



Gartner®

# 2022 WOMEN IN SUPPLY CHAIN RESEARCH

# 2022 Women in Supply Chain Survey Reveals Midpipeline Progress and Global Organizational Prowess

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Initiatives: [CSCO Strategic Leadership](#)

Despite the “Great Resignation,” 2022’s results show sustained and even improved representation of women in supply chain. CSCOs remain committed to gender diversity, but new data suggests they will need to double-down on goal-setting, leadership inclusion and career-pathing for women.

## Overview

### Key Findings

- Women comprise 39% of the total supply chain workforce, a slight drop from 41% in 2021. Representation of women improved at the first-line manager/supervisor, senior manager and director levels of the supply chain organization.
- Alarming, 43% of respondents said the pandemic had a negative impact on the retention and advancement of women in supply chain organizations over the past year. Lack of career opportunity is the most cited reason for the departure of midcareer women for a second year in a row.
- Women of underrepresented races and ethnicities comprise 19% of supply chain organizations, an increase from 14% in 2021.
- All told, 70% of responding supply chain organizations have a diversity, equity and inclusion objective to attract, develop, retain and advance women. And 28% of those organizations have specific goals and leadership accountability.

### Recommendations

CSCOs responsible for strategic leadership of their supply chain organization should:

- Drive accountability in supply chain for gender diversity by setting specific goals, sharing them and incorporating them into management scorecards. Track and require leadership inclusivity.
- Motivate and engage women in first-line positions by focusing gender diversity initiatives on career pathing, development, work flexibility and other compelling elements of your employment value proposition (EVP).
- Further differentiate your supply chain organization’s EVP by partnering with HR to understand the pay equity gap in your organization. Co-develop a plan for bridging the gap, and determine what information you are willing and able to share publicly.
- Improve representation of women at the manager or supervisor level by focusing on diversity recruitment initiatives. Pull more women into senior manager positions by focusing on development programs specifically designed for women, and increase the number of women in director and vice president positions by equipping leaders to think and act inclusively.

## Survey Objective

Gartner's seventh annual Women in Supply Chain Survey was conducted from 24 February 2022 through 28 March 2022. Gartner surveyed 116 supply chain organization leaders, primarily from companies headquartered in North America, about their companies' goals and initiatives to improve recruitment, development, retention and advancement of women. We collected baseline data on how many women are in first-line manager, senior manager, director, vice president and executive-level roles within supply chain organizations.

We also asked questions about:

- Representation of women from underrepresented races and ethnicities
- Practices that increase the engagement with, and success of, women in supply chain organizations
- Specifics about midcareer pipelines and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Pay equity plans and transparency
- First-line engagement practices for women in on-site roles in manufacturing, distribution and transportation

Gartner's primary research partner for this project is AWESOME, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization focused on advancing women's supply chain leadership.<sup>1</sup> We also partnered with boom!, a U.K.-based global community formed to support and link women in the supply chain profession, with membership spanning 30 countries.

## Data Insights

News and media stories covering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on working women have been sobering. Lockdowns, home schooling and domestic responsibilities drove more women than men from the workforce around the world.<sup>2</sup> Women worldwide also lost \$800 billion in earnings in 2020, and 13 million did not return to work in 2021.<sup>3</sup> Our assumption had been that supply chain would follow the rule, not be the exception.

And yet, last year, our 2021 Women in Supply Chain survey results left us pleasantly speechless. We managed to not only retain women in the organization but also to pull more of them into and through the leadership pipeline. Our 2022 survey results have equally surprised us. While we did see some slight dips in representation, we saw a record number of women at the first-line manager, senior manager, director and C-suite levels.

This year's results still show strong commitment from supply chain leaders to gender diversity goals and supply chain-owned initiatives, with more than half doing both (see Figure 1). Increasing the number of women leaders in supply chain is a stated goal for more than two out of three responding organizations. In 2016, when we initiated this survey, that number was just 47%.

Figure 1: Women in Supply Chain Continue to Defy Pandemic Odds

## Women in Supply Chain Continue to Defy Pandemic Odds

Commitment Remains High



n = 125 end-user respondents (2016); 85 end-user respondents (2022)

Source: 2022 Gartner/AWESOME Women in Supply Chain Survey

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While we should certainly celebrate our progress, there is reason to believe that this might be the calm before the storm and that supply chain leaders should proceed with cautious optimism. About 43% of respondents stated that the pandemic has had a net negative impact on their ability to retain and advance women in supply chain. This is a significant change from what was stated in 2021, where only 11% said there was a negative impact. In other recent Gartner research on employee experience, women report significantly lower well-being than men, giving even more reason to continue investing in gender diversity commitments and initiatives (see [Drive Women's Well-Being With Hybrid Work Models](#)).

## Representation of Women Improved Across the Middle of the Pipeline, Showing Resilience

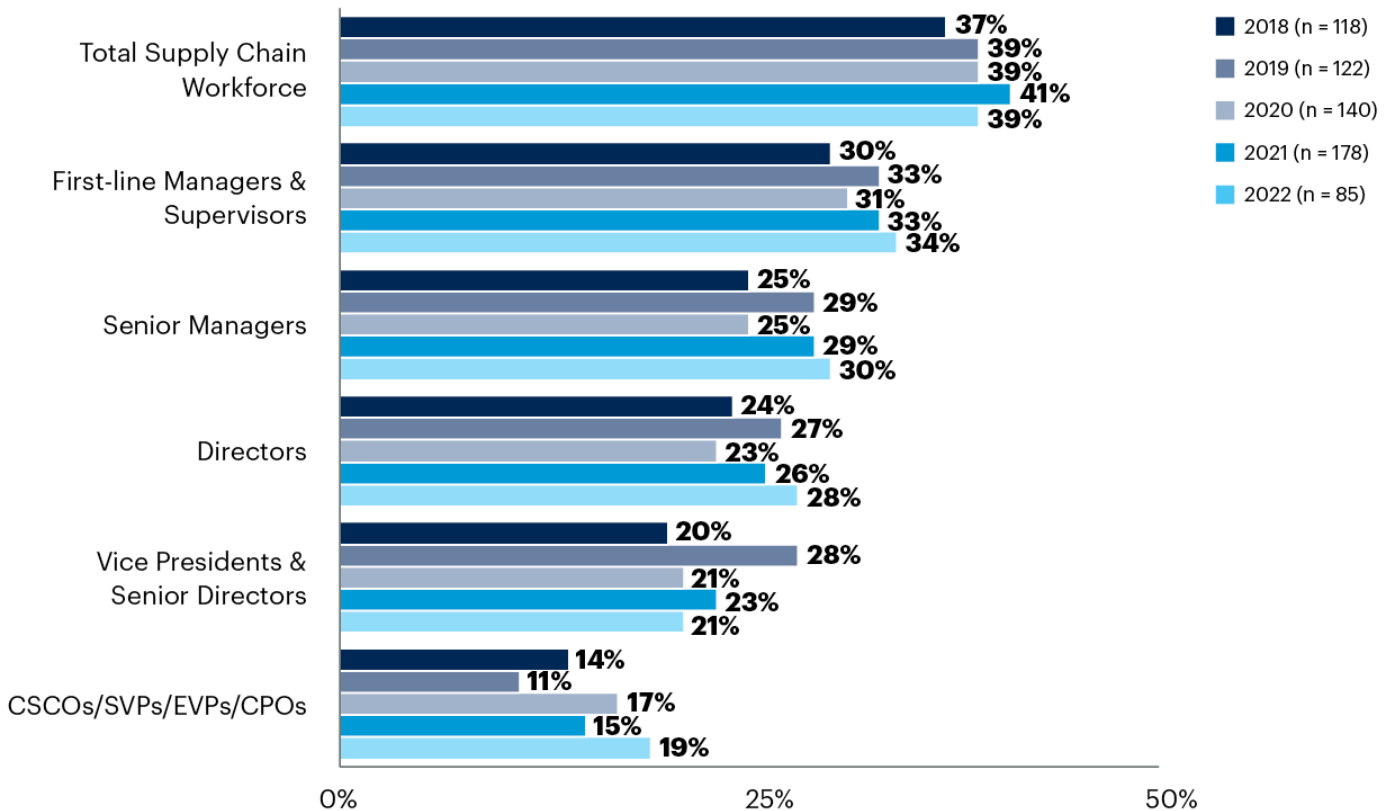
In the onslaught of disruption, it's refreshing to hear good news. The pandemic has weighed heavily on working women across the globe, yet supply chain leaders have managed to maintain and even advance representation of women in their organizations. Women make up 39% of the total supply chain workforce, which was only a slight dip from last year's high of 41% (see Figure 2).

There is continued improvement in gender representation in the middle of the pipeline at the first-line (34%), senior manager (30%), director (28%), and C-suite levels (19%).

Figure 2: Representation of Women in Supply Chain Increased in the Middle of the Pipeline and at the C-Level

## Representation of Women in Supply Chain Increased in the Middle of the Pipeline and the C-Level

Women in Supply Chain Leadership Roles Year to Year Comparison



Q: Thinking about all the full-time employees in your supply chain organization/business unit, what percentage is female?

Note: 2019 forward, excludes revenue <\$100million, Senior Managers/Directors not available in 2016, 2017

Source: Gartner Women in Supply Chain 2022

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There's even cause for celebration at the senior levels of supply chain leadership. A record-breaking 19% of women comprise C-suite, executive vice president, or senior vice president positions in supply chain. And the percentage of women in the most senior supply chain role has increased to 36% from just 28% in 2021. Over one-third of end-user industries have a woman in their most senior role, with 2% also being women of underrepresented races and ethnicities. Against all odds, women have remained resilient in supply chain.

There are a few reasons that continued progress makes sense even in the midst of disruption. Supply chain's mission-criticality throughout the pandemic has meant that many sectors did not lay off but continued to hire and even complain of talent shortages. In today's hypercompetitive talent marketplace, a well-functioning supply chain cannot afford to lose 39% of their workforce. Our 2021 Women in Supply Chain survey results also showed a record number of specific commitments and supply chain-led actions. The fruits of these labors can be seen in the middle of the pipeline.

Yet one trend has persisted over the seven years that we have conducted this survey: as the corporate ladder advances, the proportion of women leaders declines. This has almost become the defining snapshot in the world of working women in supply chain. The incline of the slope, however, slowly levels year over year.

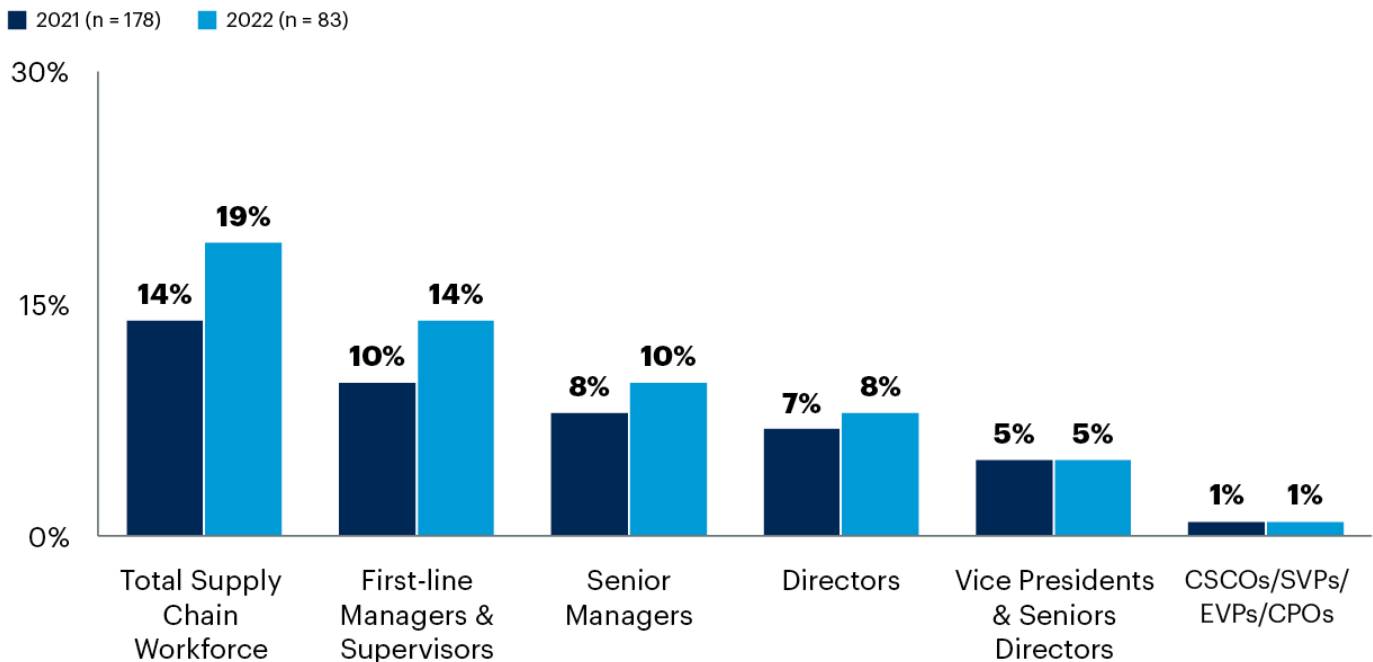
Today, women only make up 21% of VP-level positions and 19% of C-level positions in the average supply chain organization. Supply chain still continues to have a problem in pulling women up to the more senior ranks of the organization. This is in large part because talent strategies are not designed to pull women up the corporate ladder; without thoughtful redesign, talent processes often hold hidden biases that systematically prevent women from pushing into higher levels of leadership.

Similar to the trend seen for women overall, the proportion of women of underrepresented races and ethnicities (see Note 1) declines as the corporate ladder advances. Women of underrepresented races and ethnicities make up 19% of the supply chain workforce overall, which is similar to the percentage that comprise the U.S. labor force (20.3%).<sup>4</sup> Yet we did see an increase in the representation of women from underrepresented races and ethnicities at all levels except for the VP and C-suite levels, where we saw no change (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Women of Underrepresented Races and Ethnicities Increased in Representation at all Levels Except for Senior Leadership**

## Representation of Women in Supply Chain Increased in the Middle of the Pipeline and the C-Level

Percentage of Women of Underrepresented Races and Ethnicities in Full Time Positions Year to Year Comparison



Q: Thinking about all the full-time employees in your supply chain organization/business unit, what percentage are women of underrepresented races and ethnicities?

Source: Gartner Women in Supply Chain 2022

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Despite progress, women of underrepresented races and ethnicities still only make up 14% of manager/supervisor roles, 10% of senior managers, 8% of directors, a mere 5% of vice presidents and 1% of CSCOs in supply chain. The challenge lies in intersectionality: the intersections of identity categorizations within individuals and groups. We must consider everything and anything that can marginalize people, such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability and age. Women that identify themselves as an underrepresented race or ethnicity are disadvantaged by multiple forms of oppression, and this affects the development and career support they receive within their organizations.

## CSCO Actions

Improve promotion of women into senior leadership levels and ensure that the pandemic doesn't weigh on your pipeline:

- To reduce the dramatic drop-off of female representation in the first level of leadership and build supporting infrastructure, develop mentorship and sponsorship programs specifically focused on aspiring women leaders. Be sure to involve men — not just women — as mentors and sponsors in these programs (see [Ignition Guide to Creating a Mentoring Program](#)).

- Shift from reactionary diversity initiatives to a more sustainable gender equality strategy that ensures intersectionality and its additional biases are addressed, particularly in pulling in women of underrepresented races and ethnicities.
- Improve succession planning practices for senior leadership positions by requiring active inclusivity. For example, appoint a bias champion that assists in identifying bias at succession planning meetings. This champion might ask, “Is this feedback due to a capability gap or simply a work style difference?” (see [Building Inclusive Leadership Behaviors: Beyond Bias Training](#))

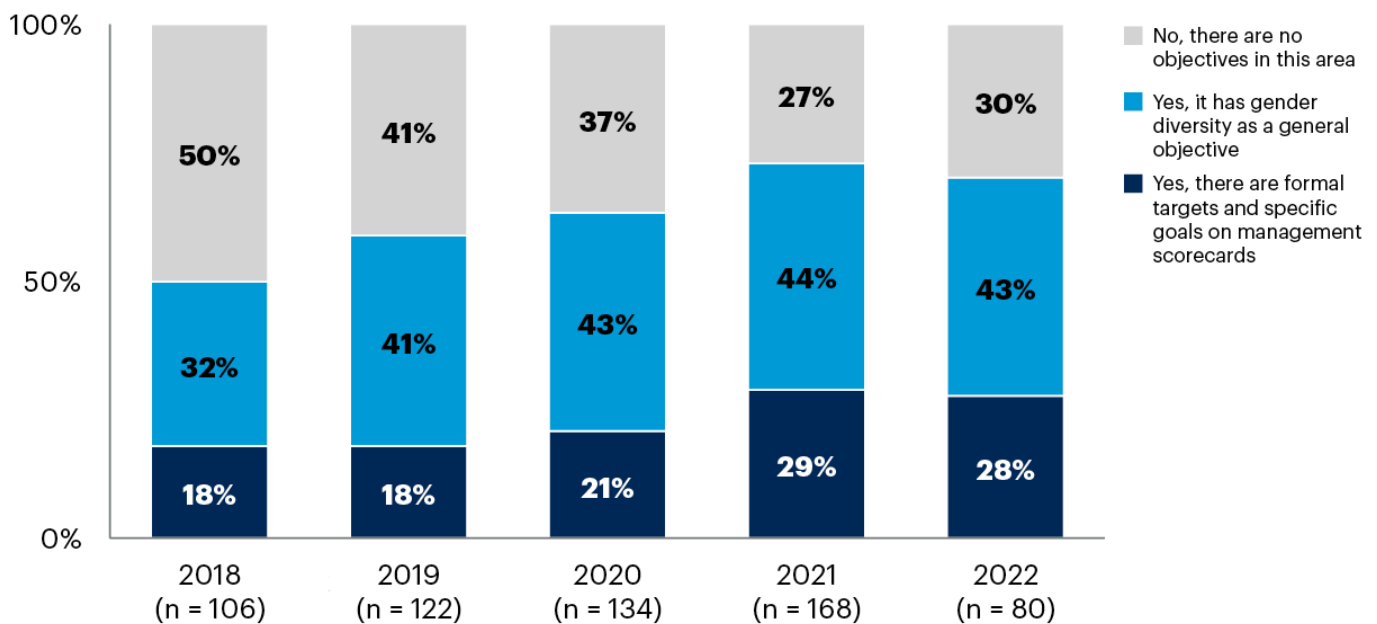
## Global Organizations Are Tying Commitments to Action and Recognize Midcareer Women Flight Risk

Previous years showed that articulating and adopting goals and objectives are crucial drivers for improvements in pipelines and other DEI outcomes. In 2022, 70% of supply chain organizations have some type of gender diversity goal or objective, a slight decline from 73% in last year’s results (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Gender Diversity is an Objective for 70% of Supply Chain Organizations

### Gender Diversity is an Objective for 70% of Supply Chain Organizations

Percent of Organizations With Stated Objectives to Increase Women Leaders, Year to Year



Q: Does your organization/business unit have a stated objective to increase the number of women leaders in supply chain?

Source: Gartner Women in Supply Chain 2022

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We differentiate between general objectives (“we will be more diverse and inclusive”) and more specific goals that are also on management scorecards (“senior supply chain leadership will reach gender parity by 2030”). We find that only 28% of supply chain organizations have more formal gender targets and specific goals on management scorecards. For these respondents, there is greater accountability for results — and we see the correlation with stronger representation and inclusion showing up in pipelines.



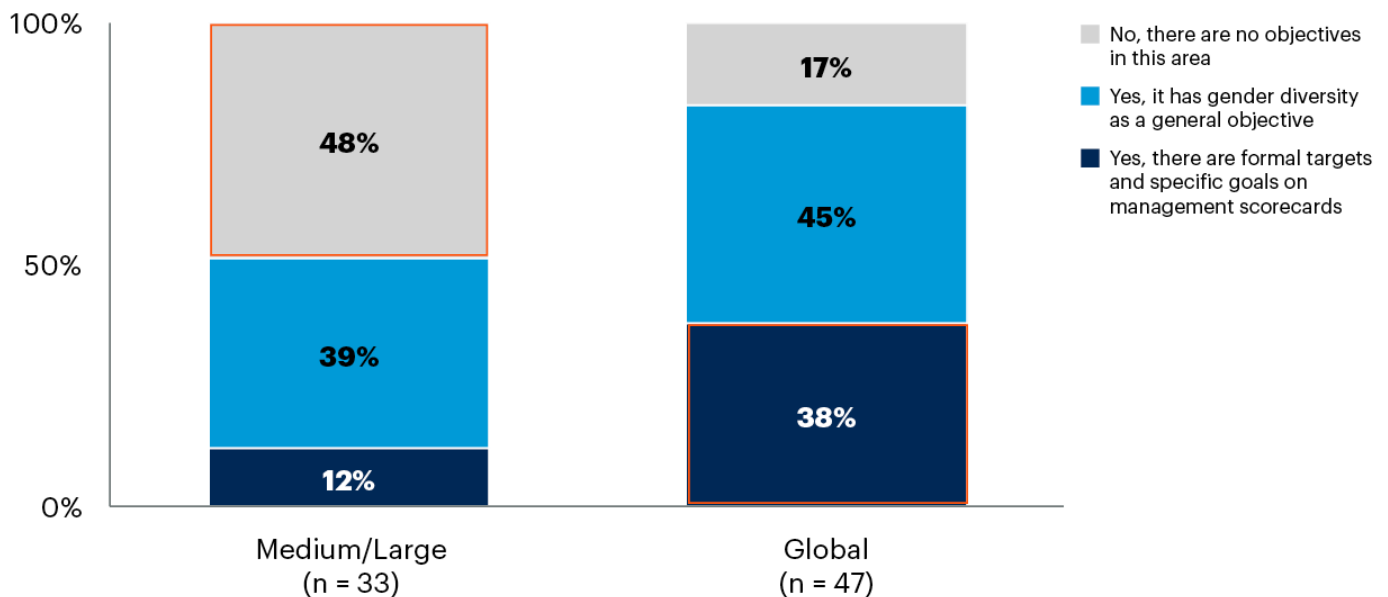
Comparing organizations of different sizes, we immediately see striking differences:

- Nearly 50% of medium and large organizations (\$100 million to <\$5 billion) have *no objectives* to increase the number of women leaders in their supply chain (see Figure 5). Only 12% of these organizations have incorporated specific goals or targets on management scorecards.
- In contrast, the level of commitment from the largest global organizations (\$5 billion+) matches their size. Around 83% of these organizations have a stated objective to improve representation of women in leadership and 38% have incorporated formal targets.

Figure 5: Global Organizations Show Greater Commitment to Gender Diversity

## Global Organizations Show Greater Commitment to Gender Diversity

Percent of Organizations with Stated Objectives to Increase Women Leaders



Q: Does your organization/business unit have a stated objective to increase the number of women leaders in supply chain?

Source: Gartner Women in Supply Chain 2022

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Unsurprisingly, there is a payoff: global organizations have better pipelines of women of underrepresented races and ethnicities. They have better representation at a total workforce level and at every single level of leadership. They are also significantly more likely to have women of underrepresented races and ethnicities in a director position than medium or large organizations.

This relationship between heightened objective- and goal-setting and improved representation of women in supply chain has been reported in our prior surveys and in outside research on gender-focused DEI outcomes. What we measure matters.

Yet supply chain leaders that have seen improvements in gender-balanced representation in their organization should not become complacent in their efforts. In particular, supply chain organizations should attend to midcareer challenges for women. Over half of end-user organizations state retaining midcareer women is an increasing challenge, with an additional 19% indicating it is a significant challenge.

Global organizations seem to be more aware of mid-career flight risk. Around 85% see retention of mid-career women as an increasing or significant challenge compared to only 54% of medium or large organizations.

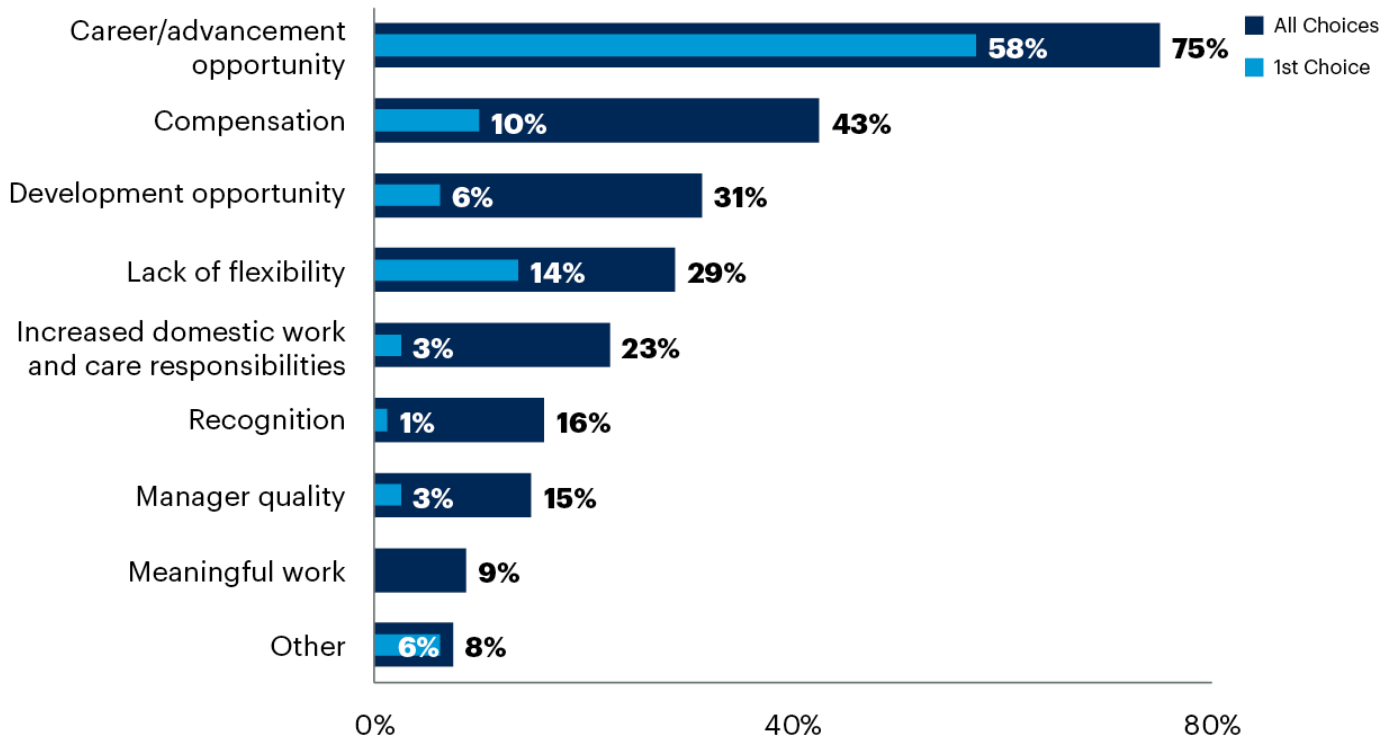
With almost half of medium and large organizations lacking gender diversity goals or objectives, they may be very unaware of a real problem that is facing all supply chain organizations today.

According to end-user respondents, the top reason that midcareer women are leaving their organization is because they lack career or advancement opportunities (see Figure 6). This was an increase from last year's responses, which found that only 50% cited career opportunities as the top reason for departure. The fastest-climbing response is that women are seeking greater or more competitive compensation, coming in at second place. This jumped dramatically from 24% in 2021 to 43% today.

Figure 6: Midcareer Women Are Leaving Due to Lack of Career Opportunities and Compensation

## Midcareer Women Are Leaving Due to Lack of Career Opportunities and Compensation

Multiple Responses Allowed



n = 80, End-user Respondents excludes don't know

Q: When women have left your organization/business unit at mid-career or later, what have been the reasons?

Source: Gartner Women in Supply Chain 2022

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Yet only 14% of supply chain organizations across industries (excluding providers) have an initiative to retain midcareer women. But the distribution of these initiatives is not equal when we look at company size. We know that global companies are more aware of the problem and are more visible in their ability or inability to address it. So it comes as no surprise that 19% of them already have an initiative to retain midcareer women. Only 7% of medium or large companies can say the same.

## CSCO Actions

Drive lasting gender diversity results and address midcareer flight risk:

- Set specific goals, and hold yourself and other leaders accountable for them. There is a correlation between leadership accountability for gender equality and actual progress in representation of women along the pipeline (see [Tool: Creating a Sustainable Approach to DEI Strategy](#)).
- Retain midcareer women by improving career path visibility and mobility (see [Ignition Guide to Building Compelling Supply Chain Career Paths](#)). Also, partner with HR to offer more competitive compensation and to remedy midpipeline pay inequities immediately (see [Addressing Pay Equity](#)).

- Invest in returnship programs that pull women back into the supply chain workforce, like those seen at [Dow](#), [Amazon](#) and [General Motors](#). These programs reskill and upskill talent, mostly women, who have left the workforce due to caregiving responsibilities.
- Offer greater work flexibility as a competitive differentiator in attraction, retention and engagement of women in supply chain (see [Evolve Your EVP to a Human Deal by Offering Radical Flexibility](#)).

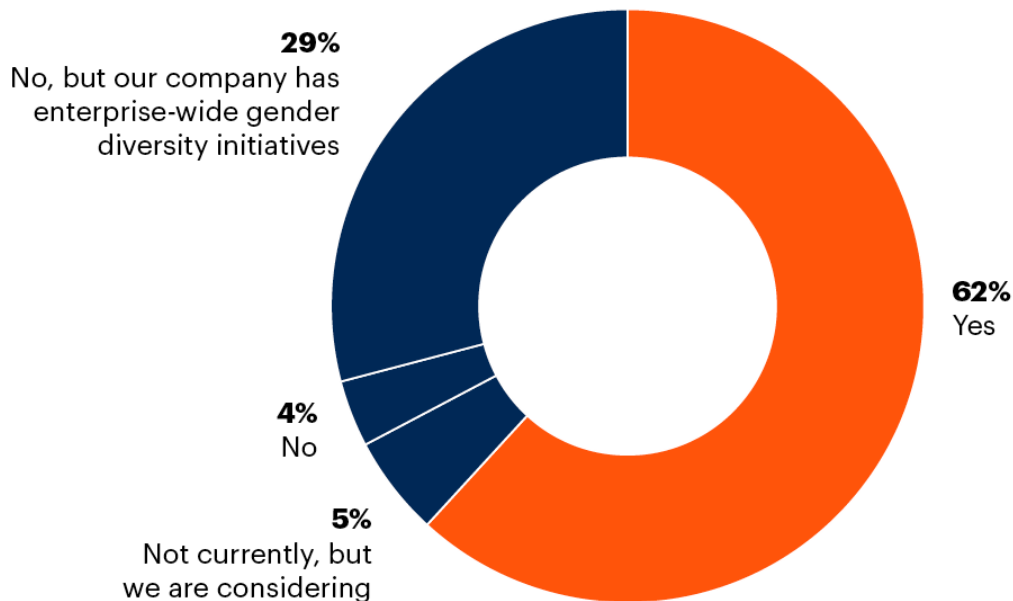
## Gender Diversity Initiatives Focus on Recruitment and “Lean-In” Rather Than “Pull-In” Tactics

Once supply chain leaders establish gender diversity objectives, what are they doing to achieve them? For other supply chain and business priorities, typically when an objective is set, a project or activity is launched to meet the objective. Within the subset of respondents who have stated objectives, 62% said the supply chain organization had a targeted initiative focused on women, a slight dip from 68% in 2021 (see Figure 7). Twenty-nine percent rely on enterprisewide DEI initiatives (an increase from 23% in 2021), and 5% said they were considering starting a supply-chain-specific one. This is at an all-time high, with respondents reporting active initiatives at 91% in total.

Figure 7: A Majority of Supply Chain Organizations Own Their Own Gender Diversity Initiatives

### A Majority of Supply Chain Organizations Own Their Own Gender Diversity Initiatives

Percent of Organizations with Targeted Gender Initiatives



n = 55, End-users who have stated objective, excludes DK

Q: Does your organization have any targeted initiatives to recruit, develop, retain and/or advance women in your organization/business unit?

Source: Gartner Women in Supply Chain 2022

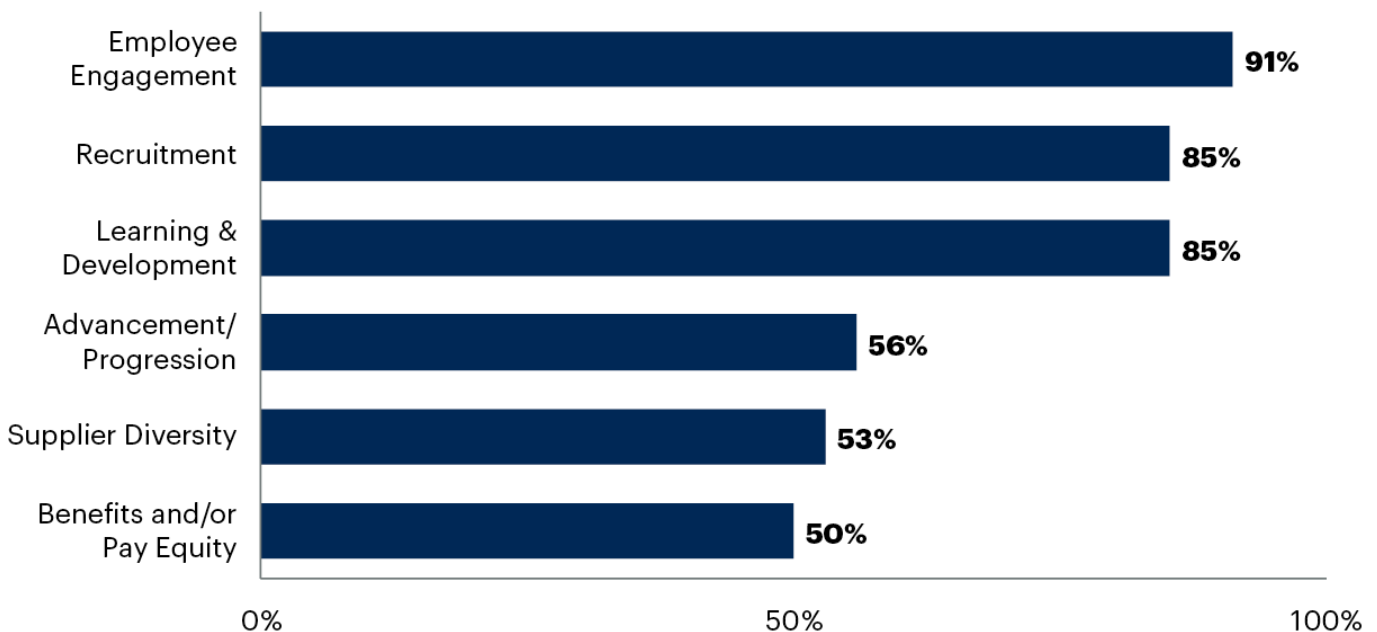
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Encouragingly, 84% of supply chain organizations (excluding providers) are implementing their initiatives and 9% are meeting or exceeding their goals. In 2021, only 66% of supply chain organizations were implementing their initiatives. Of those who have a targeted initiative, 91% are targeting employee engagement, which, for example, might include the implementation of employee resource groups (ERGs) or DEI newsletters (see Figure 8). Another 85% of supply chain organizations are implementing initiatives focused on gender diversity recruitment, which might involve reshaping the interview process or removing gendered language from job descriptions. An equal priority has been placed on learning and development initiatives (85%), which could include development programs specifically focused on women or inclusive leadership training.

Figure 8: Most Supply Chain Organizations Are Leading Employee Engagement, Recruitment and L&D Initiatives

## Most Supply Chain Organizations Are Leading Employee Engagement, Recruitment and L&D Initiatives

Multiple Responses Allowed



n = 34 End-user Respondents who have targeted initiatives

Q: What kind of targeted initiatives or projects?

Source: Gartner Women in Supply Chain 2022

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Initiatives focused on advancement and progression of women, supplier diversity and benefits or pay equity were less prevalent. Only half of supply chain organizations have a targeted initiative focused on improving benefit offerings for women or closing the pay gap. Among those end-user organizations who say it is an objective, only 27% share a specific plan to close the gender pay gap. Around 14% state they have already achieved pay equity.

Concerningly, over half (59%) have no action plan to close the gap. In a hypercompetitive labor market where women are increasingly seeking out pay increases and ethical employers, these data points reveal a hidden attraction and retention risk.

Supply chain leaders can seek to learn from Starbucks and Pfizer, which are two companies in the Gartner 2021 Supply Chain Top 25 with an “A” grade in pay equity transparency and associated actions according to institutional investor activists Arjuna Capital.<sup>5</sup>

- *Arjuna Capital 2022 Racial and Gender Pay Scorecard*

For example, Pfizer compensates female colleagues greater than 99% (99.4%; up from 99.3% in 2020) of what male colleagues are paid across the globe. Additionally, in the United States, minorities are paid at dollar for dollar parity (100% in 2021; up from 99.8% in 2020) of the pay of non-minorities.<sup>6</sup>

For the supply chain leaders who were leading their own initiatives, we also wanted to know whether these initiatives included, tracked and measured women in first-line positions. A whopping 85% percent indicated “yes.”

For organizations that have these targeted initiatives to attract and retain women in first-line roles:

- **76%** are focused on increasing career and development opportunities
- **67%** are focused on improving work flexibility
- **52%** are offering more competitive compensation
- **52%** added additional benefit offerings to their employment value proposition
- **39%** are focused on improving manager quality
- **36%** are focused on providing tuition support
- **12%** are focused on reducing menial work and replacing it with value-added work

With an overwhelming focus on gender diversity initiatives, it comes as no surprise that nearly one-fourth of end-user organizations have reported improvement in achieving diversity and inclusion goals at all levels of the leadership pipeline. Over half of manager/supervisor, senior manager and director roles are showing improvement in gender diversity and inclusion. This makes sense given the progress that we’ve seen in the middle of the pipeline.

However, for those organizations that have reported progress in gender diversity and inclusion, they reported different core reasons for success (see Figure 9):

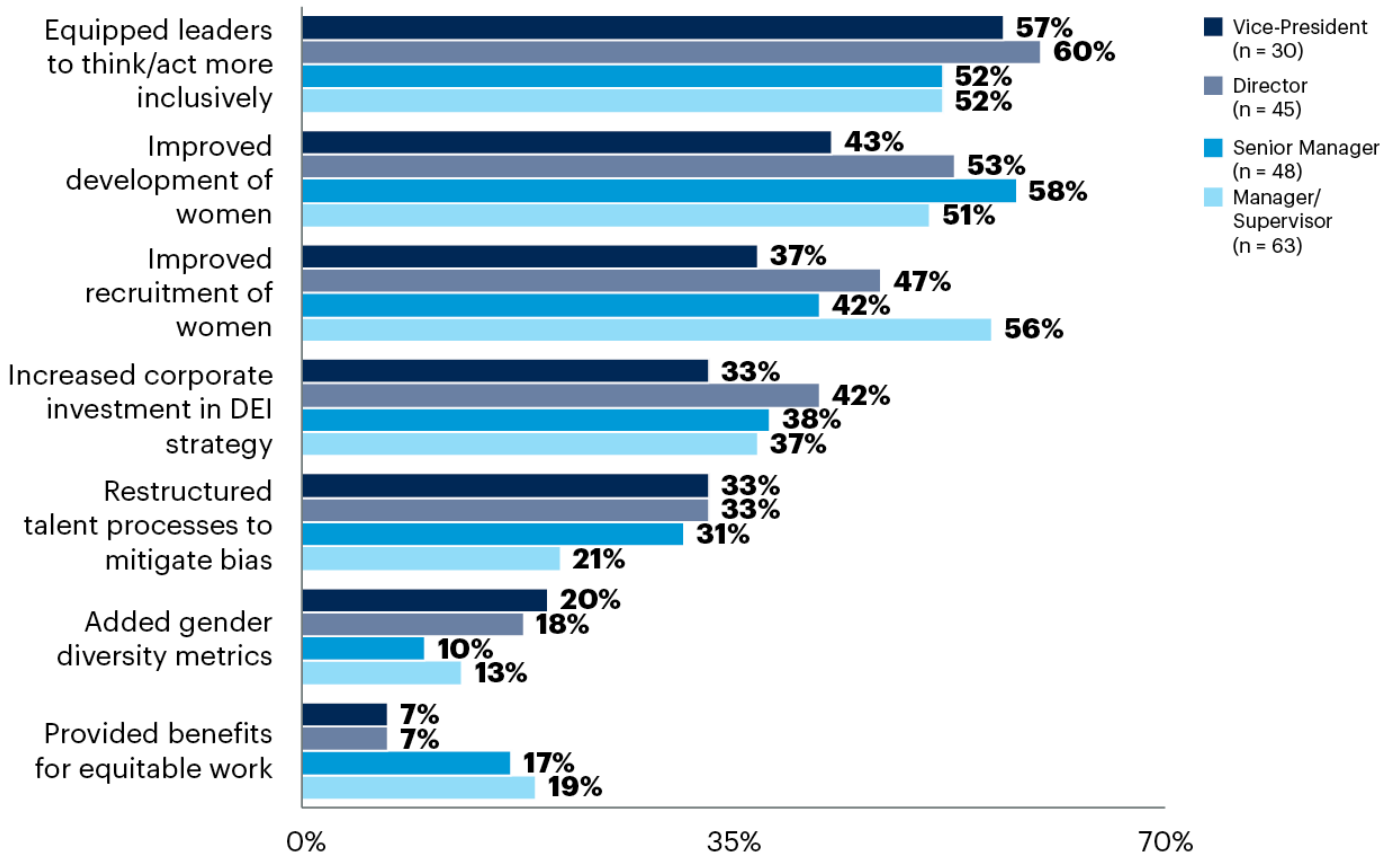
- Focusing on recruitment of women improves representation at the manager or supervisor level.
- Improving the development of women drives results at the senior manager level.
- Equipping leaders to think and act more inclusively drives results for director and vice president-level women’s advancement.

Despite nuances in reasons for progress at different levels, equipping leaders to think and act more inclusively was still the top cited reason for success.

Figure 9: Equipping Leaders to Think and Act More Inclusively is Top Reason for Gender Diversity Improvement

## Equipping Leaders to Think and Act More Inclusively is Top Reason for Gender Diversity Improvement

Multiple Responses Allowed



n = End-user Respondents who have seen improvement in these levels

Q: For each level(s) that has shown improvement, please indicate what is the reason(s) ?

Source: Gartner Women in Supply Chain 2022

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## CSCO Actions

Prioritize and lead initiatives that are most likely to show gender diversity results:

- Center inclusive leader development on easy-to-apply inclusive behaviors instead of general inclusive behaviors. This could include sharing credit, exploring proposed ideas rather than dismissing them, honoring 1:1 meetings with all direct reports and providing regular, constructive, informal feedback (see [Inclusive-Action Enablers \(Visa\)](#))
- Improve promotion of women in the middle of the leadership pipeline by redefining what good leadership looks like. Rethink required skills and responsibilities, and employ your women's ERG to evaluate current leadership descriptions for bias. Put your leadership job descriptions through a [gender-decoder](#) to identify and balance gendered language.
- Support authenticity in leadership by recognizing the value female leaders bring to the table and ways they can continue to hone leadership skills (see [3 Ways to Advance Women in Leadership](#)).
- Further differentiate yourself from other supply chain organizations by working with HR to assess, resolve and provide more transparency around pay inequities.

# Additional Research Contribution and Review

*Heather Ternet*

## Evidence

<sup>1</sup> The 2022 Gartner Women in Supply Chain Survey was conducted to track progress on attracting, retaining and promoting women in the supply chain profession.

The survey was conducted online from 24 February through 28 March 2022 among 116 respondents primarily in North America. AWESOME partnered with Gartner to develop the survey and recruit participants. The sample was augmented with recruitment efforts from social media and Gartner clients.

Qualified participants work in organizations that have an internal supply chain organization; organizations where supply chain is a separate business unit, specialty or practice area; or vendors of supply chain services and solutions. Of the 116 respondents, 85 were organizations with internal supply chains, and 31 were supply chain business services and solutions. Organizations also had to have a minimum of \$100 million in annual revenue.

<sup>2</sup> [A Gendered Pandemic: Childcare, Homeschooling, and Parents' Employment During COVID-19](#), Wiley.

<sup>3</sup> [International Women's Day Reminds us That the Pandemic Hurt Gender Equality. A lot.](#), Washington Post.

<sup>4</sup> [Women of Color in the United States \(Quick Take\)](#), Catalyst.

<sup>5</sup> [Racial and Gender Pay Scorecard](#), Arjuna Capital.

<sup>6</sup> [Pfizer Statement on Results of Third Annual Pay Equity Study Among Colleagues Worldwide](#), Pfizer.

## Recommended by the Authors

[2022 Gartner/ASCM Supply Chain DEI Survey Shows Importance of Leadership, Transparency, Accountability](#)  
[2021 Women in Supply Chain Survey Shows Resilience, Improvement in Representation](#)  
[Quick Answer: Most Common DEI Practices](#)  
[3 Ways to Advance Women in Leadership](#)

## Note 1

Women of underrepresented races and ethnicities include employees who are one of the following:

- Asian
- Black/African/Afro-Caribbean
- Hispanic/Latinx
- Native American/First Nations
- Middle Eastern/North African
- Roma
- Pacific Islander
- Multiracial-ethnic