered women isn't one where men are marginalised. It's a world where everyone thrives." - Purnima Mane

Men have observed a preference for the recruitment or promotion of women in companies which have established quotas. This raises the possibility that those companies will not select the most technically qualified person in order to meet a quota.

"I do hear of stories lately where promotions are given to women based on gender targets and not on the qualifications, experience and competency required to perform the role.... this is a disgrace and the women pushing the gender equality movement need to be careful that they don't alienate those respectful men.... a gender war is not a good solution ."

♂ "I went to a conference seminar titled "What's the best major to choose?" and the (male) [speaker] told us all that the best type of engineers we could be are female engineers, because the industry needs to have more females. These kinds of discussions are obviously going to raise a feeling of contention for males to be against females (in my opinion) as I (a male) literally cannot be a female engineer, and was discouraged that the answer was unachievable for myself. I don't think it's wrong to try to fix the imbalance of a heavily male-dominated industry, but I think it will cause feelings of competitiveness and of feeling disadvantaged. Are there similar movements in female-dominated careers to entice males?"

♂ "Current push in industry is to recruit females. I feel I have missed opportunities where I may have been the most qualified, but gender or diversity was part of criteria."

3.2.3.2   Token Women

"I am always looking over my shoulder wondering whether I measure up" - Sonia Sotomayor

Many stories indicated hostile attitudes about the selection of '*token*' women, women hired purely to fill a gender quota or to make the company look diverse. These attitudes undermine women who have achieved leadership positions, create push-back against gender equality initiatives, and may contribute towards imposter syndrome.

♂ "Just yesterday I heard "it's easy to get a job at [company] if you're a woman"... I imagine this kind of statement just adds to the imposter syndrome many women would feel."

♀ "A peer told me I'd only received something over them because it was "reverse sexism"."

♀ "The subject of gender quotas can come up from time to time. I guess I'm more overwhelmed with the repetition of this discussion, than the discussion itself. I am of the personal view that quotas have their place, are not perfect, but the biggest problem with them is the perception that women have not rightfully earned their place."

♀ "I was the only female; I got told by one of the guys that the only reason the group I was in (we got assignments and we were splintered into different groups) got the best score was because of my gender and how I looked, completely ignored all the hard work I put in and just made the comment based on that. He continued with further comments over the years (behind my back)."

♀ "A guy once told me that I got this job because I was a woman. When I tried to explain to him that I was hired for my skills and degree, he refused to acknowledge it"

"I have had multiple development and networking opportunities throughout my career. I hope that this was because of my ability & potential, but it may have just been seen as a chance to promote a woman in the business."

3.2.3.3   Breaking even

"Because I am a woman, I must make unusual efforts to succeed. If I fail, no one will say, "She doesn't have what it takes." They will say, "Women don't have what it takes." – Clare Boothe Luce

Some respondents suggest that the perceived advantages for women in specific situations do not outweigh the considerable bias that women experience in other situations.

"I have potentially been supported more in occasional isolated circumstances because I am female, however the cumulative impact of frequent negative experiences because of being female outweighs these positives. The bigger, more notable opportunities are what people remember, not the smaller micro-aggressions."

"In terms of being awarded jobs I do think there is an advantage for women. I've seen employers outright say they preference females over males for the same experience. Anecdotally I've seen my female peers with worse grades receive 3 or more job offers while my male peers may receive 2 or less. I'd say this is a natural consequence of having fewer women in industry and I don't feel like "they're stealing my jobs". Additionally I think some advantage like this is fine given all the other barriers faced by women and women in engineering."

On the idea of gender equity favouring women - I saw this a lot at university because I saw so many women in engineering leadership roles (during my time at university there was a year where every single engineering club was run by a female) or roles of success (scholarships, highly desired job offers, etc). It feels disproportionate [but] I think partially it's because the women are on average more dedicated to engineering than the males in the classes, as well as those cases standing out more significantly (there were probably a bunch of years where all the clubs were run by males and no one noticed).

3.2.3.4   A Gender Divide

"A gender-equal society would be one where the word 'gender' does not exist: where everyone can be themselves."- Gloria Steinem

Whether women are missing out, or are getting an advantage, gender-targeted approaches are exacerbating the gender divide, creating an "us vs them" mentality, and leaving anyone who does not identify as strictly male/female hanging somewhere in between.

"It's common for there to be "women's" events.   NOTE: I don't feel this is inappropriate, exactly, but I do feel it continues the narrative that there's something intrinsically separating men and women in the workforce."

"Until recently I did not have the courage to go along to Women In Engineering events as a male. Since attending a couple, I have normalised this activity for myself and see extreme value in this."

"I am constantly prompted by my boss to attend women in engineering training/events which the company will pay for. I don't even identify as a woman. I have never taken up the offer."

3.3 PARENTING AND MARITAL STATUS

"No one ever said on their deathbed 'I wish I'd spent more time at the office." — Paul Tsongas

We know that work leaks into life and vice versa, and this is an example where the above topics of assumptions and opportunity combine. 22% of men and 52% of women reported experiencing assumptions or discrimination because of their marital status, parental status and/or pregnancy (11% of men and 29% of women reported this was due to parental status). These assumptions range from not offering work opportunities out of misplaced concern that women are not able to manage it, to expecting that men will work long hours even though they have duties as a father.

The difficulty is that some people do need to accommodate various aspects of their life within or around working hours. 24% of men and 29% of women reported having to decline work opportunities because of parental duties. Nevertheless, blanket assumptions based on what an employee chooses to do outside of their contracted hours should not be influencing people's careers. In every case, conversation should replace assumptions in order to find an arrangement that works for both employer and employee based on actual ability, rather than assumed ability.

3.3.1 Being Single

"Singlism represents the myriad ways that our culture rewards married couples, from discounts on car insurance to preferential treatment in the housing market, while treating singles as second-class citizens—and it's increasing in the office" - Bella DePaulo

12% of survey respondents (7% of men and 17% of women) provided stories about added work expectations due to assumptions based on their "single status".

"As an unmarried man, it was assumed that I can 1) work late, 2) work weekends, 3) travel interstate at the drop of a hat."

"At a previous workplace, it was assumed that as I didn't have any dependents etc. that I could work through the holiday periods as I was 'more flexible'. If I took carer's leave (to assist my grandparents/ mother etc.), [it was assumed] that I was lying and needed to provide proof of doing that - even though people who had children didn't."

"As a woman who chose not to have children, there are regularly, regularly, assumptions made that I have 'no commitments' so can, and will happily, cover for colleagues requiring parental leave. This assumption is incorrect."

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"At the time I was single, this meant I should be able to travel for work whenever and that I couldn't take leave at Christmas because I didn't have kids like the other team members."

"As an unmarried female with no children I cannot count the times I have had someone volunteer my time out of hours because I couldn't possibly have anything else to do with my time. This was quite frequent at a company I used to work for. My manager didn't believe women could have both a career and a family and felt very strongly that women should not work once they had children. He very regularly told me that I couldn't have both a career and a family, and would find it difficult to understand why I hadn't already started a family."

"People assume I am able to work when needed due to not having children."

3.3.2   Having a Partner

"Ambitious people have two options: 1. Marry a supportive partner, who knows and understands exactly what they're signing up for. 2. Do not get married." - Julie Gurner

6% of respondents provided stories about discrimination or harassment based on having a partner, or being married.

"I have been asked if my "husband minds me working with so many men"."

"I've received comments about marriage affecting my work (based on the idea that it will affect my home life)"

"People have assumed I would not relocate for work/site experience due to having a partner at home"

"I have witnessed this happen to other women in my workplace, comments like "She wouldn't want that secondment opportunity as her husband won't want to move cities with her"."

"I have had many inappropriate comments be made like "she is bound to have children soon"

"I've been asked many times when I would be taking maternity leave and having children (even though I've had none - by choice) and so what my availability is like to take on new projects"

3.3.3   Being a Parent

"Parenting is the hardest job you will ever love" - Anonymous

Becoming a parent is not a gendered issue. It is a choice made by two people. Unfortunately, the most common argument made against gender equality in the workplace is the missed time during primary caregivers leave and associated interruptions such as children falling sick at school. The below stories highlight that there is still more work to be done to support parents in our industry - regardless of gender.

3.3.3.1   Becoming a Mother

"For me, being a mother made me a better professional because coming home every night to my girls reminded me of what I was working for. And being a professional made me a better mother because by pursuing my dreams, I was modelling for my girls how to pursue their dreams." – Michelle Obama

Pregnancy and motherhood are huge career influences for women in the workplace, with 29% of women experiencing discrimination because of one or both of these factors. In many cases, pregnancy or parental leave is used as an excuse for women to miss out on promotions or learning opportunities. Similarly, the return to work after parental leave is often difficult due to perceptions of capability being lost during the leave.

"I have faced other men judging women for this. There were 3 engineering managers hiring at the same time, and one of the top candidates was 7m pregnant. She had stated she only wanted 2 months maternity leave and possibly 1m WFH. My argument was that she was due in December, a week before our mandatory Christmas break, and January was always slow anyway. So really we'd only be losing a few weeks and then she would WFH. All the guys kept saying "yeah, but once she has the kid things will change and she won't want to come back". The other teams didn't hire her, but I did. She did come back in the original timeframe and was a top engineer."

"When pregnant, on a few occasions, I experienced comments (from female HR representatives) such as "well you're about to go on maternity leave, you couldn't possibly have a promotion now" (even though I've been doing the higher order job for a few years prior to being pregnant); "well you've just returned from maternity leave, so you need to "do your time"" (reading between the lines of this comment, [I needed] to prove [myself] because being on maternity leave clearly means you lose your brain and experience for 9 months compared to the previous 10-15 years of experience before that). If I'd gone on travel leave to go overseas I'm sure that I wouldn't have had to return and "do my time", it would have been viewed as an advantage and growth period. Which is exactly what parenting is. My husband and I went through more personal growth, management of human beings without being "in control" of them, logistics management, resilience, stress management and many other things that we apply in our work lives during those 9 months."

"I was told I could no longer continue my work as a Project Manager after having my daughter. I requested to work 3 days from the office and 2 from home. I was told no and ended up having to take a role as project administrator instead 3 days a week."

"When having children, I was treated as if I was having a lobotomy instead of a child. Sidelined and tasked with glorified admin duties. It was demoralising and infuriating."

"11 years ago I was on parental leave from my role as a Project manager. When I spoke to my manager about returning to work he told me that Project Management can't be done if you are working part time and I would need to find another role somewhere else in the company. Luckily I had a strong network and was able to get a different role where I have now been able to work part time in a leadership role for the past 7 years."

"I've been denied/delayed promotion because I was on maternity leave, when male colleagues have been called back in, in the same situation. The MD told me he hadn't discussed my future or aspirations with me because I had been busy having children and working part time. People also assume that because I have a child, I am not interested in field work (which is actually true, but not necessarily because I have a child!)"

"A female in my office was asked to come into work when she was on her last week of pregnancy during covid in 2020. Her doctor recommended she not come into the office. Her Manager and subsequent General Manager insisted she come in, and she did so because she felt she had no other option. My response was to try to talk her into not coming in. Unfortunately I failed."

"I had two miscarriages at work and did not feel comfortable to even raise the subject with my manager due to the fact that I was the only woman in a very blokey project team. I felt like I just had to soldier on and keep coming to work even though I was grieving. I swore that if I ever became a people leader that this situation would never happen in a team I managed."

"Having just come back from my final maternity leave, I am still dealing with the assumption of reduced capacity for work, travel, and communication. But it also works the other way when people call at 6pm and expect not to hear screaming children in the background, or assume a pregnant woman can handle the same site visit load she always did. (It's a tricky one because I don't want to have my reduced capabilities assumed but I do want them accommodated for when they do arise!)"

3.3.3.2   Becoming a Father

"My child arrived just the other day, He came to the world in the usual way, But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay, He learned to walk while I was away" - Harry Chapin

11% of male respondents reported experiencing bias or assumptions related to their status as a father. Predominantly, these stories indicated the stereotype that men *wouldn't* spend time with their children, and indicated that parental leave was harder to obtain for men.

"It should be just as acceptable for Men as it is for Women to want to take on the primary carer role."

"When you have small children, the assumption is you are either going to ignore your family or not take top jobs."

"In a previous role, it was assumed that I would be able to resume a high work/travel load 6 months after my son was born. This was because it was assumed that my wife would be stopping work and would be taking on all parenting responsibilities, leaving me as the male 'breadwinner' to be back working as much as possible."

"When my children have been sick or I have elected to pick up children from school/childcare. Sometimes overtly but more often it is implied that I get the laptop out and fulfil a non-critical task."

"I was once asked during a job interview if I was married and had kids. I will say that I currently work 4 days a week mainly so I can spend more time with my child, and my current team is very understanding of my parenting responsibilities. I was able to work from home for three weeks when my spouse was travelling recently."

3.3.3.3   Juggling Work and Parenting

"'How do you juggle it all?' people constantly ask me, with an accusatory look in their eyes. 'You're screwing it all up, aren't you?' their eyes say." - Tina Fey

Many parents reported missing or having to decline work opportunities as they struggled to balance work requirements with parental duties.

"I feel guilty when I can't do something work related because I have to get home a certain time to pick up my son from daycare"

"When I first had children ~10yrs ago, it was not "accepted" that a man could request paternity leave (our first child was born with a heart condition requiring surgery) and my partner also had a very difficult birth that left her incapacitated for some time. I hence declined travel and in the end that resulted in me needing to leave that employer."

"Do men always ask each other how their kids are as the first/only point of common ground? I make an effort to follow some codes of football or know the latest cricket happenings but it has rarely come in handy! In the middle of a meeting someone will sidebar me with "how's the kids?" and I will have to remind them that I'm actually in the conversation, not just on a mum break."

"I believe that as a mother the emotion of guilt is bestowed on you at the birth of your firstborn and it never goes away! One event I had to turn down that really disappointed me was when the engineering contracting company I worked for (~98% male employees) invited me to a Women in Engineering breakfast at 7am. As one of maybe 5 women in the business (most of us working mothers) you would have thought they could just have asked what the most suitable time of day would be for such an event. Most men in business have no idea what it's like to try and work (even part time) with 3 children in primary school and a husband working away (FIFO) or in any full time capacity."

"Since becoming a parent, I have definitely had to stand my ground and say No to meetings, etc. if I had to take care of the kids, or pick them up from school, etc."

"I think many networking opportunities naturally lie at the time when I would need to leave for parental duties, although some more day-based courses are very much wanted!"

"I have missed out on some development opportunities (ie. o/seas conferences) because I didn't feel I could take them at a time when I had a young family and already worked full time and long hours. This was a choice I made. I would like to see the industry consider creating opportunities for women later in their career, as this is a time they have more flexibility to take on extra development activities."

♀ "For years I was always running from the office to the train station in my high heels to try and make school pick up on time. There was no WFH option for working parents/mothers (still isn't in some places)."

♀ "Why do childcare and schools always ring the mother when they have both parents' numbers? I'm the one to leave work if a child is sick, etc. (Thankfully my husband tries to stop this bias as much as possible)"

♀ "I have had to decline travel because of my parental duties a couple of times. I also had to fight for my right to bring my baby on an interstate workshop trip because I was still breastfeeding and my husband worked full time."

♂ "Parenting does require you to be present, so I've declined many work opportunities with significant interstate and overseas travel."

♂ "I have missed a number of work activities due to parental duties, primarily related to illness in children."

3.4 Sexual Harassment, Assault and Bullying

"We have a zero tolerance policy for harassment and bullying" - Every Employer's Code of Conduct

Unfortunately, we received a number of confronting stories of sexual assault, harassment and bullying in the industry.

The Australian Human Rights Commissions' Respect@Work report[9] lists the following behaviours as forms of sexual harassment:

- Inappropriate physical contact, such as unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing, or actual or attempted rape or sexual assault;
- Intimidating or threatening behaviours such as inappropriate staring or leering, sexual gestures, indecent exposure, or being followed or watched;
- Verbal forms such as sexually suggestive comments or jokes, intrusive questions about a person's private life or physical appearance, repeated or inappropriate invitations to go out on dates and requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts;
- Sexually explicit pictures, posters or gifts;
- Sexual harassment involving the use of technology, including sexually explicit comments made in emails, SMS messages or on social media, indecent phone calls, repeated or inappropriate advances online, or sharing or threatening to share intimate images or film without consent.

29% of women and 4% of men either explicitly stated that they had experienced sexual harassment, or provided a specific example of physical sexual harassment or assault (a total of 20% across all genders). More indicated that they had experienced or witnessed sexual harassment, but did not provide details. We expect that if the verbal, online, and intimidation forms of sexual harassment were included in that statistic, the percentage would be much higher.

3.4.1 Sexual Assault

"When a woman is assaulted, one of the first questions people ask is, "Did you say no?" This question assumes that the answer was always yes, and that it is her job to revoke the agreement. To defuse the bomb she was given. But why are they allowed to touch us until we physically fight them off? Why is the door open until we have to slam it shut?" - Chanel Miller

Sexual Assault is engaging in a sexual act without the consent of the other person. These are stories from the industry in which sexual assault has been committed.

If this is a triggering topic please do not read this section.

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[9] Jenkins, K. et al. (2020). "Respect@Work: *National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*", Australian Human Rights Commission.

We wholeheartedly thank the survey respondents who so bravely shared these confronting stories, especially those for whom answering the survey may have triggered difficult and dark memories and emotions.

"I once had a working dinner travelling that turned into a lot of drinks, and had the all-male party basically fighting over my attention in a really creepy way. I ended up rather drunk because they topped my glass up without my knowing, and woke up in my motel room with vague memories of being assaulted then had to go back to the workshop with that person for two more excruciating days."

"A director of a company I was working for (I started as his assistant but had moved to a Planner role) asked me to pick up his car from service and pick him up from his house. He put his hand on my leg while I was driving his car to the office."

"I commissioned a fine chemicals plant back in the day and one of the operators cornered me between himself and a large gate valve he had to open. He rubbed himself up against me with his arms firmly around my waist and his hands on each side of the gate valve handle. I was the only female on site and never reported that incident to anyone."

"I was kissed by a married colleague in an elevator, completely by surprise, then had to go back to a training course with him the next day which was horrible."

"[At an industry dinner] an older man asked me to dance. Everyone had been so nice and welcoming, how was I to know he was going to stroke my bottom! First thought was OMG he is having a stroke and is clutching me, he was too old for me to bash him. I felt embarrassed at the time although I was at the receiving end of his hand on my rear. Now that I'm older and wiser, I wish I'd have told him off then and there."

"I used to work in [a department] doing night shifts from 4-10pm. The guys would sit there and watch porn and laugh and try to force me to watch it to upset me. At the same place, I had a male boss who was a total sleazebag and would call me over to sit next to him in his manager's office and then run his hand up and down my leg. I was worried about my job as there was a downturn in industry and I had only just graduated. I very quickly learnt to say nothing, and always only stood at his door and never entered his office after that."

"I was actually robbed/express kidnapped on a remote location at work [overseas], I got hit with a gun and was forced to take my clothes off (luckily nothing further happened). It was quite a traumatic and shocking experience that increased my anxiety levels and was the main reason for me to [move to Australia]"

"As a graduate I went to a contractor's Christmas party while on a site swing. The owner of the site contractor put his hand on my thigh. I quickly left the event, but I had to deal with him on site the next day. It just felt like such a power imbalance, and the last place in the world I wanted to be."

"I wore a hilarious costume to an [industry] dinner that had pretty much every male in the party (and a few females) touching me inappropriately. I vividly remember certain higher-up execs in my own company groping flesh with zero remorse. It started getting more invasive and almost violent, to the point I had to readjust my outfit entirely. I had a friend with me who helped me remove myself from the situation but I hate to think what would have happened on my own."

3.4.2   Sexual Harassment

"If your flirting strategy is indistinguishable from harassment, it's not everyone else that is the problem" - John Scalzi

Received stories covered a wide range of people, places and events, demonstrating a wide range of types of sexual harassment. Included here are stories that constitute an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated.

"I've experienced more sexual harassment in my time in the pipeline industry than all of my career prior"

"I have been subjected to sexual harassment, but not within my current employer. It was in the early 1990's when things were unfortunately very different to the positive resolution actions that would be taken today."

3.4.2.1   Sexual Advances

Stories of repeated or inappropriate invitations to go out on dates and requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts.

"I experienced multiple instances of inappropriate behaviour from an older male colleague when I was a graduate. After I rejected these advances, the colleague started malicious and blatantly untrue rumours about me to justify his behaviour."

"After a company function, a colleague cornered me and told me I clearly didn't love my partner because he'd 'seen the way I looked at him'. I still have no idea how he could have got the impression I was at all interested, and I called in sick the next day. I just didn't want to be there."

"When I was a graduate, I was asked out by someone 15 years older than me while we were at work, and when I declined he followed it up with a phone call and an email. It was extremely uncomfortable."

"Some minor sexual harassment - just a lot of "attention" as I was a young female at the time, being asked out on dates when I made it clear I had a partner, wolf-whistling etc."

"A head operator told his crew what he would "like to do to me" and made gross overtly sexual movements."

3.4.2.2 Pornography

Stories of sexually explicit pictures, posters or gifts.

"Women were completely objectivised - playboy centrefolds behind every control room door and girly pictures on the desk pads and wall calendars! We've come a long way in that respect."

"I have worked in control rooms that have stacks of porn almost a metre high."

"When a pipeline construction job went over schedule and had to ask the leading hand to stay longer on site. He suggested to me (a male) that he'd been away from his wife for several weeks now and I was starting to look pretty good. Also had a rather unsavoury German hardcore VHS tape (judging by my translation of the title) left on my desk from the worksite's "library" on my first day at work as an undergrad."

3.4.2.3 Calm down, It's just a joke

Stories of sexually suggestive comments, and intrusive questions about a person's private life or physical appearance, usually made under the premise of a 'joke'.

"At an after work gathering, receiving a text from my foreman "Look at you being all sexy over there. Are you keeping my men entertained?". I had earlier that night told him it was inappropriate to ask if I was "banging anyone" and walked away from his company. Later in the night he also sent me a facebook message saying "I like the sexy cowgirl outfit most"."

♀ "In 2016, I was working with a male contractor, who I had met numerous times before. We were working on setting valves, and he made sexual remarks about me and I was taken aback. Didn't say anything, just went quiet. He continued talking rubbish for a little longer until he realised I wasn't responding back and stopped. We continued working although things were awkward for the rest of the shift we had to work together. I never felt safe being alone with him again and avoided being in a situation just me and him."

♀ "For almost a month my peer engineers deliberately turned everything I said into a sexual joke, or would be making jokes about tinder dates."

♀ "I was once asked how I have sex with my partner when the person found out they were the same sex."

♀ "I delivered technical training to a group of men. I'm not usually in the training department. It was just for this one particular roll out so there was the normal trainer in the room. I finished the training quickly and said "that was a nice quick roll out right?". The other trainer without missing a beat said "she likes it quick". The entire room laughed. When I said it was inappropriate he told me it was my fault for taking it the wrong way."

♀ "I was told by a client that I had spent too much time at work (for him) recently and should buy some lingerie and go home to my husband."

♀ "I started a secondment with a gas company. On my first day, I was introduced to the project team (in front of about 20 people), then the Senior in charge started making comments about who of them were on Tinder for me to swipe on etc. It made me feel incredibly unwelcome, disregarded as a professional and I did not want to return to that role."

♂ "On site workers assume you want to engage in vulgar group chats, discussions and racial jokes to the point of it making you feel sick."

⚧ The amount of times I've had to tell senior engineers to shut up when they start spouting transphobic tripe during my, a trans person's, meetings. Also the fact they make jokes encouraging me to hook up with any young members of the opposite sex I deal with on a professional basis.

♀ "At an [industry] evening event I sat at a random table and 3 guys started saying "oh look at this beaut joining our table", "oh you just want to sit closer to that gorgeous thing", "honey let me take a photo of your name tag so I can look you up later on LinkedIn" (while holding the phone zoomed on my chest and the other guys looking at the phone). This went on for 30 minutes. I told the guy beside me what was happening and at the first opportunity, he stood up and walked away leaving me with the guys harassing me. I went home crying for hours. This was in 2021."

“I have been belittled with comments about 'what my partner would think' etc when I have a strong opinion. Also sexual remarks, around the use of dating apps and sex toys, which were completely out of context just to belittle me when I was trying to speak up at work.”

3.4.3 Bullying

“We all lose when bullying and personal attacks become a substitute for genuine conversation and principled disagreement.” - Alicia Garza

Bullying occurs when a person or group of people repeatedly behave unreasonably towards another worker or group of workers or the behaviour creates a risk to health and safety. These behaviours include verbal abuse, physical attacks, threats, and inappropriate behaviour. Both men and women reported stories of bullying.

3.4.3.1 Verbal abuse

“Self-respect by definition is pride in knowing that your behaviour is honourable and dignified. Therefore, when you harass another person, you not only disrespect them, but also yourself” - Miya Yamanouchi

Stories of verbal threats, attacks and offensive language.

“I was a bystander in a confrontation between a male colleague and a female colleague. The female was being verbally attacked.”

“[I have witnessed] abusive, misogynist language from a pipeline construction supervisor to a young female graduate at a relatively remote site/field.”

“Some men think it's ok to aggressively question you as if what you are saying is just made up! It's rude... most of us do our due diligence to ensure that this doesn't happen hence we go in prepared for all sorts of questioning of what it is we are presenting... It's a double standard because they don't treat the guy who spoke before me the same way!”

“I don't believe the times I've been yelled at or the way I've been spoken to would happen to someone who isn't male (at least in the context I was in based on conversations with women in similar positions). The way I've been yelled at has made me not want to work in the environment.”

“There is an assumption that it's due to being male-dominated, which may not be the case. [But I have been told to] "Toughen up", "Don't be such a princess", "Sometimes you just have to suck it up".”

♂ "I once, as remains my habit, stepped out of the way in a bus queue to allow the lady behind me to get into the bus before me. Gentlemen open doors for gentle ladies (still). Despite the fact that I got a mouthful of abuse from this woman who was clearly a misandrist, I continue to behave this way today.....She had a problem, not me. Those women who are pushing the gender equality bandwagon need to consider the consequences very carefully.... perhaps it is they who have the problem, not the men they blame."

♀ "I had a manager who yelled at me for "questioning his authority" and I believe it is because I was a young female asking questions (about the project) that he couldn't answer, so he felt insecure and resorted to bullying."

♀ "Leaving a meeting with a client, only for very senior colleague to turn to me and say 'She's only so bloody difficult because she's a woman'"

3.4.3.2   Asserting Dominance

"Bullying is bullying. No matter what reasons people do it for, it will usually be out of self-interest or for their own enjoyment." - Isaiah Harden

Stories of belittling behaviour, intended to insult implicitly rather than explicitly. This was largely from men, but also included women being antagonistic towards other women because of a view that they are competing for a limited number of spots at a senior level in the industry.

♀ "I was in the office with a manager and he dropped a pile of papers and called me over and stood there while I picked them all up. I told HR and they advised me to confront him directly which I didn't want to do"

♀ "A previous manager got so bad that someone else in the company reported him for bullying and harassment. He treated me very differently to the males in the team. [...] I scheduled a meeting with him to discuss how he [his behaviour during] my site visit [...] was inappropriate, he immediately took over the meeting and told me that I had let our team down [...]. From then on he started to monitor my movements and keep track of how long I would be away from my desk, he requested that I advise him of where I was going and how long I was going to be away from my desk for [...] I sat at my desk all day with music blasting in my headphones to keep me from sitting there and crying.[...]

I'd been in the industry for 4 years and worked my way up [...] to Land Liaison Manager. We had several project meetings over a week in our Head Office. I wasn't asked to join any of them as it was "engineer talk", even though I had many questions I needed answered to help me do my job and prepare for the project start-up. On the last day our General Manager finally popped his head out of the boardroom and asked me to join them. "Better bring a notepad too please" he said. [...] I walked in and took my seat in the only spare seat at the opposite end of the room. I listened to their conversation about a tricky section of pipeline, ready to provide my input in regards to Land Liaison. After 15 minutes their conversation reached an end and there was silence for a moment. The GM made eye contact with me and exclaimed, "Ah yes, sorry I forgot. Anyone want a coffee and a bite to eat?" Several men put their hands up. "Can you handle that please sweetheart?", the GM asked me. It was then that I realised the notepad was so I could take their particular coffee and food orders. I did the task then cried in the toilets for 10 minutes.

"I started working for a male boss who was so threatened by the fact that I had more qualifications than him that he continuously undermined my credibility to more senior (male) colleagues and would belittle me in front of male co-workers"

"While I was working on site [I became Acting] Superintendent. The other Superintendent then became paranoid that he was going to lose his job and abused his position of power and made it very difficult for me, not my male back to back, and when his paranoia escalated he told me I was crazy or [...] that I had my period and reported that I was acting crazy to the COO. He made it so hard for me onsite and at every opportunity would do something to remind me of the power he had, so much so that I was often afraid of what he would do even to the extent that I was worried that he would come around to my home while we were both on R&R and do something. Nothing ever happened, but at the time I was terrified of what he might do to me."

"Male dominated industries attract women who like to be alpha females. These are the staff who want to tear other women down. Most men I've dealt with are respectful. These women who are threatened by other successful females are the toxic ones who display micro-aggressions towards other women."

"I have been bullied by another woman! Sometimes women can be extremely mean and judgmental of other women - this unfortunately is part of the issue. If our own kind are not going to lift us up.. . how can we expect the men to learn how to do this!!?"

3.4.3.3 Physical Violence and Threats

"There's so much violence in our culture because so many people are taught to value power and dominance, regardless of the cost to themselves and others,"- Jennifer Siebel Newsom

Stories of threatening behaviour from men trying to assert dominance over other men or women, often in response to feeling threatened themselves.

"I have had my ponytail pulled in the office."

"I had a manager in a bad mood one day. I asked him if he was ok, and he got up from up from his chair, yelled at me and shook his fist and said to me, "lucky you're a woman or you'd get this" (his fist was closed like he was about to punch me) I submitted a complaint to HR and had witnesses and was advised that maybe I was seeing things and it wasn't actually that bad. I took a week off work and never returned."

"I find specific instances hard to recall, however the interactions nearly always involved men in a senior position exercising their "power", typically involving yelling or threats (whether subtle or physical)."

"Although mostly male on male aggression, to be honest the worst experience of aggression I've experienced was from a female Engineering Manager. She almost hit me once after a meeting for challenging our own design in front of the client. We were apparently only supposed to defend our design and discussions about alternative, safer design options were punishable!"

3.4.3.4 Being Ignored

"It would be too easy to say that I feel invisible. Instead, I feel painfully visible, and entirely ignored."- David Levithan

Stories of being spoken over or completely ignored.

"I had asked the facilitator to minute a discussion point. After asking a second time, and getting no action, I dropped the frequency of my voice and asked again. This remarkably got the attention of the facilitator and the minute was finally made. One male colleague came up to me and said he'd never seen anything like that, and despite the giggle we'd all had, he'd actually found it very concerning. I was grateful that a male had noticed how poor reception can be toward a female voice, but this by no means solves the problem."

"I have been in a shutdown meeting where I was the senior engineer and I was with a less experienced (male) colleague. I was asking the shutdown team questions and they were answering to him. He commented on the disrespect, he had not seen this before."

♂ "I regularly see women get spoken over in meetings, I have heard from friends and acquaintances about being sexually harassed, or feeling unsafe at work, I know that many women feel out of place in engineering.

♂ "General belittlement of women who try to take authority or speak up on anything in their work."

♀ "Walking into a meeting room to have the most senior client representative refuse to shake my hand or even acknowledge me, then later gaslight me by ignoring my input and later suggesting it again as his own idea."

♀ "I had a meeting with a council member (white Australian, everyone always asks of his "cultural background") for an escalated issue, so with me I had my Senior Engineer. We started the meeting and I gave a full reasoning for the project delays and cost increases. The council member then turned his whole body 45 degrees to face my Senior Engineer and responded. My Senior just looked at me and when I started talking the council member "rolled" his head to look at me after a few seconds. For the full 1hr meeting he refused to look at me while he spoke."

♂ "At university while working in a group to come up with an answer everyone was talking over the only female in the group, who had the correct answer. When the tutor came around to our group to record the response, I thought she'd finally have an opportunity to speak. He just talked over her as well."

♀ "Asking a vendor questions, only to have them turn around and answer to my male colleague."

♀ "I ended up having to send my work to my male boss to then send to the client."

♂ "I do work at my kids' primary school P&C and I am the only male in the committee and there are not many male teachers in the school. It does feel different to work in a female dominant environment, and I don't always feel comfortable speaking up in meetings".

3.4.4   Safety

"When women are able to live in a safe and secure environment, they can participate effectively in the economy and society" – Helen Clark

Everyone deserves to feel safe and protected from harm in the workplace. Psychological safety is defined as feeling safe and being self-assured that you are not in danger. An individual cannot have wellbeing without first feeling safe. In workplaces, a lack of psychological safety triggers fear and anxiety which blocks one from achieving their potential.

"Safety is a big issue and that is safety for both genders. Whilst statistically there is a preponderance of attacks male on female, the opposite does happen a lot as well. Neither is acceptable.."

"I've also felt unsafe when asked to go to site visits with particular people, as the only woman, especially when I know there are shared house arrangements or not great facilities."

"I was the only female in a camp of approximately 70 men, aside from one of the kitchen contractors who was married to her colleague but still copped attention. I felt comfortable in my team but going to the gym alone and walking the site at night definitely made me uneasy".

"Yes, staying back in an office late at night I have felt unsafe around particular people. I would often ask my husband to come in and meet me and take me home."

"I will continue to go to work even if I am uncomfortable, I will just stay in close proximity to my "safe" colleagues. I should not have to be impacted in my abilities to work simply because someone else is being the issue"

"During shutdowns I would try to never get in a lift with all contractors. It happened once and as the lift filled with more unknown faces, I got really nervous."

"I don't think about the safety of getting home (even though in a non-work environment I've been harrassed and attacked multiple times while walking at night). I think the difference in concern for safety is based on gender and the way people are raised, rather than threat to safety."

"I have had to leave work early when a big project was due the next day because I needed to catch the train home and couldn't do that past a certain point. When I told my project lead I needed to leave he was shocked but once I gave the reasoning he was really upset because that is something he never has to consider."

"I have often left events early to avoid getting the train/taxis late at night on my own as I often don't feel safe to do so. I have declined dinner with male colleagues and clients in the past, as I didn't feel comfortable going as the only woman, while they were drinking heavily."

"[After I was sexually harassed] it was very hard for me to return to work after my R&R, especially after there were roster changes and I would fly in to him already at work. I would often make doctors appointments on my fly out day just so I could delay my flight to the next day or if I was lucky I could delay it a few more day"

3.5 INCIDENT REPORTING

"All that is needed for evil to triumph in the world is that enough good men and women do nothing" - Edmund Burke

3.5.1 Systems Failure

What women have understood [...] is that if they call out sexism, they will be stigmatised as weak, or whingers, and their careers will be damaged. This is what [they] learn: cop it and move on, despite the cost." – Julia Baird

The introduction of sexual harassment and sexual discrimination policies have helped foster better working environments and provided support for women and men in the industry, but those systems are not holding up under the weight of a culture that has not changed at the same rate. Too many stories referenced problems with company systems, because of management failure, or the execution of policies and guidelines not following the original intention of the system.

3.5.1.1 The Gender Pay Gap

"Equality will be achieved when men and women are granted equal pay and equal respect." — Beyoncé

Remuneration policies may state that workplaces are "equal" but the gender pay gap is more complicated and harder to solve than just writing a policy.

"I think the general understanding of what the 'gender pay gap' is and what it isn't is confused. The term can be used by some in the media to push an agenda. However, for people running a business, it's really important that a common source of definition is used. Because of this confusion, discussions on these issues have been brushed over with people agreeing that it's confusing and not resolving the true issues."

"They said my company paid women $500 the other year to address the pay gap but it hasn't really done anything and it's not fair to the blokes as the women didn't do any extra work so why should they get it."

"A few years back I presented a spreadsheet to our CFO demonstrating the pay increase percentages of men at the company over a 10 year span vs myself and was told it was nothing to do with gender but education and ability."

"I have had a situation where a few of my friends and I went for the same job and there was a difference in the language used. I was asked what my current salary is vs. my male friend got asked what is their salary expectation."

"I've been told 4 times by 2 different general managers that I'm paid less than my male peers, but due to the HR limitations they can't fix it."

3.5.1.2   Human Resources and Policies

"The primary purpose of human resources is to protect the company at the expense of the employees" – Steven Magee

Recruitment, Harassment and Reporting Policies are in place in most companies, but many respondents reported difficulties when attempting to follow those policies.

"Pointing out that a meeting about diversity policy is being attended by 7 middle-aged white males and one female got a burst of laughter, before being ignored in favour of working out the way we can report our dramatic improvements in diversity.

"After hiring 2 female engineers in a single week, an HR Manager pulled me aside to say "I understand you want to push this hiring women thing, but I need to do a check-in with you to ensure you're hiring the best people for the job"."

"I made a formal complaint to HR after trying to "manage" the person myself. I had been quite direct in asking them to stop contacting me. HR responded by saying "it looks like you were pretty clear with the person so there is nothing more to do here". Obviously, the person didn't stop. They eventually left the business but HR did nothing."

"A female colleague told me of an incident that had happened to her. I reported it (with her permission) but it was handled badly. Interestingly, the person who told me to drop the thing was a woman, not a man, which confused me... I also told a male colleague, who made a joke about it and laughed it off. I am still angry."

"I had a horrible boss who looked me up and down every time he saw me again, and stared at my chest. Do you think anyone else noticed? HR "needed witnesses"."

"I'm told it is not an issue and they would welcome more females to the team but there aren't many around and if they start they don't last"

"I raised an issue to HR after a male heard about my performance rating (I never told anyone my rating so it had to have come from a manager) and he told me that I was a "goody two shoes" and I could do no wrong as I'm female."

“I took stress leave after male colleague that had been sexually harassing me had charges against him (from multiple parties) dismissed, and he still remained on the project whilst I was removed from it.”

“This situation was handled poorly by HR saying that it was my emotional response that was the issue and that I was unable to deal well with direction, not the fact that I was yelled at and physically intimidated by the male manager.”

“After he was reported [for bullying] I had to take a week off, at the request of the company, which had to be taken as either annual leave or leave without pay, while they investigated and interviewed my manager about what had been reported to them. [...] From then on all communication from my manager was delivered to me via the general manager.”

3.5.1.3   Leadership

“What's often ignored is that diversity is not only a pipeline or recruiting issue. It's an issue of making the people who do make it through the pipeline want to stay at your company” – Andrea Barrica

Many respondents also provided stories about difficulties reporting incidents to managers or supervisors.

“I was badly harassed by my manager when I worked in Central Qld. I reported it to my manager's manager, and he didn't know how to handle it so he did nothing. By the time the harassment was so bad the company had to act, they realised how bad it looked for them so they flew in a law firm from Brisbane to make the problem disappear. It took a lot of emotional help to get over the injustice of it all. I left the company soon after.”

“A team member attended a course and the trainer harassed her. She was brave enough to report it to the training manager but she asked for the report to be anonymous in fear of the impact on her training and career. I was very disappointed with the trainer and the situation. How can this still happen and especially in a professional environment?”

“We had a female resign due to being treated unfairly and then write a public message of gender in-equality in our workplace during a townhall (to the CEO). After, I met with the manager to discuss why she might have felt that way and what he personally can do to help promote gender equity. He finished the conversation with “well we'll see if management choose to action anything on this'' and left the conversation.”

"I raised with my manager that we were all frustrated and feeling overworked. The team was tired and people were looking to leave as morale was low. I was asked if "I was getting any action at home" as this could have been why I was frustrated. I did say my sex life was fine and not the problem but the long hours were.....and he responded "maybe I needed a holiday". Amazing what words are being heard sometimes and the response. I have thick skin but that was not an appropriate question in any setting."

"I had a female engineer reach out to me as she felt she was being bullied in the workplace because she was the primary caregiver and had to take multiple days off to care for her children during COVID. One example she gave was that her mom, who typically helps her, was admitted to hospital so during school holidays she needed to work from home. She was told WFH is not a solution to her child care issues. I made her say to me "I am being bullied and am formally requesting your help". I went to her general manager (3 levels up) and informed him of our conversation and how this needed to be investigated. 3 weeks later she was let go."

"I was once given admin responsibilities as the only female graduate engineer. When I raised that this was not fair with my leader he responded that I was just as good of an engineer as the three women who are project managers."

"My observation is, if the bad behaviour is committed by senior staff, reporting it means you have to leave your job, nothing will be done. And when you leave they will not speak of your work successes, will just rubbish you."

3.5.2   Awareness

"We're blind to our blindness. We have very little idea of how little we know. We're not designed to know how little we know"- Daniel Kahneman

A blind spot refers to an area where a person's view is obstructed. Many of the difficulties experienced by people attempting to report an incident were experienced because the person receiving the report was blind to the issue completely.

There is a polarised culture within the industry: not between men and women, but between those that are affected by gender inequality, and those that don't believe (or just don't see) that gender inequality exists. This highlights the importance of educating those who have not experienced bias, so that they become aware of it.

"I have never seen harassment happen in our industry, ever. And by the way I am not blind."

"In all my 40 years I have not seen it as big of an issue as these questions suggest - are you making a mountain out of a molehill?"

3.5.2.1 Dismissed and Disregarded

"Women don't need to find their voice. They need to feel empowered to use it and people need to be encouraged to listen."- Meghan Markle

11% of men and 36% of women have been brushed off when trying to raise an issue about gender-based bias or discrimination.

“When faced with an aggressive response, I got told "oh, that's just X person, you need to get a thicker skin".

“Most often they listen. However, I have been told that "it's complicated" and then they end the conversation there. OR they say "it's better than it was" or "sexual harassment doesn't happen in the workplace anymore".”

“I was being "overly sensitive to the situation and making assumptions" when I raised that everyone else in a meeting was capable of taking notes.”

“I've been told that the way I have been treated is to make me better, and 'that's just the way the aggressor is, they aren't going to change for you' , and 'it was your fault because you don't communicate better, you could've avoided the situation by just having better communication skills.'”

“I think the default view many men hold (and some women) is that gender equity/equality is either unnecessary (i.e. they do not see discrimination), or will somehow threaten society”

“I watched a brilliant woman leave our business after trying to change the views in upper management. She was ignored and told by them that it is not an issue. I have since tried for years to change their mind but it has not gone well. I have since seen the same thing happen again.”

“I actually didn't pursue it because the general response was "he is always like that, it was just your turn today". Whether it is gender related or not, we shouldn't have to tolerate this type of behaviour in modern day professional life.”

“Mostly "it's not as bad as it used to be" or "things will get better just give it 20 years"... or sadly from female mentors "you have it easy now... wait until you have kids and then you are screwed".”

“Most men (including in my own family) simply say, "I've never seen it so I assume it doesn't happen".”

3.5.2.2   Hostility

"Recognise that their experiences are just as valid as yours. They don't need you to explain their feelings or rationalise the things they might be talking about." - Clementine Ford

Beyond dismissal of issues, there were several stories and examples of people actively trying to argue against gender equality, or gender equality initiatives.

"Let's move on and worry about far more important things like solving the energy crisis. Our family has a motto, to keep children out of trouble, keep them busy, buggered and broke.... I think you have too much time on your hands and you should use your talents on far more important subjects than gender equality."

"Around International Women's Week, there are a lot of comments about "where is the International Men's Week". I had conversations with people about gender equity and one reply was "regardless of the purpose of the initiatives, the result is you will get the job over a guy which is unfair.""

"I [was] seconded to [a client] and attended a presentation on their next 5 years with the wider team (100 people or so). [...] There was a 5 minute section on company issues and corporate targets where they revealed they were targeting a closer gender balance (I forget if there was a specific target). [...] The reaction to the presentation was quite hostile, when the Q and A time came there [was] considerable focus on the gender target. From my perspective, people were presented with a good, progressive goal that would enhance the organisation, and instead heard "you will be fired and replaced by a woman". I was embarrassed but also surprised at the level of hostility. I guess it highlights that change will be difficult and some people will need to be dragged kicking and screaming, but also, regrettably, the message might need to be carefully managed to encourage support."

"There is a lack of knowledge on what gender equity or equality is. Unfortunately social media provides lots of misinformation where people see these talks more as a 'complaint' than an issue we all need to work towards."

"At a social event a guy raised how his company has a new policy to achieve 50% women in management and asked me what I thought. This led to a very long discussion on how I felt women leadership groups, equal representation at interview stage and mentor/support to females greatly assisted. Every point I made he said, "well devil's advocate, why don't men have…" It was exceptionally frustrating."

"I have a coworker who believes that bias and inclusivity training will in itself create bias against minority groups, since "forcing someone to face their bias and the way they think will make them biased against the minority group"."

3.5.2.3 Lost Cause

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced" - James Baldwin

33% of men and 52% of women have been brushed off when trying to talk about gender equality with their peers. More had just not tried in the first place. Overwhelmingly, many women in this industry are frustrated. Being told that "it's historically been this way", does not make it ok; "it's better than it was" doesn't mean it's good.

"I was told once that "it's just not a good industry for women"."

"I honestly haven't even tried to explain because I felt it would be a lost cause."

"I have never even bothered because they won't listen."

"After being told you are too sensitive or overreacting a few times, you just start to suck it up."

"As a man, trying to explain [gender equality], I seem to get an even rougher response, I guess because other men expect me to 'be on their side'. It doesn't really matter what the actual story details are, the results are always the same. It goes something like me trying to explain why women feel treated unfairly, then men say they are not and they are just being sensitive, then I say that they don't get it because it hasn't happened to them, to which they respond that I am making it up because I am trying to be politically correct, and I then try and provide examples, which men then try to recast as different experiences (i.e. the women were misinterpreting) or justified based on their (male) perspective or whatever. I get exhausted and realise I won't win them over because they are simply unable to see it from any perspective other than their own, so I give up."

♀ "Trying to explain to someone how there are so many little things that happen so frequently or just what you have to take into consideration on a daily basis to someone who cannot comprehend having to think that way is so difficult that there have been times I've given up, especially when they are adamant that these things don't happen or that there are things that I shouldn't be concerned about. I've even tried to go as far back about what I was taught at high school with self defence classes and staying aware, which often surprises them that as females we are taught these things, but it's so far beyond what they have to deal with that they still cannot grasp what it is like."

♂ "My main experience discussing it with other men, who are well meaning and intelligent, is that they reject the magnitude of the issue (i.e. argue that the gender pay gap is exaggerated), reject any action as "unfair" or "unequal" (i.e. the classic strawman that any corrective measures are "unequal" and therefore hypocritical), hypothesise that there are inherent gender differences that lead to the inequality (not recognising the societal pressures with us from birth) or claim the ultimate and only goal must be complete free speech and complete equality - so it will sort itself out. I don't know why. Perhaps people are threatened by the thought of having to surrender some of their privilege. I think some can't admit it because they think it implies they must've had it easy and somehow diminishes their own accomplishments. Even seemingly intelligent people are being semi-radicalised by media and social media which seems to make them want to "pick a side" as if it's some sort of competition, rather than just being a good and decent person."

♀ "There is little ownership of this issue by men. Almost every conversation seems to assume that this is someone else's fault/problem."

♀ "It was just easier not to raise things."

3.6 MOVING FORWARD INTO OUR FUTURE

"You must be the change you want to see in the world." - Mahatma Gandhi

Complaining about the situation doesn't make it go away. Instead, we need compassion, friendship, understanding, perspective and a breaking of the silence. We also need to maintain hope, aspire to change, and keep working at it together.

"Things are changing, but slowly."

3.6.1 Positive Progress

"Sometimes in our lives, We all have pain, We all have sorrow, But if we are wise, We know that there's always tomorrow." - Bill Withers

There has been positive progress made in our industry, and many people are happy with their workplaces and proud of the team around them.

"I once worked in a team where I was the only male. My superior was a female and my subordinates were female. A joy. I had for so long shot the breeze with all male teams. It was great to experience a completely different professional and social environment and chatter and byplay. Though I did hate the red and purple they always insisted on for my slideshows until a senior guy from overseas observed he liked the colours and styles. A great experience that highlighted the benefits of diversity and how diversity brings different things to the table (not only referencing the slides example)."

"Thankfully the company I work for is one where I've never felt uncomfortable or in any way undervalued because of my gender."

"I am proud of our gender diversity in our business, as a father of three girls encouraging gender diversity is a key objective of mine as a male leader"

"My current employer is 50/50 and the culture is inclusive."

"I would like to point out that over the past 2 decades I have seen massive improvements. Especially so in the past 5 years. Is this because our clients demand equal opportunity KPI's be met before they award you work? Probably."

♂ "Management has been very good if flexibility was required to balance young kids, pregnancy, etc."

♀ "Things have changed a lot in the last 15 years, but there is still so far to go. No one is sitting around in the lunch room discussing how the new receptionist looks like a horse, but as long as women like me are being told by mentors to get their career as far as possible before having children, with the clear implication being that, as a woman, once you have children your career opportunities will be limited, (something I doubt any of my male colleagues have experienced), there is work to be done."

♀ "Not here at [my company], I feel valued as an employee and not for my gender. It is a refreshing change."

♀ "Despite the stories I have shared seeming incredibly negative I have had a lot of positive experiences as well. Something that happened recently is something that gave me great hope from a man I work with who is in his 50s. He told me that every day he reflects on his interactions throughout the day, he then writes it down if he thinks he acted in a sexist manner. He said if he writes it down then hopefully it'll become more conscious in his mind so that he can stop doing those things in the future. This may seem like something small but it gives me great hope for change."

♀ "I like working in this industry and especially the people in it."

3.6.2   Supportive Allies

"Lean on me, When you're not strong, And I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on" - Bill Withers

Pipeliners are some of the best problem solvers in the world. But, even united, there simply aren't enough women to solve this problem on our own - we need everyone's help. Luckily, there are many strong supporters of gender equality in the industry. Hopefully, together, we can change the narrative going forward

♂ "Brave people are rare but are powerful at creating change. I have had the fortune to work with many women who exhibit this but very few men"

♀ "I was lucky to work for excellent managers who supported me in my quest for leadership. I have paid that forward by championing women in my workplace and leading by example, raising complaints when I have experienced harassment or unacceptable behaviour."

"I have been very fortunate to have good supportive mentors and managers. I have friends in other industries who were disadvantaged because managers assumed they would get pregnant and disappear. I had two children while working in the gas industry and in both cases returned from maternity leave to a promotion opportunity that had been held for me."

"It's one thing to witness jokes being told around you that you are uncomfortable with, it's significantly worse to be the focal point of those jokes."

"I must say that I love working in oil and gas and with a large proportion of men. I think a balanced work environment where men can be themselves too needs to be promoted. That doesn't mean being disrespectful by anyone, but having fun, a joke, being direct (saying it how it is) rather than worrying about how everything is going to be taken….We have to try and gain a balance where everyone can be themselves at work. Obviously poor behaviour by anyone (no matter, gender, colour, creed, religion etc) shouldn't be tolerated."

"I have worked with some exceptional women in this industry and they have ALL suffered in different ways."

"I have also recently come across some great male managers who have been more supportive and helpful than I have ever experienced. I believe that there can be negative people anywhere though it is the company culture which fosters this and allows for this behaviour to continue. It should be allowed for more conversations like this to be had to show the male colleagues that behaviour targeting women is unacceptable."

"I think the vast majority try to be fair to others regardless of differences including gender. Unconscious bias is still an issue and further education is required so people become aware of how they think which in turn affects how they act. It is a difficult balance between tokenism, positive action to improve gender diversity and the risk of reverse discrimination (or perceived) that we need to navigate."

3.6.3   Learning and Experience Sharing

"If there is a load you have to bear, That you can't carry, I'm right up the road, I'll share your load, If you just call me." - Bill Withers

The following quotes were not provided by our industry survey, they come from feedback received after the story-sharing presentations we gave at our workplace. These responses highlight the effectiveness of storytelling as an inclusion device, and the self-reflection we can initiate in order to create a wider cultural change.

"Since the presentation I have had greater awareness of what Women are often faced with in STEM, and that has probably influenced my behaviour. I think the session certainly helped to reinforce good habits. When people have used the term 'he' instead of 'they' etc (in all contexts) it has certainly stuck out to me more, and with a better understanding of the issues at play these small things bother me more than they used to. I have called these things out a few times, but will admit I often let it slide even if I notice it. I will continue to strive to not fall into the trap of assuming genders in engineering contexts - I think I usually do a decent job of this, but always room for improvement."

"[I learnt that] There are a lot of subtle differences between how men and women in the workplace can be treated which I wouldn't usually notice but have compounding effects."

"The format of the presentation was highly effective. By telling your own stories you removed politics from it and were able to get your audience to put their preconceived opinions aside. You managed to get engineers to embrace their empathetic side - not always easy... The period of open questions where people felt they could ask without fear of judgement was very valuable."

"I have had very different experiences, but some of what was said made me realise that some things I always attributed to my own personality may have also had a lot to do with my gender, my interests, and my unwillingness to change the latter. Perhaps if I grew up in an environment more open to women having my interests, I may have felt less isolated as a child and as an adult…"
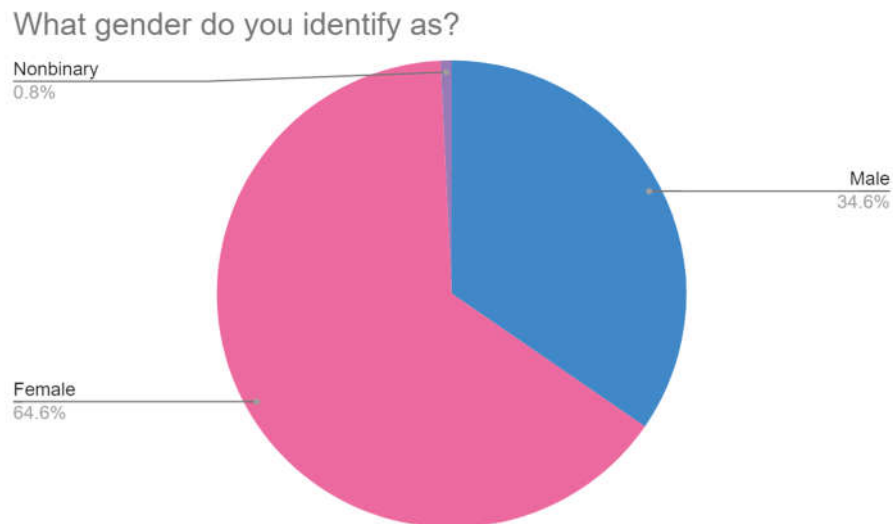
"As with all behaviours/traits/habits, a single session will not make me perfect. It is the continual practising and repetition of doing the right thing that will help consolidate my perspective. My perspective has improved in that I try not to associate roles/professions with genders. I believe associating types of roles/professions has unfortunately been carried over the generations. It can stop with us (with this generation). One of the things I learnt is that Women can become doubtful of achievements/promotions in the workplace. The example that was told: When a Woman is promoted in the workplace many conflicting thoughts arise, one being: "Am I just being promoted because I am Female" and the workplace is doing it based on my gender. This is so damaging as the individual is left doubtful whether they achieved the promotion based on merit or based on gender. This is a detriment to the individual's mental health and impacts them in all areas of their life."
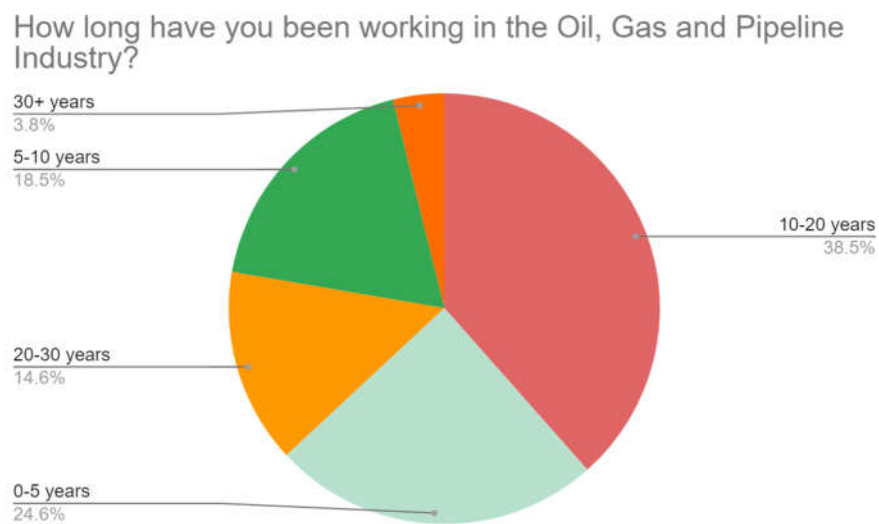
4 STATISTICS FROM THE INDUSTRY

4.1 THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE STORIES
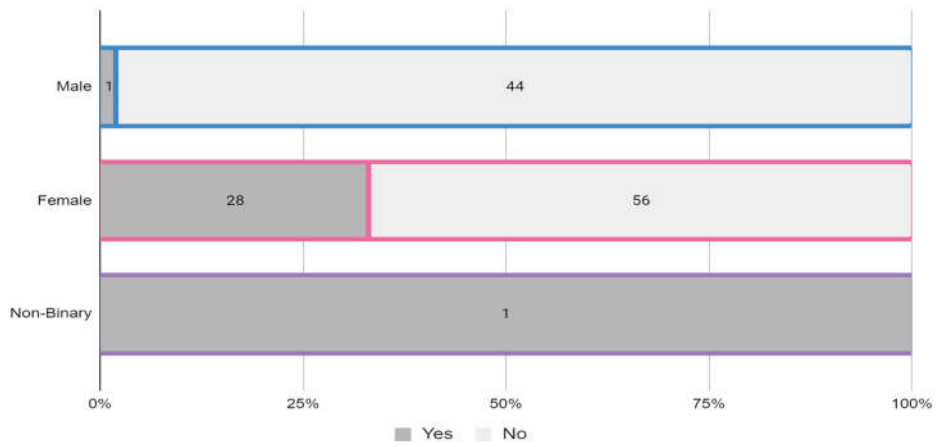
4.1.1 What gender do you identify as?

4.1.2 How long have you been working in the Oil, Gas and Pipeline Industry?

4.1.3   What did you want to be when you were 5 years old?

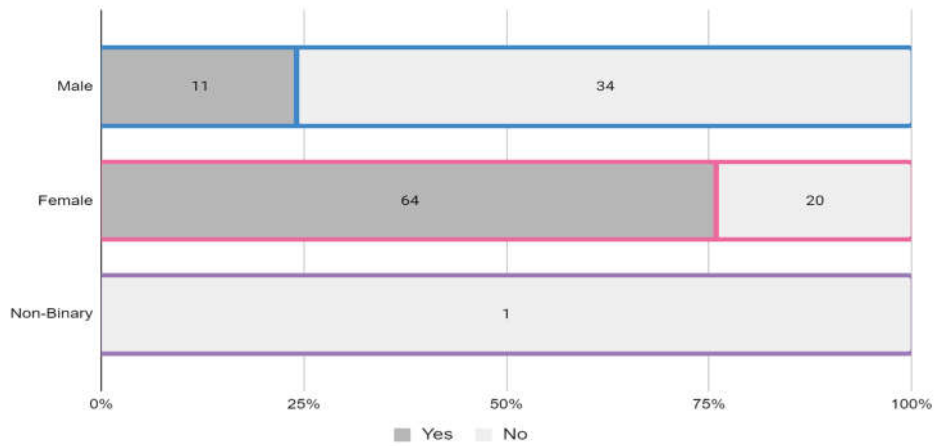### 4.1.4   How would you describe your current role?

4.2 SURVEY RESULTS

4.2.1 Has a person or people ever assumed your gender incorrectly?

4.2.2 Has a person or people ever made assumptions about your skills or ability level based on your gender?

4.2.3 Has a person or people ever made assumptions about your ability to work based on your marital status, parental status, pregnancy (or lack of any of these things)?
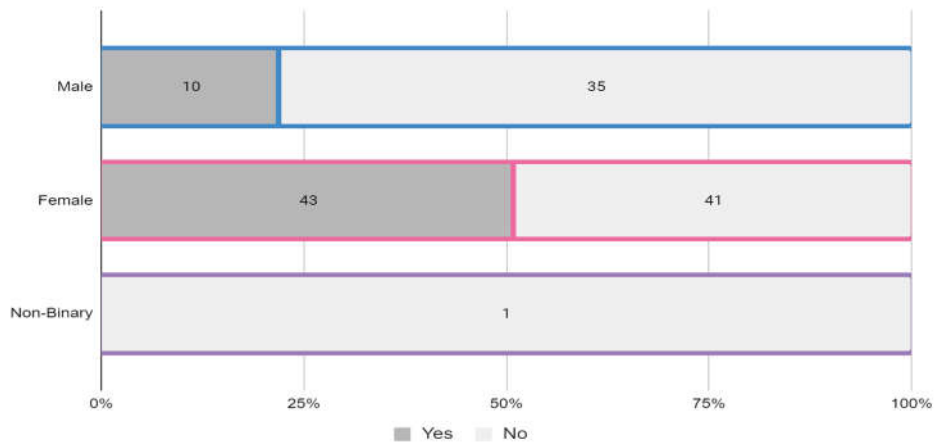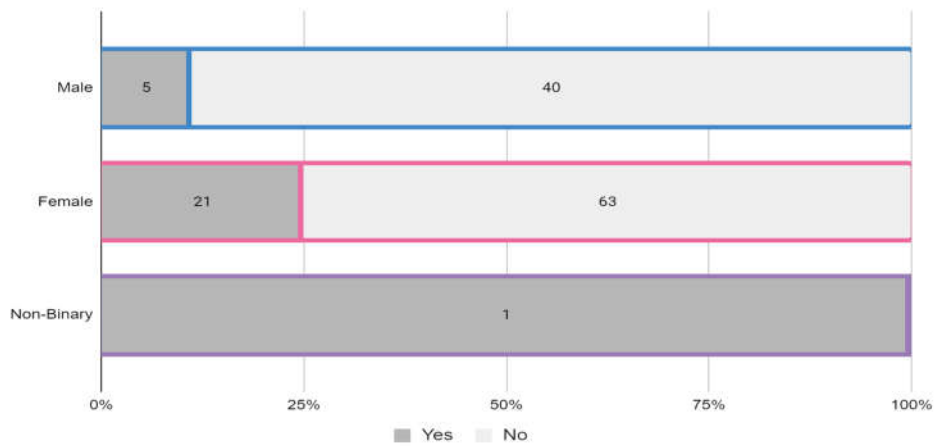
4.2.4 **Has a person or people ever commented on your looks or your dress because of your gender?**
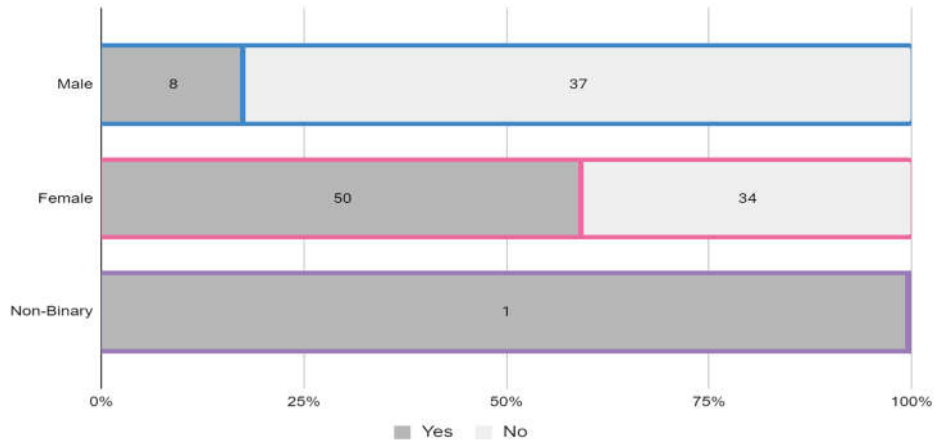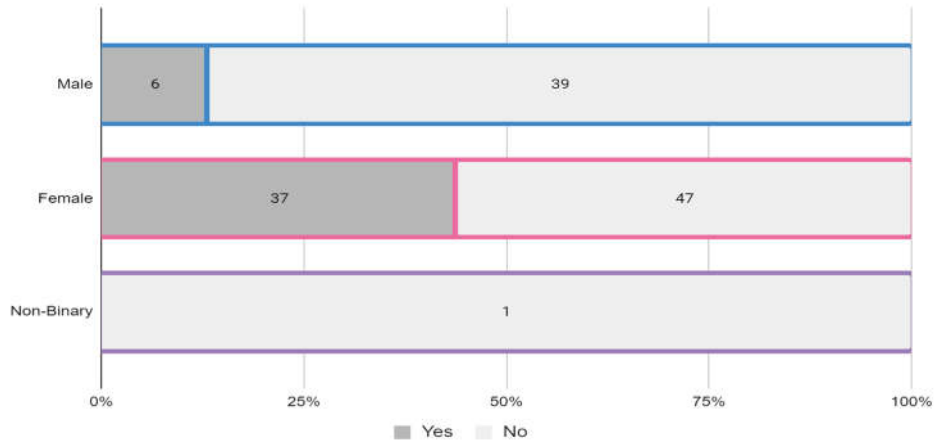

4.2.5 **Have you missed out on mentoring or development opportunities because of your gender?**
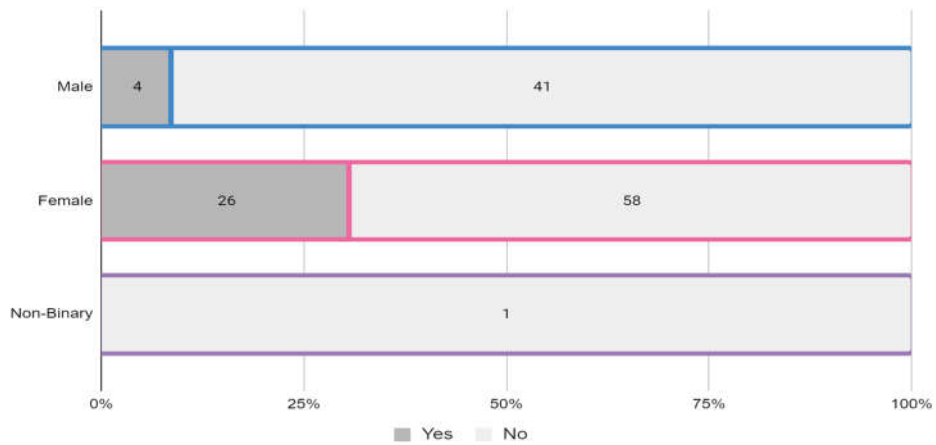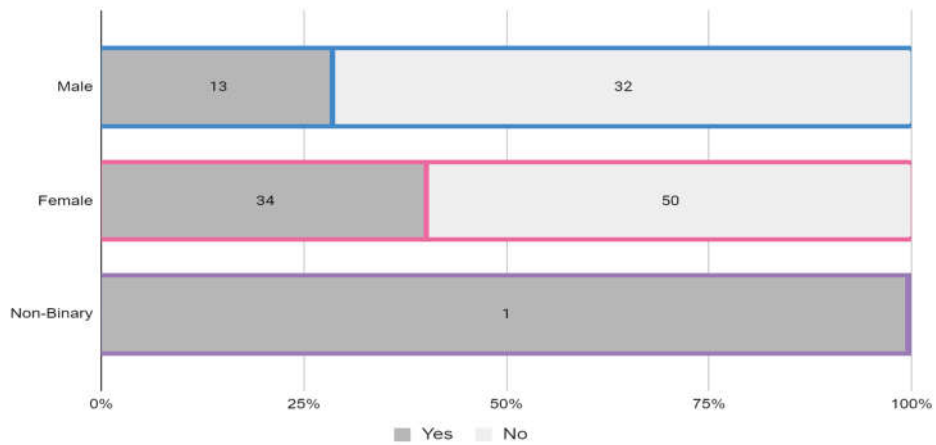

4.2.6 **Have you been provided additional/extra mentoring and development opportunities because of your gender?**
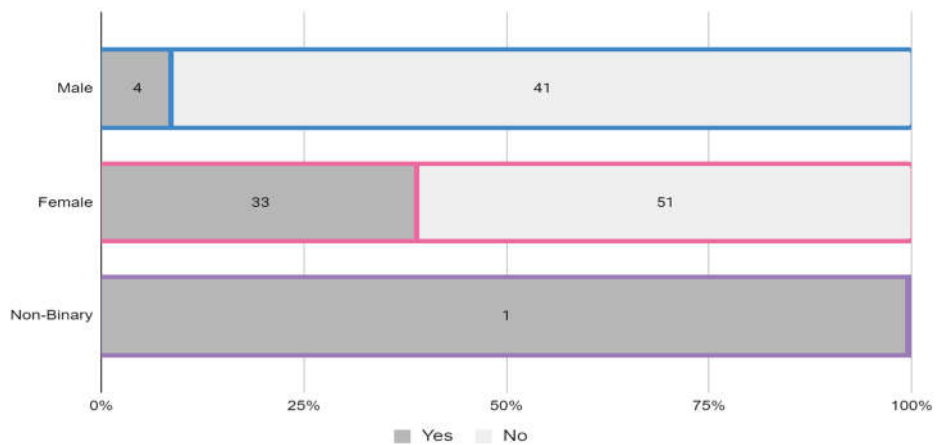
4.2.7 Have you missed out on social or networking events because of your gender, or because of an assumption based on gender?
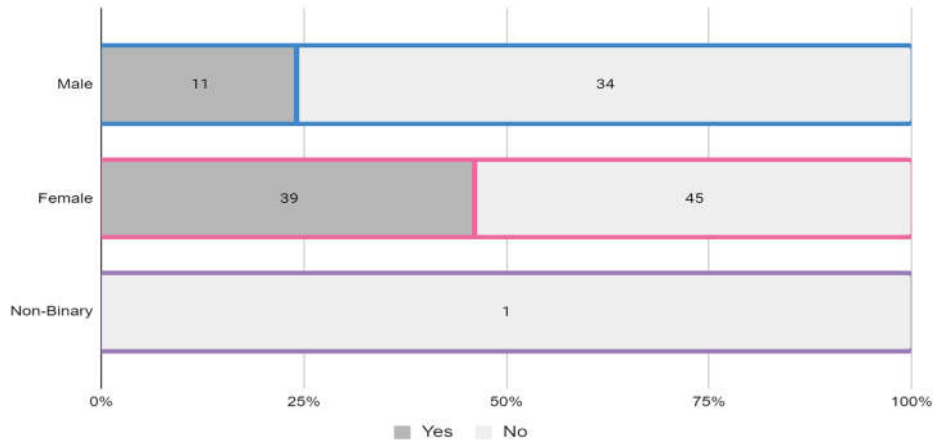

4.2.8 Have you ever felt unsafe in a work environment?


4.2.9 Have you ever had an experience at work (related to your gender) that made you so uncomfortable that you didn't want to come to work the next day?

**4.2.10   Have you had to decline an opportunity or work commitment because of something related to your gender (e.g. safety walking home, parental duties)?**

4.2.11   Have you ever experienced harassment (including micro-aggressions) as a result of being in a male-dominated industry?
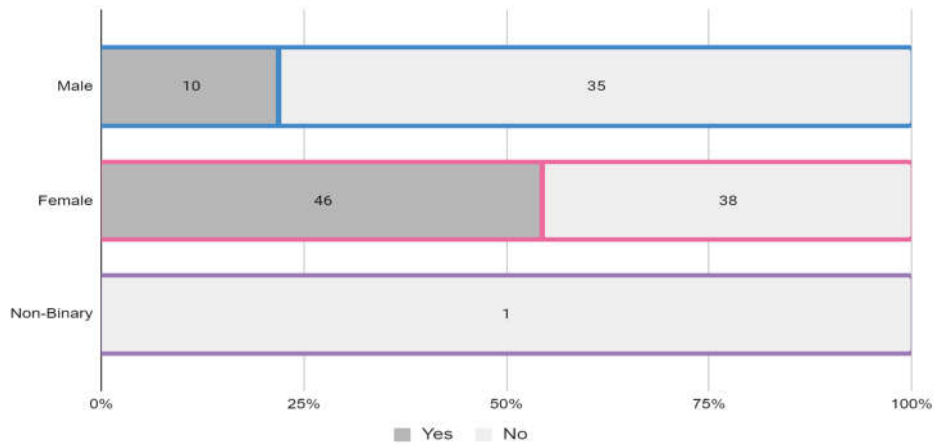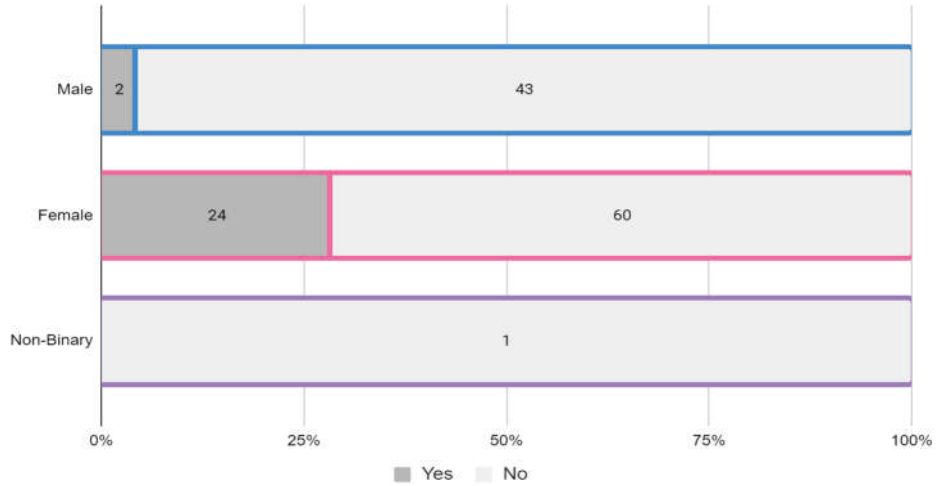

4.2.12   Have you ever been brushed off or overwhelmed when you have tried to explain gender equity or equality to your colleagues?
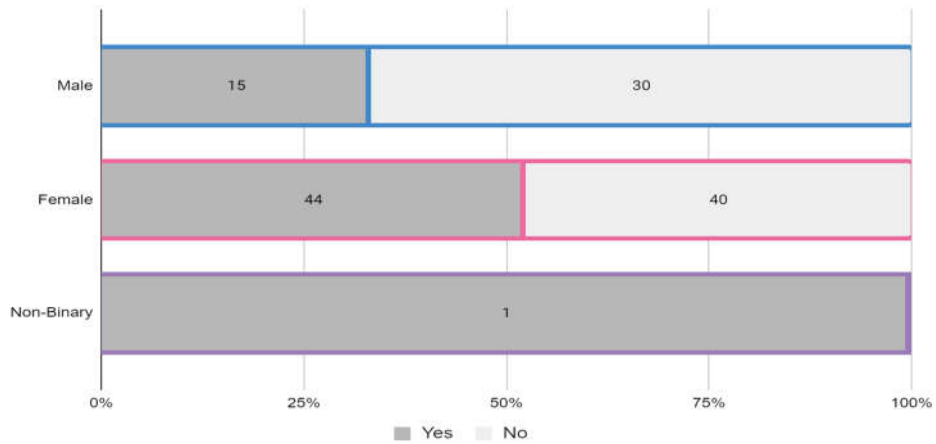
4.3 RESPONDENT TRENDS

4.3.1 **Number of respondents who provided examples or explicitly stated that they had experienced physical sexual harassment at a work event.**

4.3.2 **Number of respondents who reported yes to more than one question about experiencing negative gender bias, discrimination or sexual harassment.**
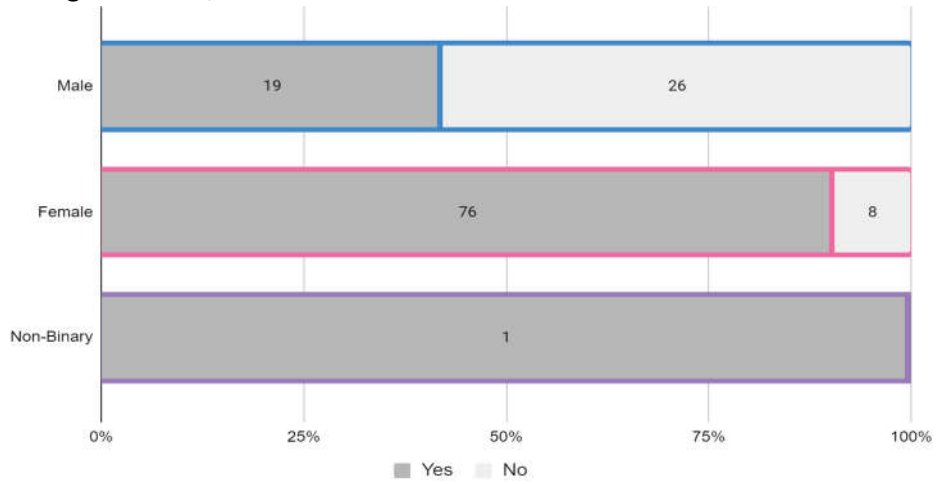
4.3.3 **Respondents who reported yes to more than three questions about experiencing negative gender bias, discrimination or sexual harassment.**
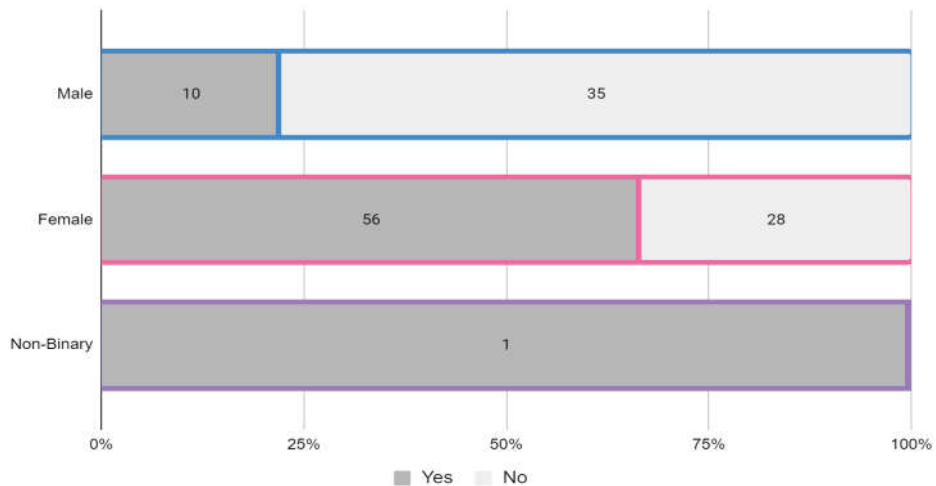
5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

"Diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society to be without" - William Sloane Coffin Jr.

The stories collected above have been summarised by the following 20 Findings.

5.1 ASSUMPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES

Finding 1:

A large majority of women had encountered negative biases that manifested as:

- Suggestions that all people in a company/industry are male
- Beliefs that a woman's competence or skills are inferior
- Choosing women for stereotypical tasks such as taking notes, getting coffee or cleaning up
- Unwelcome remarks about a woman's appearance
- A lack of facilities or equipment for women

Finding 2:

Men had also experienced negative stereotyping, often with regards to being more experienced but less emotionally intelligent than women.

Finding 3:

There is a prevalent compounding effect of these "minor" stories, which affect behaviour, confidence, happiness and overall wellbeing.

5.2 MENTORING, SPONSORSHIP, TRAINING AND PROMOTION OPPORTUNITIES

Finding 4:

A large number of women had missed out on opportunities and are lagging with their career development because:

- They were evaluated less positively than men in job and promotion opportunities
- They were sidelined in social and work networking events
- They were overlooked for mentoring and sponsorship
- They had to decline due to safety or female health (related to menstruation)

Finding 5:

Some women had benefited in recent years from female-focused mentoring and networking opportunities.

Finding 6:

Some men felt excluded from female-centred events, and disadvantaged by quotas.

Finding 7:

Exclusion of men has initiated hostile attitudes about the selection of 'token' women. This has added to the imposter syndrome already being experienced by some women.

Finding 8:

Certain advantages for women have not made up for disadvantage experienced elsewhere.

Finding 9:

Gender-specific initiatives are contributing to a gender divide that makes it difficult people of all genders to work together towards gender equality, and contributes to the exclusion of other genders (e.g. non-binary).

5.3 PARENTING AND MARITAL STATUS

Finding 10:

Both men and women experienced assumptions about their work ability because of their family life:

- Single people of both genders experienced assumptions that they could work more, or out of hours because they weren't in a relationship.
- People in a relationship experienced assumptions that they could not take a job opportunity because of their partner's preference.
- Women with children experienced assumptions that they could not work capably or competently after they had taken parental leave.
- Men with children experienced assumptions that they would work after having children, when they wanted to take leave, or work flexibly.

Finding 11:

Both men and women reported struggles with accommodating parental duties around work duties, and having to decline work and industry opportunities

5.4 SEXUAL HARASSMENT, ASSAULT AND BULLYING

Finding 12:

More than one in five survey respondents had experienced physical sexual harassment or assault. More had experienced verbal, online or intimidatory forms of sexual harassment.

Finding 13:

Both men and women had experienced bullying, or experienced an aggressive culture. This emerged in the form of verbal abuse, belittling, physical harassment or threats. Many women also experienced bullying in the form of being spoken over or completely ignored.

Finding 14:

Some women feel that they are being pitted against other women in some kind of competition for few positions.

Finding 15:

Many women reported changing their behaviour and ambition due to awareness of their safety.

5.5 INCIDENT REPORTING AND THE FAILURE OF SYSTEMS

Finding 16:

Despite the institution of policies against harassment and discrimination, there were many responses that described a gap in the execution of those policies, because of dismissive or defensive responses of managers, HR, and their colleagues.

Finding 17:

There is a broad spectrum of opinions on how much progress has been made in the industry. This spans from individuals believing discrimination against women is still a big problem, to others who believe it no longer exists, and even to some who believe that it has reached a point of reverse sexism (discrimination against men).

5.6 POSITIVE STORIES AND PROGRESS MADE TO DATE

Finding 18:

Some individuals had excellent things to say about progress made in their companies with some praising their leadership in focusing on gender equality. This shows that it is not an impossible puzzle to solve and that these companies have a competitive advantage over others when it comes to 'how we treat our people'.

Finding 19:

There are supportive men in this industry who have gone above and beyond in recognising their own privilege and are comfortable working alongside women.

Finding 20:

A story-based approach to gender equality confronts the situation by attaching a person to the problem, rather than being "political". It has been proven to be an effective, compelling and creative way to instigate compassion and understanding.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

"Most people don't want to acknowledge that everything they know is a falsehood. Who would? The whole point of evolving is that it's an uncomfortable (but necessary) transition. Of course we're going to be reluctant to believe narratives that challenge our whole identity. It means realising that we have been acting out of ignorance and through our subconscious minds our whole lives. Acknowledging this truth is uncomfortable. Knowing you have been unintentionally causing harm and benefiting from unfair systems is uncomfortable. But think about how uncomfortable it must be existing on the flip side of that privilege." - Florence Given

From the above findings, 12 recommendations are provided for individuals, companies and the industry to work together on a journey towards gender equality.

6.1 FOR INDIVIDUALS

Recommendation 1: Listen to others. Seek to understand their perspective. We each have unique human experiences and our own history. Other people may have had very different experiences to yours, but that does not make them any less valid.

From a young age, we are taught to respect those around us and to treat others the way we wish to be treated. Somewhere along the way to adulthood, we start surrounding ourselves with like-minded people (creating opinion echo chambers and group think), our biases grow (often without realising) and before we know it, we forget these fundamental lessons. Work on being open-minded. By listening to other's experiences, you can expand your understanding of the world and your privileges within it.

Recommendation 2: Question your assumptions. Have a conversation. Examine your bias with constant vigilance.

Consider how stereotypes are insidious and often unfounded. Think about how being told frequently that you are inferior, or more emotional, would affect your behaviour. Consider how, when gender is brought front of mind, gender stereotypes are automatically primed. When you recognise yourself making a judgement on another individual (for example, "She wouldn't want that promotion, she will probably have children soon"), instead force yourself to think, "What have they done to make me think this would be their response?" Ask yourself, "Have they actually told me, to my face, that they no longer care about their career and only care about reproducing?" If the answer is no, don't assume; instead, ask them about their interests, their priorities and their availability. Together, you can work out their openness and ability to take up opportunities.

Identify your biases and reactive assumptions via an implicit bias test.[10] Constantly examine those biases. Mentor someone of the opposite gender. Ensure you're not excluding anyone from a social event (or multiple social events).

Recommendation 3: Find adjectives to add to your own vocabulary that aren't associated with traditional stereotypes. Challenge yourself to go one step further by removing gendered language from your written and spoken work.

Stereotypical words to describe a female employee often include: Ambitious, Sensitive, Bubbly, Compassionate, Bossy, Emotional, and Hysterical, whereas, men are often associated with: Analytical, Arrogant, Strong, Protective, Competitive and Confident. Instead of following those stereotypes, use words such as: Inspirational, Empathetic, Passionate, Assertive, and Innovative. In fact, try to cut out all gendered language, especially when communicating to diverse audiences (e.g. use Hi Team instead of Hi Guys).

Recommendation 4: If you see an incident of gender bias, stereotyping, discrimination or harassment, question it, call it out, and support the victim.

If you saw someone in the incorrect PPE, you would call it out, right? Focus this same energy on the psychological safety of those you work alongside with. If someone else tells you about a situation that made them uncomfortable, don't try to explain the situation away, or rationalise their feelings. Understand that they have legitimate reasons to feel the way they do. It's a response to their life experiences in this world. Listen, and then ask them if there's any way that you can help.

6.2 FOR COMPANIES

Recommendation 5: Foster a culture of open minded and curious conversations surrounding difficult topics. Create safe spaces of open engagement.

Build the company culture to be welcoming and supportive to anyone, whatever their gender. (If there are people within your company who can relate to any of the negative stories within this paper, there is work for your company to do.) Encourage people to share their personal stories through varied formats (e.g. presentations) without fear of repercussion. Hold education sessions about identifying stereotypes, bias and everyday sexism. If a conversation being held is focusing on gender discrimination, flip it to instead focus on gender privilege

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[10] Refer to the Diversity Australia website titled "*Test your own unconscious bias.*"
https://www.diversityaustralia.com.au/services/test-your-own-unconscious-bias/

Recommendation 6: Regularly audit your systems, policies and procedures to ensure they are meeting their intent.

The fundamental obligation owed by employers is to take reasonable care to protect the employee against foreseeable injury arising out of their employment. Furthermore, nobody wants to work for the company that preaches staff safety and fails to come through. Safety in this sense includes psychological, emotional and mental safety, as well as physical. Policies around gender equality, conduct, harassment, reporting, remuneration and leave are essential. Refer to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Diagnostic Tool to audit your policies according to current best practice for gender equality. Do this regularly. Policy basics include:

- Holding staff accountable if they are sexist.
- Ensuring that there are serious repercussions, including dismissal for any person who has attempted sexual harassment, including requests for sexual favours. In companies in which a sexual harassment case was brought to light but punishment was not enacted, women are either leaving these companies or refusing to join altogether[11].
- Defining the gender pay gap and publishing it within your policies so that your workplace has a common understanding of what it is, what it means and how it affects them.
- If capable, support flexible working.[12]

Recommendation 7: Support working parents.

They say it takes a village to raise a child and a community to educate one. Family-friendly workplaces motivate staff, reduce staff turnover, help attract new staff, reduce workplace stress, and generally enhance worker satisfaction and productivity. If you're organising an event for parents, make it within work hours or with advanced notice so that they can organise to be available. Provide equal opportunity parental leave for both parents. Allow primary and secondary caregivers to work flexibly. Establish check-in programs for people on parental leave.

Recommendation 8: Invest in initiatives that involve both genders.

Female-specific initiatives can be a good starting point in a gender unequal workplace. However, gender equality is not just a women's issue, it is a business imperative that increases profitability. If your company is using quotas, make sure that women aren't being hired as a "token" and that they are competent and capable for the job, and that the team and workplace culture can support the women who are hired. To drive the hire of young women into a hostile workplace to make the gender count look good does an injustice to those women. When investing in emerging leadership programs, ensure there is gender diversity in your candidates. Provide unconscious bias training to all staff.

[11] Eikermann, S. (2019). "Women not welcome: A study of Gender Inequality and Leadership in STEM", University of San Diego.

[12] Diversity Council Australia (2018). "Myth Busting Flexibility: Using Evidence to Debunk Common Myths and Assumptions", Sydney, Diversity Council Australia.

6.3 FOR THE INDUSTRY

Our industry is fundamentally about community and gender equality only makes communities safer and healthier. There are a myriad of problems that this industry will need to solve in the coming years (e.g. energy transition). Engineering vacancies are at 10 year high levels in Australia, and similar trends are occurring globally. Attraction and retention of resources is essential for the success of organisations and the industry. It seems misguided to not welcome absolutely anyone wanting to help us solve these problems together, and to encourage them to contribute through all stages of their career.

Recommendation 9: Perform further research to understand specific issues more thoroughly.

Treat gender equality as something we can learn about. There are a substantial amount of presentations, lunches and learns, workshops and subject matter experts within the industry that focus on technical solutions and products. Who says we can't have the same for people-focused solutions and products?

This paper covered a variety of themes, stories and situations. However, we did not record the timing of these stories, so we can't track gender equality progress over time. We also did not record the companies our survey respondents came from (for anonymity) so we cannot tell if some companies are worse or better than others in terms of gender equality. Further research could also shed light on the gender pay gap specific to our industry, or investigate how our life differences affect our behaviour. There is still a lot to learn.

Recommendation 10: Promote events to actively support gender equality (e.g. education seminars on how to identify and call out bias and discrimination).

Future proofing our industry is a hot topic on the minds of many people. But what about future proofing the people in our industry? Programs focused on strengthening our community and the women within it, should continue to be prioritised and funded. Men, should also feel welcome to support and attend events organised by these programs (just as those under 35 years of age attend YPF events).

Recommendation 11: Support initiatives that encourage people from minority groups to enter the community and improve their presence within the industry. Then support initiatives that allow people of all genders to learn and work and participate in the industry together, and maintain those supportive networks

Initiatives such as the WLDP and WPF have had a positive effect on supporting women entering the industry. Going forward, it is important for those support networks to be maintained and for people of all genders to become involved.

Recommendation 12: Celebrate progress in diversity, inclusion and equality.

Maintain a culture in the industry that encourages gender diversity and inclusion in leadership positions in the industry association, and also its member bodies. Support inclusion and equality initiatives. Celebrate people or companies that are creating change, sharing stories, and role modelling the progress we are aiming for.

As Vernā Myers puts it, "Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance." We're aiming for both.

Let's work together towards building an industry that doesn't just count women, but makes women feel like they count.

7 CONCLUSION

Presently, women are more welcome in the pipeline and gas industry than they have ever been previously. Many women reported positive careers and workplaces. In particular, there were positive stories regarding opportunities for leadership training and mentoring. We expect that this is largely due to the recent introduction of the APGA Women's Leadership Development Program and the Women's Pipeline Forum.

However, there are still many subtle, and often unconscious, ways that women are made to feel unsafe or unwelcome in the industry. These include:

- Reinforcement of gender stereotypes (particularly relating to competence).
- Deliberate exclusion from mentoring, promotions, networking events or job opportunities.
- A variety of types of sexual harassment, assault and bullying.
- Being ignored or belittled when trying to report a case of gender discrimination.

There are women who don't know who they can trust, women who are afraid of someone they should be able to trust, women who are constantly questioning their place in their job and in this industry. Those women feel frustrated, out of place and unsafe. The effect is that many women cannot thrive as professionals as easily as their male colleagues.

For men, stories of gender bias and harassment are much less frequent than for women, but *they are not zero.* Men reported negative biases around emotional intelligence and communication, exclusion from training opportunities, and discrimination regarding their role as a parent. They also reported a prevalence of aggressive male-male peer relationships, and bullying.

There were so few non-binary responses that we cannot draw strong conclusions; what we do know is that there is very little understanding and support for anyone who does not fit into a "gender norm", and that non-binary people experience bias and harassment at significant levels.

While some progress has been made, there is much work to do to achieve true diversity, inclusion and gender equality in this industry. We have provided a number of recommendations, but above all, we have shared stories. We believe in the power of stories to build empathy, involvement and investment, and we hope this paper can create an opportunity for mental re-framing and positive resolutions.

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