



HER CAREER BREAK TO RESTART

Survey Research

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An initiative by
HER CAREER FOUNDATION
www.hercareerfoundation.org



**"Women share this planet 50/50 and they are underrepresented, their potential astonishingly untapped."
–Emma Watson**

Women's participation and contribution to political and economic growth have been stellar. Today, women are successful business and political leaders as well as household managers. Many public and private organizations, systems, and processes are independently driven by women successfully.

But the journey is yet rough and bumpy, seeking a balance where, on the one hand, personal responsibilities call while on the other, the desire for professional excellence demand an answer.

Despite clear visibility on women's contributions in every sphere, businesses have been myopic on re-engaging women who have been on a career break. They have been deemed unfit for re-employment.

The vast potential of women talent on a career break is rendered useless due to pre-set bias and lack of sensitivity towards the very reasons women go on a career break. This is not something new but has been going on for a long. Many organizations have brought policies and programs to tackle this menace, but the results are not encouraging enough.

A CAREER IS A LONG-TERM PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY.

How can a few years' career break impact women's calibre and negate their overall skills and professional learning?

Through our research survey, Her Career - Break to Re-Start, we have attempted to understand the trials and tribulations that women go through right from deciding to go on a career break to managing during the break, and, finally, deciding to re-start their careers.

This research survey can serve as an informed source of information to stakeholders who can play an essential part in fighting the prejudiced approach restricting women's re-entry into the workforce. Women's inclusion is necessary for achieving comprehensive, unbiased, and sustainable development.

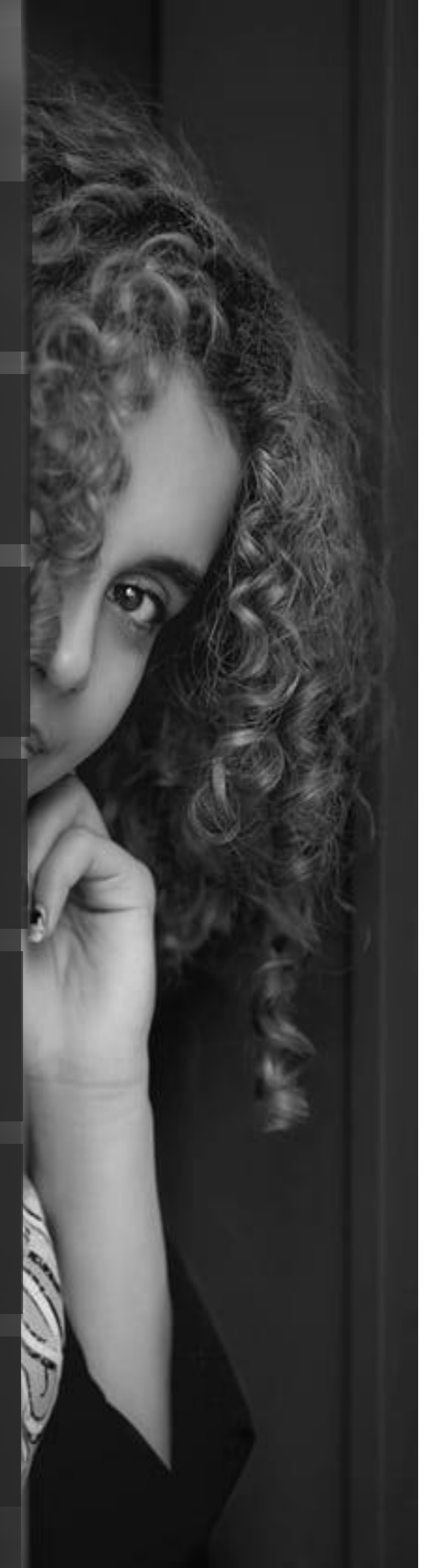
The aspirations and actions executed today will influence the future workplace, which will be more receptive and inclusive. Together we can usher in a new era that is more sensitive, empathetic, and most of all–Inclusive



Sarla Sharma
Founder, Chairwoman
HER CAREER FOUNDATION

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THE QUEST FROM BREAK TO RE-START

THE QUEST FROM BREAK TO RE-START

Women's careers are rarely aligned in a linear path and seldom follow the conventional track from entry to senior levels without voluntary or involuntary career breaks.

STUDY DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study is to present a realistic picture of the challenges women face after going on career breaks in India. It is essential to look at the issue holistically, i.e., the trials and tribulations of these women in their quest to restart their careers and the organization's behavior towards these women.

To gain a greater insight into the subject, this research was conducted with over

- **1325** Women from all over India, who are currently on a career break and want to restart their career (Quantitative)
- **50** Women's telephonic interviews (Qualitative)
- **15** Recruitment Consultants (Qualitative)

KEY FOCUS AREAS

- Reasons for women taking a career break
- Did they try all the options before taking the career break decision?
- Career restart challenges – The Trail & Tribulations
- Career break impact on mental – emotional – physical wellbeing
- Industry's approach towards women's candidature with A career break
- Support women need to restart their careers after A break

WOMEN MATTER!

“No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half of its citizens.” – Michelle Obama.

Talent matters; women are equally talented, so why ignore them?

48% of the Indian population consists of women, and only 28% counts to be employed and contribute to the economy. India is a country governed by its traditional values and belief systems. It carries the weight of gender roles and conventional beliefs, holding women’s potential back from achieving their best.

Women have outwitted men in many fields, yet in India, an educated woman pursuing her career often endures harsh social criticism. People have been conditioned to believe that life is a domestic affair for women, constrained indoors with no rights to chase their dream careers. They are made to seek validation for their worth and talent from a society with its own set of rules and preconceived notions against career-oriented women. Women are bound by such pressing demands and circumstances that a career break often seems to be the only choice left.

Have we ever questioned what we can do to get these women back to work and achieve their goals?

The times are changing, and the economy is a lot more competitive. Ignoring their potential will only be a loss for the economy. An article published by a world bank survey says there is potential for the economy to grow from 1.5% to 9% every year for every 50% increased women involvement. Rightly so, we have recognized this blind-sighted effect of staying close to our roots with shielded clarity leading us to disarray.

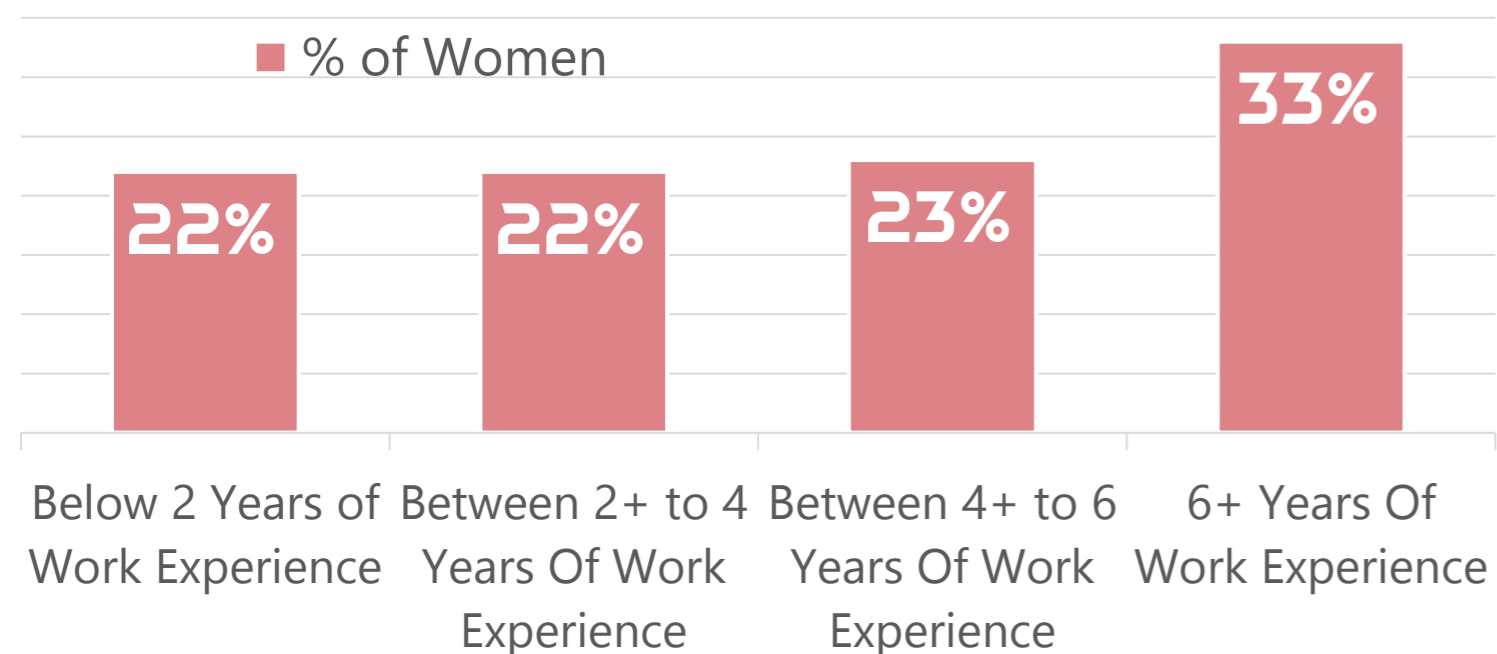
The government is coping with recognizing these issues and making policies that will help women seek their aims and ambition with legal and valid support with acts like the Maternity Benefit Act, Sexual Harassment Act, Women at the Workplace Act, National Commission for Women Act, Indecent Representation of Women Act. Though the constitution has enacted these acts to support women and encourage their involvement, we ought to realize that passing laws is not enough. To properly implement the benefits, we have to make sure that no one disregards these acts and policies.



SURVEY RESEARCH STATISTICS

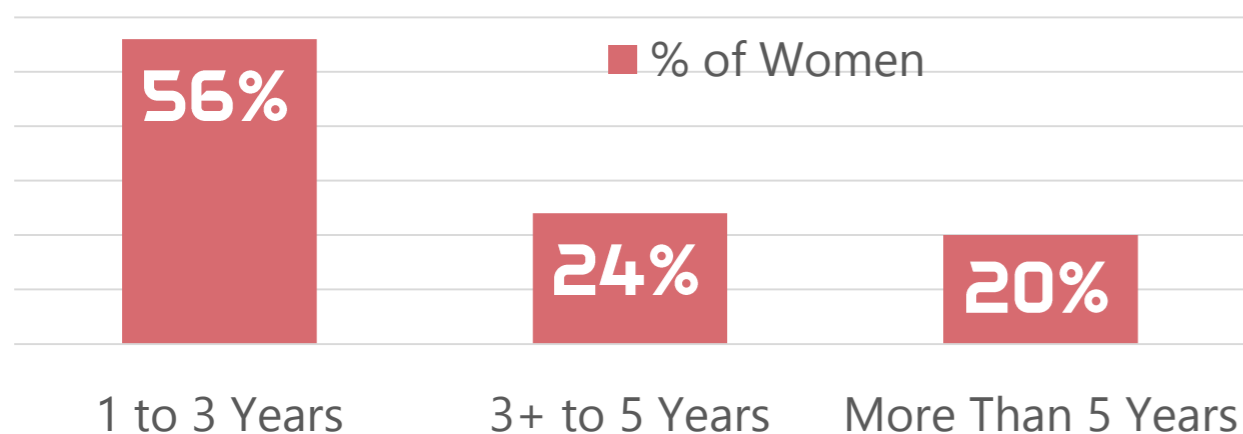
PURPOSE : The study focuses on why women take a career break, the **trials and tribulations** they face on their way back to restart their careers.

WORK EXPERIENCE BEFORE TAKING A CAREER BREAK



- 22%** Below 2 years of work experience
- 22%** Between 2+ to 4 years of work experience
- 23%** Between 4+ to 6 Years of work experience
- 33%** More Than 6 Years of work experience

I HAVE BEEN ON A CAREER BREAK SINCE



- 56%** 1 To 3 Years
- 24%** 3+ To 5 Years
- 20%** More Than 5 Years

1325
TOTAL SURVEY
WOMEN
PARTICIPANTS

Women Who Are On A Career Break And Want To Restart Their Careers, Sharing The Trails and Tribulations They Face On Their Way Back To Restart Their Careers After A Break.

CAREER BREAK IS IMMINENT!

An ambitious working woman, Geeta found herself stuck in a conundrum when she had to take a sudden career break, driven by a deep desire to support her daughter's needs. A single mother to a 15-year-old currently studying in the 10th grade, Geeta's endeavor to provide her daughter with the best of everything is heart-warming. Geeta has always had a zealous approach towards her work and calls it her 'happy place'. It's her work that has kept her going with a smile despite all odds.

Geeta wanted to send her daughter abroad for higher studies. She wanted to provide her with all the comforts and support she could. However, to manage both the fronts, personal and professional, was becoming increasingly difficult for Geeta. It was like chasing two rabbits and catching none. Her daughter needed her constant presence owing to the pressures of the board exams around the corner. Added to this were the complications caused by her hormonal changes leading to a severe psychological impact. Geeta was under immense stress, fighting to cope with all her responsibilities.

Finally, after a mindful deliberation, she decided to take a three-year career break to make a comeback into the workforce once her daughter completed her 12th grade.

She was delighted at the thought of being a pillar of strength for her daughter by staying at home full-time and taking care of her daughter's needs.

As time passed by, Geeta started questioning her decision. She grew anxious about how she would manage to have financial stability whilst having no source of income. She felt purposeless, whiling away all her time and having nothing productive to do. This breather that she had taken started suffocating her. The only question daunting her constantly was, "Will I ever be capable enough to start working again."

Geeta is not alone. Women, more than men, compromise with their careers to balance their personal commitments. For women, at times, a career break is imminent. They are burdened with shouldering the impracticalities of managing domestic responsibilities with a full-time career.

The rate of women tending to leave their jobs due to personal reasons is very high. Working women are twice as likely as their male counterparts to run the house, thrice more likely to look after their children, and eight times more likely to take time off to look after an unwell child.

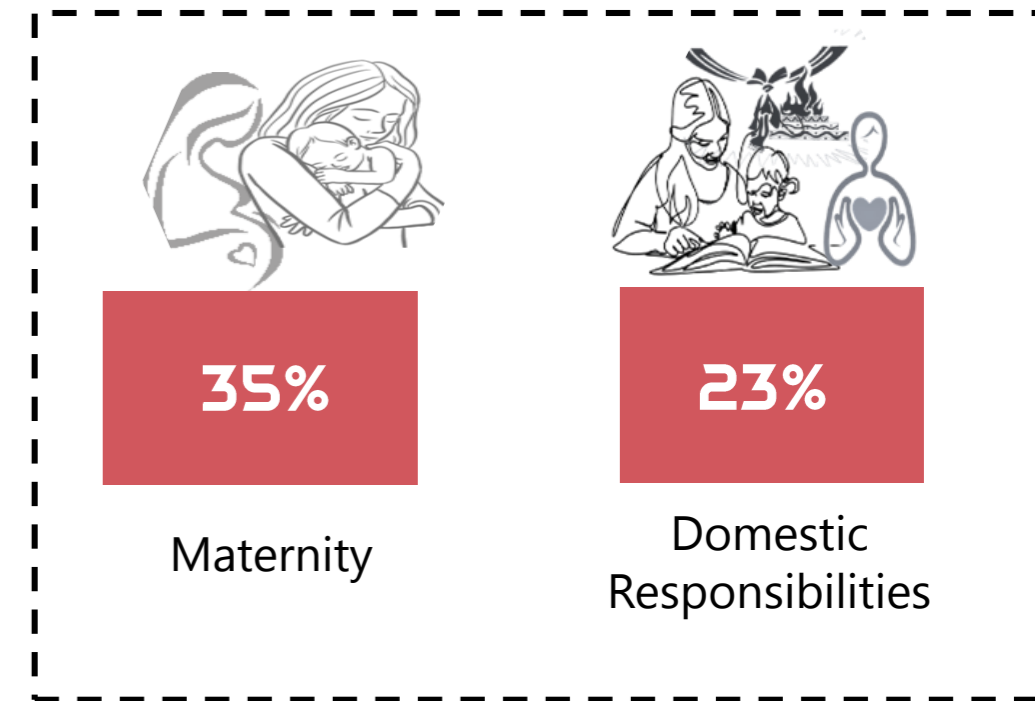
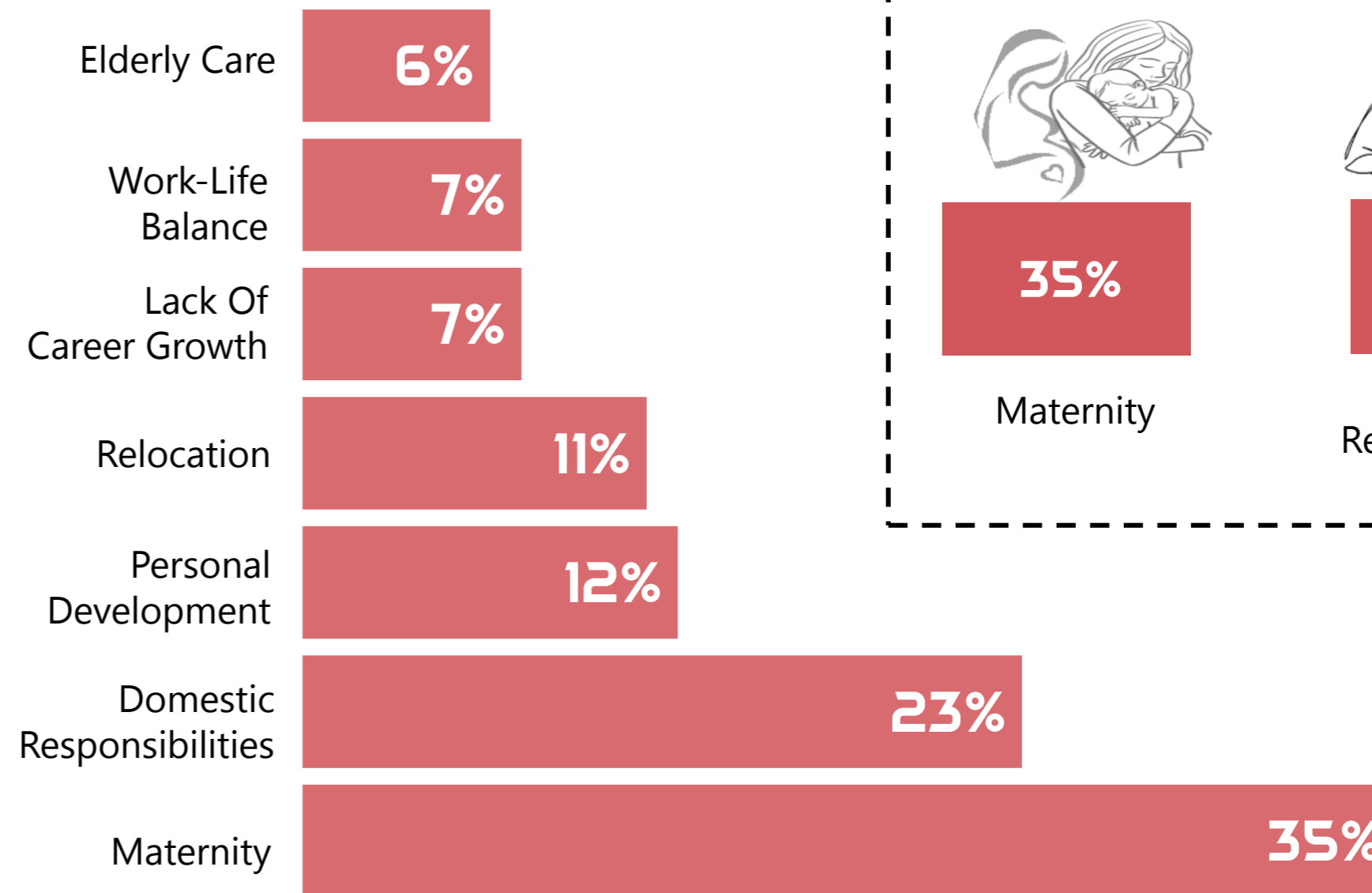
In a nutshell, the deeply gendered worlds of mother and fatherhood, irrespective of any work situation, continue to play out on a mass scale.

"Juggling a career and a family is a challenge for anyone, and even more so (in general) for women." Geeta



**CAREER BREAK
IS IMMINENT**

REASONS FOR MY CAREER BREAK



Research Findings – According to our survey research

35% Maternity coupled with **23%** Domestic responsibilities are the most common reasons for women to take a break from their careers.

At **12%**, Personal Development is another critical reason which influences women to opt out of their careers.

*“I went on a career break because of maternity, but, unfortunately, it got extended well beyond my imagination, and I happen to be on a 6 years of hiatus from work.” - **Women with 8 years of experience, Financial Services Professional.***

REASONS FOR CAREER BREAK

Being in the most inclusive era of development when growth is the main objective of any person, some warriors have to put their growth to a halt and fight for other issues instead. Probably in this world, they are called "**WOMEN**".

GROUNDS FOR TAKING CAREER BREAKS

While discussing women's responsibilities in our society, it is quite clear that they are bound to manage the world around them. There can be many reasons for a woman to take a career break, including her social role management, the corporates' structural faults, or personal factors. Usually, marriage, childbirth, child-rearing, elderly care, and relocation are considered the times when a woman is presumed to leave her career goals and focus on her family. Similarly, the barriers of traditions, misogynist families, and societal ecosystems with no alternatives for childcare and elderly care make it essential for her to stay at home and look after them.

Corporations are the hotspots of challenges for women. It may be the unhealthy working environment, lack of growth opportunities, or improper work timings, making it unsuitable for establishing themselves under the constraints of managing household duties.

Moreover, there can be personal reasons, as well. Poor health conditions and long commuting hours to work can constrain women from pursuing their careers; sometimes, of course, even continuing higher education or the desire to explore different job options can lead to career breaks.

But most often:

***“Women do not really think about it,
Women do not really plan for it.
Women are not really ready for it.
Women take a very long time to accept it.”***



EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

I TRIED ALL OPTIONS BEFORE TAKING A CAREER BREAK DECISION

52% Of Women Respondents Wanted A Career Break

48% Of Women Respondents Did Not Want A Career Break



48%

of the respondents did not want a career break. They tried all options to find a flexible employment opportunity within and outside their organizations.

16% of the respondents said they tried exploring alternative working options with their previous organizations as they did not want a career break.

32% of the respondents said they tried exploring all alternative working options before taking the final decision for a career break.

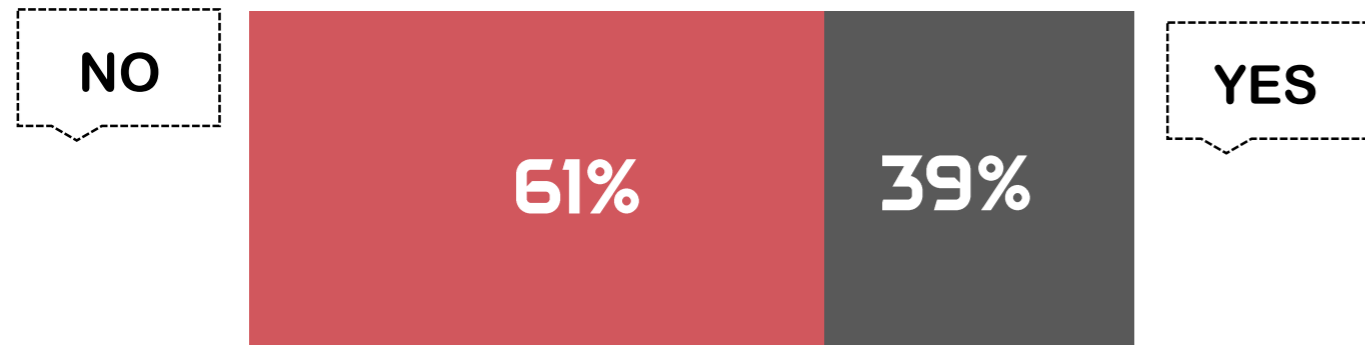
52% of the respondents were certain that they wanted to take a career break to fulfil their obligations.

A career break, irrespective of its reason, is a crucial decision that can potentially impact the present and probably the future career progression. A working woman professional would like to explore any alternative options to avoid taking a career break. It can be exploring opportunities with her present employer or outside her current employment.

At times, the reasons behind the career break decisions are unavoidable or cannot be managed by exploring any alternative options, and opting for a career break seems to be the obvious alternative.



MY CAREER RESTART PREFERENCES



I PREFER GOING BACK TO MY PREVIOUS ORGANIZATION TO RESTART MY CAREER

39% of the respondents prefer to re-join their previous employers after a career break.

61% of the respondents prefer to restart their careers with a new organization after a career break.

It is challenging for women post-career break to re-establish themselves in the ever demanding corporate environment. Sometimes, there is a choice for them to either return to the previous employer or restart with a new organization. This decision depends solely on the earlier experiences at their workplace; the reason for leaving the job also plays a significant role.

The reason for a large percentage of women preferring to restart their careers with a previous employer is the pre-known environment and recognized colleagues. Employers play a significant role by helping them gain more confidence, which translates into work efficiency.

There are some companies already providing '**Back to Work**' programs. They support flexible timings, provide options to work remotely, and all the prerequisite conditioning to fill the skill gap, making it a bit easier for them to re-establish themselves and step up towards greater heights in their careers.





DO YOU THINK
WOMEN ARE
NOT SERIOUS
ABOUT THEIR
CAREER?

HER HEAR VOICE

HEAR HER VOICE

55%

of the respondents expressed to have **FULL-TIME** job engagement to restart their career.

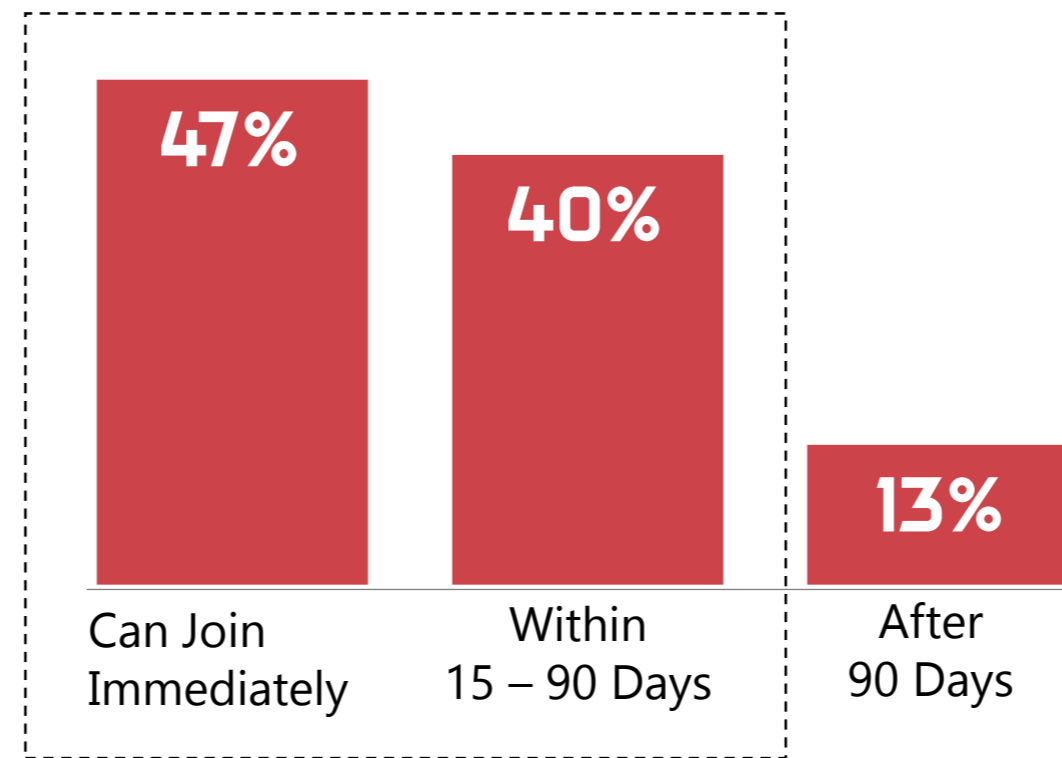
27%

of the respondents expressed to have **WORK FROM HOME** job assignments as it would help them manage their dual responsibilities

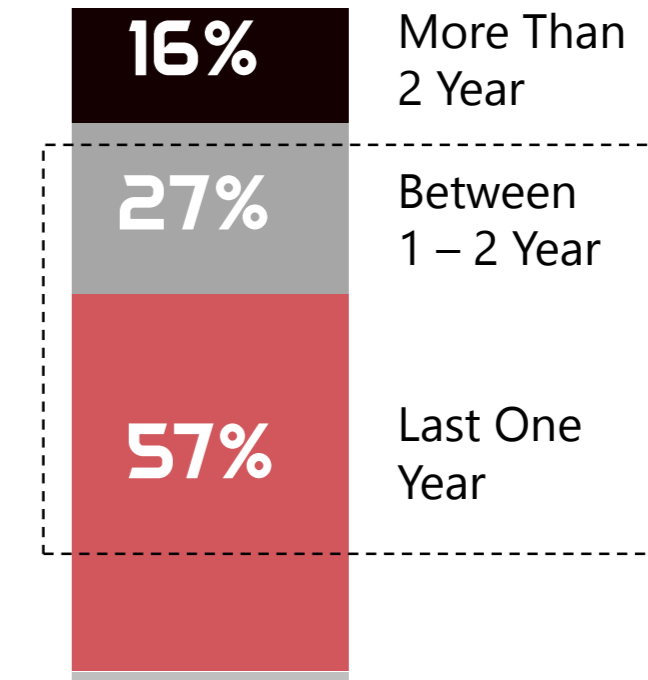
I AM ACTIVELY LOOKING TO RESTART MY CAREER



TIME PERIOD REQUIRED TO REJOIN



LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO RESTART MY CAREER SINCE



I WANT TO RESTART MY CAREER

In an overwhelming response,

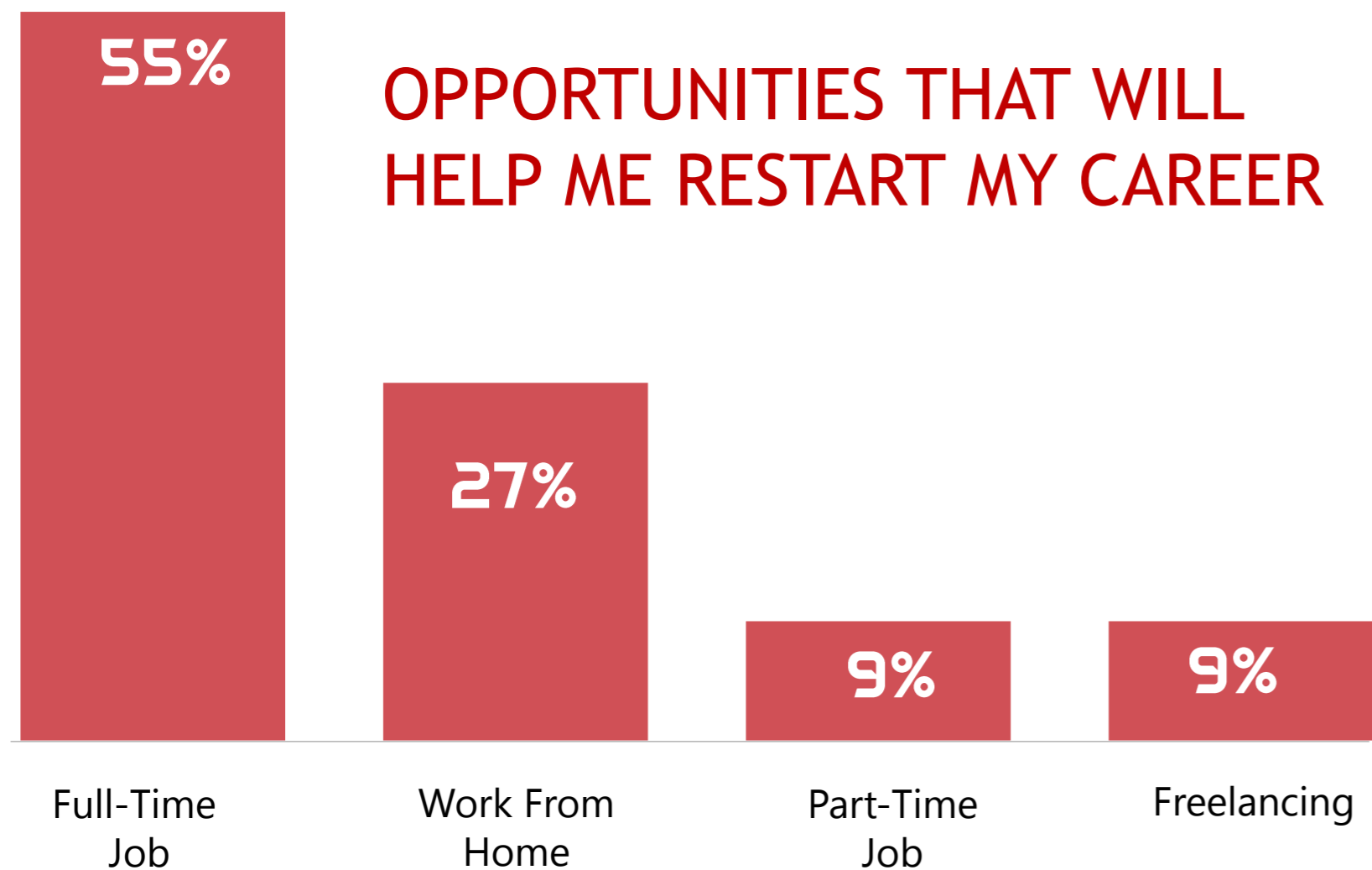
91% of the women respondents have asserted that they are actively looking for job opportunities to re-start their careers after a break, highlighting the importance women give to their professional selves.

I AM PLANNING TO REJOIN THE MAIN WORKFORCE

87% of the respondents can re-join within 90 days after getting a suitable opportunity.

LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES SINCE

84% of the women respondents have expressed that they have been actively looking for career opportunities for the last TWO years but are still struggling to get suitable job opportunities..



55% of the respondents expressed to have full-time job engagement to restart their career.

27% of the respondents expressed to have work from home job assignments as it would help them manage their dual responsibilities, i.e., home and professional front, without compromising on either of the two.

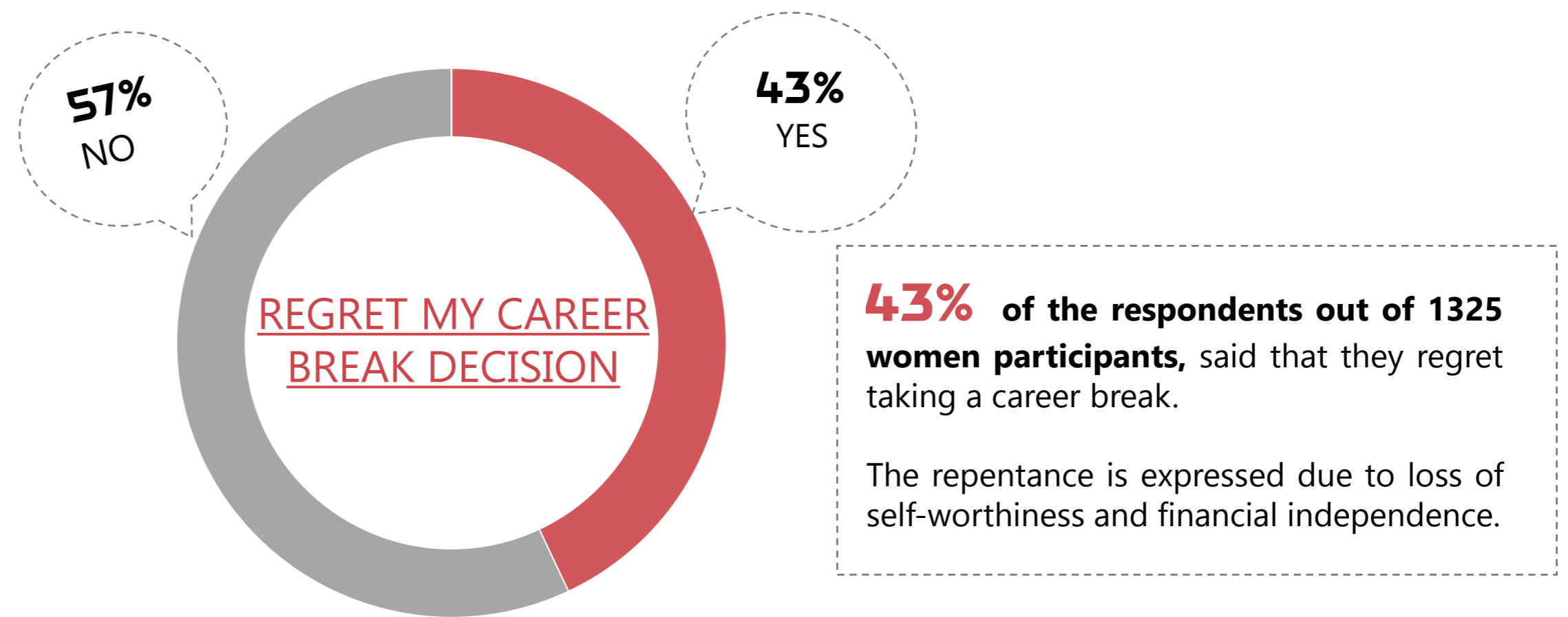
9% of the respondents expressed the desire to have part-time job assignments to balance their professional deliverables with domestic or personal responsibilities without losing touch with the industry.

9% of the respondents expressed taking up freelancing projects.

A little flexibility and acceptance from employers will help women rise in their careers and add value to the organizations.

HEAR
HER
VOICE

SKEPTICISM AND REPENTANCE DURING A CAREER BREAK



SKEPTICISM AND REPENTANCE DURING A CAREER BREAK

From working the whole day in a professional environment to managing the household chores and the overwhelming caregiving to the family tends to eat up a woman's professional sagacity. This is when a woman experiences her increased value as a mother, wife, or daughter but at the same time continually suffers from a diminishing value of her intellectual capabilities.

Working women generally have a high sense of professional identity. After a career break with each passing day, she finds herself more confined to the four walls of her house, and the void of her lost professional identity keeps on deepening. Insecurity and uncertainty make her feel unsettled for sacrificing her goals.

A career break may be involuntary or voluntary. Still, the challenges these women experience looking for job opportunists to re-start their careers after a short or considerably long hiatus make them question their decision of going on a career break.

This insecurity soon changes into self-doubt, which starts crumbling their confidence, making them highly prone to depression and anxiety. The worst part is the ignorance and normalization of the situation, which further elevates the problem.

The regret of a lost career can be dire and needs to be handled by professionals or by women themselves by not losing hope and by avoiding falling into the trap of remorse.

CAREER BREAK IMPACT ON MY

- CANDIDATURE SELECTION
- SALARY EXPECTATION
- CAREER PROSPECT

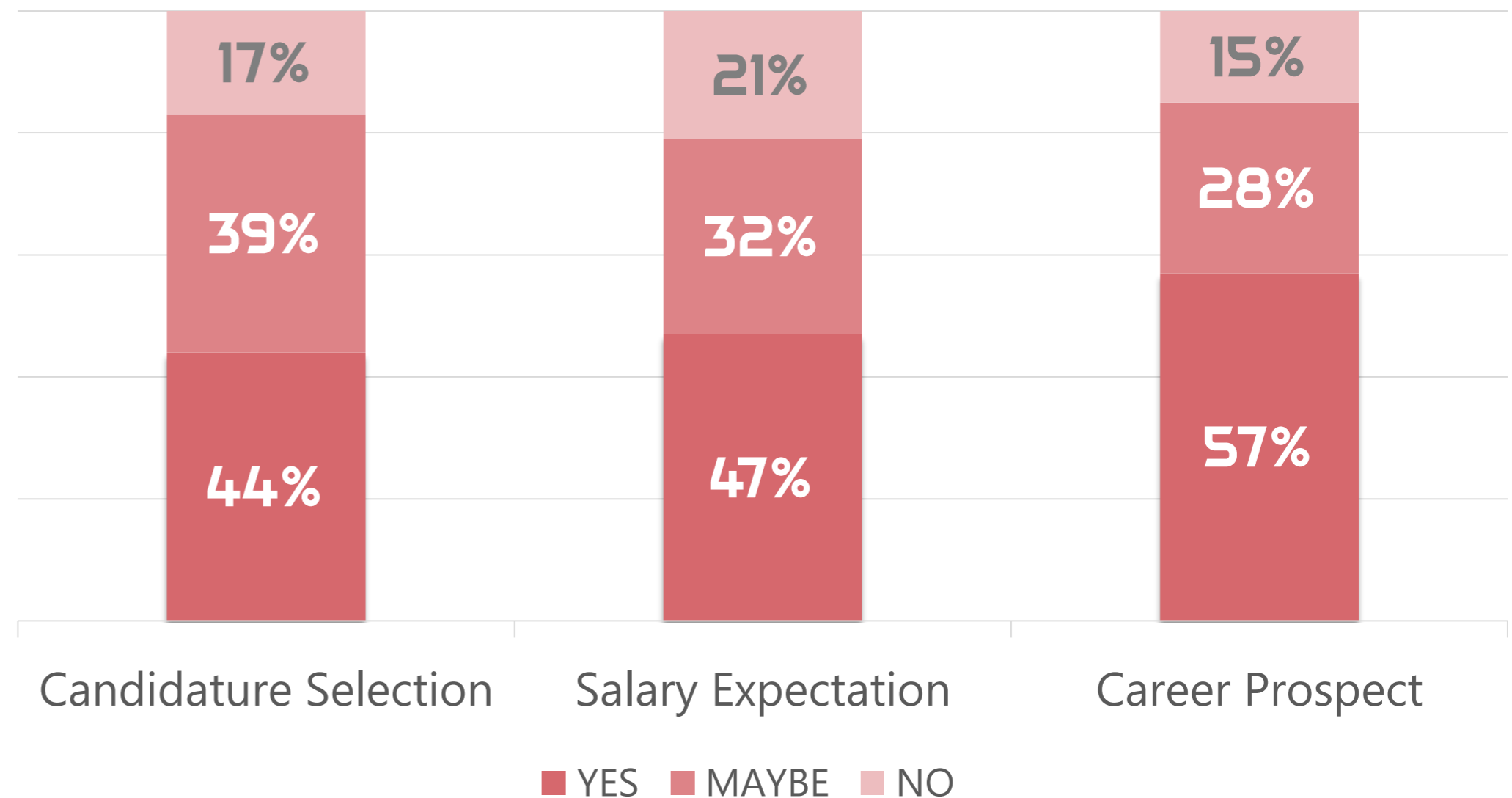
More often than not, women returning after a break are compelled to accept positions and salaries lower than they DESERVE.

Mostly women go for around a year-long sabbatical during their careers. The reason for the break can vary from maternity to child care or elderly care to several other domestic reasons. But most of them leave the workplace with an idea of a quick break and early come back.

Finally, when they plan their return after overcoming numerous personal issues, the conventional workplaces thrust new hurdles at them. Often these hurdles arise due to unconscious biases too.

The negative effect of a career break is quite strong and sustainable in a woman's professional life.

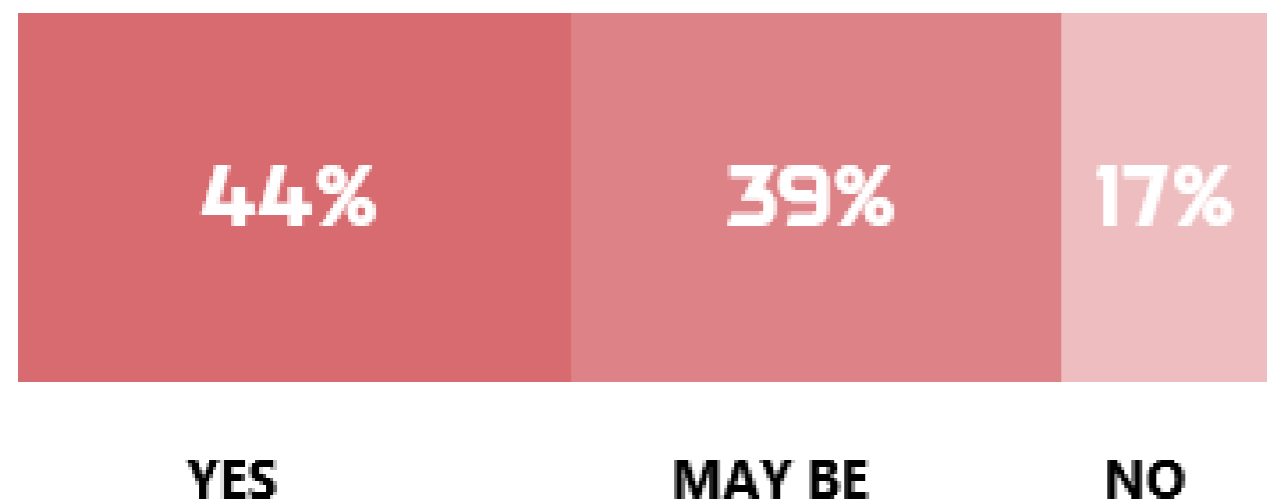
In our survey, we tried to understand from women respondents who are on a career break if they feel there would be any impact of their career breaks on the below factors when planning to re-start their careers.





**YOU'LL NEED
TO THINK
ABOUT HOW
TO SELL YOUR
BREAK AS A
POSITIVE MOVE.**

CAREER BREAK IMPACT ON MY CANDIDATURE SELECTION



Research Findings

- 44%** of the respondents strongly feel that a career break would impact their candidature selection
- 39%** of the respondents were not sure if their career break would impact their candidature selection
- 17%** of the respondents feel their career break would not have any impact on their candidature selection

- Most women who have been on a career break have had to face challenges of varying degrees when they plan to re-start their careers.
- The industry stigmatized a career gap, which is evident from the recruiters' behaviours and the hiring managers.
- A woman with a career break is deemed to be unfit for a role because she is considered to carry the baggage of personal responsibilities into her professional role.
- Even if they are called for an interview, the discussion mostly revolves around their career gap and how they would not cope with the job requirement's high demand.

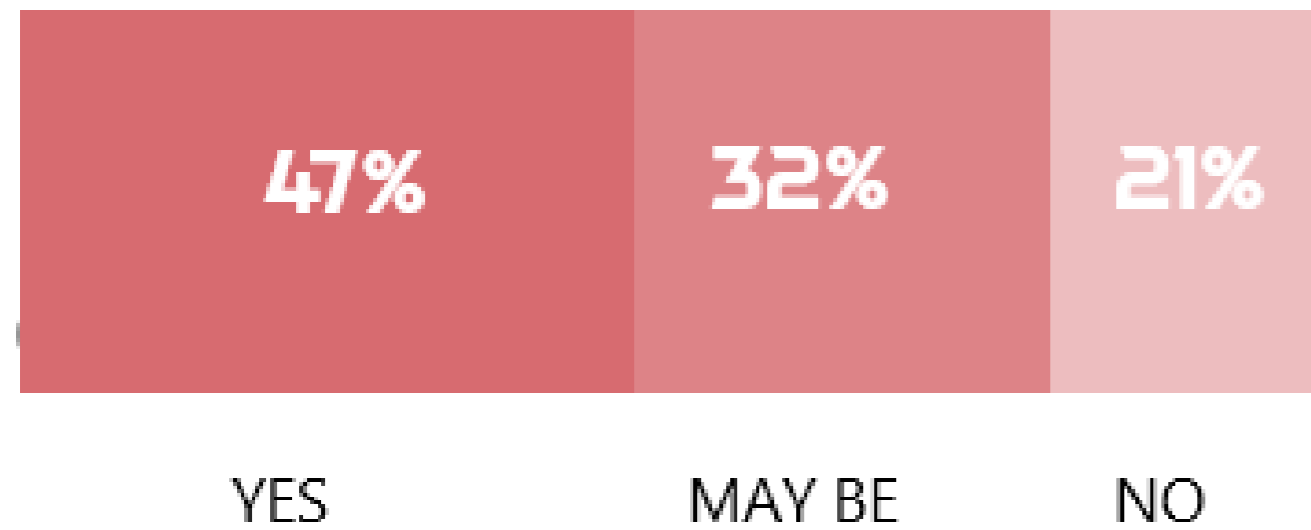
SUGGESTIONS



- Instead of treating women with career breaks as a liability, organizations need to change their mindset and respect the reasons for their career gap. Organizations should use the recruitment process to address negative perceptions and practices that are prevalent. They should roll out initiatives to bring them back into the mainstream job market.
- Rejecting credentials based on frivolous reasons has to be stopped; it's only sending out the wrong message that women with career breaks are not welcome and not respected.
- Organizations need to ensure they have trained and diverse recruitment teams at each stage, from information sessions to interviews and networking sessions. This enables to address the risk of informal evaluation and selection methods related to pre-set biases against women with a career break.



CAREER BREAK IMPACT ON MY CANDIDATURE PROSPECTS



Research Findings

- 47%** of the respondents strongly feel that a career break would impact their career prospect
- 32%** of the respondents were not sure if their career break would have any impact on their career prospect.
- 21%** of the respondents feel their career break would not have any impact on their career prospect

- The dominant model of career progression demands strict requirements for linearity and continuity in the career path.
- Women with career breaks are at a significant disadvantage in consideration for promotions and career advancements.
- There is a high probability that breaks hamper career prospects, and women experience loss of status or seniority.

SUGGESTIONS



- Organizations should have initiatives to mentor women who have been on a career break and show potential for advancement.
- Additionally, they can be provided with skill enhancement training and sponsored career advancements through management development programs.



“When we invest in women and girls, we are investing in the people who invest in everyone else” - Melinda Gates

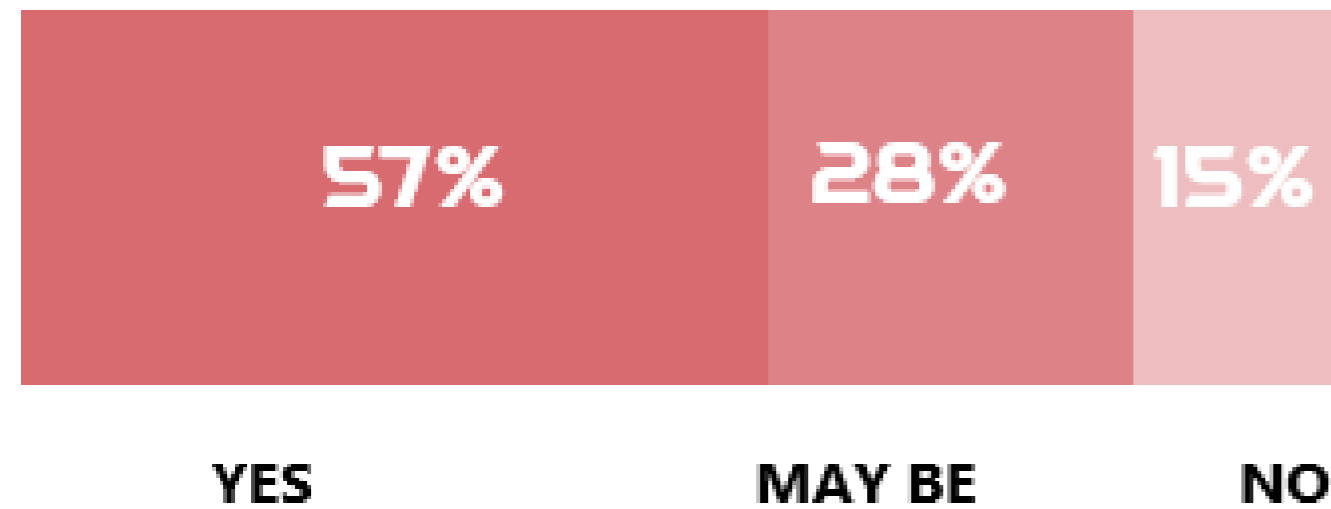
SUGGESTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations need to create a proper roadmap to make the re-entry of women into the workforce easy. Initially, even if they are hired on less salary, there should be a provision for salary revision considering their performance and potential exhibited during the course of employment.

Organizations need to create success stories, support women through mentoring and on-the-job training to help them establish a strong foothold in their respective roles.

Organizations need to discuss career progression plans with these women, encourage, appreciate, and celebrate their achievements; most of all, create an environment of belongingness. Further, they need to focus on their skills and abilities rather than their career breaks

CAREER BREAK IMPACT ON MY SALARY EXPECTATIONS



Research Findings

- 57%** of the respondents strongly feel that a career break would impact their salary expectations
- 28%** of the respondents were not sure if their career break would have any impact on their salary expectations
- 15%** of the respondents feel their career break would not have any impact on their salary expectations

SUGGESTIONS



-A break does not wipe clean a woman's potential and skills.

- As such, hiring them at a salary less than their counterparts can only be a demotivating factor. In fact, many women emerge stronger and more productive after a break.
- Organizations tapping their ability can benefit in the long run by providing them with the necessary training to up-skill them and prepare them for the role they have been chosen for.

"I faced challenges on the financial front, as I didn't have any alternative source of income. Secondly, getting back to work was very disappointing as wherever I tried for a job I had to accept a hit on my salary just because of my break period." –

Participant with 2 years career break – A Senior Marketing Research Professional.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WOMEN ON A CAREER BREAK



Build Yourself For The Future –

"The future depends on what you do today."

Skill sets are a major determinant in deciding the suitability of a candidate for a particular role and the salary being offered to them. A career break induces a gap in the skills that affect the candidate's salary expectations.

Build Your Professional Worth

Upgrade your skills. You can opt for online courses in your chosen field. Associate with various volunteering assignments. It will help you gain your confidence, learn a new skill, develop your network, and most of all, you will make a difference in the community. This will build up your overall confidence, positively impacting all other factors, be it career opportunity or salary expectation.

Highlight Your Potential

Highlight how your skills and experience can add value to the offered role and how you will be an invaluable human capital for the organization.

Be Clear About Your Priorities

Being clear about your priorities helps you to position yourself better in terms of role and pay requirements. If you are okay with giving up on some cash, it can help you negotiate some flexibility in terms of remote working or flexible working hours, etc.



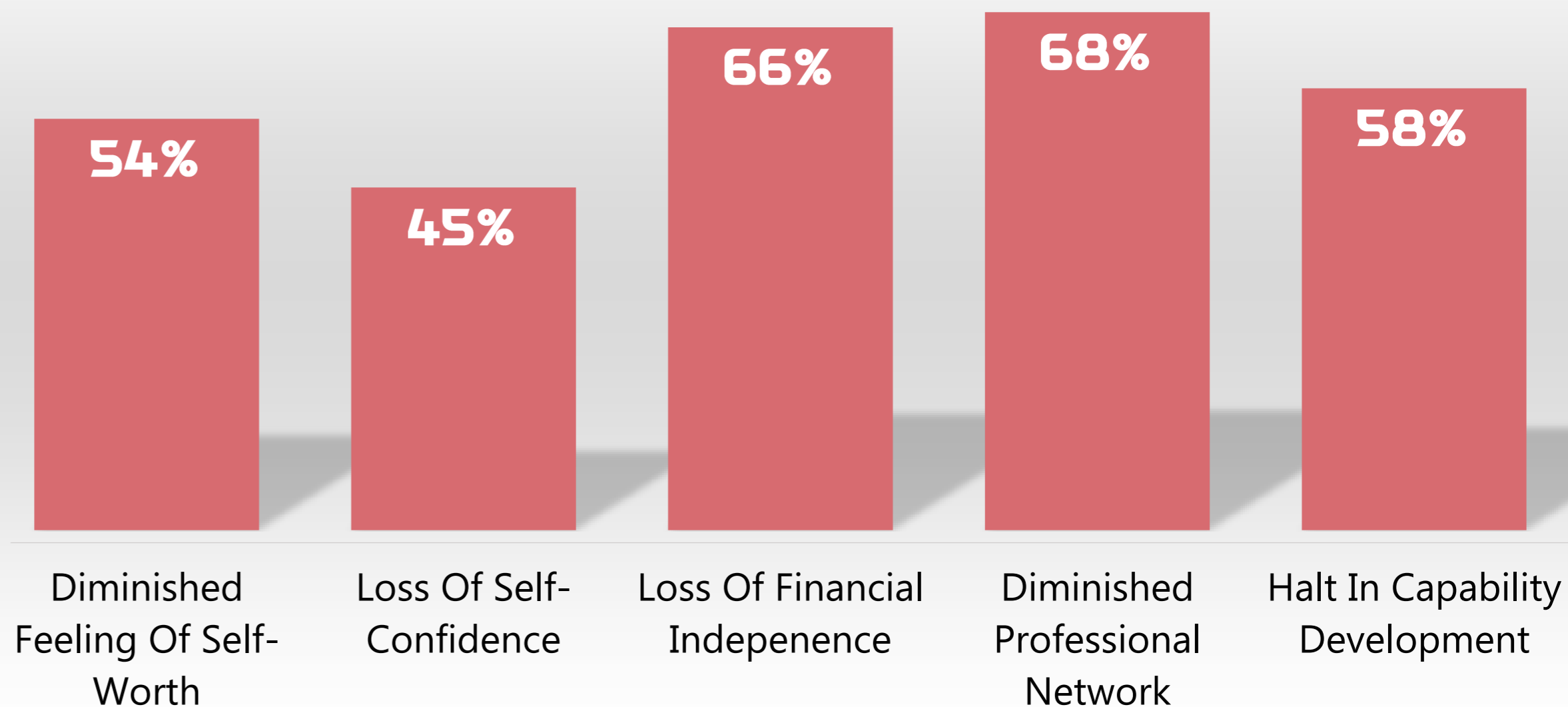
IT'S JUST NOT
ALL ABOUT
MY JOB,
IT'S ABOUT
MY CAREER!

CAREER BREAK ADVERSE IMPACT

"I am not confident to return to the workforce. Technology is progressing at a very fast pace, and it is hard for me to match myself with the current requirements." - Participant with 8+ years of career break, Quality Control Professional



43% OF WOMEN PARTICIPANTS OUT OF 1325 REGRET THEIR CAREER BREAK DECISION



Women Respondents expressed the adverse impact of the career break on their Self-Worth , Self-Confidence, Financial Independence, Professional Network and their Capability Development

CAREER BREAK ADVERSE IMPACT ON MY SELF-WORTHINESS

54% In our survey research, 54% of the women participants have reported that their career break has adversely impacted their **SELF-WORTHINESS**

DIMINISHED FEELING OF SELF-WORTH(how they feel about themselves and how others view them)

Women value their careers and validate their worth based on their ability to perform.

They exert all their creativity and potential in advancing their careers and view it as a measure of their capabilities. A sudden change of reality leaves them with no platform to express themselves; so, they begin to question their worth and start developing notions that they are incapable and are inefficient. A lack of income creates a feeling of dependency, leading to self-doubt and assumptions of being inept and lacking talent.

The fire in them always persists against challenges that, when suppressed, takes the form of negative thoughts, disturbing their mental peace and sanity.

“Self-doubt hinders decision making and life fulfillment, takes away control over feelings, and long-term leads to self-esteem issues, anxiety, and depression.”

SUGGESTIONS



If your circumstances allow, don't rush into the job searching. Start by analyzing yourself. Take time to evaluate your values, skills, and life stage/responsibilities because it can pay dividends.

Remind yourself of why you decided on a career break. Pat yourself for handling the responsibilities to the best of your abilities

Seek professional support through cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness practices and a psychodynamic approach, you can help yourself break free from your fears and rise to your full potential.

Keep the faith that it's a temporary phase and shall pass.

“Yes, my feelings of my self-worth have been affected to an extent as I am still struggling to find a good job.” - Participant with 7+ Yrs Career Gap, an Accounting Professional



“As Women, We Have To Start Appreciating Our Own Worth And Each Other's Worth.” - Madonna

Self-worth is a self-apprising emotional reaction. It's an innate feeling of confidence in our capabilities and qualities.

We have to connect to our “true self” -the person who we are, our values, passions and dreams.

Self-worth is inner security. Your sense of self worth comes from you alone.

It's your other self that stands up for you when you are dispirited and cheers and motivates you when you are successful.

Isn't it time we began to nurture this relationship?

Know Yourself
Respect Yourself
Accept Yourself
Love Yourself
Care for Yourself

CAREER BREAK ADVERSE IMPACT ON MY SELF-CONFIDENCE

45% In our survey research, 54% of the women participant have reported that their career break has adversely impacted their **SELF-CONFIDENCE**

LOSS OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

A career is not just a professional means of earning a living. It is a projection of our lifestyle, influencing how we view ourselves and how we think others will perceive us. When striving to accomplish our career goals, we pour all our energy, skills, and talent. But when circumstances compel us to give up our aspirations and accept a new role and situation, our confidence is often shattered.

An uncertain future, financial dependency, and the fear of being left behind in our career nag us deep within, leading to negative emotions and a lack of self-belief.

“Returning to the workforce overwhelms me. I have lost all confidence because I know how technology has changed over the past few years, and I am not sure if I can ever gear up.” - Participant 7+ years career break, Coding Professional

SUGGESTIONS



Figure out the underlying reason affecting your confidence. It could be due to a gap in skill set, loss of the professional network, confusion about what you actually want to do, or uncertainty about the future.

Once the problem is identified, develop an action plan to address it and don't hesitate to ask for help.

Re-launching your career can be frustrating and mentally taxing. But we can overcome these obstacles by acclimatizing ourselves to the changing trends and focusing on upgrading our skills rather than giving in to negative emotions and self-doubt.

Allow yourself the mental headspace and work on your problem areas regularly. This will lead to an exponential improvement in your confidence level.

Pausing one's career is a critical decision, and it can have severe ramifications on the career. Remind yourself that you have been brave to consider going on a career break, you are brave enough to restart your career, and nothing will deter you.



Passivity leads to Doubt and Fear. The only way to conquer self-doubts and fear is by actively tackling the issues head-on.

It's a fact that doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will.

A few months or years of career break should not break you. Don't let these gaps create a sense of Doubt and fear in your mind. You have successfully shouldered multiple responsibilities at a time.

What you need to do is appreciate your existence, appreciate yourself and be proud of yourself.

Keep in touch with your Network. Speak your mind. Develop your skills. Declutter and let go of things that don't matter, to have inner peace.

Self-Belief, Perseverance, Resilience and Persistence will be the key to bounce back.

CAREER BREAK ADVERSE IMPACT ON MY FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

66% In our survey research, a high majority - 66% of the women participants have reported that their career break has adversely impacted their **FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE**

LOSS OF FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

A financially independent woman is empowered, capable of providing for herself, and supporting her family. A woman who derives a sense of confidence from being financially independent may not be in the same circumstance always.

Life being capricious can forge blocks that may necessitate taking a voluntary or involuntary career break, which can be a roadblock in her financial independence. This can leave her financially vulnerable and demoralized.

“As we are emotionally linked to the office culture, after working for so many years I miss that part of my life. Also, I definitely missed my financial independence and have to think a lot before spending. Now as my mother is in good health, I want to again get back to the job. But it has become very difficult to get a job now, which is frustrating and disappointing.” -Participant with 2+ years career break, a Senior Logistics Professional

SUGGESTIONS



If you are contemplating a career break, you need to plan your finances well in advance.

Save while you work - Judiciously planning and saving wisely during your working period ensures minimizing/avoidance of a financial crisis while you are on a career break.

Contingency fund - Set aside money to cover unexpected expenses, it will help you avoid the debt trap and unnecessary stress.

Paying off Loans - Try paying off your loan/liabilities before you consider a career break.

Freelancing - Explore some freelancing or work from home projects, which can generate some income for you during your career break.



“Financial independence is key to women empowerment” - Prerana Langa

Financial Independence provides women the benefits of decision making, since they can choose to live by their terms, make mistakes and learn from them

Financial independence is KEY to a WOMEN'S lifestyle where they can choose to concentrate on things they want to do in their lives.

Financially independent women create an Evolved and Equitable Society.

Financial independence gives women the power to choose a lifestyle of having your heart and mind free from worry about the what-ifs of life.

The last thing women would ever want is financial worry to overshadow their lives.

CAREER BREAK ADVERSE IMPACT ON MY PROFESSIONAL NETWORK



68% Agreed that their **PROFESSIONAL NETWORK DIMINISHED**
In our survey research, a high majority - 68% of the women participants have reported that their career break has adversely impacted their **PROFESSIONAL NETWORK**

DIMINISHED PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

This mainly happens because women get so tied to their responsibilities that they fail to network with their previous colleagues or peers from the industry, hampering their professional network.

Women are ambitious, too, like their male counterparts, and with immense courage and potential, they forge ahead to chase their dream careers. Unfortunately, several challenges hinder their path towards a successful career, of which most are born out of social misgivings.

Once they get involved in their priorities and are committed to them, they begin to lose touch with their friends and colleagues, gradually disconnecting from the strong network they may have built. Not being in the loop anymore, not trying to keep themselves aware of the upcoming technologies, ideas, action plans, the changing dynamics of the business world, and the latest corporate trends are some of the greatest hindrances when they wish to return to the workforce again.

"Being a working woman is like having a double-edged sword hanging over your head. If I work hard and dedicate my time to a challenging career then I can't focus on my household responsibilities, and if I focus on my familial commitments, I lose my edge over my work proficiency," - Priya, who is currently on a career break.

SUGGESTIONS



- Don't Go Wide, Go Deep – Nurture Your Network! Must practice a **ME TIME** routine.
- Despite your personal commitments you need to squeeze some time to connect and bond with your ex-colleagues and peers from the industry.
- This will help you remain updated and also this network can serve as a reference source when you are scouting for opportunities to restart your career.

Networking is not collecting contacts; it is more about planting long-term relationships.

Building a network requires an investment of time, effort and sincerity.

THE TIME TO BUILD A NETWORK IS ALWAYS BEFORE YOU NEED ONE

Networking is Marketing Yourself.
After you've established contact, work at it, and follow up!

CAREER BREAK ADVERSE IMPACT ON MY CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

58% Agreed that their **CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT** has come to a **HALT**
In our survey research, a high majority - 58% of the women participants have reported that their career break has adversely impacted their **CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT**

HALF IN CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

A career is a process of learning through experiences and growing in life. When a woman pursues a career in any organization, her main aim is to learn and grow in her field and profession. Women are known for having a competitive streak, and a career break is a period of extended pause where there is no scope of growth or learning new skills. It is a period that stagnates their growth, and upon returning to work, they are subjected to critics based on corporate standards, and having a skill gap becomes a setback in their career.

“Working for years in the corporate sector, I got used to that lifestyle. When I left my job and tried to mould myself into a new role, it was quite tough at the beginning. Adjusting to the new responsibilities, being confined within the four corners of my house, and most importantly losing track of the industry trends made me feel lost and frustrated.” - A Senior Logistics Professional with 2+ Years Career Break

SUGGESTIONS



Build Yourself For The Future – “The future depends on what you do today.”

It is imperative to build your skills to adapt to the demands of your profession. Be it soft skills or technical skills, one must utilize one's break to re-skill and up-skill judiciously.

Continue to work on short term project works as freelancers, consultants, associate yourself with NGO - the cause which resonates well with you, as it will keep you in touch with the networks, while you give back to the community, you also pave the way for your learnings about new skills during this course of time and develop new networks.

Up-skilling will add incremental value to your candidature. This will help you stay relevant to the role requirements, which will give you a better chance of restarting your career.

One of the easiest ways is to pursue online and certification courses related to your field.



START FROM WHERE YOU LEFT,
DO NOT AVOID THE DIFFICULT
PART

Agree to invest in yourself!
Don't stop learning!

Build Yourself For The Future – “The future depends on what you do today.”

Stay CONNECTED with your professional friends and ex-colleagues to keep the relationships alive.

Stay abreast of industry developments and news related to your sector.

Your skill and knowledge will be extensively tested when you eventually get to an interview.

A CAREER BREAK CAN SEEM DAUNTING

The percentage of women employed in the corporate sector has considerably gone up over the last few decades. However, it is seen that for a vast majority of these women, a career break is imminent.

The women of this era are a testament against all the prejudices of old traditional citations and make-beliefs that they are inefficient leaders. Today, they have careers and have found a thoroughfare between personal and professional lives.

Nevertheless, they meet circumstances where they have to put a pause on their ambitions and attend to other commitments like matrimony, motherhood needs and challenges, relocation, career stagnation, elderly care, lack of family support, and many other situational disadvantages leading to a 360-degree shift in their lives resulting in anxiety, mental and emotional stress, financial depression, and other mental issues.

Taking a break is a tough decision, yet we often see women going for it. When a woman has to sacrifice her career, she experiences a surge of emotions. The act of letting go, the ordeal of adjusting, and the need to compromise create turmoil and confusion. When forced to sacrifice her career, a woman passionate about her career does so by calculating the risk involved, evaluating who she is doing it for, and understanding its long-term and short-term effects.

Women strive hard to accomplish their career goals and dedicate themselves completely to accomplish their aspirations, giving in their best, but when the focus has to be shifted to other obligations, they are often disillusioned with an uncertain future ahead. Awaiting a turn of the tide, they gradually delve into self-blame and subconsciously move towards despair, guilt, and regret.

Women can overcome these adverse effects over time with the right coping practices, pivoting their thoughts in the right direction to become a better version of themselves and rightly using the break to up-skill themselves.



REMEMBER

OUT OF SIGHT IS OUT OF MIND

**IT'S OK TO BE OUT OF JOB,
BUT DON'T BE OUT OF MARKET.**

It requires a conscious effort and practice to be active in the job market, it may be hard but it is worth it.

Keep learning – latest trends in industries and business. Keep farming your network.
Work on enhancing your skills

Building healthy self-esteem is possible. But for that to happen, you need to look inwards and inculcate a greater sense of self-awareness.

A sense of self-awareness will help you develop a positive attitude that will reinforce your courage to build self-esteem and experience a greater confidence level.

EMOTIONAL & MENTAL WELL-BEING DURING A CAREER BREAK

Ettner (1996) establishes highly significant causal links between income, general health and mental health and wellbeing.

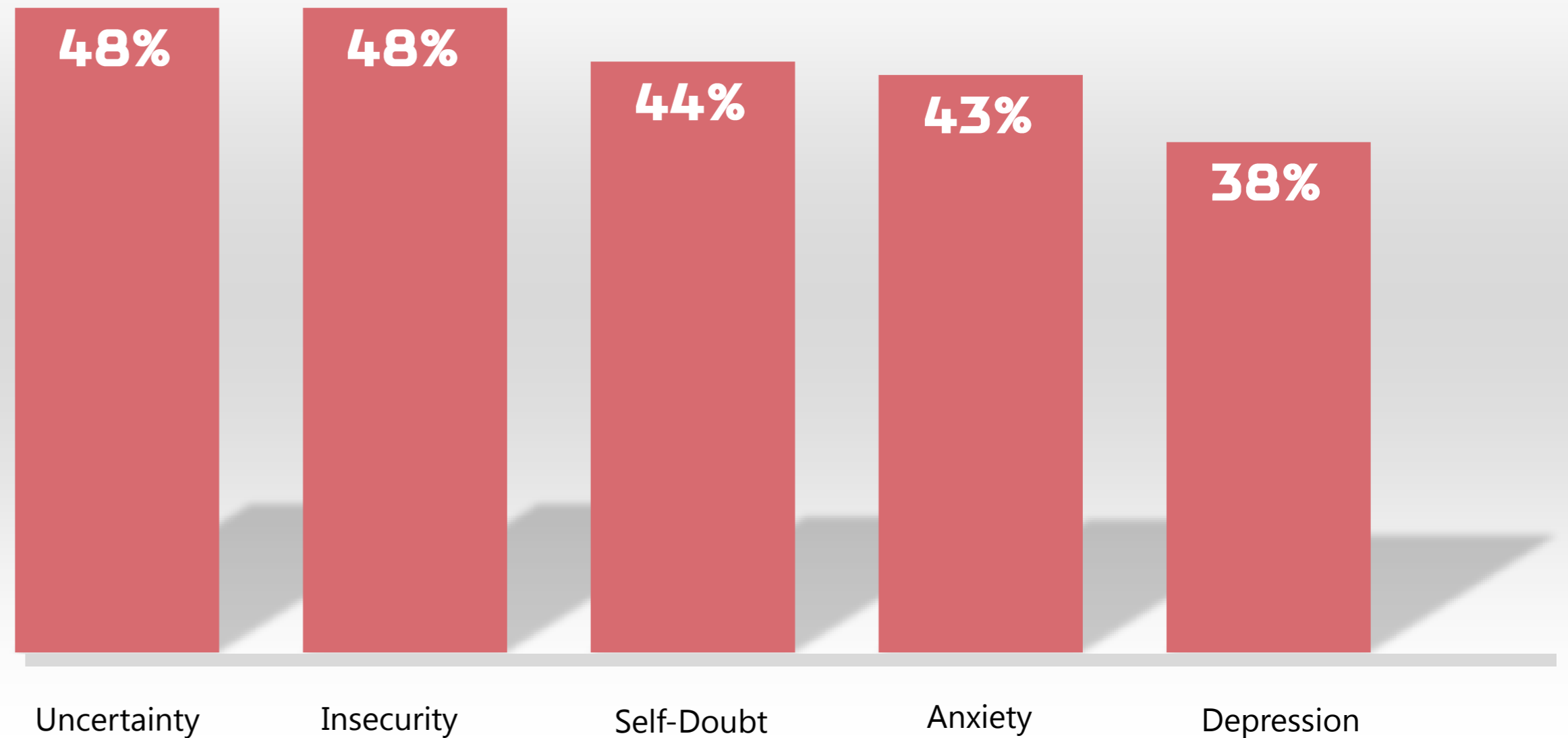
"I was always unconsciously thinking about resuming my career, doubting myself and my ability to do so. I lacked focus and slowly lost myself over it. A career transition is an emotional point where women must endure a complete shift, and most find themselves unprepared to deal with it." - Anita Roy, a mother who has been on a career break for eight years. She was an IT test engineer who took a break to support her growing children.



MY EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING DURING A CAREER BREAK

MCQ

Women Respondents Responded On Their Emotional and Mental Well-Being During Their Career Break



48% of women participants shared that they have developed a feeling of Uncertainty.

48% of women participants shared that they have developed a feeling of Insecurity.

44% of women participants shared that they have developed Self-Doubt by questioning their capabilities to re-start their careers.

43% of women participants shared that they are suffering from Anxiety.

38% of women participants shared that they are suffering from Depression.

It's a well-established fact that unemployment has an adverse effect on mental health and wellbeing.

Obsessively thinking about something can disarm a person's emotional and mental wellbeing.

CAREER BREAK ADVERSE IMPACT ON MY EMOTIONAL & MENTAL WELL-BEING

48%

FEELING OF UNCERTAINTY

of the women respondents in our survey have expressed that they have developed a feeling of **UNCERTAINTY**.

Uncertainty is the only certainty in life as there is no definite way to predict the future and what it holds, but these women facing a shift of reality always feel uncertain, and many lose calm over it.

It is just the tip of the iceberg, which slowly pushes them into a state of restlessness.

48%

FEELING OF INSECURITY

of the women respondents in our survey have expressed that they have developed a feeling of **INSECURITY**

Women on career breaks often feel anxious and uncertain about themselves, away from the nine-to-five grind and the lack of opportunity to evolve. They feel threatened by the shifting dynamics and having to compromise with their ambitions. They begin to develop inhibitions and grow self-conscious. Most women, even after the break, still find it challenging to recover from these notions and fixate themselves with reservations about their capabilities. These thoughts reduce their productivity and confidence to face the new challenges at their workplace, leading people to assume they are inefficient, equating their vulnerable persona to ineptness

44%

DEVELOPED SELF-DOUBT

of the women respondents in our survey have expressed that they have developed a feeling of **SELF-DOUBT**.

Women who take a career break face a sudden shift of reality. They take time to accept their new reality while the changes bring along fears, worries, and insecurities, which seem to manifest. Unfortunately, when they get over such anxieties and re-start their careers, they often tend to develop a new set of doubts again, thus continuing the vicious cycle, and finally, self-sabotaging their sanity.

“Anxiety and stress derive from fear and self-doubt” -- Debasish Mridha

43%

FEELING OF ANXIETY

of the women respondents in our survey have expressed that they have developed **ANXIETY**. A career break is a difficult decision to make, and women become extremely worried about their future when they decide to take a break.

Constant pressure and anxiousness about an uncertain future shroud their thoughts. Self-doubt begins to predominate their feelings. They tend to grow restless, worrying whether they will land a new job, their profile will draw the recruiter's attention, will they be able to manage the work pressure along with family commitments, are they capable of working in a competitive environment, will they get paid equally as other candidates with no career breaks, will they be considered for growth, and more. Such thoughts very often aggravate their anxiety, which can lead to depression.

38%

FEELING OF DEPRESSION

of the women respondents in our survey have expressed that they are feeling **DEPRESSED** because of the prolonged career break.

A career break can lead to continuous stress about the future and the uncertainties ahead. It can quickly transform into obsessive tendencies and self-doubt, which contradict the very reason for a break.

INVEST IN EMOTIONAL & MENTAL WELL-BEING DURING CAREER BREAK

An everlasting state of mental and emotional digression is strong enough to transform into obsessive tendencies and depression.

Now the question that arises is, what can women do to take care of their mental health during a career break so that their fears don't manifest into a disruption of emotional wellbeing?

THERE ARE MULTIPLE WAYS TO TACKLE THIS **JUST** DON'T GET COCOONED

1. For starters, know that it is completely okay to feel low or anxious sometimes. You don't have to deny your feelings. Remember, there is no better way to truly understand yourself and your feelings than by writing them down. This makes you feel heard and allows you to revisit your problems from a reader's point of view as well.

4. Make an inventory of every small thing you have done. Chances are you haven't even acknowledged the micro decisions you have made that have a positive impact on you and others and that you are not less than anyone.

2. As for anxiety, practicing mindfulness and seeking therapy are two major ways to better your mental health and reduce anxiety. Acknowledge your anxiety before it manifests into something larger. While you practice mindfulness, calmly sit down and think ahead of what you want from the future and how you will work towards it.

5. Practice Giving Back - Today, many organizations require individuals who can dedicate their time towards volunteering for social causes, which can keep the mind focused and help learn new skills.

3. If you feel doubtful about yourself and feel like you know less than others, there's no harm in that!

All of us have flaws and shortcomings, and we should gracefully embrace them and strive to enrich our knowledge at every chance we get

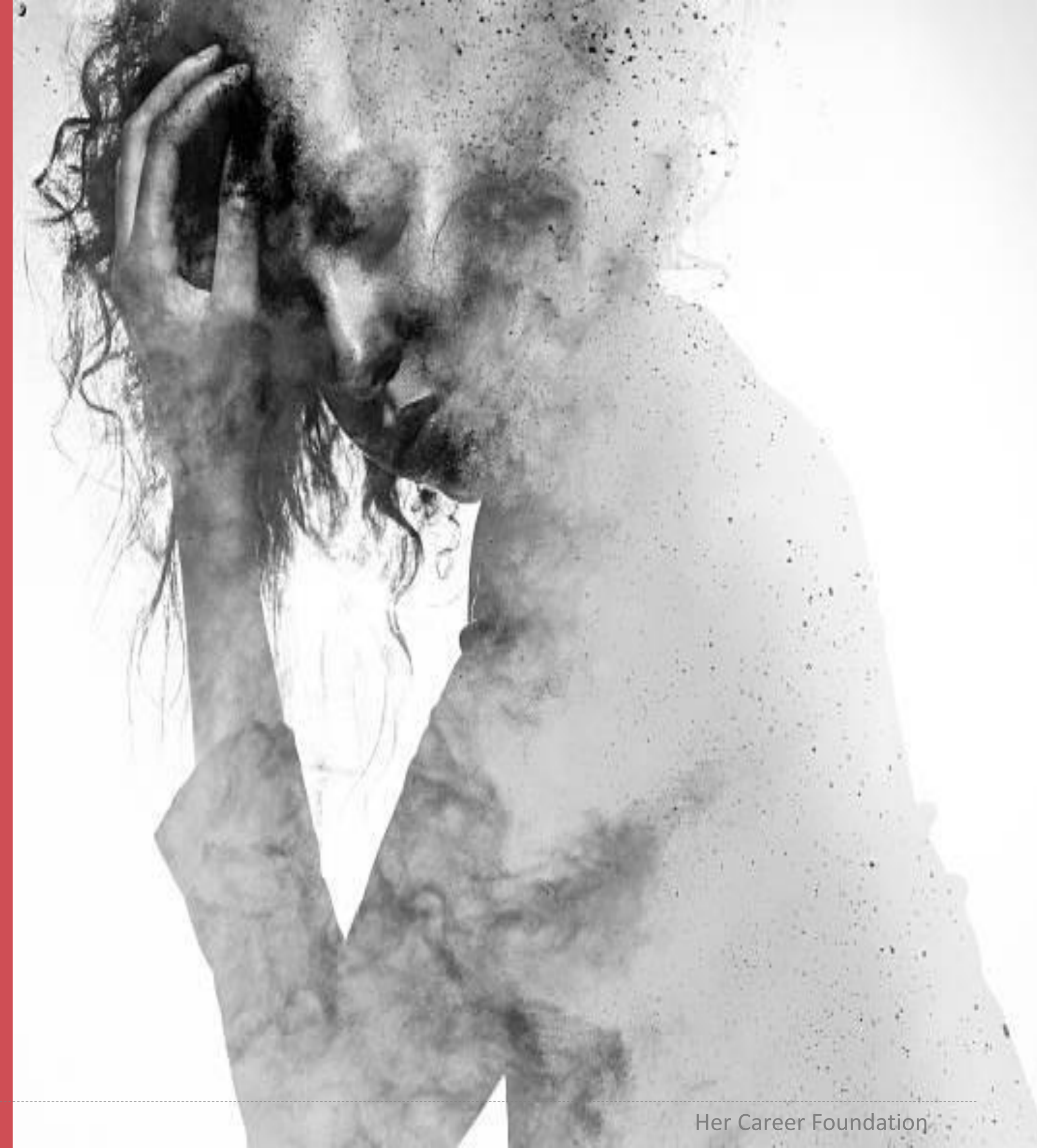
6. Open up and seek help from family members, friends, or a professional if need be. There will be moments when you feel you are not doing things right, but giving in to these feelings constantly can take a major toll on your mental health.



Self-discipline is key in the path to wellbeing. Thinking out loud with counselling and self-reassurance can help overcome depression.

Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do - John Wooden

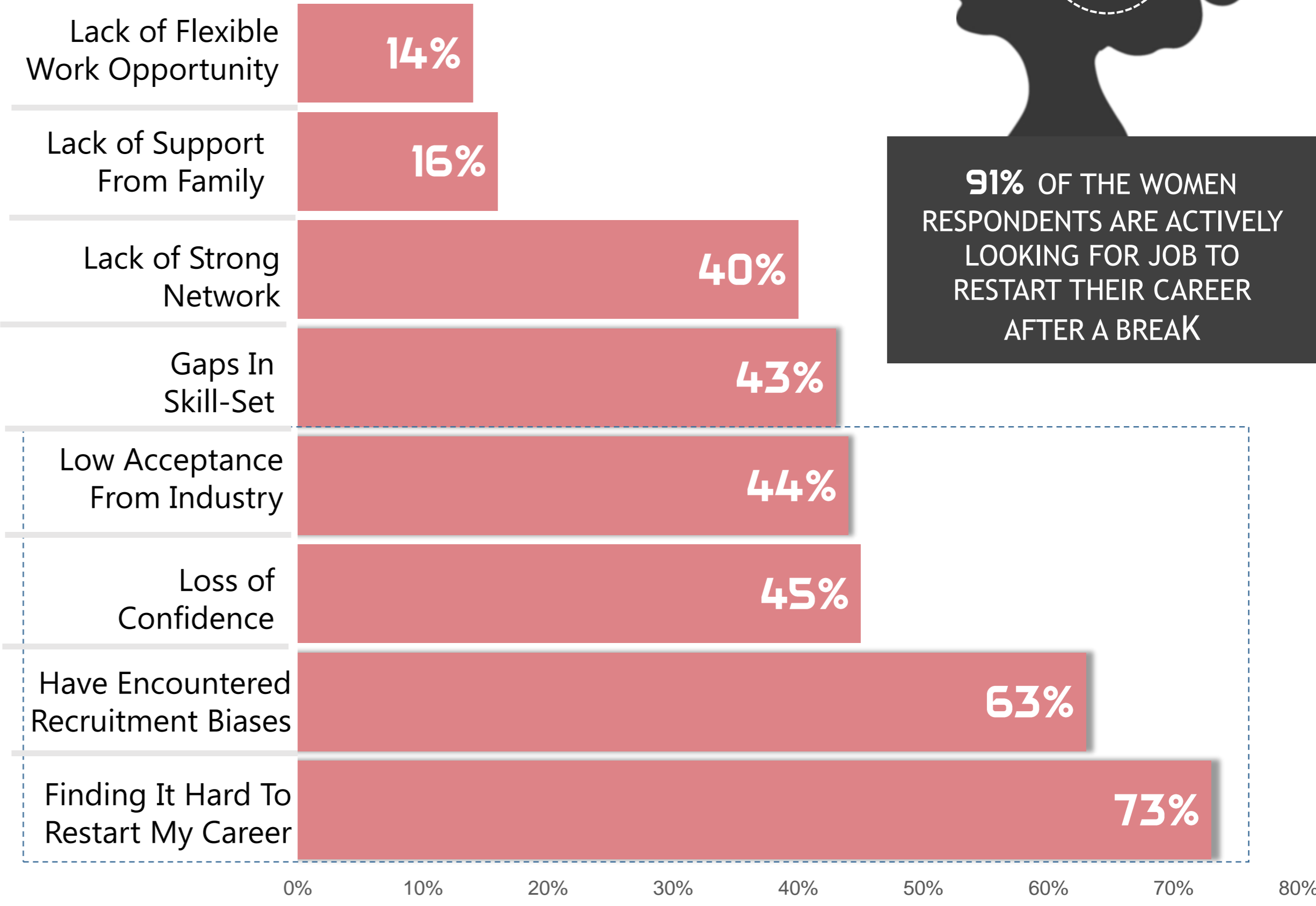
*“I wanted to get back to work once my child started going to school. I was looking for flexible working hours but could find no such job. At the same time, even when I was ready to compromise on the work timings, the package companies offered was too meagre for me to work for. It was almost three to four times less than what I was earning earlier.” - Participant with 5 years of career break
- A Senior HR Professional*



MY CAREER RESTART CHALLENGES THE TRAILS AND TRIBUNALS



91% OF THE WOMEN RESPONDENTS ARE ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR JOB TO RESTART THEIR CAREER AFTER A BREAK



Career Restart Challenges After A Break

MY CAREER RESTART CHALLENGES THE TRAILS AND TRIBUNALS

73% THE WOMEN RESPONDENTS HAVE SAID THAT THEY ARE FINDING IT HARD TO RESTART CAREER AFTER A BREAK

- According to our survey, 73% of the respondents find it hard to restart their careers after a break.
- Transitioning from one phase to another is quite often a big challenge. After a break, women returning to work have to face many obstacles and have to overcome them to have a successful transition into their work life.
- “Return to Work Syndrome” is a denouement of the guilt, fear, societal pressure, and disquietude that women go through when returning to work after a break. More than not getting an opportunity, they have doubts about their own choice to return to work.
- On exploring further, we found that recruitment biases and low acceptance from industries are the major barriers these women face when looking for opportunities to restart their careers.

*“I was offered positions for which I was overqualified and was offered a salary much less than what I was earning earlier and that of my counterparts.
8 years experienced **Participant with 6+ years career break, Human Resource Professional***

63% THE RESPONDENTS HAVE SAID THAT THEY HAVE FACED RECRUITMENT BIASES DUE TO A CAREER BREAK

- The tendency to judge and make assumptions based on previous experiences in an organizational setup disrupts the employees' productive efficiency.
- When hiring managers decide to hire an employee based on presumptuous beliefs or unconsciously grow biased towards a potential candidate, the organization cannot have a healthy work culture.
- After a career break, women looking for opportunities experience implicit biases when recruiting managers focus on the gap in their resume, age, or family background and assume that they cannot commit to or deal with work under pressure.
- Women with a career break are considered less than other candidates and are assumed to be able to perform only facile jobs. Their skills, experience, and credentials are underrated while screening and during interviews.
- In fact, personal questions are directly hurled at them with a set of prejudicial notions.

*“I tried my best. during interviews, I was being judged for my career break rather than the skill sets and the experience I had. Very superfluous reasons were provided to reject my candidature.”
- **Participant from Mumbai with 6+ Years career gap, Customer Relations Professional.***

45% OF THE WOMEN RESPONDENTS HAVE SAID THAT THEY HAVE LOST THEIR SELF CONFIDENCE DUE TO A CARER BREAK

- Many women go on a career break with a determination to join back at the earliest. But very often, they are bound by overwhelming situations in life, and before they realize, they fall off the grid.
- It can be a daunting situation for many women. Along with the personal responsibilities arises their fear of the changing market dynamics that are likely to render their skills outdated. Eventually, these women lose their confidence and delve deeper into self-pity and anxiety.

*“For me restarting my career was important not just because I needed financial independence but also because it gave me a sense of self-worth. But unfortunately every interviewer seemed skeptical to hire me because looking at my career break they believed I was not stable in my career and may rush to a sabbatical again.” **Participant - with 5+ years career break, A Senior Administration Professional***

MY CAREER RESTART CHALLENGES THE TRAILS AND TRIBUNALS

44%

THE RESPONDENTS HAVE SAID THAT THERE IS A LOW ACCEPTANCE RATE OF WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY WHO HAVE A CAREER GAP

Organizations Under-Value Their Credentials.

They have to deal with biased opinions and stigmatized behaviours and beliefs. After a career break, a woman is assumed to be an unstable force and deemed unfit for employment as she has been out of work for some time and her skills are obsolete.

She is considered for less demanding opportunities, completely negating her overall professional work experience. The patriarchal mindset is inflexible to accommodate a woman's demanding life.

All these factors weigh heavily on women trying to make a comeback into the main workforce affecting their self-confidence.

43%

OF THE WOMEN RESPONDENTS HAVE SAID THAT THEY HAVE GAP IN SKILL-SET

A gap in skill sets is hindering their chances to re-start after a career break. A considerable gap in anyone's career renders their skills outdated. It generally happens because of the dynamic business environment, which mandates the usage of evolved skills and technologies. This gap in skills creates challenges in terms of staying relevant in the job market. Planning to re-join means adjusting to a newer and more evolved marketplace and skill requirements.

*"Even though I am considered a senior professional, I have had a hard time landing interviews with companies. A recruiter once asked me if I could handle the work since I had been 'out of the workforce.' These questions are demotivating. All you can do is nod your head at such comments." – 8 years experienced **Participant with 3+ years career Break, an IT Professional***

40%

OF THE WOMEN RESPONDENTS HAVE SAID THAT THEY FACE LACK OF A STRONG NETWORK

Lack of a strong network is a major challenge they are facing in restarting their careers, exploring job opportunities after a considerable career gap becomes an uphill battle.

Lack of connection with other professionals and not being in a situation to network is a significant barrier for many women to explore career opportunities. It limits their chances of getting job prospects, leading to frustration and a feeling of powerlessness.

16%

OF THE WOMEN RESPONDENTS HAVE SAID THAT THEY FACE LACK OF SUPPORT FROM FAMILY

Most often, women more than men are the ones who adjust their schedules and make compromises when the needs of children and other family members collide with work.

When these women decide to make a comeback to the workforce, they face many hurdles. One of the most significant barriers is the lack of support from their family members impacting their career restarting plans. It all starts at home with an equal partnership, respecting women's career aspirations and her passion for working.

14%

OF THE WOMEN RESPONDENTS HAVE SAID THAT THEY FACE LACK OF FLEXIBLE WORK OPPORTUNITY

Lack of flexible work opportunities poses a challenge for them to re-start their careers. They are not confident about being able to balance their commitments with a rigid work environment.

*"Yes, I have faced biases from hiring managers' multiple times. They are skeptical about my seriousness to pursue a career. They tend to get judgmental. Their remarks are really demotivating. They ask on what basis will they consider my candidature and often add that I can leave their company anytime as my son is 2 years old." - 5 years experienced **Participant with 2+yrs Career Break, Banking Professional.***

CAREER RESTART CHALLENGES

Many women take a career break from their professional careers, presuming it to be a better choice between balancing work and household responsibilities. They think it's a short break they are taking, but joining the workforce becomes a challenge once they are away from work.

Today, women are passionate, ambitious, career-oriented, want to be financially independent, but because of social barriers and obligations, they often take a back step in their career.

They have to deal with their demons, and when they plan to restart, they get bogged down by a set of challenges posed by their families and the treatment meted out to them by the organizations, creating another journey marked with struggles for them.

We say women are free to choose their careers, but how many are?

Very few women are partly free in some spheres. Usually, women take a career break because of certain unavoidable reasons like marriage, maternity, childcare, family, lack of support.

There is a presumption that married women should invest their time taking care of their family and focus on household chores.

Further, if their husbands are earning well, then there seems no reason for women to work.

Our society's prejudiced mindset acts as a barrier and is weighed as more important than a woman's dream to become financially independent.

*"At a personal level, the fight was on many fronts. I was on a career break. I had 2 small kids. Worst of all I had to undergo a divorce from my husband during the same phase, which was devastating for me. It was difficult focusing on job opportunities and taking care of my babies. Though I appeared for many interviews, I was rejected without providing any feedback." - **Participant with 5+ years career gap, Logistics Professional.***



ELIMINATE CAREER RESTART CHALLENGES

POSSIBLE WAYS TO ELIMINATE BIASES AGAINST RETURNING WOMEN AFTER A CAREER BREAK

Biased practices are difficult to eliminate, yet it is imperative to segregate, to institute with.

The agenda of supporting women with a career break has to be a part of a company's policy. It has to be a top-down approach to instill credibility and accountability into the process.

Hiring managers need to be sensitized to issues concerning women with a career break. Companies should train hiring managers to focus on their overall professional experience and not side-line their credentials because of her career break.

Eliminating information that highlights a candidate's details that may create a negative impression in the recruiter's minds. This can create a fairground for all the candidates.

BLIND HIRING CAN BE PRACTICED AT ALL STAGES OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION.

Re-engineering Job Descriptions is an important way of eliminating biases against women returning to the workforce after a career break. This can be achieved by making the Job Descriptions Gender Neutral.

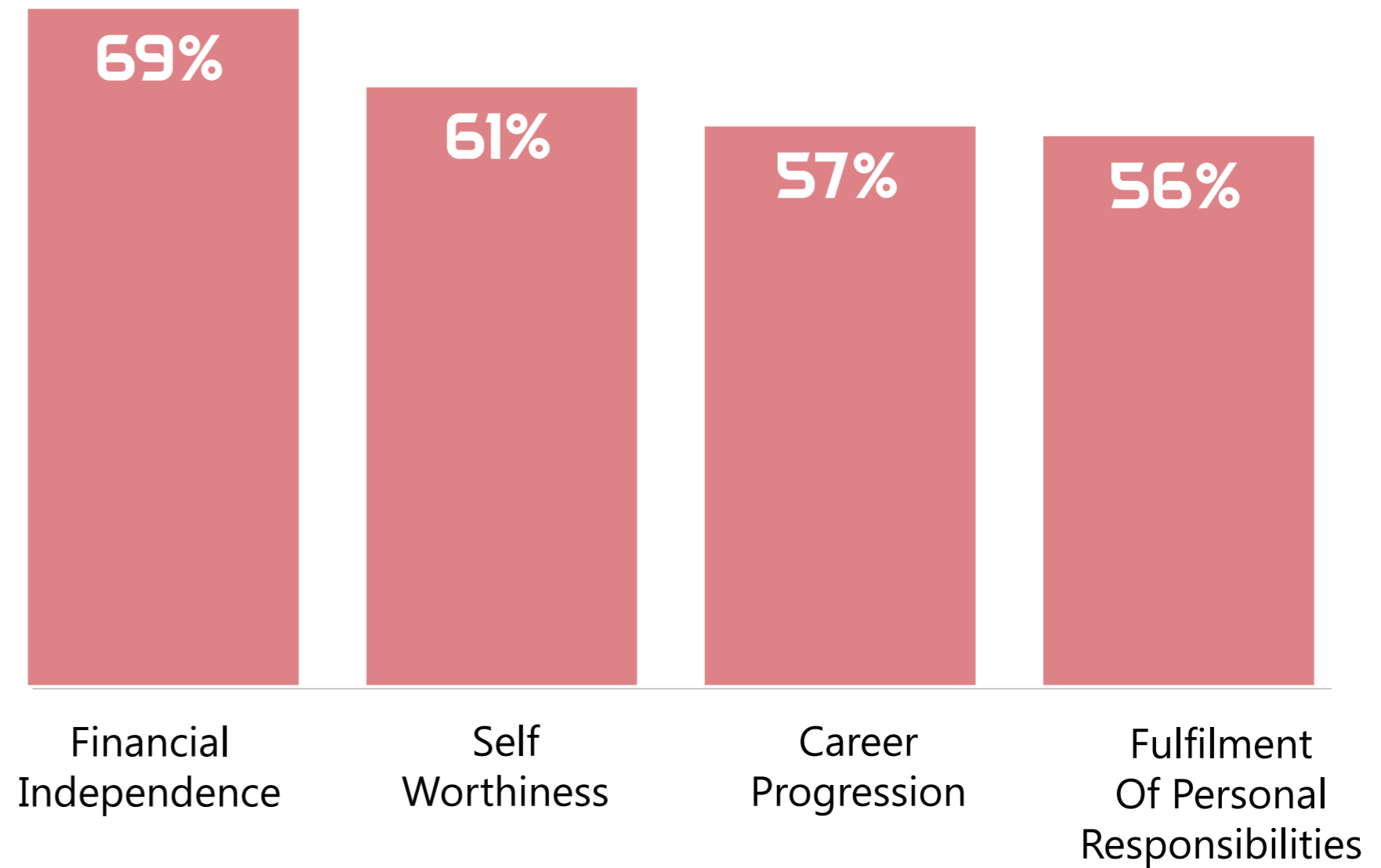
Pre-assessment tests and behavioral tests can be conducted to assess the candidates.

AI-based software can be efficiently used to nullify any superfluous contact between the candidate and the recruiter during the interview.

Lastly, managers can be taught the art of empathy and appreciating the value of connecting with a CANDIDATE rather than a PAPER



MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR ME TO RESTART MY CAREER AFTER A BREAK



"For me restarting my career was important not just because I needed financial independence but also because it gave me a sense of self-worth. But unfortunately every interviewer seemed skeptical to hire me because looking at my career break they believed I was not stable in my career and may rush to a sabbatical again."

6 years experience participant - with 3+ years career break, A Senior Administration Professional

MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR ME TO RESTART MY CAREER AFTER A BREAK

69%

FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

69% of the women respondents have put Financial Independence as the most crucial factor influencing their decision to restart their careers.

For a woman, the mere idea of financial independence falls short when it comes to uplifting the family's living standards and adding value to the household or the children's better upbringing.

Financial freedom can be considered as one of the primary motivating factors, but a woman desires it with the idea of enriching her family and bettering her children's life through her financial contribution.

61%

SELF WORTHINESS

Working women strongly identify themselves with their professional selves. 61% of the women respondents have rated Self Worthiness as one of the most important motivators for re-starting their careers.

Day-to-day professional rituals and the act of adding value to the workplace and personal life enhance a woman's self-worth.

A desire to boost her self-worth is the highest motivating factor for a woman to resume her career.

57%

CAREER PROGRESSION

Career breaks often lead to loss of status or seniority. Once the reasons for career breaks are taken care of, women have a burning desire to catapult their stagnant careers towards progression.

People often do not accept that women can resume their careers after a break with opportunities suitable for their experience and credentials. This is quite demotivating for women as they try to step out of their sabbatical.

But optimistic women deny giving up. Instead, they exert more effort in upskilling and moulding themselves for their new journey. Once these women start working, they demonstrate a high level of commitment and professionalism to move up the corporate ladder. Being sensible and understanding the steps towards personal development is the key here.

56%

FULFILMENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

56% of the respondents said they are planning to re-start their careers as they have fulfilled their personal obligations for which they went on a career break.

At times, the complexities of life force women to go on a career break. It becomes increasingly difficult to manage one's professional life with personal responsibilities that may need immediate attention.

Once these responsibilities are taken care of, women are most often ready to get back on board.

BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL WOMAN IS HERSELF

Women generally take a break with a burning desire to come back on board as soon as possible.

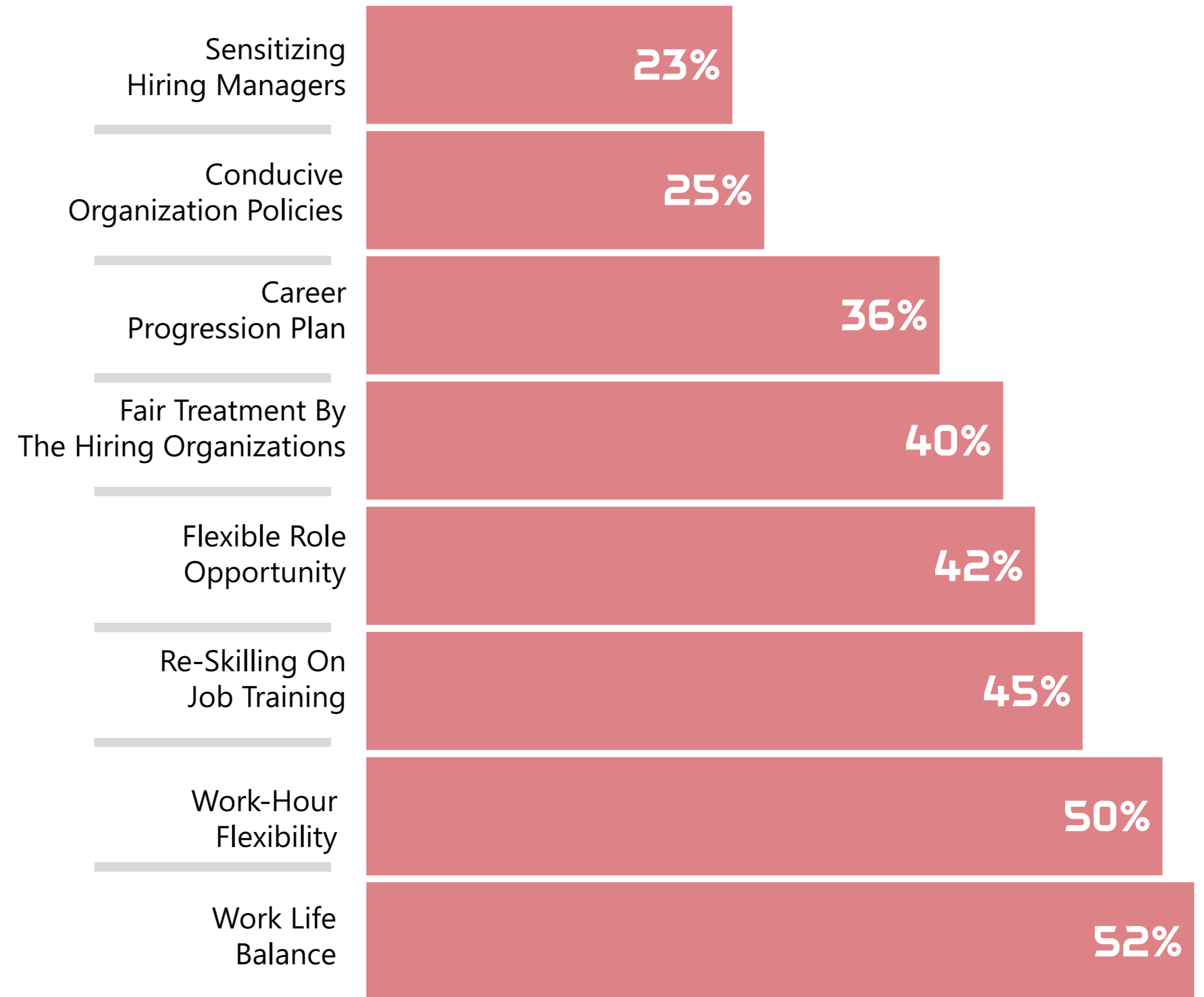
Most women have strong motivators galvanizing their resolve to return to work when the time is appropriate. These vary from financial independence to missing being intellectually challenged, to regaining a sense of work identity, gearing up their stagnant careers, and being a role model to their children. But several factors make their comeback quite challenging. The challenges involve personal as well as industry-related issues.

Surprisingly, despite these hurdles, every passionate woman is ready to fight for a successful come back. For every professional woman, her passion for career progression, the urge for financial independence, and the desire to enhance her self-worth overpower every hurdle on her way to resume her career.

And often we see, **“The potential and caliber of women increases manifold once she emerges from her personal ordeals transforming her into a fierce worker and achiever”.**



ATTRIBUTES THAT MAKES MY RETURNSHIP SUCCESSFULL



A successful return after a career break is contingent upon many factors. Our survey wanted to understand the factors contributing to a successful returnship after a career break.

ATTRIBUTES THAT MAKES MY RETURNSHIP SUCCESSFULL

52% **WORK-LIFE BALANCE**
A supportive workplace motivates every woman to add more value to the organization and walk the extra mile for better results. If organizations shift their focus from the number of hours worked to the gross productivity, it will be a real gesture of support towards maintaining a work-life balance for women.
52% of the respondents feel that support from the organizations to maintain work-life balance is an essential factor for a successful restart after a career break.

50% **WORK HOUR FLEXIBILITY**
Similarly, 50% of the respondents want flexible working hours as it would help them to dispose of their responsibilities at their personal front in a justified manner.

42% **FLEXIBLE ROLE OPPORTUNITY**
of the women respondents said that providing flexible role requirements is necessary to encourage more women to get back to the workforce after a career break. A rigid skill set matrix creates an unnecessary barrier to a women's entry into the workforce after a career break. Hiring managers need to relax the experience or skills required if they are planning to hire women with a career break.

45% **RE -SKILLING ON JOB TRAINING**
of the respondents feel that on the job training is an essential element that can contribute towards women's successful return to the workforce after a career break.
On the job training is conducted to make the employees accustomed to the work culture, responsibilities, and discipline.
This is a smart way to acclimatize women to the trending work culture and organizational norms and gradually draw them back into a professional atmosphere without burdening them. Such practices can enhance women's self-coincidence and motivate them to work on their shortcomings as they grow aware of their strengths and weaknesses during the training.

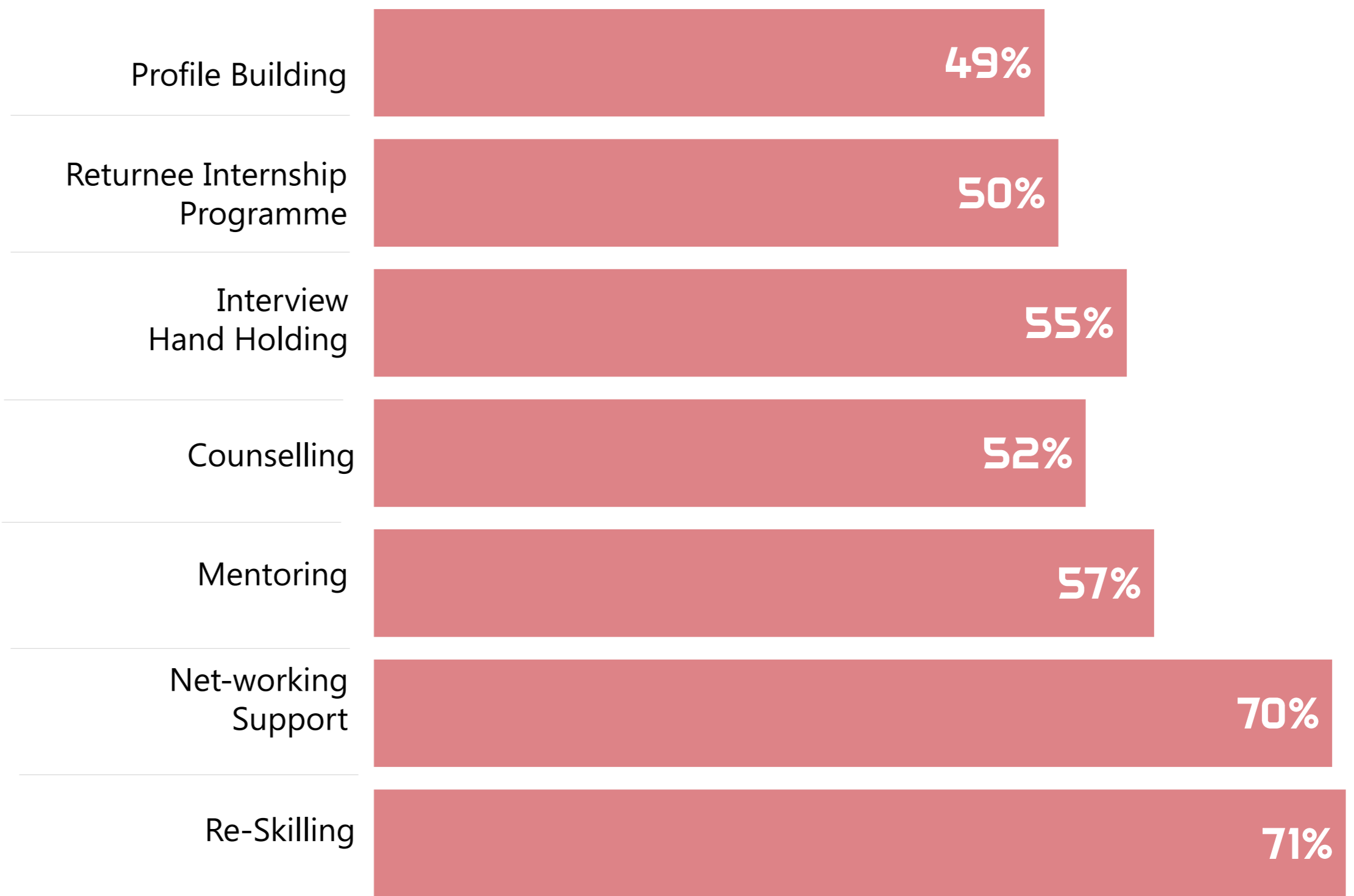
40% **FAIR TREATMENT BY THE ORGANIZATION**
of the respondents said that fair treatment leads to happier, involved and productive employees, who are proud to vouch for your company. Creating a fair and engaging employee experience is essential to engage and retain employees.

36% **CAREER PROGRESSION PLAN**
of the respondents feel that the presence of a proper career progression plan would be an important factor for a successful restart and advancement

25% **CONDUCTIVE ORGANIZATION POLICIES**
Conducive organization policies are like principles or actions proposed by an organization based on the present situation with a vision of better results to ease women's journeys at the workplace and when stepping out of their career break.
25% of the respondents feel organizations should have conducive policies that support women with a career break and provide equal opportunities for their professional development and growth.

23% **SENSITIZING HIRING MANAGERS**
of the respondents feel a strong need to sensitize the hiring managers. Hiring managers need to be trained to display empathy and sensitivity towards women's struggles and challenges that they face during and after a career break to restart their careers.
Let us appreciate the contribution of a woman, going for a career break, towards a social and humanitarian cause, her values as a human being and her zeal to climb up the professional ladder once again.
We need to understand her potential and give her a second chance to establish her career for we never know what she can bring to the table.

SUPPORT I NEED TO RESTART MY CAREER



Women on career break look like they are lost causes, but they are not. A piece of motivation, small support, a little nudge can go a long way in their transitioning from a career break to career re-start.

SUPPORT I NEED TO RESTART MY CAREER

71%

RESKILLING SUPPORT

of the respondents said they need RESKILLING SUPPORT to restart their careers. This set back is caused by the change in their field of work or the new methods and technologies that come into practice. The market is continually booming with the need for people with new skills,

52%

COUNSELLING SUPPORT

of the women respondents said that they need COUNSELLING SUPPORT to address this part of the challenge - getting back after a career break is often full of personal struggles and future insecurities.

Counselling can help women to tide over their personal guilt of neglecting their responsibilities to restart their careers and fears and inhibitions they have developed over the course of their break.

49%

PROFILE-BUILDING SUPPORT

of the women respondents have expressed that they need support on PROFILE BUILDING after a career break to re-start their careers. They need support in profile building as they are not confident in writing their cv, building their LinkedIn profile that would demonstrate how they would add value to a company after a career break. It is always essential to have an effective CV that represents your professional experiences, skill sets. It is important to think about how to sell your career break as a positive. Before applying for any job that you aim to start your new career in, it is always essential to have an effective profile that represents your skillset and what your major objective is. The best objective statements are a few lines long and communicate your expertise, the value you add to a company, and your ideal job. It is always better to make a well-written resume with gaps, than some attempt at creativity in covering up the time.

70%

NETWORKING SUPPORT

of the respondents need NETWORKING SUPPORT, which can help them to new opportunities. A career break leads to a diminished professional network, which hampers the prospect of connecting with colleagues and peers from the industry to stay updated and relevant.

50%

RETURNSHIP PROGRAMME

of the women respondents have expressed the need for RETURNSHIP PROGRAMS to help build up their confidence and skills. Suppose you feel like you are lack in your skillset or the updates on the industry you want to work in, you can always turn to Returnee Internship programs: many companies organize such workshops for few weeks to a couple of months where they theoretically and experimentally teach everything you might have missed during your break.

57%

MENTORING SUPPORT

of the respondents have requested for MENTORING SUPPORT to guide them on professional developments. Mentoring with a seasoned professional can give these women a better idea of their future. It can also help women on a career break to realize their true potential and work towards achieving it, not letting a gap affect their career aspirations.

55%

INTERVIEW HAND-HOLDING

of the women respondents have expressed that they need PRE & POST INTERVIEW HANDHOLDING to successfully navigate the stressful process of a job interview after a career break.

Pre-interview can sabotage performance on the interview day also navigating the post interview process makes them worried. Most women find it hard to explain their career gap.

63% of the respondents said that they have faced **recruitment biases** after a career break. Women are either neglected or are asked to compromise on roles and salary.

Once we cross our barrier of having a supportive resume, interviews are our next hurdle. Interviews can be very sensitive as you have a professional interview after a very long time

You don't make progress by sitting on the fence and making excuses or getting bogged down by the struggle.

You make progress by facing the situation head-on and working through them.



- ❑ All the panel members were of the common observation that there is LOW ACCEPTANCE in Industry for women candidature with a career break.
- ❑ All the panel members agreed that THERE ARE RECRUITMENT BIASES Towards Women With A Career Break.
- ❑ All the panel members agreed that the CAREER BREAK IMPACTS Women's SALARY Expectation.
- ❑ 13 out of the 15 panel members were of the common observation that IT IS CHALLENGING for women TO RESTART their career after a career break.

We Spoke To A Panel of 15 Directors/CEOs of Recruitment Consulting Firms To Get A 360 Degree Understanding On Various Issues Plaguing The Restart Journey Of Women Professionals Who Are On A Career Break.



Mr. Amal Kumar Das
Managing Partner & CEO
GoodPeople Consulting LLP

Do you feel the industry is not receptive towards women on a career break?

Industry by and large think women are not serious about their careers that's why they took the break in the first place!

What should women do to restart their careers after a break?

Prepare yourself for a **CAREER**, not just a job.



Mr. Vinod Bhat
Promoter & Partner
Ken McCoy Consulting

Do you feel the industry is not receptive towards women on a career break?

Yes, I completely do not agree why industry should not accept. After career break women are more strong and matured.

What should women do to restart their careers after a break?

During career break they should update their skills as per the latest trend. Generally, after career breaks, organizations feel that women are more responsible towards their family; however they should convince organizations that they can manage work and home very well. Also they should show enthusiasm towards the career.



YOU ARE THE
ONLY ONE THAT
HAS THE
POWER AND
THE
RESPONSIBILITY
TO PICK
YOURSELF UP,
DESPITE THE
CHALLENGES
AND FAILURES



Mr. Harjeet Singh
CEO at Conscript HR Advisors Pvt. Ltd.

Do you feel the industry is not receptive towards women on a career break?

They often face rejection from the Industry because of their career gap.

What should women do to restart their careers after a break?

- Build Self Confidence
- Should do competency mapping and understand the Skill Gap
- Reskilling in the required Skill
- Keep updated yourself with the latest from the Industry
- Build a powerful Profile (Show what more you have learnt during the break. Join Startup or Small Companies as Intern for few months
- Share your knowledge through Blogs and Articles
- Start connecting and Networking with recruiters, Industry leaders.

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL, BUT YOU HAVE TO RIDE THE WAVE.

Do you feel the industry is not receptive towards women on a career break ?

No they are not receptive . No. Companies always wish to understand how people on their career break have upgraded themselves & how they can add value to the organization.

What should women do to restart their careers after a break?

Upgrade their skills, Build their personal brand & network to get the right opportunity.

YOU ARE FIERCE, STRONG, FULL OF FIRE, UNSTOPPABLE.



Mr. Ritesh Goel
CEO at HR Reflections.



The
Struggle
Is Real,
But You
Have To
Ride The
Wave



Mr. Vikas Kumar
CEO at Purechase

Do you feel the industry is not receptive towards women on a career break?

No, they are not receptive as the general feeling is that women coming back for a second career will still be burdened by their family life and will not be committed to work. There is also a feeling that they may not be serious about their career and are coming back to be engaged.

What should women do to restart their careers after a break?

A career oriented woman should keep doing what she is good at even during her break, maybe as a consultant or part time.



Mr. Sunil Sajnani
Founder and Managing Consultant
Sushaan Synergies LLP

Do you feel the industry is not receptive towards women on a career break?

Yes. Possibly industry would be wary of the reason why the break was taken. Was it a voluntary break or was she asked to leave? The Industry would also be wary of the woman's seriousness and commitment levels. If the break has been long, the industry would also have apprehensions if the woman had kept abreast with changing times and technologies, then her skills will be relevant.

What should women do to restart their careers after a break?

See if her skills continue to be relevant and she is technologically updated. If not, she should take action for the same. Not to lose confidence and jump at the first available offer. Ask for salary as per industry standards.



LET
YOUR
PASSION
BURN
BRIGHTER
THAN YOUR
FEARS

Career post a break for a **woman** professional can be challenging. But there is a lot that she can accomplish with a planned and intentional approach.

CAREER MATTERS!

No matter how much your partner earns, it is completely fine to place your career and financial independence over everything else. Be selfish enough to realize that being financially stable makes you an independent person and brings a sense of confidence that no other thing can.

After a career break, returning to the workforce is a multistep process, but each needs to move in tandem with the other.

LEARNING AND NETWORKING ARE CRITICAL FOR A SUCCESSFUL RESTART.

Many women on a career break have cited a lack of professional network as a significant barrier to restart.

The first thing to do is make a conscious decision to stay connected with your ex-colleagues and put in the desired effort to sustain your decision. It will help you stay connected and updated in your domain and the industry's latest developments during your career break.

Learning can be attributed to skill development. A SWOT analysis will offer you an objective look at how you fit into the competitive landscape and the job market.

This will help you build a realistic picture of your situation and provide a direction to direct your efforts. Further, you can use career GAP Analysis to discern the gap between your present skill levels and qualifications versus job requirements. This will help you formulate an action plan to close the gap. There are many online/offline courses available that can help you bridge the gap.

SUPPORT SYSTEM

You need to have a support system in place. It can be your family members, family friends, or relatives. Start developing the support system well in advance.

PROFILE BUILDING

Before you begin your search, you need to build your CV that highlights your experience, skill sets, and how you will add value to your future employer. Be clear about your priorities and what kind of work arrangement will help you perform better at your job, for instance, flexibility or work from home options.

GROW INTO YOUR ROLE

Once you start working, allow yourself some time to settle in. Don't force yourself. Learn, adjust, and grow in the role instead. Seek support from mentors who can guide and help you navigate your second professional journey.

"Women feel vastly undeserved. Despite the remarkable strides in market power and social position that they have made in the past century, they still appear to be undervalued in the market place and underestimated in the workplace. They have too many demands on their time and constantly juggle conflicting priorities - work, home, and family."

It's imperative that women willing to resume their careers gear themselves up and upgrade themselves with the necessary skills. While as for companies, it's high time they open their doors to women with a career break, for they are missing out on a large part of the talent pool that has immense potential to deliver growth and profits.

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Not-for-Profit platform that provides Learning, Networking & Mentoring resources for women who are on a career break and are planning to rejoin the main workforce and supports women entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurship journey.

www.hercareerfoundation.org

[CREATING IMPACTS](#)

THANK YOU!

