

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

SITUATIONAL DIAGNOSTIC: GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

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The views in this document are those of the authors and they do not necessarily reflect the views of the Business Mauritius or AFD for whom the document was prepared.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Mauritius, despite being recognized as an economic success in Africa, still faces challenges in terms of gender equality. The country ranks 105th out of 153 countries in the "Global Gender Gap Index 2022," a slight improvement from its 110th position in 2021. However, Mauritius performs relatively better, ranking 66th out of 189 countries in the "Gender Inequality Index" (GII) conducted by the United Nations. These figures indicate that achieving gender equality in Mauritius is an ongoing process.

Despite three decades of progress in the legal framework for gender equality and improved access to education for women, the overall female participation rate in the workforce remains low at 41 percent. Women are underrepresented in leadership positions both in the public and private sectors. Recognizing the potential of the workplace as a catalyst for reducing gender gaps, Business Mauritius, an organization dedicated to transforming the private sector, has identified it as a crucial area for change.

The Mauritius Commercial Bank, emphasized the importance of increasing female labour participation in its publication, "Promoting gender equity to sustain a more inclusive development path," released in March 2021. The bank highlighted that Mauritius is facing the challenges of an aging society and a shrinking workforce, which pose threats to productivity growth and exacerbate the shortage of skilled workers. One key solution mentioned was to promote a sustained increase in female labour participation, which currently lags behind that of males and is lower compared to peer countries.

2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH FOLLOWED

The consultants employed a combination of qualitative, quantitative, and secondary research methodologies, as summarized in the table below, to outline their methodological approach.

- Experts interviews with key stakeholders (25 NGOs, Human Resources Directors, Opinion leaders, Academics)
- Quantitative survey with the General Public in Mauritius (500 completed interviews with a national Representative Sample of Mauritians – 18 to 55 years)
- Quantitative Survey with Business Leaders in Mauritius (329 completed interviews with representatives of the various economic sectors)
- Qualitative Study with women who stop working in the last 5 years (10 in-depth interviews)
- Analysis of national and international statistics, as well as other surveys conducted locally.

The results and figures used in this study, unless otherwise stated, are derived from surveys conducted in April and May 2022 by Analysis, an affiliate of Kantar.

3 KEY RESULTS: SITUATIONAL DIAGNOSTIC: GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

3.1 International Context

In the past two decades, significant efforts have been made to promote women's rights and address gender equality issues. The emergence of movements like #MeToo, the activism of feminist groups, and the changing attitudes towards gender identity have brought attention to persistent gender inequalities in society and within companies.

Despite these efforts and regulatory measures aimed at promoting gender equality, implementation challenges remain prevalent worldwide. While there has been some progress in increasing the representation of women in decision-making positions, the presence of gender-based violence and inequalities in domestic responsibilities serve as reminders that achieving true gender equality requires further action.

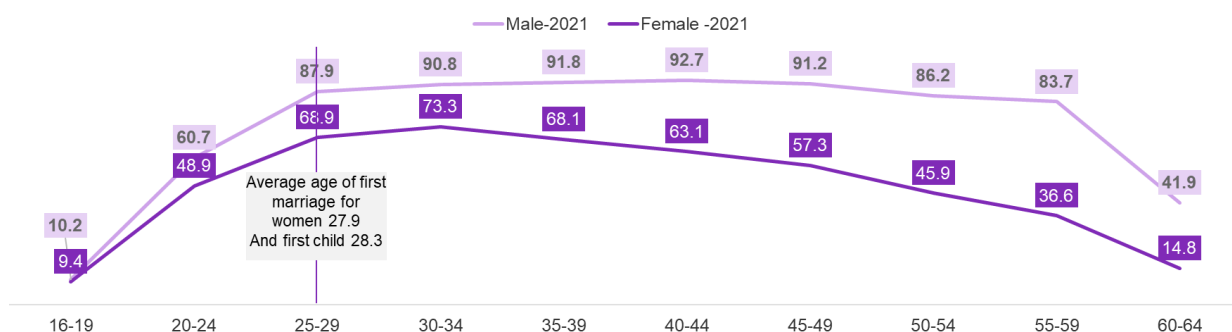
Although strides have been made, there is still a considerable distance to cover, and additional efforts are necessary to overcome these challenges and attain comprehensive gender equality.

3.2 Local Context

In Mauritius, the situation reflects global patterns where a legal framework and government policies addressing gender equality are established but face challenges in implementation. Consequently, issues such as violence against women and sexist behaviour's persist.

The research conducted sheds light on the connection between female activity rates and various life stages, with particular attention to the decline in rates after marriage and childbirth. The study emphasizes the significant variations in women's participation rates at different life stages, underscoring the influence of marital status and responsibilities related to childcare.

Graph 1: Exploring the Link between Female Activity Rate and Life-Stages: Implications for Gender Equality in the Labor Force – Statistics Mauritius



3.3 The burden of Invisible Work and Childcare issues

Household chores and childcare pose significant burdens for women in Mauritius.

Despite some progress in male engagement in household tasks, the situation remains highly unequal. If household chores were recognized as work, women between the ages of 25 and 59 would spend more time working than men, with women devoting 8.9 hours compared to men's 8.2 hours.

Specifically, women aged 25 to 59 spend an additional 3.5 hours on average than men on household chores, encompassing housework and caring for family members. Men in the same age group spend an average of 1.8 hours per day on these tasks, while women dedicate 5.3 hours.

Regardless of their employment status, the majority of women reported taking on the primary responsibility for childcare, including school-related and extracurricular activities. However, on average, childcare responsibilities are shared in 43 percent of households.

Child day-care is a real issue for working Mauritians:

30 percent of the young parents declared facing problems with their child day-care. One third of children below 3 years old are in child day care centres, one third is baby-sited by family members, the remaining by their mother. The first issue is the baby-sitting of children when the latter are ill. The second most mentioned issue is the opening hours of kindergarten. On that particular issue, the last Child Day Care Centres Regulations 2022 has provided for extended opening hours, which are now, from Monday to Saturday, from 6.00 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. However, these new regulations will impact the prices of child day-care centres (need to have more human resources).

Indeed, the third most quoted issue is the **cost of the child day care centres**. On that point, the research done by World Bank in 2019¹ has confirmed that cost of child day-care centres is an important barrier among households with low incomes. The specific offer for the lowest income households, sponsored either by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or public funds (Municipal Child Day-Care Centres) are very limited in volume and capacity, and do not target the middle-lower income households (Rs25,000 to Rs50,000 per month).

The World Bank research has also underlined the lack of child day care offer, especially in the South of Mauritius and in Port Louis, the capital city. During interviews, we also confirmed that most of the child day-care unit, managed by private companies or an ONG have waiting list to enrol new children.

Finally, the fourth most quoted issue was the transport duration and the security of children, the transport issues are directly linked with traffic and transport issues in Mauritius. The security one could be associated with the lack of quality standards in the offer which is directly linked with costs and price constraints. Most of the child day care units cannot afford trained and certified employees as well as better infrastructures without a huge impact on prices. An increase in price will lead to unbearable costs for households with medium and low income and will impact on women's/mother's activities.

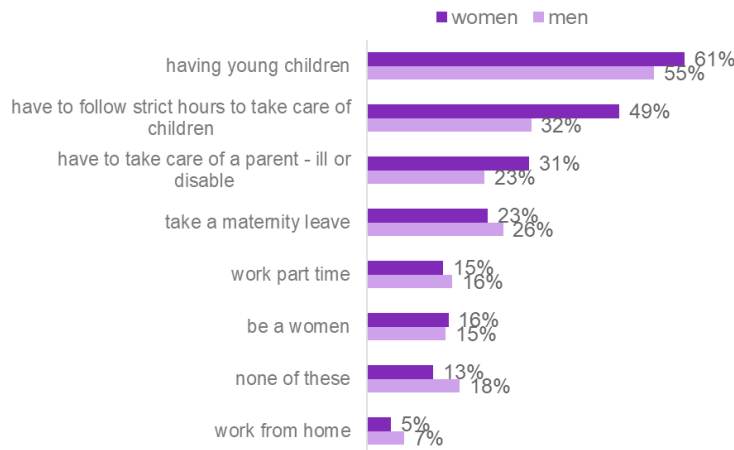
According to experts interviewed, these different constraints in the child day care have a direct influence on the number of children by couple. The cost and stress incurred are quite high, and may have consequences on performance and well-being of young parents.

¹ World Bank, "Fostering Labour force participation among Mauritian Women - quantitative and qualitative evidence," Marco Ranzani, Isis Gaddis, 2019

Acknowledging the Relationship Between Invisible Work and Professional Success Among Men and Women

Both women and men acknowledge that having young children can hinder a woman's professional success within a company, along with the obligations of adhering to strict schedules for childcare and caring for a parent, or taking a maternity leave. However, these situations are not seen as hindrances to the professional success of men, by both men and women.

Chart 2: What potentially hinders a woman's professional success in a company?



3.4 Security and Domestic Violence: The remnants of Patriarchal Mindset

Gender-based violence in Mauritius serves as a significant barrier for women, perpetuating a vicious cycle that restricts their independence and deprives them of autonomy.

The issue of gender violence in Mauritius is a pressing social problem, yet it remains vastly underreported. Research conducted by Gender Links in 2012, titled "War at Home - Gender-based Violence Indicators," reveals alarming statistics: 24 percent of women are victims of violence, 23 percent of men admit to perpetrating gender-based violence, and 9 percent of men believe that it is sometimes justified for a man to beat his wife, compared to 3 percent among women.

The findings from the report "The Sociological Profiling of Perpetrators of Domestic Violence in Mauritius" highlight that there is no single profile for a domestic violence perpetrator. Instead, numerous risk factors and situational triggers contribute to the eventual profile of such individuals. Perpetrators of domestic violence exhibit traits such as manipulation, jealousy, emotional instability, and strong patriarchal values. The research indicates that men often feel threatened by the perceived superiority of their female partners, leading them to resort to domestic violence as a means of regaining control.

Unfortunately, women still experience a sense of insecurity when walking alone on the streets or using public transport, particularly during non-working hours.

3.5 Inequalities at workplace²

Gender Disparities in Sectoral Employment: Examining Female Labor Force Distribution in Mauritius

The analysis examines the gender imbalances in sectoral employment within Mauritius, highlighting the prevalence of men in the majority of sectors and the disproportionate representation of women in specific sectors. The data shows that 84 percent of women in the labour force are engaged in the tertiary sector, whereas this figure stands at 64 percent for men. Women's employment comprises 40 percent of the overall employment in Mauritius. Wholesale and retail activities, accommodations activities, the educational sector, and human health and social work activities account for 44 percent of total female employment.

Shifting Dynamics in Female Labor Force: A Rise in Occupational Progression

27%

of employed women belonged to the top 3 ISCO * major occupational groups (Managers, Professionals, Technicians and Associates Professionals).

Against 20% for men.

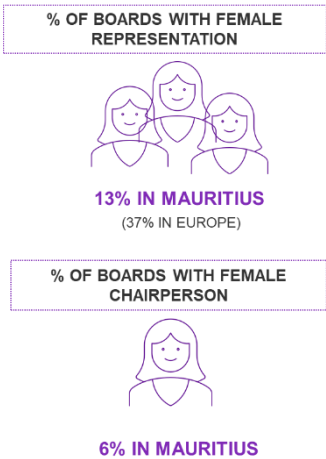
Overall, women’s progress on the social ladder and are over-represented in 4 occupational groups on 5. In the highest occupational groups (management and professionals), women nearly represent half of the employment (47 percent) rate. Women represent 66 percent of the employment rate in the clerical positions, 44 percent in the services and sales positions, and 54 percent in the elementary sector.

Only in one group (ISCO 6 to 8 - the technical and manual skilled workers), which represents 28 percent of the total employment, women account for only 11 percent of the labour force.

Leadership roles: Can women break through the glass ceiling?

Despite their significant presence in the workforce, the representation of women in decision-making bodies remains low. The presence of women in directorship roles within the private sector is gradually increasing, albeit still at low levels. In 2018, two companies reported having a female Chairperson, and 8.7 percent of board memberships were held by women. Currently, women fill 6 percent of Chair roles and makeup 13% of overall board members.

This highlights the progress made in improving gender diversity and emphasizes the ongoing challenges. Efforts are needed to further advance women's representation in directorship roles within the private sector.

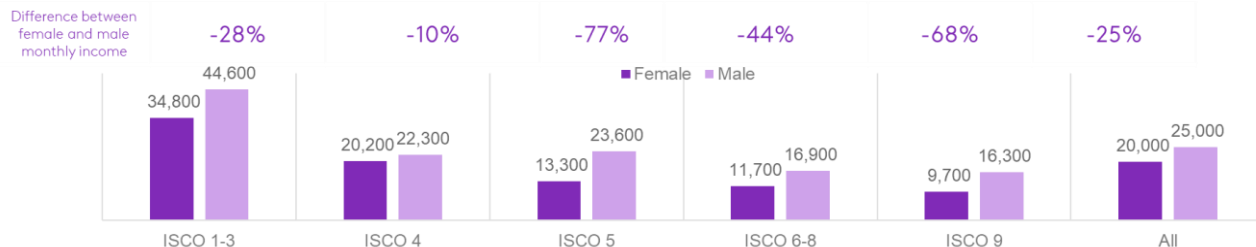


² Statistics Mauritius, Gender Statistics

Despite all these evolutions, the pay-gap is a reality

According to Statistics Mauritius, the pay gap measured at the national level is 25 percent and 29 percent in the tertiary sector. National data reported by companies with at least 10 employees reveals a significant pay gap in certain job categories, such as a 77 percent difference for female service and sales workers in the ISCO 5 group, and a 68% difference in Elementary occupations.

Graph 2: Monthly income by ISCO group and gender, 2021 – Statistics Mauritius



An analysis of income-to-hours-worked ratios demonstrates that the pay gap persists for female workers regardless of their working hours. In the primary sector, the pay gap is largely attributed to men working longer hours, resulting in a smaller gap when measured on an hourly basis compared to the overall gap.

A significant number of female workers hold the perception that they are being paid less than their male counterparts for comparable work, as revealed by interviews with 48% of working women.

48%
of working women think that they are paid less than their male colleagues for similar work.

There are different ways of explaining or justifying the wage gaps between men and women. According to men, plausible explanations behind the pay-gap between men and women, are the lack of flexibility and availability of women regarding working hours., the fact that women are often work part-time and they have less desire to access management positions.

While women explain the pay-gap might be due to the difficulty of women to negotiate or put themselves forward. The lack of promotion and lower proposed package are also part of the explanations. Amongst female leaders, the two first explanation for the pay gap are that women are less promoted with equal competences (47 percent) and are offered lower salaries for equal competence (40 percent)

3.6 Challenges and Aspirations of Women in Workforce Reintegration

Based on our research findings, we have identified a specific group of women who have either stopped working or express a desire to do so. These women typically share certain characteristics, such as having young children, residing in low-income households, and possessing low academic achievements.

Interestingly, two-thirds of these women express a strong desire to re-enter the workforce within the next 2 or 3 years, while 20 percent exhibit hesitancy. The primary motivation behind their decision to return to work is the potential for increased income and gaining financial independence.

However, there are several obstacles hindering their successful reintegration into the workforce. Firstly, an unhealthy working environment plays a significant role, characterized by difficulties in adapting, lack of cooperation and mutual respect among colleagues, unhealthy competition, expectations of rapid self-learning from management, lack of understanding, negative comments from supervisors, and a lack of appreciation for their efforts. These factors contribute to a toxic work environment that often leads them to leave. Additionally, there is a prevailing perception that women face unequal opportunities in many companies.

Secondly, poor work-life balance, particularly for mothers with children at home, poses another challenge. Long working hours result in mothers missing valuable time with their families, exacerbating their frustrations. They feel unable to dedicate sufficient time to their children, leading them to prefer leaving their jobs.

Among the working women interviewed, approximately 6 percent expressed their intention to quit working within the next two years due to familial reasons.

3.7 Examining Women Entrepreneurs in Mauritius

Women entrepreneurs, whether self-employed, freelancer or employer represent 19,200 women in Mauritius against 69,100 men. The self-employed women, that could be described as “entrepreneur”, represent 15 percent of women interviewed in the survey conducted during the Situational Diagnostic. Amongst them 8 out of 10 are working part time, while, amongst female employees, only 8 percent are working part-time. This confirms that for most of these self-employers, their activities are a “top-up” income, and could not bring to a full financial autonomy. It is interesting to note that 34 percent of the female self-employed live in a household whose monthly income is less than Rs20,000 against 14 percent for those working in the public sector. 59 percent are over 34 years old. 78 percent have children.

3.8 Perception of Mauritians towards gender equality at workplace

Mauritians' opinion on gender equality at work is divided: 41 percent think it has been achieved or has almost been achieved, 42 percent think it has not been achieved and that it is a priority to do so, 17 percent think that it has not been achieved and that it is not a priority.

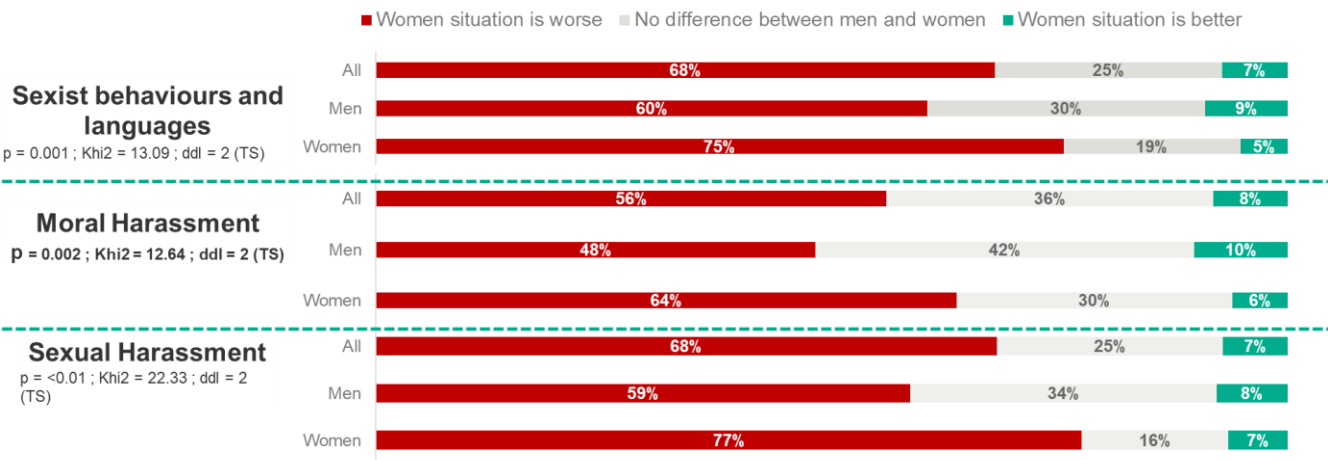
47%
of women think that gender equality in the workplace is a real issue, which must be tackled,

Overall two third of Mauritians interviewed think that the situation with regards to gender equality at the workplace has improved over the past 10 years.

only 36% of men agree with that statement

The perception of the current issues faced by women at the workplace varies according to respondents' genders. However, both men and women admit that women's situations are worse on sexist grounds, i.e., sexist behaviours and sexual harassment. Additionally, both genders agree that women and men face equal share of moral harassment at the workplace.

Graph 3: Perception of issues faced by women at the workplace



3.9 Perception of Business Leaders on Gender Inequalities at workplace in Mauritius

Opinions on Gender Equality status in the workplace are very different depending on the leader's gender. Two third of the women in leadership positions who answered, thought that gender equality is not attained and it is a priority, while nearly 50 percent of men thought this has been attained/ almost attained. Note that 15 percent of the leaders interviewed have already participated in a workshop related to gender equality.

63%
of female leaders* think that gender equality in the workplace is not attained and it is a priority,
only **35%** of men agree with that statement

Female leaders have a different perception of the working conditions of women: the majority of male leaders consider that there is no difference in women's and men's working conditions. However, female leaders noticed that men's working conditions are better, except for schedules, job security, and benefits.

A denial on pay gap: Only 32 percent of leaders interviewed declared that they have already analysed their payroll based on gender. The majority of leaders interviewed perceived that there is no or few salary gap within their company, both at employee and management level. Nonetheless, 17 percent of female leaders think that males are better paid at employee level in their company, and 29 percent at management level.

Most leaders think that reinforcing Flexibility and Work-life balance are prerequisites in the retention and acquisition of talents, especially women. Interestingly, two third of interviewed companies have changed their HR and management practices following the Covid 19 pandemic. These companies have introduced work from home (74 percent) and flexitime (47 percent).

These new practices tend to benefit the majority of employees. However, for one-third of the interviewed companies, the flexibility and some HR practices are restricted to certain categories of employees - management, administration and other activities (depending on their nature).

Mild-Interest of Business Leaders to become more gender-responsive in their organisations

80 percent of the companies interviewed don't have a gender policy or strategy. The 3 key reasons for not having such policies pertain to the size of the business (1), the fact that leaders perceived that their team are already aware of the subject (no need to take further actions) and (2) because they have more women in their companies.

Maternity, Paternity Policies, and Parental Leaves

Due to the declining childbirth rate in Mauritius, only half of the companies interviewed were concerned about maternity and paternity leaves during the last 3 years. There is no consensus on the duration of parental leaves: one-third of leaders think that the current Maternity Leaves' duration is optimal but 59 percent of female leaders and 39 percent of male leaders think that maternity leaves should be more than 14 weeks. Similarly, longer paternity leave is expected by both female and male leaders: 2 to 4 weeks seem to be the optimal duration.

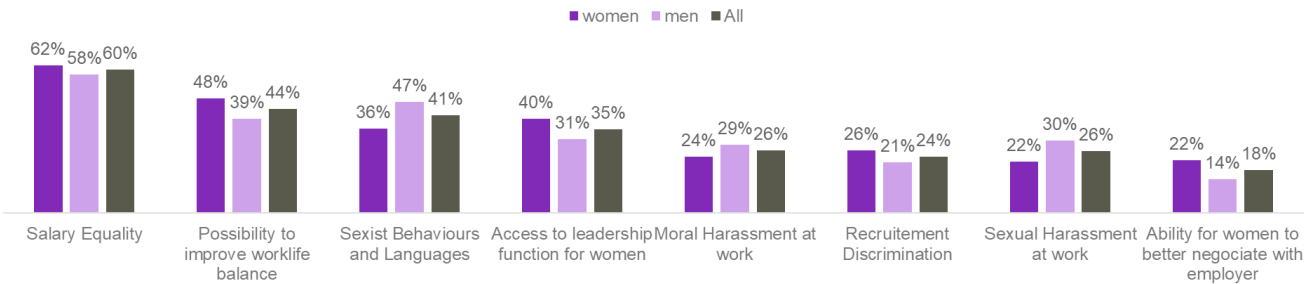
3.10 Priorities for change

The action priorities to reduce gender inequalities in the workplace differ between the general public and business leader.

For the general public

For the general public, the preferred way-forward to reduce gender inequalities at the workplace is the reduction of Salary Gap. For women, work-life balance improvement is their second priority followed by the increased access of women to leadership role as well as the challenging of sexist behaviours. For men, fighting sexist behaviours come in second rank priority, followed by work-life balance reduction.

Graph 43: Among the following topics, what do you think is a priority to act on today to reduce professional inequalities between women and men? All priorities



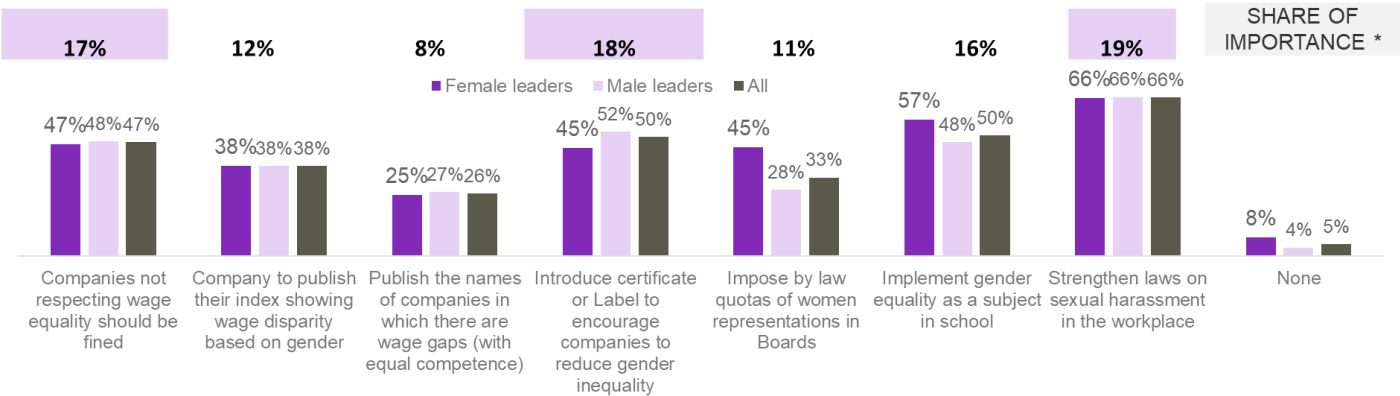
The importance of measures and initiatives have been analysed amongst the general public: work flexibility, support to women and women’s cause in different situations, implement care services for disable children and adults are perceived as most useful for women.

Business Leaders

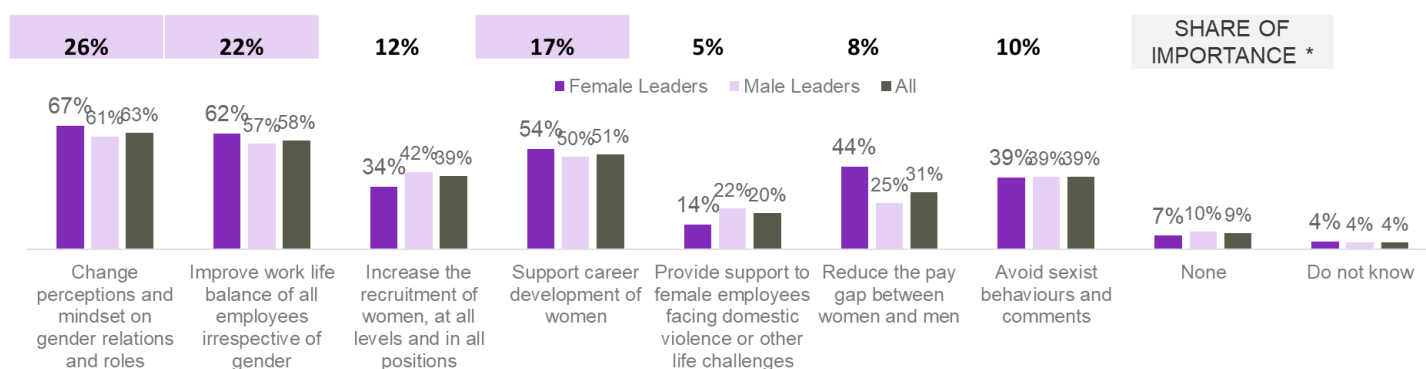
Overall, private sector leaders interviewed agreed on two effective strategies to further reduce gender inequality at the workplace: (1) the change of mind-set and perception on gender roles and relations, (2) the improvement of work life balance and support of career development.

- Business leaders interviewed (both male and female) **prioritize strengthening the laws on sexual harassment in the workplace.**
- They also agreed that the following policies could improve the overall gender disparity situation: the introduction of certificates or label to encourage companies to reduce gender inequalities (50 percent), the implementation of gender equality as a school subject (50 percent) or the introduction of fines for companies not respecting the wage equalities for equal jobs (47 percent).
- **Affirmative actions have also been chosen by women leaders:** 45 percent of women leaders proposed to implement quotas (by laws) for the representation of women, against 28 percent for male leaders.
- Also, one third of leaders believe that sexist behaviours and comments shall be avoided and tackled as a priority.
- However, reducing the Pay gap is mainly proposed by 44 percent of women versus 25 percent of men.

Graph 5: In order to reduce gender inequality in Mauritius, which new policy would be more effective?



Graph 6: In order to reduce gender inequality in your company , which of the followings would be more effective ?



3.11 Conclusions: Perspectives for Gender Indicators

Women's involvement in economic activities

While women's overall activity rate seems low (41.5 percent), the figures allow us to be optimistic about the future with regards to female participation. The participation rate of women aged between 30 and 34 is 12 percent higher compared to 2011. Even if this is still low compared to men (90 percent), in 10 years' time we can envision a better economic life with higher rates of female participation.

The evolution of human resource management practices such as flexitime and work from home (23 percent are working from home amongst the workers interviewed), are increasingly gaining popularity due to covid-19. This should encourage an increased participation of women in professional activities in the coming years.

Accelerating Gender Transformation in Leadership in Mauritius: Demographic Pressure, Higher Education, and Resource and Talent Scarcity

Women are therefore at the heart of the tertiary revolution in Mauritius, but they often remain stuck in their professional development because workplaces and practices render women invisible. They are also transferred to positions of invisibility which are motivated by patriarchal practices within their family.

The high participation of women under 34 years old in the world of work, combined with a high level of education and tensions in the labour market, suggest a significant future improvement in the situation. This situation may, in the near future, may induce increasing pressure from women, especially those ages 30 to 35 years, to have access to the jobs and salaries they deserve.

It is clear that companies will have to seize these opportunities for talent and growth by adapting their managerial and human resources practices and by having a more voluntary approach to act on inequalities within the company (especially at the wage level but also in decision-making bodies).

Companies will also have to facilitate less 'educated' women to integrate new functions and activities which have generally been reserved for men while improving support services and training, in particular technical training and academic education.