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## 5 Surveys

The second phase of my study was to survey the target groups. Two sets of questionnaires were prepared. One questionnaire was for PR professionals; the other for second- and third-year students. The questions were pilot-tested on several PR practitioners and academics.

Initially, 170 practitioners were contacted. Of these, 55 responded. A slight snowball effect resulted in a further eight completing surveys. A purposive sample produced 63 usable returns with an error rate of nil per cent. The professional PR questionnaires in MS Word format were sent out in the first week of June 2005 by e-mail to the practitioners who indicated their willingness to participate.

The initial statistical analysis of the survey only served as a base on which to gauge certain trends of students and professionals.

With both student and professional surveys attempting to analyse why men and women choose PR as a career, many of the questions in both surveys were similar. Apart from the usual questions about gender and year of study/years spent in PR, eight of the questions shared commonality. For this reason, I have chosen to present the results (answers) this way:

1. 'Student-only' questions
2. 'Professional-only' questions
3. Common questions

### 5.1 Survey of PR professionals

Of the 63 practitioners surveyed, 41 were female and 22 were male. They had 590 years experience between them, with an average of 10.7 years experience each. Their experience ranged from 1–30 years.

The second part of the survey, consisting of 12 questions, was structured to obtain basic information on practitioners' views, with a view to providing

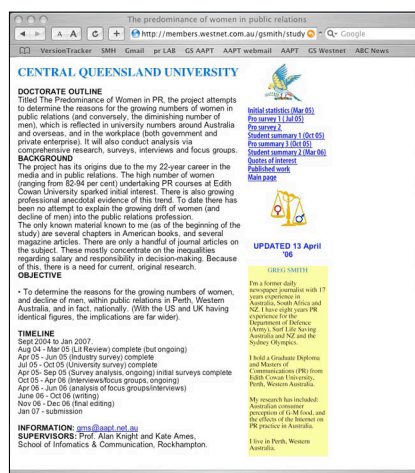
information for interviews and focus groups. In effect, this is a pilot study, as no research of this nature has been done before.

Each question contained two parts – a multiple-choice, lead-in question, followed by an associated question which allows for an open-ended response. I analysed each question, first by the number of responses, then by providing the open-ended answers to each question, based on the coding which was applied manually in the HyperText program. I have included some open-ended answers as in the main body of the thesis, so comments can be seen in light of the questions being asked, and thought processes not be interrupted by having to turn to the Appendix. I have also provided the gender of each respondent. This should help to correct any misunderstanding that some answers may be gender-biased. For whatever reason, not everyone provided detailed answers to all open-ended questions. This may be due to several factors, including: did not have an opinion, did not like the question, did not consider the question relevant, or not interested. A summation of the answers completes the analysis. Additionally, there is an analysis of additional topics which were raised in respondents' answers, but not directly addressed by the survey.

All participants were kept informed regularly by e-mail and a regularly-updated web-site (pictured) on progress. The intrusion, however, was minimal, with e-mails sent once every two to three months, advising respondents of the updated web-site information.

[The study's Web address is:

[www.members.westnet.com.au/gsmith/study](http://www.members.westnet.com.au/gsmith/study)]



### 5.1.1 Sex

From 146 e-mails sent to practitioners, there was a total of 55 responses, giving a return of 40 per cent. There were 21 males (36 per cent) and 34

females (64 per cent). The response ratio reflects the average composition of the population, though there is a slightly higher response by males. This could be simply a result of the random nature of the initial e-mails, as subjects were not identified by gender.

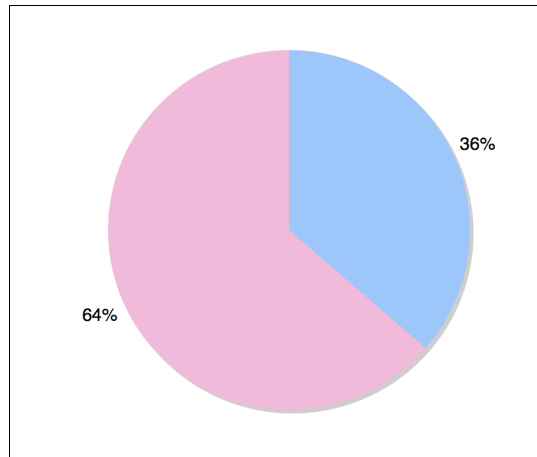


Figure 31: Gender breakdown of responses (females in pink).

### 5.1.2 Education

Respondents had four choices: Year 10/12, TAFE, Degree, Post-graduate. Most practitioners (71%) in the survey were university-educated, with 20 per cent reaching Year 10/12 level, and the remaining nine per cent attending TAFE.

Proportionally, more females (67%) of the total population attended university. Females also clearly lead the way when it comes to post-graduate study. Of those who have Masters/Honours Degrees, 81 per cent are women.

	High school	TAFE	University
Male	29%	10%	61%
Female	15%	9%	76%

Table 13: Breakdown of professionals' education levels.  
Percentages shown reflect the breakdown for a specific gender.

Women are shown to have higher qualifications than men, reflecting community general trends which show more women than men are undertaking tertiary studies. Among young people in Western Australia, females are more likely than males to complete post-compulsory schooling.

“In August 2000, the apparent retention rate for females was 77.6%, compared with the male rate of 65.5%” (Gunn, 2002). In higher education generally, women outnumber men by 2:1 in completing a degree. For post-graduate the ratio favours women by almost 3:1. With women now an increasing numerical force in PR, the statistics may merely reflect the growing numbers of women in PR and the fact that more women than men undertake tertiary study. However, it may also indicate that women are more “passionate” about their job, and see a tertiary qualifications as a more useful tool to develop their careers.

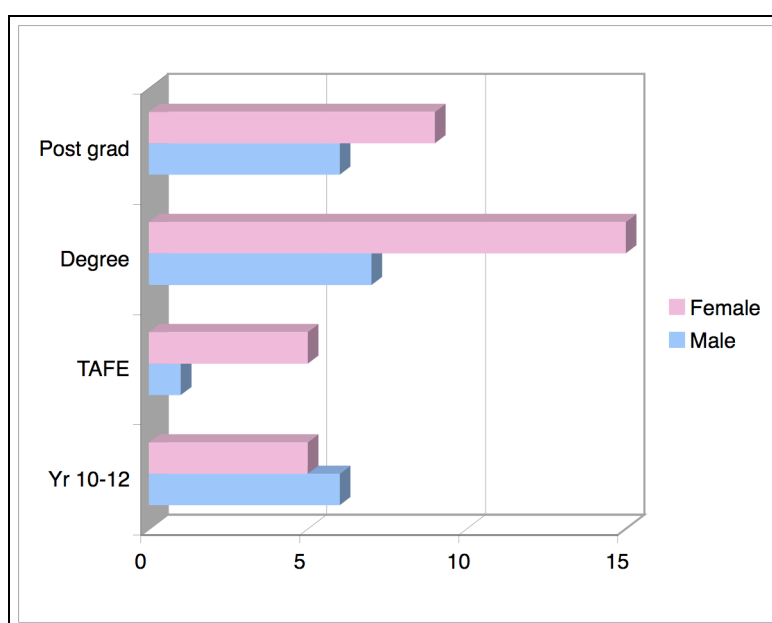


Figure 32: Male/female practitioners' educational levels.

### 5.1.3 Industry sector

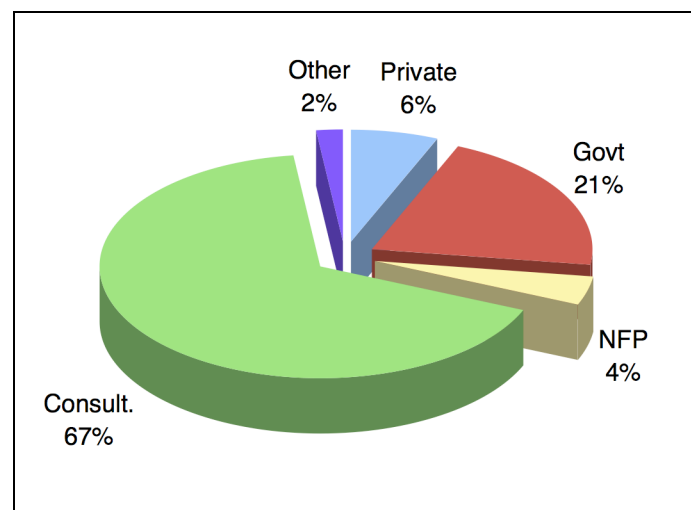
This question presented an opportunity to gauge whether certain industry sectors attract a particular gender. Respondents were given a choice of the four standard industry sectors (government, corporate/in-house, non-profit or consultancy) with a choice to nominate another sector. Overall, the response rate did not truly reflect the numbers obtained in my original Census. For example, my Census (and that of the ABS) clearly shows females as the numerically dominant force across the industry. However, this does not show in the responses to this question, with gender equally spread across all but consultancies, which shows a ratio of 2:1 in favour of women. This is just a

result of the relatively small sampling. However, this statistic, as with others in the first section of the survey, does not have an impact on the overall aim of my study, which is to consider the beliefs, attitudes and knowledge of participants with regard to reasons for a gender imbalance.

The breakdown was:

	Corporate	Government	NFP	Consult.	Other
Male	3	6	0	12	1
Female	2	6	2	23	1
TOTAL	5	12	2	35	2

*Table 14: Predominant PR work sectors.*



*Figure 33: Where PR practitioners are working.*

While The numbers in this part of the survey were too small to provide a definite breakdown, the higher proportion of women in PR consultancy work in Perth (66%) compared to 50 per cent in government and corporations, is another area worth further investigation, but is not within the scope of this study.

#### **5.1.4 Type of PR practised**

From seven key PR areas of expertise (community relations, media relations, issues management, print/web production, product promotion, investor relations) respondents were asked to nominate in order the three main areas they worked in. Ratings were determined by a system of three points for the

leading priority, to one for the third choice. There was also an option to nominate another area. This yielded an additional 10 categories, giving 17 areas of work. The purpose of this question was to see whether males or females are being “herded” into any common roles. Overall, media relations was by far the most nominated area professionals work in (or on). Surprisingly, only one female listed internal communication as a (second) choice. I say surprisingly, because quite a few of the respondents were government practitioners, and internal PR is often assumed to be a necessary part of practice in this sector. Also surprising, was that only one male listed government relations as a second choice.

Other low-scoring categories between both sexes were: investment (6 points), strategy (4), stakeholder management (4), management consultation (4), business development (3) and sponsorship (1). Investment management may be low on the “PR radar” in Perth, due to the city not being regarded as a financial hub, unlike Sydney or Melbourne.

The main types of PR practised were:

Media relations	35%
Issues management	17%
Community relations	11%
Production	10%
Events	9%
Product promotion	8%
Investor relations	3%
Strategy development	2%

For example, among women, events management, product promotion, web/print production and community relations featured prominently. Among men, issues management stood out as a priority function. For women, events management was ranked as the second most practised component (rating 28), compared to males, for whom it rated only four. Women also practised media relations far more widely than men (76 to 39).

Among males, who are generally regarded as being more business-focused, it was interesting to note that only one person listed Industrial Relations, Internal Relations, Business Development or Sponsorship as areas they worked in.

Media relations was the most widely all-around practised function, with female respondents listing it as a first choice. Generally, media relations is regarded as a 'technician' role – one which women predominantly perform. The result simply confirms widely-held views (Seitel, 1998; Donato, 1990; Toth, 2000; Newsom, 2000; Gower, 2001; Grunig, 2001; Hall, 2005) that women are tied to these roles.

At this point there seems to be a discrepancy in the survey. In two previous questions both male and females said they practised strategy, but that it only forms two per cent of their workload. This may mean that strategy is not an ongoing activity (in that plans and results are not constantly monitored).

#### **5.1.5 Years in PR**

This question produced a simple numerical answer to gauge the average experience (in years) of practitioners. The 55 respondents had a total of 590 years of experience, ranging from one to 30 years. The average time spent in PR was 10.7 years. Males had an average of 13.6 years in PR, while females had an average of 10.4 years experience. Once again, not too much can be read into these figures, except to say the responses to the open-ended questions were given by some highly-experienced practitioners.

#### **5.1.6 Main role in PR**

The purpose of this question was to analyse which role practitioners mostly perform, with the aim of detecting whether some roles attract males, and some females. Respondents could select one of six basic roles, with an option to add others, with the result that a further 10 were added to the list. The given choices were considered as representing the basic PR skills of

writing, client liaison, event management, media relations, support/coordination or strategy.

Professionals were asked to nominate the main function/role they performed. In many ways this was similar to the above category. They were given five basic choices (writer, client liaison, event management, media, support/coordination) and were free to list any others, with the result that a further 10 were added to the list. The idea was to test consistency across answers.

Women and men both listed writing, strategy and media relations as their top three preferences. Proportionally, women were more involved in developing strategy than men. It is interesting that strategy features so highly in responses to this question, whereas only two per cent of respondents said they were involved in strategy development (see 3.1.8).

	MEN	WOMEN
1	Writer (32%)	Strategy (37%)
2	Strategy (29%)	Media (18%)
3	Media (19%)	Writer (15%)
4	Events (10%)	Client liaison (9%)
5	Client liaison (5%)	Support (9%)
6	Other (5%)	Events (6%)
		Other (6%)

Table 15: Main roles practised in PR.

The main points were:

- ❑ Most practitioners considered they worked mostly on strategy
- ❑ Female practitioners carried out more strategy than males.

It is interesting that in the UK, in terms of roles, media relations is the main form of PR practised by more than 90 per cent of professionals surveyed by the CIPR in 2005, then came planning (87%) and events (73%). “The biggest response from in-house employees was ‘media relations’, while the biggest response from consultancy respondents was ‘communications strategy development’ (*PR Today: 48,000 professionals; £6.5 billion turnover. The economic significance of public relations*, 2005).



### 5.1.7 Level of employment/experience

Levels of employment across four levels were consistent between genders, with the majority working in senior levels. From the statistics, traditional PR stereotypes tended to be reinforced, with women generally performing the more “technician” roles, and men taking management-orientated roles.

	Senior	Middle	Technician	Entry
Male	57	29	14	0
Female	56	27	13	4

Table 16: Percentage breakdown of professionals' level of employment.

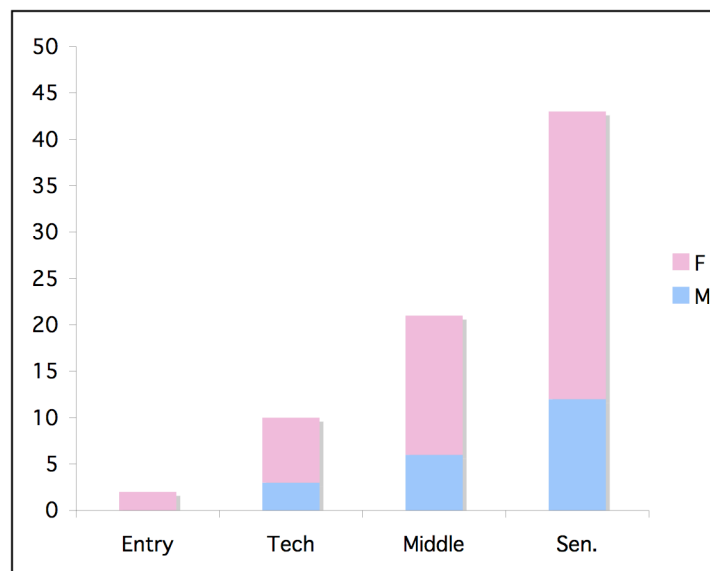


Figure 34: Professionals' level of employment.

### 5.1.8 Salary

Four levels of salary were presented, roughly equating to the above employment levels. This would give a guide as to earning capacity by gender and help unearth any possible discrepancies between the level of employment and male/female salaries.

Salary levels accurately reflected the levels at which professionals were employed. The most notable point was the lack of salary “discrimination” so often talked of in the literature. Salary levels accurately reflected the levels

professionals were employed at. There was only a two per cent difference between males and females in the upper level (\$61K-plus) and a three per cent difference favouring males in the second-highest level (\$46–60K). At middle ranking (\$26–45K), males tended to out-earn females by five per cent, while at the entry level (\$20–25K), female salaries were four per cent higher on average.

	\$61K-plus	\$46–60K	\$36–45K	\$20–25K
Male	57%	29%	14%	0%
Female	56%	27%	13%	4%

*Table 17: Professionals' salary levels.*

Due to the small sampling rate, it is difficult to accurately determine salary discrepancies. However, inequity does not seem to be highlighted to any extent. However, the results in this area do not reflect trends in other Australian cities. There is anecdotal evidence that salaries for females in Sydney, for example, are comparably lower than for males.

### **5.1.9 Hours worked**

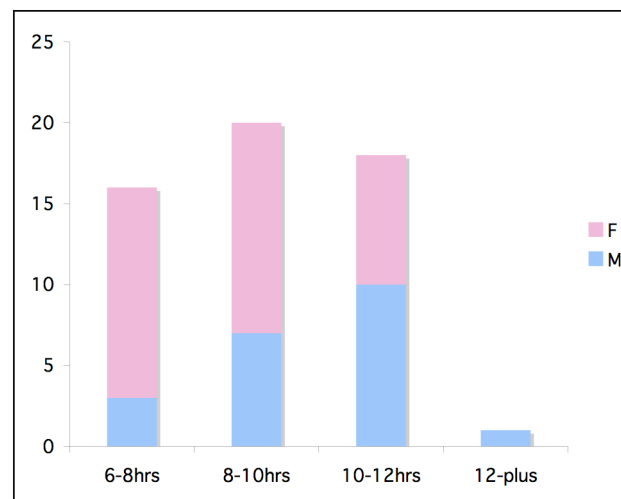
Most practitioners (44 per cent) worked 8-10 hours per day, with 36 per cent working 6-8 hours, 18 per cent working 10-12 hours and only two per cent working 12 hours or more (only males). Females generally worked fewer hours than males, with the greater percentage (38%) most working in the eight to 10-hour range, compared to males, where 48 per cent worked an average of 10-12 hours daily. UK figures were similar to those in my survey; particularly with regard to men working more hours than women.

In the UK, it was found: “On average, a quarter of public relations professionals work over 48 hours per week. Those who work for a consultancy or agency work the highest average number of hours per week (over 43 hours) whilst those who work in public relations for the public sector work the fewest hours per week (40 hours). Overall, men seem to work slightly longer hours than women; within freelance and in-house not-for-profit organisations, women work longer” (*PR Today: 48,000 professionals; £6.5 billion turnover. The economic significance of public*

*relations*, 2005). Pinker and Spelke (2005) argue that “there are slightly more men than women who want to work long hours. That is, more men than women don’t care about whether they have a life”.

	12-plus hrs	10–12 hrs	8–10 hrs	6–8 hrs
Male	5%	48%	33%	14%
Female	0%	24%	38%	38%

*Table 18: The hours PR practitioners work.*



*Figure 35: Average daily hours worked by professionals.*

#### **5.1.10 PR as a career**

Respondents had to nominate in order what made them choose PR as a career. This may help identify possible gender-specific reasons that may make males and females enthusiastic about PR. Are they in it for the money, or is a career the main objective? There were five options, with space for another (if necessary). Answers were based on a points system of five points for the main reason for PR being a good career, down to one for it being least attractive. The options were: money, career, creative, variety, mental challenge. Most respondents (men and women) chose variety as being the main reason for working in PR, with females favouring it more than males. This was followed by creativity and mental challenge (also both males and female).

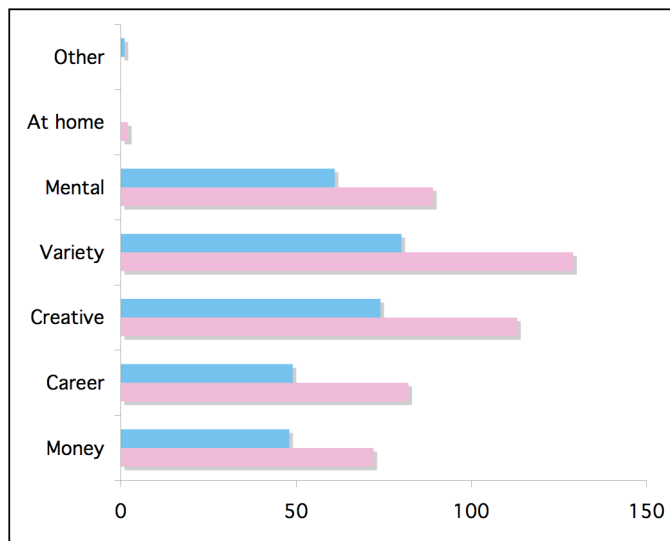


Figure 36: Reasons for choosing PR as a career.

### 5.1.11 Aspects of PR interest

Are there certain aspects of PR that interest females? What do males like about PR? This question also attempts to identify, from a job-specific (functional) aspect, whether there are any common reasons that might attract either gender to PR. Respondents were given a choice of 12 aspects of PR and asked to list their three main areas of interest, with three points for the first choice, two for the second and one for the third selection. The question is closely linked to choices made in areas of work and the main roles practised. The three questions are similar and aim to detect any differences in types of work preferred by practitioners. The answers of all three indicate women are still associated (whether by choice or management) with the technician-type roles (events, media and writing), whereas men are associated with manager-type functions such as project and reputation management (this equates with answers provide in section 5.1.7). The three areas of most interest to PR professionals are (scores shown in order) media (33) marketing (30) and writing (29). The areas of least interest are budget (1), research (4) and production and investor relations (5).

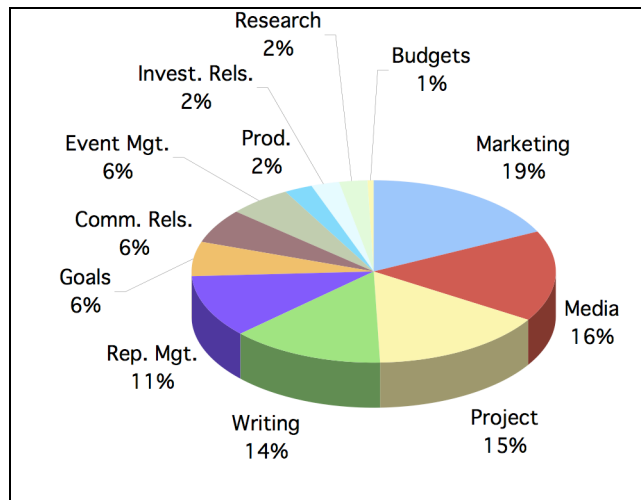
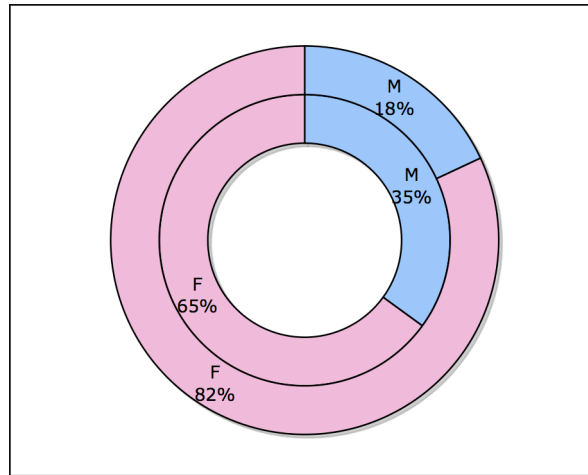


Figure 37: Work areas of most interest to professionals.

Just over half (33) of all 63 respondents said they were interested in media. Proportionally, more men (73%) than women were interested in media and marketing work. However, females (66%) clearly had more of an interest in writing than males – an area in which they are shown to be more gifted academically. In so-called ‘traditional’ areas of PR, such as events management, females (82%) clearly have more interest than males. In other areas, there was a 50/50 split in interest in community relations, and slightly more females (53%) were interested in reputation management.

Area of interest	Scores		
	Male	Female	Total
Media	9	24	33
Marketing	9	21	30
Writing	10	19	29
Project	11	16	27
Reputation Management	9	10	19
Community Relations	6	6	12
Event Management	2	9	11
Investor Relations	4	1	5
Production	1	4	5
Research	3	1	4
Budgets	0	1	1

Table 19: Areas of most interest to professionals.



*Figure 38: Females are more interested in events management. The inner circle is the sample population, and the outer circle is the level of interest in events.*

There was an additional area of interest (research) listed in the professional survey. This was deemed necessary as the research component of PR (that is, statistics and focus groups) is usually not fully emphasised at some universities until fourth year and beyond. While the sample was small, it showed that 75 per cent of males preferred research. This would fit with the general consensus of data and literature that suggests men are attracted to the “methodical” side of business. However, it could also be argued that the actual “doing” of research may also be a “technician-type” role. This, in turn may depend on the type of research – qualitative or quantitative.

### **5.1.12 Preferred workplace**

With four types of PR workplaces (government, consultancy, non-profit and corporate, or in-house) respondents had to nominate the type of workplace in which they prefer to work. This assumed they read the question carefully and nominated their preference, rather than just the place the type of practice they worked in at the time of the survey. There were respondents who worked in one sector who indicated a preference for another. The overall preference was for consultancy work, followed by corporate (in-house), then government, and non-profit was the least favoured. The overall breakdown was: consultancy (63%), government (20%), private (13%), NFP (4%). Among males the breakdown was consultancy (57%), government (24%),

private (19%) and NFP (0). Among females it was consultancy (67), government (18%), private (9%), NFP (6%).

	Consultancy		Govt.		Private		NFP	
Total	63%		20%		13%		4%	
	M 57%	F 67%	M 24%	F 18%	M 9%	F 9%	M 0%	F 6%

*Table 20: Breakdown of where practitioners prefer to work.*

Among both males and females the percentages who favoured a certain sector were remarkably the same, with a consultancy environment the most favoured at 33 per cent, followed by consultancies (28 per cent) government (21 per cent) and non-profits (18 per cent).

### **5.1.13 Building client rapport**

Most professionals (39%) thought neither gender was better at building rapport with clients. The two graphs below compare female (left) and male responses (right) to the question. Males are evenly divided among their choice of answer. However, when broken down, 40% of females thought they were better at this aspect of PR than males.

### **5.1.14 Male/female work differences**

A total of 75 per cent of respondents said there was a difference in the way males and females worked with clients. Among each gender 81 per cent of male practitioners recognised a difference, while the figure was 71 per cent among females.

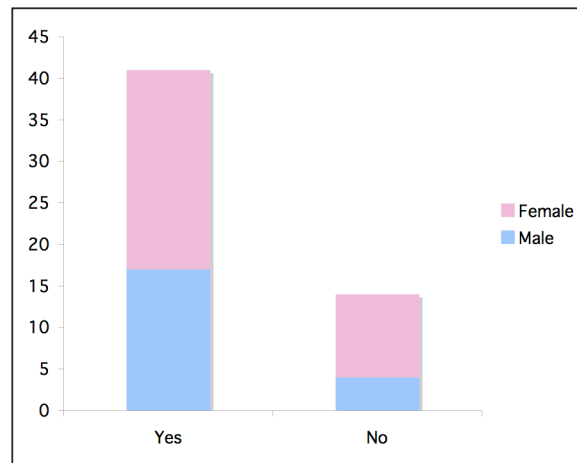


Figure 39: Professionals' perceptions of work differences between gender.

### 5.1.15 Impact of gender on work performance

A total of 76 per cent said gender did not have any impact on work performance. The figures were identical for males and females. Only three comments were received on this question.

It depends upon the environment. For example as a woman I have been more effective in male-dominated work environments and less successful in women-orientated organisations and I think this is about complementing each other's strengths and abilities. (F)

Again, it comes down to individuals not their sex. (F)

Different skill sets based on how people are nurtured and encouraged through their development and schooling. Different 'drives' according to how genders are nurtured (for example, aggressive macho male stereotype versus the calmer, more creative female stereotype). (F)



### 5.1.16 Imbalance

Professionals were asked two questions (Nos. 15 and 21):

- (1) if they thought there was a balanced workforce in PR, and
- (2) if they thought there should be a balanced workforce in PR.

Most professionals (76 per cent) thought there was imbalance. Slightly more females (79%) than males (70%) thought there should be balance. People also commented that balance should not be achieved simply for the sake of balance. The best person for the job should be selected. However, there is general concern that imbalance does create problems, notably “a bias towards women’s issues” (M) and “lack of respect for the industry” (F). Also, 73 per cent thought there should be a balanced workforce in PR, with 18 per cent saying there should not, and nine per cent being indifferent. Among males, 76 per cent said there should be a balanced workforce, while only 70 per cent of females thought balance was necessary (18 per cent said it was not necessary, and 12 per cent being indifferent).

The finding of this survey correlates with a recent US study, *Report of the Committee on Work, Life and Gender Issues*, conducted for the PRSA. One comment from the report included: “The men in one group would like to see more professional development workshops around the issues of gender and the profession. One participant said: ‘These are big, important issues that cut in a lot of complicated directions’ (Toth, 2000).

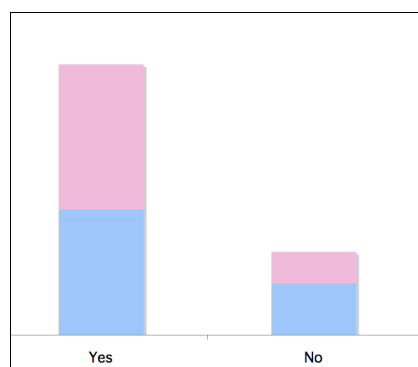


Figure 40: Professionals' levels of concern about imbalance.

Overall, the comments received on positive aspects of having a more balanced workforce (and that includes more women in managerial positions) point to the industry achieving a “better dynamic” (F) and being “better able to represent a more diverse range of clients” (M).

With 24 respondents directly indicating there should be a balance, there is clear evidence of concern. Overall, the feeling is that balance is necessary for a healthy industry.

The fact that women felt quite strongly about the imbalance was perhaps surprising, given that they are the dominant group in the industry. Their comments also generally reflected the statistics, with most of them concerned about the effects that imbalance may have. A common theme throughout, reflected by men and women, was that ‘the job should go to the best person’. There was only one comment (from a female) which could be regarded as unbalanced. “This industry doesn’t need men.” Overall, there was a level of mild concern about what effects imbalance may have, with a reasonable consensus that balance equals diversity.

	Yes %	No %	Irrelevant %
Males	76	19	5
Females	70	18	12

*Table 21: Levels of concern regarding industry imbalance.*

#### **5.1.17 Should there be a balanced (gender) workforce?**

There was a consistent reply across gender. A total of 73 per cent thought there should, with 18 per cent saying it should not and nine per cent saying it was irrelevant. Among males, 76 per cent thought there should be balance, 19 per cent said “no” and five per cent said it was irrelevant. Proportionally, fewer females (70 per cent) said there should be balance, with 18 per cent saying “no” and 12 per cent “irrelevant”.

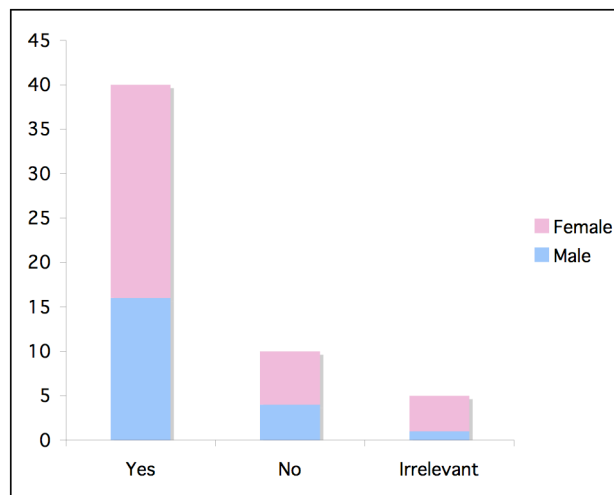


Figure 41: Practitioners' views on whether there should be a balanced (gender) workforce.

### 5.1.18 Effects of imbalance on industry

Many respondents (62%) were concerned that a gender imbalance could have an effect on the industry. There was a marked difference between males and females. Among males, the concern was higher, at 76 per cent, while only 53 per cent of females were concerned about an imbalance.

### 5.1.19 Ethical concerns

Professionals were asked if there were any aspects of working in PR that affects their ability to work with clients and other professionals within the industry. The responses were consistent for male and female, with most respondents (64%) saying they had no issues. However, the fact that 36 per cent had concerns is of interest.

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Male	38	62
Female	35	65
Total	36	64

Table 22: Ethical concerns of professionals.

### 5.1.20 Confidence

This was a *Clayton's* question, simply asking respondents if they were confident when making presentations to clients. Its purpose was to let people

‘relax’ before entering the second set of questions related to gender. Only two respondents did not answer ‘yes’ to being confident. In both cases, understandably, they were ‘juniors’ and probably had not yet developed the presentation skills necessary to function at a high level. The question validates the general opinion of most students and professionals: that one of the main prerequisites for people working in PR is confidence.

## **5.2 Additional material**

This section contains additional analysis of material which was not canvassed as part of the formal survey, but resulted from answers provided by practitioners. Basically, these are key concepts that appeared in answers.

Critical to my study is the ability to try to understand what “makes” a PR practitioner. It was important to learn what practitioners think; for they are the ones that are the industry. Their views and the way they work shape the way the industry operates and is perceived by others – their publics. The most important aspects are the basic building blocks (skills and traits) of practitioners. From my initial attempt at trying to outline an industry profile, these are what (presumably) makes practitioners practise.

Analysis of any answer is open to the reader’s interpretation. One (female) participant wrote the following (after reading the summary):

I was imagining a not-too-professionally appealing headline: ‘Study suggests women ‘fluff’ better than me’, or some such horror forever locking women into the perceived ‘soft’ end of PR. So much of this is just so ‘wrong’. The terms self-serving, stereotypical, dangerous, unfounded, appalling, outdated come to mind. Not to mention infuriatingly ignorant.

### **5.2.1 Common themes**

Before addressing each subject area, I would like to present a summary of some recurring themes to emerge from the professional survey. The following table shows common concepts (or themes) and the frequency with which they appeared in the open-ended answers. The frequency of

appearance differs from the actual number of answers given. For example, while there were 52 separate references to female skills, only 17 people responded to the question dealing with this aspect of my study. The same procedure was applied to the analysis of interviews with professionals, and this is covered in detail in that section. However, ‘themes’ common to both the survey and interviews, and the frequency of their occurrence, are highlighted in the list (below).

Female traits	91	Male traits	37	Work participation	11
Balanced workforce	82	Effects of imbalance		Knowledge base	11
Gender influence	71	in industry	37	Industry concerns	11
Work differences	58	Perception of PR	35	Male skills	9
Suitability for PR	57	Career barriers	34	Age	9
Image	55	Female skills	22	Qualities	7
Reason for feminisation	53	Gender imbalance	20	PR values	6
Client rapport	48	Performance	17	Uni studies	3
Ethical issues	46	Drawbacks	17	Networking	3
Gender differences	41	Historical aspects	16		

These themes provide an insight into the thoughts of PR practitioners, who are presented with a topic they mostly had not consciously thought about. As such, the themes may represent areas of importance, or concern, they may have about the topic. ‘Female traits’, for example is mentioned 91 times. This may indicate this topic is central to professionals’ thinking with regard to imbalance. Similarly, notions of age and networking, which are mentioned only three or four times respectively, could indicate they are not factors influencing the reasons why people enter the profession.

### **5.2.2 Female skills/traits**

For the purpose of this study, skills are defined as those abilities (physical or mental) which are learned throughout, and contribute to, a person’s career. Traits are considered (either scientifically or generally) to be inherent in a person, male or female. In some instances, I had to make a value judgment whether what was being referred to was a skill or trait.

In the areas of natural ability (traits), practitioners (both male and female) believe that women are more “naturally” suited to PR because they possess those traditional “feminine” qualities of empathy, creativity and, indeed, communication. In the area of skills, the responses were predominantly from

women, which skews opinions to favour women, making it difficult to make any assumptions. It is interesting to note that two comments from males indicated that women may be better at strategy, which mention they are better both ‘tactically’ and ‘at choosing the way to communicate’. This is also supported by a comment from a female practitioner, who says they may use this tactical advantage by relating better to women, and by ‘charming male clients’. Only one female said that males were better at the tactical level. Only one mention was made of suitability to technical aspects of PR, with a female practitioner saying men were better. This, however, would be difficult to fathom, as one of the main reasons women can compete equally with men in PR is the fact that the technical aspects (writing, design, production of materials) do not require physical effort. From the comments, it seems women have the upper hand when it comes to possessing both skills and traits that are suited to PR.

There were far fewer comments relating to male traits and skills, than for those relating to females. It was interesting to note that not many males introduced these concepts into their answers, which may indicate they do lack the “creativity” that would be associated with expanding on answers. From the comments, males are generally perceived to be more direct when dealing with clients.

### **5.2.3 Qualities**

Three people (two of them males) took the opportunity to mention qualities they believe make a good practitioner. The concept is closely related to the skills and traits practitioners should possess, although they are more innate. Once again, the trend indicates that practitioners believe women have those ‘human’ qualities that make them better suited to PR, as evidenced by these answers:

If the client is a woman, she is likely to be more trusting of a female rather than a male PR consultant (M).

Women are more adaptable in getting on with people. And that is necessary (M).

Everybody is different. I look for someone with integrity, honesty and respect (and a Degree) (F).

#### **5.2.4 Age**

I thought it surprising, but important, that nine respondents raised the matter of age as a factor in PR. On reflection, this is a valid, and contentious, issue in an industry that thrives to a large degree on image. It is also relevant given the continuing publicity regarding our ageing workforce and the fact that many mature people can not get a job. Age was also mentioned in the following section (twice) as being a drawback in PR, though it is not clear whether it is an advantage/disadvantage to be young or old. I suspect it can be taken both ways, in that older workers can be considered well past their prime and not able to keep pace with modern practice; or that an experienced worker is a valuable asset.

#### **5.2.5 Drawbacks**

The concept/theme of “drawbacks” relates strongly to issues that affect how PR work is undertaken. Family issues were prevalent in this theme. From the comments, this predominantly affects females. While phoning consultants for my initial census, many women listed as consultants were no longer working in that role as they were raising children. In the course of interviews for this study, several practitioners mentioned that the reason there are so many female consultants in Perth was that many businesses were set up initially so women could balance family and career. As two practitioners commented:

PR is a job that is flexible, and you can work at it for 2-3 days a week. That would suit women better. Certainly if women have children, PR would suit them in that regard” (M).

Women look at it as a means to an end, as in ‘I want to do a fun job that’s going to get me through to when I leave to have babies’. And I want a job that I can do while I raise kids, and from home, part-time. When the kids are back at school I don’t have to re-qualify” (M).

In this regard, the female consultancy would not only be attractive to women (particularly those with young families), its management would be more sympathetic to hiring women with families. An article on the *icBirmingham* web-site in 2004, summarised this aspect: “One of the reasons behind the success of women PR professionals is undoubtedly the flexibility of the profession, as it provides the opportunity for career-minded women to have it all in terms of high powered jobs, while still balancing family life – at least to some degree.” Once again, responses to my surveys indicate the way in which PR suits women in this regard:

Family responsibilities. PR has some odd hours, which make it hard for mothers (M).

I suspect it is still the woman usually who has to drop work to attend a sick child, and this would impact on performance, although one would expect irregularly (F)..

As in all careers, it is difficult to balance a family’s needs with a full-on career (F).

### **5.2.6 Historical aspects**

Comments here are basically anecdotal in nature, but provide a snapshot of how the industry has developed. As my study attempts to discover why the industry is becoming feminised, the last two comments provide scope for future exploration of this theme along historical lines. However, without PRIA membership statistics it will be difficult to compare the growth of university courses and an increase in female professionals, though the two are inexorably linked.

In a State of male-dominated industries (mining and agriculture) PR has been one department that females have been encouraged to populate (F).



The preponderance of males in very senior positions is as much an artifact of the 'old-school' PR, when journalists made the move to the dark side (and most journalists were male). This seniority imbalance will progressively shift as these old crusties (self included) drop off the professional twig. Government and corporates are still (in the main) uncomfortable working with female-dominated professionals on equal footing (consider nursing etc) a 'female' PR profession will take longer to gain acceptance (M).

It has traditionally been an area women have been seen to excel (F).

It's been the case for more than 10 years throughout Australia. Same percentage when I studied at RMIT in the early 1990s (F).

PR has been increasingly being perceived as 'female' sector (F).

PR shifted from being a career progression for ex-journalists (mainly men) to a more recognised professional option in its own right with university courses attracting more women (M).

The whole world of (white collar) work is becoming feminised, but PR is the most visible example of this phenomenon. (M).

### **5.2.7 Image and perception of PR**

It certainly seems that the industry's view of itself says that the profession is full of "fluff" (both in looks and content). While professionals' views were not as expansive as students', there was quite a deal of comments on how the industry is perceived. The following selection of quotes demonstrates the common theme that the industry is simply perceived as feminine, thereby discouraging males from entry.

It is perceived as a feminine industry/career. Males' and females' interests vary naturally. Women are more confident in communications (F).

It's seen as a more female occupation due to the perception of events, schmoozing, very tactical work. PR is often perceived by men to be a glorified secretary's role (F).

I think PR has a perception of being a female industry – a bit like nursing – so men are not naturally drawn to it, unless they come in via journalism or publishing (F).

I think it's more of the perception of the industry being more female oriented and that it's a lot easier for a female to get in (M).

People have a false perception of what PR is. Males just think it's a female course (F).

There's a perception of PR as a 'soft' alternative in comparison to journalism (F).

PR tends to be full of good-looking, well-groomed people, so someone who doesn't fit that mould may find it difficult to get ahead (F).

There's been a dumbing-down of the profession. These days a pretty face counts for more than knowledge (M).

PR is seen as 'fluff', while journalism is seen as 'tough' (F).

I believe it is viewed as a 'chicks' field and therefore is not taken as seriously as it would if there were more men (M).

I think it is seen as a 'fluffy' role and equated more to something women would do (F).

The industry is female-dominant because of public perception (F).

There's a perception that the career is 'feminine', as opposed to civil and mechanical engineering, which is (seen as) 'masculine' (M).

Possibly because it's generally perceived as a good job for females – lots of working with people, etc (F).

### **5.2.8 General concerns**

Though there was room for practitioners to express concerns about gender, some deviated from the topic to express general concerns about the industry.

While these comments are not directly related to my study's overall aim, I would make one comment with regard to the third and fourth responses, which touch on the industry's professionalism. The placement of PR courses outside business schools does nothing to enhance the discipline's standing among fellow students – future business leaders. Compare this approach to marketing and advertising courses, which are usually located within business schools.

My only concern is the amount of tripe generated by some practitioners (M).

An increasing emphasis on women's lifestyle editorial rather than complex investigative issues. (M).

There are too few good professionals and the PRIA has no real quality assurance program in place - nothing as rigorous as the law or accounting professions. Until we take ourselves seriously, other won't (M).

I think the gender imbalance of females, especially the 40-something generation that heads up the PRIA or the 20-something set that heads up the Young Guns, has a negative impact on the professional reputation of the PR industry in WA as there is a perpetuation of the stereotyped 'big-boobs, big-hair', or 'young buns' 'clique' of the same women - that do not encourage the business marketplace to see PR as a strategic professional skill (F).

I have heard of many young females (with university degrees) who entered the industry with consultancies and were expected to work long hours doing all of the office's general work (little of which is genuine PR work but menial tasks such as taking the boss' dry cleaning in or getting coffees.) They were treated rudely by supervisors and more experienced colleagues. They decided to leave PR. This treatment is not at the hands of males but other females. Others have received this treatment but hang in there and move on within the industry (F).

### **5.2.9 Would they do it again?**

Most professionals (64.5%) if given the option, would again chose PR as a career. There was little difference in the response rate between genders.

Among females, 62 per cent said they would. The figure was slightly higher among males at 67 per cent.

### 5.3 Student surveys

Response by university was:

University	Male	Female	Total
Murdoch	6	40	46
Notre Dame	5	15	20
Curtin	5	30	35
Edith Cowan	1	3	4

*Table 23: Response rate for student survey.*

There were a total of 116 responses received from second-, third- and fourth-year PR students from four universities, comprising 98 females (84 per cent) and 18 males. The breakdown was 67 (second-year), 45 (third-year) and four (fourth-year) students.

#### **Murdoch results**

There were a total of 45 usable surveys from 78 returns. Most of the discarded surveys came from people not studying PR as a Major. There were also several surveys incorrectly completed, making them invalid. Of the completed surveys, there were six males (13% and all second-year students) and 39 females (87%), comprising 15 third-year and 30 second-year students.

#### **Notre Dame**

There were a total of 20 usable surveys from 23 returns (all third-year students). There were 15 females (75%) and five males (25%). This equates almost identically to the national and Perth gender breakdown of the industry.

#### **Curtin**

There were a total of 35 usable responses from 45 returns. Those not completed correctly came from respondents who were not primarily completing PR Degrees (six), or questions being incorrectly answered (four). Of the usable responses, 86% were from women.

## ECU

Due to administrative problems at the university, there were only 16 returns, comprising 14 females (87%) and two males.

### 5.3.1 Perceptions of PR

In question four, students were asked how they perceive PR – as a career, as a job, or may lead to something else.

	Career	Job	Other
Male	11 (55%)	1 (6%)	7 (39%)
Female	71 (75%)	4 (3%)	22 (22%)

Table 24: Gender breakdown of how students perceive PR.

Overall, 70.7 per cent of students see PR as a career, indicating they are studying it with long-term goals in mind and are serious about the subject. For males, 57.9 per cent see it as a career, 36.8 per cent as leading to something else, and 5.3 per cent as job. As a proportion of the population, more females (73.2%) than males view it as a career. For females, 22.7 per cent see it as leading to something else, and four per cent as a job. Women clearly perceive PR to be a career. It is interesting to note that students at Notre Dame differed from those at the other institutions in that only 33 per cent saw PR as a career. Most (56%) saw it as leading to something else.

### 5.3.2 Forging a career

In question 10, students were asked what chance of success they thought they had in obtaining work in PR. There were four alternatives, with one choice to be made from: less than 20 per cent, 20–40 per cent, 50–70 per cent, 80–100 per cent. Most students were positive about obtaining work in PR with the majority (57%) believing they had a 50–70 per cent chance of working in the industry. Generally, males and females had the same levels of optimism. As a percentage of the population, females were slightly more optimistic in the upper level, with 27 per cent positive they would get a job, compared to 21 per cent of males.

	20% chance	20–40% chance	50–70% chance	80%+ chance
Male	1	3	11	4
Female	5	11	55	26
% total	5%	12%	57%	26%

Table 25: Gender breakdown of how students rate their chances of obtaining work in PR.

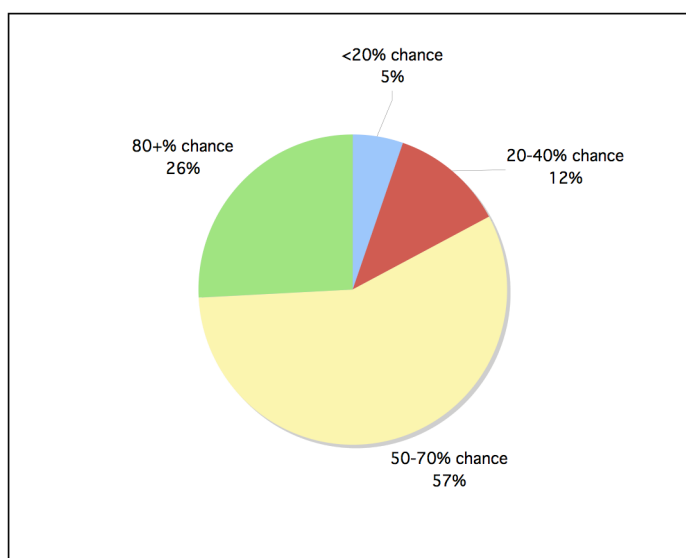


Figure 42: How students (male and female) rate their chances of obtaining work in PR.

### 5.3.3. How students view PR as a subject

Question 19 contained five Likert-type sub-questions relating to what students thought of PR as a subject. The aim was to see whether females and males thought differently about certain aspects of the discipline; particularly with regard to creative and practical aspects. One of the main aims was to learn whether students were serious about the subject. Students had four levels of choice to rate their level of agreement/disagreement with the propositions presented.

	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree
Male	2 (5%)	12 (63%)	4 (4%)	1 (1%)
Female	26 (27%)	41 (42%)	26 (27%)	4 (4%)
TOTAL	28 (24%)	53 (46%)	30 (26%)	5 (4%)

Table 26: Proposition A – that PR is an easy study option.

If the results of proposition A (that PR is an easy study option) are split between those who disagree and those who do not, then most students (70

per cent) regard the subject as relatively difficult. There is little difference between the sexes. Among males, 68 per cent believe it is difficult, compared to 70 per cent of females. This contrasts to a US study on PR students by Noble (2005), who found “women (71 per cent) were more likely to disagree that public relations courses are easier than the average college course than men (53 per cent). More men (31.4 per cent) than women (17.5 per cent) consider public relations to be an easy major, and men were more likely to say they chose public relations because they couldn’t find another major and public relations seemed easy.” There is an interesting sidelight here, in that many students commented in open-ended answers to surveys that they found PR involved a lot more writing than they thought. This may contributed to the high number who consider the subject not to be a “soft” study option.

	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree
Male	5 (27%)	4 (21%)	5 (26%)	5 (26%)
Female	24 (25%)	21 (22%)	39 (40%)	13 (13%)
TOTAL	29 (25%)	25 (22%)	44 (37%)	18 (16%)

*Table 27: Proposition B – I am mildly interested in PR.*

Answers for proposition B (that students are mildly interested in PR) were quite even. If the table is split into those who agree and disagree with the statement, 53 per cent agreed they were only mildly interested in PR. The general trend towards being disinterested came mainly from females (53%). However, double the proportion of males (26%) felt more strongly disinterested in PR than females (13 per cent). The reasons for the lack of interest are not apparent.

	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree
Male	9 (47%)	7 (37%)	3 (16%)	0
Female	34 (35%)	26 (27%)	33 (34%)	4 (4%)
TOTAL	43 (38%)	33 (28%)	36 (31%)	4 (3%)

Table 28: Proposition C – PR will suffice until other opportunities arise.

This question in proposition C also attempts to gauge students' interest in the subject. Most agree that PR is not a “subject in waiting”, with 66 per cent disagreeing it will suffice until other opportunities arise (that is, they are serious about the subject). Males seem to be more definite about their career path, as more females (38%) than males (16%) agreed they are considering their options.

	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree
Male	1 (5%)	0	7 (37%)	11 (58%)
Female	3 (3%)	4 (4%)	41 (42%)	49 (51%)
TOTAL	4 (3%)	4 (3%)	48 (41%)	60 (53%)

Table 29: Proposition D – PR allows me to be creative/inventive.

Almost all respondents agreed there was wide scope within PR for them to be creative.

	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree
Male	0	0	7 (37%)	12 (63%)
Female	3 (3%)	3 (3%)	35 (36%)	56 (58%)
TOTAL	3 (3%)	3 (3%)	42 (36%)	68 (58%)

Table 30: Proposition E – PR offers good practical skills.

As in the previous proposition, the clear majority of students agreed that PR taught them good practical skills (above) with little variation in the statement that PR offered good practical skill between males (63%) and females (58%).



### 5.3.4 Perceptions of teaching

In question 12, students were asked whether they perceived any differences in the way their male and female tutor and/or lecturers taught. Most students (62%) did not perceive any difference. Within the gender grouping, a greater percentage of females (64%) thought there was no difference, compared to 52.6 per cent of males. There certainly seems no imbalance as far as the gender of tutors and lecturers in Australia is concerned. The survey showed that 57 per cent of tutors were male. While the statistic is by no means “alarming”, it could also be the focus of a separate study, although my results show this is of little concern to students.

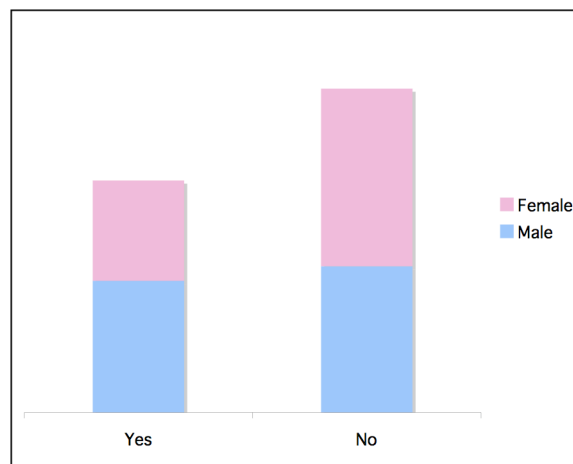


Figure 43: Level of student perception about teaching differences.

	Yes	No
Male (within gender)	47.4%	52.6%
Female (within gender)	36.1%	63.9%
TOTAL	37.9%	62.1%

Table 31: Perceived differences between male and female tutors.

### 5.3.5 Technician roles

As much of this research is about perceptions, it is important to gauge how students perceive themselves progressing once they enter the workforce. Students were asked whether they thought males or females would be more likely to be in a technician (that is, writing, editing, design, web/print) role. While both genders have the same degree, their views differed. Most students (60%) thought men and women would be considered for these roles

equally. However, when looking at the gender responses, proportionally more males (26 per cent) thought they would be in this role, while 22 per cent of females thought they would. This contrasts with a year 2000 US study, which showed women believed they would be more likely to be hired for technician roles.

	Men %	Women %	Equally %
Male	26	15	58
Female	18	22	60
Total	19	21	60

*Table 32: Students' views on being hired for "technician" roles.*

### **5.3.6 Imbalance**

Among students, 63 per cent thought there was an imbalance in gender. Among males, 58 per cent thought there was imbalance, while among females the figure was 64 per cent. There was a higher awareness of imbalance (73%) among professionals, with males (76%) more aware of the trend than females (70%). (Note: As professionals have industry experience they were asked to comment further on this, leading to additional coverage in the professional responses).

	Level of awareness
PROFESSIONALS	
Total	73%
Male	76%
Female	70%
STUDENTS	
Total	63%
Male	58%
Female	64%

*Table 33: Awareness of imbalance.*

### **5.3.7 Pay discrepancies**

More than three-quarters of students (88%) were not aware there were pay discrepancies, favouring men, within PR. Male students' lack of recognition was 74 per cent, while among females it was 76 per cent. This was based on statistics from a 2002 *PR Week* survey. However, since that survey, and in the time my research was undertaken, there is some doubt that the level of

pay discrepancy exists. Evidence is starting to emerge that salaries are now more equitable. This is what I found in my survey of Perth professionals (Table 17).

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Male	26	74
Female	24	76
Total	24	76

*Table 34: Students' levels of awareness regarding pay discrepancies.*

### **5.3.8 Socio-economic group**

Most students (41.7 per cent) came from families in the above-average income group (as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and being in the \$58k–\$70k income bracket). The breakdown was as follows:

Low (\$6k-\$21k)	Middle (\$22k-\$58k)	Above Av. (\$58-\$70k)	High (\$70k-plus)
8.3%	37.5%	41.7%	12.5%

*Table 35: Socio-economic group origins of PR students*

### **5.3.9 Traits**

Students were asked to select which one of the following traits best described them. The aim was to determine whether there was any particular general personality type that was attracted to PR. Of course, the limitation is this might not be correct, as it is the student's own impression of their personality. Most students (42 per cent) described themselves as outgoing. This was followed by personable and creative (each at 17 per cent), positive and organised (each at 8 per cent), decisive and quiet (both at 4 per cent).

### **5.3.10 Type of student in PR**

Is there a stereotypical student in PR? According to this survey, most students (67 per cent) like to “weigh up their ideas against others”, indicating they are what is commonly called “team players”. Of the remainder, 20 per cent said they preferred to produce their own ideas, and 13 per cent said they preferred to implement others' ideas.

### **5.3.11 Favourite (school) subject**

As outlined, much of the literature suggests that women are better at English (and communicating) than men, and this in turn causes those people with a predisposition to that subject to enter PR. Did university students favour English at school, thereby already having a PR-centric focus? From a list of seven core subjects, English was the most favoured subject at school (29 per cent), followed by history (26 per cent), politics, science and other languages (equal at 12.5 per cent), drama and geography (6 per cent), PE and maths (3 per cent). The results are also reflected in a survey (McCurdy, 2005) of 169 third-year south-east Queensland university PR students in which 6.3 per cent of females said English was the reason they undertook PR, while no males listed this as a factor. That English is the most favoured subject at school correlates to the study of PR students conducted by McCurdy (2005).

### **5.3.12 Influence on PR study**

Students were given six alternatives from which to choose one that most influenced their decision to study PR. Most students (37 per cent) said they “knew and enquired about PR”. This was followed by 20 per cent saying they switched to PR after starting university, and a further 17 per cent expressing a general interest in the subject. Some 13 per cent said a friend or relative told them about PR. Importantly, no students were influenced by the three other choices: someone in the industry, school careers counselors or the media.

### **5.3.13 People's views of PR**

As much of the focus groups and interviews pointed towards the perception of the industry having a possible effect on students selecting or avoiding the profession, students were asked about their view on how the public might perceive PR (How do you think most people perceive PR?). From four choices, the students were evenly split between the public ‘thinking it’s

about spin’ and ‘they’re a little unsure about it’. No students thought the general public had a positive impression about it.

This has implications for the industry, in that (a) it needs to better promote itself among possible candidates, and (b) needs to correct misconceptions among the public perception (and probably other professions).

### **5.3.14 Is PR ‘fuzzy’?**

The question was precipitated by a point raised by some during interviews and a focus group that because PR is hard to measure it can be hard to grasp, or ‘fuzzy’ in its logic. Students were asked if they agreed with the statement: ‘PR is fuzzy in its logic’. However, the high proportion of women respondents makes this result would be skewed, with 63 per cent disagreeing with the statement.

Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree
4%	33%	29%	33%

*Table 36: Students’ views on PR’s ‘fuzzy’ logic*

## **5.4 Second student survey**

I thought PR was about providing ideas and information at a senior corporate level, as well as playing a lot of golf. I now know it’s a bloody hard-working industry. (Male student).

### **5.4.1 Gender and university breakdown**

There were a total of 175 surveys completed from three universities, Curtin, Edith Cowan and Murdoch. Due to an altered course structure at Notre Dame, students from that institution were not surveyed in class. The four surveys from Notre Dame were of students who were third-year and participated in the on-line component. The overall gender breakdown was 38 males (22 per cent) and female 137 (78 per cent). These figures (once again) reflect the general states of earlier (2005) surveys and censuses that showed a 74 per cent predominance of women in the industry (comprising professionals and students). At Murdoch and ECU, the ratio of males to

females was much higher than the industry average (see below), while Curtin reflected the industry average. It is not clear why Murdoch and ECU have a higher ratio of females to males. The fact that these figures correlate to earlier statistics should further demonstrate the changing nature of the state of the industry.

#### **5.4.2 Gender and socio-economic group**

(These groups are based on the four groups defined by income by the Australian Bureau of Statistics – ABS). Most students (38 per cent) came from an average socio-economic group, followed by 25 per cent from above-average and high-income families. Low-income students represented only 12 per cent of the population. There was little variation between males and females, except that slightly more males (38%) than females (22%) from above-income families did PR. However, this was counter-balanced in the high-income group, in which 27% of females studied PR, compared to 16% of males. Overall, it could be concluded that students from low-income backgrounds do not study PR. However, this is a general trend across all university courses.

	Low	Average	Above average	High
Male	11%	35%	38%	16%
Female	113%	38%	22%	27%
Total	12%	38%	25%	25%

*Table 37: Socio-economic background of students.*

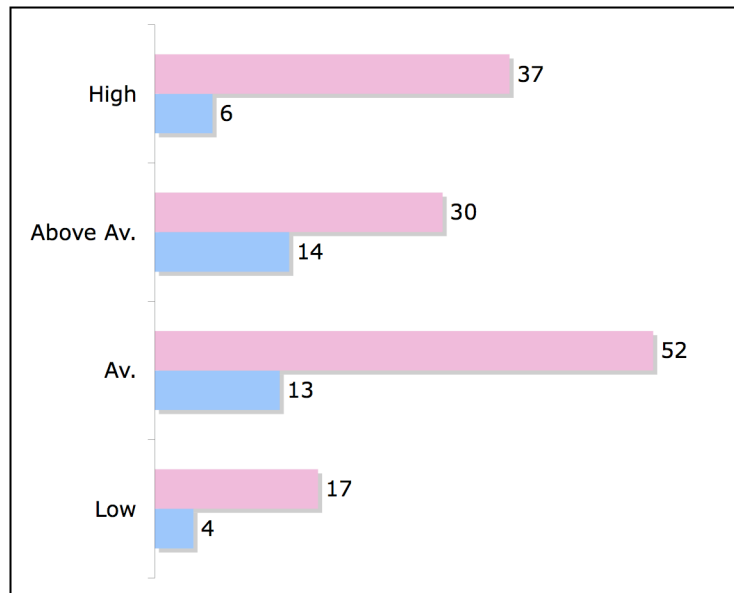


Figure 44: Breakdown of students' socio-economic groups.

### 5.4.3 Personal traits

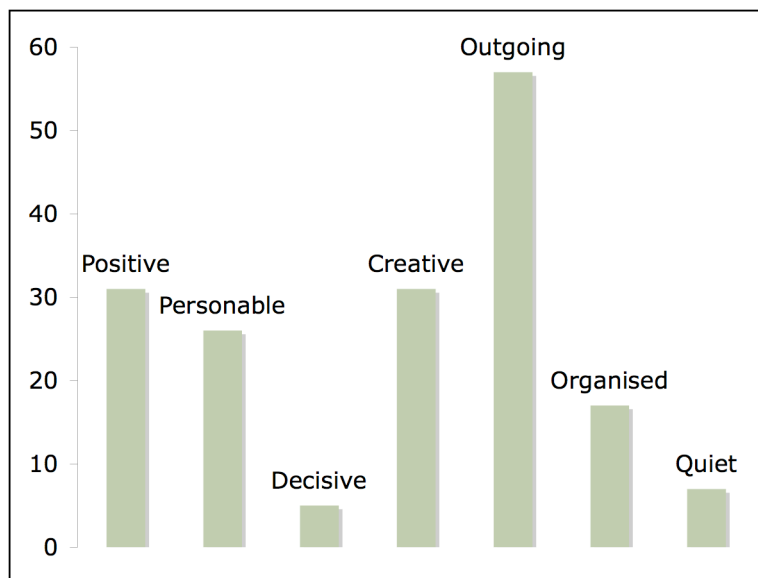


Figure 45: How students view their personality traits.

Students were asked to describe which personality traits best described them. Short of asking students to undertake psychometric testing (not within the budget, or timeframe), this was the only way to discover whether there is a certain personality trait/s that belong to those about to enter the profession. Simpson (2005) cites Holland (1959, 1962, 1966, 1982) who highlighted the importance of fit between an individual's personality and career choice.

Also known as the ‘trait theory’ (Zaccaria, 1970, as cited in Simpson, 2005), this suggests that the choice of occupation is likely to be an expression of one’s personality and that members of certain occupations are likely to have similar personality characteristics. Medical staff have found to be analytical, non-conforming and introspective with strong altruistic motivations.

A total of 57 students (32 per cent) said they were outgoing. The next two most common traits both had equal responses; those being positive and creative (31 students each, or 18 per cent). Being personable was next on the list, with 26 students (15 per cent), followed by organised (17 females only), quiet (four per cent) and decisive (three per cent). The fact that not many students said they were decisive is probably due to the fact they are students and probably finds with regard to PR that they lack the knowledge to express strong opinions.

	Positive	Personable	Decisive	Creative	Outgoing	Organised	Quiet
M	19%	23%	40%	35%	19%	0	14%
F	81%	77%	60%	65%	81%	100%	86%
Total	18%	15%	3%	18%	32%	10%	4%

*Table 38: Students’ overall views of their personality traits.*

When responses are considered among males and females separately, a clearer picture emerges of how the genders perceive their personalities. In all but two categories, the answers were similar. Table 38 (above) indicates how closely aligned male and female PR students believe their personalities are across all but two categories. The two exceptions were “creative” and “organised”. A total of 30 per cent of female respondents believe they are creative, compared to only 15 per cent of male respondents. Females also considered themselves to be much more highly organised than males, with 12 per cent of females considering this their dominant trait, while no males believe they are “organised”. The answers demonstrates that females believe their personalities are both highly creative and organised. No males indicated they were organised – a trait commonly mentioned as being important in PR, and generally regarded as being indicative of women.



As these quotes from surveys and interviews of students indicated, the industry regards “being organised” as a female trait.

Women tend to be more creative, organised and focused on finer details – all aspects needed for success in the industry (F).

Females tend to be more strict and attentive to detail, well prepared and organised (M).

Females are more strict and organised (F).

The stereotypical PR person needs to be organised, methodical, a very good communicator and network easily. That implies an outgoing person (F).

Creativity also is regarded as a necessary commodity in PR, and one which some believe fits women better than men in PR. “This new way of working, particularly when applied to public relations, is ideally suited to women, who ... can exercise their penchant for language, creativity and communication” (Chater and Gaster 1995). In her unpublished Master’s thesis, which studied 159 [US] students, Noble (2004) found “women (73.8 per cent) were more likely to agree they selected public relations as a major because of the creative aspects than did men (51.4 per cent).” Noble based her survey on a study undertaken by Fullerton and Umphrey (2001) on advertising students at two US universities. Based on that study and her own findings, Noble (2004) said: “Public relations students and advertising students possess very similar traits” (p. 5). Students, both males and females also regard creativity as a female trait, as these comments show:

I feel that generally females tend to be more creative than males (M).

Males are typically interested in and excel in numbers-based occupations, and females are typically more creative (F).

Women like being creative (M).

The field appeals to females more because it is creative and fun and includes creative writing, which I always thought females excelled at, compared to males (M).

Males tend to do commerce in general, and girls are more interested in the creative side, for example, PR (F).

PR is probably more suited to females because of the creative or communication aspects, which women tend to be better at (F).

Women are better-suited as they are more creative, persuasive and dedicated to their career (F).

Women are more creative, better at multi-tasking and communicating (F).

Similarly, professionals also believed creativity is a major factor in why females choose to study PR. As one Perth male professional commented in an interview: “Female high school students often have PR suggested [to them] because of basic psychometric assessment which identifies the creative/intuitive aspects of the profession as suitable for women.”

	Positive	Personable	Decisive	<b>Creative</b>	Outgoing	<b>Organised</b>	Quiet
M	16	16	5	<b>30</b>	30	<b>0</b>	3
F	18	15	2	<b>15</b>	34	<b>12</b>	4

*Table 39: Comparison (in percentages) on how male and female student perceive their personalities.*

Table 39 (above) lends credence to the thoughts of Anne Parry, IPR Midlands group chair and deputy MD of Quantum PR in Birmingham, UK, who said in a 2004 interview with the business website *icBirmingham*:

Women also tend to be more practical than theoretical, particularly when it comes to attention to detail. Dare I say it, but one of the main reasons behind our growing dominance is that as a general rule we are better than men at thinking on different levels all at the same time. It’s just part of our make-up. I could also argue that women are better listeners, more methodical in their decisions, less confrontational and less likely to go off in unproven directions, but I might be in danger of offending my only male colleague and business partner at Quantum and the handful of top PR men that I have enormous respect for.

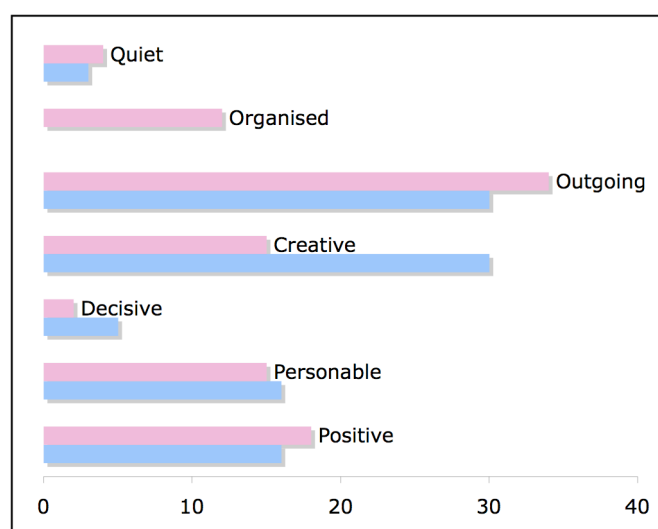


Figure 46: Self-defined personality traits.

#### 5.4.4 Subject at school

English was listed as the subject most students (34%) excelled in at school. This correlates to a US study by Noble (2004) who found 48 per cent of students listed English as their “favorite or second-favorite subject in high school”. The only variations between the two surveys was that this study showed drama (14 per cent) as the second-favourite subject, while the US study showed history as second. However, history (7 per cent) was the third selection in Perth. (Note: the results in the two surveys would vary markedly, as the US study only provided four subject choices – English, history, maths and journalism; further demonstrating that study’s limitations).

	Science	Maths	English	Lang.	History	Econ.	Art	Drama	Other
Male	3	3	10	2	2	0	1	3	5
Female	6	7	44	9	14	4	12	20	13
Total	9 (6%)	10 (6%)	54 (34%)	11 (7%)	16 (7%)	4 (10%)	13 (4%)	23 (14%)	18 (11%)

Table 40: Students’ best subjects at school.

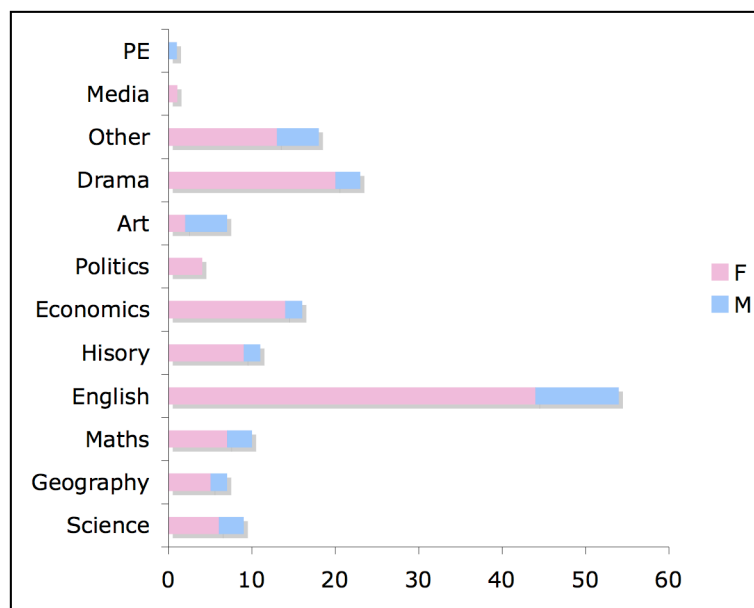


Figure 47: English stands out as PR students' best subject at school.

The breakdown by gender for subject showed both males (27 per cent) and females (35 per cent) said English was their best subject at school. That is where the similarity stopped. For females, the second subject chosen was drama (16 per cent), while 14 per cent of males chose art. Interestingly, economics rated third choice for females (11 per cent), while it was only seventh choice for males (6 per cent). Table 44 provides a comparison of all choices. (Note: "other" subjects included cultural and media studies, home economics, music [2], accounting [2], physical education [3], marketing and legal studies).

FEMALES		MALES	
English	35%	English	27%
Drama	16%	Other	14%
Economics	11%	Art	14%
Other	10%	Drama	8%
History	7%	Maths	8%
Maths	6%	Science	8%
Science	5%	Economics	6%
Geography	4%	History	6%
Politics	3%	Geography	6%
Art	2%	PE	3%
Media	1%	Politics	0%
PE	0%	Media	0%

Table 41: Male and female breakdown of best subject at school.

### 5.4.5 Influence to study PR

The most common reason for students selecting PR at university was that they knew about it and had made enquiries (26 per cent). A further 22 per cent said they were interested, indicating they probably had also made enquiries. This indicates there seems to be a good deal of information about PR available, and that students are aware of it as a subject option. However, if there is information available, it is not coming from school careers counselors, with only five students (three per cent – four females and one male) saying they received information on PR this way. In fact, all categories, except industry contact, provided more information than school counselors. The media (at eight per cent) was a better source of information, even if the general consensus is that it provides a distorted picture of PR.

(Note: “Other” categories (17 per cent) included: ‘PR was closest to events’, ‘suited my personality’, ‘thought it would be interesting’ [2], ‘the women’, ‘didn’t want to do accounting’, ‘complimented (sic) advertising’ [2], ‘internship manager’, ‘fits in well’, ‘my sister’ [2], ‘uni lecturer’, ‘needed to get into uni’, ‘uni guide book’, ‘parents’ [2], ‘I liked writing, so I thought of PR’, ‘an elective that suited me’, ‘part of Masters’, ‘wanted to mix it with marketing’, ‘through employment’.

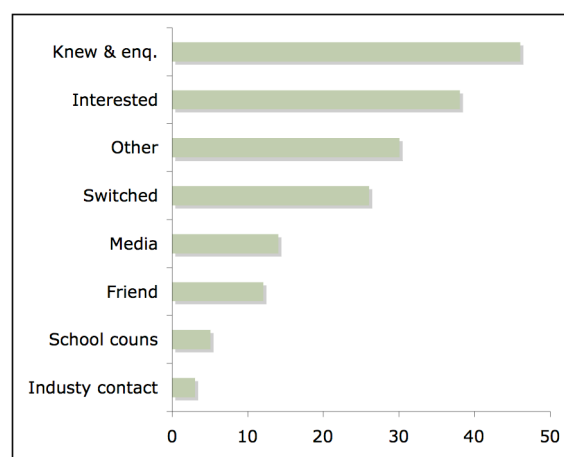


Figure 48: Most influential sources of information about PR.

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Knew and enquired	26%
Always interested	22%
Other	17%
Switched course	15%
Media	8%
Friend	7%
School counsellor	3%
Industry contact	2%

*Table 42: Reasons why male and female students choose PR.*

There were few differences in the way in which male and female students obtained their information (table 46). Most females (27 per cent) and males (26 per cent) knew about PR and made enquiries. Proportionally, slightly more females (9 per cent), compared to three per cent of males, obtained their information about PR from the media. This demonstrates males and females get information on PR from the same sources.

FEMALE		MALE	
Knew and enquired	27%	Knew and enquired	26%
Always interested	22%	Always interested	22%
Other	16%	Other	21%
Switched	15%	Switched	14%
Media	9%	Friend	8%
Friend	7%	School counsellor	3%
School counsellor	3%	Media	3%
Industry contact	1%	Industry contact	3%

*Table 43: Areas of PR influence to male and female students.*

#### **5.4.6 Gender and the way people view PR**

Most students (40 per cent) believe people believe PR is mostly about ‘spin’. A further 32 per cent think most people are unsure about PR, with 13 per cent not knowing anything about PR. Only 11 per cent of students thought the public had a positive impression of PR. Male students were more skeptical of the public’s views about PR, with 54 per cent believing the public thought it was about ‘spin’, compared to only 36 per cent of female students. This was reflected in the fact that 13 per cent of females thought the public had a positive impression of PR, while among male students it was only three per cent.

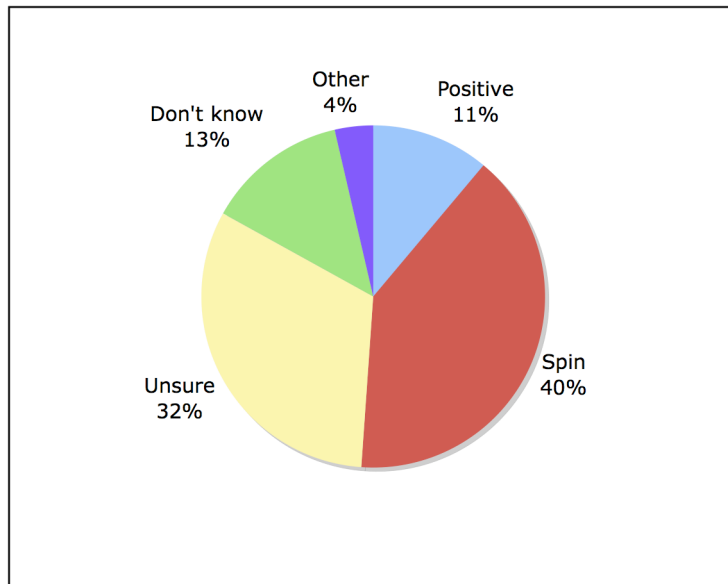


Figure 49: Students' beliefs on the way the public perceives PR.

#### 5.4.7 Gender and preferred work situation

In a work situation (university) the majority of students (65 per cent) preferred to balance their ideas against others, followed by 21 per cent, who prefer to follow others' ideas. The remaining 14 per cent prefer to follow their own ideas. Slightly more males (43 per cent) prefer to follow their own ideas, compared to only 31 per cent of females. This is a surprising statistic (particularly as there was such as strong female sampling). The inference is that males may be slightly more confident (and perhaps assertive) in the university work situation, or perhaps more individualistic, rather than team-orientated. Both males (49 per cent) and females (51 per cent) like to have a balanced approach.

	Own ideas	Other's ideas	Balance of ideas
Male	43%	8%	49%
Female	31%	18%	51%
Total	14%	21%	65%

Table 44: Students' preferred method of work.

#### 5.4.8 Is PR ‘fuzzy’ in its logic?

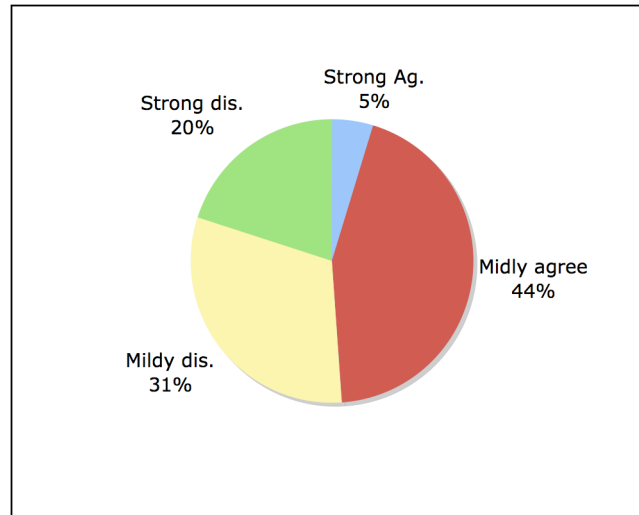


Figure 50: Students, PR and ‘fuzzy’ logic. Half agree PR is ‘fuzzy’.

Students were evenly split (51 per cent agree to some extent, and 49 per cent disagree to some extent) on whether PR is “fuzzy” in its logic (meaning some of its outcomes are hard to measure). However, the majority viewpoint was that 44 per cent mildly agree with the statement.

The level of disagreement among males and females was the only area of difference. When males’ and females’ attitudes are considered separately, proportionally more males (38 per cent) than females (15 per cent) strongly disagree with the statement. Most females (34 per cent) only mildly disagree that PR is “fuzzy”.

	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree
Male	5%	35%	22%	38%
Female	4%	47%	34%	15%

Table 45: How each gender feels about PR being ‘fuzzy’.



#### **5.4.9 Students' (pre-study) perception about PR**

If the public is misinformed about PR, are students also influenced by perceptions of the profession? According to students, the answer is 'yes', with 58.3 per cent saying they study the subject because of their perceptions of it. What those perceptions are is a question which is canvassed in the survey's open-ended answers. Figures were virtually identical across the genders (58% "yes" for females, and 59% for males).

	Yes	No
Male	22	15
Female	79	58
Total	101	73

*Table 46: Perception of PR prior to study.*

#### **5.4.10 Does perception of PR influence students to study it?**

As for the above question, students were split equally, with half saying their perception of the subject did influence their decision to study it. There was also an equal split across gender.

	Yes	No
Male	18	19
Female	69	68
Total	87	87

*Table 47: There is an even split among males and females on perception as an influence.*

The responses to the open-ended question produced some clearly-defined themes, including: students' surprise at the amount of work involved in PR; that PR involved a lot of writing, and that their initial perception about PR was wrong (that probably relates more to the amount of work involved, and that they actually had to write essays and prepare communications plans). It is in the area of their perception that mostly relates to my hypothesis that people enter PR because of the perceptions about it – that it is perceived to be a female job, and that it is seen as an easy study option – and that these perceptions are a result of societal conditioning, created largely by the media, which portrays the industry as something anyone can do.

## 5.5 Common (survey) questions

Some questions from the first two surveys featured similar themes. I have included them at the end of the chapter in order to better compare responses.

### 5.5.1 PR sector specialisation/interest

Question five presented students with a list of 11 areas of PR specialisation. Students were asked to list their top three preferences. This was meant to indicate the sector of PR in which they would like to specialise. This has limitations in that their views of PR, and therefore their area of interest, will more than likely change during their course of study. Professionals were asked a similar question – which area is of most interest?

	Overall %	Male % (order)	Female % (order)
Entertainment	28	38 (1st)	27 (1st)
Fashion	17	6 (=4th)	20 (2nd)
Tourism	17	11 (=3rd)	18 (3rd)
NFP	12	17 (2nd)	11 (=4th)
International	11	11 (=3rd)	11 (=4th)
Health	3	0	3 (5th)
Food	3	6 (=4th)	2 (=6th)
Financial	2	0	2 (=6th)
Industrial	2	0	2 (=6th)

Table 48: Type of PR in which students would prefer to specialise.

Responses differed markedly among males and female students. This is to be expected, given the high number of women in the survey.

Entertainment PR is clearly an area in which all students want to work. It was the leading choice overall (28%) and among males (38%) and females (27%). Noble (2004) also found “sports public relations (29 per cent) and entertainment public relations (24 per cent) were the most popular choices for public relations careers [among US students].”

While beauty and tourism were the second choice overall (at 17% each), there was a clear difference among males in the selection of fashion (ranked fifth choice at 6%) and females (ranked second choice at 27%). Both males (11%) and females (18%) ranked tourism as their third choice.

Working in the not-for-profit sector was selected by 12 per cent of students as the overall fourth choice. Males indicated a greater desire to work in this sector, with 17 per cent of men selecting it (and as their second choice), compared to 11 per cent of women (equal fourth choice). This is interesting, as it says men (at least those studying PR) do have those ‘innate’ qualities of compassion, empathy, which are so often associated with women.

The International PR sector comprises work within government and quasi-government organisations such as the United Nations. It was the fourth choice by 11 per cent of all students, both males and female. It also ranked similarly for males (equal third choice) and females (equal fourth).

Health and the food industry PR each only registered three per cent interest. No males were interested in health. For food, six per cent of males were interested, compared to three per cent of females.

Financial and industrial PR did not register among males, and only two per cent of females chose both of them as their main areas of interest.

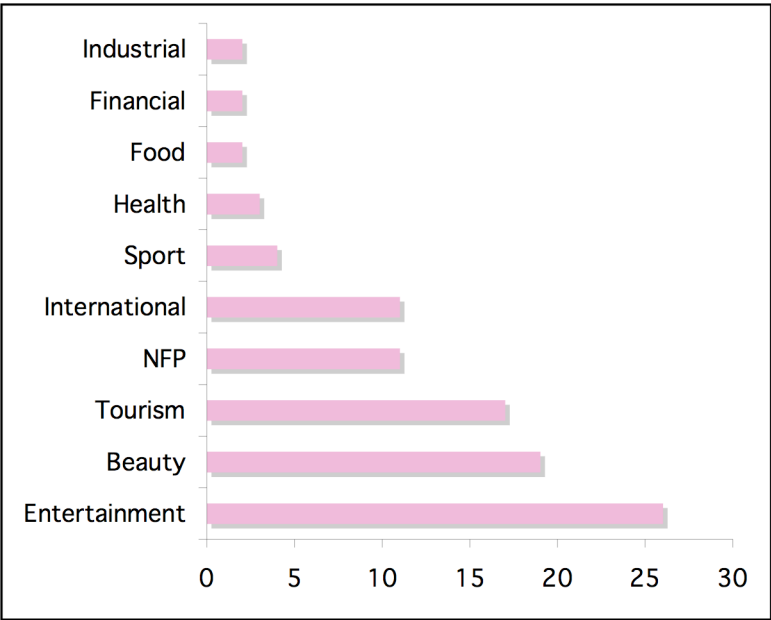
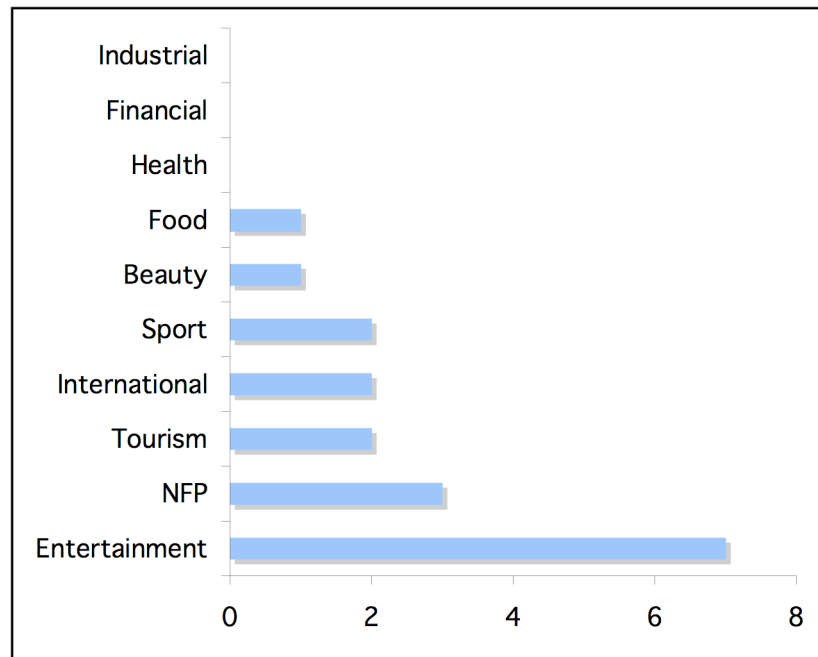


Figure 51: Female students' industry sector of interest.



*Figure 52: Male students' industry sectors of interest.*

Professionals, like students, rated entertainment highly (second choice) as a sector in which they were interested (Figure 38). However, this result is skewed. Of the 18 per cent of the population that selected this as an option, 15 per cent were women. Clearly, however, women like to work in the entertainment PR sector. The leading sector of interest for professionals was Information Technology, with 22 per cent of respondents selecting it. The financial and government sectors were equal third choice (10 per cent). Women did not register interest in the following sectors: travel, health, sports, mining and property.

### **5.5.2 Areas of interest**

I could walk into a university and ask who wants to work in entertainment or tourism and the hands would shoot up. And I could ask who wants to work in investor relations, and no hands would go up. Then I'd ask who wants to earn \$100K in eight to 10 years? The hands would go up. Of those, I'd ask who would want to work in investor relations, and the hands would drop. So I'd walk out and say none of you are going to earn much. – MD of a Perth PR consultancy.

The areas of interest were reflected in question 5 to students, and in question 12 to professionals. Students were asked what three areas of PR (in order) interested them most, from 12 choices.

	Total%	Male%	Female%
Events	40	6	34
Media	26	4	22
Project	17	3	14
IMC	8	2	6
Com. Relations.	4	1	3
Goal-setting	4	1	3
Writing	4	1	3
Rep. Mgt.	3	0	3
Investor	2	0	2
Budgets	1	0	1
Production	1	0	1

*Table 49: PR sectors of interest to students, expressed as a percentage of the gender group.*

Both male and female students agreed on their five first areas of interest (in order): events management, media relations, project management, community relations and integrated marketing communication. The only noticeable difference (and this was marginal) was that more females (37 per cent) selected events management as their first choice, compared to 27 per cent of males. This follows traditional employment patterns within PR, in which females have traditionally performed that function.

Males did not choose any of the following as a first, second or third choice: community relations, reputation management, investor relations, budgets and production. While this may indicate they have yet to develop any interest in these areas, it may also demonstrate that females have a better all-around appreciation of the many facets of PR.

Noble (2004) found that in the US, sports public relations (29.4 per cent) and entertainment public relations (23.8 per cent) were the most popular choices for public relations careers. Her comments pose an interesting sidebar to this study, regarding the image/perception of the profession as created by the media (both through entertainment (TV shows such as

*Absolutely Fabulous*, *Spin City* and *Absolute Power*) and the way the news media portrays PR people (that is, as ‘spin’ merchants).

Why are students selecting these aspects of public relations? We are all consumers of the media, and students’ selection of sports and entertainment public relations fields may be due to their greater familiarity with these via the news media and television. Students may gravitate to these specific areas of public relations because these areas receive more news coverage. What part do the apparent glamour, fame and fortune of the sports and entertainment fields have to do with student interest? Further studies may differentiate between the interests of students who wish to be in the sports and entertainment public relations fields versus those interested in other aspects of the public relations industry (Noble 2004).

Professionals are mostly interested in Integrated Marketing Communication (24 per cent), media relations (23 per cent) and reputation management (17 per cent).

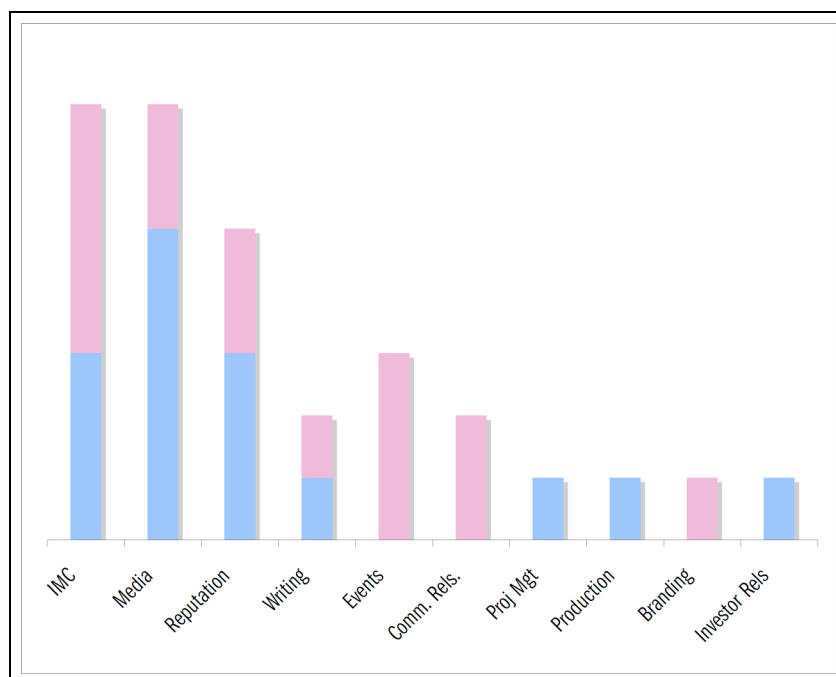


Figure 53: Professionals’ areas of interest.

### 5.5.3 Preferred workplace (sector)

Students and professionals were asked the type of PR in which they would prefer to work, and had to select one sector from several alternatives. The

common sectors were: consultancy, government, non-profit and corporate (in-house). Because students are not working they had two additional choices – ‘anything I can get’, and ‘undecided’. Most students (52%) list corporate PR as their first choice. Nineteen per cent were undecided, and nine per cent said they would work at any PR job. Consultancies, non-profit organisations and government were highly unpopular choices.

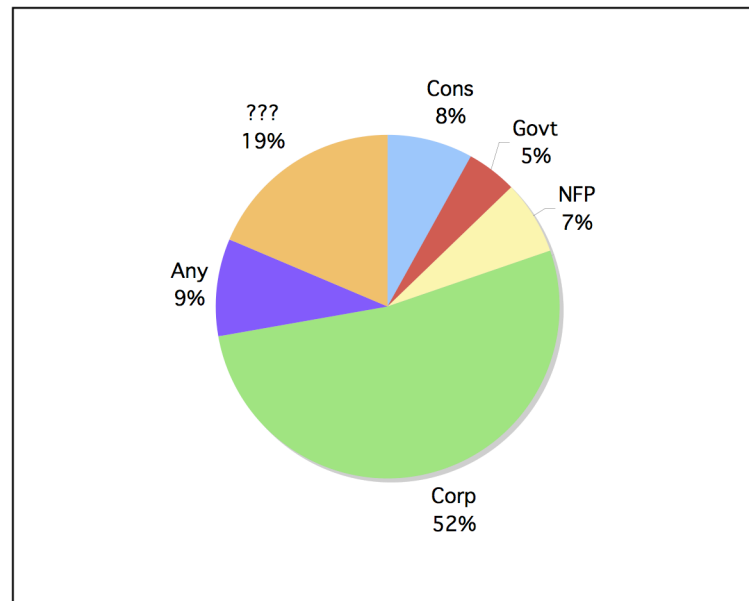


Figure 54: Students' preferred workplaces.

#### 5.5.4 Influence of gender

Both groups were asked if they thought gender might influence a person's entry into PR. Apart from the basic statistical outcome, the aim of this question was to elicit respondents' views on the fact that being either male or female might influence people in commencing a PR career. There was a marked difference in the way the questions were presented to each group. The professional survey, which was sent earlier than the students survey, did not have the option of a “not really” response. My original intention was to force respondents into making a distinct choice, therefore prompting comments in the open-ended answer (which happened). This decision was also a result of the fact that there was likely to be a relatively low response to the survey, and the priority was to obtain as much qualitative data as possible.

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not really (%)
STUDENTS			
Male	53	0	47
Female	27	18	55
Total	31	15	54
PROFESSIONALS			
Male	65	35	
Female	50	50	
Total	56	44	

Table 50: Students' and professionals' opinion on gender as an influence into PR.

### 5.5.5 Awareness of imbalance

Students and professionals were provided with statistics showing the gender balance of PR and asked if they were aware of it. Professionals were more aware of the imbalance. Female students and professionals were more aware of the imbalance than their male colleagues. This gap was slightly more pronounced among professionals (6% among students, and 11% among professionals).

	Yes (%)	No (%)
STUDENTS		
Male	58	42
Female	64	36
Total	63	37
PROFESSIONALS		
Male	71	29
Female	82	18
Total	78	22

Table 51: Students' and professionals' awareness of gender imbalance.

Note: among the universities, Murdoch students were more aware of the imbalance (39.7%), followed by Curtin (30.2), Notre Dame (17.2) and ECU (12.9).

A total of 78 per cent of professionals said they were aware most of the industry was female. As the chart (below) shows once again, women were more aware of the trend, with 82 per cent aware of it, compared to only 71 per cent of males being aware. This question tried to get to the heart of my study, which is why feminisation has occurred. There was a good response (31) in the open-ended answers. The most common reason put forward was that the industry is simply perceived as being feminine, with 10 respondents



directly stating that. In conjunction with that theme, it is perceived as being glamorous (three), a “soft” career option (three). The next most popular (eight answers) theory was that women have better skills.

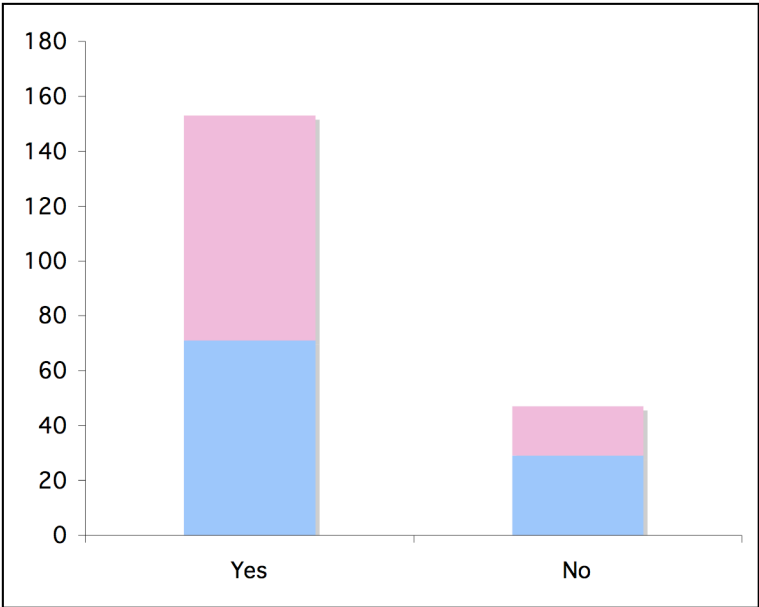


Table 52: Professionals' awareness of imbalance.

Across both groups, females were more aware of the gender imbalance than males. Is this in itself an indication of what many papers, textbooks and practitioners are saying: that women are more intuitive and can pick up on issues?

Only 43 per cent of professionals were aware of the imbalance, compared to 63 per cent of students. Female professionals had a higher awareness (82%) compared to males (71%). Among students, 64 per cent of females were aware, compared to 58 per cent of males.

	Awareness %
PROFESSIONALS	
Total	43
Male	71
Female	82
STUDENTS	
Total	63
Male	58
Female	64

Table 53: Level of awareness of imbalance.

### 5.5.6 Ability to build rapport

This question attempts to gauge whether people believe men or women are better at building rapport with clients. Results varied markedly between the two groups. Students (both male and female) almost overwhelmingly said neither men or women would be better at building rapport with clients. Most (90%) said neither would be better, with the remaining 10 per cent split between men and women. However, professionals were evenly split, both overall and by gender, with 25 per cent saying men would be better, 26 per cent saying women and 39 per cent neither.

	Men (%)	Women (%)	Neither (%)
STUDENTS			
Male	5	5	90
Female	5	25	70
Total	5	22	73
PROFESSIONALS			
Male	29	33	38
Female	24	38	38
Total	25	36	39

Table 54: Students' and professionals' opinions on building client rapport.

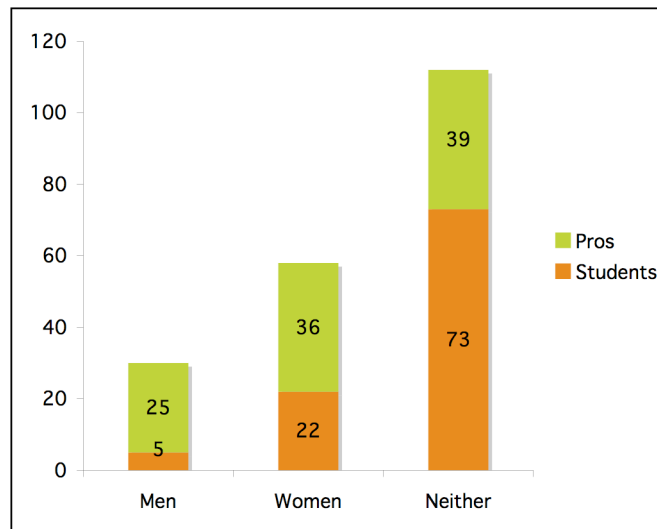


Figure 55: Level of students' and professionals' confidence in the ability of males or females to build rapport with clients

### 5.5.7 Qualities of PR practitioners

Students had eight choices. They could choose three. The top choices, scored on a three-two-one points basis were:

1. Verbal skills 65
2. Organisational 55
3. Strategic skills 46
4. Planning 39
5. Writing 33
6. Media 17
7. Listening 15

### 5.5.8 Reasons for entering and working within PR.

Students were given nine choices. The result of their responses (in order of importance) was:

1. Work with people 28%
2. Job satisfaction 21%
3. Variety 21%
4. Creative 17%
5. Current affairs 6%
6. Money 3%
7. Prestige 2%
8. Perceived benefits 1%

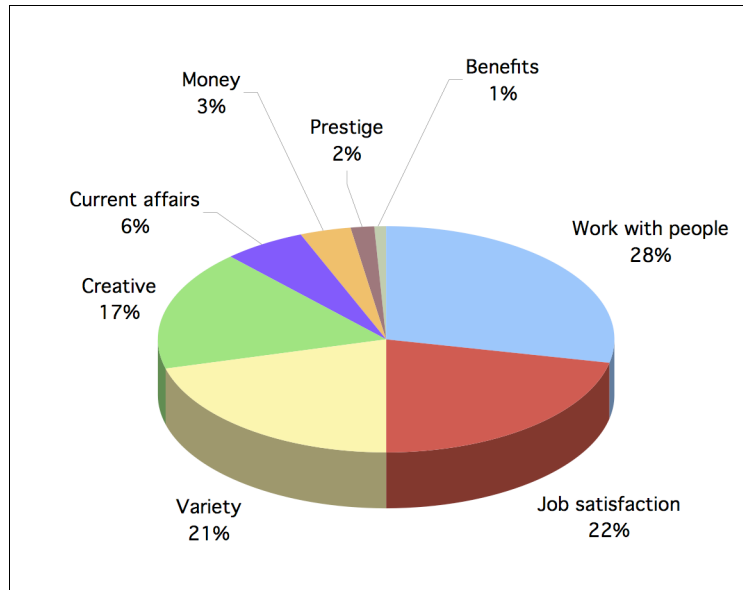


Figure 56: Students' reasons for studying PR.

Among males, the order and percentage of respondents who selected a particular reason for studying PR was:

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Creativity                               | 44% |
| 2. Variety                                  | 23% |
| 3. Job satisfaction and working with people | 9%  |
| 4. Benefits, current affairs and prestige   | 5%  |

Among females the results showed:

- |                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| 1. Working with people | 32% |
| 2. Job satisfaction    | 24% |
| 3. Variety             | 21% |
| 4. Creativity          | 12% |
| 5. Current affairs     | 6%  |
| 6. Money               | 4%  |
| 7. Prestige            | 1%  |

The responses varied among males and females. The clear difference is that males and females clearly have different reasons for studying PR. This is reflected in the top two choices, which differed. Forty-four per cent of males

chose creativity and variety as their leading selection (compared to only 12 per cent of females), with variety (23 per cent) the second choice. The top two choices for women were working with people (32 per cent, compared to 9 per cent for males) and job satisfaction (24 per cent, compared to nine per cent for males).

	People	Money	Satisfaction	Benefits	Current Affairs	Variety	Prestige	Creative
M	9	0	9	5	5	23	5	44
F	32	4	24	0	6	21	1	12
T	33	4	25	1	7	24	2	20

*Table 55: Summary of reasons why students study PR; expressed as a percentage of the population.*

Additional points of interest were:

- Males across all universities do not consider working with people to be important when considering a PR career, with only two males selecting this.
- Money is not an important consideration for students choosing PR as a career. Only four females chose this. No one from ECU thought money was important.
- An interest in current affairs was higher among women than men, particularly at Notre Dame and Murdoch Universities. No one at Curtin and only one male at ECU thought this a consideration in selecting a PR career.
- While creativity is a factor considered by most students to be important, only one female student at ECU selected this as a factor. This is surprising, as the PR course is part of the School of Creative Industries.

			Reasons for studying PR							Total
University			Work with people	Money	Job satisfaction	Benefis	Current affairs	Variety	Prestige	
Notre Dame	Gender	Male	1					1		4
		female	3	1	2		2	3		3
	Total		4	1	2		2	4		7
Murdoch	Gender	Male	1		2				1	2
		female	13	1	8		4	7		7
	Total		14	1	10		4	7	1	9
Curtin	Gender	Male				1		2		2
		female	10	2	8			8	1	1
	Total		10	2	8	1		10	1	3
ECU	Gender	Male					1	1		2
		female	5		5			2		1
	Total		5		5		1	3		1

Table 56: Students' reasons for studying PR (by university).

Perth PR professionals were asked to choose (in order) what made PR a good career. The phrasing was different to reflect the fact that professionals had time to consider and evaluate what was driving their careers. The choices were also different, and included money, career, variety, creativity, and mental challenge, along with room for respondents to add another aspect of their choosing, of which only one did (a flexible workplace). Job satisfaction was found to be highest among females. When asked if they would choose PR as a career again, 72 per cent of women said they would, compared to 50 per cent of males.

For professionals, the reasons for choosing PR were:

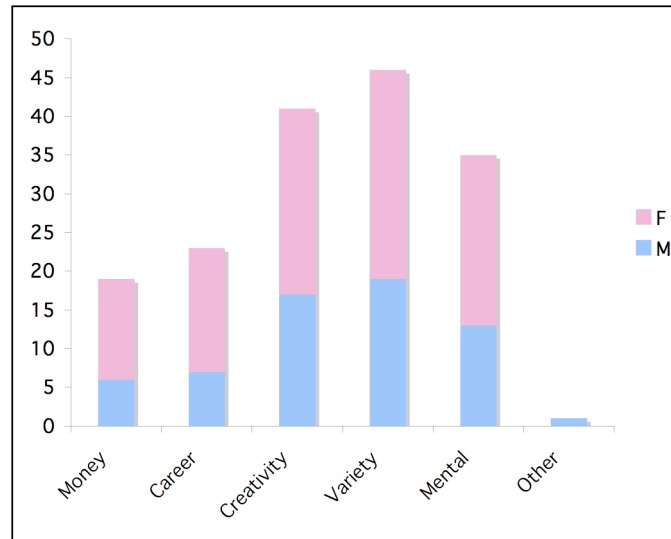
1. Variety 31%
2. Creativity 29%
3. Mental challenge 25%
4. Career 15%
5. Money 5%

There was no variation in order of selection between either gender, which contrasts starkly to the different reasons male and female students gave.

Clearly, variety and creativity are important factors for choosing PR among students and professionals. However, among female students these two factors were third and fourth choices respectively. Female students chose “working with people” and “job satisfaction” as their top two choices.

	Money	Career	Creativity	Variety	Mental	Other
M	10	11	27	29	21	2
F	13	16	24	25	22	0
Total	12	14	25	27	21	1

*Table 57: Professionals' opinions on what makes a good PR career, expressed as a percentage.*



*Figure 57: Professionals' views on what makes a good career.*

### **5.5.9 Career barriers**

Respondents simply had to answer yes or no as to whether they perceived any barriers to their careers. There was a marked difference in the overall response between students and professionals in what they thought were barriers to their careers.

Students were split evenly on whether there were barriers that could affect their careers. Among male students, 63 per cent thought there were impediments, while only 53 per cent of females held that opinion.

Among professionals 75 per cent listed barriers – 12 per cent higher than students. This may simply reflect the naivety of youth and/or the years of experience/cynicism that practitioners have. Unlike the students, the percentage response among professionals was consistent across gender, with 76 per cent of males saying there were barriers, while among females it was 74 per cent.

	Yes (%)	No (%)
STUDENTS	50	50
Male	63	37
Female	47	53
PROFESSIONALS	75	25
Male	76	24
Female	74	26

Table 58: Respondents' concerns about career barriers.

### 5.5.10 Suitability for PR

Both students and professionals were asked if they thought men or women were better suited to a career in PR. It was a contentious question designed to get people thinking. Contrary to some respondents' replies, this was not designed to be sexist. Judging by the responses, most professionals (70 per cent, and three of them men) thought women were better suited to be in PR. Four per cent thought men were better suited, and 42 per cent said gender either did not, or should not, enter into it. One woman thought men were better suited to PR. Even though most people made a choice, they also qualified it in their open-ended answers, with 13 of the 28 open-ended answers qualified by saying gender should not really enter into the equation.

	Men%	Women%	Neither%
Students (total)	3	36	61
Male	14	53	33
Female	3	73	24
Professionals (total)	4	42	70
Male	5	26	69
Female	4	38	59

Table 59: How students and professionals ranked each gender's suitability for PR. Results are expressed as a percentage of the group.



## 5.6 Conclusions

The statistics, which proved the phenomenon and provided further impetus to conduct this study, show the trend of increasing female predominance across three countries (the US, UK and Australia) to be similar, and prove that there has been a rapid increase by women into PR in the past 20 years.

While I initially thought the survey data would act more as a guide for the “rich” nature of the qualitative phases of the study (i.e., what I could put towards participants in interviews and focus groups) it yielded a wealth of material and showed distinct trends about the way the profession is perceived by students and professionals.

The results of each question are, by themselves, self-explanatory and therefore, in effect, mini conclusions. However, some of the more notable aspects of the surveys were:

- Both groups are aware of the gender imbalance, with females in both groups more aware of it than males.
- Both professionals (70%) and students (63%) thought women were better suited to PR.
- Variety was among the most highly-ranked reason why both professionals and students undertake PR. Money is not an important consideration among both groups.
- Not many students consider an interest in current affairs to be important in PR.
- Both males and female students both list entertainment PR as their main area of PR sector interest.
- Females still seems to be “pigeonholed” into technician-type roles. While at university, they either think this is what they will end up doing, and those in the workforce tend to either gravitate to it, or are merely allocated those roles.