

ULI Singapore

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2026 Women's Leadership Initiative Gender Gap Survey

Key Findings

11 September 2026

From access to advancement

*The question from **2016**:*

How do we provide women with equitable access to networks, opportunities and support?

- *73% of respondents identified having senior-level sponsors to advocate for them as being critical.*
- *73% of respondents highlighted that an inclusive workplace culture was key to their career success.*
- *51% of respondents said that companies need to focus on offering workplace flexibility and maternity/familial leave.*

*The question in **2026**:*

How do we turn access to networks, opportunities and support into equitable career progression for women?

- *50% of women respondents have access to a mentor and/or sponsor.*
- *65% of all respondents rate their current workplace culture as being inclusive.*
- *86% of respondents belong to organisations that offer flexible work arrangements.*

Note: The 2016 and 2026 surveys employed different methodologies and respondent samples. Results should be viewed as directional indicators of change rather than directly comparable.

Diverse respondent profile

Survey Period:
28 May – 25 June 2026

175 respondents

- 78% Women
- 22% Men

- 43% Age 20s - 30s
- 31% Age 40s
- 26% Age 50+

12 countries

- 52% Singapore
- 25% East Asia
  China Mainland, Hong Kong SAR, Japan and South Korea
- 23% Other
  Australia, India and others

Variety of sectors

- 34% Design, Engineering & Construction
- 28% Investments, Transactions & Asset Management
- 21% Consulting & Advisory
- 18% Development & Others

Range of seniority levels

- 39% Below Director Level
  Analyst, Associate, Manager
- 61% Director Level & Above
  Director, VP, MD, Head, C-Suite

Note: To support meaningful interpretation, segment-level findings are reported only where there are at least 30 respondents.

Executive summary

FINDING 01

The leadership gap persists

55% of all respondents are in organisations where women hold less than a third of leadership roles.

FINDING 02

Lower career satisfaction for women

60% of women are not positive about their career progression, versus 34% of men.

FINDING 03

Career progression slows in the 40s

48% of women in their 40s have been passed over for a promotion in the past 2 years – highest of any age group.

FINDING 04

Networks outrank every other barrier

60% rank male-dominated networks in their top three barriers – the highest-ranked issue.

FINDING 05

Flexibility can still carry a career cost

67% of women respondents with access to flexible work perceive an associated career penalty.

FINDING 06

Sponsorship lags mentorship

24% of women have access to a sponsor, versus 40% who have a mentor.

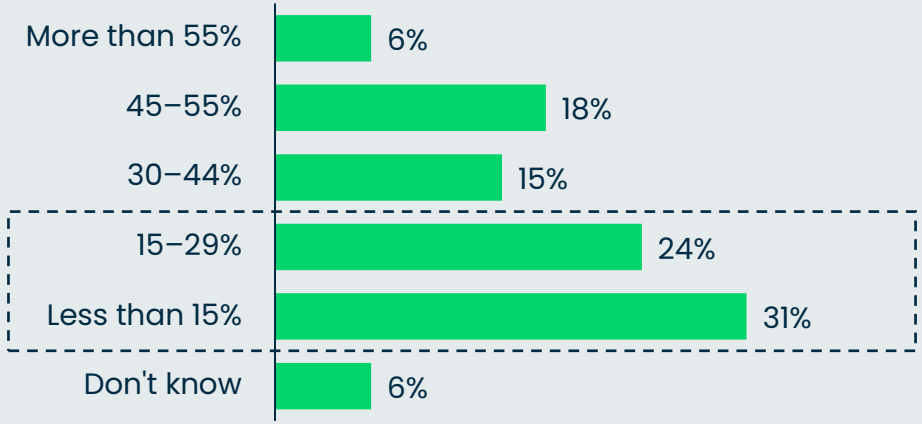
FINDING 01

The leadership gap persists

- **Women remain underrepresented at the levels where strategic decisions are made.**
- **This gap becomes self-reinforcing**. 29% of women respondents cite the lack of visible female role models at senior levels as a barrier.

Q: Approximately what proportion of leadership positions (Director level and above) in your organisation are held by women where you are based?

55% of all respondents belong to organisations where women hold **less than a third of leadership positions**.



*% of **all** segment respondents where less than a third of leadership positions in the respondent's organisation are held by women*

By Geography

- Singapore (60%)
- East Asia (60%)
- Other Regions (37%)

By Sector

- Investments, Transactions & Asset Management (65%)
- Consulting & Advisory (61%)
- Development & Others (52%)
- Design, Engineering & Construction (44%)

FINDING 02

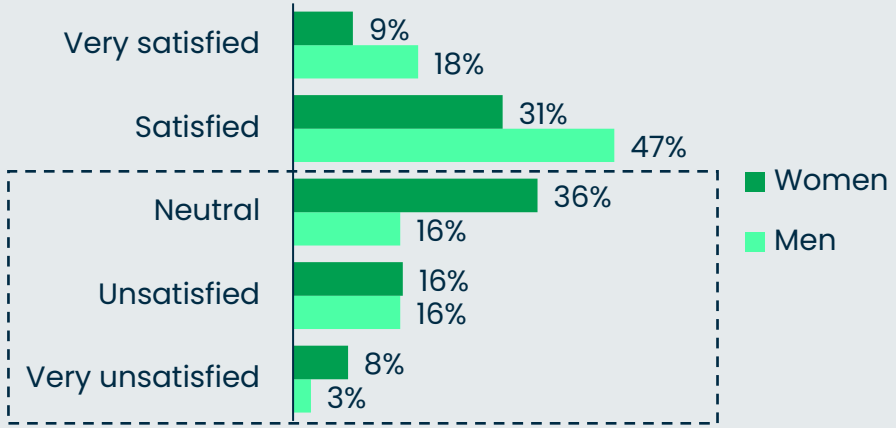
Lower career satisfaction for women

- **A gap also shows up in how career progression is experienced by women day to day.**

- The gap shows up in several ways:
  - 35% of women respondents say they have been **passed over for a promotion** they believed they were qualified for.
  - Women respondents **commonly report** being dismissed in meetings (35%), disproportionately assigned support work (33%) or excluded from informal networks (31%).

Q: How satisfied are you with your career progression to date in real estate?

60% of women respondents are not positive about their career progression, versus 34% of men respondents*.



*% of **women** segment respondents who are neutral / unsatisfied / very unsatisfied with their career progression to date*

By Geography

- Singapore (63%)
- East Asia (63%)
- Other Regions (53%)

By Seniority

- Below Director Level (67%)
- Director Level & Above (56%)

By Sector**

- Investments, Transactions & Asset Management (67%)
- Design, Engineering & Construction (51%)

***Other sectors excluded as number of women respondents in segment < 30.*

**Gender comparisons should be read as directional only, given the smaller base of men respondents (n=38).*

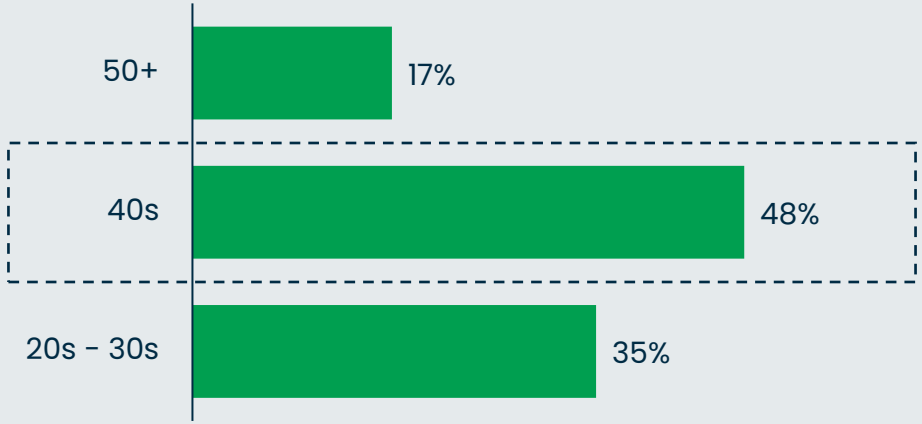
FINDING 03

Career progression slows in the 40s

- **Progression appears to slow for many women during their 40s.**
- **Gender was widely seen as playing a part.** Close to half of the women respondents who were passed over for promotion believe that gender was a contributing factor.
- **Limited access to networks and sponsors appears to be a key factor blocking women in their 40s from progression to senior leadership**. More than half of women respondents in their 40s identified male-dominated professional networks and lack of sponsorship as the biggest barriers.

Q: In the past 2 years, have you been passed over for a promotion you believed you were qualified for?

48% of women respondents in their 40s report being passed over for promotion in the past two years – the highest of any age group.



*% of **women** segment respondents who were passed over for a promotion they believed they were qualified for*

By Geography

- Other Regions (38%)
- East Asia (38%)
- Singapore (33%)

By Seniority

- Director Level & Above (37%)
- Below Director Level (33%)

By Sector*

- Investments, Transactions & Asset Management (48%)
- Design, Engineering & Construction (31%)

**Other sectors excluded as number of women respondents in segment < 30.*

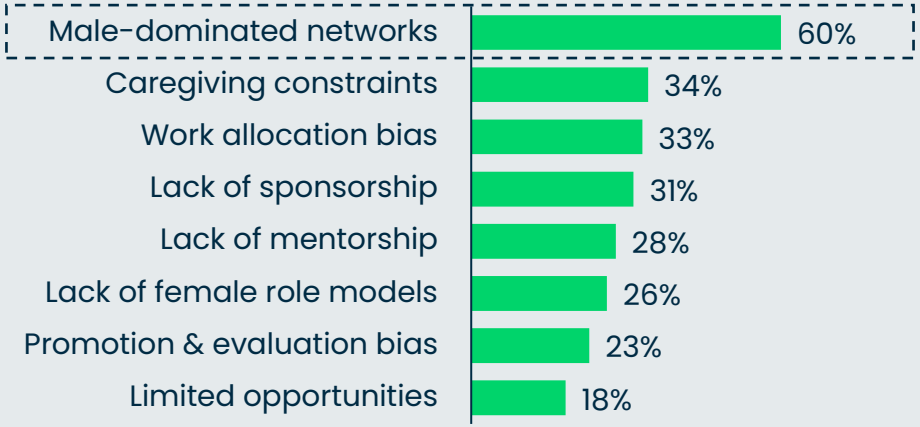
FINDING 04

Networks outrank every other barrier

- **Professional networks are where women feel the gap most.**
- **The impact is not only social but commercial.** 31% of women note being excluded from informal relationship-building opportunities (e.g. golf, after-hours events) and 25% from key deal teams or high-profile projects.
- **And it is not just women who are noticing this.** Male-dominated networks were also the most-cited barrier among men respondents, slightly ahead of caregiving constraints.

Q: What do you believe are the biggest barriers for women reaching senior leadership in real estate? Select up to 3 barriers.

60% of all respondents rank male-dominated networks in their top three barriers – well ahead of the next highest ranked factor.



*% of **all** segment respondents who believe male-dominated professional networks are one of the biggest barriers for women*

By Geography

- Singapore (66%)
- Other Regions (56%)
- East Asia (51%)

By Seniority

- Director Level & Above (61%)
- Below Director Level (58%)

By Sector

- Investments, Transactions & Asset Management (69%)
- Consulting & Advisory (64%)
- Design, Engineering & Construction (54%)
- Development & Others (52%)

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.

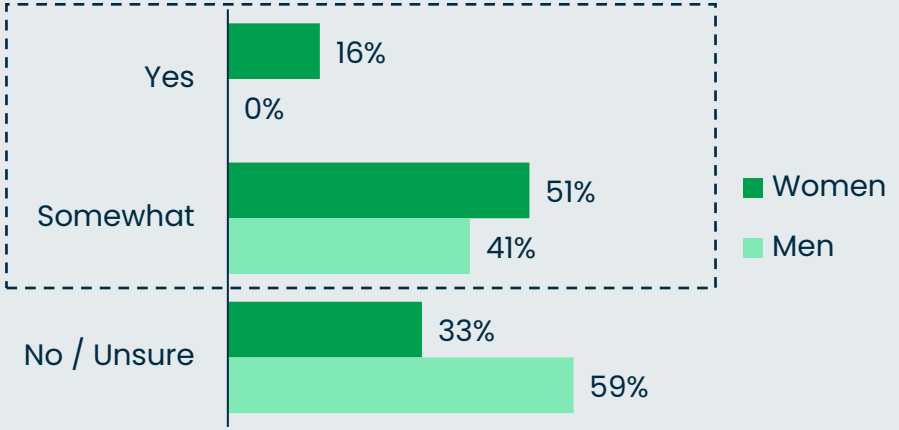
FINDING 05

Flexibility can still carry a career cost

- **Flexibility exists on paper, but using it is perceived to carry a penalty – more often by women than by men.**
- **The policy is in place, but the culture around it isn't**. 86% of all respondents have flexible work arrangements available, yet 38% say removing the career penalty attached to using it would do most to advance gender equity.
- **Men respondents perceive this factor to be more important for women** than women respondents themselves do. Men are more likely to regard:
  - Caregiving not accommodated by flexible policies as a barrier for women (53%* vs 29%).
  - Penalty-free flexibility as a high-impact change for gender equity (47%* vs 35%).

Q: In your experience or observation, does using flexible work carry a real or perceived career penalty in your organisation?

67% of women respondents with access to flexible work arrangements see a career penalty for using them, versus 41% of men*.



*% of segment respondents **with access to flexible work arrangements** who view a real or perceived career penalty (yes / somewhat)*

By Geography

- Other Regions (66%)
- East Asia (61%)
- Singapore (60%)

By Seniority

- Below Director Level (77%)
- Director Level & Above (52%)

By Sector**

- Design, Engineering & Construction (67%)
- Investments, Transactions & Asset Management (58%)
- Consulting & Advisory (56%)

***Development & Others excluded as number of relevant respondents in the segment < 30.*

**Gender comparisons should be read as directional only, given the smaller base of men respondents (n=38).*

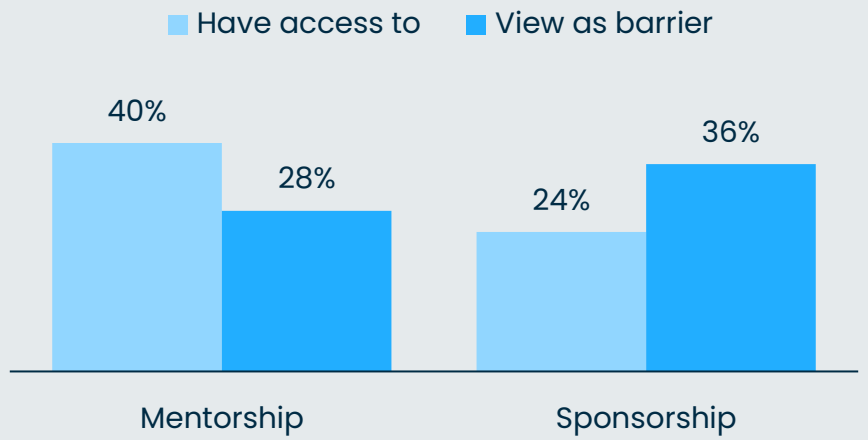
FINDING 06

Sponsorship lags mentorship

- **Both mentorship and sponsorship fall short for women, but the latter lags further behind.**
- **Sponsorship is the most overlooked gender equity initiative**. Only 5% of all respondents belong to organisations that have implemented a formal sponsorship programme for women, lower than any other initiative.

Q: Which of the following do you currently have access to? Select all that apply. + What do you believe are the biggest barriers for women reaching senior leadership in real estate? Select up to 3 barriers.

40% of women have access to a mentor and **24%** a sponsor; more highlight sponsorship as a barrier.



*% of **women** segment respondents who have access to a mentor / sponsor.*

By Geography

- Singapore (33% / 24%)
- East Asia (44% / 28%)
- Other Regions (50% / 21%)

By Sector*

- Investments, Transactions & Asset Management (19% / 26%)
- Design, Engineering & Construction (57% / 31%)

**Other sectors excluded as number of women respondents in segment < 30.*

Definitions

- ***Mentor**. Someone who provides career advice.*
- ***Sponsor**. Someone who actively advocates for another's advancement.*

From evidence to action — together, let's close the gap.