

# SURVEY RESULTS

## “ SURVEY ON THE PHENOMENON OF OPTING OUT ”

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**In the United States**, there has been a long-running debate around why highly successful women with degrees leave their jobs. Sometimes it is a case of feeling worn down or simply wanting to move on to something else. Alternatively, it can spring from a desire or need to put their personal lives first. In every case, it probably reflects a vision of a different career path.

**In France**, the leaders of the *Observatoire de la Mixité* (the *Observatory for Gender Balance*) want to make every effort to accelerate gender parity in their workforces, particularly at the level of managers and executive directors, in line with the Rixain law. This is why the *Observatoire de la Mixité*, with Bureau Veritas and Safran, decided to launch a survey of a large sample of managers (1,000 women and 1,000 men) to assess the prevalence of the "opting out" phenomenon, understand its causes and explore solutions to address it. Here are the main findings.

# 1 | KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

**The significance of work and drivers of motivation are identical for women and men, regardless of their level of managerial responsibility: fulfilment, pride and remuneration**

## LOOKING AT THE FINDINGS IN MORE DETAIL:

- Over 4 in 5 managers say they are proud of their job and enjoy going to work
- Three quarters of those surveyed view their work as a source of personal fulfilment
- For 74% of women, their work is above all a means to support themselves; the only factor in which men express a significant difference (+4 points at 78%)
- Work is viewed as a source of fulfilment to a far greater extent by CEOs and Executive Committee members (+16 points at 91%), and less as a means to support themselves (-18 points)
- Drivers of motivation are the same for women as for men

Meaningful work - whether for female or male managers - is not a one-size-fits-all concept. It must be **intellectually stimulating** (59% of women vs. 56% of men), provide a **healthy work-life balance** (55% for both groups) and offer **financial security** (54% vs. 52%).

### Obligatory note

Survey by the Observatoire de la mixité with Bureau Veritas and Safran  
Conducted by BVA from January 31 to February 22, 2022

## 1.1 OPTING OUT: A PHENOMENON THAT IS UNFAMILIAR TO FRENCH MANAGERS, AND ABOUT WHICH WOMEN AND MEN FEEL DIFFERENTLY

**Only slightly more than one manager in three has heard of "opting out" —even if only by name—** and only around 1 in 10 knows exactly what it is.

Once the concept has been explained, **opinions diverge between men and women** on the gender of the groups that are most concerned by this phenomenon:

- The majority of women managers think that it affects them more (**64%** vs. **34%** for men)
- While men believe that it affects women and men equally (60% vs. 31% for women)

These differences of opinion raise questions about men's perceptions of the day-to-day reality of women managers' working lives, but also about men's and women's personal feelings about their own careers.

## 1.2 OPTING OUT AFFECTS BOTH WOMEN AND MEN WHEN IT COMES TO REFUSING PROMOTIONS—BUT MORE WOMEN MANAGERS THAN MEN DO NOT APPLY FOR SENIOR OR EXECUTIVE POSITIONS EVEN WHEN THEY HAVE THE ABILITY TO DO SO

When it comes to the two forms of opting out cited by women managers (refusal of a promotion and not applying for a promotion), the picture seems slightly different. While just as many women managers as men (32% vs. 30%) have refused promotions to senior or executive positions, **a larger proportion of them have never applied for this type of role** (+7 points / 48% vs. 41% for men).

**This suggests that there is a larger "pool" of candidates for this type of role if companies are willing to make the effort to "go out and find these women", and if candidates are able to break free of the glass ceiling and/or impostor syndrome.**

To illustrate this last point, **nearly 70% of women managers declare that they have already applied for a position in full knowledge that they did not meet all the requirements, against only 62% of men.** This goes against the received truth that women only apply for a position if they have 100% of the required skills.

### 1.3 REASONS FOR OPTING OUT THAT REFLECT A CRISIS OF ASPIRATION RELATING TO THIS TYPE OF ROLE AS OPPOSED TO A STRICTLY GENDER-BASED ISSUE

There is little difference between men and women managers in the reasons given for not being promoted and/or not having applied for this type of role. The following reasons for opting out are the most striking:

- **19%** feared their workload would increase too much
- **18%** thought there was too much pressure in this type of position
- **18%** wanted to continue to have time for themselves
- **17%** believed they would not be paid what they were worth
- **17%** wanted to continue to see their children/relatives as much as they wanted

It would seem, then, that the main reasons for opting out, which are common to women and men, are:

- **On the one hand, the perception of pressure and workload that senior positions represent.** On this point, it is interesting to question the role played by leaders in shaping the image of executive functions. The notion that positions at the top inevitably come with heavy pressure and an unbearable workload is open to discussion. There may be a way for leaders to inspire people to become managers and demonstrate in concrete terms that their jobs are not just about pressure and a never-ending succession of meetings.
- **On the other hand, there is the issue of personal time and family life.** There is an interesting debate to be had here on the work-life balance that companies offer to their employees, including those at the top. What "balanced" work arrangements that can be put in place to make people want to take up senior positions? In this sense, the remuneration offered seems to play a larger role in the decision-making process than expected.

If intuitively we expected reasons relating to work-life balance to be important, we did not expect reasons linked to the image of positions of power to carry the same weight.

## 1.4 THE SOLUTIONS THAT WOULD TIP THE BALANCE IN DECISION-MAKING ARE ALSO THOSE THAT ARE DEEMED TO BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE

Several proposals to tackle opting out appear to be endorsed by both female and male managers interviewed and provide a number of options for consideration:

- **Flexible working arrangements (79%** of respondents)
- **Highly attractive pay (78%)**
- Support for the **spouse's geographical mobility (75%)**
- **Mentoring**, with a significant difference between women and men (**75%** for women, **+6 points** compared to men)
- **The example set by the company's leaders**, together with inspiring leadership in terms of language and tolerance (**73%**)
- **Coaching** before taking up a position (**72%**)

These solutions all have very high effectiveness scores. As such, they provide us with several options to respond to the global phenomenon of opting out, in ways that are linked to the new aspirations of women and men who are eligible to assume senior roles.

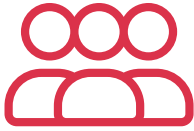
**1/ THE REMUNERATION PACKAGE,**  
an indispensable prerequisite for this type of role

**3/ THE IMAGE OF POWER**  
conveyed via the example set by the company and its leaders

**2/ WORK-LIFE BALANCE,**  
which is becoming an essential cornerstone of professional fulfilment in senior positions

**4/ SUPPORTING PEOPLE AS THEY TAKE UP THEIR POSITIONS,**  
to meet their needs for reassurance and legitimacy

## 2 | SURVEY METHODOLOGY



Survey carried out with a representative sample including **996 female and 1008 male managers** (all levels and functions)



Web survey carried out by the BVA Institute from **31 January to 22 February 2022**



**Representativeness ensured via use of quotas** on the following variables: gender, age, business sector, company size and region of residence.



**Presentation of results** focusing on women's outcomes. Men's scores are only shown when there is a significant difference.

Supported by the Institute for Responsible Capitalism, sponsored by Michel Landel, independent Board Member and former CEO of Sodexo, and co-directed by Caroline de La Marnierre and Marie Christine Mahéas, **the Observatory for Gender Balance** is a think and do tank that brings together companies active in the field of gender balance, as well as recognized experts in the field.

Its objective is to make rapid and sustainable progress in gender balance within organizations by producing concrete recommendations for decision-makers, companies and institutions.

It also aims to conduct research and communicate its work in greater depth and share its findings.

The Observatory also brings together within its Executive Club corporate executives who accompany, deepen and amplify the work aimed at advancing gender balance

**Bureau Veritas** is a world leader in laboratory testing, inspection and certification services. Created in 1828, the Group has more than 80,000 employees located in nearly 1,600 offices and laboratories around the globe. Bureau Veritas helps its 400,000 clients improve their performance by offering services and innovative solutions in order to ensure that their assets, products, infrastructure and processes meet standards and regulations in terms of quality, health and safety, environmental protection and social responsibility.

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