

Britain's got talented female engineers

Successful women in engineering:
A careers research study

Led by

ATKINS

In partnership with:





Foreword

Every year thousands of young people choose one of the best-paid careers: one that offers opportunities for foreign travel; has an enormous number of kinds of interesting work; is very well-respected; and has excellent career prospects

– all the way from work experience, to getting your first job, to quickly advancing into management. Every year these young people are mostly boys.

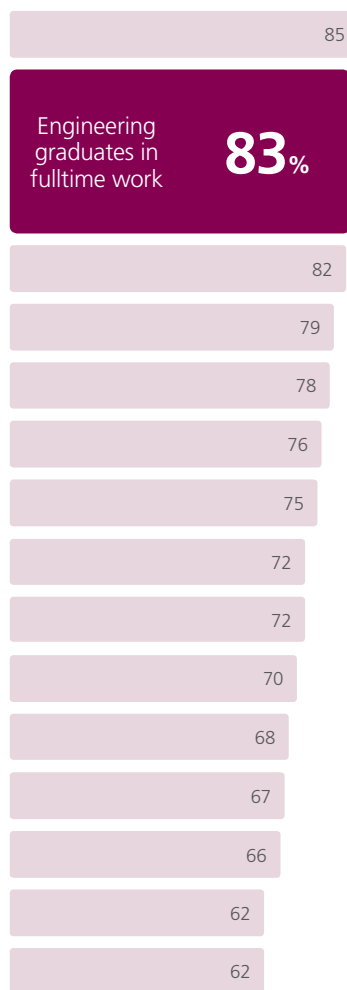
The career (you may already have worked out) is engineering. And that imbalance of new engineers is one problem that engineering companies of all sizes really want to solve.

Choosing a career is one of the big decisions most of us face. On one hand there's here and now: you, your interests, your ambitions and your abilities. On the other lies your future: higher education, that first job, the career you might follow and the lifestyle you'd like. Often there's a very understandable fear: If I commit now, what happens if I have second thoughts?

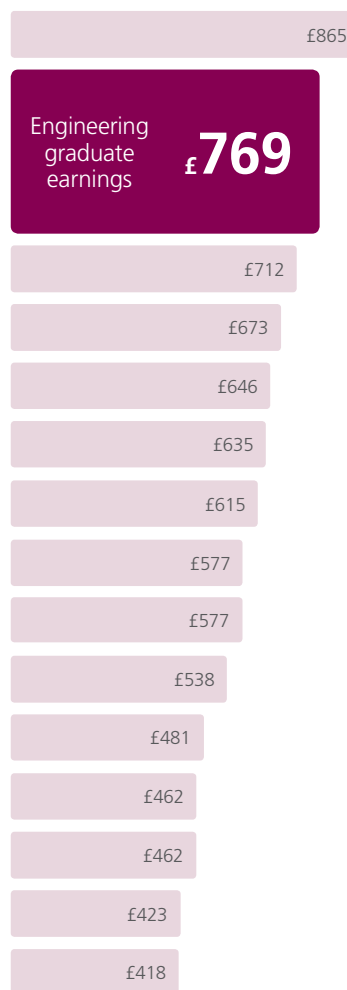
So if you're unsure about committing to any single career then turn to page five:- here, listed, are the job roles of the women engineers in this survey. Few, if any, other degrees or training can open as many doors as a degree in engineering.

Almost all of the 300 women engineers who helped in producing this report agreed that for more girls to share the benefits and rewards of working in engineering much more awareness of what engineers do was vital.

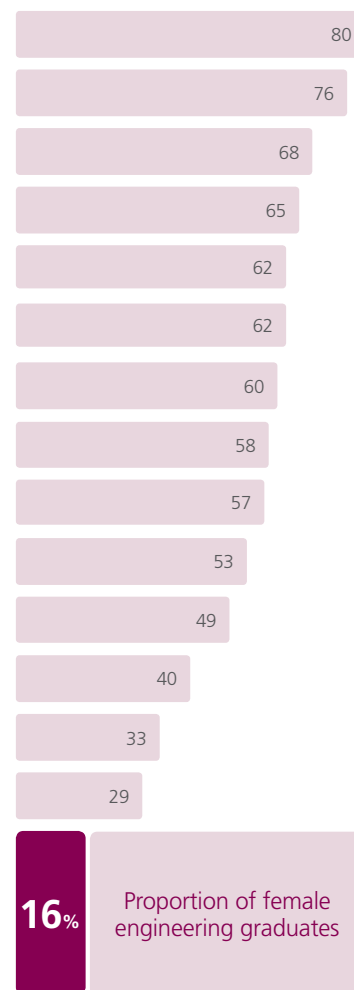
We hope this report helps in increasing recognition that achieving the status of engineer is the perfect starting point for a wide range of interesting and fulfilling careers.



Graduates in fulltime work / course (ONS 2012)



Median gross weekly earnings of graduates / course (Labour Force Survey 2012)



Proportion of female graduates / course (HESA 2013)

A startling perspective

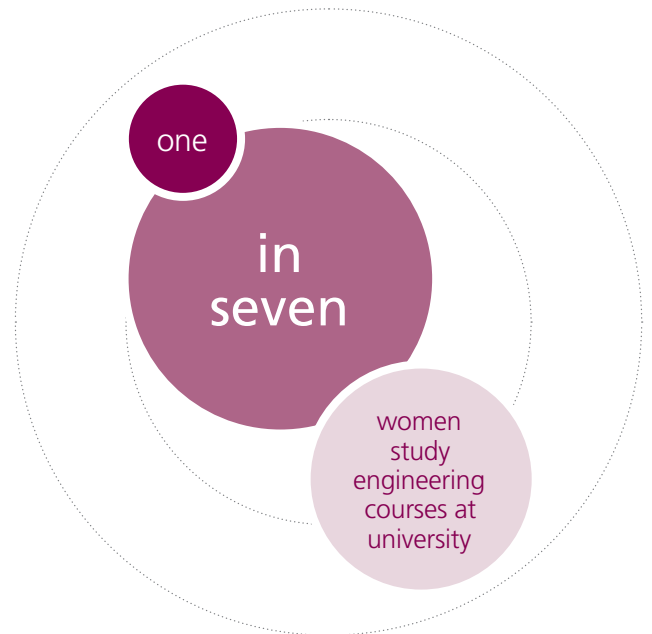
The 'pluses' are impressive. Engineering students are second only to medics in securing full-time jobs and earning good salaries.

Yet the proportion of women in engineering courses is extremely low – just one in seven. (The lowest for all university courses.)

Behind this report is the desire to encourage even more girls to regard engineering as a desirable and attainable career choice.

A unique first survey of women successfully following careers in engineering, this report asked them the key questions, including:

- What inspired you during your early years?
- Why did you become an engineer?
- How happy are you with your career choice?
- What do you think the industry should do to encourage more women into engineering?



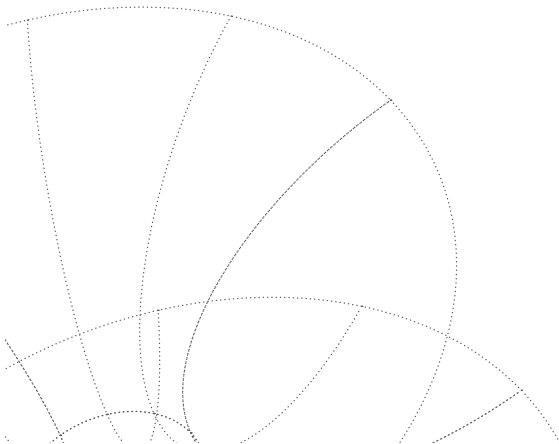
Executive summary

At Atkins we are committed to addressing the gender imbalance in our workforce, as well as in the wider sector. This determination is shared by our partners in this report, BP, Rolls Royce and the Royal Academy of Engineering.

We know there are a number of surveys already out there, particularly looking at the reasons girls don't choose STEM subjects. But none of them asks female engineers why they chose engineering careers and whether they are fulfilled by their choice.

Our survey set out to learn more about what women in industry feel about their own career paths and how they think we can encourage more young women to follow in their footsteps.

The results of this survey in themselves are inspirational:



In their early years:

- Many respondents didn't study physics at school
- Most women engineers (91%) had at least one inspirational teacher
- 75% interested in problem solving/fixing things
- Knowing one or more engineers was frequently important.

Almost four in ten women had a family connection, most frequently their father, and 11% had a friend who was an engineer.

As professional engineers:

- Over 80% of female engineers are happy in their job
- 98% of women engineers find their job rewarding. Most frequently (80%) this reward came in the shape of the successful projects their work had helped deliver

On perceptions of a career in engineering:

- Three-quarters believed engineering is still regarded as being 'a male career'
- Just over two-thirds thought engineering was believed by too many to involve fixing engines
- Over half of the sample (55%) said they believed potential students are being put off by an idea that engineering is 'too difficult'
- 43% said they believed engineers were thought to require physical strength.

To help fix the future:

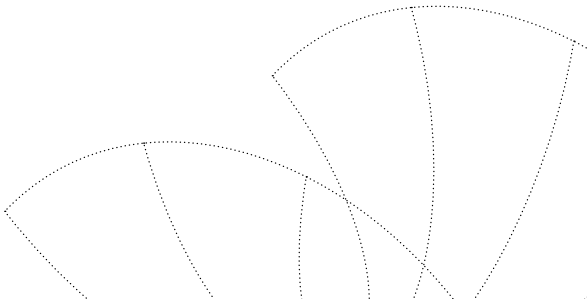
- Seven in eight believed greater awareness was needed of what engineers do
- 77% believed greater awareness of the wide range of engineering careers is needed
- Seven-in-ten women engineers said that the advice currently being given about engineering as a career needs improving
- Almost two-thirds (64%) believe there should be greater efforts by recruiters of engineers to provide more work placements for girls to work alongside women engineers
- A majority of 56% wanted to see more provision of women speakers in schools.

Next steps:

The survey results above, particularly where related to 'A perfect choice' will in themselves inspire young women to consider a career in engineering. But as the respondents clearly told us, a lack of understanding, awareness and inspiration prohibits girls considering an engineering career. We aim to use this survey to widely communicate the many positive messages and to support many of the respondents to become role models.

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Ruth Stevens

Subsea project engineer,
BP



How do you explain what an engineer does?

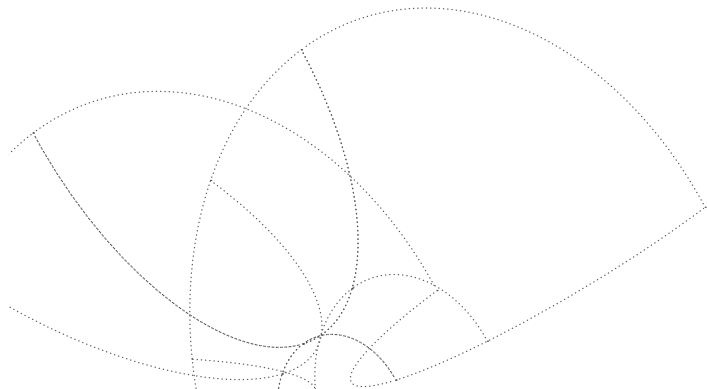
"Someone who sees a problem, uses their maths and science skills, and applies these to solve that problem."

What do women bring to engineering?

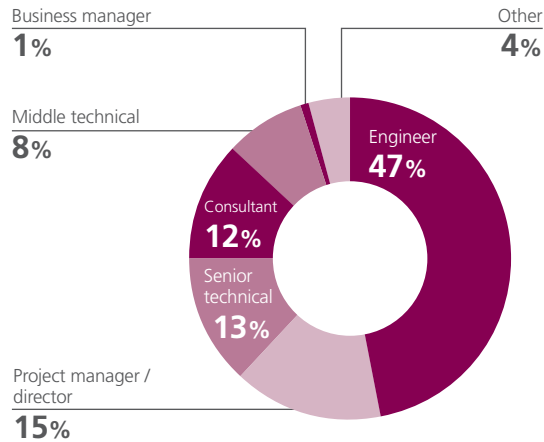
"An alternative view of the world, a more diverse and inclusive work place."

The survey contributors

Demonstrating the range of careers performed by graduate engineers of both genders, only a minority of the 300 women with engineering qualifications who helped create this report said their job was described best in the term 'engineer'.

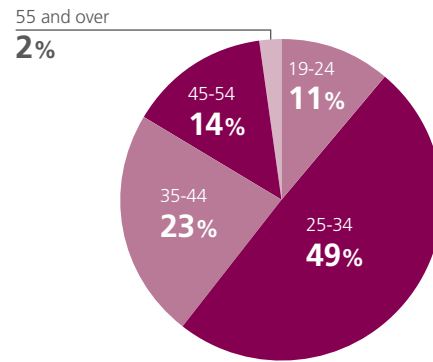


‘Technical’ (both senior and middle) better defined a quarter. One-in-seven were project directors or managers, one-in-eight were business managers.



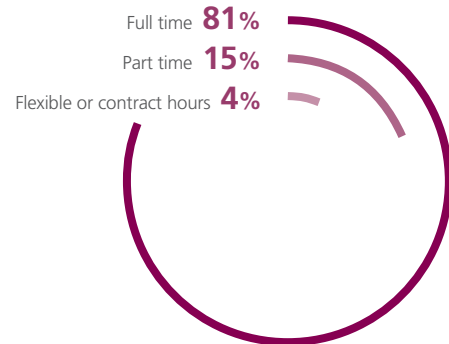
Question: Which of the following best describes your position or current role in your organisation?

Nearly, but not all, had a first degree. More than half (53%) had a Masters degree and one-in-twelve had won a doctorate. Some respondents had not taken the degree route and had worked their way up through the company. Younger women comprised a majority of the survey sample. Almost half were 25 – 34; 11% were under 25.



Question: Which of the following age ranges are you in?

Most, 81%, had full time roles; 15% had part time positions, and 4% worked flexible or contract hours.



Question: Which of the following best describes your job?

“There are jobs in engineering I had no idea existed even during my engineering masters degree”

The thousands of careers

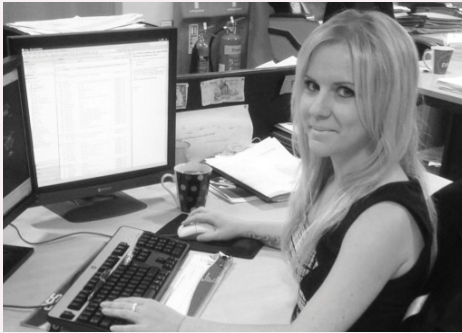
These are some of the job titles of this survey sample of 300 women engineers. Literally thousands of different careers are open to engineering students.

Just a few engineering job titles... Sectors

Aerospace Design Engineer Assistant Chief Design Engineer Assistant Chief Engineer Assistant Project Manager Associate Energy Consultant Capability Acquisition Manager Chartered Civil Engineer Chief External Supply Chain Chief Engineer Chief Patent Officer Civil Engineer Commissioning Leader Computational Fluid Dynamics Engineer Consultant Consulting Engineer Continuous Improvements Manager Defence Business Manager Design Engineer Design Manager, Plant Safety Director of Product Integrity Draughtsman Drilling Engineer Electrical Design Consultant Engineer Engineer Geologist Engineering Process Specialist Environmental consultant Flood Defence Engineer Flood Risk and Drainage Engineer General Manager Geo-Environmental Engineer Global Chief of CFD Global Head of Transformation - System Design Graduate Design Engineer Graduate Engineer Graduate mechanical Engineer Graduate Structural Engineer Head of Engineering Head of Nuclear Environment Head of Product Safety Assurance Head of Projects and Development Human Factors Engineer Hydro-Geologist Incorporated Engineer Integrity Planning Team Leader Junior Security Consultant Lead Process Safety Engineer Manufacturing Engineering Manager Manufacturing Laboratory Manager Manufacturing Laboratory Manager Marketing Projects Engineer Mechanical Engineer Platform Integrity Lead Metallurgy Principal Designer Principal Engineer Principal Environmental Scientist Mining Nuclear Energy Principal Geo-Environmental Engineer Principal Mechanical Engineer Oil and Gas (Operator) Principal Process Engineer Principal Project Leader Process Safety Engineer Oil and Gas Control Systems Programme Manager Project Development Manager Project Engineer Oil and Gas Engineering Project Manager Project Manager - Structural Systems Design Project Rail & Transportation Safety Lead Project Systems Engineer Rail Modelling Specialist Research and Safety Engineering Technology Manager Safety Engineer Sector Lead Material Planning Senior Safety Equipment Consultant Engineer Senior Electrical and Lighting Engineer Senior Engineer Security Engineering Senior Environmental Consultant Senior Geotechnical Engineer Senior Ship Design Hydrogeologist Senior Maritime Safety Engineer Senior Mechanical Engineer Structural Management Senior Nuclear Safety Engineer Senior Process Engineer Senior Project Manager Structural Engineering Senior Safety Engineer Senior Engineer Senior Project Engineer Structural Engineering Subsea Project Engineer Technical Director Technical Reports Manager Tunnelling Engineering Thermo-Fluid Specialist Tunnel Engineer Well Intervention Team Leader Well Operations Manager Water Engineering

Natalie Cooper

Aerospace design engineer,
Aerospace Engineering Solutions



Proudest achievement:

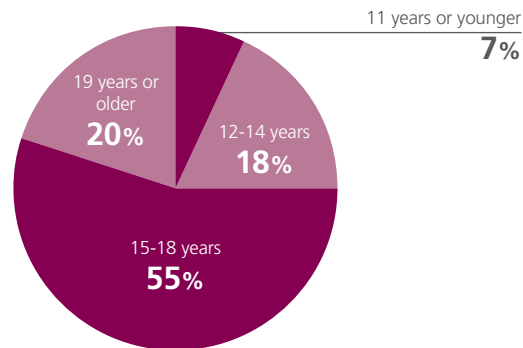
"Working my way up the ladder as I started as an administrator."

How do you explain what an engineer does?

"I do technical drawings which include modifications and repairs to commercial aircraft."

It's not all about physics

An often repeated myth says engineering faculties insist on your being able to offer physics as one of your A levels. This isn't true. A check of the entry requirements for engineering degrees will quickly show otherwise.



Question: At around what age did you first think you might be interested in a career in engineering?

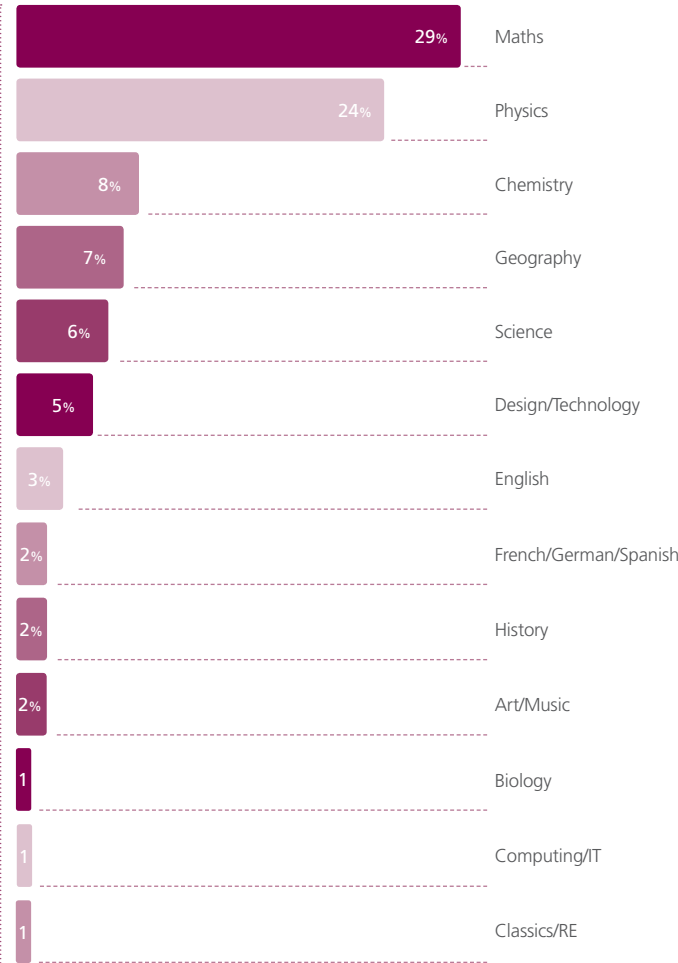
It is very true that physics and maths are ideal, but these days there's a wider range of entry requirements, reflecting increasing awareness that for many and for a range of reasons, physics is not one of the most popular A level choices. Universities also offer excellent engineering foundation courses.

This is important: not least because only a minority of us ever truly know before choosing A levels which careers may appeal to us a few years later on. The research confirmed there was no single age when women engineers developed their interest; very few had been following a single path from an early age.

A common factor for most women engineers (91%) was having had at least one inspirational teacher. She or he was likely to have been passionate about their subject (80%), 'able to bring their subject to life' (70%) and actively supportive of individual pupils (62%). Perhaps more surprisingly, a majority of two-thirds of women engineers said that the teacher they had found most inspiring while at school was teaching a subject other than physics.

Most frequently remembered as inspirational teachers were those teaching maths (29%), followed by physics (24%), chemistry (8%), geography (7%), science (6%) and design & technology (5%).

Their source of inspiration at school may even have been teaching an arts subject. Five percent found their English teacher or a modern languages teacher inspiring and a similar proportion was inspired by a history, art or music teacher.



Question: Thinking back to the school and/or the teacher you found the most inspiring, what subject did she or he teach?

Rosie Goldrick

Graduate structural engineer, Design and Engineering,
Atkins



Most enjoyable part of being an engineer:

"Doing problem solving on a daily basis, especially when working on site. You get to work with a variety of people, from steel fixers to clients. Every day is different; you are very busy and have lots of responsibility."

Proudest achievement:

"I spent a week as leader of a group in Thailand where we were constructing a school for a charity."

'I enjoyed problem solving'

Women engineers frequently characterised their younger selves as having been interested in problem solving and fixing things.

80%

Your academic interests seemed to naturally point you towards engineering

75%

You were interested in problem solving/fixing things

"I thought if my friends (who were boys) could do it – I could too."

Equally important were school subjects, 80% said interests at school could then be taken further by choosing an engineering degree.

Again, perhaps surprisingly, this research showed that an interest in building, making or doing things was quite a lot less likely to have been part of the reason to become an engineer. Only 30% had wanted to help build roads, railways, airports and water supplies; and just over a quarter had followed an altruistic interest in wanting to work on projects that would help people.

Knowing one or more engineers was frequently important. Almost four in ten women engineers had a family connection, most frequently their father, and 11% had a friend who was an engineer.

Families, as would be expected, had been solid in providing almost unanimous support. Nearly all (94%) women engineers said their family had supported their interest in engineering, although for 11% of families the news had apparently been something of a surprise.

Almost none believed they'd been actively influenced by the media. Just one in twenty said some of their inspiration had been drawn from anything on the television or at the movies.

Question: Which of the following, if any, played a part in inspiring your interest in engineering?

39%

A family member is or was an engineer

28%

that person was their father

30%

You wanted to help build vital infrastructure and solve global challenges

26%

It was an opportunity to do things that would help people

17%

To your mark on history

14%

A particular event

11%

A close friend is or was an engineer

Alice MacGregor

Assistant engineer, Energy,
Atkins



Most rewarding aspect of being an engineer:

"The ability to work on a variety of different projects helping to change the world. You can see what you have done and put your name to it."

Proudest achievement:

"M4 and M5 hard shoulders around Bristol near my home - I was involved from the start and can see how they manage the traffic."

Opening up so many choices

Awareness of the choices a degree in engineering would subsequently bring them had been an important factor when many women engineers were making their choice of undergraduate course at university.

Most frequently cited as reasons for choosing engineering were the variety of career options and routes (62%) and that engineering was 'a good route to lots of other interesting careers' (56%).

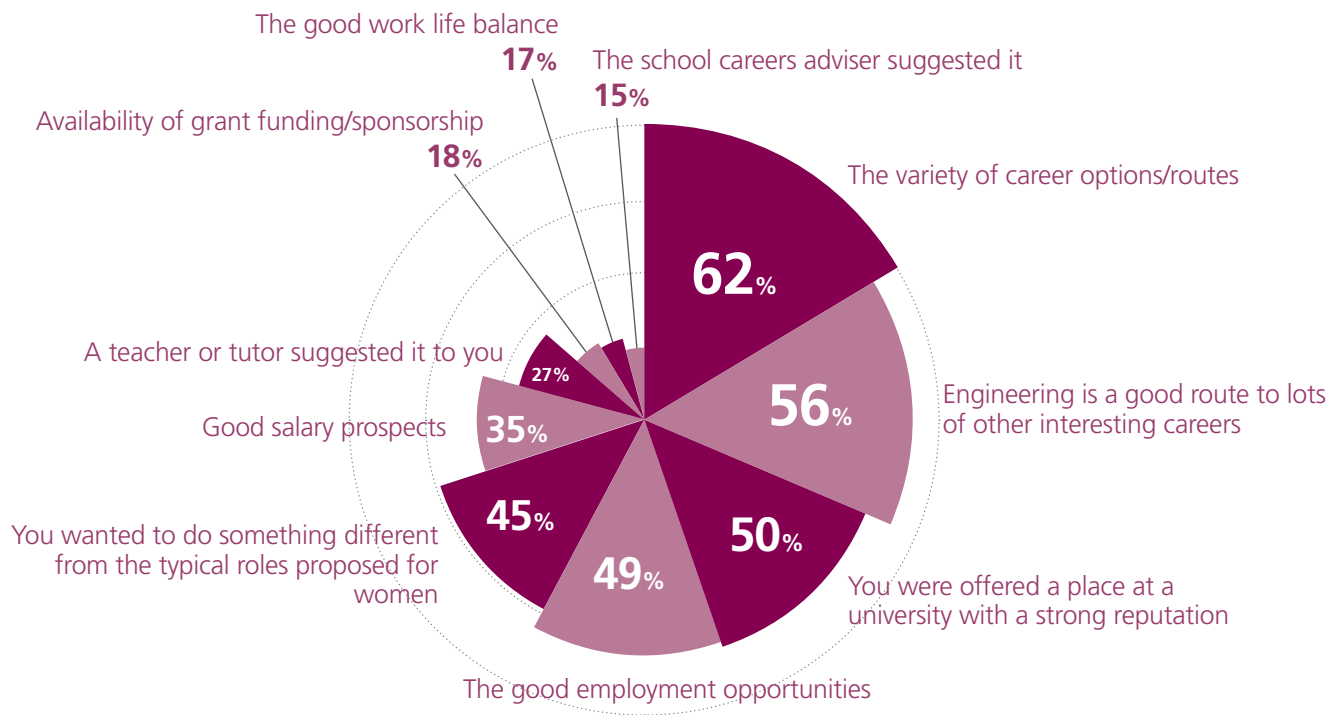
Receiving offers of places in engineering faculties of universities with strong reputations had been an important consideration for 50% of women engineers.

Almost half the sample (49%) had been attracted by the good employment opportunities, although the prospect of a good salary had not been as important as might be anticipated – named as a factor for just over a third of women engineers.

Unimpressed by gender stereotypes, one of the reasons for their choice of engineering for approaching half (45%) of women engineers was actively wanting to 'do something different from the typical roles proposed for women'.

For the majority the idea of choosing engineering seems to have been largely their own; 27% saying they had been encouraged by a teacher/tutor and 15% receiving careers advice from a school careers adviser.

“I wanted to work in a large organisation and there was plenty of choice in engineering.”



Question: Which of the following, if any, played a part in your choosing a career in engineering? This chart shows the percentage of respondents who selected these reasons.

Dr Wigdan Hamour

Integrity planning team leader, Clair Ridge Project, BP



What do you think women bring to engineering?

"I think women approach challenges differently to men. Also they provide out of the box thinking which is crucial to engineering. I also think women make good mentors and leaders and that would help in developing the next generations of engineers."

Proudest achievement:

"My PhD in structural engineering. That was a huge achievement for me!"

Female advantages

Two-thirds of women engineers provided examples where being a woman had been and/or provided one or more positive benefits including:

Gaining personal recognition:

"It certainly helped when joining university."

"When you are going for interviews it helps to get noticed and be different from the other candidates."

Work contributions:

"In big meetings people listen to you, they want to hear your opinions."

"We can look at the bigger picture and are more flexible to work on any project."

"In conferences being a woman - people remember you - career visibility."

Kate Leighton

Senior project engineer,
Curtins Consulting



In which kind of situations does it actually help to be a woman in engineering?

"It helps when applying for jobs. There are so few women in the industry and employers are keen to get parity with male staff."

Proudest achievement:

"Seeing my imagined designs taking shape in the real world, forming places of employment, family homes and learning institutions that effects everyone's lives."

People skills:

"On a number of occasions having worked in different companies - male engineers respond well to you as a female engineer - on a personal level."

"Working offshore - everyone is treated as equals."

"Females find it easier to motivate a team."

Applying for a job:

Over two-thirds of women engineers reported that as a job applicant, being a woman makes no difference. One in six (17%) believed there was an advantage and slightly fewer (13%) believed their gender had been a hindrance.

Question: When applying for a job, do you find being female is a help, a hindrance, or it doesn't make any difference?



Emma Doherty

Head of engineering, London Tramlink,
Transport for London



Proudest achievement:

"I am very proud of my current role as Head of engineering for London Tramlink. I have a great team working for me and it is very satisfying to see my planning and vision starting to impact on the quality of service we offer to our 30 million passengers a year"

Most rewarding aspect of being an engineer:

"I love the variety and enjoy working in the transport sector in London where I have a real impact on people's lives. My sector also influences regeneration and growth in some of the more deprived parts of London and can really improve quality of life."

A perfect choice

In a major vote of confidence, 84% are either happy or extremely happy with their career choice.

Providing further encouragement 98% also believe that it is a rewarding career for women.

Job satisfaction is important in every career. Most frequently amongst women engineers (for 80%) this important reward came in the shape of the successful projects their work had helped deliver.

Just under three-quarters (72%) relished receiving new challenges and over half (54%) enjoyed having the opportunity to make a difference. For 42% becoming a chartered engineer had been a major milestone.

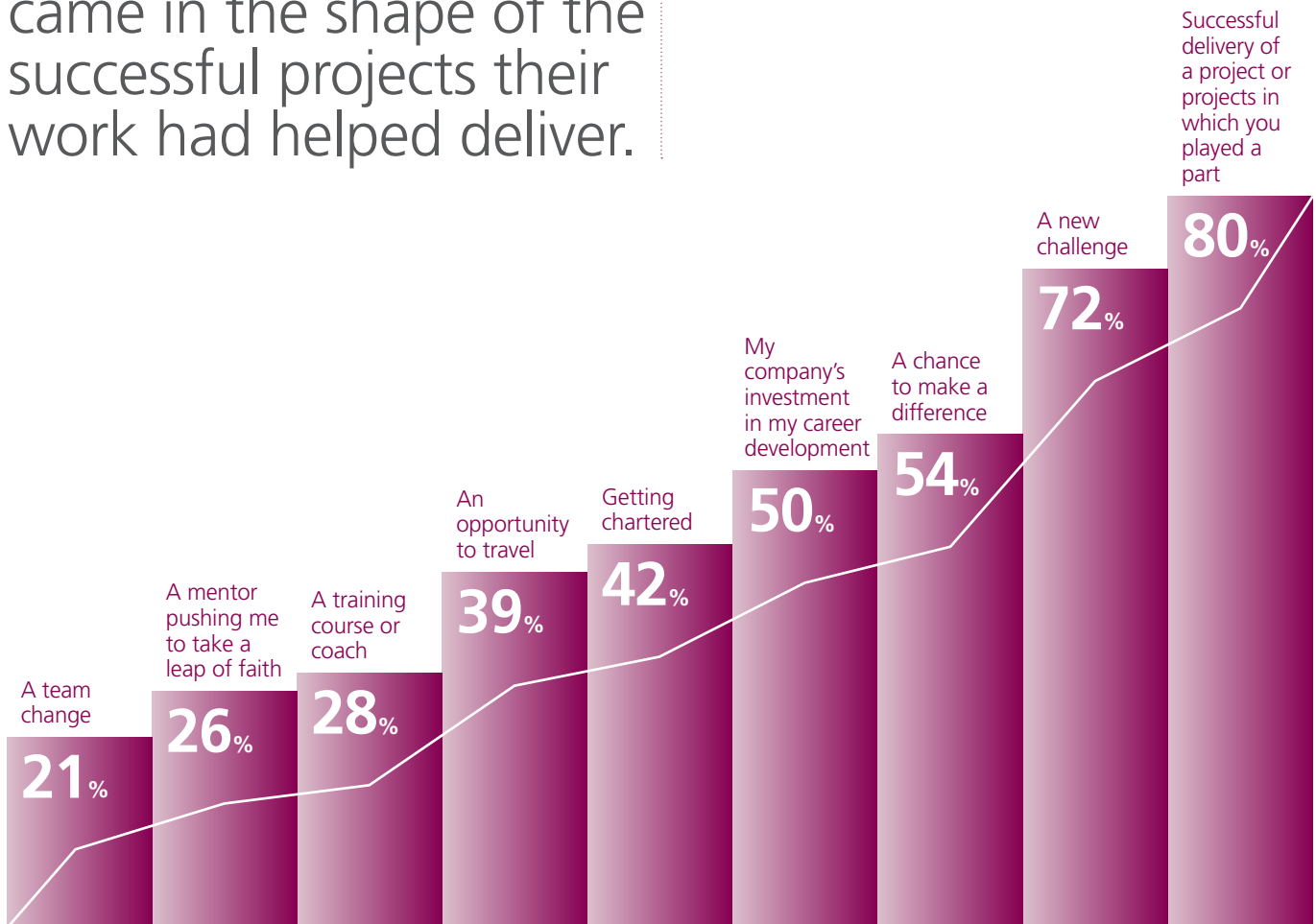
Half said their company's support in terms of their own career development was very important.

Reflecting the international presence of engineering companies and the demand for their skills as professional engineers, almost four-in-ten (39%) of female engineers in the survey had enjoyed opportunities to work and travel.

“Engineering is financially rewarding, and has provided me with a wide variety of exposure to knowledge, new thinking, innovation and networking.”

For 80%, job satisfaction came in the shape of the successful projects their work had helped deliver.

Question: Which of the following, if any, do you consider to be the key milestones or definitive moments that have inspired or helped you to continue to pursue your engineering career?



Helene Pepin

Chief external supply chain, Aerospace,
Rolls-Royce



Proudest achievement:

"Ensuring safety of general public when travelling with our product. Worked and lived in four different countries so far. Managed to successfully raise my children and achieve a successful career without dropping any balls."

How do you explain to someone what being an engineer is?

"The title says it - engineering is the creation of products used everyday. There is a multitude of ways to create, same goes for engineering."

Balancing life

Almost all of the women surveyed said they were achieving a good work life balance with almost four-in-five (79%) saying their colleagues and employers were playing an important role in helping them fit their working career alongside their family life and personal interests. Interestingly 81% of women engineers surveyed are in full time roles.

“We have good flexibility on working hours -so I’m able to have time off when needed, or take a longer holiday break.”

Supportive family and friends were a help for 69%, and having good time management skills was important to over three-quarters (77%).

Three-quarters had an employer who actively helped in enabling a good work life balance, enabling flexible working arrangements and work policies.

Two-thirds appreciated the ability to have open conversations with a member of management sympathetic about ensuring the work life balance was kept in the picture.

Some comments that helped to give a picture of balancing life as an engineer were:

“Ability to plan my own schedule and IT system that allow me to participate in key meetings regardless of where I am physically.”

“Compressed hours or flexitime - more opportunity to do this even at senior levels of the organisation and not necessarily just for managing family commitments. i.e. if I wanted to go part time to pursue other interests in my day off.”

“I don’t have children so have not required the same degree of flexibility in that regard. However, I really value the freedom to work from home or somewhere away from the office as this helps clear my mind to focus on complex issues.”

Question: Which of the following have been the most useful in achieving a good work life balance?

A supportive working environment and co-workers

79%

Good time management skills

77%

Flexible working arrangements and policies

75%

Supportive family and/or friends

69%

Open conversations with my line manager

66%

Keeping the **big picture**

58%

Location of office

52%

My pragmatic engineering **experience**

42%

An excellent **mentor**

27%

Professional **networks**

23%

Joanne Jamieson

Project manager, Structural Systems Design,
Rolls-Royce



Most rewarding part of being an engineer:

"When members of my team get rewarded for outstanding work, for example winning the Sir Henry Royce Innovation Award."

How do you explain to someone what being an engineer is?

"I'm part of a large team which together design aero engines. I usually spend my day at a computer or in meetings, and I never use a spanner."

Myths & misunderstandings

All the women engineers in the survey believed that a combination of reasons cause the current imbalance of the sexes choosing to take an engineering degree and working in engineering.

These reasons can be divided into a) those that could be grouped under myths and misunderstandings, and b) those related to a general lack of knowledge.



Three serious myths were highlighted by a large proportion of women engineers:

- **Myth 1** – But it's just for boys
Three-quarters believed engineering is still regarded as being 'a male career'
- **Myth 2** – Engineers 'fix engines'
Just over two-thirds thought engineering was believed by too many to involve fixing engines
- **Myth 3** – Muscles required
43% said they believed engineers were thought to require physical strength.

A need for awareness raising of fundamental understandings was identified in several areas – most applying equally to both genders:

- **General ignorance**
Seven in eight believed greater awareness was needed of what engineers do
- **Diversity of careers**
77% believed greater awareness of the wide range of careers employing engineering graduates
- **Improving careers advice**
Almost two-thirds of women engineers believed that careers advice about engineering was weak
- **It isn't difficult**
Over half of the sample (55%) said they believed potential students were being put off by an idea that engineering was 'too difficult'.

Maria Taboada

Platform integration lead,
Rolls-Royce



Proudest achievements:

"I started at the design office of a shipyard from a very low level, I continued studying till I became technical director. At the same time I had two children. I have been responsible for the design of very interesting vessels, many of them appear in the news involved in research campaigns, this makes me feel very proud."

How do you explain what an engineer does?

"From my experience I would say that engineer means two things that in most cases are opposite: creativity and process. Creativity to think in another way to solve challenges: process to do the job in a proper way avoiding mistakes."

Rebecca Chapman

Sales and marketing engineer,
Hoval Limited



Proudest achievement:

"I set up a manufacturing division for a product – air to air plate heat exchangers. These are put into ventilation systems to recover heat from buildings."

Are you involved in any initiatives that encourage young people into engineering?

"I was one of the winners of Under-30 'Make it in Britain' competition held last year. You had to prove you had made opportunities for people to be employed in engineering, I went on to national radio."

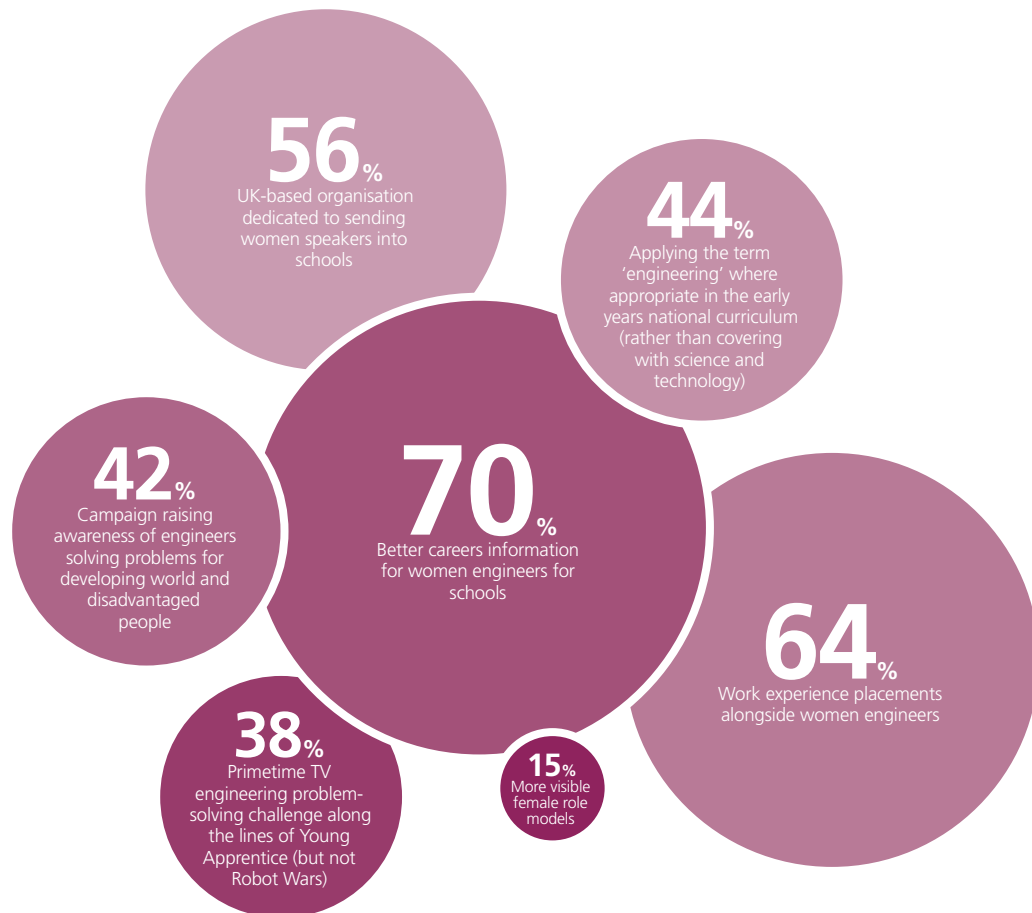
Fixing the future

A range of initiatives, some already in practice, were suggested as ways of encouraging more girls into engineering.

1. The greatest consensus focussed, perhaps surprisingly, on improving careers advice in schools. Seven-in-ten women engineers said that the advice currently being given about engineering as a career needed improving.
2. Almost two-thirds (64%) believed there should be greater efforts by recruiters of engineers to provide more work placements for girls to work alongside women engineers.
3. A majority of 56% wanted to see more provision of women speakers in schools.
4. Almost half (44%) would like to see the term 'engineering' feature in the school curriculum alongside or in place of 'technology' and 'science'.
5. A campaign raising awareness of engineers solving problems for developing world and disadvantaged people (also 44%) would encourage more girls into engineering was regarded as important.

“I don’t think many teachers know enough about engineering to have a valid conversation about it as a career option.”

Question: On a scale of one to ten where ten is very likely to be effective and one would be ineffective, how effective in your opinion would each of the following be in encouraging more young women to choose a career in engineering? This chart shows the percentage of respondents who gave these suggestions a high score.



Our commitments

The 300 women who contributed to this survey by sharing their experiences, beliefs and advice have given us great hope that we will be able to encourage more girls to choose a fulfilling career in engineering. These findings tell us that engineering isn't seen as a viable career option for many young women simply because of a lack of information, inspiration and understanding. Where there isn't a family member, a teacher or a role model who inspires young people, girls aren't aware of what we now know is a rewarding, fulfilling and balanced career path for many.

Based on this survey
the companies involved
have made three
commitments:

Stay positive

All too often we hear people talk of the "skills gap" or "gender imbalance" in engineering sectors, particularly energy. Negativity doesn't inspire people and it certainly doesn't help us address these issues. We commit to spreading the word about what a diverse and rewarding career the engineering profession can offer, armed with the many positive statistics and messages in this report.

Survey steering group:

Imogen Parker
Head of communications,
Energy



ATKINS

Jenny Young
Manager of diversity



Profile role models

We know that a large number of female engineers were inspired by a family member. We also know that there is a lack of role models in society. Every single one of the 300 women we surveyed is an inspirational role model capable of speaking to young women in a language they will understand and opening up the world of engineering to a new and receptive audience. We commit to supporting the development of role models and encouraging more of our women to raise their profile through the media, digital platforms and community initiatives.

Clear a path

Many of the survey respondents told us there needs to be a better awareness of what engineering is and the many career options on offer. They also talked about the many misconceptions and 'myths' we need to break through in order to broaden the appeal of our industry. But there are many great initiatives and campaigns to support teachers and promote engineering already out there. We commit to exploring what can be done to raise awareness of existing careers information while identifying what else teachers and students would like to see.

All of us need to make it easy for teachers to navigate the right tools for inspiring others into engineering, be it a video, a visitor or a virtual experience!

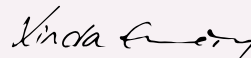
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Manager of diversity



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Global head of talent
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experience



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Special thanks to

Rebecca Chapman, Sales and marketing engineer, Hoval Limited

Natalie Cooper, Aerospace design engineer, AES

Emma Doherty, Head of engineering, London Tramlink, Transport for London

Rosie Goldrick, Graduate structural engineer, Atkins

Dr Wigdan Hamour, Integrity planning team leader, BP - Clair Ridge Project

Joanne Jamieson, Project manager, Structural systems design, Rolls-Royce

Kate Leighton, Senior project engineer, Curtins Consulting

Alice MacGregor, Assistant engineer, Atkins

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To all of the 300 women who took part in the survey, thank you for sharing your reflections and views which have helped enable us to tell the positive story about life as a professional engineer and to inspire future generations.



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98% believe it is a
rewarding career for women

Over **80%** are **happy**
with their career choice

87% not hindered
by being a woman

79% said
a supportive
working
environment
helps **work life
balance**

91% had an
inspirational teacher

75%
loved
**problem
solving**

We asked 300 professional female engineers why they chose a career in engineering and how they feel about their choice.

A clear majority of respondents find their job rewarding, satisfying and interesting.

We can now use these positive statistics and stories to help inspire future generations of female engineers.

Spread the word via #womeninengineering.

It's all about problem solving

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