



Gender-Fair Advertising in New Zealand: How Inclusive is Recruitment in the Construction Industry?

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Introduction

- Labour force in New Zealand comprises 47.4% of women, but the construction sector employs only 16% of women (MBIE, 2024).
- To attract more women into the sector, talent acquisition space has been transforming with strategic efforts to increase gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language in job advertisements (Barkley, 2022).



Figure 1. New Zealand construction workforce by gender from 2013-2023. (Source: MBIE, 2024, p 18.)

Research Objective

- Evaluating construction job vacancies in New Zealand to determine if gender inclusivity is practised in the talent acquisition space.
- **Main RQ: How do recruitment practices influence gender diversity in the New Zealand construction industry?**
- Sub Questions
 - What practices exist around the usage of gender-inclusive language in job advertisements?
 - What strategies are used to make the recruitment processes equitable?

Research Design

- Methodology: Explorative study
- Research method: Content analysis
- Primary Data: Job advertisements between October to December of 2023 on Seek.co.nz
- Analysed using Kat Matfield's (n.d.) Gender Decoding Tool
- Tool scans and “then calculates the relative proportion of masculine-coded and feminine-coded words to reach an overall verdict on the gender-coding of the advert” (para 4).

Gender Decoder

[What is this?](#) [Check an ad](#) [FAQ](#)

Finding subtle bias in job ads

Without realising it, we all use language that is subtly 'gender-coded'. Society has certain expectations of what men and women are like, and how they differ, and this seeps into the language we use. Think about "bossy" and "feisty": we almost never use these words to describe men.

This linguistic gender-coding shows up in job adverts as well, and research has shown that it puts women off applying for jobs that are advertised with masculine-coded language.👉

This site is a quick way to check whether a job advert has the kind of subtle linguistic gender-coding that has this discouraging effect. [Find out more about how this works.](#)

Paste your ad text here

Check this ad

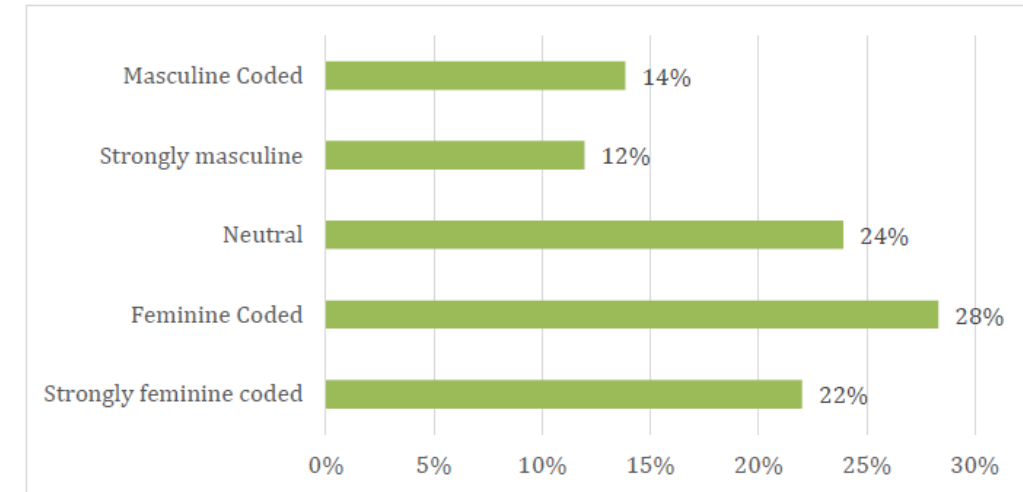
Research Findings

- The quantitative analysis included 169 jobs advertised
- Each job was categorised into one of the five classifications: neutral, feminine-coded, strongly feminine-coded, masculine-coded and strongly masculine-coded.
- Gender-inclusive language prevails in these adverts, potentially making them more appealing to women.

| Category | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Masculine-coded words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active- • adventurous • aggress- • ambitio- • analy- • assert- • athlet- • autonom- • battle- • boast- • challeng- • champion- • compet- • confident- • courag- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decid- • decision- • decisive- • defend- • determin- • domina- • driven- • fearless- • fight- • force- • greedy- • headstrong- • hierarch- • hostil- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impulsive- • independen- • individual- • intellect- • lead- • logic- • objective- • opinion- • outspoken- • persist- • principle- |
| Feminine-coded words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree- • affectionate- • child- • cheer- • collab- • commit- • communal- • compassion- • connect- • considerate • cooperat- • co-operat- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • depend- • emotiona- • empath- • feel- • flatterable- • gentle- • honest- • interpersonal- • interdependen- • kind- • kinship- • loyal- • modesty- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nag- • nurtur- • pleasant- • polite- • quiet- • respon- • sensitiv- • submissive- • support- • sympath- • tender- • together- • trust- |

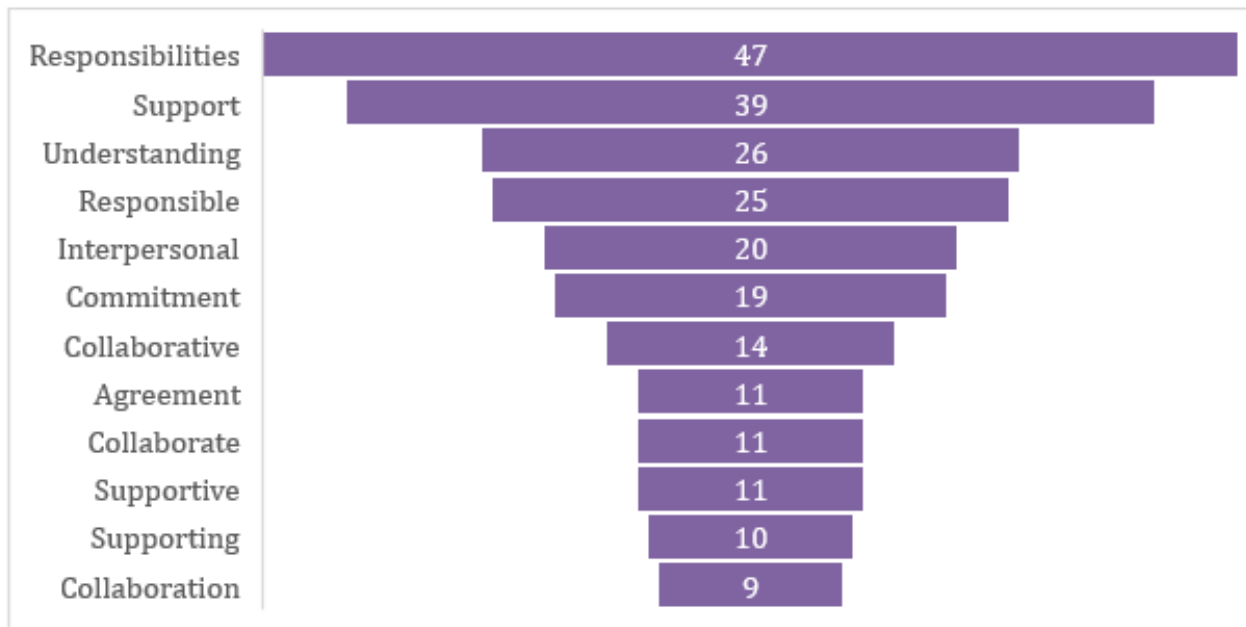
Research Findings

- A higher percentage of job advertisements (50%) were 'feminine' coded, 24% of advertised positions were coded without gender biases (neutral)
- A strategic approach to quell gender stereotypes and promote equal opportunities is evident in NZ talent acquisition space.
- The industry mindset is changing, showcasing ongoing adaptation and improvement in recruitment strategies, thus accentuating gender diversity and equality.

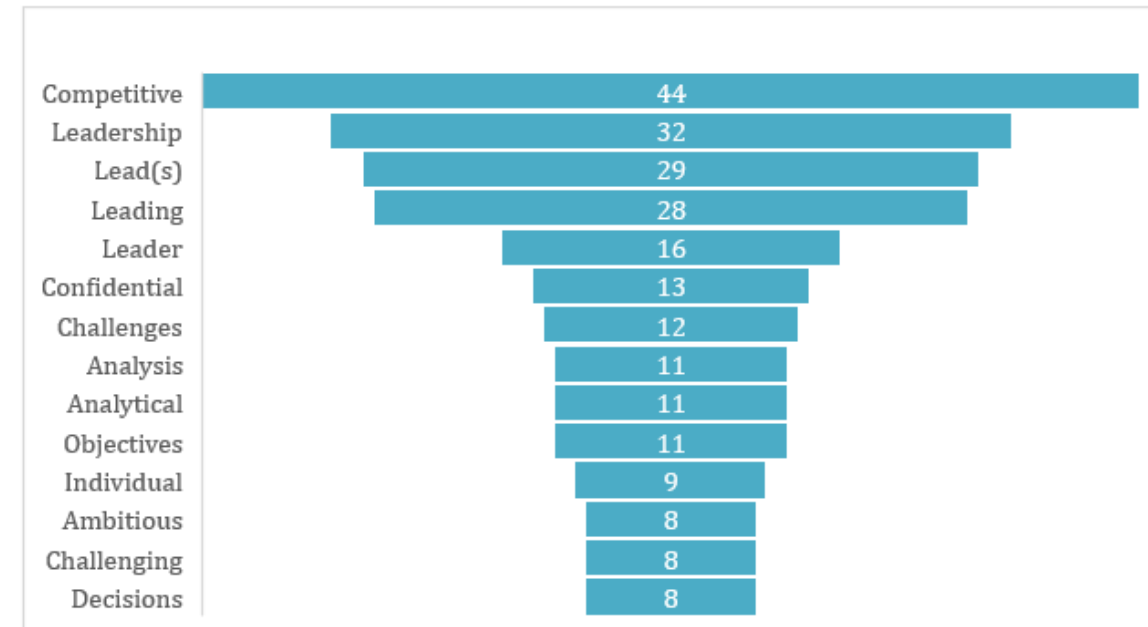


Research Findings

- The research shows an increase in gender-neutral words, but even gender-definite words and attribute words that seem gender-neutral can contribute to signalling gender preference in job posts (Bem and Bem 1973).



Popular choice of feminine coded words in construction job advertisements



Popular choice of masculine-coded words in construction job advertisements.

Research Findings

- The findings prove that gender-coded language is widely used in New Zealand construction industry job advertisements.
- Findings are similar to a 2022 study that reviewed construction job listings in major global metropolitans such as New York, London, Dublin, Sydney, and Auckland (Ramirez, 2022).
- The study highlighted that both male and female-coded words were used in advertisements, and surprisingly, the advertisements were increasingly becoming more female-coded.

Research Findings

- According to Hu et al. (2022), biases are easily detected in job text by use of specific words “commonly associated with a specific gender, e.g., ambitious is usually considered masculine and considerate is usually considered feminine even though both words can be used to describe people of any gender” (p. 2).
- He and Kang (2022) affirm that gender-neutral language in job advertisements for “male-dominated jobs increases the gender diversity of applicants by attracting more people (not only women but also men) who may not strongly adhere to the expectations traditionally associated with male gender identity” (p. 1).

Conclusions & Recommendations

- NZ construction is becoming a more gender-inclusive environment
- Gender-coded language in job advertisements still prevails, but with greater use of feminine-coded language.
- For the maintenance of gender equality in the sector, the use of gender-neutral language is highly recommended.
- If recruitment processes continue to advance and become gender-neutral, the masculine nature of the construction industry can be transformed into a gender-inclusive environment.
- The elimination of gender-coded language may assist in prohibiting stereotypes and reduce the differentiation between roles and responsibilities according to gender.

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Q&A

Thank you

