

What is the future for gender diversity in the pilot trainer role? Myth or reality?

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Rationale for study

- RAeS Flight Crew training group
- Diversity and Inclusion Plan
- How this research came about and why is it important?
- Pandemic made this possible

Background

- Pilot role one of the most male dominated worldwide (185,143 pilots globally, of which 9,746 (or 5.26%) are women) (IFALPA, 2021)
- In the UK, 16,338 pilots, of which 889 are female (5.5%) CAA, 2022
- Just 0.9% of pilot trainers in the UK are women (CAA, 2022)
- Aside from our study, there exists a paucity of research on the pilot trainer role: WHY??
 - Vermeulen, 2009: pilot trainers have a more positive attitude towards female pilots than their male pilot colleagues
 - Marintseva, 2022: advocates gender awareness training in flight school
 - McCarthy et al. 2015: male instructors have less confidence in female pilot technical skills and male trainees are derogatory towards female trainees



Background literature

We therefore draw upon the background literature on pilots to understand the challenges for women to survive and progress, organized around six major themes:

- **Negative workplace cultures:** bias, discrimination and sexual harassment towards women (IFALPA, 2021); sexual and gender harassment of women (Foley et al. 2019; Ferla and Graham, 2019; Yanikoglu, 2020); women having to prove themselves (McCarthy et al. 2015); lack of clear career path for women (Marintseva et al. 2022)
- **Challenging Work/life/family balance;** including unsocial working hours and time away (Ferla and Graham, 2019; Harvey et al. 2019; Yanikoglu et al. 2020)
- **Lack of visible role models and mentors:** which has been linked to a lack of progression (Ferla and Graham, 2019; IFALPA, 2021; Korn Ferry, 2029. Having support and a good WLB can be enabling factors for women pilots (Marintseva et al. 2022).



Background literature/cont'd

- **Lack of transparency in R&S of pilots:** in relation to job applications to enter the profession and promotion once in the profession (Neal-smith, 2014; Yanikoglu et al. 2020; Korn Ferry, 2019; Mitchell et al. 2006). Recruiting more women could help solve the global pilot shortage (Marintseva et al. 2022). By 2030, just over 980,000 new pilots will be needed for air transportation. Between 2008-2018, the female pilot population rose by 0.9%.
- **Lack of women in leadership and lack of leadership commitment to D&I:** Korn Ferry, 2019; Wyman Report, 2021; Bridges, 2021).
- **The cost of becoming a pilot:** (IFALPA, 2021, McCarthy et al. 2015). The majority of pilots are expected to fund their own training (circa £100-120K) in the commercial environment and this situation is unlikely to change in the short term (<https://www.ukflying.com/funding>).



Methodology overview

Mixed methods

- Quantitative
 - + Online survey
- Qualitative
 - + Essay box for four open questions
 - + Focus groups



Quantitative method

Online survey

Hosted on Qualtrics

Distributed through various networks

Reach: 7,000 student/newly qualified pilots, commercial pilots, and pilot trainers

Blocks of questions relevant to specific groups

Qualitative methods

4 x open questions at the end of survey, resulting in 750 testimonials

Follow-up questions allowing respondents to elaborate on earlier answers

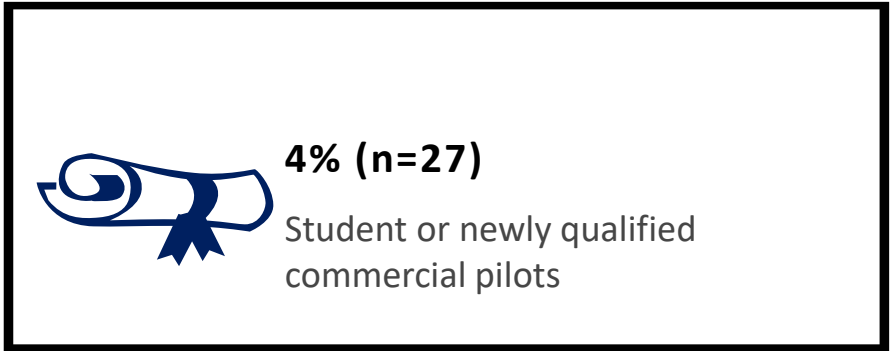
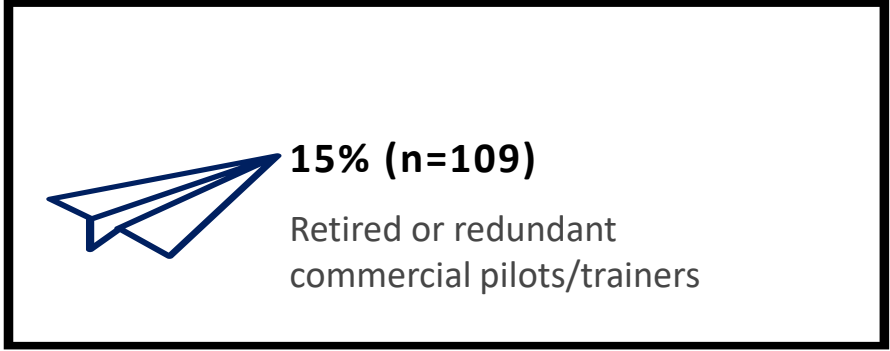
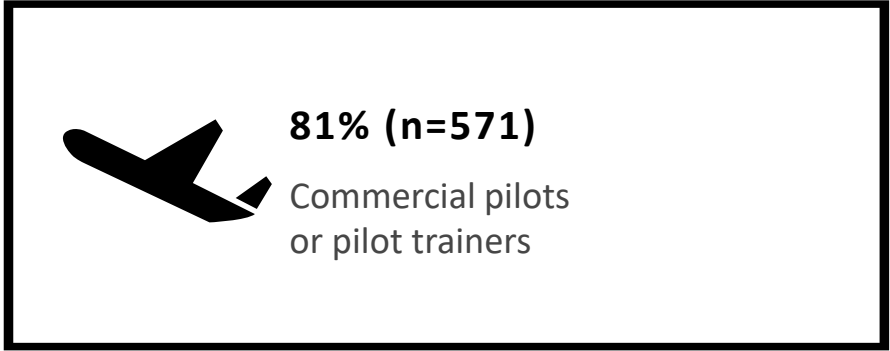
4 x online focus groups: male and female pilots and pilot trainers

Thematic analysis



Overview of survey sample

Survey sample



707
responses
analysed

Demographics

Gender

Male



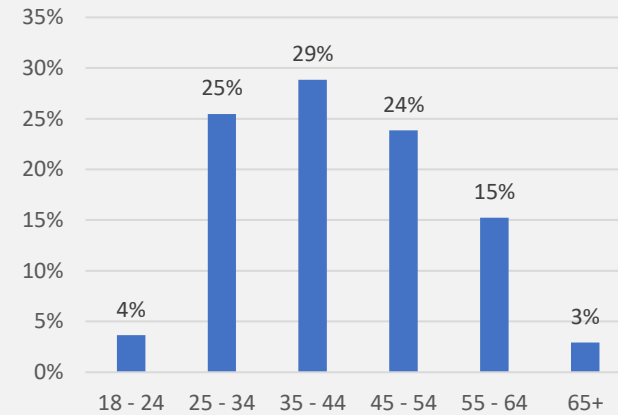
76%

Female

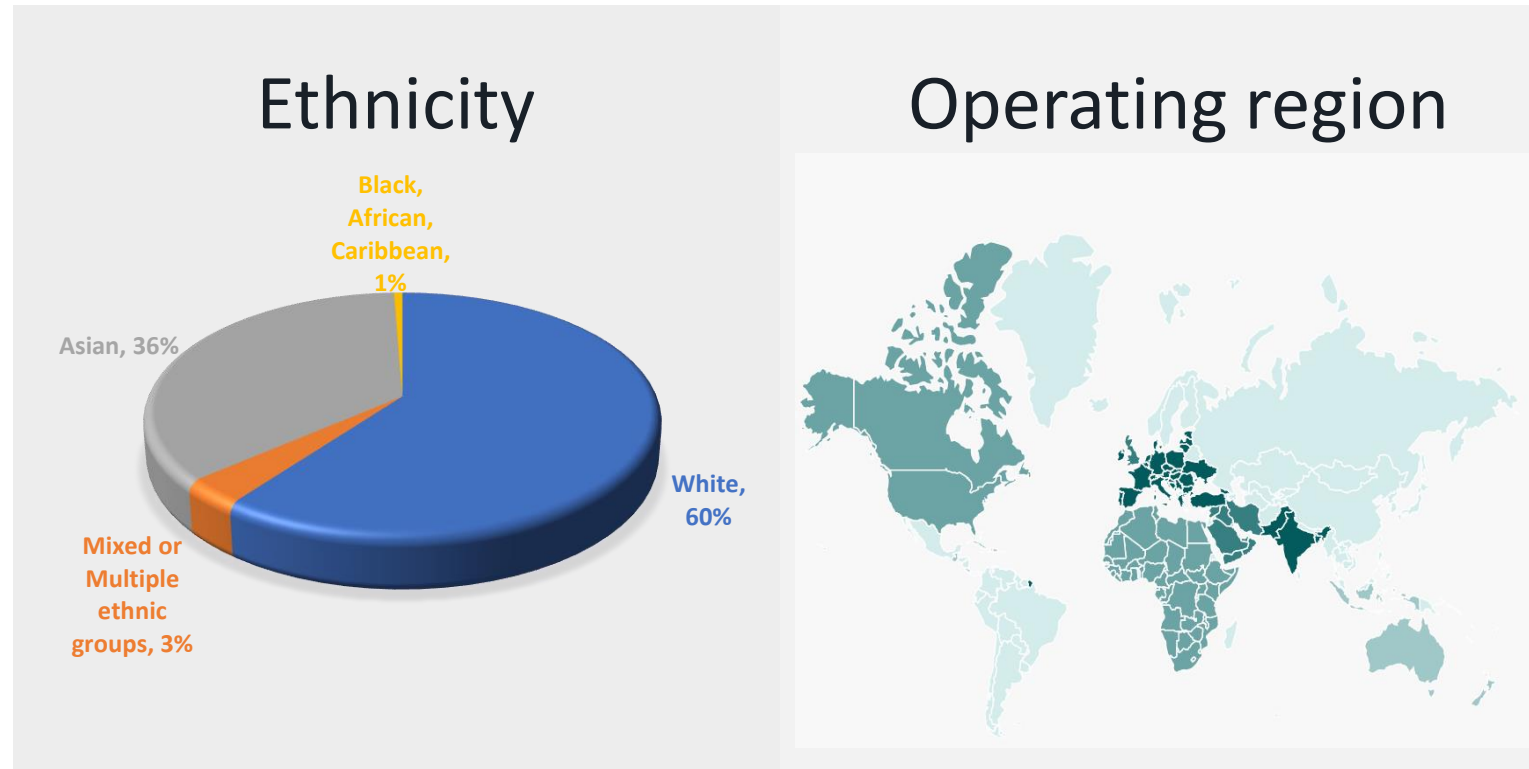


24%

Age range



Demographics





Overview of focus group sample

Focus group sample



Group 1

8 x female pilot trainers
UK, Canada, New Zealand
Aged between 31-63



Group 2

7 x male pilot trainers
UK, France, Netherlands
Aged between 42-68



Group 3

6 Female commercial pilots
UK and Europe
Aged between 33-55



Group 4

5 Male commercial pilots
UK and USA
Aged between 27 to 49

26
participants

Findings

A number of positive findings:

- Pilot/pilot trainer role identified as a vocation by most
- Many influenced by family members and pilots
- Satisfaction levels with role high but mostly for men (82% for men; 74% for women)
- Most felt they belonged in the industry, felt respected and valued, and intended to stay
- But only 53% of women and 57% of men said they would recommend their profession to others
- Importantly, the requisite skills for the pilot trainer role are not gender-specific and there is agreement by male/female pilots and pilot trainers about the key skills required

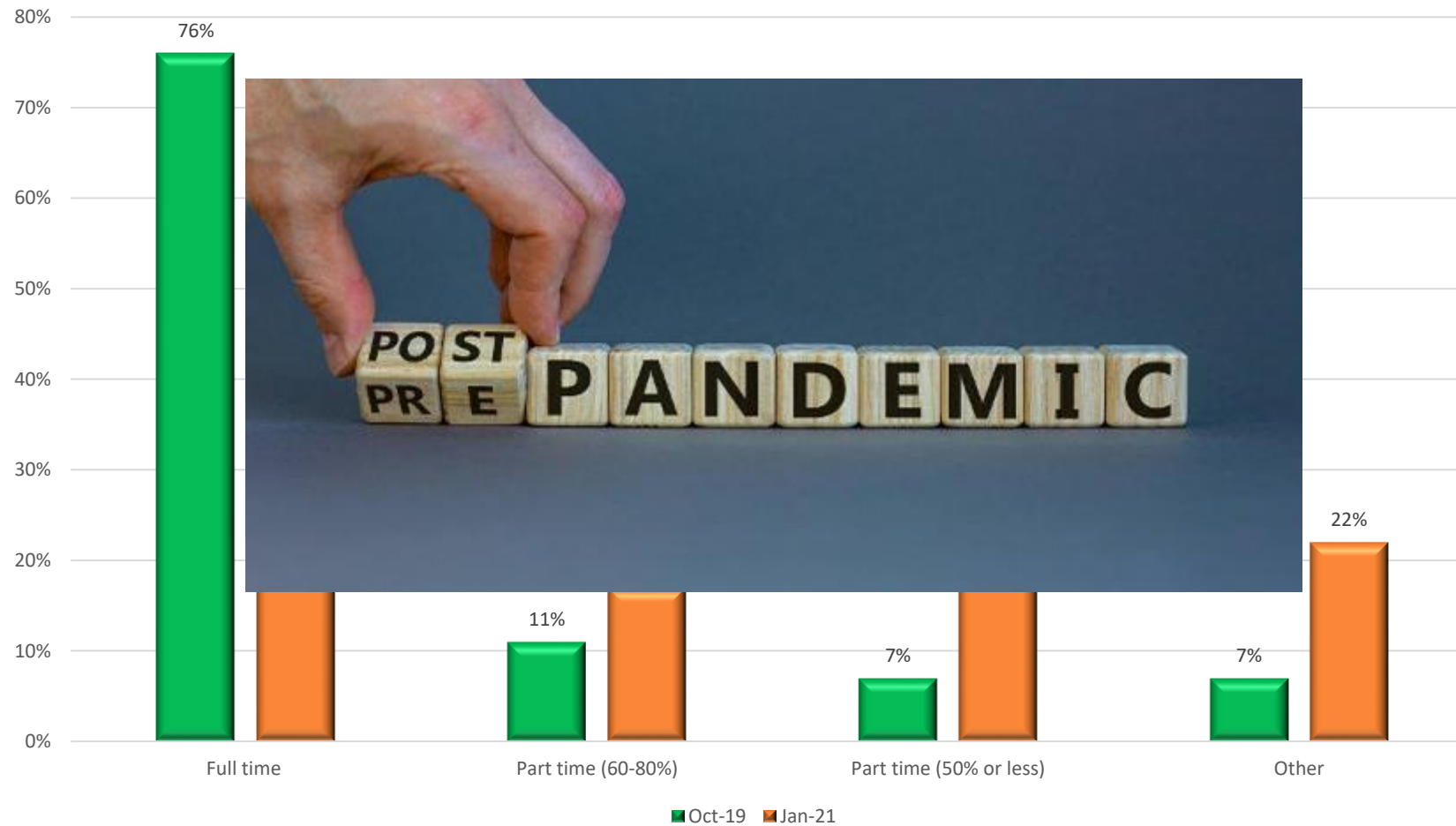
So why are there so few female pilot trainers?

Main Findings

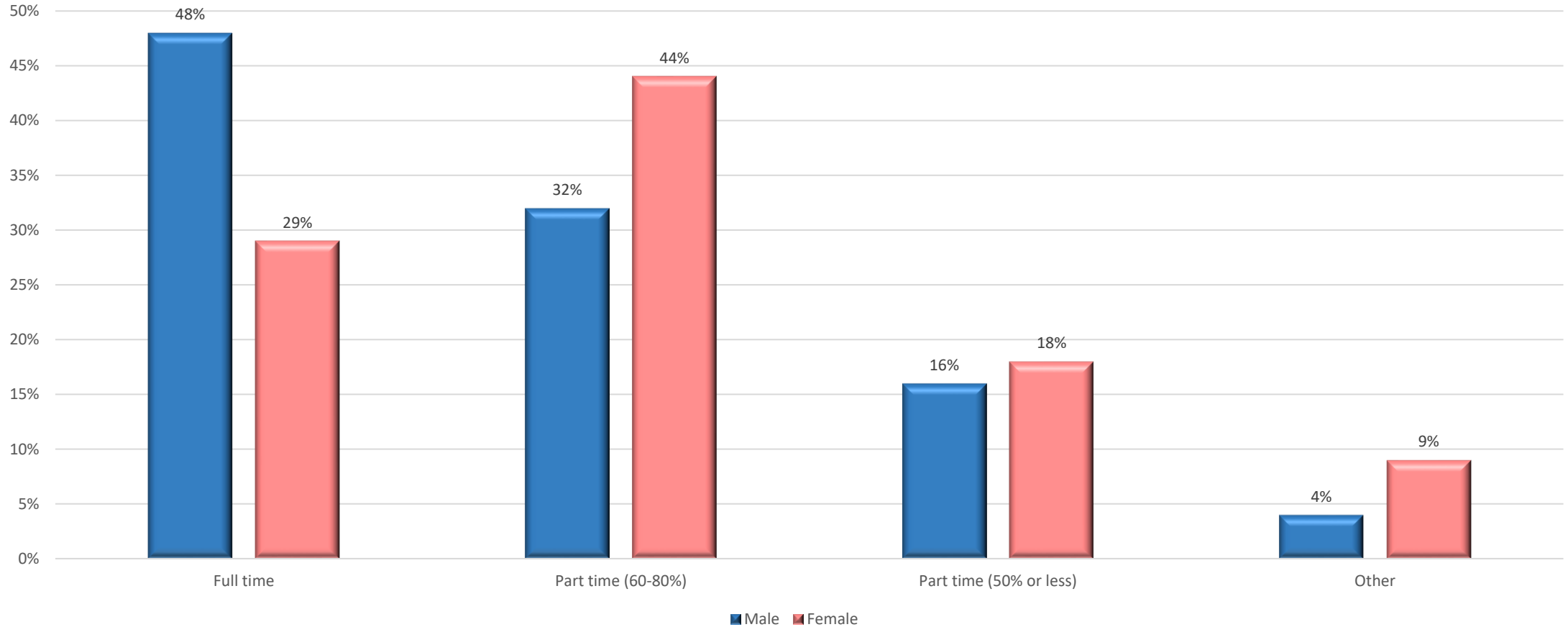
The under-representation of women in the pilot trainer role

- The part-time paradox
- Lack of role models and mentors for women
- Lack of transparency in the recruitment and selection process
- Sexism, sexual harassment, and the presence of the old boys' network (OBN)

Working patterns: Oct 2019 v Jan 2021



Preferred working pattern: pilot trainers





Part time working

Reluctance of airlines to offer the pilot trainer role (hereafter referred to as the trainer role) on a part-time basis - what we have labelled 'the part-time paradox'

This prevents many women from applying for the trainer role and stands in contradiction to what many would prefer and to making the role more gender balanced

Just 49% of women (compared with 72% of men) of our pilot respondents intended to apply for a trainer role

Average age to become a trainer is 34 years (around childbearing age and the care of young families for many women)

Industry seems reluctant to support non-traditional career paths for part-time workers and older women

46% of current trainers in the survey would prefer to work part-time and 34% of female pilots intend to remain part-time when normal working hours resume

Part time working



And it always is the part-time issue, so a lot of our female pilots are part-time, probably because they've got children or family commitments. And our airline won't allow part-time simulator trainers, or I don't think line trainers either at the moment, so it... it's that really. And I think also it depends when you get into training, so if you get into training before you have children and you have those commitments where you're part-time, it's probably easier to carry it on. But as [participant] has just said, I couldn't imagine doing a TRI course with children. So, if you get all those courses out the way before you start the family, sort of that's kind of the situation I'm in – it's kind of, I feel, a little bit easier... *(female pilot trainer)*

I have aspirations to become a pilot trainer myself (way into the future as I have only just started as a commercial pilot) but am already aware that I may be affected by the full time/part time issue. *(female pilot)*

My only comment on encouraging females into training is the conundrum for them whereby they tend to have the experience to train at a similar time to childbearing age. They then return (normally part-time) and are (by many carriers) excluded from joining training. *(male pilot)*



The importance of role models for pilot trainers

Trainers have role models they could ask for help



77% male
65% female

There is a need for more role models in training to encourage more female pilot trainers



58% male
87% female

Disappointed there are so few women trainers



45% male
84% female



Lack of role models/mentors for women

- Mentors and role models could be a source of support and a 'safe space' to encourage and support women in the industry
- 66% of female trainers in our survey said that having a role model enabled their pathway to a trainer role
- Mentors and role models could help women to weigh up the pros and cons of the trainer role and encourage more women to apply
- Mentors would be especially important at the initial pilot training stage, where many women are 'tokens' and face challenges not faced by their male colleagues
- 81% of women in our survey said having a mentor/adviser for their future career would encourage them to apply for the trainer role (compared with 49% of men)

Lack of role models/mentors for women

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Mentorship of young pilots and encouraging them to pursue traineeship/leadership roles in the future. Most women are taught to self-doubt and some confidence building exercise is required. *(female pilot)*

Male pilots are generally much more confident in their skills than female pilots, despite research that shows female pilots often outperform males. Encouragement or recommendations from trainers and management could be beneficial. *(female pilot trainer)*

I think having a female mentor sort of changes your mental framework that, oh, this can be done, and, okay, how did you do this? And do you think I could do it? Right? *(female pilot trainer)*

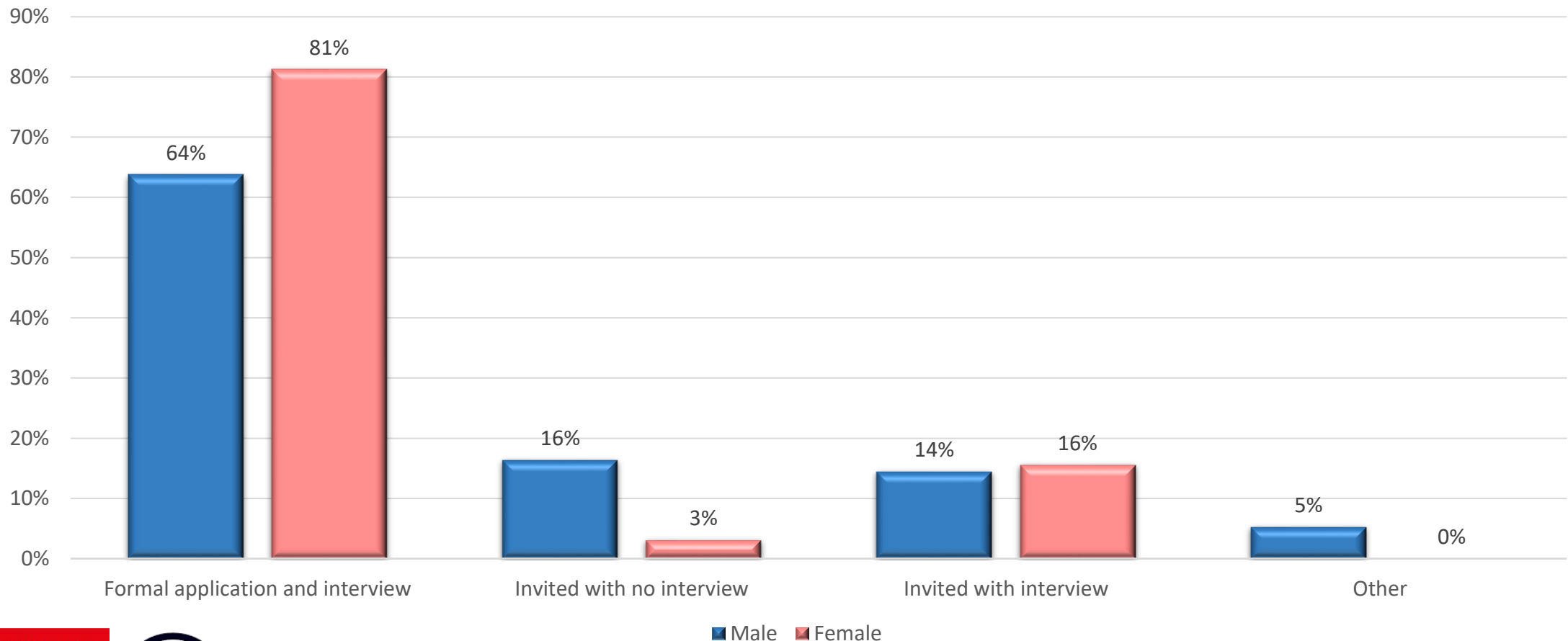
More role models in the top jobs and more press or advertising that includes women in the top roles. Show the world through the media that women do the job and highlight them through special news stories and articles. *(male pilot)*

Schemes and mentor support from the company to demonstrate the need and desire to actively bring more women into these roles. *(male pilot)*

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Recruitment and selection

How considered for pilot trainer position



Lack of transparency in the recruitment and selection process



- Most trainer survey respondents went through a formal interview for their role, but some men were 'invited'
- Very few women were present as interviewers
- Most recruitment conducted internally by men and if your face 'did not fit' you would not be successful, especially if you were not ex-military
- There are no industry recommendations for recruitment and selection, especially regarding diversity
- Women did not enjoy the same access to information about the role

Lack of transparency in the recruitment and selection process

Many female pilots felt that recruitment and selection should be:

- More open and transparent
- The skills required for the role should be advertised
- That more would should be encouraged to apply
- That the application process should be confidential
- That recruitment should be based upon merit
- The trainer role should be more diverse

Female trainers felt that:

- More female trainers should be encouraged to progress to higher positions
- The visibility of female trainers who were in the role should be increased

Male pilots suggested:

- Scrutiny of the recruitment and selection process, including, looking for unconscious bias in the process, having more women in decision making positions around recruitment, making more information available about the role.
- Encouraging more women to apply for the trainer role

Lack of transparency in the recruitment and selection process

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Women tend not to apply unless they meet every criteria and are encouraged to do so. I think we need to have a more diverse team doing the hiring, and at an individual level, (maybe after a sim) have individual encouragement. *(female pilot)*

Maybe add some of the female trainers to the selection process. This may feel less intimidating and could encourage more females to apply. *(male pilot)*

I think the airlines need to talk to female pilots and ask why they are not applying, assess the selection system to see if it has any unconscious/unintentional bias within it, and also encourage female pilots to become managers, as without a single one we have a very narrow body of people in management. I could be wrong, but off the top of my head most managers are white male, quite a few are ex-military but not all. *(male pilot)*

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Discrimination

Treated differently because of gender

- 17% male
- 42% female

Discriminated against

- 10% male
- 30% female

Witnessed discrimination

- 32% male
- 41% female

Sexism/sexual harassment

We did not ask about sexism/sexual harassment, but it emerges as a worrying trend in our qualitative data, especially at the pilot trainee stage for women

- We found evidence of systematic sexual harassment and bullying towards female trainees and relatively high levels of dissatisfaction amongst male trainees (but for different reasons)
- Sexual harassment and sexism ranged from banter and being undermined to physical abuse in some cases
- Many women and some men reported being excluded from the old boys' network
- Industry influenced by a military culture (see also Women in Defence Report, 2021)
- Both male and female respondents felt this was still happening today

At the training stage...

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I was the only female student on my course of 18 pilots. I experienced stupid, degrading comments (along the lines of cleaning planes etc.) from both an instructor and a student on my course. *(female pilot)*

Of my class of 28 students, we were two female students and we were harassed daily *(female pilot)*

... my gender and how I looked was always commented on. Sexist jokes constantly from peers and trainers... they need a whole culture change with diversity training on what is appropriate and what is not to head away from the boys club culture they have (or had when I was there). Also needs to be known female pilots don't have to act like a typical man to be a good pilot, the trainers seem to think that is the only way they can understand you as a pilot. *(female pilot)*

There is still a very chauvinistic/macho culture in the mostly white straight male dominated modern cockpit. Despite feedback and praise over a number of years, any inadequacy/lack of self-confidence I carried and have overcome has been fed by this toxic-masculinity environment. I think only a lack of tolerance of any kind of prejudice and positive role models of various backgrounds will break this down. I think the unpopular notion of positive discrimination in hiring is a necessary evil. A lot of this is only achieved in union protected workforces in large carriers and will persist in smaller/medium size private companies for years to come. *(male pilot)*

It did always feel like a bit of an old boys' club, which even as a male felt uncomfortable at times. *(male pilot)*

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And currently...

“ Generally I think early experiences scare people off, maybe. I was 35 when I was hit in the simulator - imagine if I were only 20. Unfortunately I was talking with a friend the other day and it seems this stuff is still going on. It's a miracle us women don't leave the industry altogether! *(female pilot)*

The aviation industry is still riddled with sexists and misogynists. *(female pilot)*

The training department is run by the old boys club, they only recruit from their own circle of people *(female pilot)*

It's a male dominant industry and some people want to keep it that way. *(male pilot)*

Historical stereotypes for the most part. "It has always been like this" - until we reach some critical mass/percentage of female pilots, a continued effort to encourage females to seek out the profession will be required. To some degree I believe that the work-life balance deters women to a larger degree than men. Very few female role models, both historical, relational and cultural. This is tightly connected to the historical stereotype mentioned in the beginning. *(male pilot)*

In conclusion

- Both women commercial pilots and pilot trainers continue to face gender specific challenges in their profession
- Our findings are in line with previous studies in relation to women pilots
- However, our findings on the pilot trainer role address a large gap in the literature which reveals one of the most male dominated roles in a very male dominated profession which culminates in women not entering the pilot trainer role





Q&A
Any
Questions?