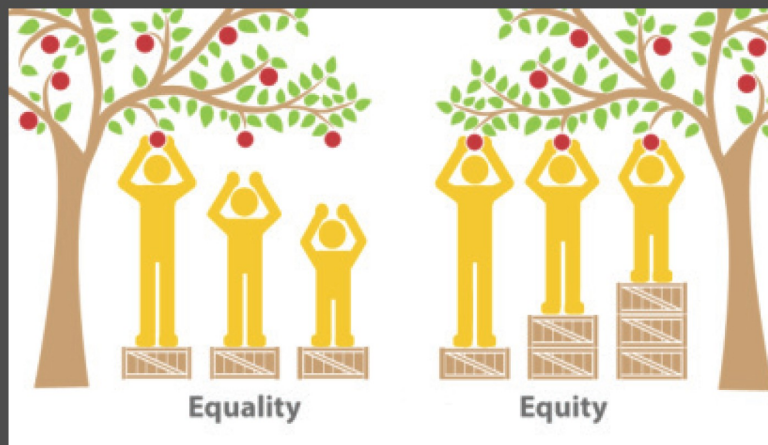




Mauritius National Assembly

## Key Findings and Recommendations

# Participatory Gender Audit in the Private Sector in Mauritius



Study Commissioned by the Parliamentary Gender Caucus  
of the Mauritius National Assembly  
in collaboration with the  
United Nations Development Programme

27 May 2019

## **Acknowledgements**

The Parliamentary Gender Caucus extends its appreciation to all its stakeholders involved in the completion of this participatory gender auditing exercise in the private sector in Mauritius. The partnership established at the outset with Business Mauritius created the impetus needed to launch the Study.

The Caucus further wishes to recognise the unwavering support of the United Nations Development Programme, our privileged partner, in extending technical assistance through the services of a National Gender Expert attached to the National Assembly. Moreover, Statistics Mauritius provided technical assistance to the Caucus.

The Caucus would also like to highlight that the auditing exercise would not have been able to establish the baseline on the status of gender equality in the private sector without the full participation and collaboration of the 100 selected companies who participated in the exercise. The Caucus further acknowledges the dedication of the Human Resource Managers involved for allocating the time and resources to complete the questionnaires and to participate in the interviews.

It is expected that the results of the findings and recommendations will inform the policy and procedure development process in the respective sectors.

## **Background**

The Parliamentary Gender Caucus was formally established at the level of the Mauritius National Assembly in December 2016 through amendments made to the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly. As per Standing Order 69(6) of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly, the objective of the Caucus is to work for the promotion and attainment of gender equality. The Caucus is further mandated to recommend the carrying out of research on salient gender issues.

In 2003, a study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers on the representation of *Women at Executive Level in Mauritius* in the public and the private sectors revealed that amongst the top 100 selected companies in the private sector, women occupied only 5 percent of positions at the senior staff level, with women's participation in the private sector ranking six times lower than in the public sector.

According to the Mauritius Institute of Directors, amongst 52 selected companies, which include 33 of the top 50 companies in 2015, only 4.58 percent of the board directors were females, and 5.6% of board members were female.

Furthermore, the 2017 World Bank report entitled *Mauritius: Addressing Inequality through More Equitable Labour Markets*, has reported that women in the private sector are paid on average 30 percent less per hour than men in Mauritius.

At its meeting dated 15 September 2017, the Caucus approved the commissioning of a participatory gender audit exercise in the private sector in Mauritius to establish the baseline on the status of gender equality therein. Subsequently, the Caucus has proceeded in a consultative manner throughout the exercise with a formal meeting held with the then Director of Business Mauritius who extended his full support to the project and ensured the total collaboration of Business Mauritius in this exercise. The UNDP National Gender Expert attached to the National Assembly was tasked to undertake the exercise in selected sectoral companies falling under the umbrella of Business Mauritius.

Additional consultative meetings were held with representatives of Business Mauritius. All required standards set forth by Business Mauritius were complied with, along with due

observance to data protection and confidentiality of respondents. A technical committee comprising representatives of Business Mauritius, Statistics Mauritius, the UNDP National Gender Expert and Officials of the National Assembly was set up for that purpose.

The report presents the key findings and recommendations of this exercise.

## **Outcome**

The overall outcome of the exercise is to establish the baseline on the status of gender equality in the private sector at national level. The specific outputs of the assessment exercise are to:

- take stock of the status of women and men evolving in different sectoral echelons in the private sector;
- identify challenges and opportunities for equality; and
- provide recommendations to further gender equality principles in the private sector in Mauritius.

## **Adopting a Participatory Process**

Representatives of the technical committee met in November 2017 to:

- examine the draft Questionnaire pertaining to the Study;
- discuss and define a representative sampling methodology;
- identify the different sectors to form part of the participatory auditing exercise to reflect the architecture of the Mauritian economy; and
- refine the outputs of the audit through the identification of specific information to be generated from the exercise.

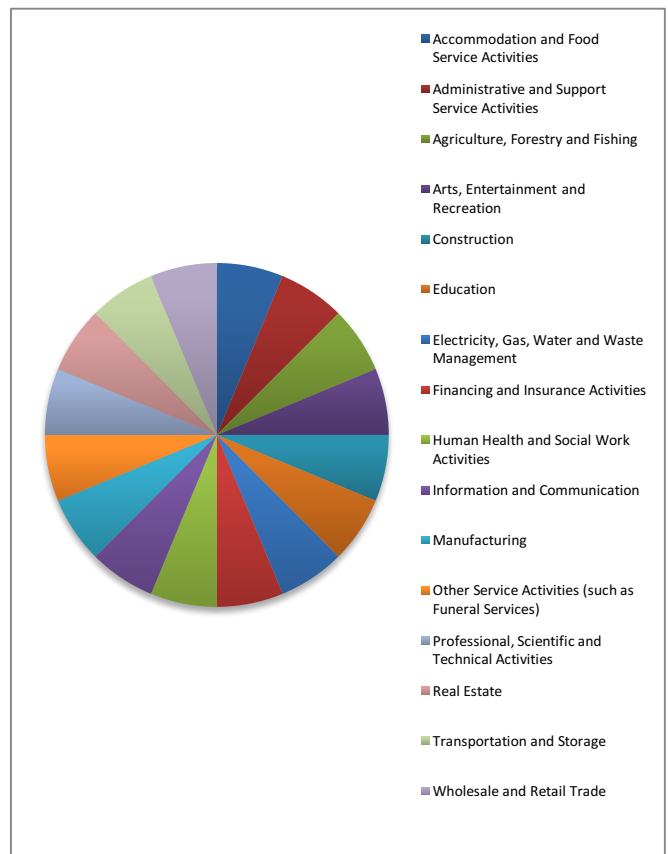
The draft Questionnaire was subsequently modified and circulated to representatives of Business Mauritius for approval. A second meeting was held with the latter to shortlist a representative sampling of companies to form part of the exercise.

## Sampling Methodology

A population size of 1211 representing companies registered under the aegis of Business Mauritius was obtained for a total number of 16 Sector Activities.

The definition of Micro, Small, Medium and Large Enterprises were taken as per current definition of Statistics Mauritius as follows:

- ❖ Micro enterprises - one to five persons employed and not more than Rs 2 million annual gross output.
- ❖ Small enterprises - those generating an annual gross output of not more than Rs 10 million, except those classified as micro enterprises.
- ❖ Medium enterprises - those generating an annual gross output of more than Rs 10 million, but not more than Rs 50 million.
- ❖ Other enterprises - include all enterprises generating an annual gross output of more than Rs 50 million.



### ⊕ **Step 1: Determining the Sample Size**

Based on the target population of 1211 companies, the sample size was calculated with a confidence level of 90 percent, generating an ideal sample size of 100 companies.

### ⊕ **Step 2: Stratified and Cluster Sampling**

The stratified sampling method was mainly underpinned by 2 strata, namely

- (i) stratum by sector activities; and
- (ii) stratum as per turn-over<sup>1</sup>.

For ease of analysis, the 16 strata were subsequently merged into 5 strata and divided by “Activity Sector” and “Business Turn Over<sup>2</sup>”.

### ⊕ **Step 3: Representative Sampling**

A representative sampling methodology with probability calculation was used for the proportional representation of each stratum (activity sector and turn-over).

### ⊕ **Step 4: Hosting and Filling of Questionnaire**

Participants were given two methods to fill out the questionnaire, based on their preferences. A self-response option gave participants the opportunity to manually fill out the questionnaire and fax/email these to the Secretariat of the Caucus. Alternatively, participants were able to respond to the questionnaire on the online

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<sup>1</sup> Based upon the classification of the Businesses as per SME definition, 365 companies were removed as they had no turnover details, resulting in a final population size of 846.

<sup>2</sup> Calculation of probability of selection of cluster was calculated as follows: Total population size of stratum / Total population size \* 100 (Selected sample size)

government platform hosted by the Government Online Centre and using an online survey method.

#### ✦ **Step 5: Initiating Contact**

The Human Resource Managers of the 100 selected companies through the representative sampling methodology were contacted personally through telephone calls, with a follow-up email by the National Gender Expert, through an official e-mail address provided by the Government Online Centre, explaining the objectives of the auditing exercise. All respondents were then proposed the two alternatives for filling in the questionnaire.

#### ✦ **Step 6: Pilot Testing**

A pre-test of the questionnaire filling exercise was carried out with 5 different sizes of clusters excluding the 100 selected companies using a self-response questionnaire and online method to identify and fix any bug with the online system, as well as to test the quality of the data to be extracted from the questionnaire. The pilot testing phase revealed no fault with the online platform and content of the questionnaire.

#### ✦ **Step 7: Data collection and transcription**

All selected companies (total of 100) responded to the questionnaire. Questionnaires were kept confidential at the level of the National Assembly, with all research ethics protocols observed. Data was encrypted and transcribed on the IBM SPSS® software platform that supports qualitative and mixed methods analysis and Microsoft Excel.

#### ✦ **Step 8: Data Analysis and Validation**

Data analysis was conducted following completion of the above steps.

## **Key Findings**

The participatory gender audit exercise amongst the representative sample reveals that the private sector is sensitive towards institutionalising a conducive gender responsive environment. 54 percent of companies valued “equality” as a fundamental principle in the smooth running of a company, with the Human Resource Unit acting as Focal Point for issues pertaining to equality of opportunity and gender sensitivity. It is further seen that more companies are adopting affirmative actions in a bid to recruiting more women, with 66 percent of companies having issued job advertisements that encourage women to apply during periods of recruitment.

From the study, it is posited that the private sector now employs an almost equal number of women. However, for the period 2015-2018, it is seen that more men have taken employment in private companies.

The status of women at the highest level of decision-making in the companies sampled in this study remains very low, with the number of women in higher positions at the level of Chief Executive being almost five times lower than their male counterparts. Concurrently, women employees continue to be highly represented in the administration, rather than the technical side of operations in the companies participating in the auditing exercise. In terms of gender and educational attainment, the study reveals that there are 2.5 times more men with a post-graduate qualification than women, working in the private sector.

A higher number of women have been promoted within their specific levels/grades during the period 2015-2018. Furthermore, more women than men have attended personal development courses, and have the same level of ambition as their male counterparts to move onto decision-making positions. However, the study reveals that women still experience challenges as to moving on to the highest levels of decision-making.

In terms of the triple roles of women, it is revealed that less than 1 percent of women have not entered back into the labour force after taking maternity leave, thereby re-affirming the position of the Mauritian household as a dual-earner and women identifying themselves as career-oriented. Maternity and paternity leaves remain the most popular



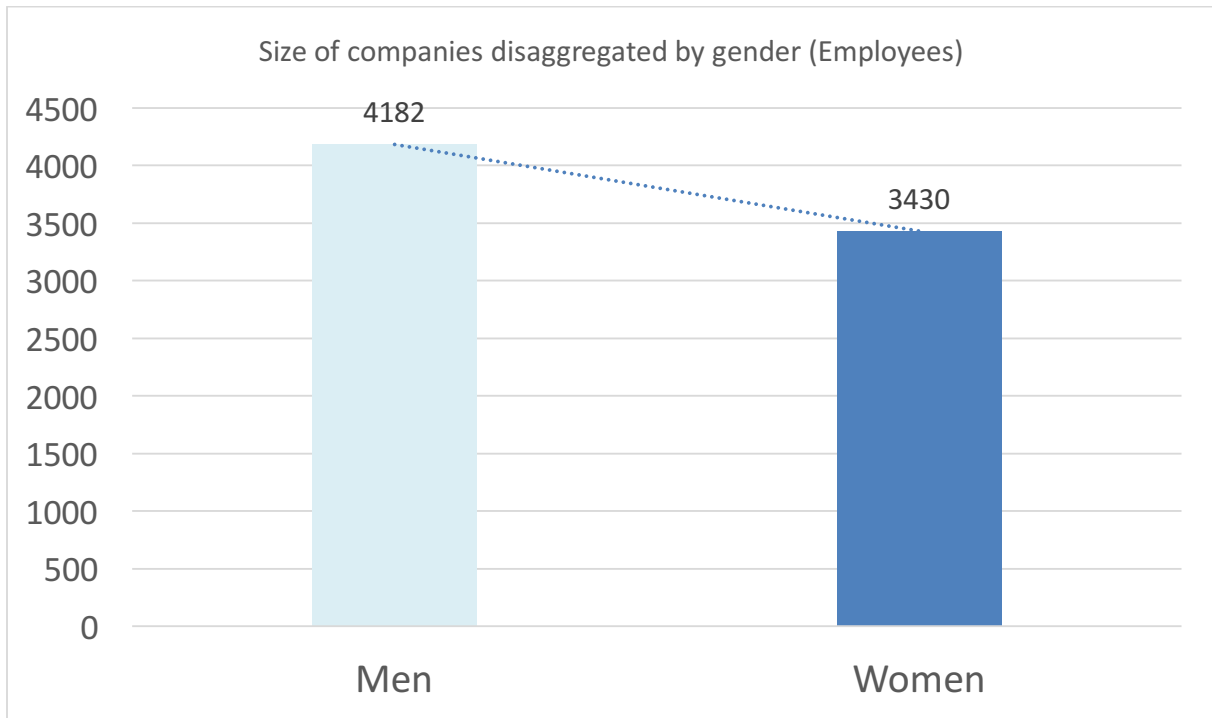
opportunity for parents as compared to parental leave, with a very low percentage of clusters having an internal policy on parental leave.

In terms of sponsoring a women's specific empowerment project (corporate social responsibility or others), only 14 percent of companies have reported having participated or presently sponsoring such initiatives.

These findings indicate that the private sector overall has a positive institutional culture in regard to gender equality. This provides an entry point to further consolidating actions towards gender equality by promoting women's participation in higher levels of decision making.

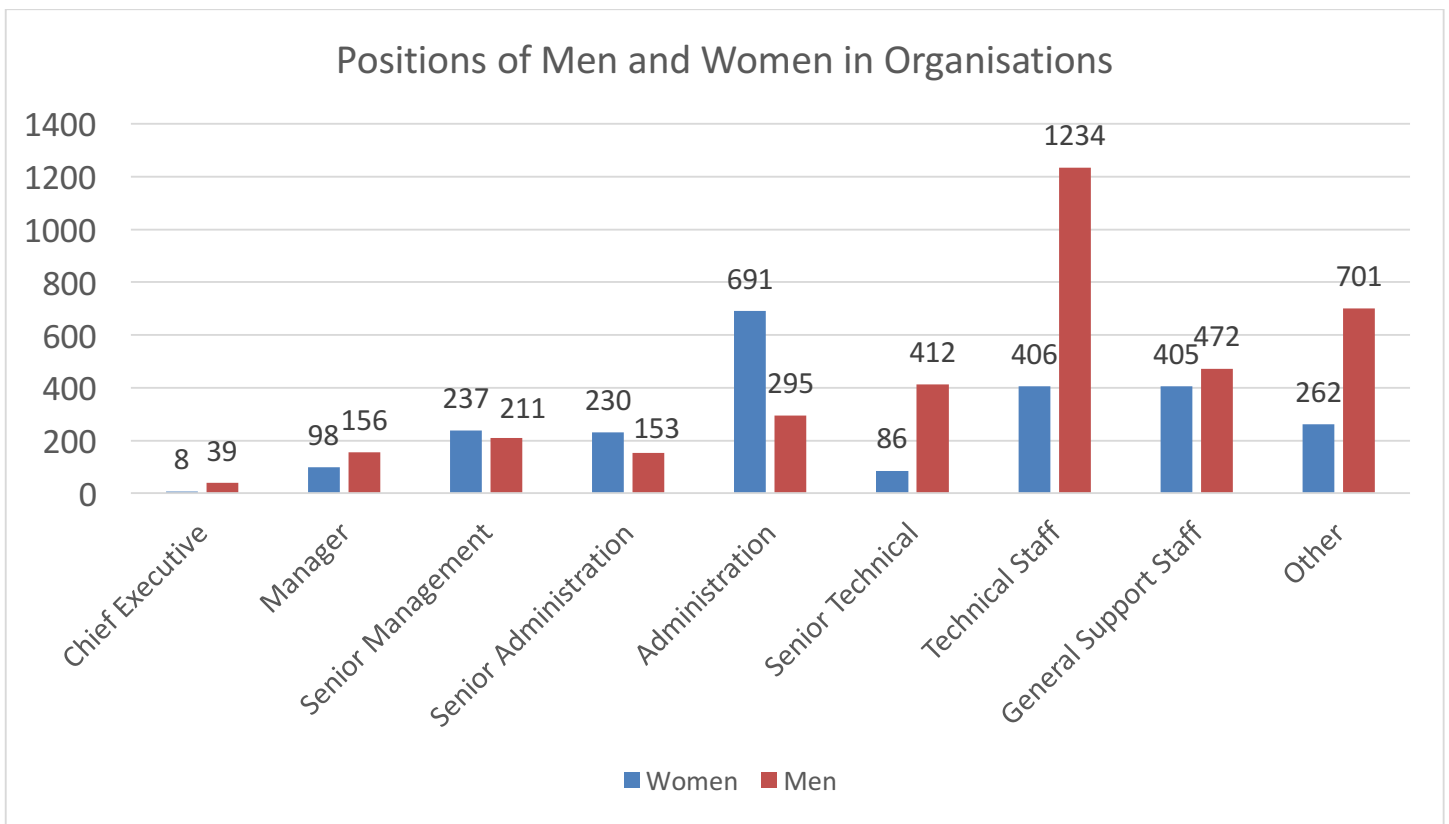
## Key Findings

### Chart 1-Gender Disaggregation



The total number of individuals employed in the selected companies under this participatory audit exercise amounts to 7,612. From the representative sampling obtained, the private sector employs almost the same number of women and men. In this study, women comprised 45.1% of the workforce in the private sector, whereas men comprised 54.9% of the workforce within that same sector.

**Chart 2- Gender disaggregation of job status<sup>3</sup>**



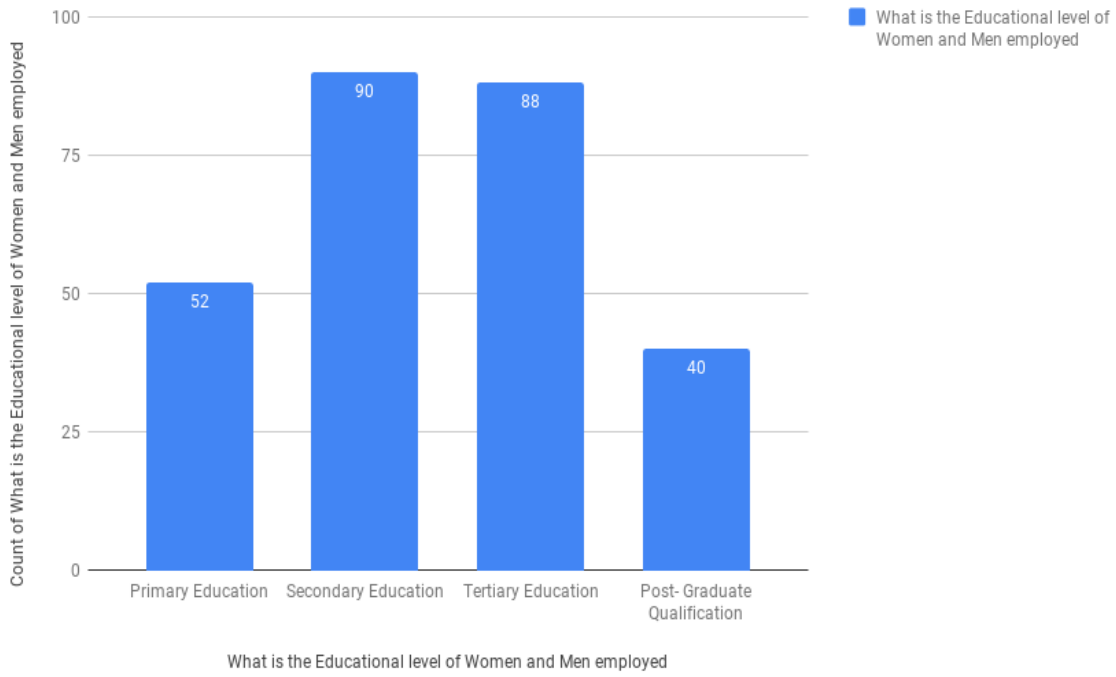
The number of men in higher positions at the level of Chief Executive is almost five times higher than that of women. The number of men in higher positions at the level of Manager is 1.6 times higher than that of women.

Women are seen to be dominant in administration jobs whereas men are seen as dominant in positions of technical staff, representing three times the number of women.

<sup>3</sup> The Chief Executive Officer is the highest ranking position in the company and responsible for taking policy/managerial positions. Managers have been defined as those tasked for the overall administration of the business. Senior Management position has been defined as high level executive members of the company who are actively engaged in the day to day business supervision and administrative processes to help meet the business objectives. Senior Administration staffs are responsible for the overall supervision of staff and managing operations in the business. The Administration section comprises Officers under the senior administrator who looks after the processes for the smooth running of the business. The Senior Technical Staff is responsible for technical responsibilities of the business such as engineering, IT, accountancy and legal matters. The Technical cadre operates under the Senior Technical Staff to carry out technical duties. General Support Staffs contribute to the running of the overall activities of the business and support the administrative and technical cadres. Other Staff are defined as workers responsible for maintenance.

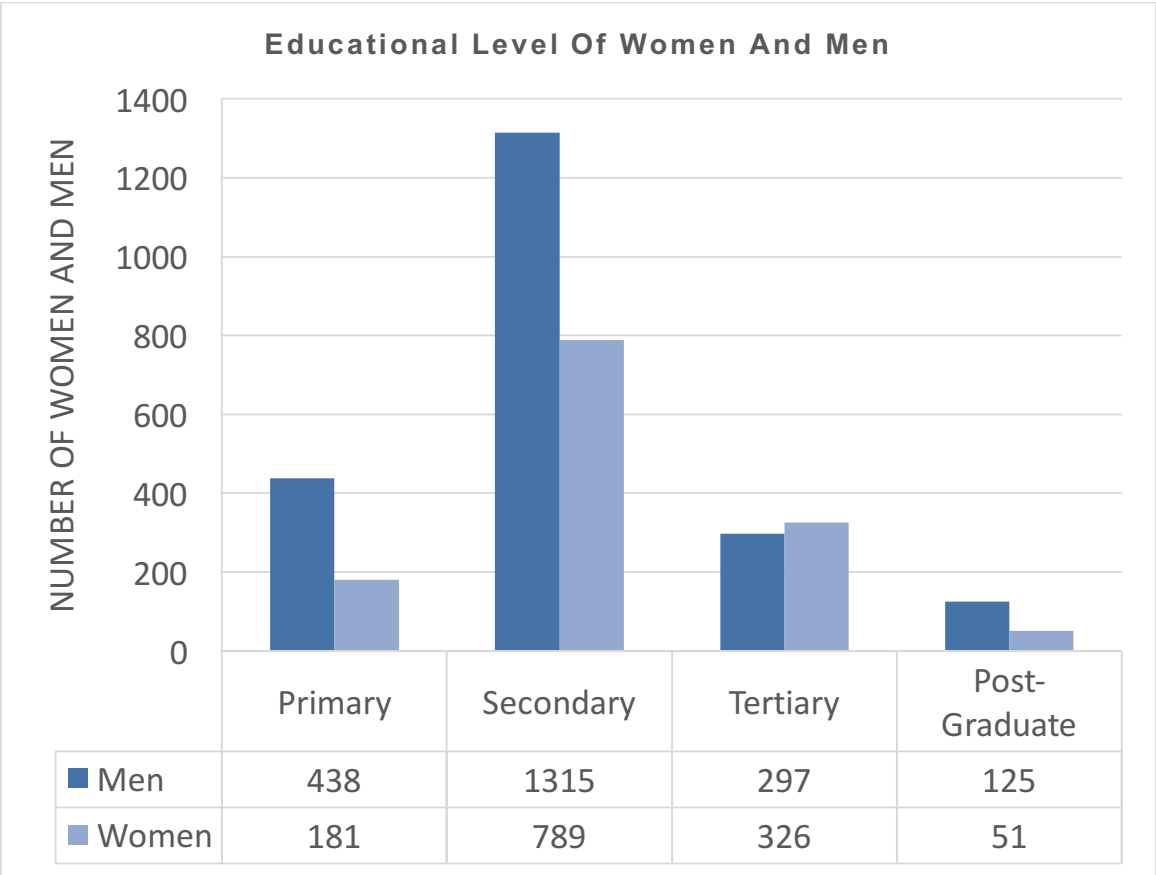
### Chart 3- Overview of educational level of men and women

Educational level of Women and Men employed in company



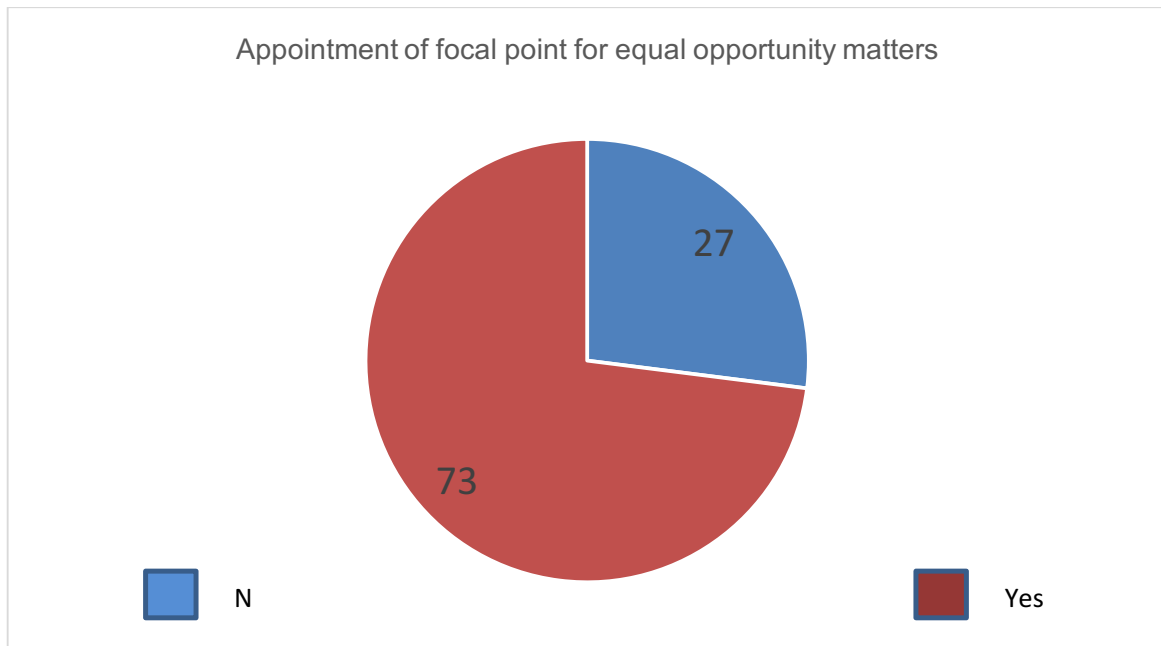
The above chart gives a general overview of the educational background of the employees. It is noticed that employees in the private sector have a sound educational background with 88 percent of companies having employees holding a tertiary education background and 40 percent having employees with a post-graduate qualification.

**Chart 4- In-depth analysis of educational level of women and men**



When disaggregated in terms of gender and educational qualification, it is observed that more men have completed their primary and secondary education. Furthermore, women possessing a tertiary education qualification are present in higher levels as compared to men. However, there are 2.5 times more men with a post-graduate qualification than women. Based on the sample of this exercise, there is no evidence of correlation between levels of education and representation at senior management level.

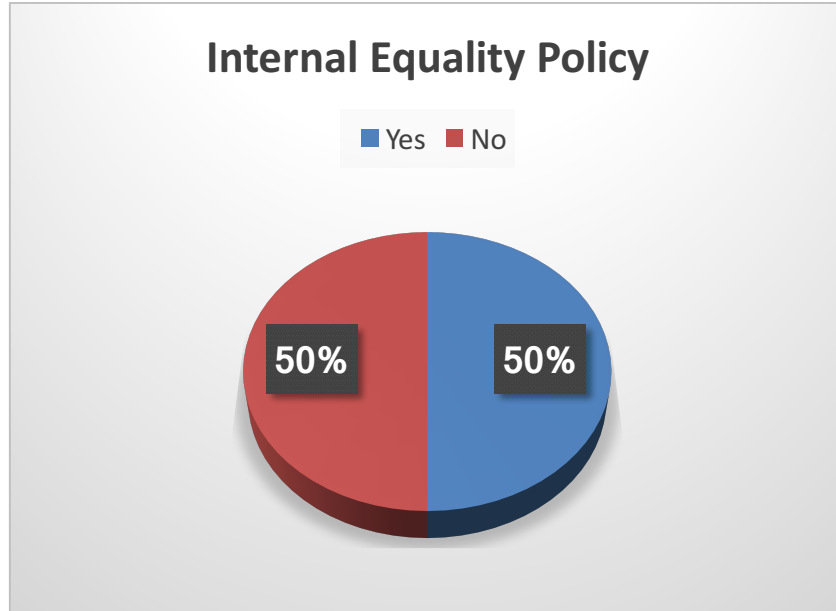
**Chart 5- Focal person on equal opportunity matters**



27 percent of companies mentioned that there was no focal person appointed to deal with gender equal opportunity matters. Out of the 73 percent of companies who reported having a focal person dealing with equal opportunity matters, 4 percent of respondents have commented that the focal person remains the Human Resource Manager while 10 percent commented that the focal person is the owner of the company. 59 percent of companies reported that equal opportunity remained a matter to be dealt with at the level of the Human Resource Department. It is encouraging to note that a majority of companies has in place a focal point on equal opportunity matter.

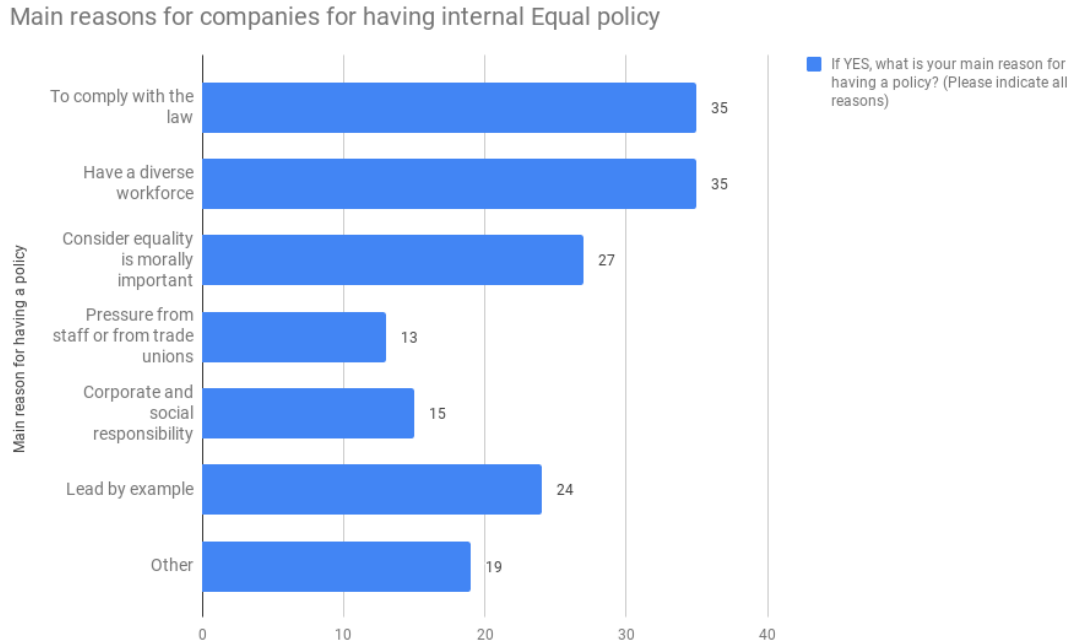
## Chart 6- Equality of opportunities

### 1. Company having Internal Equality Policy



According to the chart above, 50 percent of companies do not specifically have an internal equality policy, but adhere to the Equal Opportunities Act (2008) and national Labour and Employment legal provisions.

## 2. Main reasons for companies for having Internal Equality Policy<sup>4</sup>



The above chart provides a number of reasons why selected companies have chosen to institute an internal equality policy. Having gender equality in the workplace was not seen as the main reason for instituting an equality policy; rather 70 percent of companies indicated a strong willingness towards having diversity in representation in the workforce. 70 percent of companies have instituted an internal equality policy “to comply with the law and have a diverse workforce”. 54 percent of companies valued “equality” as a fundamental principle in the smooth running of a company. 26 percent of companies reported formulating an internal equality policy in the light of advocacy and lobbying from staff and trade unions. 30 percent of companies mentioned having the said policy to align themselves with corporate social responsibilities. 48 percent of companies took ownership of the process to lead by example in the private sector by adopting an equality policy.

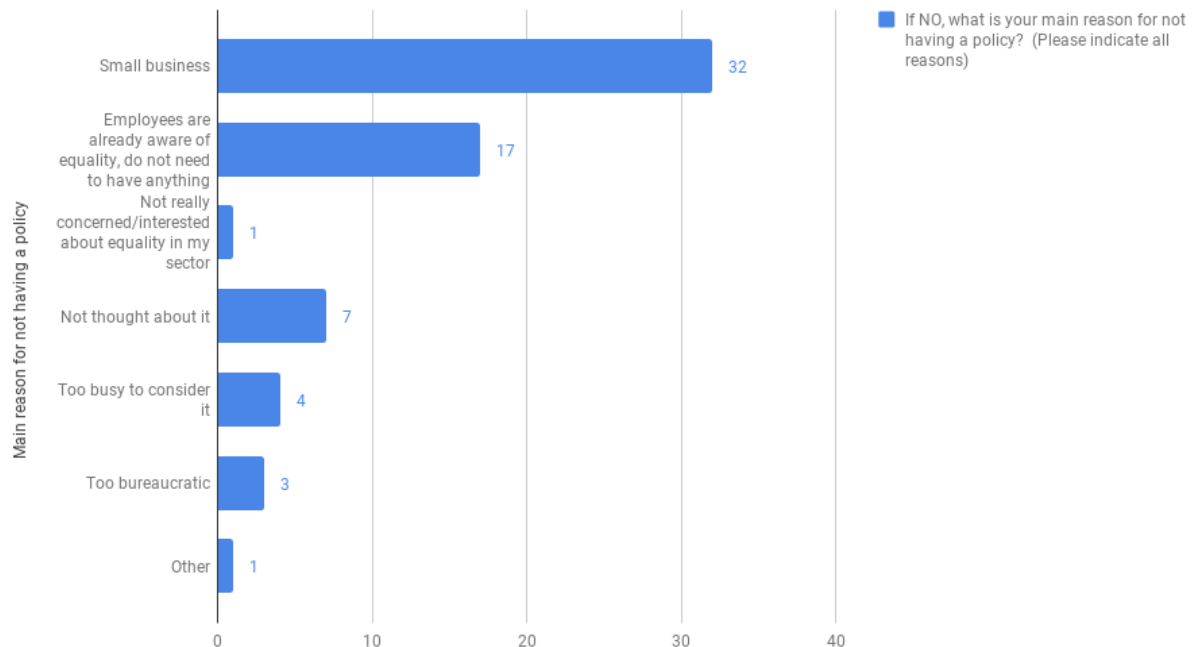
<sup>4</sup> Equality was disaggregated in terms of age, disability, gender, childcare, pregnancy and paternity and flexi-time.

The percentages have been doubled in the analysis as this chart represents companies who have an internal policy, as compared to 50 percent who do not.



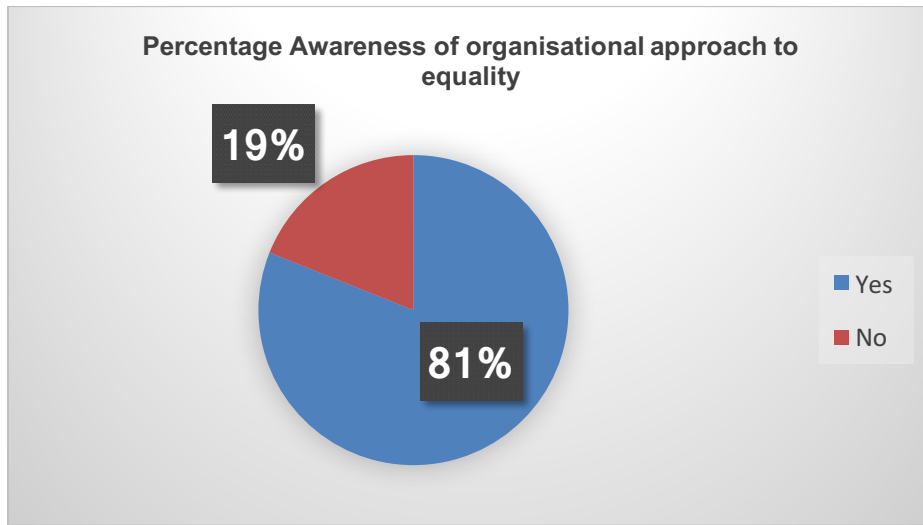
### 3. Main reasons- Absence of an Internal Equality Policy

Main reasons for companies not having a policy



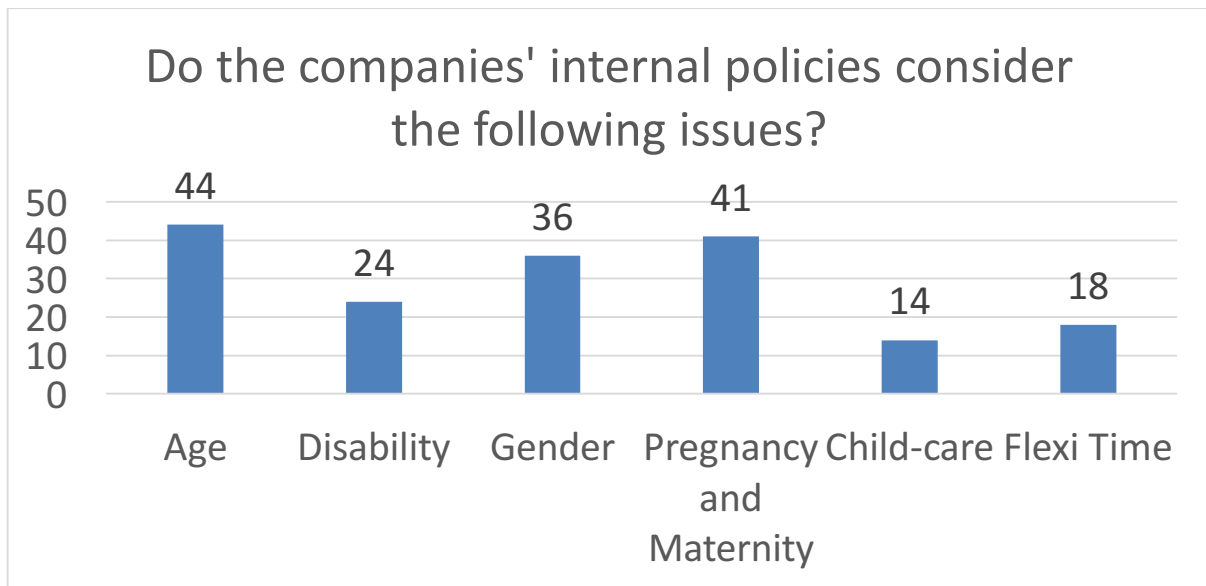
The main reason given by respondents for not having an internal equality policy was related to the size of the business and equality remained an added burden without being value-added. Concurrently, 42 percent of companies posited that employees were already aware of equality principles in general. 2 percent of companies stipulated that they were not interested in instituting an equality policy within their sectors. 14 percent of companies stated that they had not given prior consideration to instituting an equality policy. 8 percent of companies stipulated that the company had other priorities and had yet to consider having an internal equality policy. 6 percent claimed that institutionalisation of an internal equality policy remained a bureaucratic process that would involve additional human and financial resources and time.

**Chart 7- Awareness of the organisation's approach to equality**



There is a general view that 81% of employees within the organisations were aware of the basic principles of equality.

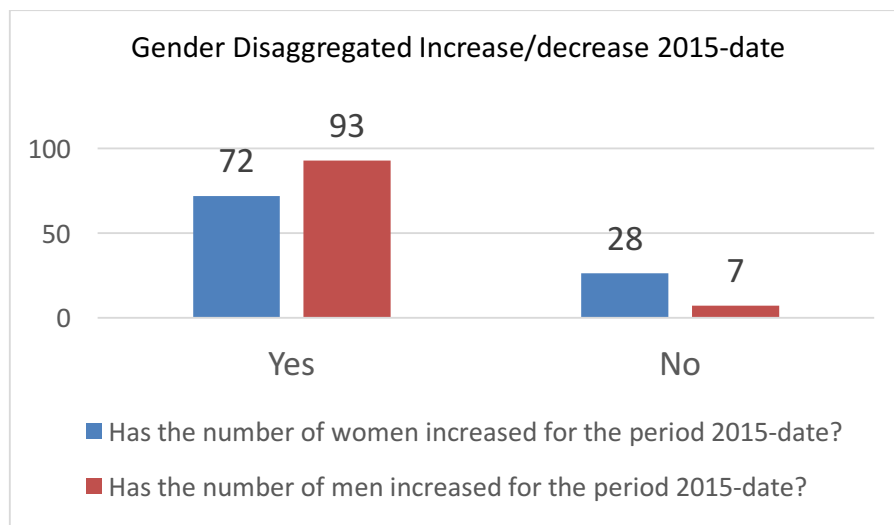
**Chart 8- Principles of the internal policies**



Respondents have been asked whether the above factors are included in their internal policies in addition to existing of the 50 percent of selected companies who had an internal equality policy, 44 percent reported having age as a major consideration within recruitment and retention of their internal workforce.

36 percent of companies reported that “gender equality” was included in their internal policies for recruitment, promotion; whilst 41 percent of companies had a “pregnancy and maternity” clause within their internal policy. 14 percent of the companies had child-care considerations within their internal policies and 18 percent of companies had flexi-time arrangements. It is to be noted that having an internal policy in regard to these issues does not necessarily imply negative nor affirmative action, rather respondents stated that there were additional consideration regarding these issues stated in their internal policies.

**Chart 9- Increase/decrease of Employees in Companies**

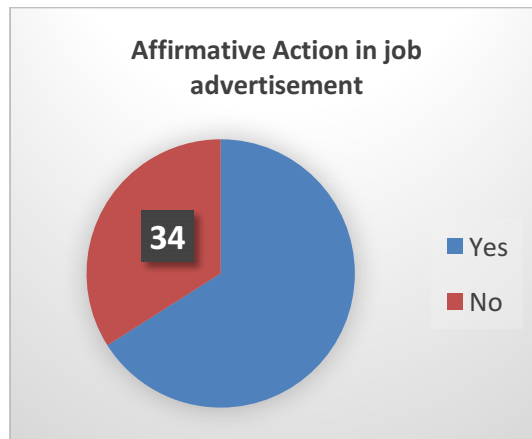


Respondents were asked whether there has been an increase or decrease of men and women in their company for the period 2015- till date. 93 percent of companies mentioned that there has been an increase of men recruited within their companies during the period 2015 to date, in comparison to only 72 percent of companies who reported an increase in their female labour force<sup>5</sup>. Hence, the private sector in Mauritius has witnessed an increase in the number of men recruited during the period under study (2015-2018) in comparison to female recruitment. However, it is noticed that there is an increase in the number of women entering the tourism sector, manufacturing and security services.

<sup>5</sup> Two companies failed to submit information on the staffing trend therein.

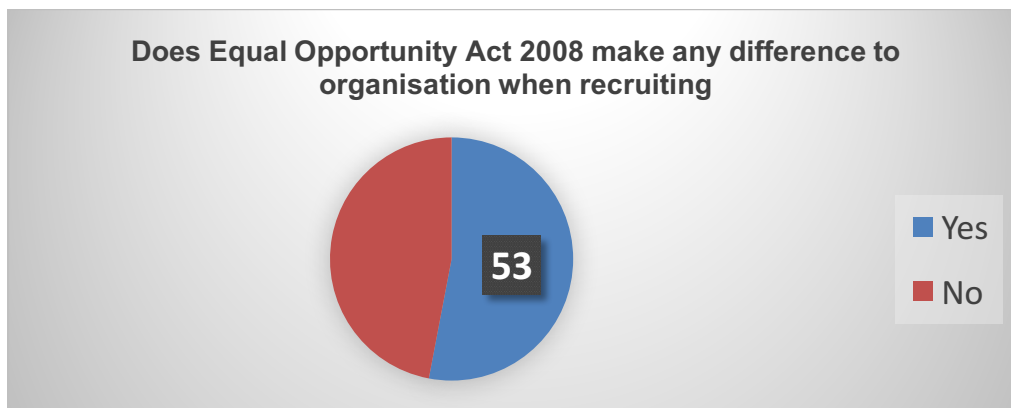
## Chart 10- Types of Equality of opportunities in recruitment

### 1. Affirmative action in favour of women in job advertisement



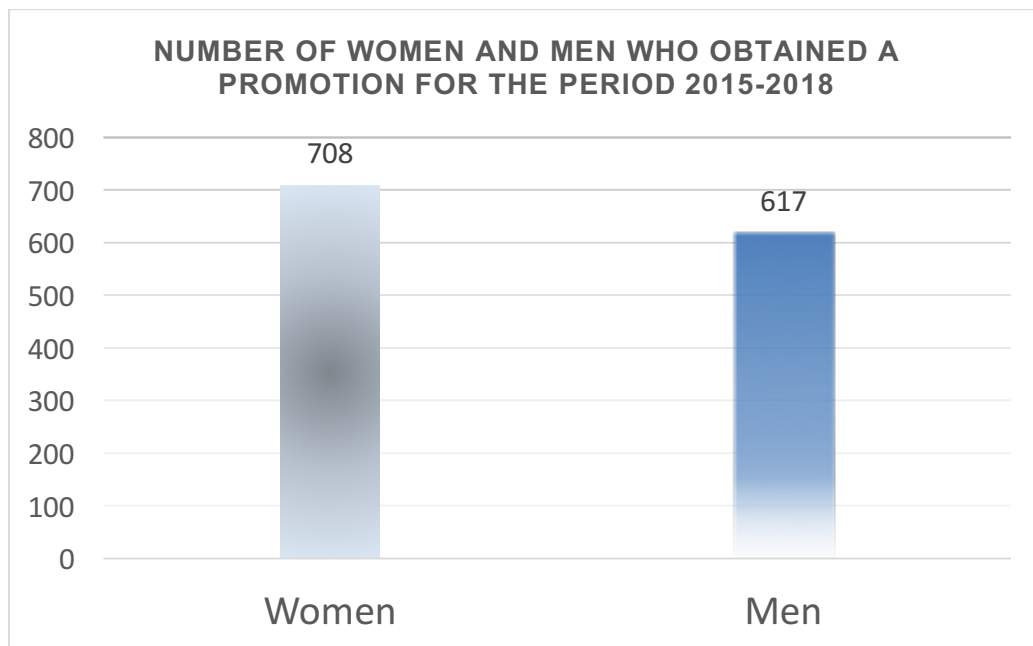
66 percent of companies sampled encourage women to apply for jobs in their advertisement. There is affirmative action in recruitment, which encourages more women to submit applications for job, as well as the existence of internal equality policies.

### 2. Equality in recruitment principles



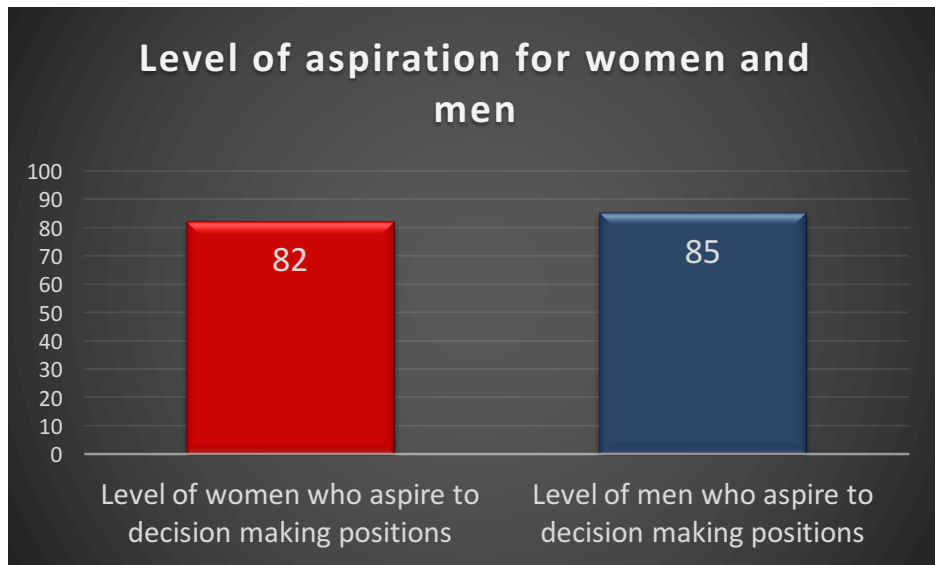
53 percent of companies have responded that Equal Opportunities Act 2008 has made a positive impact in the workplace in terms of adhering to principles of equal opportunity for women and men in recruitment, as well as addressing direct or indirect discrimination.

**Chart 11- Gender disaggregation of promotion opportunity (2015-2018)**



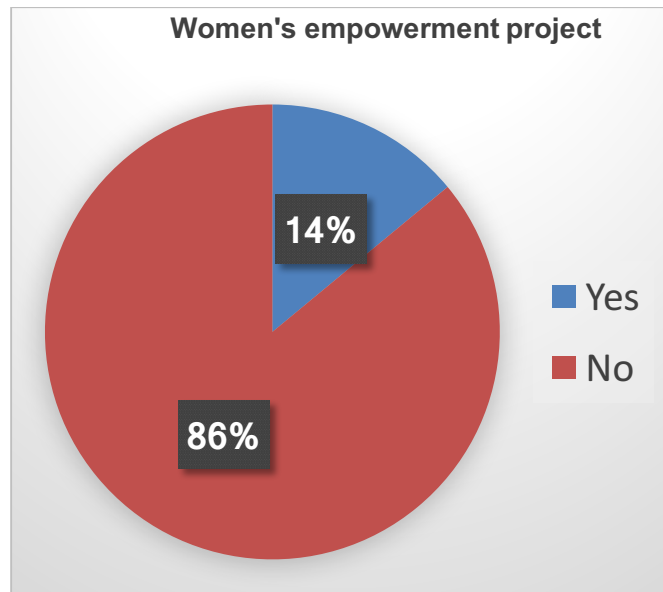
More women than men have been promoted as compared to men for the period 2015-2018. Nevertheless, when a bivariate analysis is carried out, there is a gender disparity in the level of promotion, it is noted from an earlier analysis that more women are present in the administrative, senior administrative and senior management level. However, the number of men at CEO, managerial and senior technical levels is greater than women. There is a higher number of women getting promoted in the Senior Administration and Administration cadres.

**Chart 12- Gender disaggregation of level of aspiration to decision making**



There is no glaring difference in the level of ambition of women and men in climbing up to higher decision-making and technical levels. Yet, there is a slight difference of 3 percent where men have reported to have a higher level of aspiration to reaching a higher decision making position as compared to women. It may be therefore argued that both women and men in the private sector aspire to climbing up the ladder within the workforce.

**Chart 13- Corporate Social Responsibility Project on women's empowerment**

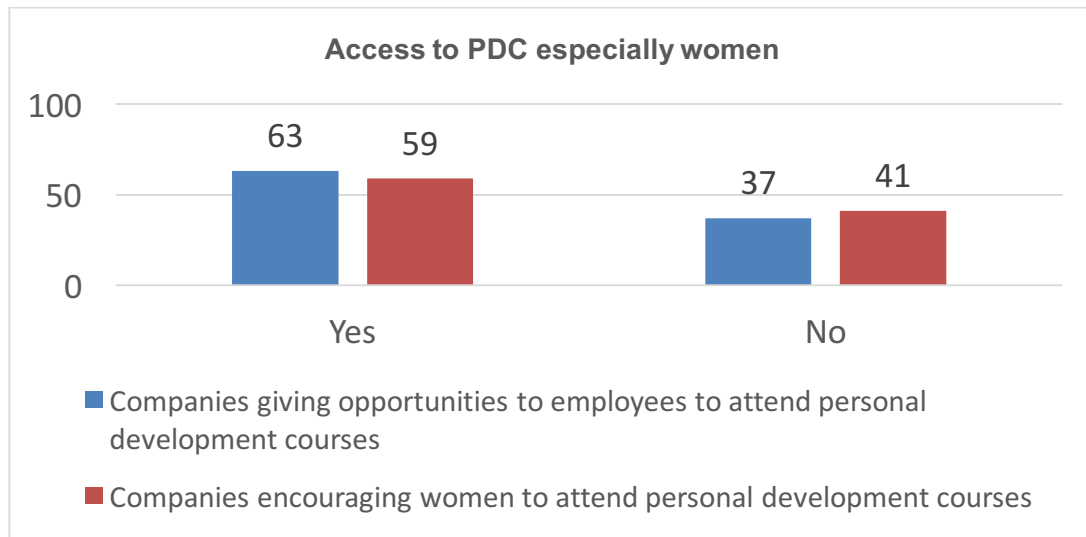


In addition to contributing to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Foundation, 86 percent of companies have reported having no women's empowerment project being spearheaded or implemented at their levels. 14 percent of companies have reported having a women's empowerment project in addition to contributing to the CSR Foundation. Out of the 14 percent of companies that have reported having a women's empowerment project, 77 percent have reported being approached by sectoral Ministries to sponsor women's specific empowerment projects.



### Chart 14- Access to training and equality of opportunities for personal development courses

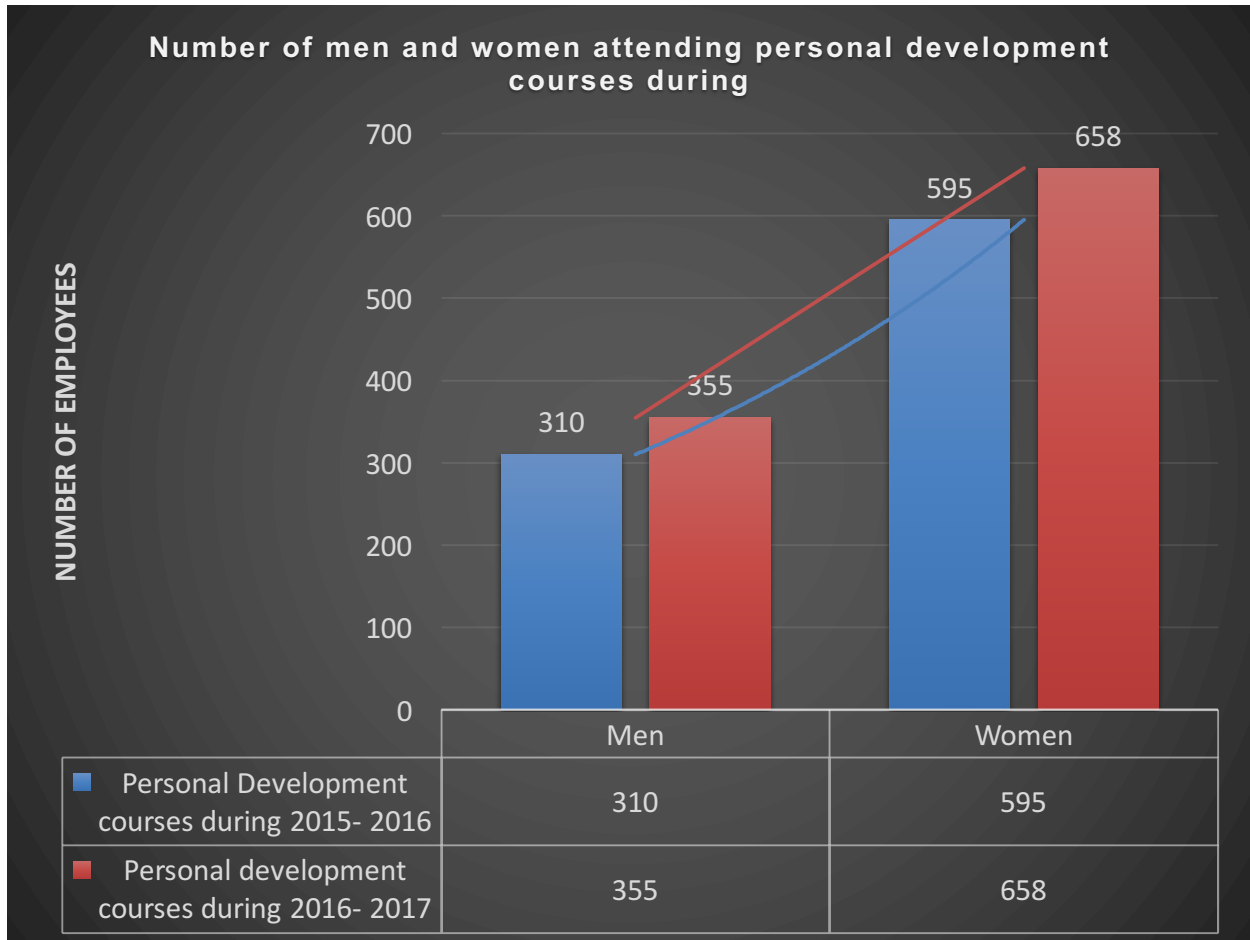
(Number of companies giving opportunities to employees for personal development courses (PDC); and encouraging women specifically to attend)



63 percent of companies extend equal opportunity to their personnel, both women and men, to attend personal development courses. 59 percent of companies have reported having a mechanism in place to encourage women to attend such courses.

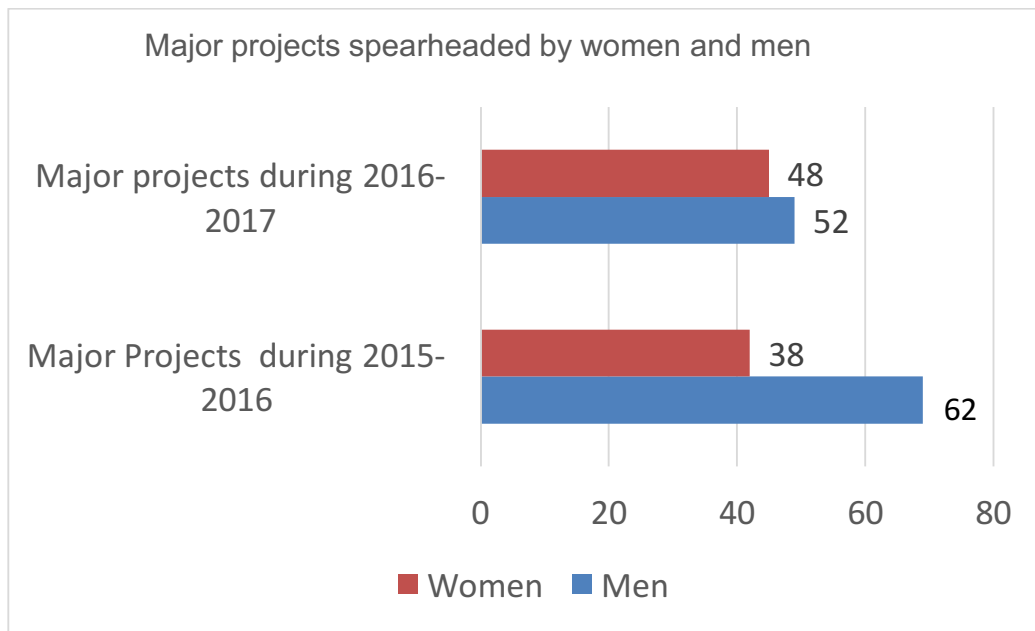
37 percent of companies do not provide for personal development courses in the light of the small nature of the companies and the need is not felt for further development courses; for example, in micro enterprises, the administrative and support service activities sector (tours operators, tattoo, photography); and wholesale and retail trade.

**Chart 15- Gender disaggregation of attendance to personal development courses for the period 2015-2016; 2016-2017**



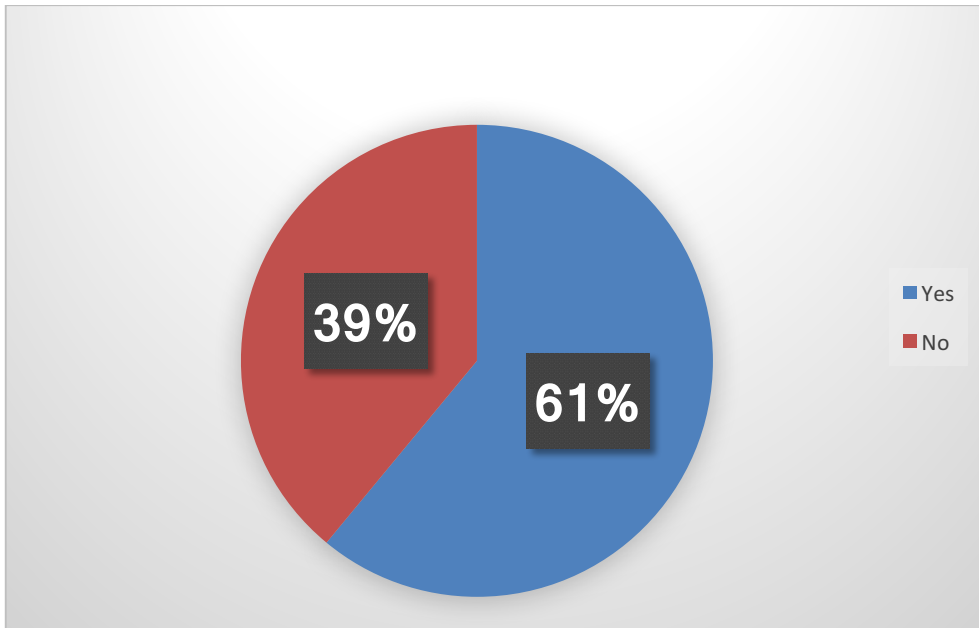
The chart above represents the total number of men and women who attended the personal development courses. It is noted that women are greater in number than men to have attended personal development courses in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. The number of women who attended personal development courses has seen an increase over the past two years, yet a multivariate analysis reveals that more women are able to attend courses both in *soft-sectors* of the economy, such as the care, human resources and administration as well as in other sectors such as the Financial services and ICT. Despite having taken the opportunity for self-development, women still remain at the administrative levels.

**Chart 16- Gender Disaggregation of Leadership of Project Formulation**

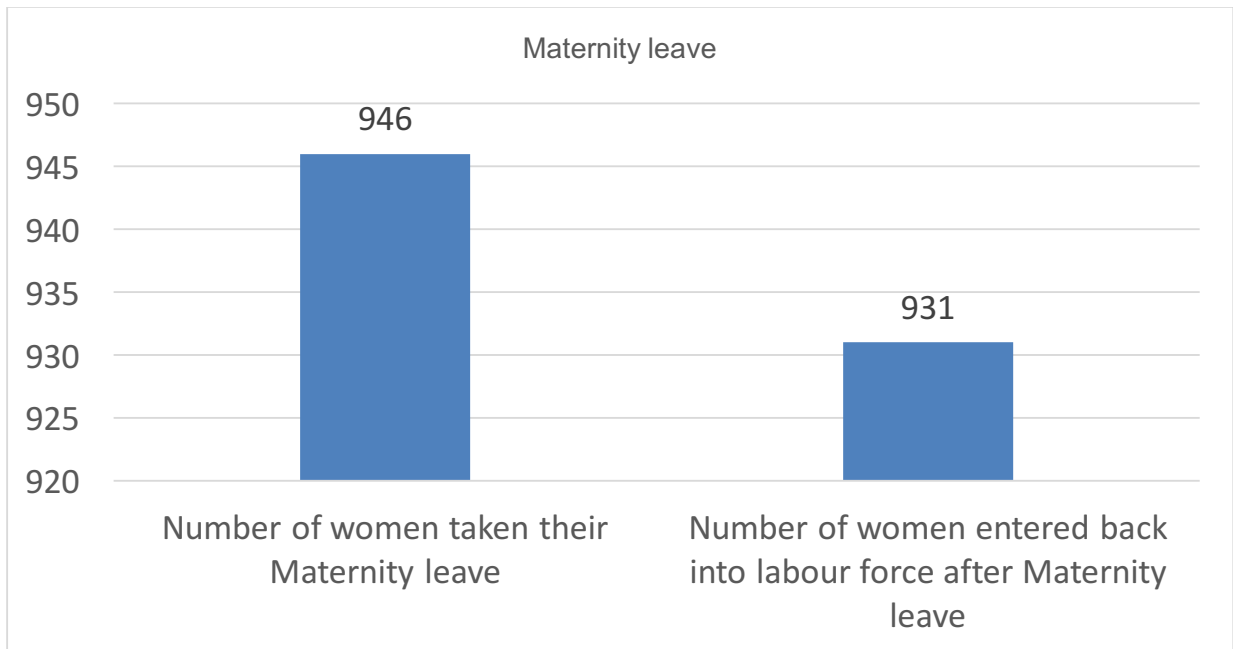


Respondents were asked how many major projects have been spearheaded by women and men during 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. In 2015-2016, 62 percent of men spearheaded projects, as compared to 38 percent of their female counterparts. From 2016-2017, there were 52 percent of men who spearheaded projects, as compared to 48 percent of female co-workers. In both stages, men are seen as dominant in such project. This may be linked to the male-dominated culture prevailing whereby men are still seen as having leadership traits. The perception of gender differences in leadership skills and styles is still prevalent. However, it is slightly decreasing. Even though women represent an increasingly large proportion of the work force, they either still show a reluctance to take on opportunities to lead projects or are not given the opportunity to do so. Based on this study, there is no empirical evidence that suggests whether there is a lack of opportunity for women to take on leadership in spearheading project formulation nor whether there is a lack of ambition on the part of females.

**Chart 17- Maternity Leave 2015-2018**



**Number of women who have taken Maternity leave and entered back into the paid workforce**



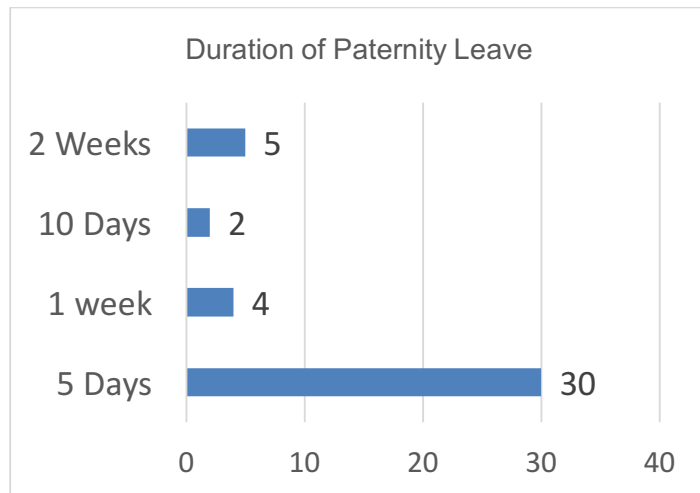
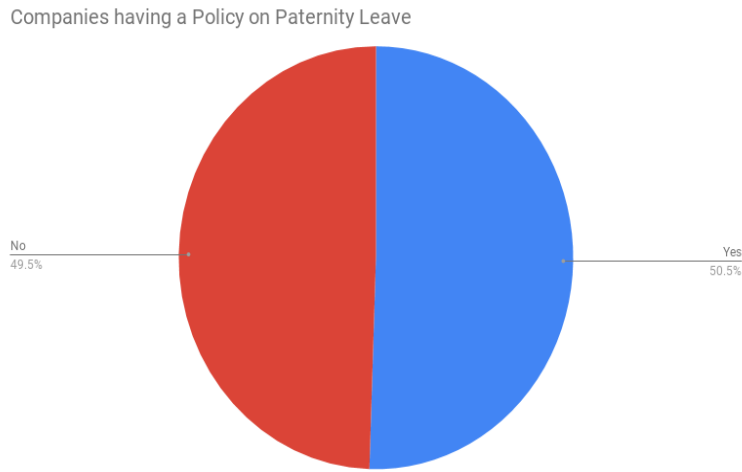
61 percent of companies have reported that women employees had taken maternity leave in the last 3 years<sup>6</sup>. Less than 1 percent of women have not entered back into the labour force after taking maternity leave. Given the changing socio-economic landscape, it is noted that the concept of males being the traditional heads of the household is now shifting towards dual-earner households. More women are entering the paid workforce in addition to their reproductive roles. Hence, women are managing both productive and reproductive roles.

According to this study, 41 percent of companies sampled have an internal policy on maternity leave. These internal policies are in addition to the existing provisions in the law. Less than one percent of the 41 percent of companies with internal policies on maternity provisions mentioned having no other flexible arrangements than those contained in the law. Types of flexibilities provided to women, in addition to the existing provisions contained in the Employment Rights Act are rescheduling of morning shifts to more flexible hours upon request by new mothers, lessened workload upon resuming from maternity leave and flexi-time provided to new mothers for medical consultations without conditions for a limited period.

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<sup>6</sup> Respondents have defined Maternity Leave as per the provisions contained in the Employment Rights Act (ERA); or as per internal company policy pertaining to maternity leave, as defined by the company.

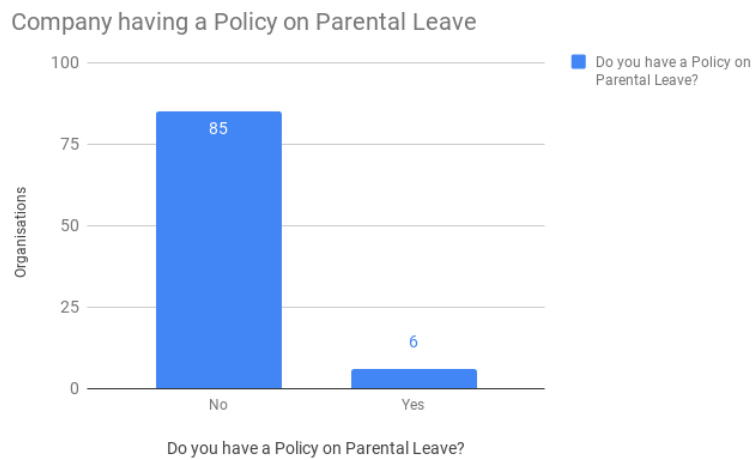
### Chart 18- Company policy on paternity leave



51 percent of companies have stated that they have had a policy on paternity leave, prior to the enactment of the Employment Rights Act (2018) in August 2018, which now provides for Paternity Leave<sup>7</sup>. It is noted that in the absence of a legal framework prior to August 2018, it is still positive to note that companies in the private sector had in fact instituted a policy on paternity leave. Male employees have reported taking on average 5 days as part of paternity leave.

<sup>7</sup> Respondents have defined Paternity Leave as per the provisions contained in the Employment Rights Act, and/or as per their internal company policy pertaining to paternity leave.

## Chart 19- Companies having policy on parental leave<sup>8</sup>



Only 6 percent of companies had a parental leave policy<sup>9</sup>. It is to be noted that there is no provision in the current Employment Rights Act (2018) on parental leave. Maternity and paternity leaves seem to be the more popular leave policy/option amongst employees.

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<sup>8</sup> 9 percent of companies did not respond to this question.

<sup>9</sup> Please refer to Annex 3 on parental leave.

## Discussion Points

The findings of the participatory gender audit exercise reveal that women have not progressed steadily in numbers in acceding to top-level decision-making positions in the private sector. Nevertheless, women are as qualified as men, hold a slightly higher level of aspiration than men to these positions and are granted equal opportunity to follow professional development courses within the organisation, yet they fail to climb to the highest position of decision-making within the company.

Concurrently, it is noted that women remain at the levels of senior administration and senior management. However, female representation decreases significantly at the managerial and chief executive levels, with the number of men in positions of Chief Executive being five times higher than that of women, despite the recruitment of both women and men holding post-graduate qualifications.

Furthermore, the presence of women is felt more at the administrative level, whilst that of men tends to be higher at the technical level. It is foreseen that by extension, this inevitably leads to gender pay gaps that are wider at the top of the wage distribution. This marked horizontal and vertical difference, reveals that there are compelling barriers that women respondents in this Study face to rise in leadership positions past a certain point. As it stands, these barriers remain invisible at the first glance; whilst *unconscious* bias in the corporate world continues to be a challenge to gender diversity. Based on the analyses, there is no one challenge at one level that prevents women from moving up the corporate ladder, rather, there are varied and pervasive forms of challenges linked to, for example, gendered social constructions and internal policies, that work in covert ways to the detriment of women. Moreover, these are also linked to individual factors such as lack of self-confidence to push for one-self, salary negotiation, balancing productive and gendered reproductive roles, informal organisational structures and cultural factors through gendered norms and stereotyping.



Human Resource (HR) cadres remain in positions that enable them to have a positive impact on their organisations. Hence, being aware of, and acknowledging how gendered constructions and power dynamics operate and impact in differentiated ways, either directly or indirectly, on women and men remain one of the entry points to addressing gender equality and equity concerns. HR may engage with individual employees in mapping out a clear and concise career succession path taking into consideration the different factors of amounting to the glass ceiling effect. Additionally, prominent male leaders both from the public and private sectors should act as Champions leading discussions on the rationale of having gender equity and equality as a national imperative. Male Champions should be encouraged to send strong signals by creating the forum to open up and engage in conversations about gender equality and equity among male counterparts so that men are an integral part of the change and leading change.

In terms of addressing other causes of the low representation of women, programmes that support women into entering predominantly male-dominated industries, must be sustained. Women should be encouraged to pursue post-graduate qualifications, to counter the argument of low competency and merit that are sometimes put forward. Similarly, having gender awareness programmes at the workplace would remain inherent to the breaking down of stereotypes and unconscious bias in organisations.

Opening the conversation at the level of individual businesses within the private sector to identify specific gender issues within their sectors that hamper women's advancement and gender equity in the workplace remains the first step towards achieving gender equality. When promptly addressed and implemented, gender mainstreaming remains a transformative approach with a great potential for equity and equality in the workplace.

## Key Recommendations

The audit exercise has revealed that there is an underlying gender sensitive culture within the overall institutional culture of the selected companies audited. This finding comes as a strategic entry point to consolidate existing efforts to enhance gender equality within the private sector and to strengthen institutional and operational processes to engage women further in decisional instances.

The recommendations following the results of the audit therefore build on the existing initiatives to further promote and support women's personal and professional growth. The recommendations set forth are further underpinned by the fact that equality of opportunity and gender equality should not be seen only as a legal requirement, but rather mainstreamed into the institutional culture and processes.

The proposals are as follows: -

- ⊕ Companies are encouraged to set up a Gender Cell comprising representatives of the Human Resource Section, the Finance Unit, and a representative of the administrative and technical side to follow up on internal equality procedures. Mainstreaming gender equality principles should not be seen as falling solely under the ambit of the Human Resource section. Having a Gender Cell further ensures sustainability of the initiative. The Gender Cell may further act as mechanism to foster consultation between management and employees on issues concerning gender equality; and provide an opportunity for Staff to encourage dialogue and reflection to provide feedback about the working culture in the company. This forum would further strengthen employee engagement; address, monitor and evaluate equality standards within the workplace and enhance the overall quality of the workplace and its output.
- ⊕ The nomination of "Gender Champions" to sponsor gender equality initiatives at the highest level of decision-making in each company would send a strong signal on the importance attached to gender equality at the level of the

company. Moreover, the formulation of a gender policy statement by the Gender Cell for all companies evolving in the private sector is also recommended. The gender policy statement could, to start with, provide sex disaggregated data on the status of women as from the mid-management level and upwards in the company. The company could further state how it engages itself to promote gender equality in each department.

- ⊕ Gender inequality is often linked to other inequities and should be addressed by accounting for other intersecting grounds linked to inequality. Any gender equality policy statement should inherently consider the impacts on individuals of other inequality grounds such as disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, or ethnicity.
- ⊕ Companies are invited to adopt the United Nations “Women’s Empowerment Principles for Business” as part of the United Nations Global Compact that sets out guidelines on women’s empowerment within the workplace and community with a view to enlarging the scope for women to engage sustainably in the highest level of decision-making. To that effect, companies are further invited to join into the “HeforShe Campaign” launched by the United Nations, which calls upon men as partners for equality and create a common networking platform amongst companies in the private sector.
- ⊕ In a bid to create a conducive condition for women employees to reconcile their productive and reproductive roles, private companies, where relevant, are encouraged to invest in a crèche, thereby benefitting from a double deduction under corporate tax as per paragraph 221 of the 2018-2019 Budget Speech.
- ⊕ Companies are encouraged, where possible, to institute a work environment that is conducive to social capital development, for example, in terms of instituting a flexi-time schedule/ work-from-home initiative for employees to

- reconcile work-life balance and gendered roles, and take into consideration the changing nature of work by the youths in contemporary society.
- ⊕ Companies are encouraged to have a list of women entrepreneurs for targeted procurement exercises, where possible.
  - ⊕ Companies are encouraged to institute temporary voluntary target measures at the board level/ higher level of decision-making to enhance gender diversity on boards and in the highest level of decision-making. It is expected that more qualified women would thus be given the opportunity to take up leadership roles.
  - ⊕ Companies are invited to stand guided by the National Code of Corporate Governance (2016)- Principle 3- which calls on all organisations to appoint Directors of both genders as members of the Board. Concurrently, all Boards are invited to institute a non-discrimination policy inclusive of gender equality. Such efforts should be combined with other measures such as professional development courses, exposure to regional and international best practices to support a gender balance in participation and representation by women and to expand the pool of qualified women.
  - ⊕ It is proposed to set up a working group comprising stakeholders from both public and private sector to address gender equality matters in the private sector, as well as look into gender equitable wage distribution. Enterprises may, on a voluntary basis, agree to publish such information as gender disaggregated data on wages, as part of their engagement towards achieving gender equality.
  - ⊕ Organising a symposium on the importance of gender equality and equity for businesses is also recommended so that businesses see gender diversity at

board level and gender equality in terms of smart economics which in turn would contribute to increased profits.

- ✦ Adopting a dual approach towards gender equality by combining gender mainstreaming and specific measures for the advancement of women in the private sector will contribute towards addressing the vertical and horizontal occupation difference in the workplace. An approach that simply seeks to add more women in the organisation at different levels does not ensure that gender mainstreaming has been undertaken, and does not lead to substantive change. Gender equality and equity should be seen as part of an organisational change management strategy, rather than as a stand-alone item on the agenda.
- ✦ According to the baseline data contained in this report, it is suggested that more in-depth studies be conducted to contribute to research on specific gender issues in the private sector at the national level. Such areas of research may include, *inter alia*, investigating in a more focused manner the gender gap in career progression/ career development in the private sector; and examining gender gaps in terms of educational advancement during their term of employment in the private sector, for more evidence-based policy-making endeavouring to redress underlying gender gaps within the private sector.
- ✦ Changing the mindset to redress existing gender gaps and gendered power-dynamics requires deep personal commitment and top level leadership. In order to address the vertical and horizontal gender occupational differences identified in this report, in terms of a large proportion of women in administrative roles, it is recommended that temporary affirmative actions be adopted at the level of recruitment, or HR Units in private sector companies to encourage qualified women to apply for specific technical jobs that are traditionally viewed as male-dominated, in order to create a gender balance in terms of descriptive representation of women therein.

## Conclusion

The Participatory Gender Audit exercise in the private sector in Mauritius remains a first of its kind in Mauritius in terms of analysing the status of gender equality therein. The study has revealed that, whilst there is a gender sensitive institutional culture along with the use of gender sensitive language, the representation of women in top leadership positions still remains low. It is noted that whilst women and men bear almost the same level of aspiration to climb towards top management, and access personal development courses, women are still not able to enter such positions. The Study thus recommends that principles of equal opportunity be mainstreamed within the overall company accountability structure. Moreover, increasing the number of women in top management positions is not an end in itself. Although having a critical mass of women in such positions to account for gender diversity remains important, descriptive representation in terms of numbers alone will not remain sustainable if the accompanying gender sensitive measures are not strengthened to cater for gendered practical and strategic needs. Sustained gender sensitive measures require commitment and dedication from the highest levels, trickled down to all levels of the company. Principles of gender equality and equity should be clearly reflected within the overall vision and/or strategies of companies for tangible results. Change management programmes should go hand in hand with implementation of these gender strategies. Men should act as strategic partners and actors for change in the quest towards gender diversity, especially at top management level. Lastly, gender diversity with diverse perspectives at top management level remains a matter of equity and equality.