



# Women in the Workplace

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## 2023





## About the study

Women in the Workplace is the largest study on the state of women in corporate America.<sup>1</sup> In 2015, McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org launched the study to give companies insights and tools to advance gender diversity in the workplace. Between 2015 and 2023, over 900 companies participated in the study, and more than 450,000 people were surveyed on their workplace experiences. This year, we collected information from 276 participating organizations employing over 10 million people, surveyed more than 27,000 employees, and conducted interviews with people of diverse identities, including women of color, LGBTQ+ women, and women with disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

Sign up to participate in the 2024 study at [womenintheworkplace.com](https://womenintheworkplace.com).

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## INTRODUCTION

# Debunking Four Myths That Hold Women Back

For the ninth year of the *Women in the Workplace* report, we start with the corporate pipeline because it offers a bird's-eye view of the state of women in corporate America. The story is both encouraging and frustrating. Over the last several years, there have been sizable gains in senior leadership.<sup>3</sup> This is an important step in the right direction and shows what companies can accomplish when they focus their efforts on a well-understood problem. However, with lagging progress in the middle of the pipeline—and a persistent underrepresentation of women of color—true parity remains painfully out of reach.<sup>4</sup>

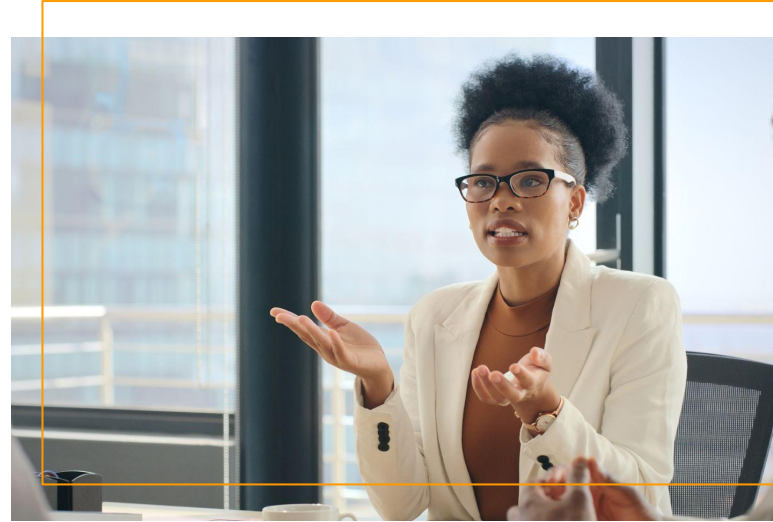
This year's report debunks four myths about women's workplace experiences and career advancement. A few of these myths cover old ground, but given the notable lack of progress, they warrant repeating. A few have re-emerged and intensified with the shift to flexible work.<sup>5</sup> We hope highlighting them will help companies find a path forward that casts aside outdated thinking once and for all and accelerates progress for women. The future of work for women depends on getting this right.

PART 1

# State of the Pipeline

## Despite gains at the top, women remain underrepresented

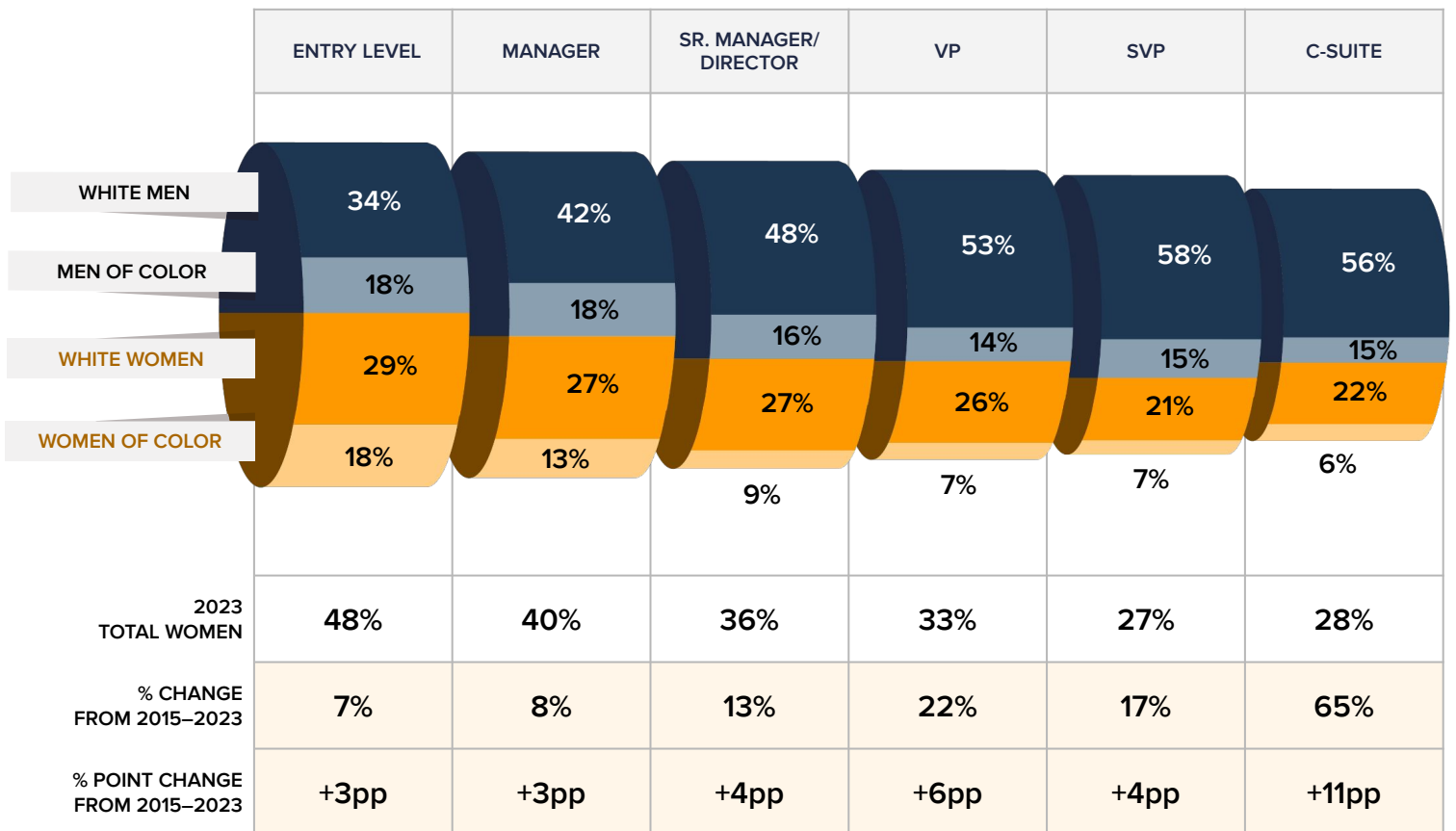
Over the past nine years, women—and especially women of color—remain underrepresented across the corporate pipeline.<sup>6</sup> However, we see a growing bright spot in senior leadership. Since 2015, the number of women in the C-suite has increased from 17 to 28 percent, and the representation of women at the VP and SVP levels has also improved significantly.



REPRESENTATION IN THE CORPORATE PIPELINE BY GENDER AND RACE<sup>7</sup>

WOMEN MEN

% of employees by level at the start of 2023



## These hard-earned gains are encouraging yet fragile

Progress remains slow for women at the manager and director levels, creating a weak middle in the pipeline and impacting the majority of women in corporate America. And the “Great Breakup” continues for women at the director level, the group next in line for senior leadership positions.<sup>8</sup> Similar to last year, women directors are leaving at a higher rate than in past years—and at a notably higher rate than men at the same level. As a result of these two dynamics, there are strikingly fewer women in line for top positions.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, progress for women of color is lagging behind. At nearly every step in the pipeline, the representation of women of color falls relative to white women and men of the same race and ethnicity. Until companies address this inequity head on, women of color will remain severely underrepresented in leadership positions—and mostly absent from the C-suite.

**Women of color face the steepest drop-off in representation from entry-level to C-suite positions.** As they move up the pipeline, their representation drops by two-thirds.

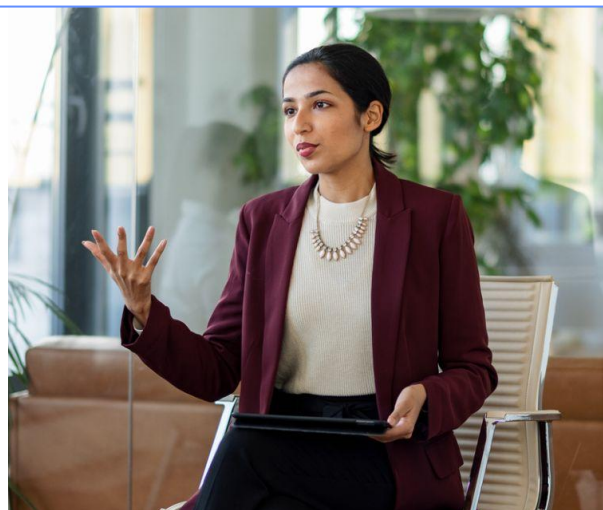
Women represent roughly 1 in 4 C-suite leaders, and women of color just 1 in 16.

“People need to see leaders who look like themselves to understand that it’s possible for them.”

BLACK WOMAN  
DIRECTOR, WORKS HYBRID

### LATINAS OFTEN DON'T SEE THEMSELVES IN LEADERSHIP

Latinas stand out as being the least likely of any group of women to receive a raise in the last year and also face the steepest climb up the corporate ladder: only 1 percent of C-suite executives are Latina. “It’s disheartening to be part of an organization for many years and still not see a person like me in senior leadership,” explains one Latina professional. “Until I see somebody like me in the C-suite, I’m never going to really feel like I belong.”



PART 2

# Four Myths on the State of Women at Work



**MYTH**

Women are becoming less ambitious

**REALITY**

Women are more ambitious than before the pandemic—and flexibility is fueling that ambition

Recent headlines suggest that women’s ambition is diminishing. Our data tell a different story. Women remain highly ambitious, and flexible work is helping them pursue their ambitions.

## Women are equally as ambitious as men

At every stage of the pipeline, women are as committed to their careers and as interested in being promoted as men. Women and men at the director level—when the C-suite is in closer view—are also equally interested in senior leadership roles. And young women are especially ambitious.<sup>10</sup> Nine in 10 want to be promoted to the next level, and 3 in 4 aspire to become senior leaders.

Moreover, the pandemic and increased flexibility did not dampen women’s ambitions. Roughly 8 in 10 women want to be promoted to the next level this year, compared to 7 in 10 in 2019.<sup>11</sup> And the same holds true for men.

**Women of color are even more ambitious than white women:** 96% say that their career is important to them, and 88% want to be promoted to the next level.

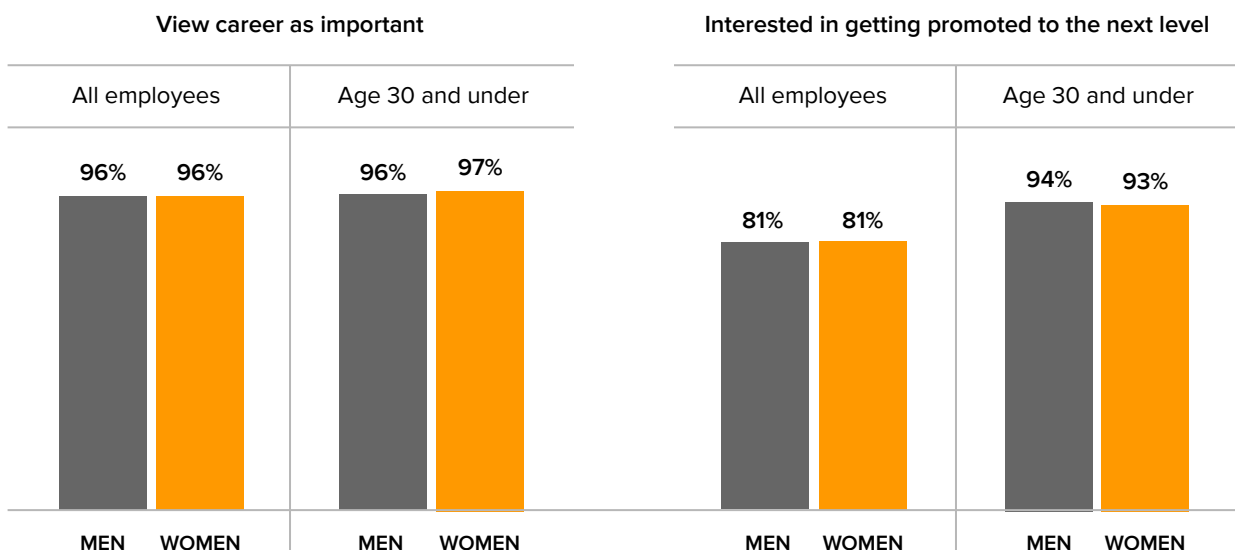


In my next role, I hope to be a director. I like my current role, but I would like to see myself moving up.”

LATINA MOTHER  
SENIOR MANAGER, WORKS ON-SITE

### WOMEN ARE JUST AS COMMITTED TO THEIR CAREERS AND ADVANCING AS MEN

% of women and men and those 30 and under who say their career is important to them and they are interested in being promoted to the next level



## Workplace flexibility helps unlock women’s ambitions

Women who work hybrid or remotely are as ambitious as women and men who work on-site. Also, women who work flexibly are just as ambitious as women who don’t work flexibly. In fact, flexibility is allowing women to pursue their ambitions. One in 5 women say flexibility has helped them stay at their organization or avoid reducing their hours. A large number of women who work hybrid or remotely point to feeling less fatigued and burned out as a primary benefit. And a majority of women report having more focused time to get their work done when they work remotely.

Women who work hybrid or remotely are no more likely than women who work on-site to consider reducing their hours or switching to a less demanding job.

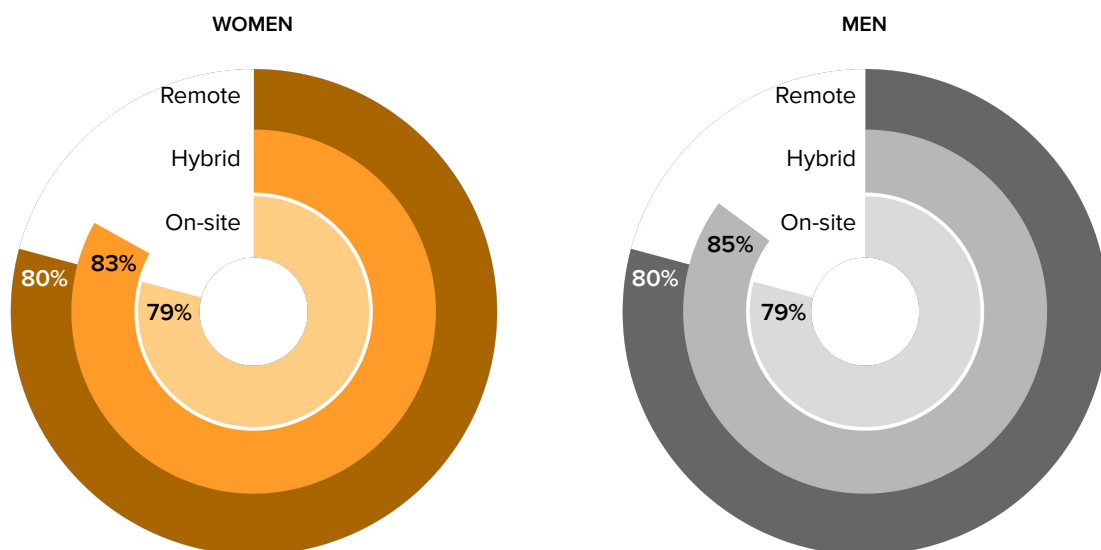
“Flexible work has made me more productive because I can build work around whatever I’ve got going on with my personal life. If I wake up early in the morning, I can jump online and go through emails real quick.”

WHITE WOMAN, MOTHER  
DIRECTOR, WORKS REMOTELY

### WOMEN WHO WORK HYBRID OR REMOTELY ARE AS AMBITIOUS AS WOMEN AND MEN WHO WORK ON-SITE

% of women and men who are interested in being promoted to the next level

Interested in getting promoted to the next level



## Women’s ambition remains high even as they prioritize their personal lives more

The pandemic showed women that a new model of balancing work and life was possible. Now, few want to return to the way things were. Most women are taking more steps to prioritize their personal lives, but at no cost to their ambition—they remain just as committed to their careers, and just as interested in advancing, as women who aren’t. These women are defying the outdated notion that work and life are incompatible—and that one comes at the expense of the other.



**Men are also prioritizing both life and career:**

Roughly 60% of men are taking more steps to prioritize their personal lives, and like women, they are just as ambitious as men who aren’t.



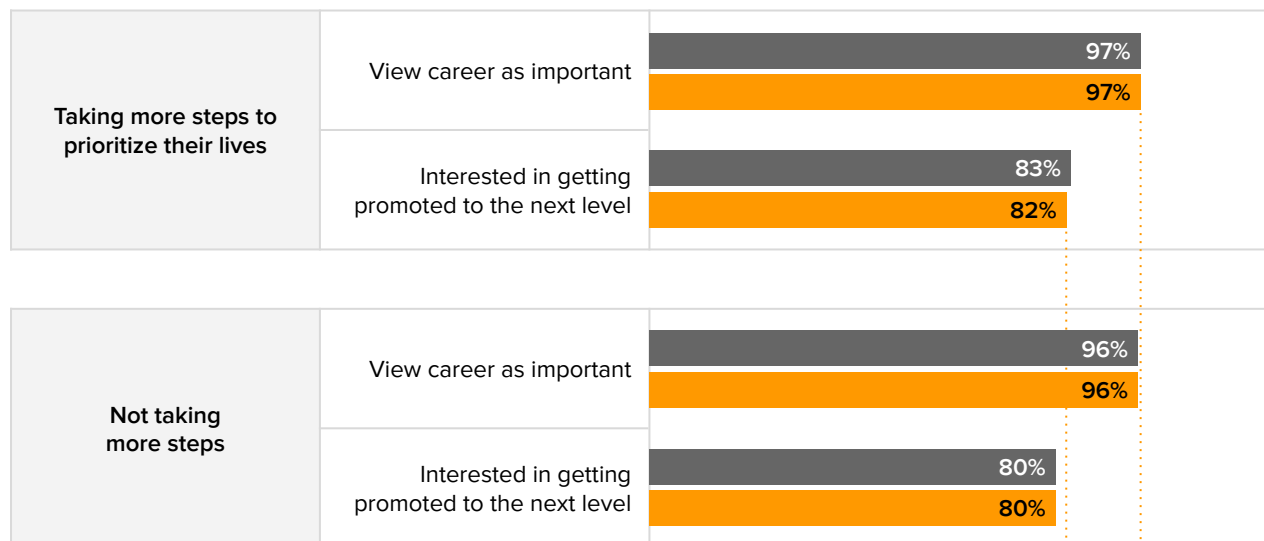
The house is crazy. A dog, our four kids, a wife. Being able to juggle all that is going on in the personal life by having flexibility at work is extremely important. It leads to a healthy balance from my perspective between work and personal life.”

WHITE MAN, FATHER  
DIRECTOR, WORKS HYBRID

### WOMEN WHO ARE INVESTING MORE IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES ARE JUST AS AMBITIOUS

WOMEN MEN

% of women and men who are and aren’t taking more steps to prioritize personal lives who see career as important and want to be promoted<sup>12</sup>



## MYTH

The biggest barrier to women's advancement is the “glass ceiling”

## REALITY

The “broken rung” is the greatest obstacle women face on the path to senior leadership

The glass ceiling—a term coined over 40 years ago to describe an invisible barrier preventing women from reaching senior leadership—is often cited as the primary reason more women don’t rise to the top. Our data point to a bigger problem much earlier in the pipeline.

## The broken rung remains the biggest barrier women face

For the ninth consecutive year, women face their biggest hurdle at the first critical step up to manager. This year, for every 100 men promoted from entry level to manager, 87 women were promoted. And this gap is trending the wrong way for women of color: this year, 73 women of color were promoted to manager for every 100 men, down from 82 women of color last year. As a result of this broken rung, women fall behind and can’t catch up.<sup>13</sup>

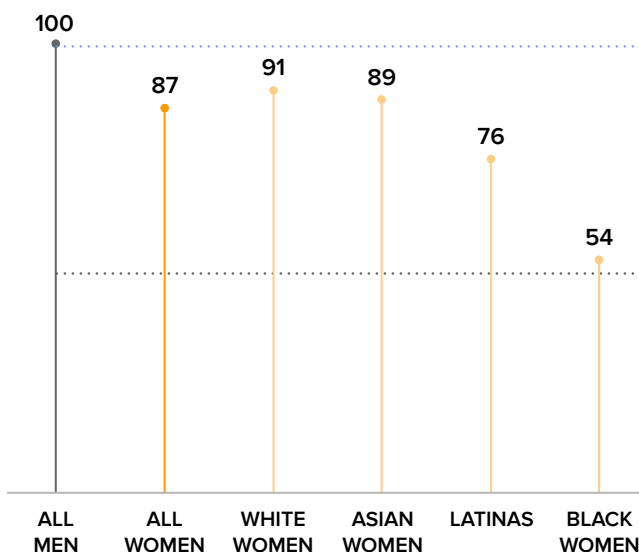
“I’ve always done every task, every project ahead of schedule and under budget, and I still couldn’t get the promotions I saw my white colleagues getting.”

BLACK WOMAN  
C-SUITE, WORKS HYBRID

### WOMEN LOSE THE MOST GROUND AT THE FIRST STEP UP TO MANAGER

Ratio of promotions to manager for men vs. women

For every 100 men promoted to manager, far fewer women are promoted



Progress for early career Black women remains the farthest out of reach.<sup>14</sup> After rising in 2020 and 2021, likely in response to heightened focus on their advancement, the number of Black women promoted to manager for every 100 men has fallen back to 2019 levels.<sup>15</sup>

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
58	58	82	96	54

## Here are three things every company should know about the broken rung:

### Women are not responsible for it

Outdated thinking often points to two explanations for the broken rung: women are not asking for promotions, and they're more likely to step away from work. Neither is true. Women at the entry and manager levels ask for promotions as often as men do, and they are no more likely to leave their company—this year, 17 percent of entry-level men chose to leave, compared to 16 percent of women at the same level.

### Bias is a strong driver of the broken rung

If women's career choices don't explain the broken rung, what does? Women are often hired and promoted based on past accomplishments, while men are hired and promoted based on future potential. This unfair thinking—rooted in what social scientists refer to as “performance bias”—can be particularly challenging.<sup>16</sup> Because women early in their careers have shorter track records and similar work experiences relative to their men peers, performance bias can especially disadvantage them at the first promotion to manager.<sup>17</sup>

### Until the broken rung is fixed, gender parity in senior leadership remains out of reach

While companies are increasing women's representation at the top, doing so without addressing the broken rung offers only a temporary stopgap. Because of the gender disparity in early promotions, men end up holding 60 percent of manager-level positions in a typical company, while women occupy 40 percent. Since men significantly outnumber women, there are fewer women to promote to director, and the number of women decreases at every subsequent level.



Almost a quarter of women 30 and under say that their age has contributed to them missing out on a raise, promotion, or chance to get ahead.



A president of a tech company said something that stuck with me. She said, “Women are hired for what they have done. Men are hired for what they can become.” Women have to have a proven record, but men do not.”

SOUTHEAST ASIAN WOMAN  
VICE PRESIDENT, WORKS HYBRID

**MYTH**

Microaggressions  
have a “micro” impact

**REALITY**

Microaggressions have a  
large and lasting impact on women



The term microaggressions implies they're insignificant. This is simply not true. In reality, microaggressions take a heavy toll on women and inhibit their career progression.

## Despite the “micro” in their name, microaggressions have a macro impact

Microaggressions signal disrespect, cause acute stress, and can negatively impact women's careers and health.<sup>18</sup> Years of data show that women experience microaggressions at a significantly higher rate than men: they are twice as likely to be interrupted and hear comments on their emotional state. For women with traditionally marginalized identities, these slights happen more often and are even more demeaning. As just one example, Asian and Black women are seven times more likely than white women to be confused with someone of the same race and ethnicity.<sup>19</sup>

As a result, the workplace is a mental minefield for many women, particularly those with traditionally marginalized identities. Women who experience microaggressions are much less likely to feel psychologically safe, which makes it harder to take risks, propose new ideas, or raise concerns.<sup>20</sup> The stakes just feel too high. On top of this, 78 percent of women who face microaggressions—so the vast majority—self-shield at work, or adjust the way they look or act in an effort to protect themselves.<sup>21</sup> For example, many women choose not to speak up or share an opinion to avoid seeming difficult or aggressive to their colleagues. The stress caused by these dynamics cuts deep. Women who experience microaggressions—and self-shield to deflect them—are three times more likely to think about quitting their jobs and four times more likely to almost always be burned out.<sup>22</sup> By leaving microaggressions unchecked, companies miss out on everything women have to offer and risk losing talented employees.

**Microaggressions** are demeaning or dismissive comments and actions—rooted in bias—directed at a person because of their gender, race, or other aspects of their identity.

**Self-shielding**, also known as self-monitoring, refers to efforts to avoid or protect oneself from mistreatment by continuously modifying one's behaviors. This includes code-switching, restricting self-expression, or hiding aspects of one's identity.

### Why the “micro” in microaggressions?

*The term microaggressions was coined in 1970 by researchers to refer to the prejudiced and exclusionary acts that may be more subtle than overt discrimination, but nonetheless have a big impact on well-being.<sup>23</sup> The popular misunderstanding that microaggressions are minor or insignificant minimizes the real harm they cause.*





# As microaggressions harm women and threaten their psychological safety, they self-shield to protect themselves

BETTER EXPERIENCE WORSE EXPERIENCE

ALL MEN	ALL WOMEN	LGBTQ+ WOMEN	WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES		WHITE WOMEN	ASIAN WOMEN	LATINAS	BLACK WOMEN
<b>SELF-SHIELDING BEHAVIORS</b> <sup>27</sup>								
4%	8%	20%	17%	They feel pressure to change their appearance to look more professional	9%	7%	7%	9%
23%	32%	47%	49%	They tone down what they say to avoid being unlikable	32%	28%	26%	37%
4%	6%	35%	29%	They hide important aspects of their identity to fit in	6%	3%	6%	5%
9%	15%	28%	29%	They have to code-switch to blend in with others	12%	15%	15%	36%
22%	31%	42%	48%	They don't speak up or share an opinion to avoid seeming difficult	31%	25%	27%	39%
15%	25%	33%	41%	They feel like they have to perform perfectly to avoid scrutiny or judgment	24%	24%	20%	33%
<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY</b>								
57%	56%	61%	56%	They don't worry they'll be penalized for mistakes <sup>28</sup>	61%	51%	44%	45%
62%	54%	59%	52%	They feel comfortable disagreeing with coworkers <sup>29</sup>	57%	51%	45%	44%
52%	48%	54%	49%	They rarely feel excluded <sup>30</sup>	52%	44%	39%	37%

### BLACK WOMEN ARE OFTEN FORCED TO CODE-SWITCH

Black women are more than twice as likely as women overall to code-switch at work by changing their mannerisms, tone, or speaking style. They are also more likely than women of other races and ethnicities not to speak up or share an opinion to avoid appearing difficult or aggressive. “I speak very differently at home than I do at work,” explains one Black woman. “I feel like I have to be careful about the way I say things.”



## Microaggressions lead to negative outcomes for women

Women who experience microaggressions and self-shield<sup>31</sup> are ...

**4.2x**  
more likely  
to almost  
always feel  
burned out

**3.3x**  
more likely  
to consider  
leaving their  
company

**2.6x**  
more likely  
to say they  
wouldn't recommend  
their company<sup>32</sup>

**3.8x**  
more likely  
to feel they  
don't have an equal  
opportunity to advance<sup>33</sup>

“

It's like I have to act extra happy so I'm not looked at as bitter because I'm a Black woman. And a disabled Black woman at that. If someone says something offensive to me, I have to think about how to respond in a way that does not make me seem like an angry Black woman.”

BLACK WOMAN WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY  
ENTRY LEVEL, WORKS REMOTELY

Roughly 1 in 3 women with disabilities and 1 in 4 LGBTQ+ and Black women have felt invisible or like their accomplishments didn't get noticed at work.

### LGBTQ+ WOMEN FEEL PRESSURE TO HIDE THEIR FULL IDENTITIES AT WORK

More than any other group of women, LGBTQ+ women feel the need to hide important parts of their identities to fit in at work.<sup>34</sup> They are also 2.5 times more likely to feel pressure to change their appearance to be perceived as more professional. Such self-shielding behaviors make it harder for them to bring their authentic selves to work. “I had an experience where I think I got turned down for a promotion because of my hair. I wasn't as girly as the others going for that role,” explains one director who identifies as bisexual. “And when I looked at myself compared to the others—I didn't wear makeup and I didn't wear jewelry—I didn't have an executive presence.”



## IN THEIR WORDS

“

There's not as many people of color or even women, so I do feel like you need to present yourself a certain way in order to be taken seriously or even considered.”

SOUTH ASIAN WOMAN  
ENTRY LEVEL, WORKS HYBRID

“

I had an experience with a boss ... being painted as sassy, feisty, or rude. I feel like I have to be so careful about how I'm doing here—about what I'm doing here—because I just feel like I'm really going to get mischaracterized if I'm not careful with my words.”

LATINA, TRANS WOMAN  
ENTRY LEVEL, WORKS ON-SITE

“

I can't change the color of my skin, and that is what makes everyone afraid when I walk into a room. It's the color of my skin. I can't erase it. At the end of the day, if I did not have this color skin, I wouldn't have to work as hard as I do to maintain my seat and protect my name.”

AFRO-LATINA WOMAN WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY  
C-SUITE, WORKS ON-SITE



“

We experience [a] sense of un-belonging in many spaces and constant microaggressions based on our identities as indigenous people.”

INDIGENOUS WOMAN  
DIRECTOR, WORKS HYBRID

“

Being born female, and I present very feminine, people assume that I'm straight and that I'm cisgender. [When on-site] I'm mentally preparing myself for how much I want to disclose about my gender.”

WHITE NONBINARY PERSON  
ENTRY LEVEL, WORKS HYBRID

“

When I was climbing the ladder to executive director, I felt that the only way that I could be successful was to do everything I possibly could to assimilate. I would watch how the white female leaders would dress, how they would communicate, how they would interact. I felt I needed to look like that, sound like that, and model that.”

LATINA  
MANAGER, WORKS HYBRID

## MYTH

It's mostly women who want—  
and benefit from—flexible work

## REALITY

Men and women see flexibility as  
a “top 3” employee benefit and  
critical to their company’s success

Stereotypes about women suggest they are the only workers who care about flexibility. In reality, a majority of men and women place a high premium on flexible work and point to it as a key benefit.

## Employees view flexibility as vital today—and for the future of work

A vast majority of employees say that opportunities to work remotely and have control over their schedules are top company benefits, second only to healthcare. Workplace flexibility even ranks above tried-and-true benefits such as parental leave and childcare.

Flexibility is also core to how employees view the future of work. Half of women and a third of men point to “offering significant flexibility in when and where employees work” as a top-three factor in their company’s future success.

As workplace flexibility transforms from a nice-to-have for some employees to a crucial benefit for most, women continue to value it more. This is likely because they still do a disproportionate amount of childcare and household work.<sup>35</sup>

**Flexibility** refers to remote or hybrid work, as well as flexible work options such as the ability to set your own hours.

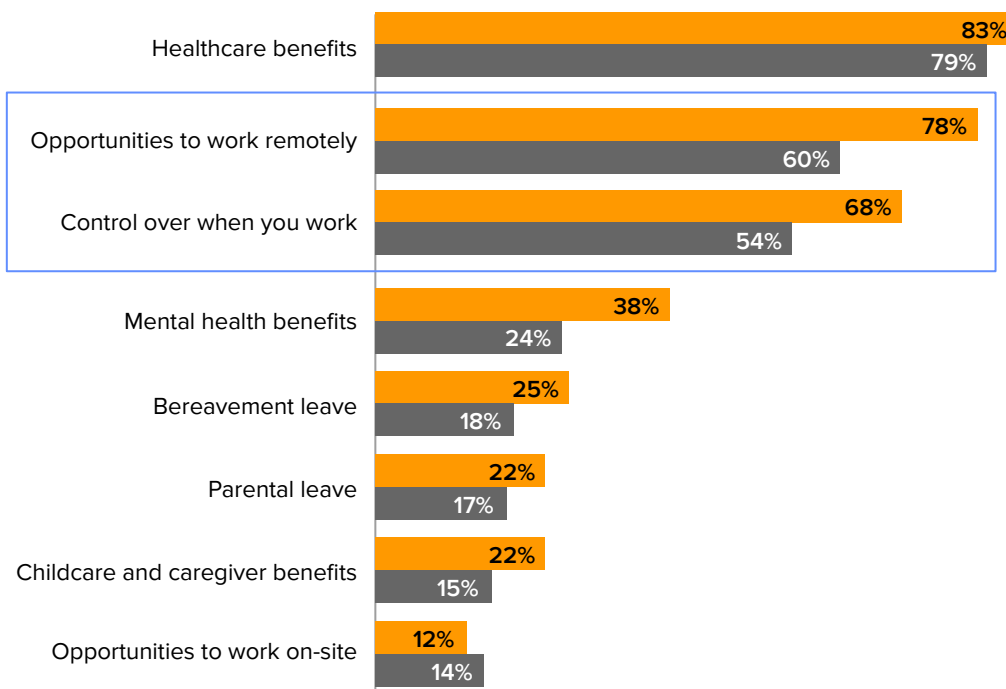
### For mothers, flexibility is not just about where—but also when—they work.

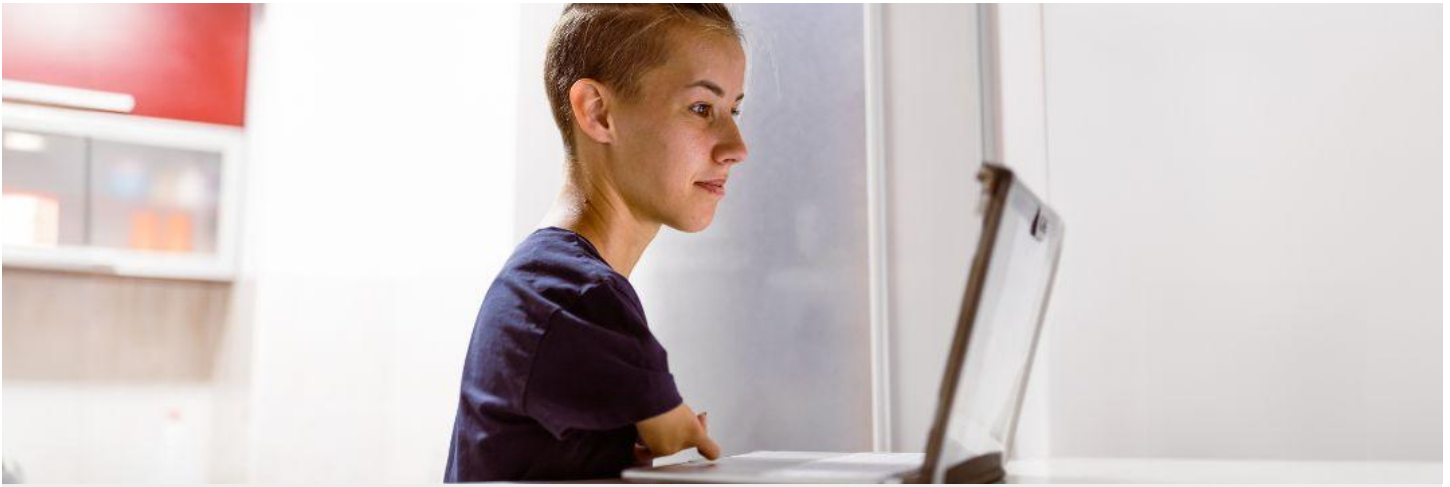
Mothers with young children are especially likely to rank flexible scheduling as a top employee benefit.<sup>36</sup> And without flexibility, 38% say that they would have had to otherwise leave their company or reduce their work hours.

### EMPLOYEES HIGHLY VALUE OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK FLEXIBLY

WOMEN MEN

% of women and men saying these benefits are most important to them





### A CLOSER LOOK

## Employees are increasingly comfortable working flexibly

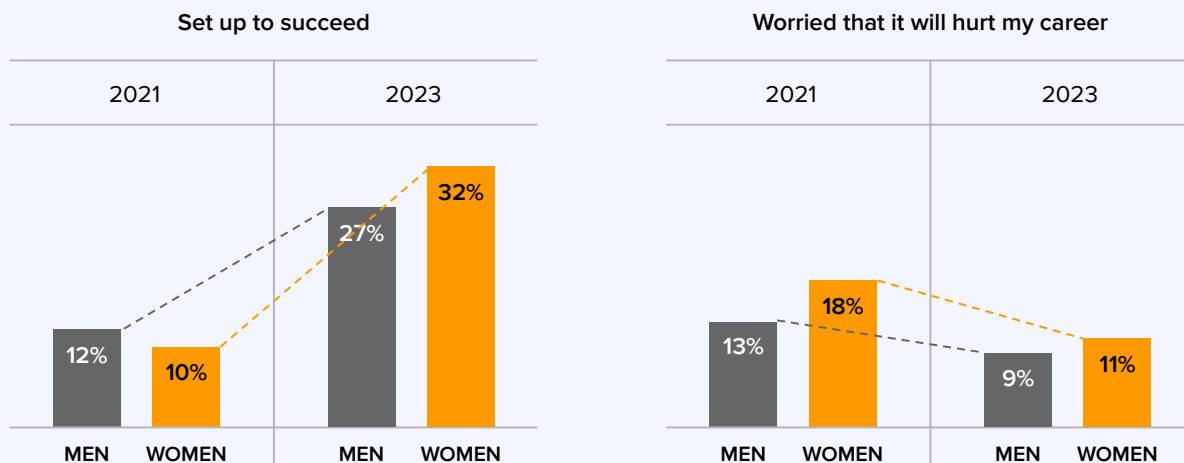
A majority of women and men work more flexibly than they did before the pandemic, and relatively few feel judged or worry it will negatively impact their careers. Most notably, women are far more likely to feel set up to succeed when they work this way than they did two years ago.

“Working from home you’re going to be more comfortable, and you’re going to get more done in the process.”

WHITE WOMAN  
ENTRY LEVEL, WORKS HYBRID

### WOMEN ARE FAR MORE CONFIDENT WORKING FLEXIBLY THAN THEY WERE 2 YEARS AGO <sup>37</sup>

% of employees who say they feel this way when working flexibly





## The ability to work remotely delivers benefits to most employees

Hybrid and remote work are delivering important benefits to employees. Most women and men point to better work-life balance as a primary benefit of remote work, and a majority mention less fatigue and burnout. And research shows that good work-life balance and low burnout are key to organizational success.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, 83 percent of employees say the ability to work more efficiently and productively is a primary benefit of working remotely. However, it's worth noting that companies see this differently: only half of HR leaders say employee productivity is a primary benefit of working remotely.

### Women and men cite stress-reducing upsides with remote work.

Twenty-nine percent of women and 25% of men who work remotely say one of the biggest benefits is having fewer unpleasant interactions with coworkers. Even more—53% of women and 36% of men—point to reduced pressure around managing their personal style or appearance.

When women work remotely, they face fewer microaggressions and have higher levels of psychological safety.<sup>39</sup>

### THE TOP 5 BENEFITS OF HYBRID AND REMOTE WORK

■ WOMEN ■ MEN

% of employees working hybrid or remotely who say this is one of the biggest benefits of their work arrangement

		Hybrid		Remotely	
1	You have an easier time balancing work/life	83%	79%	86%	79%
2	You are more efficient and productive	72%	67%	86%	80%
3	You experience less work burnout or fatigue	62%	58%	60%	54%
4	You feel less pressure to manage your personal style or appearance	43%	29%	53%	36%
5	You are better able to coordinate and communicate cross-functionally	30%	26%	41%	32%

## On-site work delivers benefits to employees—but with room for improvement

Employees who work in person also see tangible benefits. A majority point to an easier time collaborating and a stronger personal connection to coworkers as the biggest benefits of working on-site—two factors central to employee well-being and effectiveness.

However, the culture of office work may be falling short. While 77 percent of companies believe a strong organizational culture is a key benefit of on-site work, most employees disagree: only 39 percent of men and 34 percent of women who work on-site say a key benefit is feeling more connected to their organization’s culture. On top of this, men are more likely to benefit from working on-site.



**Gen Z wants to spend some time in the office.** Just 18 percent of the youngest employees want to work fully remotely.<sup>40</sup>

### THE TOP 5 BENEFITS OF ON-SITE WORK

% of employees working on-site who say this is one of the biggest benefits of their work arrangement

	WOMEN	MEN
<b>1</b> You feel more personally connected to your coworkers	61%	62%
<b>2</b> You have better access to work resources and equipment	60%	62%
<b>3</b> You have an easier time collaborating with coworkers	56%	61%
<b>4</b> You are better able to coordinate and communicate cross-functionally	41%	49%
<b>5</b> You have more opportunities to hear from and/or interact with senior leaders	37%	37%

A CLOSER LOOK

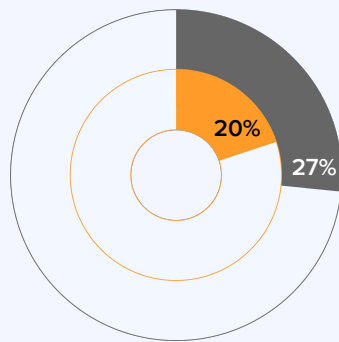
# Men are benefiting disproportionately from on-site work

Compared to women, men are more likely to be “in the know,” receive the mentorship and sponsorship they need, and have their accomplishments noticed and rewarded when they work on-site.

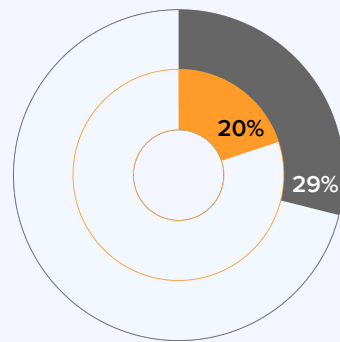
**MEN REPORT GREATER BENEFITS OF WORKING ON-SITE THAN WOMEN**

WOMEN MEN

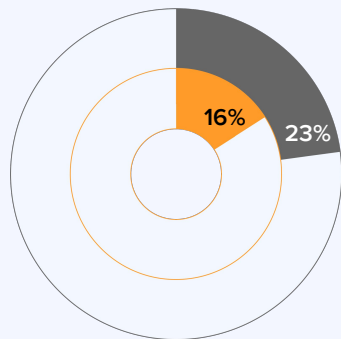
% of women and men who say these things are more true on-site than remote or are benefits of on-site work<sup>41</sup>



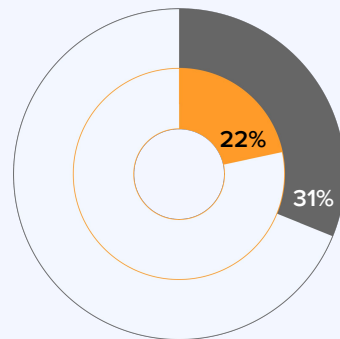
You're more “in the know” about decisions that impact you and your work when on-site



You feel more connected to your organization's mission and your work when on-site



You get more of the mentorship and sponsorship you need when on-site



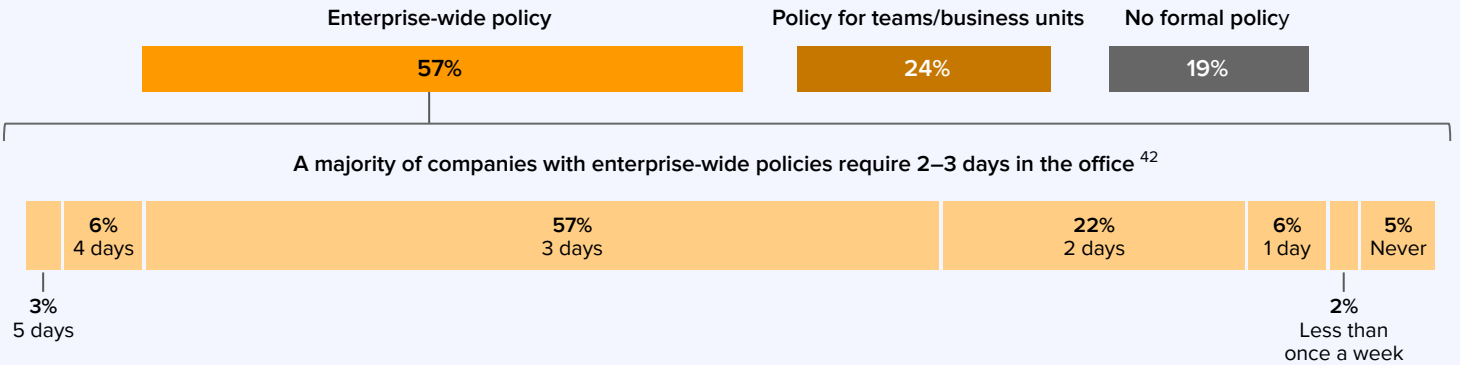
A major benefit of working on-site is getting useful feedback more often

## BY THE NUMBERS

### A BREAKDOWN OF COMPANIES' HYBRID, REMOTE, AND ON-SITE POLICIES

% of companies with policy or guidelines regarding remote and hybrid work

- Enterprise-level policy or guidelines
- No enterprise-level policy or guidelines; individual teams/business units have their own policies
- No specific guidelines on the frequency that employees should be in office



### ACROSS DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES, COMPANY POLICIES VARY WIDELY

Industry <sup>43</sup>	Policy breakdown by industry	Average number of days required on-site
Public and social sector	100%	2.3
Finance	66% Enterprise-level, 23% Team-level, 11% No specific guidelines	2.8
Energy and basic materials	63% Enterprise-level, 22% Team-level, 15% No specific guidelines	2.7
Food and restaurants	58% Enterprise-level, 31% Team-level, 12% No specific guidelines	2.5
Tech	54% Enterprise-level, 8% Team-level, 38% No specific guidelines	2.2
Transportation, logistics, and infrastructure	53% Enterprise-level, 33% Team-level, 13% No specific guidelines	3.0
Retail	53% Enterprise-level, 37% Team-level, 11% No specific guidelines	2.8
Engineering, automotive and industrial manufacturing	52% Enterprise-level, 28% Team-level, 20% No specific guidelines	2.8
Healthcare	47% Enterprise-level, 32% Team-level, 21% No specific guidelines	1.9

PART 3

# Recommendations for companies

As companies work to support and advance women, they should focus on five core areas:

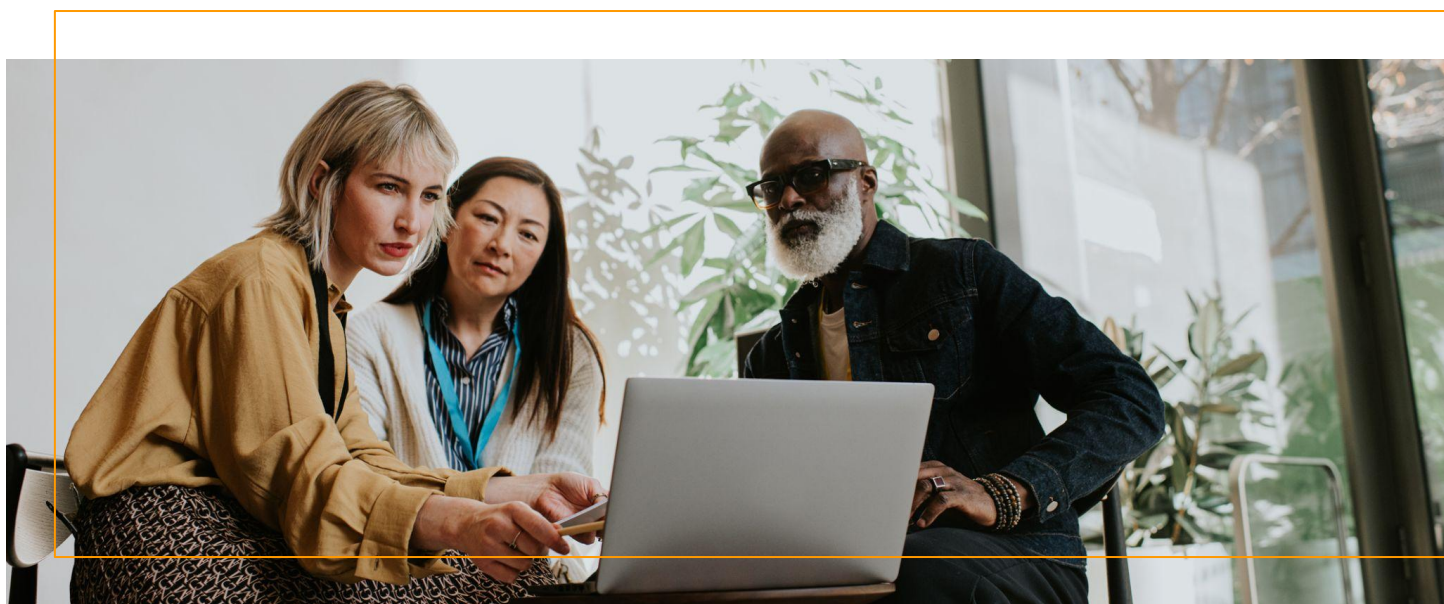
- Tracking outcomes for women's representation
- Empowering managers to be effective people leaders
- Addressing microaggressions head on
- Unlocking the full potential of flexible work
- Fixing the broken rung, once and for all

## Track outcomes to improve women's experience and progression

Tracking outcomes is critical to any successful business initiative. Most companies do this consistently when it comes to achieving their financial objectives, but few apply the same rigor to women's advancement. **Here are three steps to get started:**

### 1 Measure employees' outcomes and experiences—and use the data to fix trouble spots

Companies should track outcomes for drivers of women's advancement: hiring, promotions, and attrition. Visibility into other metrics that influence career progression is also important, such as participation in career development programs, performance ratings, and employee sentiments on job satisfaction and inclusion. Then it's critical that companies mine their data for insights that will improve women's experiences and create equal opportunities for advancement. Ultimately, data tracking is only valuable if it leads to organizational change.



## 2 Take an intersectional approach to outcome tracking

Tracking metrics by race and gender combined should be table stakes. Yet even now, fewer than half of companies do this, and far fewer track data by other self-reported identifiers, such as LGBTQ+ identity.<sup>44</sup> Without this level of visibility, the experiences and career progression of women with traditionally marginalized identities can go overlooked.

## 3 Share internal goals and metrics with employees

Awareness is a valuable tool for driving change—when employees are able to see opportunities and challenges, they're more invested in being part of the solution.<sup>45</sup> In addition, transparency with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals and metrics can send a powerful signal to employees with traditionally marginalized identities that they are supported within the organization.



## Support and reward managers as key drivers of organizational change

Managers are on the front lines of employees' experiences and central to driving organizational change. As companies more deeply invest in the culture of work, managers play an increasingly critical role in fostering DEI, ensuring employee well-being, and navigating the shift to flexible work. These are all important business priorities, but managers do not always get the direction and support they need to deliver on them. **Here are three steps to get started:**

### 1 Clarify managers' priorities and reward results

Companies need to explicitly communicate to managers what is core to their roles and incentivize them to take action. The most effective way to do this is to include responsibilities like career development, DEI, and employee well-being in managers' job descriptions and performance reviews. Yet relatively few companies evaluate managers on metrics linked to employee career progression and satisfaction. For example, although 61 percent of companies point to DEI as a top manager capability, only 28 percent of people managers say their company recognizes DEI in performance reviews. This discrepancy may partially explain why relatively few employees say their manager treats DEI as a priority.

### 2 Equip managers with the skills they need to be successful

To effectively manage the new demands being placed on them, managers need ongoing education. This includes repeated, relevant, and high-quality training that emphasizes specific examples of core concepts and includes concrete actions that managers can incorporate into their daily practices. And topics should be carefully selected to give managers the tools they need to be successful—for example, a focused training on how to manage a dispersed team may be far more valuable than a broader training on management essentials. Finally, companies should adopt an “often and varied” approach to training and upskilling and create regular opportunities for coaching so that managers can continue to build the awareness and capabilities they need to be effective.



**According to companies, the three most critical mindsets and abilities for managers are:**

1. Treating DEI as a top business priority
2. A strong growth mindset and willingness to evolve as a leader
3. The ability to build trusting relationships with teams



### 3 Make sure managers have the time and support to get it right

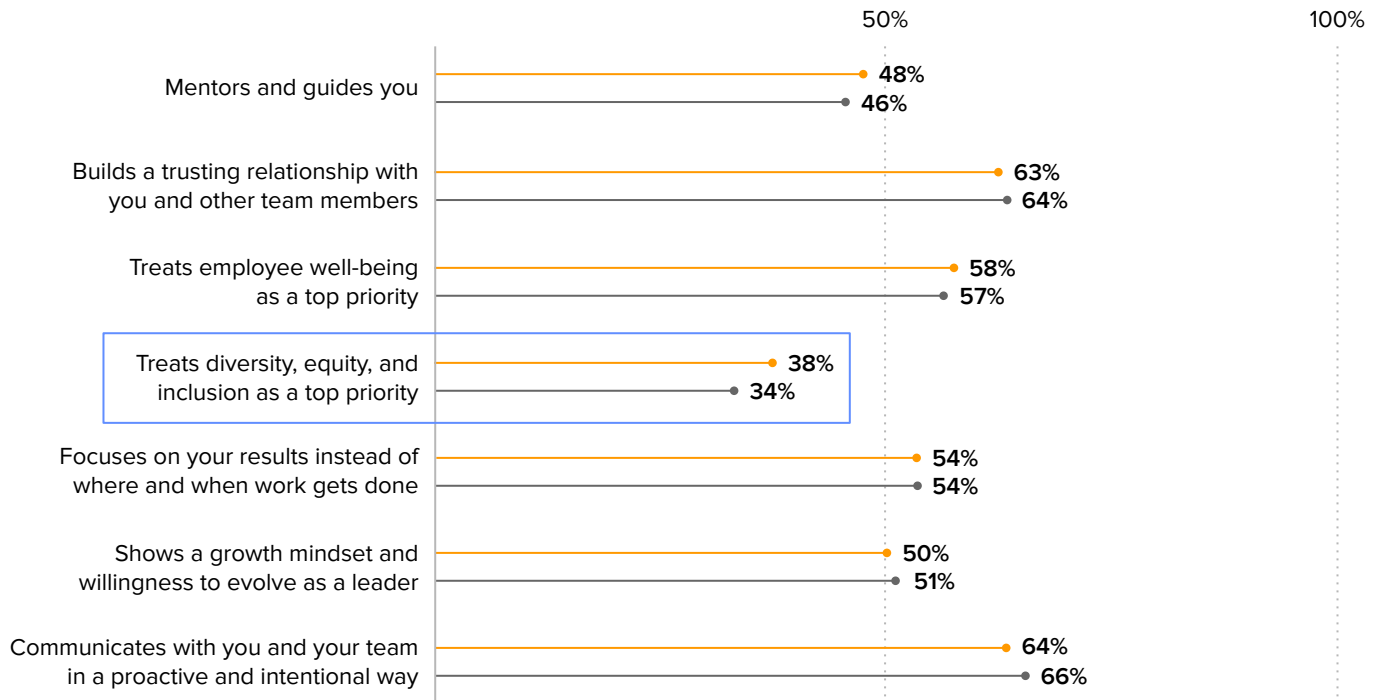
It requires significant intentionality and follow-through to be a good people and culture leader, and this is particularly true when it comes to fostering DEI. Companies need to make sure their managers have the time and resources to do these aspects of their job well. On top of this, companies should put policies and systems in place to make it easier for managers. As a few examples, many managers would benefit from sample scripts for challenging conversations and standardized questions to gauge their team members' well-being and job satisfaction in one-on-one meetings.<sup>46</sup>



#### A SNAPSHOT OF MANAGER ACTIONS

WOMEN MEN

% of women and men who say that their manager consistently takes these actions





## A CLOSER LOOK

# Most companies say DEI is a top and growing priority—and critical to their success

Most companies have increased or maintained their financial and staffing investments in diversity, equity and inclusion over the past year. And nearly three in four say DEI is critical to their future success.

### THE MAJORITY OF COMPANIES HAVE DEEPENED THEIR INVESTMENTS IN DEI OVER THE PAST YEAR <sup>47</sup>

% of companies that say staff and budget for DEI work has increased, decreased, or stayed the same



### COMPANIES POINT TO DEI AS A TOP 3 DRIVER OF THEIR FUTURE SUCCESS

% of companies selecting this as one of the top 3 most important things to focus on for the future success of their organization

1	Fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion	73%
2	Effective people management	59%
3	Fostering a culture of innovation	45%

## Take steps to put an end to microaggressions

Microaggressions are pervasive, harmful to the employees who experience them, and result in missed ideas and lost talent. Companies need to address microaggressions head on. **Here are three steps to get started:**

### 1 Make clear that microaggressions are not acceptable

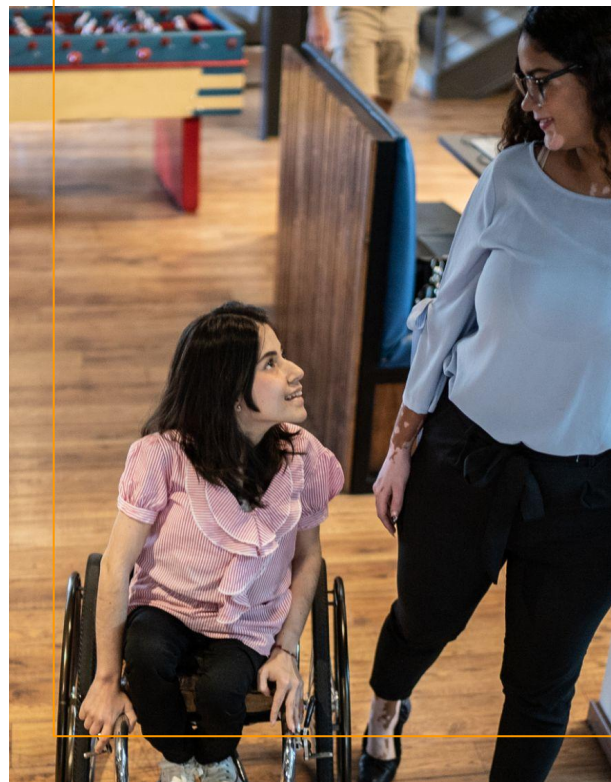
Many people don't realize the harm microaggressions cause. To raise employee awareness and set the right tone, it's crucial that senior leaders communicate that microaggressions and disrespectful behavior of any kind are not welcome. Companies can help with this by developing a code of conduct that articulates what supportive and respectful behavior looks like—as well as what's unacceptable and uncivil behavior.

### 2 Teach employees to avoid and challenge microaggressions

Most people don't fully understand how microaggressions work, so they end up saying and doing things that are hurtful.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, employees often don't recognize microaggressions, let alone know what to say or do to be helpful.<sup>49</sup> That's why it's so important that companies have employees participate in high-quality bias and allyship training and receive periodic refreshers to keep key learnings top of mind.

### 3 Create a culture where it's normal to surface microaggressions

It's important for companies to foster a culture that encourages employees to speak up when they see microaggressions or other disrespectful behavior. Although these conversations can be difficult, they often lead to valuable learning and growth. Senior leaders can play an important role in modeling that it is safe to surface and discuss these behaviors.<sup>50</sup>



## Invest in tracking and optimizing flexibility

The past few years have seen a transformation in how we work. Flexibility is now the norm in most companies; the next step is unlocking its full potential and bringing out the best of what different work arrangements have to offer. **Here are three steps to get started:**

### 1 Establish clear expectations and norms around working flexibly

Without this clarity, employees may have very different and conflicting interpretations of what's expected of them, which can create confusion and make coordination on and across teams difficult. As part of this process, companies need to find the right balance between setting organization-wide guidelines and allowing managers to work with their teams to determine an approach that works best for them.

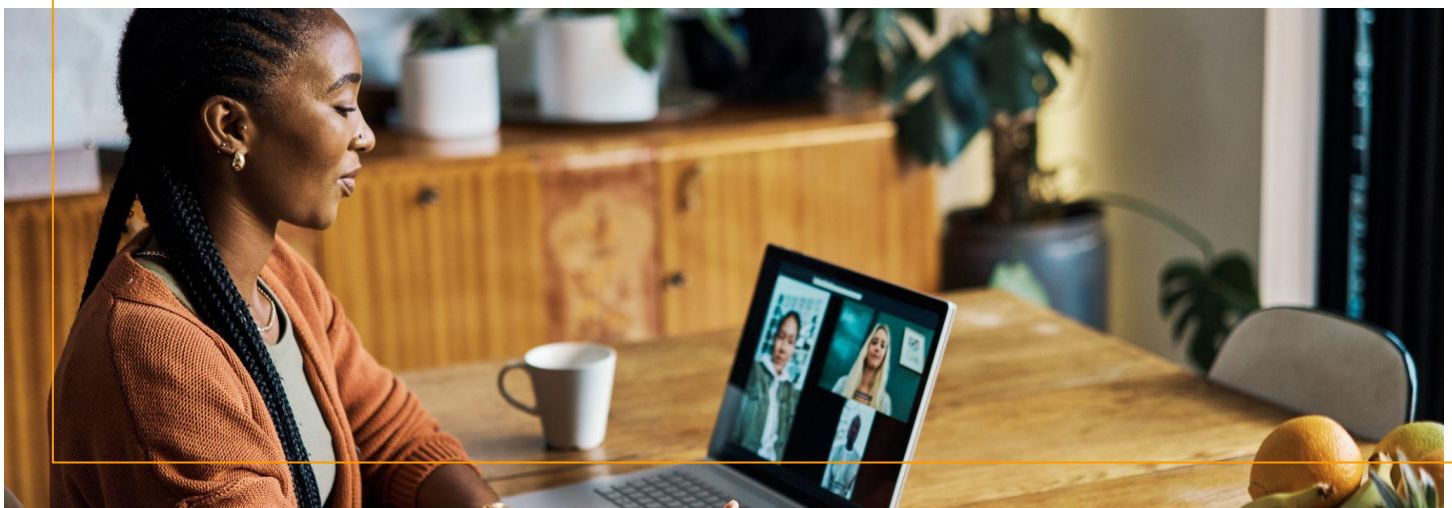
Women at companies with supportive flexible policies are more likely to report having equal opportunities to advance—and are less likely to consider leaving.

**Most employers now offer opportunities to work flexibly and remotely—and the vast majority have maintained or increased their flexible work options in the last year.**

Yet less than 10% of HR leaders point to “offering significant flexibility in where and when employees work” as a top-three driver of their company’s future success, compared to 42% of employees. This misalignment may signal that companies have not yet internalized how beneficial flexibility is to their employees—and by extension, to their business.

### 2 Measure the impact of new initiatives to support flexibility and adjust as needed

The last thing companies want to do is fly in the dark as they navigate the transition to flexible work. As organizations roll out new practices and programs to support flexibility, they should carefully track what's working, and what's not, and adjust their approach accordingly—a test-and-learn mentality and a spirit of co-creation with employees are critical to getting these changes right.



### 3 Put safeguards in place to ensure a level playing field across work arrangements

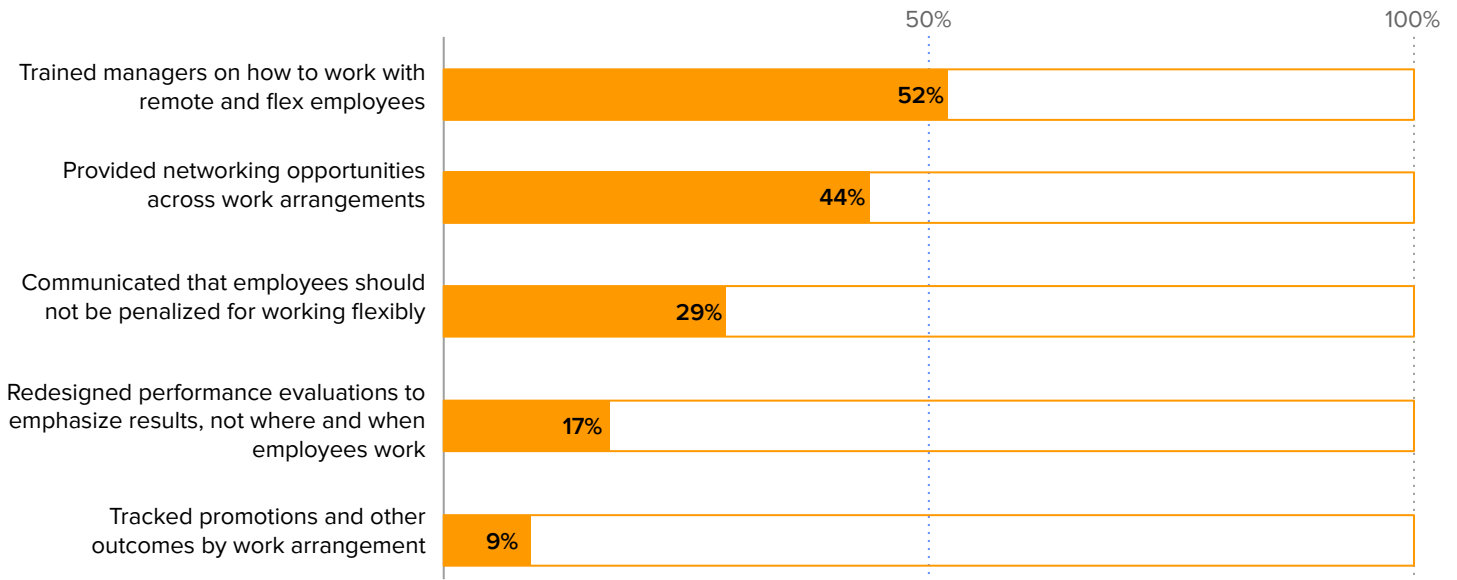
Companies should take steps to ensure that employees aren't penalized for working flexibly. This includes putting systems in place to make sure that employees are evaluated fairly, such as redesigning performance reviews to focus on results, rather than when and where work gets done. Managers should also be equipped to be part of the solution. This requires educating managers on flexibility stigma and the importance of making sure their team members get equal recognition for their contributions and equal opportunities to advance. In addition, to ensure the playing field is leveled, companies should track outcomes by work arrangement to see if employees are getting the same opportunities and advancing at similar rates.

**Flexibility stigma** is the unfair judgment that employees often face when they work flexible hours or work from home. Research shows that employees who work flexibly face more doubts about their productivity and commitment, even when they produce the same results as their colleagues.<sup>51</sup>

**Few companies currently track outcomes across work arrangements.** For example, only 30% have tracked the impact of their return-to-office policies on key DEI outcomes.

#### ACTIONS COMPANIES HAVE TAKEN TO ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACROSS WORK ARRANGEMENTS

% of companies that have done the following to ensure equal opportunities for career development and progression regardless of working model<sup>52</sup>



## Fix the broken rung for women, with a focus on women of color

Fixing the broken rung is a tangible, achievable goal and will set off a positive chain reaction across the pipeline. After nine years of very little progress, there is no excuse for companies failing to take action.

**Here are three steps to get started:**

### 1 Track inputs and outcomes

To uncover inequities in the promotions process, companies need to track who is put up for and who receives promotions, by race and gender combined. Tracking with this intersectional lens enables employers to identify and address the obstacles faced by women of color, and companies can use these data to identify otherwise invisible gaps and refine their promotions processes.

### 2 Work to de-bias performance reviews and promotions

Leaders should put safeguards in place to ensure that evaluation criteria are applied fairly and bias doesn't creep into decision-making. Companies can take these actions:

- Send “bias” reminders before performance evaluations and promotion cycles explaining how common biases can impact reviewers' assessments. Research shows that anti-bias training can wear off over time, so seasonal refreshers like this can make a big difference.<sup>53</sup>
- Appoint a “bias monitor” to keep performance evaluations and promotions discussions focused on the core criteria for the job and surface potentially biased decision-making. Research shows that this has a large impact by shutting down conversations that are likely influenced by bias.<sup>54</sup>
- Have reviewers explain the rationale behind their performance evaluations and promotion recommendations. When individuals have to justify their decisions, they are less likely to make snap judgments or rely on gut feelings, which are prone to bias.



**Companies need clear evaluation criteria to stop bias from entering hiring and reviews.** Evaluation tools should be easy to use and designed to gather measurable, objective input that can be compared across candidates.

### 3 Invest in career advancement for women of color

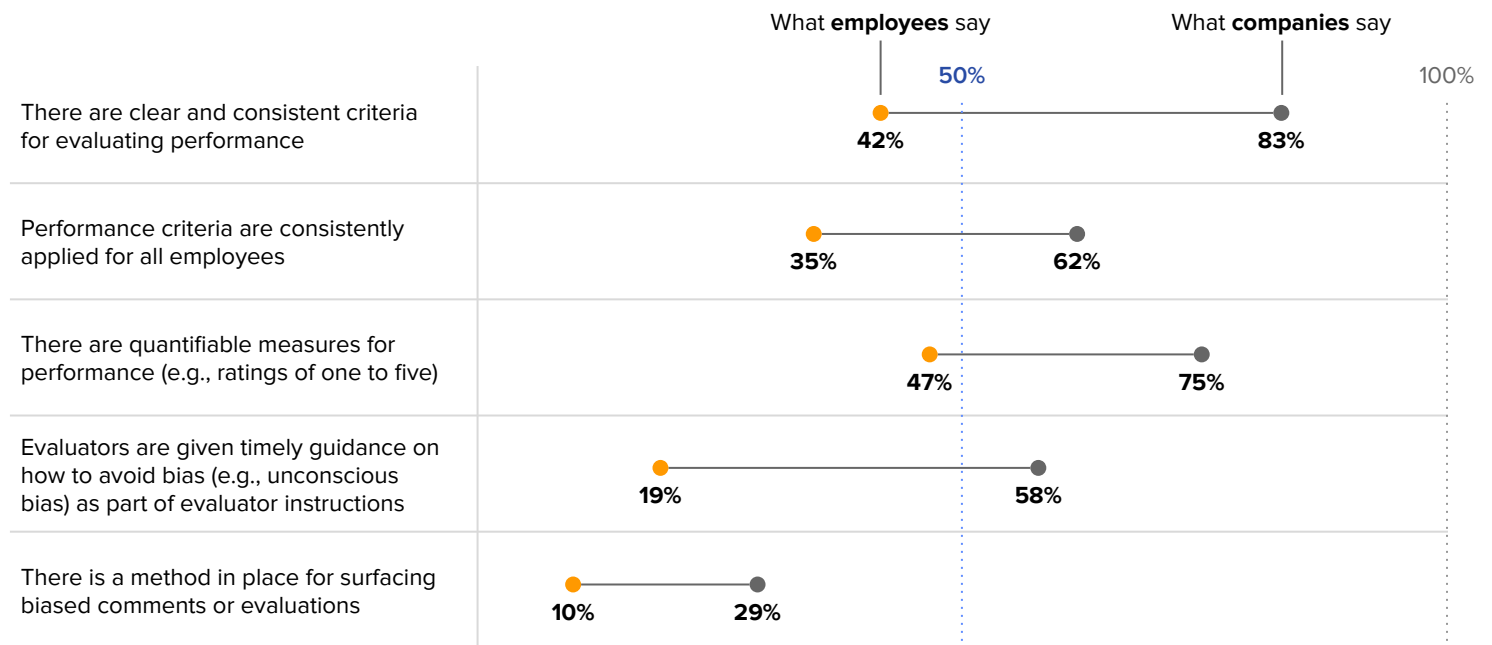
Companies should make sure their career development programs address the distinct biases and barriers that women of color experience. Yet only a fraction of companies tailor career program content for women of color. And given that women of color tend to get less career advice and have less access to senior leaders, formal mentorship and sponsorship programs can be particularly impactful.<sup>55</sup> It's also important that companies track the outcomes of their career development programs with an intersectional lens to ensure they are having the intended impact and not inadvertently perpetuating inequitable outcomes.



Less than half of companies track the outcomes of career development programs by gender and race combined, and fewer than 1 in 5 do so for sponsorship and mentorship programs.

#### COMPANIES CAN DO MORE TO DE-BIAS THEIR PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESSES

% of companies and % of employees saying this is true for performance reviews at their company



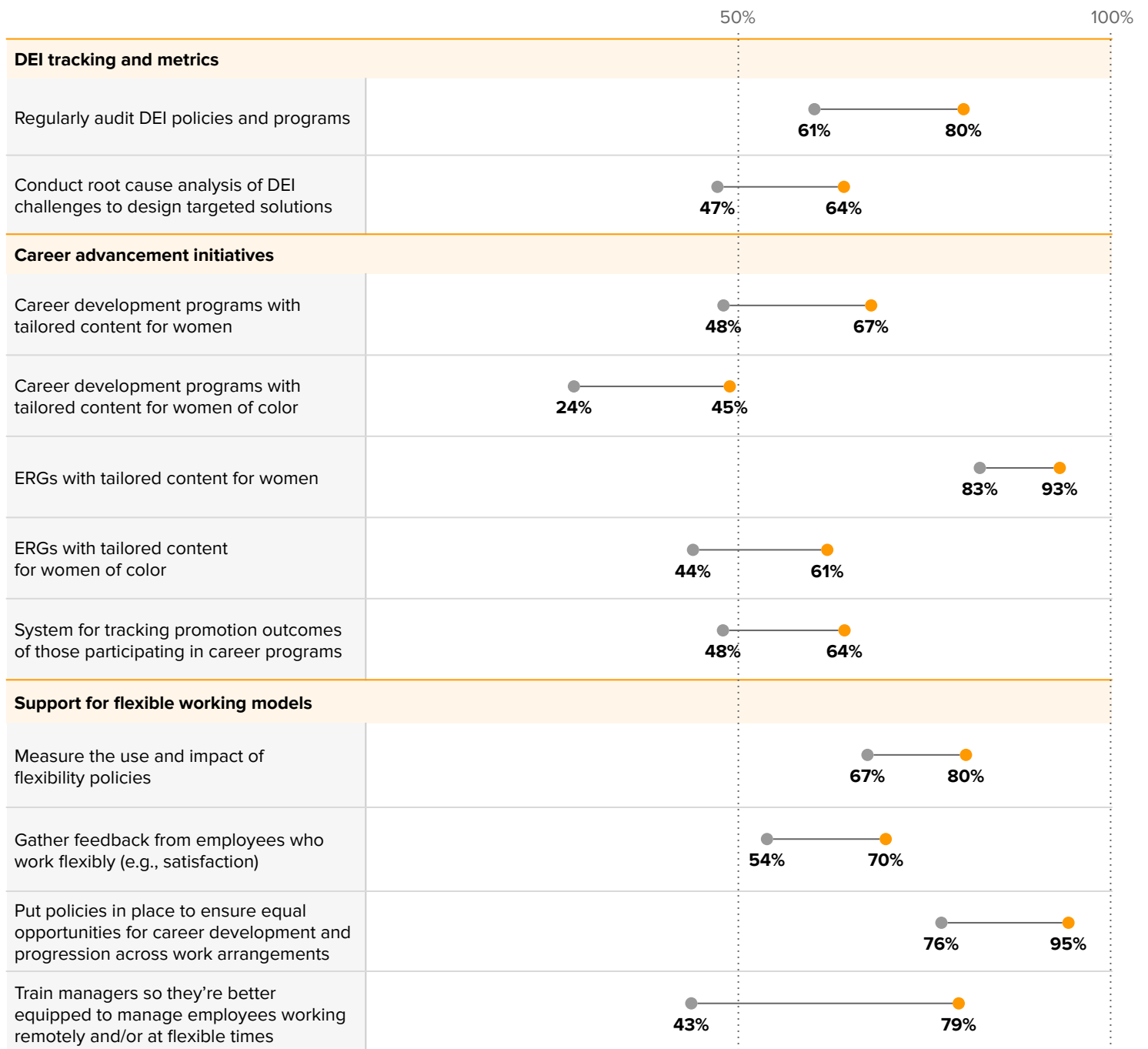
## Practices of top performing companies

Companies with strong women’s representation across the pipeline are more likely to have certain practices in place. The following data are based on an analysis of top performers—companies that have a higher representation of women and women of color than their industry peers.

### PRACTICES OF TOP PERFORMING COMPANIES

■ ALL OTHER COMPANIES ■ TOP PERFORMING COMPANIES

% of top performing companies vs. % of all other companies who report having this policy, practice, or program



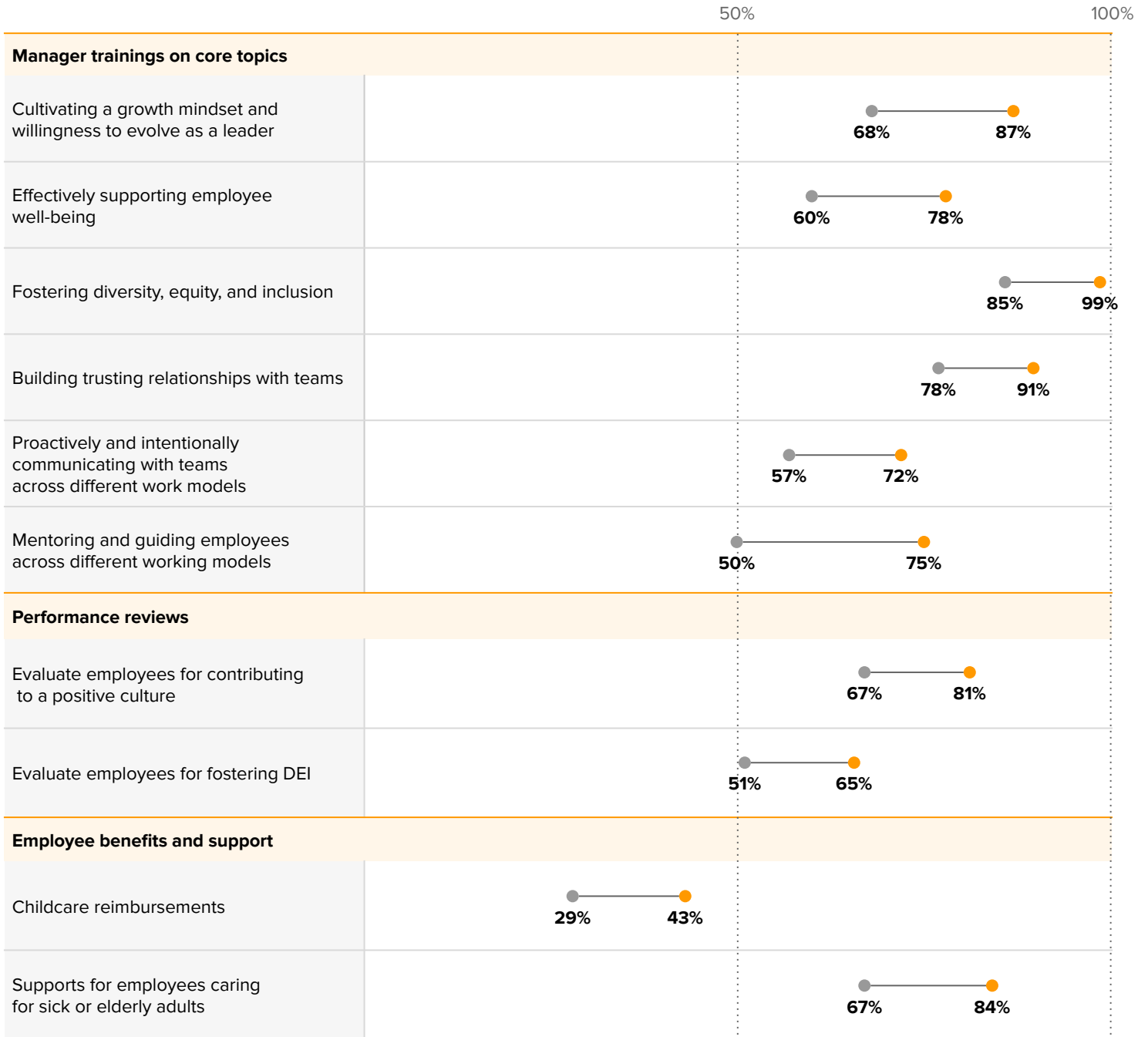


PRACTICES OF TOP PERFORMING COMPANIES

ALL OTHER COMPANIES

TOP PERFORMING COMPANIES

% of top performing companies vs. % of all other organizations who report having this policy, practice, or program

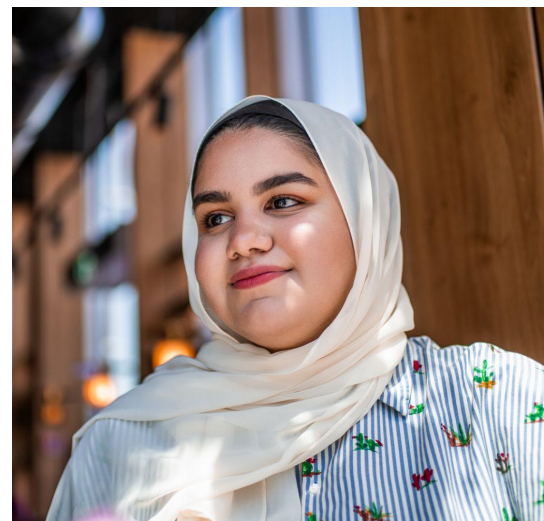


# Acknowledgments

McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org would like to thank the 276 companies and more than 27,000 employees who participated in this year's study. By sharing their information and insights, they've given us new visibility into the state of women in the workplace and the steps companies can take to achieve gender equality.

We appreciate the continued help of Defined Contribution Institutional Investment Association (DCIIA), The Equity Collaborative, Expanding Equity, International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Massachusetts High Technology Council (MHTC), PayTech Women, The Press Forward, and Women's Foodservice Forum (WFF) in convening participants in their respective industries.

We would like to thank Qualtrics and IntelliSurvey for their help in conducting the surveys for this study and Getty Images for providing the photography from the Lean In Collection used in this report and website.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR COMPANIES

Lean In runs programs to support women and improve the culture of work—and they're available at no cost, because every company should have the tools to build an equitable workplace. Our **50 Ways to Fight Bias** training takes the guesswork out of identifying and challenging bias with specific research-backed recommendations for what to say and do. **Allyship at Work** focuses on practical steps managers and employees can take to practice allyship. And our **Lean In Circles** program brings women together for peer mentorship and skill building, and pairs well with our new **Women at Work Collection**—a leadership curriculum designed specifically for women and customizable for women of color, LGBTQ+ women, and women with disabilities. Find out why thousands of organizations like Adidas, Sony Music Group, and Walmart are using our programs and how you can bring them to your company at [leanin.org/partner](https://leanin.org/partner).

McKinsey & Company has made a commitment to researching and building diverse leadership, as well as inclusive and equitable work environments. We have a track record of client service to institutions working to modernize their talent and business processes as well as cultures to support these aims. McKinsey offers award-winning programs to equip leaders with the network, capabilities, and mindsets needed to achieve their goals. Our Connected Leaders Academy has enrolled 67,000 leaders. This program—offered at no cost and which includes customized content relevant to Black, Hispanic and Latino, and Asian leaders—focuses on **early professionals, midcareer managers, and senior executives**. Our DEI Maturity Assessment has provided 250+ clients with a comprehensive framework to assess and drive their DEI strategy. Inclusion assessment has been used by 100+ clients to assess employee perspectives on how effectively leaders, peers, and systems support inclusion in the workplace. We also offer an Inclusion Incubator program aimed at fostering meaningful inclusive leadership behaviors. Visit <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion> to explore McKinsey's client service, research, and insights on DEI.

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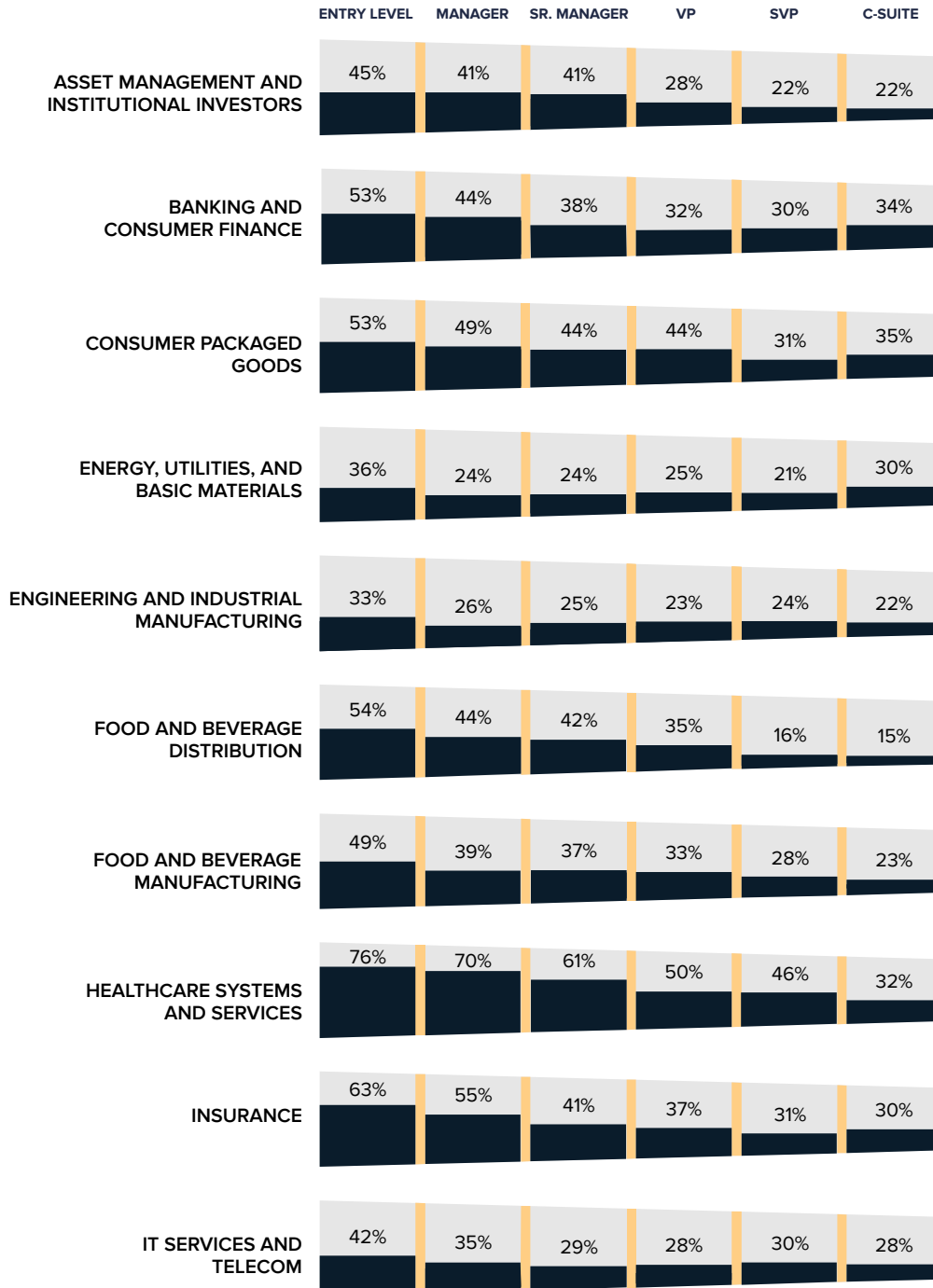
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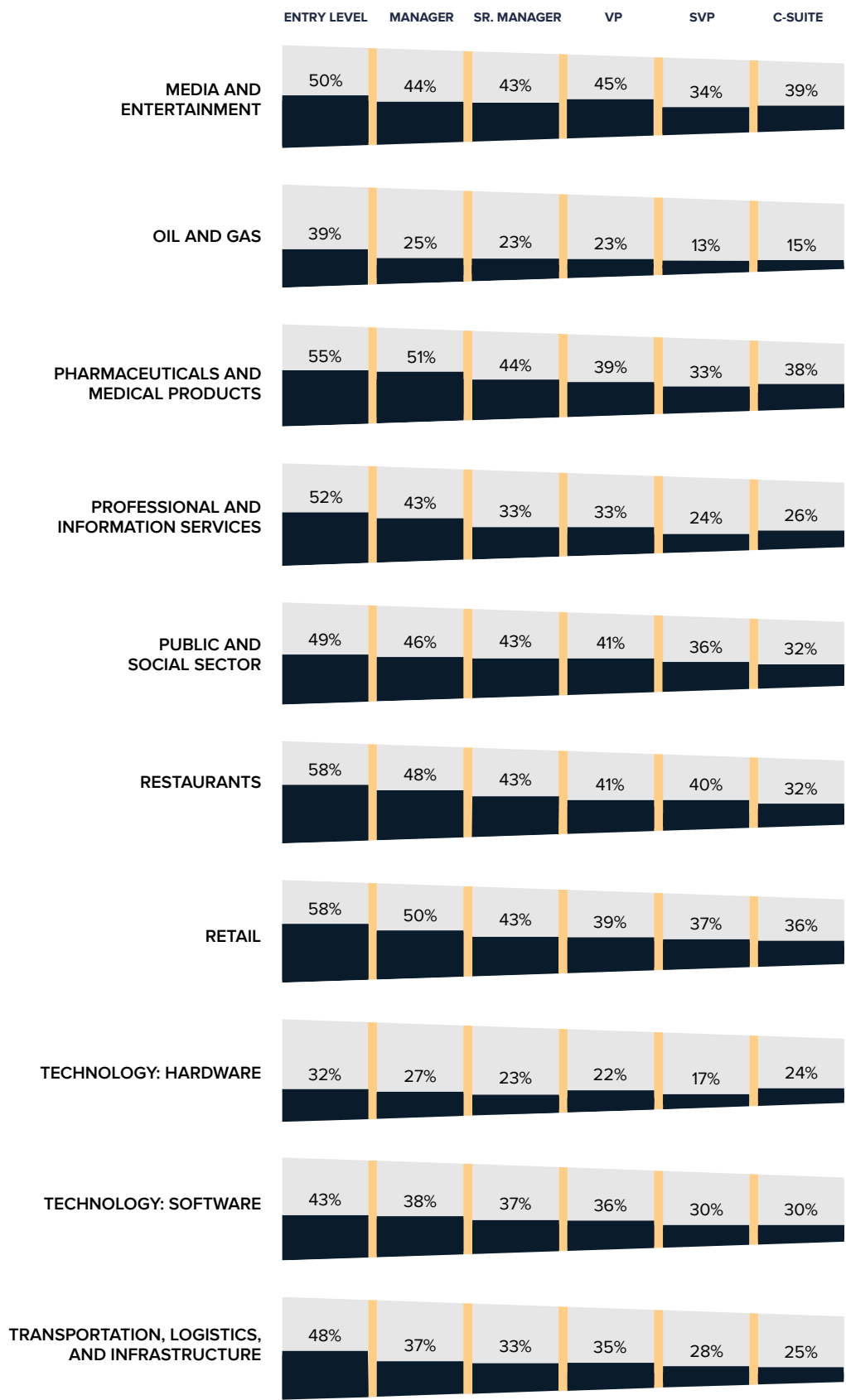
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## CORPORATE PIPELINE BY INDUSTRY

### Industries have different talent pipelines

Although women are broadly underrepresented in corporate America, the talent pipeline varies by industry. Some industries struggle to attract entry-level women (e.g., Technology: Hardware; IT and Telecom; Engineering and Industrial Manufacturing), while others fail to advance women into middle management (Energy, Utilities, and Basic Materials) or senior leadership (Oil and Gas).





# Methodology

## RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

This report is based on research from 276 companies across the United States and Canada, building on similar research conducted annually by McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org since 2015, as well as research from McKinsey & Company in 2012.

A total of 276 participating companies from the private, public, and social sectors submitted talent pipeline data, and 274 of them also submitted HR policies and programs data. In addition, more than 27,000 employees from 33 companies were surveyed on their workplace experiences. We also interviewed 39 women and nonbinary individuals, including people of different races and ethnicities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities at all levels in their organizations, working remotely, hybrid, or on-site.

We grouped companies by industry to create benchmarks that provide peer comparisons. The number of companies from each industry is as follows:

- Asset Management and Institutional Investors—28
- Banking and Consumer Finance—22
- Consumer Packaged Goods—9
- Energy, Utilities, and Basic Materials—17
- Engineering and Industrial Manufacturing—25
- Food and Beverage Distribution—7
- Food and Beverage Manufacturing—7
- Healthcare Systems and Services—23
- Insurance—12
- IT Services and Telecom—6
- Media and Entertainment—5
- Oil and Gas—9
- Pharmaceutical and Medical Products—18
- Professional and Information Services—8
- Public and Social Sector—7
- Restaurants—12
- Retail—10
- Tech: Hardware—13
- Tech: Software—20
- Transportation, Logistics, and Infrastructure—15
- Other—3

Companies opted in to the study in response to invitations from McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org or by indicating interest through our public website. Participation in the Employee Experience Survey was encouraged, but optional.

All talent pipeline data collection occurred between May and July 2023. Talent pipeline data reflect representation of men and women **as of December 31, 2022**, as well as personnel changes (e.g., due to promotion, hiring, attrition) during 2022. Therefore, **all talent pipeline data do not represent any changes that occurred during 2023**. In July 2023, 52 companies also submitted optional “H1” data on their talent pipeline representation and personnel changes for the first half of 2023.

Human resource leaders and professionals provided information on policies, programs, and priorities on behalf of their company between June and September 2023. Additionally, employees were surveyed on their workplace experiences between June and August 2023. These datasets represent point-in-time snapshots and **reflect companies’ responses and employees’ experiences at the time the survey was taken**.

Where appropriate, some statements describing women’s experiences in the workplace were taken from past survey data that have been published in prior *Women in the Workplace* reports.

## PIPELINE DATA AND ANALYTICS

### Overall Metrics

All pipeline metrics (e.g., representation, promotion rates, hiring shares, attrition rates) were initially calculated for each participating company. Company results were then averaged for each industry and each industry’s data were weighted by the composition of the Fortune 500 in 2022. This enabled us to avoid overemphasizing or underemphasizing particular industries and better estimate trends over time based on each year’s sample of companies.

The industry breakdown of the Fortune 500 used for our weighting was:

- Energy and Basic Materials—19%
- Engineering and Automotive and Industrial Manufacturing—10%
- Finance—19%
- Food and Restaurants—7%
- Healthcare—8%
- Media and Entertainment—2%
- Professional and Information Services—4%
- Retail—18%
- Tech—11%
- Transportation, Logistics, and Infrastructure—3%

### Definition of Job Levels

Companies categorized their employees into six levels based on the following standard definitions, taking into account reporting structure and salaries. The levels and definitions provided were:

- L1—Executives: CEO and direct reports to CEO, responsible for company operations and profitability (board members are not included in our primary analyses unless they are also employees)
- L2—Senior vice presidents and other similar roles: senior leaders of the organization with significant business unit or functional oversight
- L3—Vice presidents and other similar roles: leaders within the organization, responsible for activities/initiatives within a subunit of a business unit or function, or who report directly to senior vice presidents
- L4—Directors: seasoned managers and contributors, with responsibility for multiple teams and discrete functions or operating units
- L5—Managers: junior managers and contributors, responsible for small teams and/or functional units or operations
- L6—Entry level: employees responsible for carrying out discrete tasks and participating on teams, typically in an office or corporate setting (field employees like cashiers or customer service representatives are not included in our primary talent pipeline analyses)

# Methodology

## TALENT PIPELINE

### Metrics and Analytics

Talent pipeline data included the representation of men and women (overall, in line versus staff roles, by race/ethnicity, and optionally for functional roles like marketing, sales, and engineering). In addition, companies reported the number of men and women who were hired, promoted, and who left the company (overall, by race/ethnicity, and optionally for functional roles like marketing, sales, and engineering roles, as well as optionally for voluntarily versus involuntarily leaving).

Promotion and attrition rates were calculated for women and men, overall and by race/ethnicity, at each level. Promotion rates were calculated by dividing the number of promotions of that gender into a level by the number of employees of that gender in the level below at the start of the year. Attrition rates were calculated by dividing the number of each gender who left the company at a given level by the number of employees of that gender in that level at the start of the year. Submitted data were checked for consistency and inconsistent data were excluded as needed.

## EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE SURVEY AND ANALYTICS

### Survey Participation

More than 27,000 employees from 33 organizations elected to participate in the Employee Experience Survey. The survey questions covered multiple themes (e.g., overall satisfaction, flexibility and remote/hybrid workplaces, advancement, employee well-being, equity, mentorship, sponsorship) as well as demographic questions (e.g., gender, gender of primary manager, race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, role, family status, household characteristics, and responsibilities).

### Bivariate and Multivariate Statistical Reporting

Survey results were reported as an unweighted polled average of responses across companies. Many of the questions offered a five-point labeled response scale (e.g., “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”). Unless otherwise specified, analyses aggregated the top two and bottom two boxes of the response scale (e.g., combining “Somewhat agree” and “Strongly agree”).

Where we highlight differences between genders or other groups, we highlight only those differences that are substantial and reliable. To that end, all differences noted in this report are statistically significant to a 95 percent confidence level and/or reflect a difference of at least five percentage points between two groups unless otherwise indicated.

- **Definition of Remote Work Status Composite Variable**

Participants were asked how often they currently work on-site and were given interval-level responses as options. During the data analysis, the five options were transformed into the following variables:

- Remote: Never, or less than one day a week on-site
- Hybrid: 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, or 4 days a week on-site
- On-site: 5 days a week on-site

## HR PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

Human resource professionals from two hundred seventy-four organizations provided information on gender diversity policies and programs on behalf of their organization. We report the percentage of organizations that have a program, policy, priority, or position out of the total number of companies that submitted HR program/policy data.

## QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

We conducted individual interviews with 38 women, men, and nonbinary employees across multiple industries. Interviewees were volunteers selected to reflect a range of levels, departments, and demographic groups. Our interviews focused on workplace experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the quantitative findings from the employee survey. Individual names, company names, and any other identifying information were kept strictly confidential, and individuals are anonymized in this report. Within the quotes, some identifying details may have been altered and/or withheld to protect the speaker’s anonymity. Quotes have been edited for clarity.

## HR AND DEI BEST PRACTICES

DEI best practices are based on a top performer analysis conducted with pipeline data and HR survey data. This is supplemented by external research, past Women in the Workplace studies, and responses from subject matter experts about what has been most effective in improving representation and advancement of women.

We used talent pipeline data from 271 companies that participated in both the Talent Pipeline and HR Surveys in 2023 to identify organizations that outperform representation of women and women of color metrics. We compared their total women and women of color representation for L1 to L6 to their industry’s average for these values. We then ranked the companies by the extent to which they outperformed this year’s industry benchmarks for total women and women of color representation from L1 to L6 in the pipeline to identify the top quartile of companies.

The key HR practices and policies that drive progress were based on the top performer analysis and were defined as practices where there was a statistically significant difference in the percentage of top performing organizations (n = 69) and non-top performing organizations (n = 202) that have adopted that practice. In cases where recommendations included multiple individual practices (e.g., sponsorship and/or mentorship programs for women and women of color), the recommendation was classified as a significant practice if there was at least one statistically significant difference between top performers and all other companies in the analyses for any of the listed practices. To further inform solutions, we conducted additional deep-dive analyses for theme-related top performer groups, including assessing what practices are adopted significantly more by organizations that have managed to promote women to the manager level at more similar rates to men and by organizations that had lower voluntary attrition than their industry average.

## Endnotes

- 1** This report contains stock photographs for illustrative purposes only. Images do not reflect the identities of the women quoted. Within the quotes, some identifying details may have been altered and/or withheld to protect the speaker's anonymity.
- 2** In this study, "women" includes cisgender and transgender women. Due to small sample sizes for transgender women, data are reported for "women overall" or "LGBTQ+ women" in aggregate. Women of color include Black, Latina, Asian, Native American/American Indian/Indigenous or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, or mixed-race women. Due to small sample sizes for other racial and ethnic groups, reported findings on individual racial/ethnic groups are restricted to Black women, Latinas, and Asian women.
- 3** Except where otherwise noted, "senior leadership" refers to individuals at the vice president level or above (L1 to L3 in Methodology).
- 4** Except where otherwise noted, the "middle of the pipeline" refers to individuals at the manager and director level (L5 and L4 in Methodology).
- 5** Except where otherwise noted, "flexible work" or "flexibility" refers to remote or hybrid work, as well as flexible work options such as the ability to set your own hours.
- 6** Total percent of women and men per level in the race and gender pipeline may not sum to overall corporate pipeline totals, as the race pipeline does not include employees with unreported race data. Some percentages may sum to 99 percent or 101 percent due to rounding.
- 7** Pipeline data in this report are based on data from the end of 2022 and do not reflect changes through 2023.
- 8** LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2022* (October 2022), <https://womenintheworkplace.com/>.
- 9** These trends continued throughout the first half of 2023, based on our analysis of pipeline data from a subset of 52 company participants.
- 10** Except where otherwise noted, "young women" and "young men" refer to employees 30 and under.
- 11** Full questions: [2023] How interested are you in the following? Being promoted to the next level [Selected "Very interested" or "Somewhat interested"]; [2019] Do you want to be promoted to the next level? [Selected "Yes, I would like to be promoted"].
- 12** Full questions: I am taking steps to prioritize my personal life more than I did before the pandemic [Respondents selected from "Strongly agree," "Somewhat agree," "Neither agree nor disagree," "Somewhat disagree," "Strongly disagree"]; My career is important to me [Respondents selected from "Strongly agree," "Somewhat agree," "Neither agree nor disagree," "Somewhat disagree," "Strongly disagree"]; How interested are you in the following? Getting promoted to the next level: [Respondents selected from ["Very interested," "Somewhat interested," "Neither interested nor uninterested," "Somewhat uninterested" "Very uninterested"].
- 13** In this study, numbers for the "broken rung" assume an equal number of men, women, and women of color at entry level (L6 in Methodology).
- 14** Entry-level workers are defined as individual contributors responsible for carrying out discrete tasks and participating on teams, typically in an office or corporate setting (e.g., business analyst, software engineer, paralegal, operations support). Here, "early career individual" refers to entry-level employees.
- 15** Unpublished data, LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2022* and *Women in the Workplace 2021*; published data from *Women in the Workplace 2018–2020*, <https://womenintheworkplace.com/>.
- 16** LeanIn.Org, 50 Ways to Fight Bias, <https://leanin.org/50-ways-to-fight-gender-bias>; Joan C. Williams and Rachel Dempsey, *What Works for Women at Work* (New York: NYU Press, 2014); Laurie Rudman, Corrine A. Moss-Racusin, et al., "Reactions to Vanguard: Advances in Backlash Theory," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 45 (2012).
- 17** Ibid.
- 18** Monnica T. Williams, "Microaggressions: Clarification, Evidence, and Impact," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 15, no. 1 (2019), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1745691619827499>.
- 19** "Asian women" refers to women of South Asian, East Asian, and Southeast Asian origin or descent. Unless otherwise stated, "Asian women" does not include individuals of Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, West Asian, or Middle Eastern origin or descent.



## Endnotes

- 20** “Psychological safety” is the belief among employees that it’s safe to take interpersonal risks. It means employees believe they won’t be punished or humiliated if they propose new ideas, raise concerns and issues, or admit mistakes. Amy Edmondson, “Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (June 1999): 350–83, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2307/2666999>.
- 21** In addition to “self-shielding,” social scientists describing similar dynamics have used terms such as “impression management,” “self-monitoring,” “stigma management,” “vigilance,” “emotional tax,” and “performative contortions.”
- 22** In this study, “women who experience microaggressions and self-shield” are being compared to women who do not experience either.
- 23** Chester M. Pierce et al., “An experiment in racism: TV commercials,” *Education and Urban Society* 10, no. 1 (1977).
- 24** In this study, respondents who experience microaggressions refers to those who selected anything other than “None of the above” from the following list. Full question: During the normal course of business, have you experienced any of the following? Select all that apply | [Q27.1] Having others take or get credit for your ideas; Having your judgment questioned in your area of expertise; Being mistaken for someone at a lower level; Being interrupted or spoken over more than others; People commenting on your appearance in a way that made you uncomfortable; People commenting on your emotional state (e.g., you’re too angry, feisty, emotional); Feeling judged because of your accent or way of speaking; People expressing doubt or disbelief at your accomplishments; Being confused with someone else of the same race/ethnicity; Other people calling attention to your age unnecessarily; None of the above.
- 25** LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2022*, <https://womenintheworkplace.com/>.
- 26** LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2021*, <https://womenintheworkplace.com/>.
- 27** In this study, self-shielding means respondent selected any response from the following list. Full question: Which of the following have you experienced at work? Select all that apply | Respondents selected one or more of the following: You felt pressure to change your appearance to look more professional; You toned down what you said because you didn’t want to be seen as unlikable (e.g., chose your words carefully); You hid important aspects of your identity to fit in at work (e.g., being LGBTQ+, having a disability); You felt like you had to “code-switch” to blend in with others at work (e.g., changing mannerisms, tone of voice, or speaking style); You chose not to speak up or share an opinion so you didn’t seem difficult or aggressive; You felt like you had to perform perfectly to avoid scrutiny or judgment.
- 28** LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2022*, <https://womenintheworkplace.com/>.
- 29** Ibid.
- 30** Ibid.
- 31** Comparison of responses from women who experience microaggressions (see note 24) and engaged in self-shielding (see note 27) vs. women who do not experience microaggressions and do not engage in self-shielding.
- 32** Wouldn’t recommend their company: Selected “Strongly disagree” or “Somewhat disagree” in response to question “How much do you agree with the following statements? I would recommend this company as a great place to work.”
- 33** Feel they don’t have an equal opportunity to advance: Selected “Strongly disagree” or “Somewhat disagree” in response to the question “How much do you agree with the following statements? Compared to my peers at this organization, I have an equal opportunity to advance.”
- 34** Due to small sample sizes, all women identifying as lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, otherwise nonheterosexual, and/or transgender were analyzed and reported in a single category as LGBTQ+ women. This means that, throughout this report, the composite “LGBTQ+” most closely describes the experiences of larger groups in the sample.
- 35** Richard Fry, Carolina Aragão, Kiley Hurst, and Kim Parker, “In a Growing Share of U.S. Marriages, Husbands and Wives Earn About the Same,” Pew Research Center (2023), <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/04/13/in-a-growing-share-of-u-s-marriages-husbands-and-wives-earn-about-the-same/#:~:text=Among%20parents%20in%20marriages%20where.per%20week%20on%20paid%20work>; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, “Employment: Time spent in paid and unpaid work, by sex,” 2023, <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=54757#>.
- 36** In this study, “mothers of young children” refers to women with at least one child under the age of four years old.

## Endnotes

**37** [2023] Full question: When you work flexibly (e.g., work from home, work nonstandard hours), how do you feel? Select all that apply. Respondents selected from: “Supported,” “Judged,” “Set up to succeed,” “Worried that it will hurt my career,” “Like I’m a burden to my team,” “Like it’s no big deal,” “I don’t work flexibly,” “There are no opportunities to work flexibly at my company,” “Other.” [2021] Full question: When you request or take advantage of opportunities to work flexibly (e.g., take time off, work from home, work non-standard hours), how do you feel? Select all that apply. Respondents selected from: “Supported,” “Judged,” “Set up to succeed,” “Worried that it will hurt my career,” “Like I’m a burden to my team,” “Like it’s no big deal,” “I don’t request or take advantage of opportunities to work flexibly,” “There are no opportunities to work flexibly at my company,” “Other.”

**38** Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Micah Kaats, and George Ward, *Workplace Wellbeing and Firm Performance*, University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2304 (2023), <https://wellbeing.hmc.ox.ac.uk/papers/wp-2304-workplace-wellbeing-and-firm-performance>; Sabine Sonnentag, “Wellbeing and Burnout in the Workplace: Organizational Causes and Consequences,” in James D. Wright, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (New York: Elsevier, 2015), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B9780080970868730212?via%3Dihub>.

**39** LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2022*.

**40** “Gen Z” is defined as being born in 1997 or later.

**41** “Full questions: All respondents were asked: Are the following statements more true when you are working remotely, working on-site, or about the same in both settings? You’re “in the know” about decisions that impact you and your work | You get the mentorship and sponsorship you need | You feel more connected to your organization’s mission and your work [Respondents selected from “More true REMOTE,” “More true ON-SITE,” “Equally true in BOTH,” “Not true in EITHER,” “Don’t know”]; Respondents working on-site five days a week were asked: “Which of the following are the biggest benefits of on-site work for you? Select all that apply” [Respondent selected option “You receive useful feedback more often”].

**42** Some percentages may sum to 99 percent or 101 percent due to rounding.

**43** Chart excludes Media and Entertainment, Professional and Information Services, and Law Firms due to small sample sizes.

**44** Unpublished data, LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2022*, <https://womenintheworkplace.com/>.

**45** Slack, “Trust, tools and teamwork: what workers want,” October 3, 2018, <https://slack.com/blog/transformation/trust-tools-and-teamwork-what-workers-want>.

**46** LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2022*; LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2021* (September 2021), <https://womenintheworkplace.com/>.

**47** Some percentages may sum to 99 percent or 101 percent due to rounding.

**48** Monnica T. Williams, “Racial Microaggressions: Critical Questions, State of the Science, and New Directions,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 16, no. 5 (2021), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/17456916211039209>.

**49** Monnica T. Williams, “Microaggressions: Clarification, Evidence, and Impact,” *Perspectives on Psychological Sciences* 15, no.1 (2019), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1745691619827499>.

**50** LeanIn.Org, 50 Ways to Fight Bias, <https://leanin.org/50-ways-to-fight-gender-bias>; Jennifer Kim and Alyson Meister, “How to Intervene When You Witness a Microaggression,” *Harvard Business Review*, September 30, 2022, <https://hbr.org/2022/09/how-to-intervene-when-you-witness-a-microaggression>.

**51** Joan C. Williams, Mary Blair-Loy, and Jennifer Berdahl, “Special Issue: The Flexibility Stigma,” *Journal of Social Issues* 69, no. 2 (June 2013): 209–405, <https://spssi.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/15404560/69/2>.

**52** Full question: What is your organization doing to ensure that employees have equal opportunities for career development and progression regardless of their working model (e.g., on-site, remote/hybrid, flexible hours)? Select all that apply: “Explicitly communicated that employees should not be penalized for working remotely and/or at flexible time,” “Redesigned performance evaluations to emphasize results, not where and when employees work,” “Track outcomes for employees with different working models (e.g., promotions, attrition, satisfaction),” “Trained/training managers so they’re better equipped to manage employees working remotely and/or at flexible times,” “Provide more formal networking opportunities for employees,” “Provide more informal networking opportunities for employees,” “Put formal mechanisms in place so all employees get the same opportunities for mentorship,” “Put formal mechanisms in place so all employees get the same opportunities for sponsorship,” “None of the above.” Provided networking opportunities is an aggregate of informal and formal networking opportunities.

## Endnotes

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**53** Shelley J. Correll, "Reducing Gender Biases in Modern Workplaces: A Small Wins Approach to Organizational Change," *Gender & Society* 31, no. 6 (December 2017).

**54** Joan C. Williams, *Bias Interrupted: Creating Inclusion for Real and for Good* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2021); Shelley J. Correll, "Reducing Gender Biases in Modern Workplaces."

**55** LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2022*.

