



VOICES FROM THE FIELD:
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP
JOURNEYS IN AGRICULTURE

NOVEMBER 2025



ABOUT ECO CANADA

Environmental Careers Organization of Canada (ECO Canada) is a not-for-profit corporation established in 1992 as part of Canada's Sector Council Initiative. ECO Canada is focused on identifying, communicating, and meeting the needs of environmental practitioners, employers, educators, and students. Its vision is to build the world's leading environmental workforce.

ECO Canada has supported Canada's environmental workforce by establishing professional development resources, training programs, and educational partnerships, conducting in-depth labour market research and providing the largest industry-specific job board.

ECO Canada's programs and services are developed through strong national partnerships, consultative strategic planning, and ongoing labour market research. Its labour market research provides valuable insights into environmental career trends, which can be used by governments, educators, youth, and industry partners to make decisions and formulate strategies. To learn more, please visit www.eco.ca.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has been funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada. We are greatly appreciative of the support.



We also thank Forum Research for their assistance with the survey.

DISCLAIMER

Copyright © 2025 ECO Canada

All rights reserved. The information and projections contained herein have been prepared with data sources ECO Canada has deemed to be reliable. ECO Canada makes no representations or warranties that this report is error-free and therefore shall not be liable for any financial or other losses or damages of any nature whatsoever arising from or otherwise relating to any use of its information.

The use of any part of this publication is subject to the Copyright Act. The content may be referenced for general, educational, or media purposes with the following citation: Source (or “adapted from”): ECO Canada. (2025). www.eco.ca.

For comments or questions, contact: research@eco.ca

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About ECO Canada	2
Acknowledgements	3
Disclaimer	3
Executive Summary	5
Key Findings	6
Key Takeaways	7
Introduction	8
Gender Diversity in Canadian Agriculture	9
Snapshot: Who We Heard From	11
How Satisfied Are They With Their Careers?	12
Satisfaction with Opportunities for Career Advancement by Seniority	13
Satisfaction with Access to Mentorship or Role Models by Seniority	14
Satisfaction with Recognition of Contributions by Seniority	15
Satisfaction with Work-Life Balance by Seniority	16
Snapshot: Helpful Resources and Tools	17
What Has Helped Them Succeed in Their Workplace?	18
Snapshot: Stretch Assignments as Opportunities for Growth	20
What Barriers to Advancement Do They Encounter?	21
Snapshot: How Prevalent Are Gender Equity Policies in Agriculture?	22
Work-life Balance Issues	23
Limited Access to Training or Professional Development	25
Physical or Safety Challenges	27
Lack of Mentorship or Sponsorship	29
Gender Bias or Discrimination	31
How Many of Them Experience Workplace Gender Inequality?	33
Unequal Pay for Equal Work	33
Exclusion from Decision-Making Opportunities	34
Dismissal of Ideas or Contributions	35
Lack of Diversity in Senior Leadership Roles	36
Gender Harassment or Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace	37
What Would They Change to Make Their Workplace More Gender Inclusive?	38
How Would Addressing Systemic Barriers Impact Their Career Growth?	40
Conclusion	42
References	43

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agriculture has shaped Canada's economy for generations and remains a vital industry. In recent decades, new technologies and shifting trends have transformed how farmers work and who works in the sector. As Canada responds to global trade and social changes, agricultural producers face growing pressures to stay competitive and adopt sustainable practices.

Women, transgender and non-binary individuals play a crucial and growing role in Canadian agriculture. While these groups account for only 35% of the agricultural workforce and just 21% of senior management roles within the sector, they contribute across the entire value chain by running farms, managing operations, and advancing research, policy, and innovation. They also bring diverse perspectives to farm management, community engagement, and environmental stewardship.

To gain insights into their unique experiences and challenges and identify potential supports that could be useful to their career advancement, we surveyed 232 individuals working in agriculture across Canada who identify as women, transgender, or non-binary in February 2025.



Key Findings

1	Career Satisfaction	Roughly two-thirds of respondents reported being satisfied with their career progression, mentorship, recognition, and work-life balance. Satisfaction generally increased with seniority.
2	Advancement & Mentorship Gaps	Early-stage employees were less likely to be satisfied with their opportunities for advancement and access to mentorship, pointing to a need for stronger support structures early in career pathways.
3	Employee Recognition and Work-Life Balance	Senior employees, particularly executives and directors, report the highest satisfaction with recognition of their contributions, while mid- and entry-level staff feel less acknowledged. Overall, work-life balance satisfaction is strong across all levels, though junior-level employees show slightly higher dissatisfaction.
4	Helpful Resources and Tools	Respondents highlighted flexible work arrangements, leadership training, and networking opportunities as the most used and helpful resources. While flexible work arrangements were most commonly used, leadership training and networking opportunities were identified as the most beneficial for future career growth.
5	Stretch Assignments	Only half of respondents reported receiving high-profile or challenging assignments. These opportunities are critical for developing leadership skills and earning promotions.
6	Positive Workplace Supports	While 54% reported encountering positive experiences such as co-worker support and mentorship, these supports were unevenly distributed by seniority, with early-career professionals least likely to benefit.
7	Barriers to Advancement	Key challenges among those experiencing gender-related barriers included work-life balance issues (28%), limited access to training (21%), physical/safety concerns (18%), lack of mentorship (18%), and gender bias or discrimination (15%).
8	Equity Issues in the Workplace	Nearly half of respondents reported experiencing unequal pay, exclusion from decision making, lack of diversity in senior leadership roles, or having their ideas dismissed. Four in ten experienced gender-based harassment.
9	Workplace Gender Equity Policies	While 72% said their workplace has gender equity policies, nearly one in five indicated such policies are absent or unclear.
10	What Workers Want to Change	Respondents prioritized improvements such as stronger equity policies, inclusive workplace cultures, family-friendly supports, pay equity, and greater access to leadership development.
11	Impact of Addressing Systemic Barriers	One in four respondents said that addressing systemic barriers would support their career growth. Suggested impacts included fairer access to advancement, better recognition, more equitable policies, improved work-life balance, and stronger peer support.

Key Takeaways

1	Advancement & Mentorship Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early-stage employees often lack access to mentorship and meaningful advancement opportunities, signaling the need for structured early-career support programs.
2	Recognition & Work-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior employees feel most recognized for their contributions, while entry- and mid-level staff often feel undervalued. • Work-life balance is generally positive, but junior staff report slightly higher dissatisfaction, indicating room for targeted support.
3	Resources & Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible work arrangements, leadership training, and networking are highly valued, with leadership development and networking particularly beneficial for future growth. • Positive workplace support, including teamwork, training, job shadowing, and networking, helps most employees succeed.
4	Key Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-life balance issues, limited training opportunities, safety concerns, lack of mentorship, and gender bias hinder advancement. • Half of employees report not receiving high-profile or challenging assignments, which slows leadership skill development and promotion potential.
5	Equity & Systemic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many employees report unequal pay, exclusion from decision-making, lack of diversity in leadership, or gender-based harassment, showing persistent systemic inequities. • Stronger equity policies, inclusive culture, and addressing systemic barriers are linked to improved career growth, recognition, and workplace fairness.

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector is a critical component of the Canadian economy and has been a mainstay throughout Canadian history. Many dynamics will continue to shape the agricultural sector and its economic contributions for the foreseeable future.

While the agricultural sector is a key sector of the Canadian economy, it is relatively small in comparison to the national picture.

OUTPUT

In 2024, agriculture generated

\$31.6 billion

in gross domestic product (GDP), equivalent to 1.4% of Canada's national output (Statistics Canada, 2025a).

EMPLOYMENT

In 2024, roughly

231,000 individuals

were employed in the agriculture sector, equivalent to 1.1% of Canada's total employment (Statistics Canada, 2025b).

Agriculture in Canada is heavily impacted by government legislation, policy and regulation. Recent polling of agricultural producers noted that their direct concerns in government were the regulatory environment (61%) and the effects of trade dynamics on opportunities and barriers, both domestic and international (50%) (Angus Reid Institute, 2024).

Government decisions, such as environmental regulations, have a direct impact on industry as producers attempt to increase production while limiting their emissions. Technology has aided these efforts while also allowing producers to expand their production, maintain efficiency, and limit cost expenditures (Huneke et al., 2024). These innovations have, in many cases, transformed the sector and brought more stability.

Despite its critical economic role, the agricultural sector faces significant workforce challenges. Labour shortages have become a persistent issue, with over 28,200 positions unfilled during peak seasons in 2022 alone, leading to a 3.7% decline in sales, equating to an estimated \$3.5 billion in lost revenue. (Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council, 2024)

The agricultural sector has been hampered by multiple hiring barriers including (Khanal, 2025):

- Individuals' disinterest in physically demanding jobs,
- Lack of economic stability possible due to seasonal work,
- Gradual decline in rural populations limiting available labour, and
- Skill mismatches require additional training and support to replace retiring workers and producers who outpace incoming labour.

These barriers have contributed to 20% of agriculture employers being unable to find enough workers during their peak seasons. A situation that will become dire with a projected 100,000 job vacancies in the sector by 2030 (Canadian Federation of Agriculture, 2022).

Gender Diversity in Canadian Agriculture

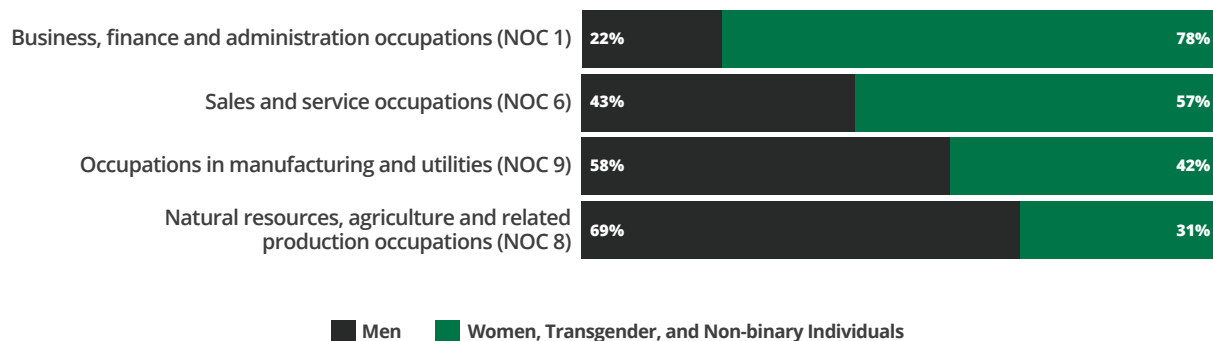
Women, transgender and non-binary individuals play a crucial and growing role in Canadian agriculture. They contribute across the entire value chain—running farms, managing operations and advancing research, policy and innovation—and bring diverse perspectives to farm management, community engagement and environmental stewardship.

2021 Census data reveals that **48%** of individuals employed across Canada identify as women, transgender or non-binary but only **35%** of workers in agriculture. Their share of senior management roles is even smaller, with **30%** of senior managers across all industries identifying as women, transgender or non-binary. In agriculture, the share drops to **21%**.

Women, transgender and non-binary individuals comprise **31%** of workers in Natural resources, agricultural and related production occupations, which include general and specialized labourers, supervisors, and foremen/women. In contrast, **78%** of workers in Business, finance and administration occupations and **57%** of workers in Sales and service occupations are women, transgender or non-binary individuals.

Figure 1

Gender Distribution of Employment for Top Occupations¹ in Agriculture,² 2021 Census



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021 Census. Custom tabulation for ECO Canada.

¹ Based on the National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021. For more information about NOC, visit <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>.

² Data reported is for three industry groups: NAICS 1110 (Farms (except greenhouses, nurseries, floriculture and aquaculture)), NAICS 1114 (Greenhouse, nursery and floriculture production), and NAICS 1150 (Support activities for farms (1151 to 1152)).

Opportunities exist to strengthen the sector's sustainability and prosperity as it attempts to address complexities such as government environmental regulations, international trade, and a decrease in labour supply. Research demonstrates that agricultural organizations with greater gender diversity embrace innovation, a necessary component to address the changing landscape in the agricultural sector (Huneke et al., 2024). To unlock opportunities for gender diverse workers and create a more inclusive work environment in agriculture, it is essential to consider the experiences of women, transgender and non-binary individuals in the sector and find ways to alleviate barriers to employment and reduce challenges to career advancement.

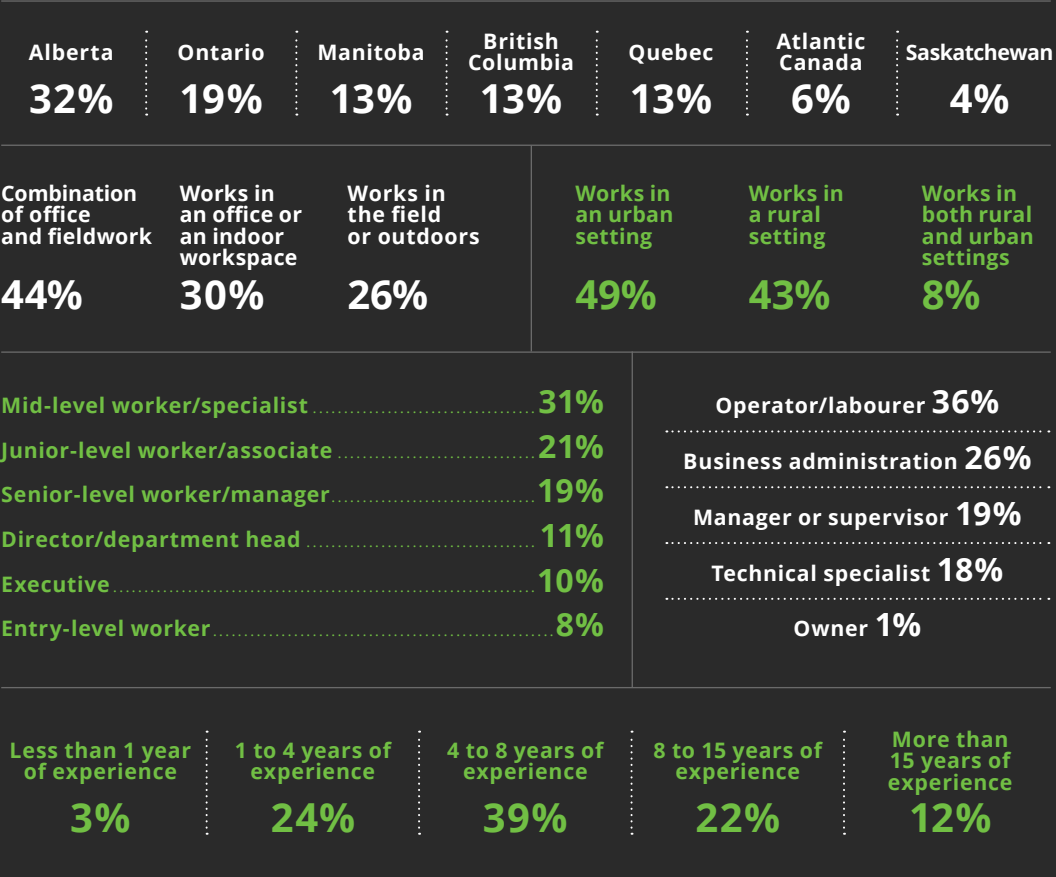
To gain insights into their unique experiences and challenges and identify potential supports that could be useful to their career advancement, we surveyed individuals working in agriculture across Canada who identify as women, transgender, or non-binary in February 2025. This report summarizes their experiences and suggestions for improving equity and inclusion in the sector.





Snapshot: Who We Heard From

We surveyed 232 individuals working in Canada’s agricultural sector who identified as women, transgender, or non-binary persons.



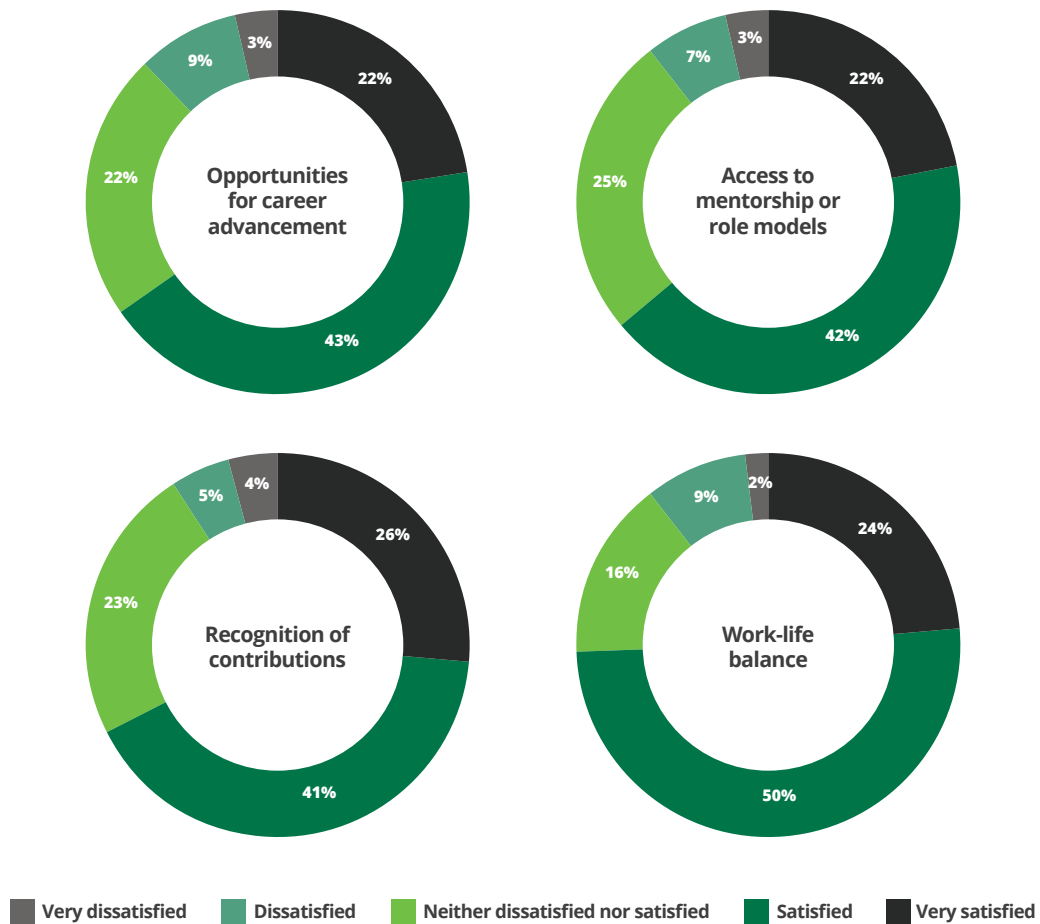
Reporting Note: Percentages in this report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

HOW SATISFIED ARE THEY WITH THEIR CAREERS?

To set the stage for our analysis, we began by asking respondents how satisfied they are with their career, with a focus on their opportunities for advancement, mentorship, recognition, and work-life balance. Overall, roughly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with these aspects of their career. Roughly 1 in 10 respondents reported that they were dissatisfied.

Figure 2

Satisfaction With Opportunities for Advancement, Mentorship, Recognition, and Work-life Balance



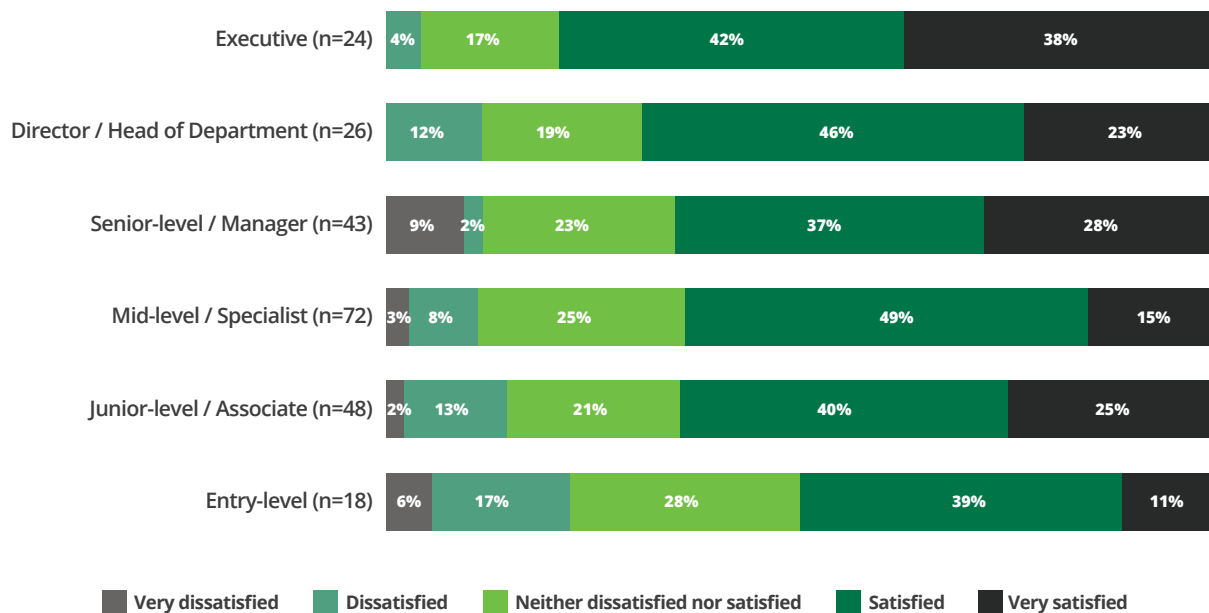
One interesting insight from our survey is that respondents with greater seniority generally reported higher career satisfaction. The following sections take a deeper dive into these results.

Satisfaction with Opportunities for Career Advancement by Seniority

Perceptions of opportunities for career advancement vary significantly across seniority levels. Executives and Directors report the highest satisfaction, with 70-80% feeling satisfied or very satisfied with their advancement opportunities. Conversely, only 50% of entry-level employees report similar satisfaction. These findings highlight an opportunity to enhance professional growth pathways and mentoring support at the lower levels to boost satisfaction and foster upward mobility across the organization.

Figure 3

Satisfaction With Opportunities for Career Advancement, by Seniority

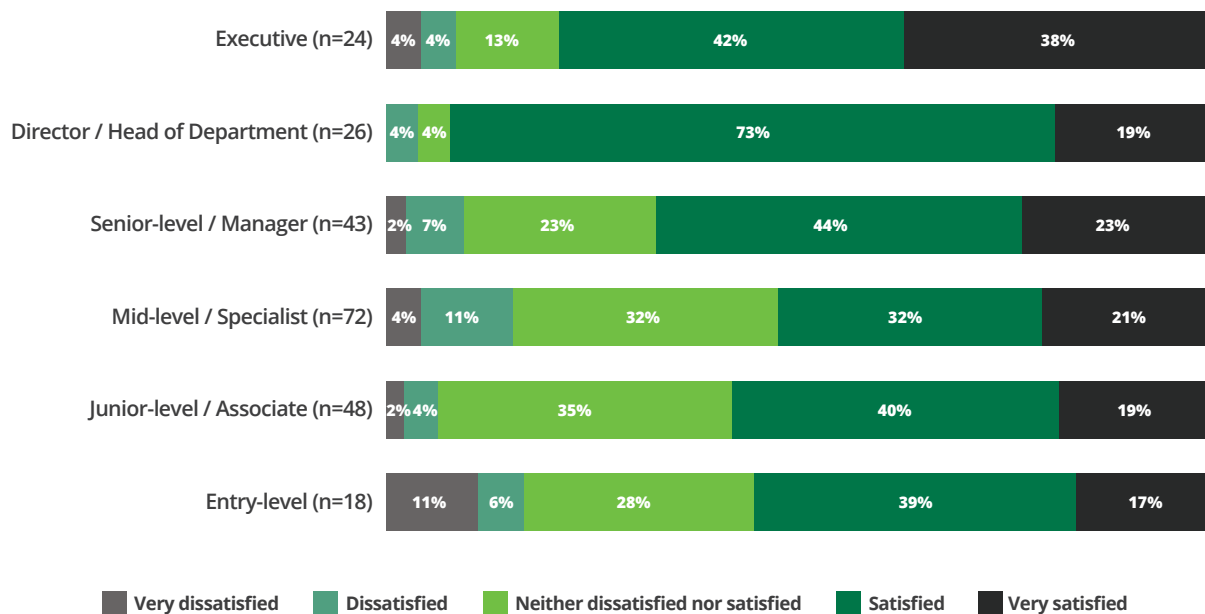


Satisfaction with Access to Mentorship or Role Models by Seniority

Across all levels of seniority, most respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their access to mentorship or role models, with satisfaction increasing at higher levels of seniority. Executives and Directors reported the highest levels of satisfaction, with over 80% indicating they were either satisfied or very satisfied. Entry-level respondents reported the highest levels of dissatisfaction (17%), followed by mid-level/specialists (15%). Notably, a substantial portion of mid-level and junior staff also reported feeling neutral (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), suggesting opportunities for engagement and retention efforts targeting these groups. Overall, while satisfaction is relatively high across respondents, there are clear gradients by seniority, highlighting areas where interventions might enhance employee experience and support career progression.

Figure 4

Satisfaction With Access to Mentorship or Role Models, by Seniority

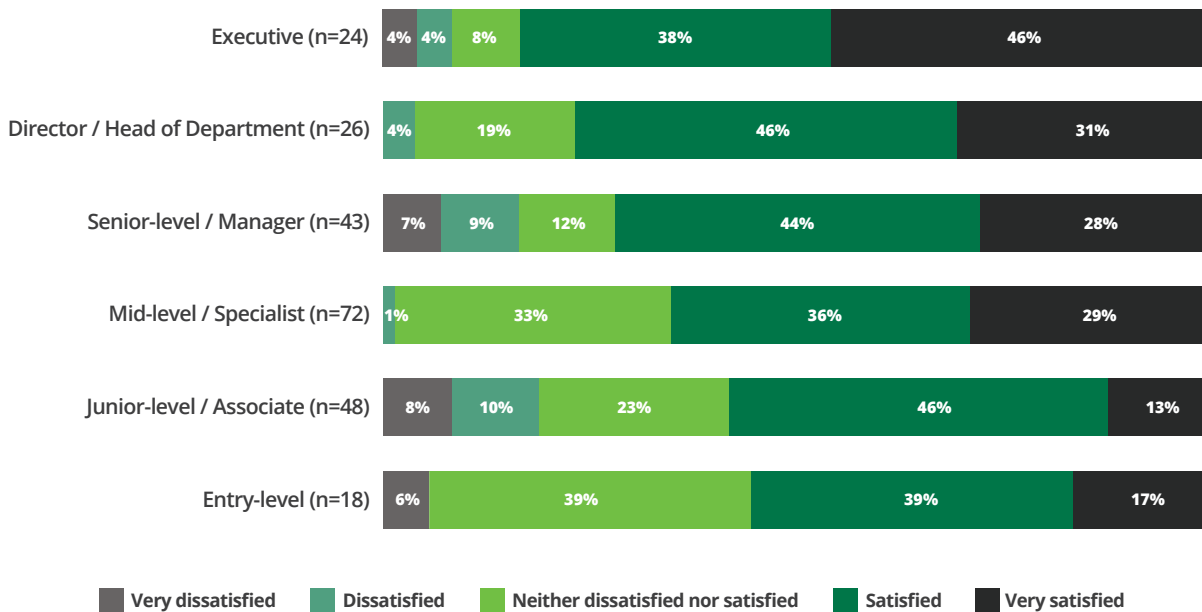


Satisfaction with Recognition of Contributions by Seniority

Agriculture workers at higher levels of seniority expressed greater satisfaction with the extent to which their contributions are recognized. Executives and Directors report the highest levels of feeling recognized, with 84% and 77% respectively indicating they are satisfied or very satisfied. By contrast, satisfaction with recognition is lower among mid-level, junior-level, and entry-level employees. Notably, dissatisfaction levels are low across the board but are slightly higher in senior-level (16%) and junior-level (18%) roles. The data suggests a clear need to strengthen recognition efforts at the lower levels of the organization to foster a more inclusive and rewarding work environment.

Figure 5

Satisfaction With Recognition of Contributions, by Seniority

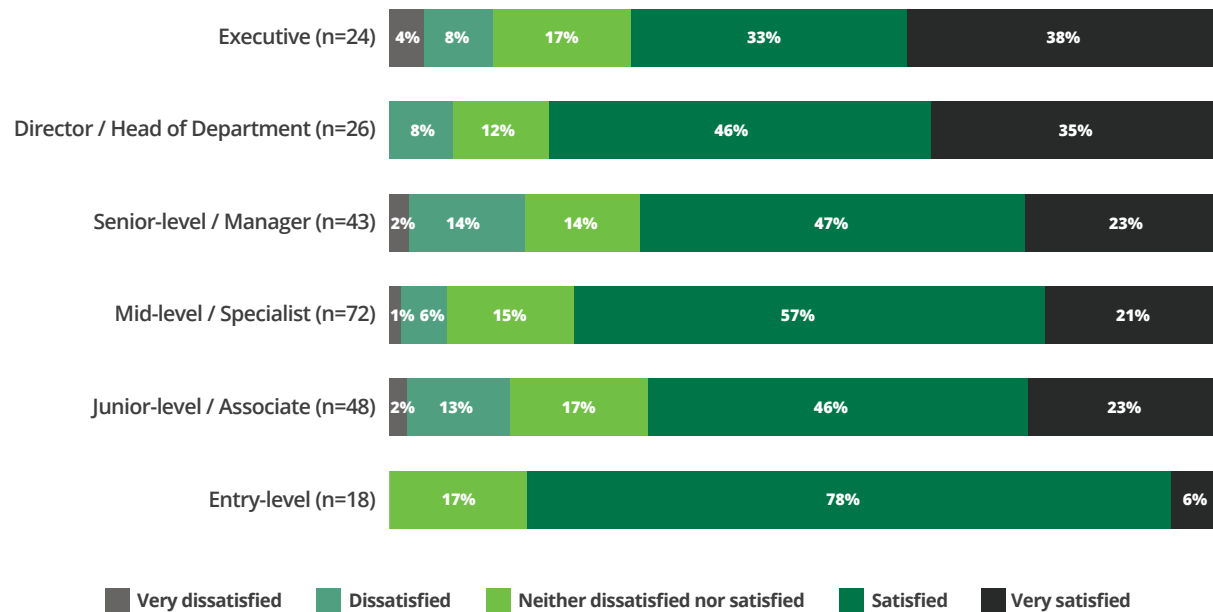


Satisfaction with Work-Life Balance by Seniority

Overall, satisfaction with work-life balance is high amongst respondents to our survey, ranging from 69% for junior-level staff to 84% for entry-level staff. While none of the entry-level respondents reported dissatisfaction with work-life balance, 15% of junior-level respondents reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their work-life balance. Executives and Directors also report high satisfaction levels, with 70% or more feeling positive about their work-life balance. These findings suggest that while most employees are satisfied with their work-life balance, organizations could focus on enhancing flexibility and support for junior-level employees to foster better experiences across the board.

Figure 6

Satisfaction With Work-Life Balance, by Seniority





Snapshot: Helpful Resources and Tools

To better understand the experiences of women, transgender, and non-binary individuals working in agriculture, we asked respondents about the types of tools and resources they had used in the past and which resources they felt would most help their career advancement. In both instances, flexible work arrangements and leadership training were the top two choices.

Table 1

Resources Used or Would be Used by Respondents

Resources/tools used	Resources/tools that would be helpful
Flexible work arrangements (59%)	Leadership training (72%)
Leadership training (56%)	Networking opportunities (72%)
Networking opportunities (50%)	Flexible work arrangements (71%)



WHAT HAS HELPED THEM SUCCEED IN THEIR WORKPLACE?

We were also interested in exploring what types of positive experiences or supports women, transgender, and non-binary individuals in agricultural careers have encountered that helped them succeed in their workplace. Only 54% of respondents reported that they have benefited from such encounters in the past, while 40% reported not encountering positive experiences or support at all.

Among those who reported positive experiences or support, the types of support encountered varied widely. The top three cited were co-worker support/teamwork (26%), training, mentorship, or job shadowing (18%), and networking (14%).

Figure 7

Respondents' Positive Experiences



Qualitative responses showed strong emphasis on the value of **support networks** composed of coworkers, friends, and family. **Mentorship and training** were also emphasized as beneficial experiences for workers to access encouragement and critical skills to succeed. Finally, the **quality of the workplace** was a large focus with points regarding work-life balance, higher positions with higher wages, and flexible working arrangements.

The proportion of respondents reporting positive experiences differed across seniority levels, as did the types encountered. More than three-quarters of Executives (78%) reported positive experiences or support that benefitted their careers. In contrast, only 40% of Entry-level and 43% of Junior-level / Associate workers reported benefitting from supports or positive experiences.

Figure 8

Proportion of Respondents Reporting Positive Experiences, by Seniority

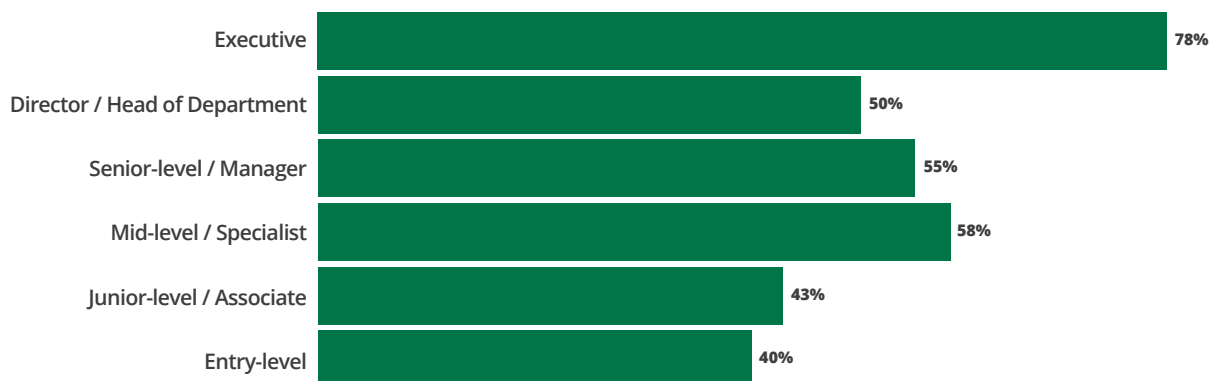


Table 2

Top Three Positive Experiences Reported, by Seniority

<p style="text-align: center;">EXECUTIVE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Networking 2. Support and help from co-workers 3. New technologies, equipment, or infrastructure 	<p style="text-align: center;">DIRECTOR / HEAD OF DEPARTMENT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training, mentoring, or job shadowing 2. Support and help from co-workers 3. Support and help from their manager
<p style="text-align: center;">SENIOR-LEVEL / MANAGER</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training, mentoring, or job shadowing 2. Support and help from co-workers 3. Work fulfillment 	<p style="text-align: center;">MID-LEVEL / SPECIALIST</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Networking 2. Support and help from their manager 3. Support and help from co-workers
<p style="text-align: center;">JUNIOR-LEVEL / ASSOCIATE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and help from co-workers 2. Training, mentoring, or job shadowing 3. Networking 	<p style="text-align: center;">ENTRY LEVEL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and help from co-workers 2. Flexible work schedule / work-life balance 3. New technologies, equipment, or infrastructure

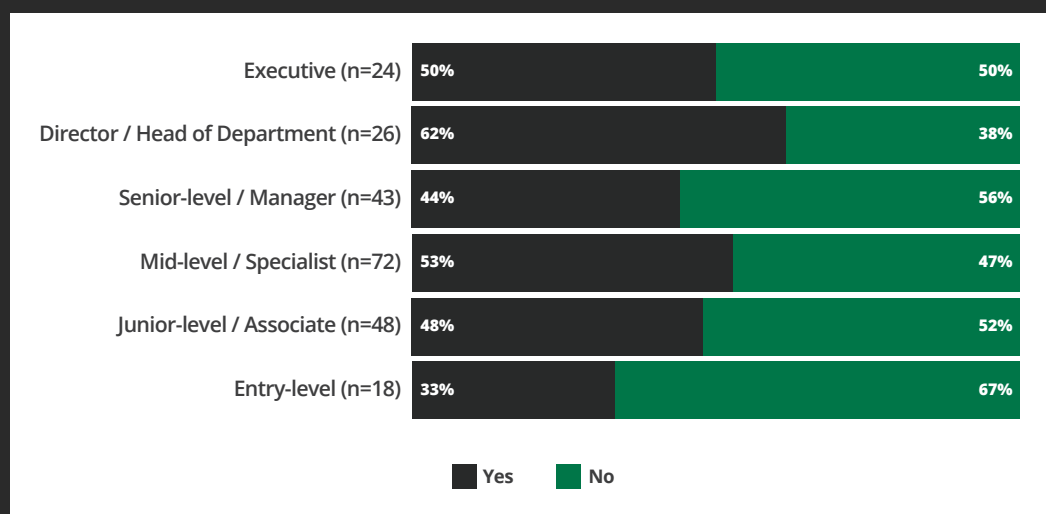


Snapshot: Stretch Assignments as Opportunities for Growth

Stretch assignments are critical for career advancement because they provide the **skills, visibility, and credibility** necessary for leadership roles. Unfortunately, only half (49%) of respondents had experienced the opportunity to take on challenging or high-profile assignments.

Figure 9

Percentage of Respondents who Experienced Opportunities to Take on Challenging or High-profile Assignments, by Seniority



Here's why these types of assignments matter so much, especially for women, transgender, and non-binary workers.

Stretch assignments push individuals to:

- Build strategic, cross-functional, or leadership capabilities
- Solve complex problems under pressure
- Gain confidence and credibility by demonstrating success in high-stakes situations

Taking on a challenging assignment is a signal that the individual is:

- Willing to grow and take risks
- Ambitious and capable of leadership
- A team player able to handle complexity and ambiguity

High-profile projects often mean working with senior leaders or external stakeholders. This visibility:

- Increases recognition and sponsorship potential
- Puts them on the radar for promotions or future roles
- Builds a track record that leadership can reference when considering advancement

Challenging and high-profile assignments:

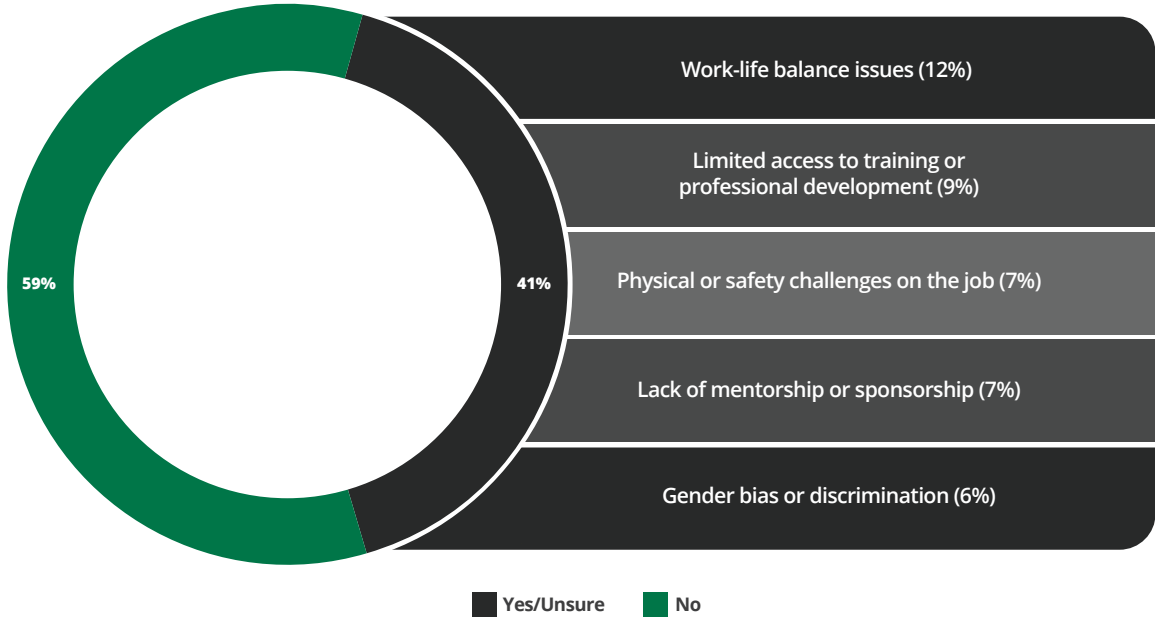
- Provide access to the kinds of roles and accomplishments that build promotable profiles
- Break down the "experience trap" (you need experience to get experience)
- Help close gaps in leadership representation over time

WHAT BARRIERS TO ADVANCEMENT DO THEY ENCOUNTER?

When asked whether they had faced any barriers to advancement due to gender or gender expression, nearly 60% responded that they had not faced such barriers, 38% reported that they had, and 3% were unsure.

Those respondents who had, or were unsure if they had, faced gender-related barriers were asked to identify the most significant challenge they faced. Work-life balance issues appear at the top of that list (28% of respondents), followed by limited access to training/professional development (21%), physical or safety challenges on the job (18%), lack of mentorship or sponsorship (18%), and gender bias or discrimination (15%).

Figure 10
Proportion of Respondents Experiencing Gender-Related Barriers



To better understand how prevalent these challenges are for women, transgender and non-binary workers in the agriculture sector, we asked all respondents how frequently they encounter each of them in their workplace.

Snapshot: How Prevalent Are Gender Equity Policies in Agriculture?



Most respondents (**72%**) reported that their workplace or organization has policies or initiatives in place to support gender equity. However, **21%** indicated that no such measures exist, and **7%** were unsure. This suggests that while gender equity is a priority for many employers, there is still room for broader adoption and clearer communication of such initiatives.

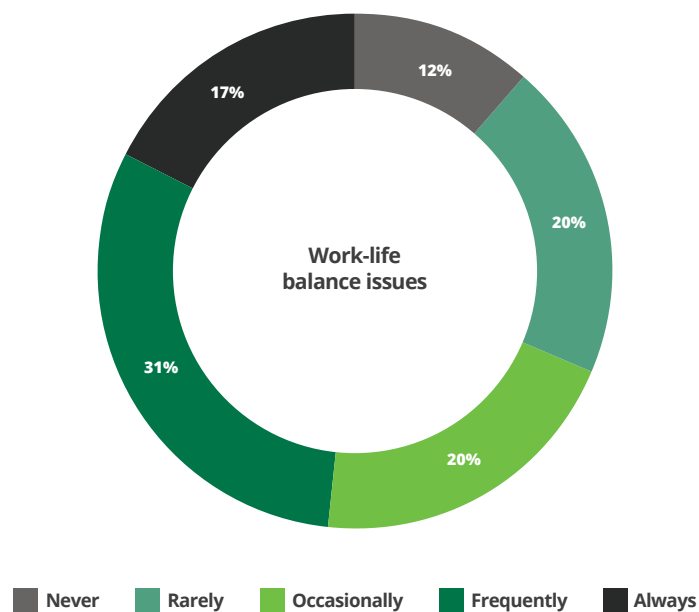


Work-life Balance Issues

When workers don't have a good balance between work and personal life, it can be harder for them to move ahead in their careers. Long hours or strict schedules can make them too tired or busy to learn new skills, take on important projects, or build strong relationships at work. Others might see them as less dedicated, even if they work hard. This can lead to missed chances for promotions or career growth.

Figure 11

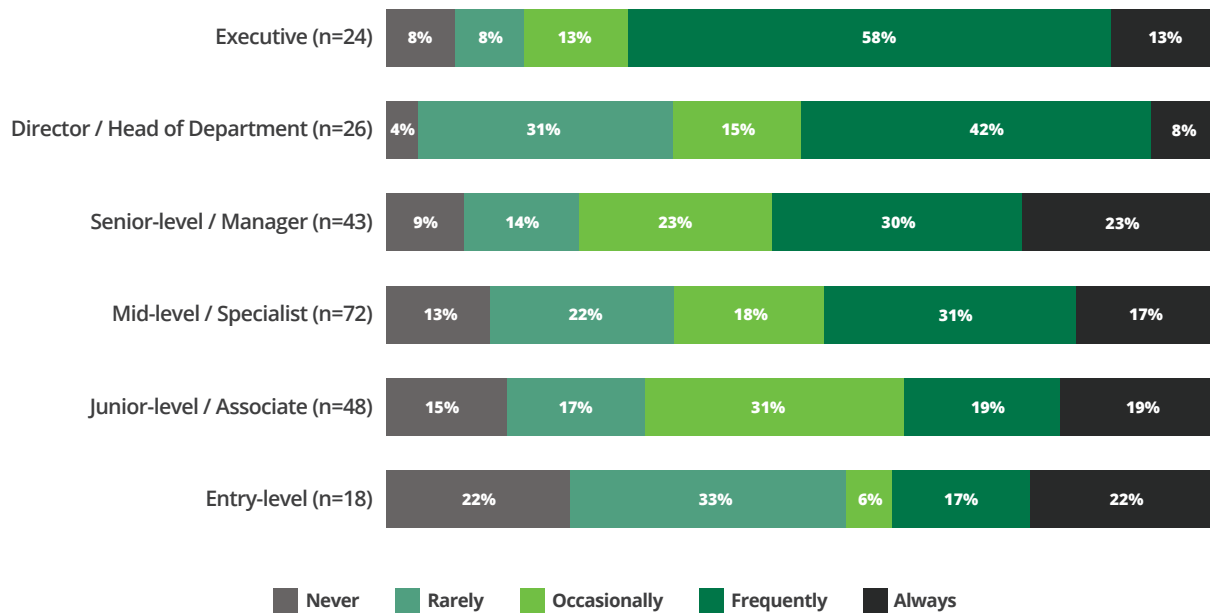
Frequency of Work-life Balance Issues



Nearly half (48%) of respondents reported that they always or frequently encounter work-life balance issues at their workplace. The prevalence of work-life issues increases with seniority, with 72% of Executives, 50% of Directors / Heads of Department, and 53% of Senior-level / Managers reporting that they always or frequently encounter work-life balance issues.

Figure 12

Frequency of Work-life Balance Issues, by Seniority

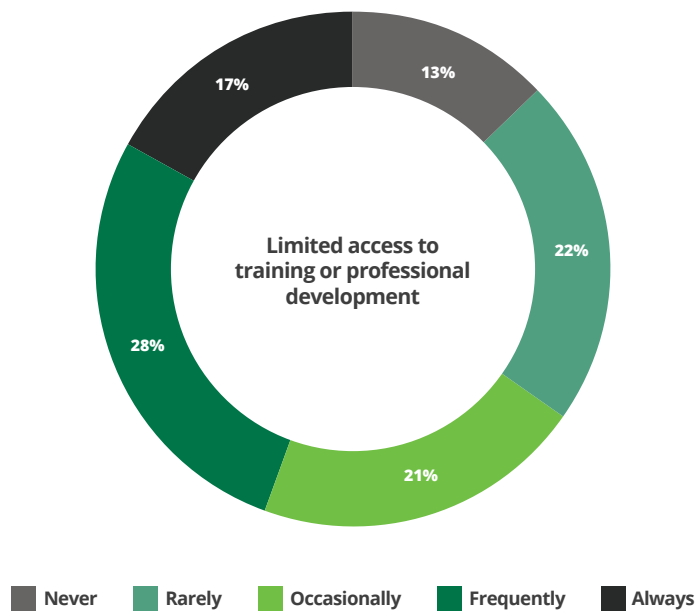


Limited Access to Training or Professional Development

When people don't have access to training or professional development, it can hold them back in their careers. Without chances to learn new skills or improve the ones they have, it's harder to take on bigger responsibilities or apply for higher-level jobs. They may also fall behind others who do get those opportunities. Over time, this can make it harder to move up and reach their career goals.

Figure 13

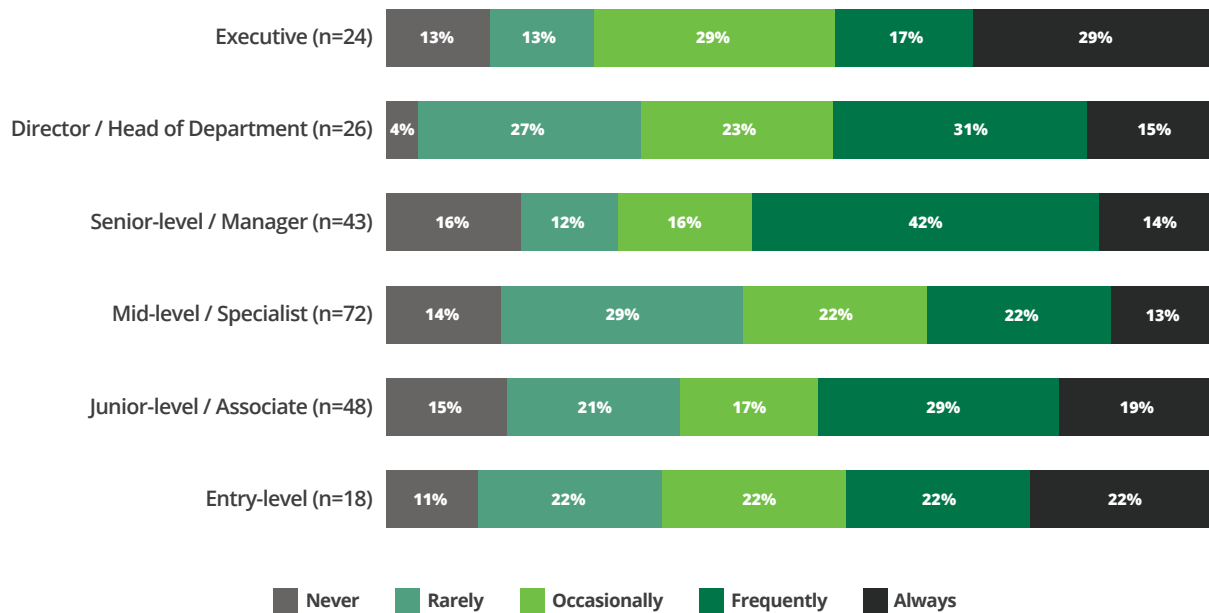
Frequency of Limited Access to Training or Professional Development



Nearly half (45%) of respondents reported that they always or frequently encounter limited access to training or professional development at their workplace. While only 35% of Mid-level / Specialists reported always or frequently experiencing this challenge, 56% of Senior-level / Managers reported the same.

Figure 14

Frequency of Limited Access to Training or Professional Development, by Seniority

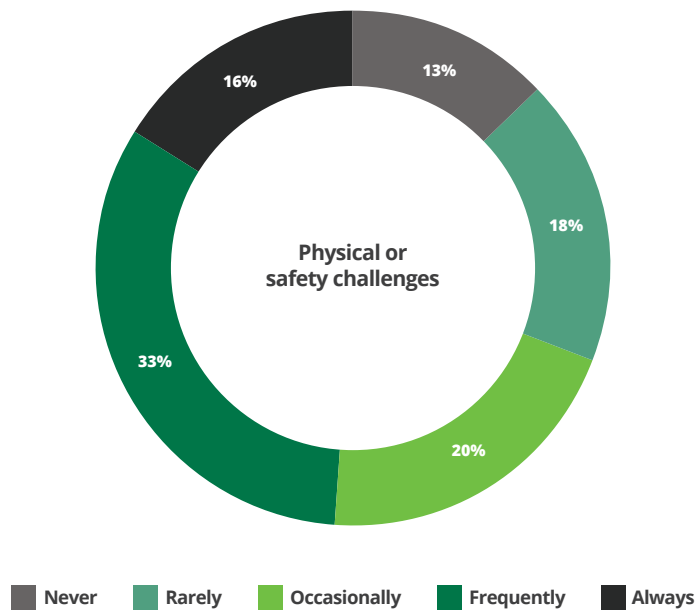


Physical or Safety Challenges

Physical or safety challenges on the job can lower job satisfaction and limit chances for advancement. When tasks, equipment, or training are not designed with women in mind, there is a greater risk of injury or strain. This can make it harder for women to stay in the industry long term, take on leadership roles, or feel valued and respected in their work.

Figure 15

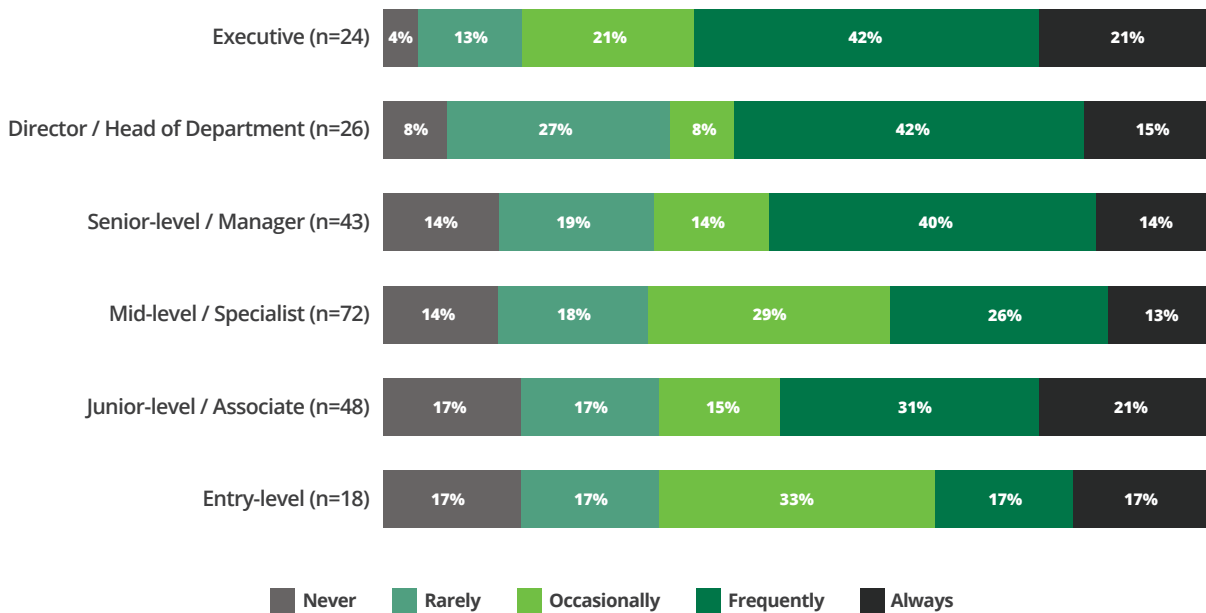
Frequency of Physical or Safety Challenges



Nearly half (49%) of respondents reported that they always or frequently encounter physical/safety challenges at their workplace. While roughly one-third (34%) of Entry-level workers and 39% of Mid-level / Specialists reported always or frequently experiencing these challenges, nearly two-thirds (63%) of Executives report the same.

Figure 16

Frequency of Physical or Safety Challenges, by Seniority

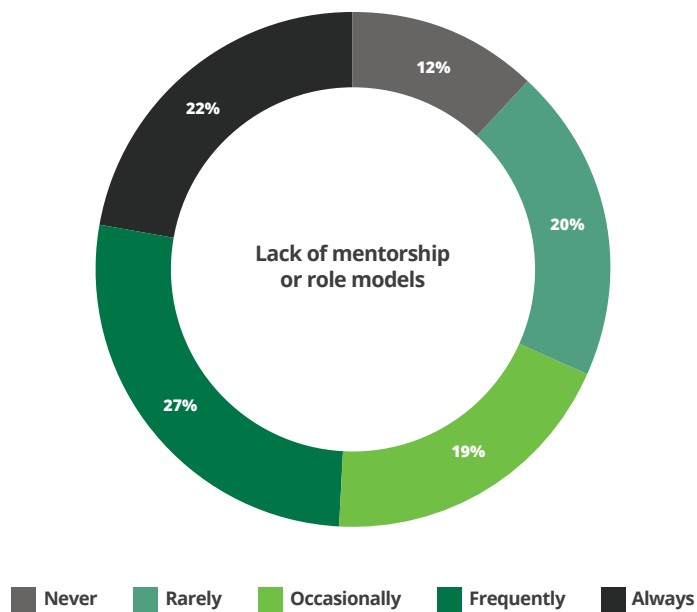


Lack of Mentorship or Sponsorship

When people don't have a mentor or sponsor at work, it can be harder for them to grow in their careers. Mentors give advice and help with learning new skills, while sponsors speak up for others and help them get noticed for new opportunities. Without this kind of support, it's easy for an employee to feel stuck or overlooked, even if they work hard. This can make it harder to move up or reach their career goals.

Figure 17

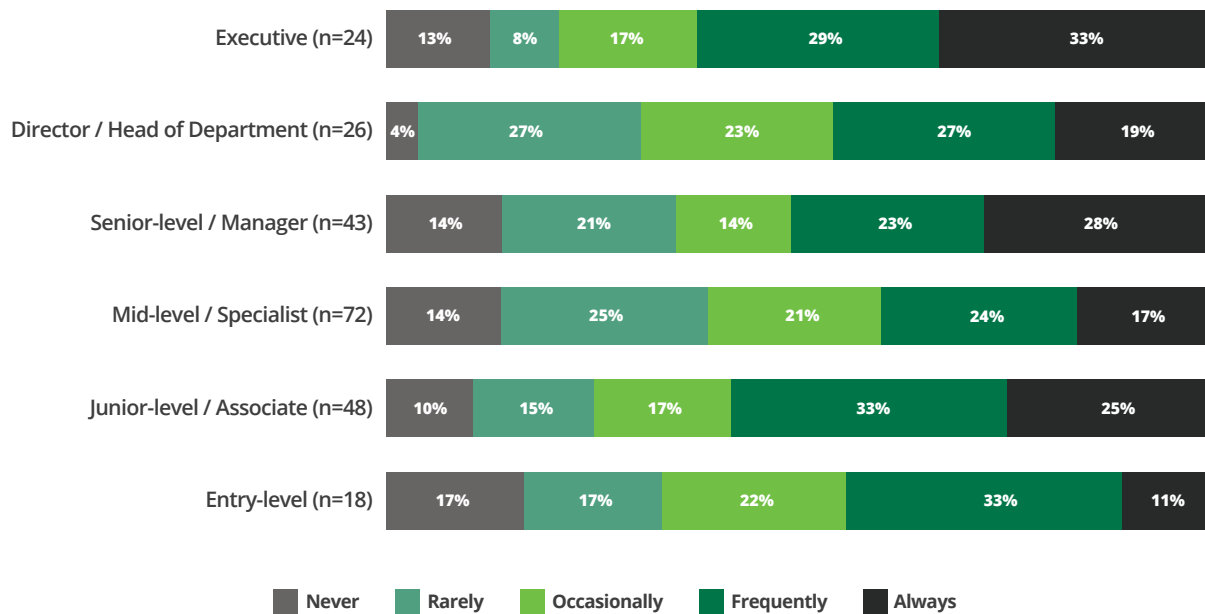
Frequency of a Lack of Mentorship or Sponsorship



Nearly half (49%) of respondents reported that they always or frequently encounter a lack of mentorship or sponsorship at their workplace. Executives (62%) and Junior-level / Associates (58%) reported encountering a lack of mentorship or sponsorship with the greatest frequency. In contrast, just over two-fifths of Mid-level / Specialists reported always or frequently encountering this challenge.

Figure 18

Frequency of a Lack of Mentorship or Sponsorship, by Seniority

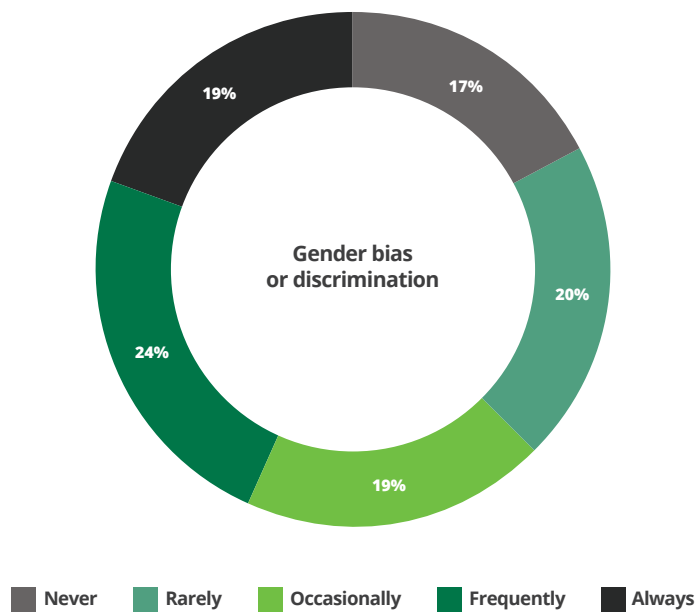


Gender Bias or Discrimination

Gender bias or discrimination can make it harder for women and gender-diverse people to move ahead in their careers. They may be treated differently, have their ideas overlooked, or be passed over for promotions and important projects. This can make them feel unwelcome or less confident at work. When people aren't given the same chances to grow and succeed, it becomes much harder for them to reach their career goals.

Figure 19

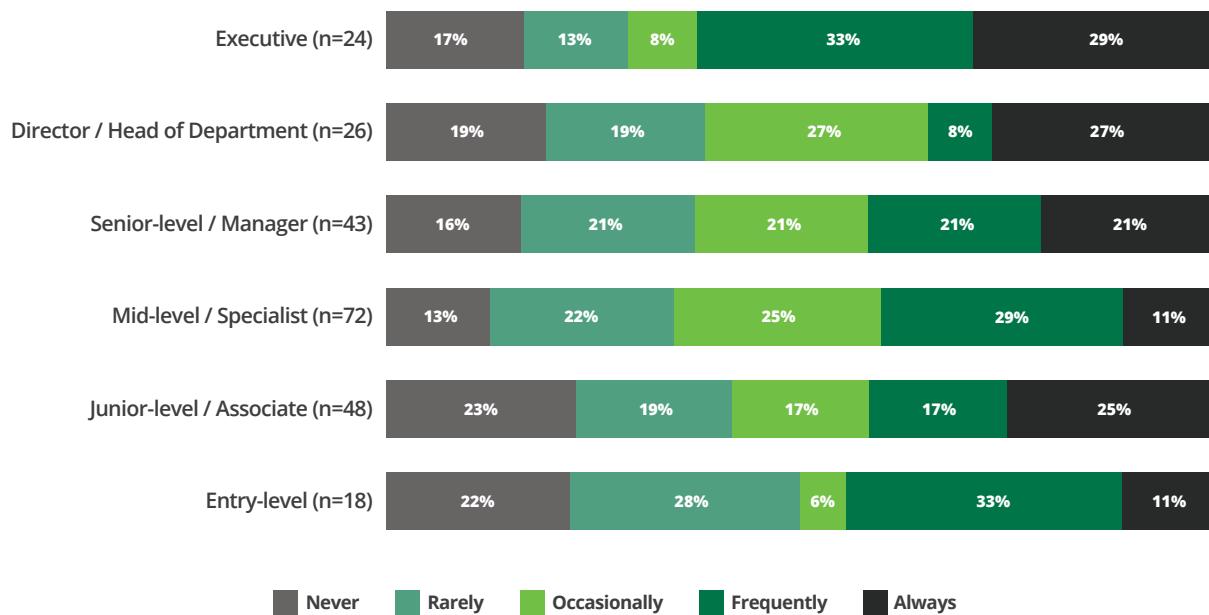
Frequency of Gender Bias or Discrimination



More than two-fifths of respondents reported that they always or frequently encounter gender bias or discrimination at their workplace. More than three-fifths of Executives (62%) reported always or frequently experiencing gender bias or discrimination. In contrast, just over one-third of Directors / Heads of Department experienced the same.

Figure 20

Frequency of Gender Bias or Discrimination, by Seniority



HOW MANY OF THEM EXPERIENCE WORKPLACE GENDER INEQUALITY?

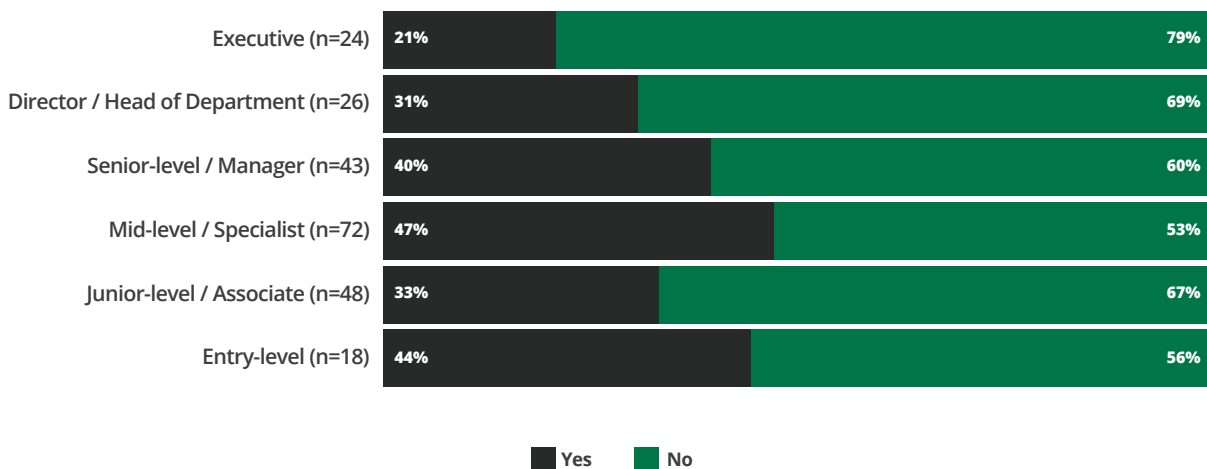
In this section, we take a closer look at how women, transgender and non-binary individuals are experiencing their agriculture sector workplaces when it comes to fairness and inclusion. We asked respondents if they had personally experienced or observed things like unequal pay, being left out of important decisions, or gender-based harassment in their workplace. Their answers shed light on the everyday challenges that can hold people back and highlight where the agriculture sector still has work to do to create inclusive environments.

Unequal Pay for Equal Work

Thirty-eight percent of all respondents reported personally experiencing unequal pay for equal work in their workplace. This concern was most frequently raised by mid-level specialists (47%) and entry-level staff (44%), suggesting that perceptions of pay inequity are more prominent earlier in one's career. Reports of unequal pay declined significantly at more senior levels, with only 21% of executives and 31% of directors reporting this experience. Overall, the data points to a perceived pay gap that disproportionately affects employees in junior and mid-career positions.

Figure 21

Percentage of Respondents who Experience Unequal Pay for Equal Work, by Seniority

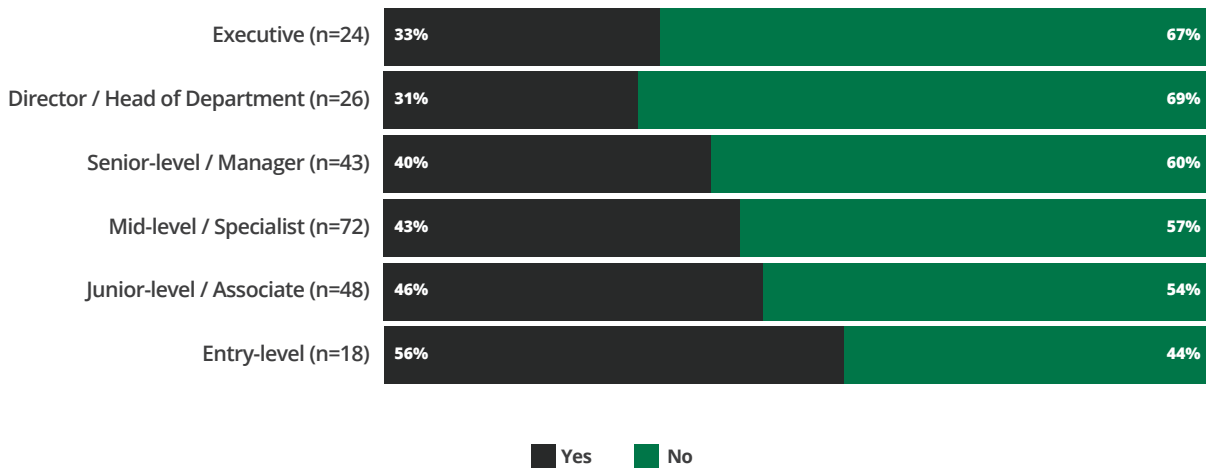


Exclusion from Decision-Making Opportunities

Overall, 41% of respondents reported being excluded from decision-making opportunities in their workplace. This experience was most common among entry-level employees, with over half (56%) indicating exclusion, followed by junior- and mid-level staff. The prevalence of exclusion declined steadily at higher job levels, with only about one-third of directors and executives reporting this experience. These results suggest that access to decision-making improves with seniority, though a significant share of early- and mid-career professionals still feel left out of key organizational conversations.

Figure 22

Percentage of Respondents who Experience Exclusion from Decision-Making Opportunities, by Seniority

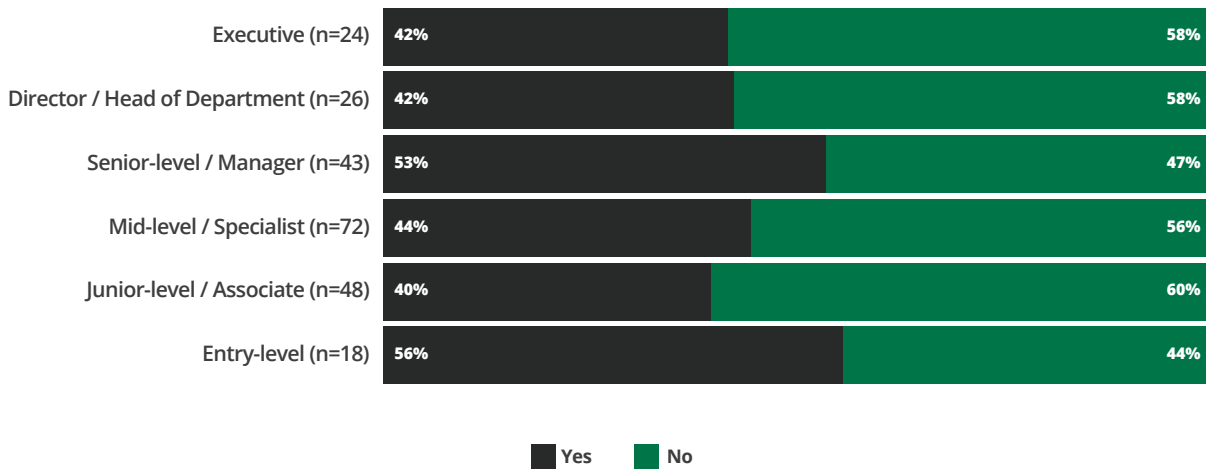


Dismissal of Ideas or Contributions

Across all respondents, 45% reported having experienced the dismissal of their ideas or contributions in the workplace. This issue was most commonly reported by entry-level employees (56%) and senior-level managers (53%), suggesting it affects both early-career professionals and those in mid-to-upper leadership roles. Such perceptions were somewhat lower—but still notable—among junior-level, director, and executive staff, each ranging around 40–44%. The data indicates that feeling unheard is a widespread issue across career stages, with heightened prevalence at the lower and mid-senior levels.

Figure 23

Percentage of Respondents who Experience Dismissal of Their Ideas or Contributions, by Seniority

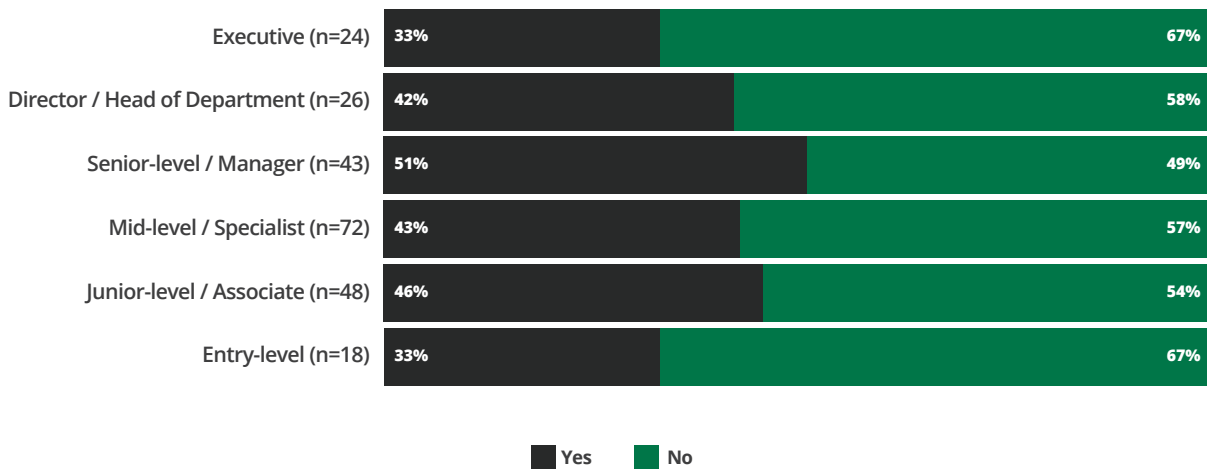


Lack of Diversity in Senior Leadership Roles

Overall, 43% of respondents reported experiencing a lack of diversity in senior leadership roles within their workplace. Perceptions of this issue were highest among senior-level managers, with over half (51%) indicating they had observed a lack of diversity. Responses were more mixed across other job levels, with reported experiences ranging from 33% at both the entry and executive levels to 46% among junior-level staff. These findings suggest that perceptions of leadership diversity challenges are present across all career stages.

Figure 24

Percentage of Respondents who Experience a Lack of Diversity in Senior Leadership Roles, by Seniority

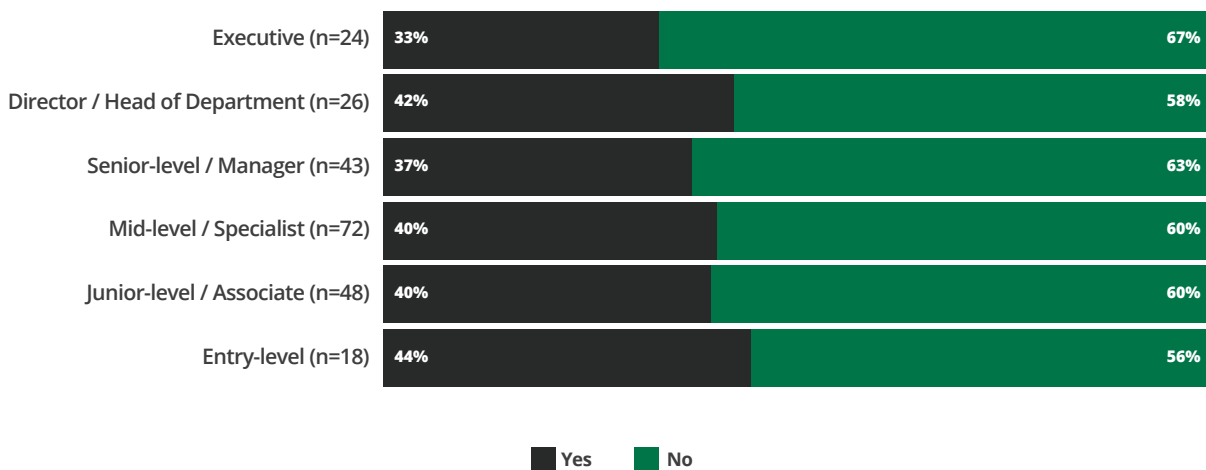


Gender Harassment or Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace

Forty percent of respondents reported personally experiencing gender-based harassment or inappropriate behaviour in the workplace. The incidence was relatively consistent across most job levels, ranging from 33% at the executive level to 44% at the entry level. While executives reported the lowest rate, the findings suggest that these experiences persist across all career stages.

Figure 25

Percentage of Respondents who Experience Gender Harassment or Inappropriate Behaviour, by Seniority



WHAT WOULD THEY CHANGE TO MAKE THEIR WORKPLACE MORE GENDER INCLUSIVE?

When respondents were asked what, if anything, they would like to change to make their workplace more gender inclusive, more than half (56%) responded that there was nothing that they would change. Those who provided suggestions for change focused largely on using company policies and training to improve gender diversity across roles, create a more inclusive organizational culture, establish a family-friendly workplace, and ensure pay equity.

1 Strengthen, monitor, and enforce gender equality and equity policies (27% of suggestions)

- Introduce or update comprehensive gender equity policies that promote equal treatment, fair pay, and inclusive practices across all levels of the organization. Create formal structures (e.g., gender equity committees or monitoring groups) to regularly assess progress on gender equity goals, including regular audits of compensation, promotion, and work assignments to identify and correct gender-based disparities.

2 Foster an inclusive, respectful, and supportive workplace culture (24%)

- Create a culture of respect and inclusion by addressing gender bias, promoting open communication, and encouraging collaboration across all genders. Ensure staff at all levels receive training in unconscious bias, inclusive language, and respectful workplace behaviours.

3 Increase representation of women in leadership and technical roles (22%)

- Actively recruit, promote, and support women in leadership and decision-making positions, as well as in technical and field roles. Establish mentorship, sponsorship, and leadership development programs specifically aimed at advancing women's careers.

4 Provide flexible work options and family-friendly policies for all genders (14%)

- Offer flexible work arrangements such as remote work, job sharing, or flexible hours to support work-life balance for all employees. Implement family leave policies that are inclusive of all genders and promote shared caregiving responsibilities.
-

5 Expand access to training, career development, and advancement (8%)

- Provide equal access to skills training, professional development, and leadership opportunities, particularly for women and gender-diverse staff. Support participation in industry events, mentorship programs, and project leadership roles.

6 Ensure pay equity across all roles (7%)

- Conduct regular pay equity reviews and implement transparent salary structures to ensure equal pay for work of equal value, regardless of gender. Communicate pay policies clearly to staff to build trust and accountability.

7 Improve workplace infrastructure (3%)

- Adapt workplace infrastructure to meet the needs of all employees, including gender-neutral washrooms and properly fitting safety gear for women. Ensure workplace tools and resources are inclusive and equitably distributed.
-



HOW WOULD ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS IMPACT THEIR CAREER GROWTH?

Respondents were asked how addressing systemic barriers would affect their career growth. Nearly one-quarter of respondents (23%) reported that addressing systemic barriers would support their career growth, while 61% indicated that it would have no impact.

Among those who indicated that addressing systemic barriers would have a positive effect on their career growth, impacts identified included:

1 Increasing opportunities for career advancement (31% of responses)

- Removing systemic barriers would open clearer, fairer pathways to promotion, training, and leadership roles for women and gender-diverse individuals, allowing them to fully realize their potential and advance their careers.

2 Improving employee confidence, respect, and recognition in the workplace (17%)

- Creating an equitable environment would help employees feel more valued, respected, and empowered, boosting their confidence to contribute ideas, pursue opportunities, and gain recognition for their achievements.

3 Ensuring fair access to resources and promoting equitable policies (13%)

- Addressing structural inequities would provide everyone with the tools, training, and opportunities they need to succeed, regardless of gender, by establishing fair, merit-based systems and removing bias from workplace practices.

4 Enabling a better work-life balance and reducing burnout (11%)

- Flexible, inclusive policies would make it easier for employees to balance personal responsibilities with professional goals, helping to reduce stress and promote sustainable career growth.
-

5 Fostering a more inclusive and collaborative workplace culture (11%)

- A workplace free of bias would encourage collaboration, respect across diverse perspectives, and a sense of belonging, leading to more engaged employees and stronger team dynamics.

6 Supporting long-term career growth through structural and policy changes (11%)

- Introducing transparent, inclusive decision-making and accountability structures would reduce systemic barriers, create a more level playing field, and provide lasting support for career development.

7 Strengthening access to mentorship, sponsorship, and peer support (6%)

- With barriers removed, employees would gain greater access to mentors, advocates, and peer networks that provide guidance, encouragement, and connections critical for career progression.
-



CONCLUSION

The survey highlights both strengths and opportunities within the agricultural workplace.

Overall, a majority of employees report satisfaction with career progression, recognition, and work-life balance, with satisfaction increasing at higher levels of seniority. However, entry- and junior-level staff face notable gaps in mentorship, access to stretch assignments, and recognition, pointing to the need for stronger support early in career pathways.

Respondents identified flexible work arrangements, leadership training, and networking opportunities as key resources to advance their careers, while also highlighting barriers such as limited access to training, gender bias, and inequitable workplace practices.

Nearly half reported experiencing inequities, including pay disparities, exclusion from decision-making, and harassment, despite most workplaces having formal gender equity policies. Addressing these systemic barriers—through inclusive cultures, equitable policies, and expanded career development opportunities—could enhance retention, foster leadership growth, and create a more equitable and supportive environment for all employees.



REFERENCES

- A look at those at work in agriculture*. Statistics Canada. (2024, April 18). <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/6075-look-those-work-agriculture>
- Angus Reid Institute. *Risks & prospects: Survey of agriculture sector finds policy environment, extreme weather, protectionism atop agenda*. Angus Reid Institute. (2024, August 22). <https://angusreid.org/canada-agriculture-risk-capi-gifs/>
- Edmond, C. (2023, October 26). *Flexible working is helping women in work – but they are still struggling to reach senior roles*. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/10/gender-gap-women-work-flexibility-promotion/>
- Getting into the field: Labour issues in agriculture*. Canadian Federation of Agriculture. (n.d.). <https://www.cfa-fca.ca/getting-into-the-field-labour-issues-in-agriculture/>
- Huneke, M., Vinodrai, T., & Hall, H. (2024, August). *Crunching the numbers: A snapshot of Canada's Agricultural Technology Landscape*. University of Waterloo. <https://uwaterloo.ca/disruptive-technologies-economic-development/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/ag-crunchbase-report-august-2024-final.pdf>
- Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council. (2024, February). *Agriculture Labour Market Forecast 2023–2030*. Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council. <https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/resources/document/agriculture-labour-market-forecast-2023-2030>
- Khanal, M. (2025, February). *Labour Shortage in Alberta Agriculture*. School of Public Policy: Agriculture Policy Trends. <https://www.policyschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/AgPolicyTrends-Feb4-Final.pdf>
- Limiting our livelihoods*. American Association of University Women. (2019, November). <https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Limiting-our-Livelihoods-Full-Report.pdf>
- Overview of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector*. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. (2024, June 27). <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/sector/overview#s2>
- Pandit, A. (2025). *Role of Training in Women for Employment: A Thematic Study*. Journal of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/tvet/issue/view/4838>
- Statistics Canada. (2022, February 9). *Population growth in Canada's rural areas, 2016 to 2021*. Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-x/2021002/98-200-x2021002-eng.cfm>
- Statistics Canada. (2025b, May 9). *Labour force characteristics by industry, monthly, seasonally adjusted, last 5 months*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410029101>
- Statistics Canada. (2025a, May 30). *Gross domestic product (GDP) at basic prices, by industry, annual average*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3610043403>
- Supporting the Advancement of Women in Agriculture: Needs Assessment*. Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council. (2016, February 4). https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/sites/default/files/2022-02/SAWA%20Case%20Study%20-%20Brenda%20Lammens_Final_v3-FR.pdf



CONTACT US

...

ECO Canada
Suite 400, 105 12 Avenue SE
Calgary, Alberta T2G 1A1

P : 1-800-890-1924
E : research@eco.ca
W : eco.ca



@ecocanada

We are located in the heart of Calgary, Alberta, and have representatives located in Vancouver, Edmonton, Windsor and Halifax. Visit our website or contact us for more information.