



2nd Annual

Women's Leadership Impact Study

FLORIDA

APRIL 2023



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Edge

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About the Study

The 2022 FL Women's Leadership Study marks the second year of longitudinal research examining the status of women's leadership among Florida's employers. Designed and managed by The Women's Edge (formerly The Commonwealth Institute), the research is conducted once annually.

The study examines the development, training, and benefits employers offer to support women where they work. Its goal is to catalyze progress in women's leadership, including the advancement of women of color and those whose other intersecting identities place them at risk for marginalization or underrepresentation.

This year's report highlights trends and relevant comparisons to previous years. Where appropriate, it spotlights or makes comparisons to broader data and national gender equity issues. The report concludes with a *Roadmap for Success* (page 11) that includes measurable recommendations for action.

The 2022 study surveyed Florida-based small, medium, and large organizations. Private companies represented 73% of respondents, nonprofits 19%, and public companies 8%.

The percentage of responding companies that are led by women increased dramatically this year, rising from 56% to 86%. In contrast, 10% of Fortune 500 companies are currently led by women. The disproportionate representation of participating companies with women at the helm is somewhat expected, given the study's focus. We acknowledge that these statistics could skew results in favor of support for women's leadership.

Readers Note: We use various terms to describe identities throughout this report and recognize that opinion about proper term usage varies. Wherever possible, our terms reflect original source material. Thus, readers will see terms such as the following throughout: LGBTQ; LGBTQ+; or LGBTQIA2S+; women of color; Black women; African American women; BIPOC (Black Indigenous and People of Color), Hispanic women; Latinas; or Latinx women.

Introduction

This report – our second in what will become a series of annual Florida studies conducted by The Women’s Edge – examines how employers are working to fill the leadership pipeline with qualified women and how they are addressing roadblocks that prevent women’s ability to thrive and succeed.

While the 2022 survey demonstrated some progress around women’s leadership, action related to certain initiatives actually declined compared to 2021. The mixed data provides a reminder that women working in Florida – like other women nationally and globally – face obstacles to career progression. One of the most persistent issues is the reality that women fall behind at the first step to leadership, setting them on a lagging path compared to men for the remainder of their career (see Figure 1).

We examine both the positive and negative trends taking place in Florida on the following pages.

This report contains two major sections:

Key Findings and Trends (page 4) synthesizes major takeaways from this year’s survey and compares them to past years wherever possible. Highlights include: increased use of goals and metrics; improvements for women of color; a growing commitment to mentorship and sponsorship; greater recognition of identities that intersect with gender; and an intentional commitment to adopting last year’s report recommendations.

A Roadmap for Success (page 11) outlines specific recommendations for organizations focused on supporting and advancing women’s leadership. The roadmap includes: leveraging metrics that spur accountability; what to do when progress is stalling; creating a culture of allyship (that recognizes intersecting identities); shifting perspectives about mentorship and sponsorship; and actively supporting women’s wellbeing.

CHART

Women Continue to Fall Behind on the Pathway to Senior Leadership²

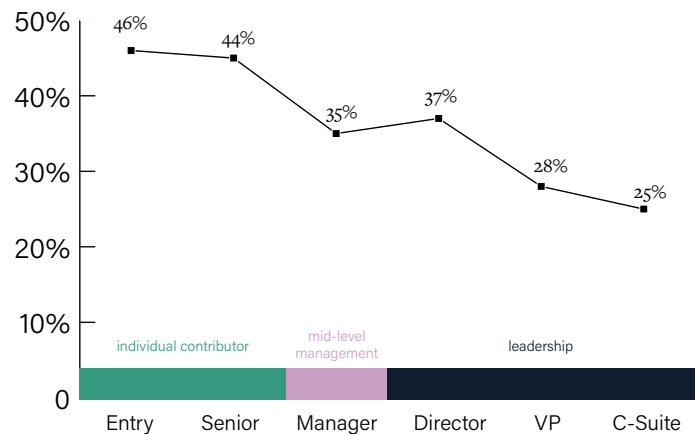


Figure 1: The representation of women by seniority across the US.

Key Findings & Trends



Organizations are allocating resources and adopting goals and metrics.

Overall commitment to formal goals and metrics stayed roughly the same from 2021 to 2022:

- Formal goals related to the development of all women leaders stayed dead even – at 39% – compared to 2021.
- Metrics to track an increase in women of color in leadership roles remained almost the same as 2021, moving from 28% to 29%.

More employers (47%) cited “increased rates of women in every stage of our organization” as an indicator of the success of leadership development programs. This metric stood at 42% in 2021.

SURVEY QUESTION:

How do you define success of your leadership development programs?

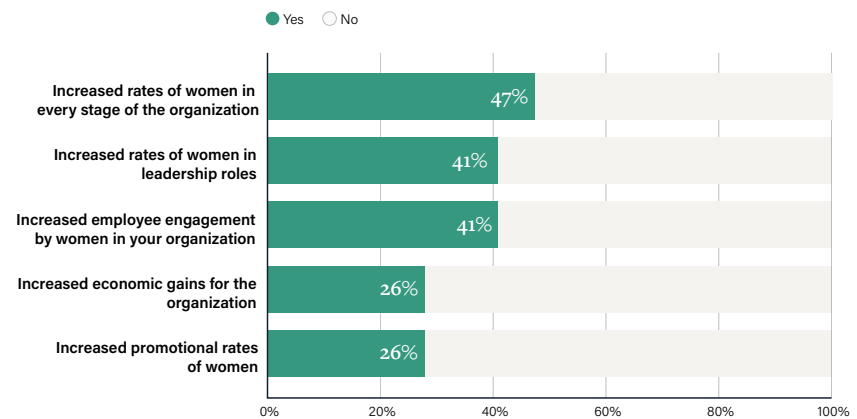


Figure 2: How the responding organizations define success of leadership development programs

This is part of who we are. We try to elevate all people, with particular focus on women. As a female leader myself, I know what it takes to develop necessary management skills.

SURVEY PARTICIPANT

Regarding specific leadership development initiatives, actions decreased year-over-year:

- In 2022, 36% of participants said their organizations have leadership development initiatives specifically for women, compared to 48% in 2021.
- In 2022, 9% of participants said their organizations have leadership development initiatives specifically for women of color, compared to 12% in 2021.

Despite uneven progress and setbacks, respondents provided encouraging comments about goals and metrics to support women on their journey to leadership.

They told us that they were creating specific strategies related to succession planning that include women. They reported goal-setting to get more women into the tech sector and putting more women of color in leadership positions. They identified specific recruitment efforts for women in project management. And they also set goals to hold more outside seminars and leadership training.



"It's important to note that having core DEI standards and initiatives in companies is not a one-time event, but an ongoing commitment to a culture of equity, diversity, and belonging. It starts at the top, but requires the commitment and active participation of leaders and employees at all levels of the organization to create a workplace that values and respects everyone. We are making progress, but still have a lot of work to do."

KERRY-ANN ROYES
President & CEO





Organizations recognize the power of high-impact coaching, mentorship, sponsorship, and ERGs.

Survey respondents overwhelmingly reported positive experiences with relationship-building initiatives such as coaching, mentorship, sponsorship, and employee resource groups.

A full 100% of those who responded affirmed the positive impacts of a variety of specific approaches (see figure 3.)

SURVEY QUESTION:

Tell us about your organization's experience with the following programs and their measurable impact.

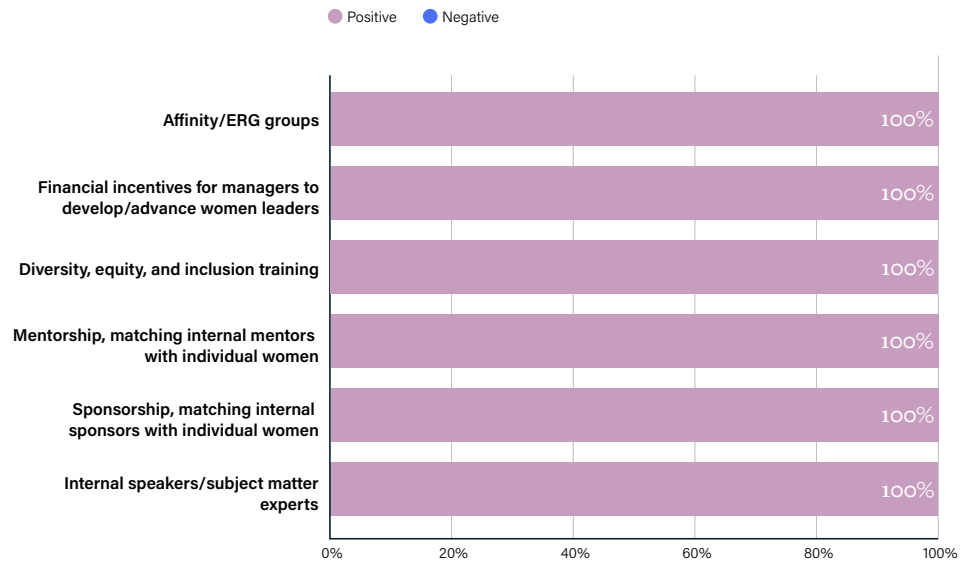


Figure 3: Companies reported positive experiences with a variety of programs.

Recognition of sponsorship as an important leadership advancement tool was already strong in 2021, and the increased support for this approach in 2022 is reassuring (see figure 4.)

SURVEY QUESTION:

Tell us about your organization's experience with sponsorship programs and their measurable impact.

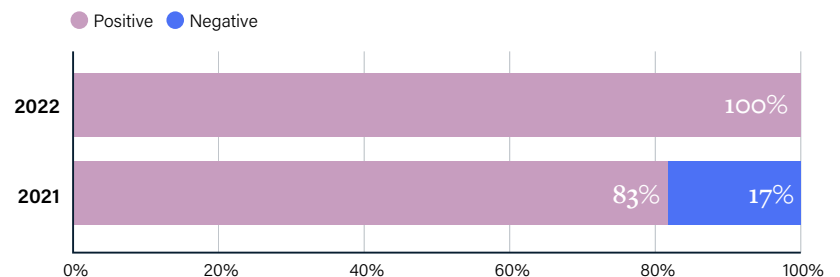


Figure 4: Companies reported positive experiences with a variety of programs.

2022 survey respondents shared numerous affirming comments for relationship-based support systems in their qualitative feedback. They wrote about active women's affinity groups that provide developmental programs, along with mentorship and sponsorship programs.



“

Women need more than mentors who will speak with them about their career; they need sponsors who will speak about them to others. They need champions who will advocate for them both inside and outside of their organizations. Sponsorship has been shown to play an important role in the success of high-potential women, and it's especially critical for women of color. At Kaufman Rossin, we recognize the value of sponsorship in leveling the playing field for advancement, which is why it is a key component of our DEI strategy. The pilot of our two-year sponsorship program is currently underway, and we look forward to continuing this program for many years to come.

”

MARIA TOLEDO
DEI Advisory Council Chair and
International Tax Principal





Employers are affirming intersecting identities and needs.

"...both leaders and employees must take a more intersectional approach to workplace culture and pay particularly close attention to identities that intertwine with race, such as first-generation college, sexual identity and orientation, religion, age, health, and much more."

Workplace Inclusion:

Nurturing a Culture of Care and Belonging⁶

Survey participants are demonstrating somewhat greater recognition of the impact of intersecting identities, particularly in their qualitative responses:

- "Overall, we aim to cultivate an environment where women, women of color, LGBTQ women feel comfortable, supported, and confident in their role and in their upward mobility."
- "We offer programs to help women reach the personal balance between family and professional goals."
- "We allow women to participate in the roadmap of what they would like to learn and help them create their own journey."
- "We are having more thoughtful discussions about women's needs as they join our company."
- "We are incorporating more flexibility for women who need it."

Demographic data collection among survey participants, though increasing, has room for improvement. Increased and accurate data collection can help in the development of more effective and targeted goal setting for employees whose intersecting identities might affect their career trajectories.



"Right Management aspires to celebrate, attract and develop diverse talent at all levels of our organization, foster an inclusive workplace culture that helps people achieve their full potential, and partner with clients and communities of all backgrounds to provide opportunities to jobseekers. We are delighted to offer programs with inclusive leadership paired with diversity to help create an environment where all employees advance & thrive."

MAUREEN A. SHEA
CEO, Florida/Caribbean



Figure 5 indicates whether respondents are collecting data for specific historically marginalized communities. It indicates room for improvement in all data collection and the implicit challenges in gathering data about employees who identify as LGBTQ+. Multiple factors impede accurate metrics for this identity group:

- LGBTQ+ employees often fear they will face increased discrimination if they disclose.
- Employers sometimes provide insufficient or inaccurate choices for employees to select when self-identifying.
- International companies are hindered if it is illegal for people to identify as LGBTQ+ in a country where they operate.

SURVEY QUESTION:

Does your organization formally collect demographic data for employees in the following historically marginalized communities?

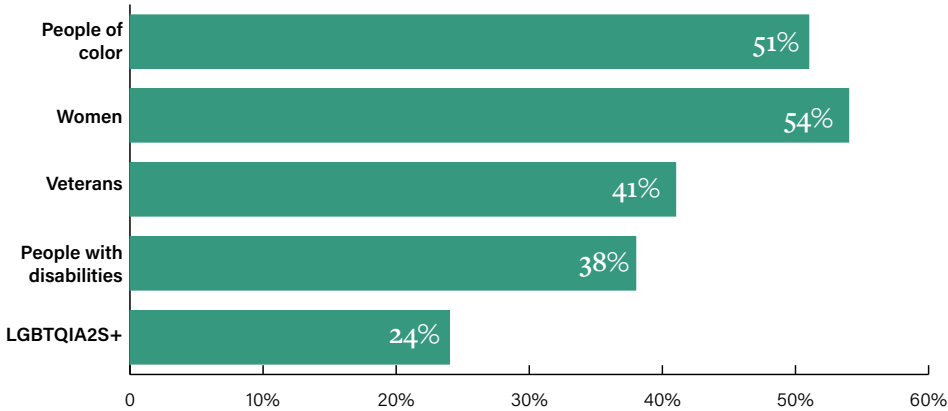


Figure 5: Organizations are collecting more employee demographic data.



“At GuideWell, we believe our best success will come when we are a reflection of the community we serve. Our culture includes the aspiration that our employees can be their whole selves at work, and we have added inclusion as one of our values. We want all of our people to be represented, heard, and their voices included. It’s not about one group or another, but how we come together to live our mission.”

AMY RUTH
 Senior Vice President, Human Services Group and Chief Human Resource Officer





Participants are leveraging report recommendations.

Qualitative survey results in 2022 indicate that companies are leveraging the recommendations included in the *2021 Roadmap for Success*.

Respondents shared the following in response to the question, *What specific actions did you take based on the report?*

- "We grew in regard to prioritizing women of color. Our CEO took a summer-long training course on racial equity work and is working with a coach. Our CEO has also added board diversity to our list of strategic planning initiatives."
- "We added an ongoing mentorship program with a more regular cadence."
- "We have continued to elevate women of color into leadership and we are creating a strategy that preps incoming women of color to step into leadership."
- "We implemented a sponsorship pilot program focused on our high performing females."

Ample data affirms the power of strategic and tactical actions such as those our participants are taking. Deloitte reports³ that the behavior of executives and managers can drive a difference of 70 percentage points between the proportion of underrepresented employees who feel included and those who do not. Likewise, well-respected DEI experts such as Frank Dobbin⁴ and Iris Bohnet⁵ advocate for specific structural and process-based interventions such as those survey participants are taking.



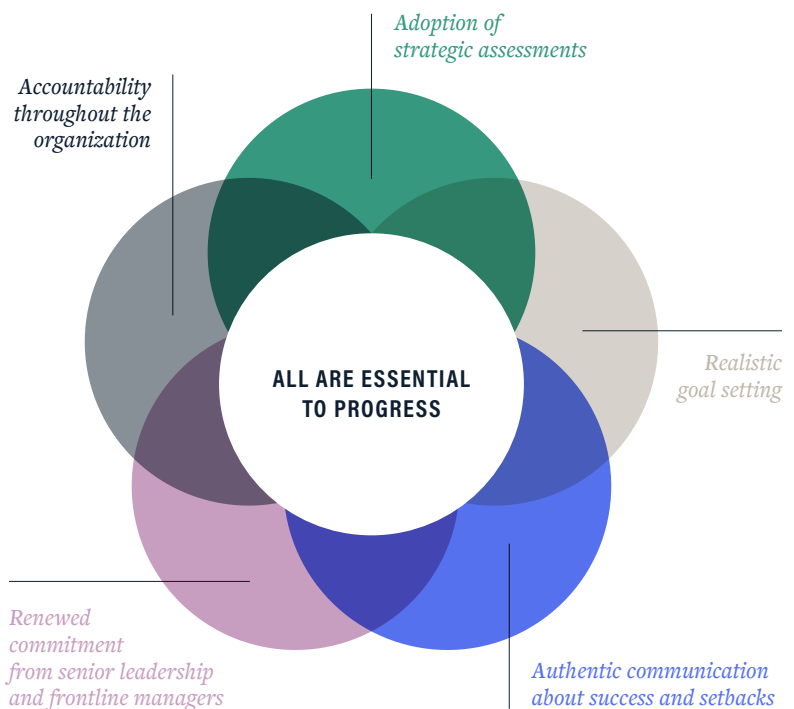
"We are seeing continued support for DEI practices this year, though many are navigating an ever-changing landscape. It is critical for companies that want to achieve business success, create a work environment of belonging, and attract and nurture the best talent. Companies have come along side employees to celebrate an inclusive environment which in turn creates higher employee engagement, innovation, productivity, and financial performance."

KERRY-ANN ROYES
President & CEO



A Roadmap for Success

The Florida data indicates that employers have work to do to overcome systemic and cultural challenges that are impeding or eroding progress.



The roadmap outlined on the following pages highlights specific strategies directly related to issues that have emerged in the 2022 study. Ideally, these recommendations will become part of a blueprint for action for women's leadership for all participating organizations.



Leverage metrics to spur increased leadership accountability.

Leaders who embody inclusion are essential to cultures of belonging.⁶

In fact, it's nearly impossible to make sustained progress without committed exemplars at the top of the organization. And while committed leaders set the stage, frontline managers are also critical: their behavior directly impacts employees' experiences, including those of inclusion.

Because best intent doesn't always convert to substantive action, increased use of metrics can hold leaders and frontline managers accountable and ensure success.

HOW DO YOU START?

Initially, leadership accountability goals and measurement can tilt towards the qualitative, growing more focused and quantitative over time.

A starting point might be allowing leaders to select three goals out of many options and demonstrate progress by discussing achievements and challenges during their performance reviews. Later, goals can become more specific and quantitatively assessed.

A few examples of goals that could be flexed (depending on where your organization/leadership is in its DEI maturity) include:

- 1 Increase the number of women with underrepresented identities on your team from 30% to 40% over two years.
- 2 Introduce targeted training or development for women of color.
- 3 Act as a formal mentor/sponsor to two women within the next year.
- 4 Offer more flexible arrangements for employees who need it, and seek direct input from women about the kind of flex they need.
- 5 Serve as an active executive sponsor for a women's ERG, and demonstrate how you have supported them.
- 6 Model allyship for women of color, and demonstrate how you have done this.

Consider whether you should be disaggregating data.

For instance, your overall numbers for women might look good, but do they vary significantly from one division or one region to another? Fortune 500 Boards provide a helpful example: Despite increased gender diversity, white women have made the greatest strides, gaining 209 board seats in 2020 for an increase of 20.6% from 2018.⁸ But it seems to have come at the expense of larger, more intersectional board diversity: the increase of board representation that Black women experienced in that same period decreased to six seats and there was minimal progress for most other race/ethnicity-gender combinations.



Wherever your progress is stalling, dig into what's holding it back.

NEARLY

60%

of bachelor's and master's degrees are awarded to women.¹⁰

There is no shortage of qualified women entering the pipeline. But when faced with unconscious bias and limited workplace support, making it to the top can seem like an out-of-reach goal, even for the most ambitious women.

Survey participants, like many employers, face challenges that impede progress in women's advancement. Perceived or real issues can include: time, financial resources, a lack of goals, too few women to hire, or women self-selecting out.

As you assess what's holding back progress, be sure you are being honest and transparent about where you are lagging. Consider using Accenture's recommendations to "create feedback loops" and "include multiple perspectives." (See framework at bottom of page.)

DO YOU THINK THERE ARE TOO FEW WOMEN TO HIRE?

- Look at your job requirements. Are they too limiting? How can they be enhanced to appeal to a broader demographic group?
- Speak to your women's ERG if you have one, and get their input.
- Identify women candidates in places you haven't before, such as: women's professional organizations; women's colleges; and incubator or apprenticeship programs run by universities or chambers of commerce.
- Look for women in different parts of the organization, perhaps where gender representation might be more equitable.
- Examine your hiring process closely and identify where hidden gender bias exists. How are you reviewing resumes? Are you using gender bias decoders? Who is on the interviewing panel? Be sure there are multiple women involved in the entire process and that more than one woman makes it to the final candidate slate.
- Remember that men are often hired or promoted based on their potential while women are more often promoted for their experience and track record.⁹

USE A FRAMEWORK

All leaders and organizations committed to making progress in women's advancement and overall inclusion can leverage Accenture's 4-step best practices framework:

- Measure what matters: identify the strategic metrics that will help you reach your goals.
- Define measurement process and cadence: conduct pulse checks on how specific groups (women and women of color) feel about progress. Take timely action based on results.
- Share results for transparency and accountability: publicize progress and be transparent about setbacks.
- Create feedback loops that promote better actions: include multiple perspectives to ensure representation in feedback and recommendations.



A focus group among women at Harvard Business School revealed what they were up against in the workplace.¹²

They were often “the only” on a team, lacking role models and real-time support from women on the same journey. They reported isolation, fear, and decreased engagement. Some of them left that first employer as a result. One participant noted, “I was always the only woman on the team at my consulting firm, and an immigrant, too. I think it’s shocking that, over five years, I have still not worked for a woman. Why don’t firms put multiple women on teams so that we don’t feel alone?”

DO YOU THINK WOMEN ARE SELF-SELECTING OUT?

Research demonstrates that women leaders leave their workplaces for three primary reasons¹¹:

- 1 They face more barriers to advancement than men.
- 2 They do more work that goes unrecognized and under rewarded.
- 3 They want a better culture.

Work to learn more about the issues impacting women’s advancement and their perceived development needs via pulse surveys, exit interviews, and focus groups. Explore whether women are leaving due to structural barriers or microaggressions that could be mitigated.

DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR COMPANY DOESN'T HAVE THE TIME OR FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO DEDICATE TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ADVANCEMENT?

- Companies with the greatest proportion of women on executive committees earn a 47% higher rate of return on equity than companies with no women executives.¹³
- Companies in the top 25% for gender diversity are 27% more likely to outperform their national industry average in terms of profitability.

BUT BE ALERT TO THE WAY THIS WORK CAN FALL DISPROPORTIONATELY ON YOUR WOMEN.

- While female leaders are twice as likely as male leaders to spend substantial time on DEI work, 40% say such work is not acknowledged at all in performance reviews.¹¹

She+ Geeks Out recommends these tools to mitigate gender bias in hiring¹⁴:

- *Textio* or *Gender Decoder* to ensure more inclusive job descriptions, since women are less likely to respond to job listing coded with more masculine language.
- *Hundred5* and *Skillist* to focus on knowledge and skills, and to demonstrate competencies beyond what resumes provide.
- *Unbiasify Chrome Extension* to remove names and photos from sites like LinkedIn and Twitter.
- *Talent Sonar* combines some of the above in an all-in-one platform.



Create a culture of allyship that recognizes intersecting identities.

Allyship is a powerful force to propel women to leadership, yet only 11 percent of study respondents said they have a formal allyship program.

Most often, allyship programs for women enlist men as active advocates, and for good reason. Deloitte notes that, "Allies might be the missing link in creating more inclusive organizations."¹⁵

Effective male allies build collaborative and supportive relationships with women, identify and reduce their own sexism, understand the social privilege conferred by their gender, and actively address gender inequities at work and in society.

ACCOUNT FOR INTERSECTING IDENTITIES

Gender allyship must account for intersecting identities. Increasingly, organizations are recognizing the need for – and the complexities related to – allyship for women whose multiple identities can create barriers to advancement. These include race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ status, and disability, to name a few. Consider the following¹⁶:

- Women of color who make it to the top consistently cite the importance of allyship.
- Workplace allies help break down stigma attached to disability.
- Allies for LGBTQ+ employees educate others about how to intervene to reduce microaggressions.

Despite the powerful case for allyship, research reveals persistent barriers to progress:

- Asian women and Black women are less likely than white women to have strong allies on their teams.¹¹
- LGBTQ+ women and women with disabilities are more likely than other women to experience demeaning microaggressions.
- A significant percentage of people consider themselves workplace allies but don't recognize their personal roles and responsibilities.
- About 75% of men say that are doing "everything they can" to support gender equality at work, yet only 41% of women agree.¹⁷
- Nearly 90% of men believe that they would be a "good listener" to a woman reaching out about workplace harassment but only 58% of women concur.¹⁸



LEVERAGE BEST PRACTICES

Consider the following best practices¹⁶:

- Embedding a culture of psychological safety, where employees know it is safe to speak up, show up authentically, make mistakes, and question the status quo
- Providing educational programs about allyship for all employees, always recognizing that self-awareness can be the single most important step in becoming an ally
- Prioritizing allyship education and action among senior leaders
- Adopting frameworks for honest conversations across difference
- Establishing a culture of “calling people in” respectfully, collaboratively, and non-judgmentally
- Celebrating unique identities and stories, along with moments of allyship
- Making a public commitment to allyship as an organization
- Ensuring accountability among leaders and teams

“No experience or journey is the same. Queer people often have experience as part of multiple marginalized communities. We may also be Black, indigenous, or a person of color (BIPOC). We may be part of the disability community or face poverty or homelessness. The struggles of these groups often intersect with those of the queer community. To be an ally, take the time to listen to the experiences of marginalized people and help us to live openly and authentically. Take the time to learn about the unique experiences of LGBTQ communities of color.”

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN¹⁸



“ One of the biggest challenges in diversity, equity and inclusion-efforts is helping people understand the impact of DEI more broadly. People who don’t feel a part of DEI tend to think of it in narrow terms—‘it’s only about people of color’ or ‘it’s only about women,’ etc. When you look at DEI through this lens, it’s easy to feel left out. At Liberty Mutual, we focus on how diversity is about all of us and all of the differences and similarities that make us who we are. Yes, we want to raise underrepresented groups so that we have talent of all backgrounds at all levels of the organization—and so our workforce reflects the customers and communities we serve. In the end, we want everyone to bring their unique talents to the table. Achieving gender equity and equity in general means we ALL win. And when we all win, we are going to be more engaged and do our best work. It’s crucial not to blame, shame or attack others, but to help people find ways to connect with the work. Understanding and valuing our differences allows us to collaborate more effectively to make Liberty an even stronger global organization.”

”

DAWN FRAZIER-BOHNERT

EVP, Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer





Shift your perspective on mentorship and sponsorship.

Both mentorship and sponsorship are valuable and essential to women’s ability to thrive and succeed in their careers.

Broad data demonstrates that, when successful, these relationships result in increased self-confidence, self-awareness, job satisfaction, aspiration, employer loyalty, and career fulfillment.

The lines can be blurred between mentorship and sponsorship, and sometimes this is okay. Mentorship, after all, can sometimes grow into sponsorship. Remember, though, that the core difference between the two approaches is that mentors listen and advise while sponsors use their influence to connect protégés to high-profile people, assignments, pay increases, and promotions. Sponsors, therefore, must hold senior positions and have the power to influence promotions for their protégés.

MENTORSHIP VS. SPONSORSHIP¹⁹

MENTORS	SPONSORS
Mentors have mentees	Sponsors have protégés
A mentor could be anyone with experience desired by a mentee who can offer advice and support	A sponsor is a senior level staff member invested in a protégé’s career success
Mentors support mentees through formal or informal discussions about how to build skills, qualities and confidence for career advancement	Sponsors promote protégés, using their influence and networks to connect them to high-profile people, assignments, pay increases and promotions
Mentors help mentees craft a career vision	Sponsors help drive their protégé’s career vision
Mentors give mentees suggestions on how to expand their network	Sponsors give protégés their active network connections and make new connections for them
Mentors provide feedback to aid a mentee’s personal and professional development	Sponsors are personally vested in the upward movement of their protégés

Research shows that Black executive women find it more difficult to obtain and hold onto sponsorship than others. In one study, only a third of Black women’s sponsors were white men, while 75% of white men’s sponsors were also white men. Harvard Business Review reports that, “It is time to understand and acknowledge the power dynamic that prevents Black women from reaching the top seat of corporations. Regardless of education, motivation, and personal and professional success factors, being sponsored by a white man remains the primary accelerant to the career mobility of Black women.”

Sponsorship is particularly vital in advancing women into senior leadership ranks. Studies show that powerful sponsors help overcome organizational risk-aversion to promoting women to key positions.²⁰

Further research demonstrates that while most women face barriers to white male sponsorship – such as exclusion from informal networks, lack of opportunity to build camaraderie with white males, and concerns regarding misinterpretation of the relationship by others – the challenges are compounded for women of color based on the intersection of their gender and race.

4

When women are sponsored by men, they make more money²², get more promotions, and have better career outcomes – not because men are better sponsors but because they have more power.

ARE YOU STRUGGLING WITH ADDING SPONSORSHIP TO THE MIX?

If so, shift your mindset and view your mentorship-sponsorship initiatives on a spectrum. Classic mentoring (private advice and support) sits at one end of the spectrum and classic sponsorship (strong advocacy and personal risk taking to provide protégé with opportunities) sits at the other end. In between are a range of roles and relationships to consider.

A number of strategies are effective for both mentorship and sponsorship:

- Strategize with your advisee, sharing insider knowledge on how to advance.
- Connect your advisee to influential people.
- Provide high-visibility assignments.
- Seek advisees with intersecting marginalized identities.
- Get training on how to be an effective mentor or sponsor to women of color.
- Ensure that your organization is providing as many high-level, influential mentors and sponsors to women as they are to men.

ARE YOU LEVERAGING FRONT LINE MANAGERS?

Frontline managers can play a vital mentor/sponsor role for women of color who are moving through the ranks. Fewer than a third of Black workers report having sponsors²¹, and fewer than 25% report receiving sufficient help in making it to the next level. Mid-level managers can find their place on the mentor-sponsor spectrum. A good starting point is providing honest, compassionate feedback, which people of color receive disproportionately less of than white people.



“The more common concept in business today is mentorship, and that is really important; but I believe the more impactful concept is sponsorship. Who will advocate for you when you are not in the room? Sponsors can represent you and help unlock opportunities. At GuideWell, our sponsors champion women protégés for high-profile assignments, connect them to other leaders, and recommend them for promotions. These women have gone on to make a powerful impact in our workplace and the communities we support.”

AMY RUTH
Senior Vice President, Human Services Group and Chief Human Resource Officer





“

In the aftermath of the pandemic, we felt it was necessary to expand the wellness services offered to our employees...to step up in order to take care of the team who was taking care of our community. We focused on this by providing employee assistance programs and mental health resources, and we worked to create a culture that emphasized wellness and self-care as part of the job. We encourage employees to maintain healthy work-life integration, prioritize their personal lives, and recognize family priorities and obligations. We provide flexible work options that have helped employees to be more productive and reduce stress. By making these initiatives a priority, it not only makes an employee feel better, but it builds employee loyalty, commitment and reduces turnover. Bottom line—show your employees that they matter!

”

HEATHER SISKIND
Chief Executive Officer





Actively support women's workplace wellbeing.

The pandemic underscored and exacerbated the profound impacts of mental and physical health for women in the workplace.

It is well-established that ongoing inequities related to pay and caregiving, outsized expectations to qualify for advancement compared to men, and numerous other gender-related microaggressions contribute to poor health outcomes for women.²³

In 2021-22, over 50% of women²⁴ reported that their stress levels were higher than the previous year, and burnout has become a top factor driving women away from their employers. In fact, nearly 40% of women actively looking for a new job cite burnout as the main reason. And while women with the highest levels of burnout are in middle management or are younger (aged 18 to 25), even women leaders feel more strain: a full 40% of women leaders report burn out compared to only 31% of men at the same level.

THE PANDEMIC'S LONG-TERM IMPACTS

The long-term impacts of the pandemic and the "new normal" for work remain uncertain. For instance, we know that increased virtual work can reduce microaggressions. For women whose intersecting identities place them at greater risk, remote work can provide protection. Yet simultaneously, it can be isolating, leading to further advancement barriers.

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO?

A key factor in supporting women's advancement is supporting women's health. Consider these strategies to nurture well-being for women and all employees:

1. Provide mental health training for people at all levels, teaching how mental health intersects with various aspects of identity. Provide baseline knowledge, discuss intersectionality, dispel myths, and offer strategies for conversation about mental health.
2. Explicitly build health supports into organization-wide practices. Restructure processes where necessary. Look at workloads, after-hours boundaries, flexible hours, paid time off, parental leave, pay inequity, consequences for microaggressions and harassment, and accountability mechanisms like regular surveys.
3. Over-communicate about health benefits that are available. Remember that stigma prevents or delays people from seeking help. Leaders can help destigmatize mental health issues by sharing if they have personally used benefits.
4. Ensure that leaders model behaviors that prioritize physical and mental health. This is essential in order to destigmatize often-hidden health issues and to nurture culture change that prioritizes self-care for all employees. Leaders must talk about their own vulnerabilities, their own challenges, and how they use employee benefits. This will establish greater connection, trust, and support for a culture of well-being.

Endnotes

1.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Trish Foster is a sought-after diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategist on a mission to help organizations become more inclusive for all employees. She advises a wide variety of clients. She also designs DEI programs, facilitates educational workshops, serves as a keynote speaker, and writes extensively on DEI topics. A sampling of her expertise includes allyship across identity difference, inclusive leadership, psychological safety, intersectionality, sponsorship and mentorship, employee resource groups (ERGs), and gender equity.

Previously, Trish served as Executive Director for the Center for Women and Business (CWB) at Bentley University, leading mission-driven work to create more inclusive organizations. Earlier, she served as a senior executive for Ogilvy and Mather and Fleishman Hillard.



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Elizabeth L. Hailer, CEO
ehailer@thewomensedge.org

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