

**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT  
AND BUSINESS**

# **2020 TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

In Partnership with



**United Nations  
Global Compact**



**BSR®**

# TURNING COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION

**In the decade since the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) were launched by UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact, the business case for gender equality has continued to grow, demonstrating how embedding gender equality across business strategy and operations is a smart investment.**

At the same time, increasing evidence highlights the deeply entrenched and systemic barriers working women face globally, from violence and harassment to the unequal share of unpaid care and domestic work.

Around the world, companies now recognize the value of actively supporting women throughout business operations, from the boardroom to the supply chain to impacted communities. More than 2,000 companies have used the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool, an online resource for companies to anonymously assess gender equality performance across the workplace, marketplace, and community. This report presents the aggregate findings of the tool for selected indicators.

The overall picture reflects incremental progress but leaves considerable room for improvement. The majority of companies have made corporate commitments to promote gender equality, and more than 2,900 CEOs have signed the

WEPs CEO Statement of Support. Yet few companies have taken the necessary next steps to meet those commitments by implementing, monitoring, and reporting on progress toward gender equality. Strong policies lay the groundwork for environments that support women, but without concrete targets, adequate programming, and accountability, there is little chance gender gaps will close or culture will change to enable women to thrive.

Going forward, the UN Secretary-General has called on all actors, including the private sector, to mobilize for a "Decade of Action" to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Gender equality and women's empowerment is at the top of the 2030 Agenda, both through SDG 5 and as a catalyst for achieving the other 16 goals. That is why, at the beginning of this decisive decade, it is critical to build on the momentum and scale business ambition to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

The UN Global Compact and BSR have been working steadily with companies to inform their approaches and drive progress for gender equality and women's empowerment. BSR and the UN Global Compact are committed to continuing to support businesses with the tools and insights needed to navigate the coming decade and move from commitment to action on gender equality. Business as usual is no longer working for women or men, but innovative solutions designed with and for women can move us beyond the status quo toward a gender-equal workplace.

## THE WEPs GENDER GAP ANALYSIS TOOL

### 18 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

The WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool is composed of 18 multiple choice questions across four areas: leadership, workplace, marketplace, and community.

### 4 MANAGEMENT STAGES

The tool also covers four management stages—commitment, implementation, measurement, and transparency—to ensure commitments are coupled with substantive action to implement the WEPs.



The WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool is a joint project of the UN Global Compact, UN Women, the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and IDB Invest.

## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

**Principle 1**  
Leadership Promotes Gender Equality

**Principle 2**  
Equal Opportunity, Inclusion and Nondiscrimination

**Principle 3**  
Health, Safety and Freedom from Violence

**Principle 4**  
Education and Training

**Principle 5**  
Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices

**Principle 6**  
Community Leadership and Engagement

**Principle 7**  
Transparency, Measuring and Reporting

**Join 2,900+ business leaders and sign today!**  
[www.weps.org/join](http://www.weps.org/join)

# PROGRESS SO FAR

The aggregate data here represents a snapshot of the results from the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool and reveals important gaps in all areas.<sup>1</sup> In particular and reflecting 2018 data trends, few companies are setting goals and targets, and even fewer companies are reporting on progress.<sup>2</sup> To support companies to move from commitment to action, each area highlights initiatives to strengthen corporate efforts to create more gender-equal workplaces.

## AVERAGE LEADERSHIP 31%

- 68%** has leadership commitment or support for gender equality and women's empowerment
- 41%** advocates for gender equality and women's empowerment in public forums\*
- 28%** has time-bound, measurable goals and targets\*\*
- 25%** reports publicly on progress and outcomes\*\*

\*In 2020, UN Women will convene the **Generation Equality Forum**, a global public conversation for urgent action and accountability for gender equality. To engage in Generation Equality, companies must be a WEPs signatory.<sup>3</sup>

\*\***Target Gender Equality** is an opportunity for companies participating in the UN Global Compact to deepen their implementation of the WEPs and contribute to SDG 5. Target Gender Equality calls for bold action in setting and reaching ambitious corporate targets for women's representation and leadership, such as building a pipeline of eligible women for management positions, for which only 17 percent of companies have a corresponding goal or target. Companies will benefit from facilitated performance analysis, capacity-building workshops, peer-to-peer learning, and multistakeholder dialogue at the country level to support their efforts.<sup>4</sup>

## AVERAGE MARKETPLACE 17%

- 26%** has a responsible marketing policy/commitment addressing gender stereotypes\*
- 8%** has robust due diligence or assessment processes for suppliers and vendors\*\*
- 4%** tracks percentage spend with women-owned businesses
- 3%** reports publicly on percentage spend with women-owned businesses

\*The **Unstereotype Alliance** is a thought and action platform that seeks to eradicate harmful gender-based stereotypes in all media and advertising content. Convened by UN Women, the Unstereotype Alliance brings together partners and seeks to collectively use the advertising industry as a force for good to drive positive change all over the world.

\*\*BSR's **Gender Data and Impact Framework and Tool (GDI)** aims to support companies and suppliers to evaluate the true impact of business operations on women workers in the supply chain through gender-responsive due diligence and assessments. Currently, only six percent of companies include gender in auditing protocols, supplier scorecards, or other supply chain management tools or encourage their suppliers to track progress on gender equality. The GDI includes KPIs to track outcomes for women in the workplace, an Excel-based data-collection tool, an analytical framework to uncover the root causes of gender issues, and recommendations to address gender gaps and discrimination.<sup>8</sup>

## AVERAGE COMMUNITY 22%

- 33%** has a policy/commitment embedding gender in CSR, philanthropy, advocacy, and partnerships
- 9%** assesses impacts on men and women during human rights or social impact assessments
- 14%** has clear goals on desired impacts for women and girls in community projects\*
- 12%** reports publicly the number of beneficiaries from community projects, disaggregated by sex

\*Despite the gender-specific risks in workplaces globally, human rights and social impact assessments are often gender-neutral. In 2019, the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights released the "**Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights**" to provide guidance on how to integrate the respect of women's human rights at all stages of due diligence and access to remedy, from gender-sensitive assessments to the implementation of gender-transformative measures and remedies.

## AVERAGE WORKPLACE 33%

The WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool captures many areas where a company can create safe and inclusive workplaces including the three highlighted below.

### ENSURING SAFE WORKPLACES\*

- 68%** has a policy/commitment for zero tolerance of violence at work
- 28%** provides annual training on zero tolerance of violence to all employees
- 36%** tracks grievances related to workplace violence, disaggregated by sex
- 23%** communicates publicly their approach to ensure for an environment free of violence

\*The International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted a **Convention on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work**, and an accompanying Recommendation.<sup>5</sup> As the first binding international treaty on this issue, the Convention provides a clear and common framework for preventing and addressing violence and harassment.

### PROMOTING EQUITABLE WORKPLACE OUTCOMES\*

- 35%** has a nondiscrimination and equal opportunity policy
- 31%** takes proactive steps to recruit women in traditionally underrepresented roles
- 25%** regularly undertakes a gender pay gap audit or evaluation
- 15%** publicly discloses the gender pay gap

\*The **Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC)**—led by the ILO, UN Women, and the OECD—works to achieve equal pay for women and men everywhere. EPIC provides resources, data, and opportunities for knowledge-sharing and peer-to-peer learning.<sup>6</sup>

### SUPPORTING WORKING PARENTS\*

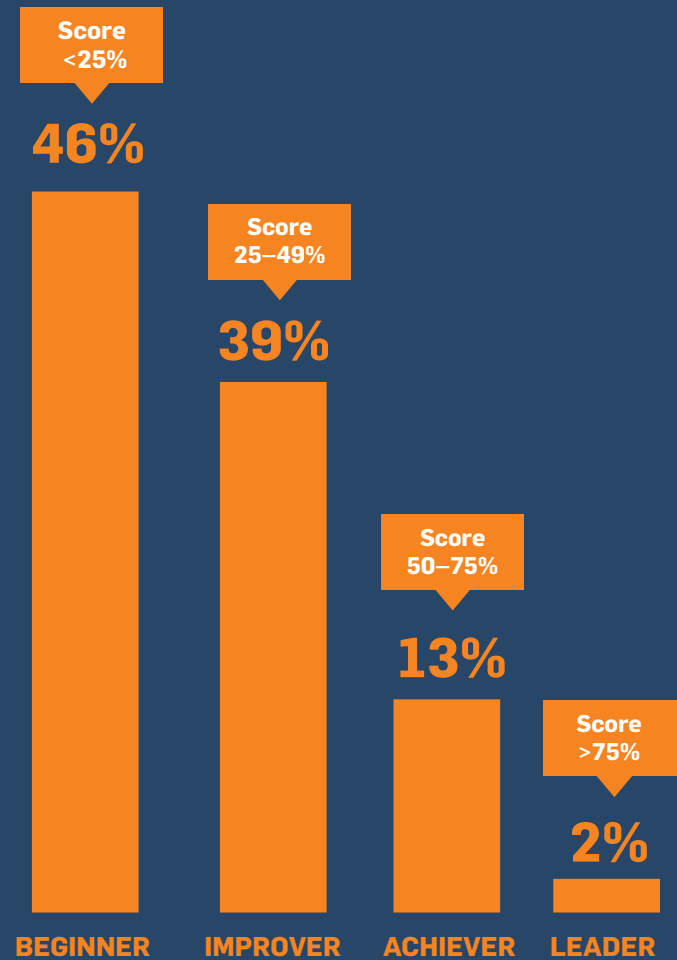
- 67%** provides paid maternity and paternity leave
- 18%** provides on-site childcare and/or referrals for off-site childcare
- 21%** tracks the percentage of women and men using parental or care benefits
- 9%** reports publicly on the number of employees using parental or care benefits, disaggregated by sex

\***IFC's Global Tackling Childcare Initiative** supports companies interested in providing childcare and family-friendly workplace options for their employees. In addition to several reports making the business case for employer-supported childcare, IFC has developed a corresponding guide for companies that addresses various aspects, including quality, financial sustainability, and results measurement.<sup>7</sup>

## OVERALL WEPS SCORE PERFORMANCE

The WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool sets a high bar by encouraging businesses to employ a holistic approach to gender equality and women's empowerment. A company achieves a higher score by demonstrating more complete action across each management stage (commitment, implementation, measurement, and transparency).

The average score for all users is **28 percent**, representing only a slight increase from 2018, when the average score was 26 percent.



## USERS BY REGION

This map shows the regional distribution of companies that have taken the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool.

Global 3%

North America 6%

Latin America 63%

Europe 14%

MENA 3%

Asia 5%

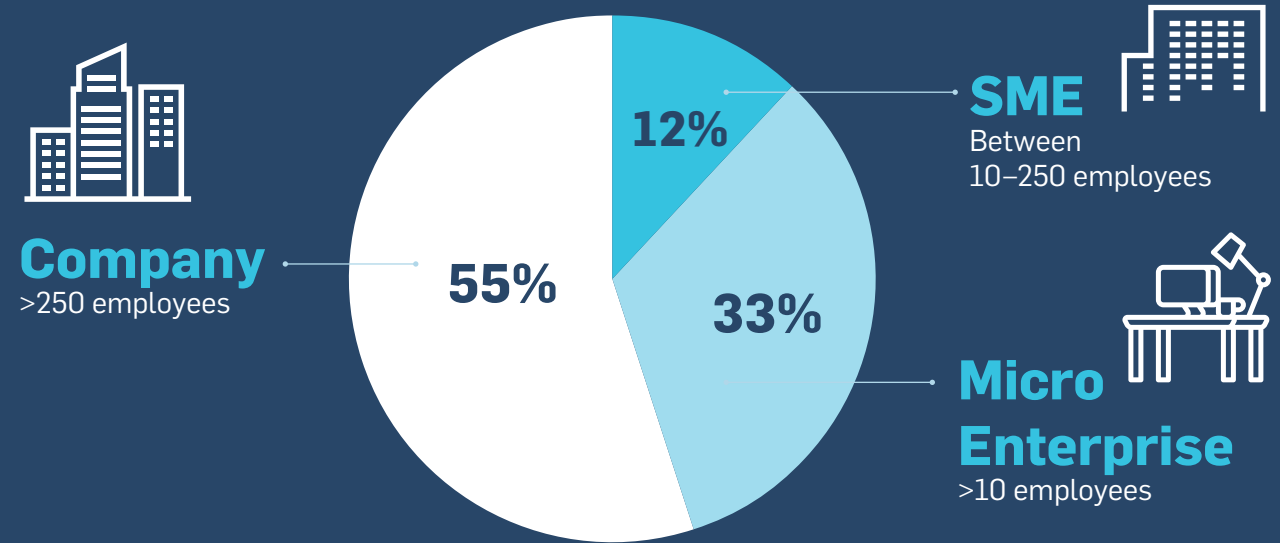
Africa 4%

Oceania 2%

Latin America has the largest number of companies taking the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool. On average, companies in the region score slightly higher than the global average (30 percent compared to 28 percent globally) and are more likely to have a nondiscrimination and equal opportunity policy (70 percent compared to 35 percent globally). IDB works in the region to promote women's economic empowerment by supporting companies to move from policies to implementation for meaningful change for women—as employees, in the value chains, and in the markets the companies serve. Through these efforts, it has adopted the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool as a key component of its gender equality work both with IDB Invest's clients and as a diagnostic tool for their Gender Parity Accelerators in the region.

## USERS BY COMPANY SIZE

This chart shows the size distribution of companies that have taken the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool.



## USERS BY INDUSTRY

This chart shows the top five industries of the companies that have taken the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool.

### TOP 5

1. Financial Services
2. Energy and Extractives
3. Food, Beverage, and Agriculture
4. Healthcare
5. Information and Communications Technology

## Why use the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool

As a free, user-friendly, and confidential online platform, the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool supports companies in adopting a holistic approach to gender equality and implementing the WEPs.

2,076 companies in 117 countries and counting...

Now available in Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, and Korean

Endorsed by UN Working Group on Business & Human Rights



## BSR

BSR™ is a global nonprofit organization that works with its network of more than 250 member companies and other partners to build a just and sustainable world. From its offices in Asia, Europe, and North America, BSR™ develops sustainable business strategies and solutions through consulting, research, and cross-sector collaboration. Learn more about BSR's 25 years of leadership in sustainability at [BSR.org](https://www.bsr.org).



**United Nations**  
Global Compact

## United Nations Global Compact

As a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General, the United Nations Global Compact is a call to companies everywhere to align their operations and strategies with ten universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Launched in 2000, the mandate of the UN Global Compact is to guide and support the global business community in advancing UN goals and values through responsible corporate practices. With more than 10,000 companies and 3,000 non-business signatories based in over 160 countries, and more than 60 Local Networks, it is the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world. For more information, follow [@globalcompact](https://twitter.com/globalcompact) on social media and visit our website at [unglobalcompact.org](https://unglobalcompact.org).

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The data presented in this report are the aggregate results of self-reported data that has not been verified or validated by any of the tool partners (United Nations Global Compact, UN Women, or any member of the Inter-American Development Bank Group). It represents a sample of 1071 responses submitted by businesses between the tool's launch in March 2017 and January 2020.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/library/5615>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/beijing-plus-25/generation-equality-forum>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/target-gender-equality>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C190](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190);  
[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:R206](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R206)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.equalpayinternationalcoalition.org/>

<sup>7</sup> Visit [www.ifc.org/tacklingchildcare](https://www.ifc.org/tacklingchildcare) or follow #TacklingChildcare on social media to learn more.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/report-view/making-women-workers-count-gender-responsive-due-diligence-report>

### Photo Credit

Cover: Joel Sheakoski / UN Global Compact