



25BY2025

# From Commitment to Measurable Progress

Progress has been real but uneven (2019–2025)









**42%**

women in the total workforce  
among reporting signatories

**31%**

women in senior leadership —  
up from 29% in 2021

**7%**

women representation on the  
flight deck — up from 4.8%  
in 2021

**21%**

women in technical roles —  
up from 18% in 2021

**9%**

women airline CEOs among IATA  
members — tripled from 3%  
in 2019

# Executive Summary



**When 25by2025 launched in 2019, it was estimated that women held approximately 19% of senior leadership positions across aviation, but there was no comprehensive data.**

CAA reports suggested women pilots accounted for between 3 and 4% of the global licensed pilot population and just 1–2% of captains.

Among IATA member airlines in 2019, there were 3% women CEOs women.

*Aviation made a commitment in 2019. Since then, 217 organizations, across every region measured their progress and shared what they learned. That kind of collective discipline is essential in this industry. The numbers reflect a consistent move in the right direction.*

**Anton Grove** - Senior Vice-President People  
Performance and Development, IATA

”

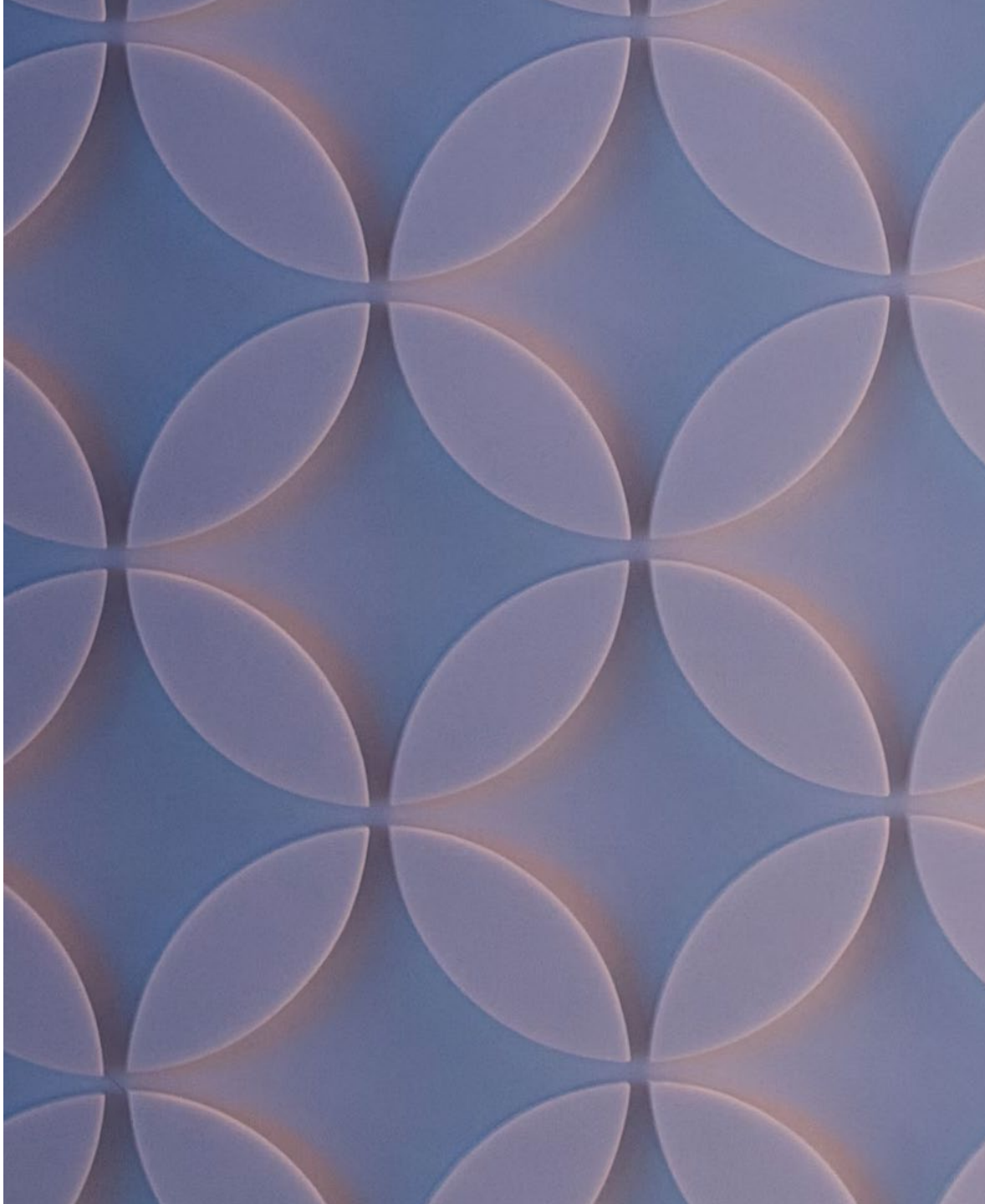
Progress, however, has not been even. Change has been slowest in the most structurally constrained roles (flight deck and technical) where pipelines are long and entry points limited. These roles improved; they did not transform. The full picture demands honesty about both. Beyond representation data, 25by2025 built something that did not previously exist at industry level: collective learning and action. Forty peer-learning calls brought signatories together across regions. Fifty organizations shared their practices with peers. One hundred and eight completed the D&I maturity self-assessment. More than 135 delegates gathered in Geneva in 2024 for the industry's first in-person workforce forum. The tools, relationships, and common frameworks that emerged are a durable part of what the initiative leaves behind.

**25by2025 is complete. The work it started is not.**



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THE CHALLENGE

# What 25by2025 Set Out to Do

Aviation in 2019 was, by its own data estimates, a predominantly male industry, particularly in the roles that defined its operations and leadership.



*"There is a big elephant in the room... diversity in aviation is abysmal. I don't want to be back in 12 months' time and have another lip-service conversation around diversity. We need to set some targets with some real teeth."*

**Christopher Luxon**

Prime Minister of New Zealand, ex-CEO of Air New Zealand IATA  
AGM, D&I Awards, Seoul, 3 June 2019





# 25by2025 A Movement

The gaps were not uniform, but they were consistent. Women representation was highest in airlines where cabin crew had long drawn women into the workforce; considerably lower in manufacturing, ground operations, and technical functions. Estimates suggested women in senior leadership represented 19% across the industry, but there was no accurate picture. Women pilots accounted for around 3-4% of the global licensed pilot population, and technical roles were perceived to be underrepresented by leaders.

The macro-economic context shaped what followed. Aviation entered 2019 at the peak of a decade-long growth cycle, expanding fleets, rising passenger demand, acute competition for operational talent. The conditions for change existed. The collective will to act had not yet taken shape. 25by2025 was created in direct response to that challenge. The following year, COVID-19 hit aviation harder than almost any other industry, placing workforce strategy firmly in survival mode. Gender and D&I priorities, where they had begun to gain traction, were largely set aside at first. It was against this backdrop — structural under-representation compounded by an industry in crisis — that 25by2025 had to find its footing.

## AFTER 25BY2025 (%)



women in senior roles



growth in women pilots



Women airline  
CEOs since 2019



# The Approach

25by2025 was built on a simple principle: shared commitment, full discretion on how to achieve it. No quotas, no rankings, no enforcement. The foundation was a mutual pledge that applied to the industry and to IATA equally.

## What committing to 25by2025 meant to signatories:

- Report annually on key diversity metrics.
- Increase the number of women in senior positions and under-represented areas by 25%, or up to a minimum of 25% by 2025.
- Increase women nominations from the airline for IATA governance roles to a minimum of 25% (IATA members only).
- Work with IATA to increase the number of women appointed to IATA governance roles to a minimum of 25% (IATA members only).

Progress was tracked against two categories: senior positions and under-represented roles, both defined by each signatory and held consistently across reporting years.

For each, organisations set a single objective: reach at least 25% of women representation or increase their existing share by a minimum of 25% relative to their starting point.

Those already above 25% set further stretch objectives; those at or close to parity committed to maintaining it. This flexibility was intentional and designed to be equally meaningful for a manufacturer starting from a low base and an airline already well above the threshold.

## The 25by2025 Commitment



Increase women representation in 2 categories: senior and tech roles

Either by



Or to a minimum of





## WHAT WE BUILT TOGETHER

# How 25by2025 Worked in Practice

**25by2025 was more than a reporting exercise.**

Alongside the annual data cycle, the initiative created an infrastructure for collective learning and action to give signatories the tools, the connections, and the shared reference points to move from commitment to practice.





**WHAT WE BUILT TOGETHER**

# How 25by2025 Worked in Practice

## A Global Peer-Learning Platform

From early 2021 to December 2025, 40 quarterly calls brought together more than 2,000 participants representing signatories from across the aviation value chain.

These were not progress reviews, they were working sessions: space for organizations to share what they were trying, discuss what had worked, and hear from peers navigating similar constraints in different contexts.

Fifty organizations took the floor as presenters. The nature of conversations shifted markedly over time: early calls focused on translating commitment into first steps; later calls engaged with structural barriers, regional constraints, and what it takes to embed inclusion into core people processes.

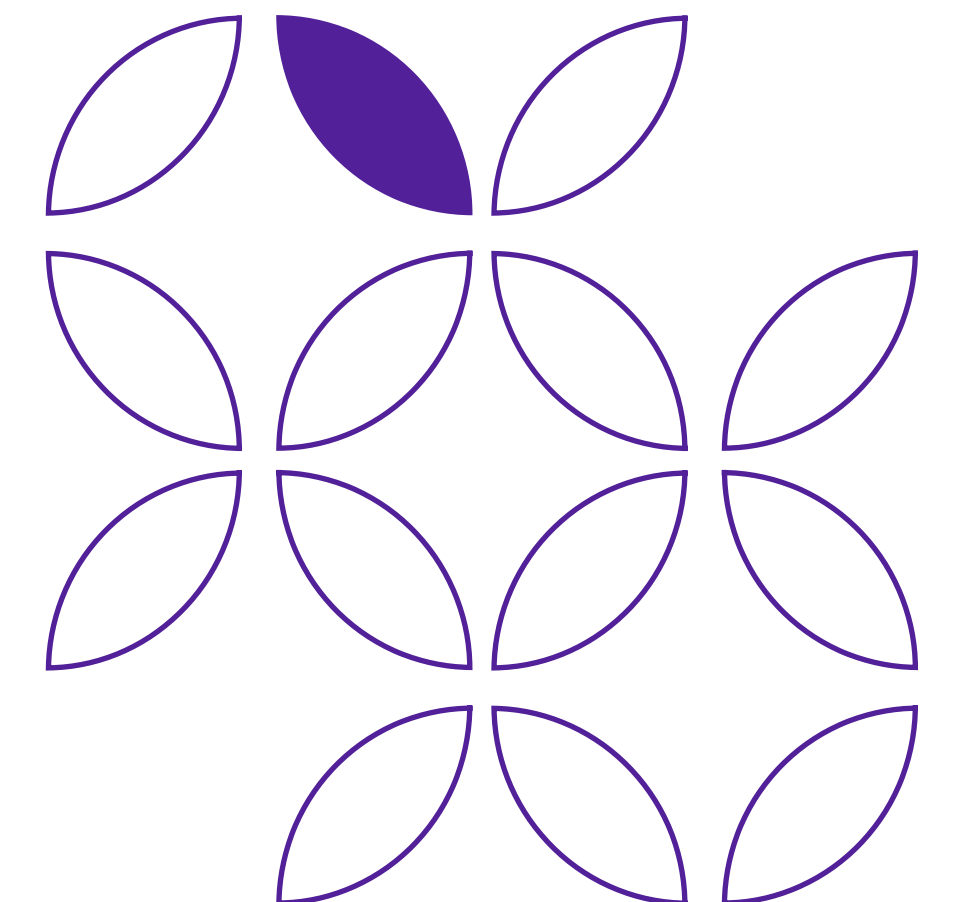
## In-Person Global People Forum

In September 2024, 25by2025 convened its first in-person industry gathering. The IATA Global People Forum brought together 135+ delegates (Chief People Officers, CEOs, and operational leaders) at IATA's Geneva office for two days of structured dialogue.

The agenda extended well beyond D&I and gender: focusing on talent attraction, skills development, AI and the workforce, and organizational culture. That breadth was deliberately positioning inclusion not as a standalone topic but as part of a wider People agenda. The closing session, Beyond 2025: What is next?, marked the transition from a time-bound gender initiative to an ongoing conversation about the industry's workforce future.

## Practical Tools to Support Action

Three tools, structured around a common five-pillar framework (Strategy, Governance, Policies & Processes, D&I in the Business, and Culture) gave signatories a consistent reference point to support action.





## WHAT WE BUILT TOGETHER

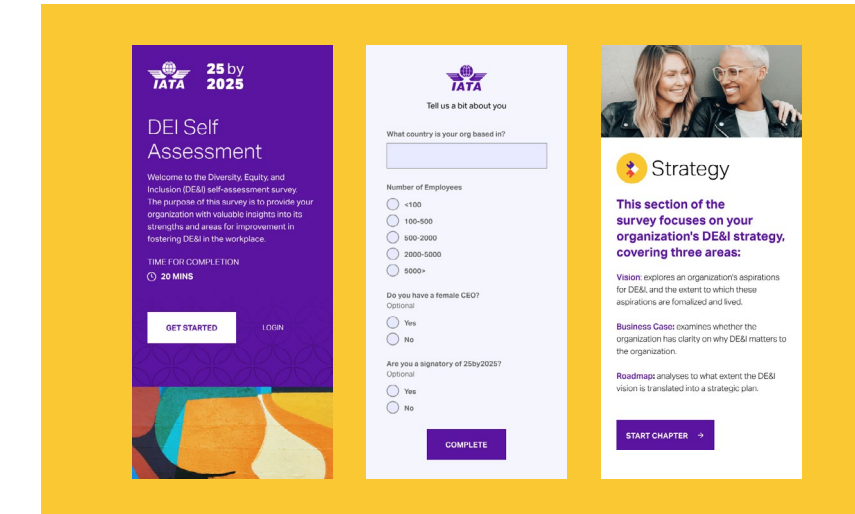
# How 25by2025 Worked in Practice



## Best Practices Guidebook

Published in 2023, the D&I Best Practices Guidebook provided structured, actionable guidance across the five pillars for organizations at three levels of maturity: Boarding, Take-off, and In-flight.

Rather than prescribing a single path, it allowed each organization to assess where it stood and identify the steps most relevant to its context, size, and business model.



## D&I Maturity Self Assessment

Completed by 108 organizations, the self-assessment allowed signatories to benchmark themselves across the five pillars and receive a confidential report identifying strengths and priority areas, with tailored recommendations for progression.

Explicitly designed as a learning tool and not a ranking, its outputs were visible only to the organization that completed it.



## Diveristy Datathon

Eight cross-functional teams from signatory organizations worked on real business questions using people and gender data. The winning entry, developed by a team from SMBC Aviation Capital, built a data-driven model linking gender balance in senior leadership to ESG and financial performance indicators. It was a practical demonstration of what the initiative had long argued: that gender data, interrogated rigorously, can inform business decisions and not just D&I reports.

Taken together, these tools reinforced the peer learning initiated through the quarterly calls and helped bridge the gap between data, diagnosis, and action.



CHANGES

# What Changed at Industry Level

**Across signatory organizations, representation improved across every category tracked: overall workforce, senior leadership, and operational and technical roles.**

Progress, however, has not been even.

The data that follows shows where change has been strongest and where it has been slower to take hold.





CHANGES

# Signatory coverage

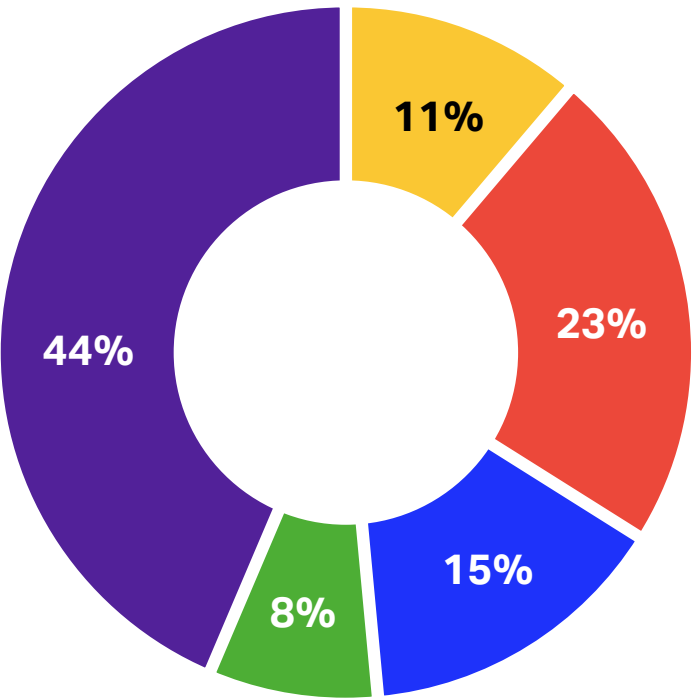
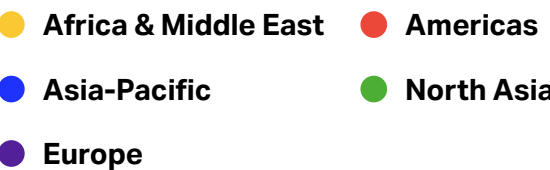
Growth in signatories was not linear. The initiative was launched in 2019 with 51 founding organizations. Momentum slowed sharply in 2020 as COVID-19 brought the industry to a standstill. Recovery followed: 77 organizations joined in 2022, the peak year, reflecting the industry’s re-engagement with the people agenda as operations stabilized. Numbers tapered toward the initiative’s natural conclusion.

Table 1: Signatories by year, 2019-2025

| Year  | Number of signatories |
|-------|-----------------------|
| 2019  | 51                    |
| 2020  | 17                    |
| 2021  | 36                    |
| 2022  | 77                    |
| 2023  | 29                    |
| 2024  | 7                     |
| 2025  | 0                     |
| TOTAL | 217                   |

## Geographical coverage

Figure 1: Regional distribution of IATA 25by2025 signatories



Geographically, Europe accounted for the largest share of signatories with 95: a reflection of the concentration of IATA membership across the region. The Americas followed with 49, Asia-Pacific with 32, Africa and the Middle East with 24, and North Asia with 17.

The signatory base was dominated by airlines, which accounted for 174 of the 217 organizations of which 168 were IATA members complemented by service providers, associations, manufacturers, airports, ANSPs, ground handlers, and others.

While insights are directionally informative across the membership base, results for non-airline sectors should be interpreted with caution due to both their comparatively low response rates within each sector and the overall sample composition being dominated by airlines (80% of respondents).

Table 2:

IATA 25by2025 signatories by organization type

| Type of signatory                | Number of signatories | % of total signatories |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Airlines                         | 174                   | 80.2%                  |
| Service Providers                | 15                    | 6.9%                   |
| Associations/Governments         | 11                    | 5.1%                   |
| Air Navigation Service Providers | 4                     | 1.9%                   |
| Manufacturers                    | 4                     | 1.9%                   |
| Airports                         | 3                     | 1.4%                   |
| Ground Handlers                  | 3                     | 1.4%                   |
| Travel Agencies                  | 2                     | 0.9%                   |
| Aircraft Leasing Companies       | 1                     | 0.5%                   |
| TOTAL SIGNATORIES                | 217                   | 100%                   |

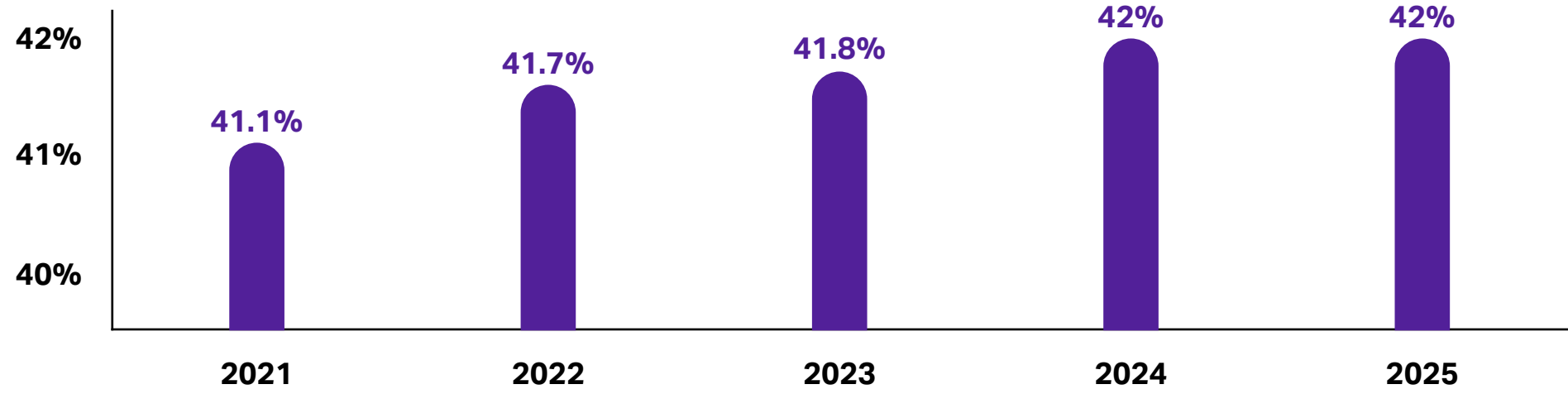


CHANGES

# Overall Workforce Representation

By 2025, women employees accounted for 41.8% of the signatories' total workforce. When looking at the sample which has benefited from consistent 2021 to 2025 reporting (see annex 1), this metric stands at a very comparable 42.0%, with an overall 0.9ppt increase from 2021.

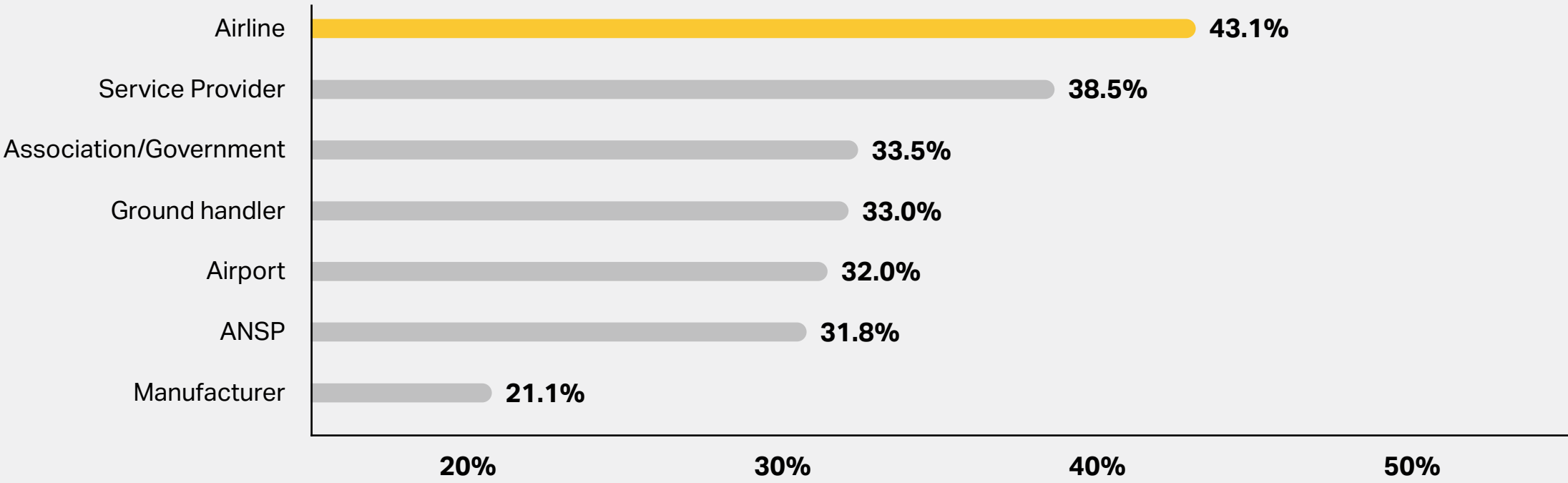
fig.2 Share of women employees in aviation, 2021-2025



Source: IATA 25by2025 survey. Chart represents data from 108 entities that have submitted a survey response in all years from 2021 to 2025 (Comparable/complete sample).

As reported in past years, women representation continues to differ significantly across the aviation value chain (Figure 3). Airlines continue reporting the highest share of women employees (at 43.1% in 2025), which is underpinned by the high proportion of women flight attendants. Importantly though, the share continues to improve, with the complete sample reporting a 1.1ppt increase in share of total women employees since 2021.

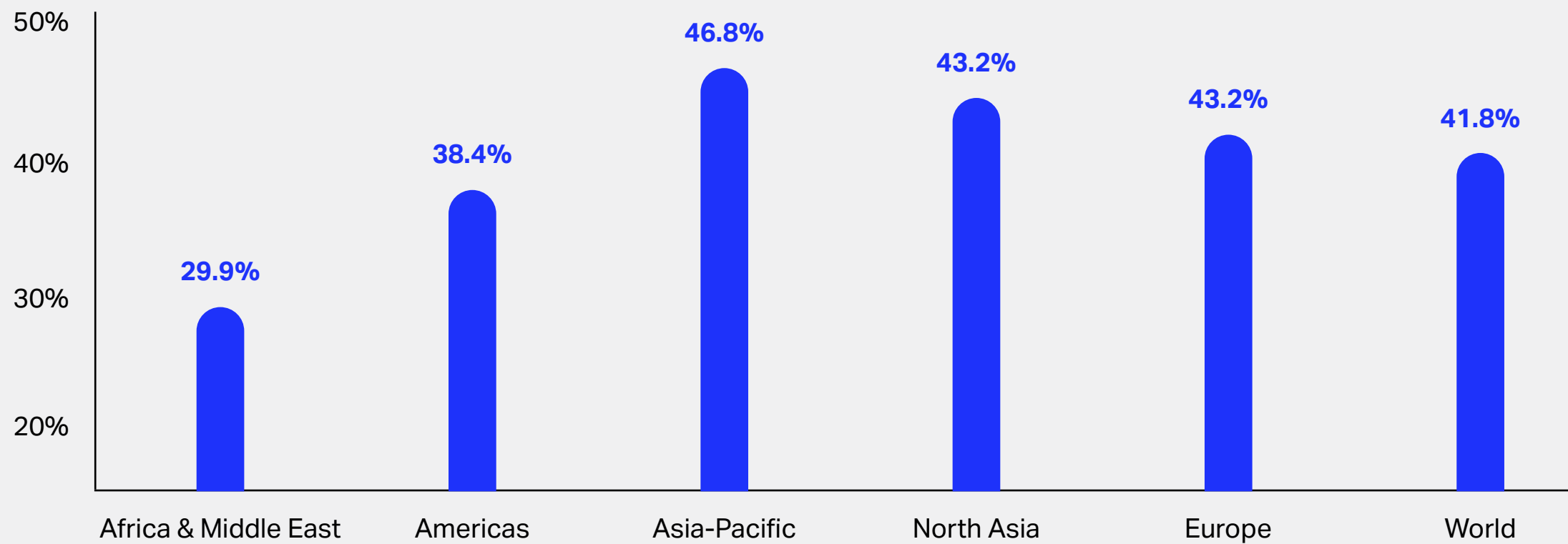
fig.3 Share of women employees in aviation by organization type in 2025



Source: IATA 25by2025 survey – Chart represents data from 119 entities that have submitted a survey response 2025 (full sample). Please note the sample size across the wider value chain (non-airlines) varies and is not representative.

The proportion of women employees shows considerable regional variation (Figure 4) in 2025. Asia-Pacific continues having the highest share of women employees at 46.8% while Africa & Middle East has a 29.9% women employee share on average.

fig.4 Share of women employees in aviation by region in 2025



Source: IATA 25by2025 survey. Chart represents data from 119 entities that have submitted a survey response 2025 (full sample).



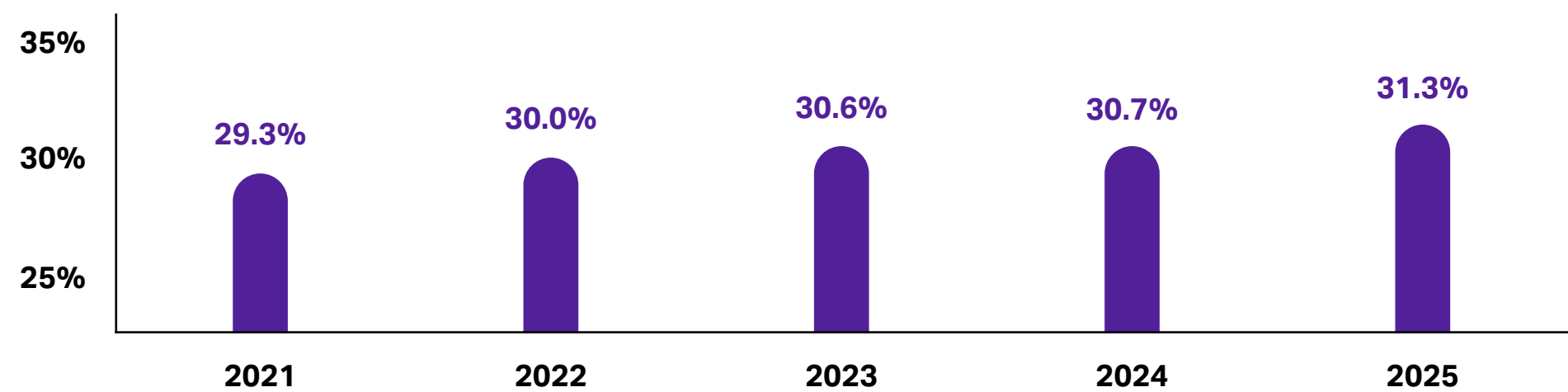
CHANGES

# Senior Leadership Representation

Among the signatories who reported consistently over the years, the share of senior women leadership increased gradually and steadily from 29.3% in 2021 to 31.3% in 2025.

While progress has been gradual, the trend is consistent and reflects sustained focus on leadership pipelines.

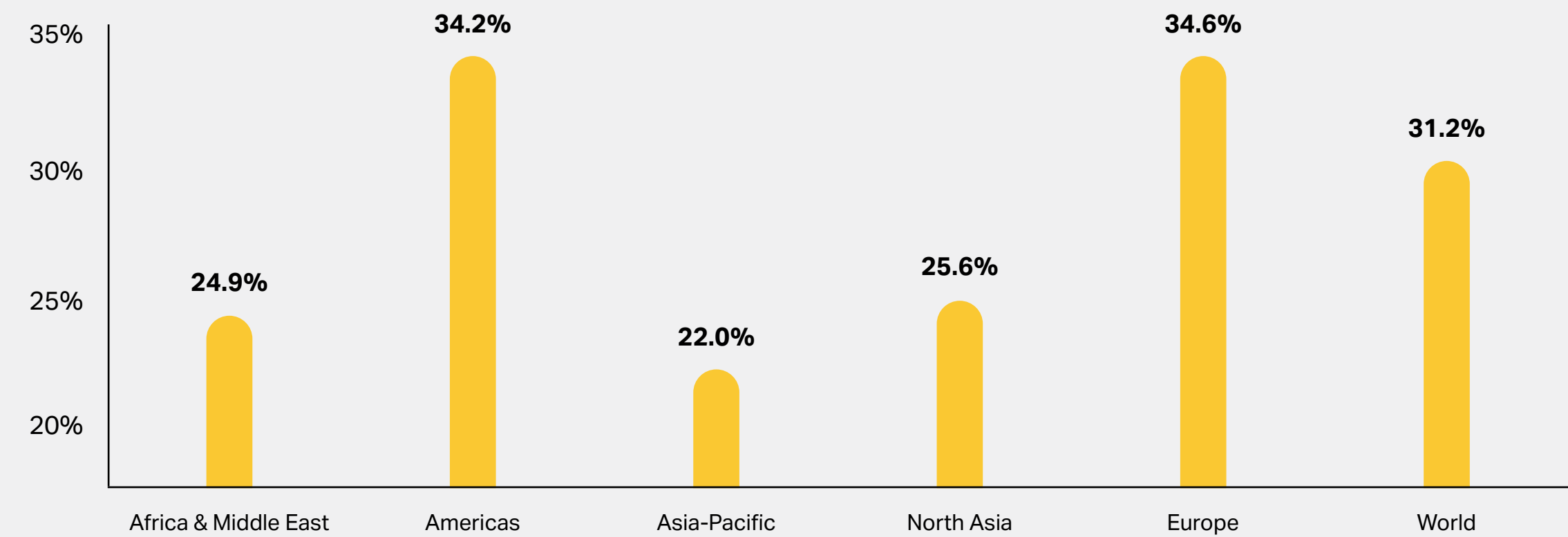
fig.5 Share of senior women employees in aviation, 2021-2025



Source: IATA 25by2025 survey. Chart represents data from 107 entities that have submitted a survey response in all years from 2021 to 2025 (Comparable/complete sample)

When looking at the full sample, 163 entities reported an average women leadership share of 27.9% in 2019. The 117 entities that provided insight on this for 2025 reported a 31.2% share of senior women leadership. In terms of the distribution of results across regions, the Americas and Europe lead with a senior women leadership share of above 34.0%. Asia-Pacific lags, with a 22.0% share observed in 2025.

fig.6 Share of senior women employees in aviation by region, 2025



Source: IATA 25by2025 survey. Chart represents data from the 117 entities that provided insight into this metric in 2025 (full sample).

In 2025, the 102 reporting airlines recorded a share of women leadership of 31.3%. The distribution of the share of women leadership across other entity types differs noticeably, with manufacturers reporting a share of 13.8%, and airports of 36.7%. However, given the low number of contributions from non-airline entities, these results should not be treated as representative.

Separately, the share of women among airline CEOs of IATA members grew from 3% in 2019 to nearly 9% in 2026, a threefold increase at the most visible leadership level. Although IATA's membership expanded from around 280 airlines to more than 360 over the period, the number of women chief executives rose from 8 to 33 — far beyond what new members joining at the prevailing rate would produce. It remains one of the clearest measures of directional change across the sector.

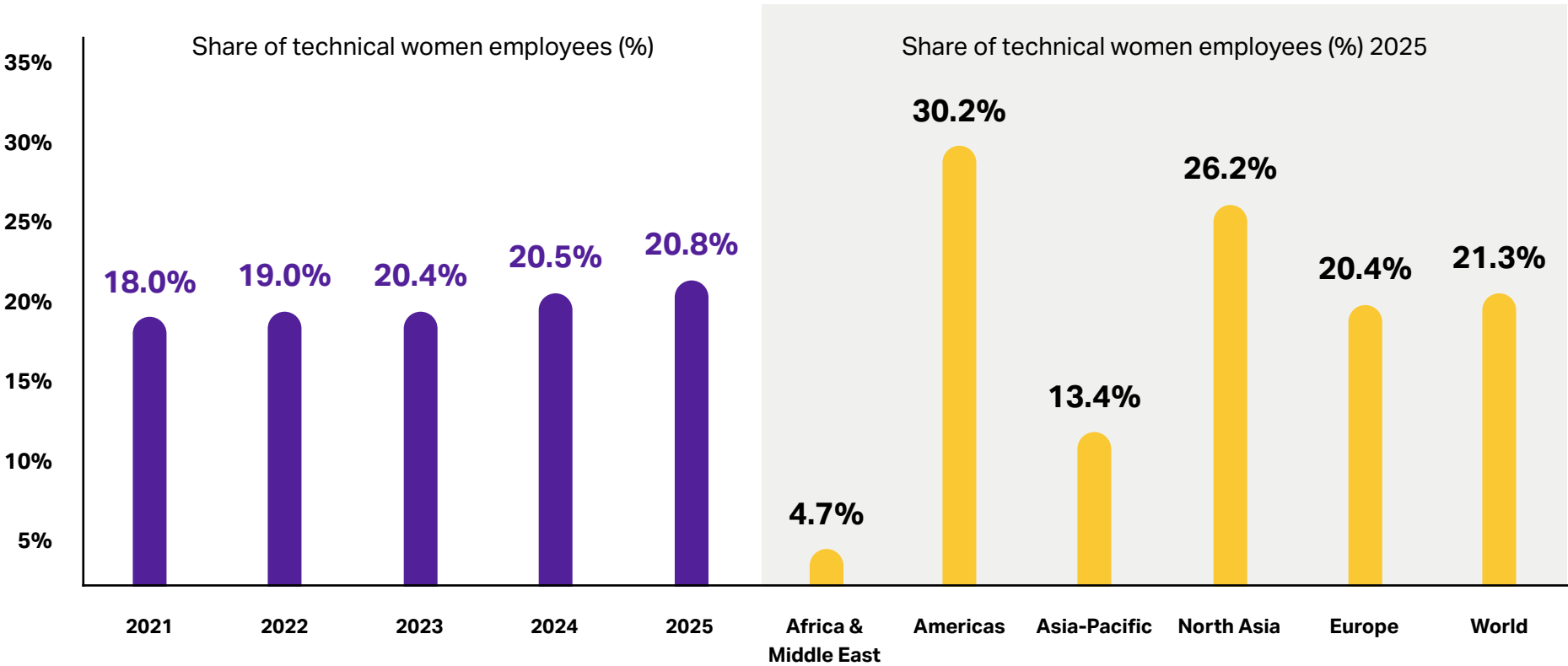


CHANGES

# Operational & Technical Roles

**Involvement of women in technical and operational flight deck roles has also increased noticeably across the years. The constant sample reported an improvement in the share of women in technical roles of 2.8ppt, from 18.0% in 2021 to 20.8% in 2025. The highest women participation was reported by US entities, at a 30.2% (full sample). On the other hand, technical roles in Africa and the Middle East remain strongly men-dominated, with a 4.7% share of women participation.**

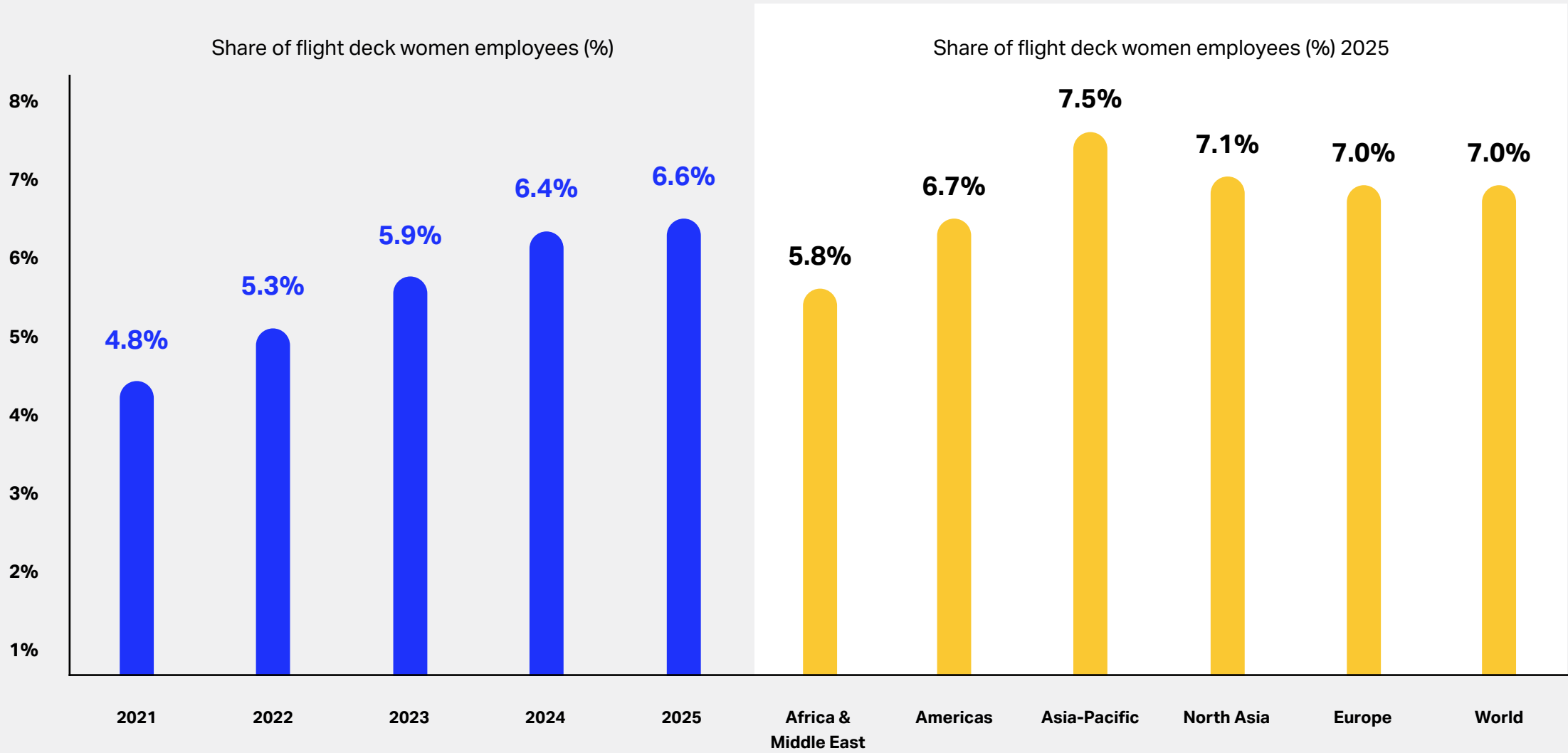
fig.7 Share of technical women employees, 2021-2025 (LHS), by region 2025 (RHS)



Source: IATA 25by2025 survey. LHS chart represents data from 66 entities that have submitted a survey response in relation to technical women employees in all years from 2021 to 2025 (Comparable/complete sample). RHS chart represents data from 70 entities that provided insight into this metric in 2025 (full sample).

Flight deck women participation across the constant sample has increased by 1.8ppt, from 4.8% in 2021. The full sample reported a women participation of 7.0% in 2025, with the best result of 7.5% having been reached by carriers based in Asia-Pacific.

fig.8 Share of flight deck women employees, 2021-2025 (LHS), by region 2025 (RHS)



Source: IATA 25by2025 survey. LHS chart represents data from 67 entities that have submitted a survey response in relation to flight deck women employees in all years from 2021 to 2025 (Comparable/complete sample). RHS chart represents data from 72 entities that provided insight into this metric in 2025 (full sample)



## CHANGES

# Goal Achievement (Growth & Level Goals)

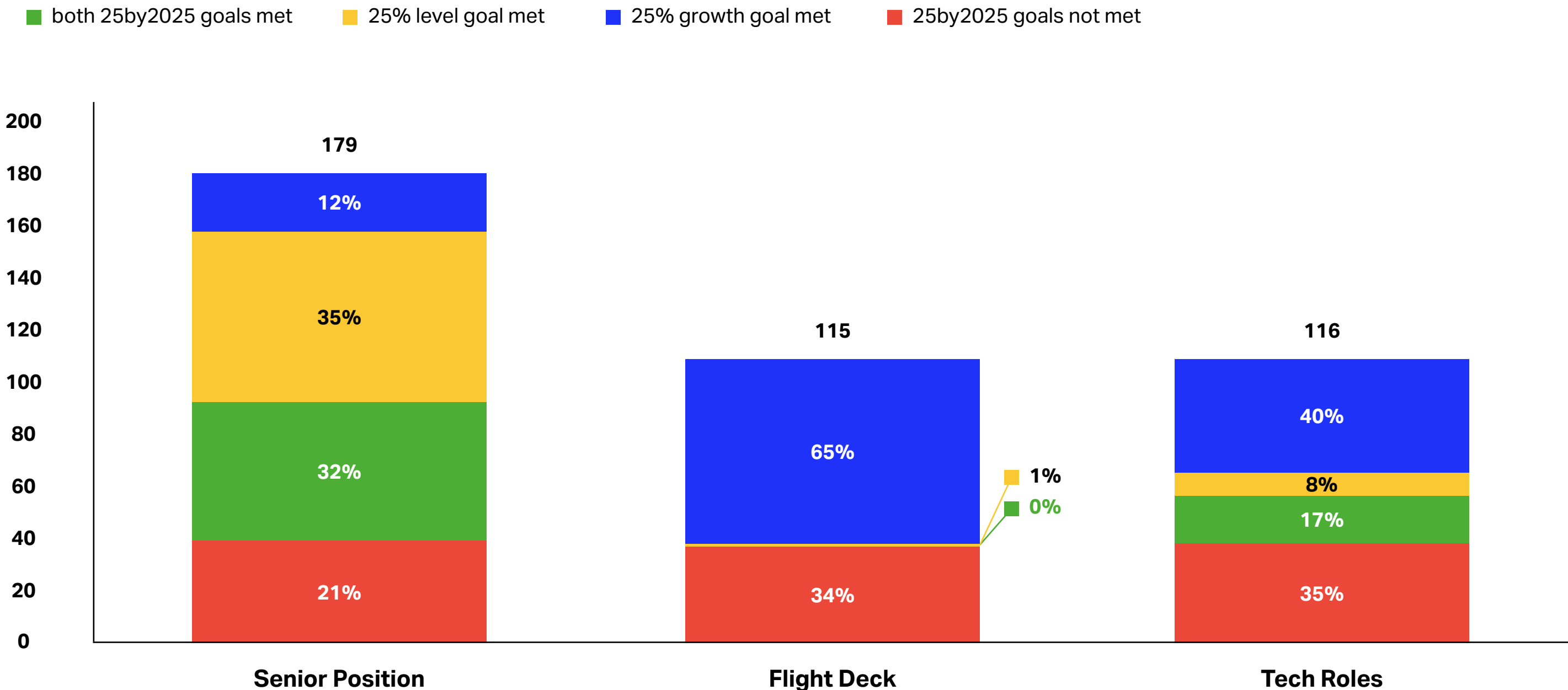
**25by2025 signatories committed to either increase women representation by 25% (growth goal), or reaching a minimum of 25% women representation (level goal) in senior roles and in under-represented roles.**

**When looking at the latest data reported by the signatories, 79% of all respondents achieved the Senior 25by2025 goal.** Of the 117 responses received regarding the Senior Position 25by2025 goal, 32% of respondents achieved both the level and growth goal, 12% the growth goal alone, and 35% the level goal.

**Regarding the Flight Deck achievements, 66% have reached the goal.** Only 1 of the 115 respondents has reached the level goal. This shows that despite significant progress, more time will be required to achieve a widespread share of at least 25% of women in the flight deck. Strong performance has also been observed in the Tech Roles category, with 17% of respondents reaching both goals, 8% reaching only the level goal, and 40% the growth goal. **65% of the 116 respondents managed to meet the 25by2025 goal in the tech roles category.**

fig.9

Distribution of surveyed signatories achieving IATA 25by2025 goals  
(based on latest available report for each reporting entity)



Note: IATA 25by2025 initiative established two goals: 1) Growth goal: To increase the share of women employees in under-represented roles by 25% in under-represented roles 2) Level goal: To achieve a minimum of 25% share of women employees in under-represented roles. Some reports include several signatories (e.g.: airline groups or alliances sending one report including all their subsidiaries). Source: IATA 25by2025 survey.

## From anecdotes to metrics: what the data cannot fully capture

One of the least visible but most durable shifts over six years was in how organizations related to their own data. At the outset, many signatories had limited visibility of their workforce by gender, particularly in operational and technical roles. Participation in 25by2025 pushed organizations to build that visibility, establishing consistent definitions and moving from anecdotal accounts to measurable baselines. By 2025, metrics were being used more frequently to guide internal decisions rather than only to fulfil external reporting obligations. That shift, from data as compliance to data as insight, is among the initiative's most lasting legacies.



## PROGRESSION

# Where Progress Was Strongest and Why

## The quantitative data shows what changed.

It does not explain why some organizations moved faster than others, or what conditions enabled more durable progress. The patterns below are drawn from peer-learning exchanges, case contributions, and conversations. They are not findings from controlled analysis, they are recurring themes, surfaced consistently across regions and business models that the 25by2025 community itself identified over six years.

## Three patterns stood out.





4 PROGRESSION

# Three patterns stood out



## D&I embedded in people systems

A first pattern concerned where D&I work was located within the organization. Where progress seemed more durable, gender and inclusion objectives had been integrated into existing people processes (recruitment and selection criteria, succession planning, talent reviews, and performance conversations) rather than running alongside them as a separate program. The distinction mattered in practice: standalone initiatives could be paused or deprioritized; objectives embedded in core processes were harder to set aside. Organizations that described D&I as integrated into HR processes rather than managed separately tended to report greater confidence in the consistency of their efforts.



## Focused and context-aware action

Organizations making more consistent progress tended to concentrate efforts on specific roles, pipeline stages, or known constraints rather than pursuing broad, organization-wide programs simultaneously. They also adapted their approach to local conditions. What worked for a large network carrier in Europe did not translate directly to a regional airline in Asia-Pacific or a ground handler in the Middle East. Awareness of context and willingness to design around it rather than apply a universal template were consistent differentiating factors.



## Leadership and accountability

In organizations where gender and D&I progress appeared most sustained, the topic had moved beyond the HR function. It featured on executive agendas, was tied to business priorities, and had identifiable ownership, meaning a named leader or governance structure with responsibility for outcomes, not just oversight of activity. This did not always mean a dedicated D&I function. In some cases, it meant a CPO or CEO who treated representation as a people performance issue, tracked it alongside other workforce metrics, and spoke to it internally with consistency.



CASE STUDIES

# Gender and D&I Progress in Practice

**The five cases that follow illustrate how signatory organizations addressed gender and D&I challenges in practice across different regions, business models, roles, and starting conditions.**

These are not best-practice rankings. Progress in 25by2025 was not ranked, and these organizations were not selected because they outperformed others. They were selected because they show concretely how action happened at different points and in different contexts, and what others might adapt.





## CASE STUDY

Air Canada



# Intentional outreach to build long-term pipelines in technical roles

## Context and challenge

Two roles at Air Canada (pilots and Aircraft Maintenance Engineers – AMEs) had long been men-dominated, both within the organization and across the industry. Women representation in both functions was low at the start of the reporting period (7% pilots, 2% AMEs in 2021), and the pipeline feeding into them was narrow. The challenge was to intervene early enough in the career journey to expand that pipeline meaningfully over time.

## Where in the people lifecycle action took place

The focus was entirely upstream on reaching young women before career decisions had narrowed, and on removing financial barriers that could prevent women from pursuing qualifications in these fields.



### What changed in practice

Air Canada took a two-part approach. The first was a structured outreach program in partnership with community organizations whose primary mission was engagement with young women using Air Canada facilities as a venue, and ensuring that serving women pilots and AMEs were present at these events to provide direct role models. The second was financial: scholarships to support women pursuing qualifications as pilots or AMEs, addressing the cost barrier that disproportionately affects entry into both professions.



### What this enabled

Women pilot representation increased from 7% to 9% between 2021 and 2025. Women AME representation doubled from 2% to 4% over the same period from a low base, but directionally consistent with the pipeline investment. Women flight dispatchers, pilot qualification managers, and airworthiness controllers showed stronger movement, increasing from 13% to 38%. Women representation in senior positions rose from 33% to 43%.



### What others can learn or adapt

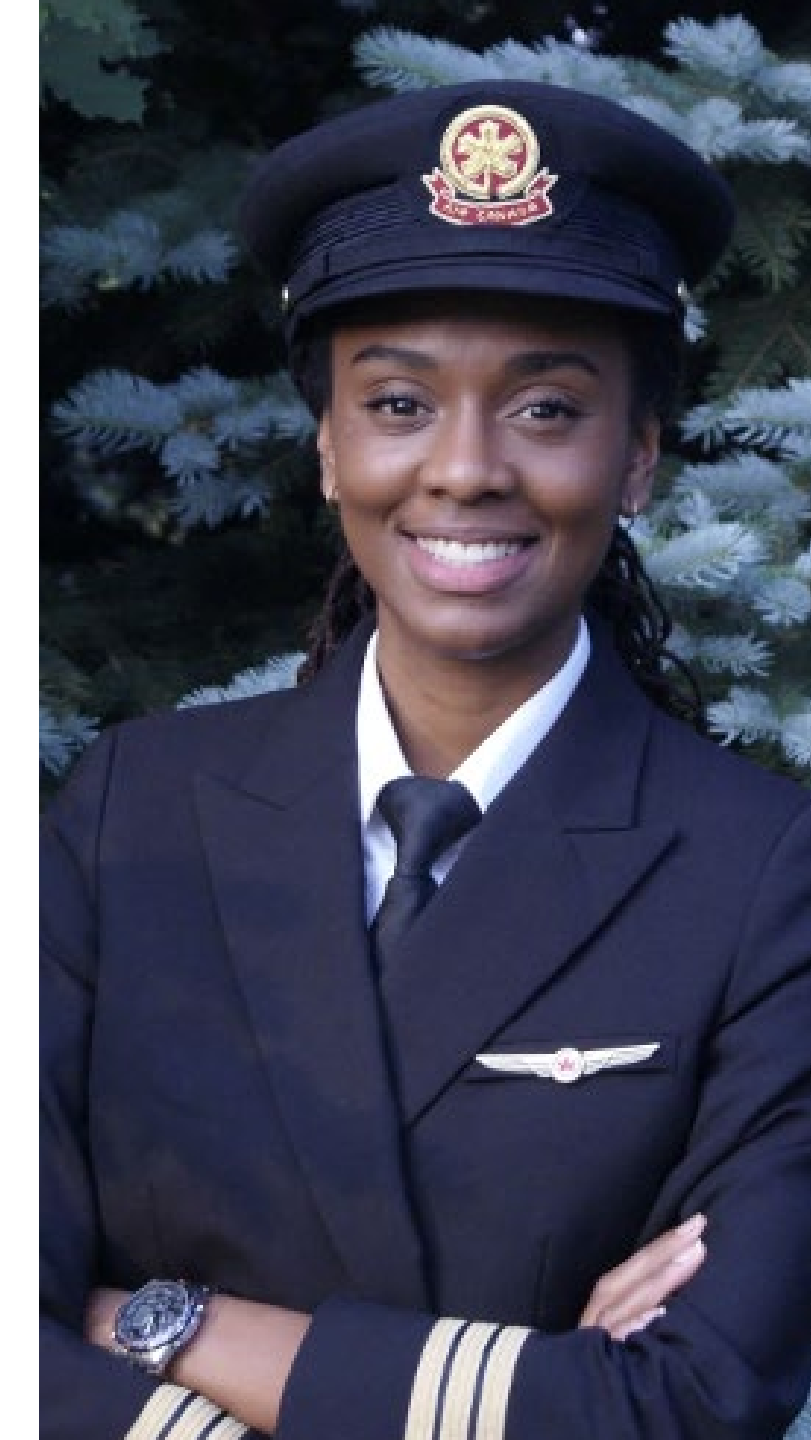
Outreach is most effective when it is specific, targeted at defined roles with identified pipeline gaps, rather than directed at women in general. The presence of current women employees at outreach events is a design choice with meaningful impact: it makes the career path concrete and credible for young women in ways that institutional communication cannot replicate. Financial barriers to entry in long-qualification roles are a structural constraint that outreach alone cannot overcome; scholarships address a different part of the same problem.



AIR CANADA

10%  
increase

of women representation  
in senior positions





CASE STUDY

MAS AIR



## Redesigning talent entry and building a long-term pipeline

### Context and challenge

masair's starting point was a structural one: an industry historically dominated by men, with limited women representation not only in operational and technical roles but in strategic and leadership functions. The challenge extended beyond recruitment. Internally, deeply held assumptions about gender and role suitability shaped how talent decisions were made. The opportunity the organization identified was to move from inclusion as a stated value to inclusion as a measurable feature of how people were recruited, developed, and promoted.

### Where in the people lifecycle action took place

Action focused on two points of entry: the immediate recruitment process, where gender imbalance was most directly reproduced, and the longer-term pipeline, through a structured partnership with a national academic institution.



#### What changed in practice?

The recruitment process was redesigned to require at least two viable women candidates on every final shortlist, creating a structural condition for gender balance in hiring decisions rather than relying on individual effort or awareness. In parallel, masair established a scholarship program with the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN) for high-performing women in aeronautics, a longer-term investment in building a qualified pipeline of women talent for the sector. Internally, the organization worked to increase the visibility of existing women role models, using their stories to shift both the external perception of the company and internal assumptions about who belongs in technical and leadership roles.



#### What this enabled

Over time, women representation reached senior and strategic roles that had not previously included women, including the positions of Chief Operating Officer, Sales Director, and Director of Financial Controlling. Internal climate indicators in operational areas showed improvement across credibility (65% to 90%), respect (67% to 76%), and fairness (71% to 78%). These shifts point to changes in organizational culture alongside changes in representation.



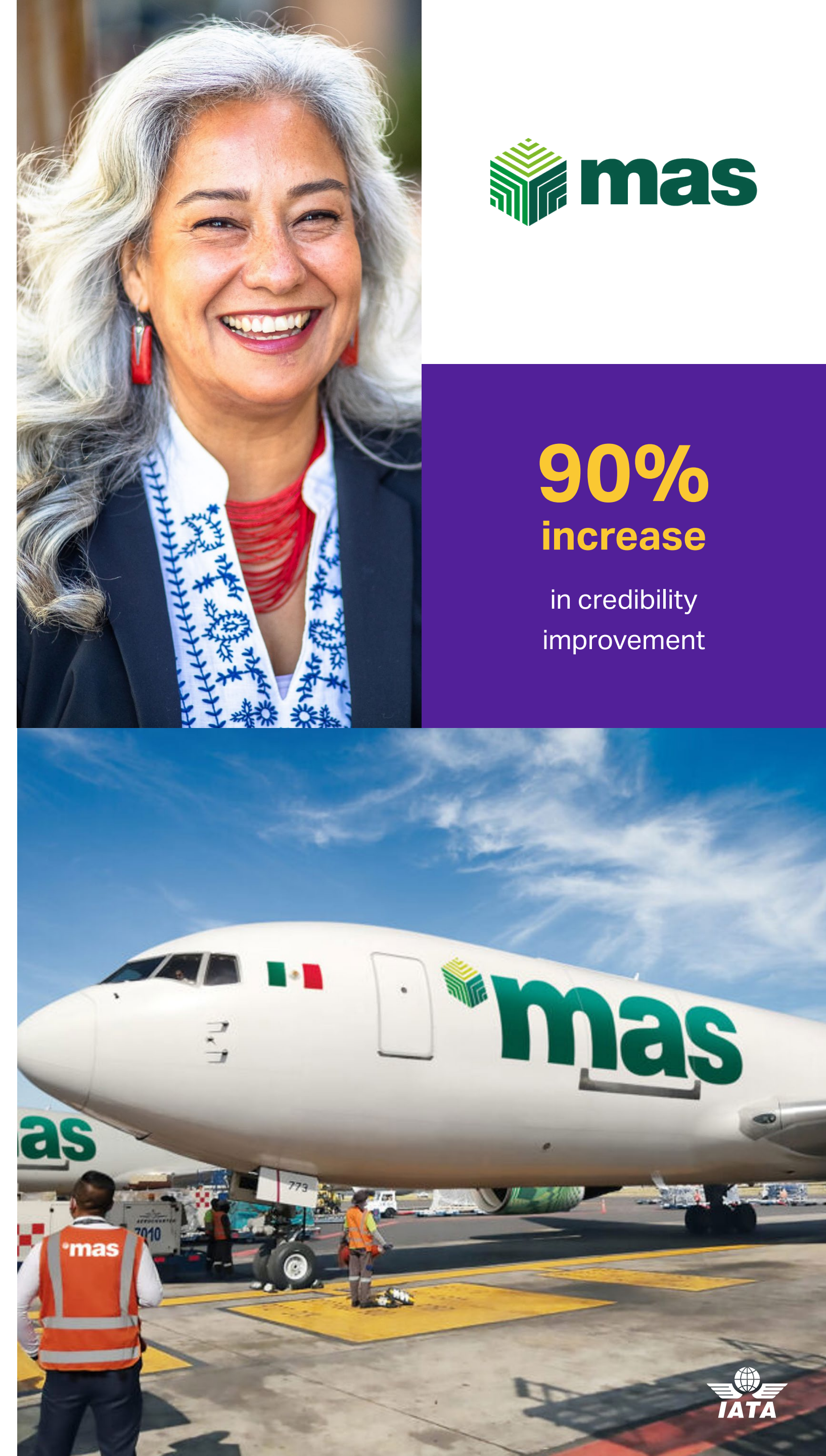
#### What others can learn or adapt

Structural requirements in recruitment such as shortlist composition rules, are more reliable than awareness-raising alone, because they operate regardless of individual bias or oversight. The combination of a short-term structural fix (shortlisting) with a long-term pipeline investment (scholarships) addresses both immediate hiring gaps and the conditions that sustain progress beyond a single recruitment cycle.



90%  
increase

in credibility  
improvement





## CASE STUDY

JetSMART



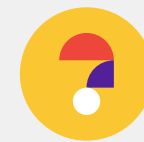
# Building pipelines and enabling continuity in operational roles

## Context & Challenge

In 2021, JetSMART had a broadly balanced overall workforce of approximately 48% women. But that balance masked a sharp structural divide. Women were highly concentrated in cabin crew roles (~80%) and significantly underrepresented in pilot positions (~5%). The challenge was not overall women participation, but access to technical career paths and the conditions that would allow women to sustain careers in operational roles over time.

## Where in the people lifecycle action took place

The primary focus was on pipeline building, reaching women before they entered the industry and before career paths had narrowed. A secondary focus addressed the conditions within operational roles that determined whether women could remain and progress once they had joined.



### What changed in practice?

JetSMART introduced direct engagement with women students in flight schools through its Smart Coffee initiative creating regular, informal touchpoints aimed at reducing the distance between young women and aviation careers. This was accompanied by a co-responsibility policy introduced in 2021, which extended flight hour validity for pilots during maternity leave and introduced flexible rostering options upon return (weekday-only schedules, home-based overnights, and 6x4 shifts) to support smoother reintegration. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the company also partnered with the Chilean Ministry of Women and Gender Equity to raise awareness of gender-based violence, actively supporting the national helpline.



### What this enabled

Women participation in partner flight schools increased over the period from 14% to 21.3% in Chile and from 10.1% to 18.4% in Argentina between 2023 and 2024. Internally, women pilot representation increased from the 2021 baseline. By end of 2025, women accounted for 12.1% of First Officers and 3.6% of Captains across the network, with Colombia showing notably stronger First Officer representation at 27.9%. Progress toward Captain level remains limited, reflecting both the length of that pipeline and the time required for early-career gains to translate into senior roles.



### What others can learn or adapt

Pipeline initiatives and internal retention conditions need to work together. Outreach that increases the flow of women into aviation careers has limited effect if operational policies do not support career continuity once they are in. The co-responsibility policy, specifically the retention of flight hour validity during maternity leave, is a concrete, transferable design choice that addresses a structural barrier particular to operational roles.

JetSMART

27.9%  
First Officer

women representation  
in Colombia





CASE STUDY

ANA Group



## Developing women leadership in a constrained national context

### Context and challenge

Japan ranks among the lowest of developed economies on gender equality indicators at 118th in the Global Gender Gap Index in 2025. National averages for women executives stand at 21.1% and women managers at 13.1%. The ANA Group entered the 25by2025 period having already made progress on women representation but facing a specific and persistent challenge: women at manager level were not advancing to general manager and above at the rate required to meet the organization's targets. An observed tendency for women employees to self-limit their career ambitions, a pattern shaped by broader cultural context, added a dimension to the challenge that structural processes alone could not address.

### Where in the people lifecycle action took place

The focus was on development within the organization, specifically on the conditions, relationships, and learning experiences that determine whether women in middle management become credible candidates for senior leadership.



#### What changed in practice

ANA introduced a Mentor-to-Sponsor program led by the Chief Human Officer, in which three executive officers actively supported each participating women manager combining cross-departmental executives who broadened strategic perspective with executives from the participant's own department who could tie development to concrete career opportunities. This dual structure addressed a specific gap: women in highly specialized roles such as cabin crew often lacked cross-functional exposure, which limited their readiness for broader management roles. Alongside this, the organization assigned women managers who were candidates for senior roles to cross-industry management training, explicitly to build external networks and perspectives outside aviation. Level-specific unconscious bias training was introduced for all newly appointed leaders, aimed at preventing managers from inadvertently narrowing the opportunities available to women through excessive protectiveness in role assignment.



#### What this enabled

The ratio of women managers rose from 17% in FY2021 to 21% by the end of the reporting period. 35% of Mentor-to-Sponsor program participants were promoted at the promotion cycle immediately following their participation. Qualitatively, supervisors observed that participants' management perspective had broadened, and sponsor executives identified specific individuals as candidates for the next leadership tier. ANA was recognized as a Nadeshiko Brand, Japan's highest external recognition for companies where women's empowerment is demonstrably linked to business performance.



#### What others can learn or adapt

Three design choices are transferable. First, institutionalizing sponsorship rather than leaving it to informal relationships increases both the reach and the reliability of leadership development for women. Second, the deliberate pairing of cross-departmental and in-department executives within the same program addresses the tension between broadening perspective and ensuring that development is grounded in real career opportunity. Third, building follow-up into the program design (result reporting sessions, ongoing sponsor contact, involvement of line managers) prevents development from becoming a one-off event disconnected from the conditions of daily work.



21%  
increase

in the ratio of  
women managers





## CASE STUDY

IndiGo



# Redesigning the working environment to sustain women's careers in the cockpit

## Context and challenge

When IndiGo began operations in 2006, women represented 9–12% of licensed pilots in India. Aviation was widely perceived as a non-traditional career choice for women, shaped by high training costs, limited visibility of women role models in cockpit roles, and a socio-economic environment in which pilot training, typically costing around USD 100,000, was rarely seen as a viable investment for daughters. Families questioned career continuity post-marriage or motherhood, and the profession offered little structural accommodation for those who stayed.

For women who did enter the profession, retention posed an equally significant challenge. Aviation careers intersect with life stages involving maternity and caregiving at precisely the point where flight currency and operational relevance are hardest to maintain. Rigid rostering systems and standard contract structures offered no meaningful flexibility, and exits during these phases, often permanent, represented a loss of trained, safety-critical talent that the organization had invested heavily to develop.

## Where in the people lifecycle action took place

The primary focus was on the working environment itself: the conditions, policies, and operational design that determine whether women can sustain careers in the cockpit through life transitions, not just enter the profession. IndiGo's central question was not how to attract more women, but how to stop losing the ones already there.



## What changed in practice

IndiGo redesigned its operating model around the specific points at which women pilots were most likely to disengage or exit. The 6E Reconnect program introduced a dedicated 40-hour flying contract for women returning to the cockpit after maternity or extended caregiving breaks, available until a child turns five — preserving flying currency and enabling a gradual, structured return rather than a binary choice between full-time flying and leaving. A complementary 6E Flex program extended a 50-hour flexible contract to both men and women managing caregiving responsibilities. During maternity grounding, pilots were offered temporary ground or corporate roles, daycare access, and amended rosters prioritizing day flights for a defined period, maintaining professional engagement without requiring full operational availability.

Alongside the retention infrastructure, IndiGo embedded a 25% women representation commitment into every intake of its Cadet Pilot Programme, creating a sustained pipeline rather than relying on the general candidate pool. Through its CSR arm, IndiGoReach, the organization provided full financial sponsorship for 50 women from lower-income backgrounds to complete pilot training, directly addressing the cost barrier that had historically limited access regardless of aptitude. A peer community for women pilots provided mentoring and collective support, complementing the structural changes with a cultural dimension.



## What this enabled

By early 2026, women accounted for 17.5% of IndiGo's pilot workforce with the airline surpassing 1,000 women pilots, a milestone reflecting the cumulative effect of consistent pipeline investment and retention-focused design over nearly two decades. Women represent over 45% of IndiGo's overall workforce.



## What others can learn or adapt

Three design choices are transferable. First, retention mechanisms need to be built into operational systems, not added alongside them: flexible contracts and return pathways only work if they are embedded in the rostering and employment model rather than treated as exceptions. Second, the cost of pilot training is a structural barrier to entry that awareness campaigns and inclusive hiring processes cannot address alone; direct financial intervention at the access point reaches candidates that other mechanisms miss. Third, the return-to-work pathway, specifically the preservation of flying currency during career breaks, addresses a challenge common to every carrier that employs women in safety-critical roles, and does not require scale to implement.



FINDINGS

# What 25by2025 Taught the Industry

25by2025 was not a research program. What it produced, alongside the data, was six years of shared experience across organizations, regions, and business models that had rarely had structured reasons to learn from one another. The lessons below are drawn from that experience.



*"What 25by2025 demonstrated is that this industry can move collectively on a shared commitment. Progress has been real, but the gap remains significant. That is not a reason to step back. It is a reason to continue, with the same discipline and the same honesty about where we stand"*

Jane Hoskisson - Director Talent  
Assistant Manager Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, IATA





**6 FINDINGS**

# What 25by2025 taught the industry

## Targets focused attention. Integration moved the numbers

The 25% commitment gave the industry a shared reference point and, for many organizations, a reason to examine their own data for the first time.

That attention mattered. But the cases are consistent on what actually moved representation: structural changes to recruitment, co-responsibility policies that let women sustain operational careers, leadership development built into management systems rather than running alongside them.

Standalone programs, without that integration, produced short-term movement that did not hold.

## Operational and technical roles require earlier intervention and longer time horizons

Progress in flight-deck and technical roles was slower and required a fundamentally different approach.

These are long-pipeline professions, where the decisions that determine future representation are made years before someone qualifies.

Waiting until a vacancy exists is too late. The organizations that made the most consistent progress invested upstream: in flight school partnerships, in scholarships, in making the profession visible and accessible before career decisions had narrowed. Even then, the results take time. First Officer numbers move before Captain numbers. Pipeline investments made in 2021 are only beginning to appear in 2025 data.

## Context determines what works: there is no universal model

Aviation is a global industry, but its workforce challenges are not uniform.

Regional labor markets, national regulatory environments, cultural norms around gender and work, and the operational realities of different business models all shape what barriers exist and what interventions are likely to work.

Organizations that recognized this, designing around their specific constraints rather than applying a common template, made more consistent progress.

Effective action starts with an honest diagnosis of the actual barriers in a given environment.



## 6 FINDINGS

# What 25by2025 taught the industry

## Peer learning accelerated progress more than isolated effort

The 40 quarterly calls were not incidental, they were a core mechanism.

The nature of those conversations shifted over time: early sessions focused on shared understanding and translating commitment into first steps; later sessions engaged with structural barriers, regional constraints, and what it took to embed inclusion into core people processes.

That evolution reflected a community that had moved beyond intent and was grappling with the harder, more specific questions that determine whether progress is real.

The tools built under 25by2025 reinforced that learning. The Best Practices Guidebook offered actionable guidance calibrated to three levels of maturity, so that a manufacturer at the beginning of its journey and an airline already operating at scale could both find something relevant.

The D&I Maturity Self-Assessment let signatories benchmark themselves confidentially, without external comparison pressure. The Datathon demonstrated that workforce data, interrogated across functions, can shift conversations from reporting to decision-making.

**Collectively, this infrastructure meant that no signatory needed to start from zero.**

## Data quality is itself an outcome

When 25by2025 was launched, many signatories had limited or inconsistent data on their workforces by gender, particularly in operational and technical roles.

The reporting discipline the initiative created improved that visibility over time.

By 2025, many organizations told us they were using workforce metrics to guide internal decisions, and shared their outcomes during the quarterly calls.

The shift from data as compliance to data as insight is one of the less visible but more durable legacies of the initiative.



CLOSING THE CHAPTER

# Carrying the Learning Forward

**25by2025 launched in 2019 with a straightforward proposition: that the airline industry would commit, collectively, to improving gender representation, and that it would measure its progress.**

Over six years, 217 organizations signed up to that commitment, across the world and in every segment of the value chain. They met 40 times to share what they were doing, what was working, and what was not. 50 organizations presented their practices to peers.

108 completed the D&I maturity self-assessment. More than 135 delegates gathered in Geneva for the industry's first in-person workforce forum. The Datathon showed that workforce data, interrogated rigorously, could inform strategic decisions.





## CLOSING THE CHAPTER

# Established relationships

**That is what 25by2025 built: not only a record of where the industry stood on gender representation, but an infrastructure for collective learning that did not previously exist. Shared tools. A common framework. Established relationships across organizations that had rarely had reason to work together. And a growing willingness to discuss people and inclusion as a business issue rather than a compliance requirement.**

The numbers tell a story of real but uneven progress. Women representation increased across every tracked category. The pace was slower in the roles that matter most for operational equity, and it varied significantly across regions and business models. The initiative moved the conversation forward, and it moved some of the numbers. It did not close the gaps.

Gender and D&I progress in aviation remains unfinished. The structural barriers of 2019 have not been resolved. They have been better understood, more consistently measured, and in some organizations, more deliberately addressed. That is progress. It is not completion.

The IATA Diversity and Inclusion Awards, which have recognized individual and organizational contributions to D&I across the industry since their inaugural edition in 2019, continue as a standalone program. 25by2025, as a time-bound initiative, concludes.

The learning it generated (the data, the tools, the peer relationships, and the shared reference points built over six years) will continue through the IATA People Forum, which carries forward this work as part of a broader people and workforce agenda. Gender and inclusion remain at its core.



***“The numbers matter. But what I will remember most is watching organizations that barely knew each other start to trust each other enough to share their failures as freely as their successes. That shift in how the industry talks about its people challenges is 25by2025’s most durable legacy”***

**David Berger** - Assistant Manager  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, IATA

**The chapter  
closes here.  
The work does  
not.**





ANNEX 1

# Survey responses

The report contains the results of the 25by2025 survey, which collects data on key developments from signatory organizations across the aviation industry.

Participation in the survey is entirely voluntary, and responses reflect the information provided by signatories as of 31 December of the year they are reporting on.

Participants provide their data through a form in which they are asked:

- Total number in population and total number of women.
- Population in under-represented roles and number of women in those roles (they can self-define the category but must hold it consistent across the reporting years. Recommended roles to report on are pilots, technicians, engineers, maintenance, etc.).
- Population in senior roles and number of women in those roles (they can self-define the category but must hold it consistent across the reporting years. On average, senior roles represent less than 6% of employees amongst respondents).

It is important to note that the results presented here are not directly comparable to those reported in previous years, as additional reports were shared following the release of the 2024 report.

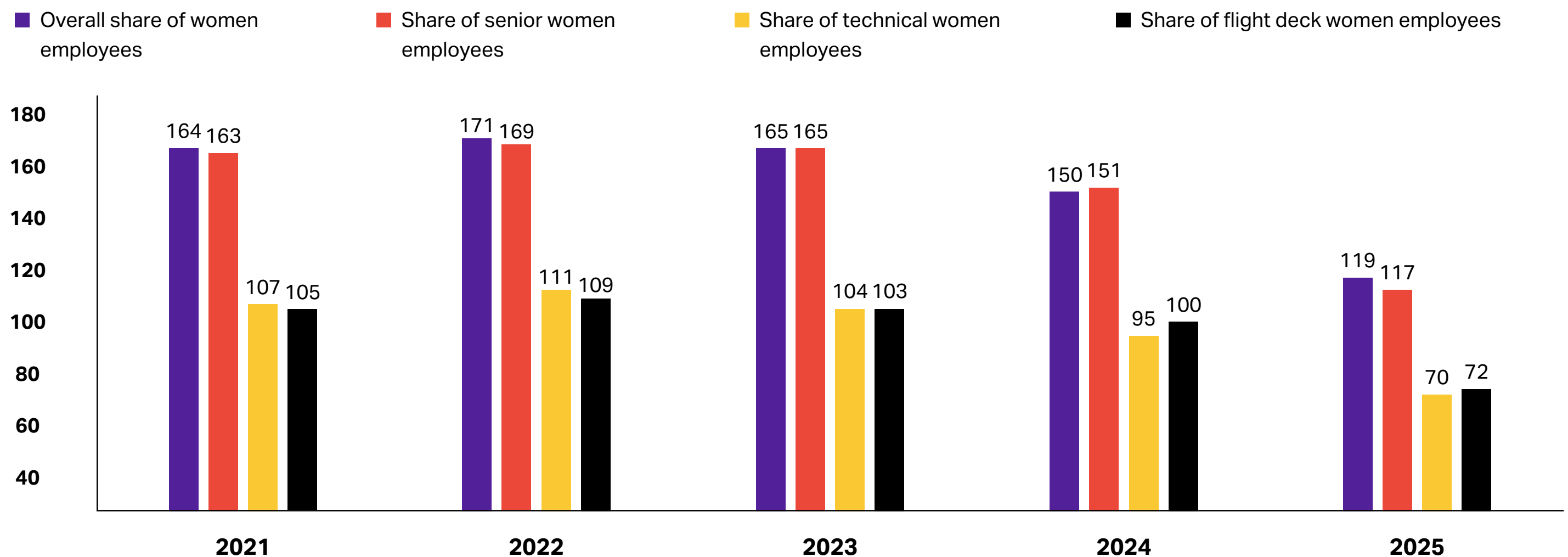
This report provides a snapshot of:

- The full 2025 performance, based on 99 submissions, which represent 119 companies.
- A cross-year progress perspective, based on a constant sample of 111 companies which reported on a given category.

This allows for the most comprehensive perspective on the performance achieved, while also allowing for meaningful year on year comparisons.

fig.10

Overview of number of reports submitted per category



183 organizations have submitted at least 1 report



## ANNEX 2

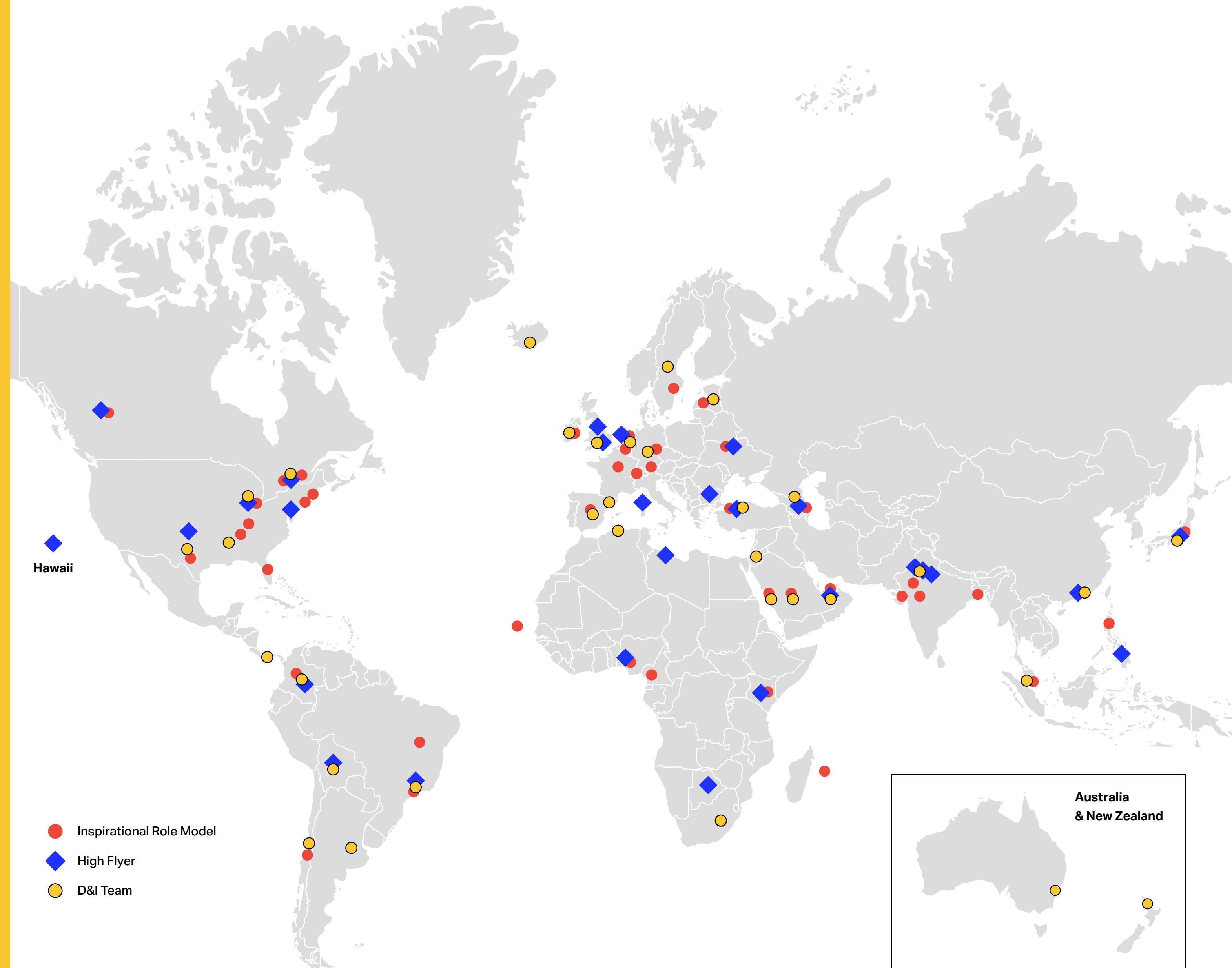
# IATA Diversity & Inclusion Awards 2019 – 2026

The IATA Diversity and Inclusion Awards, sponsored by Qatar Airways, recognize individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to advancing diversity and inclusion within the aviation industry. Established in 2019, the same year 25by2025 was launched, the awards have run annually alongside the initiative, celebrating progress across three categories. The sponsorship commitment covers ten editions, reflecting a long-term investment in industry-wide recognition of D&I leadership. Each award carries USD 25,000 in prize money, funded by Qatar Airways.

### Three awards are presented each year:

- **The Inspirational Role Model Award** recognizes a woman in a senior industry position who has had substantial impact on D&I in aviation at global level.
- **The High Flyer Award** recognizes a women aviation professional under 40 who has demonstrated leadership through concrete action in favor of diversity and inclusion.
- **The Diversity and Inclusion Team Award** recognizes an IATA member airline that has achieved measurable positive change in D&I.

The 2020 edition was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



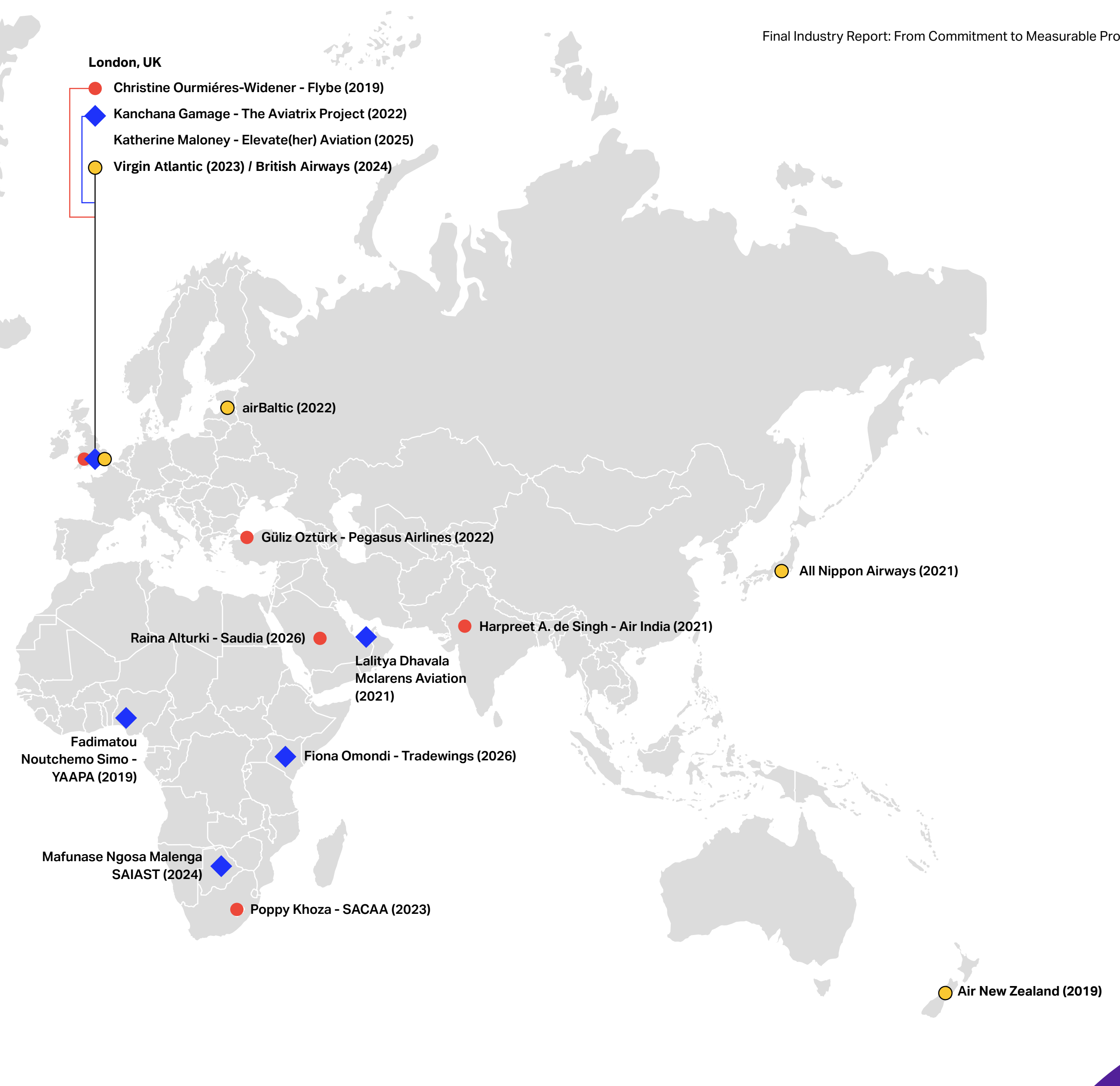


ANNEX 2 FIG 11

## Map of D&I awards winners (2019 – 2026)

The geographic spread of winners across eight editions reflects the breadth of D&I leadership across the industry, spanning Europe, Africa, Asia-Pacific, North America, Latin America, and the Middle East. No region has dominated; progress has been recognized across very different contexts, business models, and roles.

- Inspirational Role Model
- ◆ High Flyer
- D&I Team















**25by2025 proved  
this industry  
can move together.**  
Imagine what we could  
do together with the  
People Forum.

**iata.org**

**Download the  
full report here:**

