



INSPIRE · NETWORK · GROW

Inspire, Network, Grow:
Gender Representation
in the Meat Industry 2023

MEAT BUSINESS WOMEN

FOREWORD



For the past 20 years I have been lucky enough to have worked in the meat industry, a career I fell into by accident and now one I could not be more passionate about. Eight years ago, I founded Meat Business Women, with the dual aim of networking with other women in the industry and inspiring those outside of it to recognise it as a fulfilling career destination.

In 2019 we were recognised by the United Nations as a contributor to its **Sustainable Development Goal (Goal 5)** to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Our collaboration with the United Nations has culminated in the release of this our second global report on gender representation in the meat industry, and we are proud to share our findings.

Our industry plays a critical role in providing high-quality, sustainable food to the communities and customers we serve but faces multiple challenges: sustainability, profitability, shifting consumer attitudes, technology and workforce availability. The data repeatedly shows, year after year, that inclusive workplaces are more profitable and more innovative, and that they retain staff for longer and make better decisions. However,

in today's fast-evolving world, the importance of inclusion goes far beyond these benefits – it is a cornerstone upon which the meat industry's long-term resilience, relevance and sustainability depend. The data tells us that inclusion is no longer a “nice-to-have”, but rather a necessity if the meat industry is to thrive in the years to come.

Since the trailblazing **2020 report**, the Meat Business Women strategy has been focused on shifting the dial on the key themes of industry perception and gender balance, through global campaigns, role modelling, networking and mentoring. As a result, we now partner with over 35 corporate businesses in addition to working with thousands of individuals across the global supply chain.

So why does the report matter? It shines a light on the current state of gender balance within the meat industry – a crucial benchmark for all businesses. The report also offers invaluable insights into both men's and women's perspectives on the industry's present condition, making it an indispensable resource for anyone seeking to cultivate a more gender-balanced workplace.

Most interestingly for me, the data tells us that there is a widening gap between the best and worst businesses when it comes to inclusion. This is a problem for us all, and there is a huge opportunity for further pre-competitive working on best practice and key workforce policy issues. There has never been a more important time to remember that a rising tide lifts all boats.

Gender is only one aspect of inclusion; our research once again uncovered a lack of broader diversity within our industry from mid-management upwards. Race, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic diversity, age, and gender identity, amongst other aspects of identity, all impact people's experience in the workplace. The industry has started to blaze a trail with gender inclusion, and we would urge it to continue to expand the focus of its inclusion

work to create an environment where everyone can thrive.

Now that we have the benchmarks, I urge industry leaders to observe, reflect upon, discuss and action our findings, utilising the expertise and support of Meat Business Women to attract top talent whilst achieving the retention and progression of the very best workforce.



Laura Ryan, founder and global chair of Meat Business Women

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report establishes an updated global view on gender inclusion in the meat industry. It draws on international data from more than 50 major meat organisations employing almost 250,000 staff, in-depth interviews with senior HR and operational leaders, focus groups of women working in the industry, and survey responses from 400 women and men. The report looks back at progress against the priority themes Meat Business Women set out in 2020 and forward to the next steps the industry can take to drive gender inclusion.

Priority themes:

- **Changing perceptions of the industry ...** Perception need not be reality.
- **Moving inclusion up the agenda ...** It must be now.
- **Tackling the broken career ladder ...** It requires ongoing focus, from hire to retire.
- **Strengthening networks and creating visible role models ...** Aspire and inspire.
- **The way we work doesn't work ...** Gender proofing working practices and patterns.

Women now make up 33.5% of the workforce (down from 36% in 2020). Women's representation in the workforce continues to lag behind that of other industries, and this position has declined since 2020.

The industry has made good progress in shifting the dial of women's representation in senior leadership roles, with women now making up 23% of board-level director roles (up from 14%), 32% of high-level leadership roles (up from 22%) and 32% of middle-manager roles (up from 29%).

However, only 8% of CEO posts are held by women (up by 3%), and progress at skilled and first-line-manager level has stalled (with women making up 30% and 27% of the workforce respectively at these levels). Women now only make up 36% of the unskilled workforce (down 4% since 2020).

Our report highlights positive progress against each of the priority themes, with shifts in how the industry is perceived, repaired rungs in the senior-leadership career ladder, and greater access to role models and networks. However, there is no room for complacency, as 50% of people working in the meat industry rate it as less inclusive than other industries, while just 10% rate it as more inclusive.

Good practice is emerging from the best businesses in the industry, and this is highlighted throughout the report. However, our research has uncovered that the gap between the most inclusive and the least inclusive meat businesses is widening.

During the research, we heard powerful stories of inclusion and exclusion. Throughout the report, we have used direct quotations from women and men in the industry to convey their real-life experiences of working in meat businesses across the world.

WOMEN NOW ACCOUNT FOR:

- ↓ **33.5%** of the total workforce are women
- ↑ **8%** Chief Executive Officers
- ↑ **23%** of board-level director roles
- **27%** of first-line managers
- ↓ **36%** of unskilled roles



Meat Business Women supports the global meat industry, and businesses and individuals working across the industry, by providing membership which includes access to:

Monthly international masterclasses with industry and professional development experts.

A global mentoring platform with best-practice guidance and resources.

Conferences and networking events in all territories, working closely with our partners.

Initiatives that champion young talent and positive role models, such as the annual "One to Watch" prize.

Global marketing campaigns such as "She Looks Like Me", changing perceptions of the industry.

You can find out more here: www.meatbusinesswomen.org

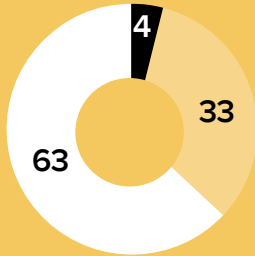
HOW ARE WE DOING?

PROGRESS AGAINST THE FIVE KEY THEMES FROM THE 2020 RESEARCH

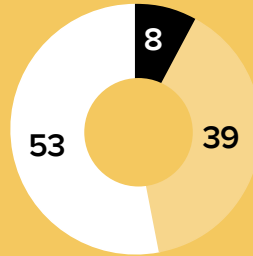
Our 2020 research set out five priority themes for the industry to tackle in order to drive gender inclusion. In this research we look back at progress against those themes and assess how they rate now. We ask what has changed and what still needs attention.



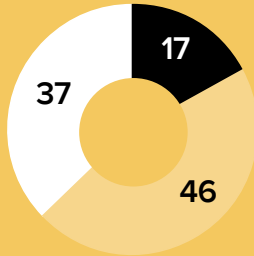
● % better than 2020 ● % worse than 2020 ○ % no change since 2020



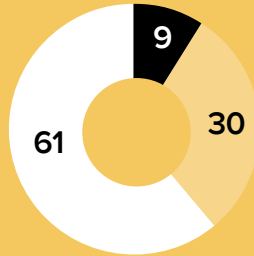
THEME 1
Changing perceptions of the sector.



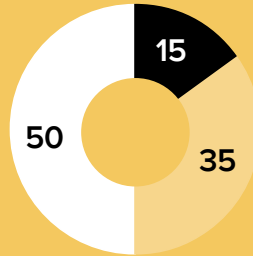
THEME 2
Moving inclusion up the agenda.



THEME 3
Tackling the broken career ladder.



THEME 4
Strengthening networks and creating visible role models.



THEME 5
The way we work doesn't work.

THEME 1: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE INDUSTRY ...

PERCEPTION NEED NOT BE REALITY

In 2020, we found that the meat industry was reticent to tell its story and make people aware of the breadth of roles and opportunities that exist, meaning that women do not always see the industry as somewhere they would like to work.

In 2023, perceptions are gradually changing: 63% of people working in the meat industry think that it is changing perceptions and making opportunities more visible. More organisations are shifting how they position themselves – from meat processors to providers of sustainable, nutritious food. However, the industry is still cautious about publicising itself. Consequently, the breadth of opportunities within the industry remains largely unknown to individuals who are not part of it.

“More work is needed to tackle the misconceptions that the meat industry is all blood and guts with men only butchers. It’s a part of the farm to fork food chain where women can thrive in senior roles.”

“Once people are in the industry they see the opportunities, but the opportunities still aren’t visible enough from the outside.”



WHAT THE 2023 RESEARCH UNCOVERS

Best-in-class organisations are investing in building strong relationships with schools, colleges, universities, teachers, communities, career services and employment advisors to change perceptions of the industry. They are making future career paths more visible to employees at entry level and having workplace conversations to help people see careers, not just jobs, in the industry.

63% of people working in the meat industry think the industry is changing perceptions and making opportunities more visible.



WHAT MEAT BUSINESS WOMEN IS DOING

Meat Business Women’s strategy has heavily focused on the ‘perceptions of the industry’ theme, starting with the global [“She Looks Like Me” campaign](#) and then creating a series of ‘Spotlight On’ videos to demonstrate the different roles that exist in the meat industry and the women undertaking them.

This work will continue with our “The Power of You” campaign. This will showcase unique career stories, women’s empowerment, removing the stigma of impostor syndrome and igniting self-confidence. We will work alongside our partners and support them with toolkits and a wealth of valuable careers assets to drive a gender-balanced industry. We want our Meat Business Women community to continue to grow and extend across the whole of the meat industry from farm to fork, supporting our mission to inspire, network and grow.

Our aim is to play a crucial role in creating awareness, in driving engagement and change through networking and sharing opportunities, as well as in enabling open discussions and facilitating a safe space in which to harmonise and create best practice for policy that specifically affects women.

THEME 2: MOVING INCLUSION UP THE AGENDA ... IT HAS TO BE NOW

In 2020 we found that inclusion was still seen as an optional “nice to have”, rather than a key part of business strategy. Where there was a drive for change, it often came from outside the industry in the form of customer pressure or following the appointment of a senior leader from a more inclusive industry.

In 2023, 53% of people working in the meat industry say that inclusion has moved up the agenda. Change is being driven by individual leaders, external pressure from major customers, investors or governments, and labour shortages leading to the rethinking of roles and working patterns. In 2020, we found that buyers were placing broad environmental, social and governance (ESG) requirements on suppliers, with a focus on demonstrating that policies were in place. This is now shifting to more outcome-focused requirements, including targets for numbers of women in senior leadership roles.

WHAT THE 2023 RESEARCH UNCOVERS

Shifting the culture

- The research exposes that the gap between the most inclusive and the least inclusive businesses in the industry appears to be widening, with no industry-wide goals and few opportunities for benchmarking and best-practice sharing.
- Whilst inclusion is moving up the agenda, 46% of people say that culture in the industry is a major barrier to progress, with a current focus on “ticking a box” rather than creating real change.
- 50% of people working in the industry say it is less inclusive than other industries, with a heavily male-orientated culture. Over 25% of comments made in the survey are about the urgent need to shift the culture.

“It’s one thing having a policy that sits in a handbook, and it’s another thing ensuring that policy is living and breathing and active. For me, that’s where we need to go next.”

50% of people working in the meat industry rate the meat industry as being less inclusive than other industries, with only 10% rating it as more inclusive.

78% of people working in the meat industry rate creating the right environment for women to thrive as a key enabler for gender inclusion.



SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE SHIFTING INCLUSION UP THE AGENDA

This is what businesses in the industry are already doing to move inclusion up the agenda:

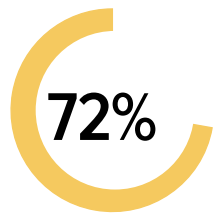
- ✓ Establishing diversity, equity and inclusion committees with clear strategies and action plans covering all areas of inclusion
- ✓ Careful use of intersectional, gender targets, with a focus on removing barriers to all women progressing
- ✓ Creating inclusion data dashboards to target and measure the impact of inclusion action
- ✓ Running listening sessions with different demographic groups to understand barriers and enablers (e.g., women, parents, LGBTQ+, ethnically and culturally diverse employees)
- ✓ Broadening out communications copy and visuals so that they reflect the communities and customers the industry serves.

“We don’t want cupcakes for IWD, we want shifts in systemic barriers such as help with child care, and better maternity pay.”

BUILDING ALLYSHIP

Change happens when men, as well as women, drive gender inclusion. The 2023 research uncovered that all too often, the onus is still on women to educate, call out behaviour and lead the inclusion work – even when this means challenging their line managers and peers.

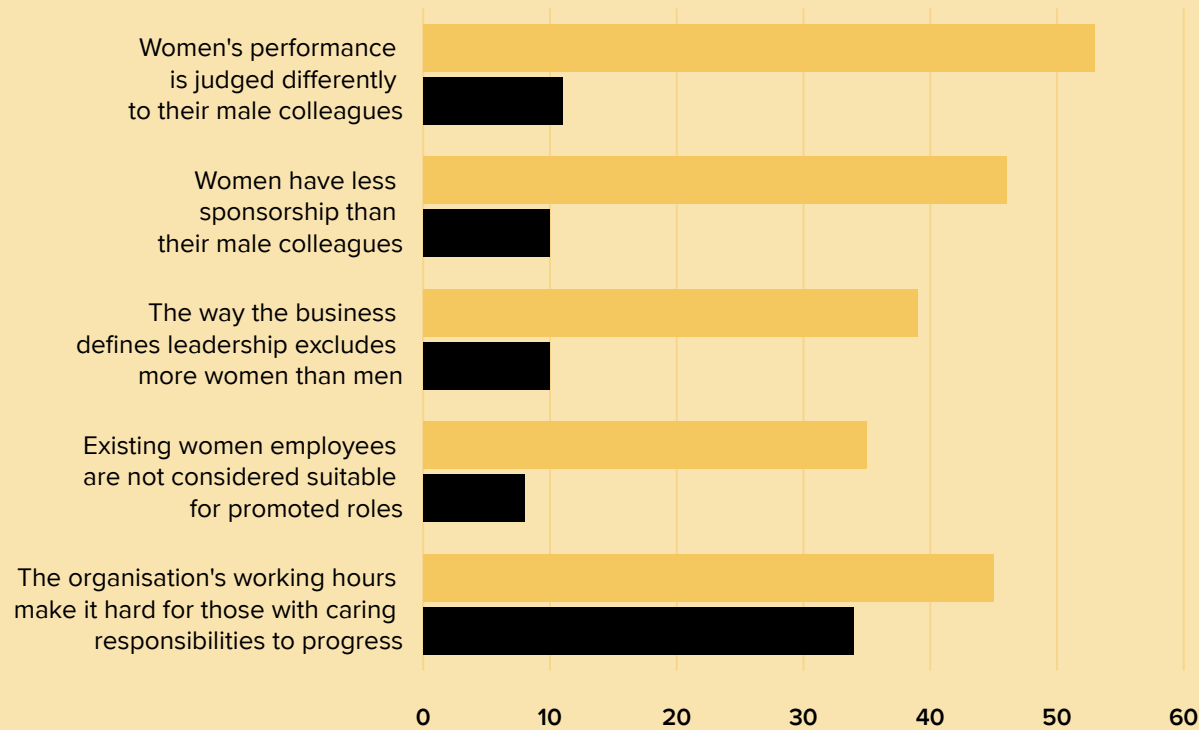
To really shift the dial, women and men need to work together to create a more inclusive future. In practice, this means more men stepping into allyship roles and taking practical everyday action to support inclusion. The research shows that men do not see the barriers that women are facing and have a different and overly optimistic view about how much progress has been achieved.



of people working in the meat industry rated leaders proactively championing and sponsoring equality initiatives as a key driver for change

HOW WOMEN AND MEN SEE THE BARRIERS

Our research found that men and women see barriers differently with major differences on key areas and more alignment on caring responsibility challenges.



% of women agree / strongly agree



% of men agree / strongly agree



We need more real male role models showing how they respect and value their women colleagues”

SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE PRACTICAL WAYS FOR EVERYONE TO BE AN INCLUSION ALLY

- ✓ **Call out bias** and exclusionary behaviours when you see them.
- ✓ **Sponsor and mentor** employees who do not look like you.
- ✓ Monitor who gets air time in meetings, and **invite in** diverse voices.
- ✓ **Check your and others' assumptions** in hiring, promotion, succession and pay discussions.
- ✓ **Show support** for underrepresented employees, for example by attending their events.
- ✓ **Own and champion** work to improve diversity and inclusion equity.
- ✓ **Be informed** on how bias and how exclusion work.
- ✓ **Stick with** conversations about inclusion, even if they feel difficult and you are fearful of saying the wrong thing.
- ✓ **Ask for feedback** on how you can become a better ally.

TACKLING EVERYDAY EXCLUSION

Leaders calling out and challenging disrespectful behaviour was ranked as a top-three gender-inclusion enabler by men and women working in the industry. Whilst good progress has been made, there is still more work to do to tackle everyday behaviours that undermine women working in the industry. The following are some examples of the common behaviours reported by women during the research:

Important corporate entertainment and networking events revolving around traditionally male pastimes such as golf, rugby and shooting

Women on leadership teams being expected to pick up the organisation of team events and recognition awards, employee survey action planning, and inclusion work (important work, but rarely activity that leads to promotion)

Recruitment situations in which women are not seen as a 'good fit' because they do not look like the men sitting round the table

Women graduate trainees and apprentices facing questions about why they are working in meat plants

People assuming the junior male member of a woman's team is her boss and talking to him instead of her.



Whilst individually these instances seem small, collectively they have a negative impact on women's ability to thrive in the industry, and they are not being routinely challenged. Tackling this needs a combination of education, allyship and leaders being willing to constructively challenge behaviour.



Where leaders take this seriously and play their part, things change.”

53% of people working in the meat industry say inclusion has moved up the agenda.

WHAT MEAT BUSINESS WOMEN IS DOING

Meat Business Women is poised to be a key player in reinforcing the diversity, equity and inclusion strategies of its partners by conducting unique global research on the number of women employed in the meat industry, as well as identifying the enablers and barriers. We will offer our partners a comprehensive toolkit that proactively addresses these challenges and provides step-by-step solutions to overcome them. By sharing best practices within the industry, Meat Business Women is committed to promoting greater diversity, equity and inclusion across the industry.



EVERYDAY EXCLUSION: WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Women are **twice as likely** than men to be mistakenly taken to be the more junior colleague (with black women being twice as likely to be so mistaken).¹

Women are **30%** more likely to have their judgement questioned (with black women being **50%** more likely).²

37% of women leaders have had a co-worker get credit for their idea, compared to 27% of men leaders.³

One in three black women leaders say they have been denied or passed over for opportunities because of their race and gender.⁴

62% of women of colour and First Nations women hide aspects of their identity to fit in at work.⁵

Women are **twice** as likely to experience sexual harassment at work than men.⁶

THEME 3: TACKLING THE BROKEN CAREER LADDER ... IT REQUIRES ONGOING FOCUS, FROM HIRE TO RETIRE

If women in the meat industry were advancing their careers at the same rate as men, we would see similar proportions of women at each stage of the career ladder. In 2020, women were overrepresented in the most junior roles and underrepresented at every level above, with very few women at the most senior levels of leadership. There were broken rungs in the career ladder (i.e., key steps where men were more likely to advance than women) at the steps up from unskilled roles to skilled/first-line-manager roles and from mid-level roles to the most senior leadership roles.

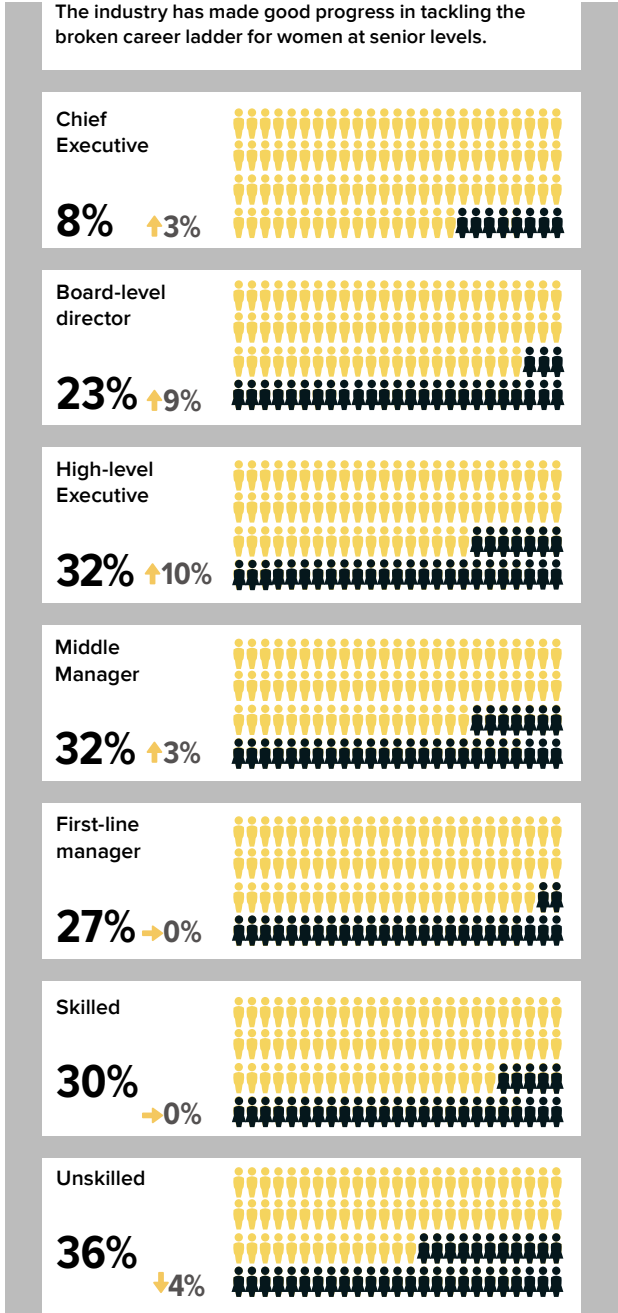
In 2023, the picture is better, with significantly more women in senior leadership roles. Women now make up 23% of board-level director roles (up from 14%), 32% of high-level leadership roles (up from 22%) and 32% of middle-manager roles (up from 29%). Women hold 8% of CEO posts (up by 3%). A stronger gender-inclusion focus, increased flexibility, and external pressure from customers, investors and governments all appear to be making a meaningful difference at senior levels.

The overall number of women in the workforce has fallen from 36% in 2020 to 33.5% in 2023. Unskilled roles have seen the biggest drop, falling from 40% of the workforce to 36%. Women still carry

a disproportionate share of childcaring responsibilities, and this may be behind the reduction. Businesses reported losing women from production roles at a greater rate than men during the COVID-19 pandemic as women faced a tough choice between working and childcare. Rising childcare costs are also limiting more junior women’s access to work, with childcare cost often exceeding wages for the lower paid.

This year we also asked for data on employees who identify as non-binary. Many employers do not yet hold this data, or where they do, the number of employees self-identifying as non-binary is low in comparison with the population as a whole.

% OF MEN AND WOMEN EMPLOYEES AT EACH LEVEL IN THE INDUSTRY

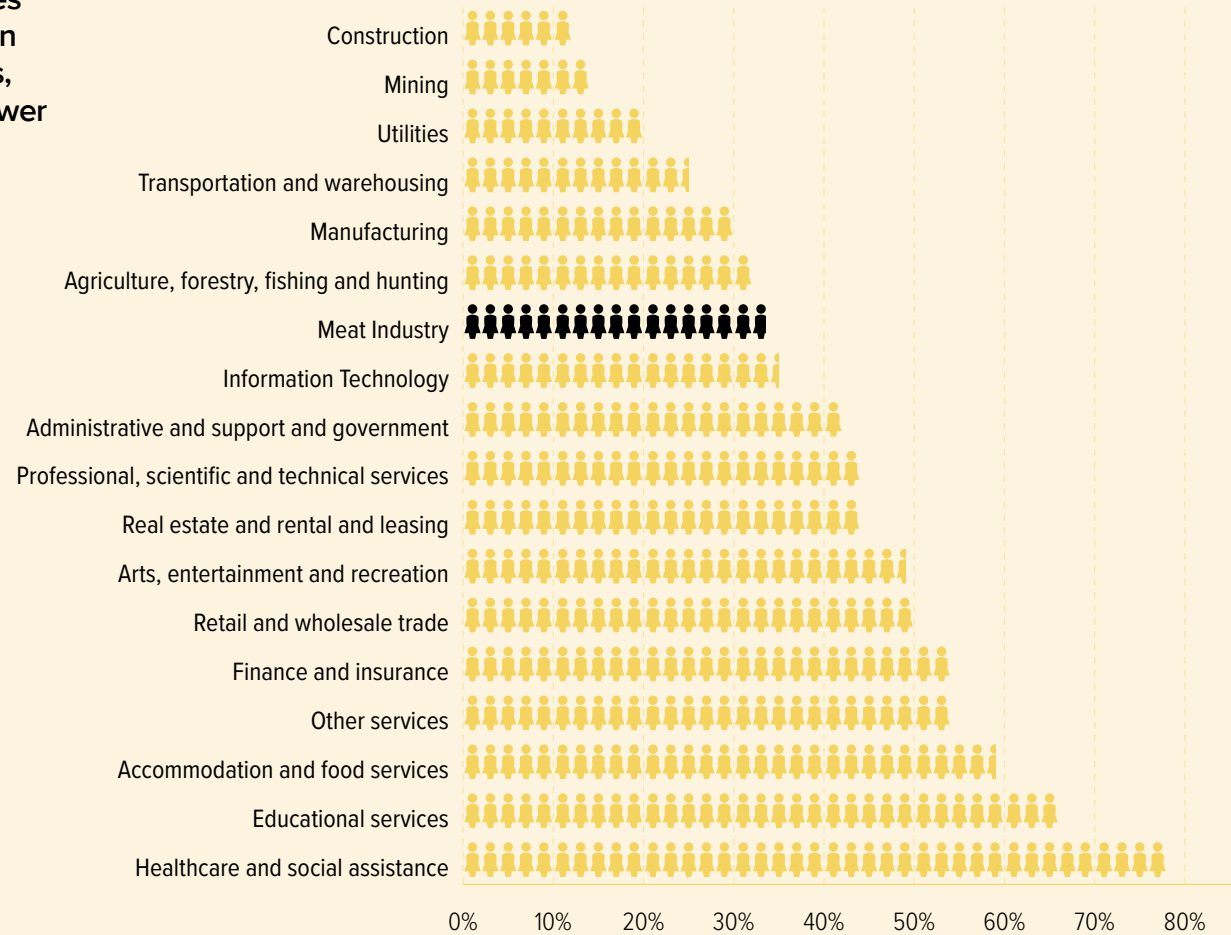


WHAT MEAT BUSINESS WOMEN IS DOING

Meat Business Women has created a global platform connecting both women and men across the industry to facilitate mentoring. It offers not only mentorship but also best-practice guidance and essential resources to support career advancement. This unique service has proven invaluable, as hundreds of members have benefited from the expertise and guidance provided by Meat Business Women, helping them to grow professionally, achieve their career goals and reach new heights of success. The mentoring portal will continue to be an integral asset for Meat Business Women, and one we plan to expand as we grow.

HOW DOES THE MEAT INDUSTRY COMPARE?

Our research has uncovered that women make up 33.5% of the workforce in the businesses that participated in the study. In comparison to other industries, the meat sectors employs a lower percentage of women.



Data based on weighted average of Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the UK and the USA. Source: McKinsey & Company ⁷

“A number of very talented female managers are now starting to come through to senior positions; some companies are slower than others.”

SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE TACKLING THE BROKEN RUNG IN THE CAREER LADDER

This is what businesses in the industry are doing to tackle the broken rungs in the career ladder:

- ✓ Annual ‘work conversations’ at production-team-member level to help women think about their careers and explore ambitions to shift to first-line-management and skilled roles
- ✓ Shifting from manager nomination to self-nomination for high-potential development programmes to remove bias from nomination processes
- ✓ Using ex officio roles on boards and senior leadership teams to give underrepresented talent exposure and add greater diversity to decision making
- ✓ Working with recruiters to provide genuinely balanced shortlists containing appointable women candidates
- ✓ Driving gender-balanced entry into graduate and apprenticeship programmes
- ✓ Interviewer training on recruitment bias and having gender-balanced interview panels
- ✓ Providing tailored one-to-one coaching support to help women navigate the career jump from middle management to senior leadership.



WHAT THE 2023 RESEARCH UNCOVERS

Focus in on junior women

Progress is stagnant at more junior levels, where men still hold 73% of first-line-management posts compared to 27% held by women.

Many of the first-line-manager roles are in production environments. Initial evidence suggests that lack of working-hours flexibility and the culture in production areas are barriers to women progressing into first-line-manager posts in these environments. Women in these areas also appear less likely to have access to development resources and opportunities.

Mapping out entry-level career pathways, offering apprenticeships and using workplace conversations to engage women in discussion about their future are already being used in the industry as ways to increase the talent pipeline of women moving into first-line-manager roles.

“

There are two tiers of women in the meat industry. We're beginning to get it right for the senior, professional women but nothing is changing for entry-level female employees.”

THEME 4: STRENGTHENING NETWORKS AND CREATING VISIBLE ROLE MODELS ...

ASPIRE AND INSPIRE

In 2020 we found that there were few opportunities for women in the industry to network together, and the absence of senior female role models was getting in the way of women seeing how they might grow and develop.

Our 2023 research suggests that things are improving, with 60% of people working in the meat industry saying that women now have more opportunities to network and role models are more visible. Meat Business Women's reach is wider, and more organisations have set up their own internal women's networks. Younger and more junior women value the access to senior women they achieve through Meat Business Women and would also like more targeted networking events aimed at earlier-career-stage women.

Whilst role models are becoming more visible, younger women want to see more relatable role models and more diverse leaders, including men and women who are balancing senior roles with parenting and are willing to talk honestly about the juggling that this involves. They also want to see more people in senior-level roles who are working flexibly.



SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE ROLE MODELS AND NETWORKS

“Senior women are more visible now and are more willing to tell their story. There is more acceptance that discrimination exists and therefore women are pushing into the work of networking and mentoring.”

“Organisations like Meat Business Women allow me to access role models more easily when they are not available within the company.”

WHAT MEAT BUSINESS WOMEN IS DOING

Meat Business Women has made a significant impact in this space by fostering strong networks and providing inspiring role models for women. Meat Business Women organises numerous conferences and networking events in different territories, enhancing both local and international networks. By bringing women working in the meat industry together, Meat Business Women has created a supportive community that promotes growth and advancement.

The “One to Watch” prize highlights exceptional women in the industry and provides visible role models for aspiring young women. The winners of this prize are awarded personal development investment, which helps them advance their careers and reach their full potential.



60%

of people working in the meat industry think that women's access to networks and role models has increased since 2020.

66%

Two-thirds of women under 30 say that they would be more interested in advancing if they saw senior leaders with the work-life balance they want.⁸



“

It feels like senior women who have made it are glossing over just how hard it really is, which isn't helping those coming up behind them. I'd like more honest conversations.”

This is what businesses in the industry are already doing to strengthen networks and make role models more visible:

- ✓ Setting up employee resource groups, including groups for women and working parents, alongside other underrepresented groups
- ✓ Running in-house-mentoring and reverse-mentoring programmes to connect junior women with senior leaders
- ✓ Participating in Meat Business Women's mentoring programmes
- ✓ Bias checking corporate networking events to ensure that they do not unintentionally exclude specific employee groups
- ✓ Using “An audience with...” sessions to help senior leaders share their career stories and connect with underrepresented talent.

THEME 5: THE WAY WE WORK DOESN'T WORK ... GENDER PROOFING WORKING PRACTICES AND PATTERNS

In 2020 we were met with a stark picture; a lack of flexibility was a key reason for women not applying for more senior roles, along with a 24/7 culture that excluded those with caring responsibilities.

Whilst those in corporate and support roles had achieved greater flexibility through home working due to the pandemic, production roles remained inflexible, with part-time, job-share or school-hours working largely off the table. This theme has seen some of the biggest changes since 2020 and is also one in relation to which the industry faces some complex choices.

Of the respondents surveyed, 50% said that access to flexibility had increased. For those working in some production sites, labour shortages have driven a rethink of what is possible, to make roles attractive to different demographics. School-hours shifts, part-time shifts, rostering parents back-to-back and job-share working on shifts are now more commonplace, although access to flexibility is still often driven by individual site leaders' preferences.

Flexible working is ranked as the #1 enabler of gender inclusion in the industry.

WHAT MEAT BUSINESS WOMEN IS DOING

Meat Business Women hosts international member webinars and podcasts featuring personal and professional development experts. These webinars cover a range of topics, including how to achieve a healthy work-life balance, which is particularly relevant to women in the industry, who often face unique challenges.

We plan further work in this area focused on understanding and sharing best practices for specific issues which affect women's careers, such as maternity and menopause policies.

SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE

Businesses can drive the inclusion benefits of flexible working by:

- ✓ consciously using technology and automation advances to design gender neutral roles
- ✓ capitalising on the learnings from COVID-19 by identifying ways to normalise flexible working across a wider range of roles and organisational levels
- ✓ providing clear, structured routes back into work for women who have taken maternity leave or career breaks, for example returners programmes, returnships and alumni events
- ✓ challenging long hours and the culture of 24/7 availability, and
- ✓ exploring what the unconscious 'ideal worker' norm looks like and how this is influencing job design; then, if the ideal worker norm is full-time, identifying and implementing ways of challenging this.



“I think we still definitely do have a journey to go on in relation to flexibility and attractiveness to market, but from where we were pre-COVID to now is night and day, so we have had a big, big change in our industry, but we still need a lot more.”

WHAT THE 2023 RESEARCH UNCOVERS

Getting the balance right

A diverse range of working arrangements exist for those in corporate and non-production roles, including 100% home-based, hybrid home / on-site, and fully on-site. Many organisations are facing a complex trade-off between avoiding the creation of a “them and us” culture between those who can have hybrid working and those who cannot, and needing to remain competitive in a job market where flexibility is the new norm. People working in the meat industry ranked flexibility as the number one enabler of gender inclusion in the industry, which means that the approach organisations take to this area is likely to influence their gender demographics.

“

When I look at why women are moving out of the industry, it's because work-life balance and flexibility just isn't there. How we move forward with maternity leave and supporting people back to the workplace is key.”

Supporting working parents

Paid maternity and adoption leave was ranked as the second most important factor in enabling gender inclusion in the industry.

Maternity-pay benefits are perceived to be lower than in other industries. Many women appear to either not return after maternity leave or return to lower-level or less visible roles. Women talk about managers making assumptions that they will want less challenging work on return from maternity leave. Managers could be more skilled at having conversations with women ahead of, during and on return from their maternity leave, to get the right balance of challenging work and flexibility (where wanted), which would decrease the likelihood of women dropping off the talent radar.

Part-time working is rare at senior levels. Younger women talk about looking up and seeing a 24/7 culture and few role models of women balancing work and parenthood. The industry risks losing talent at this critical career stage.

Those meat organisations which are leading the way have clear maternity policies that are well understood by employees and their managers, offer enhanced maternity pay, encourage paternity leave, and have return-to-work policies and practices aimed at keeping and supporting women.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS: FLEXIBLE AND HYBRID WORKING

Women are **three times** more likely to work part-time and **nearly four times** more likely to work only during term-time than men.⁹

Post-COVID-19, **only 30%** of women are now working in a primarily office-/site-based way¹⁰.

Only 7% of companies plan to pull back on remote and hybrid working in the next year, and **32%** are likely to expand it.¹¹

Only 10% of women want to work mostly on site and **49%** of women leaders say that flexibility is one of the top three things they consider when deciding whether to join or stay with a company.¹²

Male managers are significantly more likely to work from the office mostly or completely.¹³

Those in traditionally underrepresented groups (including those with disabilities, and non-binary and LGBTQ+ employees) are even more likely to prefer hybrid working than their peers.¹⁴

When badly managed, hybrid working can damage women's career prospects. Feeling excluded from meetings, interactions and exposure to leaders has been reported by **60%** of women working in hybrid environments.¹⁵

Flexibility remains a key enabler for keeping women in the talent pipeline; put simply, there are more women at senior levels in businesses that offer flexibility.¹⁶



CASE STUDIES

What is making a difference? Case studies of practical solutions businesses are using to shift the dial



Dunbia: Enabling gender-balanced recruitment into graduate programmes



Hilton Food Group: Creating a diverse talent pipeline



Kepak Group: Kickstarting your career and earning while you learn



OBE Organic
Being allies and champions of inclusion across the supply chain





Dunbia:

Enabling gender-balanced recruitment into graduate programmes



The challenge

Dunbia recognised that the meat industry is one in which typically, at all levels, more men are employed than women. Dunbia are committed to continuously monitoring, enhancing, and adapting their programmes and policies to create an equal and inclusive workplace. As part of this commitment, they set a target to achieve at least a 50% female intake into their graduate programme.

The action

To achieve a gender-balanced graduate intake, Dunbia took an end-to-end approach by looking at each stage in the recruitment journey and making sure it helped to deliver balance. They started by reviewing where they were advertising their roles, making sure their social media, printed media and university contact created a balanced reach. As part of their advertising, they published case studies of successful female graduates within the business. Finally, at the recruitment stage, they ensured balanced candidate shortlists.

Dunbia's approach was part of a wider programme of work, aimed at increasing the diversity of their workforce over time. Dunbia have focused their efforts on key career stages, such as graduate entry, and departments in which gender balance is more challenging, such as engineering, IT and the first stage of their production process.

Dunbia recognise that recruitment is just the first step, and they are equally committed to creating an environment in which diverse talent can thrive. All their business leaders, directors and managers have completed diversity and inclusion training, to support them in their role in building an inclusive culture.

The outcome

Dunbia now have a 66% female graduate intake and have created a diverse and inclusive environment in which women find the same respect for their ideas and abilities as men. Dunbia are continuing their focus on retention to ensure that women are fairly represented in all levels of management throughout the business.



Hilton Food Group

Creating a diverse talent pipeline



The challenge

Hilton Foods are committed to being an inclusive organisation built on equity and respect, ensuring opportunities for skills and career development are open to all.

“One of the key highlights of the course for me was getting to build relationships across the other Hilton sites. The opportunity to have time to focus on my career and be given tailored guidance on how to improve how I operate and help my team was great”
Supply Chain Manager, UK

“My biggest takeaway was the access to the knowledge of our international colleagues, it deepens the Hilton Foods spirit and family-feel.”
Operations Manager, Netherlands

The action

To deliver on this commitment Hilton Foods offer all colleagues the opportunity to participate in ‘work conversations’ or performance development reviews with their manager to discuss performance, development, career aspirations, wellbeing and sharing ideas and feedback. To make conversations like these an everyday part of how they do business they modernised their approach to performance development reviews and, in 2022 launched their ‘work conversations’ initiative.

Hilton Foods couple this work with their annual succession and capability review. Taking on board colleagues’ work conversations and Performance Development Reviews, alongside organisational requirements Hilton Foods are able to review their overall organisational capability. This enables them to understand the diversity of their talent pipeline and drive actions to improve it.

Those colleagues who are identified as “ready for succession” are also given the opportunity to participate in accelerated development programmes. These programmes give colleagues the opportunity to undertake their development with colleagues across Hilton Foods international family of businesses.

The outcome

In 2022 through the annual engagement survey Hilton Foods saw a seven-point increase in those reporting they were given opportunities to talk about their performance at work and 80% of colleagues said ‘I feel I can be myself at work’. This is a 6-point increase on 2021. Hilton Foods 2022 Exploring Leaders Development Programme saw 46% female participation.



Kepak Group

Kickstarting your career and earning while you learn

The challenge

Kepak Group, a leading European food company, wanted to diversify its talent pool and build solid foundations for the future through adopting an apprenticeship programme at its dedicated on-site training facilities. In alignment with its diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, Kepak was keen to hire talent that would bring a different perspective and skillset and be empowered to progress through the company.

The action

Since 2021, Kepak has adopted a new and engaging work-based apprenticeship training programme. There are three different apprenticeship categories available, namely Butchery, Food Manufacturing, and Engineering & Maintenance. The aim of the programme is to provide participants with the best opportunity for a fulfilling career, as well as futureproofing and diversifying Kepak's workforce to ensure organisational success. Through Kepak's dedicated apprenticeship programme, individuals can gain a real flavour of what the day-to-day running of a meat company entails.

Kepak's large array of apprenticeships offers participants a recognised qualification and the opportunity to earn a wage whilst gaining a recognised qualification. The programme also provides excellent progression opportunities with increased future earning potential.

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The outcome

Since the programme launched in the Merthyr site, Kepak's staff turnover has decreased by 15%. The apprenticeships have resulted in an upturn in both performance and profits in departments in which apprentices are learning their trade, with off-the-job trainers overseeing apprentices' development and creating individual learning plans in coordination with their training provider. As a result of the success of the programme, Kepak was shortlisted for the Large and Macro Employer of the Year Award at the prestigious Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2022, and Kepak is now scaling the apprenticeship programme across its Irish and UK sites.



OBE Organic

Being allies and champions of inclusion across the supply chain



Inspire, Network, Grow: Gender Representation in the Meat Industry 2023

The challenge

OBE Organic is proud to be Australia's oldest and most trusted organic beef marketing company, owned by family farmers who are united by a shared respect for people, the environment and their animals. OBE Organic identified a lack of recognition of the contribution of Traditional Owners and Indigenous stakeholders, in beef supply chains.

The action

Seeing celebrity collaborations such as the one between Rhianna and PUMA, sparked an idea to collaborate on social media with different stakeholders. OBE Organic collaborated with the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation to share photos and stories from behind the scenes of their unique production region, in the pure heart of Australia.

Mithaka People have lived and worked across outback Australia for generations and have custodial kinship with the lands and waters of the outback. OBE Organic's collaboration on social media with the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation was a first for a beef brand in Australia – and perhaps the world.

You can view the collaboration [here](#).

The outcome

This collaboration is unique since it recognises the importance of Indigenous Australians telling stories, sharing history and exploring subject matter that is critically relevant to the future of agricultural production in Australia. In their case, it is environmental protection of the pure heart of Australia.



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WHAT CAN WE DO?

2023 Checklist for driving gender representation in the meat industry

The original 2020 checklist, on the next page, sets out the core activities that businesses, the meat industry and Meat Business Women could take to improve gender representation. This 2023 checklist sets out further actions in response to the new research findings.

What can individual businesses do?	What can the industry as a whole do, with the support of Meat Business Women?	How can Meat Business Women provide support?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Attract more women into the sector: Continue to focus on attracting women into meat businesses at all levels so that the industry is more representative of its customers and society. <input type="checkbox"/> Build inclusive cultures: Run inclusion training for all managers and team leaders to help them understand their role in creating an inclusive culture. Create and share practical resources which help overrepresented groups of employees know the small, everyday actions they can take to be better allies to underrepresented groups and to challenge day-to-day exclusion. <input type="checkbox"/> Benchmark your business's talent pipeline against the industry average: Understand how your gender data compares with the industry average. If you have broken rungs in your career ladder, run listening groups with women in the tier below to understand the actions required to level up the playing field. Pay particular attention to how women move from unskilled to first-line-manager roles. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer flexibility: Offer flexible and hybrid working approaches where possible. <input type="checkbox"/> Make your childcare-related policies and support an enabler not a derailer: Review childcare-related policies (maternity, adoption, IVF, paternity and shared-parental leave), support systems and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Share, learn, challenge and change together: Create an industry-wide pre-competitive forum, to develop and share best practice and to progress policy issues and aligned career promotion into schools and colleges. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the industry's voice: Have a stronger lobbying voice across issues which impact women's participation in the workplace, e.g. rising childcare costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to raise the profile of the meat industry: Building on the success of 'She Looks Like Me', use campaigns such as the upcoming 'The Power of You' to target audiences working in the industry as well as those outside of it. <input type="checkbox"/> Utilise maximum value from Meat Business Women membership: Help businesses to utilise all of the partnership benefits, including our global mentoring portal, which helps women to grow professionally and achieve their career goals. <input type="checkbox"/> Grow the community: Continue to extend the global reach of Meat Business Women events so that they are accessible to all in the industry, including women at earlier career stages.



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2020 Checklist for driving gender representation in the meat industry

Themes	What can the industry as a whole do?	What can individual businesses do?
CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE INDUSTRY ... PERCEPTION NEED NOT BE REALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in national programmes that showcase the best of the industry; <input type="checkbox"/> tell compelling stories that showcase the industry's positives of contribution to community and society; <input type="checkbox"/> make female talent at all levels visible so people can imagine themselves working in the industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create an engagement strategy that positively positions your business with women. <input type="checkbox"/> Make your female talent more visible within and outside the business. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure your recruitment practices, website content and social media presence are equally attractive to women as to men.
MOVING INCLUSION UP THE AGENDA ... IT HAS TO BE NOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Put Diversity and Inclusion on the agenda at key industry events; <input type="checkbox"/> enable benchmarking and best-practice sharing; <input type="checkbox"/> establish industry champions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Appoint a senior inclusion and diversity lead. <input type="checkbox"/> Hear and share the experiences of women in your workplace. <input type="checkbox"/> Gather the data that tells you how you are currently performing. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a gender diversity strategy and action plan
TACKLING THE BROKEN CAREER LADDER ... IT REQUIRES ONGOING FOCUS, FROM HIRE TO RETIRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Senior leaders to agree and actively champion an aligned position on the importance of diverse talent being attracted and retained in the industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Map your business gender data and identify any rungs that are broken and where these are. <input type="checkbox"/> Put in place development actions to help women shift into first-line manager roles and to help women move into the most senior management roles. <input type="checkbox"/> Support senior women in Marketing, Finance, HR, R&D and Quality roles to build the broader commercial experience required to move into more senior roles. <input type="checkbox"/> Strengthen recruitment practices that encourage diversity and counteract bias.
STRENGTHENING NETWORKS AND CREATING VISIBLE ROLE MODELS ... ASPIRE AND INSPIRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create more inclusive networking opportunities at industry events and encourage ongoing conversations about the importance of positive role modelling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create formal mentoring schemes. <input type="checkbox"/> Support women to take part in industry-wide networking events and groups.
THE WAY WE WORK DOESN'T WORK ... GENDER PROOFING WORKING PRACTICES AND PATTERNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Shine a light and champion where different approaches work, especially capitalising on technology post-Covid-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify ways to normalise flexible working across a wider range of roles and organisational levels. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide routes back into work for women who have taken maternity leave or career breaks. <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge long-hours cultures.

How can Meat Business Women provide support?

Meat Business Women supports the global industry, businesses and individual women working across the meat industry, by offering:

- Specific gender-inclusion toolkits and resources.
- Monthly international-member virtual webinars with industry and personal development experts.
- Access to a mentoring portal with mentoring best-practice guidance and resources.
- Conferences and networking events in each territory, working closely with our trusted territory partners.
- A proactive meaningful pillar of Corporate Social Responsibility, which can be used in gender-pay reporting.
- Positive role models via the annual One to Watch Prize.
- Corporate case studies for strategic partners, which are published on the Meat Business Women website and social media channels.
- Content to share at careers fairs and proof of positive action.
- Opportunities for businesses to become involved in new Meat Business Women initiatives.

See what the industry says about us [here](#).

Purpose and methodology

Meat Business Women set out to update and uncover the barriers and the enablers to women joining and progressing in the meat industry, and to find the “bright spots” – the organisations in which inclusive practices are better than the meat industry average – and share their actions on and approaches to the challenges of gender inclusivity.

Our research included:



The involvement of over 50 companies (with a combined total of 250,000 employees) in the UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand



Focus groups with women working in the meat industry in the UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand



Interviews with senior HR Directors, inclusion leads and business leaders in the UK, Ireland, and Australia



Survey data from 400 men and women working in the meat industry



Desk research into trends in gender inclusion in countries in which Meat Business Women operate.

Data presented in the report as ‘the view of the people working in the meat industry’ is based on a representative global sample of 400 men and women.



Limitations of the research

Meat Business Women recognises that gender is not binary and that there are people whose identity and experiences are not reflected by binary language. We also recognise that there is no single experience of being a woman in the workplace and that race, ethnicity, linguistic and cultural diversity, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background, amongst many other things, impact individual women’s experience.

In comparison with other industries, the meat industry is at an earlier stage in its inclusion journey. The data in this report represent the average data that are available in the industry. Meat Business Women will continue to research the impact of different aspects of identity on women’s experience in the industry.



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About Meat Business Women

Meat Business Women is the global professional community for women working across the meat industry. Assuring the sustainability of our industry by attracting, developing and retaining the best possible talent, our mission is to:

INSPIRE: Show you the success that can be achieved.

NETWORK: Develop an empowered community.

GROW: Encourage and nurture people through education, knowledge sharing and mentoring.

Our values are:



We champion the meat industry as a great place to build a fulfilling career, where individuals can reach their full potential.



We encourage and support a well-connected global community of like-minded people.



We encourage innovative thinking and collaborative relationships that positively influence our people.



We believe that diversity, equity and inclusion is a critical component to the agility, resilience and sustained relevance of the future success of our industry.

Meat Business Women is a community of over 10,000 women across the world representing the entire breadth of the meat supply chain from farm to fork.

In 2019, Meat Business Women was recognised by the United Nations (UN) for fulfilling one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Why work with Meat Business Women

By partnering and participating with Meat Business Women you become part of a bigger and broader network across the global meat industry. This results in increased talent attraction and retention for your business and in turn the industry as a whole.

By enabling a proactive environment in which to openly share and discuss issues, Meat Business Women can positively influence gender balance and inclusion across our global industry. As we continue to grow across the whole value chain, we will work closely with our partners to facilitate and support relevant policies that affect gender bias.

We will continue to actively champion the meat industry, transforming its image and ambitiously voicing the opportunities that are available but not always seen by the broader population. As well as supporting the success of women’s careers, we will encourage existing and new male allies to work supportively and collaboratively with Meat Business Women, aiming to make the meat industry a choice career option for anyone, regardless of gender.

For more information visit www.meatbusinesswomen.org

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Thank you to our territory partners the Australian Meat Industry Council, Beef and Lamb NZ Ltd, Beef and Lamb NZ Inc., and Meat Industry Association of New Zealand for supporting us to make this truly global work.

Thank you to the Meat Business Women board for building and driving our strategy.

Last, but by no means least, thank you to the amazing businesses and individuals who work with us.

About Niteo Development

Niteo Development is a leadership and inclusion consultancy. Our purpose is to support individuals, teams and organisations to create authentic, effective and sustainable leadership to tackle the challenges of an increasingly complex world. For more information contact team@niteodevelopment.com



ENDNOTES

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