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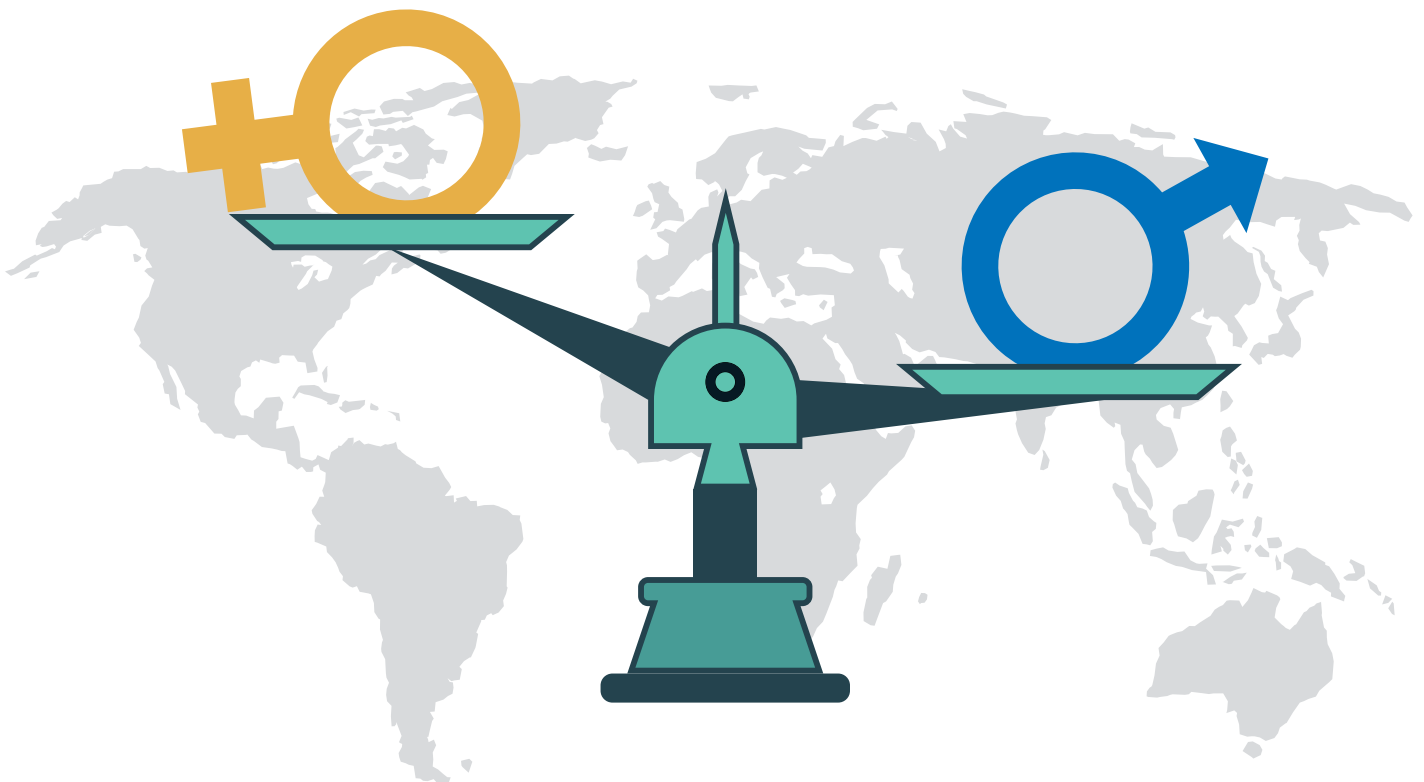
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Gender Discrimination and Expatriates – Assignments without (Glass) Borders. How far have we come?

Quarterly Report September 2018



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The RES Forum cooperates with the Leuphana University of Lüneburg. The main goal is to enhance the practical perspective of the RES Forum with a more academic research approach. We aim to match the understanding of pressing issues in HR management with research expertise in order to achieve academic thought leadership in the field of global HR management.

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The RES Forum is an independent, highly engaged and international community of senior in-house International Human Resources professionals with more than 1600 members in over 45 countries. We are not influenced by external parties or third-party vendors. We share information to make our working lives easier and to assist in solving difficult work challenges. We collaborate on shared projects and initiatives, and we learn together. Our agenda, set entirely by our membership, is delivered through a spectrum of services including member information exchange, custom research, professional consultancy and training and a full schedule of events held around the globe.



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Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Professor Michael F. Dickmann, Professor of International HRM, Cranfield University, School of Management, UK, for his collaboration and support writing this report.

Thank you also to the following who supported the writing and production of this report:

- Emma Lally and Alex Footman, Gateley Plc
- Taryn Kramer, Brittany Zanczak, Jeff Mills and Lisa Marie DeSanto, SIRVA Worldwide Relocation & Moving
- Andrea Piacentini and Heather Hughes, The RES Forum (for Editorial services)

Thank you to all of The RES Forum Members who took part in the research for this report. Without you, this report would not have been possible.

This report has been produced in association with the following RES Forum Partners:



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About SIRVA

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Introduction

Despite the great strides that women have made towards gender parity in the workplace and despite the fact that the gap is smaller than it once was, the gender gap still remains. It is widely recognized that even today, women are underrepresented in leadership positions and earn less than men, even when carrying out exactly the same tasks. In all areas of the workforce, we are still far from achieving gender equality, and this is equally true in terms of Global Mobility, where the numbers of women accepting international assignments are significantly lower than men.

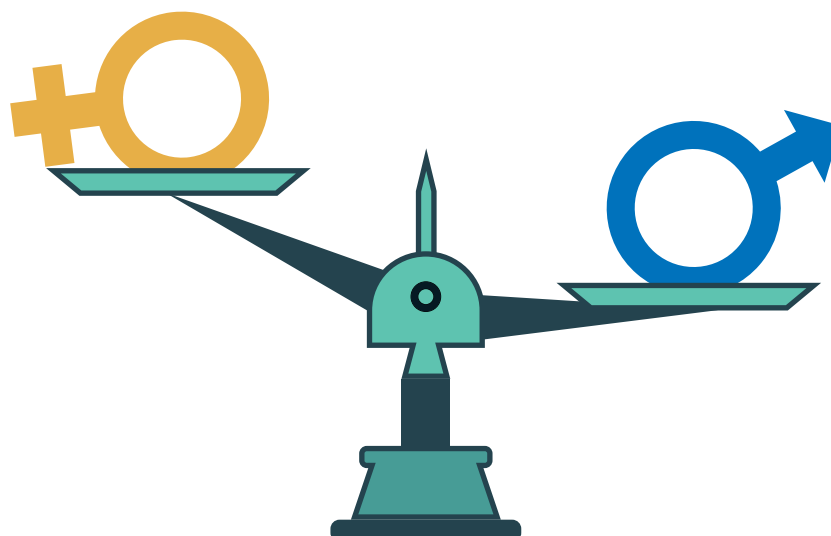
According to the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2017), given the current rate of change, it will take an incredible 217 more years to achieve gender equality. The research suggests that the economic gender gap is actually widening instead of closing, meaning that, there is still a long way to go before gender equality is achieved in all areas of the global workforce, and for International Assignees this is no different.

With the onset of globalization, the deployment of expatriates to fill skill gaps in overseas subsidiaries and for employee career development is part of the day-to-day business of Multinational Corporations (MNCs). International work experience is almost mandatory for any professional who wishes to climb to the top of the corporate career ladder. However, even in the year

2018, in many host countries female expatriates face challenges because of their gender, meaning that gaining international work experience can be particularly difficult for women. Whilst both men and women face the same challenges adapting to cultural and political differences, in some locations such as Saudi Arabia, women face other seemingly insurmountable hurdles that their male counterparts do not need to deal with purely due to their gender.

The subject of discrimination against female expatriates has not been investigated in great detail to date. To enable us to gain a full understanding of gender discrimination against female expatriates within MNCs, we surveyed both expatriates about their own personal experiences, as well as Global Mobility professionals working within MNCs, allowing us to gain a multi-dimensional view of the issues that women face today.

In this report, we demonstrate the ways in which female expatriates are subjected to workplace discrimination according to the results of our research. We look at the implications of such discrimination for organizations, as well as ways in which they can mitigate against this. We then offer action steps that GM teams can take to make positive change within their organizations for the future.



Who participated in the study?

The study draws on a sample of 180 expatriates from Western Europe and the United States, of which 39% were female. This is a slightly higher percentage of women than in typical expatriate samples due to our decision to disproportionately target more women for the purposes of this study. The average age of respondents is 40, and they have spent an average of 2.8 years in their host countries. Respondents live and work in 30 different countries, spread across 4 continents, and the top 5 assignment destinations are illustrated in Figure 1. We cautiously selected these host locations, since they represent a good mix of countries with very low to very high institutional levels of gender discrimination based on the Social Institutions & Gender Index by the OECD (genderindex.org). The expatriates that we surveyed work throughout all levels of the organization from Technical to Top Management, as depicted in Figure 2. Just over half of all expatriates (56%), are accompanied by at least one family member (e.g. a spouse and/or children). Just under half of all expatriates (45%) have accompanying children.

Figure 2: Seniority level of responding expatriates

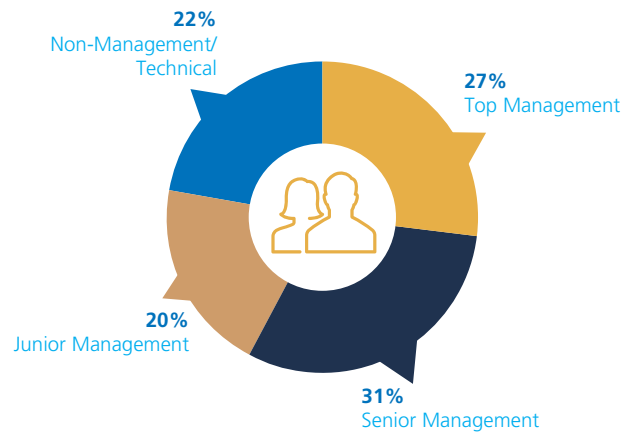
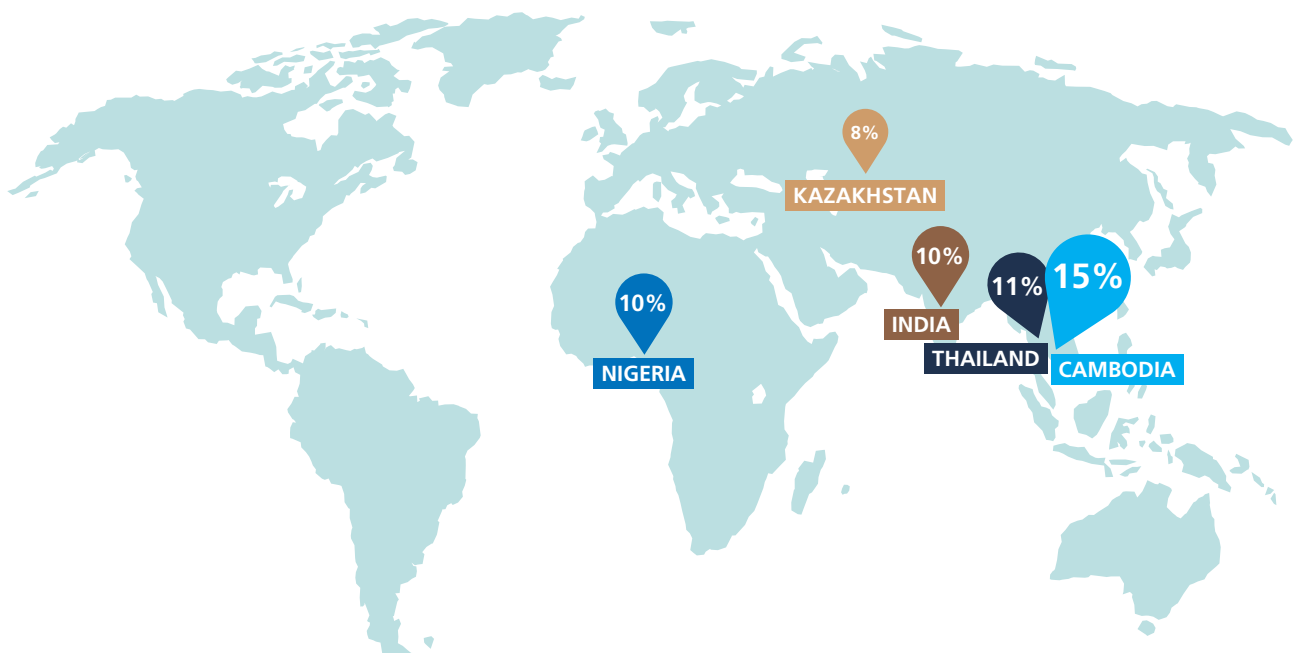


Figure 1: Top 5 host countries



Facing gender discrimination and harassment: Discrimination both in and out of the workplace?

In order to capture different facets of gender discrimination, expatriates were asked about their experiences of discriminatory treatment both in the workplace and outside of work. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of one (never) to seven (several times a day), the frequency with which they encountered certain types of behaviours.

Workplace discrimination

As shown in Figure 3, female expatriates generally experience higher levels of gender discrimination at work than their male counterparts. While this is not surprising, we were interested in finding out where discrimination is most frequently encountered and what the consequences of this are. Our results showed that, among respondents, gender discrimination is highest in Africa, followed by Asia (Figure 4). According to our Global Mobility experts, discrimination in Asia is highest in the Middle East

region. One expert revealed, “My observations of gender discrimination toward expats has tended to be connected to female expats in the Middle East.”

In contrast, respondents experienced very low levels of discrimination in Europe and South America. The reasons for this may partly be rooted in the high levels of institutional discrimination (rated by the OECD’s Social Institutions & Gender Index (SIGI)), for instance in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, or India. For a detailed study, see Bader et al., 2018. The Middle East and North Africa regions also exhibited the highest degree of discrimination in the SIGI. It must be noted, however, that great differences exist between countries and regions within a continent. High levels of gender discrimination are not necessarily encountered in every part of Africa. Thus, it is essential to focus on the specific host country, when studying (potential) discrimination.

Figure 3: Levels of workplace discrimination experienced by female and male expatriates

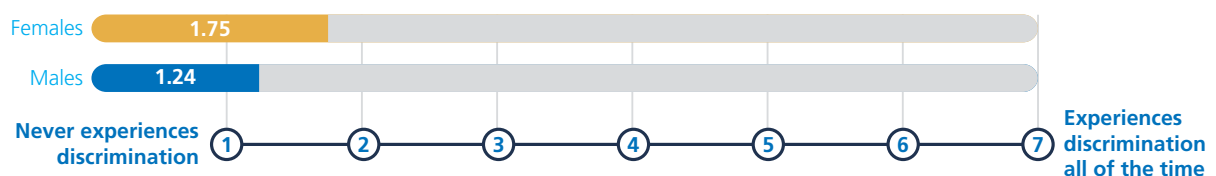
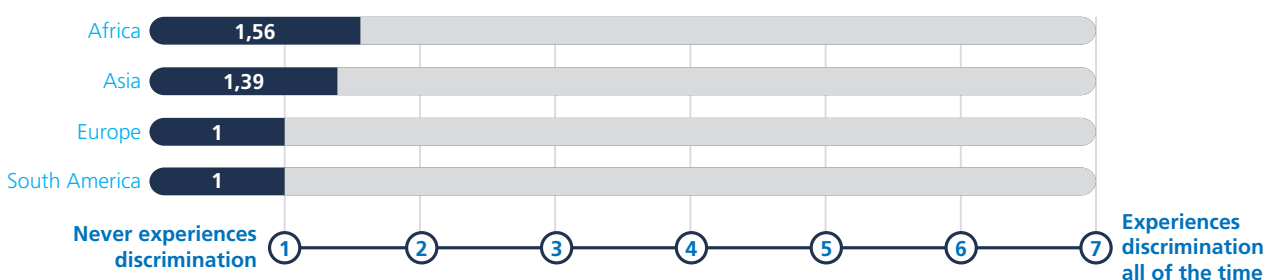
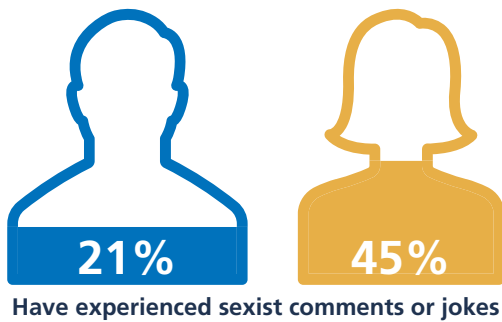


Figure 4: Levels of workplace discrimination experienced by all expatriates (male and female), shown by continent



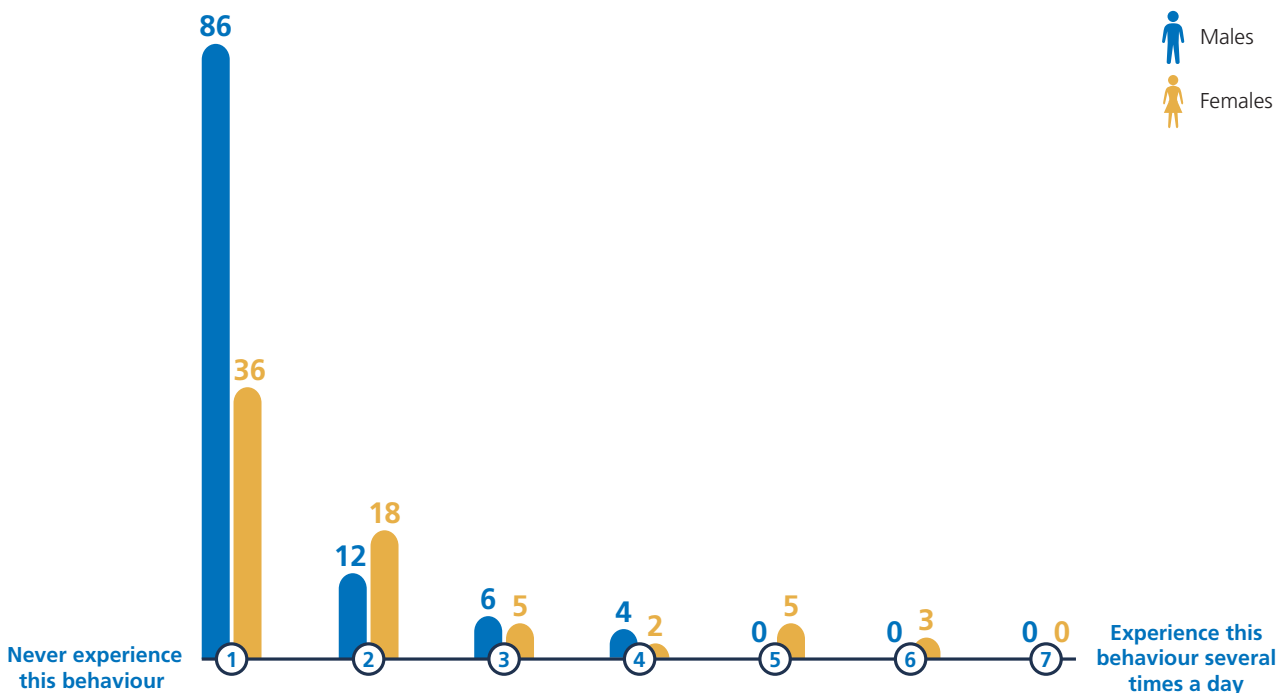
A closer look at the individual answers enables us to identify in what way female expatriates experience discriminatory behaviour from their co-workers. When it comes to sexist comments or jokes, 45% of female respondents indicate that they have experienced this in the workplace, compared to only 21% percent of males. (Figure 5).



There are many ways that females encounter gender discrimination in relation to Global Mobility. As well as having to adapt to significant cultural and political differences, and potentially putting up with sexist comments or jokes, females have to contend with obstacles such as unfavourable sex discrimination and immigration laws. In addition, within the UK, Home Office statistics show that men are significantly more likely than women to achieve skilled or highly-skilled migrant status; those on Tiers 1 and 2 of the points-based system. In contrast, women disproportionately receive the most disadvantageous labour migration status that exists; that of domestic worker.

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Gateley Plc

Figure 5: Distribution of responses to “Co-workers tell jokes about my gender”



“When I've encountered [discrimination] it's been quite subtle and has been limited to occasions where locals were uncomfortable in the presence of a female, or where they made an incorrect assumption that the female was less senior.”

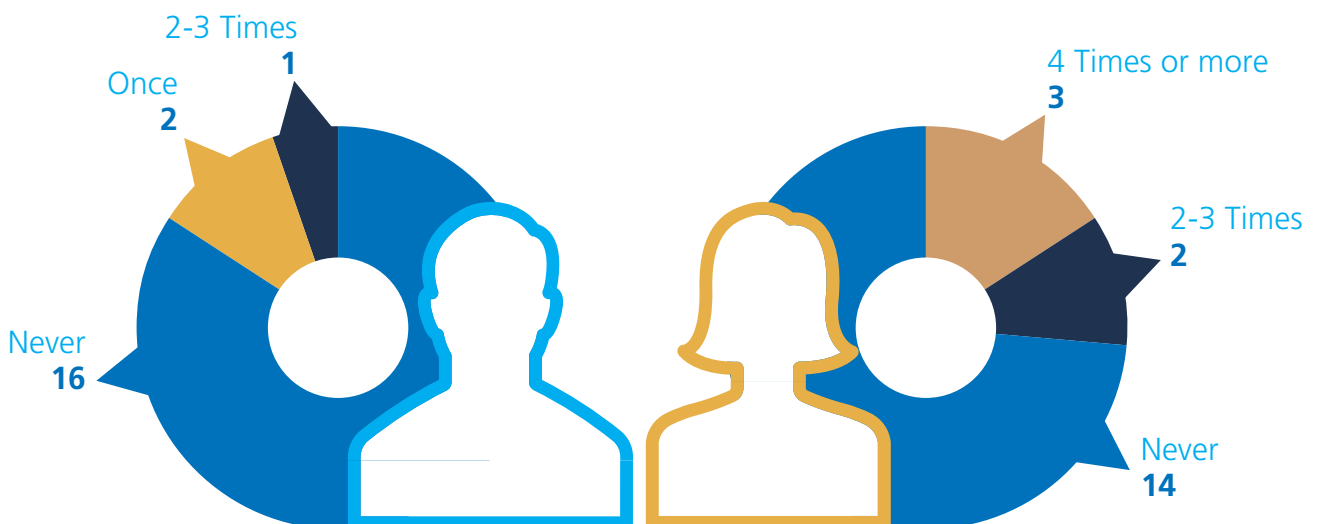
GM Expert, Defence Industry, UK

Interestingly, the organization's headquarters may not be aware of the extent of discrimination. Although almost half of the surveyed female expatriates indicated that they have been on the receiving end of sexist comments or jokes, 75% of GM professionals report that they have never been aware of such discrimination. This may indicate that many expatriates do not report gender discrimination to their headquarters. However, as Figure 6 shows, GM managers did report that they notice that female expatriates in their organizations are more likely to be on the receiving end of sexist jokes or comments than their male expatriate counterparts.

Of course, discrimination may not always be direct (e.g. a derogatory comment) but may also be more subtle. As one GM expert said: “When I've encountered [discrimination] it's been quite subtle and has been limited to occasions where locals were uncomfortable in the presence of a female, or where they made an incorrect assumption that the female was less senior.”

This statement shows just how deeply rooted gender discrimination still is in some countries.

Figure 6: In your role as a GM manager, how many times in total have you been made aware that expats have been subject to sexist jokes or comments in the workplace?

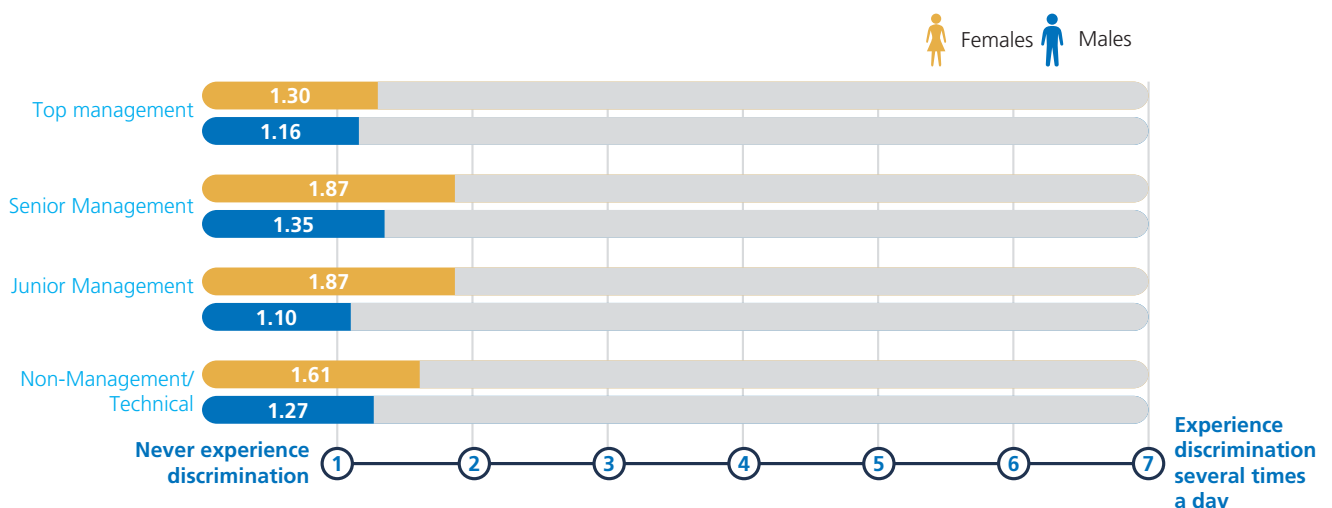


Discrimination against female expatriates is higher at junior and senior management levels than at top management

In general, expatriates at top management levels experience the lowest levels of discrimination, as Figure 7 illustrates. Evidently, those employees working at the most senior levels of the organization exercise the most power and influence over employees, meaning that there would be few opportunities for colleagues or other employees to display discriminatory behaviour towards them.

Whilst it might seem fair to state that levels of discrimination against women decrease as they rise through the organizational ranks, this simplistic analysis of course ignores the fact that, compared to men, not many women make it to the top of their organizations. Needless to say that this, at least partially, is also the result of discrimination.

Figure 7: Workplace discrimination in relation to hierarchical positions



Perceived or actual discrimination of women in the space of Global Mobility may be due, in part, to the timing of the global opportunity. The bulk of a mobile population can be classified as mid-career; these individuals are not new to the workforce, but are seeking a global opportunity as a way to advance their career through the enhancement or development of skills and experience. During this time, women may be considering family, and the global opportunity may not be the right fit for their personal lives. This may lead to an “opt out” by women when approached

or considered for an international assignment. The trend towards increased use of alternate assignment types (short term, extended business travellers) may serve to close the gender gap by providing more flexible (and manageable) options for diverse groups to accept global opportunities.

Trevor Janes

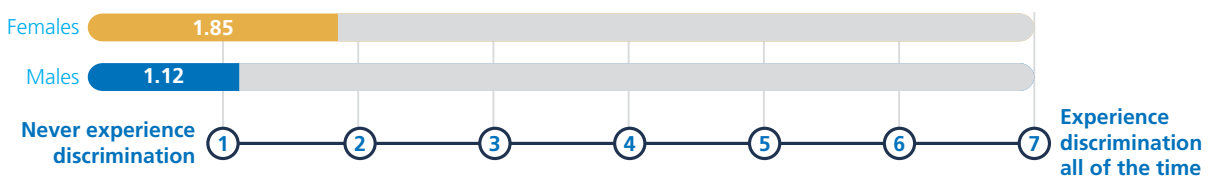
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Discrimination outside of the workplace

Of course, gender discrimination is not limited to the workplace. Expatriates move their place of residence to another country, where of course they also typically spend most of their leisure time. Looking for accommodation, visiting a restaurant, shopping for groceries, or simply using public transport; expats are constantly interacting with locals living in their host country. Expatriates may

face discriminatory behaviours in their everyday lives, both based on their status as a foreigner and as a woman. In patriarchal societies, female expats of course face even more difficult challenges. Unsurprisingly, the results again demonstrate that female expatriates experience a significantly higher degree of discrimination outside of the workplace than their male counterparts do (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Discrimination outside of the workplace



Outside of the workplace, female respondents to the survey noted that they are sometimes excluded or ignored due to their gender, and some even reported that they had been insulted. With regard to unfair treatment in general, based on gender, 61% of female expatriates stated that they have experienced unfair treatment because of their gender at least once, while only 8% of their male counterparts said the same. This can be seen in figure 9.

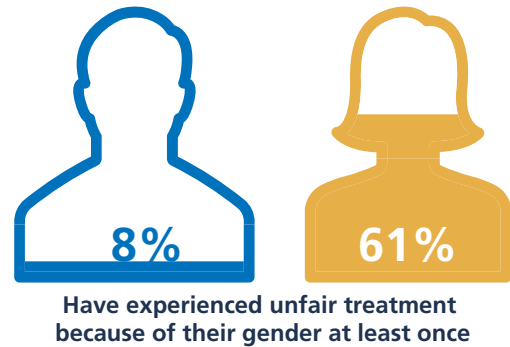
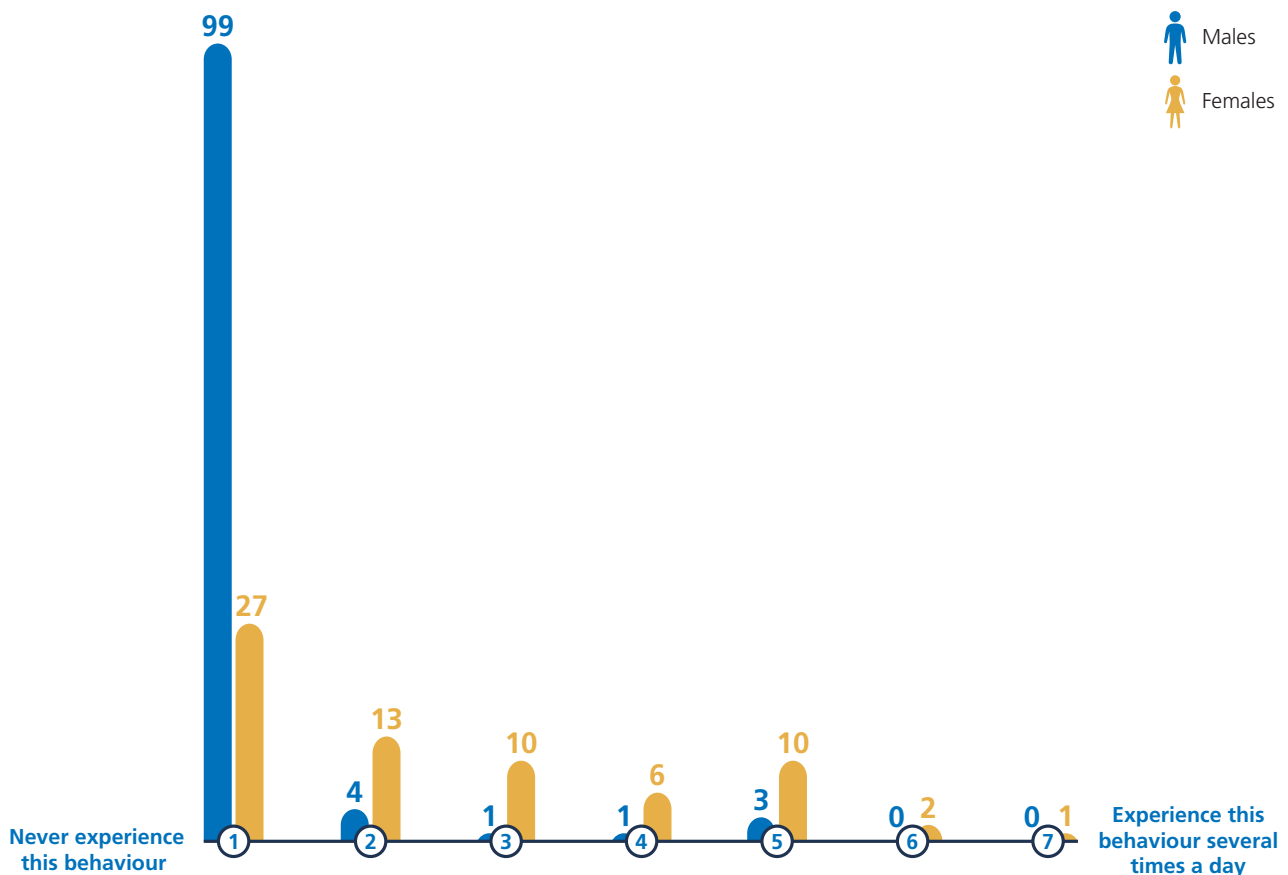


Figure 9: Distribution of responses to the statement “I am treated unfairly because of my gender”



Coping strategies, adjustment, and company policies: How is discrimination dealt with at an individual and an organizational level?

Discrimination can increase an individual's stress levels, thereby leading to a reduction in physical and psychological health (APA, 2016). It is therefore essential for organizations to help their expats to find ways to deal with discrimination that they encounter both in and out of the workplace.

Organizations themselves have a keen interest in ensuring assignment success. It is therefore necessary for organizations to provide support for expats in the form of coping strategies to deal with discrimination and adjustment to the host country.

Dealing with discrimination at an individual level: What can expatriates do?

From a psychological point of view, coping strategies refer to an individual's own efforts to solve a problem with the aim of reducing their stress levels. A broad range of coping strategies exists, but there are several generic patterns that work for most people. We asked respondents about three of these coping strategies: cognitive coping (changing the way of thinking), emotional coping (regulating emotions) and colleague support.

Generally speaking, expatriates' coping strategies improve with the time spent in the respective host country. This is true for both cognitive coping (Figure 10) and emotional coping (Figure 11).

Figure 10: Cognitive coping in relation to the time spent in host country

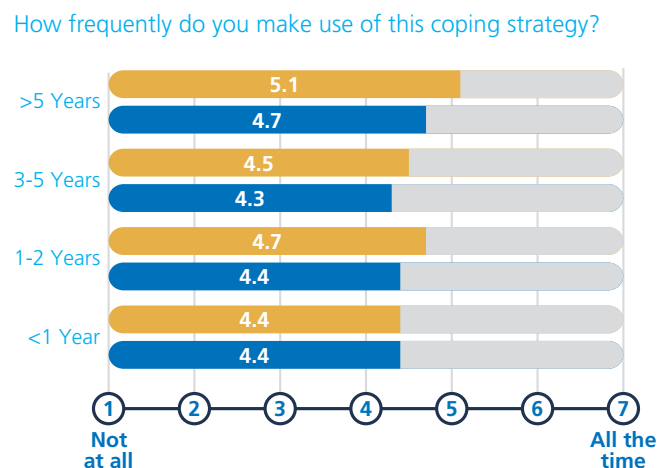
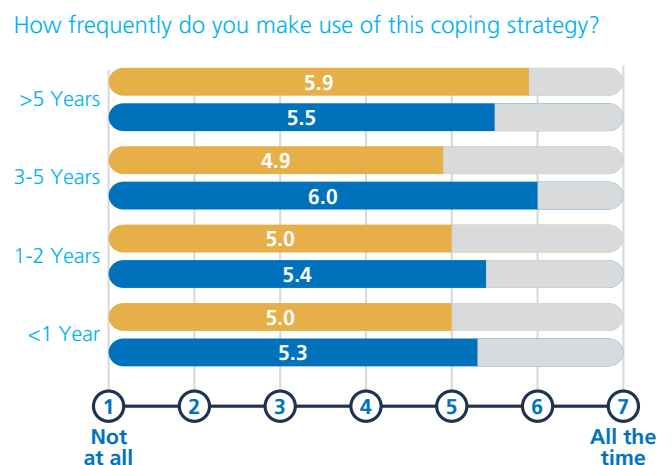


Figure 11: Emotional coping in relation to time spent in host country



When somebody is subject to discrimination, personal support can make them feel less exposed and threatened. Expatriates experience strong support from colleagues in general, however women in our survey reported that they receive slightly less support from their colleagues than men do (see Figure 12).

However, what our research does not tell us is the number of expatriates that left in the early months/years of an assignment. Early termination of an assignment is also a "coping strategy", therefore it cannot be stated from our data that time heals the wounds for all expatriates who face discrimination.

Of course, international assignments require the expatriate to settle into a new country, where they may have to deal with an unfamiliar culture, climate, living conditions, daily customs and so on. In this respect, it is also important to see how well expatriates adjust to their new host locations. Adjustment refers to the degree of comfort and the level of acquaintance an expatriate feels in the new setting. Research has shown that expatriate adjustment is not only a key factor for personal well-being, but ultimately also for the success of the assignment. Unsurprisingly, the degree of discrimination affects the adjustment of the expatriate. The more an expatriate faces discrimination, the less well-adjusted he or she feels, as depicted in Figure 13. This effect is even stronger for males than for females.

Figure 12: How satisfied are you with the level of support from colleagues? (female and male expatriates)

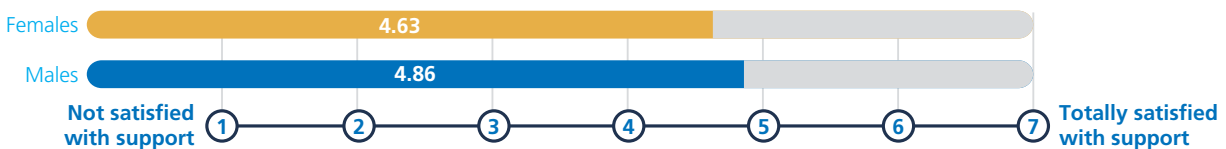
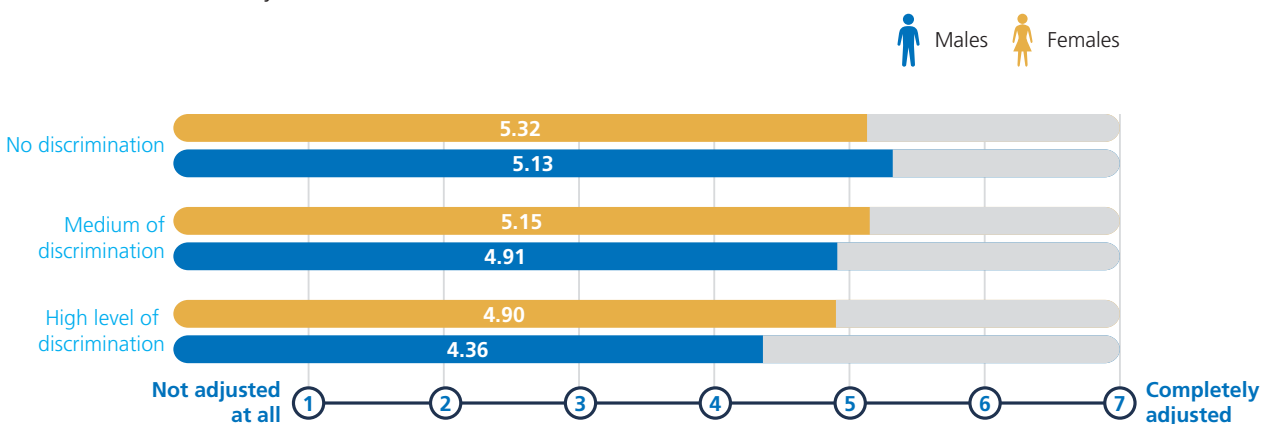


Figure 13: The level of adjustment Expatriates feel in their new host country, in relation to the level of discrimination that they face



Dealing with discrimination at an organizational level: What should companies do?

Every organization has a duty of care for each individual employee, no matter where that employee works and whether they are a local hire or an international assignee. Accordingly, the entity sending the employee abroad is responsible, at least to an extent, for the expatriates' well-being. The organization may not be able to influence what's happening outside of the workplace, but organizations can certainly take steps to manage workplace discrimination. As indicated above, in a separate study we focused on organizations (i.e. by surveying GM managers) rather than expatriates. In this regard, we asked GM professionals of RES Forum member companies about the measures they are taking to prevent discrimination and whether they think those measures are sufficient. As Figure 14 illustrates, almost all companies surveyed have a complaint and reporting mechanism as well as a process for resolving complaints. Many companies also have an anti-discrimination policy and offer diversity training.

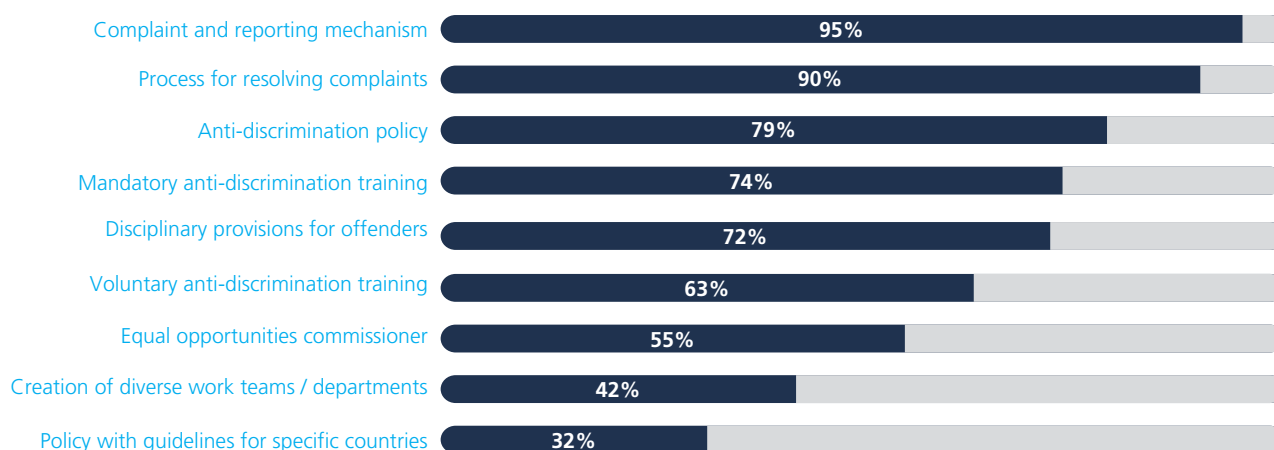
When asked whether they think the tools their organization has in place to prevent discrimination are sufficient, 63% of GM experts indicated "Yes, in all or most locations", whilst 32% stated "Yes, but only in some locations". 5% went so far as to say that tools are insufficient in all locations. One GM professional added: "[The] Caveat [is] that there are locations where different cultural norms make preventing discrimination more

difficult." Again, it becomes evident that focusing on the specific host country is crucial not only when investigating (potential) discrimination but also when implementing measures to prevent it. Ultimately, one in three responding companies states that, at least in some locations, the tools to prevent discrimination are insufficient.

As part of the rigorous country profiling undertaken in a risk assessment for a new location, it's important to identify those countries that have potential discrimination issues both inside and outside of the workplace. This ensures that anti-discrimination policies are applied consistently across all locations, even in those places where cultural norms make preventing discrimination more difficult. This creates a workable global structure that works for all, regardless of gender. Without such a structure in place, efforts to attract and retain female talent with global mind-sets, who are trained in cultural awareness and sensitivities, will be undermined.

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Figure 14: Measures that organizations take to prevent workplace discrimination



Percentages total more than 100% as respondents were able to select as many responses as applicable for their organizations.

The impact of discrimination: frustration, stress and early assignment termination

Assignment failure is often used to describe a situation when an expatriate terminates his or her assignment prematurely or is not able to deliver to expected levels of performance. Failure may result in a sizeable burden for the company, both in terms of direct costs (e.g. relocation expenses), and indirect costs (e.g. damaged relationships, loss of knowledge, and even lawsuits).

Before an expatriate leaves their company, they typically consider all of these things, which researchers call “turnover intention” (i.e. their intention to leave their employer). We found that the degree of discrimination is linked to the turnover intention of expatriates, in that the more discriminatory treatment an expatriate receives, the higher his or her turnover intention. Figure 15 illustrates this. As can be seen, female expatriates who experience a high level of discrimination think almost twice as often about leaving the company as their male counterparts who do not suffer workplace discrimination.

We also asked the respondents to our expatriate survey whether or not they often think about leaving their host countries. While more than half of the female expatriates (55%) often think about leaving the country, only 32% of

males do so. This is probably not due to lower motivation levels of female expatriates in general, but may be ascribed to the fact that females abroad have greater difficulty than men because they experience higher levels of discrimination. The exact distribution of responses is shown in the following Figure 16.

Figure 16: Distribution of responses to the statement “I often think about leaving my country of assignment”

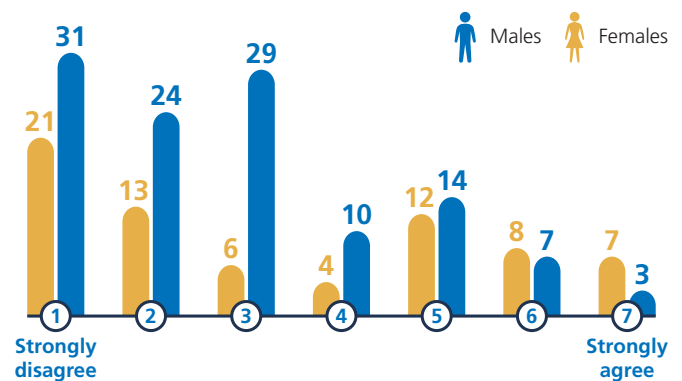
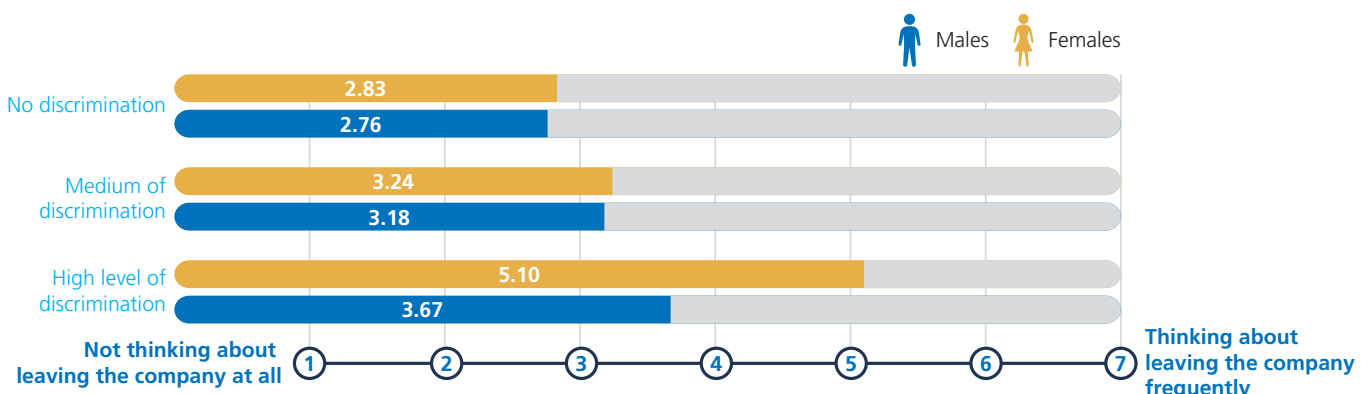


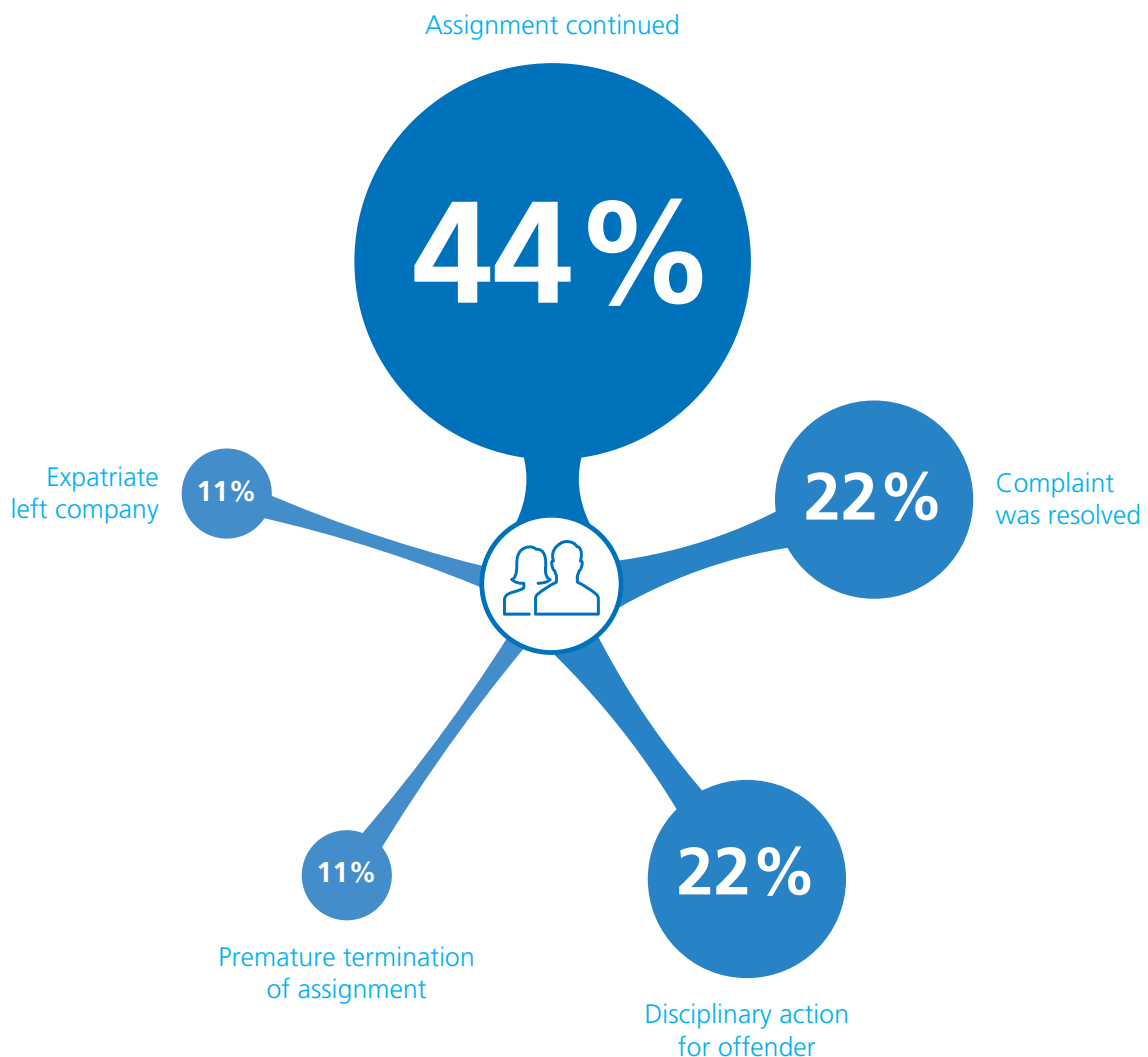
Figure 15: Expatriate’s turnover intention in relation to the degree of workplace discrimination



In-house GM professionals who responded to our survey noted that, where an employee experienced workplace discrimination during an assignment, in most cases the assignment continued. Only rarely is an assignment terminated early or does an expatriate leave their organization due to discrimination during an assignment (see Figure 17).

However, it may be the case that organizations are not aware of a link between gender discrimination towards an expatriate and assignment failure, as our research indicates that GM professionals are not aware and expatriates do not report such incidents.

Figure 17: Distribution of responses from GM professionals to the question “If you have been made aware of gender discrimination towards an expatriate within your organization, what was the outcome?”



Percentages total more than 100% as respondents were able to select as many responses as applicable for their organizations.

Action steps for organizations

1

Tackle the root of the problem; don't treat the symptoms

Not assigning female expatriates to countries where gender discrimination is likely to occur might seem like an easy solution. This, however, would only exacerbate the problem, since many organizations have a requirement for higher level managers to have international experience prior to promotion. If women are not sent on assignment simply to protect them from potential discrimination, then future career opportunities will be unavailable to them due to this lack of international experience.

In some locations such as Saudi Arabia, there may be genuine security reasons why it may be inappropriate for organizations to send women,

and employers should always prioritize their duty of care to female employees. However, organizations should in general, continue to assign female expatriates to roles wherever they are deemed to be suitable for the role. When doing so, companies should prepare the respective expatriate and also their host country co-workers by means of cross cultural and anti-discrimination training. Except where they have a duty of care to protect female employees, organizations should not use the excuse that they are protecting women from discrimination when they fail to assign them to certain locations due to a fear that they will encounter discrimination.

2

Implement and promote an inclusive climate throughout the whole organization

Global Mobility is not an island in organizations, and international assignees are first and foremost employees. Companies with a formal, global code of conduct or an anti-discrimination policy in which desired and unwanted behaviours are made explicit can easily make sure the spirit of these policies is understood and extended to international assignees. With such policies in place employees know exactly what is expected of them. In particular, host-country managers with expatriate team members should communicate corporate values and monitor compliance. These values can be communicated using trainings and seminars, field trips and by sending those working in subsidiary offices to spend time as expatriates at company headquarters (as inpatriates).

3

Encourage expatriates to approach HR or management teams at the organization's headquarters when discriminatory incidents occur

In order to take action steps to eliminate discrimination against expatriates within their organizations, HR and management need to know that this is not just a theory but that it is actually happening within their own organizations. The reporting of discriminatory conduct may be facilitated through a standardized complaints process or by providing expatriates with additional access to a mentor or an Ombudsperson. Once such incidents have been reported, adequate action steps must be taken with consideration of disciplinary actions against those responsible.

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Gender Discrimination and Expatriates – A Global Mobility Manager's Toolkit



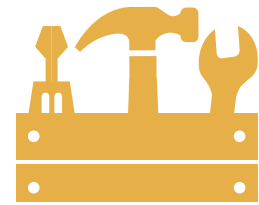
Tackling the root cause of the problem is the only sure fire way to ensure a discrimination-free environment within your organization in the long term.

Imagine your organization in the context of discrimination as a tree. If the roots of the tree are healthy, it will flourish. Yet, whilst it may not initially be visible from the outside, even the mightiest tree will die when its roots are rotten. This happens below the surface, and once the outcome is clearly visible to the observer, it is too late and the tree dies.

Similarly, discrimination in an organization may not be visible to the outsider in the beginning. However, discriminatory behaviour that is not prevented or dealt with will lead to other, perhaps less subtle, forms of discrimination until eventually, the roots of the entire

organization become diseased by this discriminatory environment. No matter what is done to treat the symptoms, when the root cause of the discrimination is not tackled, the organization will suffer like the tree.

So what can be done to tackle the root causes of discrimination within your organization, with the aim of creating an open, discrimination free, global working environment where women and other minority groups are able to work without prejudice?



1. Draw up global Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct is a way to articulate the fundamental values of the organization. It can be communicated to employees and other stakeholders. If there is a violation of this Code of Conduct within a subsidiary (e.g. female expatriates are discriminated against), the company can deal with this behaviour in line with the Code of Conduct.



2. Integrate anti-discrimination training into overall Training & Development approaches

Mandatory anti-discrimination trainings for all employees should become a part of the overall T&D approach of a healthy organization. They may be classroom based, online, or Implicit Association Tests (<https://implicit.harvard.edu>).



3. Adjust trainings to country context

Specific anti-discrimination and awareness interventions targeted at countries where problems seem to be most prevalent can be developed, and these trainings will differ by country or by region. They may be supplemented by cross-cultural training initiatives.



4. Deliver training to expatriates and host country teams

Both expatriates and host country teams need to undertake Code of Conduct and anti-discrimination trainings. In countries where discrimination is a more concerning problem, employees should undertake more frequent and more detailed training.



5. Integrate discrimination awareness into formal performance appraisals or informal employee dialogues

Awareness is a key tool required to tackle the root cause of the issue. By opening discussion among employees and by forging a direct link between required behaviours and performance appraisals, there are positive reasons for employees to want to be a part of corporate cultural change within their organizations.



6. Consider creating an organizational annual report on discrimination, diversity and inclusion for Global Mobility

Many organizations provide information regarding general discrimination and inclusion issues in their annual report, but this is often headquarters-centric. Organizations may find it useful to create a similar report specifically for Global Mobility so that differences between countries can be visualized and transparently communicated to stakeholders. This will demonstrate which areas are making good progress in terms of discrimination, diversity and inclusion, and which still have much room for improvement.



Learning Lab

RES Forum's Brand New Virtual Education Programme

Developed in partnership with Knowledge Anywhere, to help GM Professionals become experts in Global Mobility (GM), the curriculum covers the following aspects of Global Mobility and International Relocation:

- Mobility overview
- Assignee journeys
- Employee compensation
- Compliance

Each module includes an assessment to ensure understanding and drive engagement.

For participants who want to take their Learning Lab experiences to the next level, 'RES Accreditation' is a valuable supplementary part of the programme, assessing and providing formal recognition of the knowledge you have acquired on completion of the Learning Lab programme. As part of the supplementary accreditation you will be measured on application of your learnings from the programme with respect to a challenging but real life GM case study.

Training for Internal & External Teams

The course is designed for, in-house GM and HR Support Functions and in-house Shared HR Service Centres, International Relocation Services Suppliers. Although pitched at entry level, the course is far from basic – in fact some of our most experienced members failed the tests (we promised to not share any names!)

What participants learn Participants will obtain a better global understanding of processes, and their roles and responsibilities within them:

- Improving understanding of the relocating employee experience throughout the process
- Enhancing overall skills, technical knowledge and understanding of best practice
- For vendors in the mobility value chain, better understanding of the voice of the customer, to help improve client relationships

The course examines mobility from the assignee

perspective therefore enhancing the users' understanding of the employee experience, as well as technical areas of compensation and compliance. It also provides a cost-effective solution for specialist subject training on the complex area of Global Mobility.

RES Accreditation

RES Accreditation is the industry benchmark in taking HR and GM professionals beyond the basics of Global Mobility management and allowing them to demonstrate their understanding of mobility and HR concepts in practice.

The RES team send candidates a mobility case study and require that they prepare a recorded PowerPoint (including audio) or a video presentation, which builds upon the knowledge acquired through the Learning Lab. The presentation is then sent to our qualified assessors, who are, without exception, current or previous Heads of Reward or Global Mobility.

The assessment will result in either pass or fail – with a pass rate of around 70%. Successful candidates will become 'RES Accredited Class of 2018' and will receive our logo and business card templates for use on their business cards, their email signature and on their LinkedIn profiles. They will also appear in our public 'Hall of fame', allowing employers and clients to see when accreditation was achieved.

Whether pass or fail, candidates will receive a feedback summary of their submission.



Our network includes the knowledge & experience of over 1,500 in-house global mobility and HR professionals

With their help we've created our virtual education programme on Global Mobility, the RES Forum Learning Lab

Understand what really matters for in-house global mobility professionals and service providers, by visiting www.theresforum.com/learning-lab/

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The RES Forum Learning Lab - Register now