

McKinsey & LeanIn.Org Report: Women's Ambition stalled despite flexibility gains

June 25, 2024



A new report by [McKinsey](#) and [LeanIn.Org](#) paints a mixed picture for women in corporate leadership. While women's ambition remains strong, progress is hampered by a persistent bottleneck at the mid-management level.

The ninth annual Women in the Workplace report, the largest study of its kind, surveyed over 27,000 employees and 270 senior HR leaders at 276 participating organizations employing over ten million people.

Key Findings:

Women Remain Ambitious: Despite ongoing challenges, women demonstrate unwavering ambition in their careers. At all levels, women show equal interest in promotions compared to men. Young women are particularly driven, with nine in ten under 30 seeking promotions and three in four aspiring to senior leadership roles.

Women's representation saw modest gains throughout the corporate pipeline, but women of color remain underrepresented.

Representation in corporate role, by gender and race, 2023, % of employees (n = 276)



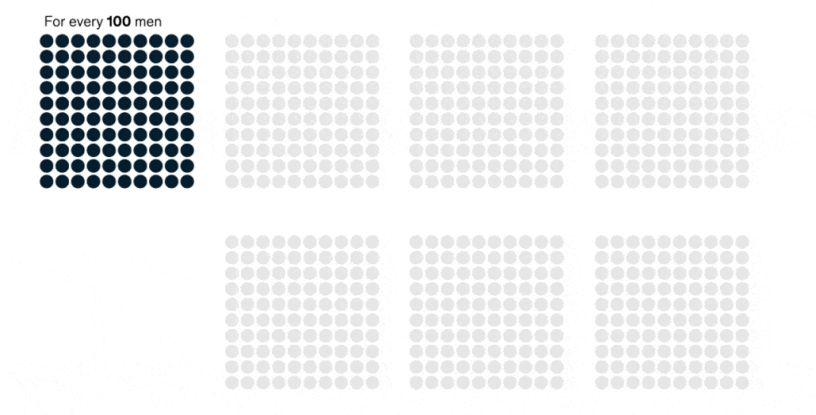
Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding. Total percent of women per level may not sum to overall corporate pipeline totals, because overall figure does not include employees with unreported race data.
Source: Women in the Workplace 2023, McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org

McKinsey & Company

Broken Rung Hinders Advancement: The most significant obstacle for women is the transition to manager. This year's data reveals a persistent disparity: for every 100 men promoted to manager, only 87 women receive the same promotion. The gap is even wider for women of color, with just 73 promotions for every 100 men. This "broken rung" creates a bottleneck that restricts women's access to senior leadership positions.

All women lose ground at the first step up to manager, but the broken rung holds back Black women and Latinas the most.

Women promoted to manager for every 100 men promoted to manager, by ethnicity, number

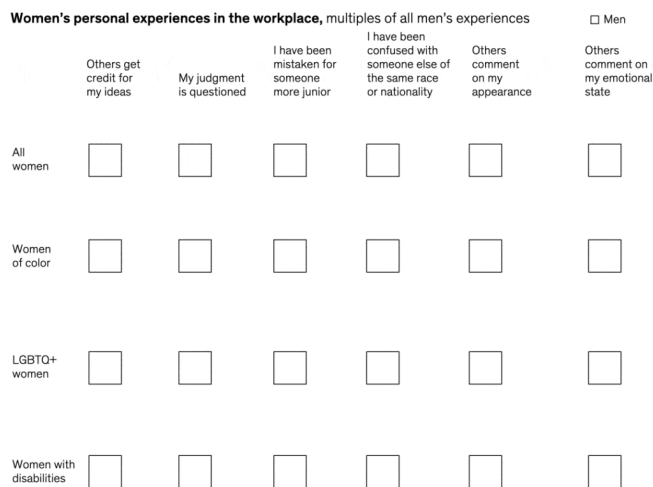


Source: Women in the Workplace 2023, McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org

McKinsey & Company

Microaggressions Take a Toll: The report sheds light on the pervasive and detrimental impact of microaggressions, subtle forms of everyday discrimination, on women in the workplace. Women are twice as likely as men to be mistaken for someone junior or face comments about their emotional state. These slights disproportionately affect women with marginalized identities, leading to feelings of insecurity and a diminished sense of psychological safety.

While most employees report microaggressions, marginalized groups are disproportionately affected.



Source: Women in the Workplace 2023, McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org

McKinsey & Company

Flexibility Fuels Ambition: The increased flexibility offered by hybrid and remote work models is a positive development for women. It allows them to achieve greater work-life balance without sacrificing career goals. One in five women report that flexibility has been instrumental in allowing them to stay employed or avoid reducing their work hours.



Recommendations for Progress:

The report outlines five key areas for companies to focus on in order to create a more equitable and supportive environment for women:

- Data-Driven Approach:** Regularly track and analyze data on women's representation, promotion rates, and experiences to identify and address areas needing improvement.
- Empowering Managers:** Equip managers with the skills and support necessary to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion within their teams.
- Combating Microaggressions:** Implement clear policies against microaggressions and provide training to educate employees on how to recognize and address them.
- Optimizing Flexible Work:** Establish clear guidelines and expectations for flexible work arrangements while ensuring a level playing field for advancement regardless of work location.
- Fixing the Broken Rung:** Address the disparity in promotions to manager, particularly for women of color, by identifying and eliminating unconscious bias in promotion processes.

The 2023 Women in the Workplace report underscores the critical need for companies to dismantle the barriers that hinder women's advancement. By focusing on the recommendations outlined in the report, organizations can create a more inclusive and equitable workplace that unlocks the full potential of their

entire workforce.

You can read the report in full [here](#).