

The Great Reshuffle in Major Projects – a study

Study Report

Highlights from the Major
Projects Association special
study February 2023



**MAJOR PROJECTS
ASSOCIATION**

Introduction

Through analysis of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) data of protected characteristic groups one Major Projects Association member observed a **higher female employee 'churn' rate** in 2021 compared to previous years. The global pandemic (Covid-19) may have contributed to this, and we were keen to explore the data across the membership to see if any trends emerged.

Publications worldwide have been referencing the high turnover as the 'great resignation' or 'the great reshuffle' – and our interest was to understand if this rate of **voluntary** movement was specifically higher with women working in major projects in the UK than across other sectors.

Objective

To gather sufficient data, to determine if female attrition figures within the Major Projects Association membership were consistent with those experienced by other sectors over the 2019–2021 period.

Methodology

A survey of member organisations was undertaken by requesting data from HR departments on the number of new starters and recent leavers for the 2019–2021 period.

To minimise the work required to complete the questionnaire, we simply asked them to use the last full reporting period that most closely matched their normal reporting activities – it could be calendar year, financial year or other defined period, for example January to December 2021 or April 2020–April 2021. We also asked for a breakdown of the data by sex, age and ethnicity.

From the responses received we were able to calculate the number of recruitment transactions for each organisation – how many people left and how many joined – to see if this rate of churn was comparable for men and women. We were also able to calculate if an organisation had become more or less gender balanced over the period in question and, by looking at the whole cohort of respondees, whether gender balance had shifted for this sample of the major projects space.

Having established a churn rate for the organisations which responded, we were able to compare those rates with the benchmark provided by a UK employee support and retention study and other figures quoted in the

business press. This provided an immediate indication of the scale of the issue within major projects and if it was better or worse than wider business sectors.

Data

We received responses from 13 companies. This represented a sample population of just under 40,000 employees. All responses provided gender and age breakdowns. Ethnicity data was incomplete.

Industry trends

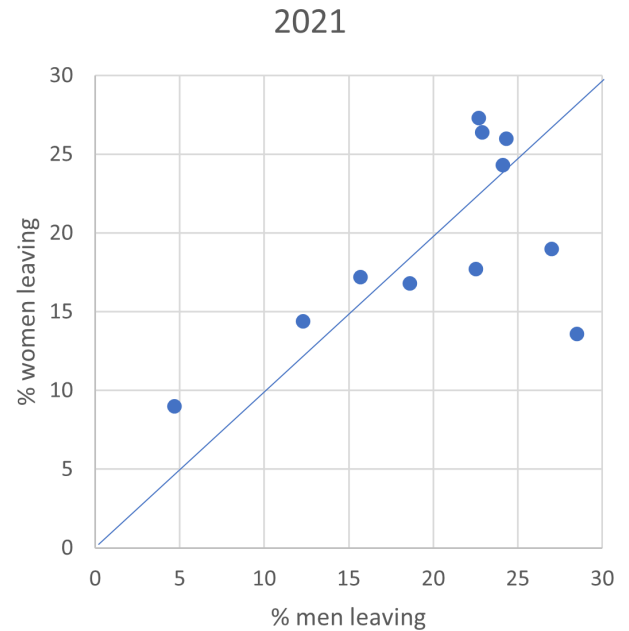
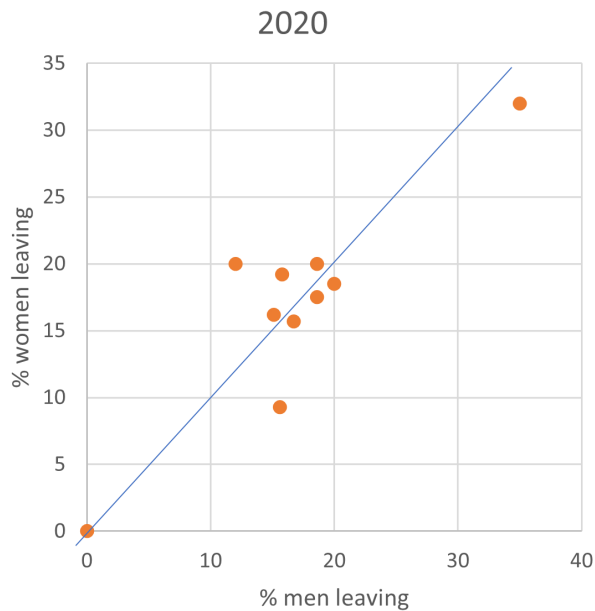
A widely quoted study the **UK Employee Support and Retention Study**, for Wildgoose Limited, surveyed 133 companies and found that 33% of women had started a new position in the last year compared to 19% of men. They also analysed their data by age, with 40% of 18–35s having changed job compared to 20% of the over 35s.

Other studies on the 'great resignation' and 'great reshuffle' phenomena have quoted that 19% of men and up to 30% of women were looking to leave their role during 2021. PwC have also produced a study which reported that 18% of all employees intended to switch jobs in 2022, with further recent publication of their **Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey** finding that globally one in five workers planned to quit their jobs in 2022.

Results

Analysis indicates that whilst there were some individual companies that experienced the loss of more women (by percentage) than men, and a greater churn rate of women into and out of the business, these were isolated cases. When looking at the overall sample that completed the survey **the cohort has actually become more female by a small amount – up from 26.75% to 27.1% – over the two-year period in question.** The number of 'transactions' – leaving or arriving – is also as would be predicted for the gender balance in the companies in question. The data also indicated that we have **emerged from Covid with a younger cohort – 42.5% under 35, up from 40.2%.**

It appears that the major projects sectors are **not** seeing anything near the 30% for women overall, (there is just one organisation that experienced 30%+ leavers for male and female) although there are a number of companies that break the 19% barrier for either male and/or female leavers.



Figures 1 and 2: % male and female leavers for the years 2020 and 2021

Conclusion

Whilst the study is only based on responses from 13 companies, the circa 40,000 employees that this represents is a credible sample size.

The major projects sectors do not appear to be seeing anything markedly worse than the business economy in general and it does not seem to be resulting in an overall loss of female talent – which was the original question that we set out to answer.

This is a helpful result, as it suggests that major projects are not losing female or young talent as a result of pandemic-related social change. This provides a sound baseline on which to grow the diversity of our project delivery teams.

Further reading

The UK Employee Report and Retention Survey Wildgoose

How the Great Resignation Will Shape HR and the Future of Work Workhuman Resources

'Great Attrition' or 'Great Attraction'? The choice is yours McKinsey & Company

The Great Resignation, The Great Reset, The Great Reshuffle and The Great Retention
Rebecca Riley, Birmingham Blogs, University of Birmingham

Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2022 PwC Global

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