



BREAK THE SILENCE.

2025 findings

**A grassroots campaign to build a stronger, fairer,
more innovative PR industry.**

CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Snapshot of findings	6
Methodology	8
Demographics	12
Research findings	16
Experiences of gender disparity in the PR industry	17
Understanding barriers in capability and motivation to change the PR industry	27
Taking action for gender equality	33
Conclusions and recommendations	34
Research strengths and next steps	36
The team	38
Steering group	40
Acknowledgements	42



FOREWORD

In an industry driven by the power of narrative, it's striking how often the most urgent stories remain untold.

In March 2025, Socially Mobile, with support from the CIPR, launched the groundbreaking *Missing Women* report that revealed that over 4,000 women have left the PR industry mid-career. It generated significant conversation within our industry alongside collective frustration at the need for more action.

It was this frustration that led to the formation of *Break the Silence* - a grassroots initiative led by Lynn, supported by 100+ PR and communications professionals, driven by a shared commitment to driving meaningful change within our industry - now, and in the future.

We began with a simple yet profound question: what do we miss when we only hear one side of the story? For years, the gender equity debate in PR has largely focused on the barriers women face – and rightly so. But missing was the other half of the conversation: the perceptions, privileges, and potential of men to be part of the solution.

We began with a familiarisation phase grounded in listening and learning: what does the data tell us, what has come before, and what do practitioners from all walks of life experience every day.

And then we asked more than 1,000 professionals to break their silence and share their truths. The result is one of the most inclusive and substantial datasets on gender and progression in the PR industry to date.

The findings are as revealing as they are urgent.

- **63% of women** told us they have experienced unfair treatment because of their gender – over **three times the proportion of men**.
- **Three in four women** said parenthood negatively affected their careers. Only **one in four men** said the same.
- And while **79% of men** believe equal opportunities exist in leadership, only **53% of women** agree.

These are not just disparities in outcomes. They are also disparities in perception. And when our perceptions don't align, the systems we build fail to serve everyone.

Yet what gives me hope – and what sets this study apart – is what happens when those perceptions shift. Across all respondents, **90% agree** that **men in senior roles actively championing gender equality can transform workplace culture**. Yet we know that examples of this kind of leadership are exceedingly rare.

This is where we hope *Break the Silence* can push the boundaries and move this issue from conversation to action. With a series of relevant events and discussions, we want to empower and enable today's leaders and future generations to think critically and deeply about current behaviours and the intended and unintended consequences these may lead to. And what these might mean for our PR industry.

***Break the Silence* is a starting point, not a conclusion.** It is a call for allyship with action. It is a framework for listening with empathy and leading with integrity. And it is an invitation: to those with influence, to those who have stayed silent, and to those who've waited too long for change.

We cannot rewrite the story of our industry alone. But together we can change the next chapter.

Shayoni Lynn

CEO & Founder at Lynn Group

**BREAK
THE
SILENCE.**

SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

63% of women in the sample report having **experienced unfair treatment directly related to gender**, compared to only **19% of men**.

There is a **clear perceptual gap** between male and female PR practitioners when it comes to **equal leadership opportunities**, with **79% of men vs 53% of women thinking equal opportunities are available**. This gap is also evident in relation to equal networking opportunities, with a combined **86% of men** thinking that networking opportunities are equally available **vs 62% of women**.

A combined 59% agreed that having children had impacted their career progression. However, **the impact of parenthood is clearly gendered**, affecting a **combined 75% of women, compared to 25% of men**.

Similarly, 56% of women report that having to juggle both personal and professional responsibilities has impacted their career progression, compared to 25% of men. **Men also acknowledged their systemic privilege, with their female partners' careers taking the brunt of the detrimental impact**.

Ageism affects both male and female PR practitioners, with **58% of women and 40% of men** reporting having **experienced discrimination** because of their age.

Ageism was more prevalent after 55, but was also present at the youngest age segments.

A combined **90% of respondents believe that men in senior positions taking the lead and modelling gender equality would greatly enhance workplace culture and team performance**.

The **lack of senior male allies** and having **few concrete examples of what gender equality and allyship** look like in practice is seen as a **barrier for greater gender equality in PR**.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-methods survey to understand career progression barriers that public relations (PR) practitioners face. It aimed to reach a wider, more representative, sample of PR professionals than previously engaged on gender equity issues. Specifically, we sought to ensure representation and perspectives from male practitioners to better understand and identify their specific barriers and motivators that would enable them to proactively and positively be part of this discussion.

Led by behavioural science agency Lynn - and supported by 100+ PR and communications professionals within our industry - the *Break the Silence* initiative was driven by four working groups of PR professionals who provided their time and services pro-bono.

PHASE 1

Familiarisation and co-production

The first stage of the study involved a familiarisation phase to ensure that all parties involved were aware of existing relevant evidence and lived experience. Specifically, this study follows from the Socially Mobile *Missing Women* study^[1], which focused on the barriers that women face in relation to career advancement in PR, and which generated significant discussion within the industry. Following this familiarisation phase, a survey instrument was initially developed by Lynn researchers to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the issues identified in previous studies, as well as ensuring perspectives of both male and female PR practitioners were collected. A working group of 10 PR and communications professionals provided feedback and contributed to the development of the final survey instrument.

PHASE 2

Mixed-methods survey

The final survey instrument was developed to understand the views of both men and women in public relations, regardless of their level of seniority. The survey comprised 30 single or multiple choice questions (eight on socio-demographic information), including 5 open-ended questions that gathered almost 60,000 words.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited organically and through convenience sampling through a grassroots campaign, primarily via LinkedIn and one-to-one direct outreach (although other channels including Instagram and Bluesky were also used). The recruitment used the hashtags #BreakTheSilence and #Challenge5 which encouraged those participating to tag 5 individuals and challenge them to complete the survey. **The total sample was 1076 respondents recruited in 3 weeks.**

Data quality assurance mechanisms

Participants who failed to complete at least 70% of the survey were removed, resulting in a **final sample size of 803** (approx 25% drop-out). Drop-out rates depend on a number of factors, but for surveys with more than 15 questions, drop-out rates can be up to 60% [2], and a response rate of 50% or above is considered excellent [3] - particularly for web-based surveys, where drop-off rates are higher [4].

Of the 273 respondents removed, 230 (84%) dropped out immediately after the demographic section.

Qualitative questions were analysed to identify overarching themes within the data. **Representative quotes have not been corrected for spelling or grammatical errors.**

PHASE 3

Data analysis and reporting

The data was processed and analysed using statistical (e.g. Welch's t-test) and thematic analysis to compare men and women's views and identify themes within the data. The report uses *significant difference* in the statistical sense of the wording. That is, the differences observed between the views of men and women are unlikely to be down to chance. All significant results are significant at $p < .05$.

[2] Average abandonment rate for surveys based on length

[3] What is a good survey response rate?

[4] Identifying Attrition Phases in Survey Data: Applicability and Assessment Study

**BREAK
THE
SILENCE.**

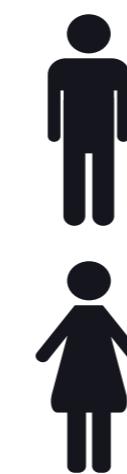


DEMOGRAPHICS

**BREAK
THE
SILENCE.**

THE DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF THE SAMPLE

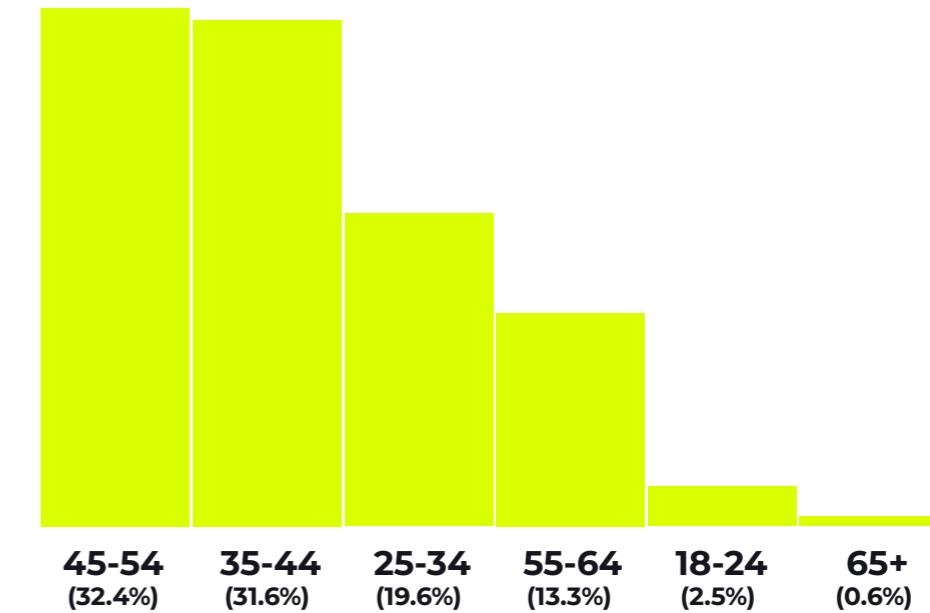
Gender



31%

69%

Age



**45-54
(32.4%)**

**35-44
(31.6%)**

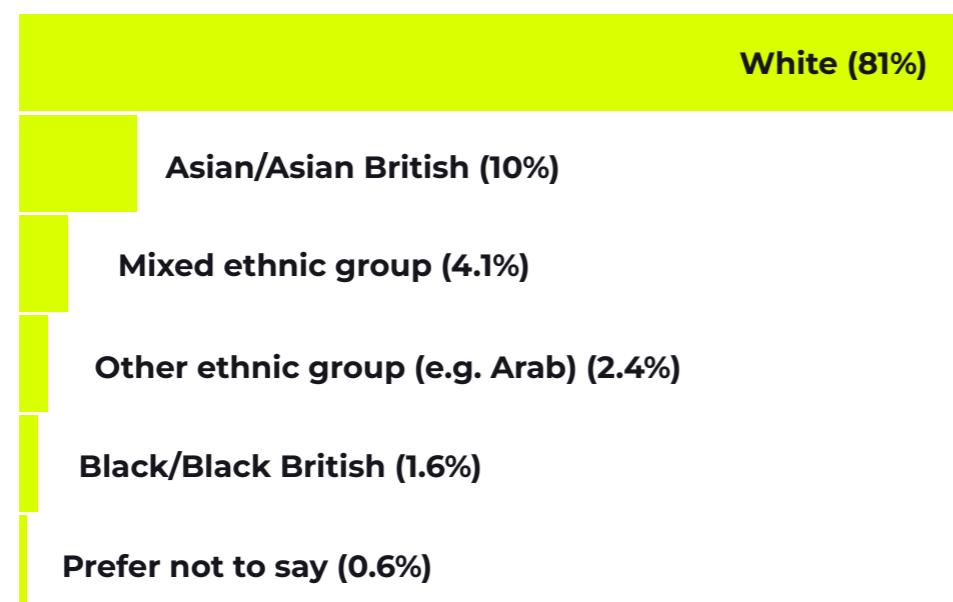
**25-34
(19.6%)**

**55-64
(13.3%)**

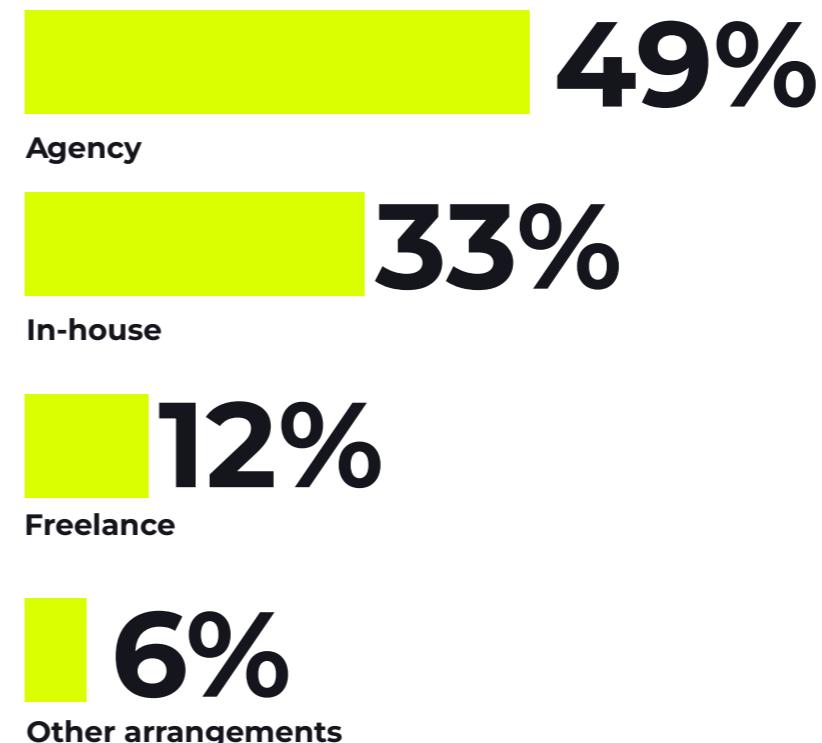
**18-24
(2.5%)**

**65+
(0.6%)**

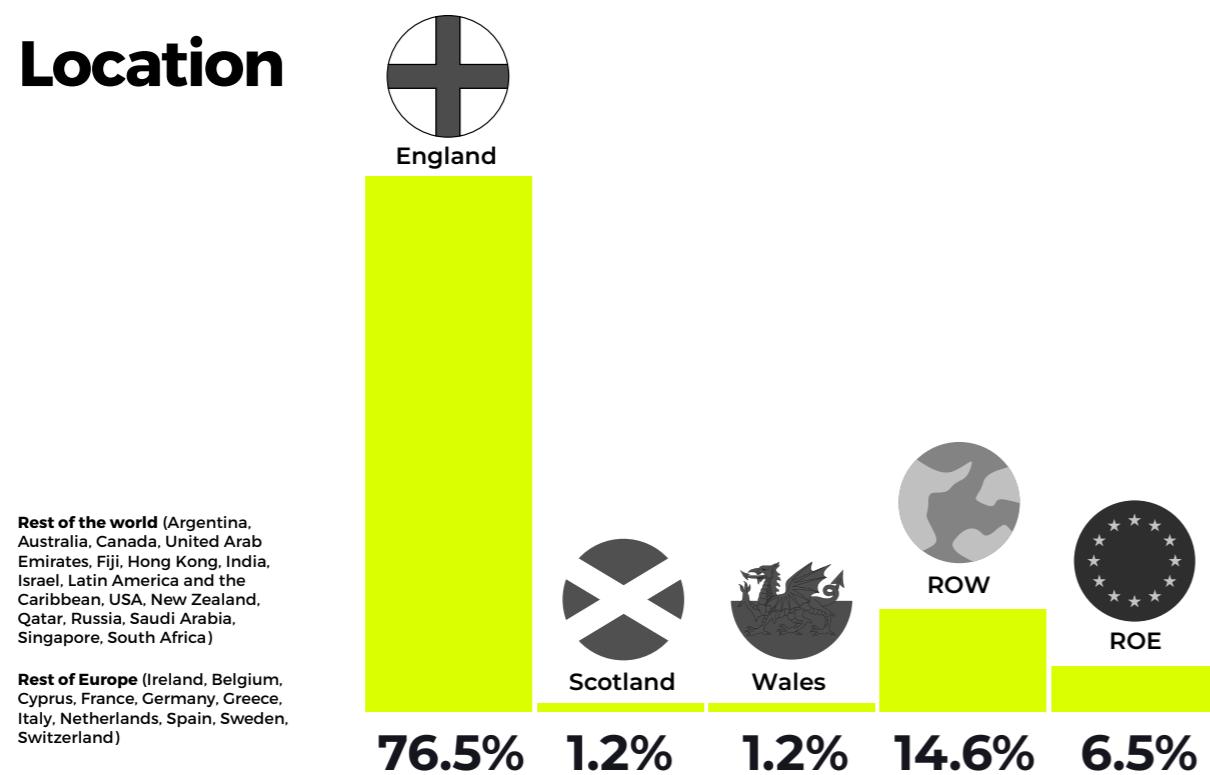
Ethnicity



Set-up



Location

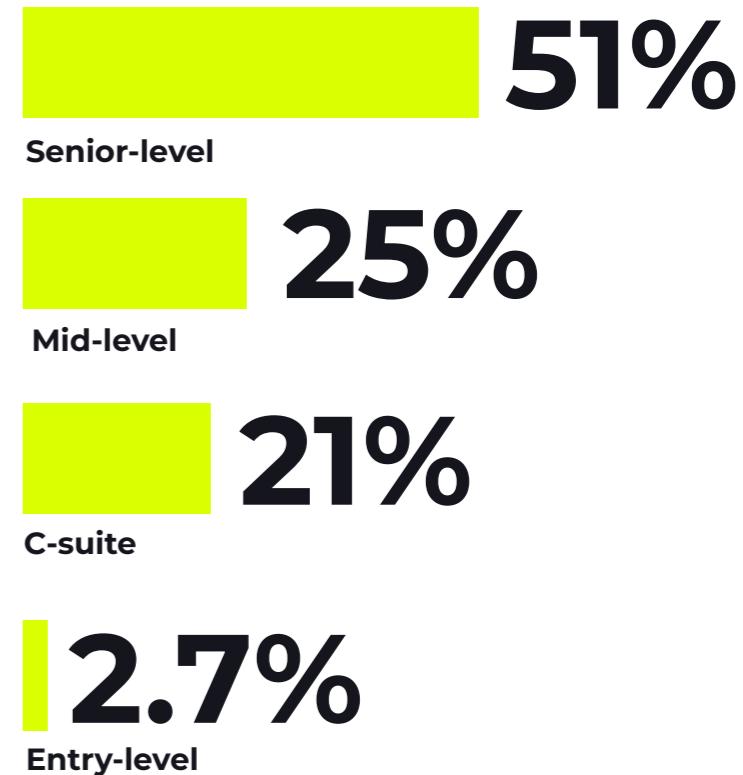


Years of experience

The sample was skewed towards women and more senior PR professionals.

In our sample, of those at the C-suite level, 11% were women (vs 10% men). At the senior level 37% were women (vs 14% men).

72% report having left an organisation or having considered it in the past due to feeling unsupported; not necessarily due to gender-related barriers.

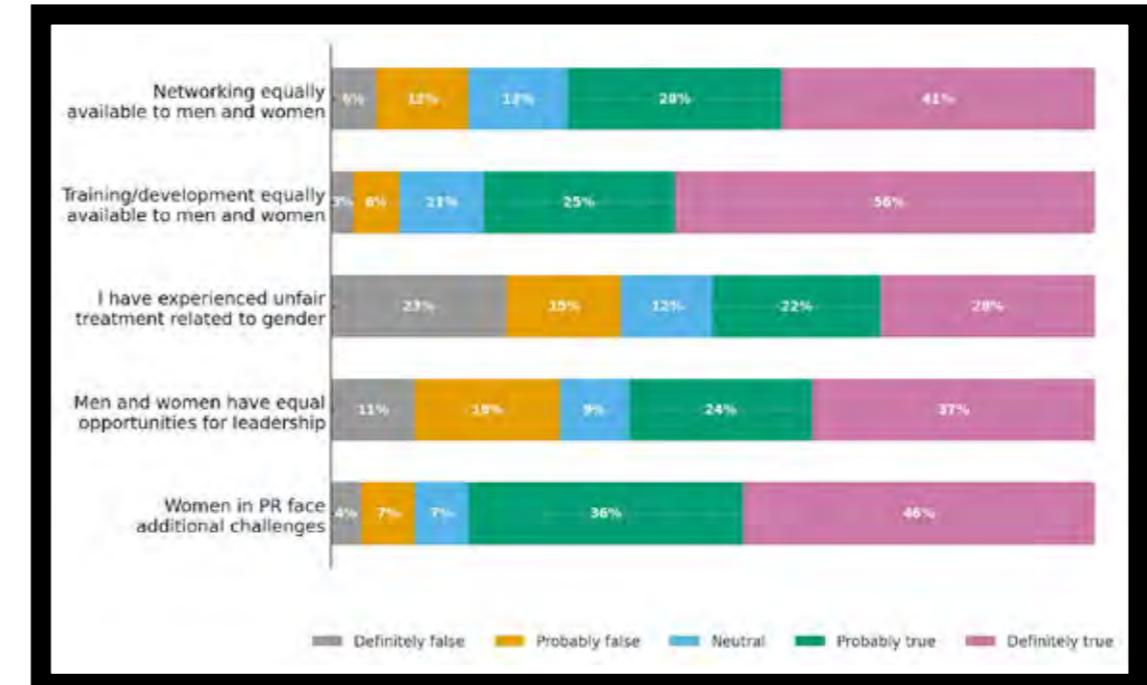


RESEARCH FINDINGS

**BREAK
THE
SILENCE.**

EXPERIENCES OF GENDER DISPARITY IN THE PR INDUSTRY

An overwhelming majority of participants agree that women in PR face additional challenges that make it harder for them to reach leadership positions, compared to men (a combined 82%). The vast majority of participants also believe that both training/development and networking opportunities are equally available to men and women within their organisations (a combined 81% and 69%, respectively). However, **significant differences arise when looking at male and female views on networking opportunities**, with male PR professionals significantly more likely to believe that opportunities are equally available for men and women (a combined 86%) compared to women (a combined 62%).



Similarly, **stark differences are evident when looking at the perceptions of leadership opportunities between men and women, with a combined 79% of men thinking that equal opportunities exist versus a combined 53% of women.**

In terms of personal experience, a **combined 63% of women report having experienced unfair treatment directly related to their gender whilst working in PR, compared to only 19% of men.**

Women's views

Approximately 265 women reported examples of discrimination or unfair treatment due to their gender (48% of all female respondents). Women's experiences of discrimination or unfair treatment focused on five main areas: (i) maternity-related discrimination; (ii) unequal pay and promotion opportunities; (iii) gender role expectations; (iv) sexual harassment and inappropriate workplace behaviour; and (v) ageism.

The most prevalent source of discrimination and unfair treatment for women was maternity. Experiences centered on being penalised in some way for becoming mothers or having caregiving responsibilities, including being denied deserved promotions, being demoted, being made redundant, having to delay maternity, or suffering career setbacks due to inflexible working conditions.

“ I was declined flexible working when returning from my first maternity leave and was informed it was because [verbatim] “I just don't think you'll cope as a working mum”.

“ First child made redundant during pregnancy, second child uninvited to all strategic meetings during pregnancy, third child opted to take a lower grade role following return to work, however after completing socially mobile decided it was time to push forward with my ambitions and am now back at the same level i was when made redundant with first child.

Another prevalent source of discrimination or unfair treatment for female respondents centered around pay compared to male counterparts, which included being asked to accept reduced compensation for equal or greater responsibilities, or being overlooked for promotions in favour of male colleagues. Mentions of a “boys club” mentality are also common, with certain conversations and networking opportunities reserved for male colleagues.

“ Responsible for 87% of turnover in an agency and earning 25% less than my male counterpart.

“ In another role I was called “hysterical” for requesting a meeting with my boss after a junior male colleague, who worked less hard, shorter hours and had achieved less than me, was awarded a bigger bonus.

Women report being asked to perform stereotypically female roles, like making tea or taking notes, as well as being labelled “too emotional”, “aggressive” when assertive, or “too nice”. It is also **important to highlight the intersectionality of some experiences, with ethnicity or sexuality also being part of the mix**.

“ I've been the only woman on teams and consistently given 'gendered' tasks... even when one of the men was less senior than me.

“ Years of microaggression style requests which would eventually wear me down, such as made to take notes or make the tea because I was a woman, not linked to my seniority or expertise.

Concerningly, references to sexual harassment from superiors, colleagues, and clients were prevalent amongst female respondents, including unwelcomed comments, physical harassment or sexual objectification. A small number of women reported cases of sexual assault.

“ I was once told I wasn't hired for a job because I was too attractive and wouldn't be taken seriously.

“ [...] my board director at an all company evening event when he pinned me against the wall in front of the board and many female senior colleagues, he berated my shouted lewd things about my appearance and asked why I bothered working so hard when pretty girls like me should just get married whilst I had my looks. Nobody intervened. I left in tears and and on ones offered to help. The next day the HR director a woman got in touch and suggested that I did not want to get a reputation as trouble maker or indeed a feminist and that perhaps I had had too much to drink (which I had not).

Another prevalent source for discrimination or unfair behaviour against women was looking “too young” or “too old” for a role, tied with assumptions about competence or leadership potential.

“ I have been excluded from meetings for looking too young, or just being a women, because our clients ‘prefer the men’.

“ Too old to be considered for a senior position in the agency which was then shared by two younger people.

“ I've been victim of ageism - “you look too young to be in xx position”.

Men's views

Most men **did not** report specific experiences of discrimination or unfair treatment due to their gender. Some men took this question as an opportunity to acknowledge differences observed with female colleagues. Nevertheless, **approximately 65 men** (26% of all male respondents) **were willing to share their personal experiences of unfair treatment directly related to their gender**.

Male experiences of discrimination or unfair treatment had some overlap with those of women, but were less varied. **There was a very significant difference**; whilst maternity was the most prevalent source of discrimination or unfair treatment for female respondents, **only one male respondent mentioned fatherhood in the context of negative impact for career progression**. Discrimination for men focused on four main areas: (i) perceived reversed discrimination in a female-dominated workplace; (ii) ageism; (iii) expectations of masculinity; and (iv) sexual harassment and inappropriate workplace behaviour.

A high proportion of men's responses expressed feeling overlooked or dismissed due to organisational efforts to promote women, particularly in the context of PR and communications being perceived as a female-dominated industry. Some men also report being assigned specific tasks or responsibilities based solely on their gender, often under the guise of balance or token representation.

“ I was hired to represent a male voice in a strongly female environment, but opinions were often dismissed. Now I see this as a tokenistic hire to fill a quota.

“ Only male in female owned and managed agency with all other fellow senior management team female and 90% overall staff female. All focus was on empowering women, International Women's Day, focusing on relationships with female decision makers in clients, identifying opportunities for senior female clients to partake in (or create) women only networks and events. The irony of having these meetings/brainstorms with a minority male in the room was lost of majority female leadership.

Some participants also shared experiences of age-based discrimination compounded by gender, particularly affecting men over 40.

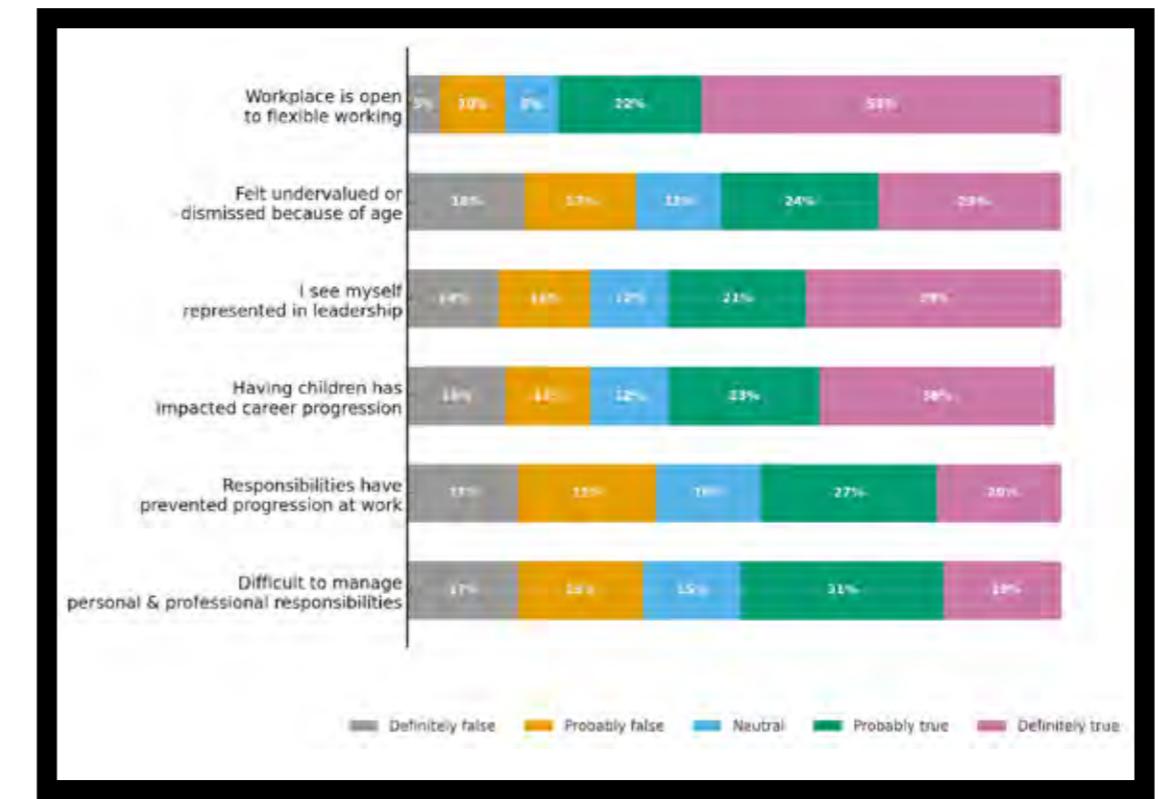
“
I was told to package my feelings like a man and get over it. This was told to me by a woman.

“
Senior management ignored multiple concerns raised by me about stress, pressure and burnout.

A minority of men reported concerning instances of sexual harassment or discomfort caused by the behaviour of female superiors or colleagues, sometimes accompanied by retaliation.

“
I was sexually harassed by my female boss when I was in a Junior role at an in-house NFP.

“
Experienced unwanted attention (bordering on harassment) from senior female colleagues in a female-heavy office, which was both awkward and embarrassing, but it didn't stifle my progression and I didn't feel discriminated against.



Although roughly half of the sample felt that they had been undervalued or dismissed because of their age, and both men and women made references to ageism in the workplace, this perception increased significantly for women (a combined 58%) in comparison to men (a combined 40%). Perceptions of ageism were evident for those in the oldest age segments (55-65+), but also at the younger segments (18-34).

The topic of parenthood and its impact on career progression, and the balancing of personal and professional responsibilities also showed clear gender differences. Whilst a combined 59% agreed that having children had impacted their career progression, this percentage goes up to a combined 75% of women, compared to a 25% of men.

Approximately 270 women shared the impact of having children on their careers. Respondents' experiences highlight the negative impact of motherhood on career progression, but also highlight the course of action that women take to cope (e.g. switching to freelancing or starting their own business), and what can help mitigate these negative impacts (i.e. having supporting partners and workplaces with progressive policies). For female respondents, the impact of having children revolved around: (i) career stagnation, redundancy, and missed promotions; (ii) mental health strain; and (iii) gendered expectations and workplace policies.

Women's views

The most prevalent consequence of having children was career stagnation, with women experiencing loss of seniority, financial loss, or being overlooked for deserved promotions due to maternity leave or perceived lack of commitment after having children. A significant number of respondents were also made redundant during pregnancy or shortly after.

“ I'd say that I have taken 18 months of maternity leave (total) in my career and that has set me back approx 5 years. As soon as you announce pregnancy and for at least a year after you return, you have minimal chance of progression.

“ On returning from Maternity leave my role title had changed to a more junior designation. With 10+ years experience, and advanced qualifications my role now matched that of our recently promoted intern.

“ I reduced my working hours to better balance childcare responsibilities. This saw me not considered for certain leadership training opportunities (compared with full time workers at my level). I was eventually made redundant

The burden of balancing career and personal responsibilities takes a toll on women's mental health, with many reporting burnout, postnatal depression and exhaustion. Some women experienced a loss of confidence after spending some time out of work, making it harder to gain professional momentum after maternity leave.

“ Not being as available to peers. From working excessive hours to always being at the end of the phone. Also having children impacts you physically and mentally and there's not enough support in place for working parents - from confidence returning to work, to tiredness etc.

Participants described facing judgement for parenting-related needs, such as school pick-ups or leaving work early, often contrasting with male colleagues who weren't penalised similarly.

“ Told by the CEO I had to choose between a client call or doing bathtime.

“ Complete inflexibility of the employer I had when I had children, there was zero consideration of working part time at my level when I had my children therefore I left.

Men's views

Approximately 95 men expressed their views in relation to parenthood and career impact. However, **most views acknowledged minimal or no career impact due to traditional gender roles** (i.e. their female partners took on this responsibility). Some of these responses explicitly acknowledge the systemic privilege afforded to men.

“
My wife took time off to look after our children; I didn't.

“
My career progression has not been impacted by having children, but only because my wife's career.

“
Certainly from an external point of view, this has never been mentioned to me and I am at a massive advantage to female colleagues.

Nevertheless, male respondents also experience difficulties following parenthood, particularly in relation to the “always-on” culture, which has a detrimental effect on their parenting.

“
Having a young child... hamstrings my ability to work significantly longer hours or invest in professional development.

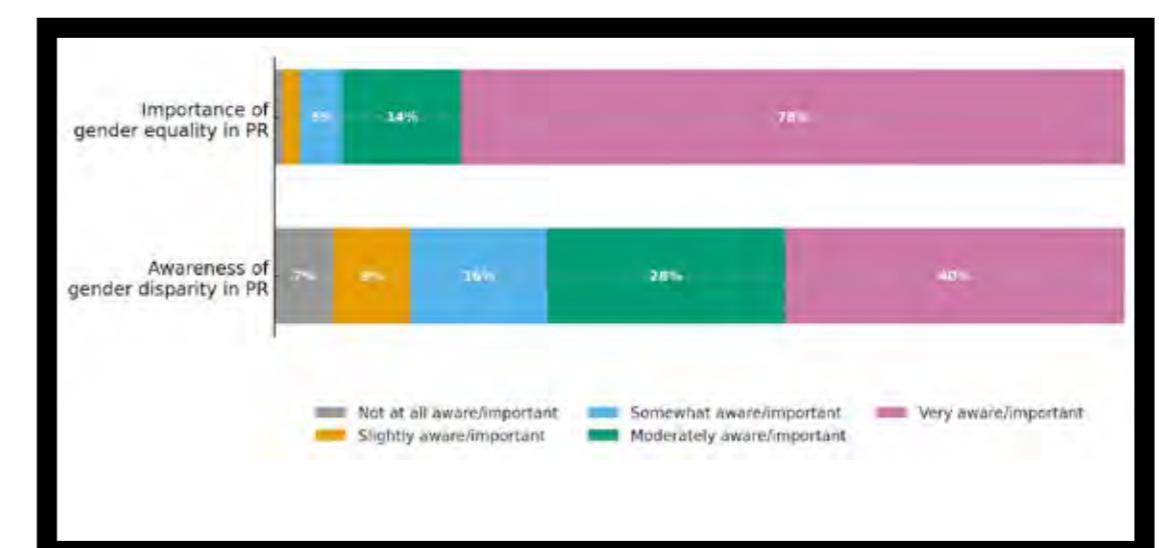
“
The demand to 'always be on' is hard when you have a young family.

There is also a recognition that flexibility and supportive working environments are essential.

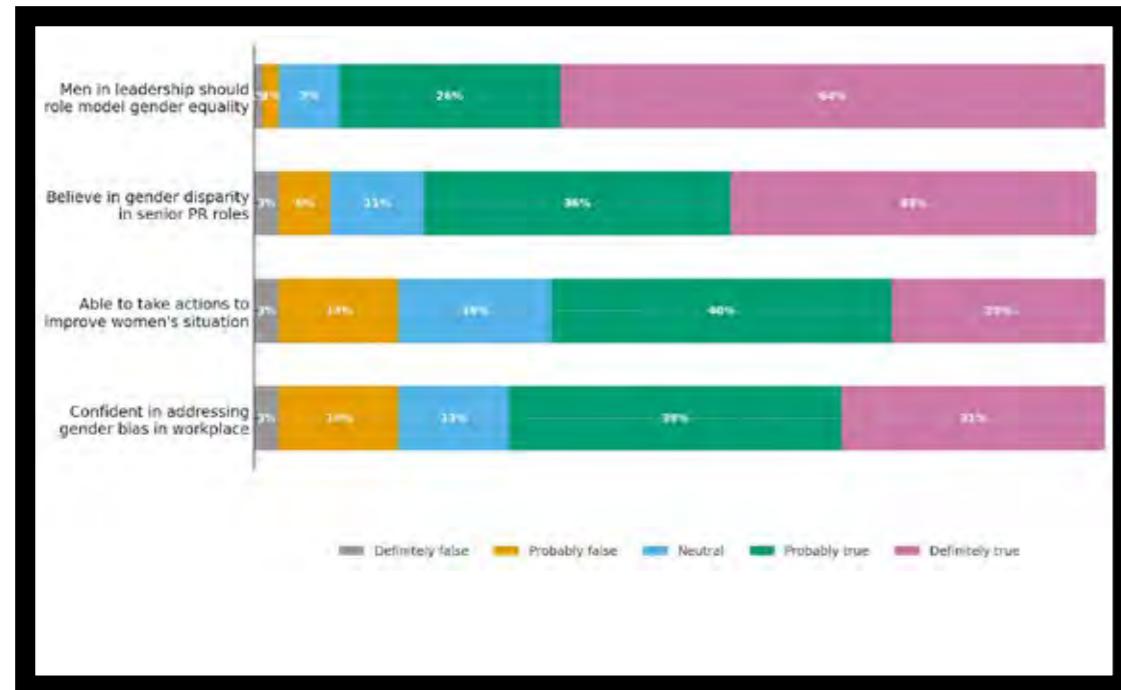
“
I've been incredibly well-supported while having children, both by my company and my family.

Similarly, responses to the **difficulties of managing personal and professional responsibilities, and whether these responsibilities have prevented progression at work were also significantly gendered**. A combined 50% find it difficult to manage their personal and professional responsibilities. This goes up to a combined 56% for women compared to 37% of men. Similarly, a combined 47% believe that having to juggle multiple responsibilities has impacted their career progression, but only a combined 25% of men think so, compared to 56% of women.

UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS IN CAPABILITY AND MOTIVATION AS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS CHANGING THE PR INDUSTRY



A combined 92% of respondents believe that gender equality in the PR industry is at least moderately important (93% of women and 86% of men). Awareness of the gender disparity in senior roles within the PR industry was also high, with a combined 68% at least moderately aware. When looking at how male and female practitioners responded to this question, awareness goes up to 72% for female respondents, but goes down to 58% of **male respondents**, who were significantly less likely to be aware about gender disparities at the senior level in PR. This suggests that an awareness gap may be contributing to a lack of action.



An overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) - both men and women - believe that men in senior positions can significantly enhance workplace culture and team performance by taking the lead to role model gender equality. Most respondents (86%) also believe that there are actions within their power that they can take to improve the situation of women in the PR industry. People at the senior-level see themselves as the most capable to drive change with their actions, with 35% of those reporting holding senior-level positions agreeing with the statement.

When asked about their opinions on what prevents men from actively championing women's advancement in the PR industry, views were varied.

The most prevalent barrier was capability related, with participants highlighting a basic lack of awareness, understanding or recognition amongst men about gender disparities in PR - particularly in light of the field being female dominated at the non-leadership level. Participants also often mentioned a lack of understanding about what practical actions are actually within their control and could constitute effective support. **Absence of visible male allies and concrete examples of what effective allyship looks like** means men are unsure of how to contribute meaningfully.

“ Lack of practical ideas. Or ideas outside of my power or ability to do. I already do as much as I can... that I know of. But there might be other ideas I don't know about.

“ The biggest hurdle is the lack of awareness and acknowledgement that the problem exists. A lot of men I personally have heard from still believe and often convinced things have changed, and the said disparity doesn't exist and that significant progress has been made. But the Socially Mobile research paints a complete different picture and more men need to acknowledge and show up.

Fear of competition and a zero-sum mentality was also a prevalent barrier for participants, with both men and women perceiving that an increase in female leadership could threaten men's careers progression, leading to resistance or passive opposition.

“ Concern over their own role. In leadership there's often protectionism over the roles and male colleagues can feel threatened when in senior positions.

“ The misconception that making room for others means there's less room for people like themselves.

Another prevalent theme was the **fear of saying something wrong and the potential negative social repercussions** for it. There were worries about making mistakes when advocating for gender equality, **including fears of being accused of mansplaining or performative allyship**.

“ *They are scared to get it wrong, fear of mansplaining.*

“ *Afraid that they might be criticised for performative actions.*

“ *As with many areas of engrained, intersectional bias, it can be scary as a man for trying and being judged for getting it wrong or not getting it right first time. The fear of judgement is not to be under-estimated as a barrier to greater male involvement in advancing all facets of DEI.*

Entrenched workplace culture (i.e. “boy’s club”), **old-fashioned attitudes, and conscious or unconscious bias** were also perceived to be factors preventing men from championing women’s advancement.

Participants noted systemic cultural barriers within workplaces, including networks and leadership patterns that reinforce male dominance and resistance to change, long hours culture, and absence of supporting policies. Stereotypical attitudes and assumptions are also seen as reinforcing gender roles within the industry.

“ *The long hours, always-on culture is not something women can deliver.*

“ *Afraid that they might be criticised for performative actions.*

“ *Something that is outside of men’s control: the expectation on everyone to be always on and work beyond their contracted hours. Disparity appears because women (due to caring and childcare responsibilities) have less flexibility to keep it up and do both as they progress.*

“ *Old fashioned attitudes, eg a belief that women will prioritise family commitments over work.*

“ *[...] a notion that some women would prefer to be more active mothers than to drive their career when their kids are young.*

“ *Honestly, I think a lot of men don’t even realize they’re not championing women—they just assume everything’s equal because it looks that way on the surface. Some don’t want to rock the boat or feel uncomfortable calling out bias, especially if it benefits them. And sometimes it just doesn’t cross their mind because they’ve never had to deal with being overlooked or underestimated the way women often are in this industry.*

Lack of motivation and general apathy were also highlighted frequently, with women particularly perceiving that some men simply do not view gender equality as a relevant or urgent issue to them, which means they turn their focus to other issues or just focus on their personal interests.

“
They don't think about it.
They can't be bothered.

“
They simply don't care
enough.

“
Apathy. Individuals not personally feeling they are the ones
to speak up.

Some participants referred to **meritocracy** as the main determining factor. Others outright **denied the problem** or cited **perceptions that gender-based discrimination does no longer exist**.

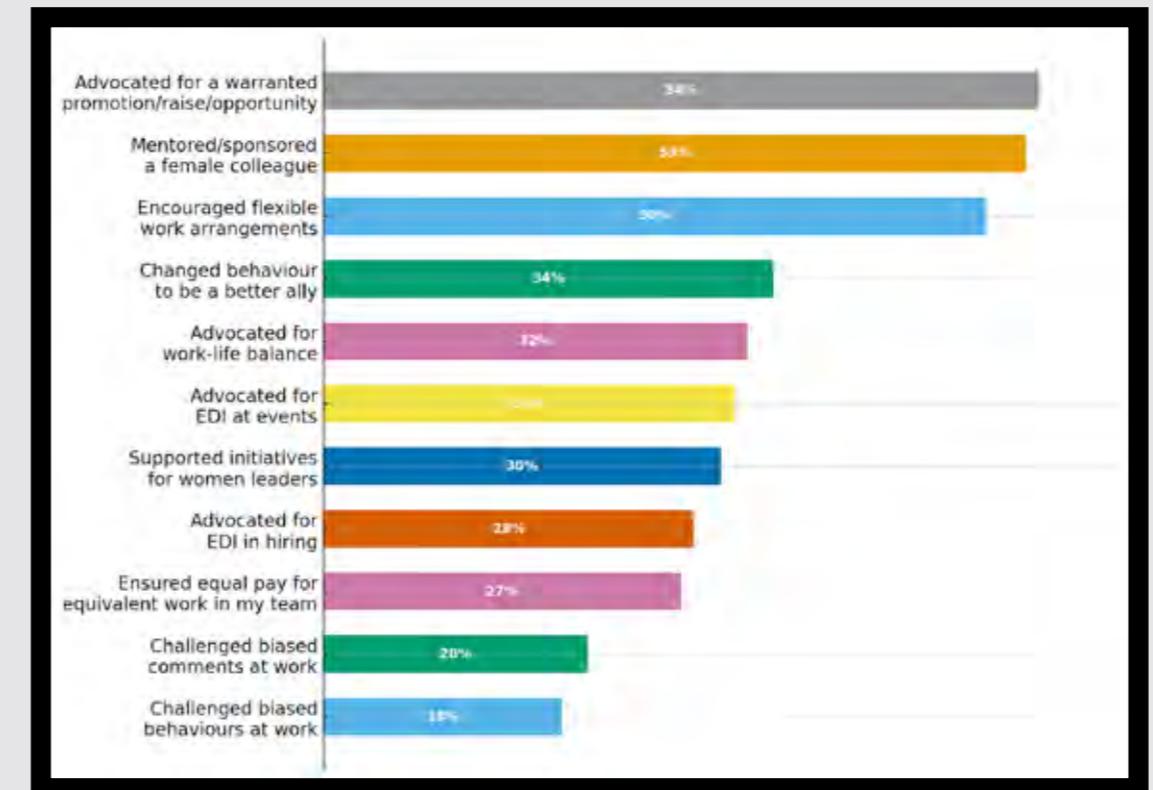
“
If you're good at your job
and get results, not really
an issue what anatomy you
have.

“
There are less men than
women!!!

TAKING ACTION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

When asked about the actions that respondents have taken within the past 6 months to champion for gender equality within their organisations and work context, the **three most popular actions** were: (i) advocating for a female colleague's warranted promotion, raise, or development opportunity; (ii) mentoring or sponsoring a female colleague to support her career progression; and (iii) encouraging flexible work arrangements for a team member or colleague who needed it (e.g. parental leave, menopause support, parental care).

The least common actions were challenging or reporting biased or discriminatory behaviours or comments at work, suggesting that people are less likely to engage in actions that may be seen as more confrontational.



CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

**BREAK
THE
SILENCE.**

The data shows that gender equality within the PR industry is important for both men and women (86% and 93% find it at least moderately important, respectively). However, despite shifts in general attitudes and advancements in gender equality, the data still shows clear gendered differences in relation to unfair treatment and discrimination (63% of female respondents - vs 19% of male respondents - report having experienced unfair treatment directly related to their gender), development, networking and leadership opportunities within organisations (as an example, 79% of male respondents - vs 53% of female respondents - think that there are equal leadership opportunities), or the impact of parenthood in career progression (with 75% of female respondents reporting that having children negatively impacted their career progression, compared to 25% of male respondents).

These discrepancies will require multi-level interventions, including cultural and organisational change, which could include a requirement for specific KPI around gender equity to ensure gender gaps around these metrics are measured and mitigated.

An overwhelming majority of the sample (90%) believes that men in senior positions could enhance workplace culture and team performance by taking the lead in modelling gender equality (e.g. ensuring that leadership opportunities are offered to men and women equally). However, the data points to a clear lack of awareness and understanding about what this could look like in practice. Increasing awareness and understanding about what practical actions actually constitute effective allyship, as well as increasing the visible number of men demonstrating these behaviours should be an essential component of any intervention. Interventions to increase understanding and role modelling could include the top 10 agencies (e.g. in the UK) committing to allyship training and materials - which could be delivered as part of an employee's induction and refreshed during annual performance reviews - or senior male decision-makers (e.g. CEOs) actively leading in the championing of gender equity within their organisations by joining advocacy or ambassador programmes.

This project is a co-produced grassroots initiative. It does not aim to prescribe solutions at this stage, but to present robust evidence to support any future actions. As such, the suggested recommendations and next steps will also be co-produced as part of a joint effort with a group of relevant industry stakeholders at the *Break the Silence* report findings launch on 5 June in London, to ensure that any potential solutions are truly acceptable and actionable in-context.

This report aims to kickstart a more robust discussion and subsequent actions to resolve the challenges surrounding gender equity in order to protect the future of our industry. For more information about *Break the Silence* events, please contact: contact@lynn.global

RESEARCH STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The study findings provide essential insights to understand the different experiences of male and female practitioners within the PR industry, and how these impact career progression and leadership opportunities.

This research has been conducted rigorously, using a mixed-methods methodology, following best survey practices, and drawing from extensively validated behavioural science frameworks, such as the COM-B model^[5]. This study incorporates the male perspective, which has been missing from previous research, adding an essential dimension to understanding gender disparity within the PR industry. To our knowledge, this study engaged the largest, most representative, sample of professionals willing to discuss gender barriers to leadership within the PR industry (803) in recent times, which allowed for meaningful statistical comparisons between male and female perspectives and qualitative saturation.

Like any piece of research, this study also has some limitations. Whilst we recruited a large number of participants, we relied on convenience sampling to reach people within a short period of time. This means that we could not achieve full representativeness (e.g. women are overrepresented based on the latest CIPR industry census^[6], which estimated 60% of the PR industry in the UK to be female, compared to 69% of female representation within our sample). Convenience sampling also increases the potential for self-selection bias, where only those aware and concerned about gender disparities may have taken part in the study. However, the clearly gendered differences in the quantitative data suggests that people who decided to take part in the survey held a range of views towards the issue.

THE TEAM



Shayoni Lynn

CEO & Founder at Lynn Group

Shayoni Lynn is CEO and Founder of multi-award-winning behavioural science and counter-misinformation communications consultancy, Lynn Group – a UK top 50 agency (Provoke SABRE Awards, 2025).

She is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) and the Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA) and is Chair of PRCA Cymru.

Shayoni is listed in the PRWeek Power Book (2021-Present) – the definitive list of the most influential and respected communications professionals in the UK. In 2025, she featured on three specialist lists – Top 25 most influential women in UK PR, Top 10 PR leaders outside of London, and Diversity, equity, and inclusion champion (as co-founder of the Asian Communications Network).

Shayoni is a member of PRCA's PR and Communications Board, founding panel member of CIPR's Behavioural Insights Panel, member of CIPR's ESG Expert Panel, and member of ICO's Misinformation Taskforce, together with Council of Europe, The Trust Project, EACD, GWPR and EUPRERA.

Shayoni is co-founder and Chair of Board for the Asian Communications Network, alongside CEO of CommsRebel Advita Patel, and CEO of Curzon PR Farzana Baduel.



Dr Sara Bru Garcia

Head of Behavioural science and lead researcher

Sara Bru Garcia is a senior researcher and Head of Behavioural Science at Lynn, with an MSc and PhD in experimental psychology from the University of Nottingham.

Over her 10+ years of experience in research, Sara has worked at the intersection between academia and applied research, holding postdoctoral research positions at the University of Nottingham and University of Sheffield and working in leading agencies overseeing primary research and the application of the insights at strategic level. At Lynn, she has worked with clients in the public and private sectors, including the World Economic Forum, NHS, the Gambling Commission, Welsh Government, and Met Office.

Supported by a working group of 10 PR practitioners who provided peer review and feedback to the development of the survey instrument and the final report.

STEERING GROUP

**BREAK
THE
SILENCE.**

Stuart Bruce

PR Futurist and Joint MD, co-founder of Purposeful Relations

Stuart helps PR and communications teams improve performance using the CommsTransform™ framework, providing advice, planning, training, custom development and implementation for AI, technology, measurement and evaluation. He is a member of the PRCA PR and Communication Board, leading its AI working group. He sits on the global executive committee of the World Communication Forum Association in Davos and has previously served as a CIPR director.

Jennifer Paavola

Founder of Impact House

Jennifer meshes experience from international leadership roles in social impact, branding and public relations to help companies and NGOs explore change and how to make the most of it. Her methodology helps leaders rethink positioning, branding and stakeholder engagement on complex topics such as climate, gender, AI and health.

Natasha Plowman

Communications and strategy consultant, Spinning Red

Throughout Natasha's career working in-house in a top global bank to the biggest drinks and consumer goods companies, Natasha has brought commercial acumen to communications practice and business reputation. Her approach is built on the role that reputation plays in driving business success. From advising on sustainability and ESG, through to the future of work, technological change and business resilience. She brings an ability to cut through to what a business needs to say and what audiences need to hear in times of greater scrutiny and need for transparency.

Laura Morin Quintal

Founder of Verko Consulting

Laura has over 20 years of experience in management consulting, strategic planning, and business development. She has successfully delivered international projects in both the public and private sectors, and is a part-time lecturer at the University of Wolverhampton (MBA program). As the founder of Verko Consulting, Laura is committed to transforming workplaces into inclusive environments for women, addressing challenges such as inflexible work structures, gender bias, and limited growth opportunities.

Acknowledgements

With over 100+ PR and Communications practitioners who supported this pro-bono grassroots initiative, although we cannot name you all, we sincerely thank you for your energy, dedication, and passion for bringing this project to life. Thank you to all our working groups who worked tirelessly over 3 months. This movement does not stop with the publication of this report, and we want to thank you for your advocacy and support - now, and going forwards.

Stakeholder engagement working group - Led by Natasha Plowman, Founder, Spinning Red; supported by Stuart Bruce, PR Futurist & Co-founder, Purposeful Relations; Frank Dias, People+AI Chief Explorer, AI x Comms Lab; Tom Laurence, Founder, mvpr; Jennifer Paavola, Founder, Impact House, and Isobel Camier, Founder, Camier Communications.

PR and events working group - Led by Claire Williamson, Managing Director, Resonance; and Victoria O'Brien, Marketing Director, 72 Point, Charlotte Taylor Dimond, Director, Sidekick PR; business development specialist Lyndsay Haywood; Tracey Coulter, Founder, TCOPR; Steph Bailey, Global Chief Client Officer, Woodrow Communications. Launch PR supported by Smoking Gun.

PMO - Led by Laura Quintal, Founder, Verko Consulting; supported by Clare Wimalasundera, Senior Consultant, Visible PR; and Heather Bull, Senior Director, FTI Consulting.



**BREAK
THE
SILENCE.**

If you have any questions about this report, please email: contact@lynn.global