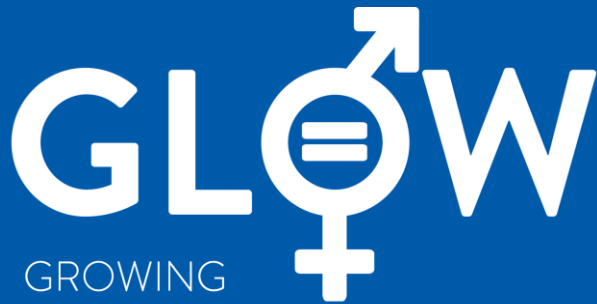




REIMAGINING SOCIAL CHANGE



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FOR WOMEN

Best practices for Banking, Financial services, and Insurance (BFSI) industry to improve gender equity

August 2026

Overview of this document



Objective

- Provide a roadmap for improving gender diversity in entry-level field roles (e.g., salesperson, collections officer) in the Banking, Financial services, and Insurance (BFSI) industry in India



Audience

- Leaders (e.g., CEOs, CHROs) and senior managers (e.g., HR heads) at BFSI companies, including third-party distributors and intermediaries



Scope

- Key challenges faced by BFSI companies in improving gender diversity
- Business benefits of employing more women in entry-level roles
- Phased roadmap of 13 interventions to improve women's hiring and retention in field roles
- ~20-minute questionnaire to assess progress on gender equity



Methodology

- Industry immersion (secondary research, interactions with 27 industry stakeholders¹), learnings from 20+ company engagements², and primary interviews with 6,000+ women³

Acronyms: CEO – Chief Executive Officer; CHRO – Chief Human Resources Officer; HR – Human Resources | 1. Stakeholders include 3 industry leaders, 9 managers, 11 women in entry-level roles, and 4 experts in the industry; 2. FSG, through its [GLOW](#) program, has provided multi-year support to 20+ companies in logistics and flexi-staffing industries to hire and retain more women in entry-level roles; 3. <https://www.fsg.org/resource/creating-a-gender-equitable-workforce-in-india/>

Executive summary | BFSI industry

Workforce composition and gender diversity	• BFSI has ~7.2 Mn employees across 4 sub-sectors (banking, lending, insurance, and intermediaries) with 19% gender diversity¹ • Entry-level roles in BFSI include field roles (e.g., salesperson, collections officer), and desk roles (e.g., customer support executive)
Business benefits	• Employing more women in BFSI industry can lead to improved work culture, customer experience and brand reputation
Gender diversity opportunity	• In the BFSI sector, the largest scope to increase gender diversity lies in entry-level field roles for sales and collections
Key challenges	• Managers' unconscious biases, lack of company infrastructure and skills, and supply constraints are the key barriers to employing women in field roles
Best practices for gender diversity	• Gender-inclusive job ads, salary structure communication, inclusive hiring and retention training, and incentives for staffing companies can make hiring fair and transparent • Gender sensitisation training, gender diversity KPIs, buddy mapping, and custom zone allocation can build manager accountability and equip them to support women operationally • Safety provisions, mobility support, and a grievance redressal system can provide strong on-ground support for women, and improve retention and performance
Gender equity scorecard	• Regular assessment of gender diversity outcomes and organisational readiness (e.g., practices and infrastructure) can help track progress and identify areas for improvement

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services, and insurance; KPIs – Key Performance Indicators | 1. [PLFS Report 2025](#)

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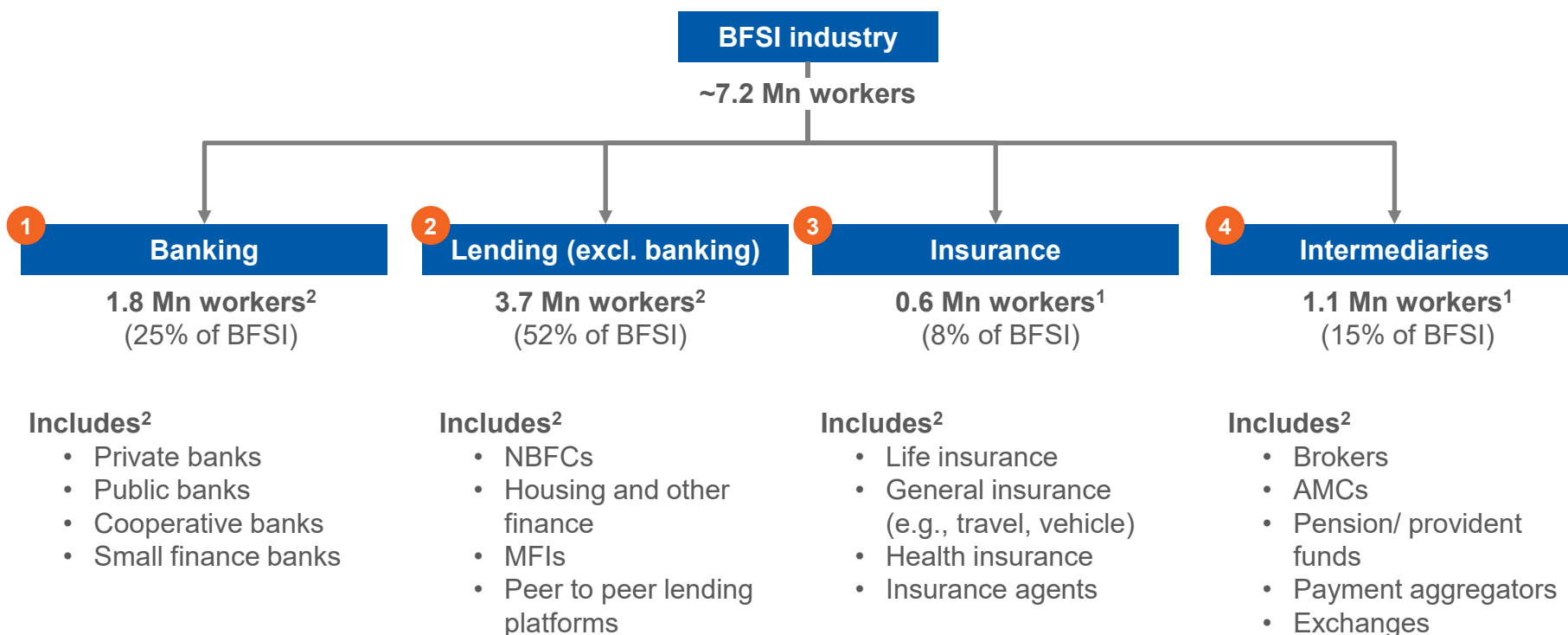
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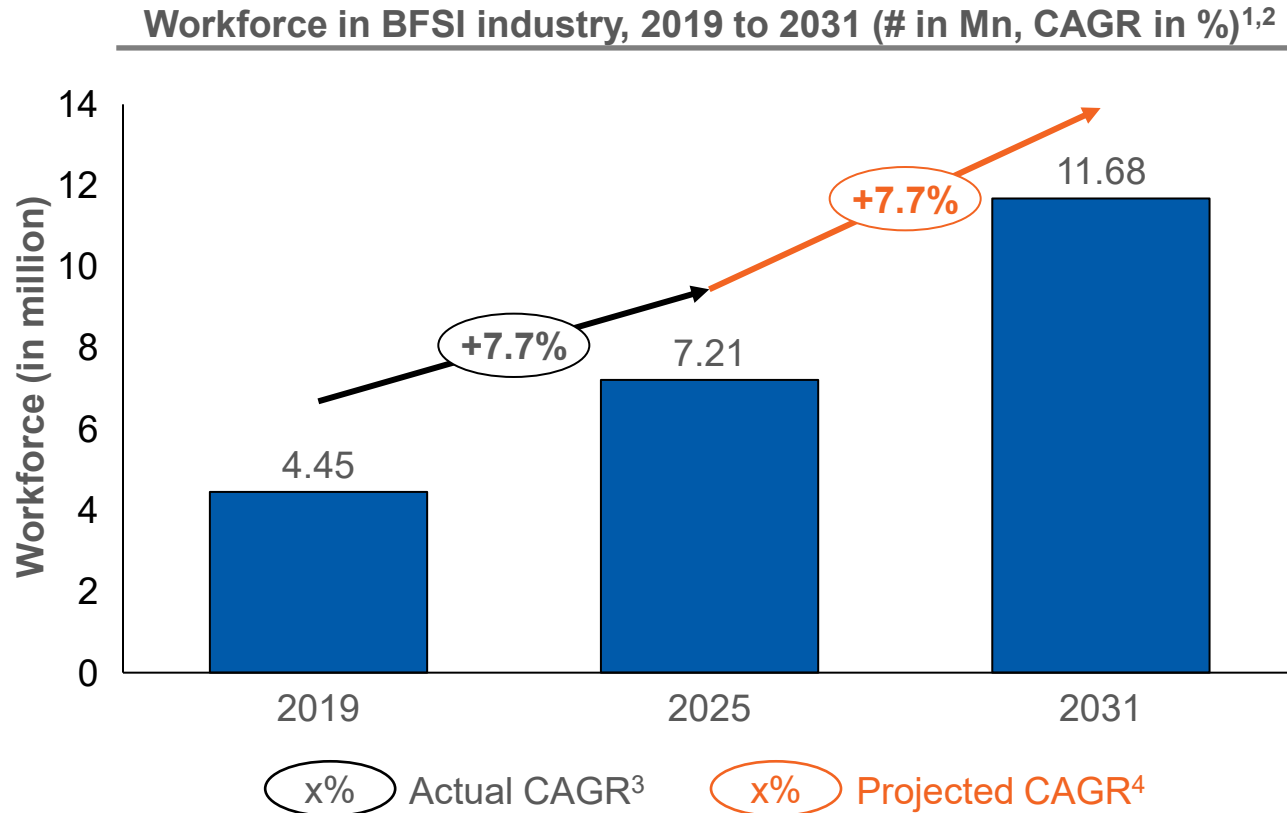
BFSI industry employs ~7.2 Mn workers across banking, lending, insurance, and intermediaries sub-sectors¹



7.2 million workers include 23% self-employed workers, 75% salaried workers and 2% casual labour¹

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; NBFCs – Non-banking financial companies; MFIs – Micro finance institutions; AMC – Asset management company; PLFS – Periodic Labour Force Survey | 1. As per [PLFS 2025](#), relevant PLFS codes 64,65,66; 2. Per PLFS 2025, workforce strength for banking and lending is ~5.5 Mn and per <https://www.cnbcvt18.com/business/indias-bank-hiring-falls-to-21000-in-fy25-as-private-lenders-trim-workforce-rbi-data-19949985.htm>, workforce strength for banking only is ~1.8 Mn. Accordingly, workforce strength for lending is calculated as the remaining 3.7 Mn. Informal banking activities (e.g., money lenders) have been excluded from the scope of the document

Headcount in the BFSI industry is expected to grow at ~8% CAGR to ~11.68 million by 2031

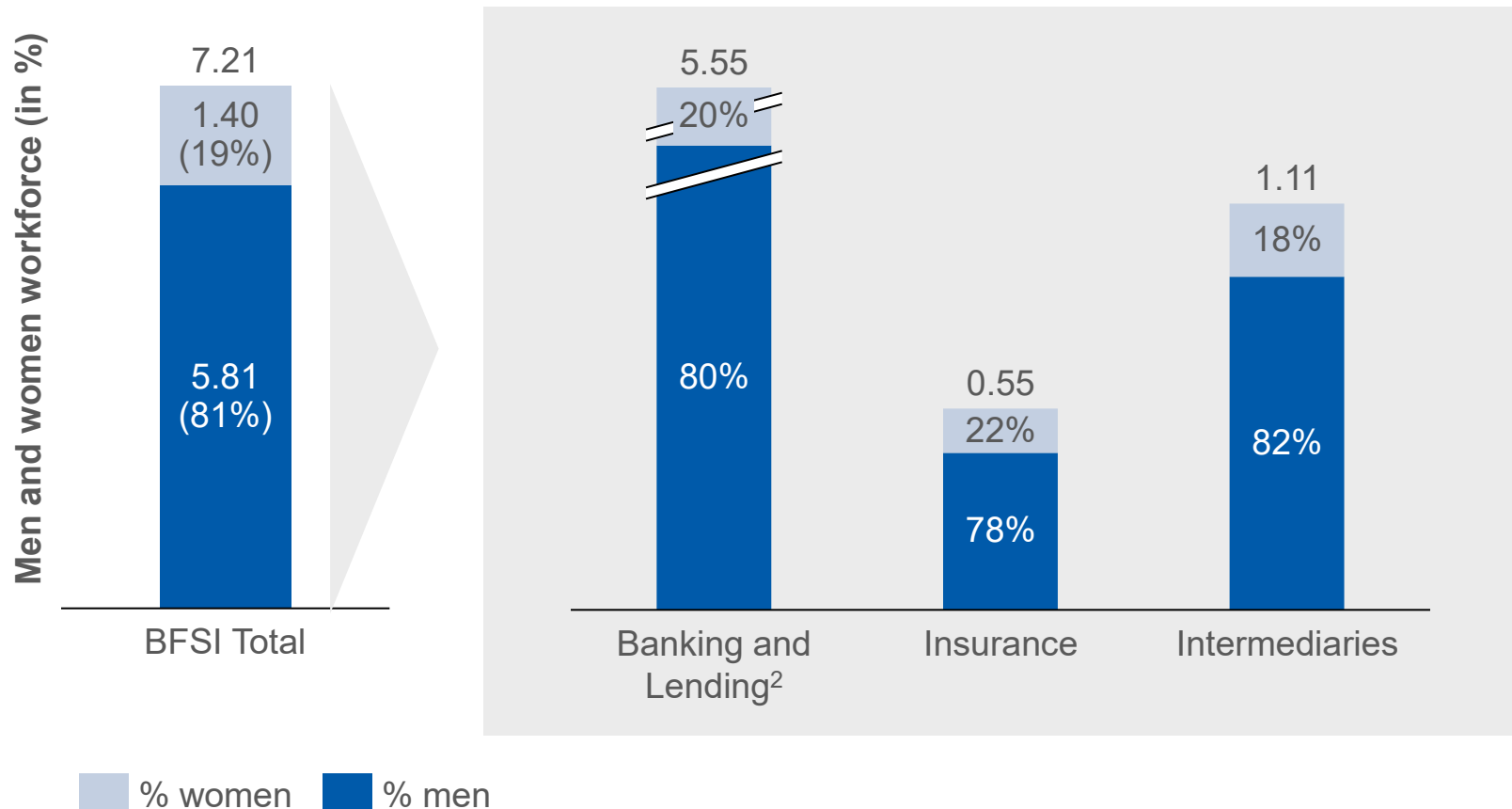


- The past trend is only indicative, as PLFS 2025 methodology differs from PLFS 2019
- Figure for 2031 is a directional estimate based on available data and is subject to change based on external developments (e.g., policy changes, macroeconomic factors)

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; CAGR – Compound Annual Growth Rate; Mn – Million | 1. Workforce data for 2019 and 2025 are as per Annual PLFS Reports of 2018-19 and 2025 respectively; 2. This includes all types of employees i.e., self-employed, casual labour, regular wage/ salaried workforce; 3. Actual CAGR is calculated over ~6.5 years since year 2019 refers to the PLFS reporting period of July 2018 to June 2019 and year 2025 refers to the PLFS reporting period of January to December 2025; 4. CAGR for 2025-2031 is assumed to be same as actual CAGR for 2019-2025. Other CAGR estimates for the industry (varying by duration and sub-sectors) fall within 7–10%: [TeamLease](#) – 5.7%, [Business Standard](#) – 7.1%, [Angel One](#) – 8.7%, [Taggd](#) – 11.5%

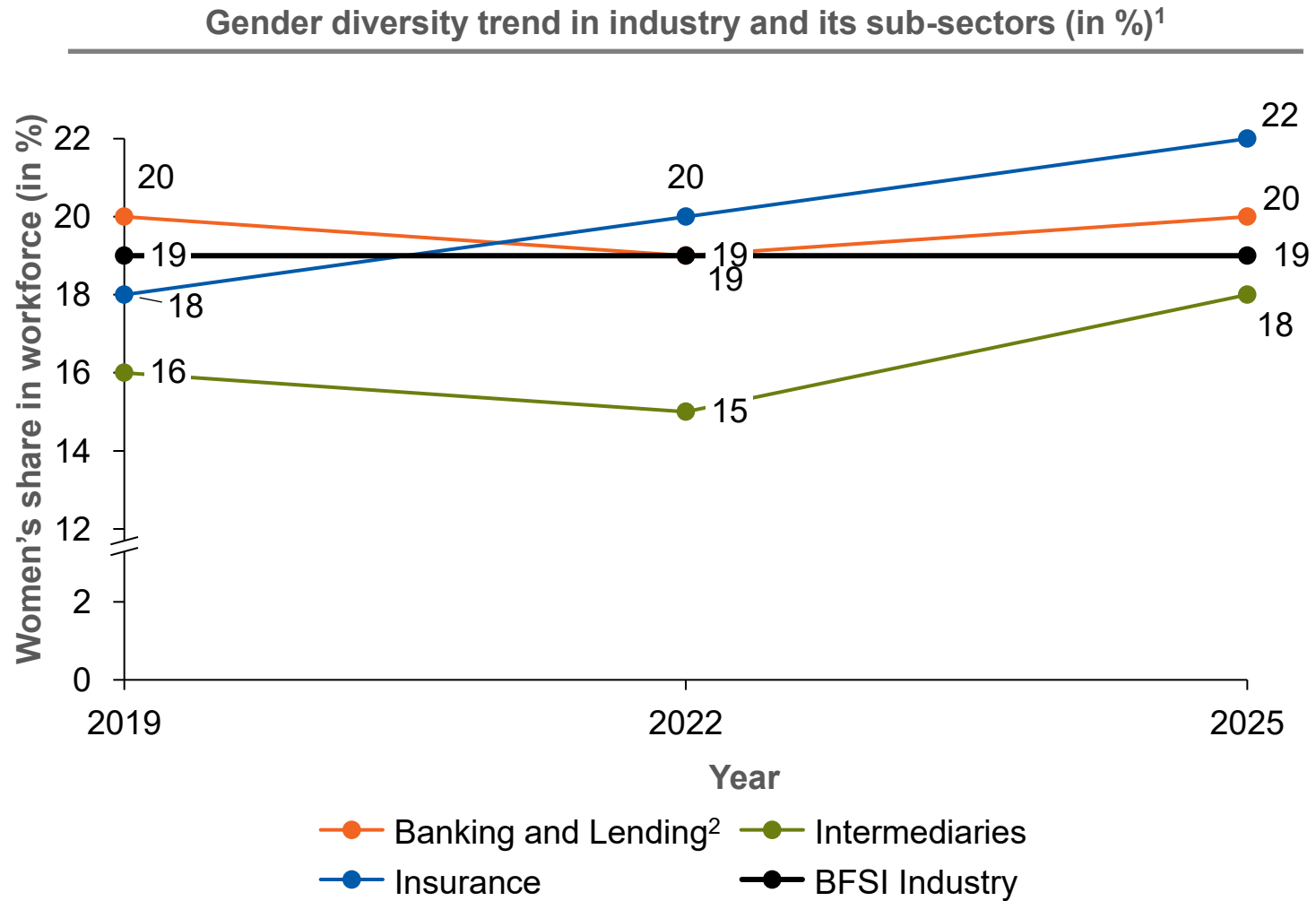
BFSI industry has ~1.4 Mn women workers, and 19% gender diversity, with small differences at sub-sector level¹

Gender diversity in BFSI industry (# in Mn, %, 2025)¹



Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; Mn – Million | 1. As per Annual report of PLFS 2025. This includes all types of employees i.e., self-employed, casual labour, regular wage/ salaried workforce; 2. Breakup for banking and lending sub-sectors is not available

Gender diversity in BFSI has remained low at ~19% over the past ~6 years



Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance | 1. Workforce data for 2019, 2022, and 2025 are as per Annual PLFS Reports of 2018-19, 2021-2022, and 2025, respectively; This includes all types of workers i.e., self-employed, casual labour, regular wage/ salaried workforce; 2: Breakup for banking and lending sub-sectors is not available

BFSI has many entry-level field and desk roles that are suitable for women with 10th/ 12th pass qualification

	Common role names ²	Description ^{1,2}	Requirement ²
Field roles (70-75% ¹)	- Salesperson/ agent - Collections officer - FOS executive	Sales: - Conduct field visits and in-person sales for loans, credit cards, and other financial products - Collect customer documents and complete on-ground verification - Assist customers during field visits with product information and application queries Collections: - Gather market intelligence and support debt recovery activities	12th pass
Desk roles (25-30% ¹)	- Operations executive - Customer support executive - Documentation executive - Back-office executive - Backend tele-sales agent	Operations: - Enter loan, lien, mortgage, and credit details into systems, including KYC information - Process applications and maintain backend records - Perform clerical and administrative tasks Customer support/ tele-sales: - Provide statements and required documents to customers - Handle service requests and customer queries through call centres or help desks - Acquire and convert customers via outbound/ inbound calls	12th pass (some require graduation) - Language proficiency (English or vernacular, depending on the role)

- Salary for entry-level desk roles typically varies between INR 10K-25K per month¹
- Salary for entry-level field roles typically varies between INR 10K-50K (owing to target-linked variable pay)¹
- Similar roles for public sector institutions typically mandate graduate degrees, proficiency in regional languages, and passing written examinations³

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; FOS – Feet on street; KYC – Know your customer | 1. Based on FSG's secondary research, interactions with 3 industry leaders, 9 managers, 11 women in entry-level roles, and 4 experts in the industry, and 3 field visits; 2. As per job listings from 2025 on Apna.com; 3. As per job listings from 2025 on Naukri.com.

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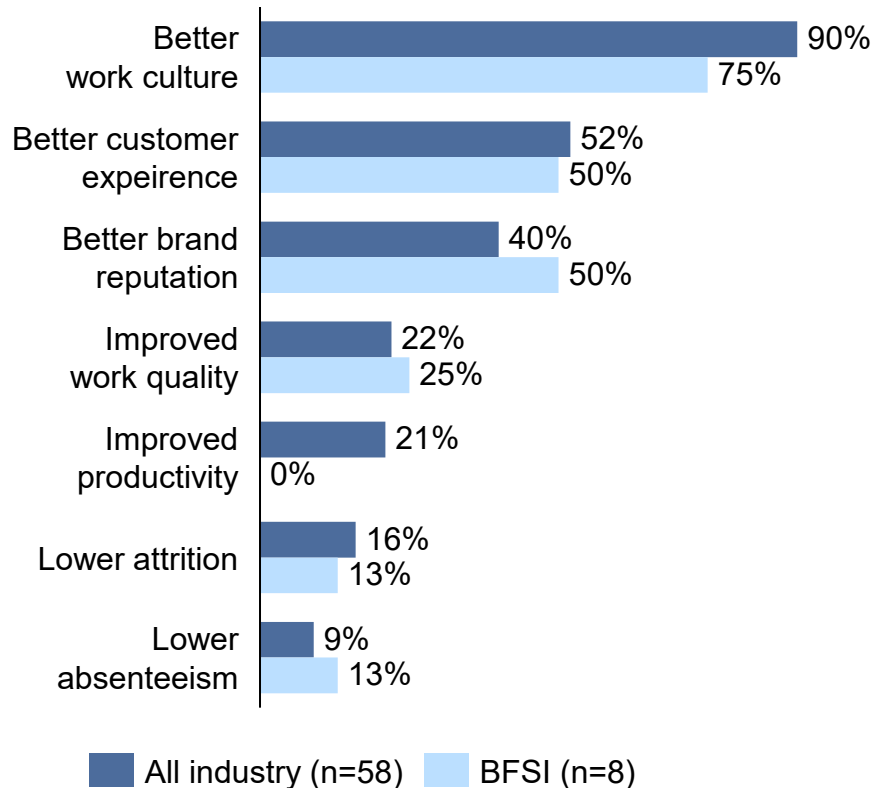
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Hiring more women in BFSI industry can lead to improved work culture, customer experience and brand reputation

Top benefits of workplace diversity cited by managers in BFSI and other industries¹



Quotes from BFSI industry interactions²

“Women work sincerely, and hence make fewer errors when handling financial documents”

– *Manager, NBFC*

“Women tend to learn quickly and start delivering results early”

– *Business head, private bank*

“Women field agents are able to bring more women customers because of relatability and comfort”

– *Insurance broker*

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; NBFCs – Non-banking financial companies | 1. Based on findings from FSG’s digital survey on ‘What are your industry peers doing to diversify the talent pool?’ with 8 responses from BFSI, 21 responses from F&B services, 14 responses from retail and 15 responses from other industries (e.g., manufacturing). In addition, ~5% respondents cited other benefits such as diverse perspectives; 2. Based on FSG’s secondary research and interactions with industry leaders and managers

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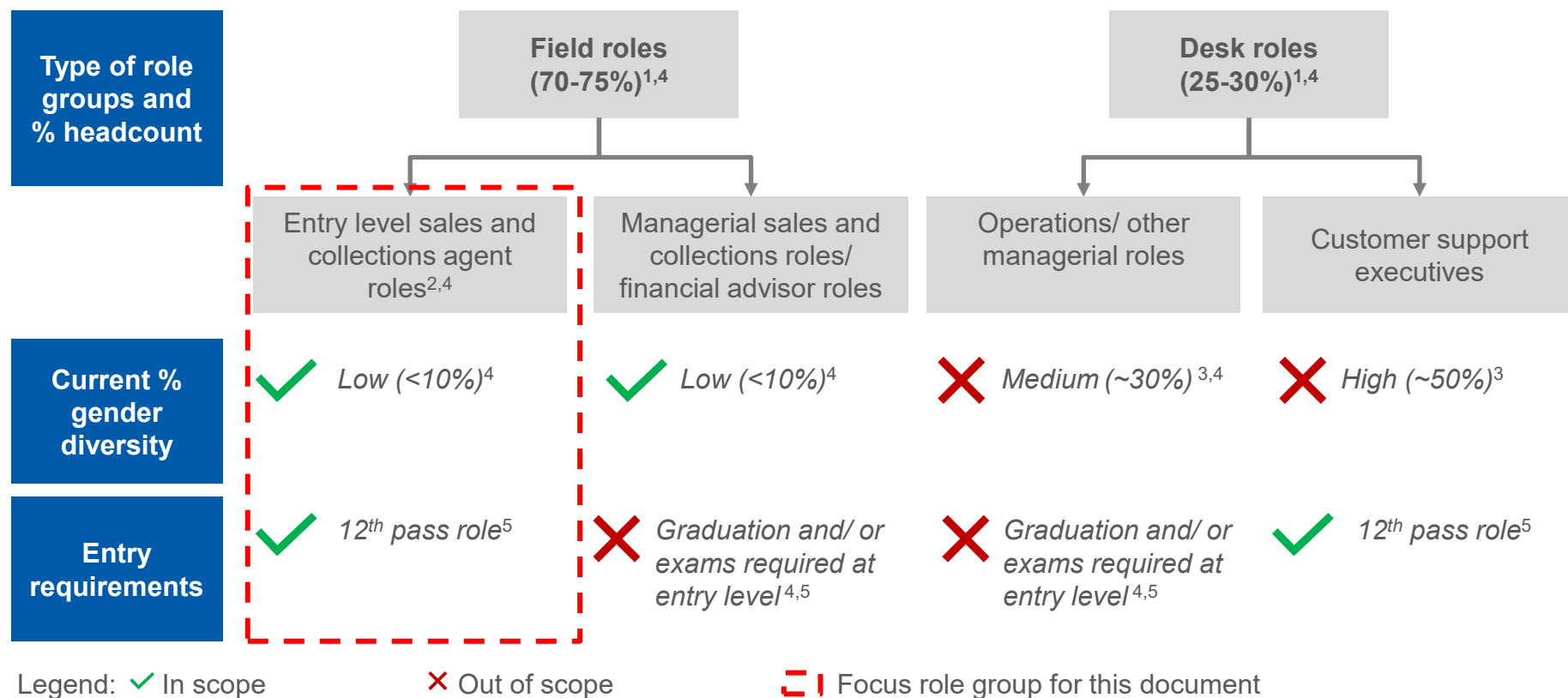
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Managers' perspectives on gender diversity from digital survey

Methodology used for arriving at insights

In the BFSI sector, the largest scope to increase gender equity lies in entry-level field roles for sales and collections



- Documentation and customer support roles may see low job growth due to increased digitisation and use of AI chatbots³
- Figures above are indicative estimates, and can vary based on sub-sector and company size

1. <https://taggd.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BFSI-DOSSIER.pdf>; 2. Entry level roles make up approximately 85% of roles within field roles, with the rest being senior/ managerial roles; 3. [Sightsinplus](#); 4. Based on FSG's secondary research, interactions with 3 industry leaders, 9 managers, 11 women in entry-level roles, and 4 experts in the industry, and 3 field visits; 5. BFSI role listings on job portals

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Unconscious biases, lack of company infra and skills, and supply constraints limit women's participation in field roles¹



Unconscious biases

- 1 Managers are reluctant to hire women for field roles due to safety concerns
- 2 Managers are reluctant to hire women for field roles due to performance concerns (e.g., women may not be able to persuade/ negotiate with customers)

Lack of skills and infrastructure

- 3 Job descriptions lack clarity on eligibility, job requirements, and details on pay structure (e.g., fixed vs variable pay break-up)
- 4 Companies provide limited mentorship and onboarding support for specific skills (e.g., pitching skills for field sales roles)
- 5 Companies lack safety and grievance redressal mechanisms (e.g., emergency support during field travel)

Supply constraints

- 6 Staffing vendors have limited ability to source women for field roles
- 7 Some women are less willing to work in field roles (e.g., field sales)

Inadequate public infrastructure

- 8 Many cities/ towns lack affordable and safe transport facilities, especially in suburbs or during late hours
- 9 Many cities/ towns lack safe/ clean washrooms for women to use during travel

Regulatory constraints

- 10 Some laws make women uncompetitive in labour market (e.g., Maternity benefits act)
- 11 Some state governments disallow women from working in late evening or night shifts

Unfavourable societal norms

- 12 Families make limited investments in assets (e.g., 2-wheelers) and skills (e.g., digital literacy) for women
- 13 Families do not permit women to work in field roles due to appropriateness biases

Legend: Bold indicates high-priority barriers

Acronyms: Infra – Infrastructure| 1. Based on FSG's secondary research, interactions with 3 industry leaders, 9 managers, 11 women in entry-level roles, and 4 experts in the industry, and 3 field visits

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Methodology used for arriving at insights

BFSI companies can roll out 13 interventions to hire and retain more women in field roles (1/4)¹



Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; KPIs – Key performance indicators | 1. Based on FSG's secondary research, interactions with 3 industry leaders, 9 managers, 11 women in entry-level roles, and 4 experts in the industry, and 3 field visits; 2. Timelines are indicative

BFSI companies can roll out 13 interventions to hire and retain more women in field roles (2/4)¹

Build capability

Enable and support

Formalise and sustain

Intervention theme	Intervention name	Intervention description
Hiring practices	1 Gender diversity pledge	Commit to a company-level gender diversity goal for entry-level roles, and reinforce it across the organisation through leadership communication and regular progress reviews
	2 Gender inclusive job-ads	Explicitly mention women's eligibility in all job posts/ collaterals, and include details of salary structure, timings, skills, travel requirements, and available support/ benefits
	3 Salary structure communication	Share flyers and organise sessions during onboarding to clearly disclose fixed pay, variable components, reimbursements, benefits and deductions
Managerial support and accountability	4 Gender sensitisation training	Conduct training workshops to help managers recognise and overcome unconscious gender biases
On-the-job support	5 Safety provisions	Invest in infrastructure (e.g., CCTV), emergency support (e.g., SOS feature), and/ or safety trainings

Further details on each intervention can be found in the Annex

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; CCTV – Closed circuit television; SOS – Emergency distress signal | 1. Based on FSG's secondary research, interactions with 3 industry leaders, 9 managers, 11 women in entry-level roles, and 4 experts in the industry, and 3 field visits

BFSI companies can roll out 13 interventions to hire and retain more women in field roles (3/4)¹



Intervention theme	Intervention name	Intervention description
Hiring practices	6 Inclusive hiring and retention training	Train HR and operations managers on hiring from women-friendly hiring channels (e.g., referrals), and minimising candidate drop offs before joining and after onboarding, for increased retention
	7 Women video testimonials	Share short videos of existing women employees through different channels (e.g., social media), boosting visibility of women and benefits in entry-level roles
Managerial support and accountability	8 Custom zone allocation	Train managers to plan routes and schedules that account for women field employees' safety and mobility constraints without penalising performance
	9 Buddy mapping	Assign existing women employees to guide and motivate new joiners by providing ad-hoc support, sharing tips, enabling new joiners to shadow them, and clarifying queries during the first 30 days
On-the-job support	10 Mobility support	Share information on appropriate transport/ 2-wheeler rental options, and/ or facilitate access to 2-wheeler rentals

Further details on each intervention can be found in the Annex

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; HR – Human resources | 1. Based on FSG's secondary research, interactions with 3 industry leaders, 9 managers, 11 women in entry-level roles, and 4 experts in the industry, and 3 field visits

BFSI companies can roll out 13 interventions to hire and retain more women in field roles (4/4)¹

Build capability

Enable and support

Formalise and sustain

Intervention theme	Intervention name	Intervention description
Hiring practices	11 Incentives for staffing companies	Incentivise staffing companies to recruit women candidates, especially in difficult-to-hire roles/ shifts, through additional per hire fee and preferential terms and conditions
Managerial support and accountability	12 Gender diversity KPIs	Set realistic gender diversity targets for HR and business/ operations managers and heads, and link a part of their variable pay to these targets
On-the-job support	13 Grievance redressal system	Set up a multi-channel grievance redressal system, including anonymous options, to enable timely and fair resolution of workplace issues

Further details on each intervention can be found in the Annex

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; HR – Human resources; KPIs – Key performance indicators | 1. Based on FSG's secondary research, interactions with 3 industry leaders, 9 managers, 11 women in entry-level roles, and 4 experts in the industry, and 3 field visits

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Objectives and context

- **Objectives:** This tool is designed to score BFSI companies on their performance on gender equity in entry-level roles, and identify areas of improvement
- **Context:** This tool
 - Is designed to be used by either the companies themselves or independent evaluators
 - Is recommended to be used annually/ bi-annually to track progress
 - Has been designed to evaluate all branches/ offices of a BFSI company
 - Does not include scores on parameters mandated by law (e.g., creche facilities, maternity leave)
 - Can be used effectively by a medium or large BFSI company that has field workforce (e.g., sales, collections) or 3rd party distributors and intermediaries
- **Common terms used:**
 - **Employee:** Refers to both on-roll and off-roll employees
 - **Branch/ office:** Physical location providing customer service, or performing backend functions and financial transactions

How to use this tool

Whom to interview to score the organisation

- Interview someone in the corporate team who has:
 - Data (e.g., headcount, gender diversity) on all branches/ offices
 - Information about hiring practices (e.g., referral bonus) and key HR policies (e.g., KPI)
- Ideally interview the HR Head of the company, but in some cases, you could also interview the CEO (for medium BFSI companies) or senior HR manager (for large BFSI companies)

How to score the organisation

- For each parameter, give a tick for each of the scores from Score A to Score D where conditions/ criteria are met for that score
- Count the number of ticks for the parameter, multiply by the applicable multiplier (if any) and enter the calculated score in the “Final score” column. For example,
 - If for the parameter “Gender inclusive hiring practices”, the number of ticks is 3, write 3 in the “Final score”
 - If you have not given any ticks for the parameter, write 0 in the “Final score”
 - If for the parameter “Women employees”, the number of ticks is 3 and multiplier is 2, write 6 (=3x2) in the “Final score”
- Continue the scoring in a similar manner for other parameters
- Add the “Final score” across all parameters to calculate the total score

Gender Equity Readiness Scorecard (GERS) for BFSI roles – Outcome

Parameter	Score A	Score B	Score C	Score D	Final score
Women employees	What is the % of all women employees (including off-roll and on-roll employees) in your company?		What is the % of all women employees (including off-roll and on-roll employees) in field roles in your company?		(# of ticks x 3)
	Tick if >=10%	Tick if >=30%	Tick if >=5%	Tick if >=15%	

Note: Please tick all applicable columns for each parameter above (i.e., for the parameter “women employees”, if the % of all women employees is 40% and women field employees is 10%, please tick “score A”, “score B” and “score C”)

Gender Equity Readiness Scorecard (GERS) for BFSI roles – Recruitment practices

Parameter	Score A	Score B	Score C	Score D	Final score
Gender inclusive hiring practices	Do you have a standard practice of clearly stating that women can apply in job ads for entry-level field roles?	Do job ads for all field roles explicitly state minimum guaranteed pay?	Do you have a paid referral program targeted at hiring women employees (or) do you provide a higher per-hire reward to all workers for referring women compared to men?	Do you offer monetary (e.g., additional sourcing fee) and/ or non-monetary incentives (e.g., longer lead time) to staffing vendors for sourcing and hiring women candidates in field roles?	(# of ticks x 1)
	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	
Onboarding support and role readiness	Does your onboarding manual cover all of the following in detail? (a) Break-up of fixed pay vs. variable pay (b) Incentive/ commission structure with criteria/ slabs (c) Performance expectations for field roles	Are personal buddies allocated to provide support and guidance to all new women field employees in the initial few weeks?	Are monthly targets relaxed for all new joiners for the first few months, and communicated in advance?	Are part-time work options available to all women field employees (other than brokers on individual insurance agents)?	(# of ticks x 1)
	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance

Gender Equity Readiness Scorecard (GERS) for BFSI roles – Capability

Parameter	Score A	Score B	Score C	Score D	Final score
Gender sensitisation	In the last year, have all employees (including managers) received written material on gender sensitisation (apart from POSH) for working with women employees and interacting with women customers?	In the last year, have all employees (including managers) received gender sensitisation training (apart from POSH) for working with women employees and interacting with women customers?	In the last year, have all field managers received written guidelines on planning field routes that account for women's safety and mobility constraints?	In the last year, have all business/ operations managers received training to reduce bias in hiring, target setting, and performance evaluation for field roles?	(# of ticks x 1)
	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	
Grievance redressal	Do you have women POCs who check-in with all new women employees in field roles during the first 30 days?		Is there a non-POSH grievance redressal channel (e.g., branch level HR, helpline, email ID) for all employees to report routine workplace issues/ concerns (e.g., colleague behaviour)?	Is there a non-POSH anonymous grievance redressal channel (e.g., suggestion box, QR feedback form) for all employees to report workplace issues/ concerns (e.g., lack of guidance to meet KPIs)?	(# of ticks x 1)
	<i>Tick if check-in done at least once per new employee</i>	<i>Tick if check-in done at least twice per new employee</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; POCs – Point of contacts; HR – Human resources; QR – Quick Response; KPI – Key performance indicator; POSH – Prevention of sexual harassment; FY – Financial Year

Gender Equity Readiness Scorecard (GERS) for BFSI roles – Infrastructure

Parameter	Score A	Score B	Score C	Score D	Final score
Mobility support and washroom access	Do you share information on public transport options available (e.g., appropriate bus routes, guidelines to get a metro pass) and 2-wheeler rental options with all candidates during the interview process and during onboarding?	Do you provide travel reimbursements for costs borne by all field employees?	Have you formally partnered (e.g., signed MOU) with 2-wheeler rental firms to facilitate access to 2-wheelers at favourable terms for all women field employees (e.g., subsidised rentals, lower security deposit)?	Have you partnered with any establishments/ offices in at least 10% of your cities of operations to provide washroom access to all women field employees in areas farther from your company branches/ offices?	(# of ticks x 1)
	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	
Safety support	Do emergency mechanisms exist for all women field employees (e.g., SOS, emergency helpline, escalation protocol)?	Do you provide safety kits (e.g., alarm keychains, pepper spray) to all women field employees?	In the last year, did you provide all women field employees with formal training on safe travel, customer interaction and emergency escalation procedures?	Do you provide all women field employees the option to share their live location for tracking, for improved safety and visibility (e.g., using GPS-tracking apps)?	(# of ticks x 1)
	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; MOU – Memorandum of Understanding; SOS – Emergency distress signal; GPS – Global positioning system

Gender Equity Readiness Scorecard (GERS) for BFSI roles – Accountability

Parameter	Score A	Score B	Score C	Score D	Final score
Diversity targets	Has the organisation internally announced a diversity target (including on-roll and off-roll employees) for the entire organisation (e.g., CXO quote, press release, company-wide email)?	Has the organisation internally announced a diversity target for all entry level field roles (including on-roll and off-roll employees) (e.g., CXO quote, press release, company-wide email)?	What % of your branches/ offices have gender diversity targets assigned to business/ operations managers and heads?	Are financial incentives of leadership and branch/ office heads of field employees (including on-roll and off-roll employees) linked to gender diversity KPIs?	(# of ticks x 2)
	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if >=50%</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	
Diversity data publication	Have you internally documented the qualitative benefits of hiring women for your company, and shared with all business/ operations managers and HR managers?	In the last two years, have you externally published content on your gender equity progress or initiatives for all entry-level roles (via news articles, blogs, etc.)?	In the last two years, have you published your gender diversity data (including off-roll and on-roll employees) externally (e.g., website, report)?	Have you estimated the quantitative benefits of hiring women, and shared the findings internally with business/ operations managers and HR managers?	(# of ticks x 1)
	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	<i>Tick if Yes</i>	

Total score (Out of 48)

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; CXO – Chief “X” officer; HR – Human resources; KPI – Key performance indicator

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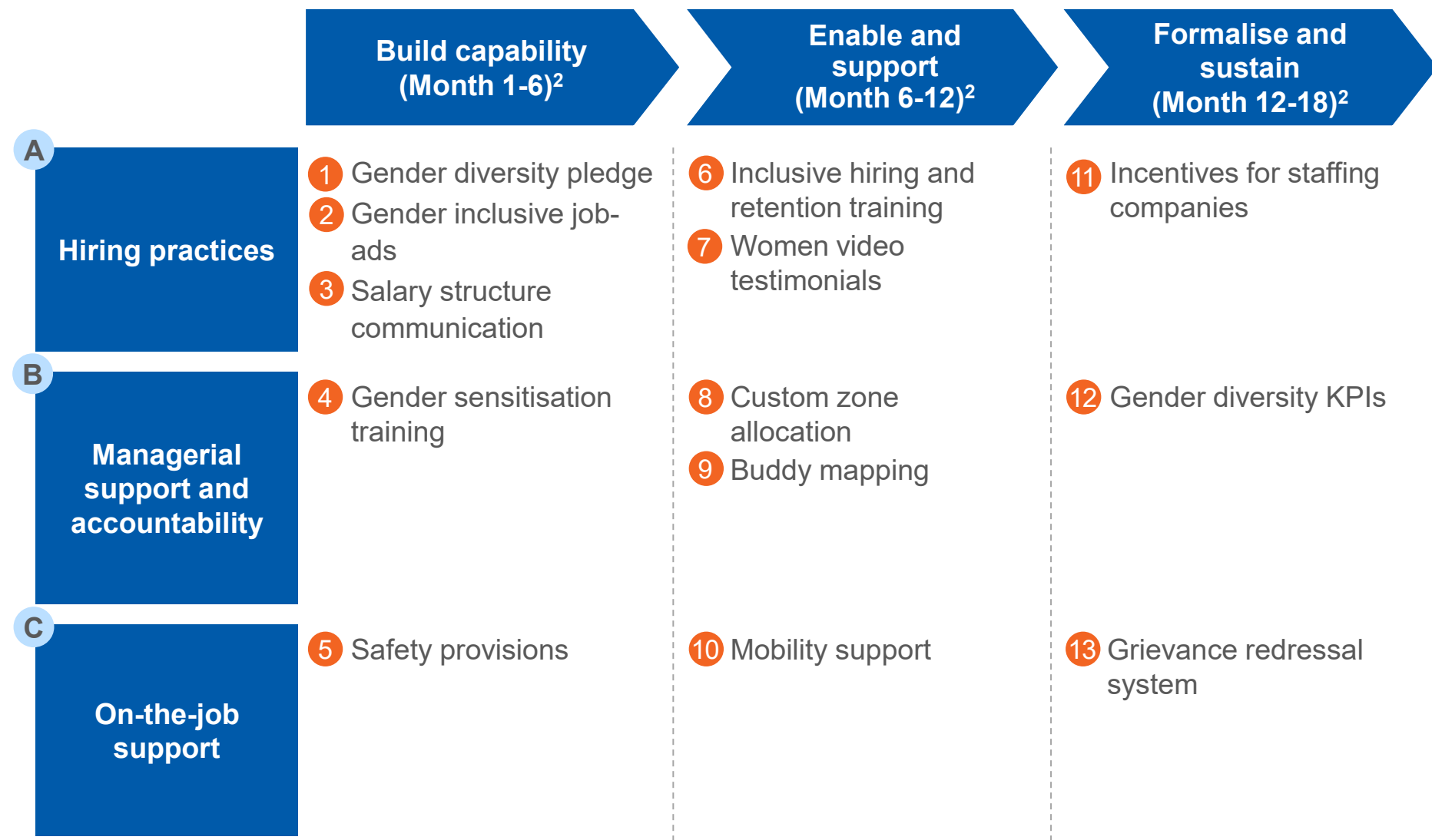
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Details of 13 interventions to hire and retain more women

Managers' perspectives on gender diversity from digital survey

Methodology used for arriving at insights

BFSI companies can roll out 13 interventions to hire and retain more women in field roles¹



Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; KPIs – Key performance indicators | 1. Based on FSG's secondary research, interactions with 3 industry leaders, 9 managers, 11 women in entry-level roles, and 4 experts in the industry, and 3 field visits; 2. Timelines are indicative

Gender diversity pledge

Commit to a company-level gender diversity goal for entry-level roles, and reinforce it across the organisation through leadership communication and regular progress reviews

Steps for gender diversity pledge

- **Define** clear gender diversity target for entry-level field sales and collections roles (including outsourced roles) and specify the time for achieving it
- **Communicate** the pledge through
 - Leadership emails
 - Leadership meetings
 - Townhalls
 - Internal newsletters
- **Discuss** progress on gender diversity regularly (e.g., quarterly), and include gender diversity in field roles as a standing topic in workforce planning discussions

Key messages for communication

- *We are committing to improve gender diversity in entry-level field roles across the organisation from 3% to 10% over the next 18-24 months¹*
- *We do not want to miss on the benefits of gender diversity — better work culture, improved customer experience, enhanced brand reputation, and improved work quality as suggested by growing research on industry²*
- *We encourage teams to explore ways to hire more women and to share ideas and initiatives by writing to us at [email] or reaching out to the gender diversity lead*

1. Targets and timelines are indicative and should be adapted based on company context and baseline; 2. [Blog on 'Diversity wins: How Inclusion matters' by McKinsey & Company](#)

Gender inclusive job-ads (1/3) | Job portal

Explicitly mention women's eligibility in all job posts/ collaterals, and include details of salary structure, timings, skills, travel requirements, and available support/ benefits

Indicate that women can also apply in the headline

Include expected work timings

Include minimum experience requirement to reduce self-selection by women

Include mandatory skills so women can assess fit

Include language expectations

Sample job advertisement

Female/ Male Sales Agent
Company name

📍 Mumbai/Bombay

💰 ₹15,000 fixed, and up to ₹35,000 variable salary per month

🚲 Field Job **F** Full Time 📁 Any experience **ENG** Basic English

🕒 **Employment type**
Full Time(9:00 am-5:00 pm)

⚙️ **Shift**
Day Shift

Job requirements

📁 **Experience**
Any experience

🎓 **Education**
12th Pass

✍️ **Skills**
Sales, pitching, distribution

🗣️ **English level**
Basic English

🗣️ **Regional language**
Fluent in speaking Gujarati

👤 **Gender**
Any gender

🛵 **Travel requirements**
2-wheeler needed
(company can assist with rental)

Include minimum guaranteed salary for variable-pay roles to set expectations

Include minimum education requirement to reduce self-selection by women

Indicate that any gender can apply

Include travel requirement and 2-wheeler rental options so candidates know support will be provided

Transparency and explicit inclusion signals reduce uncertainty and self-screening among women candidates, leading to higher applications, better fit, and lower drop-offs

2 Gender inclusive job-ads (2/3) | WhatsApp poster/ status and message

Explicitly mention women's eligibility in all job posts/ collaterals, and include details of salary structure, timings, skills, travel requirements, and available support/ benefits

Sample WhatsApp poster/ status

Job opportunity!
Earn ₹15,000 fixed + KPI linked bonus up to ₹35,000 per month working as field sales agent in Mumbai



Men and women are welcome to apply!
NO CHARGES, APPLY NOW!
Call/ WhatsApp: +91 xxxxx xxxxx

Sample WhatsApp message

Job opportunity! Earn ₹15,000 to ₹50,000 monthly!

Wanted Female/ Male Field Sales Agent in Mumbai for insurance sales role

- Job role: Field Sales Agent
- Shift: Full-time, day shift (9:00 am to 5:00 pm)
- Qualification: 12th Pass
- Language: Gujarati (spoken), basic English
- Mobility: 2-wheeler needed (company can assist with rental)

Call or WhatsApp on +91 xxxxx xxxxx. Forward this message to others interested or in need!

Clear information on role and benefits, along with visible cues on inclusion (e.g., women's photo, "women can apply"), reduces self screening and increases applications from women

Gender inclusive job-ads (3/3) | Job flyer

Explicitly mention women's eligibility in all job posts/ collaterals, and include details of salary structure, timings, skills, travel requirements, and available support/ benefits

Sample poster/ flyer for circulation on field

Hiring field sales agents for
<company name>



Earn INR 15,000+ per month
Both women and men can apply

Timings: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM	Additional KPI linked bonus up to ₹ 35,000
Entry level job for 12 th pass, no experience required	2-wheeler needed (company can assist with rental)

Call: +91 XXXXX XXXXX

Share with friends and family

Benefits of the job that women would find appealing (e.g., fixed timings and salary component)

Job requirements to allow candidates to assess fit

Photo of a woman and man to indicate both are encouraged to apply

Fixed salary component to set earnings expectations

Clear and low effort call to action for ease of application

Salary structure communication

Share flyers and organise sessions during onboarding to clearly disclose fixed pay, variable components, reimbursements, benefits and deductions

Sample poster/ flyer

Salary structure breakup for field sales agent

Fixed base salary:

- ₹15,000/ month

Variable pay (performance based, excluding base salary):

- Up to ₹35,000 (As per performance in previous month)
- Performance slabs as per INR revenue generated
- Field managers to share 5 performance slabs by 25th of previous month over email/ WhatsApp

Reimbursements:

- Fuel (actuals, capped at ₹10,000/ month)
- Mobile (actuals, capped at ₹500/ month)

Benefits and deductions:

- PF and ESIC (as applicable)
- Income tax deductions (as applicable)

Explanation to be shared during onboarding

Share exact monthly amount and fixed credit date to signal income stability

Specify whether variable pay is linked to sales in INR or no. of products sold, and whether it is paid monthly or quarterly

Share slabs (e.g., X sales = ₹Y incentive) and clarify that incentives are additional, not guaranteed

Clarify whether fuel/ mobile allowances are fixed or reimbursed against bills, and any caps that apply

Clearly state PF/ ESIC applicability, typical deductions, and what components are excluded from base salary

Sharing details upfront provides clarity, sets the right expectation, and helps improve performance and reduce attrition

Acronyms: PF – Provident Fund; ESIC – Employees' State Insurance Corporation

Gender sensitisation trainings

Conduct training workshops to help managers recognise and overcome unconscious gender biases

Objectives

- Help managers (e.g., HR manager, business/ operations managers) recognise unconscious gender biases
- Show how gender biases affect the company, women, and men at work
- Share practical solutions to reduce common biases and the benefits of doing so
- Provide a simple checklist to self-assess bias during hiring and team management

Training checklist



Attendees: HR manager, business/ operations managers, Team leads



Trainer: Internal (e.g.. HR)/ External trainer



Duration: ~1.5 hours



Mode: In-person/ virtual



Frequency: Every 6 months



Set-up required: Projector, whiteboard, markers, Video conferencing platform (e.g., Zoom)

Video: Types of unconscious bias at the workplace



What are your main takeaways from this video?

4 Fast thinking, although essential, is often the cause of unconscious gender bias

Fast thinking – Intuition, feelings, and pattern recognition that act as mental shortcuts and help us navigate our complex everyday lives



For example, fast thinking helps to:

Slam the brakes quickly when needed while driving

Recognise hesitant body language and react encouragingly

Take routine decisions like choosing a weather-appropriate outfit

However, fast thinking also leads to unconscious gender bias by causing us to:

Hold on to pre-existing beliefs despite evidence to the contrary. *E.g., if we believe women are poor drivers, we overlook competent women drivers*

Assign behaviours to groups instead of individuals. *E.g., one man's angry behaviour makes us believe all men behave that way*

Fail to question assumptions, thus reinforcing stereotypes. *E.g., we assume that a woman worker cannot lift heavy weights without checking her abilities*

Slow, deliberate thinking is essential to mitigate the impact of unconscious bias on important decisions

4 Sample group activity: How do you think unconscious gender bias affects the business and employees?

- How does unconscious gender bias affect women employees?
 - <XX>
- How does unconscious gender bias affect men employees?
 - <XX>
- How does unconscious gender bias affect business?
 - <XX>

4

Unconscious gender bias in hiring negatively affects women's participation, motivation, and growth in the workplace



Exclusion from participation

- Women may be excluded from roles viewed as inappropriate or unsuitable for them (*e.g., field collections roles*)



Lower motivation

- Women may not even try to perform some tasks
- Women may be demotivated resulting in lower productivity



Lower pay and slower growth

- Women may receive lower pay and incentives if seen as less productive
- Women may not get promoted if managers are unsure of their skills



Poor attitude towards women

- Other men employees may be biased toward women if managers are biased
- The authority of women in positions of power may not be recognised

Unconscious gender bias can lead to poor workplace culture

Unconscious gender bias in hiring restricts roles and opportunities for men and puts undue pressure on them



Exclusion from roles

- Men may be excluded from roles seen as traditionally more suitable for women (*e.g., customer service executive*)



Gendered workload distribution

- Some physically intense tasks may be assigned only to men
- Men may be expected to do overtime more regularly



Caregiving duties ignored

- Men may not be given leave for caregiving responsibilities (*e.g., caring for children, taking care of old parents*)

Unconscious gender bias can lead to poor workplace culture

Unconscious gender bias in hiring could lead to lower efficiency, higher attrition, smaller hiring pool and fewer clients



Lower efficiency

- Missed opportunities for improvement in business metrics (e.g., productivity, absenteeism), if not hiring women



Lower workforce stability

- Higher average attrition rates when hiring men only



Smaller candidate pool

- Smaller candidate pool to hire from if excluding women

5 Safety provisions

Invest in infrastructure (e.g., CCTV), emergency support (e.g., SOS feature), and/ or safety trainings

A Safety infrastructure

- Provide CCTV coverage at all entry/ exit points and across all branches
- Maintain adequate lighting at branch entrance, pick-up/ drop point, and immediate approach path outside branches

B Emergency response support

- Provide the following resources for all employees to tackle emergency situations:
 - Emergency contact card of police/ woman helpline numbers, field manager, and security-in-charge
 - SOS feature (button/ app) to raise an alert and share GPS location with concerned authorities/ people
 - Safety kits (e.g., pepper spray) to women to ensure safe commute

C Safety trainings

- Conduct the following trainings/ sessions every 6 months for all women employees, particularly women in shifts ending late evening and field roles:
 - Personal self defence sessions
 - Situational awareness and conflict de-escalation training
 - Emergency protocol session (e.g., using SOS)

Acronyms: CCTV – Closed-Circuit Television; GPS – Global positioning system; SOS – Emergency distress signal

Inclusive hiring and retention training (1/4)

Train HR and operations managers on hiring from women-friendly hiring channels (e.g., referrals), and minimising candidate drop offs before joining and after onboarding, for increased retention



Training for hiring from women-friendly channels

- Share details on sourcing candidates from women-friendly hiring channels (e.g., referrals from existing employees to find candidates with genuine interest in the role)

A Share 4 steps for an effective candidate pitch, and conduct mock pitches (e.g., customised pitch for freshers with no experience v/s experienced employees)

 Details shared in following slides



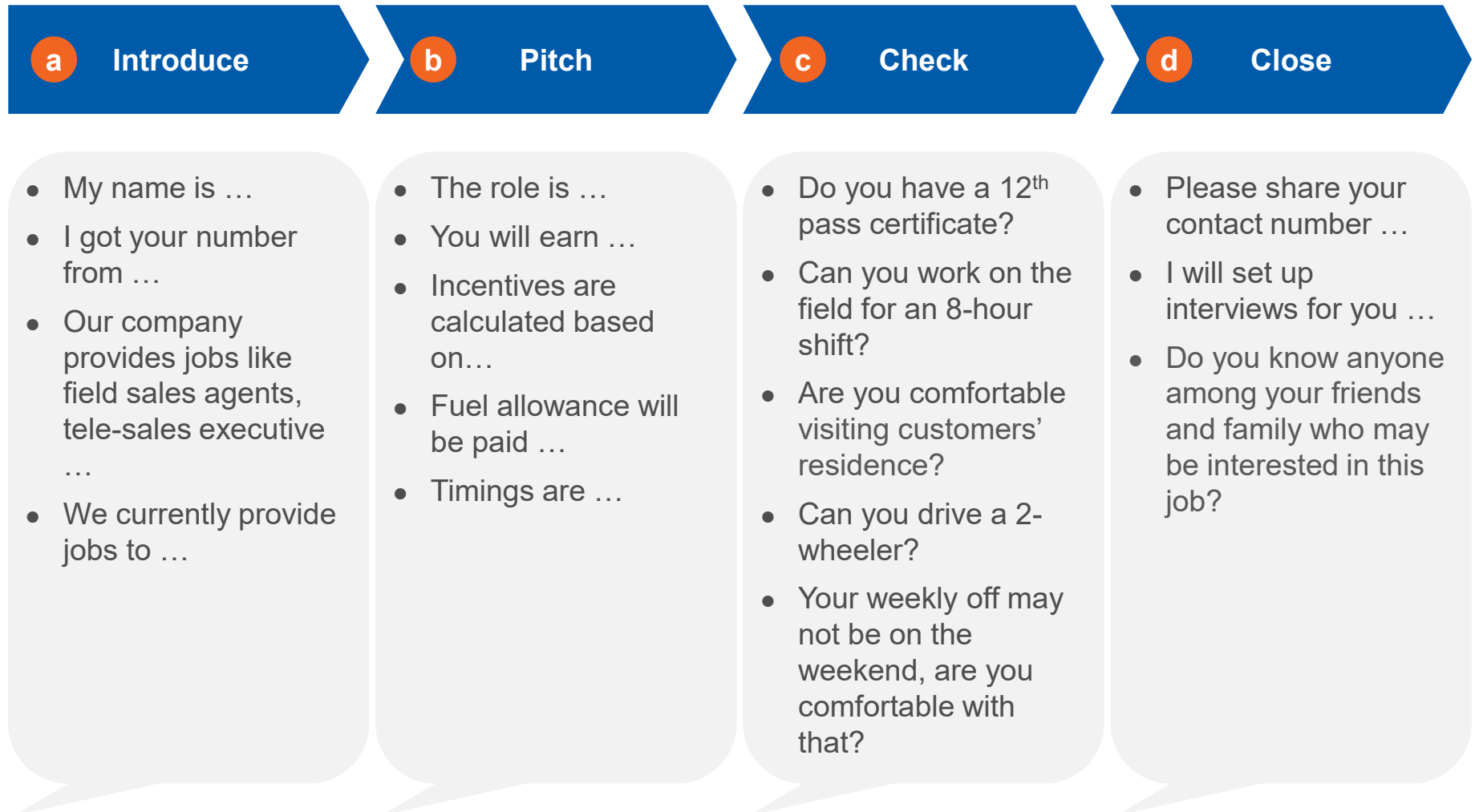
Training for reducing attrition

- B** Share 8 reasons why candidates drop off
- C** Share 6 ways by which HR and operations managers can reduce drop-offs
- Practice calls with operations managers to identify and address issues early

These trainings are critical as hiring teams tend to use male-centric sourcing channels and are often unaware of the benefits/ role attributes that appeal to women, leading to missed hires and higher drop-offs

6 Inclusive hiring and retention training (2/4) | There are 4 key steps to an effective pitch

Sample pitch for hiring insurance sales agent



6 Inclusive hiring and retention training (3/4) | Candidates drop B off due to 8 reasons

Before the candidate joins

- a) **Communication gap:** HR managers do not provide candidates with accurate information, especially about potential drawbacks of the job
- b) **Travel concerns:** Candidates have concerns due to the travel requirements of the job (e.g., lack of clarity on how to access a 2-wheeler)
- c) **Family constraints:** Families of candidates do not permit them to accept the job offer
- d) **Better opportunity:** Candidates receive a competing job offer with a higher salary or a more reputable brand

After the candidate joins

- e) **Workplace pressure:** Operations managers create intense work pressure on employees, which affects women significantly especially during the first week
- f) **Performance challenges:** Candidates realise that they are unable to perform daily tasks
- g) **Travel concerns:** Candidates have concerns as the commute requirements of the job were not clearly clarified earlier (e.g., allocated routes are in secluded areas)
- h) **Negative word-of-mouth:** Candidates hear negative narratives from co-workers in the workspace

6 Inclusive hiring and retention training (4/4) | HR and operations

C managers can reduce candidate drop-offs in 6 ways

Before the candidate joins

- a Travel support:** Provide details about commute options/ 2-wheeler rentals, and field support such as SOS and grievance redressal
- b Payout calculation:** Provide details on the breakup of the salary structure (e.g., fixed and variable component, calculation of KPI based bonus/ incentives)

After the candidate joins

- c Post-joining check-in:** Call the candidate to gather feedback on job on-boarding, and provide guidance on managing emerging issues
- d Managerial check-in:** Call the candidate's manager to foster a strong relationship, gather feedback about the candidates, address any emerging issues, and set realistic expectations
- e Monthly townhall:** Hold a monthly call with all new joiners in the same role to receive feedback, answer questions, and offer support with ongoing issues
- f Referrals:** Ask existing employees who have completed 1 month in the job for referrals

Acronyms: HR – Human resources; KPI – Key performance indicator; SOS – Emergency distress signal

Women video testimonials

Share short videos of existing women employees through different channels (e.g., social media), boosting visibility of women and benefits in entry-level roles

Benefits

- Sharing short videos of existing women employees can help in:
 - Boosting visibility of women in field roles (e.g., sales officer)
 - Highlighting benefits of working in field roles (e.g., KPI-based incentives)
 - Proactively addressing concerns related to the role (e.g., field safety)

Guidelines for video creation

- **Format:** 1-2-minute videos featuring existing women employees (e.g., working mothers, non-graduate women) across roles (e.g., field sales and collections)
- **Scale:** 1-2 videos per region (e.g., state)
- **Language:** English and local language
- **Recording:** Through smartphones. Professional shoot is optional
- **Prompts for video:**
 - How has this job helped you?
 - What do you like about this job?
 - Do you feel safe and supported at workplace?
 - What does a typical day at work look like for you?

Channels for dissemination

- Add links in the job posts
- Share on social media channels (e.g., LinkedIn, Instagram)
- Play on TV screens, if available, within the branch offices
- Host on company website/ careers page

Custom zone allocation

Train managers to plan routes and schedules that account for women field employees' safety and mobility constraints without penalising performance

Rationale

Unsafe, unfamiliar travel routes may negatively impact women field-agents' performance, increase attrition, and lead to an overall drop in the company's productivity

Allocation guidelines

Implement at least 2 of the following 5 guidelines, for the first 3 months of a new hire:

- Prioritise areas with access to safe public transport, preferably within walking distance (e.g., neighbourhoods near metro stations or bus stops)
- Assign areas that are relatively close to the woman employee's residence, ideally with a commute of no more than one hour
- Focus on high-density areas that require minimal travel within the zone (e.g., large housing societies)
- Avoid assigning risk-prone areas such as narrow by-lanes, isolated stretches, or poorly lit alleys
- Balance safety with business potential when allocating zones (e.g., do not assign non-residential but safe areas to roles such as insurance sales that require residential density)

Communication guidelines

- Share zone allocation guidelines with all team members during onboarding to ensure clarity and consistency
- Rotate the allocations periodically to provide equal opportunity to all team members
- Transparently communicate the potential business opportunities (based on qualitative estimates) available in each assigned zone so team members perceive the allocation as fair

Buddy mapping

Assign existing women employees to guide and motivate new joiners by providing ad-hoc support, sharing tips, enabling new joiners to shadow them, and clarifying queries during the first 30 days

Why is buddy mapping needed?

- Without clear guidance and ongoing support, new joiners miss out on informal learning that typically happens through peers in office environments. This is even more significant for women workers who don't have access to a network that usually their male counterparts have

How is the buddy allocated?

- Assign a senior/ experienced woman field agent working in the same or adjacent zone
- Allow the identified field agent to accept/ reject being a “buddy”

What are the responsibilities of the buddy?

- Allow new agents to shadow her (the “buddy”) for ~1-2 days
- Answer queries and guide new agents on an ad-hoc basis
- Proactively check-in with new woman agent at least once a week for the first 2 months for higher retention. Check-in questions can include:
 - Are there any locations, customers, or timings where you're feeling unsafe or unsupported?
 - Is there anything blocking your conversions where you would like my help?
- Share tips on day-to-day activities (e.g., planning daily routes, identifying safe touchpoints, and handling common customer objections in the field)

How is the buddy incentivised?

- Include a financial incentive for women buddies under the incentive structure
- Pay a bonus of INR 1,000 to the woman buddy for each new employee supported, of which INR 300 is paid within the first week, and INR 700 is paid after the new joiner completes 4 months on the job

Mobility support

Share information on appropriate transport/ 2-wheeler rental options, and/ or facilitate access to 2-wheeler rentals

Rationale

- Many women don't apply for field-roles because they lack access to a 2-wheeler
- Communication by companies on appropriate transport options can help increase the target pool of women for field-roles

Mobility support methods

- **Public transport information:** Share collateral (e.g., poster, website links) on public transport options available (e.g., appropriate metro/ bus routes and guidelines to get a pass/ card, contacts and guidelines to avail trusted car-pool services)
- **Rental information:** Identify appropriate third-parties (e.g., companies providing affordable, reliable and well-maintained vehicles for rent) and inform candidates (e.g., by sharing a poster, website links) about 2-wheeler rental options during onboarding
- **Rental partnerships:** Tie up with 2-wheeler/ EV rental firms to facilitate vehicle access for women employees with favourable terms (e.g., lower security deposit, easy returns)

Incentives for staffing companies

Incentivise staffing companies to recruit women candidates, especially in difficult-to-hire roles/ shifts¹, through additional per hire fee and preferential terms and conditions

Why incentivise staffing companies?

- Staffing companies may not have considered filling mandates with women
- Sourcing women employees for difficult-to-hire roles/ shifts¹ may involve additional costs/ effort due to:
 - Targeted sourcing requirements (e.g., partnership with NGOs/ local mobilisers)
 - Additional effort to convince women and their families

Ways to incentivise staffing companies

- Companies can offer one or more of the following incentives for hiring women candidates:
 - Incentives for hiring women in **difficult-to-hire roles/ shifts¹**:
 - Offer longer lead time (e.g., 5-6 days) for hiring mandates with diversity requirements
 - Pay an additional sourcing fee of ~INR 200-350 per woman hired, upon completion of 1 month of employment
 - Incentives for hiring women in **any role/ shift**:
 - Recognise gender equitable staffing companies through “preferred partner” tag and social media mentions
 - Offer priority to the staffing companies with “preferred partner” tag in new mandates and contract terms (e.g., exclusive contracts, faster payment)

1. Includes field roles, and roles in shifts ending late evening (e.g., post 8PM)

Gender diversity KPIs (1/2)

Set realistic gender diversity targets for HR and business/ operations managers and heads, and link a part of their variable pay to these targets

Guidance to set KPIs

- Set realistic KPIs, considering location-specific limitations (e.g., remote/ sub-urban areas with lower population density)
- Set KPIs related to both efforts and outcomes, to encourage managers to take actions related to improving diversity
- Revise KPIs for different branches/ regions annually to incorporate the impact of internal/ external circumstances (e.g., over saturation or poor financial inclusion in some areas) and communicate these changes formally via email
- Gradually increase requirements in KPIs to encourage improved diversity through the years (e.g., 5% increase in annual target)

Variable pay linked to performance on gender diversity metrics can encourage active involvement by managers in achieving gender diversity outcomes

Gender diversity KPIs (2/2) | Sample criteria

Sample gender diversity KPIs for business/ operations managers

Parameters	% Weightage (of GD bonus)	Criteria for bonus eligibility			
		25% bonus	50% bonus	75% bonus	100% bonus
A % of job roles in department with gender-neutral job ads currently	30%	30% to 50%	51% to 75%	76% to 90%	>90%
B % women interviewed in the past month	30%	10% to 20% of candidates interviewed are women	21% to 30% of candidates interviewed are women	31% to 40% of candidates interviewed are women	>40% of candidates interviewed are women
C # of new women hired last month	20%	30% to 50% of target	51% to 75% of target	76% to 90% of target	>90% of target
D % of women retained in last month	20%	30% to 50% of women headcount in last month	51% to 75% of women headcount in last month	76% to 90% of women headcount in last month	>90% of women headcount in last month

For parameters 1 and 2 (% gender neutral job ads, % women interviewed) managers to self report data and HR to conduct spot checks; for parameters 3 and 4 (# women hired, % women retained), HR to use payroll data

Grievance redressal system

Set up a multi-channel grievance redressal system, including anonymous options, to enable timely and fair resolution of workplace issues

Potential grievance redressal channels ¹				
	Letter box	HR POC	Employee helpline	Digital reporting
Description	Submit anonymous written notes	Share issues 1:1 with HR (in-person, or over call)	Report issues on a dedicated line	Report issues via app/ WhatsApp/ dedicated email ID/online portal
Issue type	Any type of issue	Any type of issue	Sensitive or urgent issues	Routine complaints (e.g., infra, payroll)
Expected resolution time²	- Slow - Depends on when the box is checked	- Medium - Depends on follow-up/ investigation	- Fast - Immediate action	- Medium - Depends on review and escalation
Trust/ Comfort	High	- Low - Fear of exposure	High	- Medium - Doubt on anonymity of submissions
Overall cost	- Low - One-time cost of the box	- Medium - HR's time commitment	- Medium - Dedicated phone line monitoring	- Medium - Channel setup/ maintenance

Multiple channels accommodate diverse employee preferences (e.g., anonymous, digital vs. face-to-face) and match specific scenarios (e.g., urgent issues via helpline), maximising reporting rates and resolution effectiveness

Acronyms: HR – Human resources; POC – Point of Contact; 1. This is in addition to legal and regulatory requirements (e.g., POSH compliance) 2. All channels should have defined timelines to ensure timely acknowledgment and resolution

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 - 5 Interventions to hire and retain more women
 - 6 Scorecard to assess progress on gender equity
-

7 Annex

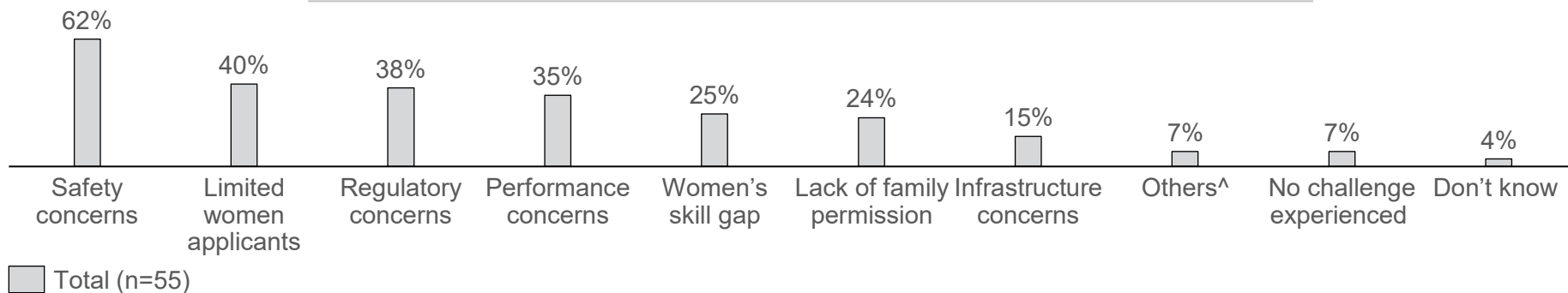
Details of 13 interventions to hire and retain more women

Managers' perspectives on gender diversity from digital survey

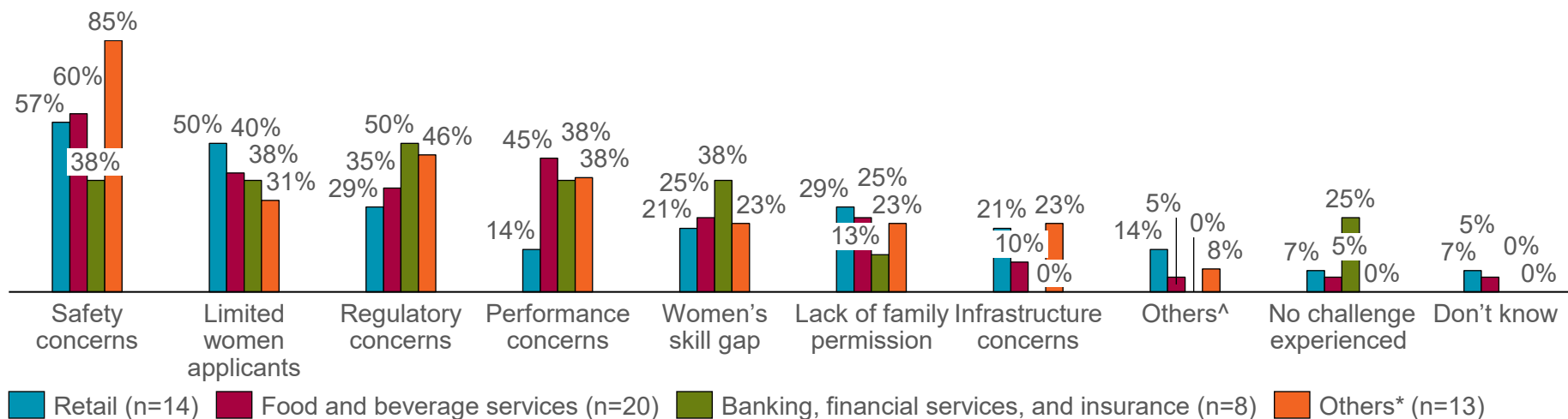
Methodology used for arriving at insights

Most managers cited three key challenges in hiring women: safety, limited applicants, and regulatory concerns

Perceived challenges in employing women in frontline/ blue-collar roles



Perceived challenges in employing women in frontline/ blue-collar roles by industry



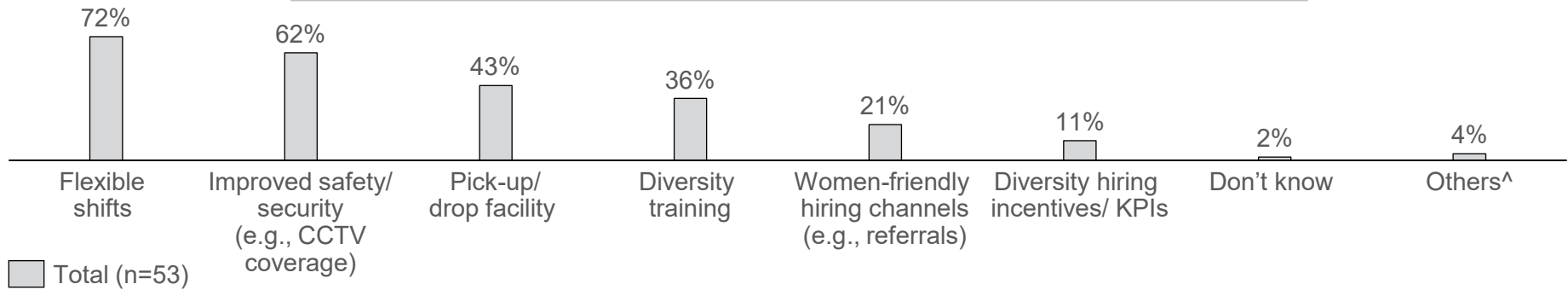
* Includes Manufacturing, Information Technology, Hospitality, Facilities Management, Logistics

^ Includes preference to work near family residence

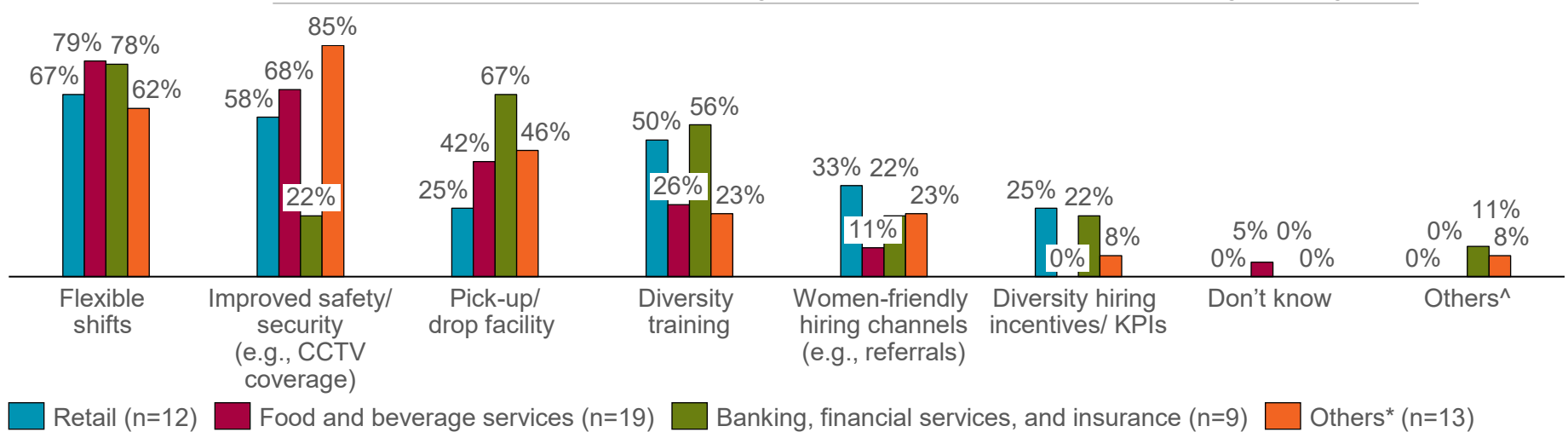
Source: Based on FSG's digital survey to understand managers' perspectives on diversifying the talent pool in frontline/ blue-collar roles

Managers cited flexible shifts, safety measures, and pick-up/drop facilities as key practices that help hire more women

Perceived practices that help employ women in frontline/ blue-collar roles



Perceived practices that help employ women in frontline/ blue-collar roles by industry

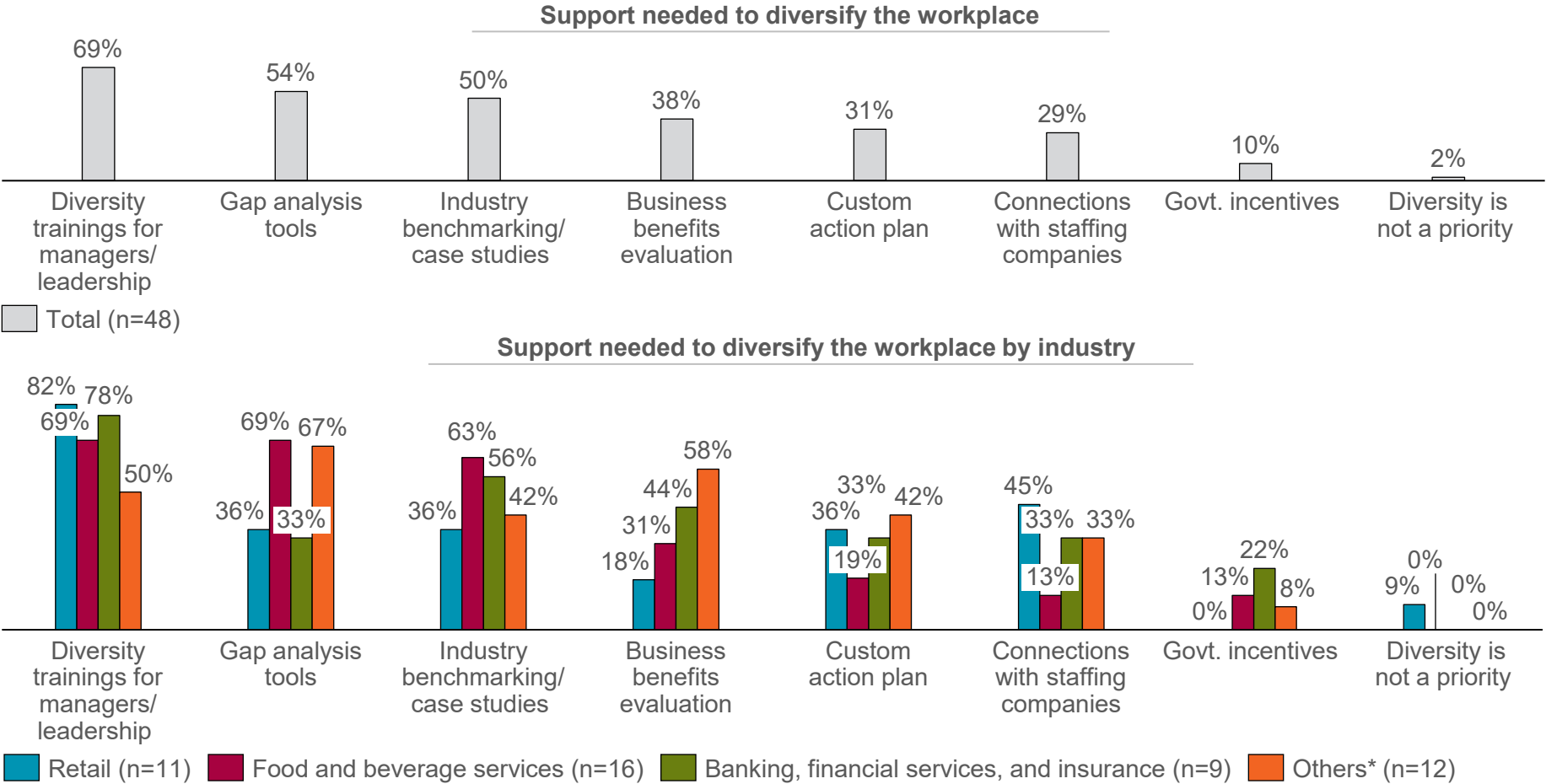


* Includes Manufacturing, Information Technology, Hospitality, Facilities Management, Logistics

^ Includes Inclusive infrastructure and policies, and counselling sessions

Source: Based on FSG's digital survey to understand managers' perspectives on diversifying the talent pool in frontline/ blue-collar roles

Managers cited diversity trainings, diagnostic tools, and industry benchmarking as top support needs to boost diversity



* Includes Manufacturing, Information Technology, Hospitality, Facilities Management, Logistics

Source: Based on FSG's digital survey to understand managers' perspectives on diversifying the talent pool in frontline/ blue-collar roles

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7 Annex

Details of 13 interventions to hire and retain more women

Managers' perspectives on gender diversity from digital survey

Methodology used for arriving at insights

Gathered data and feedback from multiple stakeholders including managers, women, industry leaders, and experts

Industry deep-dive

-  **Secondary research** (e.g., PLFS data, news articles, reports) to map roles, headcount/diversity status, and industry trends
-  **Interviews with 9 managers and 11 women employees** in BFSI to understand workplace practices and challenges, and test interventions
-  **Field visits to 3 branches/ offices** to observe available infrastructure, and understand roles and processes
-  **Consultations with 3 industry leaders and 4 experts** in BFSI to understand industry priorities, best practices, and validate interventions

Cross-industry learnings

-  **Digital survey with 50+ managers** across industries to gather perspectives on challenges, opportunities, and support requirements¹
-  **Interviews with 6k+ women** across urban India to understand women's employment-related needs, preferences, challenges²
-  **Learnings from supporting 20+ companies** on hiring and retaining women to understand internal hurdles (e.g., lack of priority, limited resources) and tailor interventions³

- Considered multiple perspectives (e.g., manager's concerns, women's preference) to identify the critical barriers limiting women's participation
- Gathered industry feedback to ensure the interventions are feasible and context-relevant

Acronyms: BFSI – Banking, financial services and insurance; PLFS – Periodic Labour Force Survey | 1. 1. Refer to 'Managers' perspectives on gender diversity from digital survey' in 'Annex' for key findings; 2. <https://www.fsg.org/resource/creating-a-gender-equitable-workforce-in-india/>; 3. FSG, through its [GLOW](#) program, has provided multi-year support to 20+ companies in logistics and flexi-staffing industries to hire and retain more women in entry-level roles

PLFS codes covered under BFSI industry in this document

Sub-sector	Related PLFS codes ¹	PLFS code description ¹
1 Banking	64	Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding
	66	Other financial activities
2 Lending (excluding banking)	64	Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding
	66	Other financial activities
3 Insurance	65	Insurance, reinsurance and pension funding, except compulsory social security
	66	Other financial activities
4 Intermediaries	64	Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding
	66	Other financial activities

1. As per NIC classification 2008



REIMAGINING SOCIAL CHANGE

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