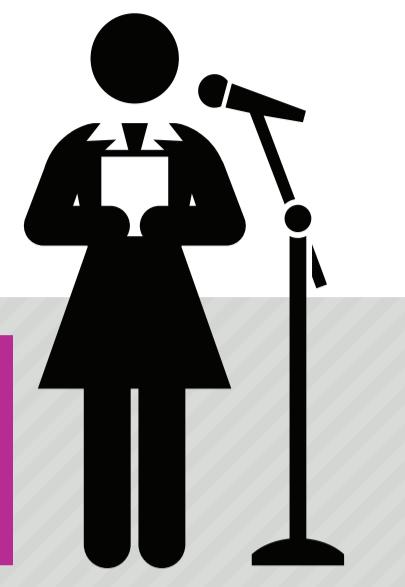


# What's holding women in Asia back from the C-suite?

Insights from the *Women in Leadership in Asia Pacific\** report

Rapid urbanisation, growing affluence, higher female education levels and lower birthrates are all impacting social norms in Asia. However, these gains are not apparent at the C-suite, where women are still underrepresented.



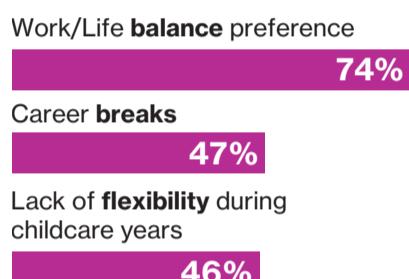
**30%** of companies surveyed do not have any **female** board members.



And only **9%** have a **female** CEO.

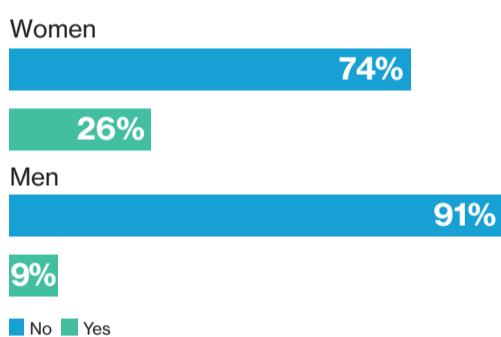
## What's causing the drain of women at the mid-level?

If you do think there is a **drain at the mid-level**, what are the perceived reasons for this?



**Over four in 10** surveyed also called out a need for **career breaks** and a **lack of flexibility** during childcare years as a reason for **women exiting** the workplace.

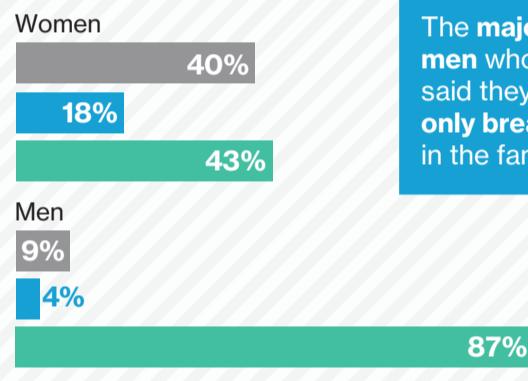
## Have you taken a **career break** for family reasons?



And the data confirmed that almost **one in four women** surveyed take a career break for family reasons, compared to only **one in 10 men** surveyed.

## Despite growing financial roles, our focus groups found that many women still face damaging gender stereotypes

Are you the **main breadwinner** in your household?\*\*



The **majority of men** who responded said they are the **only breadwinner** in the family.

But **83% of women** said that they are either the **main breadwinner**, or they **share** responsibilities equally with their spouse.

\*\*Note that survey respondents were typically senior executives, and this may not be representative of the entire female working population.



Female leadership traits, focusing on empathetic, **maternal behaviours**, often do not align with traditional leadership models.



There's a heavy emphasis on **coaching children** through competitive examinations, the so-called "maternal wall" (as opposed to the glass ceiling).



Traditional gender roles can inhibit women from competing for advancement, for instance over fears of **outearning** their spouse.



There's pressure to **marry** within a certain age or be known as "leftover women".

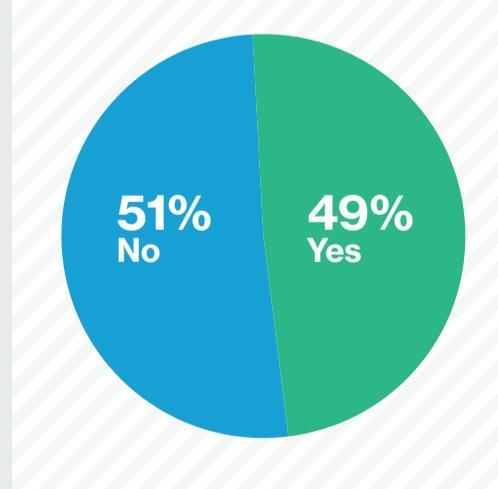


Women leaders can be **mocked** as "iron ladies".



## Interestingly, there are mixed perceptions around the existence of a glass ceiling

Do you think there is a **glass ceiling** in your organisation?

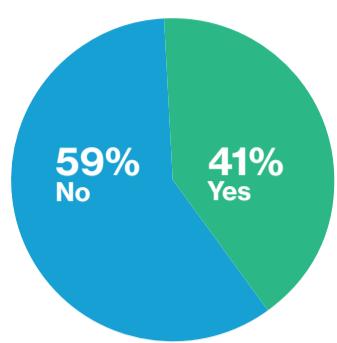


**51%** of women surveyed think that there is a **glass ceiling**, compared with only **36%** of men.

**49%** of women surveyed think that there is a **drain of mid-level women** employees, compared with only **32%** of men.

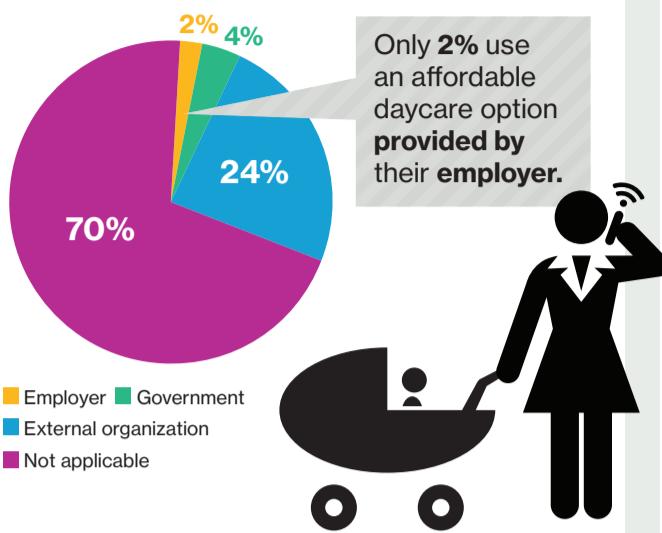
## As more women advance, there's room for employers to help

Do you have **access** to affordable **daycare**?

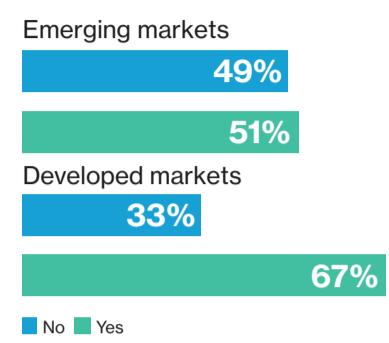
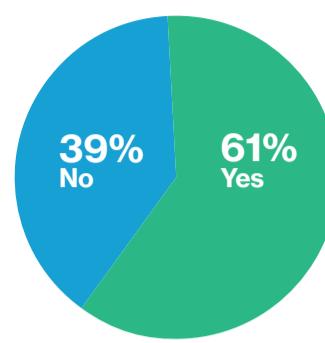


Almost **six in 10** respondents said that they **do not have access** to affordable **daycare**.

If you have access to affordable daycare, **who** is this **provided by**?



Does your company provide **parental (family) leave**?



**67%**

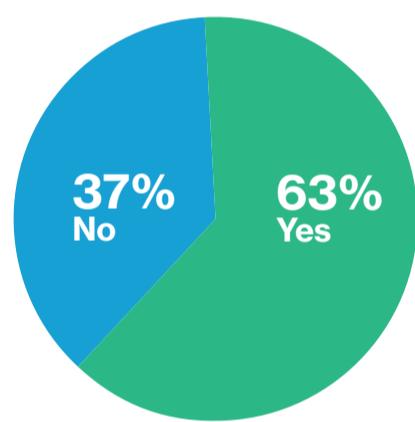
Only roughly **one in two** companies from **emerging markets** offer parental leave, compared with **two-thirds** of those in **developed markets**.



Currently, **four in 10** employers surveyed **do not even offer parental leave**  
– this is especially an issue in emerging markets such as China and India.

**What can employers do?** Many organisations are **recognising this as an issue** and taking steps.

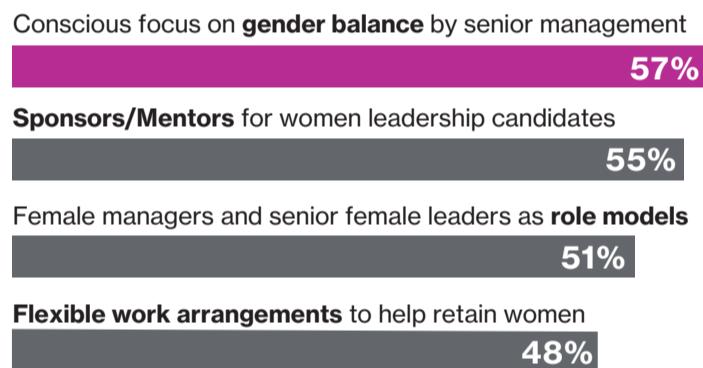
Is your organisation **taking active steps** to support women leaders? If so, what are they?



1. **Gender diversity** targets
2. **Flexible** working options, including telecommuting
3. Development of a **pipeline of high-potential** women
4. **Diversity** training
5. Professional **coaching** of high-potential women



What are the **key drivers** of successful **advancement of women** in your organisation?



A conscious focus on **gender balance**, driven by leadership, was seen as **more key to success** than practical measures such as flexible work arrangements.

The **top barriers** faced by women, according to the data stemmed from **psychological barriers**, include:

- **Family responsibilities** conflicting with career advancement
- **Exclusion** from power networks
- **Male-dominated** work environments

Employers can focus on overcoming these **psychological barriers** by consciously focusing on **gender balance**, particularly when it comes to senior management. **Mentorship** for women leaders will be crucial.

**Positive images** of working women can be socialized throughout the organisation; for example, the stereotype of "Tiger Moms" can be combated by the wide dissemination of recent research showing the affirmative impact of working mothers.

More practical arrangements such as **flexible working options** can also make a difference; however, there are many obstacles to fully taking advantage of these, including limited options for women to work from home (given small living spaces) and a stigma around working flexibly.

Changes can be made to performance management processes to incorporate the **perception of the competencies** displayed by women leaders, such as a more collaborative leadership style. Redefining **leadership attributes** may be overdue to ensure there is no gender bias.

\*Insights from the Economist Corporate Network's report, *Women in Leadership in Asia Pacific*, sponsored by Willis Towers Watson.

**About the survey:** The survey, which was conducted in early 2016, includes responses from senior executives across Asia Pacific, focusing mostly on women in leadership roles (chief, VP, head, director), but also senior male executives (chief, VP, head, director). A range of sectors are represented, from SMEs as well as MNCs, including manufacturing, commodities, energy, financial services, retail, consumer goods and healthcare.

The survey attracted 143 responses, of which 83% (120) were female. Respondents were based in China (32%), India (15%), Singapore (15%), Hong Kong (11%), Australia (11%), Malaysia (10%) and Japan (5%).