Advancement of Women in the Workplace

Women have filled many roles in the workplace throughout America's past. Today, opportunities for women seem to be at their highest point in history. National discourse on diversity, unconscious bias, anti-harassment, equal opportunity, equal pay and pay transparency have brought attention to the need for a balanced labor force.

How have MRA member organizations responded? MRA conducted research to better understand the state of women regarding workplace attitudes, representation, practices, efforts, and progress.
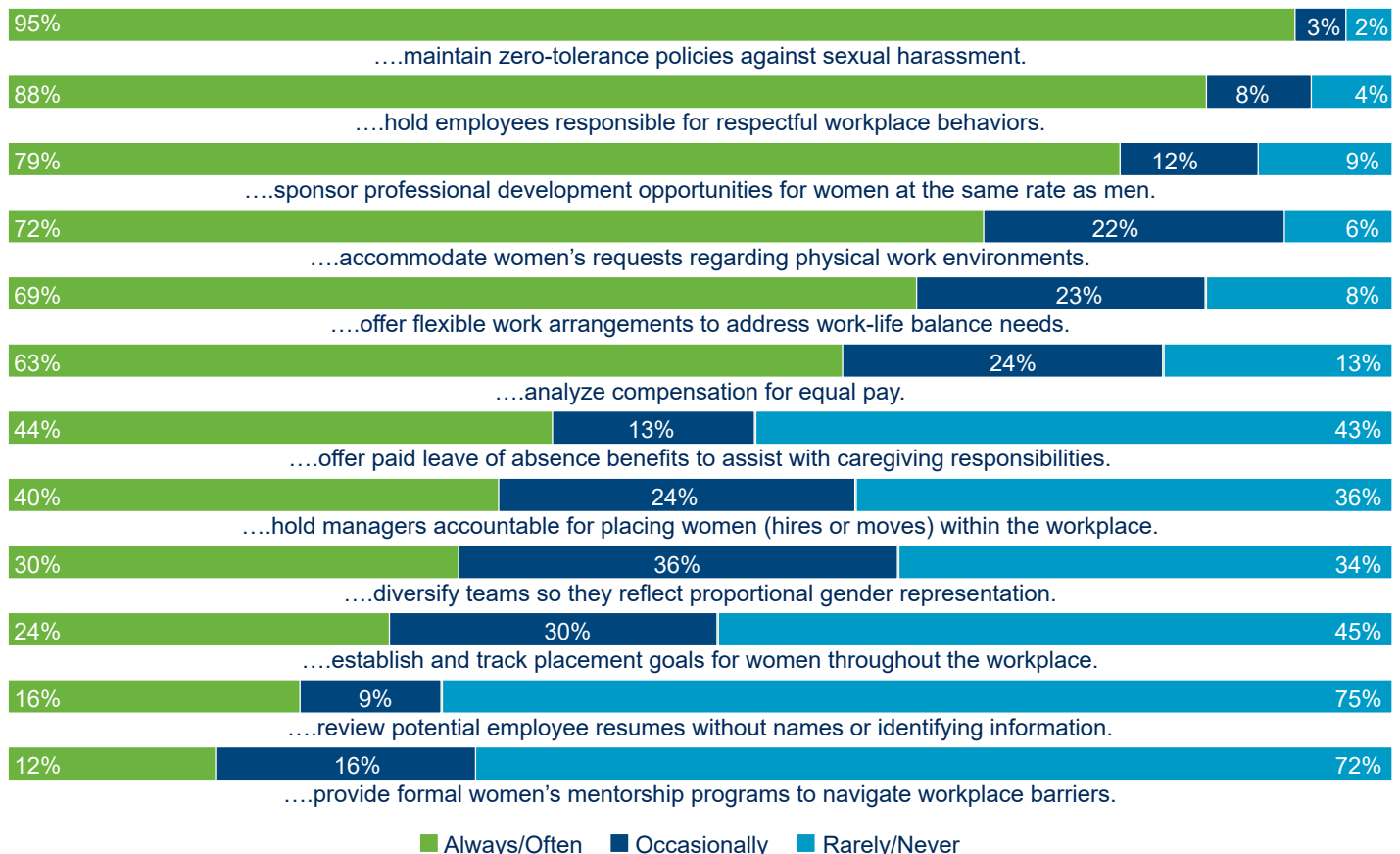
Organizations Affirm Their Commitment to Advance Women

MRA members show overwhelming positive support to various attitudes backing women in the workplace. Members report hiring women at the same rate as men, recruiting women with desired skillsets, and placing women into jobs that have been traditionally occupied by men. Members support advancing women, women in leadership positions, and women's views regarding strategic decisions. Roughly half of MRA members promote gender diversity as a business priority. Few members have sought ways to connect with women in company messaging.

79% Support women seeking advancement & development

79% Retain women new hires at the same rate as men

74% Endorse women in leadership positions

71% Attract women applicants with required skills

64% Seek women's views when making company decisions

Attract women applicants in general **63%**

Place women into jobs that have traditionally been occupied by men **57%**

Promote gender diversity as a business priority **49%**

Seek to connect with women in company messaging such as website **25%**

Policies & Practices

We asked members how frequently they follow various policies and practices. Response was nearly unanimous around frequently maintaining zero-tolerance policies against sexual harassment and very strong on the subject of holding employees responsible for respectful workplace behaviors. Also strong are responses about sponsored professional development, physical accommodations, flexible arrangements, and equal pay. Members less often offer benefits for caregivers, set and track manager goals for women placements, and diversify teams. Seldom are members reviewing resumes without identifying information and providing formal women's mentorship programs to navigate workplace barriers.
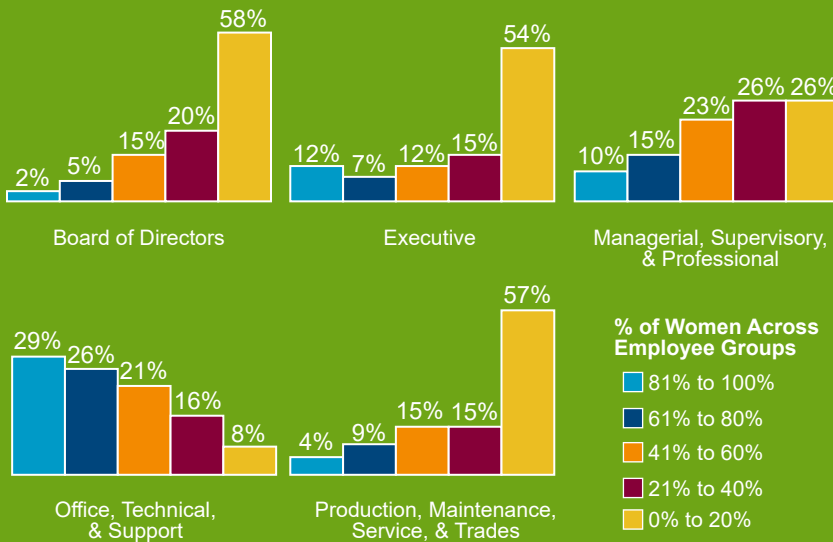
	Always/Often	Occasionally	Rarely/Never
….maintain zero-tolerance policies against sexual harassment.	95%	3%	2%
….hold employees responsible for respectful workplace behaviors.	88%	8%	4%
….sponsor professional development opportunities for women at the same rate as men.	79%	12%	9%
….accommodate women's requests regarding physical work environments.	72%	22%	6%
….offer flexible work arrangements to address work-life balance needs.	69%	23%	8%
….analyze compensation for equal pay.	63%	24%	13%
….offer paid leave of absence benefits to assist with caregiving responsibilities.	44%	13%	43%
….hold managers accountable for placing women (hires or moves) within the workplace.	40%	24%	36%
….diversify teams so they reflect proportional gender representation.	30%	36%	34%
….establish and track placement goals for women throughout the workplace.	24%	30%	45%
….review potential employee resumes without names or identifying information.	16%	9%	75%
….provide formal women's mentorship programs to navigate workplace barriers.	12%	16%	72%

■ Always/Often ■ Occasionally ■ Rarely/Never

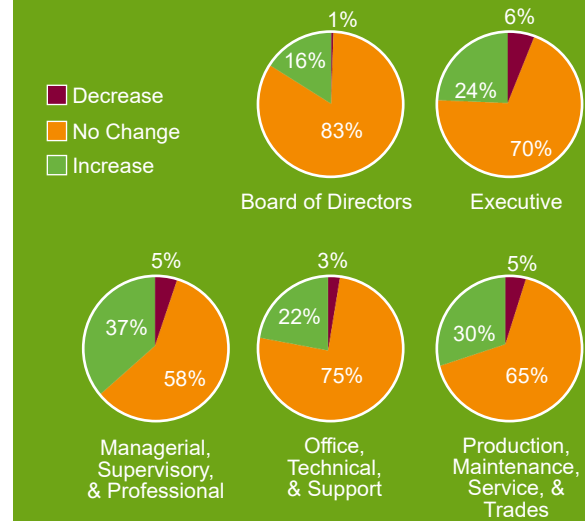# Advancement of Women in the Workplace

Women representation is highest in the Office, Technical & Support employee group followed by the Managerial, Supervisory & Professional group. The majority of member organizations have 20% women or fewer on their Board of Directors, in their Executive group, and in their Production, Maintenance, Service & Trades group. Composition of women has changed very little since 2016, yet where there has been change, reporting shows more increase than decrease.

Hot Topics MRA

Composition of Women by Employee Group

Board of Directors: 2%, 5%, 15%, 20%, 58%
Executive: 12%, 7%, 12%, 15%, 54%
Managerial, Supervisory, & Professional: 10%, 15%, 23%, 26%, 26%
Office, Technical, & Support: 29%, 26%, 21%, 16%, 8%
Production, Maintenance, Service, & Trades: 4%, 9%, 15%, 15%, 57%

% of Women Across Employee Groups
- 81% to 100%
- 61% to 80%
- 41% to 60%
- 21% to 40%
- 0% to 20%

Change in Composition since 2016

- Decrease
- No Change
- Increase

Board of Directors: Decrease 1%, No Change 83%, Increase 16%
Executive: Decrease 6%, No Change 70%, Increase 24%
Managerial, Supervisory, & Professional: Decrease 5%, No Change 58%, Increase 37%
Office, Technical, & Support: Decrease 3%, No Change 75%, Increase 22%
Production, Maintenance, Service, & Trades: Decrease 5%, No Change 65%, Increase 30%
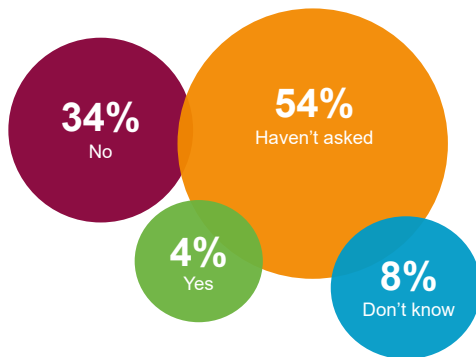
Do employees perceive a gender pay gap?

While most members haven't asked their employees if they perceive a gap between pay for different genders, those who have asked report that there is not a perceived gap.

- **34%** No
- **54%** Haven't asked
- **4%** Yes
- **8%** Don't know

Company actions regarding gender pay equity*

Nearly 70% of organizations analyze compensation regularly for equal pay. Less than one quarter are taking additional action of any type.

- **66%** Analyze compensation regularly for equal pay
- **24%** Document commitment in policy and/or handbook
- **21%** Audit and adjust gender pay gaps
- **18%** Don't know
- **13%** Communicate commitment internally
- **11%** Discuss equal pay laws in top level meetings
- **<10%** Communicate commitment on website or in job postings

*Percentages calculated as responses per valid cases, omitting cases that don't address gender pay equity due to single gender workforce, union set wages, and pay for performance only

Where reporting shows support for women in the workplace and positive attitudes around recruiting, hiring, and placing women, data shows low women composition within employee groups and little change. Advancing women in the workplace impacts structures, infrastructures, cultures, and individuals. Lasting change of this nature takes time.

The first step to enact change is a reality check. The organization may take a formal stand to advance women, but does the message resonate with employees? Managers? The C-Suite and Board of Directors? Has the organization asked for opinions and feedback?

Once you know the perception of the workplace, align strategies and tactics to support organizational goals. Benchmark where you are now and check periodically against reference points. Remain focused on creating a culture conducive to diversity and inclusion. Together you'll make an impact and move progress forward.