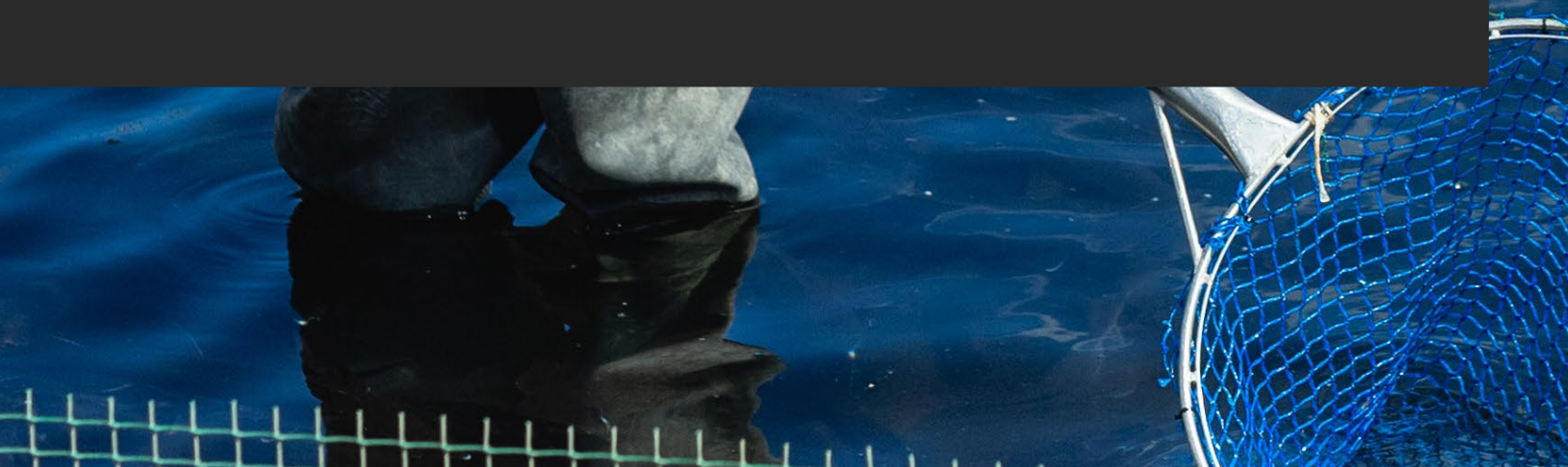


BROADENING HORIZONS:
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP
JOURNEYS IN THE **OCEAN SECTOR**

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.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ocean sector has shaped Canada’s economy for generations and remains a vital industry. In recent decades, new technologies and shifting trends have transformed who works in the sector and how they work. As Canada responds to global trade and social changes, the ocean industry faces increasing pressures to stay competitive and adopt sustainable practices.

Women play a crucial and expanding role in the Canadian ocean industry. They contribute across the entire value chain—operating fisheries, managing shipbuilding operations, and advancing research, policy, and innovation—and bring diverse perspectives to ocean management, stakeholder engagement, and environmental stewardship. Despite their significant contributions, many women continue to face barriers that limit their full participation.

In February 2025, we surveyed 139 individuals working in ocean sectors across Canada who identify as women or non-binary to gain deeper insight into their unique experiences and challenges.



Key Findings

1	Career Satisfaction	Over half of respondents reported being satisfied with their career progression, mentorship, recognition, and work-life balance.
2	Advancement & Mentorship Gaps	Satisfaction with career advancement is mixed across levels. Mid- and senior-level staff show higher satisfaction, while entry- and junior-level staff are mostly neutral, reflecting uncertainty about early-career pathways. Director-level respondents are more polarized, with notable dissatisfaction suggesting potential stagnation at the top. Access to mentorship peaks among senior-level staff, but junior employees report the lowest satisfaction and highest dissatisfaction, highlighting a mentorship gap. Structured mentorship programs and clearer career-path guidance for early- and mid-career employees could enhance development, engagement, and reduce top-level stagnation.
3	Employee Recognition and Work-Life Balance	Satisfaction with recognition increases with seniority, peaking at senior and director levels, where over half report being satisfied. Early-career employees are less likely to feel strongly recognized. Work-life balance satisfaction is relatively consistent across levels, with most respondents moderately or highly satisfied, though directors report slightly lower satisfaction than mid-level staff.
4	Helpful Resources and Tools	Women, transgender, and non-binary professionals in the ocean sector most often use flexible work arrangements, leadership training, and networking opportunities. They view leadership training, flexible work options, and networking as the most valuable resources for advancing their careers.
5	Stretch Assignments	Only half (50%) of respondents reported receiving high-profile or challenging assignments. These opportunities are essential for building leadership skills and positioning employees for promotions.
6	Positive Workplace Supports	62% of respondents reported positive experiences that supported their success, most frequently citing teamwork, managerial support, training, mentorship, and job shadowing.
7	Barriers to Advancement	Among those who reported gender-related barriers, key challenges included gender bias or discrimination (33%), physical or safety concerns (20%), work-life balance issues (16%), lack of mentorship (16%), and limited access to training (11%).
8	Equity Issues in the Workplace	Respondents reported a range of workplace inequities, such as unequal pay for equal work (35%), exclusion from decision-making opportunities (42%), dismissal of ideas or contributions (45%), and limited diversity in senior leadership roles (39%). More than one-third (35%) also experienced gender harassment or inappropriate behaviour, reflecting persistent barriers to equity and inclusion.
9	Workplace Gender Equity Policies	While nearly two-thirds (62%) of respondents indicate that gender equity policies exist, over one-quarter (27%) indicated that no such policies exist.
10	What Workers Want to Change	Respondents suggested making workplaces more gender inclusive by fostering an inclusive culture, expanding career development, ensuring equitable hiring and pay, enforcing gender equality policies, and providing flexible, family-friendly supports.
11	Impact of Addressing Systemic Barriers	Just under one-third (32%) of respondents said addressing systemic barriers would support their career growth. Suggested impacts included greater advancement opportunities, a more inclusive culture, equitable recruitment and promotions, improved well-being, better work-life balance, and fair pay and benefits.

Key Takeaways

1	Advancement & Mentorship Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid- and senior-level staff report higher career satisfaction; juniors and directors show uncertainty or dissatisfaction. • Mentorship peaks at senior levels, leaving juniors with a gap that structured programs could fill.
2	Recognition & Work-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition generally improves with seniority, though early-career contributions are sometimes overlooked. • Work-life balance is generally positive, though directors report slightly lower satisfaction.
3	Resources & Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible work arrangements and leadership training are most used and valued for career growth. • Positive workplace support, including teamwork, managerial support, and job shadowing, helps most employees succeed.
4	Key Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender bias, safety concerns, work-life balance, lack of mentorship, and limited training hinder advancement. • Only half receive high-profile assignments, limiting leadership development and promotional opportunities.
5	Equity & Systemic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace inequities include unequal pay, exclusion from decision-making, dismissed contributions, limited diversity in senior leadership roles, and gender harassment. • Addressing systemic barriers could increase advancement, inclusion, equitable pay, well-being, and work-life balance.

INTRODUCTION

The ocean sector is a critical component of the Canadian economy and has been a key driver of economic growth, job creation, and innovation. As a diverse sector, the ocean industry includes aquaculture, seafood production, ship manufacturing, and various water-based transportation sub-sectors. Many dynamics will continue to shape the ocean sector, and its' economic contributions, for the foreseeable future.

Economic and Labour Trends

While the ocean sector is a key sector of the Canadian economy it is relatively small in comparison to the national picture (see [Snapshot: The Ocean Sector by the Numbers](#)).

Despite its economic importance, the sector continues to face significant workforce challenges that limit its growth potential and ability to attract new talent (Future Skills Centre, 2024), including:

- **Low ocean literacy and general interest in sector,**
- **High competition for STEM graduates,**
- **Remote and isolated work areas mean a greater commitment,**
- **Rising living costs limiting the ability to attract and retain talent,**
- **Technological advancements rapidly shift needed skills.**



Technology and Regulation

The ocean sector has been a key focus of government policy, as demonstrated by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) through its regulation and promotion of fishery activities. Additionally, the launch of the Blue Economy Strategy—a new economic initiative aimed at guiding the evolution of regulations—signals a new era of economic growth (Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2024).

Ocean industries are also highly valued by the Canadian public. Alongside concerns about supply chain management and trade war impacts, 89% of Canadians indicated that ocean health is important (Nanos Research, 2024).

Technological advances in the ocean industry are driving rapid evolution that both minimizes environmental impact and demands an agile, adaptable workforce (McCarthy, 2022). Notable innovations include:

- Integration of green hydrogen to decarbonize marine transportation, which 64% of Canadians support despite potential higher consumer costs (Angus Reid Institute, 2024)
- AI implementation in environmental and operational monitoring for fisheries and other ocean sectors (Canada's Ocean Supercluster, 2024)
- Engineering improvements to reduce the environmental effects of underwater noise generated by ships (Clear Seas, 2025)





Snapshot: The Ocean Sector by the Numbers

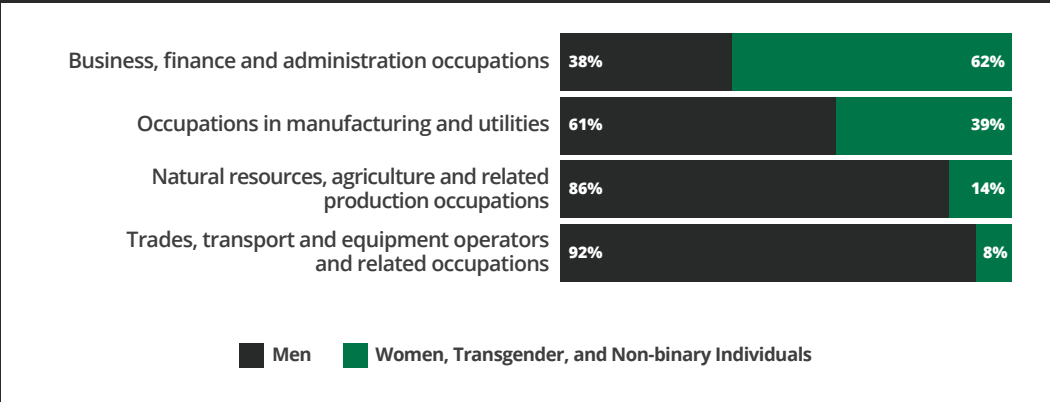
The Ocean Sector includes industries related to marine resources, water transportation, and vessel construction and support.¹

GDP: In 2021, ocean sectors generated \$24.4 billion in gross domestic product (GDP), equivalent to 1.0% of Canada’s national output (Statistics Canada, 2025)

Employment: In 2021, roughly 88,485 individuals were employed in the ocean sector, equivalent to 0.5% of Canada’s total employment (Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulation for ECO Canada).

Figure 1

Gender Distribution of Employment for Top Occupations² in the Ocean Sector, 2021 Census



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

1 Data reported includes employment within eight industry groups: NAICS 1125 (Aquaculture), NAICS 1141 (Fishing), NAICS 3117 (Seafood product preparation and packaging), NAICS 3366 (Ship and boat building), NAICS 4831 (Deep sea, coastal and Great Lakes water transportation), NAICS 4832 (Inland water transportation), NAICS 4872 (Scenic and sightseeing transportation, water), and NAICS 4883 (Support activities for water transportation). Ocean-related employment in other industry groups is not reflected in this data.

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

Gender Diversity in Canada's Ocean Sector

This report presents findings from female respondents (n = 532) across the Canadian environmental workforce, with a focus on those working in the ocean sector (n = 139) to represent their workplace experiences.

Historically, the ocean sector has been male-dominated, and this trend persists in current labour force representation (Canada's Ocean Supercluster, 2025b). In 2021, women accounted for 48% of the total national labour force but only 24% of the ocean sector workforce (Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulation for ECO Canada).

The implications of these figures are clear: research shows that women's involvement in ocean governance and systems provides a more comprehensive understanding of social-ecological linkages, which supports innovation and sustainable development (Gissi et al., 2018).

Opportunities exist to strengthen the sector's sustainability and prosperity by addressing challenges such as government trade developments, technological adaptation, and knowledge gaps. To unlock these opportunities for both workers and organizations, it is essential to consider women's experiences in the sector and implement measures that promote gender equality.

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 the ocean sector 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 139 individuals working in Canada’s ocean sector who identified as women, transgender, or non-binary persons.

British Columbia 25%	Manitoba 21%	Atlantic Canada 20%	Alberta & Saskatchewan 14%	Quebec 13%	Ontario 7%	
Fisheries and aquaculture 27% Marine renewable energy 24% Shipping and maritime transportation 20% Ocean data and technology 13% Tourism 9% Offshore minerals and resources 4% Conservation 3% Prefer not to answer 1%				Works in an urban setting 60% Works in a rural setting 29% Works in both rural and urban settings 9% Works in a suburban setting 1%		
Combination of office and fieldwork 49%	Works in an office or an indoor workspace 27%	Works in the field or outdoors 24%	Works less than 25% of time in a coastal area 19%	Works 25%-50% of time in a coastal area 23%	Works 51%-75% of time in a coastal area 35%	Works more than 75% of time in a coastal area 23%
Senior-level worker/manager 33% Mid-level worker/specialist 28% Junior-level worker/associate 17% Director/department head 13% Entry-level worker 6% Executive 1% Prefer not to answer 1%				Operator/labourer 28% Manager or supervisor 26% Business administration 25% Technical specialist 20% Prefer not to answer 1%		
Less than 1 year of experience 7%	1 to 4 years of experience 22%	4 to 8 years of experience 37%	8 to 15 years of experience 24%	More than 15 years of experience 10%	Prefer not to answer 1%	

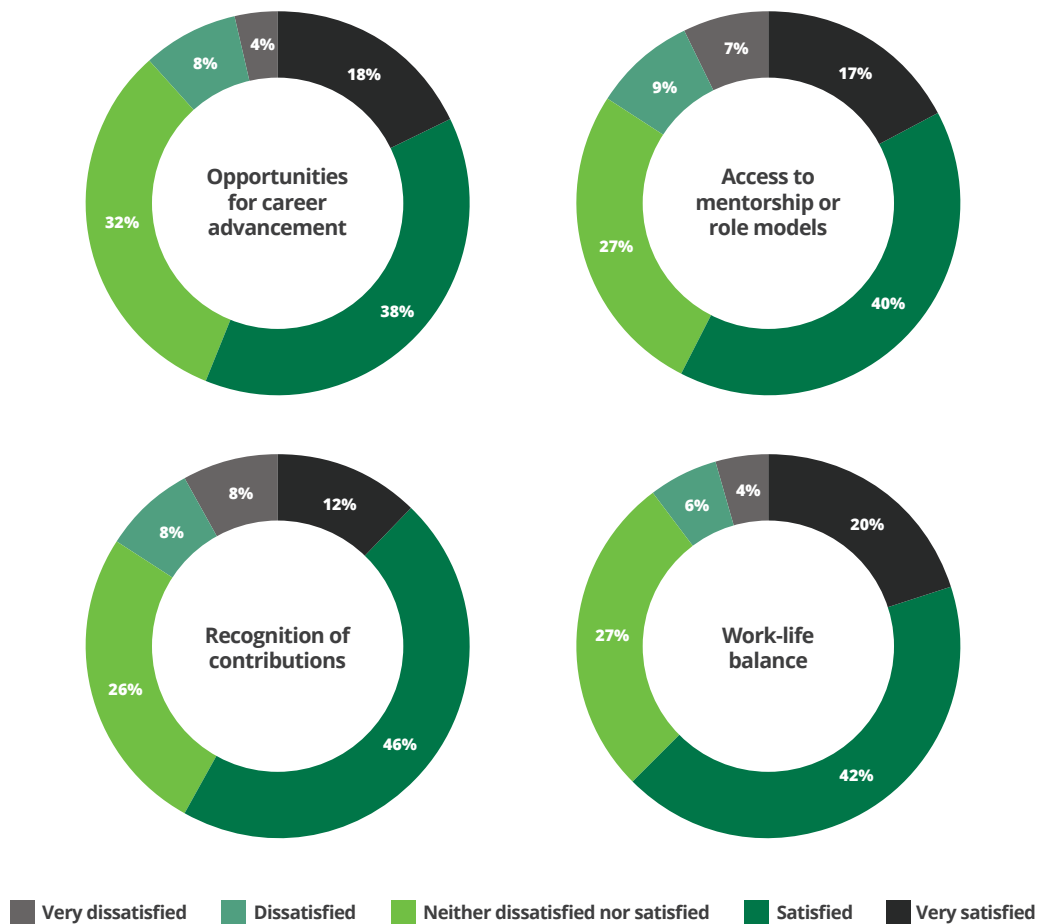
Reporting Note: Percentages in this report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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. Over half of respondents expressed satisfaction with their opportunities for career advancement (56%), access to mentorship (57%), recognition of contributions (58%), and work-life balance (62%). In contrast, 1 in 10 respondents expressed dissatisfaction with work-life balance, and 16% were dissatisfied with access to mentorship and recognition of contributions.

Figure 2

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



Satisfaction with Opportunities for Career Advancement by Seniority

Responses indicate that satisfaction with career advancement opportunities is highest among mid-level and senior-level women, with 59% and 61% respectively reporting they are satisfied or very satisfied. These career stages also show relatively low dissatisfaction rates (18% and 9%).

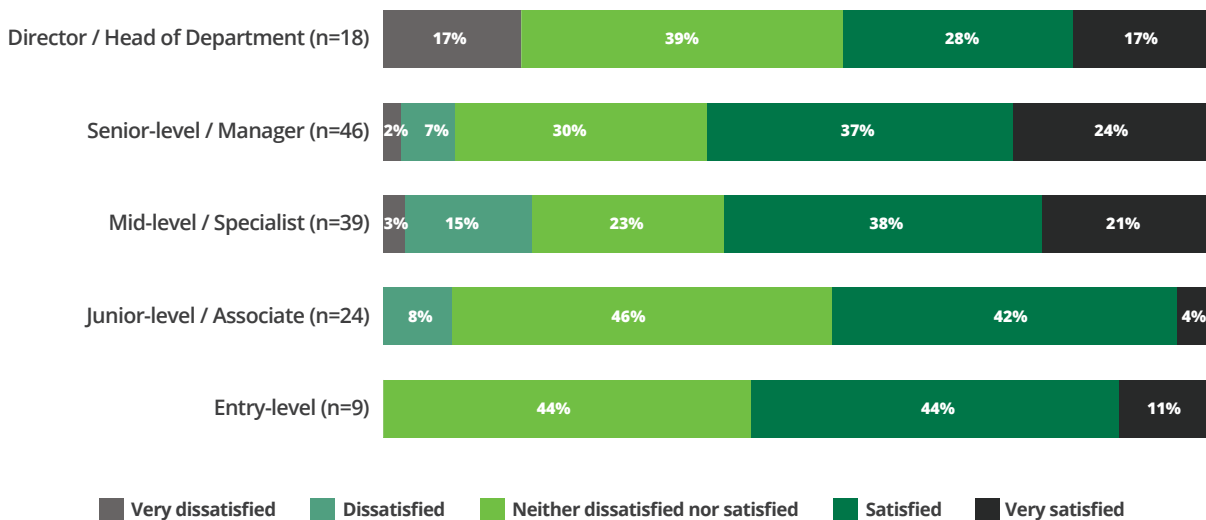
At the entry-level, responses are more neutral: 44% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and an equal 44% were satisfied, suggesting uncertainty about advancement pathways early in a career.

Interestingly, director-level respondents show more polarized views. While 45% expressed satisfaction, 17% were very dissatisfied—the highest across all groups—indicating possible stagnation or unmet expectations at the top of the hierarchy.

Junior-level respondents had the lowest overall satisfaction (46%) and the highest level of neutrality (46%), potentially reflecting limited advancement clarity at early career stages.

Figure 3

Satisfaction With Opportunities for Career Advancement, by Seniority



Satisfaction with Access to Mentorship or Role Models by Seniority

Access to mentorship and role models appears to improve with seniority, peaking at the senior-manager level where 72% of respondents (33 out of 46) said they were satisfied or very satisfied. This group also had the lowest dissatisfaction (only 5 respondents across both dissatisfied categories).

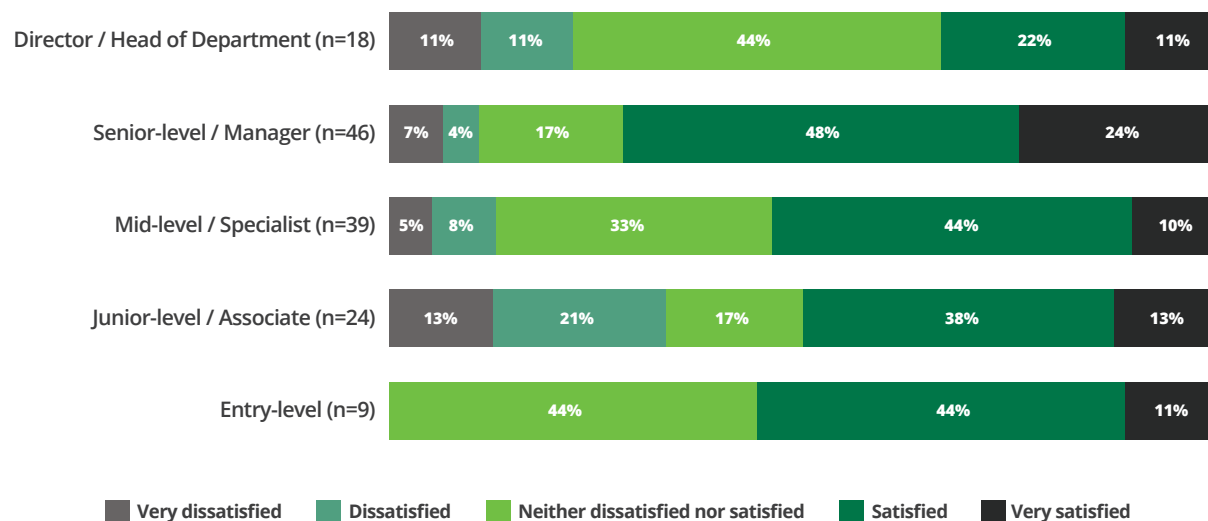
At the mid-level, responses were more mixed: while 21 out of 39 respondents expressed satisfaction, 5 expressed dissatisfaction and 13 were neutral—suggesting that mentorship access at this stage may be inconsistent or highly dependent on the workplace.

Junior-level respondents were the least satisfied overall: only 12 out of 24 indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied, while 8 expressed dissatisfaction—the highest number across all groups. These findings may signal a mentorship gap for early-career professionals trying to establish themselves.

Director-level respondents had mixed views: while only 6 out of 18 reported being satisfied or very satisfied, 8 were neutral and 4 were dissatisfied. This may reflect limited availability of more senior role models at the top, or a lack of structured mentorship at higher levels.

Figure 4

Satisfaction With Access to Mentorship or Role Models, by Seniority



Satisfaction with Recognition of Contributions by Seniority

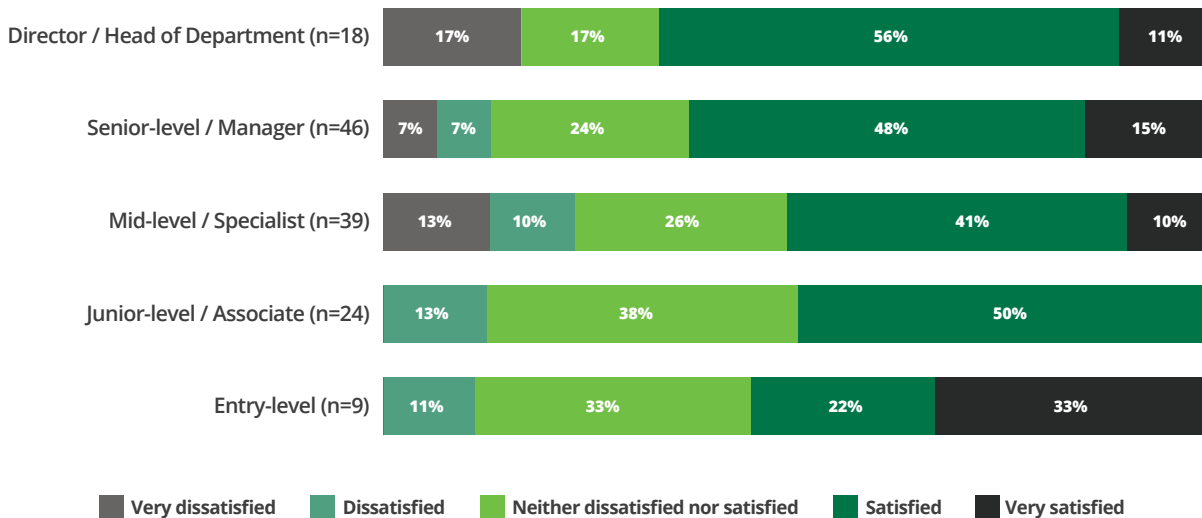
Overall satisfaction with recognition increases with career level. Senior- and director-level women reported the highest levels of satisfaction, with 63% and 67% respectively saying they were satisfied or very satisfied. Directors had the highest rate of satisfaction (56%) and no respondents reported being dissatisfied, although 17% felt very dissatisfied, suggesting a divide in recognition experiences at the top.

Mid-level professionals were more evenly split, with 51% satisfied or very satisfied, but 23% expressing dissatisfaction. Entry-level responses were polarized: 33% felt very satisfied, but another 33% were either neutral or dissatisfied. This may indicate that while some newcomers feel recognized, others struggle to be seen in early roles.

Junior-level professionals stood out for their lack of strong recognition: while half were satisfied, none reported being very satisfied, and over half expressed neutrality or dissatisfaction. This could signal a lack of feedback or visibility in early-career positions.

Figure 5

Satisfaction With Recognition of Contributions, by Seniority

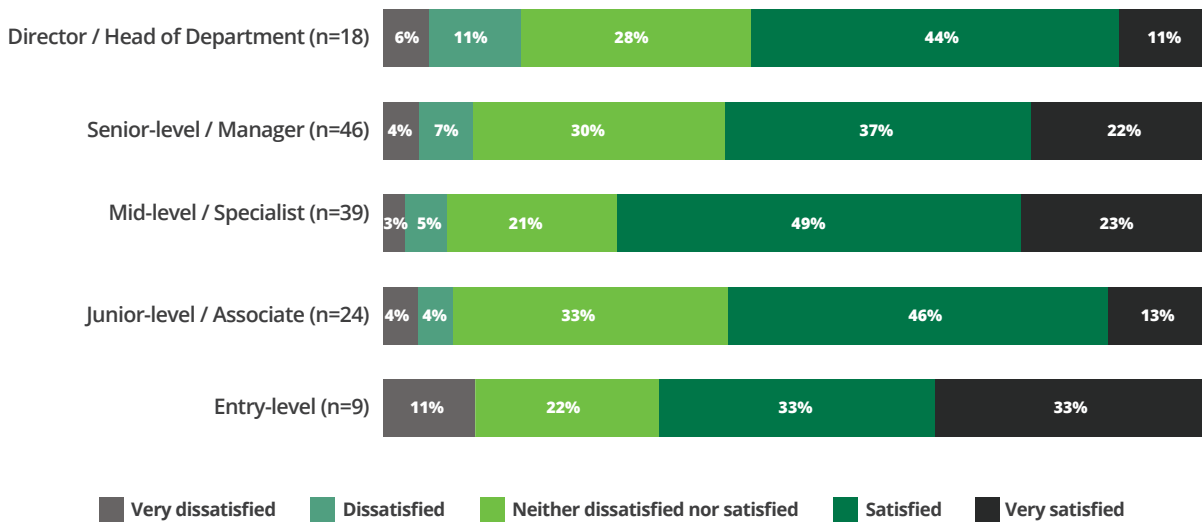


Satisfaction with Work-Life Balance by Seniority

Work-life balance satisfaction generally increases with career seniority, peaking at the senior and director levels. However, challenges remain across the board. Mid-level and junior-level professionals report mixed experiences, with limited flexibility and moderate dissatisfaction. Entry-level women show both high satisfaction and notable dissatisfaction, likely due to variability in early roles. While senior roles may offer more autonomy, structural barriers to work-life balance persist at all stages.

Figure 6

Satisfaction With Work-Life Balance, by Seniority





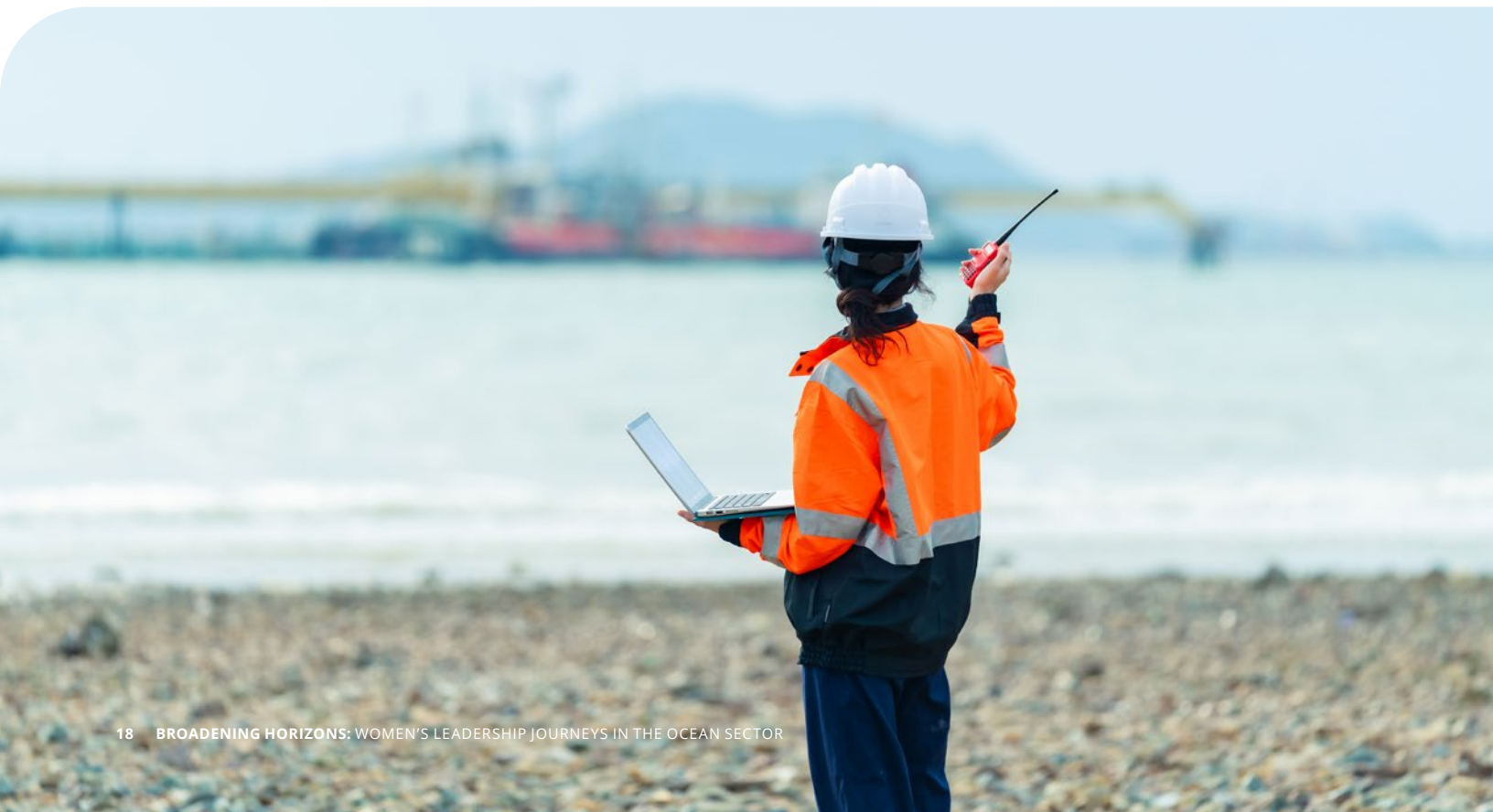
Snapshot: Helpful Resources and Tools

To better understand the experiences of women, transgender, and non-binary individuals working in the ocean sector, 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, followed by networking opportunities.

Table 1

Resources Used or Would be Used by Respondents

Resources/tools used	Resources/tools that would be helpful
Flexible work arrangements (65%)	Leadership training (80%)
Leadership training (57%)	Flexible work arrangements (73%)
Networking opportunities (53%)	Networking opportunities (73%)



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 ocean-sector careers have encountered that helped them succeed in their workplace. Sixty-two percent of respondents reported that they have benefited from such encounters in the past, while 30% 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 (29%), managerial support (16%), and training, mentorship, or job shadowing (14%).

Figure 7

Respondents' Positive Experiences



Qualitative responses showed strong emphasis on the value of **support networks**, including managers, coworkers, friends, and family. **Mentorship and training** were also emphasized as beneficial experiences for workers to access encouragement and critical skills to succeed. In particular, several responses highlighted the value of technical workshops and sharing sessions specifically designed for women. Finally, having the **trust** of their company leaders to work independently and use their initiative was valued highly.

The proportion of respondents reporting positive experiences differed across seniority levels, as did the types encountered. While more than three-quarters of mid-level specialists reported positive experiences that helped them succeed in the workplace, only half of directors and 56% of entry-level workers reported similar experiences.

Figure 8

Proportion of Respondents Reporting Positive Experiences, by Seniority

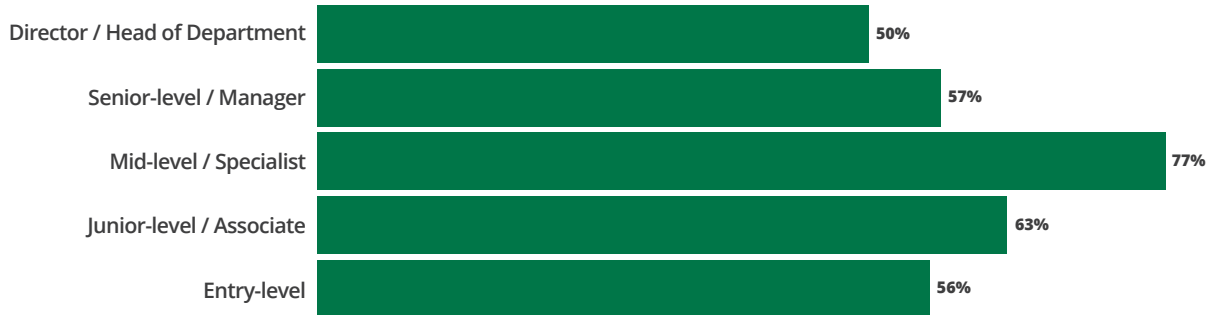


Table 2

Top Positive Experiences Reported, by Seniority

<p>EXECUTIVE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and help from co-workers 	<p>DIRECTOR / HEAD OF DEPARTMENT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and help from their manager
<p>SENIOR-LEVEL / MANAGER</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and help from co-workers 2. Training, mentoring, or job shadowing 3. Getting feedback 	<p>MID-LEVEL / SPECIALIST</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and help from co-workers 2. Training, mentoring, or job shadowing 3. Networking
<p>JUNIOR-LEVEL / ASSOCIATE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and help from co-workers 2. Support and help from their manager 3. Personal skills / past work experience 	<p>ENTRY LEVEL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and help from co-workers 2. Support and help from their manager

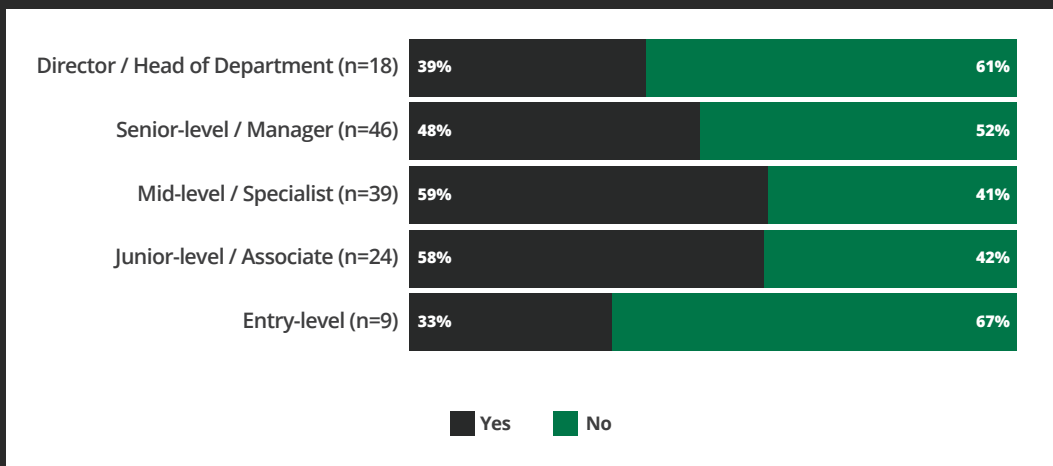


Snapshot: Stretch Assignments as Opportunities for Growth

Stretch assignments are critical for career advancement because they provide the **skills, visibility, and credibility** necessary for leadership roles. Unfortunately, only half (50%) 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

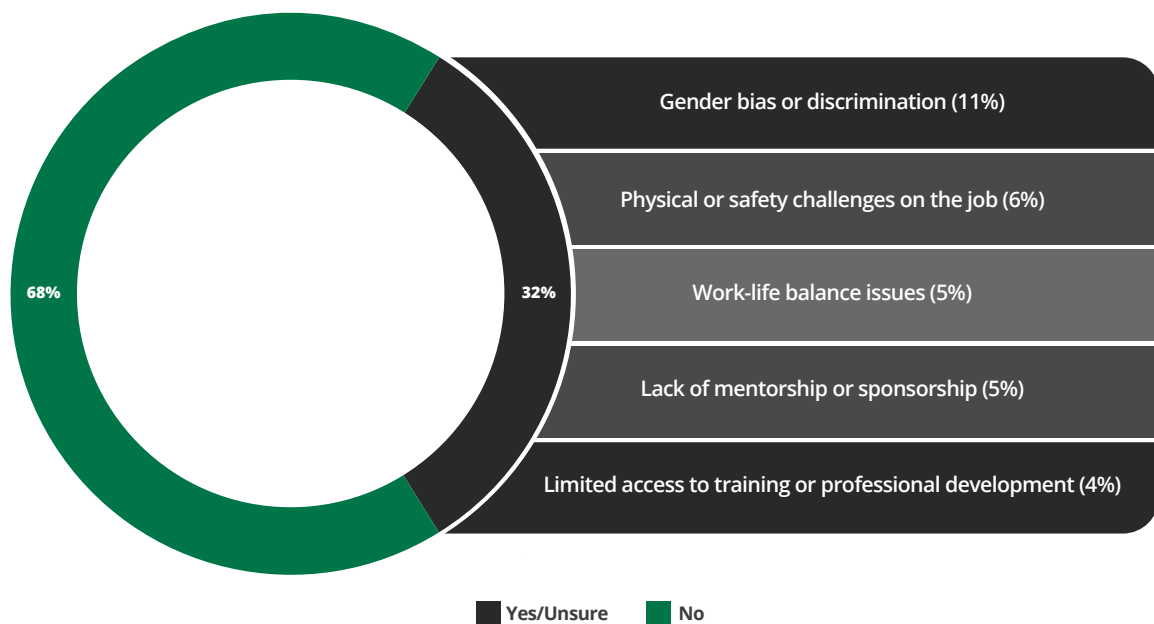
WHAT BARRIERS TO ADVANCEMENT DO THEY ENCOUNTER?

When asked whether they had faced any barriers to advancement due to gender or gender expression, more than two-thirds of respondents reported that they had not faced such barriers, 29% reported that they had, and 4% 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. Gender bias or discrimination appears at the top of that list (33% of responses), followed by physical or safety challenges on the job (20%), work-life balance issues (16%), lack of mentorship or sponsorship (16%), and limited access to training/professional development (11%).

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 ocean sector, we asked all respondents how frequently they encounter each of them in their workplace.



Snapshot: How Prevalent Are Gender Equity Policies in the Ocean Sector?

Most respondents (**62%**) reported that their workplace or organization has policies or initiatives in place to support gender equity. However, **27%** indicated that no such measures exist, and **11%** 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.

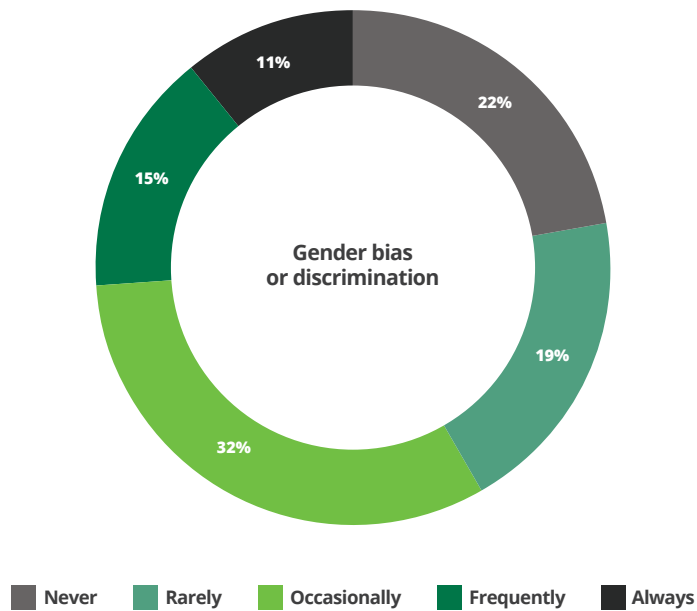


Gender Bias or Discrimination

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 11

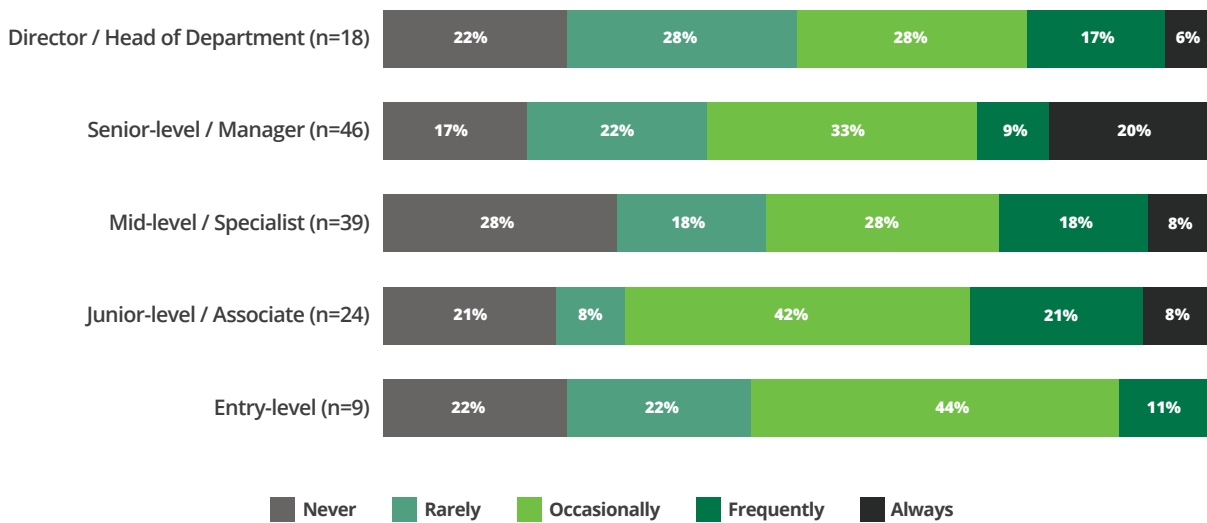
Frequency of Gender Bias or Discrimination



More than one quarter of respondents reported that they always or frequently encounter gender bias or discrimination at their workplace. Most reported experiencing gender bias at least occasionally, with the highest levels of frequent or constant exposure seen at junior- and senior-career stages. Senior-level respondents had the highest “always” rate (20%), while 71% of junior-level women experienced bias at least occasionally. Entry-level women mostly reported occasional experiences, and none reported it always. Director responses were mixed, with 23% reporting frequent or constant bias. These findings suggest that gender bias remains a persistent issue, especially at junior and senior levels.

Figure 12

Frequency of Gender Bias or Discrimination, by Seniority

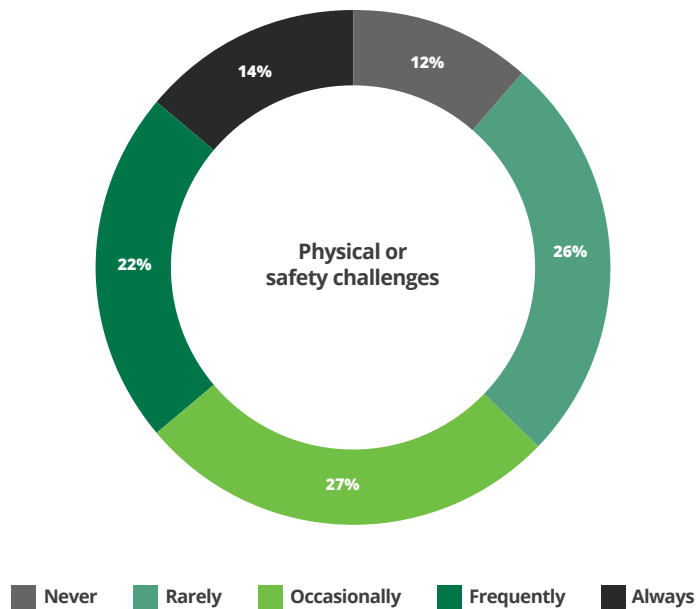


Physical or Safety Challenges

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 13

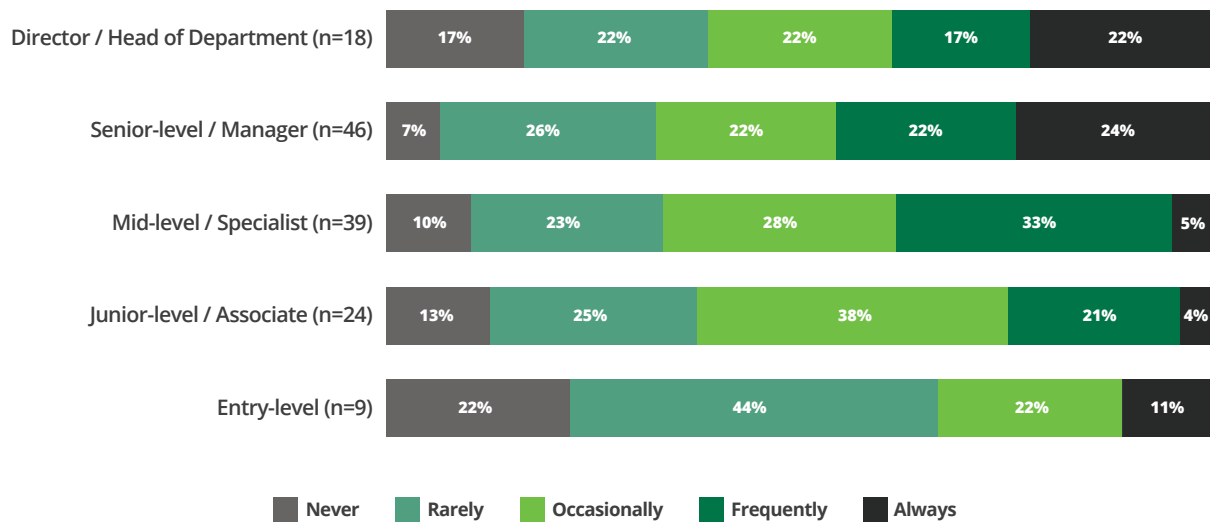
Frequency of Physical or Safety Challenges



More than one-third of respondents reported that they always or frequently experience physical or safety challenges on the job. These challenges are reported across all career stages, with the highest rates among senior-level and director-level women. Nearly half of senior leaders and 39% of directors experience these issues frequently or always. In contrast, most entry-level and junior-level respondents report rare or occasional challenges. These findings highlight the need for improved safety measures and inclusive workplace design at all levels, including leadership roles.

Figure 14

Frequency of Physical or Safety Challenges, by Seniority

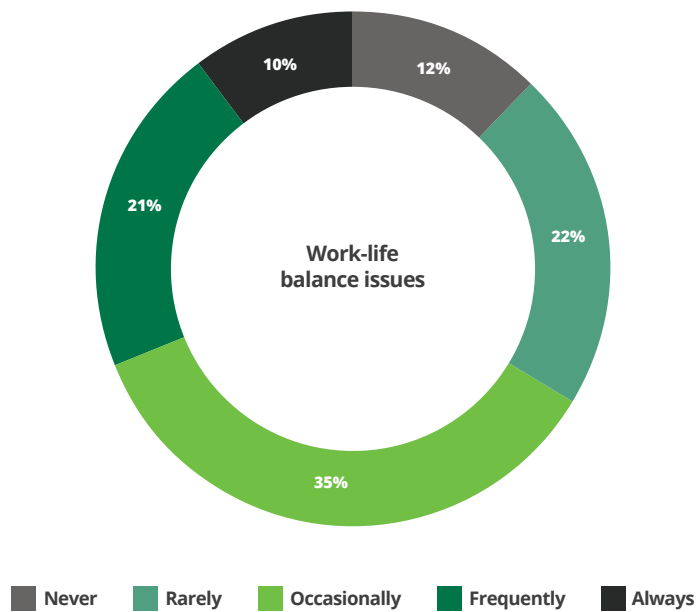


Work-life Balance Issues

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 15

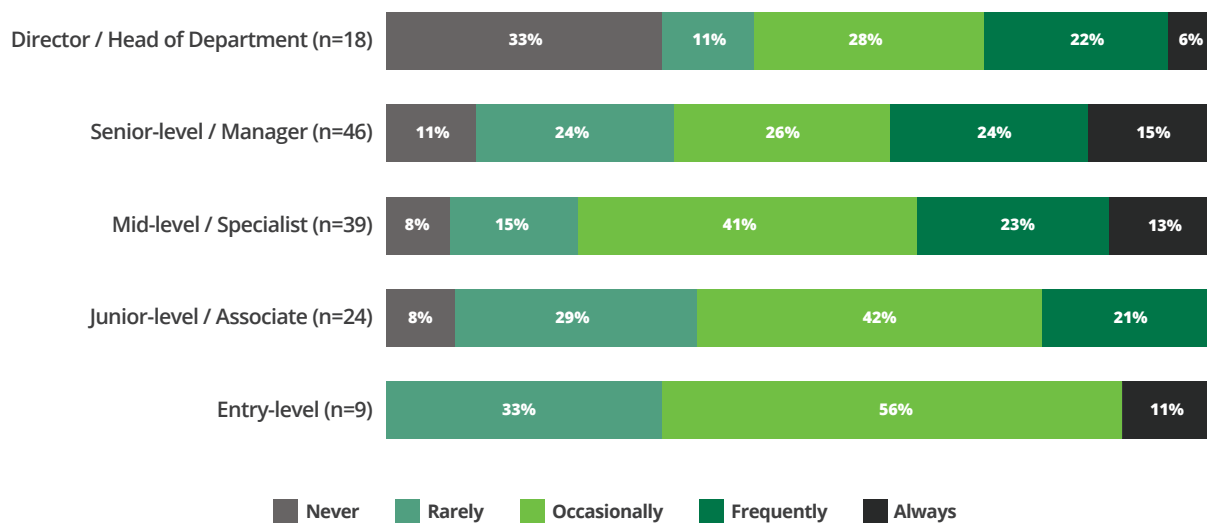
Frequency of Work-life Balance Issues



Slightly more than 30% of respondents reported that they always or frequently experience work-life balance issues. Mid-level and senior-level women were most likely to report frequent or constant challenges, with 36% and 39% respectively, saying they experience issues often or always. Junior-level respondents also showed moderate concern, with 21% reporting frequent difficulties. Directors were the most likely to say they never experienced challenges (33%), though over a quarter still reported occasional difficulties, suggesting some relief at higher levels, but not full resolution.

Figure 16

Frequency of Work-life Balance Issues, by Seniority

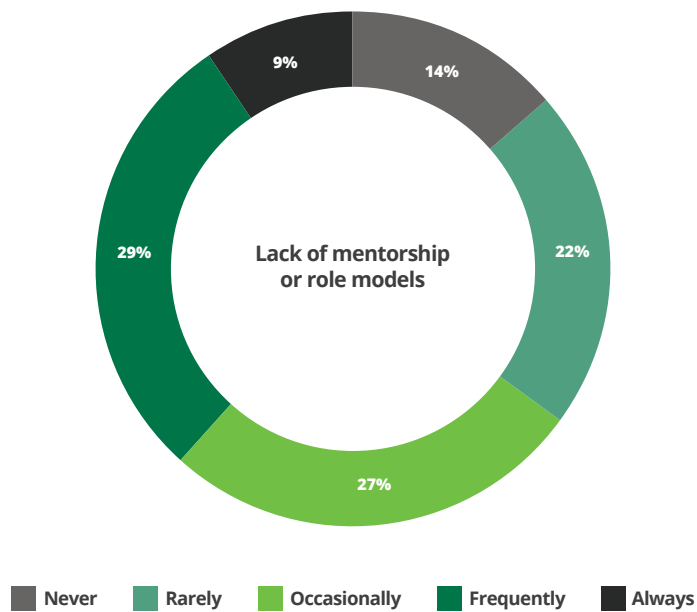


Lack of Mentorship or Sponsorship

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.

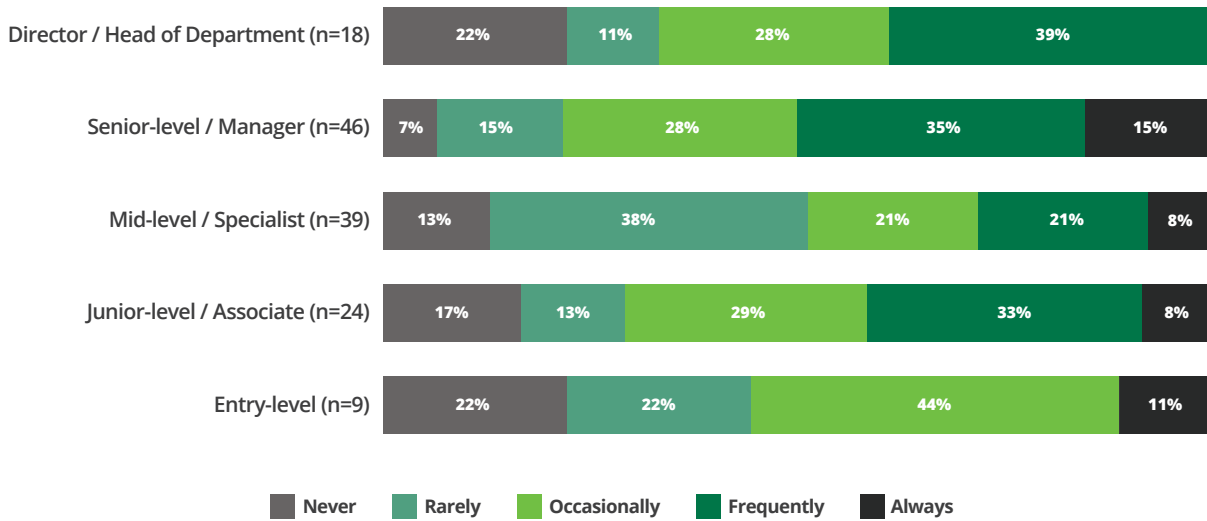
Figure 17

Frequency of a Lack of Mentorship or Sponsorship



More than one-third of respondents reported frequently or always experiencing a lack of mentorship or sponsorship in the workplace. Experiences of lacking mentorship or role models were common across all career stages, with frequent or constant challenges most prevalent at the senior and director levels. Junior-level professionals also struggled, with one-third reporting frequent lack of mentorship. These results highlight a persistent gap in mentorship support throughout women’s career progression in the ocean sector.

Figure 18
Frequency of a Lack of Mentorship or Sponsorship, by Seniority

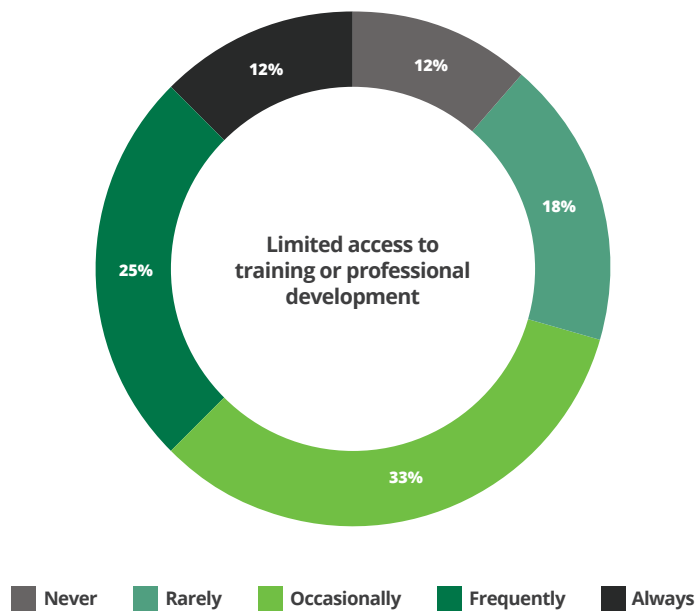


Limited Access to Training or Professional Development

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 19

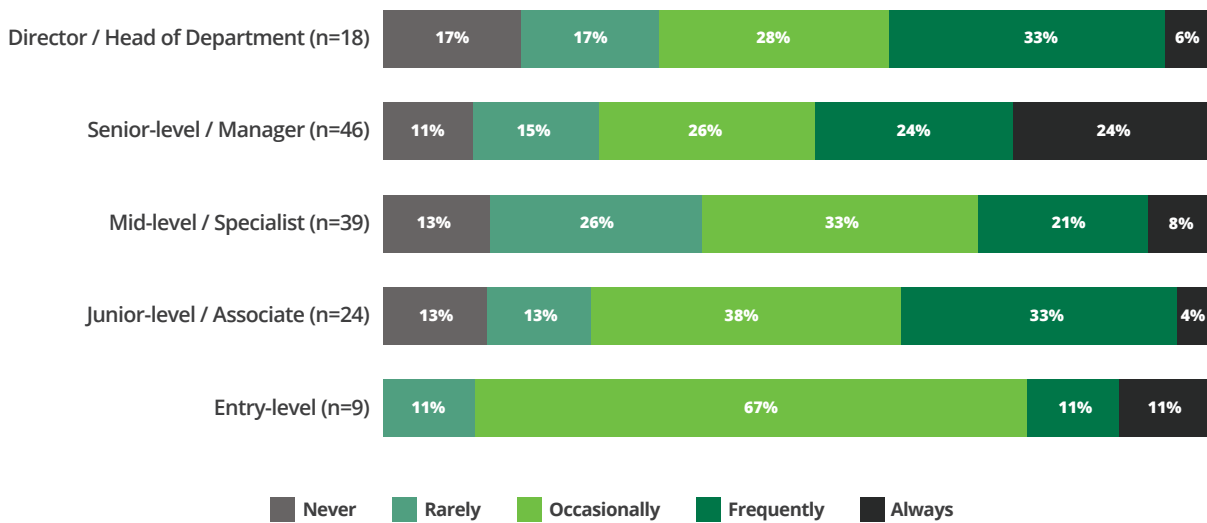
Frequency of Limited Access to Training or Professional Development



More than one-third of respondents reported frequently or always experiencing limited access to training or professional development. Entry-level and junior-level women reported the highest rates of occasional or frequent limitations, with no entry-level respondents saying they never faced barriers. Senior-level professionals had the highest “always” rate at 24%, while one-third of directors also reported frequent challenges. Mid-level professionals showed a more even distribution of experiences. Overall, limited access remains a common issue across the ocean sector workforce, even among those in leadership roles.

Figure 20

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



HOW MANY OF THEM EXPERIENCE WORKPLACE GENDER INEQUALITY?

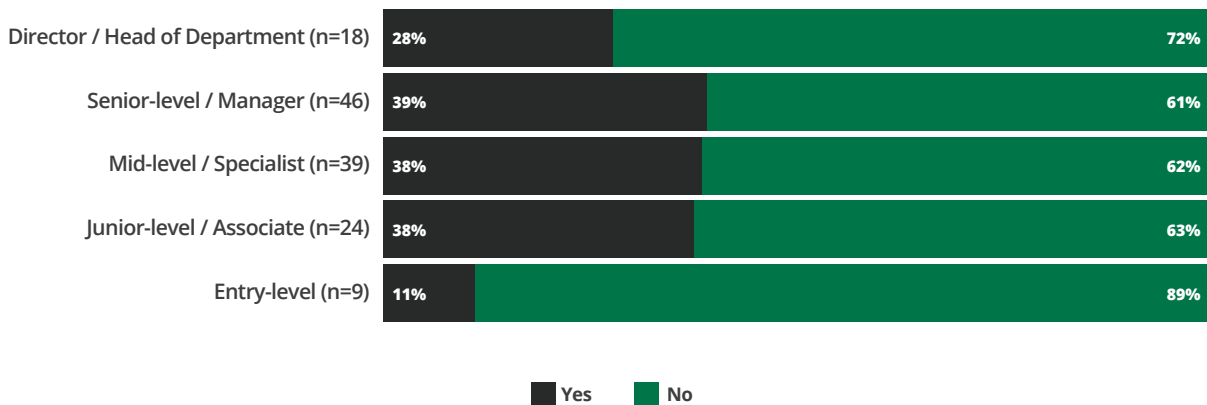
In this section, we take a closer look at how women, transgender and non-binary individuals are experiencing their ocean sector workplaces when it comes to fairness and inclusion. We asked respondents if they had personally experienced or observed things like unequal pay, being left out of important 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 ocean sector still has work to do to create inclusive environments.

Unequal Pay for Equal Work

Thirty-five percent of all respondents reported personally experiencing unequal pay for equal work in their workplace. Unequal pay for equal work is reported most often by senior managers (39%), mid-level specialists (38%), and junior associates (38%). Fewer directors (28%) say they've experienced it, and it's least common among entry-level employees (11%). This shows that pay gaps seem to be felt most in the middle of the career ladder, rather than at the very top or bottom.

Figure 21

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



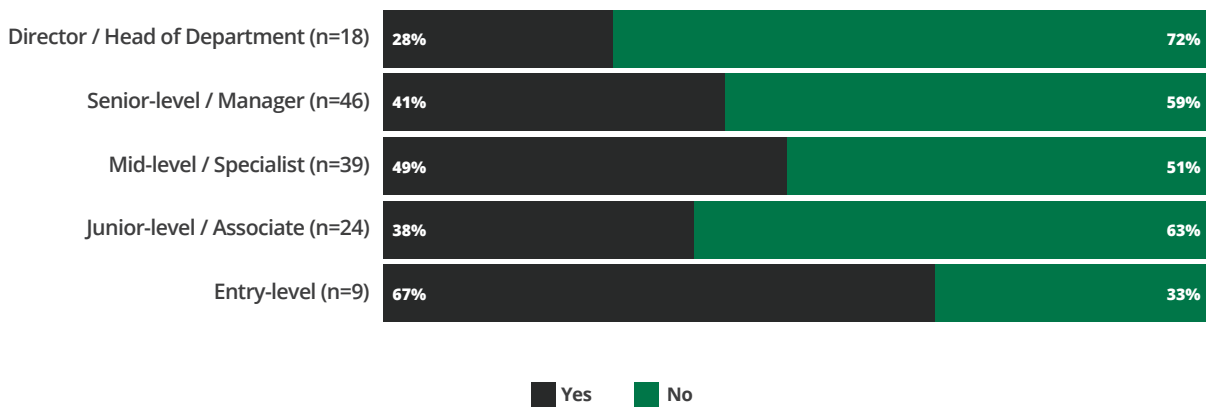
Reporting Note: Percentages in this report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Exclusion from Decision-Making Opportunities

Forty-two percent of all respondents reported personally experiencing exclusion from decision-making opportunities. Exclusion from decision-making opportunities is most common among entry-level employees (67%), followed by mid-level specialists (49%) and senior managers (41%). Junior associates (38%) and directors (28%) report lower rates of exclusion.

Figure 22

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



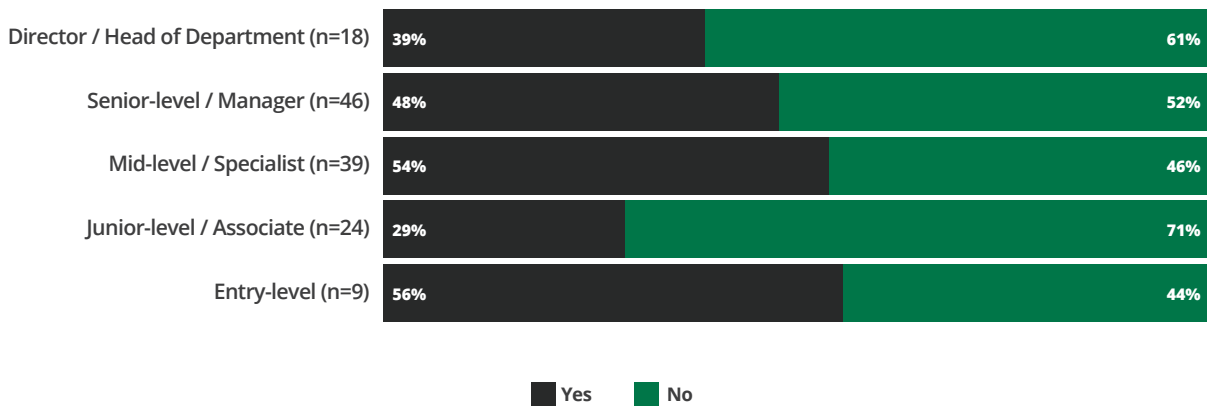
Reporting Note: Percentages in this report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Dismissal of Ideas or Contributions

Forty-five percent of all respondents reported personally experiencing exclusion from decision-making opportunities. Dismissal of ideas or contributions is most frequently reported by mid-level specialists (54%) and entry-level employees (56%), indicating that both early-career workers and those in specialized roles face notable challenges in having their input valued. Senior managers (48%) and directors (39%) experience this less often, while junior associates (29%) report the lowest incidence.

Figure 23

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

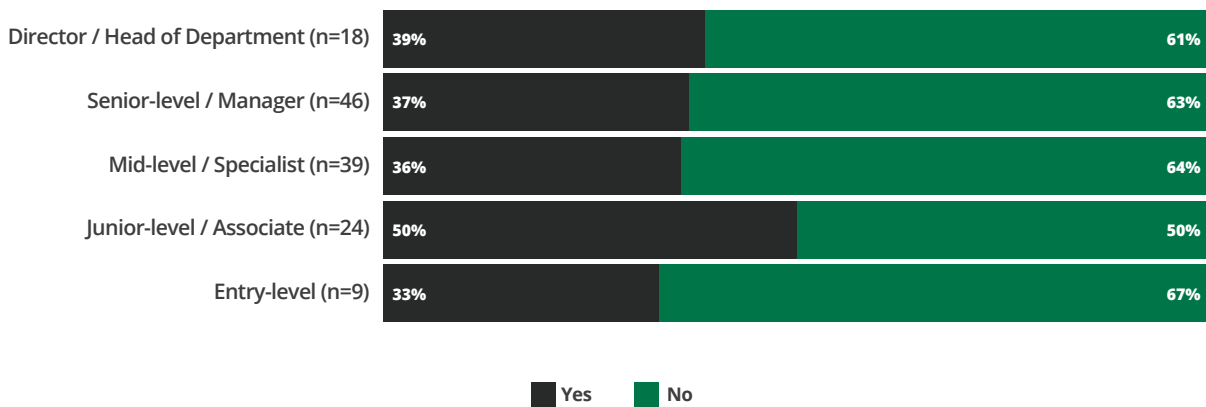


Lack of Diversity in Senior Leadership Roles

Thirty-nine percent of all respondents reported personally experiencing exclusion from decision-making opportunities. Perceptions of a lack of diversity in senior leadership are most common among junior associates (50%), followed by directors (39%) and senior managers (37%). Mid-level specialists (36%) and entry-level employees (33%) report slightly lower rates.

Figure 24

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

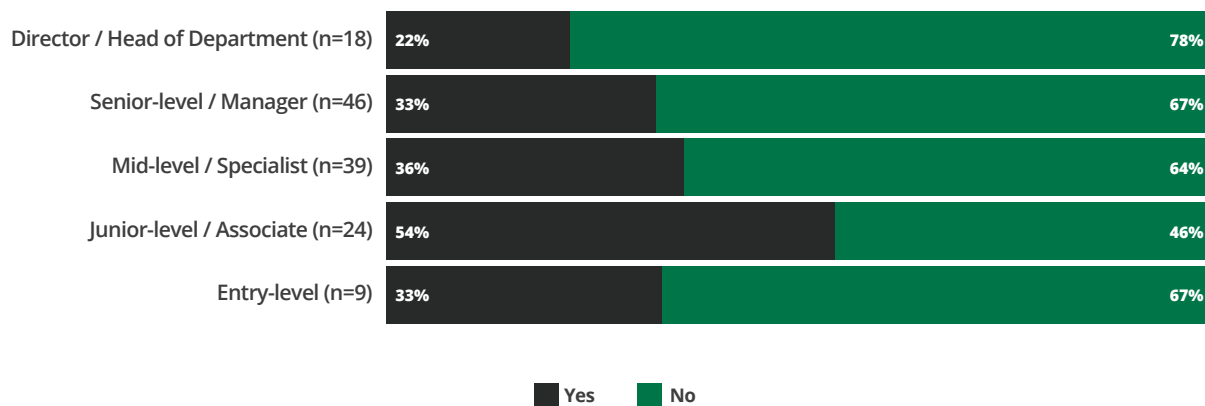


Gender-Based Harassment or Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace

Thirty-five percent of all respondents reported personally experiencing gender-based harassment or inappropriate behaviour in their workplace. More than half (54%) of junior associates reported having this type of experience. Roughly one-third of mid-level specialists (36%), senior managers (33%), and entry-level employees (33%) also reported experiencing inappropriate behaviour or harassment related to their gender.

Figure 25

Percentage of Respondents who Experience Gender-Based 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 in their workplace, 46% responded that there was nothing that they would change, while 45% provided a suggestion for improvement. Those who provided suggestions for change focused largely on creating a more inclusive organizational culture, providing focused training opportunities for gender diverse individuals, and ensuring human resource practices promote equity.

1 Foster an inclusive, respectful, and supportive workplace culture (29% of suggestions)

- Actively dismantle “boys club” dynamics by promoting diverse and respectful teams where all voices are valued. Implement anti-discrimination initiatives, address prejudices, and ensure leaders model empathy and support.
- Encourage women’s participation in projects, networking, and innovation while creating a culture of openness, fairness, and mutual respect.

2 Expand access to training, career development, and advancement (22%)

- Invest in mentorship, training, and leadership development programs that specifically support women, non-binary, and transgender employees.
- Provide scholarships, structured career advancement pathways, and equitable access to professional development resources.
- Deliver regular education on bias, inclusion, and workplace behavior to all staff, and create opportunities for team building and gender-equity awareness activities that strengthen inclusion and career growth.

3 Create equitable hiring, promotion, and leadership development processes (15%)

- Eliminate bias in recruitment and promotion by standardizing merit-based evaluation and focusing on skills, experience, and competence.
- Increase representation of women in leadership, supervisory, and decision-making roles, and establish executive sponsorship programs to accelerate the advancement of high-potential women.
- Ensure hiring and promotion policies foster gender balance across all levels of the organization.

4 Strengthen, monitor, and enforce gender equality and equity policies (14%)

- Develop clear and visible gender equality policies backed by strong enforcement mechanisms.
- Establish dedicated committees and feedback channels to monitor progress and address complaints.
- Make discriminatory or insulting behavior explicitly unacceptable and introduce welfare and support programs that respond to the diverse needs of employees.
- Regularly review and update policies to ensure they remain effective and credible.

5 Provide flexible work options and family-friendly policies for all genders (12%)

- Introduce and strengthen flexible work arrangements that support employees in balancing career and family responsibilities.
- Expand maternity leave, childcare supports, and family-friendly benefits, while also encouraging men to share caregiving roles.
- Ensure travel safety policies and fair workload distribution are in place to reduce stress and make the workplace more supportive for all genders.

6 Ensure pay equity across all roles (8%)

- Commit to pay transparency and regular compensation reviews to eliminate gender-based pay gaps.
- Ensure that men and women in the same positions receive equal pay and build fairness into all compensation practices.
- Establish equal roles and responsibilities for employees of all genders to create a workplace where contributions are valued equitably.

HOW WOULD ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS IMPACT THEIR CAREER GROWTH?

When respondents were asked how addressing systemic barriers would impact their career growth, more than half (51%) responded that it would have no impact, while just under one-third (32%) indicated that it would have a positive effect.

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 (28% 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 Fostering a more inclusive and collaborative workplace culture (19%)

- 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.

3 Promoting equitable recruitment and promotion practices (14%)

- Removing bias and ensuring transparent, fair recruitment and promotion processes would give women equal opportunities to advance and grow steadily in their careers.

4 Improving employee well-being and confidence at work (12%)

- 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.

5 Supporting work-life balance and flexibility (7%)

- Flexible work arrangements and family-friendly policies would allow employees to balance professional and personal responsibilities, making career growth more attainable.

6 Ensuring fair pay and equal benefits (5%)

- Addressing pay inequities and providing family support would improve satisfaction, attract more women, and create a fairer foundation for career growth.

CONCLUSION

This report highlights both the progress and persistent challenges for women, transgender, and non-binary individuals working in Canada's ocean sector. While many respondents express satisfaction with career advancement, mentorship, recognition, and work-life balance, particularly at mid- and senior-level positions, significant gaps remain, especially at early career stages. Access to mentorship, stretch assignments, and professional development is inconsistent, and experiences of gender bias, inequitable pay, exclusion from decision-making, and workplace harassment continue to affect a substantial portion of the workforce.

The findings underscore that targeted interventions such as fostering inclusive workplace cultures, expanding mentorship and training opportunities, implementing equitable hiring and promotion processes, enforcing gender equity policies, and providing flexible work arrangements could have meaningful impacts on both career growth and sector-wide innovation. Addressing these systemic barriers would not only support individual career advancement but also strengthen the ocean sector by promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level.

Ultimately, creating workplaces where all employees are valued, supported, and empowered is essential for building a resilient, innovative, and sustainable ocean sector in Canada.



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