

let's get real about
equality

View key findings from the When Women Thrive 2020 global report

For the first time since Mercer conducted its groundbreaking study five years ago and published the inaugural When Women Thrive global report, our next-generation research shows that hiring, promotion and retention rates of women are comparable to those of men across all career levels. This finding represents a significant achievement — and shows how we can tackle a challenge and get real results.

Organizations are taking the actions necessary to make such a difference. And they're doing so on a global scale: 81% of companies report that broadly improving diversity and inclusion is "important" or "very important." However, like any challenging endeavor, there's still work to do to achieve across-the-board results.

For new companies just opening their doors, we can confidently set them up with the practices, policies, programs and processes to achieve equal representation of women. For most other organizations, in real terms, reaching that mark will require pushing past parity in hiring, retention and promotion — and will require perseverance over time. Critically, these efforts are playing out in a complex global ecosystem with multiple stakeholders, and under scrutiny from within and without organizations — from employees and boards to activist groups and customers. While the strides we're making do get widespread global attention and every region is taking part, just like in most aspects of business, it comes down to the numbers. Women representing 50% of the global workforce is still decades away. That's one thing about math: it's undeniable.

So, with all hands on deck and rowing together in the same direction, we most certainly can go further faster. A coordinated effort among organizations, industries, communities and countries will move that proverbial needle to ensure equality of opportunity, experience and pay.

To get a jump on things, here are some of the key findings from the When Women Thrive 2020 global report, *Let's Get Real About Equality*.

The upshot: The future is looking brighter. There are optimism-inducing **Bright Spots** around the world and across organizations. From positive progress to tremendous gains, these areas demonstrate forward momentum with the potential for lasting impact. In other areas, we found clear **Learning Curves** and **Room to Grow**.

About the research:

Who

7 million employees

1,157 organizations

Where

54 countries in
6 regions

Asia, Australia and New Zealand,
Europe, Latin America, Middle East
and Africa, North America

What

26+ industries

When

Conducted from

**September 23–
November 22, 2019**

Bright spots

From positive progress to tremendous gains, these areas demonstrate forward momentum with potential for lasting traction.

Key highlights	Supporting data	Implications
----------------	-----------------	--------------

Bright future

Women are stepping in and stepping up.



Talent flows (hiring, promotion, and retention rates) for women are favorable/comparable to men.



increase in representation at both executive and senior-manager levels.

We have proof of concept for what it takes to achieve gender equality in the workforce. Companies can learn from effective practices and must persevere to bridge the gaps.

Take it from the top

Senior executives are leading the charge; boards are getting engaged.



Senior leaders are passionate about making gender equality a business priority.



report senior executives are actively engaged in D&I initiatives and programs — up 9%.



board engagement overall — a 5% improvement in D&I activities.

Purpose-driven senior leaders are critical for creating long-term culture change. They are seizing the opportunity to drive passion and commitment down through the organization.

Pay equity progress

Tremendous progress has been made.



Companies are adopting more disciplined methods of analyzing pay equity.

Strong upward trends in formal pay equity analysis and accountability measures:



reporting dedicated teams, compared to 45%. 56% conducting pay equity analysis, compared to 35%.

Pay equity is a proven driver of current and future representation of women.

Learning curves

Organizations can improve results and impact by identifying, understanding and addressing what's impeding progress.

Key highlights	Supporting data	Implications
----------------	-----------------	--------------

Pushing past parity

Although hiring, promoting and retaining at similar rates is critical, it's not enough to achieve overall organizational parity or effectively change representation.



While talent flows across organizations are now at comparable or at even better levels for women, organizations are not in a position to achieve parity in the near future.



Even with comparable/favorable talent flows, projections indicate it will take **10 years** to increase female representation by just **3%**.

Achieving parity may require over-indexing, or favoring women, in hiring, advancement and retention efforts.

Hardwiring for an inclusive culture

Overcoming cultural impediments will require "hardwiring" programs, policies and processes that drive equality of opportunity, experience and pay.



Managers are in a unique position to drive inclusion through the utilization of existing resources and through their day-to-day interactions with employees.

Frontline manager engagement in D&I programs and initiatives is **46%** globally.

Substantial increase in middle management engagement in D&I globally (from **39%** to **53%**), which is reassuring, but still below the level of senior executive and C-suite involvement.

Effective manager training on implementing policies and initiating meaningful conversations are key to driving acceptance and implementation of D&I efforts.

Getting ahead

Companies say women have equal access to critical roles; the data says otherwise.



Research shows that women who have management and profit and loss (P&L) responsibilities are more likely to advance.

79%

of organizations say that women have access to the roles that are more likely to lead to advancement into leadership.

However, only **52%** of organizations say women are equally represented in people-manager roles.

And less than half (**44%**) have equal representation of women in P&L roles.

Organizations need to understand and align on their criteria for advancement, and then ensure there are equal opportunities for advancement for all employees.

Room to grow

Identifying and understanding areas of improvement will give us the roadmap to keep moving forward.

Key highlights	Supporting data	Implications
----------------	-----------------	--------------

Game plan required

Ability and willingness to track and analyze data affects accurate assessment of root causes, trouble spots and progress.



Although leadership is engaged and confident, there is minimal data-based evidence, strategic planning or dedicated staff.

81%

focus on improving D&I, yet only **64%** track gender representation, and even fewer track hires, promotions and exits by gender.

Only **42%** of organizations have a documented, multiyear strategy; **50%** set formal, quantitative D&I goals and targets.

There's still a significant need for data-driven, evidence-based decision-making. Actions should be rooted in proof and ladder up to overall business performance.

Care beyond career

Women's health and financial needs and caregiving roles place unique burdens on them.



Although organizations are more committed to gender-based health initiatives than to financial ones, there has not been progress in either area since the 2016 When Women Thrive report.

25%

of organizations track gender-specific health needs, and **9%** track gender-specific financial wellness.



Supporting the whole person is critical: Financial wellness, health and well-being, and caregiving should be examined holistically — and at higher rates than they are currently — to enable women to thrive both in and outside of the workplace.

Tech support needed

Applied correctly, technology can enable scalable, consistent implementation of practices, processes and programs that support D&I.



Few organizations are leveraging technology to support their D&I efforts.

Only

30%



of organizations are using technology to systematically address D&I challenges.

Technology has the potential to be a disruptor to the structural biases (intentional or not) that hide in our processes and behaviors.