

Women in Public Affairs

Public Affairs Census



An introduction to the key findings of the
2021 Women in Public Affairs Census

9 February 2022

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About Women in Public Affairs

Women in Public Affairs was launched in 2012 by Ella Fallows and Laura Gilmore as an opportunity for women from across the industry to come together in an informal setting to share experiences, offer advice and support, and explore how we can work together to build a more diverse and representative public affairs industry.

Now in its tenth year, Women in Public Affairs is a well-established forum for women at all stages of their careers in public affairs.

We continue to focus on providing useful and interesting events with outstanding speakers which inform, inspire and support public affairs practitioners throughout their careers.

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About the Research

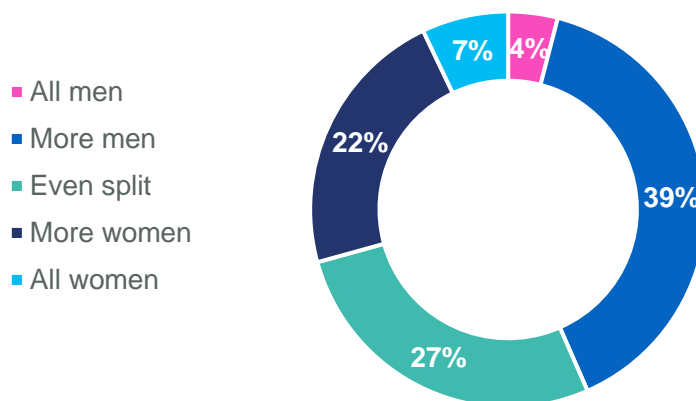
This research was conducted between 23rd September – 25th October 2021 via an online survey with a sample of 202 women who work in the Public Affairs industry. The survey was publicised online via the WiPA website and social media channels.

The current state of play

Men still dominate senior roles in Public Affairs – women are calling for a change in approach to hiring leadership

Men still dominate senior roles in Public Affairs, with 43% of women working in firms where a majority of the senior management team are men, and just 29% seeing a senior management team made up of more women. Just over a quarter are made up of an even split (27%).

Gender Split in Senior Management Teams



“I would like to see more women in leadership positions, and I'd like to see an industry where women don't have to work twice as hard as men to prove themselves capable of holding these roles”

Three in ten feel that the Public Affairs industry is poor at helping women to progress

The public affairs sector needs to improve the support it provides for women on their career and progression, as 31% of women rate the support they currently receive as poor (NET poor/very poor). This compares to just 13% of those who feel that they receive good support (NET good/excellent); the majority sit somewhere in the middle, with 45% rating the support they receive as average.

On top of this, there is widespread acceptance that women working in Public Affairs face greater barriers to progression. Half feel that women face greater barriers than men (50%), with none feeling that men

face greater barriers. However, there is also widespread belief that both men and women face equal barriers, or lack thereof, in their organisation (49%).

This issue is particularly problematic due to the specific barriers that women in the sector face: for example, six in ten women have experienced discrimination (58%), most commonly on the basis of their gender or age (44% and 28% respectively), but also for reasons such as socio-economic background and race (both 5%).

Barriers are even greater for women from minority groups

The research found that women from minority groups experience even more barriers to progression than men, with issues ranging from difficulty networking to being involved in senior activities. Of the three in ten of the sample who were from a minority group (29%), 63% believe they have experienced further barriers progression due to their minority status.

“I have experienced barriers based on my education as I attended a newer rather than older university. I have found this to hold a lot of importance. Another barrier I have faced is because English is not my first language. I see this as an asset but quite a lot of employers/jobs do not see this at all. Finally, I require flexibility as a disabled person, and this has been very difficult to get. For example, I have needed a part-time role before or working from home as my arrangement and I felt this was not considered seriously.”

When probing respondents on the barriers that they face, individuals from minority groups mentioned feeling that there is discrimination against individuals from minority groups, with examples given such as not being allowed to speak at events such as senior meetings and feeling that they are talked down to.

Aside from this, women working in Public Affairs mentioned feeling that they faced barriers based on what they deem to be working class accents, and that they feel like public affairs is a middle-class profession; this can be polarising and has meant that some have struggled to form immediate bonds with their peers. On top of this, those with disabilities (6% of the sample) mentioned lack of flexibility and support around disability.

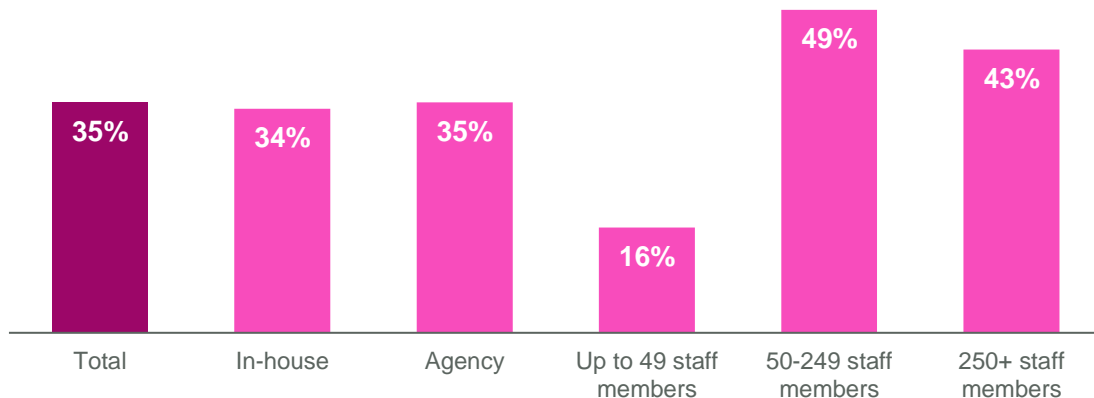
Transparency in the industry

More than half feel that their company is not transparent about progression and pay

Poor transparency appears to be a widespread issue in the Public Affairs industry, with 56% feeling that their company is not transparent about progression and pay. This is split into 59% who work in-house, and 48% who work for an agency. The research found that less than half of public affairs companies publish maternity and paternity policies, as well as companies' gender pay gap and salary bands:

- 59% include salary on job adverts
- 48% produce maternity policies
- 44% publish paternity policies
- 31% publish company's gender pay gap
- 26% publish salary bands

% of women in Public Affairs who think that pay differs for men and women at their level in the company



A third of women believe that pay differs for men and women at the same level, particularly in larger companies, with 49% of those working for companies with 50-249 staff members and 43% of those working for companies with 250+ staff members agreeing. The publishing of salary bands is widely considered to be important in the public affairs industry (92% NET important/very important), as is publishing information on gender pay discrepancies (90%), having an HR function (90%) and having a plan to make the company more diverse (90%). Having a dedicated diversity manager, however, is deemed less important (67%).

Four in five are less likely to apply for a job if it doesn't provide a fixed salary or salary bands

The publishing of a fixed salary or salary bands is widely sought after in Public Affairs, with 87% of women in the industry less likely to apply if this information is not available, including half who would be much less likely to apply (47%). When applying for their current job, three in five companies provided a fixed salary or salary bands for the role (60%); however, one in three did not (34%). Thus, while this information is very important when applying for jobs for those working in Public Affairs, it is crucially not always available. Other information that those working in Public Affairs have not been able to get at the point of applying for a role are as follows:

Top five pieces of information that individuals have not been able to get at the point of applying for a role

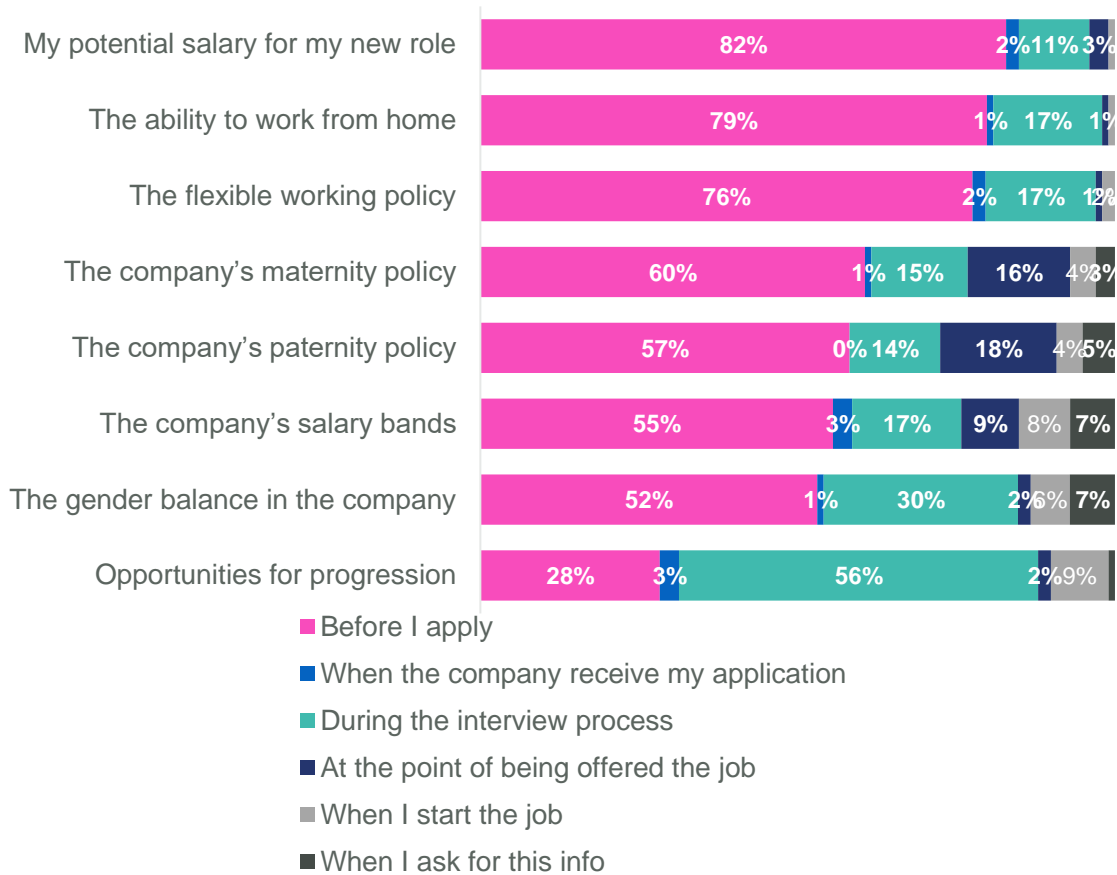
- 94% returnship schemes
- 91% sabbatical leave
- 91% company car
- 88% job sharing
- 80% the company's maternity policy

For the majority, this information was never provided to them, with 79% never having received information about returnship schemes, 72% about job sharing, 68% about sabbatical leave, and 27% never having received information about the company's paternity policy. Some information, however, is more widely provided to women at the point of application, namely:

Top five pieces of information that employers provided during the interview process

- 82% holiday entitlement
- 73% salary
- 64% benefits package
- 52% pension contribution
- 55% ability to work from home

When information should be provided



Women would like to see salary, ability to work from home and flexible working policy available to them when they apply (82%, 79% and 76% respectively). However, they would prefer to leave opportunities for progression to during the interview process (56%).

There are certain topics that some find difficult to talk about: just half would be comfortable talking about a potential salary rise or the company's maternity policy (50% and 51% respectively), and six in ten would be comfortable talking about the company's salary bands (60%).

Women would feel more comfortable discussing topics if the information was provided upfront, without being asked (87%), information being easily available online would also help (70%), as would the interviewer asking them if they would like more information on these points (50%). Other factors which would play a smaller role in improving comfort discussing these topics would be individuals having more of a positive feel of the conversation during the interview (21%), and more of a positive feel of the company (11%).

Over a quarter were asked about their previous salary when interviewing for their current role

While there is key information which is not provided at interview stage regarding important topics, more than a quarter were asked about their previous salary (27%):

43% asked about expectation of salary for new role

27% asked about previous salary

17% asked about political beliefs

11% asked about past career gaps or breaks

2% asked about whether they have children

1% asked about marital status

Three in five women in Public Affairs do not know their company's maternity policy well

Maternity policy is an area which requires further information to be shared with individuals, as three in five women who work in Public Affairs do not know their company's maternity policy well (62%). Among those who claim that they do know their maternity policy, the breakdown of the maternity pay available is as follows:

22% companies offer maternity in line with the statutory level, and **72%** above the statutory level

Among those who have taken maternity leave, on average they have taken it for **36.2 weeks**

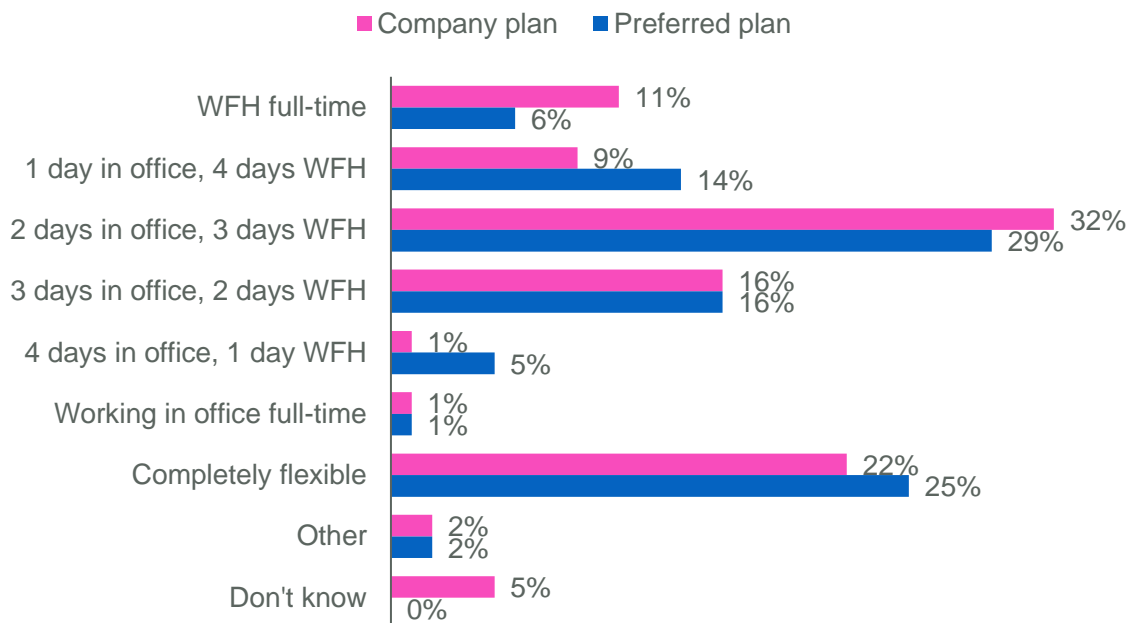
Among those whose company offers maternity pay higher than the statutory level, **74%** offered 100% pay at the beginning of maternity leave, and this level of pay was offered for an average of **17.4 weeks**

Adapting the industry to thrive despite the pandemic

Seven in ten will be working from home in some capacity going forward

Hybrid working is here to stay, with seven in ten (69%) expecting to work from home in some capacity in future. This will be split between either total flexibility, or two days in the office and three days working from home, in line with women’s preferences:

Company plan vs. preferred plan for home and office split



Looking ahead to the future of work, flexibility around working hours, the ability to work from home, as well as generous holiday packages are key priorities for women in the industry (96%, 95%, 97% respectively). Other factors which are likely to encourage individuals to apply for a role are transparency on salary bands (90%), and pension contributions (92%). Other factors which are important but less likely to encourage an individual to apply for a role are competitive maternity or paternity package and an active diversity and inclusion culture (72% and 71% respectively).

In terms of workplace policies that individuals have taken advantage of, the most common are flexible working hours (60%), mentoring or coaching (58%), unconscious bias training (52%), and leadership training (46%). Those which have been less widely taken advantage of are maternity leave (19%), compressed hours (13%), carer’s leave (4%), job sharing (3%) and shared parental leave (2%).

Demographic makeup of the Census

Who took part in the survey?

We spoke to **202** women working in Public Affairs

73% live in London

62% work in-house

91% are white

37% work in agency

75% have no dependents

6.5 years average tenure

