

Research Report

# The Status of Men as Allies for Multicultural Women

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# The Status of Men as Allies for Multicultural Women

## THE WORKING MOTHER REPORT

**This year** marks the fifteenth time that Working Mother has surveyed and celebrated the Best Companies for Multicultural Women, but over that decade and a half, it has become clear that women of color are not making enough progress in U.S. workplaces.

Women of color make up 20% of all the employees at the 2017 Best Companies for Multicultural Women, but fill only 4% of the corporate executive positions. Despite solid policies and advancement programs at the companies on this prestigious list, the proportion of senior jobs filled by women of color has barely moved.

And these companies are doing better than most. Among S&P 500 companies as a whole, for instance, Latinas and Asian and African-American women hold fewer than 4% of senior executive level positions despite being 17% of the workforce, according to Catalyst, a nonprofit focused on workplace inclusion for women.

This disparity is confounding given what we know about the bottom-line benefits of diversity. Companies that are inclusive have lower turnover, their pick of top talent, and are more productive, innovative and successful.

“We need that diversity of thought in our key decision-making roles,” says Lynnette Collins, director of diversity and inclusion efforts at Amway. “That’s where the magic happens. So we’ve taken a hard look at how to remove barriers and blind spots because we don’t see enough women in the most senior level positions and we certainly don’t see enough people of color.”

What will help move women of color into the top echelons of leadership? There’s no silver bullet, of course. It will take accountability, training and better strategies for recruitment and professional development. But in this report, we look at one critical piece of the puzzle: the role *male leaders* can play. Our research shows that when male leaders demonstrate that they care about multicultural women’s advancement or when they mentor or sponsor diverse women, it boosts women’s engagement and satisfaction across a variety of measures.

“Male leaders have an important role to play because they have a long legacy of positional power,” says Caryn Parlavecchio, vice president of human resources for Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp. “Providing men with opportunities to mentor and

sponsor women gives them a chance to broadly share their experiences, wisdom, successes and challenges.”

The excellent news is 79% of men in our survey say they’re comfortable being an ally for multicultural women at work. The less encouraging reality is only *half* of men we surveyed mentor or sponsor someone. When they do, they’re most likely advocating for a fellow white man. In contrast, multicultural women in our survey are overwhelmingly mentored or sponsored by another woman.

These women-for-women efforts are critical, but they aren’t enough. Without more men engaging directly, the pipeline for multicultural women into leadership will remain constricted. White men are 90% of top earners and 75% of executives in S&P 500 companies, according to Catalyst. These men are in the position to make a significant difference in the career paths of women of color—and ultimately, in the competitiveness of our nation.

“I’m committed to developing technical women as role models,” says Bob Edge, director, IBM Systems, who mentors and sponsors women of color all over the world. “As a global company, we want to represent the best and brightest.”

### WHO WE SURVEYED

Our survey of 1,181 college-educated multicultural women and 540 men of all races reaffirms that men and women are equally ambitious (no surprise there), with roughly equal percentages aspiring to each level of management. (The exception is Latinas, who are more likely than men surveyed to want to become a CEO.) Half of women say they aspire to be an executive or CEO, and only 15% are satisfied with their current career level.

All respondents are employed full-time in salaried jobs in fields excluding education, retail and healthcare. Here’s what they say about their experiences:

#### African-American Women (389 surveyed)

- Roughly **13%** of the U.S. population
- **54%** are satisfied with their ability to get a better position
- **65%** say their race is the first thing people notice about them when they walk into the room
- **25%** have a mentor
- **16%** have a sponsor

#### Asian-American Women (351 surveyed)

- Roughly **5%** of the U.S. population
- **53%** are satisfied with their ability to get a better position
- **33%** have a mentor
- **16%** have a sponsor
- **15%** belong to a network group for multicultural women

#### Latinas (357 surveyed)

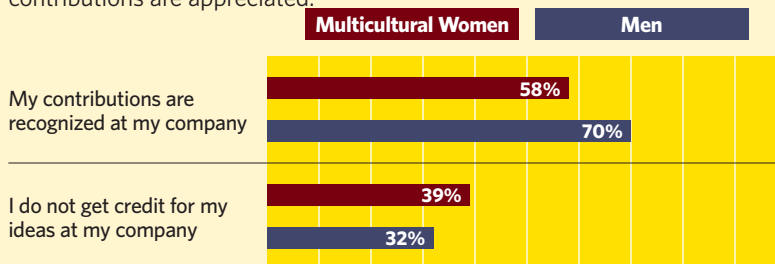
- Roughly **17%** of the U.S. population
- **64%** are satisfied with their ability to get a better position (the most optimistic group of multicultural women)
- **21%** aspire to be a CEO
- **26%** have a sponsor

## LESS SATISFIED...

In our survey, multicultural women are less satisfied at work overall than men. Seven in ten men say their contributions are recognized, versus half of multicultural women who feel their contributions are valued. In our survey, 83% of men say they are comfortable being their authentic self at work, versus 76% of multicultural women who feel that same freedom. Multicultural women are far more likely to say they are judged by their race or gender, rather than their skills. (Men are more than twice as likely than multicultural women to say people notice their abilities first.) Half of multicultural women respondents say there are informal workplace networks they do not feel a part of. Less than half of multicultural women believe senior management is open to promoting diverse candidates. Roughly a third of them feel constrained by there being only “one acceptable way of doing business.”

## Perceptions: Recognition at Work

Multicultural women are less likely than men to agree that their contributions are appreciated.



## Perceptions: Race, Gender and Talent

Only a third of multicultural women respondents feel coworkers consider their talent before their gender or race—half the proportion of men who do.

When you walk into a meeting, what is the first thing people see about you?	Multi-cultural Women	Men
My gender	27%	16%
My race	39%	16%
My talent, skills and/or ability	34%	69%

65% of Black women  
21% of Hispanic women

## Experience Gaps

Men are more likely than multicultural women to have received promotions and challenging assignments over the past two years.

In the past 24 months have you...	Multi-cultural Women	Men
Received a promotion	33%	37%
Received a pay increase	64%	73%
Been assigned to a new/challenging assignment	60%	67%
Participated in a leadership development program	31%	39%
Received an award, bonus or other special recognition	49%	55%
Had a career discussion with your manager	54%	55%
Attended a roundtable with senior executives	27%	47%
Been given feedback on your performance	57%	57%
Been told you needed more experience before being considered for a promotion	27%	21%

## ...AND FOR GOOD REASON

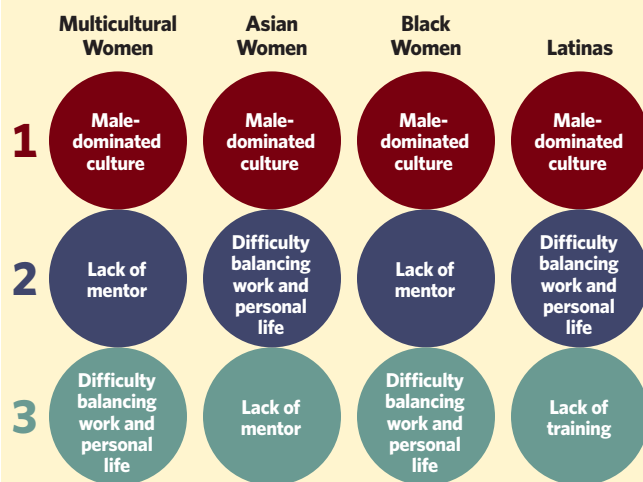
Our survey also shows *why* multicultural women are dissatisfied. Out of nine advancement metrics studied—things like promotions, stretch assignments and raises—men in the survey have higher results in eight. The only area where men and women seem to be on equal footing is in receiving feedback. (A recent McKinsey study of 34,000 workers suggests the opposite is true: that women, particularly women of color, receive less critical feedback than men because there’s discomfort in being candid.) Plus, in our survey, women are more likely than men to be told they need more experience before being considered for a promotion *and* are less likely to be getting exposure to executives. So it’s a catch-22: The bar is set higher, and, at the same time, the chances to gain experience are in shorter supply. For instance, men in our survey are *20 percentage points more likely* to have attended a roundtable with senior leaders than multicultural women respondents. That’s significant, because it’s these kinds of networking events where people spark up mentoring and sponsoring relationships that provide critical career boosts. Little wonder then that roughly half of women say they have to “work harder in order to get recognized” than men.

## MALE-DOMINATED CULTURE

Across the board, all groups of survey respondents (both genders and all racial groups) say a male-dominated culture is the number one factor that holds multicultural women back from advancement. Multicultural women get penalized by both gender and racial biases, whether overt or unconscious. In our survey, few multicultural women say their companies actively encourage dialogue on gender issues (39%), and even fewer say the same for racial issues (35%). One in three executives surveyed say they are “more comfortable” working with men than women. (Encouragingly, this drops to only 10% of first-line managers, signaling perhaps that younger men have different attitudes.) Both men and women agree that it is important to address overtly inappropriate behaviors and attitudes about gender and race. But it seems that the more subtle signs of bias can go unnoticed: Eight in ten women of color surveyed say it would be helpful not to be talked over or interrupted in meetings. Almost half of multicultural women (48%) say they could use more support from the male leaders in their company.

## Obstacles

Our survey asked multicultural women to rank the three most significant obstacles to their career advancement, and these are their top choices.



## SAME WORKPLACE, DIFFERENT REALITIES

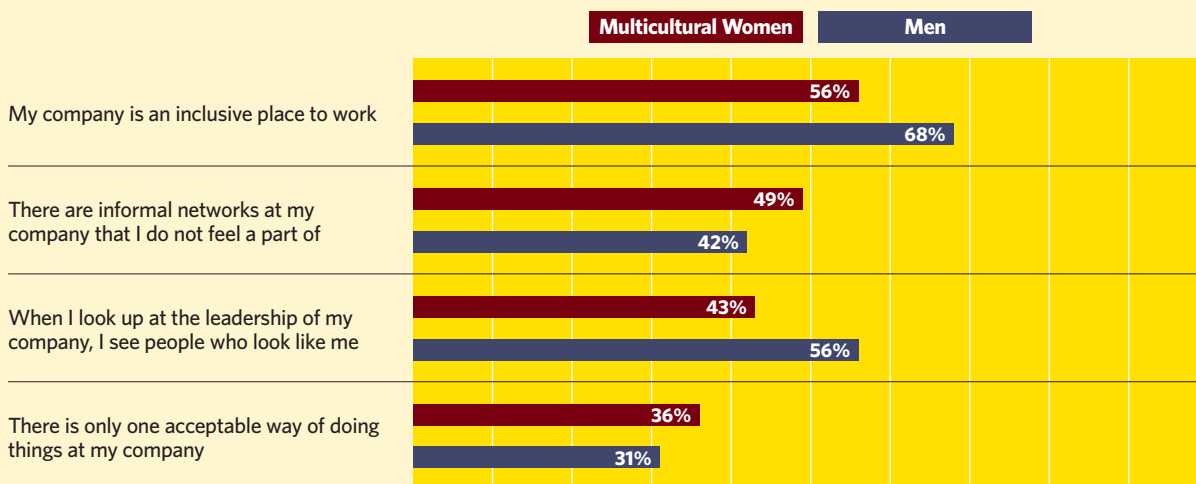
Part of the problem is that men and women view the situation differently. In broad strokes, men in our survey seem to view gender inequality as a relatively smaller, less pressing problem. They are more likely to see an equal playing field where all workers have the same opportunities to advance. They are 12 percentage points more likely to say their workplace is inclusive and 11 percentage points more

likely to believe their firm has advancement programs taking care of multicultural women's needs than women of color are. This isn't to imply men don't see a problem. Both genders cite “male-dominated culture” as the greatest barrier multicultural women face at work. But our survey, like other research, surfaced significant differences in perception. At times, the differences have a “He Said/She Said”

quality. For instance, when asked if they believe their company pays men and women equally, 71% of male respondents say yes, versus only 40% of multicultural women. (In 2015, according to Pew Research, women earned 83% of what men earned.) Eight in ten multicultural women surveyed say that men could be more effective workplace allies simply by *acknowledging that gender gaps exist*.

## Perceptions: Inclusion at Work

Multicultural women are more likely than men to feel like outsiders, based on their agreement with these statements.



## MEN AS ALLIES

If multicultural women perceive that diversity efforts are window-dressing, it's a huge drain on motivation, productivity and loyalty for these women. But when they feel personally supported, they are more likely to have good feelings about their work, careers and companies.

In our survey, 54% of multicultural women agree that there are men in leadership positions at their company who care about their advancement, and 18% *don't* agree (the other 28% aren't sure). The vast majority of multicultural women respondents working in a company where they feel male executives are indifferent to their advancement say they are not satisfied with their career progression. They are less likely to be going the extra mile, less likely to feel their opinions are valued (and potentially volunteer input) and more likely to leave their employers. All in all, significant lost opportunity. On the flip side, women who say men on their executive team care about their advancement are more engaged, satisfied and far more likely to be putting forth extra effort to help their companies succeed.

When men serve as allies for multicultural women, powerful things happen. In our survey, agreeing that there are men who care about their advancement correlates not just with feelings of satisfaction but with *tangible career progress* for multicultural women. These respondents receive more feedback about their performance as well as more promotions, pay increases, exposure to senior executives and stretch assignments.

In fact, three quarters of multicultural women who agree that male leaders care about their advancement say they've been given a challenging new assignment over the past two years. It's impossible to unpack how much of this is an effect of working under male leaders who care rather than the other way around (women becoming aware of support from leaders who notice them because of the challenging assignments they're working on), but there's a clear association.

## Perceptions: The Impact of Male Allies

Multicultural women who say men in leadership positions are invested in their careers are more likely to agree that they feel good about their work.

Multicultural women who do NOT agree there are men in leadership positions in their company who care about their advancement		
Multicultural women who agree there are men in leadership positions in their company who care about their advancement		
My work gives me a feeling of accomplishment	86%	45%
My job is challenging	85%	54%
My job is rewarding	81%	37%
My opinions are valued	86%	37%
I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond my job requirements to help my company succeed	88%	55%
Even if offered a comparable position with another company I would not leave my employer	60%	16%
I am satisfied with how my career is progressing	77%	17%
Multicultural men and women have the same opportunity to advance as anyone in my company	77%	24%
There is effective communication between me and my manager	85%	43%

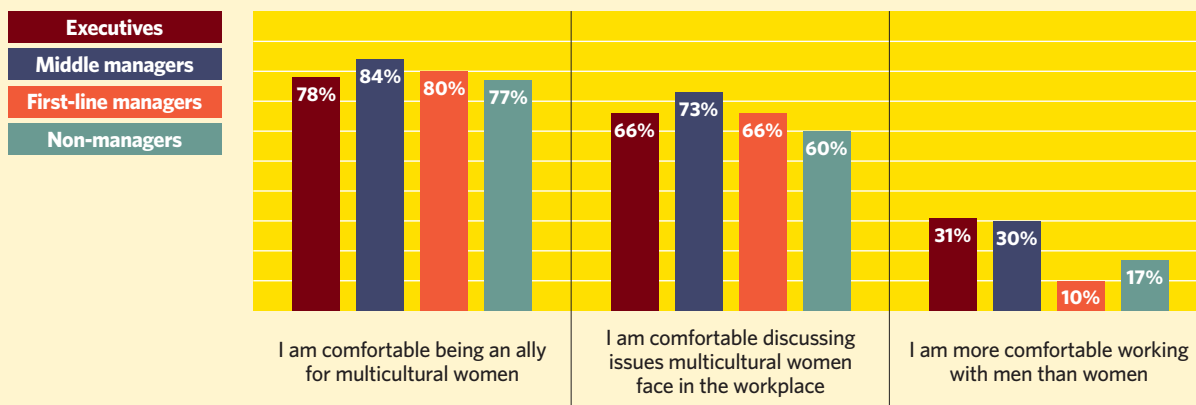
## Experience: The Impact of Male Allies

Multicultural women who say men in leadership positions are invested in their careers are more likely to have received recent promotions and raises.

In the past 24 months, have you...	Multicultural women who do NOT agree there are men in leadership positions in their company who care about their advancement	
	Multicultural women who agree there are men in leadership positions in their company who care about their advancement	
Received a promotion	42%	20%
Received a pay increase	72%	55%
Been assigned to a new/challenging assignment	74%	41%
Participated in a leadership development program	43%	14%
Received an award, bonus or other special recognition	58%	38%
Had a career discussion with your manager	63%	43%
Been given feedback on your performance	67%	42%
Attended a roundtable with senior executives	35%	15%

## How Men Feel

Middle managers are the most likely to say they're comfortable being allies for multicultural women.



## MENTORS WANTED!

Many of the effects of feeling like men at work are supportive are amplified when multicultural women have mentors and sponsors. Having a sponsor (as only 20% of the multicultural women in our survey do) dramatically boosts satisfaction with career progression—almost 8 in 10 sponsored women of color are happy with their advancement, versus only half of those without sponsors. Nearly three quarters of multicultural

women respondents say having a sponsor or mentor would be helpful to their career. But the majority of respondents aren't getting that support. When they do have a mentor (32%), it's most often a woman—65% of multicultural women are mentored by another woman and the figure is roughly the same for sponsors. Encouragingly, nearly 8 in 10 men in our survey say they are comfortable being an ally for

multicultural women in the workplace. But in practice, more needs to happen: Only 19% of men who mentor anyone are mentoring a multicultural woman. Half of men we surveyed aren't mentoring or sponsoring anyone. That represents significant opportunity for more involvement. (Only 18% of male participants in our survey sample are first-level managers, so the vast majority *are* qualified to be mentors.)

## Experience: The Impact of Mentors and Sponsors

Multicultural women with mentors or sponsors are more likely to have been given stretch assignments and special recognition over the past two years.

In the past 24 months, have you...	Multicultural women with a mentor	Multicultural women without a mentor	Multicultural women with a sponsor	Multicultural women without a sponsor
Received a promotion	45%	27%	40%	29%
Received a pay increase	75%	58%	78%	60%
Been assigned to a new/challenging assignment	75%	53%	79%	56%
Participated in a leadership development program	49%	23%	56%	25%
Received an award, bonus or other special recognition	64%	43%	56%	45%
Had a career discussion with your manager	76%	44%	74%	49%
Been given feedback on your performance	75%	49%	76%	52%
Attended a roundtable with senior executives	41%	20%	47%	22%



## THE GAPS

In our survey, we see gaps between what multicultural women want and what they're getting, and between what those women find helpful and what men believe will help. For instance, there is a 30-percentage-point satisfaction gap between the number of multicultural women who call mentors helpful and the number of those who are satisfied with the mentoring they're receiving.

In terms of how men and multicultural women view what's helpful, the women place more emphasis than men do on senior leadership being open to diversity. Multicultural women also feel that having opportunities to develop their skills is more critical than men think it is (for the women).

In considering what men can do to be more helpful, the action that the most multicultural women agree men should take (83%) is addressing inappropriate behavior and attitudes at work. And that's followed very closely by wanting them to simply acknowledge that sexism and racism exist in workplaces.

## Solutions

Multicultural women told us what they think is helpful to them in advancing their careers, and then whether they are satisfied with the amount of each support they receive in their current jobs.

Supports	Multicultural women who call each support helpful	Multicultural women who say they're satisfied with the level of each support they get
An opportunity to develop my skills	81%	57%
Professional and leadership development	78%	50%
Senior management that is open to different styles of leadership	75%	46%
A better understanding of what is required to advance	75%	51%
Senior management that is open to promoting people who look different from them	74%	47%
A mentor (someone who can provide advice and support me with my career goals)	73%	43%
A sponsor (someone of influence who will help champion my career)	70%	39%
Men in leadership positions who are willing help women advance	68%	41%

## More Effective Male Allies

Multicultural women agree that male leaders should address inappropriate behaviors in the workplace.

### How can male leaders be more effective allies for MCW?

Addressing inappropriate behavior/attitudes in your organization	83%
Acknowledging that racism can exist in the workplace	82%
Acknowledging that sexism can exist in the workplace	81%
Not making assumptions about multicultural women's commitment to their career because of their race or gender	80%
Not interrupting/talking over women in meetings	80%
Being more inclusive in their leadership style	79%
Including advancement of multicultural women as a business priority in the organization's objectives	77%
Holding their direct reports accountable for advancing multicultural women	75%
Asking multicultural women for examples of ways leaders can be more inclusive of multicultural women	74%
Making sure their direct reports include multicultural women	74%
Holding roundtables with multicultural women in their organization to engage in open dialogue about unique issues multicultural women face	69%



## CONCLUSION

By 2050, women of color will make up 53% of the U.S. female population, according to a recent Center for American Progress report. To prepare for that shift, companies need to get better at identifying, developing and promoting talented multicultural

women into leadership. Part of the problem is perception—men don't realize the extent to which racial and gender bias hinders multicultural women at work. Greater dialogue—not just during annual training sessions, but on an ongoing basis—is warranted. In

this sense, it's about figuring out how to close the gap. Because we see in our survey that men do want to help and that women want their advocacy, companies that break these barriers down and provide pathways will be the ones that thrive in the future.

# How Men Can Be Better Allies for Multicultural Women

## Raise awareness, spark dialogue

In our survey, few employers are fostering dialogue about gender and race. We see a need for much more openness, and for understanding that multicultural women are less satisfied and feel less included at work than men. Although many men say they'd be comfortable being an ally for multicultural women, they are also significantly less comfortable discussing the issues multicultural women face. And nearly a fifth of executives say they don't know how to be an ally for multicultural women. Dialogue and mutual learning is critical: 81% of multicultural women surveyed say men could be more effective allies simply by acknowledging that gender gaps exist. Learning is more likely to take place through honest dialogue between male peers and leaders and their diverse female colleagues when questions such as "Are there any ways my behavior isn't inclusive?" are asked. Seven in ten multicultural women in our survey say asking this question would be helpful.

## Don't assume agreement on the obstacles multicultural women face

While both men and multicultural women consider a "male-dominated culture" the top obstacle to advancement, only men rank "stereotypes about gender" in the top three. Forty-five percent of men agree multicultural women need a champion who supports their career in order to get ahead versus almost 60% of multicultural women.

## Encourage mentoring and sponsorship

In our survey, the majority of men want to help multicultural women, although relatively few are mentoring or sponsoring. Men need to be encouraged to get off the

sidelines by developing programs and opportunities for people of different levels and functions to mingle. Train leaders to talk with diverse women about their career aspirations, and then use their internal networks to help these women make strategic moves. Reward executives who bring diverse talent up through the ranks. In our survey, having a mentor and/or sponsor correlates with *tangible* career progress for multicultural women and it helps male leaders become more comfortable with issues of gender and race. Overwhelmingly, women in our survey who have mentors and sponsors, or who agree there are men in leadership positions who care about their advancement, have both more positive perceptions of work and also more actual positive experiences at work.

## Hold male direct reports accountable for advancing multicultural women

This means encouraging inclusive team-building. Talk to each team member regularly about career aspirations. Don't assume you know how far or high someone wants to go. In meetings, make sure everyone's voice is heard. (Eight in ten multicultural women say it would be helpful not to be regularly talked over/interrupted during meetings.) Rotate who gets a chance to present results to large groups and don't automatically give those high-visibility assignments to the loudest voices asking for the responsibility. Ensure that feedback, especially constructive feedback, is specific, actionable, and given regularly to everyone. Be as flexible as possible in how and where work gets done. Measure based on results, not face time. In our survey, difficulty balancing work and personal life is the second biggest barrier to advancement for multicultural women identified by both men and women.

The Working Mother Research Institute would like to thank the five sponsors that made this research possible:



## METHODOLOGY

The Working Mother Research Institute developed the survey and fielded it nationally through a series of email blasts sent by Survey Sampling International in November and December 2016 to its opt-in database of individuals who have agreed to participate in surveys. The email blast contained a link to an online survey questionnaire hosted by Bonnier Custom Insights (a division of Bonnier Corporation). A total of 1,934 qualified individuals submitted complete online questionnaires. Qualified respondents were men (including 255 at the middle management level or above) and women (including 1,181 multicultural women); all had at least a bachelor's degree and were employed full-time in salaried jobs, in fields other than education, retail and healthcare. Bonnier Custom Insights received and tabulated the responses, which were then analyzed by Maria S. Ferris Consulting LLC.



The Working Mother Research Institute, a division of Working Mother Media, is home to the Working Mother 100 Best Companies, the Best Companies for Multicultural Women and the National Association for Female Executives Top Companies for Executive Women, among other initiatives. WMRI produces insightful benchmarking reports and important research papers on work life, the advancement of women and diversity. It also conducts surveys, such as ***The Status of Men as Allies for Multicultural Women***, to further culture change nationwide.

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