Fueling the Future

The Talent Crisis in Oil and Gas

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Fueling the Future

The Talent Crisis in Oil and Gas

As the global economy shifts, the industry's biggest challenge isn't extraction—it's attraction.

Study conducted by

Arizona State University and Covo Intelligence

Supported by

iSAW International, Women10x Energy, WPC Energy and SAIT Southern Alberta Institute of Technology

SUGGESTED CITATION

Fueling the Future: The Talent Crisis in Oil and Gas (2026) Report, Professor Jennifer Richter and Colby Volt from Arizona State University and Covo Intelligence, with supporting contributions from iSAW International, Women10x Energy, WPC Energy and SAIT Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.

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What's inside.

Preface.

The energy sector is currently undergoing massive transformations. From new energy users such as data centers, to new innovations in extraction and production, as well as swiftly changing geopolitical situations in many Oil and Gas (O&G) producing countries, the industry must respond by focusing on its major strength: people. Two voices from inside the energy sector — a trades educator and an upstream engineer — frame the findings ahead with hard-earned wisdom, conviction, and honesty.

"This conversation is for everyone."

The rapidly changing world brings growing pressure to strengthen global energy security. Energy has a transformative impact on people's lives, directly correlating with improved quality of life. Reliable access to energy underpins households, healthcare, education, and essential services, supporting broader social well-being and economic development.

Meeting future energy demand will require significant effort, advanced technology, and a highly skilled workforce. The sector is entering a period of major transformation and growth, with substantial increases in energy-related jobs across both traditional and renewable industries. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), global energy jobs are projected to rise to between 106 million and 139 million by 2030. Within that, renewable energy employment alone is expected to more than double from 17.4 million to 38.2 million, highlighting the accelerating need for talent across all areas of the energy transition.

To meet this demand, the industry must build a workforce that is both sustainable and equitable. We will need the best and brightest to solve the challenges ahead , not just 50% of them. Attracting and retaining women is more critical than ever. Expanding human-resource capacity requires education, training, and policies that foster balanced, inclusive workplaces. Ensuring these programs address barriers faced by women and other underrepresented groups is essential for long-term success.

Heidi-Lynne Balasch

CEO PPDM Association
WPC Energy Canada Board Member
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

WPC ENERGY | CANADA

While much of the dialogue in this report focuses on women in energy, this conversation is for everyone. Progress depends on collective effort. As a mother to both a son and a daughter, my hope is that the next generation will help bridge both the energy gap and the gender gap together.

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The industry has evolved in many ways since then, though progress in some areas has been slower than I had hoped. This report is part of the ongoing effort to accelerate that progress and ensure the future of energy is shaped by all who have the talent and passion to contribute.

"The answer is women."

Honored as I am to be asked to preface this report on the talent crisis in oil and gas, I am also dismayed by some of its most important findings. How is it that we find ourselves here? How have we arrived at a place where the number of women working in the energy industry is dropping, and the perceptions of DEI are overwhelmingly negative within the sector?

For decades, countless women have worked to sit at tables and desks big and small; incredible women have opened innumerable office doors for others to follow them through. And yet, I am shocked to learn from this report that perceptions persist which view leadership roles as only accessible to men.

Meanwhile, the sector faces not only an image problem but also one which has led, in part, to a talent pool problem. Who could fill such a void?

Heather Setka

Academic Chair for Electrical Trades
MacPhail School of Energy,
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SAIT

> The answer is women. Like safety culture's development as simply smart business practice, inclusion—applied here practically, adapting Heinrich's Safety Pyramid—as an essential element for success provides a concrete approach to two problems which intersect to help solve one another: both women's seat at the table and the empty chairs which their profound presence would fill.

Ultimately, gender equity, through thoughtful inclusive practices, has the potential to stop the draining pool of talent in the energy industry. My hope is that this powerful report makes its way to those leaders in oil and gas who can and will make such a commitment for change.

Acknowledgements

◆ Report Author

Dr. Jennifer Richter

is an associate professor in the School for the Future of Innovation in Society and School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. She is also a senior Global Futures Scholar with the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory. She teaches courses in Energy Policy and Environmental Justice. Her specialty is on identifying and articulating systemic energy injustices and informing new methods and processes to include more diverse voices in energy planning, for more equitable and intergenerational energy futures.

In addition to the broader Energy landscape, she has been researching social and political aspects of the back-end of the nuclear fuel cycle since 2005, and most recently (2023-2025) was a co-Principal Investigator on a Department of Energy grant to inform a community-driven process for siting interim nuclear waste facilities. Professor Richter was also honored to serve on the Arizona Governor's Energy Promise Taskforce, advising on community engagement for potential nuclear development in Arizona.

◆ Report Data and Insights

Colby Vogt

is the founder of Covo, an independent intelligence firm built for moments when leaders can't afford to guess. With 30 years of experience in research, analytics, and audience intelligence, he helps organizations move from data overload to decision clarity, especially when the stakes are high.

Colby has advised leading brands and institutions including Union Pacific, Diageo, Lime, LG, UC Irvine, Saint Peter's University, and Westchester Medical Center. His work focuses on moments of uncertainty, from reputational pressure to shifting public trust and evolving audience expectations.

His approach is grounded in a simple belief: people don't make decisions based on facts alone. They act on what they feel. He focuses on understanding how beliefs form, how perception shapes behavior, and how organizations can earn clarity, confidence, and trust.

At Covo, Colby develops custom intelligence frameworks that bridge the gap between data and real-world action, helping leaders understand not just what audiences think, but why they think it.

Before founding Covo, he led data and intelligence teams at Burson, DeVries Global, Golin, and FleishmanHillard, and began his career at the Gallup Organization.

Dr. Vernon Morris

◆ ASU Associate Dean of Knowledge Enterprise and Strategic Outcomes

Dr. Morris is Associate Dean of Knowledge Enterprise and Strategic Outcomes at Arizona State University's New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, with appointments across sustainability, earth and space exploration, and gender equity in STEM. He has pioneered initiatives that integrate discovery-based and applied research with equitable inclusion of individuals from historically excluded groups in STEM fields and careers. Dr. Morris brings extensive experience leading large, interdisciplinary research portfolios and translating academic insight into societal impact. His work has been recognized nationally, including the 2023 American Geophysical Union Lifetime Achievement Award for Diversity and Inclusion.

Dawn R. Gilpin

◆ Associate Professor, Arizona State University

Dr. Dawn R. Gilpin is Associate Dean of Research and an Associate Professor at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, where she leads interdisciplinary initiatives using a variety of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. With over two decades of experience examining how narratives shape institutions and stakeholder behavior, she specializes in crisis communication, identity dynamics, information disorders, and public perception.

Her research also includes cross-cultural work on gender-based violence, informing evidence-driven approaches to social change. Gilpin brings deep expertise in narrative systems, communication strategy, and research leadership to guide the development of scalable, future-focused narratives that advance women's workplace equality.

Martin Elliot

◆ iSAW Chief Strategy Officer, Energy VP Executive Leader

Martin had a prestigious 35-year corporate career, in both private and public sectors, mainly in Energy (BP) and Defence (UK Ministry of Defence). Last 25 years in the world of information and digital technology holding VP level CIO roles, both business facing and at the corporate center. Operated with BP in multiple international assignments, including Oman, China, Germany, Belgium, and USA. Early career in finance function as a qualified accountant. As a leader Martin prides himself on being accessible and has always seen the value of diversity and inclusive leadership as a way to deliver better business outcomes.

Joyce Aiko McCulloch

◆ iSAW Thought Leader and Expert, Corporate HR and Inclusion Consultant

Joyce is an iSAW Thought Leader and expert in human resources, inclusion, and organizational culture transformation. She brings more than 30 years of experience across corporate roles at Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E), Deloitte, and Hilton. Before founding the consultancy, Ai Inclusion, Joyce led the development of the PG&E's first Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging strategy, embedding inclusive practices across talent acquisition, process improvement, and leadership development. Joyce's work focuses on translating inclusion strategy into measurable, sustainable behavior-based culture change, making her a key contributor to employer-facing implementation and learning within our solution.

Nancy Speidel

◆ iSAW Founder & CEO, Energy Senior Level Leader

Nancy is the Founder and CEO of iSAW, a global enabler and accelerator for women's equality in the workplace. With 27 years in high-tech and energy, she has held senior leadership roles driving IT programs, developing custom software, and transforming global supply chains. As Head of IT Competitive Intelligence Benchmarking, Nancy leveraged data to monitor performance, guide strategy, and drive change. She established industry forums, founded a women's organization in Saudi Arabia, and helped launch a corporate inclusion program. An international speaker, Nancy continues to inspire progress for women in the workplace, though demonstrating the business case for women's equality.

Niyaz M Khairy

◆ UX/UI Designer

Niyaz is a UX/UI Designer with a background in Graphic Design and Photography, he approaches every project with a dual lens: the aesthetic eye of an artist and the systemic thinking of an engineer. Whether crafting a high-fidelity prototype or organizing a 250+ person tech conference like DevFest, his goal is the same: to reduce friction and increase belonging. He specializes in translating complex requirements into intuitive, minimalist systems. His process is rooted in 'unlearning' the noise to find the simple, human solution underneath.

Executive Summary

The oil and gas industry is running low on its most vital resource—talent. With Policy tailwinds, technological modernization, and rising global demand, the sector faces a growing labor and leadership shortage. This shortage will be exacerbated by global political unrest, as the oil industry currently faces huge changes in production and transportation. Younger generations increasingly reject the industry, viewing it as outdated, unsustainable, and inhospitable. Meanwhile, only **22% of the workforce** and **19% of executives in oil and gas are women**, a figure that has barely shifted in a decade.

According to new research from a COVO Intelligence report commissioned by Women10x, oil and gas ranks last among technology, finance, and alternative energy sectors in perceived opportunity, innovation, and inclusion. Across 1,000 respondents in Canada and the UK, fewer than half viewed the industry positively, and social media sentiment around its diversity efforts was **93% negative.**

For a sector that powers the global economy, the implications are clear: image is now a bottom-line issue. Attracting top talent will require not only rebranding but rebuilding: investing in inclusion, sustainability, and leadership transparency as core business strategies. The industry's future competitiveness will hinge not on the energy it extracts, but on the people it can attract.

Introduction

HEADLINE NUMBERS

6M

People working directly in O&G globally.

60 - 70M

More jobs supported across the O&G value chain.

3M

Skilled professionals needed over the next decade.

The historical, cultural, and technological landscape of energy production is constantly evolving, creating unique challenges for long-term energy planning. Traditional Oil & Gas (O&G) companies are currently benefiting from legislation and policies supporting continued growth and development of the fossil fuel industries, and have made investments into modernizing upstream and downstream operations (Nguyen, 2025), positioning themselves for future technological advancements.

However, sudden policy shifts at the national level are disrupting established systems and affecting a wide range of stakeholders, even as the current workforce ages, and younger generations are apathetic to working in the O&G industry. Compounding this set of conditions, rapid developments in machine learning and artificial intelligence are driving increased energy demand, while also potentially affecting labor needs. The increasingly systemic uncertainty of political stability as armed conflict continues in countries and places that are critical for global oil and gas supplies is also reverberating through energy markets. Together, these forces make it difficult for the energy sector to develop coherent short-term and long-term strategies—for both meeting production needs and supporting an evolving workforce.

One of the most complex strategies relates to developing a modern workforce that can operate in both legacy production and also feel comfortable with new technological developments. There is a looming talent crisis and corresponding opportunity for O&G. Globally, there are about 6 million people currently working directly in O&G, with about 60-70 million more jobs supported by the O&G value chain (World Resources Institute, 2025). However, over the next decade, retirements will increase, creating a need for 3 million skilled and experienced professionals (IIA Energy, 2025). But competition for this potential workforce is growing from the clean energy sector as well as the tech sector (IEA, 2023).

Disparities in hiring and leadership development means that the industries are compromising future growth, and leaving the industry vulnerable to an aging workforce, as described in the 2021 BCG "Untapped Reserves 2.0" report (BCG, 2021). Affecting this looming talent shortage is a persistent and historical lack of women in the O&G workforce, and especially in leadership positions. Today, only 22% of the industry's global workforce are women (IOGP, 2023). In leadership positions, the number drops again, with women only representing 19% of the workforce at the executive level of O&G, as reported in the third "Untapped Reserves" report (BCG, 2023). In the United Kingdom, according to a POWERful Women report, "an estimated 400,000 new roles will be needed to deliver the transition: 260,000 newly created positions and 140,000 replacements for those leaving the workforce" (POWERful Women, 2025). In Canada, according to Careers in Energy, the energy sector may need between 110,000 and 116,000 new hires by 2035, created from new positions, and age-related attrition (Careers in Energy, 2024). Unfortunately, "Women accounted for all net job losses in Q4 2025, despite representing less than one-fifth of the energy workforce" with a 30% drop in employment meaning that "women's share of the employed energy workforce fell to 17%, from 23% a year earlier" (Energy Safety Canada, 2026).

This last statistic builds on the 2023 International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP) report, which notes that, "despite decades of individual company efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion, the oil and gas industry is significantly lagging behind on recruiting, developing, promoting and retaining a vibrant talent pool that will attract the next generation" (IOGP, 2023). Despite the current efforts to become a more inclusive and diverse industry that reflects global demographics, the attrition rate of younger workers (under 40 years of age, including Millennials and Gen Z) is high, with over 35% of workers leaving O&G in order to pursue employment in the tech sector.

Despite substantive efforts across the energy sector to promote inclusion, the rapid emergence of a sudden backlash against workplace diversity and inclusion initiatives has left many organizations struggling to recalibrate their workforce strategies. In the United States, federally funded programs and projects are now subject to heightened scrutiny regarding the legality of supporting historically marginalized groups, including women and racial minorities (Whitehouse.gov, 2025). This dynamic places the O&G industry in a strategic double bind. Although federal policy continues to provide robust support for industrial expansion and technological advancement within the sector, parallel constraints on diversity-oriented workforce development initiatives limit the industry's capacity to cultivate a talent pipeline that reflects evolving demographic and labor-market realities.

The current wave of companies rolling back their commitments to increasing diversity and creating more inclusive workplaces will have both direct and indirect business consequences. This pushback continues in the face of substantial evidence supporting diversity's positive impact on business performance.

THE BUSINESS CASE · MCKINSEY

+25%

more likely to experience above-average profitability — companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams.

+36%

more likely to outperform on profitability — companies with greater ethnic and cultural diversity.

BY THE NUMBERS

400k

New roles needed in the UK to deliver the energy transition.

116k

New hires Canada's energy sector may need by 2035.

17%

Women's share of Canada's energy workforce in Q4 2025 — down from 23%.

35%

Of workers under 40 have left O&G for the tech sector.

For O&G, the dearth of women in leadership positions has significant impacts to the future of the industry and to individual companies. There are several benefits to attending to gender within O&G. The first "Untapped Reserves" report notes that, "By creating a more diverse and inclusive culture, oil and gas companies can benefit from greater depth and breadth of perspective and can boost business performance" (BCG, 2017).

> According to Catalyst, a nonprofit organization, companies with more women on their board of directors outperformed those with the least on three financial measures: return on equity (53% higher), return on sales (42% higher), and return on invested capital (66% higher)" (BCG, 2021).

Ignoring this opportunity creates not only a financial loss, but also compromises the future growth of O&G.

The Covo Intelligence Report.

Based on a survey of 1,000 future professionals in Canada and the UK, the COVO report offers insights into how O&G is perceived against other growing industries, including finance, advanced technology, and alternative energy.

05

How the study was conducted.

O&G industries benefit from their roles as traditional and historic providers of energy, powering the modern development of transportation, manufacturing, and electrification. However, O&G suffers from a public image of being staid, polluting, and requiring heavy labor from employees. O&G must now compete with not only newer industries, but also its own image.

To better understand public perception of O&G, Women 10x, a non-profit initiative that brings together global stakeholders to address the lack of women's representation and lack of opportunity in the workplace, commissioned Covo Intelligence to conduct a quantitative online survey. The quantitative survey was fielded from May 12- May 15, 2025, with 1000 respondents, split evenly between Canada and the United Kingdom (UK). All respondents were between the ages of 18-55, and either currently enrolled in college or university, hold a college or university degree, or intend to pursue a degree in higher education. The sample included a representative mix of age, gender and racial/ethnic backgrounds within each country. Sampling was conducted using Torfac's verified online panel.

To complement the O&G focused survey, a broader social media analysis of sentiment towards diversity, equity and inclusion policies in O&G was commissioned and is also covered in the Covo Report. This analysis was conducted from January 2024-April 2025 and included nearly 7.3 million social media posts pulled from X, Facebook, Instagram, blogs, forums and other social media sites. While the content was global, this analysis examined only English language content.

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

1,000 respondents

- **Field dates:** May 12–15, 2025
- **Geography:** Canada + United Kingdom (evenly split)
- **Ages:** 18 – 55
- **Audience:** Currently enrolled in or holding a higher-education degree, or intending to pursue one
- **Panel:** Torfac verified online panel· representative mix of age, gender, race/ethnicity

SOCIAL LISTENING

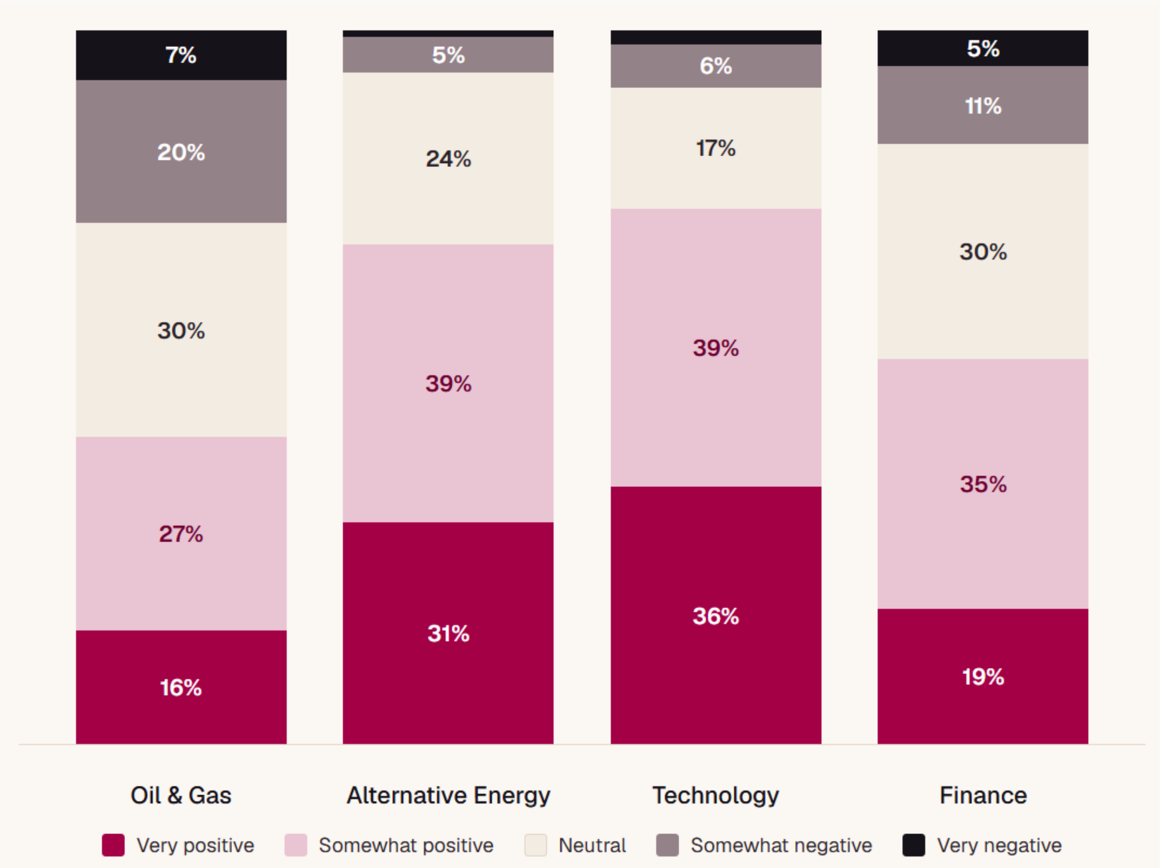
7.3M posts

- **Window:** Jan 2024 – Apr 2025
- **Sources:** X, Facebook, Instagram, blogs, forums
- **Scope:** Global · English language

The O&G industries are significantly behind in public perception, in terms of reputation, creating a pipeline issue for talent.

- Compared to Finance, Alternative Energy, and the Technology sectors, O&G is seen as a staid and aging industry. In terms of industry momentum, alternative energy and tech are seen as major growth areas for the future. 41% of respondents said that O&G was "holding ground" while 40% said technology and 28% said alternative energy were industries that were growing more and more exciting to work for.
- Generationally, in the UK, younger audiences see more momentum for O&G, with Gen Z (born between 1997-2012) holding more favorable opinions than Gen X (born between 1965-1980).
- Men and women's interest in working in traditional O&G were almost equal in their responses.
- While younger generations show slightly more interest, the levels of interest are still low overall. For instance, in the UK, younger adults in Gen Z (23%) and Gen Y (28%) were more likely to find the O&G industry very appealing as opposed to Gen X (8%).

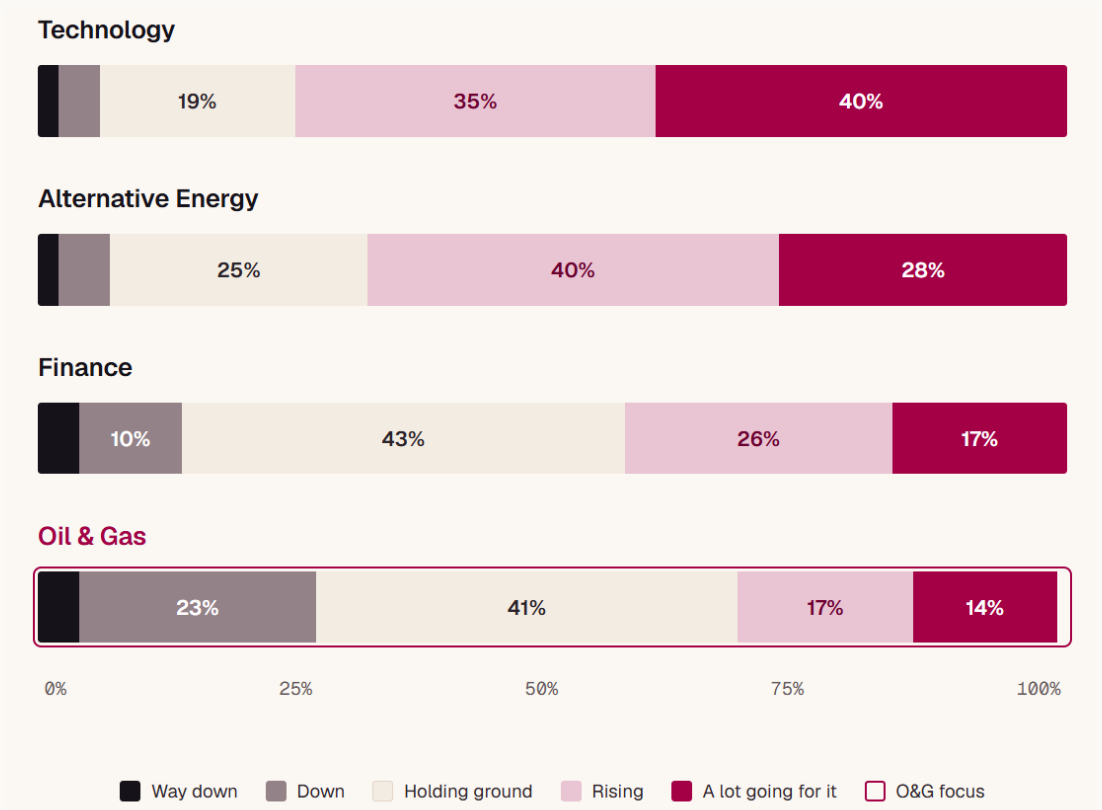
Industry perception overview: Oil & gas lags behind other industries



O&G are seen as less appealing industries for employment than all other sectors. Limited career growth, respect, and inclusivity are recognized in narratives and perceived reality of O&G.

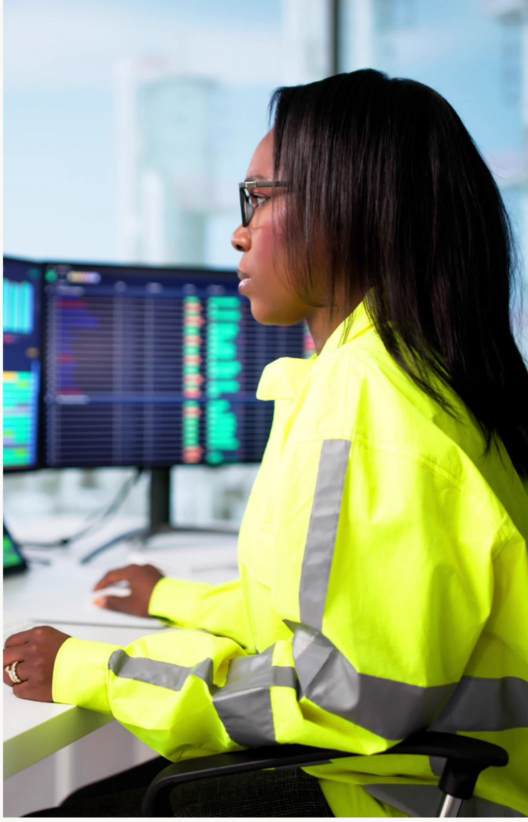
- When respondents were asked: "What is your overall perception of each of the following industries: O&G, Alternative Energy, Technology, and Finance?":
  - 27% of respondents said they perceived O&G "somewhat positively," with 16% responding "very positive." However, both the alternative energy and technology categories fared much better, with 31% "very positive" and 39% "somewhat positive" for alternative energy, and 36% and 39% for the technology sector. For the future workforce or those entering the workforce, this means that other industries will be seen as more desirable and enjoyable for them.
- These perceptions were markedly lower in the UK than Canada, most likely because Canada produces more natural gas and oil than the UK and reaps economic benefits from being the 4th largest producer of both globally.
- For the UK, only 8% of respondents had a positive or somewhat positive perception, while Canadian respondents had a 46% positive perception. 72% of UK respondents had a positive perception of alternative energy, and 74% of the technology sectors.

Industry momentum: Alternative energy and tech seen as rising – oil & gas stagnates



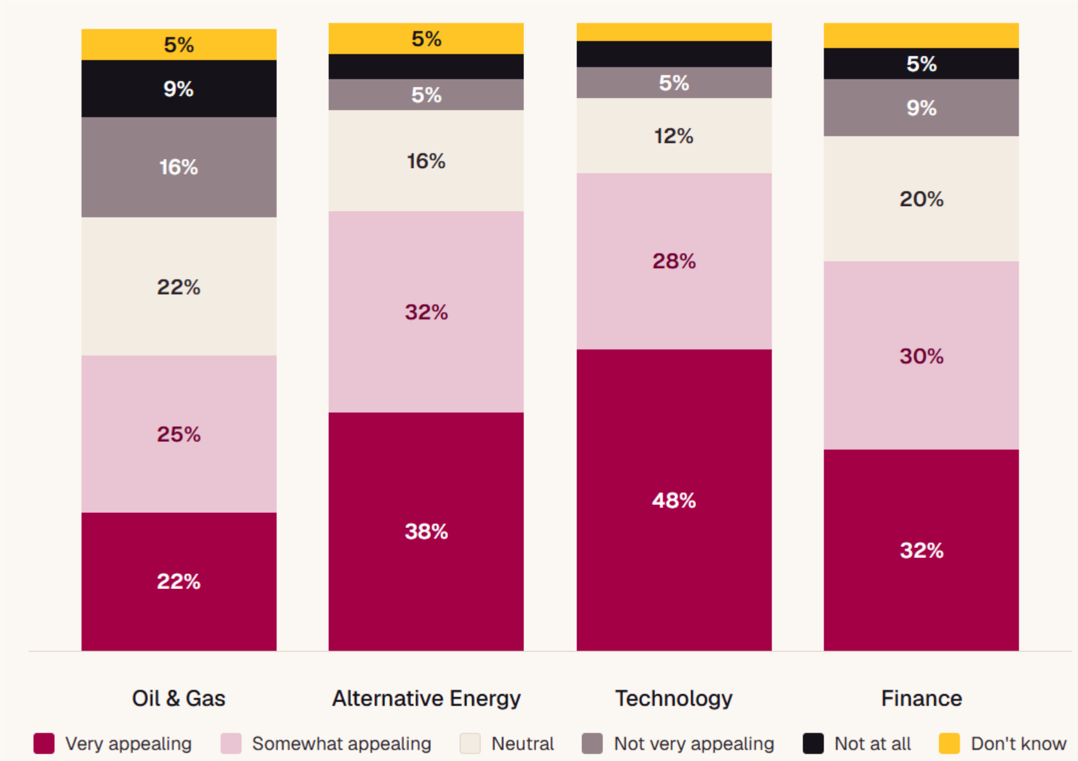
03 FINDING THREE — APPEAL

There is a stark view of the perception of career growth opportunity for women and men in O&G. One of the greatest threats to attracting top talent is that O&G is seen as an industry where men can prosper, but not women. This view was held equally by male and female respondents



- For O&G, 36% of respondents felt that women and men had equal opportunity to grow, learn, and achieve leadership position, but 60'% felt men have more opportunity.
- For other industries, it was the inverse: 55%-56% felt that finance, technology, and alternative energy were open to both men and women equally having opportunities, with 34-37% believing that men had more opportunities for leadership positions in those fields.

Industry appeal as a workplace: Oil & gas lacks appeal as a place to work

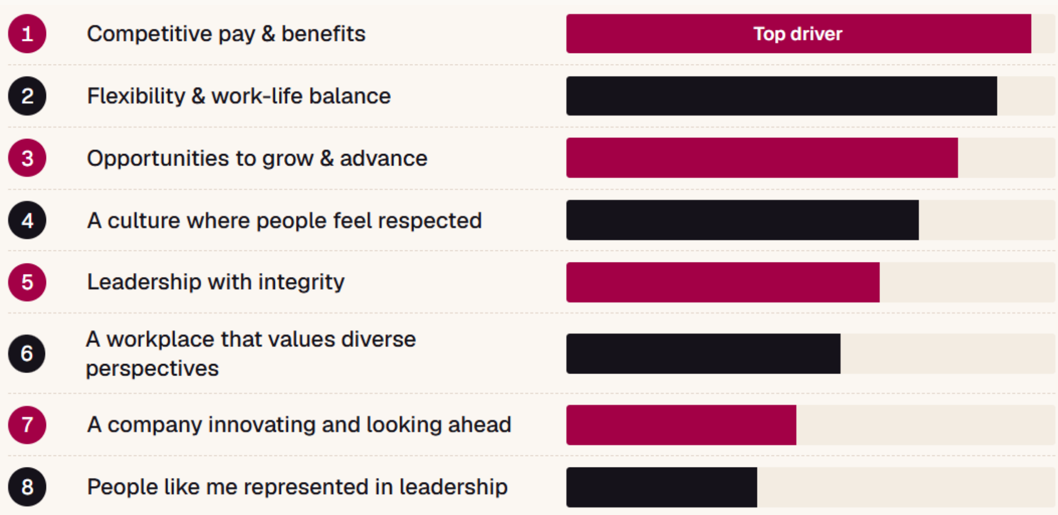


For emerging generations of workers, commitments to integrity, sustainability, and innovation are not ancillary concerns but core expectations that shape career decision-making and perceptions of organizational legitimacy.

To remain competitive in attracting and retaining talent, particularly in comparison with the technology and alternative energy sector, O&G industry must redefine itself. This requires a transition from being viewed primarily as a legacy industry to being recognized as a future-oriented, innovation-driven actor capable of contributing meaningfully to a low-carbon and technologically advanced energy landscape.

- For instance, when asked, "what could make the O&G industry more appealing?" 23% of respondents said "green energy, eco-friendly, and sustainability" were important considerations, above salary (15%).
- Other considerations like skills-building (7%), career growth, benefits, long-term stability, and stable working environment and more safety were between 5-7%.
- As a driver of workplace appeal, respect, growth, and integrity matter most to jobseekers, outside of standard responses of pay and work-life balance.

Drivers of workplace appeal (across industries): outside of standard responses of pay and work-life balance, respect, growth, and integrity matter most to job seekers



Notably, the O&G sector consistently trails the technology industry across dimensions that younger workers identify as essential to an attractive workplace— including cultures of respect, leadership characterized by integrity, and environments that meaningfully value diverse perspectives and backgrounds. For many members of younger generations, who have grown up with heightened awareness of climate change and environmental stewardship, sustainability is not merely an added benefit but a key factor in evaluating potential employers. Consequently, perceptions of the O&G industry as misaligned with environmental priorities further undermine its ability to compete for talent in an increasingly values-driven labor market.

Social Media Analysis.

A complementary angle to the COVO survey, this section focuses on an analysis of 7.3 million posts across X, Facebook, Instagram, blogs, and forums, from January 2024 through April 2025. It shows a troubling understanding of gender and the workforce for O&G, with highly negative associations amongst social media users.

Sentiment · Topics · Spikes

22 - 25

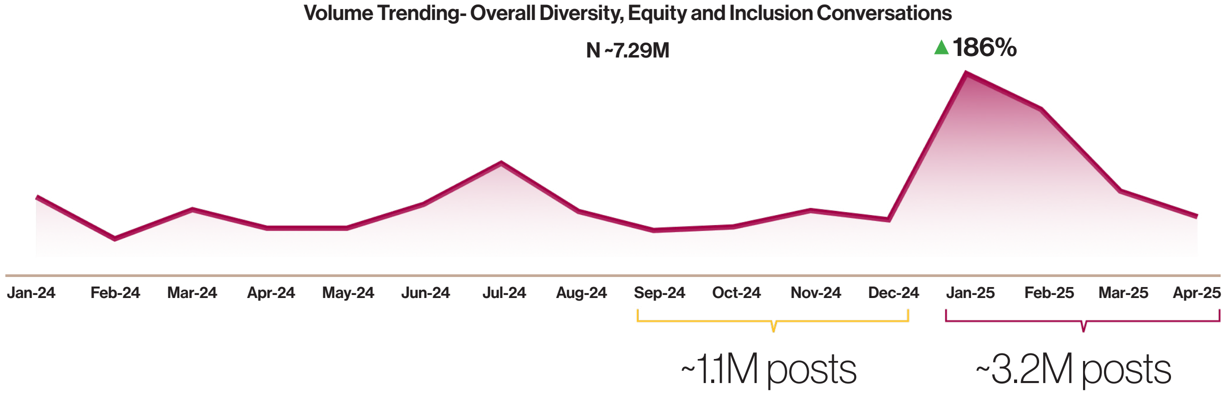
06

Social media analysis

Overall, the social media analysis supported the findings of the quantitative survey and adds more nuance to how O&G are perceived in social media. O&G shows up rarely in diversity, equity and inclusion discourses, but when it is mentioned, it is in overwhelmingly negative terms, especially around women in leadership.

- Conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion on social media spiked 186% amidst corporate pullbacks for supportive programs.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Conversation Has Grown on Social Media, Spiking Amid Corporate Pullbacks



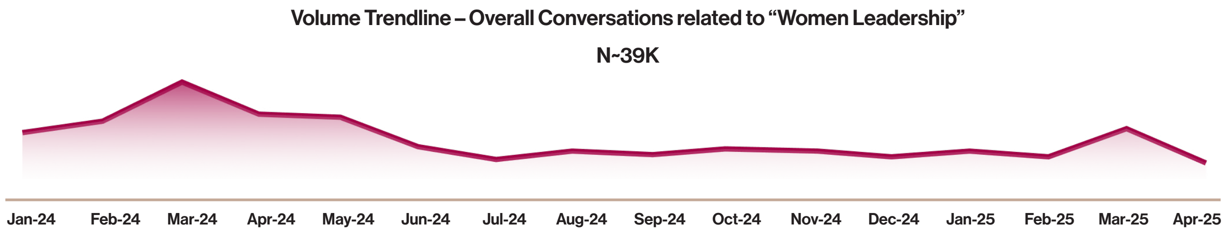
- Posts heavily skewed towards negative understandings of the term "diversity, equity and inclusion," correlating it with fewer opportunities for white men, as well as concerns focused on valuing personal identity over skills and ability. Diversity, equity and inclusion policies were seen as a driver of unfair treatment and having an outcome of reduced safety and performance.
- Perceptions of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and policies vary widely across industries, but overwhelmingly for O&G, the conversations are negative towards diversity, equity, and inclusion policies:

INDUSTRY	NEGATIVE	NEUTRAL	POSITIVE
Oil & Gas CRITICAL	93%	7%	1%
Finance MIXED	25%	74%	1%
Automotive NEUTRAL	17%	82%	1%
Technology QUIET	4%	95%	1%

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*

- A top concern was the persistent dearth of women in leadership roles, despite efforts around diversity and inclusion, pointing to the need for systemic and sustained efforts to change the industry

Women-focused conversation focused on a lack of women in senior leadership roles.



TOP TOPICS IN EACH INDUSTRY

◆ TECHNOLOGY

Women facing challenges due to a reduction in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs, the persistent glass ceiling, and systemic barriers to advancement.

◆ FINANCE

Women continue to face challenges like limited opportunities, unfulfilled diversity goals, and feeling underappreciated.

◆ OIL & GAS

Concern over the lack of women in leadership positions — raising doubts about the effectiveness of DEI efforts in this industry.

For O&G, the heavy skewing towards negative perceptions of policies promoting more diversity in the workforce, more inclusive hiring and retention policies, and more equitable outcomes for employees, stand out from the more neutral perception for other industries.

Overall, the major implications of the Covo Reports are clear:

01 O&G isn't just facing a perception problem which will exacerbate an existing pipeline problem:

the sector ranks lowest in appeal and perception among younger generations of workers.

02 Gender disparities are a tipping point issue:

perceptions that leadership is only accessible to men risk alienating half of the potential future workforce.

03 Sustainability and innovation must become central to the story O&G is telling:

competing for talent means showing up as a future-focused industry, not a legacy one.

04 Future talent demands inclusion, but the conversation is a minefield:

the industry must navigate this sensitive space thoughtfully. The challenge is to meet expectations of younger generations without getting caught in the backlash that often surrounds this polarizing topic.

The Covo report is only a first step in identifying some of the underlying cultural factors affecting perceptions of the O&G industries. In the next iteration of this report, we hope to open this to other nations, such as the United States, which is currently undergoing huge shifts in energy policy, as well as other regions globally.

Recommendations.

Three commitments that O&G leadership must make to remain viable in the decades ahead: focusing on collaboration, identification of better models for finding and retaining talent, and long-term commitment to expanding opportunities for women throughout the industry, but especially in leadership positions.

07

Recommendation

For the O&G industry to remain viable in the decades ahead, it must confront persistent perceptions regarding its culture and its capacity to attract, support, and retain top talent. Demonstrating that the sector is both welcoming and inclusive is essential not only for improving its public image but also for cultivating the innovative capacity required to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving clean-energy landscape. Diversity and inclusion are not peripheral considerations; they constitute critical drivers of creativity, problem-solving, and organizational adaptability. As the industry navigates the transition toward a low-carbon future, the ability to leverage diverse perspectives will be central to sustaining competitiveness and fostering meaningful innovation.

Based on the new information provided by the Covo report, as well as numerous past reports, we conclude the following issues need to be addressed by O&G in order for the industry to grow and thrive.

01 Collaborate to collect and share what's working in current efforts to expand the talent pipeline by attracting and retaining more women.

Change across the industry must be driven internally and collectively across the sector. While some diversity, equity and inclusion efforts are scaling back or ending, many companies must still expand their efforts to develop talent pipelines and attract more talent to fill future labor needs, and develop talent to progress into leadership roles in a modernizing sector. By sharing what efforts are now being undertaken and what is working, or not, best practices can be disseminated, increasing their likelihood of adoption, decreasing time to implementation, and accelerating results. Sector initiatives operating globally, enabled through technology, like Women10x (www.women10x.org) are ideal for collecting and sharing information on best practices.

02 Identification of other examples and models that align to the cultural values that underpin diversity, inclusion and equity as an economic driver for O&G growth

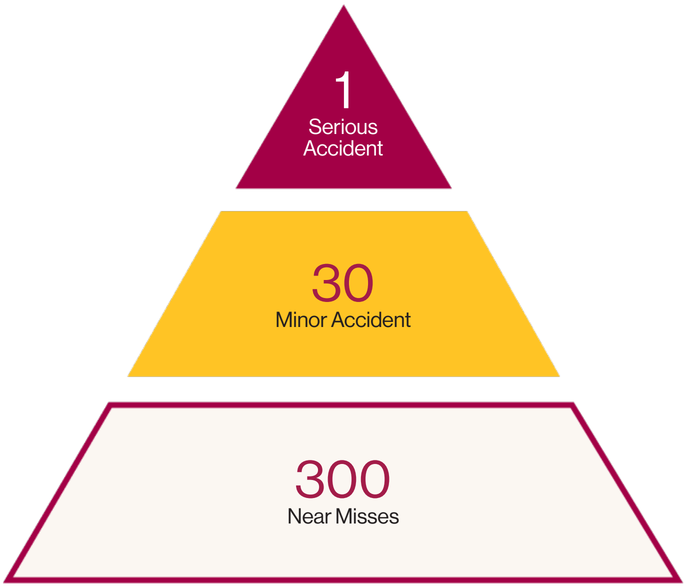
Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts are now seen as risky initiatives and increasingly ignored or rejected. Reframing the view of the behaviors that underpin

a fair and inclusive culture where all talent has opportunity to thrive may provide a tangible model for change that resonates within the sector.
However, the energy sector has solved a similar problem before, in relation to safety and risk culture across industry. Addressing safety and risk concerns was seen as a barrier to doing business as usual, and too costly in relation to savings. It was also viewed as a technical issue, not an issue of culture within O&G. The emergence of a robust safety culture was not an easy or short endeavor, and neither will be increasing the talent pool for O&G. The mindset shift to value a safety culture was dependent on fully understanding the cost and value to businesses, including public perception (see Appendix A). It required a "cross-sector ecosystem" approach and was dependent on people adopting common and collective values of care that then became part of the structure and identity of the industry.
The Heinrich's Safety Pyramid is now known and accepted as doctrine in the O&G sector as a means of addressing and systematizing safety culture.

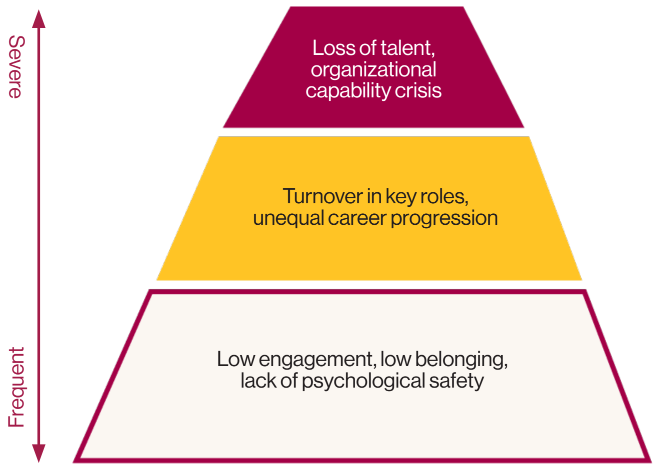
The image depicts Heinrich›s Pyramid, illustrating the relationship between minor accidents, serious accidents, and near misses, with a focus on the concept of ‹Human Error› as a key factor in workplace safety.
Just as many near misses in safety can predict an accident, many seemingly small talent pain points (microinequities, lack of meaningful feedback, career stagnation, lack of psychological safety, lack of feeling of belonging) can predict major attrition leading to loss of organizational capacity. If these pain points are experienced more frequently and acutely in some demographic groups, the losses will be greater for those groups leading to an increasingly homogenous population and lack of diversity of thought as career levels progress.
Just as in safety, most of the leverage comes from managing the base well — if you catch and address early disengagement, blocked career paths, and inequities, you dramatically reduce the likelihood of serious talent losses. Leadership that creates an environment of belonging and psychological safety

An equivalent of Heinrich's Safety Pyramid for talent management could be a «People Risk Pyramid» that shows how seemingly low-impact issues in the workplace can accumulate and lead to major talent losses (e.g., high turnover, disengagement, or critical skill shortages).

Inclusive practices to drive fairness and belonging at every level help prevent a high-impact talent crisis. Inclusive interventions that advance gender equality, have positive impacts for women and men. Without interventions, the social media analysis indicates that "misses" can accrue if narratives that O&G is an industry that is unwelcoming and unsupportive of a diverse labor force are left unchecked.



through fair and consciously inclusive processes and behaviors builds a strong base for overall talent health.



03

Commitment from O&G Sector leadership and accountability to monitor results.

Although momentum for advancing diversity and gender equity has diminished in parts of the United States due to sociopolitical backlash, global commitment to these priorities continues to deepen. Within this broader context, the Women10x initiative emerged from the recognition among leading Oil and Gas (O&G) executives that increasing women's participation in the sector is not merely a matter of social responsibility but a core talent management strategy. Expanding opportunities for women directly supports innovation, strengthens organizational resilience, and enhances long-term profitability—capacities that are increasingly indispensable as the industry navigates technological transformation and a shifting energy landscape.

Given these realities, the central question facing the sector is no longer whether to invest in gender equity but how to operationalize such commitments effectively. As with any major business strategy, particularly one that depends on meaningful cultural change, success requires visible, sustained leadership engagement. Executives must champion gender equity efforts through clear strategic priorities while also establishing rigorous accountability mechanisms to monitor outcomes. Only by measuring progress and holding themselves responsible for results can O&G leaders ensure that stated commitments translate into tangible workforce gains and position the industry as a future-ready, inclusive, and competitive employer.

Conclusion

Based on evidence from Canada and the UK, the O&G industry continues to play a critical role in supporting global economic development and contributing to poverty alleviation. Yet, despite its economic significance, the sector faces a widening gap between its workforce needs and the career aspirations of the next generation. Younger workers, who prioritize sustainability, innovation, and inclusive organizational cultures, are increasingly disinclined to pursue careers in O&G, gravitating instead toward technology, advanced manufacturing, and emerging clean-energy sectors. It would be valuable to see how these findings compare to other countries, especially the United States, where DE&I policies are directly under attack, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where the energy sector is diversifying based on national policies.

To remain competitive, the O&G industry must adopt proactive strategies to cultivate a vibrant and future-ready workforce. Central to this effort is a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. The business case for such investment is well established: organizations that embrace diverse perspectives and foster equitable workplaces consistently demonstrate higher levels of innovation, improved problem-solving capacity, stronger financial performance, and greater appeal to prospective talent.

In this context, advancing diversity is not merely a moral or reputational imperative - it is a strategic necessity. By prioritizing workforce inclusivity and aligning with the values of emerging generations, the O&G sector can strengthen its long-term competitiveness, enhance its social legitimacy, and ensure its continued relevance within a rapidly evolving global energy landscape.

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APPENDIX A

People Risk Pyramid.

By reframing the Safety Pyramid for talent management, we present a model for how seemingly low-impact issues accumulate into high-impact talent crises — and how to intervene.

The Safety Pyramid for Talent Management in the Workplace

An equivalent of Heinrich's Safety Pyramid for talent management could be a «People Risk Pyramid» that shows how seemingly low-impact issues in the workplace can accumulate and lead to major talent losses (e.g., high turnover, disengagement, or critical skill shortages). Inclusive practices address issues at every level to help prevent high-impact talent crises. Inclusive interventions that advance gender equality, have positive impacts for women and men.

The logic would be the same as Heinrich's:

◆ THE BASE

frequent, seemingly low-level events or indicators of lack of equality in talent opportunity and poor overall talent health

◆ THE MIDDLE

less frequent, more serious issues that erode productivity

◆ THE TOP

rare but high-impact talent crises that result in severe productivity losses, lack of diversity, and high cost of talent replacement

Example Structure — "People Risk Pyramid"

Top tier

(rare, severe consequences)

- Critical loss of top talent or key specialists (e.g., sudden departure of a high-performing team leader)
- Organizational capability gap that halts projects or puts strategic goals at risk
- High replacement cost of top talent (e.g., direct costs and ramp up time)

Middle tier

(occasional, significant impact)

- High turnover in specific teams or roles
- Loss of emerging high-potential employees
- Project delays due to insufficient skills

Lower tier

(frequent, seemingly low-impact individually)

- Low employee engagement
- Unaddressed career development concerns
- Internal mobility declines
- Missed learning and development opportunities
- Microinequities, bias, lack of psychological safety, lack of feeling of belonging

Why the risk pyramid works in talent management

- Just as many near misses in safety can predict an accident, many seemingly small talent pain points (microinequities, lack of meaningful feedback, career stagnation, lack of psychological safety, lack of feeling of belonging) can predict major attrition or loss of organizational capacity. If these pain points are experienced more frequently and acutely in some demographic groups, the losses will be greater for those groups leading to an increasingly homogenous population and lack of diversity of thought as career levels progress.
- The model helps leadership focus on early interventions before issues reach the top of the pyramid.
- It visualizes that preventing issues at the base has a disproportionate impact on avoiding severe problems at the top.

The People Risk Pyramid

What does "good" look like in terms of interventions to effectively manage the People Risk Pyramid?

If we treat the **People Risk Pyramid** the way safety experts treat Heinrich's original model, then "best in class" interventions aim to work mainly at the base to prevent escalation, while having contingency measures for the middle and top.
Here's how it breaks down:

01 Base of the Pyramid

Frequent, seemingly low-level issues

Low engagement · inequality in opportunity · missed development opportunities · micro-inequities · declining mobility

P Process Interventions 03

01 Continuous listening systems

Quarterly pulse surveys, sentiment analysis on collaboration platforms, exit/“stay” interviews analyzed for patterns. All analyzed by multiple demographic views (gender, career level, job type, age, etc.) .

02 Career pathways & internal mobility frameworks

Transparent role maps, all opportunities posted, internal job boards, clear and consistent promotion criteria, special assignments posted or have a review board.

03 Skills inventory & gap tracking

Regular skills audits linked to training offerings, tied to strategic workforce planning. Skill gaps are addressed with development opportunities.

B Behavioral Interventions 06

01 Manager capability building

Training on unbiased and inclusive coaching, feedback, and recognizing early disengagement signals.

02 Micro-feedback loops

Encouraging short, frequent check-ins rather than annual performance reviews. Bias monitors in feedback write-ups and calibration sessions.

03 Recognition habits

Leaders making recognition visible, specific, and timely.

04 Psychological safety emphasis

Leaders check in on workload, safety to contribute, blockers, or unfair treatment. Avenues are available to report unfair treatment without fear of reprisal.

05 Inclusion norms

Leader evaluation included clear expectations that they create an environment where everyone actively contributes, and team dynamics encourage collaboration.

06 Learning opportunities

Leaders encourage teams to value learning over perfection and to use missed goals as an opportunity to learn what needs to improve or what new skills need to be acquired.

02 *Middle of the Pyramid*

Occasional, more serious issues

High turnover in key roles · loss of high-potential staff · noticeable skill shortages

P *Process Interventions* 04

01 Targeted retention plans

Customized packages, development plans, key roles and high potentials.

02 Succession planning

Identification of key roles that require succession plans and clearly defined criteria for readiness to take on such roles. Documented successors who have been vetted across defined criteria for key positions, with readiness timelines and planned development activities.

03 Strategic workforce planning

Linking long-term business strategy to talent forecasts, hiring pipelines, and skill development programs.

04 Valuing expertise & loyalty

Publicly celebrating tenure and contributions in ways that are authentic, not tokenistic.

B *Behavioral Interventions* 04

01 Retention interviews

Twice annual one-on-one conversations with identified high potential and succession candidate employees to address any potential concerns proactively.

02 Mentoring and sponsorship

Pairing high-potentials and succession candidates with senior leaders who mentor and advocate for their career development and progression.

03 Role modelling transparency

Leaders sharing their own career journeys, including pivots and challenges.

04 Opportunity equity

Stretch assignments are assigned via a transparent, consistent, and fair process.

03 *Top of the Pyramid*

Rare, severe issues

Sudden loss of critical talent · organizational capability crisis · lack of diversity

P *Process Interventions* 03

01 Business continuity plans

Preidentified emergency replacements in succession planning for replacing key skills or leadership within weeks.

02 Knowledge transfer protocols

Documenting processes, decisions, and relationship knowledge as a priority in the normal course of business.

03 Proactive external talent review and executive search relationships

Maintaining a list of potential external candidates as part of succession management and warm relationships with specialist recruiters to shorten search cycles.

B *Behavioral Interventions* 04

01 Transparent crisis communication

Immediate, honest updates when key departures occur, explaining impact and next steps.

02 Rapid team stabilization

Interim leadership assignments, engagement activities, and clear short-term priorities.

03 Visible leadership presence

Senior leaders personally engaging with affected teams.

04 Demonstrate development opportunities

deploy emergency replacements and use succession plans to accelerate readiness for internal placement.

Key Principle

Just as in safety, most of the leverage comes from managing the base well — if you catch and address early disengagement, blocked career paths, and inequities, you dramatically reduce the likelihood of serious talent losses. Leadership that creates an environment of belonging and psychological safety through fair and consciously inclusive processes and behaviors builds a strong base for overall talent health.

CLOSING

The future of energy will be human.

The industry's competitiveness will hinge not on the energy it extracts — but on the people it attracts.