

Female pilots research

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join the dots

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OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY



To understand reasons behind becoming a pilot and what challenges or barriers occurred along the way. The focus is on female pilots but there is an interest to understand the male perspective and to draw some comparisons.

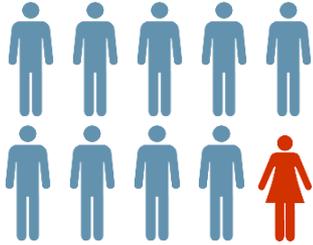


To do this we ran

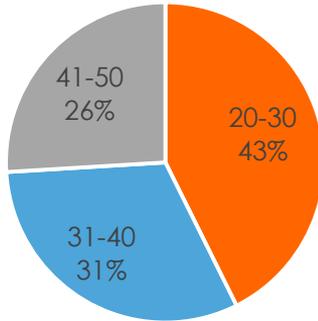
- An online survey with male and female pilots

SAMPLE

Total = 556 easyJet pilots
Male pilots=489
Female pilots=59

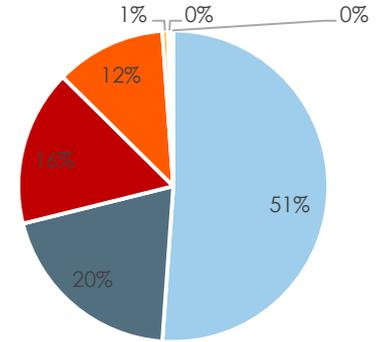


Age



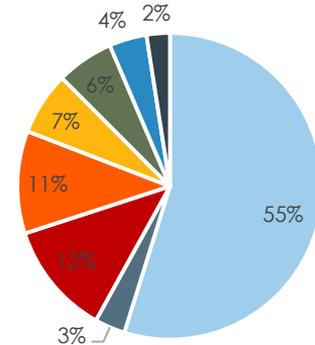
Rank

- Captain
- Second Officer
- Senior First Officer
- First Officer
- Base Captain
- Line Trn Captain
- Chief Pilot



Base

- UK
- Spain
- France
- Italy
- Switzerland
- Germany
- Portugal
- Netherlands



KEY LEARNINGS

Early inspiration

- Early childhood experiences are key inspiration triggers for both boys and girls wanting to become a pilot, but this comes later in girls (at university age) than boys (at school age).
- Positive role models, friends and relatives in the industry are vital, but most are male.

Support & encouragement

- Male and female pilots look to parents, family and friends for support and encouragement.
- But female pilots are more likely to be discouraged from pursuing a career as a pilot.
- And whilst some are discouraged in the same way as males, others have been actively discouraged on the basis of gender.

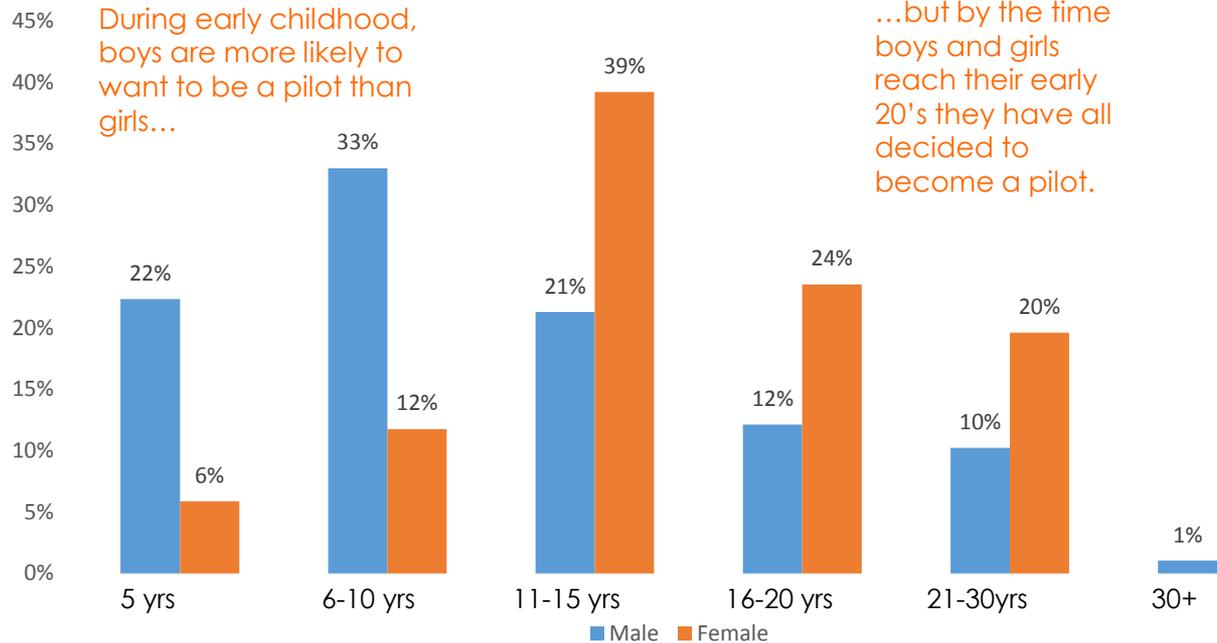
Solutions

- All pilots agree that the solutions should be:
 1. Talk to schools, teachers, youth leaders
 2. Provide male and female role models
 3. Increase the public image of female pilots

Early inspiration



The desire to become a pilot happens later for girls, than it does for boys



When did you know you wanted to be a pilot?

Base 556

Some research studies show there's limited exposure to women in occupational careers and little aspiration. For instance in children's books, movies etc. (Source: Career choices, gender stereotypes and career perceptions in schools). A possible explanation as to why some young girls don't 'see it to believe it' until later on.

Knowing someone in aviation, helps encourage pilots at a younger age (between 6-10yrs)

Who did you know in aviation?

Knew they wanted to become a pilot at **6-10 yrs**

Parents

40%

Grandparents

46%

Friends of family

40%

Don't know anyone in aviation

27%

...for those that don't know someone in aviation they are significantly less likely to want to become a pilot at a young age



Inspiration to become a pilot comes in various forms, but childhood experiences are the most common

Childhood experiences

The **inspiration** to become a pilot

Childhood experiences vary from family holidays, aeroplane shows, watching planes fly over, living by an airport, travelling and visiting cockpit or flight deck.

Role models

These are pilots that are friends or close and extended family. This varied from commercial pilot, RAF pilot, or engineering. The majority said their father was a pilot.

Technology

A minority say they had been purely fascinated by planes and technology.

↓
Male only

Nearly half of women pilot's were inspired by knowing or meeting someone in the industry

"I have **family in the industry.**"

[Female, Gatwick airport, age 30]

"Seeing military helicopters and a **friend** who was becoming a pilot."

[Female, Gatwick airport, age 45]

"**My father** was a glider pilot, and we spent a lot of time at gliding clubs and around flying. We had a lot of contact with **pilots who were family friends.**"

[Female, Gatwick airport, age 41]

"People **I met who were a pilot.** A female captain on an air Canada flight. Who allowed me to visit the cockpit inflight. **A friend's dad** who was a pilot."

[Female, Charles De Gaulle Airport, age 44]

"**My dad.** I wanted to fly but I assumed as a girl I would be Cabin Crew. My Dad told me I could be the pilot."

[Female, Gatwick airport, age 32]

Majority of female participants in Dutch study had pilots within their close family or relatives that work in the industry. This helped them perceive piloting as 'normal' and achievable
("Yes they do exist!, Master Thesis)

Young girls need to 'see it to believe it'. The media will be a powerful tool in connecting young girls to female pilot's. Whilst airlines should offer meet and greet at schools to those who otherwise don't have the chance to know pilot's.

A white airplane is shown in profile, flying from left to right against a clear blue sky. The aircraft is a high-wing model with a prominent vertical stabilizer. The cockpit area is visible, showing a pilot. The lighting suggests it might be late afternoon or early morning.

“**Visiting the flight deck on a holiday** flight at the age of about 13 and staying up for the landing was the experience that confirmed to me I wanted to be a pilot.”
[Male, Geneva airport, age 31]

“**My Dad** was a pilot, we also lived near White Waltham for **plane watching. But from day 1 of learning to glide, I knew I wanted to fly.**”
[Female, Luton airport, age 40]

“I loved birds and the idea of flight - I grew up near Duxford and in those days **you could climb all over the aircraft** they had there... I still have a school project I did about flying.”
[Female, Luton airport, age 44]

“A **visit the cockpit** of a DC-8 over the Atlantic when I was 5 years old... unfortunately this experience is **no longer possible with current security.**”
[Male, Belfast airport, age 39]

Childhood experiences has had a significant impact in developing ambition, irrespective of gender. So providing these experiences to people that might not normally have the opportunity could prove to be beneficial.

... some pilots were specifically discouraged on the basis of their gender

“School told me it was a **mans job.**”
Luton airport, age 30

“**Derogatory comments** about female pilots.”
Gatwick airport, age 29

“My parents said **it's not a job for a woman.** They did not want to pay for any training or else. Teachers said it's not a job.”
Lisbon airport, age 29

“**Men in the air cadets said good luck** in a sarcastic manner. And at that time when Cathay Pacific was recruiting local pilots they specify 'male only'.”
Luton airport, age 48

“Careers teacher advised me to do languages and **become a stewardess.** All family except my father thought I should chose a more suitable job, and were aghast when I left university to start flying.”
Gatwick airport, age 45

N.B BA ran a study in 2014 with 2000 women and found out they were put off when growing up due to lack of role models and being told it was a mans job.

Sexist stereotypes still exist and are barriers to women to becoming a pilot, or make it harder to progress their career. Breaking these cultures could take a long time, as they reflect views which are formed over a long period of time.

When it comes to industry solutions, male and female pilots agree on what the priorities should be

1. Talk to schools, teachers, youth leaders

- 47% of male pilots agree
- **64% of female pilots agree**

2. Provide male and female role models

- 57% of male pilots agree
- **51% of female pilots agree**

3. Increase the public image of female pilots

- 39% of male pilots agree
- **51% of female pilots agree**

Whilst these are the top 3 priorities for both male and female pilots, more female pilots agree that the main priority is to talk to schools, teachers and youth leaders

Summary



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENCOURAGING MORE FEMALE PILOTS TO ENTER THE INDUSTRY

The research has identified several opportunities to help encourage more female pilots enter the industry, for example:

Early inspiration and support



Engage with community leaders, teachers and advisors to inspire and support from an early age.

Provide information, outline career pathways, give a realistic picture of what it takes to enter the industry.

Role models



Work with easyJet female pilots to create positive industry role models/ambassadors.

Shout about it in the mainstream and industry press, events, careers fairs.

Focus on the journey to becoming a pilot.

Positive PR & public profile



Continue to create positive PR around female pilots at an industry and brand level.

Collaborate with cross-sector campaigns and activities to broaden reach.

Funding



Maintain support for things like the Amy Johnson initiative, but recognise funding is one piece of the puzzle and not necessarily where female pilots face inequality.