

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
LEADERSHIP FOR WOMEN

www.leadershipforwomen.com.au

WOMEN GETTING INTO BOARDS

2009 RESEARCH STUDY FINDINGS

DR DIANN RODGERS-HEALEY

AUSTRALIAN
CENTRE
FOR
LEADERSHIP FOR WOMEN

WWW.LEADERSHIPFORWOMEN.COM.AU

ACLW

Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey
Email: diann@leadershipforwomen.com.au

Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW)
www.leadershipforwomen.com.au
PO Box 3144
Minnamurra
NSW 2533

© Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW)

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
List of Figures	4
List of Tables	5
Executive Summary	6
Introduction	10
Methodology	17
Findings	18
Sex of Participants	18
Country of Participants	19
Age Distribution	21
Occupation of Participants	23
Board Membership History of Participants	25
Current Board Membership of Participants	26
Type of Current Board Membership of Participants	27
Board Membership Profile According to Age	29
Board Membership Profile According to Occupation	31
Resources Used to Gain Board Positions	33
Type of Resources Used to Gain Board Positions	35
Networks	37
Relationship Between Board Positions and Resources Used	38
Factors Leading to Invitation to Join a Board	41
Reasons for Women Wanting to be a Board Member	43
Difficulties Women Experience in Attaining Board Positions	51
Type of Support Women Want Within a Workplace	61
Type of Support Women Want Outside a Workplace	65
What Women Want the Government to do to Assist Them Get Board Positions	70
Conclusion	80
Acknowledgements	83
About the Author	84
Appendix	85

List of Figures

Figure	Title	Page
1	Sex of Participants	18
2	Country of Participants	20
3	Age Distribution of Participants	22
4	Occupation of Participants	24
5	Board membership Positions Held by Participants	25
6	Current Board Membership Status of Participants	26
7	Type of Current Board membership Positions of Participants	28
8	Board Members by Age	30
9	Board Membership Profile According to Occupation	32
10	Number of Women Who Used Resources	34
11	Type of Resources Used to Gain Board Positions	36
12	Networks	37
13	Did Using Resources Lead to Gaining Board Positions?	39
14	Relationship Between Board Position and Resources Used	40
15	Factors Leading to Invitation to Join a Board	41

Table	Title	Page
1	Age Distribution of Participants	21
2	Occupation of the Participants	23
3	Type of Current Board Membership Positions	27
4	Board Membership According to Age	29
5	Board Membership Profile According to Occupation	31
6	Number of Women Who Used Resources	33
7	Resources Used to Become a Board Member	35
8	Board Positions and Resources	38
9	Relationship Between Board Positions Held and Resources Used	38

The Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW) conducted an online survey in 2009 about the difficulties women face getting into boards. 317 women participated in the survey, with 92% being Australian.

The findings show that women indicate that the recruitment process of boards predominantly is inequitable as it lacks transparency, clearly defined and realistic criteria and is advertised to a selective group. Women do not have the opportunity to apply because they do not know which boards have vacancies. When they do apply, they are judged against criteria which are discriminatory and attitudes which rate their achievements and experiences as unimportant and un-transferable. Women's evaluation of the effectiveness of resources they access to gain board positions indicate that networks are more effective when competency and achievement are promoted and recognized: then only is one really seen. They identify a number of initiatives that workplaces, government and boards can undertake to assist women achieve board positions which they are keenly interested in so that they can empower organizations and themselves.

Findings in Detail:

Of the 317 women who participated in the Women Getting into Boards Survey, the following characteristics apply:

Age distribution of women:

- 123 women in the 40 – 49 years age group
- 94 women in the 50-59 years age group
- 50 women in the 30-39 age group
- 32 women in the 60+ age group
- 18 women in the 20-29 age group

Previous Board Experience:

- 72% or 231 participants have held Board positions in the Not-for-Profit sector.
- 25% or 78 women have not held any Board positions in the Not-for-Profit sector.
- 1% or 3 women have held positions in both the Not-for-Profit and Private sector.

Current Board Experience:

- 250 women or 79 % of the women are holding Board positions.
- 67 women or 21% of the women are not holding any Board positions.

Type of Current Board Memberships:

- 15% are on Public boards.
- 11% are on Private boards.
- 7% are on Not-for-profit (NFP) boards.
- 4% are on both NFP and Private boards.

199 of the 317 women or 63% of women surveyed have a Board Membership profile that is they had held Board directorships and/or are currently holding Board positions.

Women in the 40-49 years age group had ranked highest as the group with most Board positions. This was followed by women in the 50-59 years group.

All of the women who were in Finance related positions were Board members. Community Development and Law closely followed with approximately 80% of those employed in these sectors having Board positions.

155 women or 49% of the women surveyed did not use any resources to gain Board Membership positions. 128 women or 40% used resources and it is unknown what resources 11% of women used.

Of the 128 women who did use resources, Networks ranked the highest with its frequency of usage being 35%. Federal and state registers had a frequency of usage of 11%. Women on Boards had 10% and Training courses 6%.

Of the women who were successful in achieving Board positions (past and current), 147 women had accessed resources. 120 women had not used any resources but still attained a Board position.

Of the 147 women who were successful in achieving Board positions (past and current), 69 women said that they did not believe using the resources led to their Board position with 59 saying that they did.

Factors which women identified that led to an invitation to join a board were:

- Work achievements, demonstrating industry knowledge and skills
- Being respected and having a good reputation in the industry and wider community
- Being a member of an association and taking on and being effective in voluntary roles in the association
- Having academic qualifications

Women stated that they want to join boards to empower the organisation and to empower themselves. Through their general and specific work experience, knowledge and skills, they want to influence decision making at a strategic level for the benefit of the organisation, to give back to their communities and ensure good governance of organizations for the public. Women see board membership as empowering them in their professional career, workplace and personal development and find being a board member rewarding.

Difficulties women are experiencing in attaining board positions are:

- Access to information about board positions and vacancies
- Lack of availability of positions
- Not having access to male dominated networks, not being in relevant networks and/or not having effective networking results thus not being seen, recommended, approached or aware of board positions
- Closed shop mentality of boards in whom they hire, the type of experience they are looking for, discriminatory perceptions of women and their caring responsibilities; ageism, attitudes about rural regions and racism.
- Lack of time, finance and confidence to seek and apply board positions

Women want workplaces to support them by believing in their capabilities, providing board and management experiences to develop leadership skills and knowledge and recognise that opportunities for board involvement are beneficial not only to women's professional development, but also to the workplace. Having time to be involved in boards, training, mentoring and networking to find and apply for positions, and learn about board management were identified as avenues of assistance workplaces could provide.

Outside the workplace, women want a range of support initiatives:

- proactive networking events to meet, discuss, exchange ideas, develop contacts, gain mentoring, learn from successful women role models, develop a profile and be considered as a potential candidate who is interested in a board position
- training and mentoring on how to access board positions and manage boards
- transparent, objective recruitment and evaluation procedures
- wide and open advertising of board positions
- registers that are proactively used by those looking for board members
- funding assistance
- quotas and affirmative action legislation
- work-life balance support

In terms of Government support, women want the Government to:

ACLW

- Advertise positions openly and widely with clear, realistic criteria that is merit based and recognises the transferability of skills, experience and knowledge and women's life journeys and roles of caring.
- Actively promote and seek more women to apply for board positions and acknowledge and reinforce their achievement in all sectors, including the NFP.
- Set the example with having more women on public boards and set incentives for private boards to follow
- Ensure gender equality, equity and diversity on boards by making boards accountable
- Provide specific assistance of funding, mentoring, training, networking, developing effective registers
- Put in place quotas for gender balance on boards

Introduction

Introduction

One of the key findings in EOWA's 2008¹ *Australian Women in Leadership Census* was that women hold 8.3% of Board Directorships in the ASX200 companies (125 seats out of 1,505) which compares with 8.7% (129 out of 1,487) reported in the 2006 Census and 8.2% (119 out of 1,456) reported in 2004.

49% of ASX200 companies have at least one woman Board Director which is almost unchanged from 50% in 2006, 50.3% in 2004 and 51.5% in 2003. The Report unequivocally stated that the "overall trend is slightly downwards" and that the "number of seats held by women has not kept up with the increase in overall number of board seats."

EOWA's Report, *Pay, Power and Position: Beyond the 2008 EOWA Australian Census of Women in Leadership* released in 2009 added further support to this finding reporting that "Between 2006 and 2008, the number of board seats in ASX200 companies **increased** from 1,487 to 1,505, while the number of seats held by women **decreased** from 129 to 125." It added that "while the number of individual women serving on ASX200 boards has increased since the first Census, the rate of change has been so slow that without significant improvement, women will remain substantially under-represented on company boards for decades."

The EOWA Report dismissed the thinking that women's representation on boards is so low because today, Australian company boards are smaller than in the past. Revealing that the average size of ASX200 boards remains more or less unchanged at 7.8 board members in 2008, compared to 7.6 in 2006, it declared that the number of women board directors "**decreased**" while the number of board directors overall "**increased.**" It also concluded "that an increase in the number of board director positions does not translate into a corresponding increase in the representation of women on ASX200 boards."

The Hon Minister Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Housing and the Status of Women addressing the Australian Women's Leadership Symposium in 2009 has said, "In Australia, we are performing worse on these measures than countries like Canada and the United States... the rate of change has been so slow that without significant

¹ Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace (EOWA), *2008 Australian Census of Women in Leadership*, Canberra: ACT.

improvement, women will remain substantially under-represented for decades. We know this is not for lack of talent.”

Recently, it was reported in the media that women “with board aspirations try the financially oriented and high profile not-for-profit organisations, and work harder on their collegiate relationships with men” while men network and develop “strong collegiate relationships².” It was observed that women do not spend their time networking, but “maybe they’re the ones working hard in the office.³”

That women need the right mentor, but that they lack the network and access required was another reason indicated for women not being successful in their Board aspirations. Publicity, even online exposure⁴ was proposed as being a key to getting noticed. However as pointed out by one consultant⁵, “The best springboard for an aspiring non-executive director is to be either a CEO or operate in the C-suite space. You need board exposure and have a broad management experience of running a P&L, finance, sales and marketing - not a functional specialist.”

Whilst in the Australian public sector, almost 38 per cent of board members are women and the government through the EOWA continues to research and draw attention to the gender imbalance on boards, debate about the application of Quotas in workplaces through legislation continues, following Norway’s approach in 2005 enacting a law requiring that publicly listed companies set aside at least 40% of the board seats for women and escalating to requiring full compliance in 2008. VICTORIAN Women’s Affairs Minister Maxine Morand has been reported to float “the idea of making it mandatory for private companies to meet a quota of women on their boards,” saying “I think it’s worth exploring and having a discussion about quotas.⁶” Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick was also reported to have said “it should be considered as part of new solutions to improve the numbers of women on boards.⁷”

² Julianne Dowling, Women on boards: addressing the gender imbalance, Brisbane Times, September 7, 2009. The comment was made by Kate Spargo, Lawyer and Company Director.

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Julianne Dowling, Women on boards: addressing the gender imbalance, Brisbane Times, September 7, 2009. The comment was made by Consultant Stafford Bagot, of executive search group Heidrick & Struggles.

⁶ Carol Nader, Call for mandatory quotas for women on boards. 2 September 2009, SMH.

⁷ *ibid*

Recent opinion regarding quotas as reported in the Australian media is that quotas are like “a role to tick a box⁸” an issue which needs debating. Appointing women on merit according to some is more effective. However, there is also the view held by some women leaders that quotas are necessary as the ‘blokey’ and ‘mateship’ culture is difficult to change:

Yvonne Butler, consultant and chairwoman of the Women's Housing Company: “Quotas impose an unnecessary tension and often reinforce the negative behaviour that they are endeavouring to remove. In many instances, women who have been given opportunities through a quota approach find themselves the subject of artificial scrutiny. An alternative to quotas might be to have the regulators include diversity. For example, the ASX Corporate Governance Principles could be modified to ensure that directors have an appropriate range of skills and experience with examples that include gender equality in board membership.⁹”

Christine Nixon, Former Chief Police Commissioner, Victoria Police: “Quotas are important.” Nixon also pointed out that one of the ways she changed the “blokes” culture in the police force was to get the “boys” to stop just considering each other for positions¹⁰”.

Whilst the debate about quotas continues, some State governments are opting for raising targets for women to public Board positions hoping that this example will be followed by the corporate sector. With only nine of Queensland's 50 biggest companies having a female director on their board, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh recently challenged business to follow the Government's lead by raising the proportion of women on government-appointed boards from the current 36 per cent to 50 per cent. She says: “We want to smash the glass ceiling in boardrooms across the state and I make no apologies for taking affirmative action to do that¹¹”.

Victoria’s Premier John Brumby also recently encouraged private enterprise to follow the example that the Victorian Government has set in appointing more women to

⁸ Julianne Dowling, Women on boards: addressing the gender imbalance, Brisbane Times, September 7, 2009. The comment was made by Robyn Watts, on the board of the Australian School of Performing Arts.

⁹ Julianne Dowling, Women on boards: addressing the gender imbalance, Brisbane Times, September 7, 2009.

¹⁰ Amanda Gome, Female leaders call for quotas to boost women in senior ranks, 4 March 2009, Smartcompany.com.au

¹¹ Daryl Passmore, Push for more women on boards, Courier Mail, September 13, 2009 12:00am.

boards raising the number of women on government boards from 32 per cent to 40 per cent and now to 50 per cent¹².

Corporate Australia has also researched the issue of Diversity on Boards. The Corporations and Markets Advisory Committee (CAMAC) in March 2009 released its report *Diversity on Boards of Directors*¹³ with one of its aims being to “consider possible ways to promote an environment conducive to a more open approach to the composition of boards, including recruitment of directors from a more diverse pool of qualified candidates”. Stating that “there is an apparent under representation of women on those boards, it raised a number of questions:

- “• about the possible overlooking and wastage of valuable talent as well as broader considerations of participation and opportunity
- whether some boards are unduly blinkered in their approach and are failing to consider the benefits of greater diversity
- whether lack of opportunity or other reasons are limiting the pool of qualified women for board appointments”

Indicating that “while some studies suggest a positive link between diversity and corporate performance,” it, however, surmised that “this is not an easy matter to tie down,” and instead recommended that a “more sustainable proposition, ... is that enlightened companies can be expected to perform better and that they will inevitably be the ones who seek talent from all sources and to whom gender is a very secondary consideration.” It called for “more transparent board processes, and more information about the reasons for putting forward new directors” as this “will assist shareholders in questioning a board’s approach or in voting on board appointments.” However, it concluded that “there would be problems in imposing a gender (or other) model of diversity on companies in the private sector. Such a move, by dictating aspects of board selection and composition, would cut across the right of shareholders to choose the directors who are to be the stewards of their investments, and is not supported.”¹⁴

The Not-for-Profit (NFP) sector in Australia also appears to have challenges in relation to its board structure and management. Whilst relying on the voluntary participation of citizens interested in making a contribution to civil society and their altruism, commitment and advocacy for marginalized people, this way of operating also contains the seeds of many challenges currently facing NFP Boards.

¹² Media Release, **Premier of Victoria, John Brumby: Private Sector Needs More Women Leaders**, 8 September 2009.

¹³ Corporations and Markets Advisory Committee (CAMAC), *Diversity on boards of directors*. 13 August 2009, Media Release. Pp1-4.

¹⁴ Corporations and Markets Advisory Committee (CAMAC), *Diversity on boards of directors*. 13 August 2009, Media Release. Pp1-4.

According to the New South Wales Council of Social Service (NCOSS), recruiting Board members is a challenge with “an oft-repeated scenario at Annual General Meetings, during which Board members are elected by members, that a number of key positions are at best uncontested, at worst, unfilled. This leaves many vacancies which existing Board members try to fill by drafting (sometimes reluctant) people to the roles at a later date.¹⁵” NCOSS identified factors that may “hamper successful recruitment:”

- The changing social and economic structures mean that more people are in employment often working longer hours and as a result they are simply not available for voluntary endeavours.
- The complexity of the regulatory environment has discouraged some potential Board members who are committed to a cause but not to corporate governance.
- The legal liabilities of Directors of organisations
- The proliferation of NFP organisations competing between organisations for skilled Board members.

To address these challenges NCOSS recommended the following:

- **Clarity of vision:** what it stands for; who it serves; how outcomes will be achieved. It is this mission that will attract potential Directors.
- **Excellence in service provision:** has value and integrity and achieves real outcomes
- **Quality relationships between the Board and CEO:** the appointment of a quality CEO or Manager through recruitment that needs to be values driven, targeted and professional. “The Board needs to be innovative in marketing what it can offer – such as flexible working arrangements, additional leave entitlements and a relaxed, informal workplace. Once the CEO is appointed, effective communication, strong strategic support and respect for the respective and complimentary roles of the CEO and Board is essential.”
- **Commitment to a vibrant membership:** involved and active membership

¹⁵ New South Wales Council of Social Service, Challenges Facing Non-Profit Boards of Management, 2008 NCOSS News Vol 35, Number 9.

- **Energy to recruit an active and diverse Board:** make an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and then actively recruit at the time of the AGM on the basis of what is required
- **Sound governance policies and procedures:** clear governance policies and procedures including operating policies for the Board; induction and orientation processes for new members; ongoing training, based on a Board self-assessment process and a compliance checklist
- **Fun!** So that Board processes are not so arduous that they wear down the enthusiasm of the Directors.

Whilst the Not-for-Profit sector is facing challenges of finding skilled Board members, the research uncovered does not include any statistics of its Board composition across the sector, so it is difficult to definitively discuss this in relation to gender. However, the 2008 NCOSS Report¹⁶ did state that Not-for-Profit Boards feel “they benefit especially from having a corporate CEO on the Board. These benefits are contingent on corporate Board members having the requisite understanding of the NFP sector to contribute effectively.¹⁷” This would pose difficulties for women who are underrepresented in the CEO pool of candidates.

In conclusion, it can be said that from research, industry and social perceptions, it is apparent therefore that there is a gender imbalance on Boards in Australia, particularly in the corporate sector, and to a lesser, but still significant extent in the public sector and that this situation is slow to change. There is much research by Catalyst and McKinsey¹⁸ to indicate the benefits¹⁹ of having women on Boards. As the debate for quotas continues in Australia, governments are continuing to draw attention to this issue pointing out the benefits of diverse boards which include women.

¹⁶ New South Wales Council of Social Service, Challenges Facing Non-Profit Boards of Management, 2008 NCOSS News Vol 35, Number 9.

¹⁷ Centre for Corporate Public Affairs 2008, Relationship matters: not-for-profit community organisations and corporate community investment, Centre for Corporate Public Affairs, Sydney.

¹⁸ Catalyst, The Bottom Line: Corporate performance and women’s representation on boards, Catalyst, New York, 2007; McKinsey & Company, Women Matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance drive, McKinsey & Company, France, 2007; McKinsey & Company, Women Matter 2: Female leadership, a competitive edge for the future, McKinsey & Company, France, 2008.

¹⁹ Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace (EOWA), 2009, Pay, Power and Position: Beyond the 2008 EOWA Australian Census of Women in Leadership, Canberra: ACT; Speech by The Hon Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Housing and the Status of Women, 17 June 2009 Australian Women’s Leadership Symposium, Australian Institute of Sport, Canberra.

This research study by The Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW), had a focus different from adding support to the benefits of women on boards. The ***Women Getting into Boards Study*** aimed to explore why women can not get into boards across the public, private and NFP sector with the objective to identify the barriers women face and the strategies that have been employed by those who have succeeded to attain Board positions.

It aimed to give women nationally and internationally an opportunity to voice their concerns and uncover from their views, perspectives for the following areas:

- How many women have or held Board positions?
- How have they achieved this?
- What are the barriers to getting into Boards?
- What are the most effective strategies that have been proven to work?
- How can workplaces, the Government and society in general assist women in their board membership aspirations?

Methodology Methodology

The Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW), a virtual Centre at www.leadershipforwomen.com.au conducted an online international Survey entitled: Women Getting into Boards. The Survey (see Appendix) which ran from 12 June 2009 to 12 August 2009 comprised 10 questions which included closed and open ended questions. As an online Survey, it was open to women and men of any country and requested that the participant identify their sex.

It was promoted widely to women's lists, public and private organizations and networks and in the media as being "an anonymous questionnaire for women who have been trying to get into directorships on public, private and non-profit boards and are experiencing barriers." It assured participants anonymity.

The objective of the Survey was to understand the difficulties and aspirations of women who wish to get into boards in order to formulate strategies to assist women, as well as lobby public and private organizations, Boards and the government to undertake further research and development to address issues in this area.

Responses to the Survey were collated and analysed using Content Analysis by Dr Rodgers-Healey. The qualitative and quantitative findings which emerged are reported in this document.

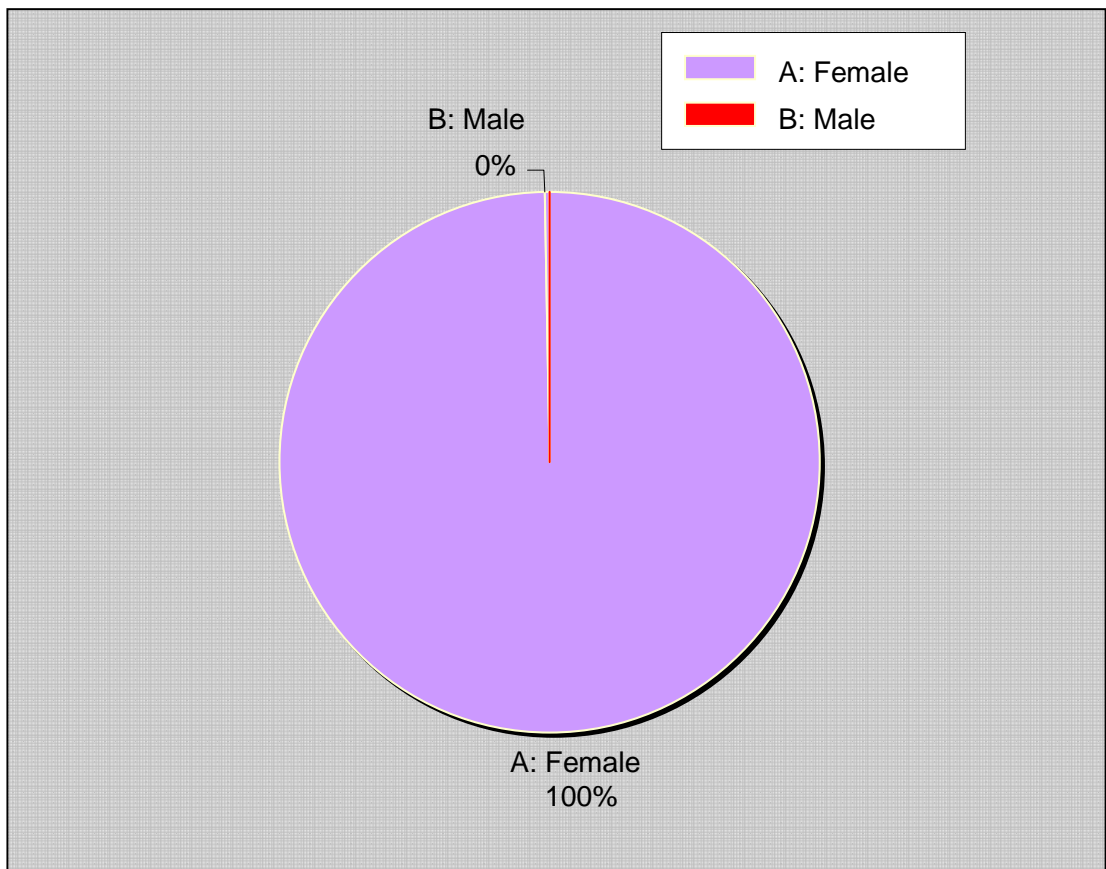
In total, 318 participants responded to the Women Getting into Boards Survey.

Sex of Participants

There was only one male in the number of participants who responded to the survey. There were 317 women.

The responses of the male were not included in the analysis as it would not be statistically relevant as indicated in **Figure 1: Sex of Participants**. The findings reported therefore only relate to the 317 women participants.

Figure 1: Sex of Participants



Country of Participants

Predominantly the participants of the Survey were from Australia. Of the 317 women, 293 women were from Australia.

10 women were from other countries which comprised:

- Canada
- Germany
- Northern California
- Papua New Guinea
- Philippines
- Samoa
- The Philippines
- Tonga
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom

14 women did not choose to identify which country they were from. This finding is represented statistically in **Figure 2: Country of Participants**.

The views of the 10 international women were incorporated in the analysis of the Australian women as it was too small a cohort to separately analyse.

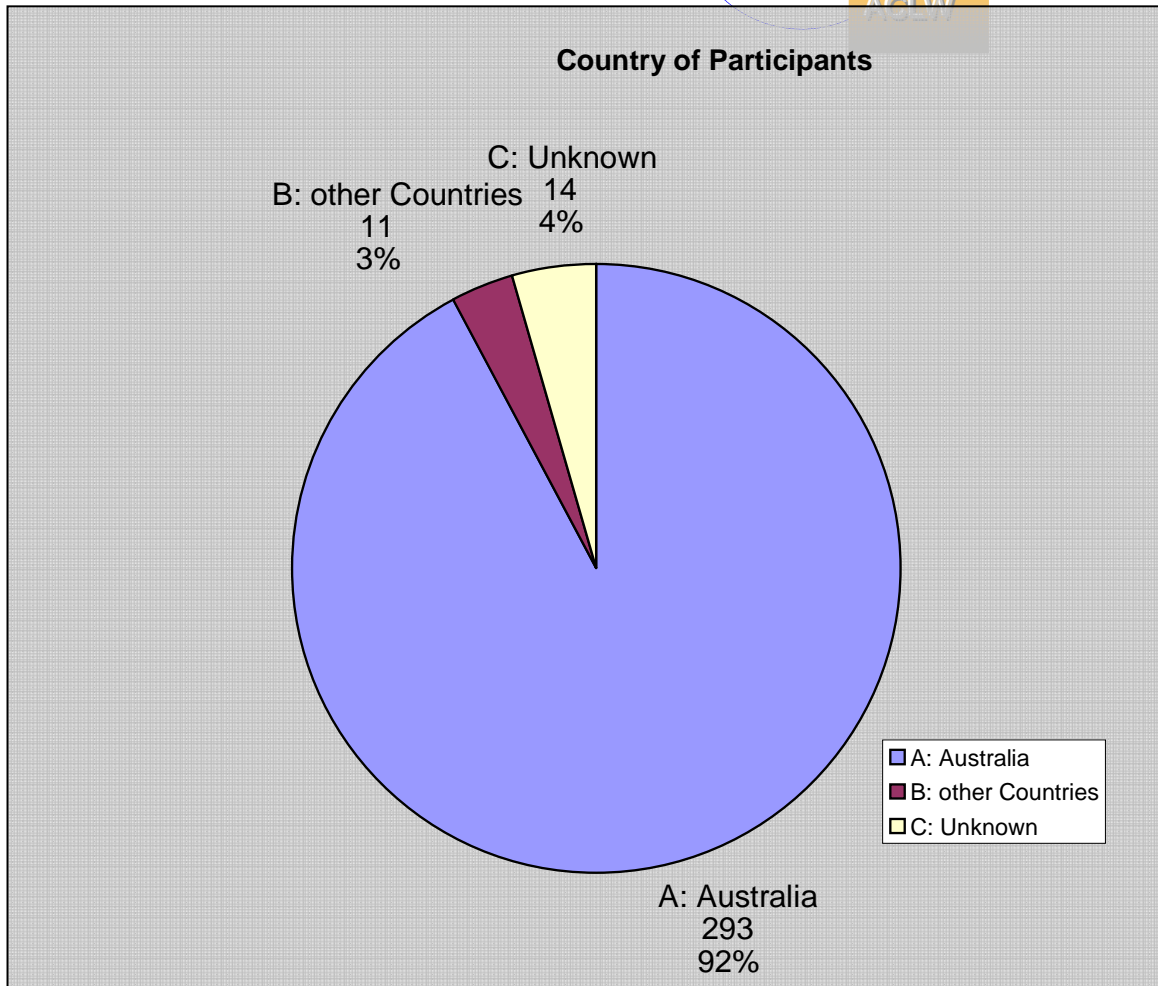


Figure 2: Country of Participants

Age Distribution

In terms of the age distribution of the women participants, as indicated in **Table 1: Age Distribution of Participants** the predominant group was women aged 40 – 49 years with 123 women being in this age group. 94 women were in the 50-59 years which was the second highest group of women.

Table 1: Age Distribution of Participants

Age Group	Board Member
20-29	18
30-39	50
40-49	123
50-59	94
60+	32
TOTAL	317

Figure 3: Age Distribution of Participants shows the age distribution as a percentage.

Age Distribution of Participants

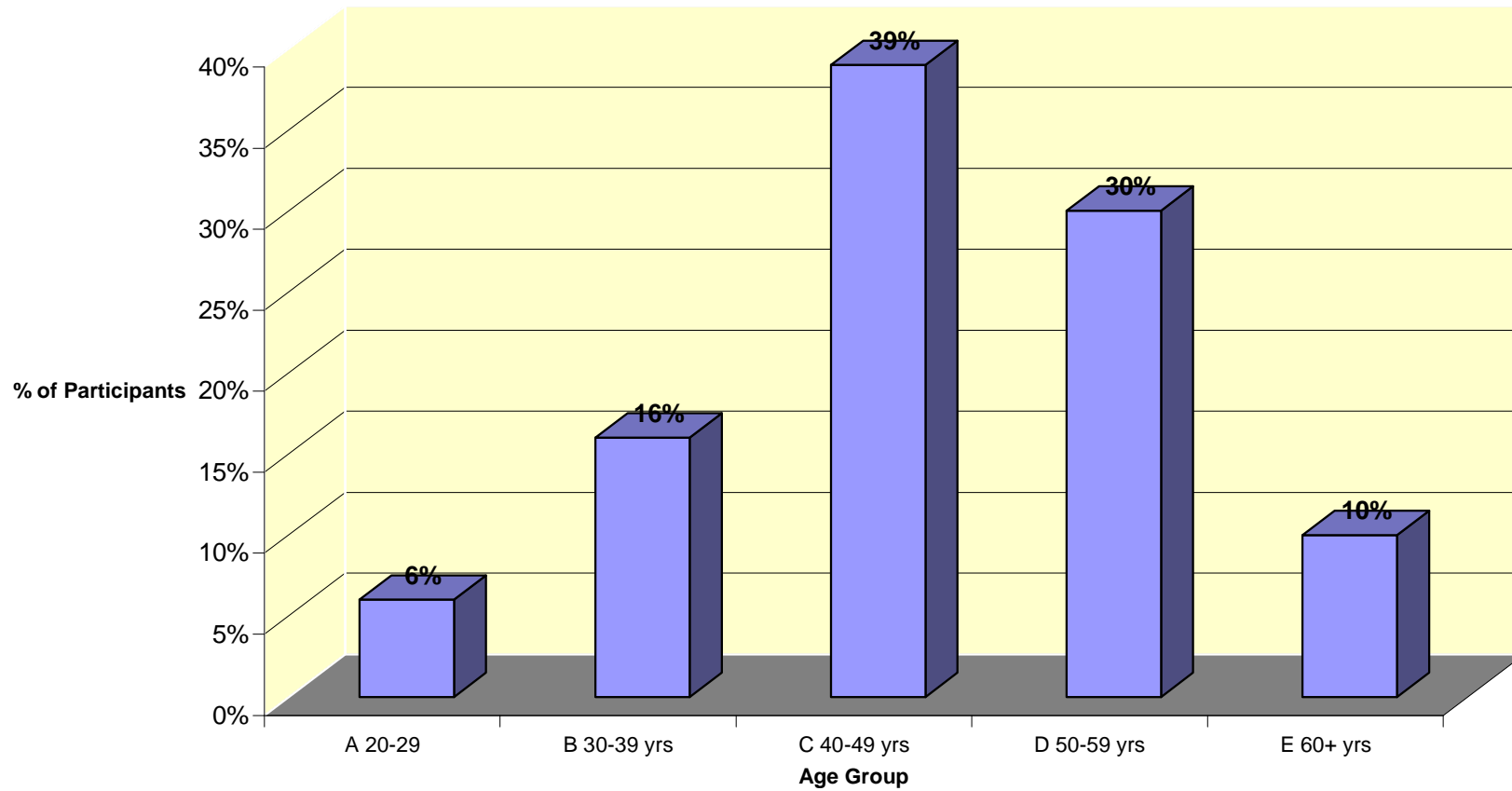


Figure 3: Age Distribution of Participants

Occupation of the Participants

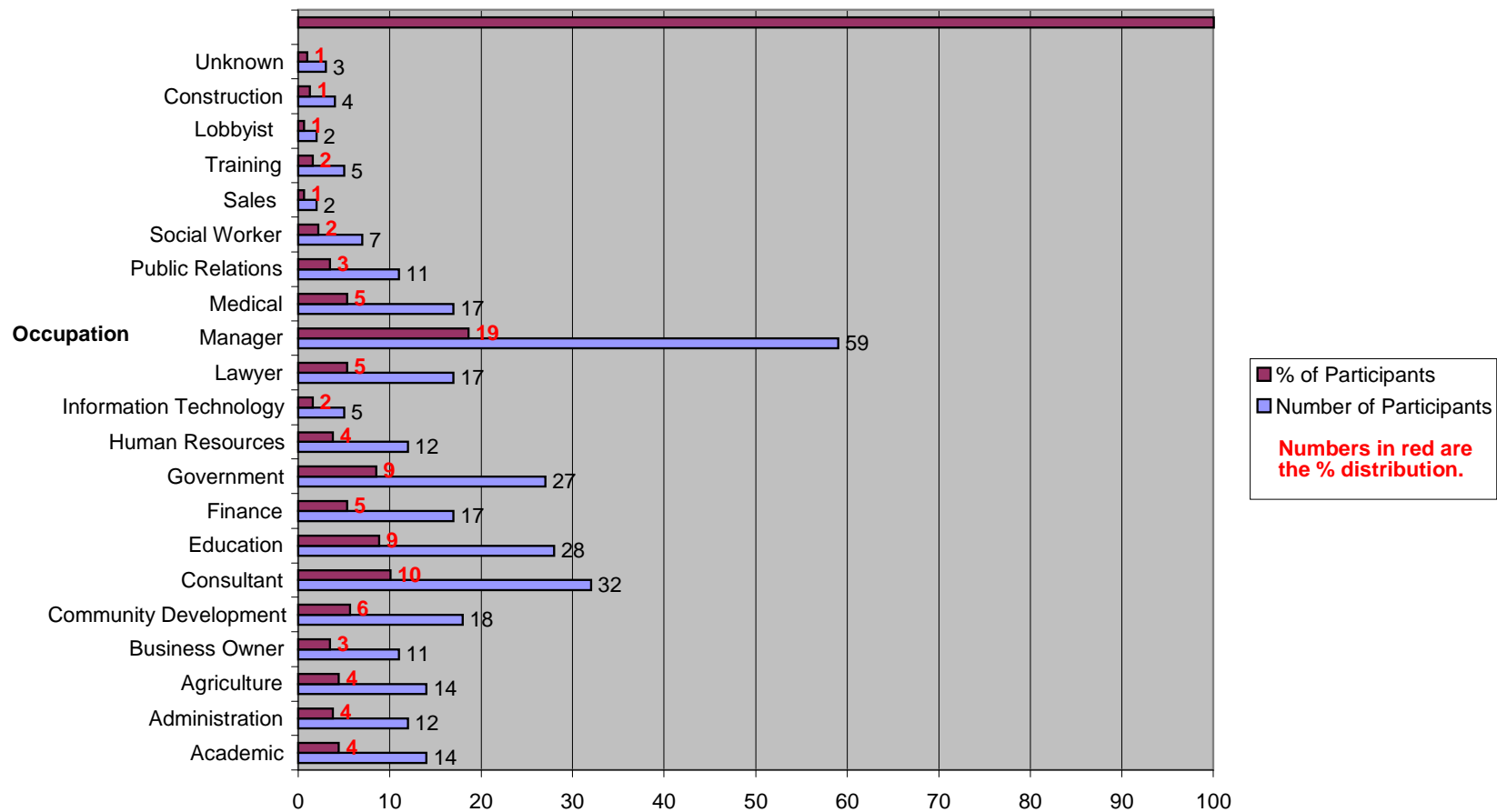
Management was the occupation that ranked the highest amongst the participants with 59 women or 19%. Consultancy, Education and Government related occupations ranked as the next highest group with approximately 30 women in each of these occupations. This was followed by Community Development, Finance, Law and Medicine with approximately 17 women in each of these occupations as shown in **Table 2: Occupation of Participants**. **Figure 4: Occupation Distribution of Participants** plots the distribution as a percentage.

Table 2: Occupation of Participants

Occupation	Number of Participants
Academic	14
Administration	12
Agriculture	14
Business Owner	11
Community Development	18
Consultant	32
Education	28
Finance	17
Government	27
Human Resources	12
Information Technology	5
Lawyer	17
Manager	59
Medical	17
Public Relations	11
Social Worker	7
Sales	2
Training	5
Lobbyist	2
Construction	4
Unknown	3
TOTAL	317

Figure 4: Occupation Distribution of Participants

Occupation of Participants



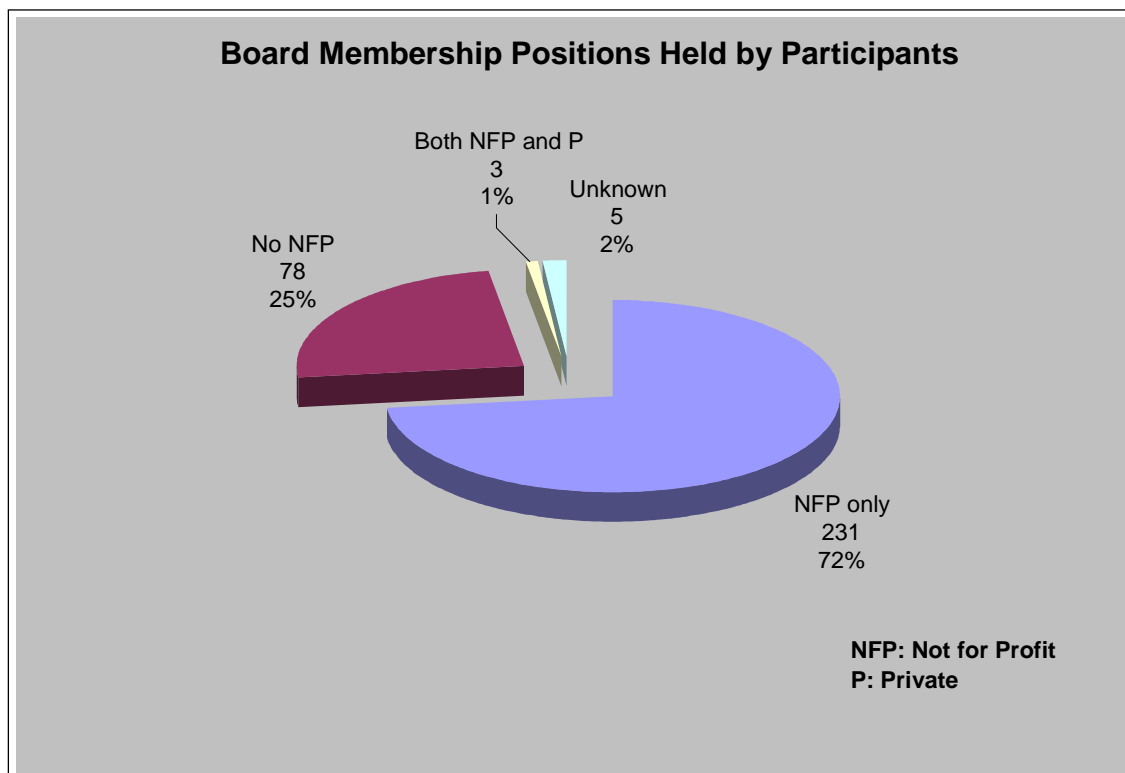
Board Membership History of Participants

As shown in **Figure 5: Board Membership Positions Held by Participants**, 72% or 231 participants have held Board positions in the Not-for-Profit sector.

25% or 78 women have not held any Board positions in the Not-for-Profit sector.

1% or 3 women have held positions in both the Not-for-Profit and Private sector.

Figure 5: Board Membership Positions Held by Participants



"I have been on two committees of management..."

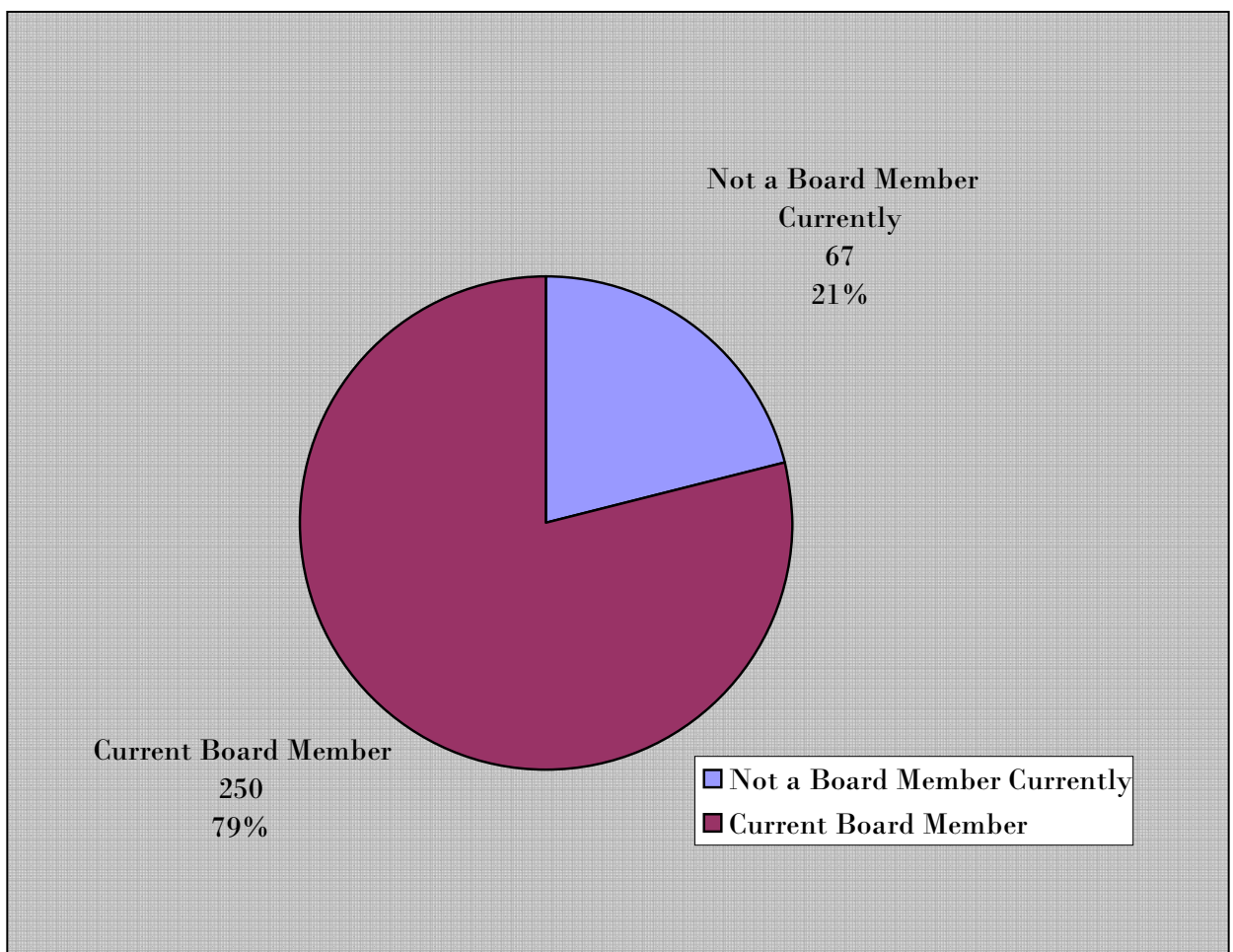
"All of my previous and current positions are in the not-for-profit sector."

"have held committee positions only"

Current Board Membership of Participants

As shown in **Figure 6: Current Board Membership Status of Participants**, currently, 250 women or 79 % of the women are holding Board positions. 67 women or 21% of the women are not holding any Board positions.

Figure 6: Current Board Membership Status of Participants



Type of Current Board Membership of Participants

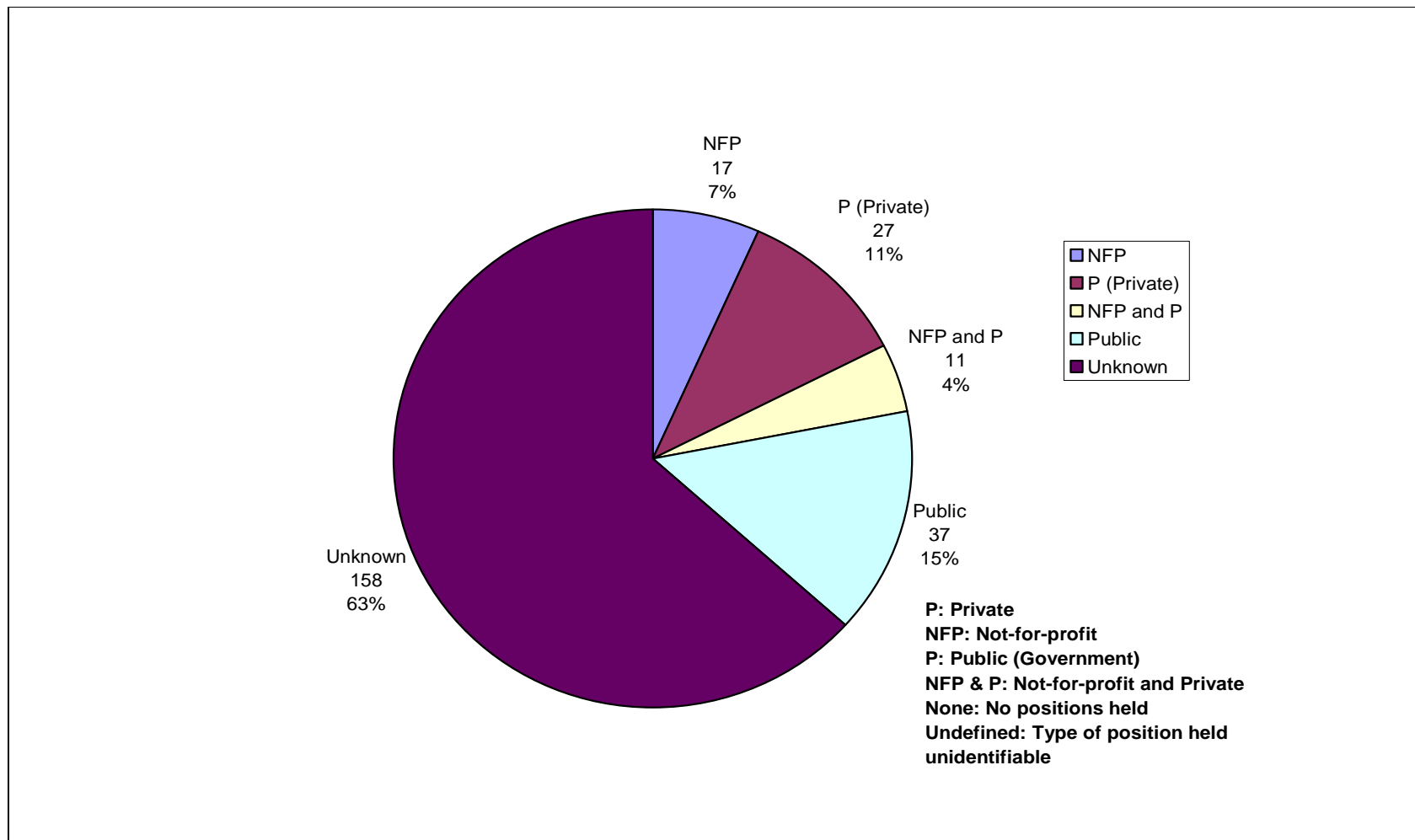
Of the 250 women who currently have board positions, 158 women did not state whether their Board position was in the Not-for-profit, public or private sector.

Of the 92 women who did identify the type of Board position they had, 37 women were in the public sector; 27 in the private sector, 17 in the not-for-profit and 11 women had positions in both the not-for-profit and private sector. The numbers are listed in **Table 3: Type of Current Board Membership Positions** and depicted graphically as a percentage in **Figure 7: Type of Current Board Membership Positions of Participants**.

Table 3: Type of Current Board Membership Positions

Type of Current Board Membership Positions	Number of Participants	% of Participants
NFP	17	7
P (Private)	27	11
NFP and P	11	4
Public	37	15
Undefined	158	63
TOTAL	250	100

Figure 7: Type of Current Board Membership Positions of Participants



Board Membership Profile According to Age

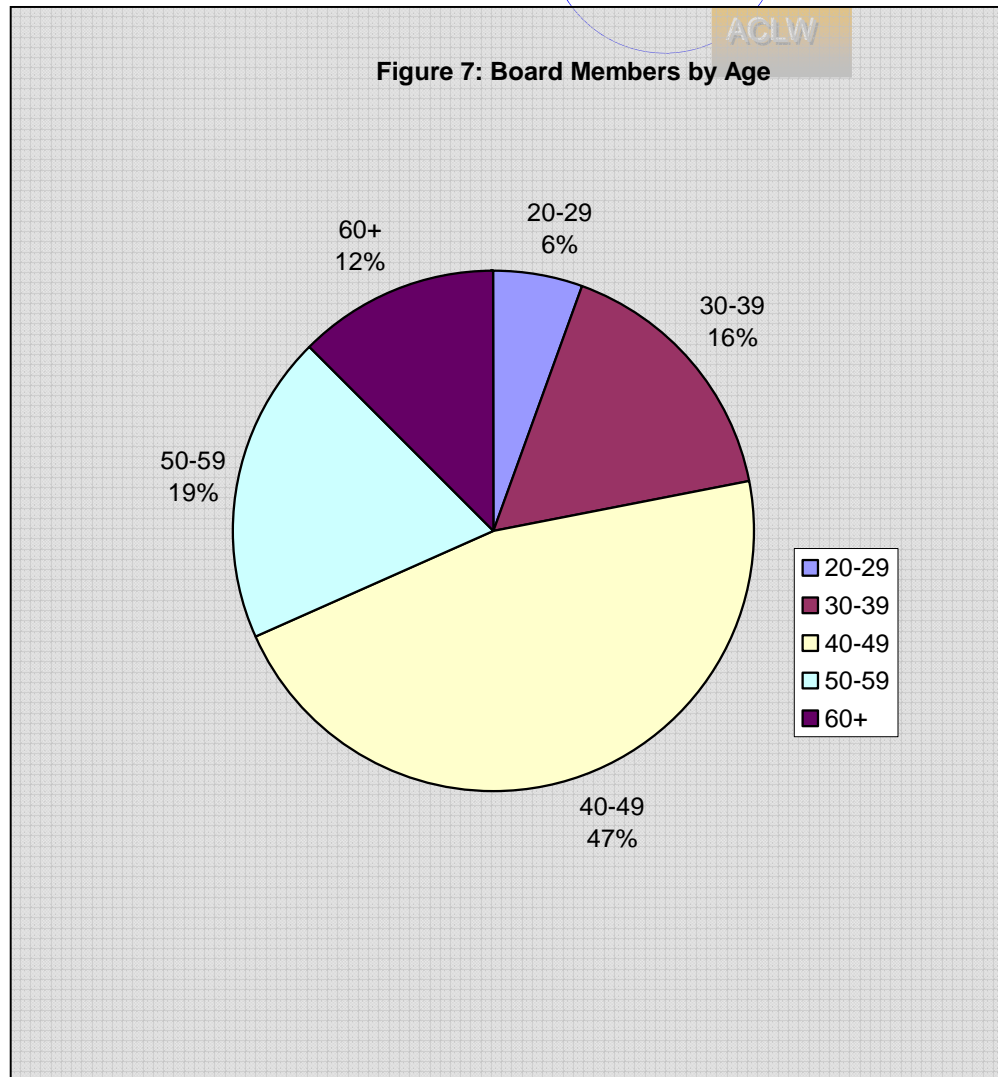
When the data of Board positions held previously and currently was correlated with the age of the participants, women in the 40-49 years age group had ranked highest as the group with most Board positions. This was followed by women in the 50-59 years group.

Table 4: Board Membership According to Age presents this information which is also presented graphically in **Figure 8: Board Members by Age**.

Table 4: Board Membership According to Age

Age Group	Board Member
20-29	10
30-39	29
40-49	82
50-59	34
60+	22

Figure 7: Board Members by Age



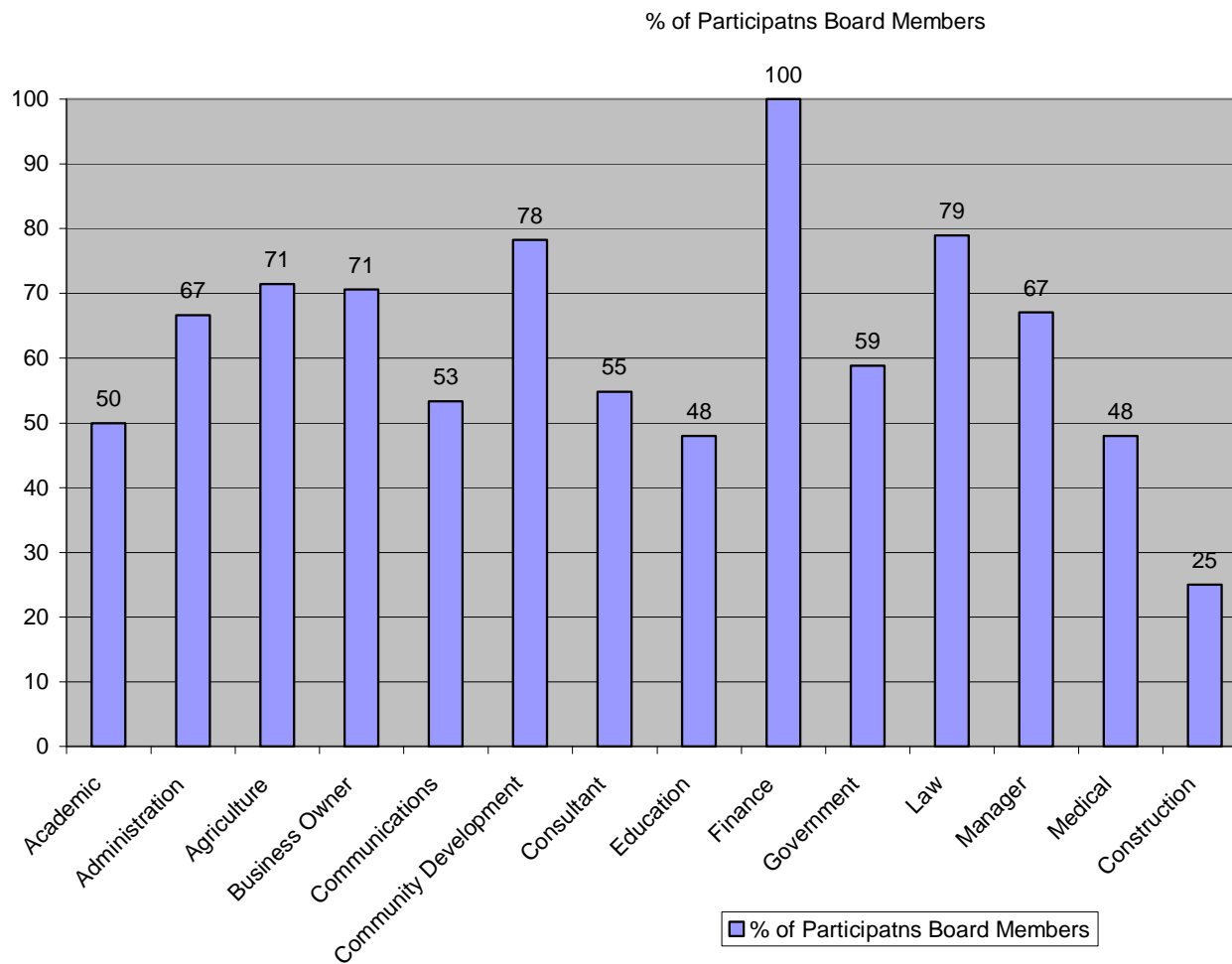
Board Membership Profile According to Occupation

When the data of Board positions held previously and currently was correlated with occupation of the participants, as indicated in **Table 5: Board Membership Profile According to Occupation and Figure 9** of the same name, the occupation which ranked the highest was Finance where all of the 12 participants who were employed in Finance related positions were Board members. Community Development and Law closely followed with approximately 80% of those employed in these sectors having Board positions. It is also evident that of the 317 women, 199 of them or 63% of women surveyed have a Board Membership history.

Table 5: Board Membership Profile According to Occupation

Occupation	% of Participants who have Board profiles	Participants who are Board Members currently & previously	Participants in the occupation
Academic	50	6	12
Administration	67	10	15
Agriculture	71	5	7
Business Owner	71	12	17
Communications	53	8	15
Community Development	78	18	23
Consultant	55	17	31
Education	48	12	25
Finance	100	12	12
Government	59	10	17
Law	79	15	19
Manager	67	61	91
Medical	48	12	25
Construction	25	1	4
Unknown			4
TOTAL		199	317

Figure 9: Board Membership Profile According to Occupation



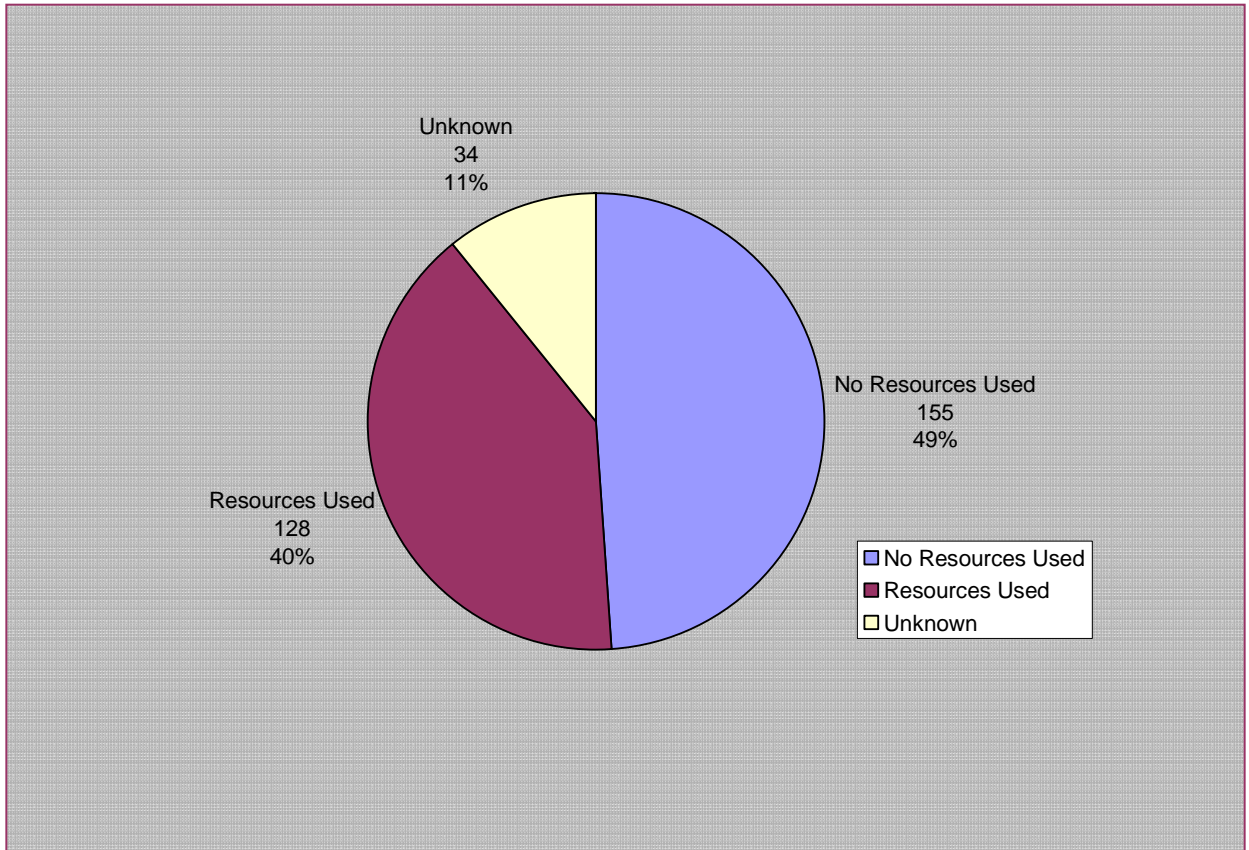
Resources Used to Gain Board Positions

As *Table 6: Number of Women who Used Resources* and *Figure 10: Number of Women who Used Resources* indicates, 155 women or 49% of the women surveyed did not use any resources to gain Board Membership positions. 128 women or 40% used resources and it is unknown what resources 11% of women used.

Table 6: Number of Women who Used Resources

Resources Used	Number of women	% of women
No Resources Used	155	49
Resources Used	128	40
Unknown	34	11
Total	317	100

Figure 10: Number of Women who Used Resources



“I have used my networks – unsuccessfully.”
 “I have used several ‘registers’ and also used my networks.”

Type of Resources Used to Gain Board Positions

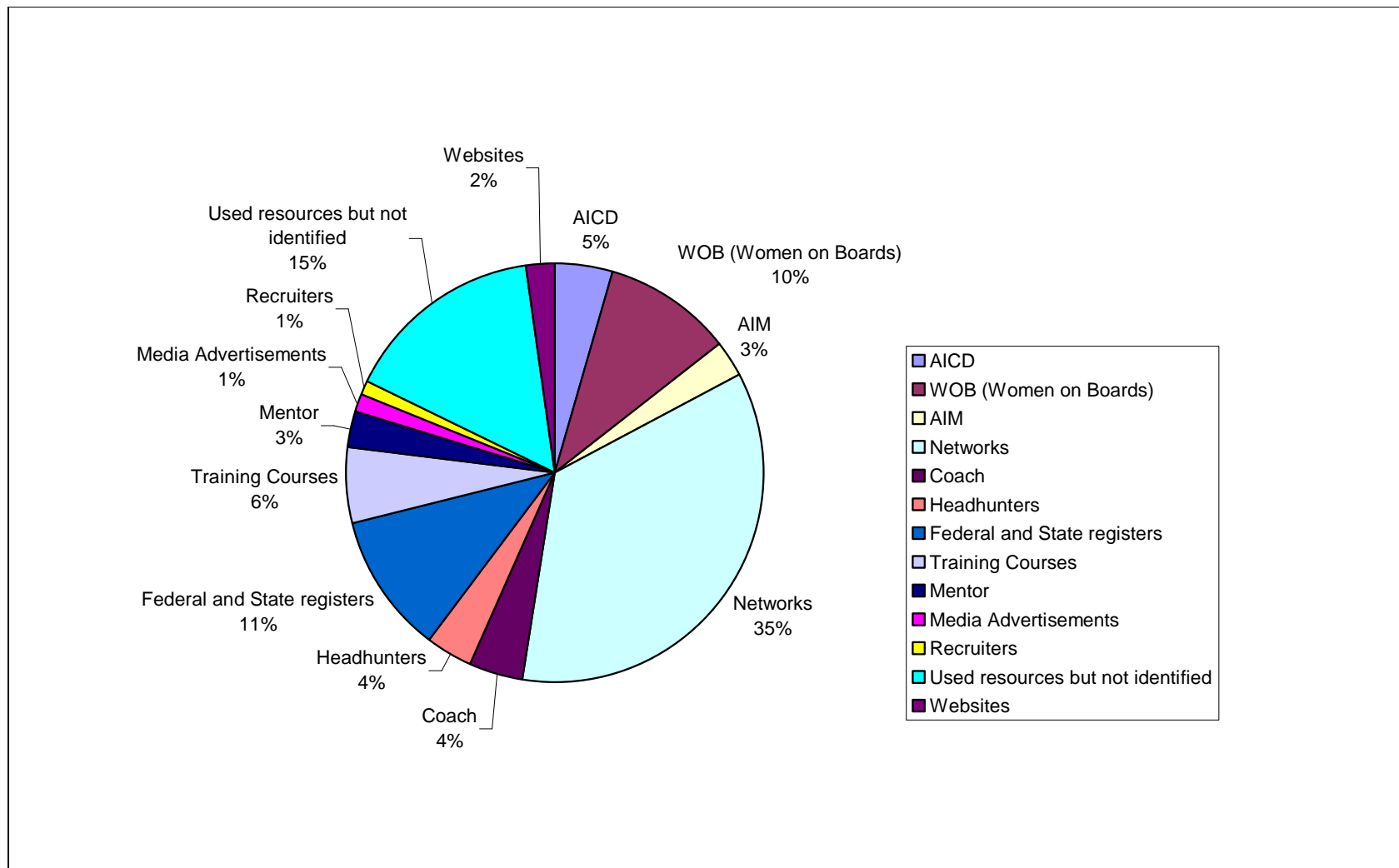
Of the 128 women who did use resources, there were a range of resources which women used to gain board positions. **Table 7: Resources Used to become a Board Member** lists the resources and the number of times they were mentioned in the discussion for this question. Some women used more than one resource.

As can be seen from **Table 7 and Figure 11: Type of Resources Used to Gain Board Positions**, Networks ranked the highest with 78 references made to it. This translated to its frequency of usage being 35%. Federal and state registers had a frequency of usage of 11%. Women on Boards had 10% and Training courses 6%. The percentage of frequency was calculated in relation to the total frequency of all the resources accessed.

Table 7: Frequency of Resources Used

Resources Used	Frequency	Frequency as a %
AICD	10	5
WOB (Women on Boards)	22	10
AIM	6	3
Networks	78	35
Coach	9	4
Headhunters	8	4
Federal and State registers	24	11
Training Courses	13	6
Mentor	6	3
Media Advertisements	3	1
Recruiters	3	1
Used resources but not identified	34	15
Websites	5	2
TOTAL	221	100

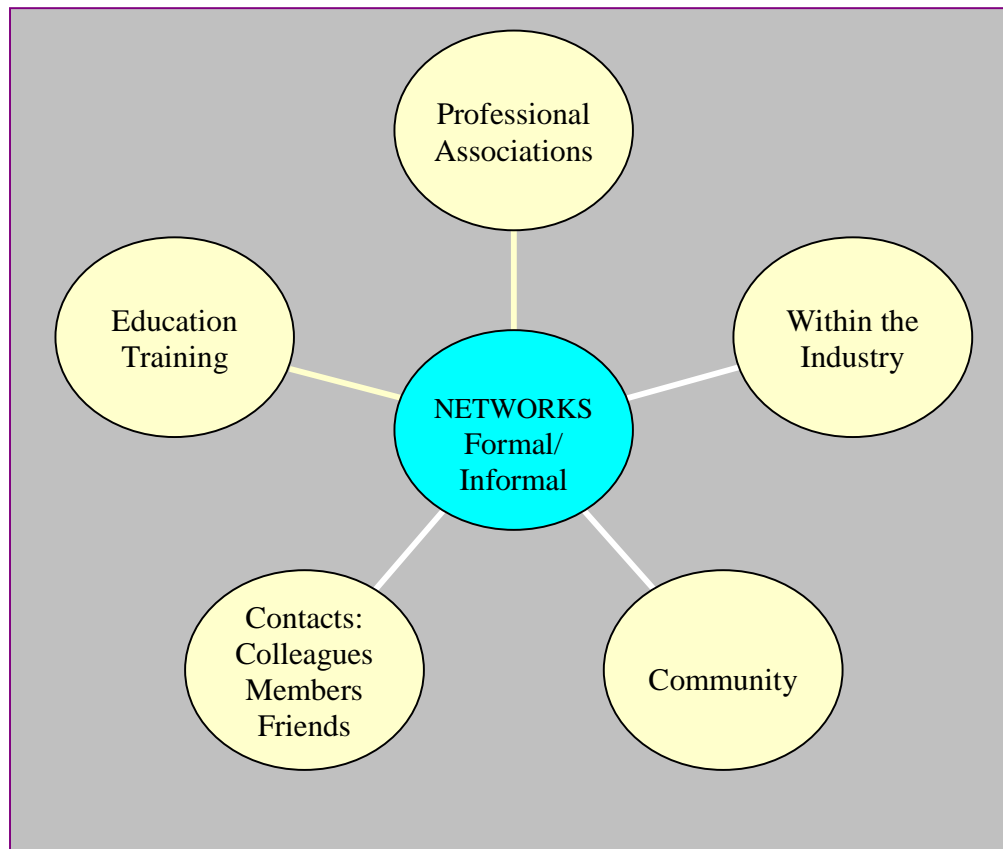
Figure 11: Type of Resources Used to Gain Board Positions



Networks

As networks were the resource most accessed by women, a closer look at what was being said about networks has been represented in **Figure 12: Networks**. It shows the types of networks women access to help them get Board positions. Networks of a formal and informal nature included work, community and personal contexts.

Figure 12: Networks



“The Network of the organisation approached me. I studied Fundraising in order to contribute to Board membership.”

“I have tried, but it’s very difficult if you are not networked well.”

“I used networks, business contacts, political contacts, organisation contacts.”

Relationship between Board Position and Resources Used

When the data of Board positions held previously and currently was correlated with women’s responses about types of resources used; how they succeeded in attaining Board positions, and how they found the avenues they accessed for help, an interesting picture emerged. Women were indicating that attaining a Board position was not always because of the resources used despite their accessing them. **Table 8: Board Position and Resources** shows that 147 women were successful in achieving Board positions (past and current) and had accessed resources, but that 120 women who had not used any resources still attained a Board position.

Of the 147 women who were successful in achieving Board positions (past and current) and had accessed resources, as indicated in **Table 9: Relationship between Positions Held and Resources Used**, 69 women said that they did not believe using the resources led to their Board position with 59 saying that they did. It is not clear how the remainder felt, but they certainly did not respond in the affirmative.

Status	Number of Participants
Had No Board positions but had used Resources	9
Had No Board Positions and had not used Resources	16
Had held Positions but had not used Resources	120
Had held Positions and used Resources	147
Unidentifiable	25
TOTAL	317

Did using Resources lead to gaining Board Positions?	Number of Participants
Did not	69
Yes they did	58
Unknown	20
TOTAL	147

Figure 13: Did Using Resources Lead to Gaining Board Positions? depicts Table 9 graphically.

Figure 13: Did Using Resources Lead to Gaining Board Positions?

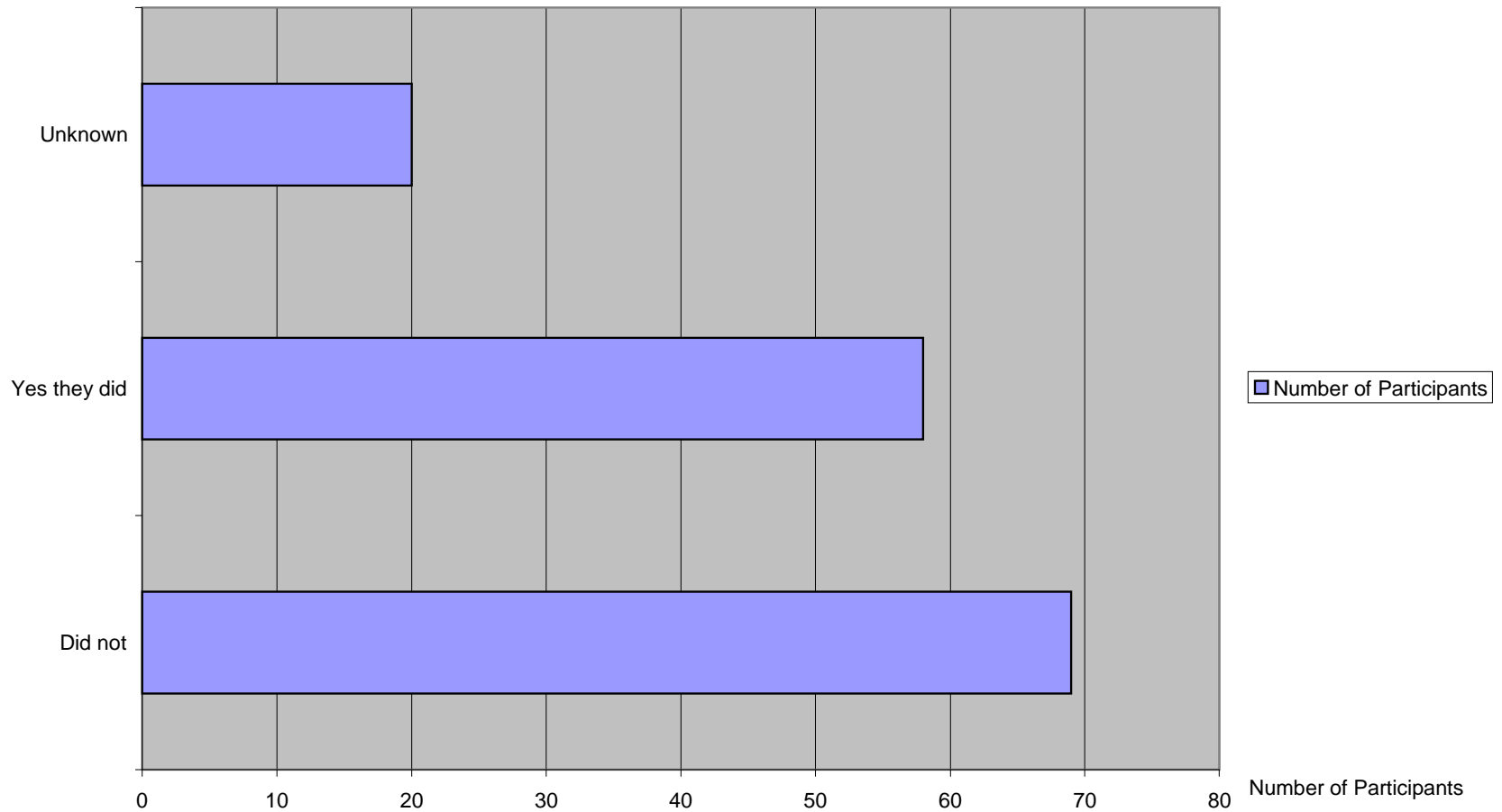
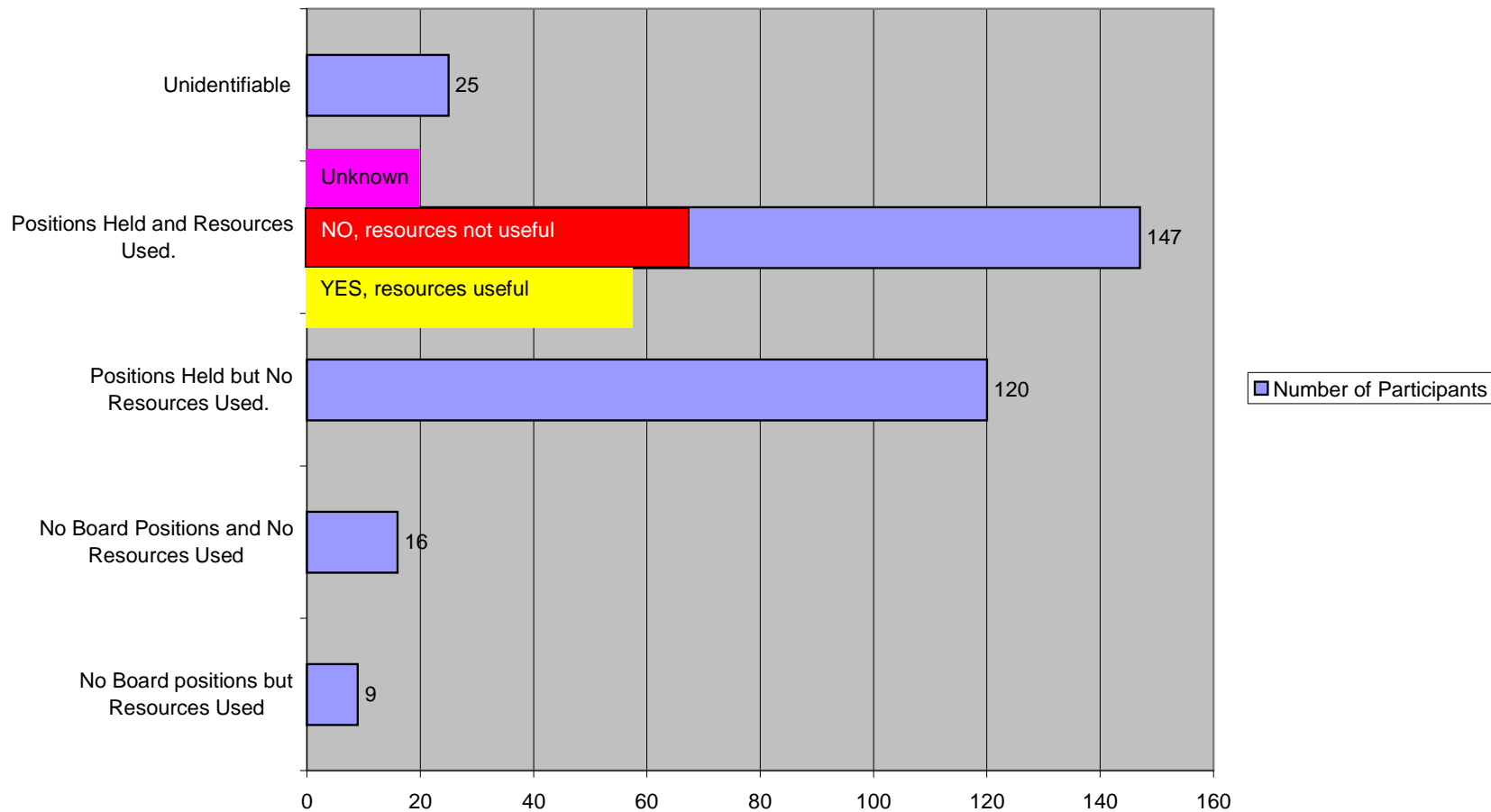


Figure 14: Relationship Between Board Positions and Resources Used graphically presents the data of Table 8: Board Position and Resources and Table 9: Relationship between Positions Held and Resources Used.

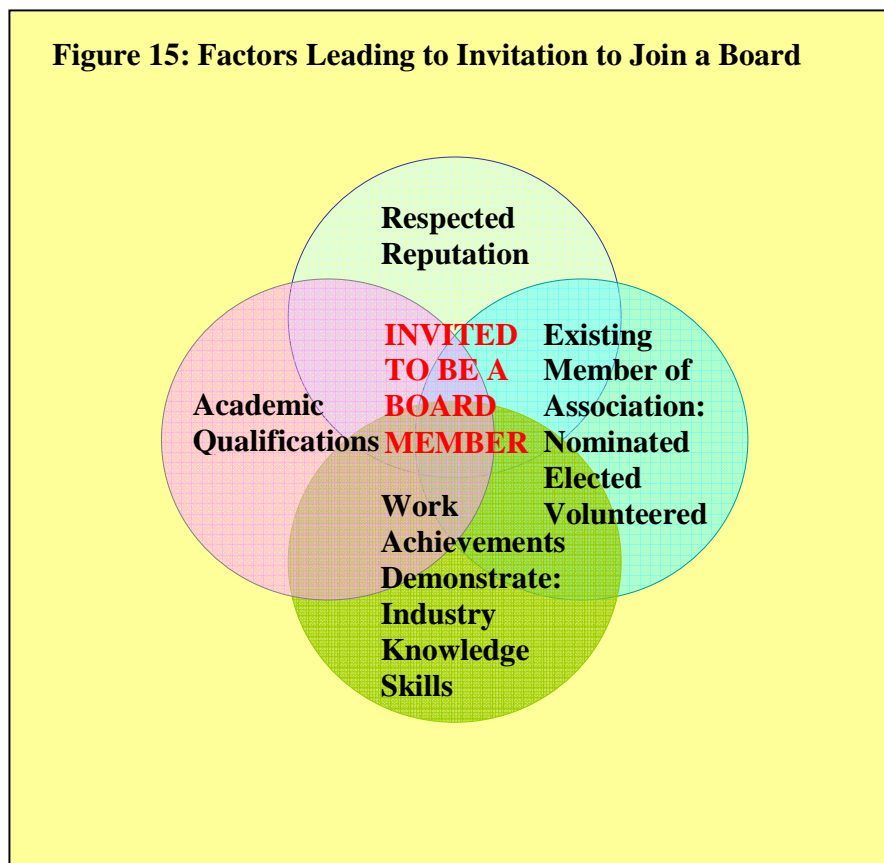
Figure 14: Relationship Between Board Positions and Resources Used



So how did women get into Board Positions?

Factors Leading to Invitation to Join a Board

Women expressed a number of factors which led to being successful in becoming a Board member. **Figure 15: Factors Leading to Invitation to Join a Board** presents the various factors which appear to feature in much of the women's experiences and reflections.



Having an academic qualification attracted an invitation. Being well known and respected for one's work achievements through demonstrating industry knowledge and skills was another attraction. Another means of getting on the Board was stated as joining the association as a member and then becoming known within it, thus increasing one's chances for getting nominated or elected for positions. Volunteering within associations to undertake roles/tasks led to one becoming better known.

Resources such as registers, head hunters and coaches did not lead to board membership. Although, becoming members of associations can be said to be networking, **it appears to be competency and achievement, when recognised, that successfully leads to Board positions.**

So Why
So Why

ARE WOMEN

Interested in becoming a Board Member in the first place?

"I have a background in corporate governance and enjoy this means of making a contribution towards a sustainable community."

"have held role on several boards and realise how important and rewarding it is"

"INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION; MAKE A BROADER CONTRIBUTION; TRANSITION CAREER."

"I WISH TO EXPAND MY PORTFOLIO OF BOARD POSITIONS."

"INFLUENCE DECISION MAKING AND ENSURE THAT ALL WAYS OF THINKING ARE REPRESENTED"

"I BELIEVE I HAVE A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE TO OFFER A NGO."

"I enjoy being challenged, feel strongly about social justice and disability related issues and feel I have a lot to offer."

"I have forty years of high level business experience and can make a difference, and I care."

"My education together with my national and international experience and cultural background could make a valuable contribution to organisational development."

Reasons for Women wanting to Be a Board Member

309 women responded to the question 'Why do you want to become a board member of a public or private organisation?'

Their responses can be divided into two broad categories: Empowering Organizations and Empowering Oneself.

Both of these categories received an equal number of comments and predominantly went hand in hand, that is women could see Board membership as being beneficial to the organisation in utilizing their experiences, skills and knowledge, as well as benefitting themselves in their own professional and personal development. The following discussion explores the details within each of these broad categories.

Empowering Organisations

In terms of how women could empower organizations by becoming a Board member, there are several areas that emerged in the discussions as per below:

Women's Experience

The largest proportion of comments related to women wanting to offer their experience, knowledge and skills to Boards.

- **General Experience**

There were a number of women who referred in general to their experience benefitting Boards and organizations. They wanted to contribute their:

"depth of knowledge..."

"30 yrs+ of experience"

"experience and knowledge"

"...my national and international experience and cultural background"

"diverse background would provide a diverse view"

"strategic expertise"

"insight"

"learnings"

"relatively broad knowledge"

"talents"

By contributing their many years of work experience, they feel that they “have something to give back to the business community,” “add value to the organisation,” and to the “Board.”

- **Specific Experience**

There were also a number of women who were specific in terms of what type of experience they could offer Boards as the comments below indicate:

“30 years as a Senior Executive in major listed companies running material functions - eg \$4 billion turnover”

“After 20 years business experience including 10+ years consulting at executive and board levels to a range of top 20 ASX listed groups I have a broad and deep knowledge understanding of the key issues affecting the operational success of organisations.”

“Considerable experience in health service delivery and management, ...”

“Have knowledge and experience in community engagement, IT, social media, youth and rural development.”

“I believe I have a lot to offer, having run both a district of schools and four schools as principal, especially in the area of people management and education.”

“I feel I have good global experience and perspective across sectors and would like to contribute this... I feel the cross sectoral perspective can add real value, particularly in terms of the 'triple bottom line'.”

“I have significant knowledge in the public sector and Government Owned Corporations ...”

“Considerable experience across a range of government and non-government positions in terms of community development, services and advocacy”

“I have a wealth of experience and skill having been in local government, etc”

“Long experience and skills in corporate, management, governance and HR areas

Women’s Skills

- **General Skills**

There were a number of women who referred in general to their skills benefitting Boards and organizations and adding “value” to them. They did not specify any particular skill, but referred to a broad range of skills they had acquired.

“have considerable and diverse skills”

“good skills in my area of expertise”

“I have talents and skills to offer.”

“clear thinking skills”

“It is a good opportunity to dedicate my skills to the growth of the company.”

“It utilises my skills, helping others...”

- **Specific Skills**

Some of the specific skills women referred to included:

“financial and operational skills”

“accounting, management and corporate governance skills

“legal and policy development skills...”

“marketing and communications skills”

“business and strategic planning skills”

Board Experience

A small number of women stated that their previous and current Board Directorships or Committee memberships would benefit other Boards and organizations:

“I have had previous experience on a state board and believe I have skills and expertise which could be useful.”

“I have over 40 cumulative years as a director.”

“I feel I have gained a lifetime of experience on many committees and feel I could now manage a Board position.”

“(I) have served on numerous community organisation committees and feel I have skills and experience which would be of benefit to a board.”

“I have often served on non-profit boards. Chaired a board for three years.”

“I work in a not for profit and report directly to a Board. I would like the opportunity to assist other not for profits as a Board member.”

Qualifications

A very small percentage of women spoke of their qualifications being suitable for Board appointments. An “MBA,” “law degree” and the AICD Directorship training were specifically mentioned. Other comments just referred to being “well educated” or having “qualifications.”

Social justice

A large proportion of comments were made about wanting to be a Board member for reasons that related to social justice and community concerns. Women felt that Board membership was a way of giving “back to society,” contributing “to society,” contributing “to community,” to “social issues” for the “public good,” the “the greater good.”

"Serving" the community was also linked to representing specific groups or issues through Boards as shown in the comments of what women wanted to do through Boards:

"to improve real-time needs of women, men & their families through healing, justice & reconciliation"

"to enable women's voices to be heard in a male dominated industry"

"to see more women on boards for gender equity and for the value women bring to all forms of business."

"to assist in getting appropriate results for Aboriginal people"

"to progress the cause of rural people"

"to be able to speak on behalf of the people who live in remote areas where it is a different world from the urban and cities."

"to use my knowledge and experience to help people with disabilities"

"to get engaged in the Planning and Running of our Government to represent the interest of our Community"

to serve community and represent community issues"

Wanting to "make a greater difference" in their "Community/Country" because they "care(d)" by ensuring Boards made "ethical and humanist" decisions for "building strong communities" was a strong reflection in the discussion. Wanting to "be in a position to drive the change" was seen as taking "social individual responsibility" to "influence the way things are done for a better social justice outcome."

Decision Making

Wanting to be a Board member to influence decisions made was also discussed to a considerable degree. Women wanted to "be involved in an organisation at a decision making level" so that they could "contribute at a strategic level," "initiate change from within," "influence policy," "make positive change," "create meaningful change," "value" and "make a difference," and "make sure they (Boards) act ethically."

Women felt that they could "bring useful strategic thinking and experience" to Boards because the decision making could be related to their "expertise," for example: "I have a lot of skills and knowledge of the Disability Sector and I am a consumer with a disability."

Being involved also meant that they could provide perspectives that were perhaps not represented: "to provide a rural and remote perspective, voice and decision making capacity to boards"

Women felt very confident in their “ability to steer public policy” and “strategic direction” reflecting on how they “enjoy(ed)” “strategic thinking” and “policy: “I like to look at strategic direction and solve problems.”

There was also a sense of power in their feeling that being involved in “strategic” “leadership” at Board level, meant that they had control in effecting change that related to others, themselves and their own industry:

- “...become engaged in decision making processes affecting me & my future”
- “...to contribute more to the strategic direction of the organisation, rather than sitting back frustrated.”
- “...to have an active role in the decision making in our industry”
- “...to help shape the direction of the organisation...”
- “to influence strategic agendas of organisations in relation to retirement incomes policy and related matters.”
- “...to improve manufacturing.”
- “to positively influence the outcomes of an organisation, particularly in the field of communications”
- “to build relationships between university and community”
- “to develop partnerships between my institution and others”
- “to represent union members interests”
- “to contribute to the arts and youth sectors”

Governance

To a certain extent, women specifically stated that they wanted to join Boards to “enhance” “improve” “contribute to” and “ensure” good governance. Wanting to ensure “ethical practice(s) of collaboration, participation,” and that Boards had “a positive, open and transparent manner” they had a keen interest in “helping an organisation to improve their governance structures” to achieve “good governance” and “corporate social responsibility.”

For some women the objective to contribute to the governance of the organisation was related to ensuring that “good governance and value is delivered to shareholders/ stakeholders.” For others, it related to ensuring “public confidence in the governance of such institutions” while “add(ing) value to Australian governance practice.”

It was widely evident that women shared a keen “interest” and sense of enjoyment in being involved in “governance issues” and felt confident in having “strong” governance skills. Their responses showed a zealous commitment to assisting organizations with its governance:

"I have developed a commitment to good governance as a way of strengthening the non-profit sector."

"I believe that I can add value and would be an active participant having strong governance and strategic direction."

"I have a background in corporate governance and enjoy this means of making a contribution towards a sustainable community."

What Women have to offer to Boards

There was a small proportion of comments made that related specifically to the unique contribution women can make to Boards:

It was pointed out that "women have as much to offer as men," but that they "have a different way of putting their viewpoint," providing "different perspective from males" "diverse points of view and input," in other words, "a gender view."

Women also brought "experience that might not be so readily available through male input, "a different set of skills to a board" and "feminine values, wisdom and influence to policy and action."

In general, the comments appeared to state that "It is valuable to have female perspective on boards."

Empowering Oneself

In terms of how becoming a board member helped one personally, there are several areas that emerged in the discussions as per below:

Career development

Career development was a reason offered for women's interest in joining boards. In general, many women felt that they wanted to be a Board member for their own "Career advancement."

Some women saw it as a "good start" after having gained many years experience in their line of work: "After 30yrs+ experience feel it would be a good career move." Some saw it as an opportunity for "transition" in their career. It afforded them a "flexible long

term career option" and an opportunity "to prepare for a new career path." Whilst others saw it as a "career progression" step to move into corporate boards having been "a board member of not-for-profits," or just wanting to "add to my current directorships."

Wanting "to stretch to the next level" was also seen as enhancing their "personal development" as they would be able to take on "a different role," and "to progress (in) a career beyond (their) current positioning." The "status" of their contributions and "confidence" in their abilities would improve their self-esteem.

Broadening One's Experience

One of the most frequently named reasons for wanting to be a Board Member was to "broaden their experience." This related to many areas such as broadening or "expanding" their:

- "knowledge"
- understanding of the "running of organizations," "of commercial enterprises and the running of large corporations," of "other industries," of "how and why boards make the decisions they do"
- "business experience" and "other ways of doing business"
- engagement in "different industries/companies" across "different fields"
- professional "skills" and "personal skills"
- "own learning," "education"
- "exposure to new environments"
- "experience as a governance professional"
- "experience with drafting policy and dealing with issues"
- "ways in which to apply my experience and abilities"
- "opportunities ... to work with different teams"

In other words, becoming a Board member was attractive as it led to one's "Professional development" "diversifying" one's "skills and knowledge," increased one's "employability" assisted one in managing one's own "business" whilst having some "control" over the industry and basically keeping one's "mind active while raising children."

Thus "gaining experience at Board Level" was not just in itself perceived to be valuable, it also had many spin offs for one's own professional and personal development.

Networking

Some women named networking as one of their reasons for wanting to be a Board member. They saw Board directorships as availing one networking opportunities and contacts.

Leadership

"To lead" was another reason that was stated for why women want to join Boards. Boards were perceived as giving one the "opportunity" for "leadership," "to function at a higher level," "to gain engagement with (the) industry on (a) higher level," "to be in a position of influence," "to have an impact," to be involved in change ..."

Income

Interest in "paid" Board positions was raised by a few women as affording them an opportunity to develop a "portfolio income" which would allow them to come off their current source of income, such as from "Farming" or to "supplement" their current income. Broadening "opportunities in retirement" was also mentioned as being a factor.

Board membership was also seen as an avenue to "develop new skills to increase my opportunities for promotion."

Self-satisfaction

Women perceived that Board membership was an emotional investment and reward in itself. Some of the comments loudly reverberated their sense of passion and enjoyment from engaging in the challenges of Boards.

"The variety and the challenge of the role of director appeals to me with of the diversity of industries and opportunities available and the range of strategic issues I will face in my goal to make organisations and our economy prosper."

"I enjoy being involved in setting future strategic directions that benefit all stakeholders, especially those with a community focus."

"I find satisfaction and sufficient challenge in the strategic and governance responsibilities of any organisation."

"I gain great satisfaction from knowing I can contribute my influence to a cause/industry I believe in."

"I enjoy this means of making a contribution towards a sustainable community."

"I enjoy the challenges."

"... I find the work of boards interesting and rewarding."

"(I) enjoy roles offering strategic insight."

"intellectual stimulation"

"...a great challenge for me."

"am an energetic person with drive."

Difficulties women experience in attaining board positions

301 women responded to the question 'What do you see as being the difficulties in attaining board positions?'

Access to Information about Board Vacancies

Women cannot access board vacancies because they are not aware of board positions being vacant. Accessibility to this information is very poor in terms of when the position becomes vacant, in which organisation's Board, what the position entails, whom to contact and what the Board is looking for.

Common responses were: "we are not informed." It is "difficult to hear of vacancies," to know if they are "actually available." " It is "difficult knowing where the positions are!" as "there's not one place to find vacancies." It is difficult knowing what Boards "are really looking for in the application," and "knowing how to access them," and "who to contact."

Board vacancies were said to be "not well advertised so only a few know about the positions," and this typified how things were done "in Australia" as "nothing gets advertised (it is a) - closed shop," where "positions (are) not advertised as readily as other job vacancies."

As one is not privy to such information, one is not "part of the cycle of knowing when vacancies occur," and thus does not have the "opportunity" to apply.

The entire "process of recruitment" and "applying" beginning with advertising the position "was felt to be "not transparent." Moreover, having applied for a vacancy, one respondent felt that "it was like a brick wall with little feedback."

Availability of Positions

Women also commented that Board positions were not available. They "do not come up often." As the positions are "limited" in number and scope, "the higher you get," there is "greater competition" to get them.

Parochialism in Boards means that the "same people" have been "on the board for many many years just filling a seat." In addition, "some men" have "up to 20 Board

appointments which lessens the opportunity for others.” One participant requested that “tenure should be a max. of 5 years.”

Networking

Gaining Board Positions “is all about networks” “or (the) lack thereof.” In the absence of formal transparent channels for finding out about Board positions and applying and being selected for them, formal and informal networking was seen to be crucial.

In addition to “not knowing” what board positions are available, “being seen” was commented as being significant to attaining a board position.

However, this was not felt to be the only advantage of networking, as doing so enabled one to come to know “existing people on the board,” “people who make the appointments,” “influential people,” develop “contacts,” so that when Boards are looking you are in the “front of (their) mind.” This was seen as being important “because boards look to people they already know.” Networking is a must and it must be done “continuously” so that you “hit their radar when they are looking” as it was apparent that Board positions appeared “to be filled by networks.”

However, not just any network suited. It was observed that “networking with people in the right places was vital. “Being part of relevant networks” was a necessary step as “being ‘unknown’ can equate to being overlooked – (and that was) too risky.” “Being part of the network from which candidates are drawn” or “being networked to those already on the board” raised one’s chances for being noticed. “Especially male networks” were even better as their recommendations might be more noteworthy. However, as one respondent commented, male networks are not effective as they are “also competing for the same roles.”

The aim of networking was so that people knew you in whichever “arena” you want to enter, or “outside (your) current company,” “in the wider community” and knew that you were a “serious contender,” knew your “public/business profile,” so that “you might be recommended” for positions or “approached to be involved.”

Success in gaining Board positions was commented by the majority of the respondents “to be based on who you know not qualifications.” “Even if a search firm puts you on a list the board will only interview you if they know you!” “The only way in is who you know.” As one participant questioned, “Why can’t we be accepted on the basis of our abilities rather than our connections?”

However, “accessibility to networks” was noted by many respondents to be difficult due to a range of reasons including: having “little time” to network given a “full-time job,” “child rearing,” running a “family business,” and “being retired and no longer having the networks.”

As “women are less involved in the networks that result in board positions” they are “less often named as potential candidates.” Some observed that women are “not using their networks” for their own “exposure.” “Women don’t seem to network as well as men.” They do not “mix in the areas that provide the networking opportunities.” During their “career” as they did not do much networking, their networks are not very “well established” and they do not have “connections.”

Some women who want to expand beyond their “circle or sphere” find it difficult believing that they are “unknown” and are not “brave enough to get the word out that you are interested, available and have something to offer.”

If you are not networking, no one knows who you are and you are not given a chance to be interviewed for a board position even if you knew of its availability and were suitable for it. As one participant stated: “You don’t get a chance to lobby people or get an interview - I wasn’t getting the positions I wanted because no one knew who I was.”

Male Dominance

Breaking into “relevant” or “right networks” is difficult because these networks are men’s networks as they are “traditionally male dominated,” “boys clubs.” Breaking through the “old boys network” is difficult because it is a “closed network,” closed to women who are perceived to be inferior as some of the comments indicate.

“It is my opinion that some men do not take women seriously.”

“Boards in farming industries approach the male partner to join even if the female partner is the proactive person contacting the board.”

“...in their (men’s) thinking that women are not part of ‘their’ industry

“(The) mindset of ‘men’ to give women an opportunity”

As male networks promote male competition and advancement by “men recommending each other,” there is always “jobs for the boys,” jobs for “the ‘old school tie’ group.” The old boy club “mentality” rules the selection process “rather than expert-based” appointments. With “men still retaining (their) Chair status” they “tend to look to their own networks” and thus preserve “the director club” status selecting “from a small pool of white men over 60 who have been a CEO of an ASX 100 company.”

Thus whilst networking enables you the opportunity to lobby for positions, the "lobbying needed to gain positions relies on old well established networks which women usually don't have" and which are not "male networks."

Moreover, as "most Boards are male dominated," "boys' clubs" Boards will "not accept a female willingly." The persistence of a "male culture on Boards" negates their talk that they are trying to become diverse but are finding it hard to find suitable women. As one participant observed, "My own NFP has no female board members despite supposedly trying to find someone. I wonder how hard men look sometimes for successful females. It isn't that hard."

It seems to be simply a case that "when men dominate, they chose other men."

Boards Select Who They Know

The predominant perception of how Boards choose the successful candidate is that "they tend to stick to who they know." It is a "closed shop environment" with a "closed shop attitude" that rules one out if you are not already a Director: "You cannot become a NED of a top 100 listed company unless you are already an NED of a top 100 listed company;" "Being seen as one of the "circle" of directors" and having the "right friends" is important so that you gain the "support of fellow board members about your capability in fulfilling the vacancy." Appointments are made on a "need to know" basis "that is board members need to know (the) new member previously..."

With Boards wanting "to hire in their own image - they don't generally search any wider than the school they went to." "Roles do not go to market." As applicants are selected and "invited" from "cliques - new blood (is) not always welcomed" as "people are often hand picked" with "board positions going to friends of friends etc."

So whilst you are networking to be in the front of their mind, you need to also remember that to get hired you need to be in the Board members' networks so that you are known by them as it often seems "that appointments are made by invitation." Furthermore, as suggested you need to be like the board member who is hiring you or a CEO of a top 100 listed company. Basically you need to be a male so that you can network with the male directors or act like one. Being a woman will not get you in the front door of the network let alone the Boards. So does "networking continuously" guarantee one a board position when such "conservative and narrow views of those selecting" continue to operate?

Women, however, continue to believe that it does as quite a number of respondents tried to reiterate what they saw as being the key:
"It appears to be who you know.... not what you know!"

"It is still "who you know" - positions are mainly offered privately to personal contacts."
"It not what you know, not who you know, it's who knows you. Having well place contacts helps."
"It's about who you know, not what you know"
"Knowing the right people"
"Getting my details to the right people at the time they are searching for the specific expertise"
Being "known to the establishment"
"It is still "who you know" - positions are mainly offered privately to personal contacts."
"It's not what you know but who you know (the culture of gaining positions)."

How proof worthy is the edict, "It's not what you know, it's who you know?" when "it's not a transparent process for appointments" when merit, expertise, skill, talent are not at the forefront, when gender becomes one of the discriminatory factors, when associations and alignments gain credence far and above equity and the job at hand. Are boards limiting themselves "of the skills they need" accepting "headhunters' ..."safe" options." Do Boards want the indictment that so many women have claimed that they operate under:

"Men select their mates."
"Men select who will be on the board. Gender is considered but not in a good way."
"There is no clear understanding of how to get onto boards and they appear to appeal to the great Aussie mateship philosophy, I will look after you if you look after me."
"Most public boards are filled through the boy's club or via political allegiances."
"Often board positions are occupied by exclusionary men who use meeting rules to keep others out."
"Boards often don't look outside their own circles."
"Perceived resistance by existing Boards to people who don't "look and feel" just like them."
"Tap on the shoulder appointments are the norm- i.e. someone knows someone who.."
"Their fixation with wanting only former CEO's or GM's of major revenue BU's (yes - some on board are very desirable but the whole board doesn't need to be constituted by them). The fact that most attractive roles are filled by existing directors suggesting people they know (so older white establishment males appoint their older white establishment male friends and colleagues)."

Experience

In relation to what Boards are looking for in terms of experience of applicants, women predominantly perceive Boards to be "usually ...looking for accountants or lawyers," "people from commercial" "business" sectors." As this appears to be the "tendency" women find it difficult to "break in" as "many women do not belong in this area.

Qualifications rank highly and "sometimes more attention is paid to the qualifications rather than experience," making "what is around ...too academic for the ordinary potential board member."

Moreover, "those in "Volunteer position(s)," "Part-time" positions do not get picked, "only paid professionals." It is an "expectation that you should have "financial independence."

Boards want "tried and tested people most of whom are men," "experienced members who are known," who have "the experience of a larger board with more responsibilities." Experience of "Corporate" private and public organizations" is vital. "Experience at not- for-profit organisations or working part time is discounted." As "success in the corporate world at Board level is considered compulsory," most women have a "lack" of such experience and remain on the outside: "Experience...you can't get it if they won't give you a chance in the first place;" "positions are mainly offered privately to personal contacts. Thus (it is) difficult to get experience to sell myself." This "lack of experience" at a "higher level of management" for women is "self-fulfilling."

Whilst it was felt that "many not-for-profits will accept any willing workers to help them, corporate organisations are difficult: "corporate boards are still under the illusion that board directors need CEO experience. That rules out the vast majority of women and visible minorities. I don't see (such) issues on not-for-profit boards."

It was stated that Boards settle for "limited knowledge and expertise" without recognizing" that "knowledge and skills" are "transferrable" and that "skilled people" can be "used properly." They show an "inability to think laterally," "a lack of consideration and knowledge of a person's skills," and their "overall experience and ability" as they apply "narrow search criteria." As one participant said, "the focus has to be broader than just CEO."

Boards were also criticized for their "lack of knowledge by board members about using existing mechanisms such as women's registers held with offices of women's policy and the need for "equity," "gender balance and diversity on the board." Furthermore, it was stated that Boards needed clarity about "what skills they need to fill positions on boards," and they needed to be wary of the "perception" held by "existing board members that they already know all the available candidates."

Thus, in a context which has "no process for entry that is official," what plays out is that "if you are not a lawyer or accountant, if you are not on a Board, "you are invisible." You do not have the "right skill set." You are "perceived" as not having "important" positions." Such "insistence of certain types of career experience ... does not take account of women's lives and career journeys/barriers." Obtaining one's first Board position without prior board experience is extremely difficult as "political decisions (are) made instead of (the) skills of nominees," and a "closed door mentality" underlined

with “fear” governs who gets in and the level of risk made about taking on those who don’t have the “expertise” or the “right skill set.” Having not-for-profit Board experience, does not guarantee one to move from this to a paid Board position in the corporate sector as this is considered to be not the “right” experience.

Attitude to Women

The predominant view amongst the participants was that “Being Female” seems to be a “barrier.”

Being a woman is “a disadvantage” on many fronts:

This “discrimination against women” broadens into the roles women play in their personal lives. Their “role as carers (is) either used against them or ignored.” That “many women’s careers plateau around the time of raising children” is seen as a disadvantage. Boards have perceptions of “weaknesses of females and family responsibilities” and the “conflict between work and family.”

The discrimination against women relates to their intellect: “I have been told that ‘women just cannot understand our business’.” To show that they do, “women have to prove themselves more than men.” There is a “lack of value for women’s input,” a “lack of respect for women’s intelligence and their capacity to contribute meaningfully & fruitfully to improve & strengthen Australia’s health & well-being.” “Women are not always seen as having the skills regardless of qualifications and experience.”

The discrimination against women relates to a woman simply being “not a man.” “Gender prejudice”, “sexism”, the “glass ceiling,” “being a woman in a man’s industry” are “reactionary” issues for Boards. Diversity “does not get a consideration either on a gender or functional basis;” “Government Boards do not even have many women.”

When “good governance” is questioned within Boards, “you are often thought to be pushy.”

Ageism

Whilst age “doesn’t seem to be a barrier for men,” it is a barrier for women. Being younger is a “disadvantage, not seen as a “succession planning opportunity,” but equated to not having “skills or abilities”

This discrimination is tied to an entrenched view on Boards that gaining “the relevant skills set ...comes with considerable experience in the workforce which means the roles are more suited for later in career positions.” Being a “young achiever” does not count.

Attitudes about Rural Areas

Women from rural areas felt “ignored” because of “regional location, and the “distance from metropolitan areas.” It was difficult “getting noticed when you live in regional Australia.” Women’s careers in “primary industries” are not valued.

For rural women, it appeared to be difficult getting noticed even at home: “Boards in farming industries approach the male partner to join even if the female partner is the proactive person contacting the board.” Also, “living in a regional centre, there are not a lot of opportunities to attain a board position.”

Rural women found access to Board positions difficult due to their “location” being in metropolitan areas. “Distance”, “travel costs”, and “travel times” limit opportunities. “Distance is an issue when you live 4 hours from a capital city.”

“I am located 2 hrs drive out of Perth, which ties up a lot of travel time...”

One participant felt that if boards were prepared to have telephone or webcam meeting, board positions would become more attractive for those travelling distances.

Other Biases

Some of the participants expressed that “racism and sexism combine to make it very difficult for immigrant and refugee women” to attain Board positions. “...False perceptions and assumptions, judgments about “cultural backgrounds” being “diverse” disadvantage women as some Boards try to “preserve the status quo.”

Concerns of Women about Board Positions

These are some of the personal issues relating to women’s concerns about getting Board positions.

Women are concerned about:

“Identifying suitable opportunities”

“providing suitable,” “appropriate and succinct CVs” profiling their “portfolio of accomplishments...”

Their “shyness.”

“Not being good at “selling” self!”

Their “confidence” in their “skills/contributions.”

Being taken “seriously”

“Getting started”

Being “able to earn a good income” by having “paid board positions” so they can choose not to “work full time anymore.”

The impact of the “global financial crisis” on organizations with Boards.

It was also suggested that “women tend to wait until they are sure they have all the skills instead of using it as an opportunity to gain skills.”

Time commitment was raised by a number of women as being an issue that women had to face. Working “full time” made it difficult to find “sufficient spare time to do all the networking, find the time required to “put into applications,” “making my experiences and knowledge relevant to the positions.”

Finding the time to “prepare, attend and participate in functions of a board,” “commit to the role,” undertake the “professional development required to fill the role effectively,” whilst balancing duties of work and raising children.”

The “unrealistic” times when meetings are held outside working hours and their locations pressure women into making choices between “their professional development (by) being in a Board or their families...” Choosing between competing agendas applies to even wanting a Board position in the Not-For-Profit sector where meetings are held outside working hours.

“Not so much attaining but maintaining” Board positions was cited as one participant’s difficulty. “Finding the time as a single mother, full time paid worker and part-time unpaid advocate to successfully network and lobby for myself! was another’s participant’s exasperation like that of the other participants of the “sustainability” of living this way as one even needed to delved into one’s “leisure time” to fulfill the commitment.

In terms of the Queen Bee syndrome, some comments supported this view that “women rarely support other women for appointments,” and that the “Big Girls” mentality exists. However one participant elaborated that although “there is some truth to the suggestion that single incumbent women directors sometimes don’t support the appointment of another women,” she suspected that “the reasons for this are not totally around the Queen Bee issue and may be in part based in the recognition that many of the more sought after/well remunerated/high status boards do really only feel that it is necessary to retain one woman director, so there is some personal danger around the appointment of a second woman director...”

A few women expressed that being a Board director is an experience which is “invaluable and can really develop you personally.” With a few women pointing out that there were “plenty of places in non-paid boards,” one woman added “I found an

organisation that suited and my way of thinking and am very happy.” Another qualified that she had no difficulties “...so long as you don't want to be paid. Paid boards are a different story altogether and I have never been able to crack the glass ceiling.” One woman cautioned against “changing role requirements after you are put forward” and another that “there is also very little support for people on board especially in the not for profit sector.”

Type of support women want within a workplace

222 women responded to the question regarding which forms of support they would like to find within a workplace to assist them in their objective to be a board member.

Support to be a Board Member

The majority of women stated that workplaces needed to support them in their ambition to be a Board member. "Managers" "Senior manager/CEO" and "Employers" needed to support them and show an "interest in furthering of staff members," and see them "with potential outside (their) current job description."

"Executive support" giving them "permission to engage in society in this way" was also linked to workplaces putting "forward" their name "when opportunities are known," giving "recommendations from management and peers," "introductions," "nomination where appropriate" and "referrals," and considering them "for roles on related entities boards."

Encouraging women "to be more involved" to put their name forward, to "join networks" to "attend personal development events" was mentioned frequently. Women wanted "recognition" of their "abilities" "trust" and belief in their "capacity and skills to lead" and support to lift their "profile." Encouragement "identifying opportunities" and offering "assistance" such as "childcare" if the meetings are in working hours or allowing emailing, printing resources was pointed out.

Financial support was also referred to. Sponsorship of training through subscriptions to AICD courses, or "company directors course" was mentioned.

If there was no support to be forthcoming, then the expectation that the employer did "not stand in the way if done in one's own time" was declared.

Time

Support from workplaces was also discussed in relation to workplaces "allowing participation in work time." Giving women "time to attend training," "to undertake a board role," "to participate in more Boards", to "assist some services during work hours" and "to deal with issues arising from involvements in these services," and "to

attend important events, research etc” was considered to be significant if women were to realize the opportunity for Board memberships.

Getting time off from work was suggested as “occasional” “leave from work,” “unpaid time off,” or “flexible time” through having the opportunity “within the workplace to accumulate hours to attend voluntary duties”

It was also important that for effective board governance a certain amount of time for Board meetings was required for the Board member to be informed on the progress of the org. (organisation) particularly the financial reporting.” This also applied to “time allocation for training and commitment.”

Recognising that “board roles (are) as helpful to my workplace” and that women need “flexibility of working hours to perform duties scheduled during normal business hours” to “be a Board member of another organisation” to engage in “skill building” and have “access to training” was a necessary mindshift for workplaces to realize.

Change in Culture

Coupled with the above, a significant concern was that workplaces needed to have “open communication,” “advance notification,” “clear indication of what is needed” “more prescriptive objective criteria” of positions available and even information about “the type of support” available within the workplace.

“Better” and “open advertisements” of vacancies, “information on Board positions, types of Boards,” “information regarding the process of being appointed to a board” and “means of application” was cited.

“Honest communication at the ground level” of “roles going to market” and “disseminating what information is relevant to making an application” was in general put forward as improving the current culture of how appointments are made.

Workplaces therefore, needed to be “proactive” in their support of women interested in Board positions. A number of suggestions were made as to how workplaces can do this:

Workplaces could provide:

“corporate and directorship exposure”

“exposure to Board workings”

“career paths beyond the full time worker trajectory”

“governance and Board Membership as professional development”

recommendations for women by putting them “forward to a register”

“leadership initiatives”

"management opportunities"

"opportunities to work with/present to Boards"

"Provision of opportunity for women to be exposed to committees and make them aware of the role of a board member etc."

"opportunities to demonstrate my skills and expertise to the broader organisation"

"Work tasks & roles that are congruent with using the knowledge & wisdom gained in board AND work roles and tasks"

"learning and development that maintains a focus on women and affirmative action"

"gender balance for the boards & opening up the field for candidates as well as using women's registers"

"professional development opportunities"

And "managers facilitating opportunities."

As such a change of culture needs to take place "at the top." This would further involve Employers and Boards:

"seeing that board membership is an asset to the workplace," "that board membership can positively contribute/enhance work activities."

"recognising the importance of voluntary board roles."

"including people with disabilities"

"Look(ing) at people and positions individually," valuing their "skills"

Encouraging "building the skills of young women (less gate-keeping by older women especially)

Having a "Policy of 3 or 5 year term on board only"

"Recognition that owning & running a business successfully ..."

Having "Advisory Boards with 50% staff on them" like "the Germans" do

In general: "Workplaces should develop and encourage women to leadership positions, encourage women to participate and value the proposals and way that women work and see that it benefits the organisation."

Training

In terms of a specific type of support required in a workplace, predominantly training emerged as the form of support most requested. Professional development in the form of "appropriate training" to help them "find and apply for positions" learn about "boardroom procedures, policies, etiquette," "leadership," "governance," "Board politics," "how to negotiate the system," "the number of strategies to be considered when managing an issue" and "public speaking" were specifically mentioned.

“Education” delivered via “workshops” “seminars” “weekly sessions” “courses” and “programs” to “help aspiring female board members get the experience,” to explain “what it means to be part of a board” was expressed.

Having on going training in the workplace while being a Board member was also raised: “I would like to see that there are leadership and governance training provided for the Board members as induction and continuous training.”

Training for existing Boards to change entrenched methods and attitudes was found in the responses: “Training Boards in the advertising, recruitment, selection and appointment of new Board members - using a competency approach, would help.”

On the whole the view was that workplaces should offer professional development opportunities for “Director training.”

Mentoring

Mentoring from “senior experienced personnel,” “other Board members” and from “peers” was indicated quite strongly in the data also. “Mentoring programs,” “Mentoring and coaching” “mentors,” “role models” “coaches,” and “headhunters” were cited in relation getting “guidance & mentoring” in the workplace to assist one gain a directorship.

Networking

Opportunities for “networking” for developing “contacts” with “existing Board members” and “people from other parts of large organizations” was also brought up to a lesser extent. Networks were considered to be useful to extend one’s contacts, to develop opportunities for mentoring, and also to enable “brokerage” on one’s behalf if opportunities arose.

Type of support women want outside a workplace

264 women responded to the question regarding which forms of support they would like to find outside a workplace to assist them in their objective to be a board member

Networking

Predominantly, women indicated that they wanted "networking opportunities outside the workplace. "Networking events," "opportunities to network with Board members; sharing of stories about how others get their first Board appointments," "occasional get-togethers with other women on boards to swap notes," "networking with people in government," "social networks among influential people," "business associations; professional associations," "women's organizations" were highlighted specifically.

"Assistance with networking" was also stated in some cases especially if one lived in rural and regional areas. An additional difficulty was entry and acceptance into networks as they are frequently male dominated: "The networks are often male dominated and it is difficult as a woman to become accepted as an active participant."

Networks were claimed to be significant as they could benefit women in a number of ways including:

Gaining "sponsorship by the organizations:

Developing "contacts" "high profile colleagues" and "becoming known" to "people ...who are looking on behalf of Commercial boards not just not for profits" by developing a higher profile

Have the opportunity to "learn from successful women role models about the how to."

Gaining "introductions," "recommendations"

Gaining "training/mentoring experience"

Women wanted "more proactive networks" which were "more than just a database of names." They wanted "structured networking opportunities."

Networking through public "facilitated" meetings and "forums" was also raised as a viable option whereby "those needing board members and those desirous of wanting to be on boards to meet, discuss, exchange ideas." Such opportunities did not need to be "just limited to the clubs."

Training

Training was the next most important feature that women wanted to access outside the workplace. Training that was "inexpensive" "affordable" and "cost effective" was sought. In terms of what the training covered, there were two broad areas: How to Access a Board Position and Board Management:

How to Access a Board Position:

- "how to successfully access positions"
- "Identifying opportunities"
- "how to lobby"
- "developing my resume"
- "assistance with preparing application"
- "Accessible governance training"
- "training on leadership"

Board Management:

- "Board trainee programs"
- "developing a very broad set of board member competencies, within a framework of domains that take in to account a variety of sectors or industries to inform potential candidates of the skills they need to identify or develop"
- "policy development"
- "budgeting training"
- "Financial training"
- "public speaking"
- "Time management"

Training in a variety of forms such as seminars, workshops, conferences and online courses that provided "advice" opportunities to "clarify questions for better understanding" that focused "on supporting and advising women to obtain leadership roles in their sector" and "helping" women "define the skills needed to become a board member" was a common theme. Attaining a "Certificate of Accomplishment upon completion" was also important

Once again it was mentioned that Boards themselves needed educating "to see beyond "the mate in a suit syndrome.""

Mentoring

Mentoring also featured significantly in the responses. Having "access to a panel of influential directors and CEOs who could act as mentors and provide introductions to relevant parties and information on vacant board positions" was highly sought after.

“Coaching on how to contribute and be an effective member,” “mentorships that focus on supporting and advising women to obtain leadership roles in their sector” that could provide “honest advice in relation to specific boards,” “guidance,” “encouragement” and “referrals” featured often in the responses. Having a “male board member” as a mentor was indicated as a preference.

Transparency

Having “more open / transparent board recruitment mechanisms,” “a level playing field” where “the requirements and roles of board members” are clearly “defined.” people and positions are considered “individually” and no “secret appointments” are made “among friends” was strongly indicated in the discussion.

More “objective and open board selection and renewal processes,” with a “willingness to consider people from outside the standard pool of possibilities” and “take a broader view of the board skills they need” and selection based on “merit” and “better evaluation of board member performance” was a common concern amongst the participants.

Open systems of board appointments was also linked to having “more open debate about the requirements of a director (financial, intellectual, experiential etc)” “advertisement(s) being more open” and “more transparency and publication of available vacancies, selection criteria and selection process” as well as “more specific tailoring of application process for applicable positions.”

Advertising

Having “an updated list of current vacancies” so that women are aware of “Board position vacancies” as well as the “information on available positions” was seen as being crucial. Notification of positions vacant needed to be made “public knowledge” and promoted in the “media” and even on a “website.” The information needed to include “skills required, and responsibility levels.”

Registers

In terms of registers, women wanted these to “be part of a pool of potential board directors” who are taken “seriously into consideration.” A “database of potential candidates” could be a source of “contacts” that could be “proactively utilize(d)” by “organisations looking for board members.”

Getting “feedback and responses” from “recruiters” who are “genuinely interested” in one’s “credentials and experience” will transform registers in to “Real recruitment” opportunities.

Funding

Financial reimbursements, subsidies, low membership and training fees and tax relief were stated as a funding need by a number of women requiring: "government scholarships for AICD courses" "AICD Memberships," "more subsidized education/coaching delivered by consultants," "travel and accommodation subsidies/support" especially "for those living in rural areas," and "reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses."

Federal funding to "assist with training future women directors and incentivising boards to take on women" as well as a payment for "contributing to the NFP sector" was mentioned.

Work – Life Balance Support

In terms of other forms of personal assistance, some comments related to wanting help with running the household and juggling family and work responsibilities:

"a gardener and cleaner, supportive partner"

"family, peer and friend support

"Supportive husband"

"Men who are centred & not egocentric, who can support women in these important empowering roles"

"paid maternity leave"

"work-life-community balance"

Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement" and "recognition" of women, their "abilities," "skills and expertise," their contribution to "the NFP sector" and their "ideas" was seen as being necessary so that "companies/Non-Profits" are not sexist in their recruiting and value "... women, who may have had varied and relevant careers before the present role."

Documenting women's pathways to success and publishing the "good news stories" will raise the profile of women and their achievements.

Legislation

Affirmative action legislation, quotas for women and trainee positions on publically listed boards and government Boards was advocated to maintain "gender balance" "diversity of background and skills" and the appointing of "women and people from

other ethnic and class backgrounds” and “people with disabilities in the community.” It was perceived to be necessary to “appoint a few outsiders on merit to strategically placed boards to break up the old boy (& girl) networks.”

Government was asked to “set an example,” “lead the way in ensuring enough women are on their boards” by adopting a “50/50 policy with appointments as model for corporate sector.”

The view of a legislated quota system resounded as an option in the context of no other alternative: “It’s time to legislate. I am an advocate for quota systems. I know all the reasons against it, but nothing else is working” as “once you get one board position, it’s easier to get a second.”

Innovative Ideas

A number of innovative suggestions were made about what women would like to see happening outside the workplace to support them in their goal for Board Directorship: Below is a list of their suggestions:

- “Considerably more enlightened head hunters ...because the way they earn their fees preserves the status quo/risk aversion”
- “move to electronic methods of communication wherever possible”
- “Continue to make board uncomfortable about their gender imbalance. Encourage questions to be asked at AGM’s.”
- “Board Mentoring Scheme - key Board members provide mentoring to individuals”
- “Effective champions”
- “Letter to all members encouraging them to be board members”
- “Life Coaches, that could be paid by the board.”
- “Education of men”
- “Experience! - Board open days?”
- “Practical board experience and transitional roles (eg advisory panels or councils affirmatively women based)”
- “emails of vacancies”
- “organisations more willing to let people show case their abilities not guess what they may be”
- “More opportunities by Boards being reminded of the benefits of independent directors & that suitably skilled women can add another perspective”
- “opportunities to actually demonstrate abilities and experience”
- “organisations like AICD should actively encourage their members to open up their boards to women”
- “Pathways”
- “Publicity”
- “Child care”

What women want the Government to do to assist them get Board Positions?

259 women responded to the question 'How can government bodies help you in your objective to be a board member?'

Advertise Positions

One of the prevalent issues that emerged was that the Government "advertise the vacancies" and also "communicate information" about the "process" involved.

"Communicating the availability" of "positions," "opportunities" together with "information about positions" was frequently raised. Providing "notification of positions as they become available," being "up-to-date" with "advertising vacancies" and "making Board opportunities known to (a) wider audience" was commonly stated. It was also added that the Government encourage profit/Asx200 Boards to advertise positions."

Be Clear about Board Positions

Governments were asked to "publish clear criteria" and encourage other "bodies to more clearly articulate what they are looking for, and how their directors meet those criteria." Explain what is "truly required to manage a company," and "be real about the challenges and skills needed."

Selection on "merit" based on "strong criteria of expertise for board engagement" that looked "beyond the degree focus" "to engage new diverse members" with "fresh experience and new faces" that placed "the same level of experience to the male members" was seen as being a vital part of a process that needed to be "more objective and open" and have "transparency."

Providing a "better evaluation of board member performance" was also suggested.

Actively Promote/Seek

It was also commented that the Government "actively promote/seek more females," "seek qualified women to fill Board positions," "encourage women to apply, and "support women not in Government or big business positions."

In addition to this, Governments were asked to “support and foster more women on Boards,” “...promote opportunities for female staff members,” and seek “support from Senior executives.”

Suggestions were offered for how this could be done:

Declaring “a commitment to ensuring women are placed on Boards”
“promoting the value of having a sex balanced Board”
“further promote to Boards the importance of diversification & having women on Boards”
“stress the importance of Board membership for interested professionals.”
show “recognition of (the) important role of NFP Boards”
“by giving legitimacy to women’s achievements that are constantly devalued in both the public & private sector”
“acknowledge(ment) of achievements and support ... acknowledging the years of work.”
“championing the value of what women's skills, knowledge and perspective can bring to a Board/organisation”
Providing “positive reinforcement to lobby groups of the necessity to include women in their processes would be a start. Token women have still great hurdles to overcome.”

In some cases, the pleas of frustration were simply put, yet impassioned:
“just believe in me that I can be as good as others.”
“Listen to what I have to say. Have respect and an understanding of what I have to say...”
“... be willing to have this ... lady on their Boards who has a lot to offer.”

Be Proactive

Governments were also being asked to be “more proactive” in “appointing women to committee & Board vacancies” in “breaking down the barriers” in offering “more opportunity for women to be involved in positions on their Boards,” and in creating “open opportunities.” In general the view was that the Government needed to be “more proactive.” Women indicated that they were seeking “support and opportunities” so that they are provided “with leadership opportunities.”

Be the Example

Women also pointed that the Government needed to not just “take the lead” but also “practice what they preach.” The Government needed to “get serious” “showing

leadership and providing incentives to Boards to change." It needed to "stick to their policies, don't just use them as political propaganda - window dressing."

In some instances, the Government was criticized for not having women on their Boards: "...It is very sad to see that a review of the superannuation system has no women on the review panel. I am sure that there are other instances of lack of women within other Government activities."

The Government was being asked to show "more involvement with Boards" and not just stop at "full responsibility being placed on senior staff."

Ensure Gender Equality and Equity

Being "more inclusive of women," and following "Affirmative Action" was raised as well as ensuring "parity" in making positions available.

"Provide access to Government Board positions."

"...search wider - look at NGO management teams and consider approaching them for Board positions"

"providing broad 'recruitment'"

"opening up the process, allowing for youth or designated positions for women and interest groups like unions"

"Cast a wider net than just women in absolute top positions"

"Continue to canvas widely and look beyond the old school network"

"continue to have a wide representation on boards"

"Stop being reluctant to nominate/appoint women who work in the public sector."

Women requested that the Government be "more open and receptive to (the) gender issue" "by embracing life in the 21st century - ie women are here to work but they also are (still) here to raise families." Women asked that the Government "respect that women have plenty to offer and are extremely capable in being Board members" and that it should be recognized "that "the time has come for women to be part & parcel of Boards, ...not only in the workforce but also in governance roles." Ensuring "gender equality and equity, including around family responsibilities." was seen as being significant: "I don't think there should be gender discrimination. That's almost worse than favoritism. Just treat everyone as equal as possible."

Diversity in age was also raised as a concern: "...focus on age- both in regards to women and men, as I think it is also important for a diversity in age as well as gender." One request was to consider "perhaps some 'positive discrimination' for older women."

In terms of Diversity in general, it was stated, "that all government Boards actively seek diversity for all Boards not just the traditional women's areas" thus influencing a "wider participation of women."

Selecting women "from rural and regional Australia" was also urged by women who wanted to see the Government "be leaders in the area of engaging with rural women." they wanted the Government to "take (the) initiative and ask more women in regional and rural areas on to Boards." Doing this would mean representing regional issues through the voices of those connected to regional Australia:

"They should use the talents of rural women to round out their knowledge of regional issues."

Specific Assistance from Government

- **Funding**

This was one of the most requested forms of assistance. "Financial support" was raised in terms of funds for:

"travel between work and Board meetings to be deductible,"
 "training" for "state and nationally accredited courses"
 for "... training and mentoring while new to board positions"
 "subsidies" for "costs of programs to become board ready,"
 "relevant forums," "conferences and seminars"
 for "consumables - ink, paper, etc..." for "out of pocket costs."

Women in rural areas were also interested in funding: "Subsidize courses for women in cities, regional areas and large urban centres, / free to women in rural and remote."

Self-funding was discussed as the option available currently that posed difficulties as women pursued their professional development for Board readiness on their own time: "Expenses Covered - if I am not at work I do not get paid, so time-off to attend meetings, seminars and conferences is unpaid time for me. I fund myself for education, conferences and seminars."

Moreover, attention was drawn to the “need to remunerate Board members” through “government funding”, in relation to not-for-profit Boards.

“Recompense community boards with some payment-in-kind.”

“Stop making things so difficult for community based not for profits! Give an appropriate amount of funding and stop expecting the earth from people who are volunteering; we all put our blood sweat and tears in and after all's said and done, that's not enough. If they don't think we're doing a great enough job, PAY someone...”

- **Mentoring**

Mentoring was presented as a form of assistance that the Government could offer women so that they could “spend some time with an existing board member.” Mentoring “programs” or opportunities for “linking with mentors who have extensive networks” were suggested.

- **Training**

The view that “Government agencies provide workshops to provide information,” “training and opportunities for personal development,” “opportunities to develop skills” for Board readiness was a common theme. Through “conferences”, “seminars”, “training sessions”, “education”, “workshops” “coaching” and “one on one meetings,” Government could assist women in this area.

Sessions on “applying for board positions,” “training in board skills” and general “education programs” were seen as being very helpful. Whilst in a Board position, Government assistance was also seen as being necessary in relation to: “Training sessions on being a productive board member,” “Information with regard (to) up to date legislative requirements needed to make correct decisions.”

It was also stated that those recruiting for Boards could undergo training: “Train selectors in the benefits of appointing women.”

- **Networking**

Networking was seen as an area that Government needed to assist in by providing “networking opportunities,” “meet ups,” “networking with government board

members," and "putting potential Board members in contact with existing Board members."

Networking "support and follow up" as well as providing "recommendations" and "recognition" of suitable women to networks was suggested as being part of the networking opportunity: "Put my name and skills and experience around in the circles considering new board members."

Registers

The existence of "registers" was acknowledged by women. However, the general feeling was that the lists were not effective for a number of reasons. They generally were perceived to not lead to Board appointments and were ignored by those recruiting to fill Board positions. Some of the comments below typify the sentiments:

"Government lists and policies exist but seem to be slow in making an impact."

"Do they "actually look at their lists?"

What about "circulating lists?"

Are they "looking beyond the usual persons for board memberships?"

"... because Board members come from a select few number of people-the promotion of lists and registrations of possible people interested in board participation is really a load of tosh."

"They have done a bit but the register of women kept by Commonwealth government has never yielded anything, it's always personal networks"

"Use the registration lists that I have had my name & CV on for years."

"Was on the state government list for board appointments for years. Have to have connections or come from their side of the fence."

"Mostly government bodies favour people they know."

A number of changes to how registers operate were made:

"force a process which makes Government bodies review their candidate lists rather than sticking with known people"

"Set up a meaningful Register of potential candidates who have been properly vetted that government bodies can access."

Establish "registers of people outside government who are interested."

Use a list as a "database of board pipeline for women."

"Every government body who has a board should keep a register of people who are interested in the boards that government body is responsible for and ensure the people are kept up to date with opportunities which are available."

"List vacancies somewhere, maybe list of applicants and Resumes matching skills database with organisations requiring advice/board (members)."

Promote "individual candidates agenda equally."

"Utilising a resume register system within RWN"

On the whole, the recurring theme was to “ask” women “to express their interest in becoming Board members” by contributing their “ CV” which the government includes on a “list” or “database” and then makes “use of registers” by “consulting” the registers “when considering appointments.”

Beyond Existing Strategies

Reflecting upon what strategies already existed to assist women become board members, women offered a number of constructive strategies that the Government could act upon to improve the situation for them. These strategies are listed below:

- **Use Technology:**

“More use of technology eg web/phone conferences”
Have a “central web site of opportunities”

- **Improve Recruitment Process:**

“Government Boards should have a position as a community rep on the Board.”
“Have a good tender process for people who are willing to be a Board member to apply and for potential candidates to provide them training and background on the key roles of particular government ministries and how that ministry contribute to the overall development of the country.”
Have the “opportunity to apply face to face rather than always in writing, needing to use the “buzz” words or pay for someone to write application in bureaucratic speak!!”
“listing committees -often lists are out of date - vacancies to advisory boards”
“Ask me and other women when positions come up”
“Search outside the box – in this case outside the public service”
“Explicitly identify boards or positions suitable for first time members.”
“Widen networks of government into community groups and members. Look outside the square.”
“Create formal Board diversity policies.”
Develop “online contacts.”

- **Mentoring/Training and Advising:**

“Offer 'ringside' seats on some of their board meetings? I think if I better understood how a board works - eg by watching quietly in the back seats with appropriate confidentiality. I would better understand how I would need to hone/promote my strengths for my applications.”
“ provide mentoring programs to widen the feeder pool”

"holding events so you can understand the kind of issues facing them (boards) and how you can contribute."

Give "Advice on opportunities", "give feedback if not successful", "review of applications"

"Provide greater support to applicants particularly around application and interviews."

"provide some sort of evaluation service to highlight any development issues that are inhibiting success"

Offer "volunteer and / or paid opportunities to develop skills needed to make the most out of board membership"

- **Financial Benefits:**

"Because many women are in low paid/unpaid employment positions etc, the government could include "Board work" as acceptable evidence to access/receive the unemployment/healthcare card benefit scheme. Being a Board member could also constitute evidence of "life-long learning" credits which can be converted into employability skills and/or financial benefits if a parent or carer or an ill/terminally ill person."

"pay them (women) on par with the remuneration that men get."

- **Employer of Choice:**

"providing practical support like child minding or respite"

"be family friendly - employer of choice, paid maternity leave"

- **Set incentives for Boards**

"Or set incentives for skills-based boards that accept women"

"Give incentives to companies who achieve diversity on boards."

"Make board positions subject to certain credentialing/qualifications (rather than optional at present) and hence given qualified women a better chance"

"Make it more attractive for boards to increase the percentage of women"

"promote and encourage the value of succession planning & inclusion of new blood in current boards."

- **Make Accountable in the following areas:**

- **How Boards Operate**

"Regulate board membership and ensure bipartisanship"

Link "government funding as part of annual reporting and transparency requirements"

Put "pressure on the non-profits to actively seek out experienced/skilled board members."

- **Monitoring Boards**

Appoint "those who might be critics..."

○ **Advertising Board Positions**

“Mandate advertising of vacancies for other board roles.”

Have a “requirement for bodies to more clearly articulate what they are looking for, and how their directors meet those criteria.”

○ **Gender Balance on Boards**

“Ensure that gender balance is mandatory.”

“Make sure boards are not gender biased.”

“Have a policy of Gender Balance with all the Boards.”

“Introduce a gender equity rule to ALL government boards. If women have to be on boards legally, then they'll soon find suitable women to fill positions.”

“Provide the support whether it's financially or through provision gender equity regulations that would necessitate the presence of women in committees and boards.”

Raise “the targets for female representation and monitoring them”

“Set targets for numbers of female board members on NFPs and companies receiving”

“Use affirmative action which is legal under the internal treaties such as CEDAW.”

○ **Terms of Appointment**

Have “rules” that “governing board members rotation be more strictly followed in Government and Private organisations.”

“Put in safeguards that enable a board member to complete their contracted term (unless there are disciplinary proceedings which dictate otherwise)...”

Quotas

As corporate and government bodies are perceived as being “still largely male biased” and “still have the “who you know” method to board membership” and as current boards appear to have the “token” female, it was stated by a number of women that “there needs to be some mandatory or legislative equity quota for women”

By legislating the “number of women on boards,” “a quota of 50:50 female to male ratios” would exist “on all government boards” and all “appointments” would “ensure 50/50 representation.” Having “quotas for women, especially young women” was also suggested. Existing quotas for minority groups was identified by one participant as being a problem “if you are an ordinary, uni educated, white Australian it is hard to get on” as “they have so many quotas for minority groups that it is hard to get on (i.e. 1 man, 1 woman, 1 disabled, 1 religious, 1 foreign, 1 old, 1 young etc)”

With the aim that “women can only learn through exposure,” it was felt that “having quotas for women on boards” is necessary “so that the shift does occur.”

Some comments were made regarding Norway's strategy of Quotas:

"Consider quotas on boards - such as Norway which has had great success."

"Follow the Norwegian example, take bold leadership and mandate quotas - what gets measured gets done."

"Consider introducing gender quotas like in Norway (and being considered in NZ)."

Hopelessness

The comment that "we may make up 51% of the population, but we sure don't make 51% of the decisions and policies!" captures the overall feeling of frustration about the situation. Women did not have confidence that the Government could change the situation for them: "I have no idea if they can;" "I don't think they can;" "They can't;" "There is little they can do."

Other views in this vein stated that the Government and business were not willing to change the situation and identified them as the problem:

"They are the problem, not the solution. Too much 'tokenism', boys' club, and flavour of the month.... that's why they don't really get the genuine diversity they need."

"They are the worst at having women on boards."

"I am not convinced that Government or the wider business community really want women on Boards."

"I haven't been offered any positions by government bodies but suspect they tend to grant positions to those they already know."

"not sure they are effective."

Conclusion

Conclusion

The findings in this study shed light on and challenge some key perceptions about why women are not getting onto boards. The study reveals that women are not getting into boards because the criteria boards are applying to fill their vacancies are predominantly underlined with biases and are unrealistic.

From women's observations and insights about how to successfully achieve a board position, particularly in the private sector, it can be surmised that one ideally needs to:

- be the right gender: male
- have the right friends: corporate board members, high profile influential contacts
- have the right experience: have corporate board experience, financial or business experience; be financially independent in a full-time paid position
- have the right skills set: financial, legal, management, leadership
- have the right qualification: tertiary degree in finance, law, management
- be of the right age: as skills set comes with considerable experience, being a young achiever is problematic
- be in urban areas not rural
- not be an immigrant or refugee

Women indicate that the recruitment process of boards predominantly is inequitable as it lacks transparency, clearly defined and realistic criteria and is advertised to a selective group. Women do not have the opportunity to apply because they do not know which boards have vacancies. When they do apply, they are judged against criteria which are discriminatory and attitudes which rate their achievements and experiences as unimportant and un-transferable.

It appears that many women are accessing the resources they perceive that will help them become board members such as networking, training, mentoring, coaches, head hunters, registers and relevant associations. Whilst many perceive networking to be the key to finding out about board positions, being seen by recruiters and having influential contacts who can recommend you, this study shows that networks are more effective when competency and achievement are promoted and recognized: then only is one really seen.

This study also shows that when competency and achievement are recognized, some boards invite women to join them. Having a reputation that is credible and based on one's competence and industry achievements is attractive to some boards. Having relevant qualifications is also desirable. Demonstrating one's competence and commitment by taking on voluntary roles in an association one is a member of also appears to lead to succeeding in some board positions.

For women to attain and maintain board positions, workplaces need to adopt the mindset that women on boards, either of their own organisation or that of others, is an asset to the workplace by virtue of their professional and personal development engaging in boards. Workplaces need to provide not just forms of assistance such as mentoring and training, but also time so that women can take on these additional leadership roles. After all, it is evident from this study that women want to join boards to empower their organizations and empower themselves. An empowered professional who is motivated to self manage her own leadership and personal development is an asset to any workplace.

Given current research and statistics about women on boards, as organizational and social cultures move at a glacial pace to ensure equity and equality, women are turning to the Government for leadership and action. This study indicates that women are asking the Government to develop and operate current registers that are utilized by boards of all sectors to fill vacancies. The provision of affordable services such as training, mentoring and networking events need to be available to all women interested in boards. Quotas for 50/50 representation need to be legislated and boards made accountable for their actions. Boards need to be provided with incentives to have diversity and gender balance in their composition.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will assist women in their understanding of what other women are experiencing and accessing to gain board positions and which strategy appears to have been more effective for some who have succeeded in board positions. It is also hoped that women's concerns of the issues raised are understood and resolved with legislative strategies, incentives from the Government to shift cultures and practices in all sectors and an unprecedented level of support from the business community and Government for women's achievements, leadership

aspirations and work-life balance. Finally, it is envisaged that board members will also gain an insight into the perceptions women have of how boards operate and how they could benefit by adopting the changes proposed without them being imposed on them.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of the participants who took part in the Women Getting into Boards Survey. I appreciate the time they took and the personal and professional knowledge they imparted through this study to improve the situation of board memberships for other women.

Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey

Founder & Director of the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW)

www.leadershipforwomen.com.au

As an independent researcher, analyst and consultant, Dr Rodgers-Healey combines research skills with an in-depth knowledge of women's leadership and workplace issues to provide strategic insights for organizations, individuals and policy developers on leadership and women's empowerment. Her approach has guided transformations for learning organizations. Specific areas of focus include: Leadership and Gender Auditing; Strategic Planning; Organisational Development to include women through systemic change; Issue Resolution and Collaboration.

Dr Rodgers-Healey has held leadership positions in business and in the educational sector in London and in Australia. She has interviewed many national and international female and male leaders about their leadership journey and the barriers they have overcome.

The Australian virtual Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW) was founded by Dr Rodgers-Healey to explore women's leadership and raise consciousness about women's issues. With a vision to empower women to understand and question leadership theory and practice and enable them to develop their own style of leadership, in 2001 ACLW was short-listed for the Australian Award for Excellence in Educational Publishing and in 2002 it was selected to be archived in the National Library of Australia.

Her publications include a book entitled, *Mentoring Yourself*. Research projects have included an audit of women's leadership in the Victorian and Federal Police Force. Executive leadership coaching, mentoring and strategic planning for the development of vision statements have also been conducted for workplaces.

Diann Rodgers-Healey graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Sydney University in 1986 and a Diploma in Education from the Sydney Institute of Advanced Education in 1991. In 1996 she completed a Masters of Education from the Australian Catholic University. Diann received her PhD from the University of Wollongong in the area of women and leadership in 2009.

Appendix

Women Getting into Boards survey

This is an anonymous questionnaire for women who have been trying to get into directorships on public and private and non-profit boards and are experiencing barriers. You do not have to give any personal contact details such as name, address/telephone or email address. The information you provide will help the Centre for Leadership for Women understand the difficulties and aspirations of women who wish to get into boards of companies. Your information will also help formulate strategies to help women, as well as lobby political networks to undertake further research and development to address issues in this area. As this survey is openly accessible on the internet, it requires that you enter which sex you are to ensure proper collation of the data. Thank you.

1a. What is your age group:

- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-60
- 60+

1b. Which Country are you residing in?

1c. Are you:

- female?
- male?

2. What is your occupation?

3. What position do you hold?

4a. Why do you want to become a board member of a public or private organisation?

4aa. Are you currently a member of a public or private organisation?

4b. Have you held any board member positions in the not-for-profit sector or private sector?

4c. If Yes, how did you succeed in becoming a board member in a not-for-profit organisation?

5a. Have you consulted or used any resources to help you in gaining board positions such as networks, coaches, head hunters etc?

5b. How have you found the avenues of help that you have accessed?

6. What do you see as being the difficulties in attaining board positions?

7. Which forms of support would you like to help you in your objective to be a board member?

- a) Within a workplace
- b) Outside workplace

8. How can ACLW help you in your leadership development? Consider online/ face to face programs/ conferences etc.

9. How can ACLW help you in your objective to be a board member?

10. How can government bodies help you in your objective to be a board member?

