

Winning the fight for female talent: How to gain the diversity edge through inclusive recruitment

Singapore highlights

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Introduction

Singapore's economy is based on knowledge and talent is our main resource. An organisation is only as strong as its people. As the government drives the need for businesses to grow and expand beyond Singapore, companies must become more globally competitive. Having talent with the right skills and deep capabilities will be key to enabling companies to go abroad. For us to play on this international field, Singapore must continue to not only attract the best and brightest from all over the world, but also groom the right talent from within.

An organisation's people strategy now matters more than ever in attracting and retaining the right talent. It is important that companies remain relevant and meet the increasing demands of prospective employees. But what do people, particularly women look for in a prospective employer and what must companies do to attract and retain female talent?

Our observations

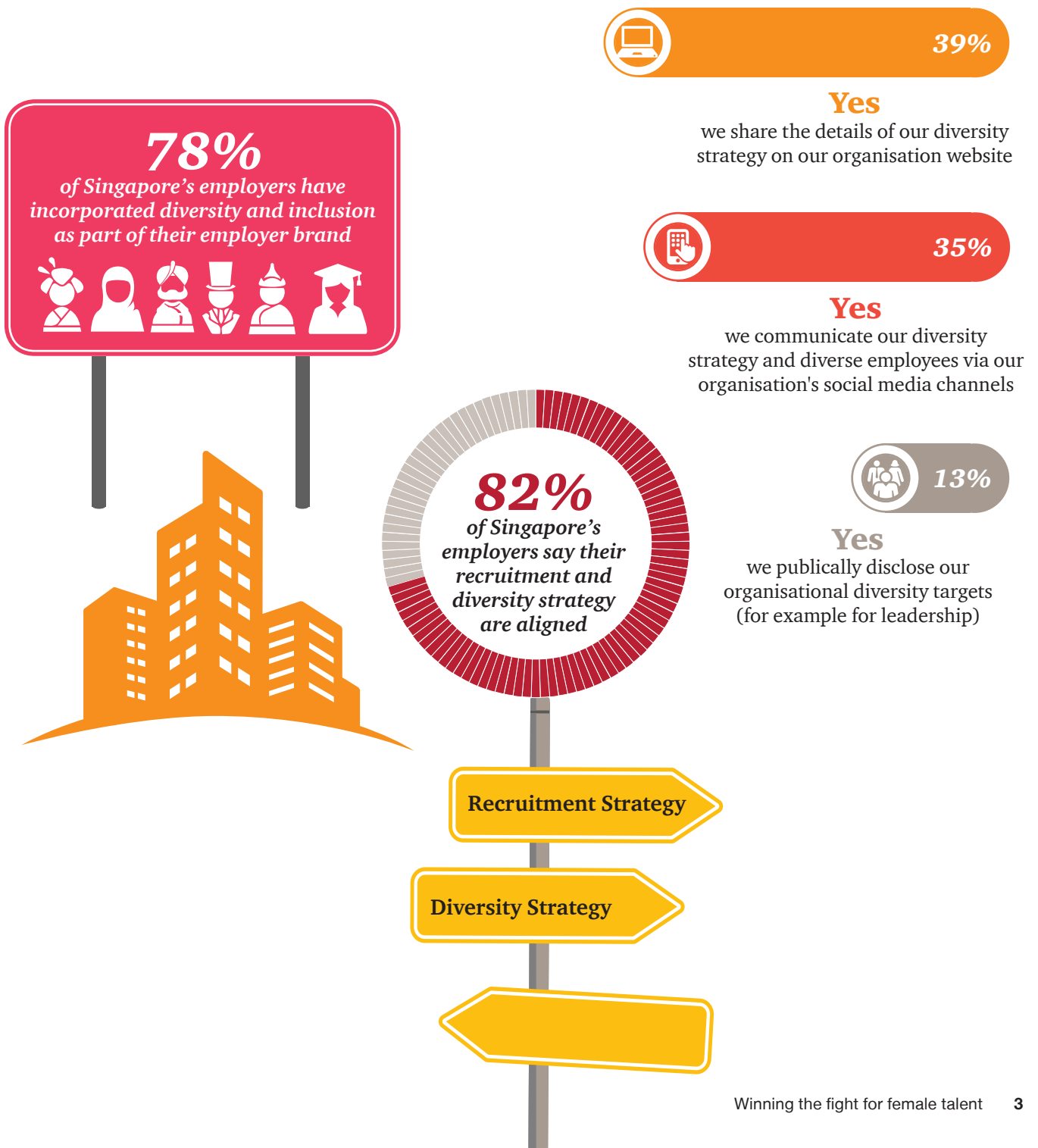
A smaller percentage of women in Singapore feel discriminated against their gender than the global average. That being said, gender stereotypes do exist regarding roles of men and women in Singapore (i.e. views on maternity leave) which impact the career opportunities given to female talent.

Pay, flexibility and career opportunities matter significantly to female talent. On that note, there is a role for employers to play in improving disclosures of the diversity demographics of their leadership team and workforce, their organisation's diversity targets as well as gender pay gap.

Recognising the imperative of diversity and inclusion (D&I)

Around eight in 10 employers (78%) surveyed in Singapore have incorporated diversity and inclusion as part of their employer brand, and a similar number (82%) say that their organisation's recruitment and selection strategy is aligned with their diversity strategy (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Incorporating diversity and inclusion in employer brand
Have you incorporated diversity and inclusion within your employer brand?

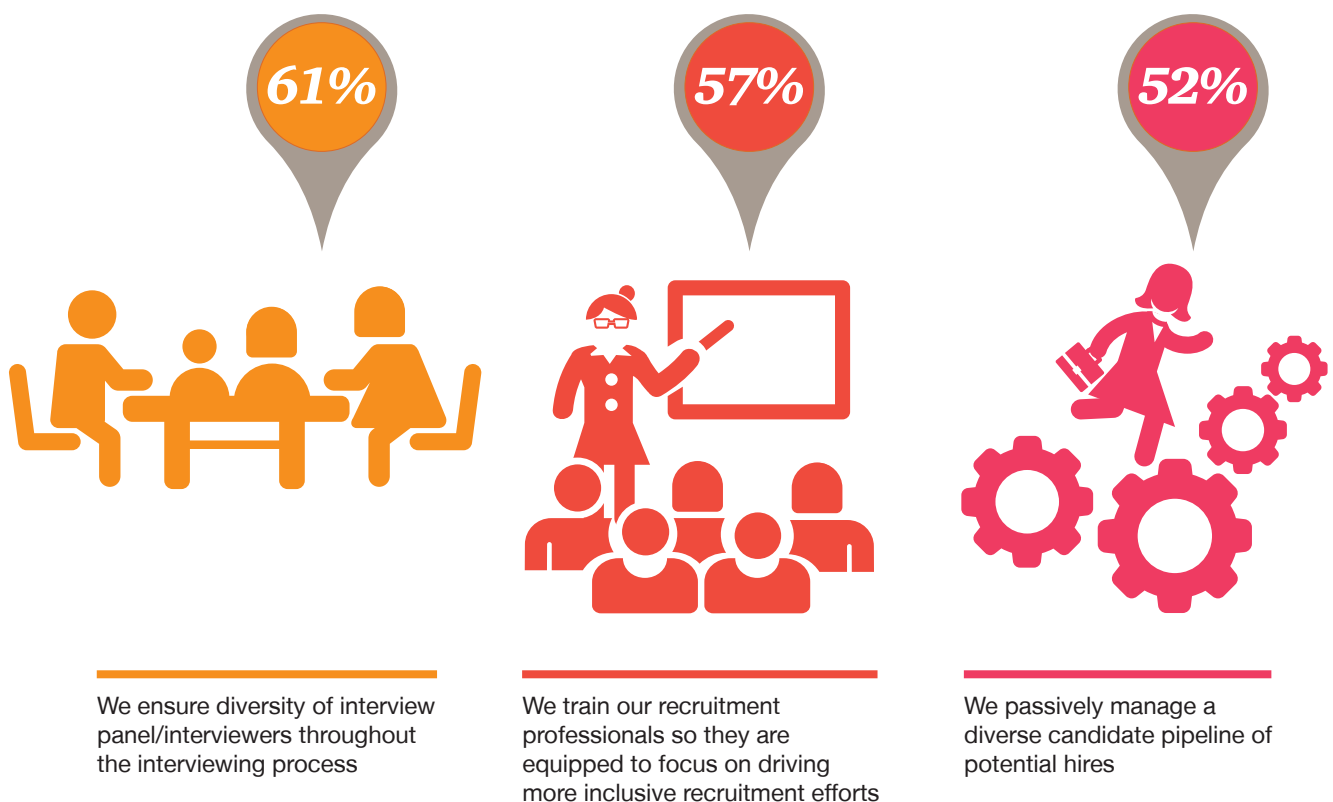


Employers' diversity efforts are paying off, seeing more engagement with female talent

An integral part of an organisation's D&I initiative is ingraining diversity practices in their recruitment process. 82% of employers in Singapore (83% globally, 90% in Asia) said that their organisation's recruitment and selection strategy and diversity strategy is aligned. Further, 78% of Singapore employers have incorporated diversity and inclusion within their employer brand. This is largely in line with the global figure of 76%, but behind Asia with an average of 88%. PwC's 20th CEO survey found that 91% of organisations in Singapore promote talent diversity and inclusiveness.

Recognising that embracing diversity and inclusion is no longer an option, organisations are taking steps to further embed a diverse and inclusive culture. The most widely adopted diversity-recruitment practice by more than half of the employers surveyed worldwide is ensuring that they have a diverse panel of interviewers in place (Figure 2). On that note, our survey results tell us that efforts are starting to pay off for employers in Singapore and regionally when it comes to increasing engagement with female talent.

Figure 2: Top diversity practices incorporated in employers' recruitment efforts
% of employers in Singapore who answered "Yes"







Seeing a return of investment in increased levels of female applicants and leadership appointments

The Singapore employers surveyed tell us that they have seen an increase in levels of female applicants (57%) as well as female leadership appointments (30%) as a result of their diversity efforts (Figure 3). Meanwhile, when compared with the performance of their regional counterparts, our survey results show that Singapore employers have room for improvement when it comes to increasing the levels of female campus/graduate and experienced hires.

Figure 3: Impact of diversity practices on recruitment efforts

Q: Have the diversity practices you have employed in your recruitment efforts had any of the following effects?

	Singapore	Asia
 Increased levels of female applicants	57%	58%
 Increased levels of female campus/graduate hires	22%	49%
 Increased levels of female experienced hires	26%	42%
 Increased levels of external female leadership appointments	30%	31%

**Note: Respondents who stated “Yes”*

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74%

of employers in Singapore saw an impact of diversity practices on their recruitment efforts.

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Employers can do better. Singapore female talent share their employer diversity experience

When asked about whether employers are doing enough to treat females equally to males, the majority of the Singapore employees surveyed — both male and female — agreed that employers are “getting it right” (Figure 4). However, one in five women surveyed in the country believe that employers are too biased in favour of men. This is indicative that employers have yet to achieve across-the-board gender inclusiveness despite a lower percentage of women surveyed in Singapore experiencing gender discrimination compared to their global counterparts.

Further, 22% of women surveyed in Singapore indicated that they experienced gender discrimination when applying/interviewing for a job – seven times higher than the local male respondents (3%).

Figure 4: Are employers doing enough to treat females equally to males in the workplace?

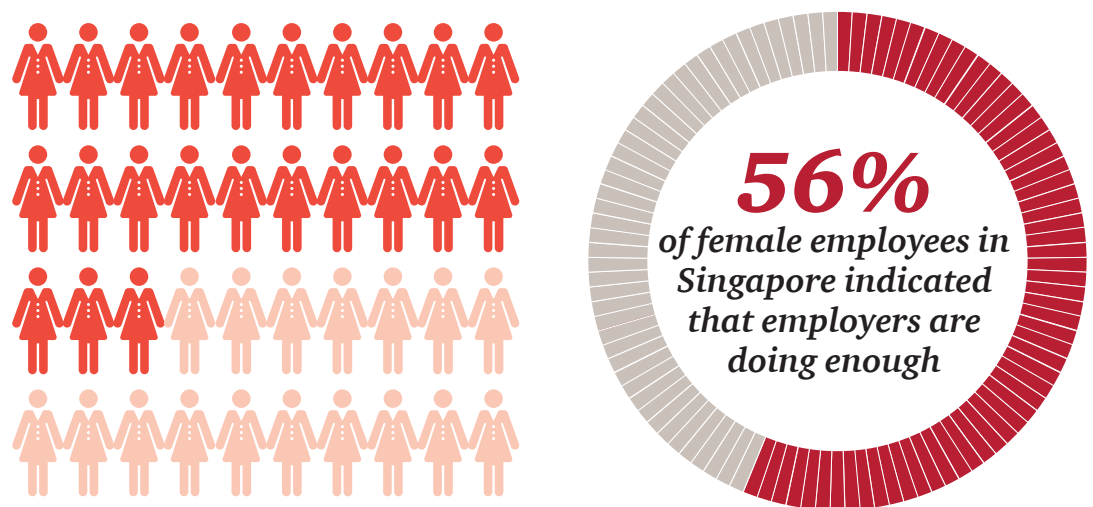


Figure 5: Gender discrimination when applying/interviewing for a job
% of Singapore’s female talent who indicated they have experienced the following
discrimination when applying/interviewing for a job



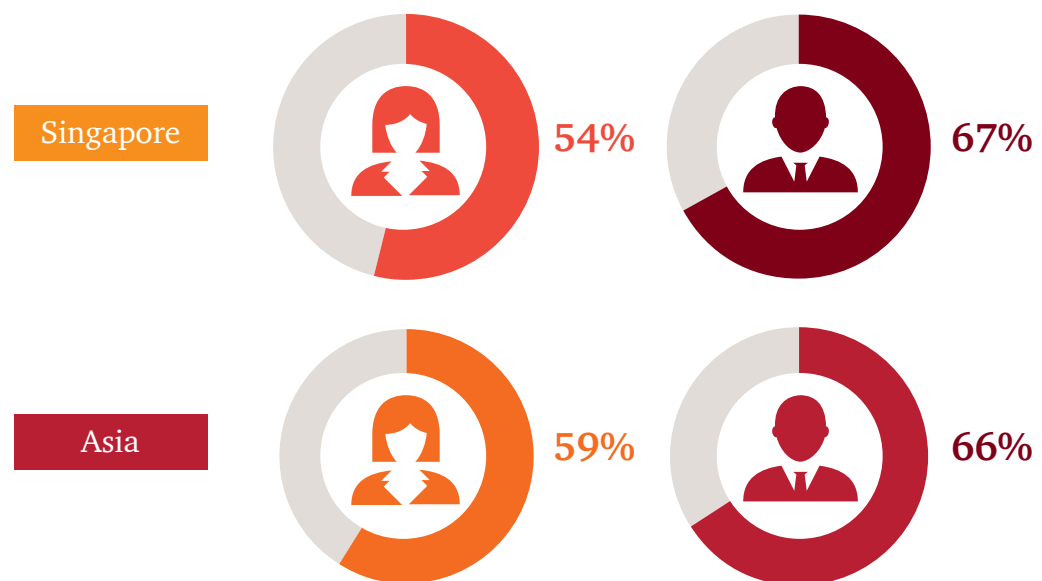
Not a level playing field for female experienced hires

Our survey reveals a disconnect between what employers and talent think regarding significant barriers to increasing levels of female experienced hires.

Respondents were divided in their beliefs about gaps between male and female experienced hires. Only 54% of female Singapore respondents (67% of males) agreed that female experienced hire job applicants have equal hiring opportunities as equally qualified male experienced hire job applicants (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Equal hiring opportunities

% of female and male respondents who agreed that female experienced hire job applicants have equal hiring opportunities



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6 out of **10** women surveyed cited gender stereotypes/assumptions in recruitment processes are a significant barrier to increased female experienced hires.

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Nearly six out of 10 women surveyed (59%) pointed out the impact of gender stereotypes/assumptions in the recruitment process pose a significant barrier to increased female experienced hires in Singapore, followed by concerns over cost and impact of maternity leave (48%). Our survey results further re-affirm their concerns as the same issues emerged in the list of top five barriers identified by the local employers surveyed when asked the same question (Figure 7).

There is also a perception gap in the difference between how much women and men are paid as half of the female talent surveyed in Singapore believe that there's a gender pay gap between equally qualified male and female experienced hires, with 45% indicating that it is in favour of men (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Significant barriers to increased levels of female experienced hires
% of female employees and employers in Singapore who agreed with the following statements

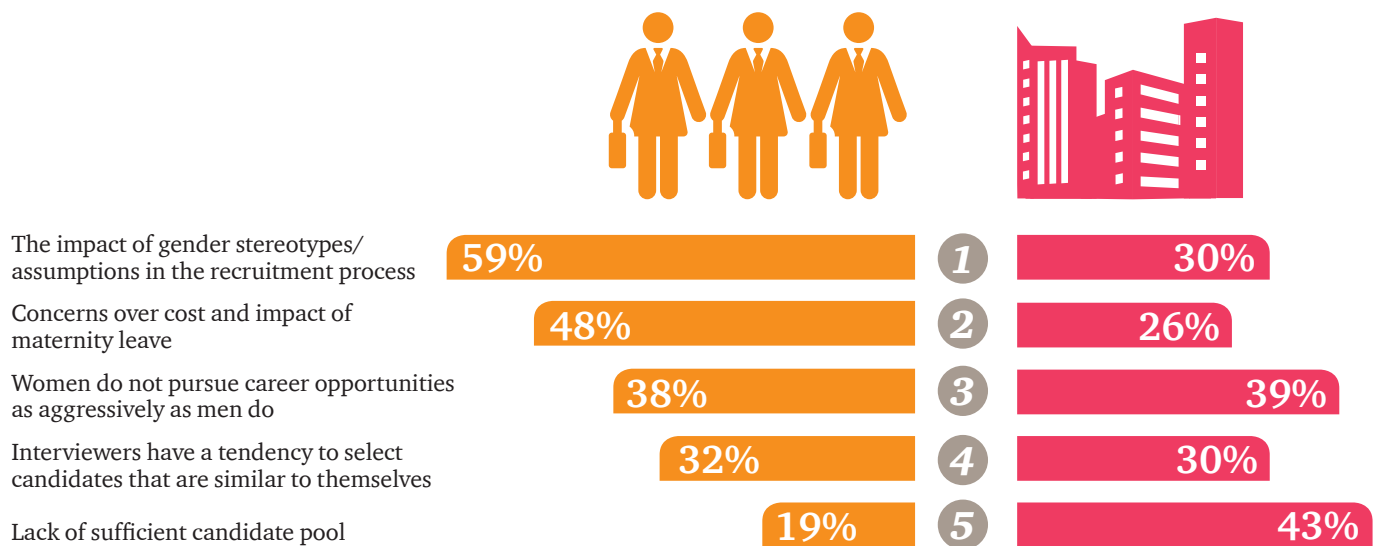
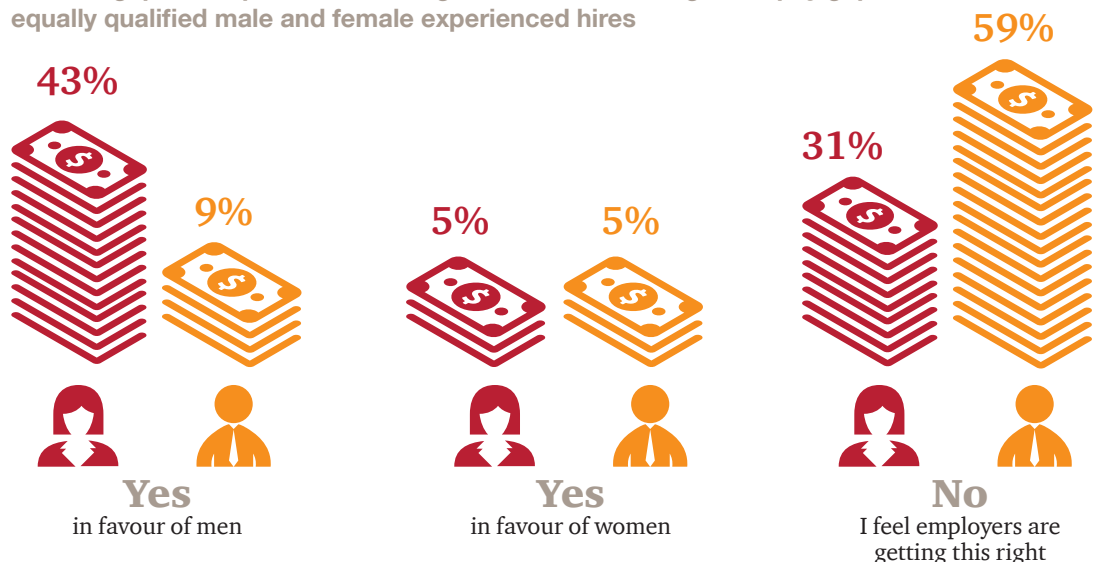


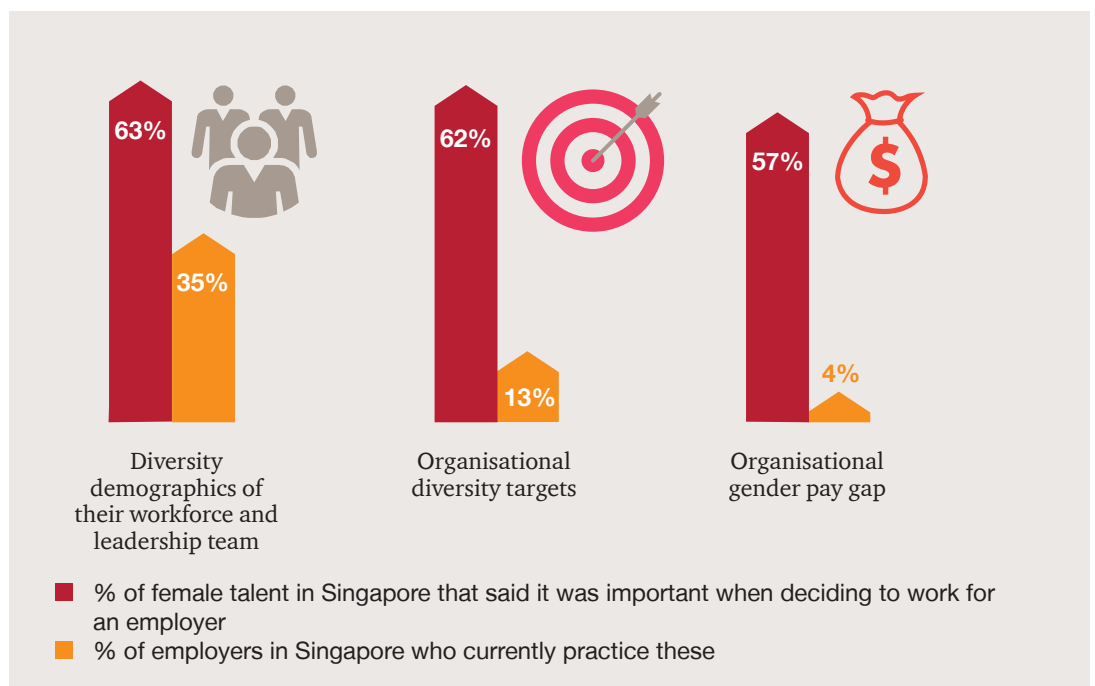
Figure 8: The gender pay gap
% of Singapore respondents who agreed that there is a gender pay gap between equally qualified male and female experienced hires



Understanding what “value” is from the employees’ point of view

Female talent are looking for better disclosure and transparency in the diversity demographics of an organisation’s workforce and their leadership team, their diversity targets as well as organisational gender pay gap (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Public sharing of information/disclosure of diversity and inclusion metrics – Singapore respondents



Women in Singapore are clear about what they want from employers, most notably: competitive wages and other financial incentives, flexible working arrangements and work life balance, opportunities for career progression, as well as recognition in their work (Figure 10).

If employers are not demonstrating these key traits, female employees may choose to leave. Two in five female employees would move to another organisation if their current employer does not provide sufficient career progression.

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It is no longer enough for organisations to only report financial figures. Prospective female talent are calling for organisations to do more. Enhancing disclosures of diversity demographics and gender pay gaps will be key to attracting future female talent.

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~Karen Loon, Territory Diversity Leader, PwC Singapore

The results are clear; creating a diverse and inclusive workplace is no longer an option. Both male and female respondents expect organisations to have diversity and inclusion policies and practices. When deciding to accept a position with their most recent employer, 54% of female respondents in Singapore (52% male) did research on whether they have diversity and inclusion policies.

As the war for talent intensifies, organisations must provide the value that female talent is looking for or lag behind.

Figure 10: Top three attractive employer traits according to Singapore's female employees

Top push factors



Top pull factors



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Understanding the core drivers of employee satisfaction, engagement and retention at a time where talent scarcity is on the minds of CEOs all around the world is critical. A company's ability to provide their employees with a clear path for progression, learning and development that will support them to get there and appropriate mentoring will win loyalty time and again. A culture and operating model where employees have the ability to create some flexibility will open up the opportunities to a broader talent pool. This broader talent pool is something that is becoming increasingly critical both locally and globally.

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~Nicole Wakefield, People & Organisation Leader, PwC South East Asian Consulting



Considerations for improvement

Global and Asian employers are actively driving diversity and inclusion activities, but Singapore still continues to lag behind in some of these areas. Only one in ten organisations in Singapore have a formal 'Returnship' programme as compared to 29% globally and 32% in Asia. A promising sign, two in five employers in Singapore are considering introducing a formal 'Returnship' programme, although half of them neither have such a programme, nor are considering it.

Another area that organisations in Singapore can consider would be the introduction of artificial intelligence to tailor the onboarding experience based on the demographics of new recruits. 42% of employers globally and 56% in Asia are already on the bandwagon while Singapore trails behind with a mere 17%.

What does this mean?

Employees don't just look at the nature of the business, but now place increasing value in the way they are treated as individuals and the role organisations play in the wider community. How organisations engage with prospective hires has never been more important. Diversity is one of the drivers that attract talent to an organisation.

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Beyond diversity, inclusion in the workforce is vital in attracting and retaining talent, and subsequently driving innovation and long-term growth of an organisation. The message is clear: organisations should walk their diversity talk or face increased difficulty attracting talent, particularly female talent.

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~Karen Loon, Territory Diversity Leader, PwC Singapore

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