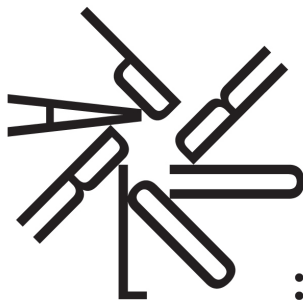

Appendix D

Priorities and perceptions around equity policy in the architecture profession

Draft for discussion, submitted to the project Steering Committee
and the National Council of the Australian Institute of Architects

*Equity and diversity in the Australian architecture profession:
women, work and leadership
Australian Research Council linkage project (2011–2014)*

September 2013



: women, equity, architecture.

Credits and Acknowledgements

The research project 'Equity and diversity in the Australian architecture profession: women, work and leadership' (2011–2014) is funded by the Australian Research Council through the Linkage Projects scheme.

The project has five industry partners: The Australian Institute of Architects; Architecture Media; BVN Architecture; Bates Smart; and PTW Architects. The research team comprises: Naomi Stead (UQ); Julie Willis (UMelb); Sandra Kaji-O'Grady (UQ); Gillian Whitehouse (UQ); Karen Burns (UMelb); Amanda Roan (UQ); and Justine Clark (UMelb). Gill Matthewson (UQ) is undertaking PhD study within the project.

The website *Parlour: women, equity, architecture* (<http://www.archiparlour.org/>) has been developed as part of the larger research project, and is edited by Justine Clark with assistance from the other research team members. The website publishes numerous outcomes and discussion papers from the research project, alongside reflections submitted by members of the architecture profession. The project has convened a number of public events and forums, notably *Transform: Altering the Future of Architecture*, held in Melbourne in May 2013. One of the main policy outcomes of the project is a series of *Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice*.

The project integrates other research elements including a literature review and survey of previous scholarly work in the field; ethnographic field work within the three case study architecture practices; visual sociology research in the three case study practices; a scan of gender equity policies and measures in comparable international institutes of architecture, plus institutional bodies in other comparable professions in Australia; a scan and summary of past research commissioned by the Australian Institute of Architects on issues of gender equity and diversity; an analysis of demographic data on Australian architects drawn from the 2011 Census; a mapping of the involvement of women in the Australian architecture profession; two major industry surveys 'Where do all the women go?' and '...and what about the men?'; and a consultation and report on priorities, perceptions and existing practices around equity policy in the architecture profession, which are the subject of this report.

This preliminary draft report was prepared by Naomi Stead and Neph Wake.

Q16 Looking at the following list of professional and workplace issues, please rate the significance of each issue to you.

Answered: 45 Skipped: 38

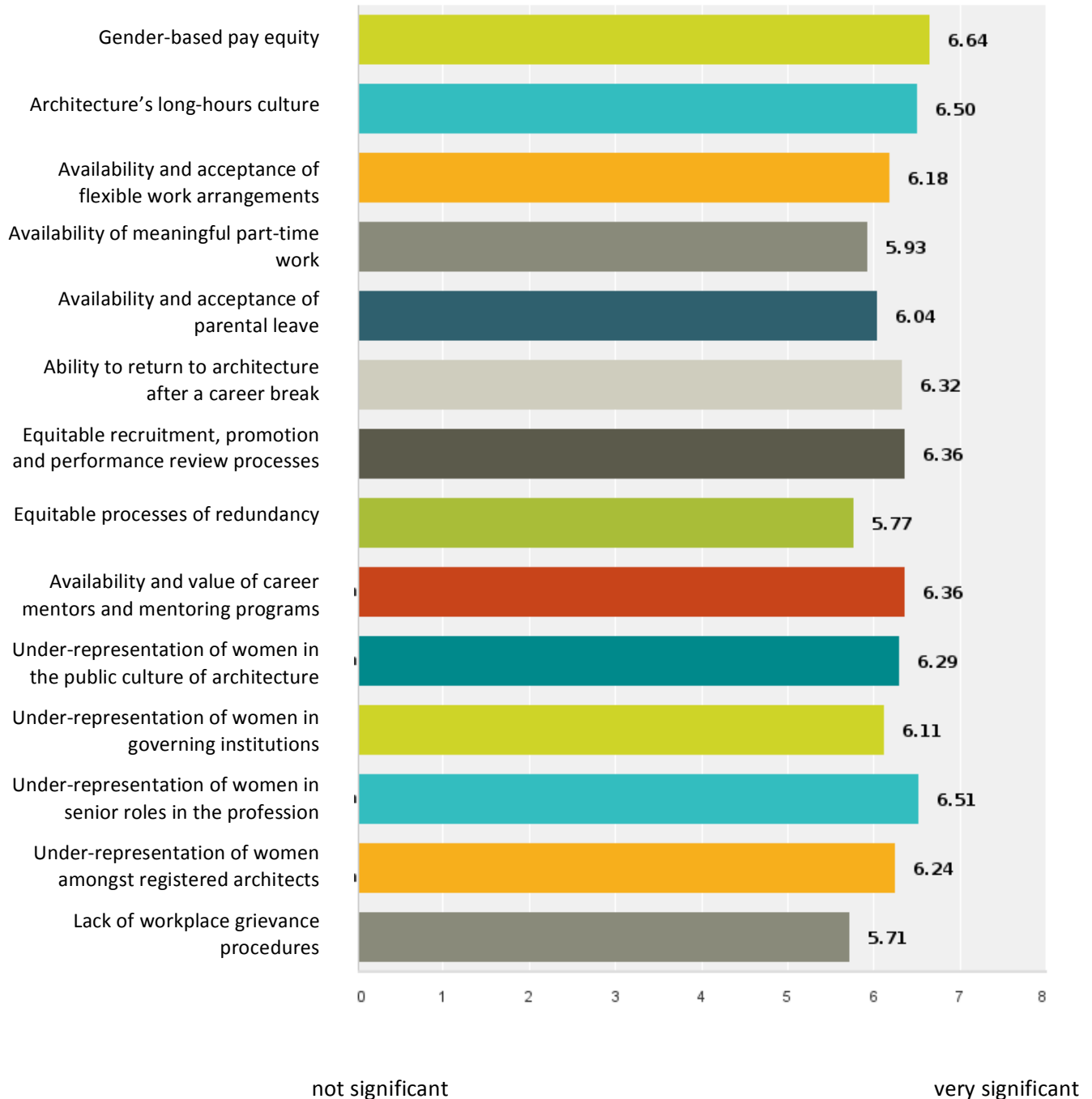


Figure 1: Rating of personal significance of specified equity issues.

Here the significance with which *all* the issues were rated is revealing. The three most significant issues identified by respondents were: Pay equity, the under-representation of women in senior roles in the profession, and architecture's long-hours culture, but it notable that not a single issue was rated at or below neutral, that is, all the issues were regarded as significant.

Q18 Some professional and workplace cultures can be resistant to change. Which three of the issues listed below do you think are the most open to change?

Answered: 43 Skipped: 40

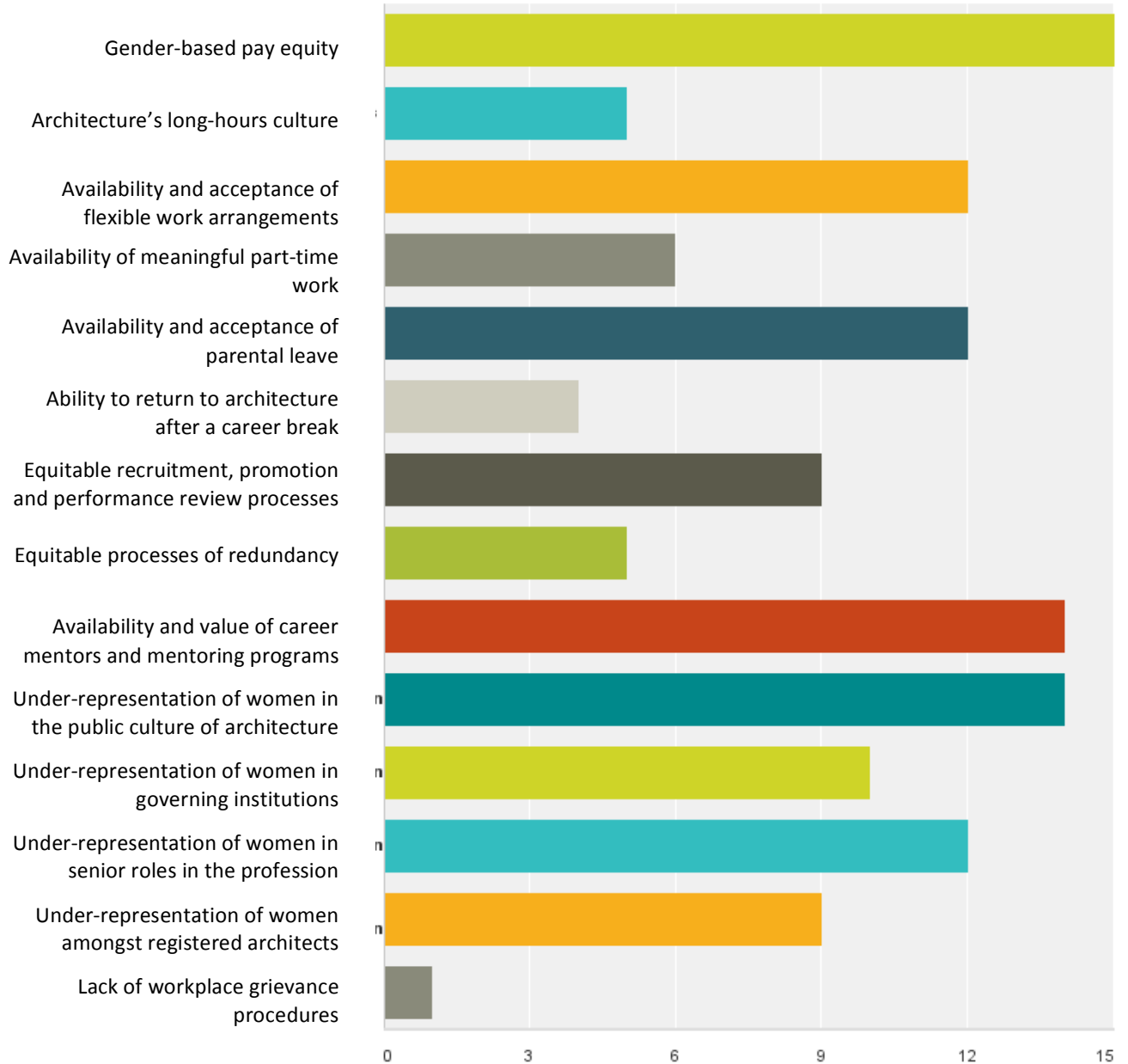


Figure 2: Equity issues most open to change

There are three preferences that respondents designated as the issues most open to change in architecture. They were gender-based pay equity, the availability and value of career mentors and mentoring, and the under-representation of women in the public culture of architecture. This suggests a degree of optimism that these three issues may be open to influence by the Institute.

Q 17. Would you like to comment on the issues you have identified as most open to change?

Respondents to the open-ended question following the earlier query on issues perceived to be most open to change made a range of responses. The general tenor of the responses is well summarised by this one:

- *I feel instinctively or optimistically that most of these issues are 'open to change' but my concern or difficulty with answering this question is about meaningful and likelihood of change. I already see change happening in areas of flexibility and representation of women in senior institutional roles (professional and academic) but I worry about meaningful representation in public culture, where architecture is represented as awfully male-dominated.*

Gender based pay equity was seen as relatively open to change. This was seen as a problem that would even out over time (or in one case, openly questioned).

- *Pay equity, I feel is nearing equality*
- *Pay equity: how do I know there is one? [sic]*

Others noted the difficulties in assessing value and cited a lack of transparency as part of the problem.

- *Pay equity issues are problematic because wages and pay are not transparent. Someone's worth and therefore pay is subjective on grounds other than gender - but could cover up the underlying gender bias.*
- *Pay: Disclosure is difficult; it's difficult to ask, there's always someone else; it's hard to put a figure on what you're doing, whether because of the economy, how efficient you are, effective, years of experience, value-adding - it's really in the hands of the employer to decide even if you do ask*
- *I believe my workplace would be open to a more transparent pay structure ie remuneration bands or similar for skills/experience like any other larger organisation, perhaps guidelines on this would help. It is possible this is already thought to be in place by senior management however the discrimination (if there is any) would be ingrained and probably unintentional.*

Some respondents provided detailed suggestions on how pay equity could be achieved:

- *I think the issues of pay equity could be changed by more awareness through a skill milestone guideline that is separate to the levels noted in the arch award. A model similar to public service levels in combination with a mentoring or advocacy group that encourages registration and clearly articulates the positive changes that registration can have for a career female architect would be a good start. Perhaps emphasising that rego is a platform to discuss pay rises would be helpful.*
- *Pay equality: this is linked to availability and appeal of flexible work arrangements for women and merit based performance recognition rather than years of continuous professional experience. The argument about duration and quality of experience will always count against women working part-time and trying to advance their careers*

Mentoring: There was a large appetite for mentoring. Recognition of both the importance of mentoring and existing mentoring programs was high.

- *The mentoring program at the AIA has been very positive and popular. It illustrates the importance of this scheme. it would be great to see a culture of mentoring throughout the profession (both men and women, young and old)*
- *Mentoring: this can be addressed by engaging more participants in existing programmes.*
- *The present career mentor programs seem to be adequate*
- *Mentoring: given the right structure (easily accessed, visibly promoted, strong guidelines and structure both formal/informal methods) both mentors and mentees would be keen to be involved*
- *Availability and value of career mentors and mentoring programs. More in-house and industry run are required.*
- *Mentoring. This can be arranged privately and I believe there are many that would happily become mentors, thus strengthening the network and capabilities of women in architecture.*
- *There is not a strong formal practice of mentoring between experienced architects and new graduates however architecture did start as a traineeship style profession so it would seem this could be reinstated to some degree.*

The importance of mentoring was recognised as a key way to retain and promote women who might otherwise leave the profession:

- *Mentoring and return to work schemes could be offered along with maternity leave/long term leave to keep women in positions.*
- *Perhaps an organisation or club for those who have a career break, mentoring, how to get back to the field etc*
- *The lack of mentors for women is huge. Men tend to gravitate towards other men as they can relate to them and perhaps see a bit of themselves in the junior men. This forms a relationship that allows that man to get ahead more easily. Perhaps the institute could offer mentoring session for women only. mentors should be male and female. Giving tips career advice. Perhaps also business management and skills for managing staff. This would give women the skills to feel like they could put themselves forward for promotions and management roles.*
- *With regards to career mentors, time is scarce for both mentors and those who would benefit from such programme*
- *If mentoring were more available - time allocated- it would be very enriching. Particularly for women in their 30s needing assistance decision making re family vs career.*
- *Mentoring is not very structured and could be improved perhaps by some guidelines set internally in the workplace management guidelines. Would improve graduate/student growth and learning*

Flexible work and parental leave were often cited as issues that were of interest to both genders, and were thus more open to change. Sample responses include:

- *Flexible work hours and acceptance of parental leave also crosses genders with males also looking to ensure a work/life balance once they have families.*
- *Flexibility of work and part time hours is not just a gender based issue. If men and women value such a change, it is more likely to happen.*

- *For parental leave, I know there are some firms who would not hire a pregnant woman or one they think may be planning a family. However males are becoming more involved with the raising of children. So this is just a fact of life and must be dealt with whether you like it or not. Also I think it's an issue that will gradually evolve along with general expectations of lifestyle.*
- *I believe there is now general acceptance among practices that there is life outside the office and gov't formalising paid parental leave has helped this significantly but I don't believe many arch firms would actually offer their own parental leave schemes*

Despite the generally positive outlook, some women who were directly involved in parental leave reported negative experiences.

Wider cultural shifts and perceived inevitability of change: Wider cultural shifts were seen as either supporting or driving changes within the profession, particularly with respect to parental leave and flexible work. For example:

- *Attitudes are already shifting.*
- *Job roles are shifting across the board with economic and social change - can see this as a more achievable area of change within the architectural industry.*
- *Even within the last decade the general openness to gender issues, equity and healthy workplace culture has increased.*
- *Most things/issues raised are going to change as society continues to develop and progress*
- *I found my last employer very family friendly with more staff part time or flexible than full-time staff. The shift is inevitable across all businesses as they realise that staff are happier and more efficient when they get time away from work.*
- *As there is an increasing demand for flexible work arrangement, return to work after leave etc, employers will need to respond to it in the long run to secure staff*
- *Long hours: increasingly fathers too recognise the pitfalls of work/life imbalance in old-school practice environments. This is a more mainstream concern now.*
- *As employers (male are experiencing their own challenges with their wives working and balancing family), I feel that the acceptance of parental leave is well accepted. Older employers (male) may not be as open to this as their circumstance were difference when they had a family.*

Role of policy and regulation: Several respondents selected issues where they identified governing bodies (including the Institute and the Commonwealth Government) as wielding a high degree of influence over the outcomes:

- *These three issues [parental leave, mentors and public culture] can be most easily legislated for or promoted through EEO policy/initiatives.*
- *Pay equity and mentoring most open to change because measurable, therefore can be brought about by policies.*
- *These issues [parental leave, redundancy and mentors] seem most likely to be able to be tied to regulation and be transparently either complied or not complied with.*
- *These issues [pay equity, flexible work and parental leave] cross the gender and should be able to be changed at the level of offices and instigated by Government.*
- *Under representation: I think universities, AACA and RAIA are making all reasonable efforts to increase representation of women. Perhaps less so in local councils, and government positions.*

Q20 Which three of the issues listed below do you think are the least open to change?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 42

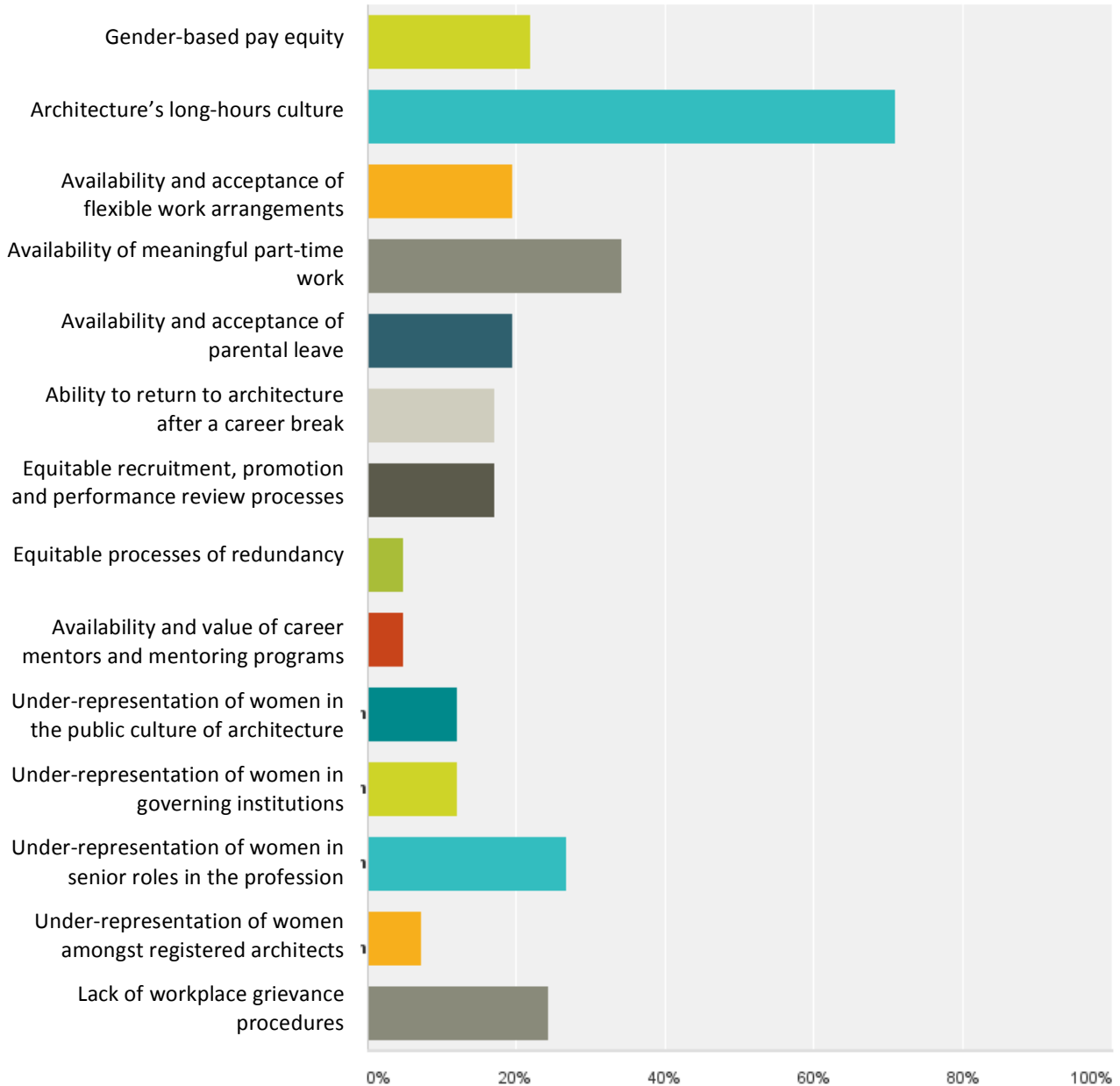


Figure 3: **Equity issues least open to change**

When asked which three of the issues specified that they thought were least open to change, respondents were unequivocal, with more than 60 per cent nominating architecture's long-hours culture as most resistant to change, followed by the availability of meaningful part time work, and the under-representation of women in senior roles in the profession. This suggests that these issues are the most deeply embedded in architectural culture and may be the most challenging to shift.

Q 18. Would you like to comment on the issues you have identified as least open to change?

This question was linked to the earlier question 16, which asked respondents to list three issues most and least responsive to change. Only four issues were perceived to be highly resistant to change overall (that is, more respondents nominated these as resistant to change than open). These are (in order from most resistant to least): long hours culture, meaningful part-time work, representation of senior women and returning from a career break.

Long hours culture was rated being the most resistant to change by a wide margin. 60 people nominated it as being resistant to change, and only 8 believe it was open to change. The issue nominated as next most resistant to change was meaningful part time work, nominated by 34 people as resistant to change, while 18 people held a counter opinion.

Long hours (most resistant to change)

Long hours were cited by many as the cultural aspect of the profession that was the most resistant to change. This was attributed to several factors, including a long hours culture ingrained at university, a sense that long hours are seen as a 'badge of honour' or rite of passage by senior staff members and a view that unpaid overtime is a way for businesses to cut costs in a generally competitive commercial environment (both within and between practices).

Habits begun at university were seen as part of the problem:

- *The 'long hours' culture of architecture begins at university and becomes entrenched in our psyche. Also in order to follow the work and secure projects we agree to unreasonable deadlines. With regards to representation in public culture and institutions and senior roles in practice, these are areas that can't change over night they will take time and require turn over of positions. With regards to career mentors, time is scarce for both mentors and those who would benefit from such programme.*
- *Until architectural education can change the culture of long hours and inefficient work practices it is hard to see how office practice will change. The long hours become an issue for anyone, male or female who have other responsibilities.*
- *The long hours culture is ingrained at university and exploited in the work place. I don't see how or why this would change when business owners are the ones who profit and they are the ones most able to change/direct the culture*
- *I think long hours culture is just too entrenched to be able to change at any noticeable rate, like many of these issues they will require disciplinary changes to occur - meaning a cultural evolution across academic and professional cultures. A lot of the 'wicked' encultured problems are constructed and reinforced in the formative years of education.*

The role of existing culture leaders was seen as playing a role:

- *Long hours work culture is seen as a badge of honour or doing your time in order to achieve a higher position in career advancement. This is resistant to change because the tight fees/services means the industry is dependent on many unpaid hours.*
- *The long hours culture is deeply entrenched and many in senior management do not see it as a problem but rather as a badge of honour. Meaningful part-time work is still quite rare and many managers are very reluctant to even try it. Many are worried clients and contractors will not accept it (even though they will)!*

Poor management in terms of costs and deadlines was also seen as driving the long hours culture, wherein long hours by staff were used to compensate for cost cutting elsewhere:

- *Inability to deliver projects on time and budget mean long hours to 'get the job done'.*
- *Long hours. It's never going to change when companies continue to undercut each other for fees and under budget for projects with materials and personnel yet expect the same quality outcomes. Companies struggled through the recession and people stayed late... it hasn't changed. Even before the recession I completed many hours of overtime with no recognition for my performance. If there was a union... this would have been resolved a lot longer ago. I don't vote Labor. It is fundamentally wrong to continue to require staff to work 10-12-14 hours a day 6-7 days a week.*
- *Long hours - shouldn't exist in the first place. Disorganisation and communication, negotiation skills or whatever. The odd deadline is different to consistent long hours. Power, control etc rather than need.*
- *The long hours culture is linked to the low fee culture. If architects can't get appropriate fees to do the job then long hours are relied on to get the job done on fee budget. Long hours also relates to the bums on seats culture ie that person is in early and stays late therefore they must be dedicated and doing a good job and want to contribute more to the company. Women tend to work smarter not longer. With their other commitments outside work ie caring for children husbands etc bums on seats is not effective/ nor a useful way of determining the effectiveness and value of an employee.*

There was also some acknowledgement of the difficulties of scheduling design work.

- *Hard to define design process in finite terms and therefore difficult to assign simple timelines thus necessitating long hours. Additional staff does not necessarily mean less hours. Ours is a labour intensive profession.*
- *Employees and employers both are responsible for long hours work culture. Difficult to reconcile, usually case by case.*
- *This can cross genders but also crosses professions. How do we dis-entangle the notion of long hours represents higher commitment? Can the same work output be done in less hours?*

Perhaps the most disturbing rationale for long hours was the 'starving artist paradigm', in which long hours were explicitly rationalised as proof of commitment and caring to design rather than symptoms of a flawed working culture. The best quote demonstrating this attitude follows:

- *I believe this is part of being in the industry... I also would like to add that long working hours are not a culture but a necessity when you care about your design. We are under-recognised and underpaid (as all artists) for the work we are doing. The only economical way to achieve and care about your design is in unpaid long hours!*

Meaningful part time work (2nd most resistant to change)

A similar response was found in part time work (which unlike flexible work was expected to be much harder to shift).

- *Directors are hesitant to take a risk on part-time staff. This issue is not specific to architecture. It is viewed that part time workers aren't serious.*

- *Parental leave for both men and women seems to be more widely accepted of late - but only for short term leave. Returning after a prolonged period of maternity leave is still very hard.*
- *Part-time is considered to mean not committed.*
- *Availability of meaningful part time work. In my own experience after returning from maternity leave although part-time work was available, the role was predominantly office administration and on project teams, basically a de-motion from where I had been a project architect prior to going on maternity leave. Seems a prevalent attitude in all practices that part-time workers cannot take on a project themselves, meaningful and rewarding part time work seems not to be available.*