

# Gender Diversity

In Transport & Infrastructure  
Leadership Teams

2022



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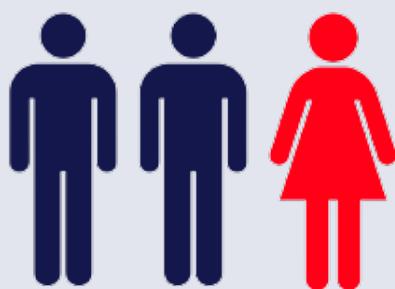


# Introduction

In the government's Hampton-Alexander Review in 2021 the FTSE 350 met the target for a third of the board and executive positions to be filled by women by the end of 2020. A new target has been set for 40% of board positions to be held by women by 2025.

The number of female Directors at FTSE 100 firms has increased by 50% in the last five years. The FTSE 100 achieved 39% female representation and FTSE 350 achieved 38% female representation across board positions.

Since the initial target was announced in 2016, we have published four reports. They have highlighted how the transport and infrastructure sectors are faring when it comes to gender diversity amongst executive teams.



**38%**  
OF FTSE 350 BOARD  
POSITIONS ARE NOW  
HELD BY WOMEN

In 2016 12% of Transport & Infrastructure companies had 33.3% or more female Directors on their executive teams.

In 2021, this figure rose to 31%.

There was no change in 2022, with 31% of T&I companies having female representation in at least a third of their executive roles.

Transport and infrastructure companies have often had a lack of female representation within the workplace, particularly at an executive level. But in recent years many companies have taken strides to improve gender diversity in senior level positions.

In the following report, we revisit our research to see how far we have come in the last year.

We focused our research on the executive management teams of the largest 150 companies within Transport and Infrastructure. We wanted to get a cross-section of the industry to compare. This included infrastructure owners and project developers, transport operators, consultancies, contractors, and other key suppliers.

# Findings for 2022

In the top 150 UK Transport & Infrastructure companies, there were twelve companies who had 50% or more female Directors.

When it comes to hitting the 33.3% target, transport and infrastructure was steadily improving year on year, but that has stalled in the last year at 31% of companies having a third of their executive teams and boards comprised of female leaders.

In this years' FTSE 350, only 5% of companies had a female CEO. In this area the top 150 transport and infrastructure companies are ahead of the wider UK market, with 13% female CEOs.

The number of companies with no female Directors at all for the FTSE 350 is now at 9%. Transport and infrastructure companies are catching up with the wider market with 10% of companies having no female executive directors at all down from 15% last year.

There is still much to be done to increase gender diversity within the sector. But as we can see across the past 6 years there have been steady improvements.

	2022	2021	
	Top 150 T&I Companies	FTSE 350	Top 150 T&I Companies
Female CEO	13%	5%	13%
Companies with no Female Directors	10%	9%	15%
33.3%+ Female Directors	31%	39%	31%

10%

OF TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE COMPANIES DON'T HAVE ANY FEMALE LEADERS



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# Within Transport & Infrastructure...



19

OUT OF 150 CEO'S ARE FEMALE



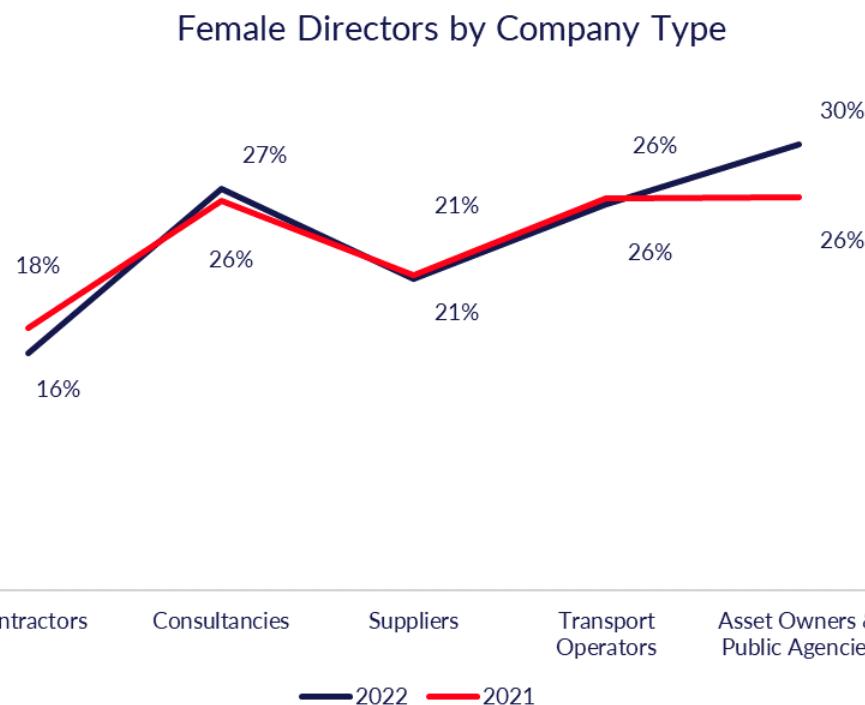
72%

OF FEMALE DIRECTORS LEAD SUPPORT FUNCTIONS



# Company Type

When we look at the breakdown by company type, we can see that diversity levels have stayed consistent in the rankings compared to last year across suppliers and transport operators. There has been a 4% increase in gender diversity at asset owners, a 1% increase at consultancies. Unfortunately, there has been a 2% decrease for contractors. As with the 2021 results; Contractors are lagging behind other company types.



	Number of Female Directors by Company Type				
	Contractor	Consultancy	Operator	Asset Owner	Supplier
CEO	1	6	4	6	2
Operations	8	7	16	27	1
HR	13	9	18	14	2
Legal	9	7	6	17	5
Corporate Affairs	3	8	2	6	1
Finance	7	7	9	13	3
IT	0	1	0	1	0
Other Central Support	6	14	14	12	0

## Key Findings

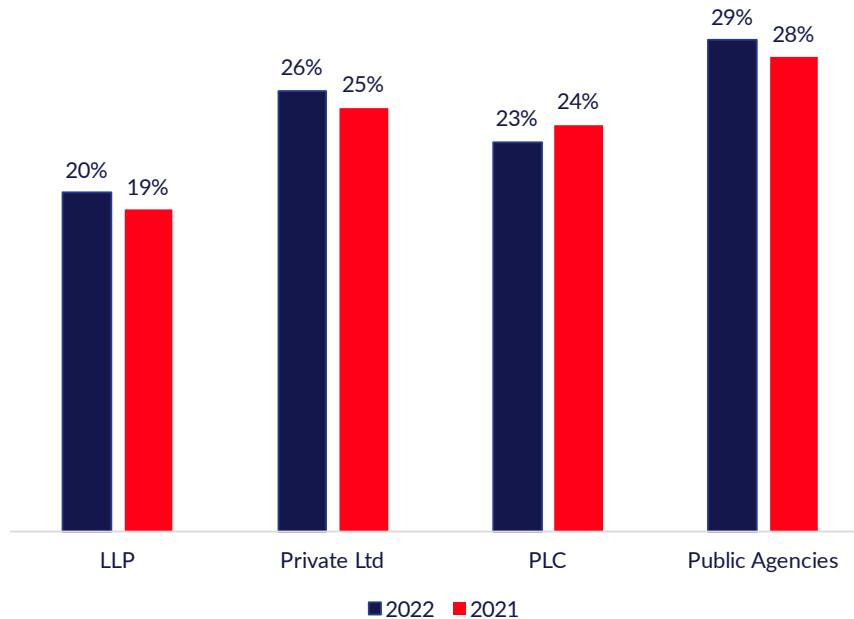
- Only 1 major contractor has a female CEO
- 95% of Asset Owners have female leaders on their executive teams
- 16% of executive directors in Contractors are women

# Ownership Structure

Public sector companies are still coming out on top when it comes to promoting women into executive positions with 29% female representation in their Director roles. Private Limited companies have had an increase of 1% female Directors in their executive leadership teams, PLC's have had a slight decrease. LLP's still hold their position as having the least female Directors in their executive leadership teams, but with a slight improvement on last year.



Female Directors by Ownership Structure



## Key Findings

- Public Sectors companies have the highest % of female Directors
- LLP's have decreased by 1%

# Function

A large proportion of female Directors tend to be in support functions such as HR, marketing, finance, legal etc. This seems to be true for the transport and infrastructure sectors as well with 72% of all the female Directors falling into one of these central support functions.

Aside from this year, the number of female Directors within core operations functions has typically grown year on year. This number is particularly significant for improving diversity because most CEOs are promoted from core operational roles.

Disappointingly, only 21% of female Directors were in core operations functions of; P&L divisional management, engineering, commercial or operations, which is down 3% from last year.

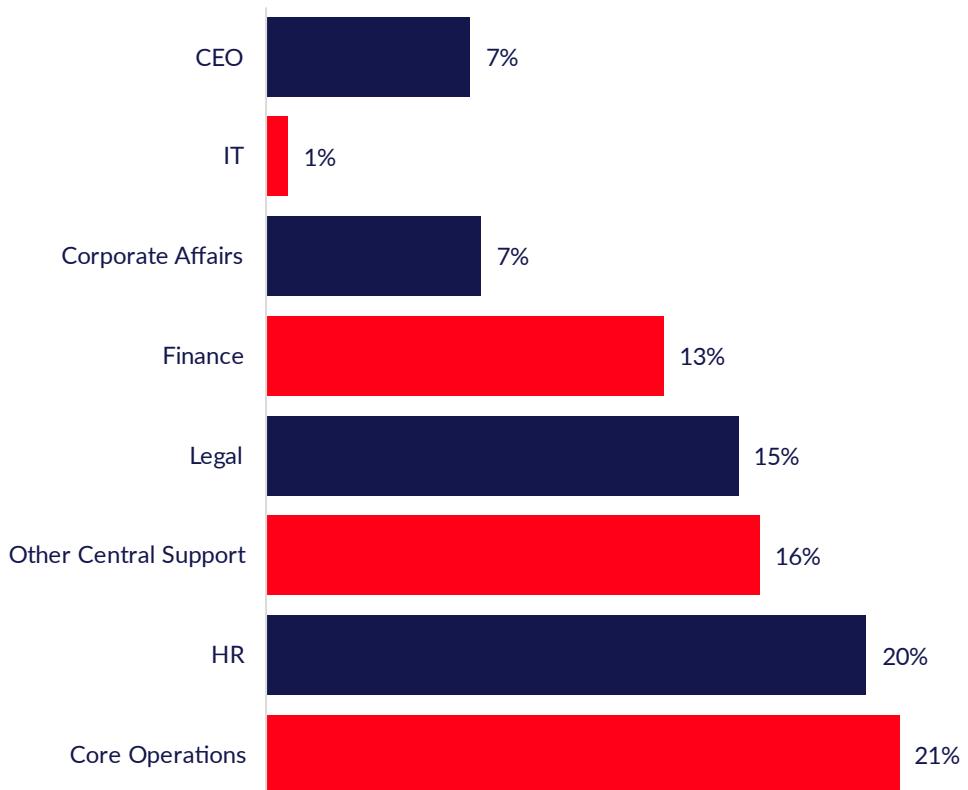
20% of all female Directors across Transport & Infrastructure are in the HR function.

## Key Findings

- 21% of female Directors are in core operations functions
- 7% of female Directors are CEOs



**Distribution of Total Female Directors by Function in T&I**



# How can we increase women in leadership?

As a business Newsom Consulting are constantly working with our clients and senior leaders across Transport & Infrastructure to do what we can to improve diversity across the industry.

While the statistics from the last few years show progression, it is clear that female diversity in leadership positions, particularly in core leadership functions, isn't increasing as fast as we need it to.

We caught up with Katie Smith, HR Director Infrastructure at Morgan Sindall and Shamit Weinberger Gaiger, Managing Director for West Coast Partnership Development to discuss what the industry needs to be doing to fast track an increase in female diversity.

## Flexible Working

Typically, client organisations and consulting firms can adopt more flexible working policies such as Arup who allow their 6,000 UK employees will have the flexibility to work their hours across all 7 days of the week, with only 2 days needing to be spent in the office. Contracting firms are still grappling with how to offer this. The transient location of capital projects can make it difficult to retain female executives with families. We recently conducted a survey and found that c71% of people working at contractors are still going into the office/site 3-5 days a week. Offering staff, the flexibility to work

from home, shared parental leave and adopting flexible working practices creates a more inclusive and diverse working culture.

"Most of the client contract frameworks are 5 years, and they expect their workforce to be transient and move. I've spoken to women who are very talented engineers who look to retrain out of engineering when they want to start a family, as they don't want to move around the country anymore and want to stay with their families.

You miss out a key age group who are looking to start families, they're missing out as they can't move. Morgan Sindall has some other, long-term frameworks, meaning that more women can settle for a long time in those area if it's a 10-20-year framework.

In the long-term we must do something around the transient nature of the industry and expecting people to move. There needs to be a government review and, we need to normalise shared parental leave and equalise paternal pay, which allows women to stay in their career."

Katie Smith, Morgan Sindall

# Move Women from Functional Leadership Roles to Operational Roles

Operational leadership roles are still typically male-dominated, although the industry has taken great strides to improve this in recent years there is still a long way to go. Operational leadership roles are typically the most common path for CEO, however with only 27% of female Directors in core operational roles (CEO and Operational) there is still improvements to be made

72% of female leaders within the top transport and infrastructure organisations sit in support functional roles such as HR, Marketing, Legal etc.

"We tend to want people who have done the job before but it's a vicious circle. Not a lot of women have operational experience.

Putting women with great leadership skills into the role and surrounding her with people with the relevant experience can increase and create a better talent pool and put women in more senior positions. Having a competent team is crucial to compliment the woman's leadership skills."

Shamit Weinberger Gaiger, West Coast Partnership Development



## Mentoring and Development Programmes

Having female role models in place is key. It can help inspire and encourage women in the industry who want to progress to an executive level.

Mentoring and Development Programmes help women in the sector expand their personal networks, build relationships, and create opportunities.

In recent years we have seen the construction and infrastructure sectors really stepping up on this front. In transport we have seen the rise of "Women in Transport" and "Women in Rail." For the Built Environment there is "The National Association of Women in Construction."

We partner with SWiFT – Senior Women in (or formerly in) UK Rail or Transport. Founded by Women in Rail and in conjunction with the UK

rail industry's Connected Leaders programme is made up of passionate like-minded individuals, both male and female looking to foster the development of high potential women in the transport arenas. They are hosting a series of networking events where there will be the opportunity to network with other leaders in industry.

Shamit leads SWiFT and is a Board Trustee for Women in Rail. She says;

“Role models are really important. Seeing them and having access to them to champion, is crucial to creating that aspiration to women to go into senior roles. It gives you a network to access advice.”

Shamit Weinberger Gaiger, West Coast Partnership Development



## Transform Corporate Culture

Having an inclusive culture is crucial when it comes to attracting and retaining gender diverse talent. We need to change people's mindsets and make sure that we don't keep hiring people from the exact same backgrounds. Using feedback from employee pulse surveys can help to target areas that require improvement.

Morgan Sindall don't set diversity quotas, but instead measure from homogenous groups. You don't want more than a 70/30 split aka no more than 70% of people from one homogenous group.

“You need to normalise that women are in the sector, or people of different ethnic backgrounds. Change people's mindsets, stop replacing what you've got, people are unconsciously biased towards those who are similar to them.”

Katie Smith, Morgan Sindall

Katie also suggested that she would like to see companies start to measure who comes from outside of the sector. “You get different perspectives. Morgan Sindall don't like to use tick boxes but rather look at what the company needs, if someone doesn't have the traditional background this can work well.”

## Preventing Unconscious Bias

Unconscious Bias training is crucial when it comes to recruiting gender diverse talent and promoting within the company.

We are hard-wired to favour those who we deem similar to us. Whether this is someone of the same gender, class, educational background, or colour. This can cause many issues, particularly when hiring and promoting from within the company.

Blind recruitment such as removing names, gender, age can prevent biased decisions. Job descriptions and adverts are also a great way to avoid bias. Women are typically more deterred from applying to jobs if they feel that they don't meet all the exact job criteria. By not setting such a strict criterion you will open your talent pool to a much more diverse set of candidates. Using gender neutral language is also key to attract a diverse mix of people.

Alongside this, it is important to partner with search firms and agencies who are aligned with your values, and who understand the importance of providing a diverse shortlist.

“The industry has a tendency to be really specific on requirements which can put women off from applying, keeping it a bit broader helps gender diversity.”

Katie Smith, Morgan Sindall

## Long Term Planning

There are a lot of tactics that companies can start to implement immediately to improve diversity on their leadership teams. However, real, significant change will take time and a long-term approach.

Using internal talent mapping to identify women with good leadership potential who are several levels down from the SLT and then developing leadership programmes for them can deliver results in the medium-term. This demonstrates to peers that the company will promote female talent.

The long-term success in achieving equality and diversity depends on attracting more women into the sector.

“In the longer term there needs to be a massive campaign from primary to secondary education and make the sector attractive. Talk the language that resonates with young people, be creative with how you present this, we need to move away from seeing the sector as hard hats and construction but look into digital, CX, state of the art engineering exciting projects and engineering challenges. We are not promoting the state-of-the-art future thinking to the younger generation, engage them make it appealing.”

Shamit Weinberger Gaiger, West Coast Partnership Development

# Methodology

We compiled the list of the top 150 UK transport & infrastructure companies by selecting the largest UK businesses in each of the different types of company including consultant, contractor, operator, infrastructure asset owner, public sector agency and supplier. We ensured each sector of infrastructure was well represented including rail, aviation, roads, water, power. We identified the senior executive team of each business within the UK as of July 2022.

Where we have discussed the statistics of the CEO role, this has been the CEO or the nearest equivalent in the most senior executive leadership position, i.e., for an LLP it has been the overall Senior Managing Partner.

For the purposes of this report a Core Operational leadership role in the executive team has been a direct report to the CEO who manages one of the core divisions or functions of the business. In a contractor or asset owner this would include a Chief Operating Officer, Chief Projects Officer, Group Commercial Director, or Group Engineering Director, in a consultant this would include a Divisional Managing Director and equivalent reporting to the CEO.

Special thanks to our contributors Shamit Weinberger Gaiger and Katie Smith.



# About the Author

My introduction to the transport and infrastructure sectors began in the early 90's, during work experience in the London office of a well-known firm of engineering consultants. Enthused by the buzz of major projects I went on to study Civil Engineering at the University of Liverpool, writing my dissertation on major rail projects and specifically why many major infrastructure projects miss programme, little did I know this topic would frequently resurface years later in discussions with clients and candidates. While I had enthusiasm for the industry my talents lay in other areas away from site or a design office, and I embarked on a career in executive recruitment.

Since 1998 I have helped clients in the public and private sector recruit scarce leadership talent in the infrastructure, transport, engineering, and construction markets. Having worked for one of the UK's largest independently owned executive recruiters and then a start-up (backed by James Caan's private equity firm), I started my own search business to create the leading executive search firm for the transport and infrastructure sectors. Outside work I am normally to be found with my wife and young family, following Liverpool FC's quest to return to former glory, six-a-side football (with similarly immobile teammates), playing tennis (if the suns out), trying to master the art of the perfect BBQ (again, if the suns out) and travelling overseas to experience new countries, places and food.



**Jim Newsom**  
Managing Director

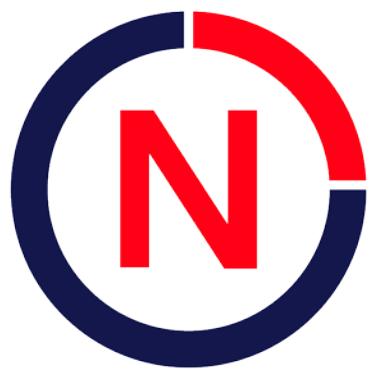
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