

Women in Leadership: Why It Matters

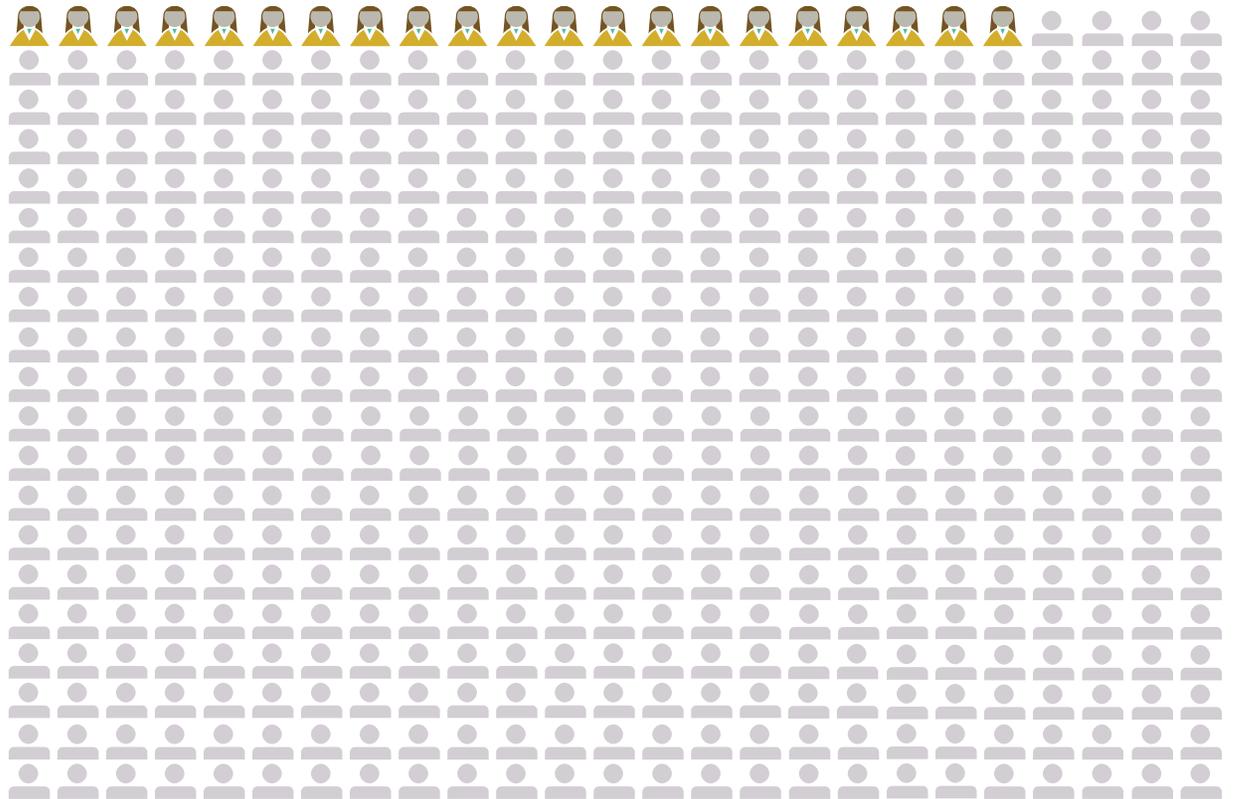


It's no secret that women have historically faced greater barriers than men when it comes to fully participating in the economy. **Across geographies and income levels, disparities between men and women persist** in the form of pay gaps, uneven opportunities for advancement, and unbalanced representation in important decision-making.

Only 21 women are at the helm of Fortune 500 companies

The value of gender diversity—particularly in the workplace—is widely acknowledged. Women bring different perspectives and approaches to business, resulting in a more inclusive workplace and often better performance for the company. Yet today, only 21 women are at the helm of Fortune 500 Companies.

To understand Americans' views and personal experiences about gender equality in the workplace, The Rockefeller Foundation gave a grant to Global Strategy Group to conduct a national study of American adults. This national poll of 1,011 adults age 18 and older, carried out online from April 20-26, finds strong convictions among Americans about the importance of having women in leadership positions, but concludes that businesses are falling short. Having female leaders in positions of influence to serve as role models is not only critical to the career advancement of women, but stands to generate broader societal impacts on pay equity, changing workplace policies in ways that benefit both men and women, and attracting a more diverse workforce.



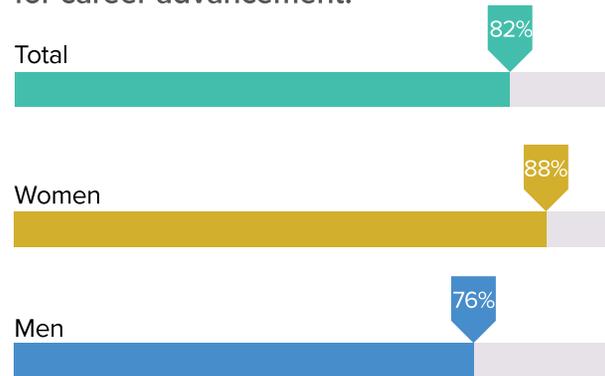
Women's lack of representation at the top is strikingly at odds with Americans' views on workplace equality

Women's lack of representation in positions of leadership is broadly acknowledged throughout the business world. Women hold just 4% of the leadership positions in Fortune 500 companies—worse even than women's current representation in the Senate (20%—an all-time high).

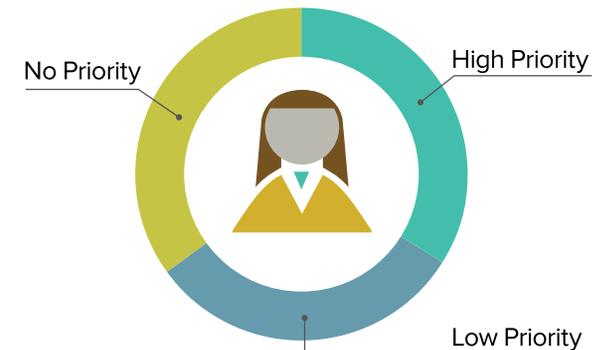
Americans are taking notice, and they don't like what they see—businesses, plain and simple, are falling short in terms of women's representation in positions of influence. One-quarter of Americans (24%) say there are no women in leadership positions at all within their companies, and only one-third (34%) say their workplace puts a high priority in having women in leadership positions.

Those findings are strikingly at odds with Americans' views of gender equality in the workplace. Americans, men and women alike, unequivocally agree that men and women are equally qualified to lead businesses (96%), and say that it is highly important to them that women and men have the same opportunities for career advancement (82%).

82% of Americans say it's important for women and men to have the same opportunities for career advancement.



Just 34% say their current workplace puts a high priority on having women in leadership positions.



1 in 4 Americans say there are **no women in leadership positions** at their current job.



Pervasive preconceptions and a lack of support from mentors are holding women back

Despite their strong convictions about gender equality in leadership, Americans are acutely aware of the forces that hold women back. Nine in ten (92%) say that traditions of, and expectations for, male leadership in workplace cultures contributes at least somewhat to women's lack of representation in top positions—including 69%, who say it contributes highly. Other preconceptions also play a role, including women being seen as prioritizing family over career (89%), and the perception that women are less effective leaders than men (78%).

In addition to these preconceptions about women and leadership, Americans see other concrete barriers as contributing to the relative scarcity of female leaders, including lack of support from mentors in securing top positions (83%) and for career advancement more generally (80%), as well as lack of access to personal connections that men have which help with career development (75%).

Women's expectations for the future of their own careers suggest the power of these forces: While

a majority of men (52%) see themselves as having opportunities to advance to leadership positions in their jobs, just 38% of women feel the same way. Americans more broadly acknowledge the impact of these obstacles—85% agree that it is easier for men to reach top leadership positions than equally qualified women (including 79% of men and 90% of women).

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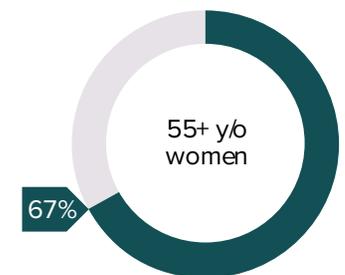
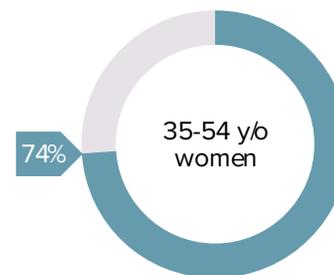
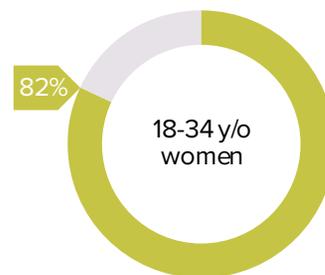
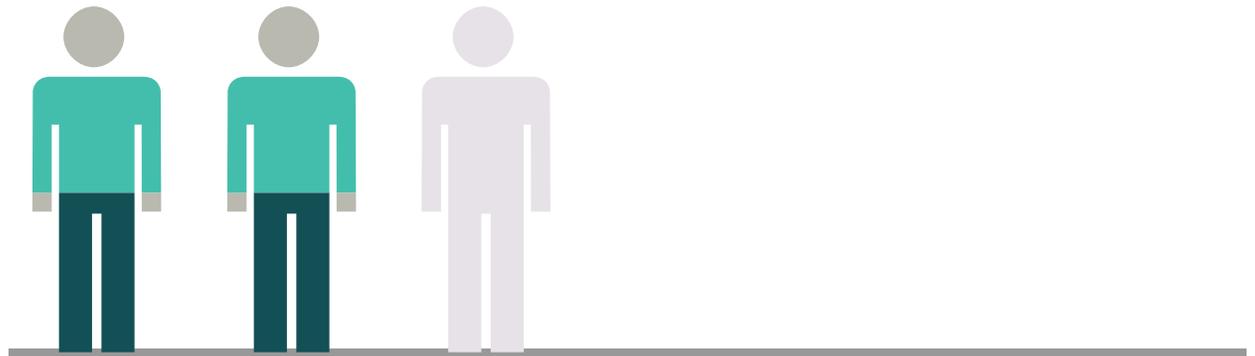
Women need role models

The only way to address and overcome these pre-conceptions and barriers is to have more women in positions of leadership; providing the support and role models women desperately need to advance in their careers, and bringing about much-needed changes in the workplace benefitting both genders.

And Americans are on board. Two-thirds (65%) say it's highly important to them that younger women starting their careers have more women in leadership positions as role models. This desire is especially intense among millennial women (82% of women younger than 35), compared with 74% among women 35-54 years old, and even lower (67%) among women 55 or older.

2/3 of Americans

say it is especially important for women starting their careers to have women in leadership positions as role models.



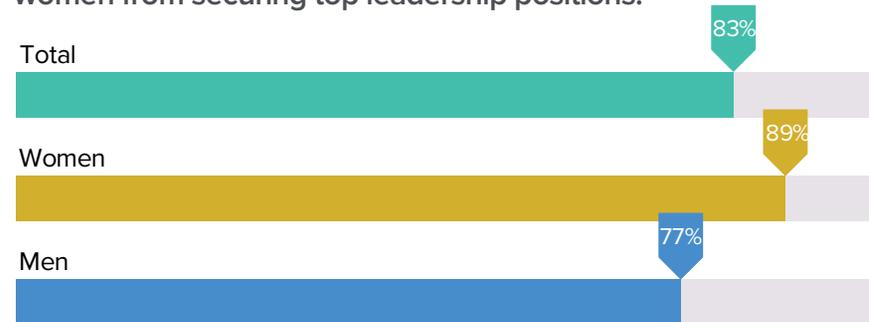
Women in leadership offer uniquely important mentorship

On a more personal note, a striking majority of Americans (81%) say that if a daughter of theirs were to pursue a leadership position in a business of her choice, they would feel confident in her abilities to succeed, and three-quarters (76%, rising to 82% among women) think it would be helpful for her to have female role models in her aspired positions to help her reach her goal. But in reflecting their awareness of the barriers facing women in business, just 60% think that it's realistic that she would actually be able to reach that top position, despite the confidence they personally have in her abilities.

Women role models are uniquely important—among those who have had mentors that supported them in the workplace, majorities of men and women alike say their mentor was the same gender as them, suggesting the need for, and potential influence of, more women in top positions. Specifically, among women who had mentors in the workplace, nearly two-thirds (63%) say that their mentor was another woman, rising to 72% among millennial women who have had mentors, while just 37% had male mentors. That flips among men, with more than three-quarters (77%) having had male mentors (vs. 23% female mentors).

More than 8 in 10 Americans

believe that not having women in leadership positions as role models fails to inspire women and has contributed to preventing women from securing top leadership positions.



63% of women

among those who had mentors in the workplace **had female mentors**

For millennial women, that increases to 72%

Women in leadership have a positive impact on workplace policies

There is an appetite and a readiness to change workplace cultures contributing to gender inequities, and Americans believe that businesses have a crucial role to play to impact change. Broad majorities agree that businesses have a responsibility to provide career development resources to their female employees (88%, including 87% of men and 88% of women alike) and to actively recruit women into leadership positions (84%, including 81% of men and 86% of women).

Notably, some occupational fields are more hospitable to women leaders than others: Perceived barriers for women are larger in particular sectors, with a majority (62%) of Americans saying that women have fewer opportunities than men in corporate America to serve in leadership positions. Government (55%) and business (50%) also present difficulty for women to rise to leadership positions. Newer, more entrepreneurial environments like startups are viewed as offering some reprieve, with just over one-third (36%) saying women have fewer opportunities in the space, and two in five (43%) saying men and women have the same opportunities, but women still face larger obstacles relative to their male counterparts.

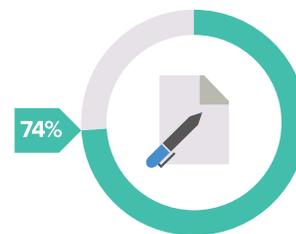
In addition to inspiring and empowering women in their careers, sizable majorities think that having more women in leadership positions would have significant positive impacts in the workplace, including: helping to reduce the pay gap between men and women doing the same work (76%), changing workplace policies in ways that benefit both men and women (74%), and attracting a more diverse workforce (71%).

The presence of women in leadership positions is an important consideration to Americans in choosing where to work—two-thirds (67%) say it's at least somewhat important to them, rising to 76% among women, suggesting that businesses' efforts would help recruit and retain the talent that is crucial to the success of their organizations.

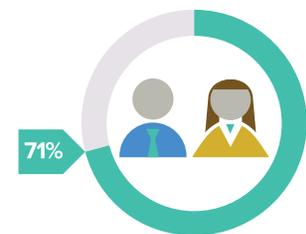
More than 70% of Americans say that having more women in leadership positions would have significant impacts, including on:



The Wage Gap



Changing Policies



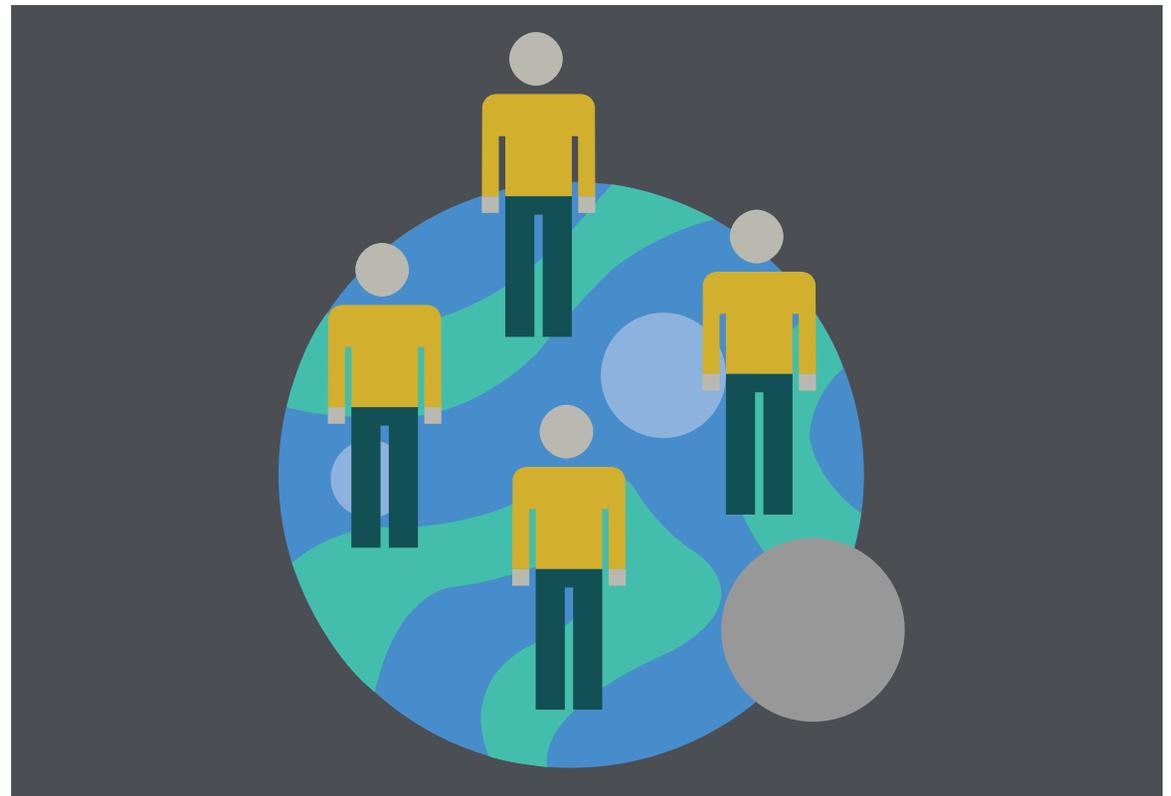
A Diverse Workforce

Gender parity: Is it fantasy or reality?

Even when pitted against outlandish goals, one in four Americans say that it's more likely that humans will colonize Mars (26%) and four in 10 think that space travel will be routine just like air travel for tourism (40%) within their lifetime than half of Fortune 500 CEOs will be women (vs. 74% and 60%, respectively).

But compared with a scenario that is closer to reality, Americans divide more closely—six in 10 find it more likely that self-driving cars will be a normal mode of transportation (59%) before women make up half of the CEOs at Fortune 500 companies (41%, with women more pessimistic about it than men; 36% vs. 46%).

1 in 4 Americans think it is more likely that humans will colonize on Mars than that half of Fortune 500 CEOs will be women.





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