



# Shifting Gears: The Role of Women in Shaping the Future of Automotive



# Introduction

The automotive and insurance industries have long been a cornerstone of global innovation, economic growth, and technological advancement. However, despite the influence and reach, both remain amongst the most male-dominated sectors worldwide. A lack of gender diversity not only limits opportunities for talented individuals but also stifles creativity, collaboration, and competitiveness in an evolving marketplace.

This whitepaper is the first in a global project, exploring the pressing need for greater gender diversity and inclusivity in the automotive and insurance industries. Focused on key markets within the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region and backed by the most up-to-date research by Solera, it examines the barriers women and gender-diverse individuals face, the current state of the industry in regard to gender progress, the benefits of fostering equitable representation, and actionable strategies to create a more inclusive environment.

From recruitment practices and workplace culture to leadership representation and customer engagement, achieving gender parity is not merely a moral imperative but a strategic advantage in meeting the demands of a diverse, region-wide customer base.

As the insurance landscape shifts with advancements in technology, evolving client demands, AI innovation and sustainability, the inclusion of diverse perspectives has never been more critical. By addressing systemic inequalities and embracing a culture of acceptance, the industry can drive not just vehicles, but meaningful progress and innovation.

# Research Methodology

The primary objective of Solera's research 'pulse check' on barriers to entry and accessibility for women in the APAC automotive industry were to:

- Identify the barriers to entry for women in the automotive industry in key APAC markets (China, India, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Australia).
- Assess the perceived disadvantages and advantages of making the automotive industry more accessible to women.
- Provide actionable insights to guide strategies for fostering gender inclusivity within the automotive sector, with the aim of informing internal Solera's strategy for improving outcomes.

The study was conducted across six APAC markets, comparing and contrasting regional trends, challenges, and opportunities within the sector, aimed at both automotive and automotive insurers. Representation was ensured across various company sizes, roles, and levels of gender diversity within each organisation, and respondents were distributed evenly across the six markets to capture local nuances.

Anonymity and confidentiality of all participants is guaranteed, and communication styles were adapted to respect cultural norms in each market.

# Table of Contents

---

4 Barriers to Gender Diversity in the Automotive Industry

---

6 Attracting Women into Technical Roles

---

7 Attracting Women into Leadership Roles

---

9 Business Impact

---

11 Customer and Product Impact

---

12 Solera's Commitment and Next Steps

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14 Conclusion

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4



# Barriers to Gender Diversity

Despite significant progress toward diversity and inclusion across industries, the automotive and insurance sectors continue to face entrenched barriers that limit gender equity, particularly in technical roles. Our research reveals a stark reality: **65.31%** of organisations in the automotive and automotive insurance sectors believe the barriers for women are more prevalent in their industry compared to other industries.

This underscores the ongoing need to address systemic cultural and organisational obstacles that hinder gender diversity.

## Organisational and Cultural Challenges

Our research has revealed that the most significant barriers to gender diversity are as follows.

### Lack of Flexibility

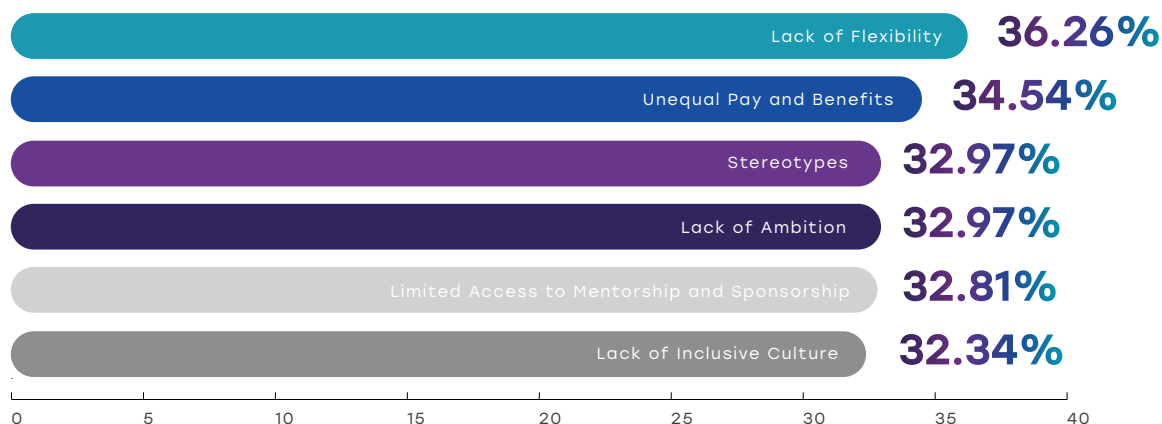
For over one in three (**36.26%**) respondents, the rigid nature of traditional work schedules and expectations in the automotive sector disproportionately impacts women, particularly those balancing work with caregiving responsibilities. The absence of flexible work arrangements not only restricts entry but also impedes career advancement for women in technical roles.

### Unequal Pay and Benefits

Pay disparities remain a critical issue, with women often receiving lower compensation and fewer benefits than their male counterparts. This inequity, highlighted by **34.54%** of organisations, perpetuates a cycle where talented women either avoid or leave the industry due to a lack of financial recognition and security.

### Stereotypes

Persistent gender stereotypes, particularly around women's abilities in technical or leadership roles, create an unwelcoming environment, according to a further **32.97%**. Such biases discourage women from pursuing careers in automotive fields and hinder their professional growth when they do.



Barrier	Percentage
Lack of Flexibility	36.26%
Unequal Pay and Benefits	34.54%
Stereotypes	32.97%
Lack of Ambition	32.97%
Limited Access to Mentorship and Sponsorship	32.81%
Lack of Inclusive Culture	32.34%

The most significant barriers to gender diversity

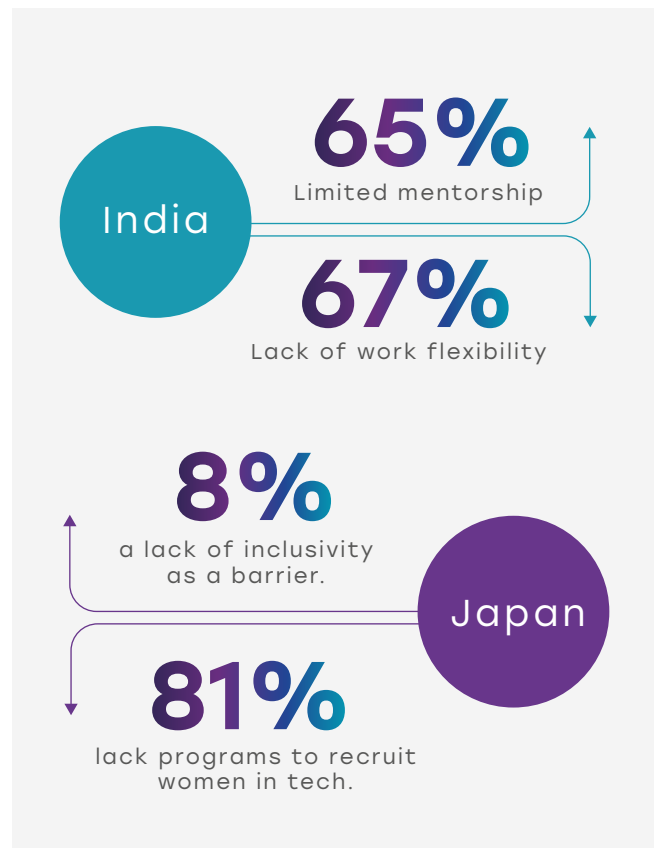
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## Regional Perspectives

The impact of these barriers varies by region, reflecting cultural and organisational nuances:

Barriers in India are particularly acute, with 65% of organisations citing limited access to mentorship and sponsorship as a significant challenge for women entering the industry. Furthermore, 67% report that a lack of flexibility in work arrangements is a critical issue, highlighting the need for structural changes to better accommodate diverse talent.

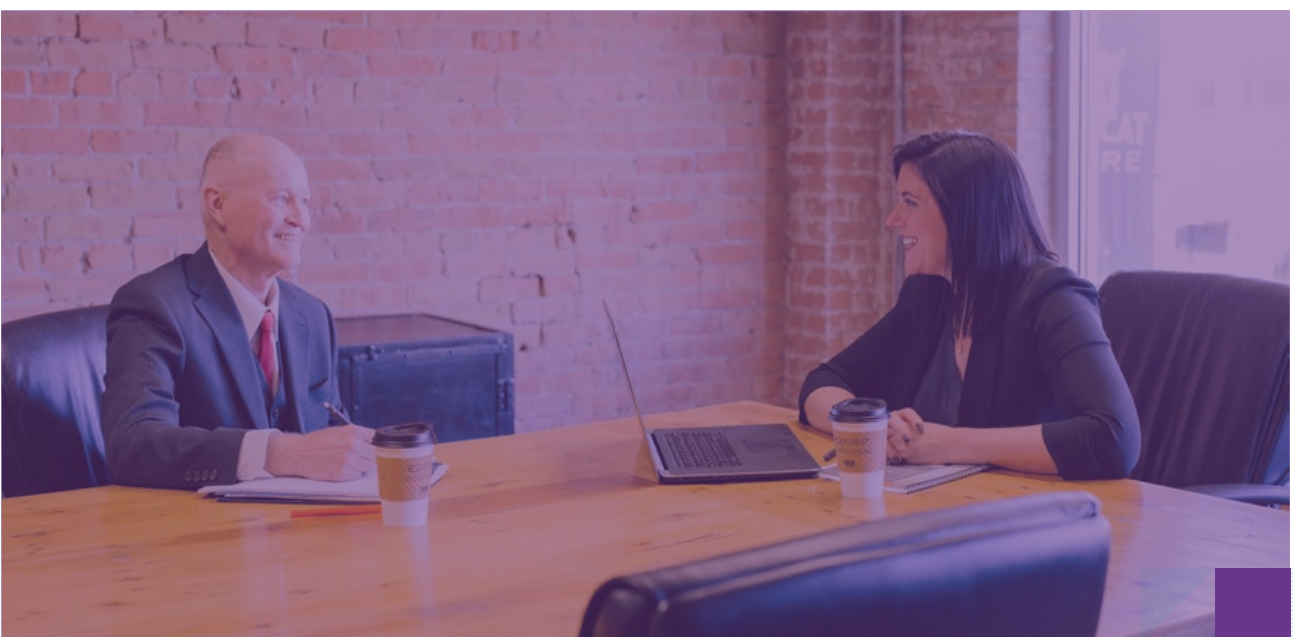
Interestingly, Japanese organisations downplay the role of inclusivity, with only 8% identifying a lack of inclusive culture as a barrier. Yet, this perception contrasts sharply with the reality that 81% of organisations have no specific recruitment programs to attract women into technical roles, illustrating a disconnect between perceived and actual efforts to foster gender diversity.



## The Compounding Effect of Barriers

Many challenges that impede the professional growth of women often intersect, creating a compounding effect that perpetuates the underrepresentation of women in the automotive industry across APAC. Without deliberate action to address flexibility, pay equity, mentorship opportunities, and recruitment strategies, the sector risks perpetuating a cycle of exclusion that undermines its ability to innovate and compete in an increasingly diverse global market.

By acknowledging and addressing these barriers, the automotive industry has an opportunity to redefine its culture, attract a broader talent pool, and drive more inclusive and innovative progress.

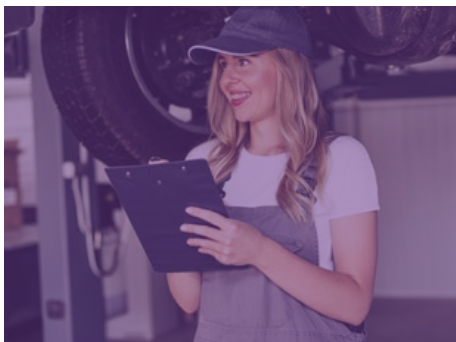


# Attracting Women into Technical Roles

The presence of women in technical roles is critical to the future success of the automotive and insurance industries. Technical teams are at the forefront of innovation, shaping the development of artificial intelligence, data science, product design, and strategic technology decisions. Currently, **82.1%** of automotive organisations in the APAC region employ women in technical positions, but there remains a significant gap; **86.23%** report that less than half of these teams are composed of women.

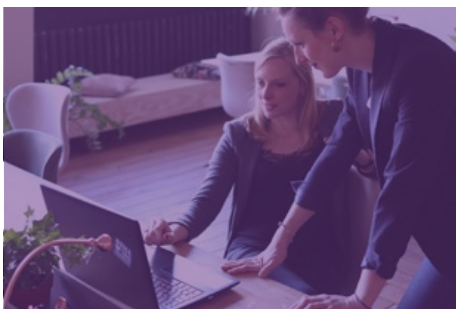
## Why Attracting Women Matters

### Enhancing Innovation and Consumer Relevance



A lack of gender diversity in technical roles directly affects the ability of organisations to innovate and meet the needs of diverse consumer bases. Indeed, **81.32%** of organisations agree that the absence of women in technical teams affects the development of products or services targeted at female consumers, a critical oversight given the growing purchasing power of women in automotive markets as revealed by data from the Korea Automobile Importers & Distributors Association (KAIDA). Moreover, **91.21%** report measurable impacts on innovation by employing women in technical roles, underscoring the essential role of women in driving creativity and competitive advantage.

### Fostering Leadership and Representation



Encouragingly, **77.86%** of organisations employ women in senior technical roles, such as CTOs and Heads of Data, with **73.47%** setting specific targets for hiring women into leadership positions. This highlights growing recognition of the value women bring to high-stakes decision-making and strategic roles. However, regional disparities remain. In Japan, only **25%** of organisations report employing women in senior technical roles, reflecting a need for targeted interventions in this market.

### Career Advancement and Support



While more than a third of organisations (**35.79%**) believe that women advance to senior roles more quickly than men, broader career support for women in technical roles remains insufficient. Two in three (**65.93%**) have formal programs to support career advancement, while **21.04%** do not provide mentorship or support specifically for women in technical teams. These gaps highlight the need for comprehensive support structures to ensure sustained career growth at all levels.

## Recruitment Programs: A Step in the Right Direction

A promising trend is the industry's focus on targeted recruitment efforts. Three quarters (76.3%) of organisations have implemented programs to attract women into technical roles, recognising the need to build diverse talent pipelines. These initiatives are a vital starting point, but to maximize their impact, they must be paired with strategies for retention, mentorship, and equitable pay structures.

### The Road Ahead

Gender-diverse technical teams are not just a moral imperative—they are a business advantage. By attracting and supporting women in technical roles, the automotive industry can:

- Develop products and services that resonate with a broader audience.
- Strengthen its capacity for innovation.
- Build inclusive workplace cultures that appeal to top talent.

As organisations invest in accessibility, mentorship, and structured career pathways for women, they position themselves as leaders in an evolving industry. The journey toward equitable representation is not without challenges, but the rewards—in innovation, growth, and competitive differentiation—are undeniable.

# Attracting Women into Leadership Roles

Leadership diversity is a crucial driver of innovation, equity, and sustainable growth. In the automotive and insurance industries, attracting more women into leadership positions is not only about addressing a gender imbalance but also about leveraging diverse perspectives to make more inclusive and effective business decisions. While progress is being made, significant gaps and challenges remain.

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## Current Landscape of Women in Leadership

The representation of women in leadership roles within the researched sectors has been increasing, with a third (66.25%) of organisations reporting growth in female leadership over the past five years. Women in these roles are already demonstrating their value:

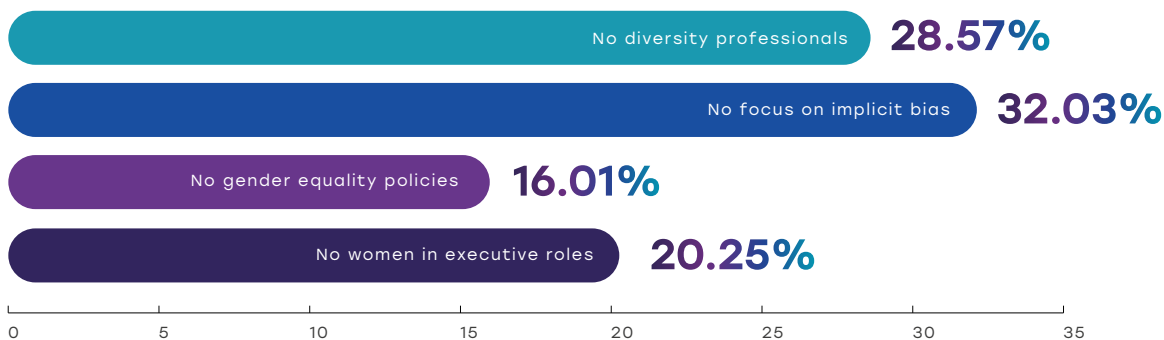
- 41.2% of organisations state that women in leadership have significant influence on key business decisions.
- 73.95% report that female leaders lead strategic initiatives or high-impact projects.

However, the overall numbers tell a less optimistic story: one in five organisations (20.25%) still have no female representation in the C-Suite or on their boards. Among those with female leaders, only 29.61% have more than half female representation. This highlights the need for more robust efforts to achieve gender parity at the highest levels.

## Barriers to Leadership Diversity

Despite progress, barriers persist that hinder women from advancing into leadership positions:

- **Limited Cultural Support:** Fewer than one in three organisations employ diversity professionals (**28.57%**) or actively work to raise awareness of implicit bias (**32.03%**). These gaps reflect missed opportunities to create an environment where women can thrive.
- **Inconsistent Policies:** Alarming, **16.01%** of organisations have not implemented any policies aimed at promoting gender equality at all, leaving systemic biases unaddressed.
- **Underrepresentation in Decision-Making Roles:** With **20.25%** of organisations lacking any female representation in their top executive ranks, many women do not have role models or champions to support their career progression.



## Promising Steps Toward Equality

Some organisations are beginning to adopt practices conducive to women's career advancement:

- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Offered by **38.93%** of organisations, flexibility is key to enabling women to balance professional and personal responsibilities.
- **Pay Equity and Benefits:** Ensuring equal pay and benefits is prioritised by **36.73%** of organisations, while **35.64%** offer enhanced maternity and paternity leave. India leads in this area, with **67%** of organisations offering additional leave policies, setting a regional benchmark for gender-inclusive practices

## The Business Case for Female Leadership

Attracting women into leadership roles delivers tangible business benefits:

- **Strategic Influence:** Women leaders drive high-impact projects and initiatives, influencing key decisions that align with diverse consumer needs.
- **Increased Representation and Talent Attraction:** Although **26.85%** of organisations believe female leadership has not helped attract female talent or customers, the broader trend suggests that gender-diverse leadership teams improve employer branding and customer trust. This result is impacted significantly by Singapore, with over half (**53.54%**) of organisations in the island's automotive industry believing that women in leadership has not helped attract female talent or customers, contrasted against Australia where almost all organisations (**97%**) believe it has.



## The Road Ahead

To fully realise the potential of women in leadership, the automotive industry must:

- **Commit to Structural Change:** Implement policies such as mentorship programs, pay equity initiatives, and diversity training to eliminate systemic barriers.
- **Promote Role Models:** Increasing the visibility of female leaders helps inspire and support the next generation of women in the industry.
- **Measure Progress:** Organisations must set targets for gender representation in leadership and hold themselves accountable for progress.

# Business Impact

In the APAC automotive and insurance industries, inclusivity is not just a social ideal—it's a business imperative. Organisations that integrate women into leadership positions are seeing tangible benefits in strategic decision-making, talent attraction, and consumer engagement. However, significant disparities in representation and inclusivity remain, with clear implications for operational effectiveness and workplace positivity across the region.

## Women as Drivers of Strategic Initiatives

Female leaders bring diverse perspectives and innovative thinking, which are vital for high-impact projects and strategic initiatives. Across APAC, organisations report a strong correlation between having women in leadership roles and improved business outcomes:

- **90%** in Australia, **87%** in India, and **77.78%** in Korea believe female leaders spearhead strategic initiatives or high-impact projects, demonstrating the critical role women play in shaping the future of their organisations.
- Conversely, only **25.29%** in Japan hold this view, reflecting the country's continued underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, which may limit its ability to adapt to evolving market demands.

## Attracting Talent and Customers through Inclusivity

Inclusivity extends beyond internal operations, directly influencing a company's ability to attract female talent and appeal to a broader consumer base. Organisations that prioritize female leadership report stronger talent pipelines and customer trust:

- **97%** in Australia and **90%** in India agree that having women in leadership positions has helped attract female talent and customers, underlining the market advantage of diversity.
- While **64.96%** in China and **64.65%** in Korea echo this sentiment, only **46.46%** in Singapore and **79.31%** in Japan share the same view, highlighting regional differences in the perceived impact of inclusivity on external engagement.

## Representation in Leadership

Despite the clear advantages of inclusivity, representation at the highest levels remains inconsistent:

- India and Korea lead the way, with 52.27% and 62.5% of organisations, respectively, reporting more than half women in C-Suite or board positions.
- By contrast, Japan reports no representation, and Australia lags behind with only 6.02%, revealing a significant gap in leadership diversity across these markets.

## Operational and Workplace Positivity Benefits

The benefits of inclusivity in leadership extend beyond performance metrics to foster a positive workplace culture:

- **Improved Collaboration:** Diverse leadership teams encourage collaboration, creativity, and a more inclusive decision-making process.
- **Increased Morale:** Inclusivity signals fairness and equity, enhancing employee satisfaction and retention.
- **Enhanced Brand Reputation:** Organisations known for gender diversity are more likely to be viewed as progressive and customer-focused, increasing their appeal to both talent and consumers.

## The Road Ahead

The data highlights both the opportunities and challenges of fostering inclusivity in APAC. Markets like India and Korea showcase the transformative potential of women in leadership, while others, such as Japan and Australia, underscore the urgency for systemic change.

For organisations aiming to remain competitive, embracing inclusivity is not a 'nice to have', it's non-negotiable. By increasing representation at the highest levels, prioritizing strategic roles for female leaders, and leveraging their influence to attract talent and consumers, businesses can unlock new opportunities for growth, innovation, and workplace positivity.



# Customer and Product Impact

The region is at a pivotal moment, as shifting consumer demographics demand more inclusive and diverse product offerings. However, a persistent lack of women in technical roles is hindering the development of products and services that resonate with female consumers, a growing and influential market segment.

Across the region, a majority of organisations recognise this issue:

- Nearly all (94.16%) in China and in India (91%) agree that the absence of women in technical roles impacts the design and development of products tailored to female consumers, highlighting the critical need for gender-diverse teams in these markets.
- Similarly high percentages in Australia (82%), Singapore (82%), and Korea (82%) indicate widespread acknowledgment of the problem.
- In Japan, however, only 52% of organisations agree that women in technical roles affect the development of products or services targeted at female consumers, reflecting cultural or organisational differences that may downplay the importance of gender diversity in technical innovation.

## Why Women in Technical Roles Matter for Female Consumer Products

### Understanding Diverse Perspectives

Women bring unique insights and lived experiences to technical teams, enabling the development of products that better address the needs of female consumers. Without their input, design and functionality may fail to resonate with a significant portion of the market.

### Driving Market Relevance

Female consumers are increasingly influential in purchasing decisions within the automotive sector. Products that do not consider their preferences risk alienating this key demographic, potentially ceding market share to more inclusive competitors.

### Fostering Innovation

Diverse teams are proven to enhance creativity and problem-solving. Including more women in technical roles can lead to breakthroughs that benefit all consumers, while also specifically addressing gaps in features, safety, and usability for women.

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## Regional Variations and Implications

The disparity in recognition for the impact of women in technical teams on products and services across markets—such as Japan's lower acknowledgment rate (52%) compared to India's high agreement (91%)—suggests that cultural and organisational priorities differ significantly. Markets with higher awareness, like China and India, are better positioned to leverage gender diversity as a strategic advantage. By contrast, markets like Japan may miss opportunities to innovate and better serve female customers unless systemic barriers to women's participation in technical roles are addressed.

## The Road Ahead

To bridge this gap and create products that resonate with diverse consumers, organisations must:

- Actively recruit and retain women in technical roles.
- Integrate gender-inclusive design practices into product development.
- Promote a culture of diversity that values the contributions of women at every stage of the innovation process.

By addressing the lack of representation in technical teams, organisations across the region can enhance its ability to meet the needs of female consumers, ensuring its products remain relevant and competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

# Solera's Commitment and Next Steps

Although Solera is proud of **the initiatives we've set in place** to create a better work environment for women and build equality into our business, we recognise that there is more to be done.

To foster a more accessible and attractive work environment for women in the APAC region, Solera is committing to implement a comprehensive approach that addresses cultural, structural, and operational barriers through a five step process.

## Promote Inclusive Recruitment Practices

- Targeted Programs: Establish recruitment programs designed to attract women into technical and leadership roles, such as outreach to female STEM graduates, partnerships with women-focused professional networks, and industry events highlighting women in automotive technology.
- Unbiased Hiring Processes: Train recruiters and hiring managers to recognize and counter implicit bias, ensuring a fair evaluation of all candidates. Utilize blind resume reviews and diverse interview panels.

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## Enhance Flexibility and Work-Life Balance

- Flexible Work Arrangements: Offer options such as hybrid work models, flexible hours, and part-time roles to accommodate diverse needs.
- Enhanced Leave Policies: Provide comprehensive maternity, paternity, and caregiver leave to support employees during life transitions, following the example of Indian organisations offering additional leave.

## Invest in Professional Growth and Mentorship

- **Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs:** Establish structured mentorship programs connecting women with senior leaders, particularly in technical and leadership roles.
  - **Career Advancement Programs:** Develop tailored training and development initiatives for women, focusing on leadership skills, technical expertise, and confidence-building.
  - **Leadership Pathways:** Set measurable goals for promoting women into senior roles, supported by coaching and skills-building programs.
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## Ensure Pay Equity and Benefits

- **Pay Transparency:** Conduct regular audits to ensure pay equity and close any gender wage gaps.
  - **Comprehensive Benefits:** Offer equal access to benefits such as healthcare, professional development allowances, and retirement plans.
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## Cultivate an Inclusive Workplace Culture

- **Awareness and Training:** Provide ongoing training on implicit bias, gender sensitivity, and inclusive leadership for all employees, especially managers.
- **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):** Support women's networks within the organisation to provide a platform for collaboration, advocacy, and support.
- **Celebrating Success:** Regularly spotlight achievements of female employees, demonstrating their value and impact.



# Conclusion

The evidence is clear: gender diversity drives better decision-making, spurs innovation, and enhances customer alignment. In a region as dynamic as APAC, where consumer expectations and market opportunities are evolving rapidly, the automotive and insurance industries cannot afford to lag behind. Organisations that champion gender inclusion now will gain a competitive edge, building resilient teams and creating products and services that resonate across demographics.

With its rapid technological evolution, expanding consumer markets, and increasing demand for innovation, the sector must embrace diversity as a strategic imperative. Women represent an untapped reservoir of talent, insight, and leadership potential that can fuel growth, innovation, and long-term success. Yet, barriers such as limited access to technical roles, inequitable career progression, and outdated cultural norms persist, hindering their full participation.

For organisations like Solera, the opportunity to lead by example has never been greater. By fostering an inclusive environment that prioritises accessibility and equity, Solera can help transform the industry. A deliberate focus on recruiting, retaining, and advancing women—not just in leadership and technical roles but across all functions—will not only strengthen the organisation but also enable it to meet the needs of a diverse and growing consumer base.

We have the expertise, influence, and opportunity to be a pioneer in shaping a gender-inclusive future for the automotive and insurance sectors. By committing to actionable change, we intend to not only attract the best talent but also inspire an entire industry to move forward together—stronger, smarter, and more inclusive. Now is the time to act and lead the way toward a more equitable and successful future.



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