

'Australian Women's Working Futures - embedded inequalities and options for change'

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<http://sydney.edu.au/business/research/wwlrg>

New Social Inequalities and the Future of Work
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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Why the Australian Women's Working Futures project?

- Need less attention on robots, more on (young) women.
- We examine the present and the future of work from *young* ($= < 40$) women's perspective because:
 - Government's constant call to increase female participation rates
 - They represent the future workforce and are child bearers/carers of the future
 - Growth and projected growth in 'female' jobs, they are the future of work

The project: method and scope

- Nationally representative, online survey of 2,109 working women, aged 16-40.
- Comparative online survey of 502 working men, aged 16-40.
- Additional booster survey of 53 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working women, aged 16-40.
- Five focus groups with working women (*Brisbane and Sydney*):
 1. High skill/pay, secure employment
 2. High skill/pay, insecure employment
 3. Low skill/pay, secure employment
 4. Low skill/pay, insecure employment
 5. Working mothers

Sample Overview: Work and Demographic Status

Women employed in:	
Private sector	55%
Public sector	28%
Not-for-profit	6%
Don't know	12%*
Women's employment status:	
In own business	6%
For an employer	55%
Casual/freelance/short term contract	19%
Number of jobs held:	
One	85%
At least two	15%
Working hours:	
0-20 hours/week	31%
21-30 hours/week	18%
31-40 hours/week	41%
More than 40 hours/week	8%
Belong to a union	17%
Access to entitlements:	
Paid sick leave	67%
Paid annual leave	65%
Paid parental leave (in addition to govt system)	42%
Income:	
Less than \$40,000	36%
\$40,001 - \$80,000	33%
More than \$80,000	18%

Location:	
Metropolitan	87%
Regional	13%
Highest education level completed:	
University	46%
TAFE	28%
High school Year 12	17%
High school incomplete	8%
Currently studying	33%
Women with at least one dependent child	39%
Proportion of those with at least one:	
0-5 year old	54%
5-17 year old	55%
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse – speak a language other than English at home	25%
Those affected by disability:	
Yes, limited a little	12%
Yes, limited a lot	3%

Embedded inequalities

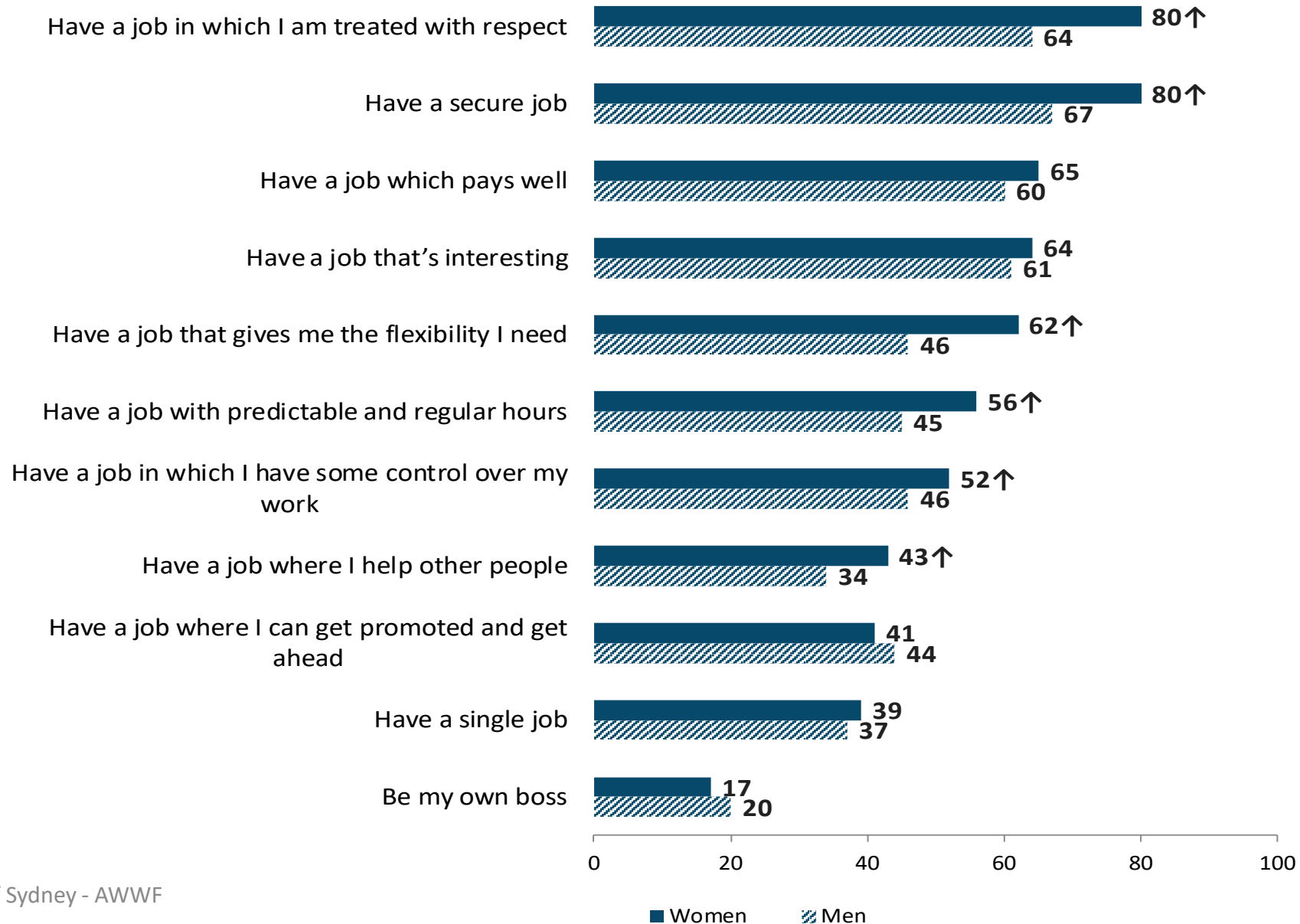
Based on the characteristics of respondents, already know that women:

- Work fewer hours than men
- Earn less than men
- Have statistically more access to paid leaves if work in public sector
- Have statistically less access to employer provided paid parental leave if work in private sector
- Have a dependent child 0-5 years old
- ***Expect to work >60 years of age***

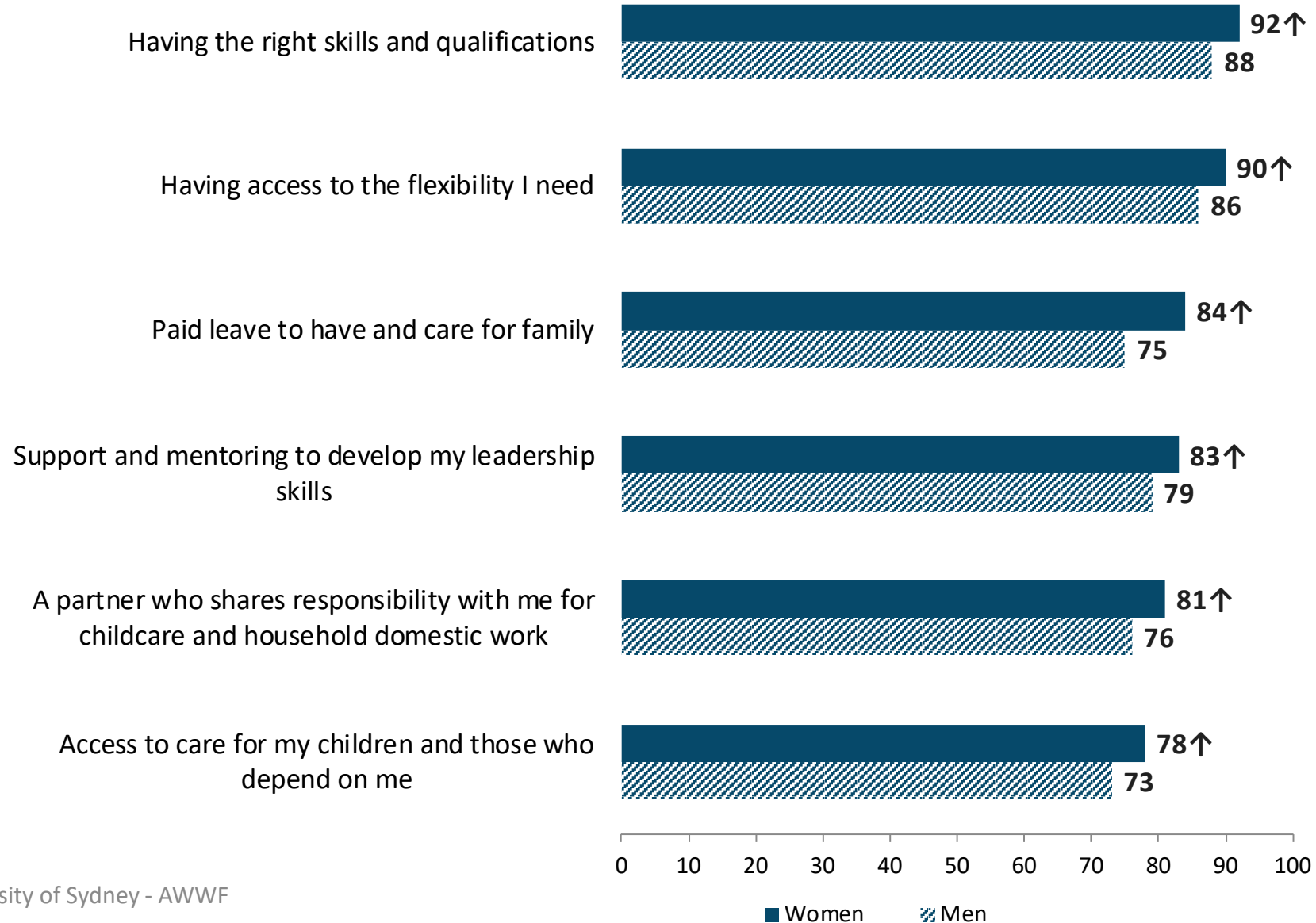
What women want, value and expect:

1. What women value most in a job
2. What women say is important for their future success at work
3. Who women say is responsible for the future of work

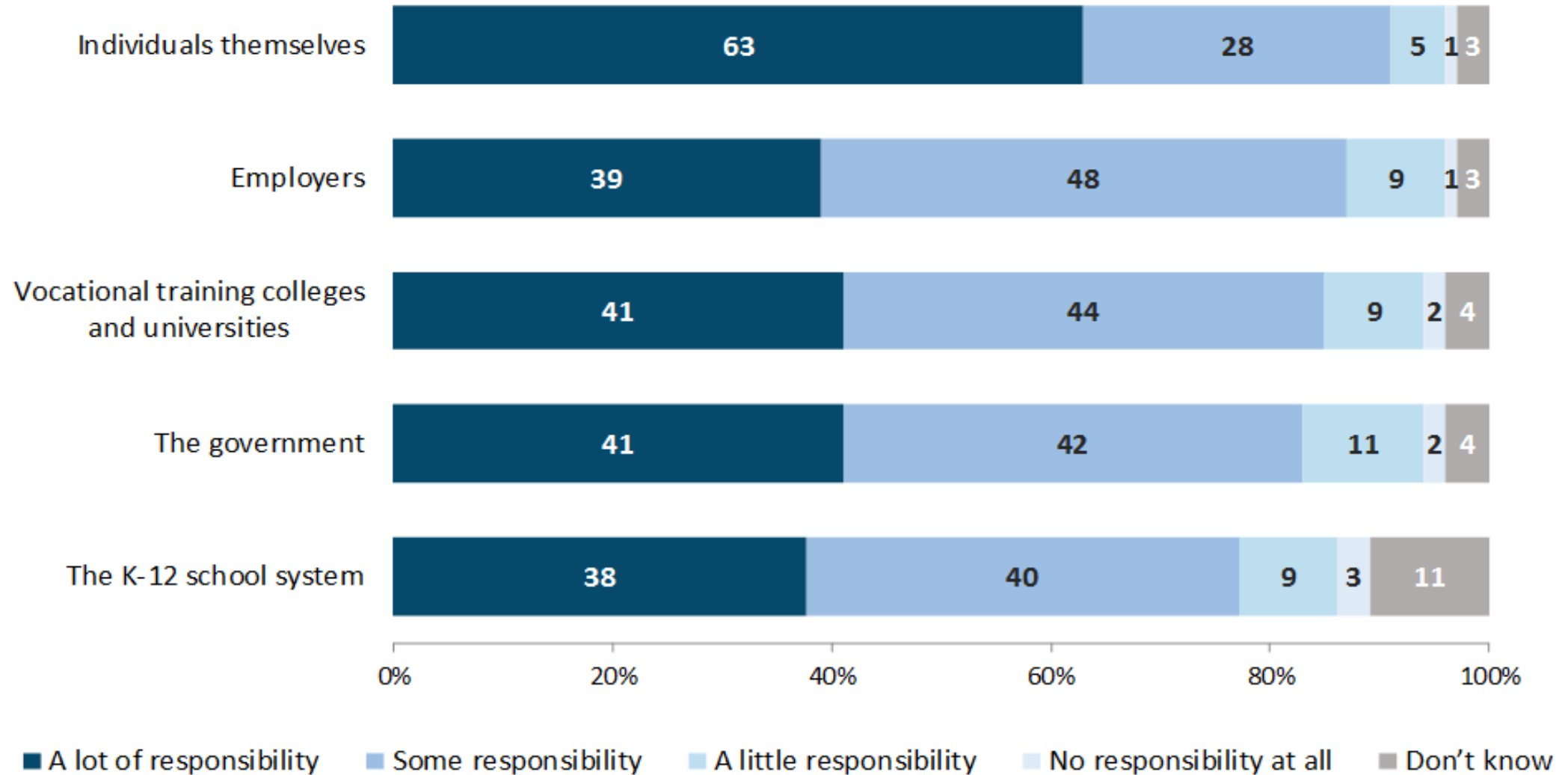
1. What matters 'a lot' to women in their work?



2. What is important for women's future success at work?



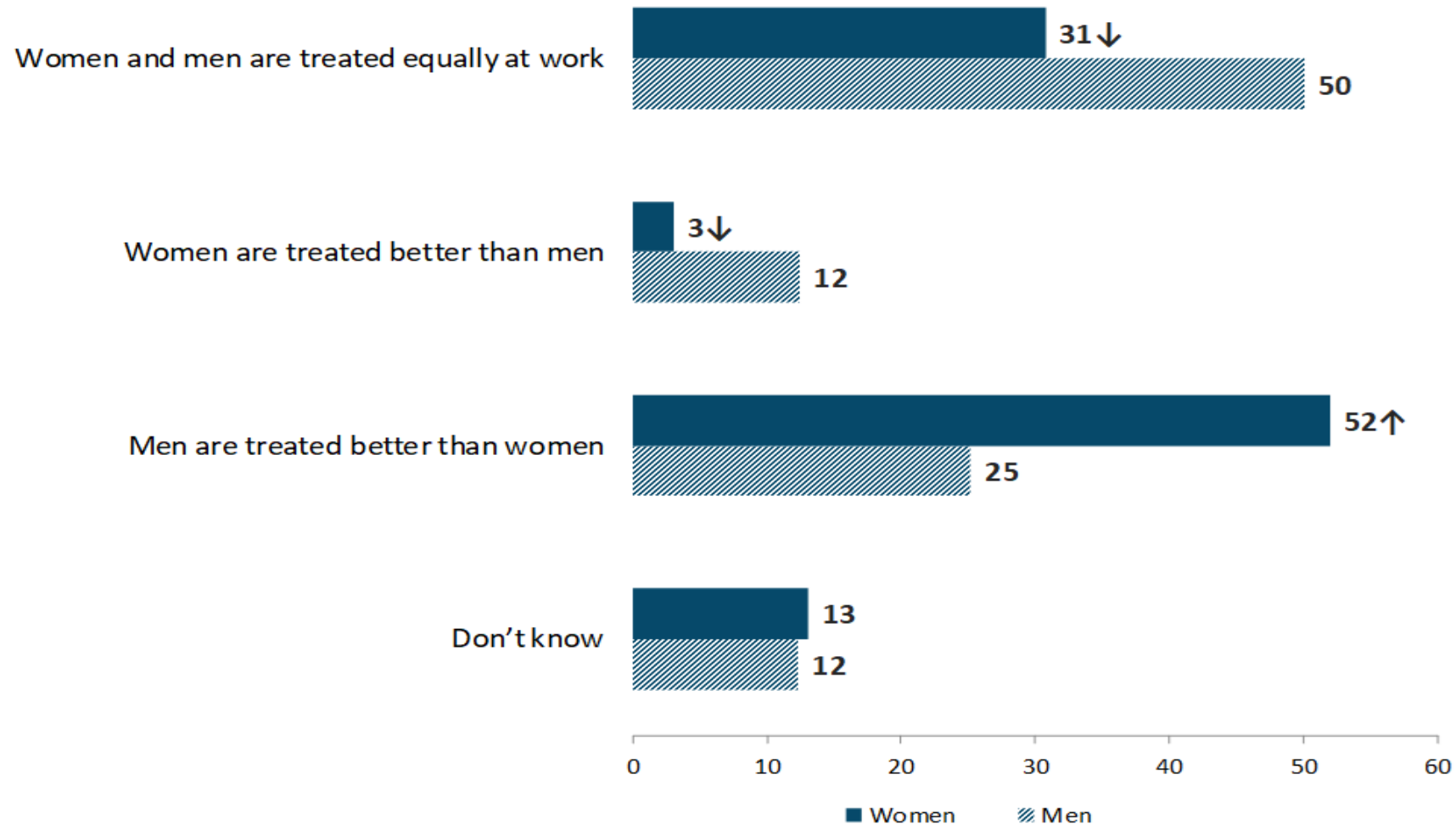
3. Who women think is responsible for the future of work?



Four key gaps: the present and future for women in work

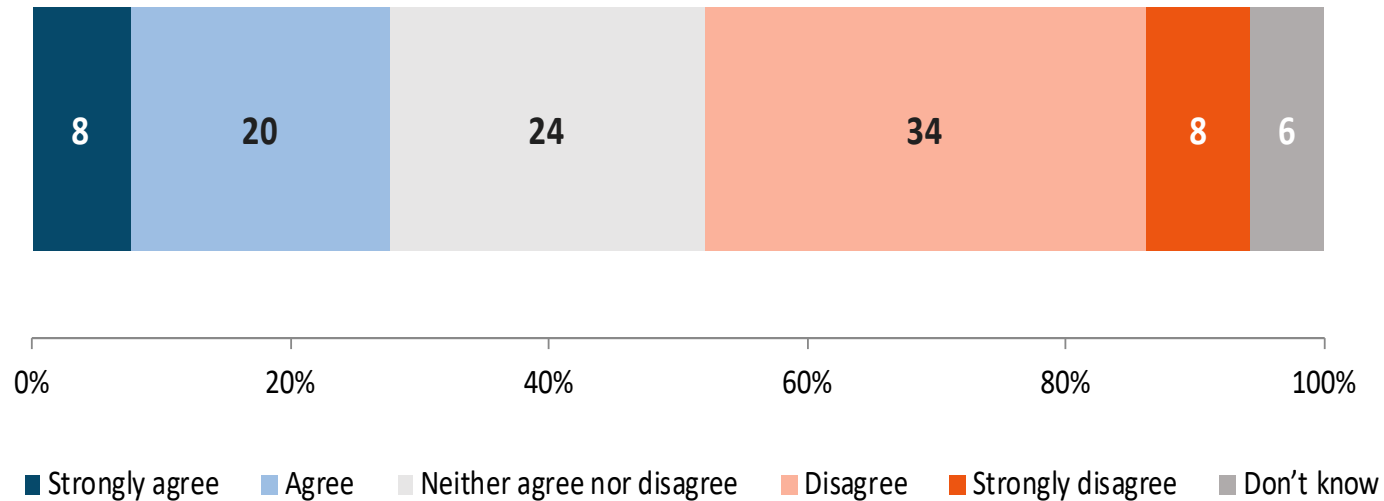
1. Respect and equality
2. Job security and predictable hours
3. Flexibility, work and life
4. Skills, training and automation

1. Respect & Inequality: the gender gap



1. Respect & Inequality: the culture gap

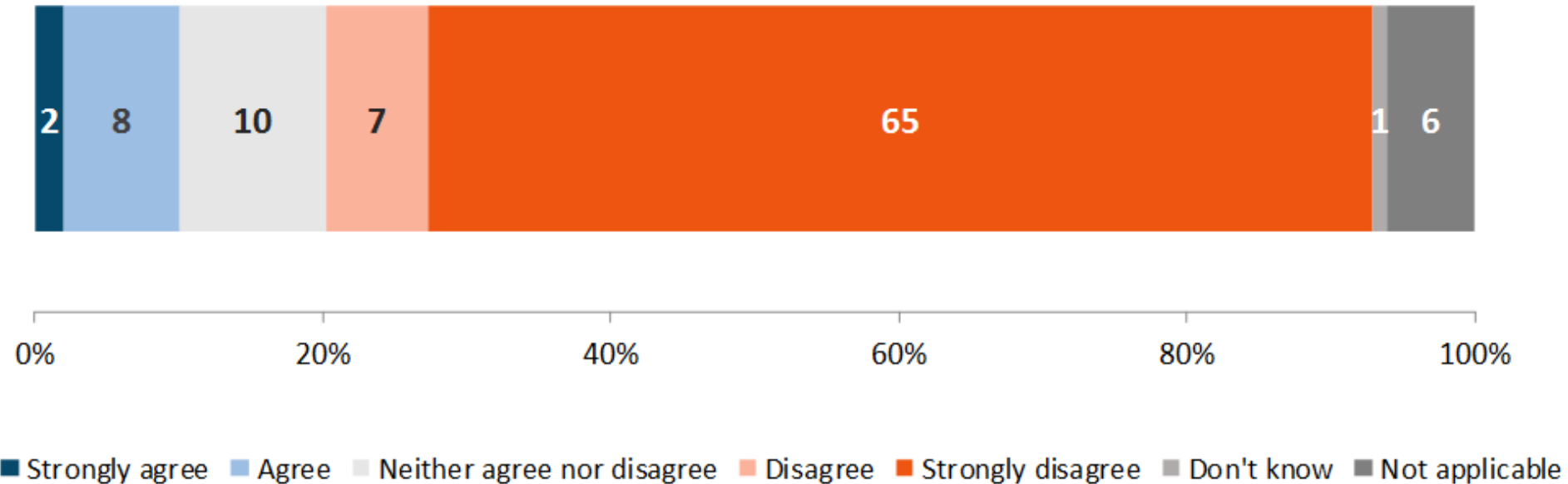
All Australians are treated equally in the workforce irrespective of their cultural background



- *I think Aussies are pretty racist to be honest, I am not going to lie.*

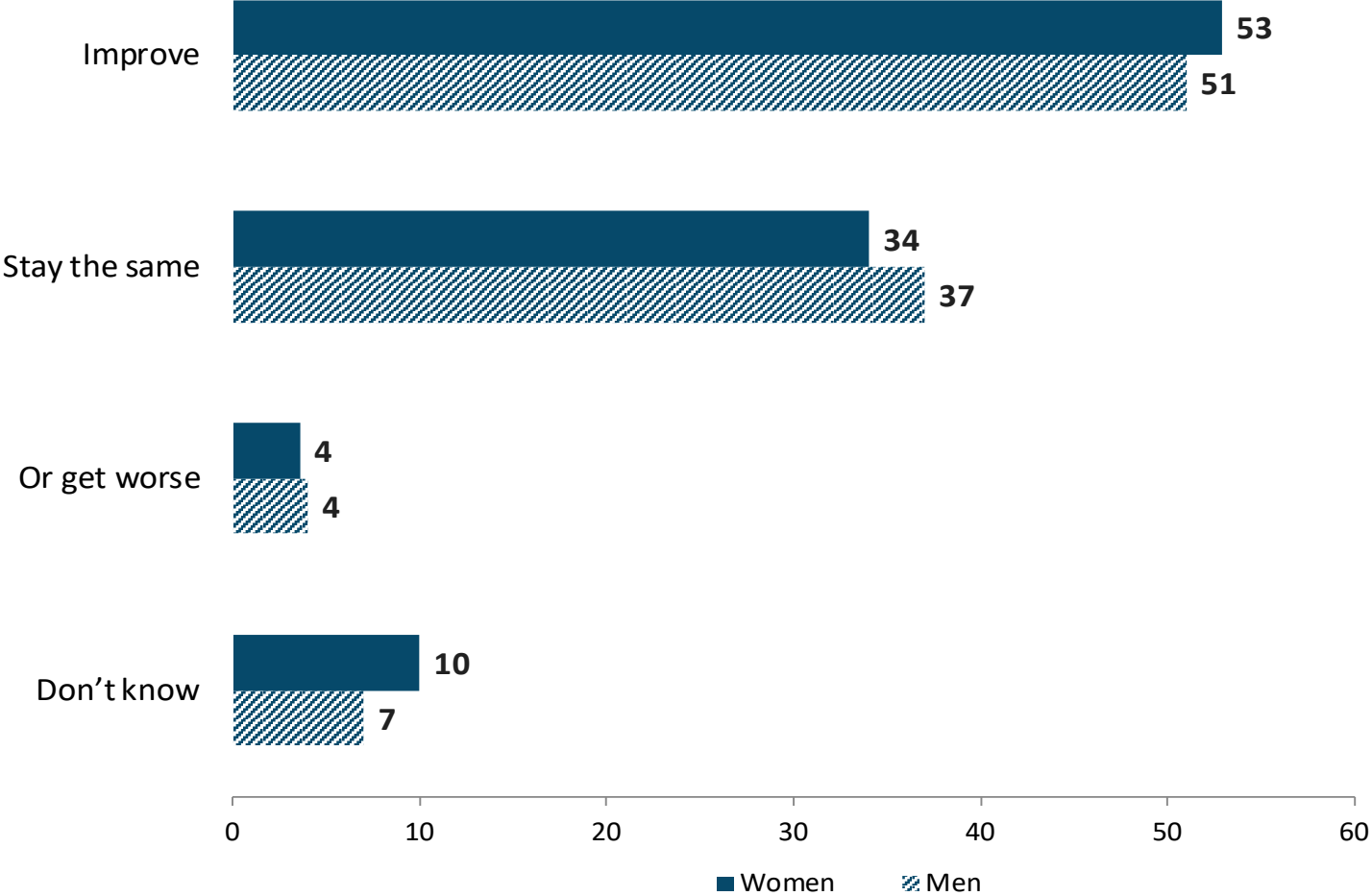
1. Respect & Inequality: sexual harassment

Women experience sexual harassment at work



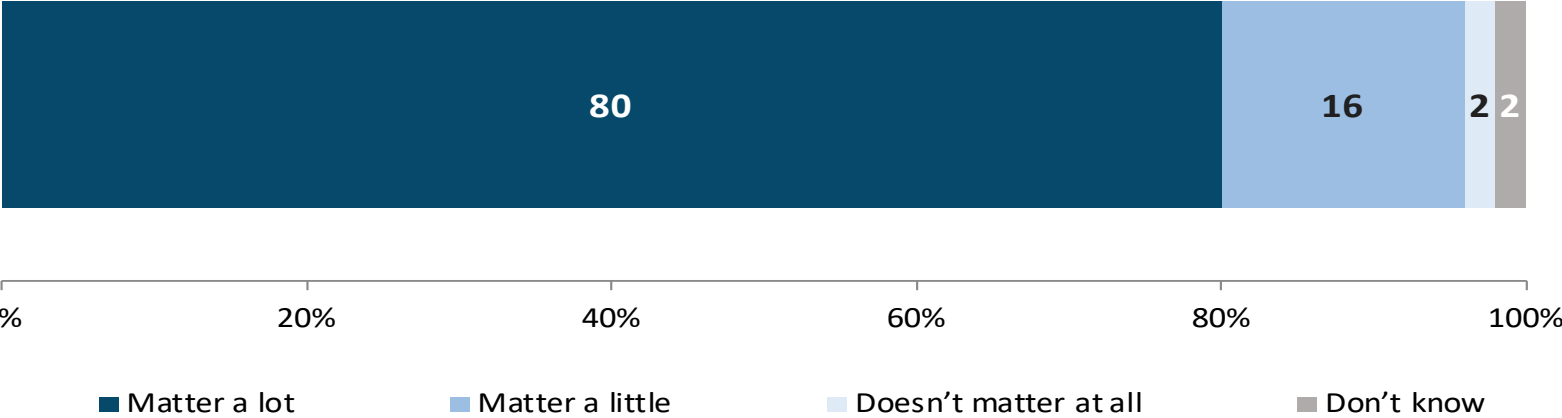
*It's a really male-dominated industry and they just don't take you seriously.
And you get hit on all the time.*

1. Respect & Inequality: The future of gender equality

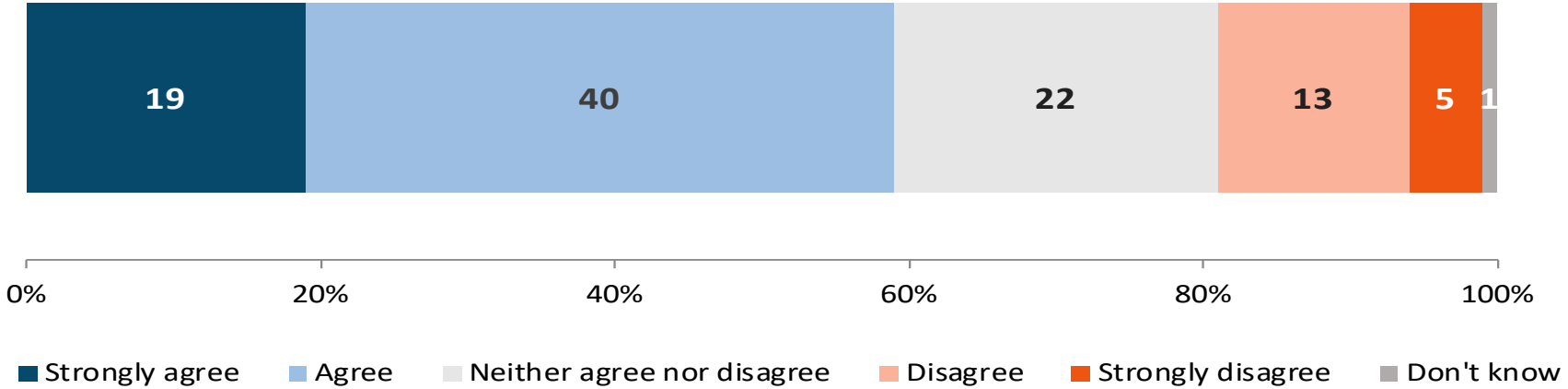


2. Job security (& predictable hours)

Having a secure job is important to women:



Current job security:

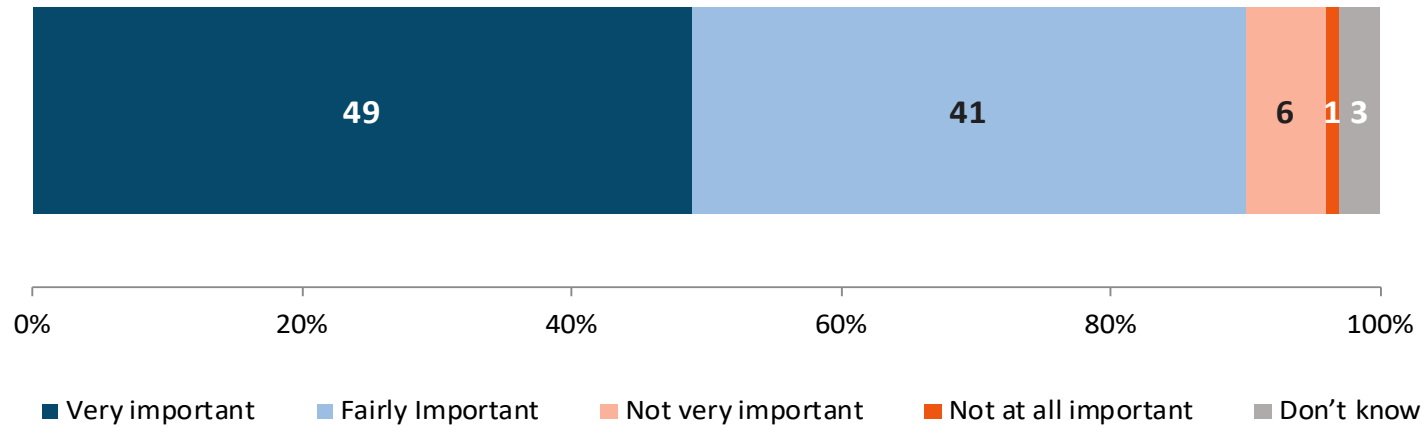


2. Job security (& predictable hours)

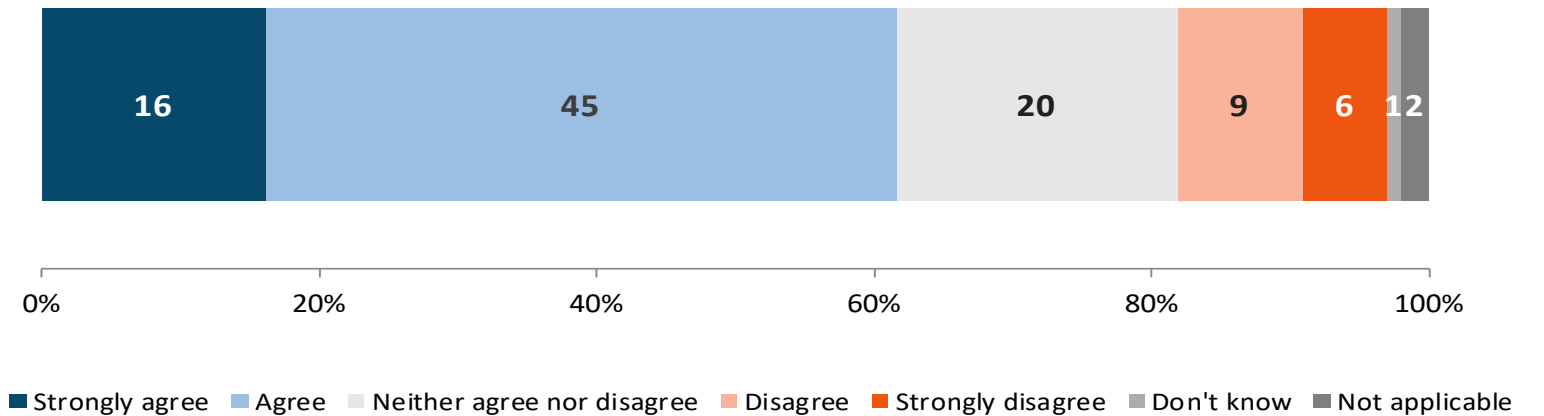
- ...no-one is actually on a permanent contract, **we're all temps** ... you haven't actually been given a permanent job and you've been working there for five years.
- Everyone just wants to employ casuals now. There is no permanent... I reckon **casualization of the workforce is the biggest issue.**
- A lot of people complain that **it is hard to get mortgages and loans** and stuff like that if all you've got is a temporary contract that just keeps getting renewed...
- I looked at my super and I've been working for over ten years now and I've got like less than a year's worth of money put aside ... How many years am I going to keep working, how much money am I going to have, **can I ever retire like comfortably?**
- I look around and see other people having kids on my salary, I think '**wow, how do you do that?**'

2. Flexibility, work and life

The importance of flexibility at work



Current access to flexibility



2. Flexibility, work and life

When I decided to go back to work I couldn't find a job in an office that had flexible school hours and ... **I was probably looking for a good 12 months.**

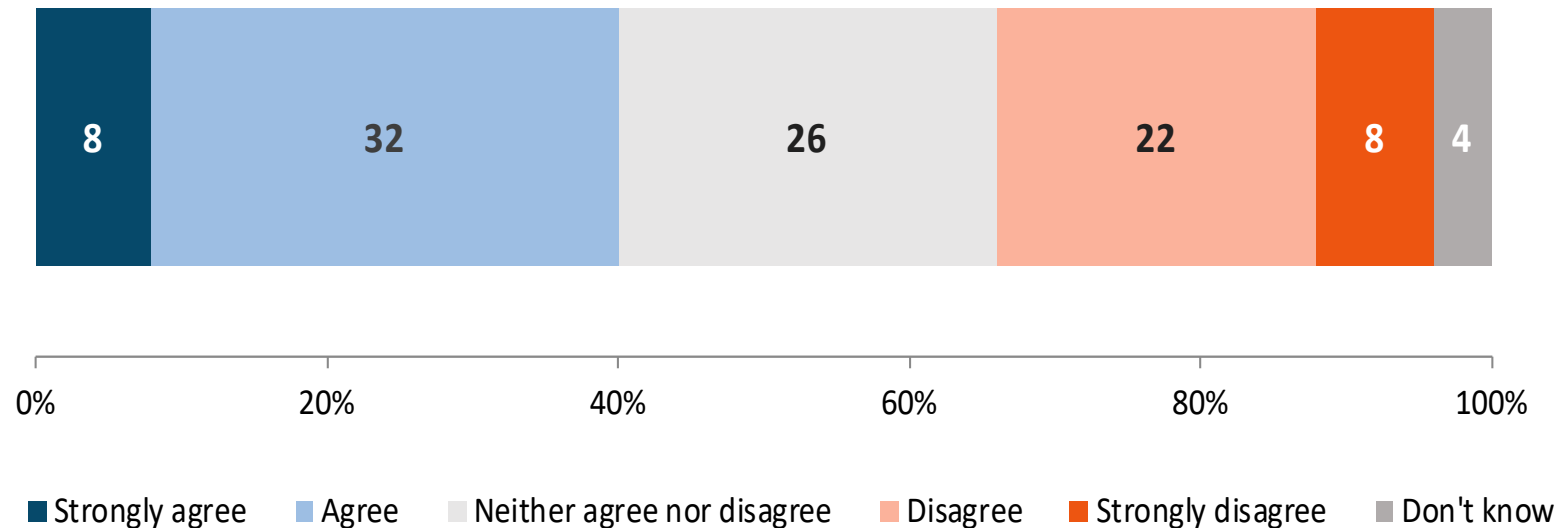
Your work/life balance [in public sector] is certainly appreciated a lot **more than it was when I was in private practice.**

I moved into non-profit for a bit more balance.

3. Skills, training and automation

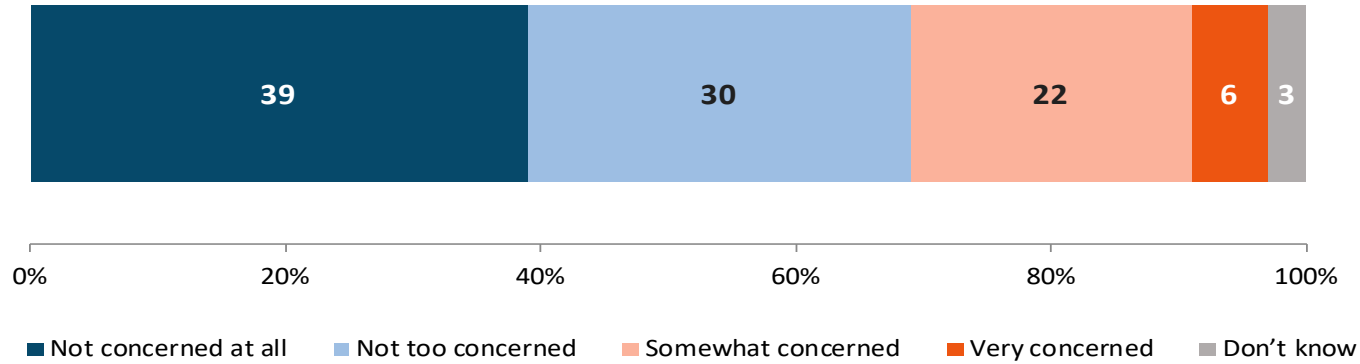
- 92% of women say it is important to have the right skills and qualifications to succeed
- 48% say they will need more education or training to remain in OR get a good job
- Yet only 40% report they can currently access affordable training to equip them for better jobs.

I can access the affordable training I need to equip me for better jobs.

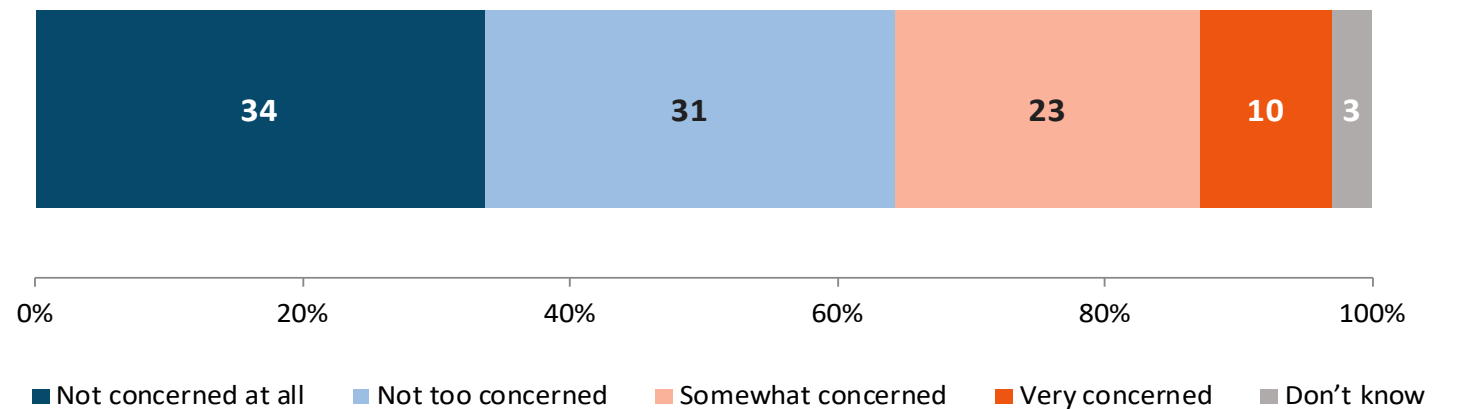


3. Skills, training and automation

Concern about job loss as a result of automation



Concerned about being replaced by workers willing to earn less



Findings and Implications for scholarship, policy, employers and jobs

Top 3 things women value most in a job: respect, security, pay

- Include and value women's concerns in debates and research about the FoW.
- FoW discussions occur at a time when there are significant gaps between aspiration, expectation and practice.
- Consider the social/relational contract as well as the work contract in any FoW discussion.

Top 3 things women say is important for their future success at work: skills and qualifications, flexibility, paid family leave

- Women still see their future roles in terms of work and care.
- Need to integrate the work and care regimes in practice and in theory.
- Avoid embedding divisions and segmentations into the future?

Who women say is responsible for preparing for FoW: top 3: themselves; tertiary education providers/government; employers

- Women have internalized the responsibility and risk to themselves. A need to shift responsibility to employers/capital.
- Debates about FoW must include life-long learning and training policy needs in context of a feminizing workforce.

Thank you
Q&A

Some policy suggestions:

- **Respect:** sexual harassment and discrimination serious problem. Need to change behaviours – Sanctions? Reporting?
- **Work and Care:** Extend and improve policies to recognise, reduce and redistribute family and community care responsibilities:
 - Flexibility rights – in parental leave period and beyond
 - Parental leave – women - extend, add super; Parental leave – men – extend; differentiate
 - Child care and elder care – improve provision and recognition
- **Work: Pay Equity**
 - Development and implementation of a national policy framework to achieve gender pay equity in Australia
 - Amend the *Fair Work Act 2009* to improve its capacity to address equal remuneration, introduce gender pay equity as an overall object of the Act; provide guidance for the Commission and applicant parties on making and applying for orders of equal remuneration
- **Life long education and training** – national scheme? employer levy?