



INTERNATIONAL
MARITIME RESCUE
FEDERATION

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MARITIME SEARCH AND RESCUE

INCLUSION, ROLES, CHALLENGES, IMPROVEMENTS

Full report on the International Maritime Rescue Federation's
#WomenInSAR Survey, October 2020 - January 2021

Supported by Trinity House



TRINITY HOUSE

1st edition, 8 March 2021

THE IMRF

The International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) is the international non-governmental organisation working to develop and improve maritime search and rescue (SAR) capacity around the world.

The IMRF brings together the world's maritime SAR organisations and has both voluntary and governmental organisations as members. As well as capacity building, the IMRF also has an advocacy role, providing an international voice for its members.

It is the only maritime SAR NGO with consultative status at the United Nations 'International Maritime Organization (IMO).

#WOMENINSAR

IMRF launched its #WomenInSAR initiative at the World Maritime Rescue Congress in June 2019.

The project aims

- to increase the representation of women in the maritime sector generally, in support of the IMO's Empowering Women in Maritime initiative; and
- to provide support for, and raise the profile of, women in the maritime SAR sector specifically.

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THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MARITIME SEARCH AND RESCUE

A report on the IMRF's #WomenInSAR Survey, October 2020 - January 2021

FOREWORDS

Theresa Crossley, CEO, International Maritime Rescue Federation

In common with other parts of the maritime sector, women are greatly under-represented across maritime search and rescue (SAR), in both volunteer and paid positions.

The IMRF launched its #WomenInSAR initiative to increase the representation of women in the sector and provide support for women and girls involved in maritime SAR. The results of this survey, the first of its kind, will help the IMRF to focus our efforts in improving awareness of, and access to, the opportunities available to women in maritime SAR.

We are very grateful to Trinity House, for their generous support for this initiative and for their wider commitment to closing the gender gap in the maritime sector as a whole.

Captain Ian McNaught, Deputy Master, Trinity House

As a charity dedicated to safeguarding shipping and seafarers, we at Trinity House have been providing education, support and welfare to the seafaring community for more than 500 years.

While many may know us for our efforts as a General Lighthouse Authority to make our seas safer for mariners, we are also a long-standing supporter of efforts to improve opportunities for women and girls in the maritime sector through our successful cadet scheme and the many initiatives and projects that benefit from grants from the Trinity House Maritime Charity.

'You cannot be what you cannot see.' I am pleased that we can stand alongside the IMRF and support the #WomenInSAR Initiative and elevate the profile of a project that seeks to raise awareness, break down barriers, realise potential and save lives.

Men and women working in maritime search and rescue save the lives of those in trouble at sea, providing a vital service; it is only right that women should be equally represented across all roles and we are proud to support this initiative.

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REPORT STRUCTURE

This report is in two parts: an Executive Summary and the Full Report (this document). Both parts of the report may be obtained from the IMRF website (www.international-maritime-rescue.org).

Of the questions in the survey upon which this report is based, 17 were for women only; eight were for both women and men to complete; and eight were for search and rescue (SAR) organisations. This report follows the basic structure of the survey.

GLOSSARY

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| BAME | Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic |
| ICAO | International Civil Aviation Organization - an agency of the United Nations |
| IMO | International Maritime Organization - an agency of the United Nations |
| IMRF | International Maritime Rescue Federation - see www.international-maritime-rescue.org |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| RCC | Rescue Coordination Centre - established in line with IMO and ICAO Conventions and guidance to receive notifications of distress cases and coordinate the SAR response (sometimes in conjunction with other functions) |
| RSC | Rescue [coordination] Sub Centre - subordinate to an RCC |
| SAR | search and rescue |
| SAR aircraft | a rotary or fixed-wing aircraft having SAR as at least one of its primary functions |
| SAR unit | a boat or ship, aircraft or shore team at least partly dedicated to SAR, as opposed to 'additional facilities' such as ships in the area which assist - both definitions derive from ICAO and IMO Conventions and guidance |
| SAR unit support staff | for the purposes of this survey, anyone who provides immediate support to a sea, air or land SAR unit, as opposed to those in administrative support or training roles - engineers, launchers, etc |
| SAR vessel | for the purposes of this survey, any boat or ship whose primary function is SAR - this can range from small inflatable fast rescue craft to large vessels designed for multi-day missions |
| Shoreside SAR response team | for the purposes of this survey, a team who work in maritime SAR on or near the shore - this includes lifeguards, search teams, cliff and mud rescue teams, etc |
| STEM | science, technology, engineering and mathematics |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The IMRF launched its #WomenInSAR initiative at the World Maritime Rescue Congress in Vancouver in June 2019. The principal aim is to encourage more women and girls to take roles in maritime SAR by providing support for, and raising the profile of, women in the maritime SAR sector.

1.2 #WomenInSAR supports the “Empowering Women in Maritime” initiative of the International Maritime Organization. The IMO has noted that women represent only two percent of the world’s 1.2 million seafarers. The situation is thought to be similar in many parts of the global maritime SAR sector. The initiative also supports United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.

1.3 Since the launch of the #WomenInSAR initiative, the IMRF has introduced the #WomenInSAR Award to raise awareness of the issue and, in collaboration with the IMO, has organised the first all-female maritime SAR training . IMRF member organisations are hosting #WomenInSAR Operation Days and #WomenInSAR activities in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The IMRF aims to produce recommendations and guidance on best practice for increasing the representation of women in both volunteer and paid SAR capacities. Other actions may result from the initiative as it develops.

1.4 To support this work, the IMRF first addressed the lack of hard data on the current status of women in SAR by organising a global #WomenInSAR Survey. The aim was to discover what people in all kinds of roles across the SAR sector think about gender balance and equality of opportunity across the maritime SAR sector and - crucially – what might be done to improve things. Specific objectives were to gather information on:

- how many women are working in the maritime SAR sector today
- what kinds of roles they are working in
- what barriers they face
- what individuals and organisations think can be done to improve the situation; and
- to establish a comprehensive and accurate benchmark, enabling the IMRF to better focus its support and to measure the success of the #WomenInSAR initiative.

1.5 The main survey was launched on 15 October 2020, with a deadline of 19 January 2021 for submitting responses. The survey was open to all, although some of the questions were reserved only for those identifying as female. All responses were treated as being in strict confidence. No individuals or organisations are identified in this report.

1.6 IMRF member organisations and individual contacts were notified of the survey, and periodically reminded of its importance, by email. Recipients were encouraged to promote the survey on their own networks and to pass the survey link to as many individuals as they could. A press release was issued and the survey was promoted on social media. The survey form was made freely and prominently available

on the IMRF website. Participants in an IMRF #WomenInSAR webinar held on 11 January 2021¹ were encouraged to complete the survey if they had not already done so.

1.7 IMRF member organisations typically provide dedicated SAR facilities - sea, air and/or land response units, rescue coordination centres, communications, training, support, administration etc. Other units and organisations can become involved in maritime SAR; shipping in the area of the incident, for example. The operators of these additional facilities were not included in this survey: it focussed on SAR professionals, including volunteers. Individual respondents identified their own SAR roles: see 'Survey respondents' below.

1.8 Interim analysis indicated that many individuals could not answer wider questions concerning the situation in their parent organisation as a whole and so a short additional survey was sent to IMRF member organisations in January 2021. The final deadline for this part of the survey was 4 February. Not all organisations providing maritime SAR facilities are IMRF members, and not all members were able to respond by the survey deadline. This means that one of the survey objectives - assessing how many women work in maritime SAR today - could not be fully met.

1.9 This document reports the two surveys' results. The survey structure has been largely replicated in this report. The answers to some questions have been grouped for ease of understanding. Details which identify individuals or organisations have been omitted. Many of the survey questions offered a number of set response options to choose from, with an 'other' box provided where necessary to enable additional free-text answers. Set responses are reported as percentages (rounded to the nearest 0.1%). The free-text answers are summarised in the body of the report under each question. A few quotations taken from the free-text answers have been amended for clarity or to abide by the commitment to confidentiality.

1.10 Discussion of the responses to the survey questions may be found in section 23. Conclusions are listed in section 24, and recommendations in section 25.

1.11 There was a good response to the survey overall, with 1655 valid submissions received from a total of 48 countries.² Not all respondents answered all questions: typically around 30% did not answer a particular question. Of the individual responses, 85% of the responses came from northern Europe. A further 8% came from North America. This does not fully reflect the geographical distribution of IMRF membership³ or of the global SAR community. While the survey results are undoubtedly useful, global conclusions cannot necessarily be extrapolated from the available data, although anecdotal evidence suggests that they might apply.

1.12 However, the information obtained from this survey should assist the IMRF, its members and SAR organisations generally to consider and address issues around the employment of women in SAR. A main

¹ The webinar is available to view on the IMRF website, www.international-maritime-rescue.org.

² A further 7 individual responses (0.4% of the total) were discounted as invalid.

³ The numbers of IMRF member organisations providing SAR services as of 1 January 2021 were, by region: Africa 12, Asia-Pacific and Australasia 14, Europe 47, Indian Ocean & Middle East 1, North & Central America and Caribbean 11, South America 4.

driver of conducting the survey has been to aid SAR organisations' understanding and responses in this important area.

1.13 The #WomenInSAR initiative, including the survey and this report, has been made possible by generous financial support from Trinity House, a UK charity dedicated to safeguarding shipping and seafarers, and providing education, support and welfare services to the seafaring community. The IMRF wishes to record its sincere gratitude to Trinity House for supporting the #WomenInSAR initiative.

2. SURVEY RESPONDENTS

2.1 1655 survey responses were received from a total of 48 countries. Of these 1637 were from individuals and 18 from SAR organisations, who answered a shorter version of the survey. The data on geographical distribution below relates to all 1655 responses. The remainder of the data in this section was collected from the 1637 individuals only.

2.2 Responses were received from all IMRF regions, as follows:

| | | |
|---|------|-------|
| • Africa | 32 | 1.9% |
| • Asia-Pacific and Australasia | 63 | 3.8% |
| • Europe | 1413 | 85.4% |
| • Indian Ocean and the Middle East | 2 | 0.1% |
| • North & Central America and the Caribbean | 138 | 8.3% |
| • South America | 4 | 0.3% |

Three responses (0.2%) related to multi-national operations.

2.3 Individual respondents identified their gender as:

| | | |
|----------|-----|-------|
| • female | 721 | 44.0% |
| • male | 911 | 55.7% |
| • other | 5 | 0.3% |

2.4 The respondents' age groups were:

| | | |
|-----------------|-----|-------|
| • 17 or younger | 18 | 1.1% |
| • 18-20 | 58 | 3.5% |
| • 21-29 | 246 | 15.0% |
| • 30-39 | 384 | 23.5% |
| • 40-49 | 363 | 22.2% |
| • 50-59 | 322 | 19.7% |
| • 60 or older | 246 | 15.0% |

2.5 Respondents recorded their years of SAR experience as:

| | | |
|----------------------|-----|-------|
| • 1-5 years | 677 | 41.4% |
| • 5-10 years | 339 | 20.7% |
| • 10-15 years | 224 | 13.7% |
| • 15-20 years | 138 | 8.4% |
| • more than 20 years | 227 | 13.9% |
| • not yet in SAR | 32 | 2.0% |

2.6 Respondents recorded their SAR roles or functions as:

| | | |
|--|-------|-------------------------------|
| • SAR vessel commander | 21.2% | 86 female, 261 male |
| • SAR vessel crew member | 44.6% | 320 female, 407 male, 3 other |
| • SAR aircraft commander | 0.6% | 5 female, 5 male |
| • SAR aircraft crew member | 1.2% | 13 female, 7 male |
| • Shoreside SAR response team commander | 7.3% | 42 female, 77 male |
| • Shoreside SAR response team | 18.8% | 152 female, 156 male |
| • SAR unit support staff | 5.7% | 43 female, 50 male, 1 other |
| • RCC/RSC commander | 5.1% | 37 female, 47 male |
| • RCC/RSC team member | 8.8% | 77 female, 66 male, 1 other |
| • SAR trainer | 14.0% | 96 female, 133 male |
| • Senior SAR administrator / manager | 7.1% | 36 female, 80 male |
| • Middle SAR administrator / manager | 4.8% | 47 female, 31 male |
| • Junior SAR administrator / manager | 1.9% | 19 female, 12 male |
| • other SAR administration / management* | 3.1% | 36 female, 15 male |
| • other* | 4.8% | 53 female, 26 male |
| • not specified | 3.1% | 24 female, 27 male |

* Some respondents used the 'other' roles or functions column to record administrative or management roles without using the main columns to indicate what level of seniority they had. They are listed separately above, under 'other SAR administration / management'. 27 women and 25 men recorded their role or function only in the 'other' column, but provided enough information to enable their entries to be reallocated to the main columns (where they are included in the figures above). Some respondents used the 'other' column to simply record additional information, which is not used further here. The remainder either did not provide enough information to enable them to be reallocated to the main columns or cited roles or functions not included in the main columns.

Note: some respondents identified more than one role, so the percentages total more than 100%.

2.7 Respondents said that these roles were:

| | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------------------------------|
| • paid | 21.2% | 194 female, 151 male, 2 other |
| • voluntary | 63.9% | 421 female, 622 male, 3 other |
| • both | 13.6% | 92 female, 130 male |
| • not specified | 1.3% | |
| and | | |
| • full-time | 39.7% | 312 female, 336 male, 2 other |
| • part-time | 56.0% | 375 female, 540 male, 2 other |
| • not specified | 4.3% | |

Note: some volunteers selected 'full-time', apparently meaning that they were always on-call rather than that SAR was their main occupation. This is discussed further below.

2.8 Global distribution

.1 For a survey with its reach limited to IMRF members, IMRF contacts, social media and 'word of mouth' to generate 1655 responses from 48 different countries is a good result. However, while it should be noted that a few of these states do not have a large SAR organisation to draw responses from, the

great majority of responses are from a relatively small number of countries. 90% came from eight countries in northern Europe and North America. Many countries with large SAR organisations are unrepresented or poorly represented.

.2 Three points must be made in this respect. The first is that the results of this survey cannot be used to assess the absolute or relative numbers of women engaged in maritime SAR. To achieve this would require a full survey of all the world's SAR organisations, with high levels of returns.

.3 Second, the heavy bias towards northern Europe and North America means that any generalisations drawn from the results must be cautious. The experience in just a few countries cannot be said to be necessarily true of the situation worldwide.

.4 Finally, common sense suggests that there are likely to be cultural issues involved here. Unfortunately, the survey results do not illuminate these issues because they do not fully reflect the global cultural mix. We must be cautious in extrapolating global conclusions - but on the other hand we should not conclude that these results do *not* apply in poorly-represented or unrepresented countries. They may. The results of the survey can be of value globally.

2.9 The gender and age mix

.1 At first sight it may seem surprising that 56% of the individual responses to a survey about the representation of women should be from men. On the other hand it can also be argued that that figure is low. It is thought that women represent far fewer than 44% of the SAR workforce globally. If this is broadly correct, then a higher proportion of women than men in SAR answered the survey.

.2 What is important is that 721 women did respond, and many of the survey questions were for women only. It is also important that so many men and non-binary respondents took part (916 in all). The *experience* of women is for women only to comment on - but the problems they identify and the solutions to those problems are for everyone to address.

.3 The age distribution of respondents is reasonably good. A weighting toward older groups - 34.7% were 50 or older, and 45.7% were aged 30-49 - might indicate another problem sometimes remarked on by SAR organisations: the difficulty of attracting young people. This may be borne out by the relatively poor response to the survey by this demographic: only 19.6% of respondents were under 30. Gender, not age, was the primary focus of the survey, so too much emphasis should not be placed on the age pattern reflected in it, beyond saying that attracting and - importantly - retaining staff depends on their perception and then experience of SAR. It would be good to hear more from the younger generations.

2.10 Experience and employment status

.1 41.4% of respondents had five or fewer years of SAR experience; 62.1% had ten or fewer. Perhaps it can be tentatively concluded that those who are relatively new to the SAR business are more likely to comment on - in this case - gender issues related to it.

.2 More certain is that the survey's reach to people not yet involved in SAR was, perhaps inevitably, disappointing. Only 2% of respondents were not yet involved in SAR, which limits the conclusions that can be drawn regarding perceptions of the work and the working environment held by those outside but interested in it.

.3 There are many volunteers in SAR organisations, usually working part-time. This is largely borne out by the survey results. It is noteworthy, however, that, in responding to this survey, quite a large number of people report volunteering *full* time. While this is possible, it may indicate a misunderstanding of the question. It should be remembered that English is not the first language of many of the respondents, and even where the survey was translated misunderstandings may occur. To be 'on call' full time does not necessarily equate with full-time employment.

.4 The ratio of female to male respondents is 1:1.26. As noted above, the ratio of women to men taking part in the survey is not the same as the ratio of women to men in SAR. Although that ratio was not determined in this survey, it is thought to be much less.

2.11 Roles and functions

.1 The 1:1.26 (44% female, 56% male) ratio broadly applies to the numbers of SAR unit crew or team members - boat crew, shore responders including lifeguards, and SAR unit support staff (for example, launchers, engineers etc) - responding to the survey. The ratio is reversed for coordination centre staff and for those in middle- or lower-ranking administration and management positions. Here, and for paid employment overall, female respondents are in a small majority. The numbers of aircrew responding are too small to draw conclusions from.

.2 There is greater variance in command and senior management positions. Women represented 44% of survey respondents, but only 25% of SAR vessel commanders; 35% of shoreside SAR unit commanders; and 31% of senior managers responding. The only senior staff to buck this trend are coordination centre commanders, where the 1:1.26 female to male ratio applies.

.3 It is important to remember that the 1:1.26 ratio applies only to this survey, and not necessarily to the SAR industry as a whole, or even to organisations whose members took part. It is reasonable to suppose that a greater proportion of women took part in a survey about 'women in SAR' than there are in global SAR services. But the level of data required to confirm this supposition (or to belie it) was not available in this survey.

3. **IF YOU ARE A WOMAN NOW WORKING/VOLUNTEERING IN SAR, WHAT MADE YOU JOIN IN THE FIRST PLACE?**

3.1 Only female respondents were asked this question. 28.6% did not answer it. All answers were free-text. These are summarised below.

3.2 The great majority of the answers given here had no apparent connection to gender. They could have been given by anyone in SAR, and they encompassed the usual motivations: a desire to help people in trouble; to 'give back' to the community; to use or develop maritime skills; a love for the sea; family or friendship connections; or simply (in a relatively few cases) that the respondent needed a job.

3.3 Out of 515 responses to this question, only nine had any bearing on the gender issue:

.1 "Career change initially but no work opportunity for a woman in 2003" (from a SAR vessel commander with 15-20 years experience - as a volunteer.)

.2 “I want to help others and this hobby gave me a perfect possibility to do this and combine it with an activity at sea. I wanted a hobby that involves both men and women.”

.3 “I was invited to join by a new manager who was actively seeking to recruit women members.”
(The gender of the manager concerned was not recorded)

.4 “Interesting job, I was the first woman in the company so I was curious.”

.5 “My father worked in SAR for many years and as a young girl I always said I wanted to take over his role when he retired. One of the things that stood out the most for me as a young girl was his only female colleague and good friend. She inspired me to be where I am today, along with my father and the family ties.”

.6 “So little girls have someone to look up to.”

.7 “Something I’ve always wanted to do and my station was looking for crew to join. The station at the time only had a small number of female crew which made me want to join even more.”

.8 “The captain did not want any ladies on board.”

.9 “To support rescue services in my community, to be a role model for younger women, to offer my skills to benefit those in distress.”

3.4 As only nine answers to this question referenced gender-related factors, it is reasonable to conclude that, for the great majority of women, their gender was not their main reason for becoming involved in SAR. It is also worth noting that a survey focussing on gender issues might be seen as inviting gender-related reasoning here. If so, the invitation was not taken up by the great majority of respondents.

4. WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST POSITIVE PART OF YOUR EXPERIENCE?

4.1 Only female respondents were asked this question. 29.3% did not answer it. All answers were free-text. These are summarised below.

4.2 Again the great majority of answers to this question made no specific reference to gender. Instead they reflected reactions very common across the SAR world - being able to rescue people, being part of a good team, learning new skills and pushing oneself, the variety, making a difference.

4.3 Of 510 answers, 12 made references to gender. These were:

.1 “Being respected as a woman engineer.”

.2 “Forging the way for younger generations in SAR and showing females, in a male dominated world, you can work in an amazing job and make a difference as well.”

.3 “Having a number of female figures in senior leadership roles.”

.4 “Joining a Team which has 4 out of 12 female members was very supportive.”

.5 “When a man said well done.”

.6 “The friends I have made here. Achieving promotion when 4 months pregnant.”

.7 “To see that most people don’t care about your gender.”

.8 “To surpass myself and prove to others and especially to myself that being a woman does not mean having less physical lifesaving ability than men.”

.9 “Versatile job, helping others, team work, ongoing learning, not discriminated because of gender.”

.10 “Watching male members’ opinions change of women doing the job.”

.11 “When I became a team member the captain said he was wrong and I made the group complete.” (This is the respondent who reported that when she joined the captain “did not want any ladies on board”.)

.12 “Working for other women.”

4.4 The 12 women who commented here on gender-related issues provided an intriguing cross-section of views. At less than 3% of the total the sample is too small to enable generalisations, but the following points may be drawn from their remarks:

- Some women did *not* feel that they have experienced gender discrimination;
- Others are conscious that they were, to an extent, trail-blazing for their gender;
- The presence of other women on the team was felt to provide support;
- Acknowledgement by male colleagues of women’s ability to do the work was welcomed - but men in SAR do not expect to need similar approval from women; and
- Good, gender-neutral management is important: for example, the acceptance by managers of the principle that taking maternity leave should not affect a woman’s career path.

.2 That a man saying “Well done” is highlighted as ‘the most positive part of your experience’ suggests that, at least in some places and for some people, equality has not been achieved.

.3 Nevertheless, 97% of the respondents reported the same SAR positives as men usually do. See also section 6 below: ‘What element of your role do you feel to be the most rewarding?’

5. WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF YOUR ROLE?

5.1 Only female respondents were asked this question. 33.4% did not answer it or said that they had faced no particular challenges. All answers were free-text. These are summarised below.

5.2 84 respondents (11.7%) gave answers that detailed or clearly indicated gender-related discrimination. The reader should note that this figure does *not* include answers which were unclear in this respect. For example, several respondents mentioned their small size or limited strength; but these are not exclusively female attributes. Many mentioned the work/life balance problem, particularly in relation to childcare and especially if single parents. Again this can be a problem for men too. Being taken seriously by older team members was also highlighted - but, once again, young men can also experience this form of discrimination. None of this is to suggest that these factors may not weigh heavier on women than men - other studies suggest that they do - but, for the purposes of this analysis, only the responses that *clearly* indicated discrimination against women are discussed below.

5.3 The question asked for the ‘most challenging’ aspects of people’s SAR roles to be identified. It follows that gender discrimination may have been an issue for many more women, but they did not regard it as their greatest challenge. It can also be said, of course, that some respondents did not mention

it because it has *not* been a challenge for them. This question did not enable identification of either of these groups.

5.4 Other challenges mentioned are common to many SAR people: cases that end in deaths (particularly of children); bad weather; lots to learn; time commitments; team 'politics'; management (either the difficulties of managing others or being managed badly); under-staffing and under-funding; lack of consistency in training or practice; and the weight of responsibility.

5.5 Turning to the respondents who mentioned gender discrimination, one answered this question - 'what has been most challenging aspect?' - with the single-word answer "Testosterone". 35% of respondents who identified gender issues in answer to this question remarked on some aspect of their SAR units having a largely male staff, with resultant negative effects for the few women joining. We need to "adapt a world of men designed by men for men", wrote one. Another described a new base accommodation building as "for men only" while women were left in the "old shack" - which men still shared for some purposes. Two women wrote of the problems of menstruating without proper facilities. Two more mentioned a failure to provide personal protective equipment such as drysuits that would fit.

5.6 Another 35% of those who identified gender issues mentioned some aspect of male reluctance to accept that women could do the job (mentally as well as physically). Older men were seen as being a particular problem here: "Sometimes older men do not understand that women are more than able to take care of the same kind of tasks as men and this can feel condescending". The problem is not limited to the old, however. One respondent noted that new male recruits can take the same attitude to women already in the team. Another wrote that "Being young and a woman, sometimes some fellow crew members feel the need to explain things that I know better than them..." Most female readers will recognise this as 'mansplaining'.

5.7 The wider world also discriminates. Several respondents said that, while their own team was not a problem, outsiders (including members of partner organisations, the general public and even some of those the team was there to help) found it difficult to accept their competence or authority because of their gender.

5.8 Ten respondents said that women have to *out-perform* men in order to be accepted as 'equals': "I am constantly having to be better than my male counterparts in order to be considered an equal. Subject to lots of extra scrutiny!!"

5.9 Overt sexism, in language and behaviour, remains a problem: five respondents gave examples. One wrote that "Critical incident stress and trauma are difficult, but I find that isolation and sexual discrimination or harassment are far worse." It was clear from the responses received that the effects of discrimination, and the failure to address it properly where it occurs, can be damaging.

6. WHAT ELEMENT OF YOUR ROLE DO YOU FEEL TO BE THE MOST REWARDING?

6.1 Only female respondents were asked this question. 32.2% did not answer it. All answers were free-text. These are summarised below.

6.2 There was a good deal of cross-over between responses to this and the earlier question ‘What has been the most positive part of your experience?’ A very large majority of the respondents prioritised helping people and saving lives, and the relief their actions generate. One woman wrote that the most rewarding thing is seeing “people’s smile when they see us coming”. Many respondents also highlighted the feeling of being part of a dedicated team. This includes those supporting the front-line SAR effort in various ways. Personal satisfaction was also frequently mentioned, alongside learning new skills, training others, ‘making a difference’, and the camaraderie.

6.3 As in the earlier question, the focus here was not on gender-related issues. Just eleven respondents referred to them when answering this question - and not all of these negatively. The points made were:

- .1 “Being a reference point for future women” in SAR.
- .2 “As a woman you make a difference by being like a mother on board. For example, with medical evacuations of sailors, you hold their hand, ask if they have family and children. You talk about their home. Men are not good at this, they rescue someone and bring them ashore. But in between there is hardly any discussion with the victims, or explaining what will happen to them.”
- .3 “To be able to be at the same level in the team whether you are a man or a woman.” A second respondent made the same point.
- .4 “To be able to do what you want to do without female physical or psychological capacities being questioned, and to prove that you are capable.”
- .5 “Developing such a strong bond with my fellow female co-workers; being able to help those in trouble on the water; having a job where I get to be outdoors, challenging myself everyday.”
- .6 “People's surprise at seeing a woman on board and, what’s more, in charge of a rescue boat!”
- .7 “To be the fourth female crew member ever on our station and my personal progression from shore crew to trainee crew to competent crew.”
- .8 Being told “well done by a man” - the second time this respondent made this comment.
- .9 “To uplift and educate, teaching the new recruits who sometimes doubt themselves that they are worthy and capable, especially the women. To hear young girls say "Wow, I want to do what she does one day when I'm old enough". That is, being a positive role model for women, young and old.”
- .10 “Equality between men and women.”

6.4 The respondent who commented on female capacity for empathy made a sweeping generalisation - and an interesting point. To suggest that all women are good carers and men are not may be going too far; but the point about the need for this sort of care during rescue remains an important one, not entirely divorced from gender issues. This sort of support should be given; and perhaps more men need to be encouraged to give it.

6.5 The remarks on the need for reference points, role models and capability are key to the IMRF’s #WomenInSAR initiative, and “equality between men and women” is its goal.

7. HAS BEING A WOMAN PRESENTED ANY ISSUES OR BARRIERS IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

7.1 Only female respondents were asked this question. Detailed answers were free-text.

7.2 43.3% of respondents answered 'No'.

30.9% of respondents answered 'Yes'.

25.8% of respondents did not answer the question.

7.3 While 58% of the women who answered this question said that their gender did not present issues or barriers, when asked in a later question to think about a range of possible barriers which women might face - 'Have you noticed any barriers that make it difficult for women to work in SAR in your organisation?' (see section 18 below) - 65% of female respondents said that they *had* noticed barriers. It is reasonable to suppose that respondents considered this first question in the light of their own personal experience, and the second more generally.

7.4 The survey only asked those who answered 'Yes' to provide detail. However 14 of the respondents who answered 'No' also gave useful explanations here. These are set out below.

.1 "Not really. The only thing to remark on could be the lack of toilets on the boats and a man-dominated organisation in itself."

.2 "Anyone can apply, it is well advertised. In my experience (17 years) the lower numbers of women have not been due to barriers but due to most women being not interested in going to sea, not interested in being on call, not interested in going away for long periods of time. In recent years, recruitment has been an issue from both genders due to increased demographic of wanting to be near home (even working from home) all the time."

.3 "I have been promoted through four grades since joining six years ago."

.4 "Being a woman has given me added advantages. I have more opportunities to serve because there are fewer women."

.5 "There was a perception that my being female would limit my effectiveness when dealing with government authorities in generally traditional societies. However there are strong and capable women working across these government sectors throughout the region and it has remained a baseless perception."

.6 "Not technically speaking but gaining the respect of those who believe SAR is a man's world or profession has been difficult."

.7 "Not to me but I can imagine that it takes a certain type of personality to feel comfortable as an only woman in the room with 30+ 'lads'."

.8 "Actually I feel important to note here that I have been very lucky to be supported within my organisation as a woman. I was successful in my application for a senior management role whilst four and a half months pregnant. I also was supported to return to work after my maternity leave on part time hours. My organisation has continued to support my request to work part time hours on the days I

choose. I have flexible working hours and since my last maternity have been supported to return to a new role working in an interesting area.”

.9 “However I am aware of our lesser physical strength.”

.10 “That will never happen.”

.11 “In fact, it has taken away barriers; more and more women are being welcomed into the workplace in a bid to equal out the male/female balance.”

.12 “Not really, since our chief is a woman. She has been successful in her position for a long time and is a role model to everyone.”

.13 “Not for me directly, but we have had females in our station who expressed that they weren't being given the same opportunities (or being treated the same) as their male counterparts.”

.14 “Not in my organisation, but I have experienced it in other units and other training situations.”

7.5 The statement to the effect that recruiting women is a problem because of a lack of interest (point 2 above) cannot be addressed in this report because the survey has had limited exposure outside the SAR community and very few responses from women without SAR experience.

7.6 Nearly all of the 223 respondents who answered ‘Yes’ provided details. These are summarised below, in no particular order.

7.7 ‘Traditional’ views about ‘a woman’s place’ were reported among some older male colleagues - and also sometimes in younger ones. Some respondents in command positions reported instances of men being reluctant to take orders from a woman. One said that male members of the team went so far as to resign when she was appointed its leader.

7.8 Many respondents reported institutional examples of what is essentially discrimination; for example, the lack of appropriate toilet, changing and/or sanitary facilities and a failure to provide clothing and gear (including vital safety gear, such as drysuits) that fit women. One respondent noted a disparity between the public relations value of women joining her team and the reality when it came to facilities and equipment.

7.9 Some respondents felt that inflexibility in working conditions, particularly as regards part-time working, rigid shift patterns and maternity leave, limits women’s career progression disproportionately.

7.10 Several respondents said that they did not think sexism was always deliberate.

7.11 At the team level many respondents reported what was essentially a lack of respect. Most had overcome it by ‘proving themselves’ - but noted that that should not be necessary. Many felt they were not taken seriously. Respondents described being last to be asked for opinions; being left out of crews on call-outs deemed to be “too difficult”; being accused of being “bossy” or “aggressive” when a man saying the same would be approved as being “assertive”; being assumed to be of junior rank; and being expected to make the tea.

7.12 Gender stereotyping and preconceptions in wider society impact on women in SAR. Respondents reported that, while their own team’s attitudes were fine, other people, including people in partner

organisations and the general public, make incorrect assumptions about them or take exception to their being in their roles, particularly command positions.

7.13 One stereotype that many respondents referred to is physical strength. Some complained that it was simply assumed that they could not do some aspects of the job; others agreed that this was indeed sometimes the case - but pointed out that compensatory techniques exist, and that a team always has a range of capabilities, including physical capabilities, and should play to its various strengths.

7.14 Many respondents emphasised that only a minority of men (and some women) make such assumptions, and that these are often unconscious. Similarly, women in predominantly male teams noted that men interact and joke with each other in ways that can exclude women, even if unintentionally.

7.15 Many respondents also reported that things are getting better. In some cases they meant for themselves as individuals: their gender was an issue when they first joined, but is no longer. In others they meant more generally, as a result of positive action taken by their organisations or changes in what wider society regards as acceptable.

7.16 We conclude this section with two example quotations from the survey returns. The first woman gave a long list of discriminatory actions and comments from team members, then asked:

“Why do I stay? Because they are the minority. They might be more vocal but the rest have been and are brilliant. It is annoying that you have to work harder, but in the end I'll gain from it.”

The second:

“I wouldn't say that being a woman has presented barriers as such, however there are clearly some outdated views and stereotypes that are still held by some of my male counterparts. SAR is very much a male dominated environment and although clear progress is being made, it has often felt that myself and my female colleagues have had to work that bit harder to have our voices heard and be taken seriously. I have heard colleagues talk about my female counterparts as "overbearing", "emotional" and "too much" when they have needed to assert themselves whereas their male counterparts are seen in a positive light when they do the same. I have also witnessed female colleagues leave the organisation due to their extensive experience and knowledge being undermined and under-appreciated by less experienced but more senior male management. Luckily, it is only a small minority of colleagues that hold these views, however they are often those who have been in the organisation a long time and therefore in more senior positions. I look forward to the day where, "you can make the tea", "we don't want any more women on the team as they are too weak to carry a stretcher" and "if I'm being politically correct..." aren't phrases that I am faced with on a daily basis in the workplace.”

8. HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY DISCRIMINATION? IF SO, HAS IT BEEN RESOLVED TO YOUR SATISFACTION?

8.1 Only female respondents were asked these questions. Detailed answers, where given, were free-text. These are summarised below.

8.2 49.8% of respondents said that they had not experienced discrimination. It is clear from comments made that some respondents interpreted this question as meaning discrimination against themselves, while others interpreted it as directly witnessing discrimination against other women. In two cases where the latter was clearly the case, based on comments from the respondent, the 'No' responses have been altered to 'Yes' for the purposes of analysis. This could not be done where no comment was made, but the same distinction may apply.

24.3% said that they had experienced discrimination.

25.9% of respondents did not answer this question.

56.1% of those reporting discrimination said that the issue(s) had not been resolved to their satisfaction. 39.3% of respondents said that they had. The remaining 4.6% did not answer the second question.

8.3 Two thirds of those who answered this question said that they had not experienced discrimination based on their gender. A few commented on this:

.1 "It can absolutely be a really harsh jargon on the boats, so for someone that is not confident in themselves it can tough."

.2 "On the contrary, they helped me a lot."

.3 "Not me in particular, but I notice that we do not have many women employed in the maritime department - the core business. Historically the maritime business has been a 'man's world' but I believe this is slowly changing."

.4 "Not obvious discrimination."

.5 "No discrimination, but no accommodation either. A cowboy driving mentality meant I had to quit because during training and non-urgent transportation the speeds were excessive and I felt it was just a matter of time before I would fall overboard, unable to hang on to the boat."

.6 "Not directly but I think it is there."

.7 "Only that people are surprised that there is a woman on a ship."

.8 "Not yet."

.9 "Not within the organisation but as the base is shared with a fire brigade the facilities for women are poor."

.10 Quite frankly no. These are more a few remarks on the beach from tourists; for example: 'If I drown, can you come and get me?'"

.11 "I have never felt personally discriminated against. However, the number of women in the organisation has significantly increased in the last 10 years; which I believe has created a more open and better representation of the society in which this organisation operates."

.12 "I was lucky enough to have very good people above me that helped and guided me, but I could see how it could easily happen, as it did for some of my female colleagues."

.13 "Our leaders have an eye for making sure every single crew member behaves the right way with me and I know I have their full support to gain leadership and kill any temptation from my fellow male crew members to behave differently."

.14 "Not directly towards me, but I feel like sometimes banter aimed at other women can be harmful; such as how they are dressed etc."

.15 “No, I have been very lucky to have a very accepting, kind and inclusive crew.”

8.4 There were too many comments from those reporting discrimination to include them all here. The following is a summary of the points made.

8.5 As in answers to previous questions, a major source of gender discrimination reported is the downplaying, disbelieving or ignoring of women’s skills and capabilities. This was acknowledged to be sometimes unconscious or well-meant (as in, ‘let me lift that for you’). There were many reports, however, of more serious, and conscious, instances, meaning that female team members were sidelined, with tasks being given to male colleagues of similar or less experience and capability, directly affecting the women’s ability to gain experience or attain promotion.

8.6 Some of the discrimination reported was in the form of inappropriate language or behaviour, ranging from ‘jokes’ to name-calling or unwanted sexual advances and, in one case, harassment that, on the basis of the limited evidence provided, might be considered actionable in law. Albeit less clearly, there was a sense in the responses that these issues are less severe in administrative offices than in front-line response units.

8.7 It is for all managers, from top to bottom in an organisation, to proactively set the correct tone and to ensure that the sort of behaviour that is expected is clear. Many survey responses confirmed the effectiveness of such an approach. It results in the recruitment and retention of more women, and this too reduces discrimination, as several survey responses agreed.

8.8 Institutional discrimination was again widely reported here. Examples included clothing or equipment that do not fit; lack of appropriate facilities, especially toilet and sanitary facilities; salary discrimination; inflexible working arrangements; and ‘male’ language in manuals, job titles, role descriptions, etc.

8.9 Some respondents reported examples of *female* discrimination, either passive (not taking on driving or helming functions, for example) or active, in the sense of women putting each other down.

8.10 A few respondents took the opportunity to report instances of racism and ageism - in the latter case usually discrimination based on being perceived as too young. Although not the subject of this survey or report, the IMRF notes the seriousness of these and other forms of discrimination.

8.11 It is encouraging that, although reporting instances of sexism and discrimination, several respondents again wanted to emphasise that things are getting better. As one woman wrote, after citing several instances of discrimination she had been subject to: “One thing I do want to say is my unit have been working on this for the last few years and it has improved. But we still have some work to do on it”.

8.12 Outlawing conscious discrimination is one thing: *un*conscious discrimination, which the survey responses indicated is still widespread, is more difficult to address. Another respondent said: “I think it's naive to say there isn't unconscious bias around. It goes way back to childhood where girls are told they're pretty and polite and boys are told they're brave and strong.”

8.13 56.1% of the women who said that they had encountered discrimination reported that the issue(s) had not been satisfactorily resolved. Due to a clerical error the survey asked for details only if they had been. Fortunately many respondents whose cases had not been resolved gave details anyway.

8.14 Many of these said that they had not taken any action to address the problem. Some had felt intimidated, others that it was not worthwhile, it would not change things, and some that they did not want to damage the team.

8.15 A failed management response was clear in some examples, although some of these instances were historic and respondents noted that matters have improved since. Too many others, however, reported the problem to be ongoing. Some examples:

.1 “It is so ingrained into the SAR service from previous generations. Although most other emergency services have progressed my organisation has not.”

.2 “It has continued with other females at the station and I have since left.”

.3 “This is still ingrained and ongoing. It's slowly improving because of some strong women within the organisation demonstrating their worth but not quickly enough and not without a struggle. As a whole the policies and opportunities are there but there's very little proactivity, so it's just the toughest that 'survive'. Change is slower than it would be if there were more support.”

.4 “I will probably leave the crew soon.”

.5 “It didn't feel safe to report or when it was it was brushed aside and indicated I was too sensitive. Only in the last 2 years have I been able to report and have it resolved. I'm not easily offended so when something happens members are stepping up to back me.”

8.16 Some of the women who replied ‘Yes’ to the question ‘has the situation been resolved?’ expressed similar concerns about it continuing for others. Some reported that managers had addressed the issue(s) effectively, but more said that the problem had only been resolved once they had ‘proved themselves’. In some cases resolution came when offending individuals left the organisation or, in a couple of cases, were asked by managers to leave.

8.17 Several respondents reported the active support of male colleagues in dealing with the problem: “I had crew members stepping up for me and eventually it felt like having 24 brothers”.

9. HAVE YOU FACED ANY RESISTANCE FROM FRIENDS OR FAMILY NOT WANTING YOU TO WORK IN MARITIME SAR, AND, IF SO, HOW HAVE YOU HANDLED IT?

9.1 Only female respondents were asked these questions. The first part of the question gave as examples ‘it's a male world’ or ‘too risky for a woman’.

57.7% of respondents said that they had not faced resistance.

16.0% said that they had. Asked how they had handled it, the answers were:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| • I ignored it | 47.0% |
| • I addressed their concerns | 62.6% |
| • other | 27.0% |
| • not specified | 1.7% |

(Some respondents selected more than one option.)

26.4% of respondents did not answer these questions.

9.2 Asked for details when selecting 'other', answers were free-text. These are summarised below.

9.3 Several of the respondents who replied that they had not met resistance from family and friends commented on the positive support they had received instead.

9.4 Some of those who had met some resistance had ignored it or addressed it depending on the person involved. SAR is perceived to be risky, and several respondents had explained how this perception is to some extent exaggerated. One wrote that "I am an ex-forces aircraft engineer who has also worked in a prison and for the Government. The SAR community is one of the safest places I have worked, I think my family breathed a sigh of relief, ha!"

9.5 Other concerns expressed included the time commitment (especially for a single mother) and whether there were other women in the team. One respondent said that "My dad served on the crew for many years before me. His concern was he would worry more about protecting women on the boat than the task in front of them." Another wrote: "People are always amazed but it has been in me to show them that women are capable of developing ourselves in all areas, that the basis is study and training." And: "I told them that if men can do it, and do it safe, there is not so much to worry about for me."

10. DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE MORE IN MARITIME SAR THAN YOU HAVE ALREADY? DO YOU HAVE A CAREER GOAL IN MIND?

10.1 Only female respondents were asked these questions.

17.2% answered 'No' to the first question.

55.9% answered 'Yes'.

26.9% did not answer the question.

34.5% answered 'No' to the second question.

38.0% answered 'Yes'.

27.5% did not answer the question.

10.2 Details given in answer to the second question were free-text. These are summarised below.

10.3 Common themes for those who did not wish to achieve more or did not have a particular SAR career goal were that they had already achieved their goals and were happy as they are; there was not much of a career path for volunteers or their personal goals pertained to their non-SAR paid employment; that (as volunteers) they had limited spare time; or that they were nearing retirement (too early for one respondent, who considered age discrimination more of a problem than gender discrimination). A few said that they did not want further responsibility; that they were unsure about what opportunities were available; or that they were not confident enough. One remarked that "the wall of men is too solid".

10.4 A large number of those who *did* want to progress aim to achieve command or senior management positions. Many mentioned a desire to become involved in training and education roles, with a few of these specifically mentioning the encouragement of other women to progress. Some mentioned better - and equal! - pay, and several expressed frustration that only voluntary roles are available in their organisations. Others expressed hopes of moving into full-time SAR or other emergency response careers. Many said they want to continue to extend their experience, improve their expertise, and seek new challenges.

10.5 Relatively few respondents mentioned gender-related issues under this heading. Most of the ambitions expressed could just as well have been expressed by men. None of the respondents mentioned gender as a factor limiting their ambition. The need for *equality* of opportunity was highlighted by some. One respondent commented: "I don't believe in gender representation. I don't think any organisation should set a goal for a percentage of females. But I strongly believe in fairness and that the opportunities should be made available for everyone regardless of their gender."

11. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO WOMEN THINKING OF GETTING INVOLVED IN THE MARITIME SAR SECTOR?

11.1 Only female respondents were asked this question. All answers were free-text. These are summarised below. 34.3% of respondents did not answer the question.

11.2 None of the 474 respondents to this question advised against getting involved in SAR.

11.3 However, many noted that SAR work is not for everyone. Many respondents noted that there are challenges and that both passion and commitment are essential. Two would not advise joining the organisations they had direct experience of (because of its "military" management style in one case, and its poor response to discrimination and bullying in the other) but still supported the idea in principle. Seeking advice from women already in the team or organisation was recommended by some, as was finding a female 'buddy' to work with.

11.4 A few representative examples of the advice offered are:

.1 "Be able to take the banter. Stand up for yourself. If a comment or action made doesn't feel right, address it straight away."

.2 "Be brave, it will be worth it. Be yourself, the men will see that you are as good as them (or even better)."

.3 "Come try to see if you fit with the team: it's a nice family. Great adventures and challenges. The reward of bringing someone back to the shore is amazing."

.4 "Go there and forget the prejudices because it's great."

.5 "Do it - it is such a rewarding job knowing that you are making a difference to others. Yes there are always going to be challenges to any role but we are all working towards a common goal - to keep people safe and to save lives."

.6 "Do it! Every individual, whether male or female, brings their own strengths to the team. A good team is made up of a variety of talents."

.7 “Go for it! We come out of it grown up, we move on in brotherhood and sisterhood. We have a good time with people who share the same passion. It is very enriching.”

.8 “Go for it! The majority of those you work alongside will be supportive and will make up for the few who are challenging!”

.9 “Speak to other women to understand their experience of the context you're in. I've observed that local station leadership is one of the biggest defining factors in terms of women's experiences of volunteering (not the HQ/ top-down policies).”

.10 “A job is a job. You should be hired because you are capable and want to be here, not because you are a woman. If you need help; ask. If you don't know something; ask.”

12. IF YOU NO LONGER WORK IN SAR, WHY DID YOU LEAVE?

12.1 Only female respondents were asked this question. Only 52 answered it (7.2%), including four women who had not yet left but intended to. This low return indicates that the survey did not reach many women who have left the SAR profession.

12.2 If so, this may have had a significant effect on the survey outcomes, particularly with regards to women who have left because they were dissatisfied with their working conditions or treatment. Given many of the responses to other questions, it may be reasonable to suppose that gender issues were a factor in many cases. However, the survey provides no specific data to support this. Women leave for many of the reasons that men do, unrelated to discrimination issues, as the limited responses to this question show.

12.3 Respondents were given a number of options to select in answering this question. The percentages shown here are of those who answered it, not the whole group of respondents. They add up to more than 100% because some respondents selected more than one option.

- | | |
|---|-------|
| • My personal circumstances changed | 25.0% |
| • I was looking for new challenges | 26.9% |
| • I found the SAR work too challenging (physically / mentally / work-life balance, etc) | 7.7% |
| • I did not feel welcome / was subject to negative comment or actions | 21.2% |
| • I felt held back and unable to progress as I wished | 17.3% |
| • other | 26.9% |

The reasons given under ‘other’ are summarised below.

12.4 Five of the respondents who had left wrote in the ‘other’ column that they had moved into other work, or full-time work, outside SAR. One had had a baby. Two others lived too remotely. One simply wrote “unsafe”. One, who also ticked the ‘negative comment or actions’ column, wrote that she “was the victim of sexual harassment”.

12.5 Of the four respondents who reported that they are considering leaving, one said that she would leave if she were going to have a baby (“but now I love to work in SAR”). Another also said that “I am passionate about the industry” but she was having a difficult time at present (for reasons she did not specify). The third wrote that “When I leave it will be because I’m tired of the huge commitment.” And the fourth that “I do not wish to have to fight endlessly to have my skills recognized.”

12.6 In all, 46% of those answering this question cited only positive reasons for leaving - a change in personal circumstances or looking for new challenges. The remainder gave a mix of positive and negative reasons, or only negative ones.

13. IF YOU DO NOT YET WORK IN SAR, WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO THE WORK?

13.1 Only female respondents were asked this question. Only a very small number (3.5%) answered it - and many of these appear to have misunderstood the question, as they already work in SAR. All answers were free-text. These are summarised below.

13.2 The survey did not reach sufficient numbers of women not yet working in SAR to enable adequate analysis of what would attract them. Here, however, the survey results are not distorted by the low response. The question was less important in the sense that it did not reflect on problems relating to women's employment in SAR - it only asked what attracts them - and it may be asserted with some confidence that women not yet in SAR are likely to be attracted for the same reasons as those already in it, whose comments on this may be found above. See section 3 in particular.

13.3 As may be expected, the majority of those who answered mentioned helping people in trouble. Other motivations cited were a new challenge, action, team-working, acquiring or using skills, and increasing the involvement of women at sea (two respondents). One respondent wrote simply "the uniform".

14. DO YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT WORKING IN SAR?

14.1 Only female respondents were asked this question. All answers were free-text. These are summarised below.

71.7% of respondents did not answer the question.

17.5% answered 'No', a few adding comments explaining their answer.

10.8% of respondents raised concerns.

14.2 Some of those who answered 'No' emphasised the quality of equipment and training, and the need for "respect for the sea" - safe practice. Some respondents noted that they felt safer with some colleagues than with others. One respondent's comment that "there are opportunities at a number of levels, from part-time voluntary roles to an admittedly limited number of full-time positions" is not universal experience, as the earlier responses on career goals show. Other comments included:

"No. If you do your training and do as you've been trained then it's fine. It helps when your managers are approachable and supportive and you have a good team. I have been very lucky in this respect. I joined a supportive team."

"Not at all. I have worked in very challenging environments throughout my career and this I see as an opportunity to grow and learn."

"Of course, personal safety is paramount. It can be a 'risky' game but with proper working practices, kit and training then the rewards can also be great."

14.3 There were more comments from those who did have concerns, and these were wide-ranging. Concerns were expressed about:

- safety
- training - considered insufficient in some cases
- equipment - especially the lack of protective clothing and equipment that fits
- temperament - “If you don't think you can handle medical emergencies, death, fires, floods and disaster by staying calm, relying on your training and understanding complex situations, you should not join SAR”
- effects on health, especially mental health, associated with a high-pressure working environment (and night-shift working) and SAR cases that do not end well
- family life - the time commitment and disruption caused by call-outs
- gender discrimination and harassment
- support - one respondent worried that if she went to work for a larger team she would not experience the same mutual support she had in her current small one
- COVID-19 (the pandemic was causing major disruption during the survey period), including concerns about sanitisation and dwindling financial support
- management issues - one respondent raised concerns about people “on land” telling rescuers what to do at sea (presumably a reference to the RCC system); another spoke of “a top-down, military-style” management approach; and two were worried about privatisation
- pay and working conditions
- paperwork.

14.4 One respondent raised what is a relatively new concern in SAR: “The work in some respects is criminalized. In the worst case this could end in a prison sentence. This happened to a friend working in SAR in Lesvos.” This is probably a reference to SAR efforts in response to the migrant emergency in the Mediterranean.⁴ Politicians and jurists in some states have attacked rescuers on the grounds that, by saving migrants’ lives, they are facilitating illegal migration. The IMRF’s position is to defend the internationally accepted position that everyone in distress at sea should be rescued regardless of their status, and that the wider migration issues should be sorted out ashore.

14.5 One highly experienced respondent, clearly thinking through the issues raised by previous questions, gave an answer here which to some extent summarises her earlier thinking:

“Diversity must be tackled across the board, not just gender. Kit and engineering design needs to be fit for all to use. We haven’t fully addressed why someone doesn’t want to work or volunteer: we always focus on why people do. We need to focus on equity not equality, regardless of gender we should all be treated as individuals dependent on need.”

⁴ Note that the IMRF follows IMO practice in referring to “unsafe mixed migration by sea” without reference to the motivations or legal status of those involved. A “migrant” may therefore be, for example, an economic migrant, seeking a better life, or a person fleeing persecution in search of asylum and refugee status. It is also important to note that no distinctions are made in the various International Conventions governing rescue at sea. There is an obligation on all seafarers to rescue anyone whose life is at risk, if possible, regardless of their legal or other status or circumstances.

We can agree that other diversity issues are of equal importance; but the focus of this survey was on women in SAR. The points about focus that this respondent makes are both apposite and important.

14.6 A large percentage of respondents did not answer this question at all. This may mean simply that these women did not have any particular concerns about working in SAR. Granted their answers to other questions, however, we cannot conclude this for certain. Respondents may have felt that they had already answered the question under another heading.

15. ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN TO PROGRESS IN YOUR ORGANISATION? IF YES, HOW DOES YOUR ORGANISATION SUPPORT THIS?

15.1 Only female respondents were asked these questions in the individual survey. They were also included in the additional survey of IMRF member organisations.

15.2 In answer to the first question

- 55.5% of individual respondents said 'Yes'
- all the responding member organisations said 'Yes'
- 2.1% of individual respondents said 'No'
- 15.4% of individual respondents said 'Maybe'
- 27.0% of individual respondents did not answer the question.

15.3 The following options were given in the second question. Respondents could select more than one option, so the totals are greater than 100%. Many of the respondents who selected 'maybe' and a few of those who selected 'yes' in answer to the first question did not select an option or make a comment. The percentages given below are of those who answered the first question in the individual survey (526 individuals) and of all the organisations which responded to the additional survey.

Individual respondents:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| • training | 71.1% |
| • flexible working | 25.9% |
| • work/life balance | 22.1% |
| • equality of opportunity | 52.5% |
| • positive action | 36.1% |
| • other | 1.3% |

Answers given under 'other' were free-text. These are summarised below. More respondents made entries in the 'other' column, but most of these were additional comments, not further examples of organisational support practices.

IMRF member organisations:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------|
| • training | 77.8% |
| • flexible working | 66.7% |

- work/life balance 38.9%
- equality of opportunity 77.8%
- positive action 22.2%

15.4 Three of the organisations added free-text detail. One reported that they have “network groups to support women’s professional development.” The second, representing a developing SAR organisation, highlighted awareness and education as key factors, referring specifically to potential female participants. The third wrote: “We have only one paid person in the organization, and she's a woman.”

15.5 Of the 526 individual female respondents who answered this question only 76% said that there are opportunities for women to progress in their organisation. 21% were unsure and 3% said there were not. This may indicate a communications problem, given that all the SAR organisations responding to the additional survey said that opportunities do exist.

15.6 In addition to the support practices offered as options, individual respondents offered several other examples. These may be summarised as a positive attitude to enabling progress. They included good leadership, at both local and senior level; a culture of support, including mutual support within teams; and “awareness” - a single-word answer which, in context, may mean that the respondent’s organisation shows that it is aware of the need to support women’s progress.

15.7 Other comments were less encouraging. Some respondents drew a distinction between voluntary and paid, or office and operational roles, suggesting that, in both cases, there was equality of opportunity in the former but not the latter. Another commented: “I believe those who do progress are childless or past the age of rearing children”. Others said that the process lacked clarity, or that the organisation paid “lip service” to it. Location was a factor for some: progression may mean moving to another part of the country (although this may be seen as a factor in many occupations and also affects men).

15.8 The options of ‘training ’and ‘equality of opportunity ’scored reasonably well with individual respondents as examples of organisational support. ‘Positive action ’such as gender quotas was not supported by everyone, regardless of gender. ‘Flexible working ’and the usually associated ‘work/life balance ’did not score highly either.

15.9 Comparisons of the individual and organisational responses are interesting. There was broad agreement about some of the means of support available, but more than twice as many of the organisations cited flexible working than individuals did, and, while over three-quarters of the organisations cited equality of opportunity, only just over half the individual respondents saw it that way. On the other hand significantly more individuals than organisations saw positive action as a factor.

15.10 Not all the organisations ticked the ‘training’ or ‘equality of opportunity’ options. We must be cautious about reading too much into this, granted the lack of explanation of what these headings might mean. Some organisations require prior experience and/or qualifications in their recruits, and so do not provide comprehensive training. It might be that this is also seen as limiting equality of opportunity, depending on how that term is defined - for example, if an individual does not have the required expertise, and the organisation does not provide it in-house, that individual cannot progress. The need for further research is indicated here.

16. HOW MANY WOMEN DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE IN SAR ROLES, IN A PAID OR VOLUNTEER CAPACITY, AND WHAT PROPORTION OF YOUR STAFF ARE THEY?

16.1 These questions were asked of everyone in the individual survey, regardless of gender. However, most individual respondents did not know or were unsure of the answers, so IMRF member organisations were asked these questions in the additional survey.

16.2 The responses received are collated in the table below, listed by organisation size, largest to smallest. For clarity, the percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

16.3 One organisation, asterisked in the table, gave figures for “explicitly SAR roles, not admin/finance”. The others did not specify. One organisation estimated two of the figures, shown in the table as ‘est’.

| Number of staff | Female staff | | All paid staff | Women in paid positions | | All volunteers | Female volunteers | |
|-----------------|--------------|------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------|----------------|-------------------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | | Number | Percentage | | Number | Percentage |
| 9400 | 1430 | 15% | 1743 | 585 | 34% | 7657 | 845 | 11% |
| 8587 | 2734 est | 31% | 87 | 34 | 39% | 8500 | 2700 est | 32% |
| 2834 | 479 | 17% | 9 | 4 | 44% | 2355 | 470 | 20% |
| 2608 | 443 | 17% | 39 | 13 | 33% | 2178 | 430 | 20% |
| 2176 | 484 | 22% | 76 | 41 | 54% | 2100 | 443 | 21% |
| 1457 | 570 | 39% | 7 | 2 | 29% | 1450 | 568 | 39% |
| 1403 | 127 | 9% | 203 | 7 | 3% | 1200 | 120 | 10% |
| 1063* | 64 | 6% | 225 | 9 | 4% | 838 | 55 | 7% |
| 652 | 101 | 15% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 650 | 100 | 15% |
| 211 | 7 | 3% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 210 | 6 | 3% |
| 60 | 25 | 42% | 0 | 0 | - | 60 | 25 | 42% |
| 40 | 7 | 18% | 0 | 0 | - | 40 | 7 | 18% |
| 37 | 11 | 30% | 33 | 7 | 21% | 4 | 4 | 100% |
| 24 | 5 | 21% | 24 | 5 | 21% | 0 | 0 | - |
| 20 | 1 | 5% | 0 | 0 | - | 20 | 1 | 5% |
| 18 | 7 | 39% | 8 | 2 | 25% | 10 | 5 | 50% |
| 7 | 3 | 43% | 0 | 0 | - | 7 | 3 | 43% |
| 5 | 5 | 100% | 5 | 5 | 100% | 0 | 0 | - |

17. DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE DIFFICULTY RECRUITING SUFFICIENT STAFF? IF YES, DO YOU THINK WOMEN ARE A RESOURCE THAT IS NOT USED SUFFICIENTLY TO HELP OVERCOME THIS DIFFICULTY?

17.1 These questions were asked of everyone in the individual survey, regardless of gender. IMRF member organisations were also asked the first question in the additional survey.

17.2 In answer to the first question,

- 30.5% of individual respondents said 'Yes' (33.1% of women, 28.5% of men)
- 38.9% of the responding member organisations said 'Yes'
- 33.2% of individual respondents said 'No' (32.3% of women, 33.8% of men)
- 61.1% of member organisations said 'No'
- 36.3% of individual respondents did not answer the question (34.5% of women, 37.7% of men).

17.3 Five survey respondents identified as neither male nor female. Such a small group cannot be usefully compared with the other two for statistical purposes. Here, one of the group answered 'yes', two 'no', and the last two did not reply.

17.4 Of the individual respondents who answered 'yes' to the first question,

- 54.2% agreed that women are an under-used resource (53.8% of women, 54.9% of men)
- 45.8% did not agree (46.2% of women, 45.1% of men)

Individuals answering the second question were asked to give details. These answers are summarised below.

17.5 Female and male responses on these questions were in broad agreement. Many emphasised that recruitment opportunities are open to all. We will consider the comments made by women first.

17.6 Roughly half of the women who answered the question believe that there are recruitment difficulties, but many said that, especially for volunteer roles, this applied to recruiting men as well as women; and is a problem in the maritime industries as a whole. Some attributed these general difficulties to changes in society; less free time for volunteering, for example. It must also be remembered that roughly half the respondents do *not* think that recruitment is particularly difficult. Many said that retention is more of a problem than recruitment.

17.7 Recruitment processes were highlighted by several female respondents. Either advertising materials primarily depict men or insufficient effort is made to specifically attract women. The lack of flexibility in working conditions was highlighted by some, who felt that flexible and/or part time working would suit women's work/life balance better. (This latter argument was sometimes based on an acceptance that women undertake more childcare and/or housework responsibilities than men - which is a wider problem in society, beyond our remit here.)

17.8 Many felt that there is a public perception that SAR work - at least on the operational side - is for men or only for those with extensive marine experience (again, traditionally men). It was agreed that

women are better represented in administrative roles. This perception combines with a tendency on the part of women to undervalue themselves, according to several respondents. As one rather neatly put it, “Women believe that they should have more experience before they apply. Men apply anyway.” The importance of female role models was emphasised.

17.9 Although more men than women answered the yes / no parts of these questions, fewer men commented. Those who did tended to agree with their female colleagues. Problems of recruitment are often felt to apply across the board, and many male respondents emphasised that recruitment in their organisations is gender-blind. As this is the first substantial question that men were asked in this survey, it is worth noting that many took this opportunity to say that gender should make no difference in SAR - and many of these said that it did not make a difference in their own team.

17.10 Others, however, reported an imbalance in recruitment in favour of males. Several noted that entrance requirements including marine certification naturally lead to an imbalance because of traditional male dominance in the maritime industries. Others spoke of the perception in society generally that operational SAR roles are ‘for men’, and noted that this attitude remains among some within the SAR services, particularly the older generation. It is perhaps unfair to single out a respondent aged over 60 who wrote that “I have not seen any reason for more women to get involved in SAR at my station” despite having agreed that his organisation had difficulty recruiting sufficient staff - but his response *might* be indicative of such an attitude.

17.11 Whether this is the case or not, it is only fair to point out that, of 115 men who commented here, only two or three made comments that might indicate that they themselves had concerns about employing women. Most were very supportive, and several expressed frustration that, despite their organisations’ best efforts, fewer women than men apply. It was agreed by several that more should be done in this respect: “We have not thought sufficiently about targeting women in the recruitment process.”

17.12 It is noteworthy that few men mentioned working conditions and work/life balance when discussing the female recruitment problem.

17.13 Unlike the individual respondents, a clear majority of the member organisations (just over 60%) reported no difficulty in recruiting sufficient staff. The individual respondents are not necessarily those employed by the organisations answering the additional survey, so we cannot make direct comparisons. Perhaps these organisations are simply luckier.

17.14 In general, better focussed advertising was recommended as a means of overcoming perceptions that ‘SAR is for men ’- particularly in front line response teams. Some respondents thought that some women undervalue the contribution they might make.

17.15 We conclude this section with some interesting remarks from a male member of a SAR vessel crew, in which he highlights some male prejudices and poor behaviour, emphasises that not all men think or act this way, notes apparent institutional discrimination, and remarks on the importance of role models and the difficulties of retention.

“In my years half of the intake has been women: the issue has been to keep them active. Many male crew members do not see recruiting female crew as a resource; rather I have heard some say

that recruiting women is a bad idea. The reasoning they give is often that ‘eventually they will get pregnant and quit’ or ‘they will find a man and stop coming’. Luckily not all males have these values, but it is enough if a few loud individuals make the women not feel welcome. Also some male crew have acted inappropriately towards female crew members, for example through flirting. In addition there are practically no females in leading positions within the crew and the ones selected for advanced training are mainly men.”

18. HAVE YOU NOTICED ANY BARRIERS THAT MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR WOMEN TO WORK IN SAR IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

18.1 This question was asked of everyone in the individual survey, regardless of gender. A number of options were offered. Respondents could select more than one option, so the totals are greater than 100%.

18.2 Female respondents:

- 33.7% did not answer the question
- 23.4% said they had not noticed any barriers
- 42.9% said they had noticed barriers. These respondents selected the following options:
 - long hours 19.7%
 - being on call 25.6%
 - potentially dangerous work / work perceived as dangerous 36.9%
 - prior experience / specialist expertise required 13.6%
 - women don’t know jobs like this exist 34.3%
 - SAR jobs portrayed as being for men only 35.3%
 - physical strength required 33.0%
 - emotional strength required 13.9%
 - tough / all-weather / day & night conditions not appealing 22.3%
 - no female role models 33.7%
 - resistance from existing (male) staff 35.3%
 - concerns about men & women working together 11.0%
 - other 16.2%

Answers given under ‘other’ were free-text: some were comments rather than additions to the list above. These answers are summarised below.

18.3 Male respondents:

- 37.2% did not answer the question

- 33.0% said they had not noticed any barriers
- 29.7% said they had noticed barriers. These respondents selected the following options:
 - long hours 7.7%
 - being on call 10.3%
 - potentially dangerous work / work perceived as dangerous 19.6%
 - prior experience / specialist expertise required 12.2%
 - women don't know jobs like this exist 30.6%
 - SAR jobs portrayed as being for men only 32.1%
 - physical strength required 24.7%
 - emotional strength required 7.0%
 - tough / all-weather / day & night conditions not appealing 18.5%
 - no female role models 34.7%
 - resistance from existing (male) staff 31.0%
 - concerns about men & women working together 9.6%
 - other 12.9%

Answers given under 'other' were free-text. These are summarised below.

18.4 Of the five respondents who did not identify as male or female two did not reply to this question and two said that they had not noticed any barriers. The last, who said they had, cited women not knowing that jobs like this exist and the work being perceived as dangerous.

18.5 Male and female respondents differed as to whether women face barriers in SAR work. The difference may be considered significant. 65% of women who answered this question thought there were barriers to women's employment in their organisation - although it is important to note that 35% did not. The comparable figures for male respondents were 53% and 47%. Overall, of those who said that they had not noticed any, 64% were men. We may conclude that it is easier to notice a barrier if you are the one facing it.

18.6 Overall roughly a third of women selected six of the options provided as examples of possible barriers. In order - although none of the six stood out greatly - these were the danger or perceived danger of the work; SAR jobs being portrayed as being for men; resistance from existing male staff; women not knowing that these jobs are there for them; no female role models; and the need or perceived need for physical strength.

18.7 By the same criteria only four options were selected by roughly a third of men: no female role models; SAR jobs portrayed as being for men; resistance from existing male staff; and women not knowing that these jobs are there.

18.8 It is interesting that female role models were thought significant by both women and men, and that the physical strength issue and, especially, the potential dangers in SAR work were thought more important overall by the female respondents than by the male. Long hours and being on call were also more important issues for women than the men thought they would be. Granted the earlier discussion about recruitment requirements, it is perhaps a little surprising that prior experience or qualification scored relatively low with both women and men: this may reflect different organisations' recruitment criteria. Tough working conditions were thought a barrier by about a fifth of both men and women.

18.9 Finally, both genders gave lower scores to 'emotional strength' and to concerns about men and women working together. A caveat regarding the last subject is that the great majority of survey responses were received from countries where co-working is the norm. People from other cultures might have answered differently.

18.10 Many women noted that the impacts on family life, especially childcare, were a barrier not listed in the options above. A lack of flexible working options, especially for shift workers such as RCC team members, was also mentioned by some. This relates to the childcare problem in particular. 42% of respondents making a comment here mentioned these issues in some way.

18.11 The lack of adequate toilet, sanitary and changing facilities was also mentioned as a factor by several women. "And," wrote one, "About men in general, understanding the impact of periods on women..." Another factor relating to institutional unpreparedness for female team members in response units was the reported unsuitability of important personal protective equipment and the lack of ergonomic consideration of women in equipment design. This was again cited frequently.

18.12 Male scepticism and other forms of sexism were mentioned by several female respondents. One respondent wrote "I have just completed an MSc in emergency management and my dissertation was on barriers and facilitators to effective recruitment and retention of volunteers. It was interesting to note that only the female respondents stated that when they became volunteer crew they felt they had to 'prove themselves'."

18.13 Several women pointed out that most of the options listed can apply to men as well as women. One remarked that:

"Some of the options suggested seem inherently sexist - are we assuming women do not like danger, getting cold or wet?? Surely this perpetuates stereotypes. I feel positive role models and also men in the roles positively enthusing about recruiting women are key factors."

It was certainly not the IMRF's intention to be sexist in this survey, and we apologise if the phrasing of the question makes it appear so. The intention was *not* to suggest that these things are barriers only to women. It was to ask if people thought that some women consider them to be barriers. The same question could equally well be asked about men - but that was not the focus of this survey.

18.14 The point made by the respondent quoted above about positive role models and attitudes was also made by others. It was noted that there *are* female role models - but we could do with more.

18.15 In the interests of balance it should be noted that one female respondent, who said that she had not noticed barriers, reported instead that "our women are given preferential treatment by their male

counterparts”. And another female respondent simply wrote that “Men just don’t know how to communicate sometimes”.

18.16 Turning to the male comments in the ‘other’ column, childcare concerns, exacerbated by inflexible working patterns and night-work, were again seen to be an important factor in discouraging female involvement in SAR work. A ‘male’ culture and overt sexism were also mentioned by several, as was the lack of sufficient toilet, shower and changing facilities. No male respondents mentioned sanitary provisions.

18.17 Other men added as factors inappropriate protective equipment and vessel design; the prevalence of men in maritime professions from which to draw recruits; and a failure to target recruiting to be attractive to women. It was again pointed out that many of the concerns listed as examples in the survey apply to men as well as women.

18.18 Again for balance, we note three further comments. The first two were from men who said that they had not noticed any barriers. One wrote: “I witness the opposite and some lack the qualifications”. With apologies to the respondent if this interpretation is incorrect, this may be a comment disapproving of ‘positive discrimination’ in favour of women - which, as several female and male respondents noted, is a problematic policy.

18.19 The second man wrote that “The more women who see SAR as a potential career, the more women we recruit. Seems like we see a good inflow of women in SAR, more than perhaps other operational maritime career categories.” The first part of this might seem a truism at first, but it underlines the importance of inclusive recruiting. The respondent does not define what “a good inflow” is, but it is at least questionable whether we should judge success by comparison with other male-dominated areas of maritime work. Again, recruitment requirements of prior experience, certification etc are a factor here.

18.20 The third comment was from a man who thought that there are barriers dissuading women from joining: “Women commonly are very interested in the SAR work but they also lack self confidence and/or required seaman skills to be able to do well in the SAR work on vessels. We only have SAR vessels in our organization”. Prior knowledge of seamanship (itself a gendered term) we have already discussed. This respondent makes a sweeping statement about women’s self-confidence: it may certainly be said that men as well as women can lack confidence. Nevertheless, responses from both men and women indicate that lack of self-confidence is perceived as being more of a hindrance for women.

19. HAS YOUR ORGANISATION TAKEN ANY STEPS TO ENCOURAGE WOMEN TO APPLY?

19.1 This question was asked of everyone in the individual survey, regardless of gender. IMRF member organisations were also asked this question in the additional survey. A number of options were offered. Respondents could select more than one option, so the totals are greater than 100%.

- 38.0% of the individual respondents did not answer the question (35.9% of the women, 39.6% of the men)

- 30.8% of the individual respondents said that their organisation had taken no such steps or they were unsure whether they had (34.0% of the women, 28.1% of the men)
- 33.3% of the member organisations said they had taken no such steps
- 31.2% of the individual respondents said that their organisation had taken steps (30.1% of the women, 32.3% of the men)
- 66.7% of the member organisations said they had taken steps.

19.2 Those individual female respondents who said steps had been taken identified

- specialist recruitment drives focussed on women⁵ 24.4%
- recruitment drives emphasising male/female equality in SAR roles 42.9%
- incentive schemes ('recommend a friend', etc) 15.7%
- mentoring and other in-post support schemes 13.4%
- equality education schemes for existing staff 29.0%
- flexible working, equal pay & benefits 23.0%
- childcare provision 2.3%
- comprehensive training 27.6%
- reassurance about the work/working environment 21.7%
- other 3.7%

19.3 Those individual male respondents who said steps had been taken identified

- specialist recruitment drives focussed on women 33.7%
- recruitment drives emphasising male/female equality in SAR roles 42.5%
- incentive schemes ('recommend a friend', etc) 11.2%
- mentoring and other in-post support schemes 11.6%
- equality education schemes for existing staff 26.9%
- flexible working, equal pay & benefits 15.3%
- childcare provision 4.8%
- comprehensive training 21.4%
- reassurance about the work/working environment 21.8%
- other 2.7%

For both women and men, answers given under 'other' were free-text. These are summarised below.

19.4 Of the five respondents not identifying as male or female, three said that no steps had been taken by their organisations to encourage women to apply, and two did not answer the question.

19.5 IMRF member organisations who said steps had been taken identified

⁵ In this and the following two questions, the survey form offered as choices 'specialist recruitment drives' and 'specialist recruitment drives focussed on women'. For the purposes of analysis these two questions have been amalgamated. Where a respondent chose both, this has been counted as one 'vote', not two.

- specialist recruitment drives focussed on women 8.3%
- recruitment drives emphasising male/female equality in SAR roles 83.3%
- incentive schemes ('recommend a friend', etc) 8.3%
- equality education schemes for existing staff 58.3%
- flexible working, equal pay & benefits 66.7%
- childcare provision 8.3%
- comprehensive training 41.7%
- reassurance about the work/working environment 41.7%
- other 8.3%

Answers given under 'other' were free-text and are summarised below. Note that the question about in-post support schemes was not asked under this heading in the member organisations' survey: see the question on staff retention below.

19.6 In some respects this section is problematic. The great majority of individual respondents were already employed in the SAR services, and may not have been directly concerned recently with recruitment efforts. It should also be noted that many individual respondents, women and men, emphasised their organisations' gender neutrality in recruitment. As noted before, there is evidence in the survey responses of resistance to positive discrimination. Whatever the rights and wrongs of that argument, gender-blindness in recruitment is a passive response to imbalance. While the survey did not seek to advocate affirmative action as such, this question was intended to highlight examples of it.

19.7 Of those individuals who answered the question, almost half (49.7%) were unsure of what tactics their organisations employ to encourage female recruitment, or did not think any specific action was taken. 55% of women took this view. It might be said that women would be more likely to notice such action - or to notice that it had not been taken. Two-thirds of the member organisations surveyed said that they do take specific action.

19.8 While there were few significant distinctions between male and female respondents' understanding of the tactics their organisations have deployed to recruit women, there were some surprising differences reported in the use of such tactics. There are also major differences between what individuals think their own organisations do and what the organisations responding to the additional survey say they actually do.

19.9 The low scores for childcare provision are not a surprise. As we have seen, this is a significant problem for many, so a low score here is to be expected: childcare support is a problem because it has not been widely provided. For volunteer SAR response teams called out infrequently it is not practicable to arrange formal childcare at the extremely short notice required.

19.10 What is surprising are the relatively low scores given to comprehensive training, reassurance about the work and the working environment, equality education schemes for existing staff, and mentoring and other in-post support schemes. The last scores particularly poorly - and should not be difficult to implement. Neither should the matter of reassurance, which should be a given in any recruitment campaign.

19.11 The low score given to ‘comprehensive training’ may partly reflect the fact that SAR organisations have traditionally sought to recruit people with prior experience and proven skills, who therefore may not need *comprehensive* training as such. But the figure, 24% overall, still seems low. If accurate, it does not inspire confidence that short-comings in experience and knowledge - a concern, it seems, for potential female recruits in particular - are addressed sufficiently.

19.12 The low score given to equality education schemes is also disappointing. This survey has shown clearly that sexism and discrimination of one kind or another are still an acknowledged problem, especially in some front-line SAR response units. Worse, harassment has been mentioned. Many respondents emphasised that it is a minority of men who are guilty of such behaviour - but it only takes one to discourage a new recruit.

19.13 There were relatively few comments or further suggestions from either women or men in response to this question. As already noted, several emphasised the gender neutrality of their organisations’ recruitment processes. For example, one female respondent wrote: “I do believe you need a certain set of skills and interest to apply for a job like this. You cannot motivate people into this, they need to come themselves. Male or female doesn’t matter. If you have to motivate people into something they shouldn’t be there in the first place.” And a male respondent reported that “During my term as a head of department I developed a recruit/train/retain process that was gender-blind and built on developing personal relationships. During my term 40% of our operational intake were women.”

19.14 Social media were mentioned as recruitment tools by several respondents, although one - a man - noted that “social media are full of unconscious gender stereotypes”. The importance of role models was again emphasised. “When visiting schools, a woman crew member is always present” noted one respondent, which seems to be a very good idea.

19.15 We should not read too much into the organisational responses to this question, granted that the sample is small and that these are not necessarily the individual respondents’ own organisations. But we may note that these organisations collectively gave a much higher score to flexible working, equal pay and benefits, equality education, comprehensive training and reassurance than the individual respondents did.

19.16 One organisation added that they focus on “internal and external communication and features on women in SAR roles” in addition to the options listed above. Another said that they run “recruitment campaigns emphasising equal opportunities and highlighting the breadth of roles that exist within the organisation that may be more female-friendly than on-water roles.” It is fair to ask who considers such roles “more female-friendly” - the recruiters or those they hope to recruit - but it is also fair to point out that the remark is open to either interpretation.

19.17 One of the organisations which replied to the additional survey was one that is still in the early stages of development.. They wrote in answer to this question that, although they are trying to recruit women, they are struggling, and need support. We note that it is one of the purposes of the IMRF’s #WomenInSAR initiative to help provide such support, including the sharing of good practice.

19.18 Such sharing is not only of value in developing states. One well developed European organisation wrote here that “in recruitment of volunteer crew at least the larger stations seek a suitable balance of

both men and women in the new recruits. The smaller stations often recruit whoever is interested. As far as I know, there are no specific measures that would encourage women to apply. However, the smaller older male-dominated stations would benefit from actions targeting 1) young people; 2) women. Often they acknowledge this themselves, but don't have the tools to help them in this.”

20. HAS YOUR ORGANISATION TAKEN ANY STEPS TO RETAIN FEMALE MEMBERS OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS?

20.1 This question was asked of everyone in the individual survey, regardless of gender. IMRF member organisations were also asked this question in the additional survey, although in this case the options offered were different. A number of options were offered. Respondents could select more than one option, so the totals are greater than 100%.

- 41.2% of the individual respondents did not answer the question (41.1% of the women, 41.4% of the men)
- 36.1% of the individual respondents said that their organisation had taken no such steps or they were unsure whether they had (39.1% of the women, 33.8% of the men)
- 22.2% of the member organisations said they had taken no such steps
- 22.7% of the individual respondents said that their organisation had taken steps (19.8% of the women, 24.8% of the men)
- 77.8% of the member organisations said they had taken steps.

20.2 Those individual female respondents who said steps had been taken identified

- specialist recruitment drives focussed on women 18.2%
- recruitment drives emphasising male/female equality in SAR roles 26.6%
- incentive schemes ('recommend a friend', etc) 7.7%
- mentoring and other in-post support schemes 23.8%
- equality education schemes for existing staff 31.5%
- flexible working, equal pay & benefits 30.7%
- childcare provision 4.9%
- comprehensive training 28.7%
- reassurance about the work/working environment 28.0%
- other 0.0%

20.3 Those individual male respondents who said steps had been taken identified

- specialist recruitment drives focussed on women 14.7%
- recruitment drives emphasising male/female equality in SAR roles 34.1%
- incentive schemes ('recommend a friend', etc) 8.4%
- mentoring and other in-post support schemes 13.3%
- equality education schemes for existing staff 30.5%

| | |
|--|-------|
| • flexible working, equal pay & benefits | 15.5% |
| • childcare provision | 4.9% |
| • comprehensive training | 25.2% |
| • reassurance about the work/working environment | 29.2% |
| • other | 0.9% |

All answers given under 'other' were free-text. These are summarised below.

20.4 Of the five respondents who did not identify as male or female, one said that no specific steps had been taken by their organisations to retain women, two said they had (one with comprehensive training, the other with incentives) and two did not answer the question.

20.5 IMRF member organisations who said steps had been taken identified

| | |
|--|-------|
| • flexible working, equal pay & benefits | 44.4% |
| • ensuring male/female equality in SAR roles | 44.4% |
| • ensuring male/female equality in training opportunities | 55.6% |
| • ensuring male/female equality in promotion opportunities | 50.0% |
| • mentoring or other in-post support schemes | 16.7% |
| • incentive schemes | 5.6% |
| • equality education schemes for all staff | 33.3% |
| • childcare provision | 5.6% |
| • other | 11.1% |

Answers given under 'other' were free-text and are summarised below.

20.6 As in the previous section, about recruitment policies, there was some evidence of uncertainty here. The question in the individual survey could have been better phrased, in retrospect, to make it clearer that it was seeking to identify policies intended to encourage women to remain with their organisations. Many respondents said that they were unsure about this or did not think any specific action was taken. This may indicate that there are no such policies or that the policies themselves are unclear.

20.7 The question was amended for the survey of SAR organisations. Reliable comparisons cannot be made between their responses and individual respondents', for this reason and also, again, because the individuals were not necessarily from these organisations.

20.8 Several of the individual respondents said that retention is a problem across the board in their organisations. It is not a problem specific to female employees or volunteers. Again, respondents commented that men and women are treated equally. Without further data it is not possible to say whether affirmative action is successful in either recruitment or retention, for women or any other group.

20.9 Of those individuals who answered the question, 61.4% believe that their organisations do not have retention policies specific to women, or were unsure about it. Rather more women (66.4%) than

men were of this view. These figures follow the same general pattern as those recorded for recruitment, above, but are rather higher in both cases - which may be accounted for by people who are already part of the organisation being likely to have a greater knowledge of retention policies than recruitment policies. The scores for active policies were higher in the organisations' responses than in the individuals'.

20.10 In general, people's perceptions of individual retention policies are similar to those reported above on recruitment, so we will not repeat the arguments here. Three figures do stand out in the individual responses to this question, however.

20.11 First, no one retention policy was highlighted by more than about 30% of the people who said that their organisations have such policies. Even allowing for individuals' uncertainty about the details, this seems a very low figure. While not all the policies suggested in the survey as possible options are easy to implement, some are not very difficult either.

20.12 Second, it is perhaps surprising that the figure for 'flexible working, equal pay & benefits' is so low. Only 30.7% of women recorded this as a policy. (The much lower figure for men here may simply be a function of it not affecting them directly.) Nearly two thirds of the respondents are unpaid volunteers, and this may be part of the reason for the low figure; although flexible employment conditions and some 'benefits' can apply to volunteers as well as paid staff.

20.13 The numbers are probably complicated further by this option combining flexible working with equal pay and benefits. In retrospect it would have been better to separate them. While we would certainly hope that women and men of equal experience are paid equally for equal work, we cannot draw any conclusions about this from this survey. Nor do we know what women regard as 'benefits'. Are adequate changing and sanitary facilities 'benefits', for example? Many respondents have reported inequalities in these respects. We do know that inflexible working patterns are a problem for some, and it is reasonable to say that this affects women more than men if we accept that women undertake more childcare than men do. (This was not asked about in this survey, but studies usually agree that this is so.)

20.14 Finally, the returns for 'mentoring and other in-post support schemes' are disappointing. Fewer than a quarter of the female respondents who said that their organisations have some retention policies included this option. Even the organisations' own returns score badly here.

20.15 Only two 'other' policies were mentioned in the individual survey responses, both by men. One singled out identifying any gender-related issues during 'debrief' sessions after tours of duty and acting on them thereafter. The other noted that a man "who behaved in a harassing way towards female crew members" had been sacked.

20.16 While higher than the individual scores on comparable questions, the organisations' responses also suggest perhaps surprisingly low levels of take-up of the options the survey suggested. We must remember that the question asked specifically about policies aimed at retaining female staff. As one organisation commented, the problem is wider. "Our national law is quite generous in terms of vacation times, paid maternity and paternity leave and so on, so for the organisation it is basically sufficient to maintain gender equality in opportunities. For volunteers, I believe there are no targeted steps for retention of female volunteers: crew retention is an important issue regardless of gender."

20.17 Nevertheless, the scores in the organisations' survey for ensuring male/female equality in SAR roles and training and promotion opportunities are still a surprise. These options do not promote affirmative action, only equality; yet only about half the responding organisations selected them. Why should this be? Are the other organisations saying that these things are a given (as, indeed, they should be) so do not need specific policies or actions? Without further research we cannot say whether this is so or whether there are other explanations.

20.18 Other policies were also mentioned. One organisation said that they already have some female members and "we intend to improve their standard of living" so as to attract more women into SAR work. Another organisation subsidises the Government paid maternity allowance to enable staff to receive a higher percentage of full pay during maternity leave. A third organisation has "set out an aim to achieve targeted improvement in numbers of female operational crew. We are working with both central and regional and local teams to support recruitment and engagement activities."

21. WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD ENCOURAGE MORE WOMEN TO BE PART OF THE MARITIME SAR SECTOR, AS PAID STAFF OR AS VOLUNTEERS?

21.1 This question was asked of everyone in the individual survey, regardless of gender. A number of options were offered. Respondents could select more than one option, so the totals are greater than 100%.

21.2 Female respondents:

- 39.5% did not answer the question

Those who did selected

- | | |
|--|-------|
| • specialist recruitment drives focussed on women | 41.1% |
| • recruitment drives emphasising male/female equality in SAR roles | 50.7% |
| • incentive schemes ('recommend a friend', etc) | 15.8% |
| • mentoring and other in-post support schemes | 30.0% |
| • equality education schemes for existing staff | 26.8% |
| • flexible working, equal pay & benefits | 28.0% |
| • childcare provision | 23.4% |
| • comprehensive training | 25.5% |
| • reassurance about the work/working environment | 37.2% |
| • other | 5.5% |

21.3 Male respondents:

- 43.1% did not answer the question

Those who did selected

- | | |
|--|-------|
| • specialist recruitment drives focussed on women | 39.0% |
| • recruitment drives emphasising male/female equality in SAR roles | 46.7% |

| | |
|--|-------|
| • incentive schemes ('recommend a friend', etc) | 19.9% |
| • mentoring and other in-post support schemes | 17.4% |
| • equality education schemes for existing staff | 20.3% |
| • flexible working, equal pay & benefits | 11.0% |
| • childcare provision | 10.4% |
| • comprehensive training | 16.6% |
| • reassurance about the work / working environment | 27.4% |
| • other | 2.3% |

All answers given under 'other' were free-text and are summarised below.

21.4 Again only three of the five respondents who did not identify as male or female answered this question. One wrote: "Stop treating us different from men." Two selected the reassurance option, and one also selected emphasising male/female equality in recruitment campaigns.

21.5 Female and male respondents were in broad agreement that recruitment drives that focussed on women, or which emphasised male/female equality in SAR, were the most important steps that could be taken to encourage more women into the SAR sector.

21.6 There were, however, some telling differences in the level of support for some of the other options suggested in the survey headings. There was significantly more female support for mentoring and other in-post support schemes; flexible and equal working conditions (although we should again note the possible confusion caused by this composite option); childcare support; comprehensive training; and reassurance about what working in SAR is like. To some extent this mirrored the concerns raised in other survey responses. But these distinctions deserve special attention for another reason: addressing them effectively will require the support of senior managers at the highest level. If men are in a majority in senior management teams (a statistic not addressed in the survey, but supported anecdotally), do they give the same attention to these issues as many women think they should?

21.7 Turning to the comments made in this section, several female respondents again emphasised that they supported gender neutrality in recruitment. Commitment and personality were considered more important than one's gender. "Stop singling women out and treat them equally," wrote one female SAR vessel commander; and a female crew member said: "I don't think that one should look specifically for any gender but for the person's commitment."

21.8 One respondent thought that the options suggested under this heading were applicable to paid positions but not volunteers. Additions suggested by other women were: more use of female role models in advertising; trial periods; team-building events; and giving female employees more opportunities to become involved when visiting schools etc. Acting on requests made by women already in the organisation would also help: providing protective equipment that fits, for example. One respondent suggested that SAR organisations should seek Investor in Diversity status. Another suggested having "a designated inclusion officer in each area to deal with issues that cannot be dealt with at station level." All of these are applicable in volunteer as well as paid employment settings.

21.9 “Maybe we must start with the idea that it is not special that women work in some so-called men’s jobs,” wrote a female SAR vessel crew and support team member. “Just stop saying some jobs are only suitable for men. And stop saying that it is special that women work in so-called men’s jobs. When we start with acting normal about jobs not being special for men or women maybe one day it becomes normal that anyone, male or female, can work where they want.”

21.10 Like their female colleagues, several men said that their organisations did not - and should not - distinguish between men and women. “We don’t need men or women. We need Crew,” wrote one. While gender-blindness should be the aim in recruitment and employment (paid or voluntary)⁶, this survey asked whether affirmative actions should be taken to tackle existing imbalances and discrimination; to create a level playing field. We may agree with the man who wrote that equality means equal requirements for all - but what are we to make of his assertion that women “commonly are not as good at steering a vessel or navigating as men are”? He used this as an example to support his belief that there should be no specific efforts to recruit women.

21.11 It is very important to emphasise that resistance to affirmative action is not the same as defending a discriminatory status quo. Judging by the comments recorded, most of those arguing for no specific action to be taken in support of female recruitment - women and men alike - feel that equal opportunities and equitable treatment are sufficient; that affirmative action can be destabilising; and/or that any imbalances (which are not universal in any event) will sort themselves out naturally. A partial corrective to the comment quoted above comes from a male SAR vessel and shoreside response team commander of more than 20 years experience: “I operate with many people, and do not care whether they are female or not. They all do their jobs professionally, and gender rarely seems to percolate into discussions. That said, I recognize that this isn't the case across all regions, and that women may view their personal experiences differently - for better or worse.”

21.12 Additional suggestions from male respondents of ways of encouraging more female participation often mirrored those from women; for example, the importance of highlighting female role models, especially leaders; addressing issues of poorly-fitting protective equipment and equipment designed for men; and using and promoting female SAR personnel on school visits, etc. One man supported “a robust policy that actually means something as opposed to being aspirational, having the strength to robustly deal with misogynistic behaviour.” Another commented that, as a male carer, flexible working conditions are not just important for women - this is a point that needs to be borne in mind as society equalises more generally.

21.13 As already noted, this was a survey focussing specifically on women in SAR. In doing so the IMRF does not seek to suggest that other diversity issues are in any way less important. One respondent, thinking of the situation in his own northwest European country “wanted to point out that the BAME [black, Asian, minority ethnic] community is represented hardly anywhere”. This may, indeed, be a larger problem than that of women’s participation, demographically. But it was not this survey’s focus.

21.14 So we will give the last word here to another female SAR vessel crew member:

⁶ This statement may not be wholly accepted in some cultures. One respondent, for example, cited fellow crew members’ Christian beliefs that men’s and women’s roles should be distinct.

“Organisations need to treat the women they have better and to utilise them to recruit more women. It is hard to attract more women when potential recruits see the barriers and difficulties existing in female members’ experience.”

22. EMPLOYERS’ VIEWS OF WOMEN IN SAR ROLES

22.1 IMRF member organisations were asked whether they had any comment on the employment of women in SAR roles. Their free-text answers are given in full below.

- “Our organisation supports full equality of roles on and off the water for women. In the future this will include designing and procuring rescue vessels to ensure that they are ‘female friendly’.”
- In the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (agreed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015) “we need to be assisted to be sustainable and carry out our plan of empowering women to take an active role in SAR.” The Goals are intended to be achieved by 2030, and include Gender Equality (Goal 5).
- “Women should be prepared to change positions or adapt positions to their challenges.”
- “Employment of women in SAR roles requires adequate support for SAR activities that involve women’s participation to a greater extent. Resource constraints are among the challenges confronting SAR organizations from recruiting more women in SAR roles.”
- “There are too few women working at sea overall, so I believe SAR could do more to recruit more.”
- “We have, to some extent, goals of training more women in the vessel commander roles. We have organized national training sessions for women volunteers. We also have a focus on cultural changes at station level to promote equal growth opportunity, with the addition of volunteer management staff that focus on values and leadership.”
- “A large percentage of the supporting staff of our organization are women who play a vital role behind the SAR scene. They are a valuable key to the success of our organization.”
- “At the RCC we actively encourage diversity and promote a different way of thinking when coordinating a SAR response, or working together in a team. Having female operational staff in the team allows for the group to look at situations differently and from a different perspective.”
- “In paid (that is, headquarters support) positions we’re not so far from a female/male balance, but for operational volunteers on lifeboats the gap is huge, with only a few women. Actions are required! Half of the humans are women so we need to reach this percentage in SAR organisations!!!”

23. DISCUSSION

23.1 The great majority of women involved in SAR reported having the same motivations, positives, challenges and rewards as their male counterparts. However, a significant minority - more than one in nine - listed aspects of gender discrimination among their greatest challenges.

23.2 Male dominance remains a fact in many SAR teams. This can have an indirect discriminatory effect in terms of facilities and equipment provided, regardless of whether discrimination is perceived at the inter-personal level. As one respondent noted, “We need to adapt a world of men designed by men for men.” Recruiting women requires concomitant action on providing suitable facilities, equipment, working conditions etc. This is an issue for senior management at the highest level.

23.3 Sexism still occurs, either within the team, or in interactions with people outside of the team. It is not universal, but was reported often enough to be a significant concern. It was more commonly - but not exclusively - reported among older men. Some women felt that they needed to out-perform their male counterparts in order to be accepted as equals. Self-confidence, or a lack of it, was identified as an issue. Confidence is not boosted by having to overcome additional barriers.

23.4 Sexism and discrimination can be conscious or unconscious. The worst cases of individual discrimination reported in the survey are conscious, but no-one should underestimate the damage done by unconscious discrimination, including issues around the provision of appropriate personal equipment, facilities, working conditions, and the language used in training manuals etc. The survey indicates that there are still too many examples of conscious and unconscious discrimination, which result in the sidelining or underuse of women’s abilities and, in some cases, their loss to the SAR services - a serious waste of resources as well as a moral wrong.

23.5 It would be useful to know more about why people leave the SAR services, whatever their gender. It would also be useful to know more about what would attract more people into the SAR services, women in particular. As one respondent noted, “We haven’t fully addressed why someone doesn’t want to work or volunteer” in SAR.

23.6 A large proportion of women respondents felt that they, or other women, had been discriminated against because of their gender. It is clear that there are still improvements to be made. Although many respondents emphasised that the situation is generally getting better, this momentum needs to be maintained and, ideally, increased. The number of gender discrimination cases reported in response to this survey that apparently remain unresolved, either at an individual or organisational level, is disappointing.

23.7 It is for managers at all levels to challenge and address the use of discriminatory language, behaviours and attitudes, whether this is conscious or unconscious. This is a matter that should be consistently reinforced across organisations. The IMRF is not aware of any evidence that women should be precluded from certain SAR tasks on either physical or psychological capability grounds. Different individuals may be suited for different tasks - but not because of their gender identification. This is one of the main reasons why we have teams.

23.8 It is also for managers to ensure that institutional discrimination is avoided by ensuring the provision of equipment and facilities suitable for all their staff, female or male, paid or volunteer.

23.9 Inappropriate humour and unwanted ‘flirting’ can reportedly be problematic. ‘Banter’ can feel like bullying if not reciprocated: a joke only works if the hearer finds it funny. Similarly, unwanted sexual approaches can become harassment. Managers at all levels in an organisation, from the highest level

downwards, are responsible for clearly setting and proactively upholding behaviour standards, and many survey responses commended the effectiveness of such a management approach.

23.10 Most men who responded wanted to see equality of treatment and opportunity for female colleagues, and many women emphasised that most of their male colleagues are supportive. This support from men is encouraging, because equality can only be achieved if everyone supports the action required.

23.11 Few female respondents reported that family or friends' concerns about their SAR work were a major issue - but women who have been dissuaded from becoming involved in SAR by such concerns are unlikely to have seen the survey.

23.12 Specific concerns raised by SAR women were wide-ranging in nature. Safety, equipment, training, temperament, and the effects on health - especially mental health - and family life were the main issues raised. SAR organisations may wish to conduct research locally and address concerns revealed, especially if facing recruitment problems. Emphasising the importance of a good, reliable team and good, supportive management; thorough training, good equipment and best practice in mitigating personal risk are all recommended - as is ensuring that these things are actually provided!

23.13 Most female respondents want to achieve more in SAR. This is a resource of ambition that any well-run organisation should wish to tap into. However, it is important to distinguish here between ambition and opportunity, bearing in mind the number of female respondents who reported that they believed they had been held back or denied opportunities because of their gender.

23.14 Promoting an organisational culture that positively encourages individual progress is clearly to be welcomed. For such a culture to thrive, it needs to be genuinely supported at all levels of management *and* within individual teams. It should extend to every part of the organisation. The example of supportive network groups mentioned by one organisation is a good one. However, it is interesting that not all the SAR organisations ticked the 'training' and 'equality of opportunity' options when discussing providing opportunities for women to progress in the additional survey. Further research would be useful here.

23.15 Concerns about family life, and childcare in particular, were raised by both women and men when asked to identify factors that may be barriers to women's employment in SAR. As these related to the 'long hours' and 'on call' categories suggested in the survey, which respondents may have selected when thinking about childcare concerns, it is reasonable to conclude that this is a significant issue - one which can be exacerbated by inflexible working patterns.

23.16 Both women and men often emphasised that recruitment opportunities are open to all - but this does not explain why a number of SAR organisations have apparently faced a particular challenge recruiting more women. If, as some respondents think, some women undervalue the contribution they might make, this could be a campaign focus.

23.17 Additional actions suggested when considering how to encourage more women to become involved in maritime SAR included more use of female role models in advertising; trial periods; team-building events; including female employees when visiting schools etc; providing equipment that fits;

seeking Investor in Diversity status; having designated inclusion officers at regional level; and dealing robustly with misogynistic behaviour.

23.18 The number of those reporting the availability of mentoring and other in-post support schemes was disappointing. The importance of this sort of support was highlighted many times in the survey responses. They are important for all staff, volunteer and paid, and particularly for new entrants. SAR organisations should consider what more they could do. Similarly, all potential recruits should be able to feel that they will receive all the training that they need. There is evidence in this survey that this is a particular concern for women.

23.19 Attention should also be given to diversity and equality education for existing staff; and the importance of inclusivity in internal and external communications, including social media, advertisements, public relations material, and outreach programmes and events cannot be over-emphasised.

23.20 As societal norms shift more in favour of equality, adjustments may need to be made to assist male employees as well: flexible working and training arrangements to accommodate childcare responsibilities, for example. This will, in turn, help women.

23.21 Addressing diversity issues effectively requires the support of senior managers at the highest level. If men are in a majority in senior management teams, will they give these issues the attention that many women think they should? Senior management teams need to remain alert to the danger of self-replicating, only recruiting or promoting those who look, think or behave like them.

23.22 Finally, many respondents, both female and male, emphasised that they supported gender neutrality in recruitment and employment. It is important to note that resistance to affirmative action is not the same as defending a discriminatory status quo. Discrimination of all kinds should be addressed and, while this was a survey focussing specifically on women in SAR, other diversity issues are equally important.

24. CONCLUSIONS

24.1 The five objectives set for this survey were to gather information on:

- (1) how many women are working in the maritime SAR sector today;
- (2) what kinds of roles they are working in;
- (3) what barriers they face;
- (4) what individuals and organisations think can be done to improve the situation; and
- (5) to establish a comprehensive and accurate benchmark, enabling the IMRF to better focus its support and to measure the success of the #WomenInSAR initiative.

24.2 Objective (1) was not fully met by this survey, because ultimately the number and distribution of responses received was insufficient for that purpose. It would require a more complete global survey of SAR organisations.

24.3 However, the other survey objectives were met. A great deal of useful material was gathered on objectives (3) and (4) in particular, and this material should assist the IMRF, its members and SAR organisations in general to identify further targeted work in this area. The main conclusions drawn from a preliminary analysis of the survey responses are set out below against these two objective headings, following some general conclusions.

General conclusions

24.4 There was a good response to the survey in terms of numbers of individual responses, but 90% of the responses came from northern Europe and North America. We should therefore be cautious about generalising more widely.

24.5 For the great majority of women respondents, the reasons for becoming involved in SAR and the most rewarding parts of their SAR experience are the same as those usually cited by men. However, issues related to gender discrimination were reportedly seen as being among the most challenging aspects of their work for a significant minority of women.

24.6 Many respondents emphasised that most male colleagues are supportive, and that things are generally getting better.

24.7 Many respondents, both female and male, do not support affirmative action. They argue for gender-blindness in recruitment processes and gender neutrality in the workplace.

Barriers

24.8 Male dominance remains a fact in many SAR teams and this can have an indirect discriminatory effect, for example in terms of the facilities and equipment provided. The survey responses indicate that a disappointing level of gender discrimination still exists in some quarters.

24.9 Some women felt that they needed to out-perform their male counterparts in order to be accepted as equals.

24.10 Gender discrimination can result in a sidelining or under-use of women's capabilities, their frustration and, in some cases, their loss to the SAR services.

24.11 A perception of SAR jobs as being more suitable for men; resistance from existing male staff; women not knowing that these jobs are there for them; and concerns about family life, childcare in particular, were considered important barriers by both male and female respondents.

24.12 A lack of adequate toilet, sanitary, showering and changing facilities, and a failure to provide personal protective equipment appropriate for women, or to consider women sufficiently when designing equipment, were reported by a significant number of respondents.

Improvements

24.13 Recruiting women requires concomitant action on providing suitable facilities and equipment and equitable working conditions.

24.14 Mentoring and other in-post support schemes such as ‘buddying’ were widely thought to be beneficial. Having female role models was thought significant by both women and men.

24.15 Equality of opportunity and flexibility of work patterns were cited as important to both recruitment and retention, particularly of women.

24.16 All potential recruits should be able to feel that they will receive all the training that they need. There was evidence from this survey that this is a particular concern for women.

24.17 Inclusivity in internal and external communications, advertisements, public relations material, and outreach programmes and events is very important to overcoming perceptions that ‘SAR is for men’ or any tendency in women to under-value the contribution they might make.

24.18 Recruitment drives that focus on women or which emphasised male/female equality in SAR were regarded as the most important steps that could be taken to encourage more women into the SAR sector.

24.19 Attention should be given to diversity and equality education for all staff.

25. RECOMMENDATIONS

SAR organisations

25.1 SAR organisations are recommended to consider the barriers and improvements listed among the conclusions above.

25.2 It is for managers at all levels in the organisation (including the highest) to address discriminatory language, behaviours and attitudes, and to set clear expectations for correct behaviour. From the responses to this survey, it would appear that this is a matter that deserves greater and more urgent attention.

25.3 Recruitment of more women is not sufficient in itself. Some survey responses highlighted poor equipment, facilities, working conditions, and even the language used in training materials, as matters requiring review. Any identified shortfalls then need to be addressed.

25.4 Promoting an organisational culture that encourages individual progress is clearly a positive step. For such a culture to thrive, it needs to be genuinely supported at all levels of management (including at the highest level), as well as within individual teams. It should extend to every part of the organisation and it should be gender-blind.

25.5 If not already in place, mentoring and other in-post support schemes are highly recommended. A very senior manager should be assigned to champion this work.

25.6 Targeted surveys could help with analysis of the local barriers to recruitment of more female personnel into SAR roles. What is discouraging potential applicants?

25.7 It is good practice to survey staff - voluntary as well as paid - who leave the organisation, to determine their reasons for leaving. Many organisations do this routinely, but it is also important to act on any negative issues this research reveals.

25.8 To aid benchmarking, underpin policy decisions and facilitate improvements, it is recommended that all relevant information on diversity in employment, voluntary as well as paid, should be centrally maintained and regularly reviewed.

The IMRF

25.9 It is recommended that the results of this survey should be shared with the IMO, in support of their own 'Women in Maritime' programme.

25.10 The IMRF should also consider further research into what their SAR organisation members do to recruit and, especially, to retain staff - including female staff. The provision of good working conditions, equality in SAR roles, and training and promotion opportunities are important for the recruitment and retention of both volunteers and paid personnel.

25.11 As usual the IMRF should share reported experience and good practice among its members and with the wider SAR community.

25.12 The IMRF should seek to establish a mentoring scheme for women in maritime SAR.

25.13 The IMRF should develop resources to assist SAR organisations to improve the recruitment and retention of women, both as volunteers and paid personnel.
