

Women in the Workforce:

Building Gender Equity
in a Post-Pandemic
World

MONSTER



Report after report has revealed that the coronavirus pandemic has disproportionately impacted women's careers. The industries hardest hit happen to also be predominantly ones in which women work. Plus, with ever-changing quarantine policies and different variants causing surges in cases, it's typically been women who've had to put their work aside to assume the last-minute childcare at home.

In short, the pandemic revealed the weak spots in our workforce foundations. Namely that women do not have the social and employer support they need to weather crises while

caring for their families. And even those who've made progress and advanced to higher organization levels are facing an uphill climb – to catch back up to their colleagues after having to scale back or drop out of the workforce.

Looking forward, there's little doubt that the world of work has changed forever, in some ways for the better in terms of flexibility. But even as we gradually return to normalcy, organizations need to be asking themselves what they need to do in order to bring back talented women, and make sure that they're on equal footing with men.

It's not enough for employers to simply claim they are committed to inclusive and equitable workplaces. We've made strides in the right direction but are still a long way from where we need to be,

says **Claire Barnes**, chief human capital officer, Monster.



The current state of women in the workforce

Consider this: Even though women are reentering the workforce after a startling number of them dropped out during the pandemic, there was still a shortfall of 1.1 million women as of [February 2022](#). “Companies who are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion will reach a greater gender imbalance if they do not take immediate steps to attract and retain women,” says Audra Jenkins, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, Randstad North America.

Other research from McKinsey's [Women in the Workplace 2021](#) report found that one in three women has considered leaving the workforce or downshifting their career—an increase from one in four who said the same during the first few months of the pandemic. This can partly be attributed to higher levels of stress and burnout, and more hours of caregiving and housework than men.

“Women are the population most challenged right now as they struggle with virtual school, daycares being closed, and not being able to rely on family to help because of quarantine restrictions. The more companies that refuse to make this a priority, the more we will see the numbers dropping out of the workforce,” says Naomi Wheeless, a senior FinTech industry executive, and member of Eventbrite’s Board of Directors.

Among those who are still working, the mental load of having to do it all is taking its toll. Mothers are more than 3X as likely as fathers to be responsible for most of the housework and caregiving during the pandemic, as per McKinsey.



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But let's not think that all women's workplace woes are symptoms of the coronavirus. For all the talk of shattering glass ceilings, there were challenges on the horizon long before the pandemic.

According to the World Economic Forum, 57% of women worldwide are at risk of being displaced by automation. And as per the McKinsey Global Institute, an estimated 40 to 160 million women will need reskilling to transition into available jobs by 2030. "The number one action that companies can do now is to reskill talent to retain women," says Jenkins.

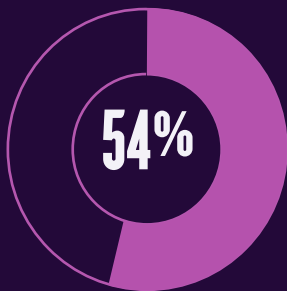
There's also a promotion problem across the globe. Women only held 37% of managerial positions globally the first quarter of 2021, and among Fortune 500 corporations, only 7.4% had female CEOs. For women of color, the reality is typically even more dismal.

"There is progress being made at junior levels of organizations but as you get further up, it's still male dominated," says Barnes.

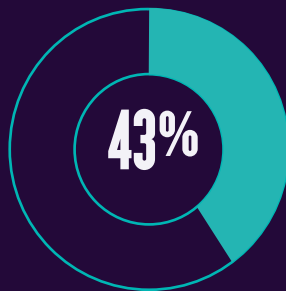
Women earn less than men globally

those making
less than
\$81,499

Women

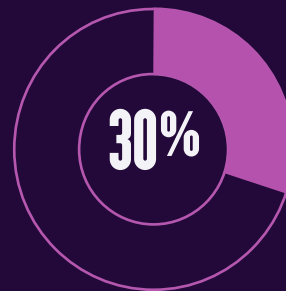


Men

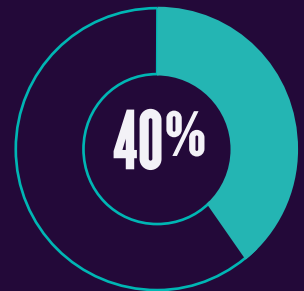


those making
more than
\$100,500

Women









Men



Internationally, women earn 77 cents for every dollar men earn for equal work – and the gap is even wider for women with children.

Women are more stressed about work

	Women	Men	Global impact of global work-related health issues	
Anxiety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Women in Italy experience higher rates of anxiety.	
Headaches	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		German women experience higher rates of physical illness, followed by headaches and loneliness.	
Loneliness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		US women experience higher rates of depression and loneliness, while US men experience higher rates of physical illness.	
Depression	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Men in the Netherlands express higher rates of depression.	
Alcohol Use		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Men in the US, Canada, Germany, France, and Sweden experience higher rates of alcohol use.	
Physical Illness	Draw		Women in Germany	

Source: Monster 2021 Future of Work Report.

SPOTLIGHT ON MONSTER

To help support primary caregivers, who are often women, Monster launched its “One Monster, One Family” program, which includes initiatives such as paid self-care days for all employees; one additional paid day per year for family time; a premium membership to caregiver site Care.com and a laptop lending program for school kids.

“When you look at the pandemic and you consider women as primary caregivers trying to balance their work and homeschooling, there’s a real danger that women are going to say, ‘I can’t do this anymore.’ As an employer, it’s important to see what you can do to help employees find balance,” says Barnes.

What women need

In addition to empowerment, acknowledgment, and confidence, women in the workforce need real policies and benefits that put them on an even playing field with male colleagues, by providing them with working conditions that can allow them to do their best work.

Gender Pay Equity

Monster's survey found that globally, 4 in 10 employers are prioritizing gender pay equality. And it's a good thing, considering the World Economic Forum 2020 Global Gender Gap Report finding that it will take nearly 100 years before we see gender parity.

Even companies that are committed to bringing women back into the workforce risk increasing the gender wage gap if they use outdated hiring processes, says Jeff Hayes, chief data analyst for the Institute for Women's Policy Research. "On the reentrance, we're trying to get employers to not ask about previous wages and salary history or base a salary offer on previous history," he says. "Especially in the last year where people cut back hours, it's one of the things that perpetuates gender wage gap. The job should pay what it's worth to the employer."

Barnes agrees that paying for the value of the role is a start, but it's also important to make sure you're comparing women's salaries with peers who

are male. "The one thing we do when we promote somebody is say who are their peers and what are they paid," says Barnes. "If that's going to bring up an inequity in pay, we have to look at that."

Jenkins recommends that organizations be externally transparent about compensation ranges on job postings, while internally, they perform regular audits of roles to identify where women (or any diverse group) appear to be lagging.

Workplace Flexibility

Flexible work styles were always important for working women raising families, but never more so than in the last two years. "I use myself as an example. I'm a mom of an 8-year-old daughter who is in lockdown at the moment. The person she will come to most is me," says Barnes. "That's fine because I work in an environment where my peers accept that. It's important for leaders to show that that's OK."



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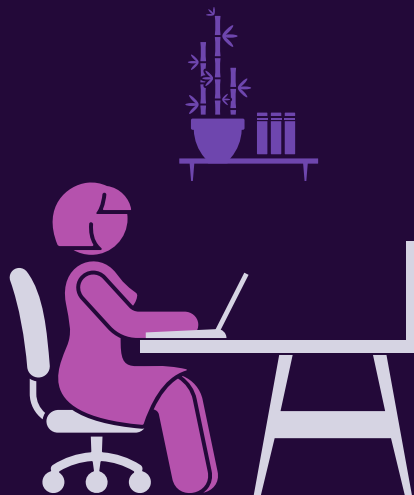
Both men and women say their ideal work environment would be a hybrid of in-office and remote work.

31% women vs. 29% men

What women are saying

Women are 31% more likely to feel insecure in their jobs than men

Women are 9% less likely than men to express satisfaction with their jobs



Training and Development Opportunities

There are a few key things that employers can do to level the playing field, says Jenkins. For starters, sponsorship and mentorship programs can help the development and advancement of diverse employees. “Companies should identify high-potential diverse employees that are promoted as a result of sponsorship and mentorship and find ways to amplify those actions. Access to C-Suite leaders is critical for women and other diverse groups to advance,” says Jenkins.

Companies can also start building a strong foundation of skilled women from the entry level with training and apprenticeship programs. “Companies can focus on women graduating from high school and college and offer on-the-job training with their commitment of working for the company for a set amount of time,” says Jenkins.

In order to support career development for women, employers can also make a bigger effort to introduce them to a variety of career paths within the organization. Monster data found that fewer women (83%) said they feel comfortable that they have the transferable skills required to find a job at a different company or industry compared to 86% of men who said the same.

It could simply be that women don't have an abundance of role models who are excelling at high levels in emerging industries or male-dominated fields. “One of the things which I'm passionate about is to get young women excited about careers in IT,” says Barnes. “The future of careers is in digitalization; it's an area that will continue to grow and provide a strong career path.”



By investing in emerging talent with little to no experience, companies can customize a training program to fill their own talent gaps while simultaneously building a strong diverse pipeline.

Audra Jenkins, chief diversity & inclusion officer, Randstad North America

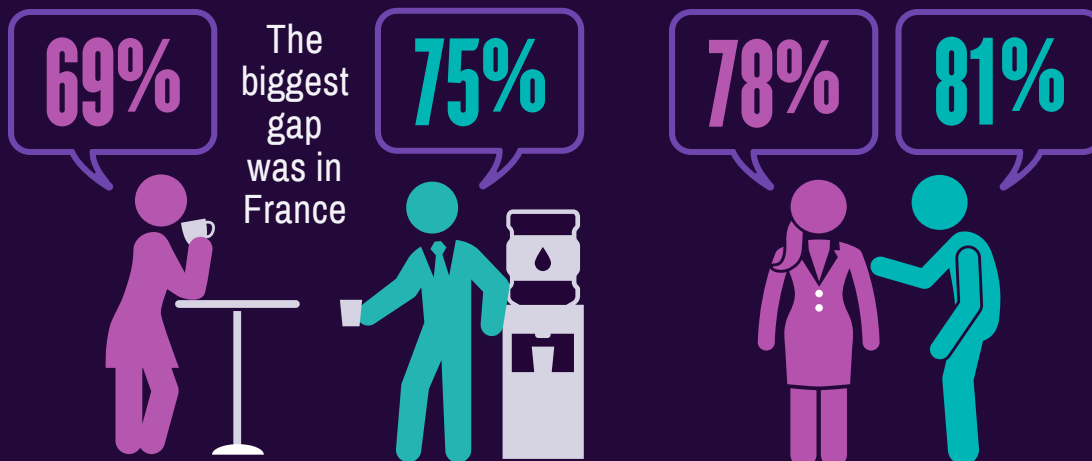


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38% of women want employee training vs. 33% of men

31% women say they want inclusive workspaces vs. 25% of men

Women are less likely than men to say their work environment is inclusive.



How companies can be more supportive to women

Good companies support women. It's not only the right thing to do, but there's a clear business case for doing it. Namely, it's good for the bottom line. Consider this: The economic benefits of narrowing gender gaps are 6 - 8X times higher than the social spending required, according to McKinsey's report, COVID-19 and Gender Equality: Countering the Regressive Effects.

Gender equity is also vital for your employer brand. "If you want to have an inclusive workplace, you need your brand to exude that and not just at face value," says Lee. "You need processes in place to show that you're actually doing it. That way, when an individual comes into the organization, they see those opportunities. They look at management and see women and people of color," she says.



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Women care more about these post-pandemic concerns than men:

- Flex work schedules
- Salary protection
- Health policies and protocols
- Shifting to a more remote work environment

Simply put, **without gender equity and inclusivity**, you're not going to attract high performers to your organization. "People are looking for that nowadays, especially millennials," says Lee.

Here are some actions that companies can take to welcome women back into their workforces, and better support their female employees:

Rethink roles and job descriptions. “Many job descriptions were written years ago, pre-COVID,” says Jenkins. “By re-examining qualifications and focusing on true skills needed, it will open up a wider talent pool.”

Acknowledge gender bias. There’s still an outdated bias that when women take time off to take care of children it’s seen as a negative, says Lee. But the idea that a female won’t be dedicated to her work because she left the workforce at some point in her past is unfair. “That’s a training piece to encourage those making those types of hiring decisions to look at the overall picture,” says Lee.

Tackle gender equity from all sides. “I encourage companies to look at their lack of diversity that they’re struggling with as they would a business problem—setting up plans, goals, metrics, data, and reporting to attack it just like they would an actual business problem,” says Wheelless.

Help women see their worth. “Research has shown that when a woman looks at a job description, they will see all the things they can’t do. But men see all the things they can do,” says Barnes. This can stem in part from pay inequity, which sends the message to impacted workers that they are “less valued” or “not worthy,” adds Jenkins. “It often signifies larger systemic issues around inclusion and belonging.” One thing employers can do is to focus on setting clear performance goals and reward employees with incentives. That way, women don’t feel like they have to break through the proverbial glass ceiling by working twice as hard as men for the same recognition.

Judge performance by outcomes, not by presence. “There are times when women will take care breaks, and oftentimes in those situations, men jump over them in the ranks for promotion,” says Barnes. “We have to have some strong processes around that, encouraging women to feel as though

they have an equal place in the workforce.” Lee agrees. “I have seen in my career where someone is overachieving but not put up for a promotion because they have children. There’s this notion that they can’t handle more than they already have,” says Lee. “But if somebody is getting phenomenal reviews and performing, companies should be using the same criteria for women as they would for men.”

Keep flexible work policies going. Organizations that are continuing a work-from-home setup can show support to women (and men) by not enforcing rigid work hours, or mandatory meeting times. “Maybe even think about blackout periods for meetings where you don’t make them first thing in the morning or last thing in the afternoon when you know some individuals need flexibility to make sure a child is getting on their class Zoom or starting their homework,” says Lee.

Lead by example. “Standards for work life balance go from the top down,” says Lee. “Try not to send urgent emails at all hours of the night. The expectation that somebody is going to be up at 2:00 a.m. to answer an email that could have waited, and then holding that against them is probably not the best approach.” In many cases, it’s not only male leaders who are guilty of having these always-available expectations. “Companies tend to focus only on male allies in the workplace, however, oftentimes the issue can be with other women,” says Jenkins. “Until we support and empower one another we cannot expect our male colleagues to reciprocate.”

Offer strong benefits and support. From temporary in-home care for a few hours a day to allow women to focus on work, to expanded Employee Assistance Programs, to perks like meal delivery or house cleaning, such support initiatives send the message that the organization cares and values its employees.

There's no doubt that the coronavirus pandemic had a devastating impact on women in the workforce. But one positive to come from it may be the realization that organizations need to do better to fully support their talented, dedicated female employees. Those that welcome women back and offer flexibility, equity, and opportunity will ultimately be rewarded with a stronger employer brand, a more diverse talent pipeline, and an elevated workplace culture all around.

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