



2024 Gender Equity in Accounting Report

Charting progress towards a positive, fair, and
empowered future for Australia's accounting industry.



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Foreword by Intuit QuickBooks

Welcome to the second edition of the *Gender Equity in Accounting Report*, a cornerstone publication dedicated to fostering a positive, fair, and empowered future for Australia's accounting industry. As we embark on this journey to unpack the intricate dynamics of gender equity in our sector, we are guided by the voices of professionals who navigate these waters daily.

Building upon the foundation laid by [Intuit QuickBooks' study in 2021](#), this report serves as a testament to our ongoing commitment to charting the progress and challenges faced by the Australian accounting community.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, our industry has undergone profound transformations, and it is essential to understand how these changes have shaped attitudes, perceptions, and priorities regarding gender equity. Now, three years on from our initial endeavour, we present a comprehensive analysis of the evolving landscape of gender equity in accounting.

Through an extensive survey of Australian accountants, we delve deep into three critical areas: leadership, remuneration and benefits, and gender equity.

These results offer an insight into the shift of perceptions among accounting professionals and executives, paving the way for informed dialogue and meaningful action.

This report is not merely a collection of statistics; it is a call to action for individuals, firms, and industry bodies to reflect on their achievements, identify growth opportunities, and commit to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment for all. By embracing diversity and championing equality, we can shape a future where every accounting professional can thrive, regardless of gender.

We extend our gratitude to all those who contributed to this report and invite you to join us in our shared mission to drive positive change in the accounting industry.



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Introduction

The 2024 *Gender Equity in Accounting Report* charts the industry's progress towards a positive, fair and empowered future for Australia's accounting industry.

In its second edition, this comprehensive report is dedicated to unpacking the nuanced realities of gender equity in the Australian accounting sector, guided by the voices of the professionals who navigate these waters daily.

This report follows [Intuit QuickBooks' first study](#) of this nature, published in 2021, which sought to map and measure attitudes, perceptions and priorities to these challenges in a time after COVID-19.

Now, three years on, this report offers a look into how industry perceptions have evolved and the progress that has been made. Through an extensive survey of Australian accountants, we delve into three critical areas: leadership, remuneration and benefits, and gender equity.

The insights offered in this report provide an opportunity for individuals, firms and industry bodies to reflect on their experiences, achievements and growth opportunities by understanding the differences in experiences and perceptions of accounting professionals.



Methodology

Intuit QuickBooks' 2024 *Gender Equity in Accounting Report* has been compiled with insights collected from a self-assessed, online quantitative survey of 552 Australian accountants. This survey was conducted between 29 January to 7 February 2024 with participants from Agile Market Intelligence's Accounting Insights panel invited to contribute to this survey.

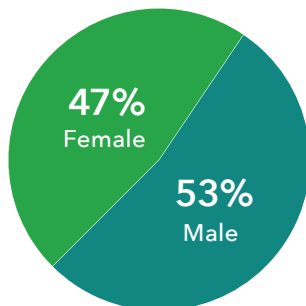
This report includes data collected from the first edition of Intuit QuickBooks' Gender Equity in Accounting report, published in 2021. The 2021 survey included the voices and experiences of 519 Australian accountants, conducted in a manner consistent with the 2024 study for time series and trend analysis.

Demographics

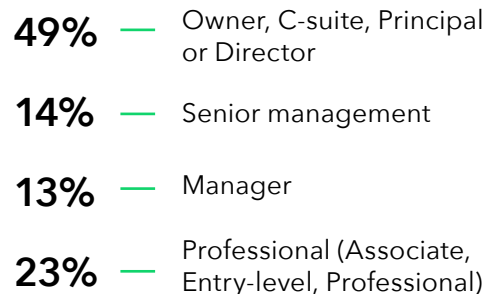
552 (All respondents)



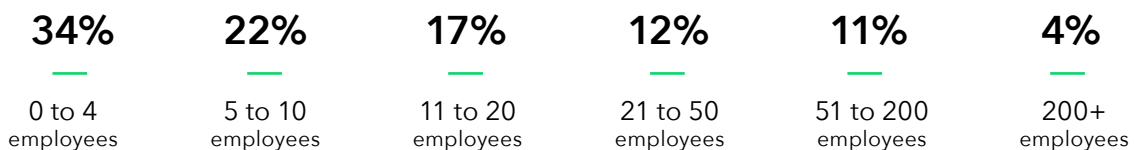
What is your gender?



What is your level of seniority in your organisation?



How many people does your practice employ?



Note on weighting: The results collected in the 2024 survey have been weighted to the distributions of the 2021 survey to enable meaningful trends and time-series analysis.

Due to rounding errors, some figures may not exactly equal 100%. All figures have been rounded to their nearest decimal for the purpose of this report.

SECTION **01**

Leadership

7 in 10 (70%) accountants have leadership ambitions, with female interest declining over the past 3 years.

The data reveals a changing narrative about employees’ leadership ambitions, with a noticeable increase in male leadership ambitions between 2021 and 2024. Initially, women were the most ambitious, leading at 74% compared to 61% of men. Fast forward three years and leadership ambition has altered, with men’s interest rising to 74%, overtaking women’s at 66%. This indicates a change in ambition or possible workplace barriers for female leadership.

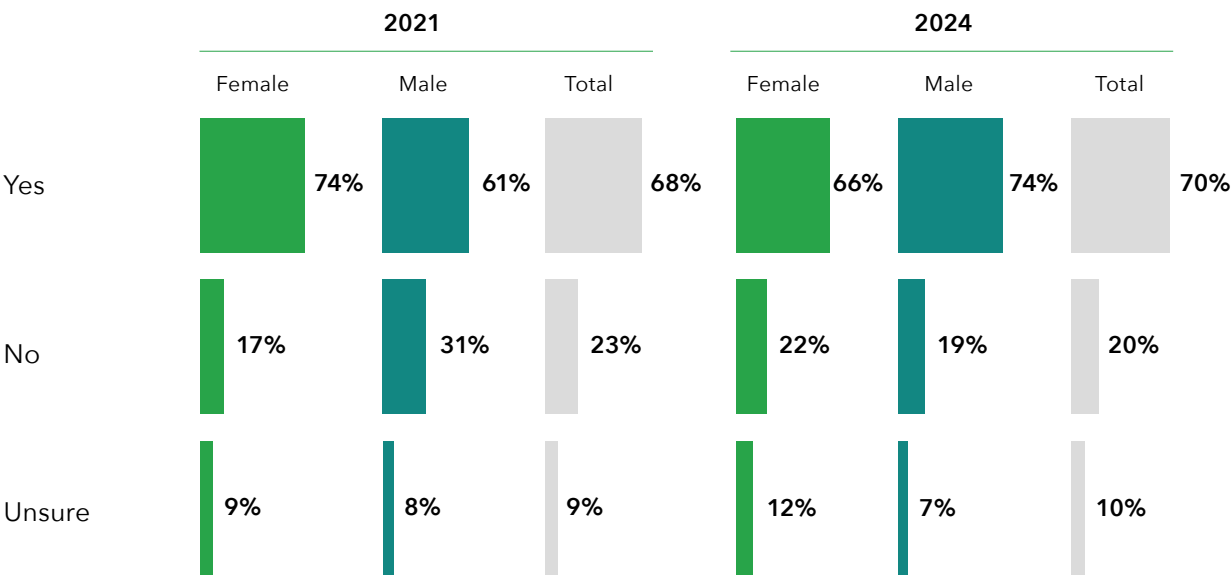
Reservations about leadership remained relatively consistent, with a slight overall decline from 23% to 20%, with the gender gap in disinterest rising among females.

This corresponds with the decline in leadership ambition levels for females throughout the years.

This trend indicates females’ perceptions and attitudes towards career advancement have changed which may be a result of personal priorities shifting or barriers and obstacles females face in the journey to leadership in Australian accounting practices.

Uncertainty about pursuing leadership roles remained consistent at 10%, with a higher percentage of females unsure about leadership positions, while male indecisiveness has remained consistent. The results suggest a steady level of indecision about career advancement in accounting practices.

Non-executive level employees Do you have goals of progressing into a leadership position within your practice?



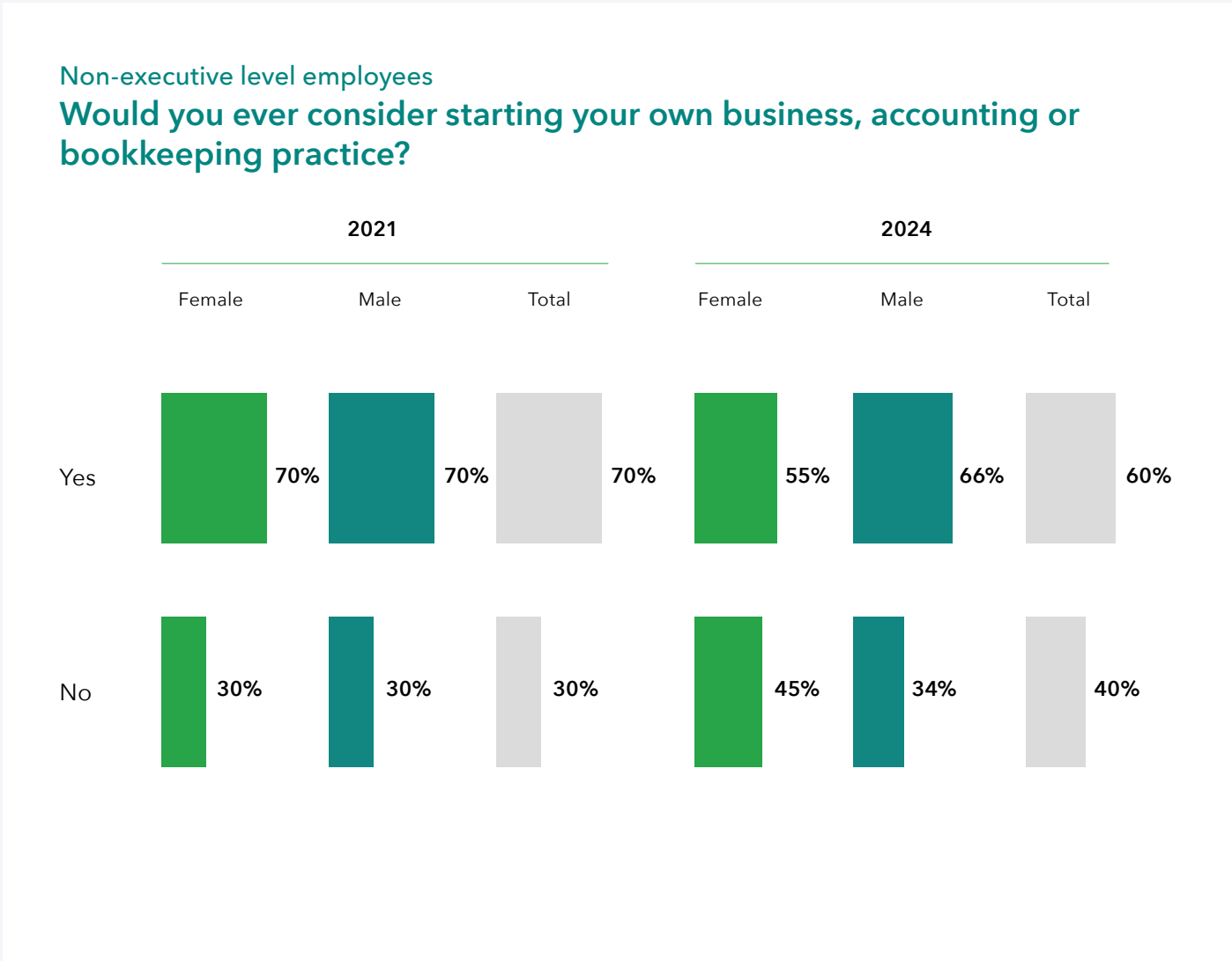
Entrepreneurial aspirations have declined across both genders since 2021, with a stronger decline in females.

In 2021, the entrepreneurial spirit was equally high among both genders, with 7 in 10 (70%) females and males considering starting their own business, accounting, or bookkeeping practice.

By 2024, there was a noticeable shift, with total interest declining to 3 in 5 (60%). This dip was more prominent among females, whose consideration decreased to 55%, while males had a smaller decline to 66%.

In 2024, 2 in 5 (40%) Australian accountants expressed no interest in starting a business, which has increased by 10% from 2021.

This raises questions about perceived risks or challenges associated with entrepreneurship and how they might have become more prominent over time. In summary, the data reflects a dynamic shift in the professional ambitions of the workforce, with a decline in entrepreneurship interest.



Risk, work/life balance, and contentment are key drivers behind Australian accountants' reluctance to embrace entrepreneurship.

The perceptions of entrepreneurship among accounting professionals reveal a strong preference towards stability, satisfaction in their current positions, and prioritisation of work/life balance, which collectively outweighs the potential benefits of entrepreneurship.

Concerns about risk and stress emerge as a dominant theme, with sentiments such as "There is significant risk associated with starting my own company and I don't have the financial back to do this" and "Too much stress, I'd rather have a steady paycheck versus chasing or finding customers". Financial insecurity and the challenges associated with establishing a new business are prominent.

Another prominent theme is the satisfaction with current employment and importance

of work/life balance, with statements such as "Happy where I am, don't want the responsibility of running my own business" and "At this stage of my life, I want work/life balance, explore life other than work," emphasising the preference for personal time and wellness over professional growth through entrepreneurship.

Other common themes that have been expressed include a preference for working in team settings, logistical and administrative barriers, and age and life stage considerations.

In summary, the perceptions highlight a strong preference among professionals for traditional employment, overshadowing the prospect of entrepreneurship with significant concerns over risks, stresses, and the hurdles of starting and running a business.



"Insurance, overheads, time frames for getting clients, negotiating fees, and cyber security."

(Female, professional, small firm)

"I have seen the stresses placed on the owner of the current practice and it just isn't something I want."

(Female, manager, small firm)

"I enjoy the culture I have helped create at the firm I work at - why would I leave that to start again?"

(Female, senior management, mid-sized firm)

"I don't want to be married to my job, and I enjoy work/life balance as it is."

(Male, manager, mid-sized firm)

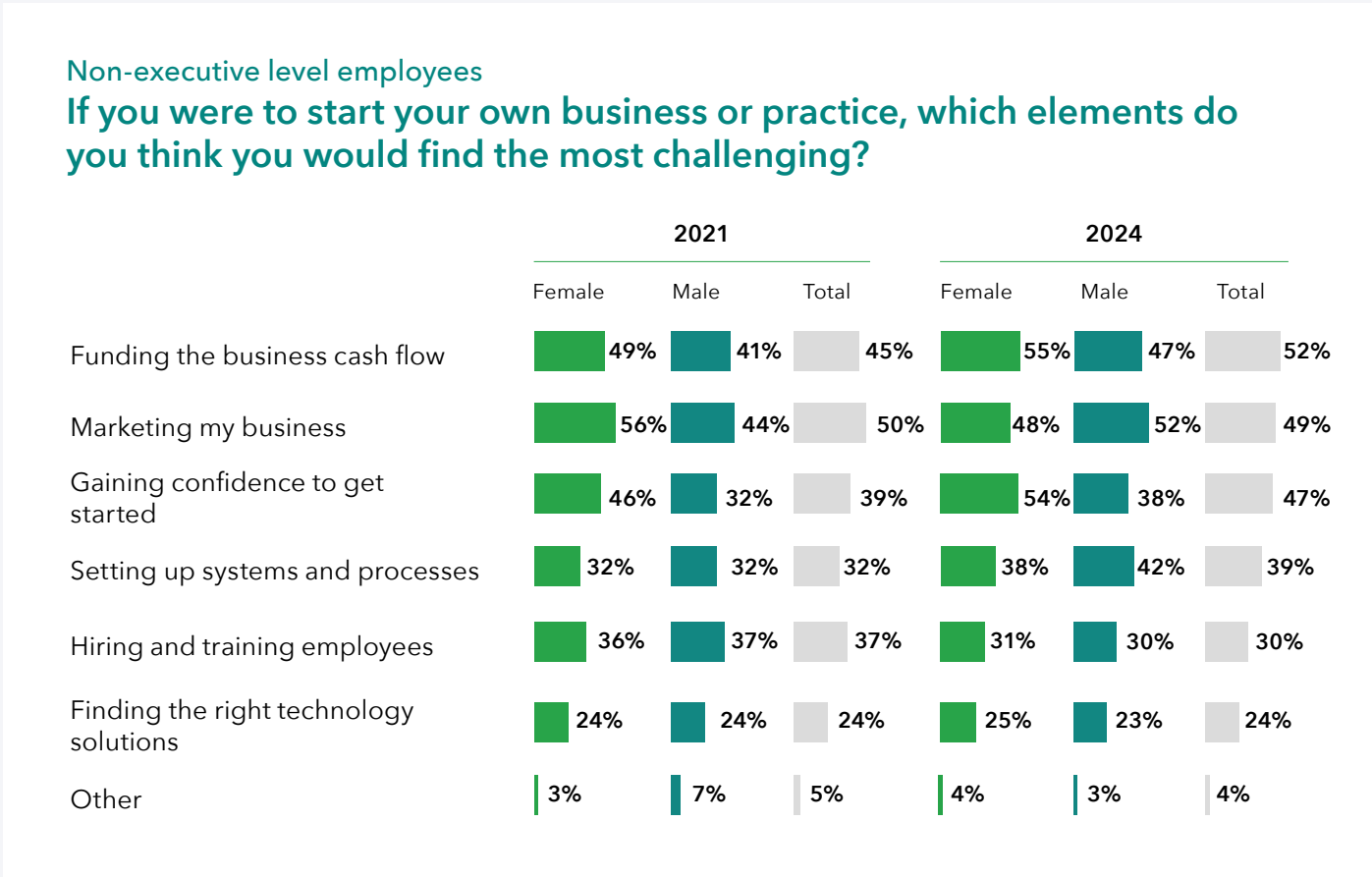
Business funding and marketing are the top-perceived challenges for accountants starting their own business in 2024.

In 2021, the leading concern for women and men was marketing their businesses. Fast forward to 2024, and funding has become a more prominent challenge among females (55%), while marketing has become the key challenge for males. This reflects the importance placed on financial hurdles in female entrepreneurship.

Interestingly, funding the business was less of a priority for males compared to marketing the business, which has increased since 2021 for males from 44% to 52%. This reveals the importance of growth and scale of a business among males, where marketing has become an acknowledged challenge in growing a business.

Gaining the confidence to get started is another area where a gender gap is evident. In 2021, this was a major concern for 46% of females and 32% of males, In 2024, it remains a key challenge for 54% of females, while being less important for males (38%).

The data also reveals a consistent view across the years regarding the challenges of setting up systems and processes, hiring and training employees, and finding the right technology solutions. There is a slight increase in the perceived difficulty of setting up systems and processes, which could be attributed to a growing complexity in business operations.



SECTION **02**

Remuneration and benefits

The majority of accountants feel moderately comfortable negotiating benefits with their employers, with slightly more discomfort among females.

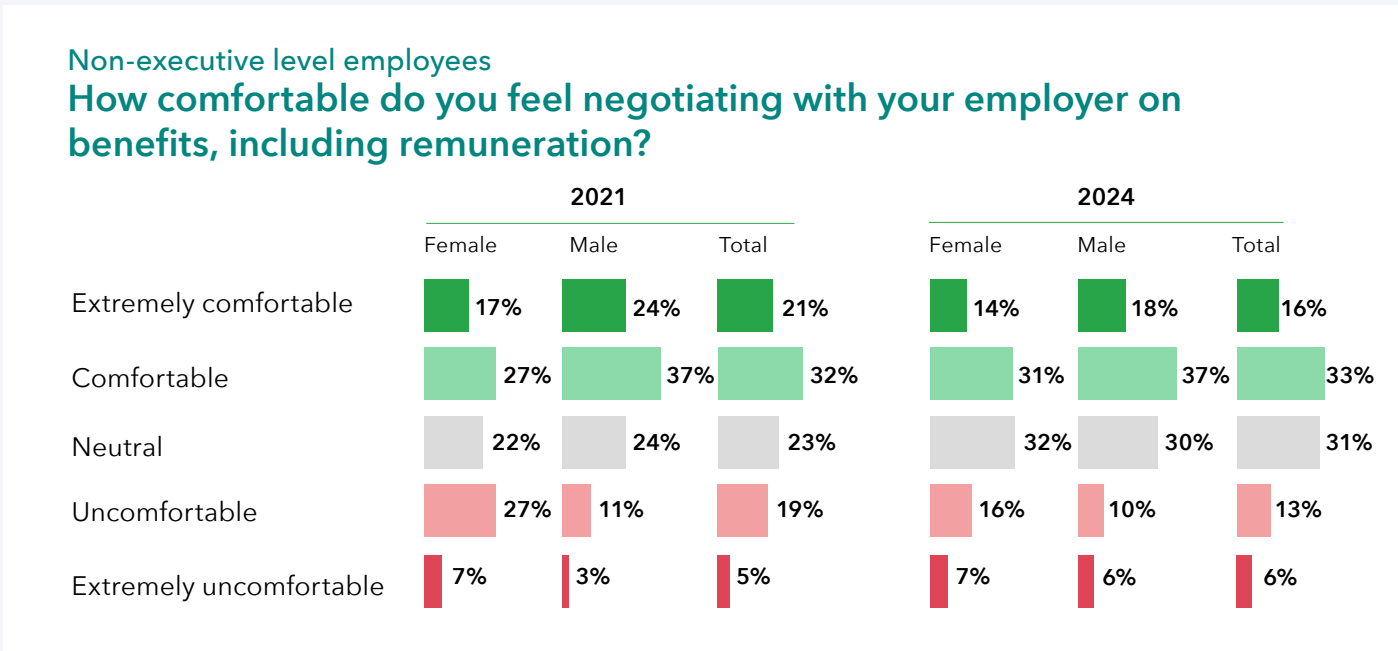
The data reveals a slight decline in the overall comfort of accounting professionals in negotiating benefits with employers from 53% in 2021 to 49% in 2024. There was a notable gender disparity in 2021 where 27% of females felt comfortable with negotiations compared to 37% of males. Fast forward to 2024, the comfort level among males remained unchanged at 37%, while it increased for females to 31%.

The percentage of females who feel extremely uncomfortable remained consistent at 7% from 2021 to 2024, whereas the figure for males slightly increased from 3% to 6%. On the other end of the spectrum, there is a shift in those who feel extremely comfortable, with a decrease from 17% to 14% for females and a decrease from 24% to 18% for males. This suggests a convergence in the extreme comfort levels, with both genders reporting moderate levels of comfort.

A sense of neutrality has increased among both genders, from 22% to 32% among females, and from 24% to 30% among males. This rise in neutral sentiment may indicate an increased uncertainty or a desire for more support in negotiation situations.

Furthermore, the data shows a significant gender gap in those who feel uncomfortable, with 27% of females and 11% of males in 2021, narrowing down to 16% of females and 10% of males in 2024. This suggests that discomfort in negotiations is declining, more so for women than men.

These insights can inform the development of targeted training and support to improve negotiation skills and confidence, particularly among women, in the workplace.



C-suite executives are confident about the ability of their employees to comfortably raise discussions around salary and benefits.

C-suite executives strongly believe that employees are somewhat comfortable in discussing and negotiating benefits with them. More than 7 in 10 (71%) executives feel their employees are somewhat comfortable or extremely comfortable.

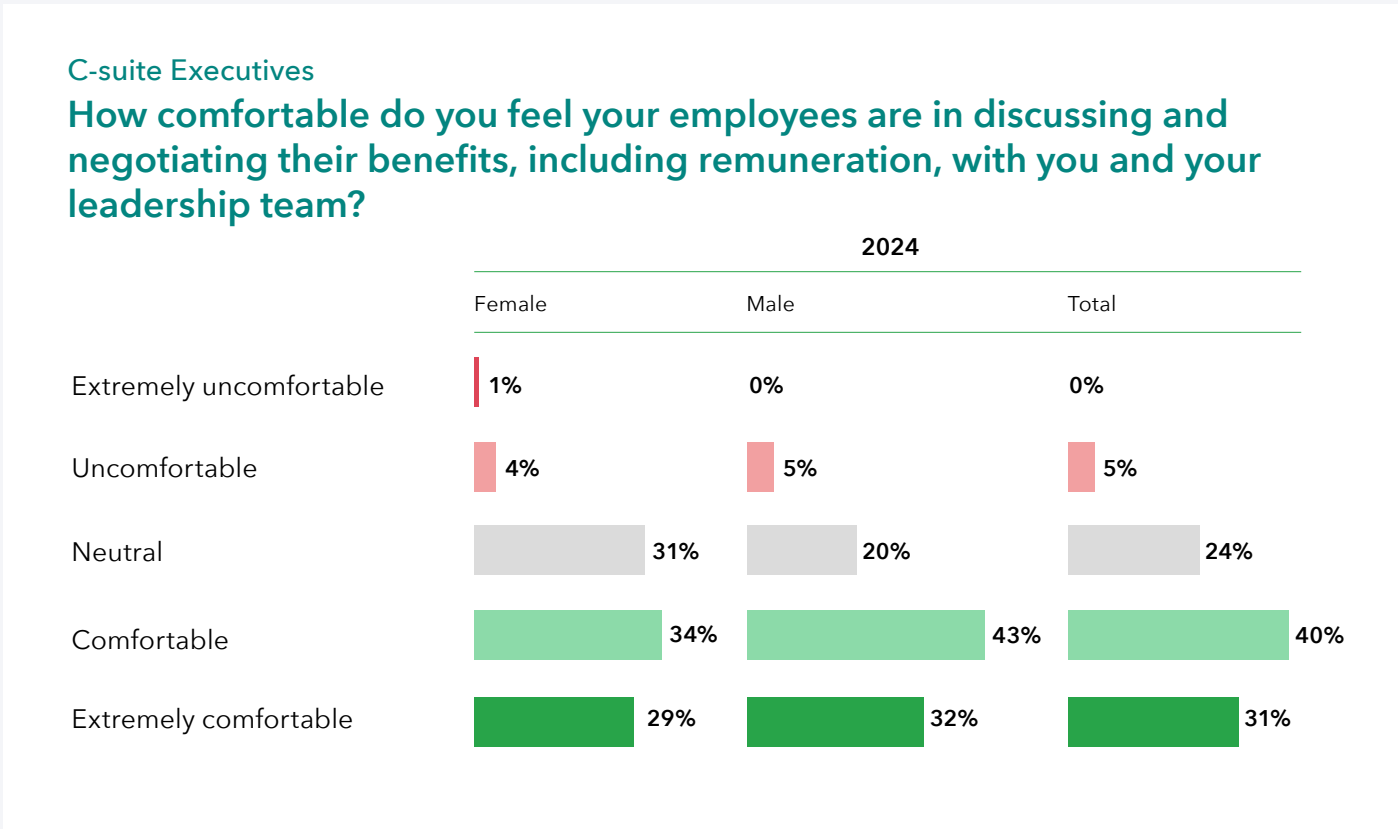
Notably, male executives have a stronger belief their employees are at ease with negotiations, with female executives expressing slightly less levels of comfort and feeling the most unsure (31%).

“Extremely comfortable” perceptions are balanced between genders, with 32% of male and 29% of female executives perceiving their employees to be highly at ease with negotiations.

This indicates an open and transparent negotiation culture set at an executive level.

There are very minimal perceptions of uncomfortable employees among executives. Only 5% of executives felt their employees were somewhat uncomfortable with negotiations, which was consistent among genders. This could reflect minimal communication and transparency in these accounting practices.

However, it’s important to note that these perceptions may not fully capture the employees’ lived experiences. The data is based on the executives’ perceptions and may differ from the reality perceived by employees.



An increased volume of pay reviews indicates stronger confidence and more successful reviews, but implementation continues to be delayed.

The level of confidence in negotiating a pay review has increased from 2021 to 2024, more noticeably in male accountants. In 2021, 3 in 5 (60%) male accountants requested pay reviews, surpassing females (53%). Fast forward to 2024, this has increased for both genders, with 55% of females and 65% of males requesting a pay review.

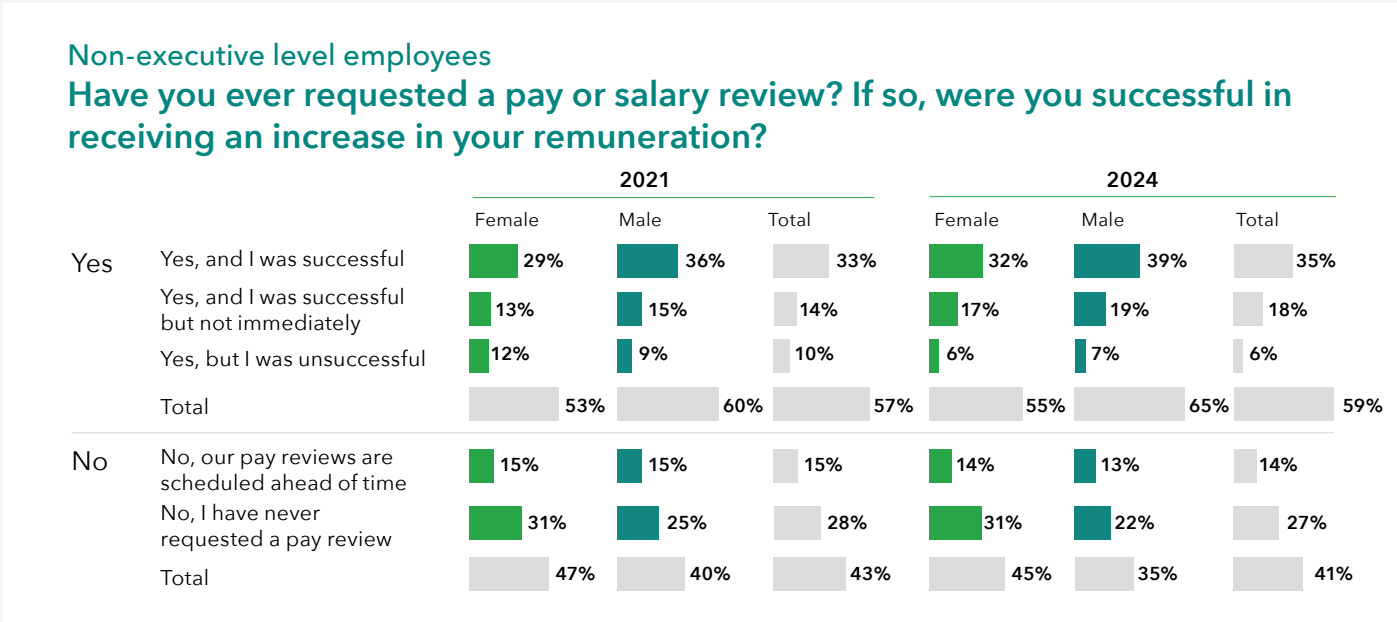
Meanwhile, some accountants remain less confident in their ability or awareness to request a pay review. In 2021, almost half (47%) of females never requested a pay review, surpassing males (40%). This stayed consistent in 2024, with 45% of females and 35% of males never requesting a pay review.

Delayed success in salary reviews, where employees were successful in their negotiation but was delayed, increased for both genders in 2024, especially for females who saw an increase from 13% to 17%.

This suggests that while employees are negotiating successfully, there is a lag in the implementation of these increases.

The proportion of employees who were unsuccessful in their salary negotiations is relatively small and has decreased by 2024, while the number of successful salary reviews have increased from 2021 to 2024 among both genders. This indicates an environment where salary negotiations are becoming more successful. This could also reflect improved negotiation strategies or improved regulations that allow for more salary increases.

This trend points towards a growing willingness among employees to actively engage in conversations about their remuneration, suggesting a shift towards a more aware workforce in terms of fair compensation.



The majority of employees received salary increases in the last year.

Almost 3 in 5 (59%) Australian accountants reported receiving a salary increase in the previous 12 months. This figure is consistent across genders, with 60% of females and 58% of males indicating their pay had risen in the last year.

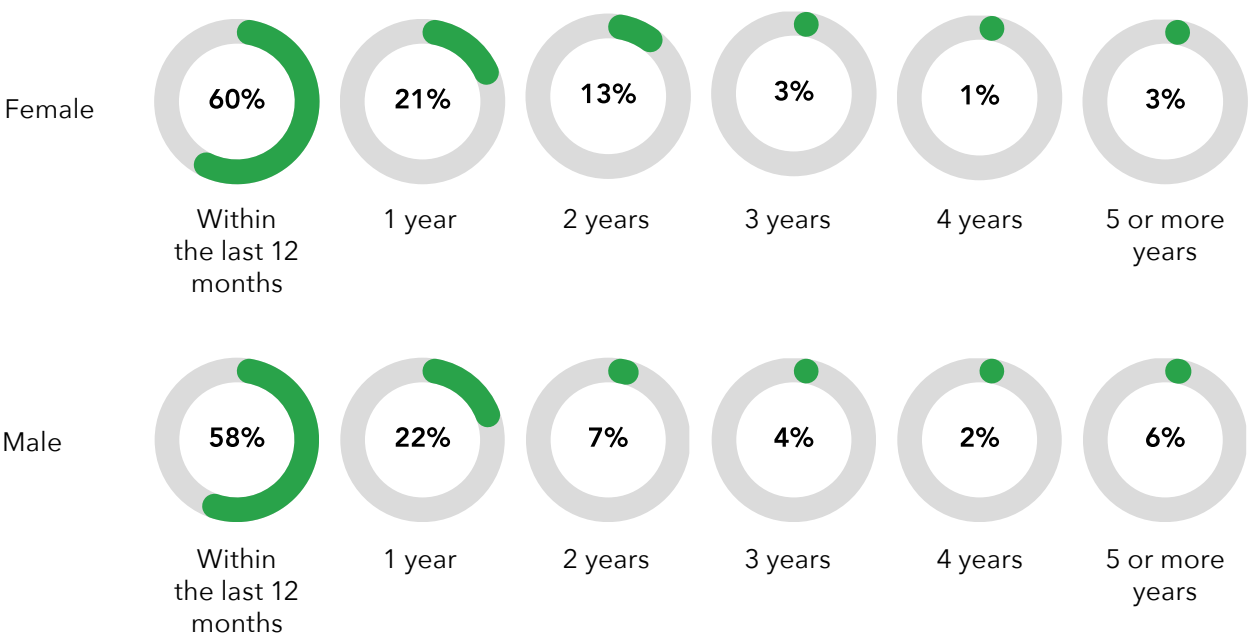
For those who last saw an increase one year prior, the numbers are relatively even, with more than 1 in 5 (21%) of females and 22% of males. The data shows a decrease in the number of employees who experienced their last pay rise two years ago, notably more among females (13%) than males (7%).

The percentage of employees who have experienced their last pay rise three years ago is even lower, at 3% for females and 4% for males, indicating that extended periods without pay raises are uncommon. This is a positive sign of effective salary review practices in accounting practices.

Overall, the data portrays a promising scenario where the majority of employees are experiencing regular salary reviews and increases, suggesting healthy remuneration reviews in Australian accounting practices.

Non-executive level employees When was the last time your salary or remuneration increased?

2024



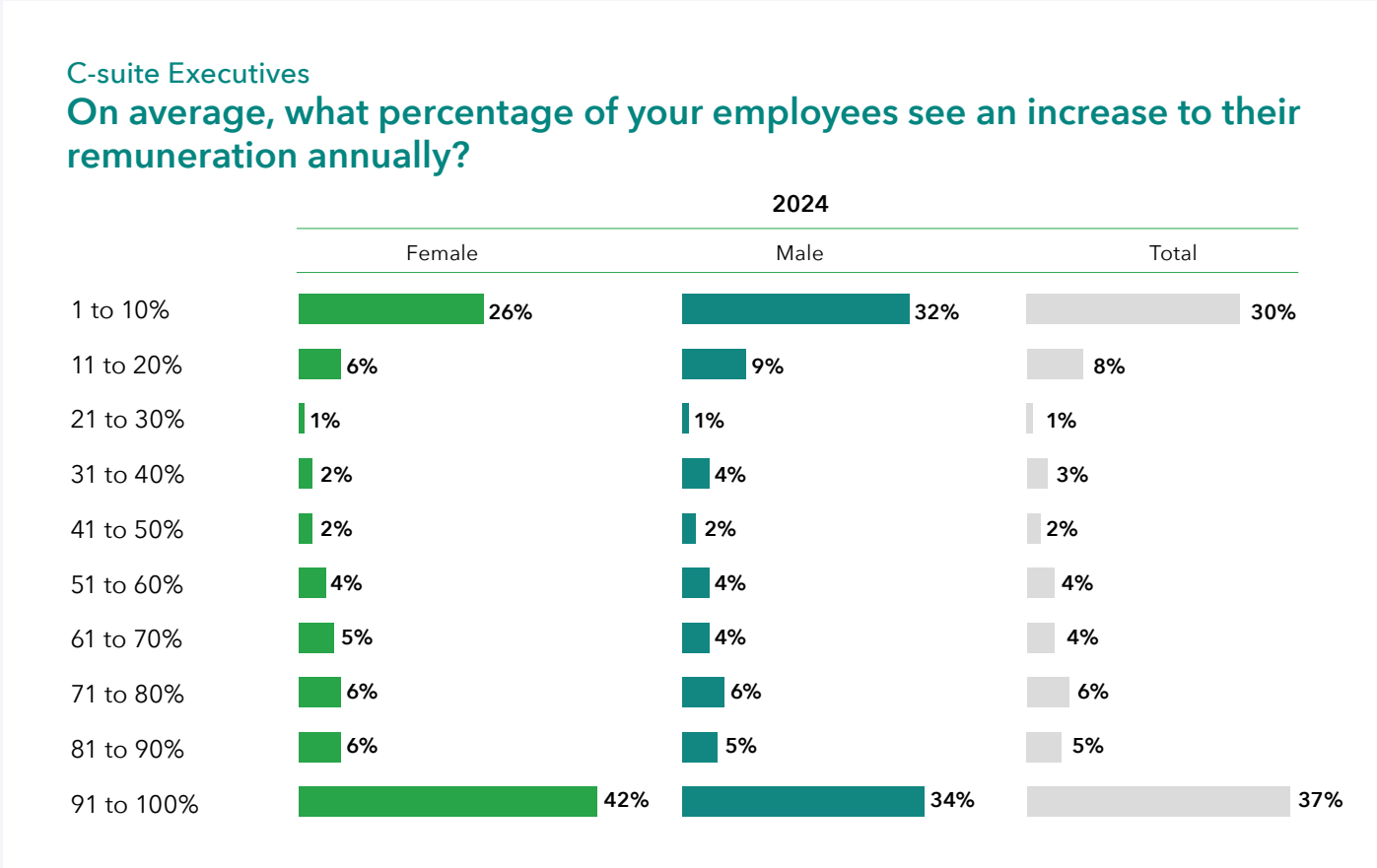
Annual remuneration increases for all employees is a common strategy among executives.

The results reveal that almost 2 in 5 (37%) executives reported that 91 to 100% of their employees receive a pay rise annually. Female executives reported higher levels of annual remuneration increase for their employees (42%), surpassing male executives (34%), illustrating a standard of consistent remuneration review.

Surprisingly, there is a segment of executives who are on the conservative end of the scale, with 26% of female executives and 32% of male executives reporting only 1 to 10% of their employees seeing an annual raise. This restriction is possibly indicating a selective remuneration increase policy or restrained financial conditions.

The distribution reveals that a majority of executives’ strategy is to maintain employee morale and retention through regular annual remuneration increase, accounting for 37% of executives, while a growing segment of executives are limiting annual remuneration increase.

Financial health, budget constraints, and individual performance metrics may be reasons for executives providing annual remuneration to a portion of employees, although the majority continue to provide almost all employees with an annual pay increase, indicating a common practice in the accounting industry.



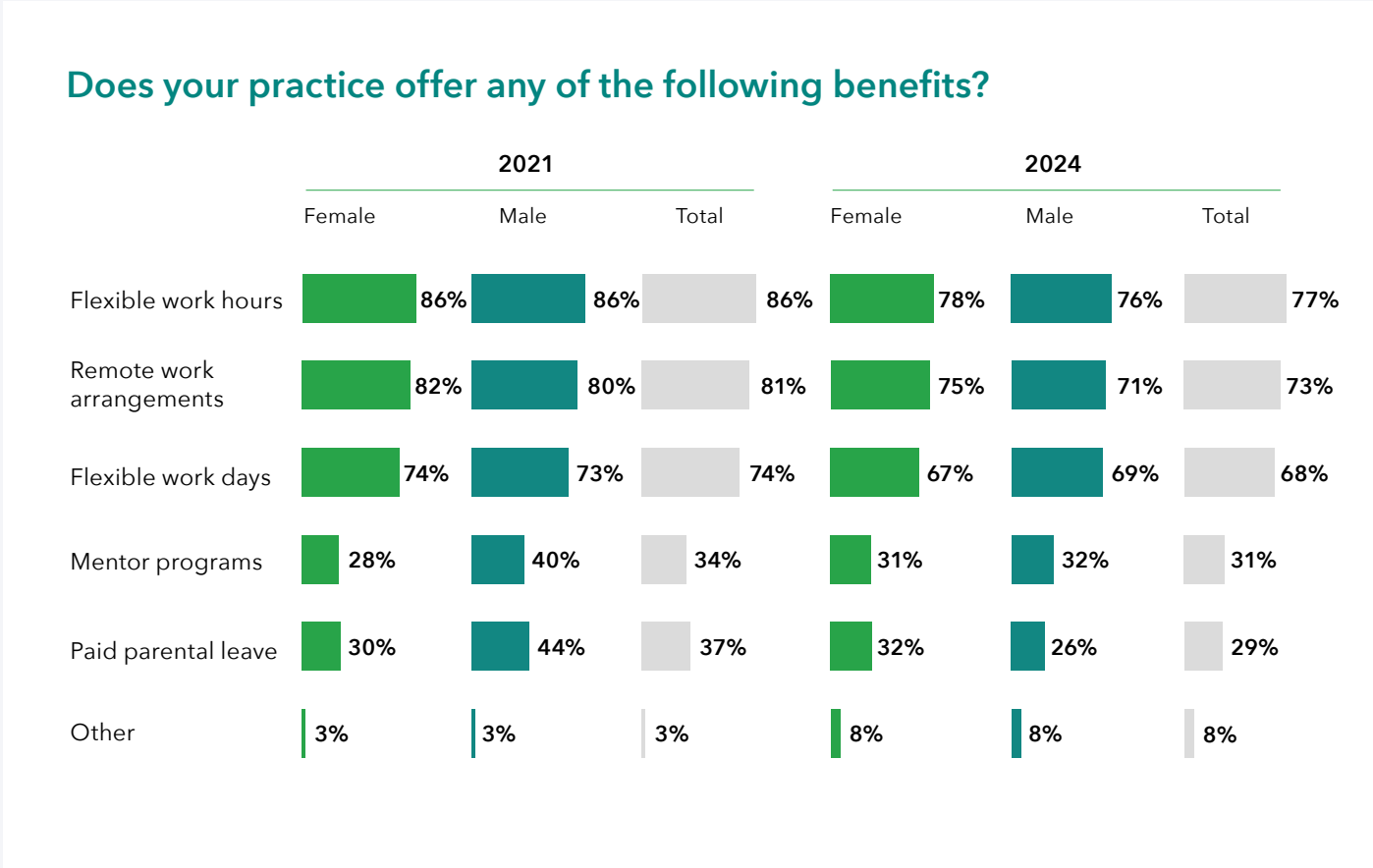
There is a limited availability of benefits, with a decline in flexible working options from 2021-2024.

The trend from 2021 to 2024 indicates a shift in the availability of flexible work options and benefits. In 2021, both female and male respondents reported high availability of flexible work hours (86%), which has seen a decline by 2024 to 78% for females and 76% for males. This suggests a trend of reducing flexibility in work hours across the board.

Remote work arrangements also decreased from 82% for females and 80% for males in 2021 to 75% and 71% respectively in 2024, reflecting a potential shift to in-office work or a change in remote work policies. Similarly, flexible workdays were reported by 74% of respondents in 2021, with a slight decrease to 68% in 2024.

Mentorship programs and paid parental leave, which are more structured benefits, show a modest decrease in reported availability. Mentorship programs have remained relatively stable, dipping only slightly from 34% to 31%. Paid parental leave saw a more significant decline, particularly among males, from 44% in 2021 to 26% in 2024.

The overall decrease in these benefits could be indicative of changing workplace policies post-COVID-19 or a shift in executives' priorities. These trends could have implications for employee satisfaction and retention, as well as for the attractiveness of these workplaces in a competitive job market.



SECTION **03**

Gender equity

A belief in leadership barriers for women remains consistent, while a notable rise is being seen among professionals who did not believe such barriers exist.

Over three years, from 2021 to 2024, the perception of barriers to women advancing into leadership roles has remained consistent. In 2021, the combined percentage of respondents who recognize these barriers, comprising those who agree or strongly agree, was 48%.

This has remained consistent in 2024, with more than 2 in 5 (42%) agreeing with the barriers women face. This suggests a stable acknowledgment of the issue among accounting professionals.

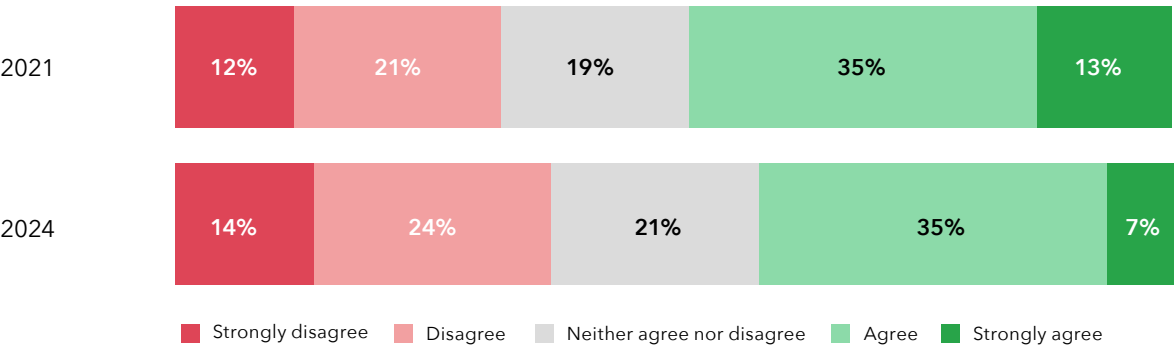
While the sentiment towards agreeing with the barriers remained consistent, the segment of professionals who do not believe these barriers exist have seen an increase in percentage.

A third (33%) of accounting professionals in 2021 did not believe such barriers existed, this belief has continued to rise in 2024 with almost 2 in 5 (38%) of accounting professionals who do not believe women face such barriers.

A slight change is observed in the proportion of neutral responses, which have increased from 19% to 21%. This increase may be a result of a large portion of professionals not pursuing leadership positions, or a lack of awareness surrounding gender issues leading to ambiguity.

In conclusion, while the overall percentage of respondents acknowledging gender barriers has not wavered, there is a notable rise in the faction that disagrees with this sentiment. This may be a result of active efforts to improve gender equality and career progression in accounting practices.

I believe that there are barriers to women advancing into leadership within the accounting profession.



There are high levels of acknowledgement of a gender pay gap, but also rising levels of uncertainty.

The perceptions of gender pay gap in the accounting profession between 2021 and 2024 highlights a gradual but noticeable shift toward the acknowledgement of pay disparities. In 2021, a combined total of 54% of respondents agreed (33%) or strongly agreed (21%) that a gender pay gap exists. This perception fell to 48% in 2024, with an increase in those who agreed (38%).

On the other end of the spectrum, the percentage of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree with the existence of a gender pay gap has seen a slight increase, from 27% in 2021 to 29% in 2024.

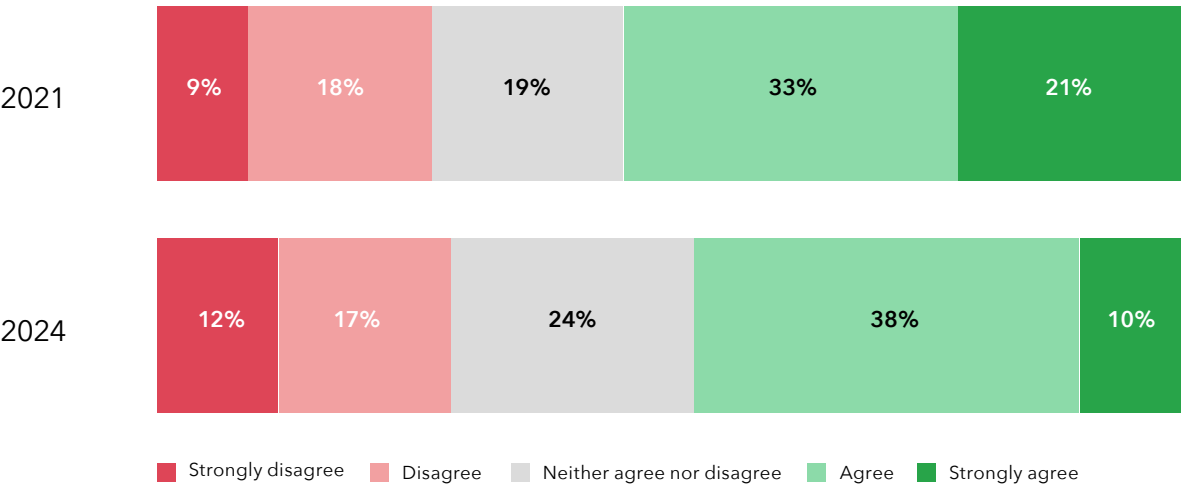
Despite this increase, the proportion of those who strongly disagree remained relatively stable, changing from 9% to 12%.

Although there is a slight rise in the number of sceptics, it is not as pronounced as the increase among those who acknowledge the pay gap.

Interestingly, the percentage of respondents who neither agree nor disagree increased from 19% in 2021 to 24% in 2024. This rise in neutrality suggests that respondents are not aware of the issue or have not experienced a gender pay gap's existence over time.

In summary, the trend from 2021 to 2024 indicates a strengthening in the acknowledgement of a gender pay gap in the accounting profession. The growing agreement, along with the decline in neutral responses, points to an increased awareness and recognition of the issue.

I believe that a gender pay gap exists in the accounting profession.



Almost 3 in 4 (73%) accounting professionals agree that diversity has commercial benefits.

Over the last three years, the majority of accounting professionals have acknowledged the commercial benefits to having gender diversity in accounting practices.

In 2021, almost 4 in 5 (77%) of accounting professionals acknowledged that there are commercial benefits to having gender diversity. In contrast, only 6% of accounting professionals had opposing views.

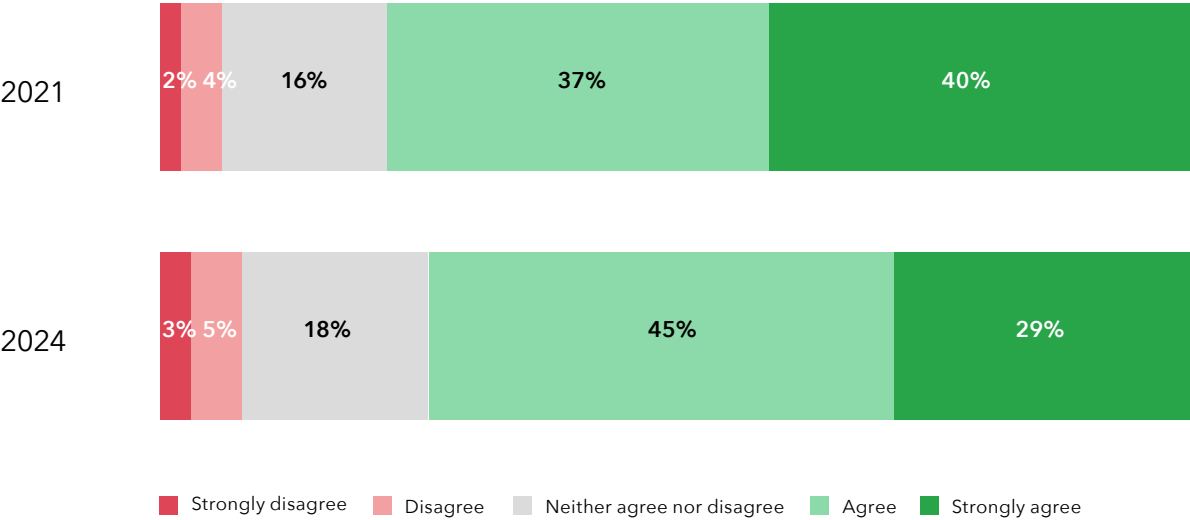
This has remained consistent In 2024, with almost 3 in 4 (73%) accounting professionals agreeing on commercial benefits. This indicates strong acknowledgement of the commercial opportunities in having a diverse workforce.

The number of professionals who did not believe there were any commercial benefits remained consistent at 8%.

The levels of uncertainty have risen since 2021, from 16% to 18%. This may be a result of a lack of awareness among non-executive employees of the benefits of diversity in the workforce.

In conclusion, there is a significant percentage of respondents acknowledging the commercial benefits of gender diversity in accounting practices, highlighting the importance and value of diverse teams.

I believe that there are commercial benefits to having gender diversity in accounting practices.



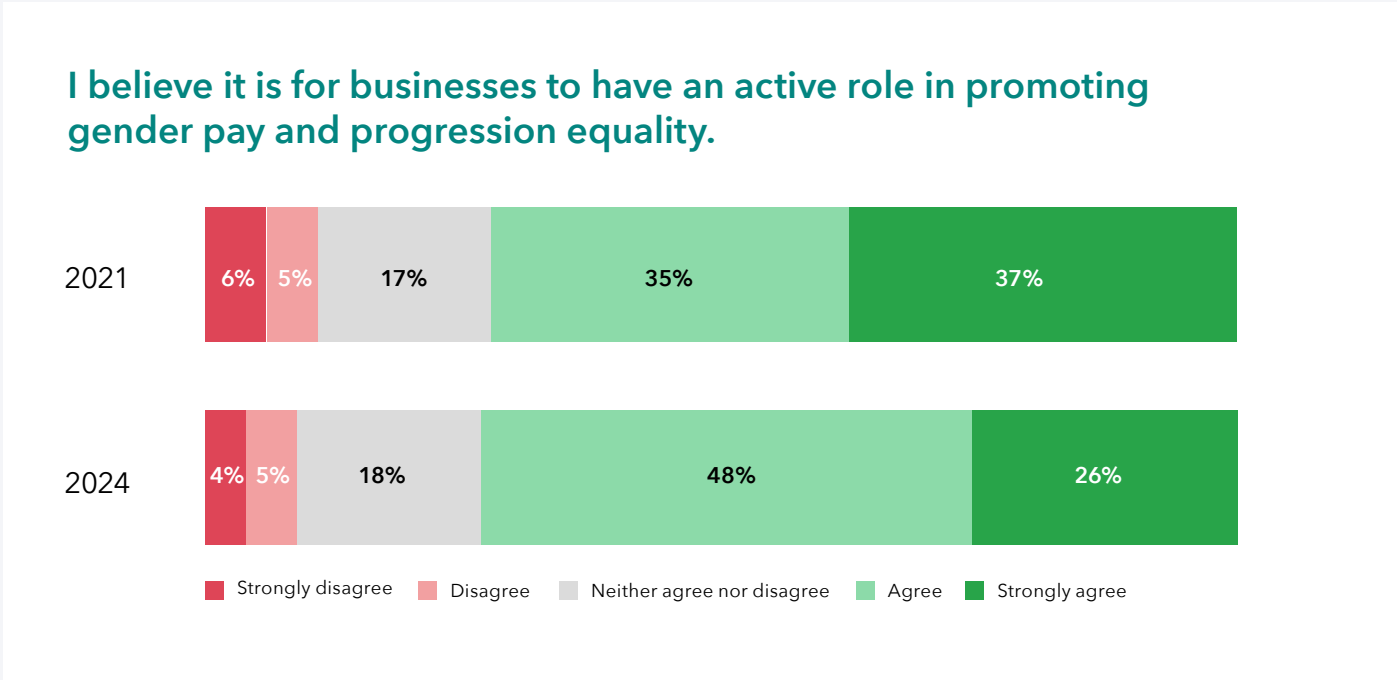
There has been significant support of businesses taking an active role in promoting gender pay and equity, with a minority opposing the view.

The trend from 2021 to 2024 reveals a significant positive shift in attitudes toward the role of business in fostering gender pay and progression equality. In 2021, the majority of accountants (72%) believed in the proactive engagement of businesses, with 35% agreeing and 37% strongly agreeing with the statement. This perception has remained significant in 2024, with 74% in agreement and a slight decrease to 26% in strong agreement. This emphasises accounting professionals’ support for the idea that businesses should play an active role.

The proportion of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree has remained relatively minor, falling from 11% in 2021 to 9% in 2024. This change indicates that there is a strong and growing belief in the responsibility of businesses to address gender pay equality, the opposition to this idea has not grown in a significant way, maintaining a steady minority.

An interesting observation is the shift from strong agreement to general agreement, which could imply that while the overall support for business involvement grows, there is a nuanced change in the intensity of that support. With the levels of strong agreement declining in 2024 and a rise in uncertainty levels, this may be a result of changing perceptions.

In conclusion, the data indicates a growing consensus on the importance of business involvement in gender pay and progression equality, with a noteworthy expansion in general agreement over the three years. The minority of the opposing view and the nuanced shift from strong agreement to agreement paint a picture of an evolving dialogue in the business community, with a steady push towards more tangible actions and policies to promote equality in the workplace.



Pay gap analysis is a diminishing practice among employers, with a declining trend from 2021-2024.

The data reveals a declining trend in the conduct of pay gap analysis by employers between 2021 and 2024. In 2021, 22% of employers reported performing such analyses, with male professionals more actively participating (27%) than their female counterparts (18%). However, by 2024 the conduct of pay gap analysis dropped to 17%.

Conversely, the percentage of employers not conducting pay gap analysis has increased from 57% to 60% in the same period. Notably, male non-participation surged from 58% to 65%, while female non-participation saw a slight reduction from 56% to 54%. This points to a growing disengagement among employers, particularly male professionals, regarding the examination of pay disparities between genders.

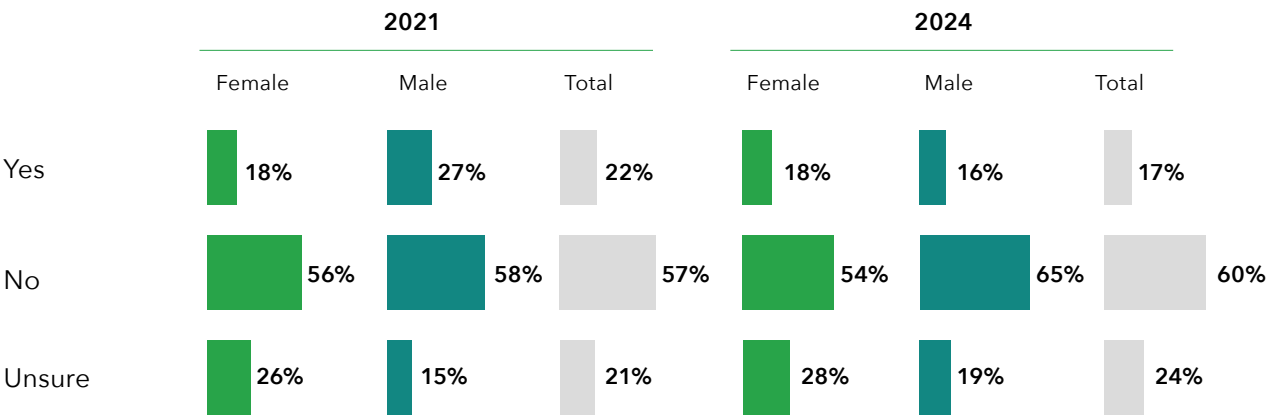
Uncertainty about whether pay gap analysis is being performed has also shifted from 21%

to 24%. The increasing uncertainty among both genders could reflect a lack of transparent communication in practices about their pay equity.

As seen above in this report, accounting professionals have expressed high levels of acknowledgement that a gender pay gap exists. With limited awareness and implementation of pay gap analysis, practices are running into the risk of unsatisfied employees leading to lower retention rates.

This downward trend in the implementation of pay gap analysis indicates limited awareness or lack of priority for executives. Employers proactively engaging in pay gap analysis may not only foster a more equitable workplace but also increase their reputation as a fair and inclusive workplace.

Does your practice conduct a pay gap analysis to review remuneration between male and female employees?



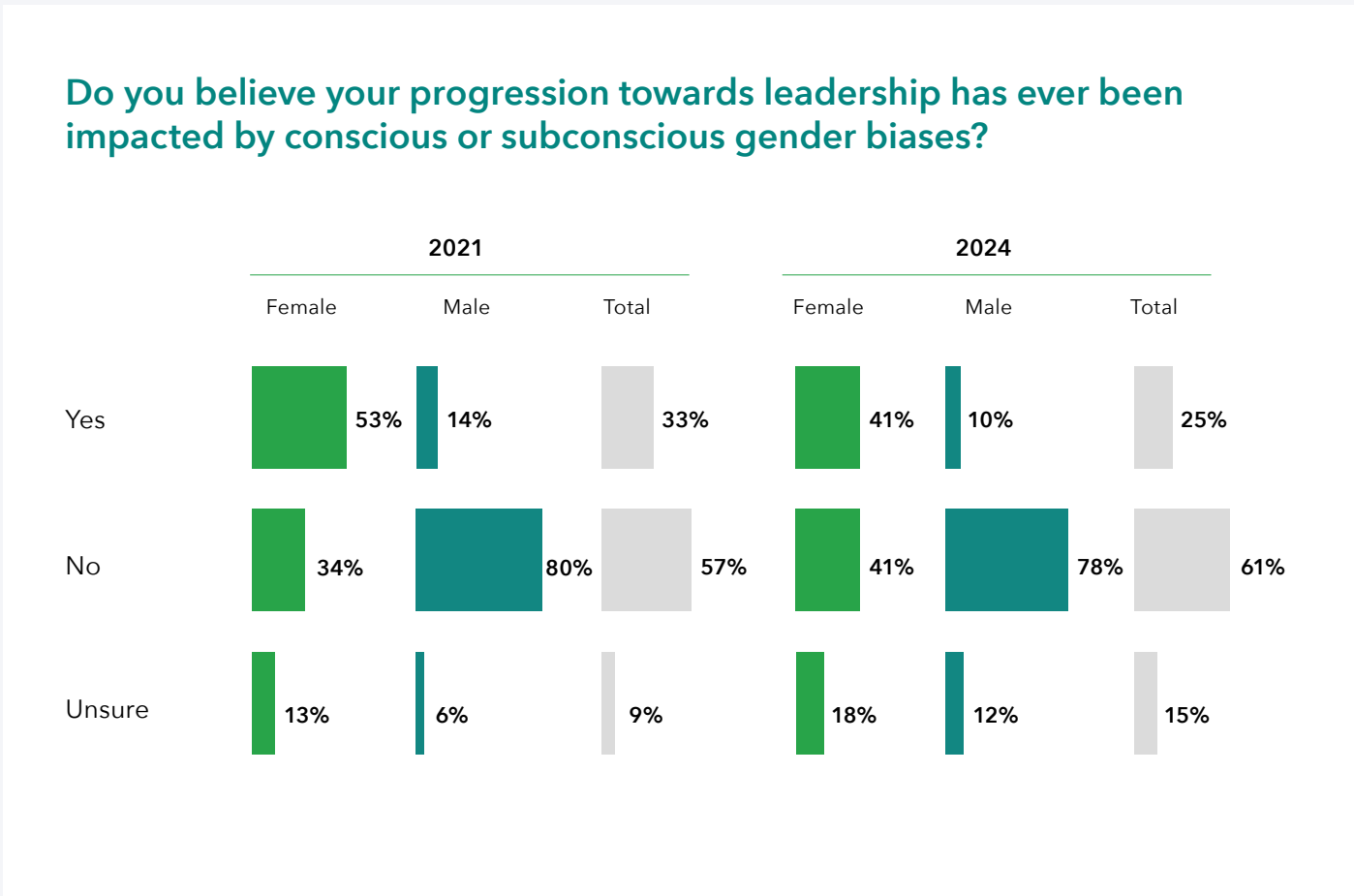
The perceived impact of gender biases on leadership progression is declining among both genders.

The analysis reveals a significant number of female professionals (53%) believed that their advancement towards leadership was affected by biases, while only 14% of males felt the same. By 2024, the percentage of females perceiving such an impact dropped to 41%, whereas for males, it slightly decreased to 10%.

Conversely, the majority of male professionals in 2021 (80%) did not believe that gender biases had affected their career progression towards leadership, a sentiment that slightly fell to 78% in 2024. The number of females who did not perceive gender biases as an impediment increased from 34% in 2021 to 41% in 2024.

The percentage of professionals unsure about the influence of gender biases on their leadership journey has risen over the three years, from 9% in 2021 to 15% in 2024. This increase in uncertainty might reflect a changing perception of gender roles in the workplace or a lack of clarity on what defines gender bias.

Overall, the data suggests a slight shift in the collective outlook on gender biases affecting leadership progression, with a decrease in females perceiving biases and a consistent majority of males denying any impact. The growing uncertainty could indicate an evolving understanding of gender biases in professional environments.



The majority of professionals believe practices are actively promoting and improving gender pay and progression.

In 2021, 73% of male respondents believed their practices were taking sufficient action to promote gender pay and progression, compared to 45% of females. By 2024, male confidence remained high at 68%, while female approval increased to 49%, suggesting an improvement in gender equity measures or perception thereof.

However, the percentage of respondents who were unsure about the adequacy of their practice’s actions towards gender equity

increased notably among females from 27% to 31%, and a slight increase among males from 16% to 21%. The total unsure response also grew, indicating limited communication and openness from executives regarding actions and initiatives leading to limited awareness among employees.

The data shows a decrease in the number of professionals stating that their practice is not doing enough, from 19% to 15% overall, with a more significant drop among females than males.



Accounting professionals believe enough action is taken by professional bodies to tackle gender pay and progression, with females more cautious and uncertain.

In 2021, there was a significant gap between the genders, with 40% of males affirming that their professional bodies were taking adequate action, as opposed to only 16% of females.

By 2024, male confidence in these efforts increased slightly to 43%, suggesting a growing approval of the measures implemented by professional bodies. Conversely, female approval showed a modest increase to 25%, indicating a more cautious view of the progress being made.

Despite the increases in positive perceptions, the data from 2024 reveals consistent levels of uncertainty, particularly among females, with 47% still unsure about the effectiveness of their professional body’s actions, consistent with the 50% uncertainty recorded in 2021. Male respondents’ uncertainty also remained high at 47% in 2021, showing a slight increase to 48% in 2024.

The percentage of professionals who do not believe enough action is taken by their professional bodies to address gender issues has decreased for both genders in 2024, with a notable drop from 34% to 28% among females and from 13% to 10% among males. This suggests a shift towards a more neutral or positive view of the progress being made in gender equity in the field.

Overall, while there is an observed increase in perceived action by professional bodies as reported by male respondents, a significant portion of females remain uncertain. This could highlight a communication gap between professional bodies and their members or reflect females’ caution or higher expectations of changes and efforts to address gender pay and progression in the accounting profession.

