

# Women Matter Spain 2023: Women are still far from top corporate leadership positions



# Executive summary

**Women are well represented in the country's workforce but are relatively scarce at the top—and that won't change anytime soon given current promotion trends. Yet companies can act to turn the tide.**

This article is a collaborative effort by Eduardo Bolio, Antonio de Gregorio, Maria del Mar Martinez Márquez, Dafni Giannikou, Gloria Macias, and Amaia Noguera, representing views from McKinsey's Madrid office.

Over the years, a changing corporate world has become more open for women, but the glass ceiling remains very much in place. This invisible barrier, which hinders women from rising to leadership positions, is just one of the identified constraints on women's professional progress. The other is the leaky pipeline, or the increasing scarcity of women as you go up the corporate hierarchy.

Women account for more than half of the labor force in Spain, but it lags behind the European average for women in top positions. There has been almost no growth in the representation of women in top roles during the past two years. Despite the efforts of companies to develop policies that promote equal opportunity, Spain's glass ceiling apparently won't shatter anytime soon.

Why are women—who at the start of their careers place as much importance on advancement as men do—largely absent from C-suites and senior managerial roles?<sup>1</sup> And how can this imbalance be remedied, beyond corporate policies and government regulations?

Women Matter 2022, which focuses on Iberia and includes insights from 45 Portuguese and Spanish companies, aims to answer these questions. The present report offers our perspectives on Spain. At a high level, the sluggish pace of advancement of women toward leadership positions results from multiple complex factors. These include invisible barriers in work and family life, as well as the widely held perception among women that companies don't cater to their needs. Gender stereotypes are also part of the equation: women often occupy positions in support functions rather than line positions, and that can shrink their management prospects.

Even when women do progress to the upper echelons, they still take on the lion's share of family and household responsibilities at home. Thirty-nine percent of top women managers, from CEOs to senior managers, say they are the sole overseer of the household, versus just 8 percent of men. Women's aspirations at work reflect this difference: 43 percent of men are keen to take on positions of high responsibility, but only 36 percent of women feel the same. Women are not only less likely to feel confident that they will progress to higher levels in the workplace but also become increasingly disenchanted as the years go by.

What's more, women are less inclined than men to take up opportunities abroad: only 2 percent of women in senior-management positions participate in international programs, compared with 9 percent of men. Since 60 percent of the CEOs of the companies analyzed have previous international experience, mobility could be an invisible barrier to women applying for general-management positions.

All these factors conspire to limit women's career paths and opportunities—and also hurt companies, since women leaders can help them boost their competitiveness and profits. In fact, as the current

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<sup>1</sup> The number of non-binary participants in the survey was too low to derive meaningful results. As such, these results were excluded from data analysis.

report argues, women are better leaders: their teams are more satisfied, and companies with more of them in the leadership have higher levels of employee satisfaction. That is very important in the context of the Great Resignation and the war for talent.

Increasing the number of women in senior management will require a nuanced human-resources approach and a willingness by companies to offer more flexible working conditions. Corporations in Spain could reap the benefits of increased levels of female leadership by adopting a distinctive, personalized approach to individual needs and expectations. Identifying and eliminating invisible barriers that hinder promotion is potentially the first step to shifting the gender imbalance.

While much work remains to achieve parity, younger generations inspire hope. Among people less than 40 years old, 39 percent of women, versus 32 percent of men, would be more interested in advancing to senior positions if they came with greater flexibility. This parity of sentiment reflects a shift in expectations and values from those of previous generations.

The report includes a call to action by outlining possible solutions to overcome the lack of equality in Spain's C-suites. Companies can commit themselves to change by introducing measurable objectives for implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) measures and promoting mentorship and sponsorship. They could provide training to help managers use DEI policies to eliminate biases in the workplace, as well. The report also suggests that companies take a stand by ensuring that women and men have equal access to promotional opportunities, appointing women to line positions, and implementing new work models that support flexibility.

Businesses need to shift from attracting more women (quantity) to ensuring that they pass through the highest stages of the hierarchy (quality). That will require a more personalized approach. But 25 percent of companies have women in more than 40 percent of their leadership positions. That is grounds for optimism.

# Introduction

At McKinsey & Company, we strongly believe in the importance of gender diversity in leadership positions. The research we have conducted over the past 15 years in our Women Matter reports has provided insight into how companies can better equip themselves to increase the presence of women at all levels of responsibility.

Women Matter examines women leadership in Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia, and the Gulf. Analyzing region-specific challenges can help uncover localized strategies that have the potential to successfully achieve gender diversity in leadership positions.

As companies are adopting equity and inclusion policies, gender diversity is more than just a box to be ticked. It has a concrete impact on the economic performance and competitiveness of a company—having a gender-diverse executive team boosts the probability of improved financial results by 25 percent.<sup>2</sup> It also reinforces talent attraction and retention. Research shows that a positive perception of equal opportunities in a company triples the possibility of retaining talent, while non-inclusive work environments can limit talent attraction by up to 39 percent.<sup>3</sup>

The Women Matter Iberia study saw the participation of 45 Portuguese and Spanish companies that employ 300,000 people on the peninsula, resulting in two reports reflecting our perspective on each country.

Women Matter Spain aims to shed light on the current context of working women in Spain, including women in management positions, and their perceptions of the accessibility and effectiveness of their organizations' gender equality measures. It also analyzes the real progress of women's participation in top positions since the previous 2017 study. Finally, this report aims to identify the most effective measures for the creation of inclusive, diverse, and equitable work environments while also understanding the impact that COVID-19 has had on working women.

At its core, this report is a call to action, informed by a rigorous analysis of the managerial landscape in Spain. While women's standing in the workplace has improved, there is still a long way to go. To get there, we suggest measures set out in this report, including clear objectives, training for managers, amending internal promotion policies, committing to the incorporation of women in line positions and N-2 and N-1 levels, and implementing new work models that are more supportive of women's work-life balance and wellbeing.

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<sup>2</sup> Vivian Hunt, Sara Prince, Sundiatu Dixon-Fyle, and Kevin Dolan, "Diversity wins: How inclusion matters," McKinsey, May 2020

<sup>3</sup> "Women in the workplace," McKinsey, October 2019.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to extend their sincere thanks to the following companies that participated in the survey for their contributions to this underlying research:



The authors also wish to acknowledge the Seres Foundation for their excellent contribution to the development of this report.

### Disclaimer

The analyses and conclusions contained in this report are based on information spanning 2019-2021, and 2022 in the cases of qualitative and employee survey data, that was made available to McKinsey. The report does not purport to contain or incorporate all the information.

The analyses contained herein were undertaken by McKinsey as of the dates noted herein. McKinsey undertakes no obligation to revise or update any such analyses or any forward-looking statements.

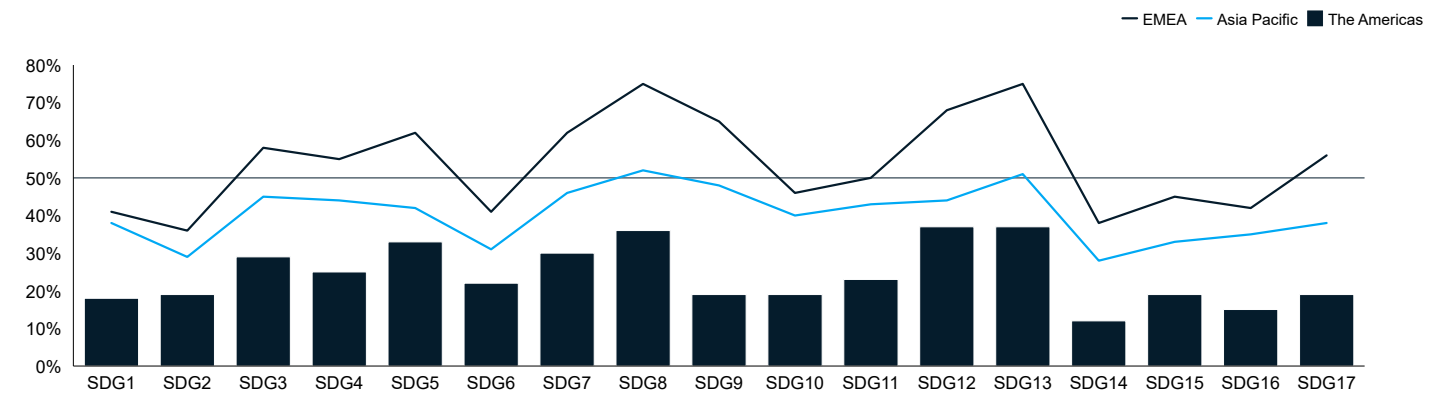
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# The Spanish context

European companies are leading the global push to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. SDG 5, which focuses on gender equality, is the third most mentioned SDG for Europe’s Fortune 500 companies, 63 percent of which have made a commitment to gender equality.<sup>4</sup>

## Percentage of Fortune 500 companies committed to the SDGs, by region

Percentage of engagement



● The percentage of engagement on each SDG of the global top 500 companies distributed in different regions<sup>1</sup>

1. Lan Song et al., "How much is global business sectors contributing to sustainable development goals?," Sustainable Horizons, January 2022, Volume 1

Businesses play an important role in the journey to a more inclusive Europe, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. The promotion of sustainable finance and the implementation of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria are an important part of this journey. While diversity affords companies a financial edge and a talent advantage, its value extends even further; effective policies have the potential to reduce inequalities in all areas of a company.

### Diverse companies deliver better financial results, and are better at attracting and retaining talent

Several studies highlight the correlation between a diverse and inclusive workforce and better financial results. Companies with a management team comprised of at least 30 percent women obtain better financial results than those with less than 10 percent women representation. In some instances, the financial performance gap between the two is as much as 48 percent.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Lan Song et al., "How much is global business sectors contributing to sustainable development goals?," Sustainable Horizons, January 2022, Volume 1.

<sup>5</sup> Sundiatu Dixon-Fyle, Kevin Dolan, Dame Vivian Hunt, Sara Prince, "Diversity wins: How inclusion matters," McKinsey, May 19, 2020.

**Women tend to demonstrate capabilities such as empathy and inclusion, both of which are considered critical leadership skills.<sup>1</sup> Women have a more adaptable leadership style that responds well to most complex contexts. This need to lead with a more human touch has been reinforced in the wake of COVID-19.**

If the gender gap were closed in Europe, the result is a possible 3.2 to 5.5 percent increase in GDP by 2050—which translates to €280 million in 2030 and €1.49 billion in 2050.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, there is a strong relationship between legislation on equity and equality, and economic growth. In Spain, fulfilling certain equality objectives is a measure that customers value, investors require, and talent considers attractive. Meanwhile, a greater exchange of ideas between diverse teams promotes innovation, spurring profitability, and a diverse management team increases interest from investors.

### **Gender equality: A national concern**

Spain has climbed four positions in the Gender Equity Index since 2017 and is now in sixth place in Europe and seventeenth place globally, making it a leader in gender equality.<sup>7</sup> This boost is mainly driven by a greater presence of women in governing bodies and public representation and an improvement in equal opportunities for employment. However, Spain is below the European average in terms of women's economic capacity and equal use of time.<sup>8</sup>

### **Spanish women: Talent to explore**

There has been a major increase in women enrolled in higher education from 1975 to today. In the 2019–20 academic year, 55 percent of the undergraduate cohort in Spain were women and 44 percent were men. This trend is also seen in master's and doctoral degrees.<sup>9</sup>

Despite being more educated than men, women do not have equal access to the labor market. In 2021, the gender gap in the employment rate in Spain stood at over 14 percent, with just over 62 percent of women in employment, compared to 73 percent of men. This trend is visible across Europe, with a gap of close to 11 percentage points in 2021 where men were at 78 percent and women at 67 percent.<sup>10</sup> Women also make up a larger proportion of part-time workers at around 22 percent, compared to 6.5 percent of men on part-time contracts.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "How closing the gender labour market activity and pay gap leads to economic growth," European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Gender Equality Index, European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Gender Equality Index, European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> "Equality in Numbers," Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Employment rate by sex, Eurostat, 2021.

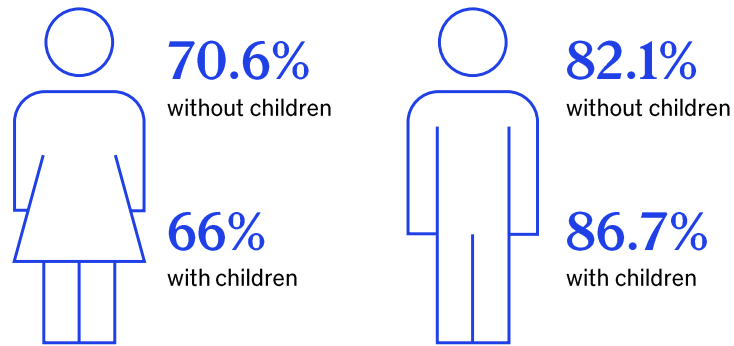
<sup>11</sup> Employment by type of working day, sex, and age group, National Institute of Statistics, 2021.

### **Sidebar**

<sup>1</sup> Rasmus Hougaard, et al., "When Women Leaders Leave, the Losses Multiply" Potential Project and Harvard Business Review, 2022.



## Employment percentages for women and men without and with children



In 2021, while most Spanish women between 25 and 49 years old were employed, men maintained a higher employment rate overall. There is also a substantial gap in the employment rate for men with children vs. women with children. This gap becomes even wider when men and women have three or more children.<sup>12</sup>

This trend also extends to contract type. Women with children under the age of 15 are seven times more likely than men to work on part-time contracts, twice as likely to be unemployed, and 20 percent more likely to have a temporary contract.

Despite efforts made toward increasing co-parenting and the assimilation of maternity and paternity leave, results have improved very little in recent years.

### The wage gap is narrowing but remains

The gender wage gap in Spain has narrowed and is now the eighth smallest in the European Union (EU). In 2017 women were expected to be paid less than their male peers than they were in 2020. Nevertheless, calculating wage gaps is complex, and there is no correlation between the percentage of the gap and the level of wealth of a country.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Incidents of employment due to the existence of children, National Institute of Statistics, 2021.

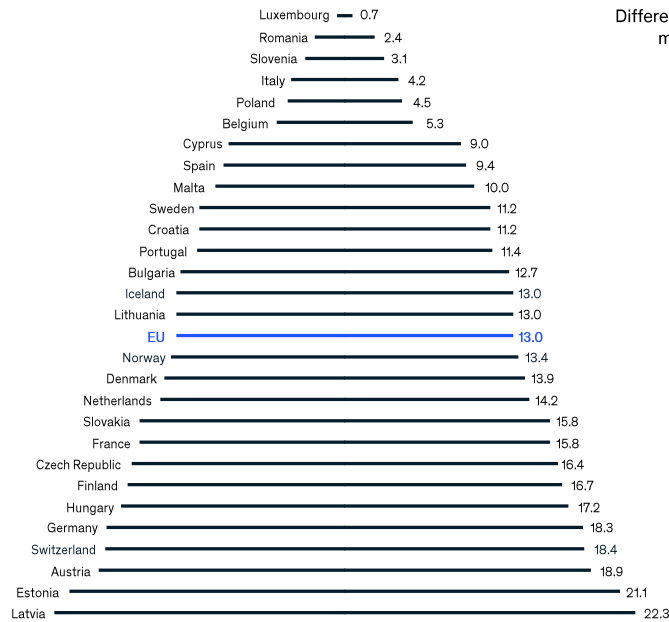
<sup>13</sup> Gender pay gap in unadjusted form, Eurostat, 2022.

## Wage gaps in Europe

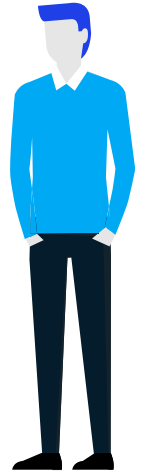
How much less do women earn than men?



### Gender pay gap



Difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as % of male gross earnings, 2020



For all countries except Czech Republic and Iceland: data for enterprises employing 10 or more employees. Czech Republic and Iceland: data for enterprises employing 1 or more employees

Source: Eurostat. Gender Pay Gap Statistics

Due to the public perception that within occupational categories the wage gap increases with age and professional position, audits and salary records for companies with more than 50 employees have become compulsory. If the pay gap within a company is greater than 25 percent, justification must be made before the Registry and corrective policies must be applied.<sup>14</sup>

### Stereotypes of 'soft skills' and STEM slants

Despite making strides in terms of gender equality, Spain still faces horizontal segregation, where men are overrepresented in an industry or sector. Women tend to work and study in fields that align with gender stereotypes, evident in women making up more than 60 percent of students in social, legal, and humanities studies. Beyond this, in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), horizontal segregation runs deep. In STEM fields, women are concentrated in careers characterized by the importance of care, such as medicine, biomedicine, biochemistry, biotechnology, and chemistry. Women only make up one quarter of engineering and architecture studies, which together have seen a 33 percent drop in enrolments between 2010 and 2020.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Royal Decree 902/2020, of October 13, on equal pay between women and men,\* Ministry of the Presidency, Relations with the Courts and Democratic Memory, April 14, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> STEAM Alliance for Female Talent, Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

### The pandemic as an amplifier of inequalities

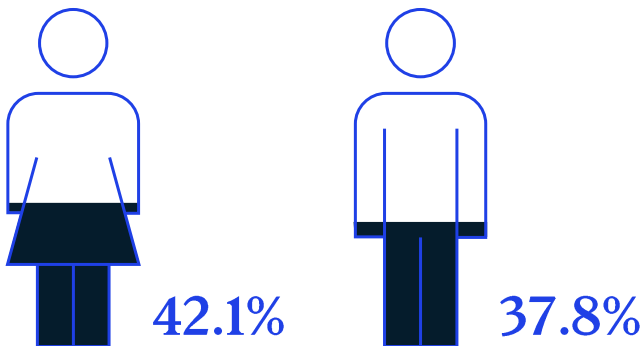
Women have more acutely felt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on several fronts. They have faced greater job insecurity while simultaneously comprising the majority labor force in sectors that have remained at work alongside high exposure to the virus, such as healthcare and commerce.

For women working in fields where remote work is possible, it has proved attractive; a larger number of women than men reported enjoying a higher proportion of remote work. However, this practice is a double-edged sword.

On the one hand, it facilitates work-life balance and flexibility, but on the other, household inequalities have increased with COVID-19 as women have assumed a greater family burden, suffered more exhaustion and stress, and, in some cases, a step back in their professional progress.<sup>16</sup>

## Enjoy teleworking

In Spain women vs. men<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Daphne Ahrendt et al., "Living, working and COVID-19: First findings," Eurofound, September 28, 2020.

Before COVID-19, women in Spain spent an average of 39.9 hours a week on housework and childcare. This number rose to 48.8 hours in 2020. Men, on the other hand, spent 26 hours a week on unpaid jobs at home before COVID-19 and 33.6 hours in 2020.<sup>17</sup> This proportional increase of hours between genders comes as the result of significant efforts at the legislative level and within companies to implement more gender-equal policies.

Some of these efforts include balancing the duration of maternal and paternal leave (both 16 weeks), a measure that has made Spain one of the most progressive nations in terms of parental leave.

<sup>16</sup> "The impact of teleworking and digital work on workers and society," European Parliament, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Lúdia Farré et al., "How the COVID-19 Lockdown Affected Gender Inequality in Paid and Unpaid Work in Spain," IZA Institute of Labor Economics, July 2020.

# The glass ceiling

Spain's overall workforce experiences relatively high rates of gender representation. However, this does not extend to leadership positions, particularly CEO and N-1 (i.e., 1 level below the CEO) positions.

The glass ceiling refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women from advancing their careers. There can be multiple reasons for that, such as not being well positioned for promotion, disenchantment, or inertia due to other demands. Not a single woman occupies the role of CEO in our study's top performing companies in terms of parity,<sup>18</sup> and the percentage of CEOs in our overall sample has only decreased.

### The higher the position, the fewer the women

The analysis carried out with the companies participating in our study indicates that Iberia is doing better than average when it comes to a degree of gender parity in the workplace overall, but women do not advance to leadership positions in equal numbers, particularly in top roles.<sup>19</sup> In our sample, nine percent of CEOs were women, and 30 percent of N-1 roles belonged to women – both below most peer nations. The proportion of women in N-2 and N-3 positions was akin to global numbers, at 32 and 34 percent respectively.

## In terms of top leadership, Spain and Portugal still lag behind most peer countries, particularly in CEO representation

Women in corporate leadership positions 2021(%) and change compared to 2019 & 2017 (p.p.)

	CEO	Delta 2021 vs. 2019 (p.p.)	Delta 2019 vs. 2017 (p.p.)		Board of directors	Delta 2021 vs. 2019 (p.p.)	Delta 2019 vs. 2017 (p.p.)
Norway	19	4.7	0.0	France	45	0.1	1.9
Denmark	13	4.2	14.3	Norway	42	1.3	-1.9
Netherlands	10	5.0	2.7	Italy	39	2.7	2.1
America <sup>1</sup>	9	0.6	0.2	Netherlands	38	3.9	4.7
UK	8	4.1	0.1	Belgium	38	2.0	5.2
EU Average	8	0.2	2.4	UK	38	5.2	5.4
Spain	6	3.0	0.0	Germany	36	0.4	3.7
Belgium	6	-6.2	0.0	Denmark	35	5.0	-0.3
Portugal	6	-0.3	5.9	Spain	33	6.2	4.4
Greece	5	-0.3	0.6	EU Average	31	2.5	3.5
France	3	-2.8	2.7	Portugal	31	6.4	8.4
Germany	3	-0.7	3.4	America <sup>2</sup>	27	1.0	6.0
Italy	0	-3.0	3.0	Greece	20	9.3	-1.0

1.Data for Fortune 500 companies in June 2022

2.Data for the sample of companies considered in Women in the Workplace 202

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, Women CEOs In America 2022 Women in the workplace 2021

<sup>18</sup> Companies that were in the top quartile of our sample in terms of women representation (>40% women in all roles up to CEO-1).

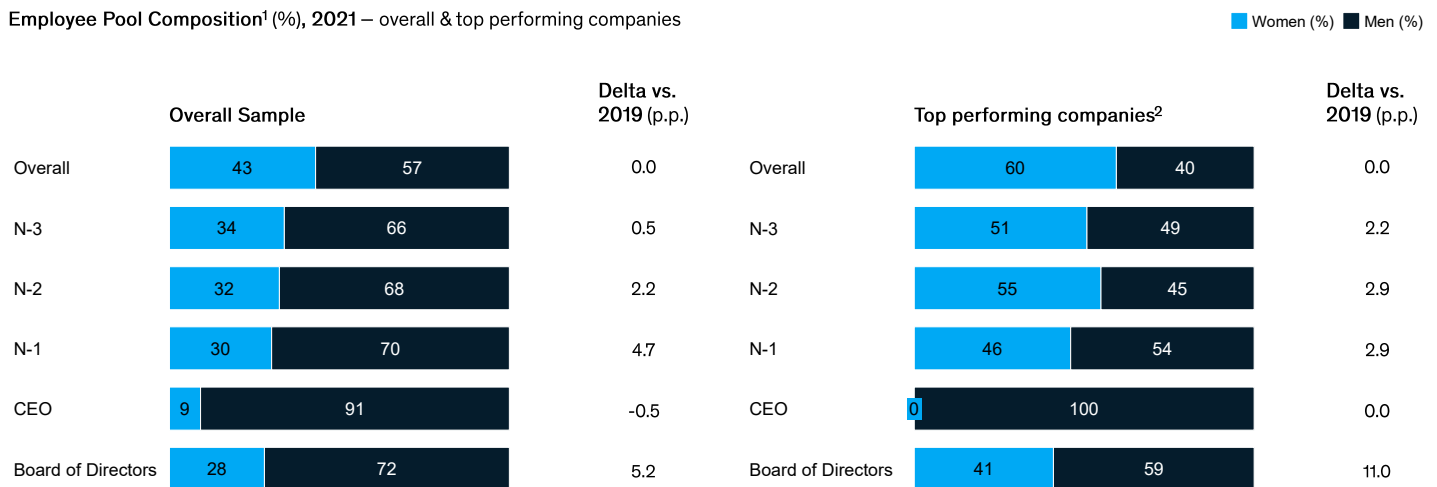
<sup>19</sup> World Development Indicators, World Bank; McKinsey, "Women in the Workplace," McKinsey, 2021.

However, the underrepresentation of women becomes more acute as they escalate to positions of responsibility—the glass ceiling effect. In Iberia, there are gaps of over 30 percentage points between men and women across all levels of responsibility from N-3 to the CEO. This gap is bridged for top performing companies (i.e., the top quartile in the sample with 40% or more women across all levels until N-1 to the CEO). However, none of those companies has a woman CEO.

## In the overall sample, the share of women in leadership positions is significantly lower

Iberia (Portugal and Spain)

Employee Pool Composition<sup>1</sup> (%), 2021 – overall & top performing companies



1.Pool composition figures are the overall average of every company's proportion of women and men at each level

2.First quartile in terms of women representation in positions in N-2 and above

Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Study

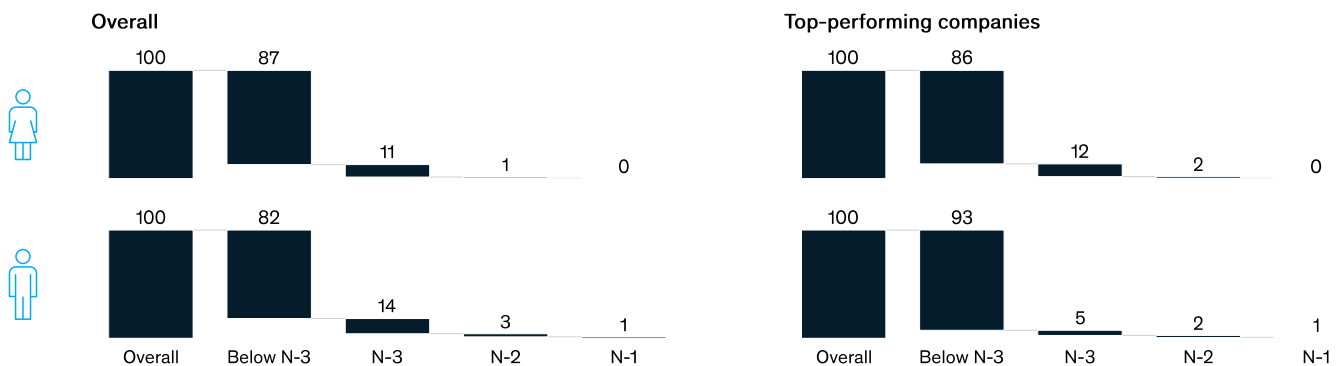
### The situation won't change with current promotion rates

What is behind the glass ceiling? The number of women to promote to the next level is thinning as we go up the corporate ladder, and promotion rates are lower than those of men on an already thin base. This leads to male-dominated promoted classes and if current promotion rates remain, the glass ceiling will remain intact.

The number of women at each level of the corporate ladder gets lower as we move to higher positions, and even where percentages of those promoted seems high, the actual number of women promoted thins further at each organizational level. Of the total number of women, only 13 percent are in N-3 positions and above, while the percentage for men is 18 percent. At the top of the ladder, four percent of men occupy positions from N-2 to CEO, compared to only one percent of women. This is additionally further reinforced by scarce external female talent to hire directly in senior roles, particularly in STEM related fields.

## Women are less likely to reach higher seniority levels than men

Share of men and women per seniority level (%), 2021. (N = CEO)



Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Study

Companies in the top quartile of parity performance present better promotion options for women. For N-3 positions, the promotion rate is eight percent for both men and women. The proportion of women promoted in N-2 positions is twice as high as men. But these percentages fall sharply for N-1 roles, where four percent of men are promoted against two percent of women.

### Why women don't advance to leadership positions: less career boosting moves, higher family obligations, and burnout

In the context of this study, we made several observations as to the factors behind the low numbers and low promotion rates of women to leadership positions.

The current dynamics show that women are still not set up for success: they participate less in career-boosting moves, require more flexibility than men, and take a higher "family toll".

Women tend to be significantly more present in staff vs. line positions, that is, positions that are administrative or provide support functions, vs positions that are at the core of the business and/or related to P&L responsibility.

41% of women occupy staff role positions vs 28% of men- a difference which accentuates at top positions. Given that there are more line positions and fewer staff positions higher up the corporate ladder, unless women have the foundations and opportunities to move into line positions, it will be difficult for them to develop the skills and positioning needed for leadership roles.

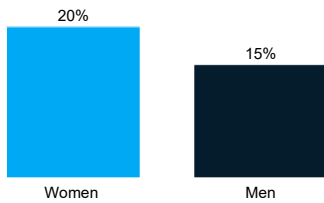
In addition, there is a significant contrast in geographic mobility between men and women. Men at a senior manager level participate 5 times more in geographic mobility programs. To put this in context, ~60% of CEOs in our sample have previous international experience.

Meanwhile, women tend to participate more in flexibility programs (e.g., reduced hours or extended maternity leave) which tends to disconnect them more from the workplace and might come at a cost to their professional advancement.

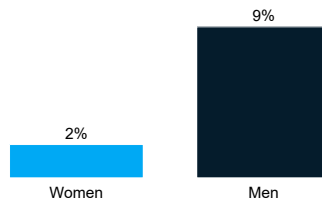
Finally, working women seem to take a higher family toll - having children, too, has a decisive impact on career options and, in many cases, decisions to step back. On average, working women have less children or other dependents than men across all roles, a difference that widens dramatically with seniority level. Men in management have an average of 2.4 dependents at home, compared to an average of 1.2 dependents for women in the same positions This effectively means that having more dependents drives women away from the workplace and from leadership positions to a much greater extent.

**The current dynamics show that women are still not set up for success: they participate less in career-boosting moves, require more flexibility than men, and take a higher “family toll”**

Share of employees in flexibility programs



Share of senior managers in geographic mobility programs



Average number of dependents

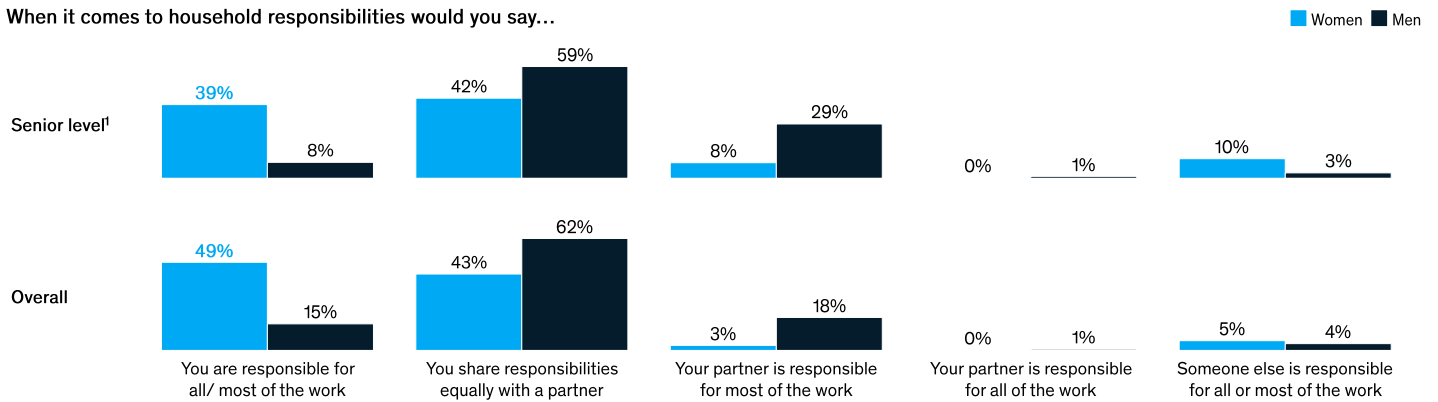
	Women	Men
Overall	1.0	1.4
Top senior level <sup>1</sup>	1.2	2.4

<sup>1</sup>Including CEOs, Executive Committees, Vice Presidents or a similar roles  
Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Study

At the same time, women at all levels are responsible for most of the household work. In the overall study sample, 49% of women are responsible for all / most of the work vs 15% of men. When we look at senior positions, 39% of women are responsible for all / most of the work vs 8% of men.



## Women tend to be responsible for most of the household work, even at senior levels



1. Including CEOs, Executive Committees, Vice Presidents or a similar roles and Senior Managers/ Directors  
Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Survey

It then comes as no surprise that women report much higher levels of burnout at work than men: 45% of women feel almost always or often burnt-out vs 33% of men. This overload leads senior women to look for professional pathways and organizational models that allow greater time flexibility and fewer travel demands in order to meet family responsibilities, while more women opt for reduced hours (20 percent of women senior managers compared to 16 percent of men).

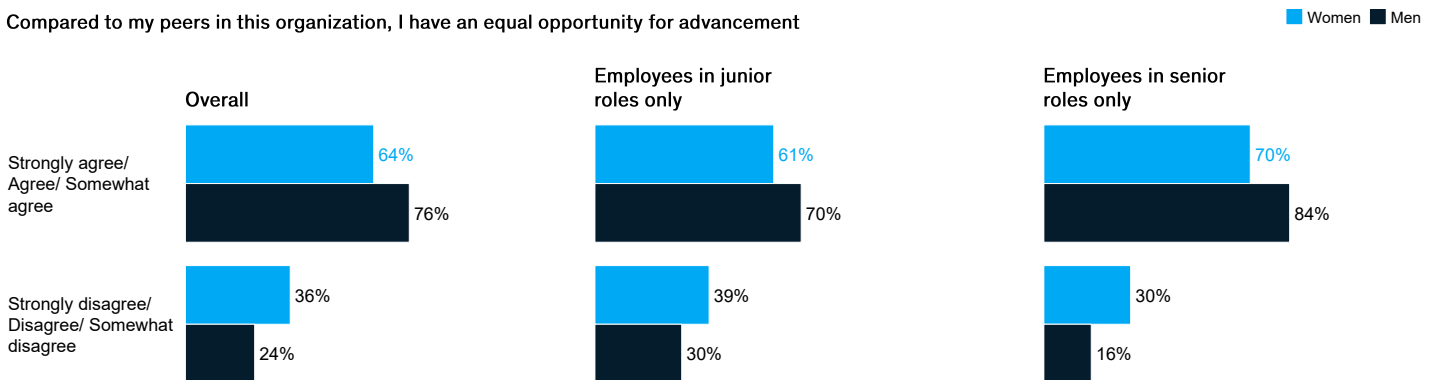
### Women worry about their careers, but do not perceive equal opportunities to access positions of responsibility

Women show the same interest as men in the advancement of their professional career (92 percent of women versus 91 percent of men) but simultaneously express less ambition to reach positions of maximum responsibility (36 percent compared to 43 percent of men). This may be a result of not perceiving the same opportunities as their male counterparts to advance through organizational levels.

Women who stay in the company and have seniority of more than five years are visibly more disenchanted. Junior employees now starting their careers feel they have equal opportunities for advancement by 85% and 88% respectively for women and men. As they reach senior positions, this percentage falls much more dramatically for women (59% vs 73%). Time spent in a company and increasingly facing the barriers to advance to positions of responsibility is undermining women's confidence in possibilities for growth.

## Women tend to be responsible for most of the household work, even at senior levels

Compared to my peers in this organization, I have an equal opportunity for advancement



Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Survey

Generally, the lack of positive perception about women's equal opportunities is also apparent in their more critical assessment of access to company programs that enhance personal and professional skills—and thus build up their chances to get promoted.

Women surveyed consistently report lower access to leadership training, internal networking opportunities, and coaching and mentoring.

The same goes for their perception of their companies' commitment to the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies. For example, 90 percent of men compared to 71 percent of women consider that their company applies flexibility measures, and 57 percent compared to 34 percent of women believe that their company has measures in place to support the care of minors.

These very different perceptions reveal an opportunity for companies to improve both equal access and effectiveness of their programs for all of their employees. There are ample initiatives but women perceive what is offered as not tailored to their needs.

**Women leadership:  
more committed  
to personal and  
professional  
development**

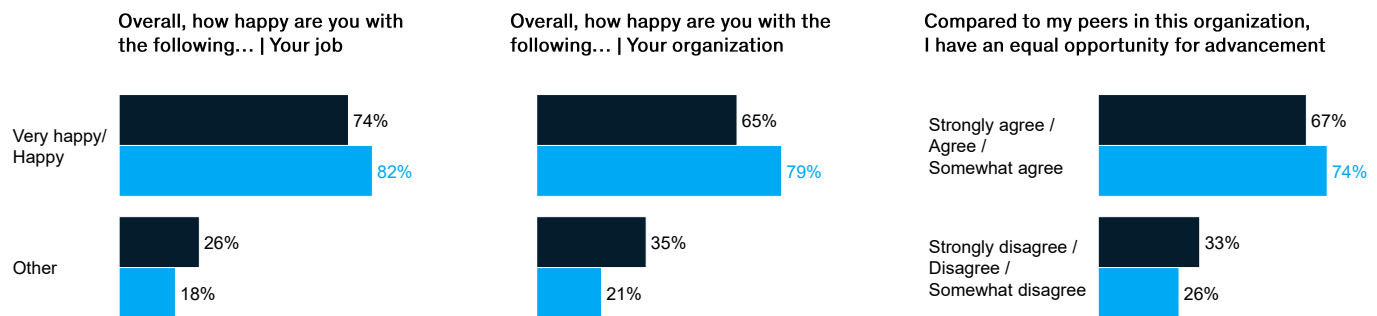
While companies are aiming to attract and retain talent with urgency, a focus on women leadership can be supportive in the development of work environments that are friendlier and more favorable to professional and personal development of all employees.

Companies with a high share of women leaders consistently scored higher in employee happiness, feeling of fairness and inclusion, and feeling of support.

Nearly 80 percent of men and women surveyed in companies with more women in leadership were satisfied with their company, compared to 65 percent for companies across the board.

## Employees from companies with a high share of women leaders are happier with their job and organization and believe they have better opportunities for advancement

■ High % of women leaders ■ Low % of women leaders



1. Top quartile in terms of women representation in N-2 and above positions  
Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Survey

Employees with women as primary managers are more likely to report receiving positive feedback and concrete recommendations in relation to their career advancement, as well as to have a senior mentor in the company (49% of employees with a woman manager have a mentor vs 38% of those with a male manager). Furthermore, employees in these companies feel they have a better chance to advance: Close to three-quarters of people at companies with greater female leadership were confident that they would have access to equal opportunities for advancement, around 10 percentage points more than the overall company sample.

In terms of work-life balance, women managers appear to be more flexible with their team in relation to remote work regardless of the respondent's gender (49% of employees with women managers claim to have total/ a lot of flexibility to work remotely vs 45% of employees with male managers). In addition, employees in companies with more women leaders report that they feel more supported in managing their personal well-being and day-to-day workload

## Employees with women managers feel their managers are generally more supportive than employees with male managers

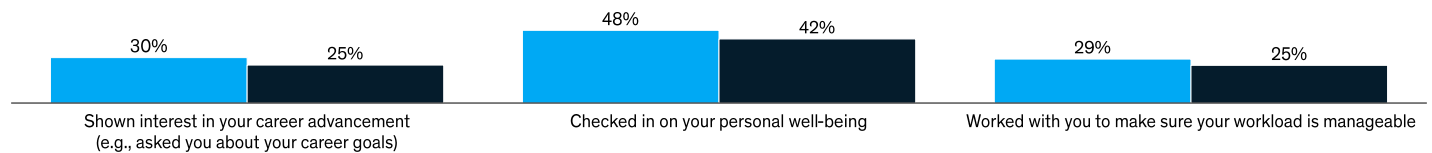
Which of the following actions has your manager taken consistently in the past year?

■ Women manager ■ Men manager

### Men respondents



### Women respondents



Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Survey

Adding to the ample evidence of the impact of diversity in financial performance, this study led us to conclude that there is a strong correlation between diversity -in this case manifested in a high presence of women leaders- and stronger organizational results too.

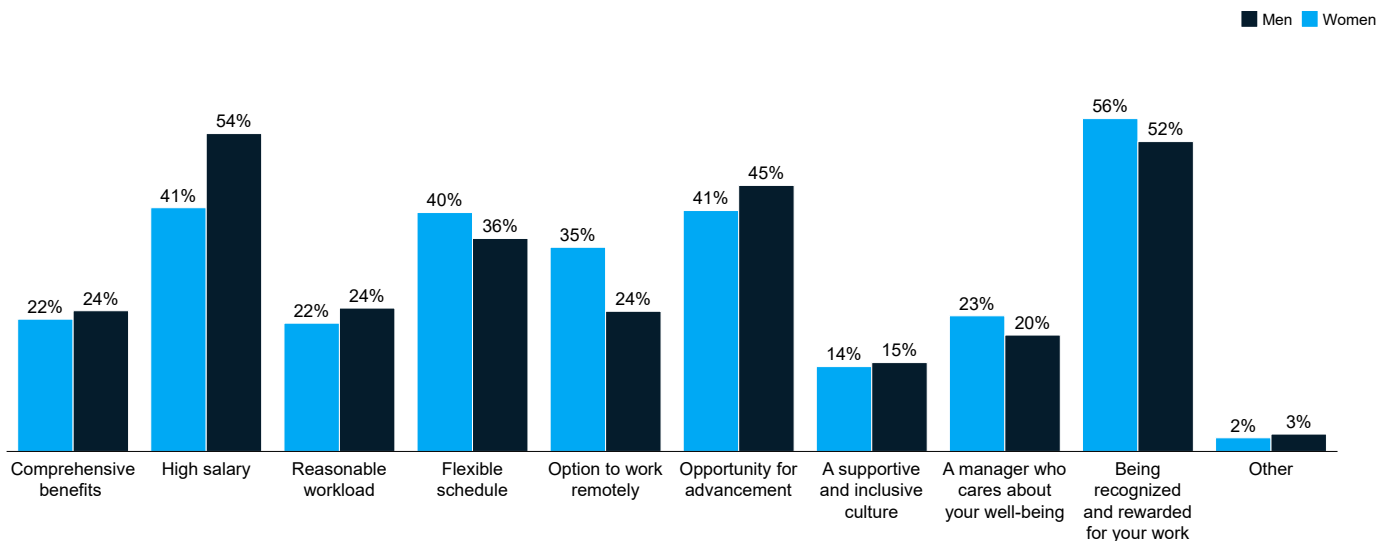
**What makes a difference  
for women? Flexibility,  
role models and  
mentorship**

Both women and men value the same factors when deciding whether to join a company: recognition, compensation, and opportunity for advancement. That said, they have differing priorities that mark their expectations in terms of professional options and work environment. This is important to account for in the development of human resources and policies.

While all employees have the same top priorities, men place significantly more emphasis on salaries than women, and women in the survey prioritized recognition much more than compensation.

### 56% of women stated that being recognized and rewarded for their work is the most relevant factor when deciding to join or stay with an organization

Which of the following factors matter most to you when deciding whether to join or stay with an organization?



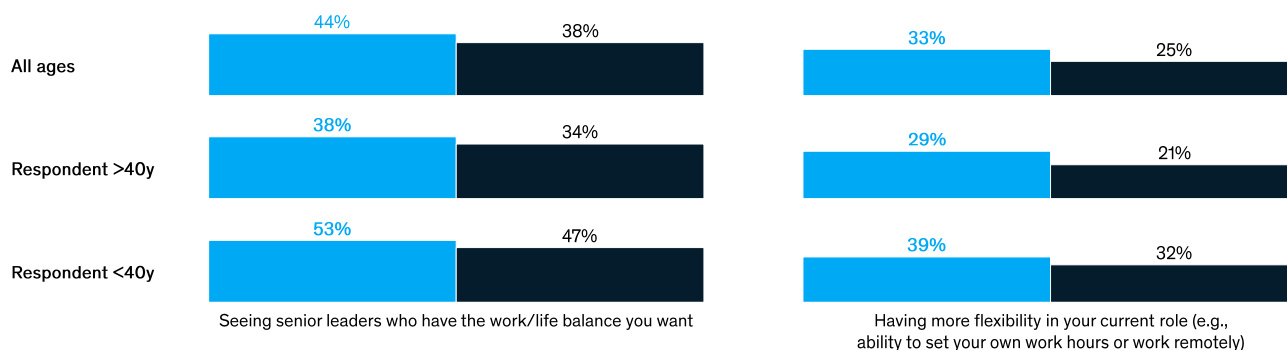
Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Survey, women respondents = 3559, men respondents = 2212

When it comes to drive for advancement, women, and particularly younger women cite having flexibility to set their own hours and seeing senior leaders with a desirable work life balance as top sources of motivation. These factors are related to the culture and organization of work and are important to maintaining interest in reaching positions of greater responsibility.

## Women, especially younger women, would be more interested in advancing professionally if they had more flexibility and if their superiors had a better work / life balance

Which of the following would make you more interested in advancing to more senior levels?

■ Women ■ Men



Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Survey

The theme of flexibility has been recurrent in the study. In terms of remote work, women (38 percent) expect to be able to work remotely to a greater extent than men (32 percent). Meanwhile, although flexible working hours are considered effective in working toward gender equity by three-quarters of women, they reported having comparatively less capacity to dictate their own schedules. Only 39 percent of women felt they had the opportunity to do so, compared to 51 percent of men. On the other hand, men consider the availability of more flexible working hours not especially relevant to professional development compared to women (12 percent versus 23 percent).

Having flexibility, not in terms of reduced hours or increased leave, but in terms of setting their own schedule to be able to increase presence and delivery at work while dealing with household obligations, emerges as a critical theme and companies should take note, particularly when designing HR initiatives and benefits as well as when training their managers on how to support their teams.

Finally, the most important barriers to professional development that surveyed employees identified are less personal and more resource-oriented. Both women and men consider the lack of transparency and clarity on what is required for a promotion as well as access to mentors and sponsors as the key challenges for advancement.

Boosting female leadership in companies, therefore, involves generating a culture of equal opportunities with transparent criteria. It also requires support from managers, mentors, and sponsors, alongside the adaptation of the work environment to promote flexibility.



**Companies with women  
in leadership focus on  
professional development,  
flexibility, and workload  
management**

Women demand a better balance between their work and personal lives, given that they assume the lion's share of responsibility for housework and the care of minors or dependents. Surveyed companies in the top quartile in terms of women in leadership positions (40% or more women in all levels up to CEO-1) offer an environment that facilitates a balance between private and professional life.

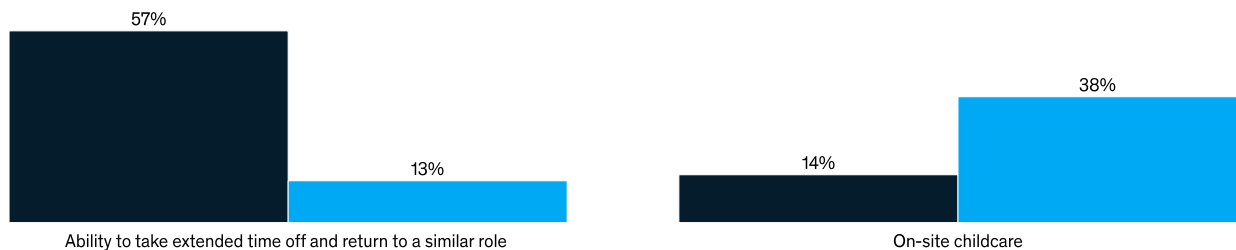
Keeping women connected to the workplace, especially after having children, can help maintain equal opportunities for promotion when compared to men.

In addition, measures to support the care of minors are valued by 80 percent of women – more than professional preparation and training programs to prepare them for management roles. Companies in the top quartile were observed to double-down on this, offering measures such as on-site childcare.

## Top-performing companies put more focus on providing the right conditions to keep employees present at work and at the office

Which of the following does your organization provide to support employee well-being and mental health?

■ Overall ■ Top performers



Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Study

As a result, new parents find it easier to remain with the company and do not feel pressured to extend their leave beyond legal requirements. Top quartile companies rely less than the average on reduced or part-time working hours (only 50 percent compared to 69 percent overall), and only 20 percent offer the possibility of taking extended leave for care, compared to 50 percent overall.

In addition, these companies put more focus on equal opportunities for professional development, instituting a culture of equality through training and management and establishing clear promotion pathways for women.

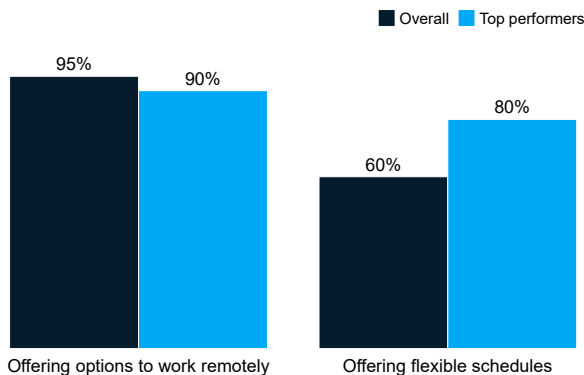
**Professional development is key to uprooting bias**

Professional development goes hand in hand with work flexibility when it comes to crafting an egalitarian work environment. The development of clear internal promotion policies is also important, requiring objective evaluation criteria to ensure that diverse candidates at all levels have equal access to management positions. Finally, a commitment to training in unconscious biases can foster a more diverse and inclusive environment.

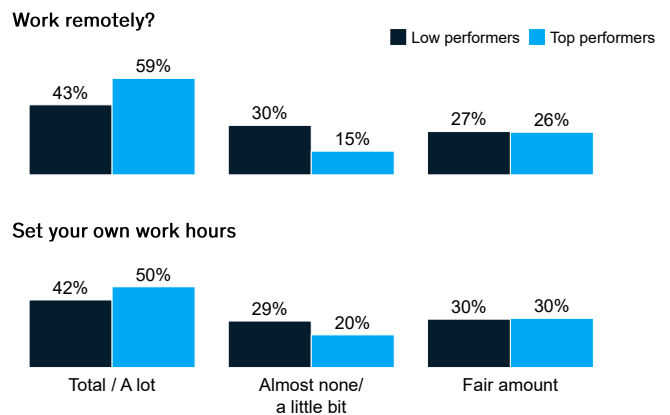
Top quartile companies in the sample have focused on generating more flexible environments that favor work-life balance. Though these companies focused slightly less on remote work, they did already have higher rates of remote work and flexible hours than the companies that hold fewer women in their N-2 to CEO positions. Moreover, half their staff have the option of truly flexible schedules, compared to the average of 42 percent.

**Employees at top-performing companies in terms of women representation believe they have more flexibility to work remotely and set their own work hours**

Thinking about your organization's efforts to improve employee retention, what are they most focused on<sup>1</sup>?



How much flexibility do you have to...

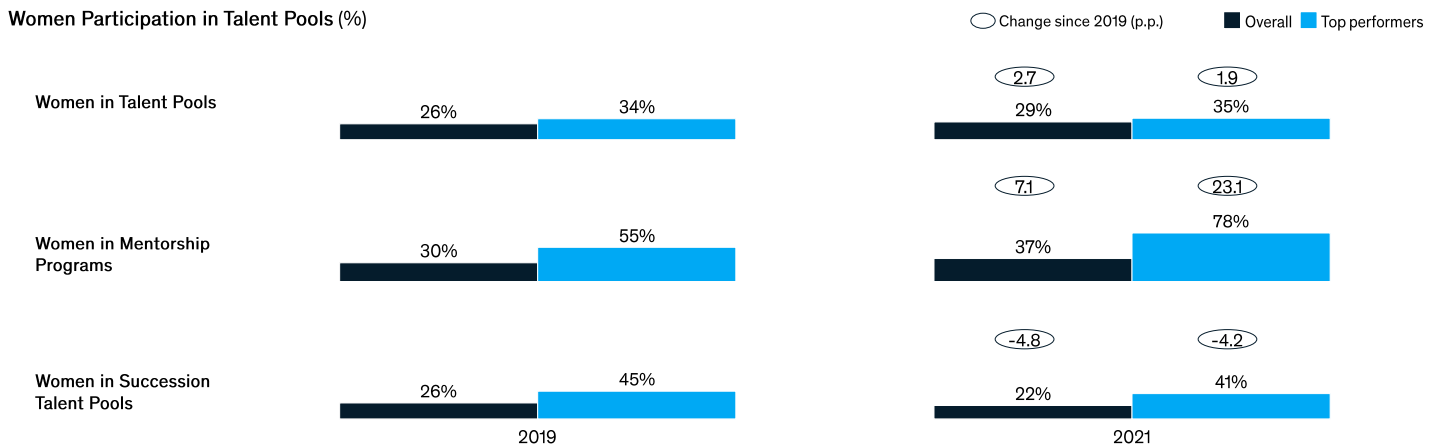


1. Answer only if you have answered "yes" in Q3. Has your organization taken any steps in the last year to improve retention of existing employees?  
 Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Study

### Mentorship and manager training

Since 2019, the top performing companies in the sample have increased women's participation in mentoring programs by 23 percentage points—seven points above the average of the participating companies in this study.

## Top-performing companies in terms of women representation have seen participation of women in mentorship programs increase by +23p.p. since 2019



Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Study

The elimination of biases and, especially, the promotion of equal treatment are key aims of managerial training, effective in transforming company culture and generating an inclusive work environment in the study's top performers. Compared to 67 percent of the overall sample, 90 percent of the companies that have achieved a high share of women leaders have managerial training that involves recognizing employees for their hard work. Additionally, 70 percent of these companies, compared to 56 percent overall, train managers in how to promote more inclusive environments in their teams and generate a sense of belonging. This is significant for women, who progress more in an environment where the support they receive is more individualized.

Of these top-performing companies, 80 percent give clear guidance to people who manage teams to pay attention to the well-being and professional development of their staff to promote a culture of inclusion. The same percentage have clear and objective performance criteria.

The commitment to individualized training also requires adaptation to a work environment that has changed radically as a result of COVID-19. There has been widespread implementation of hybrid work models, and demand is growing from women and younger generations for greater flexibility and remote work. Coaching, mentorship, and sponsorship now need to happen in an environment that is not only face-to-face. 40% of the top performing companies have opted to develop virtual mentoring, sponsorship programs, and leadership training in these formats—compared to 27 percent of companies overall.

# Creating a commitment to change

Spanish companies have made steady progress toward but the incorporation of women into positions of maximum responsibility remains slow.

The following recommendations are a call to action that hinges on the need to accelerate change through greater company involvement in all areas but especially from leaders and team managers, who play a key role in the implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion policies.

**1. Objectives and KPIs on the effectiveness and adequate implementation of DEI measures:**

Setting measurable objectives and KPIs is key to gender equality at all levels of the company, allowing for an evaluation of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in order to make sure that initiatives are well targeted, well executed and bringing the desired results.

**2. Doubling down on mentorship and sponsorship:** Ensure that women have access to mentorship and sponsorship relationships with senior leaders, which can be instrumental to their career path (e.g., by helping them understand requirements and plan next steps for advancement, providing opportunities, providing senior network exposure, etc). This can happen through formal programs, through training managers and leaders to become effective mentors/sponsors, and/or through making mentorship and sponsorship an explicit expectation for leadership roles.

**3. Training managers to create an inclusive environment and foster the next generation of women leaders:** This includes DEI values training on unconscious biases and managing remote and face-to-face teams as well as inclusion training on incorporating different leadership profiles and ensuring team well-being.

**4. Visibility on initiatives and an established feedback loop:** Ensuring high visibility of initiatives targeted on gender diversity to the whole workforce can have multiple effects. Apart from reinforcing the specific objective of each initiative, it shows that DEI is a priority for the company. This increases sensitivity and awareness on the whole workforce, and can reinforce a sense of inclusion for women, as well as higher uptake on the initiatives. On top, an established feedback loop is important to measure effectiveness and improve initiatives – thus ensuring effective use of resources to achieve DEI objectives.

**5. Processes to support female talent advancement to leadership:** This can be fostered through a set of various measures. Creating succession programs, ensuring transparency and clarity on promotion requirements, ensuring that promotion requirements and evaluation criteria are fair and unbiased towards different types of top talent and skills. Monitoring KPIs on the promotion pipeline and rates are key to identify pain points while structured, permanent dialogue and feedback between managers and promotion candidates can ensure top talent is well positioned to advance.

**6. Commitment to empowering women to reach top positions:** This entails targeting and growing top women talent, making explicit commitments to their development, guidance, and access to management and line positions. Providing management and leadership training that is tailored to their needs and ensuring that they can participate. Spotlighting role models and making women more visible in management positions.

**7. Lead the conversation on, and facilitate, co-responsibility or co-parenting:** Co-responsibility or co-parenting is a social issue that concerns both men and women and their use of time outside their work environment. Companies can play an exemplary and role in helping eliminate stereotypes of workers who can only grow professionally by sacrificing their personal choices. To do this, companies can take measures to curb the culture of presenteeism, incentivizing a healthy work-life balance, including digital connection and flexible schedules. They can also promote co-responsibility or co-parenting, promoting equal access to work-life balance measures and establishing KPIs to monitor the use of such measures by men and women. Furthermore, companies can create and strengthen the infrastructure that allows for policies that support caregivers, such as on-site childcare, to avoid exclusively resorting to extended leave or reduced hours.

While these recommendations to make women's movement toward leadership and management positions at companies more tangible are directed toward companies themselves, as the primary drivers of change, the role of men, as well as external and internal alliances along the way cannot be overlooked. Additionally, governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as corporate groups, have the potential to contribute to women's corporate success and equality.

# Authors

Eduardo Bolio and Maria del Mar Martinez Márquez are senior partners in McKinsey's Madrid office, where Antonio de Gregorio, Gloria Macias, and Amaia Noguera are partners and Dafni Giannikou is an associate partner.