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MATCH

Women in Independent Consulting



15 findings from the
COMATCH network



Even though the big consultancies have invested massively in gender equality in the last years, there are still fewer female than male consultants out there. In the area of self-employment, men outnumber women as well, with 65% being male. So how is the situation for Women in Independent Consulting, where both of these worlds meet? The COMATCH network assembles amazingly talented women. What are they motivated by, how does their working situation look like and what effect did the pandemic have on them?

We analyzed a total of 220,000 data points stemming from our everyday business activities and surveyed our consultant network to find out. The following report presents 15 insights - some expected, some surprising - which will shed light on the subject. The findings are the first steps on a long road of more intensive research which will accompany a hopefully more female future of consulting.

COMATCH is a curated marketplace for independent management consultants and industry experts with offices in Berlin, London and Paris. We provide a best-in-class matching service for organizations from all sectors.



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Women are a minority in Independent Consulting

Only 19% of the Independent Consultants in the network are female, for each woman there are 4 men.



Looking at Europe's biggest consulting markets, we see the highest share of women in our French network with 24%. In the UK, 22% are women, in Germany only 17%. **Overall, the younger the age group, the more equal the gender share.**



Below 30

31%

69%

31-40

23%

77%

41-50

20%

80%

51-60

14%

86%

Above 61

7%

93%

Gender share by age group

n = 13,223

“ When I decided to freelance 16 years ago the market was still immature in the UK. It has grown in size and structure since then. The third party intermediaries have made things easier as they take some of the risk away: You don't have to rely on your own network exclusively, they help with infrastructure like billing and provide a sense of community. Self-employment is a possible career path and I hope more women will be encouraged to take the leap.

Tracey

independent consultant, UK



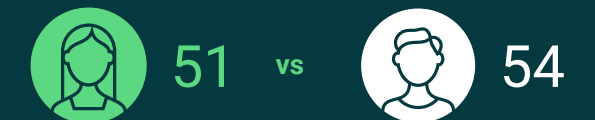


Women reach steps in the **career ladder** at a younger age

Women in the network are on average younger than their male counterparts at the same seniority level and this gap even grows with experience.

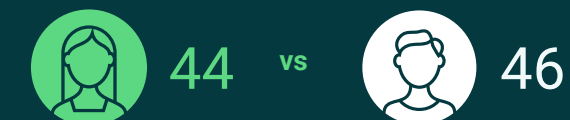
Senior Project Managers & Experts

3 Years



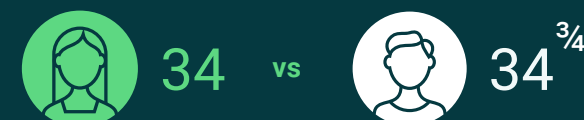
Project Managers & Experts

~2 Years



Consultants

9 Months



Average **age gap** between female and male consultants

But on top of the ladder there are very few women

Just like in the consulting industry, in independent consulting, women are underrepresented especially at higher career levels:

Out of 100 male consultants in the network, 21 are at a senior level, compared to only 13 out of 100 female consultants. The share of female vs. the share of male consultants on a senior level is therefore almost 40% lower.

“ This is mirroring the wider industry, where we see a high share of women at the entry level - 40 to 50% in the big consultancies - but less and less arriving at the top. If independent consulting becomes a real alternative in the future, it will be interesting to see if it can help to keep more women in the overall industry long term.



Katharina Schneider
Director Strategy & Finance -
and former consultant

They are driven by self-determination

Overall, men and women have the same hopes and priorities when stepping into self-employment. The desire to decide on one's very own terms - especially project topics - is the main motive. **Yet, women more often than men wish to work remotely, aim to have more free time and to travel less for work.** They are less motivated to start their own business outside of consulting (a.k.a Side Preneurship)



I chose independent consulting because I wanted to....



• decide which topics I work on	91%	93%
• have more flexibility in my schedule	89%	84%
• decide which clients I work for	77%	80%
• give more purpose to my professional life	77%	73%
• have more free time	73%	65%
• be able to work remotely	69%	59%
• gain more responsibility	56%	55%
• make more money	48%	53%
• do less work-related travelling	32%	26%
• start my own non-consulting company	27%	34%

Share of respondents rating driver as "quite" or "very important" for their decision

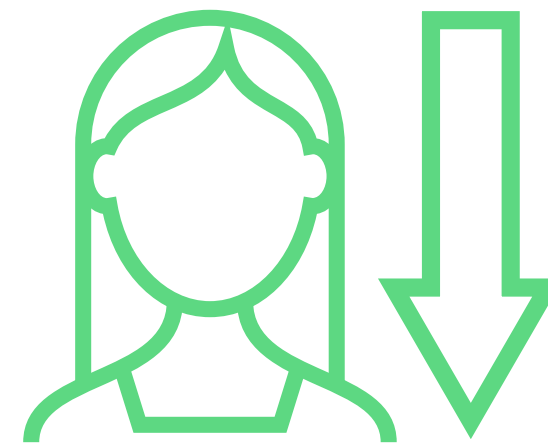
n = 915

Women were less likely to step into self-employment in 2020

“ I think women are less of risk takers and quitting your job in a crisis to start something new certainly is a risk.

A female Swiss consultant

The COMATCH consultant network is growing day by day. In 2020 the growth slowed down as the number of people applying to the COMATCH network was slightly lower than in 2019 - most likely due to the pandemic as the effect was visible since March. **Noticeably though, the decrease of female applications was 49% stronger than males ones.**



49%
**stronger decrease
of female applicants**

“ I am the counterexample: The plan was to launch my independent consulting activities in 2020, so I did it. During the lockdown period I prepared myself, thought about the kind of projects I wished to execute and started project acquisition. This was possible because I did not have young kids to take care of all day at home and work at night when kindergartens and schools were closed. The pandemic led many women to reassess their lives and question their careers as employees altogether. So, I assume the trend could reverse in the future.

Pascale

independent consultant, France

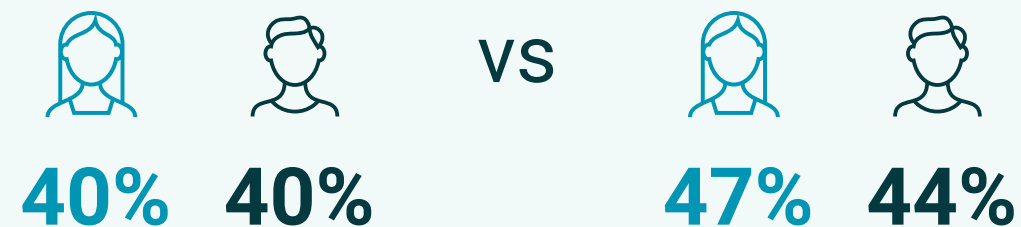




In 2020, women in the network accepted more project offers

Project offer acceptance rate

2019 — 2020



The freedom to say no to an assignment is very important to independent consultants. In the crisis year 2020 though, independent consultants denied project offers far less often than in 2019. **Women especially accepted projects offers more frequently.**

Women sell themselves better

Female consultants impress with their CVs and present themselves better in interviews: Compared to the male consultants they have a **13% higher probability to receive an invitation to an interview after clients saw their CV** and a **7% higher project win rate** after they had a personal conversation with the potential client.



**HIGHER RATE OF INTERVIEW
INVITATIONS AFTER CV CHECK**



**HIGHER PROJECT WIN RATE
AFTER INTERVIEW**



“ While men often show themselves as more courageous, bold, and position their goals higher - for example they do not only go freelance but also build small consulting agencies and hire employees - I have met many women in this area that are very performance driven, excellent multitaskers and highly efficient. It seems as if they have internalized to deliver even more in order to be recognized equally.

Grecia Sandoval

Director Consultant Relations

Women are the real crisis managers

In 2020, the **share of projects that were executed by a female consultant or industry expert** among all consultants in the network **grew by 18%** compared to the previous year. While we experienced a general decrease in project requests from clients between Spring and Fall 2020, women were less affected by this than men.

The performance of male and female consultants is judged equally well by clients with a score of:

18%+
SHARE OF PROJECTS
CONDUCTED BY WOMEN

4.5 
OUT OF POSSIBLE 5



“ Thatcher is often quoted: 'If you want something said, ask a man, if you want something done, ask a woman.' In a crisis companies have to make sure things get done and that employees are doing fine, for which you need empathy. Something which society attributes to women more than to men. Yet despite this, what shouldn't be forgotten though: Female consultants on average have lower daily rates. Companies not only needed consulting support, they were also holding their budget together, leading to our female consultants winning more projects they were proposed for.

Charlotte Gregson

Managing Director UK&US
and former consultant



Consultants share working styles beyond gender

Male and female consultants are alike in their working styles. Beyond gender, consultants have more **doer** qualities rather than being **analysts** and score higher as **collective** instead of **individual** thinkers. Female consultants have a higher average score for a **diplomatic** communication style and tend towards being **explorers** instead of **structure fans** in a project. Nonetheless: The deviations are very small (below 5%).

Communication and Leadership



Diplomats

Enforcer



Collective
Thinker



Individual
Thinker



Working Methods & Approach



Analyzer

Doer



Structure
Fan



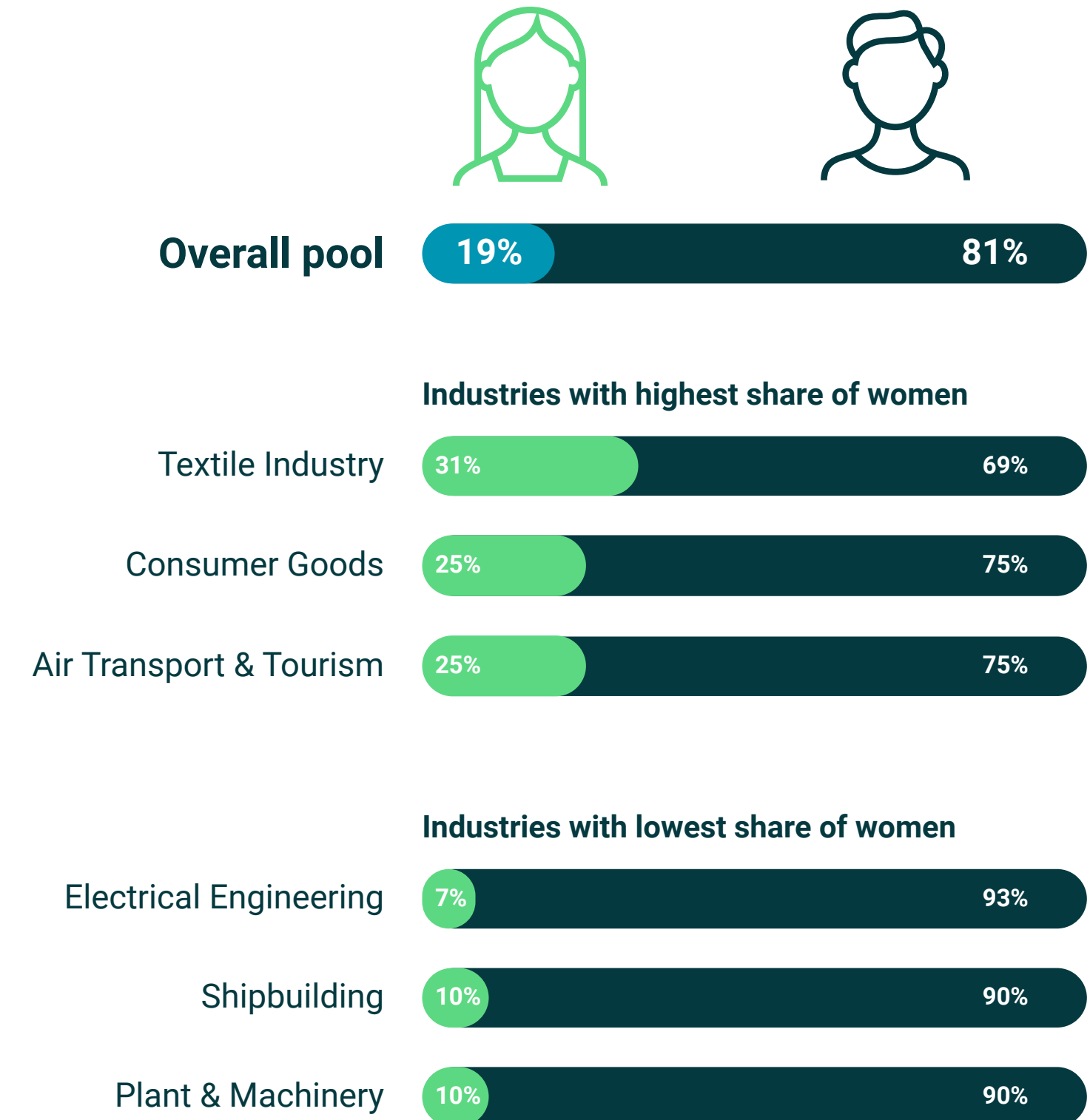
Explorer



StyleMatch assesses consultants working styles on four dimensions based on the Team Management Profile (TMP)

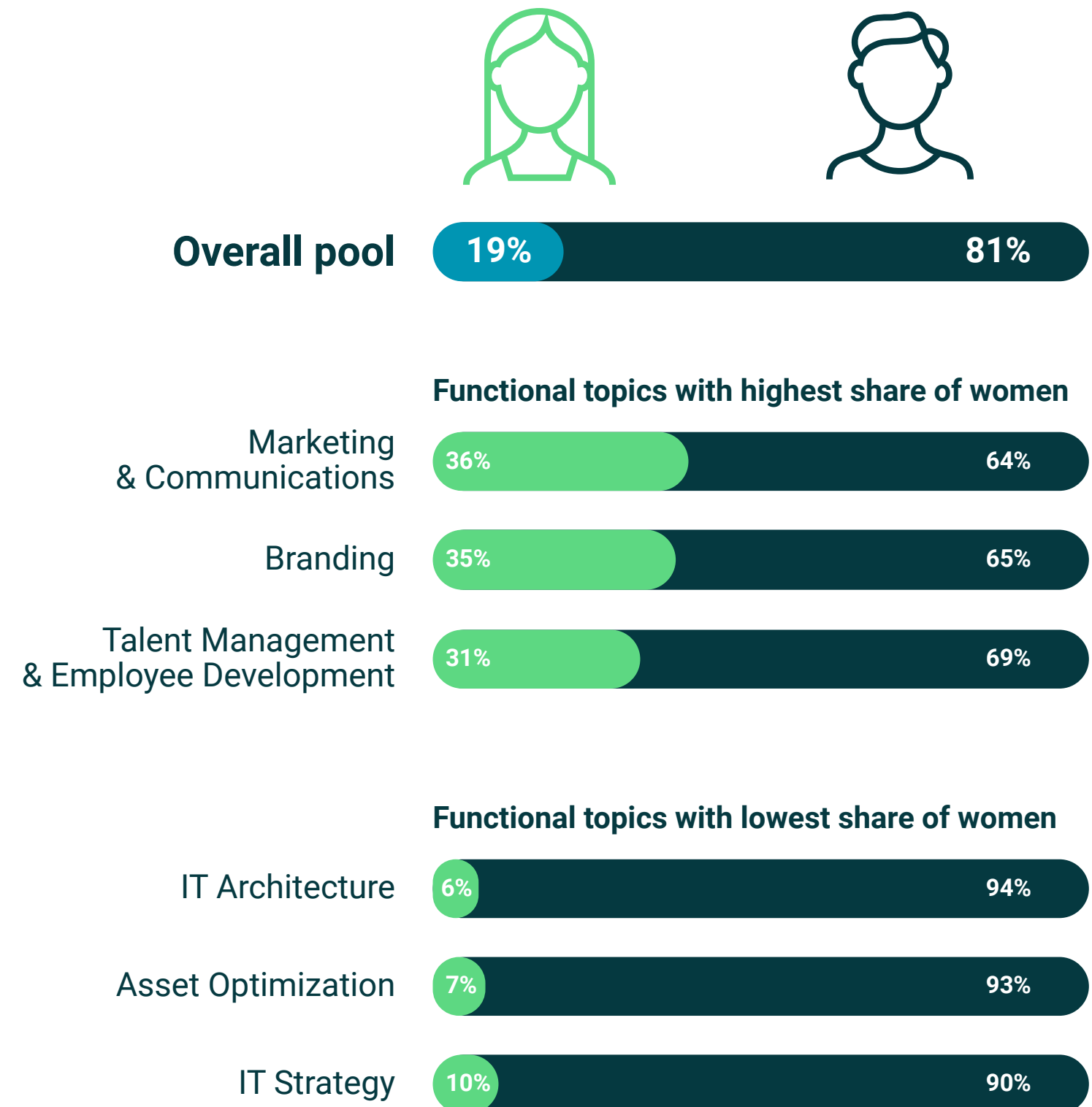
B2C industries attract women stronger than B2B industries

Independent Consultants focus on certain industries in the course of their career. While the top industries by total numbers are very similar beyond gender - e.g. Digital Business Models and Financial Services - the share of women within a sector can differ profoundly. Some industries are more likely to be picked by women than others.



Highest share of female consultants in Marketing and HR

Independent consultants usually specialize in two to five functional expertises. Here as well, the gender share differs between expertises with some topics being more attractive for women than others. The top 3 topics picked by the most consultants are very similar for women and men in the pool: Change Management, Business Plan Development and Growth Strategy.



The pay gap gets smaller with experience

Across all industries, professional backgrounds, seniority levels and nationalities, **female consultants** have an average daily rate of **1,112 Euro** and **male consultants of 1,180 Euro**.

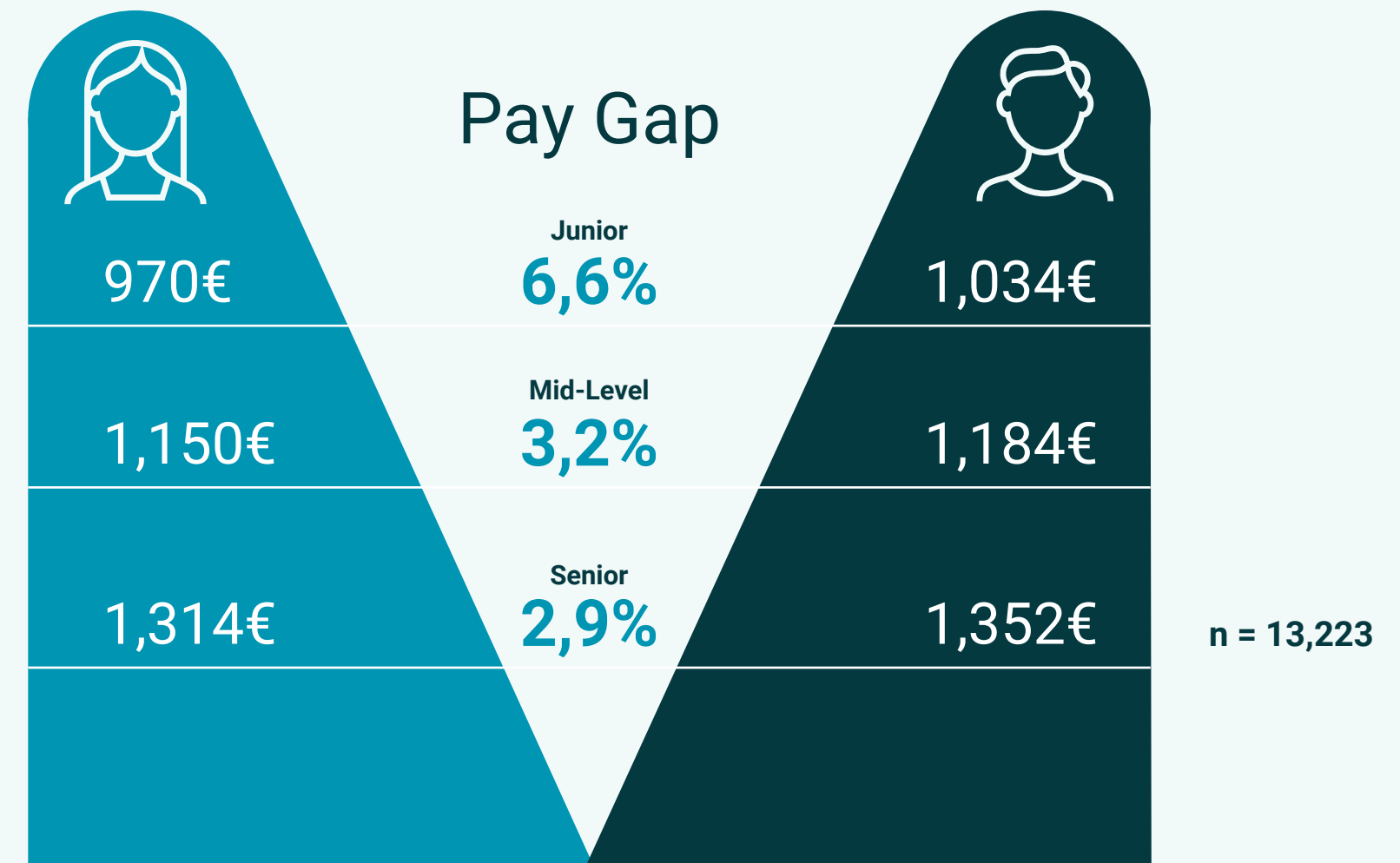
This means a **6% gender pay gap in the daily rates** which consultants have picked for themselves. Those rates are subject to a mark-up by COMATCH.

But, the higher the seniority level, the smaller the pay gap.



Inga
Independent consultant,
Germany

“As an independent you have to assess your value more often than an employee, with every project you are forced to reflect on your daily rate. This also means you can correct a financial misjudgement you might have taken at the beginning of your career.



Women judge regulations on independent work more critically

Women and men judge administration, retirement and tax regulations equally good or bad.

Regarding healthcare regulations and processes for receiving a loan women are even more critical than their male counterparts.

Statements

- | |  |  |
|---|---|---|
| • The retirement regulations are favorable towards Independent Consultants. | 22% | 23% |
| • The current tax regulations on independent work are attractive for Independent Consultants. | 46% | 46% |
| • The administrative procedures for obtaining the independent status are simple. | 80% | 76% |

- | | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| The healthcare regulations are favorable towards Independent Consultants. | 22% | 30% |
| Being an Independent Consultant is not an obstacle to obtaining a loan. | 23% | 35% |

Share of respondents agreeing with the statement

n = 749

They are **happy** about being self-employed

The overwhelming majority of women - **92% - are at least as happy** about their lives as independent consultants, with 3 out of 4 women reporting that they are even happier.



How happy are you with your life as an Independent Consultant compared to your previous situation?



I'm happier.	74%	74%
I'm as happy.	18%	21%
I'm not as happy.	8%	5%



Heidi
Independent consultant,
Germany

“ It took a while before I found my own way but it was the best decision. I enjoy being out of business routines and company politics, being part of something for some months and leaving again. You have to learn to live with insecurities but it's worth it. I am definitely happier than before.

Female consultants get what they want out of self- employment

For seven out of the ten drivers to transition into independent consulting, women report higher achievement scores than men. Especially when it comes to business travel, remote work and decision power regarding clients and project topics, women are more successful in pursuing their goal.

As an Independent Consultant I...



• have more flexibility	97%	90%	✓
• decide which topics I work on	80%	71%	✓
• decide which clients I work for	77%	69%	✓
• have more free time	76%	73%	✓
• travel less for work	70%	57%	✓
• work remotely more often	67%	52%	✓
• found more purpose	62%	64%	
• make more money	57%	60%	
• have founded my own non-consulting company	55%	57%	
• gained more responsibility	55%	50%	✓

Share of respondents stating they achieved the goals they had rated as "quite" or "very important" for their decision

n = 915



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