

Here To Be Heard



BSR[®]

The Business of a Better World

**10,000 Voices to
Shape a More
Inclusive Society
for All Women**

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Foreword



We all thrive when women can reach their full potential

Victoria Mars

Former Chairwoman of Mars, Incorporated

For more than four decades, I've been actively engaged with Mars, our family-owned business that started in my great grandmother's kitchen in 1911. During this time, I've experienced firsthand and witnessed many of the complex challenges that women face – personally and professionally. I've also

seen and believe in the tremendous value of investing in women's success and the benefits that brings to business and society.

When women have a seat at the table, our voices, our leadership, and our talents shine. Research clearly shows the benefits of gender balance on decision making and performance. But there are barriers that limit access and opportunities for women – in the workplace, in the supply chain, and in the marketplace.

The World Economic Forum estimates the journey to women's equality will take 136 years, an increase from 100 given the setbacks created by COVID-19. That would be four generations!

Our Mars Five Principles are intended to help us create an environment where everyone feels equally valued and empowered. But we recognize that intention must be accelerated with more action to change this trajectory and help ensure women can achieve their full potential, faster.

That's why in 2020, we launched Full Potential, our platform for action across our own workplaces, sourcing communities, and the marketplace. To help prioritize and design meaningful, achievable action across these pillars, we kicked off the #HereToBeHeard listening campaign in 2021, asking one simple question: What needs to change for more women to reach their full potential?

We heard from more than 10,000 women around the world who shared their stories, their ideas, their ambitions, and their frustrations. It's a simple question but the depth and breadth of the answers have been insightful, challenging, and moving.

Business not only has a meaningful role to play, but it is particularly well-equipped to make a difference. For example, part of what we heard was the need to bust bias and stereotypes that can hold women back at work. Many businesses are taking a forensic look at their systems to identify unconscious bias, understand where talent



pipelines can break down, and explore how tailored support to women at different stages in their career development can make a positive change. We all need to accelerate these actions.

Additionally, there's an opportunity to refresh the skills we prioritize and develop in our leaders. Empathy, listening, respect, and an appreciation of diverse points of view are basic leadership skills we should look for and were particularly meaningful to the women we heard from. Imagine the positive impact on engagement, productivity, and retention in an environment where everyone feels equally valued.

This report lays out the pieces of the puzzle that can help us focus our actions and break through the status quo to create a brighter, more inclusive environment. At Mars, we're absolutely committed to doing our part. We're using the data from this campaign and the expert recommendations you'll read here to fuel our next steps. Here are some of the areas where we're already progressing:

- *In our workplace, we're closing the gaps to reach gender-balanced leadership teams. That includes addressing imbalance in our talent pipeline by looking at our hiring panels and development programs, as well as increasing flexibility in the workplace to help relieve some of the stressors of balancing work and family for all parents and caregivers.*
- *In sourcing communities, we're designing sourcing strategies with women at the center in key raw materials – using how we buy from and support suppliers to help women reach their full potential from factories to farms. That includes creating access to economic resources and entrepreneurial programs, learning and training.*
- *In the marketplace, we're taking a look in the mirror to analyze how we depict women in our advertising, eliminating stereotypes, and working with our agencies to ensure that women are represented well and strongly in front of and behind the camera.*

We're determined to work with other businesses, governments, academic institutions and civil society to create a world where society is inclusive. And we want to thank CARE, the Unstereotype Alliance, the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in the Media, the Oxford University Saïd Business School's Future of Marketing Initiative, and Business for Social Responsibility for bringing their expertise, analysis, and passion to this report.

I also want to thank you for investing your time to hear from women all over the world and embracing the responsibility and opportunity we all share to create a more inclusive society. They say that talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. Together, we can facilitate an environment that removes barriers, creates opportunity, and shortens the gap to gender equality.

Victoria B. Ma



Executive Summary

Too often, women's voices aren't heard in their homes, workplaces, and communities. In its 2021 #HereToBeHeard campaign, Mars asked women one question: **What needs to change so more women can reach their Full Potential?** In three months, more than 10,000 women from 88 countries responded with powerful calls for systemic change they want to see from their employers, governments, communities, and the men in their lives to break down the barriers they face. They called for an intersectional approach that aims to support and include all women and for more opportunities for their voices to be heard.









A team of data scientists and gender experts analyzed the responses and identified eight themes and 28 subthemes most frequently mentioned by women. Mars commissioned BSR to review this data and consult with in-house experts and leading gender specialists to produce the following insight report and action recommendations. Throughout this report, you will learn about the different themes and hear from some of the women who shared their voices and stories with Mars. All quotes throughout this report are verbatim from the campaign.

“
All women can reach their full potential, we just need people to listen.”



MAIN THEMES

Including these topics

	80% <i>of women mentioned</i>	An End to Systemic Discrimination and Harmful Gender Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Structural Inequality – Entrenched Gender Roles – Treating Women as Inferior – Women Not Treated as Humans – Lack of Motivation and Confidence
	79% <i>of women mentioned</i>	Equal Career Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Gender Wage Gap – Lack of Equal Pay – The Glass Ceiling – No Level Playing Field – Male-Dominated Professions – Unequal Career Opportunities
	65% <i>of women mentioned</i>	More Decision-Making Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Excluding Women's Voices – Excluding Women from Decision-Making – Lack of Women in Leadership
	30% <i>of women mentioned</i>	Support as Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unaffordable Childcare – Not Enough Parental Leave – The “Stay-at-Home Mom” Stereotype
	26% <i>of women mentioned</i>	Greater Work/Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Inflexible Working Arrangements – Lack of Work/Life Balance – Household Chores
	24% <i>of women mentioned</i>	Gender-Equal Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gender Stereotypes in Early Education – Educating Future Generations – Lack of Role Models
	19% <i>of women mentioned</i>	Mental and Physical Well-Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Poor Mental, Physical, and Emotional Well-Being – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
	15% <i>of women mentioned</i>	An End to Gender-Based Harassment and Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Harassment and Domestic Violence – Threatening Male Behavior – Men Not Taking Accountability

Based on the findings from #HereToBeHeard, this report includes eight recommendations for business so that more women can reach their full potential. Gender experts from BSR, CARE, UN Women's Unstereotype Alliance, and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media developed these recommendations:

8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUSINESS ACTION

- 1 **Make gender-balanced leadership a reality.**

- 2 **Embrace flexible work.**

- 3 **Step up parental leave.**

- 4 **Support gender-equal learning.**

- 5 **Support women's physical and mental health.**

- 6 **Work to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.**

- 7 **Men step up as allies.**

- 8 **Brands take a stand.**

#HereToBeHeard is a powerful listening journey, and this report amplifies what was heard; how businesses can take action and how Mars is using insights from this campaign to inform change in its own workplaces, relevant sourcing communities, and the marketplace.

Women in the World Today

Women know what they need to reach their full potential, but around the world they face long-standing and new barriers to gender equality.

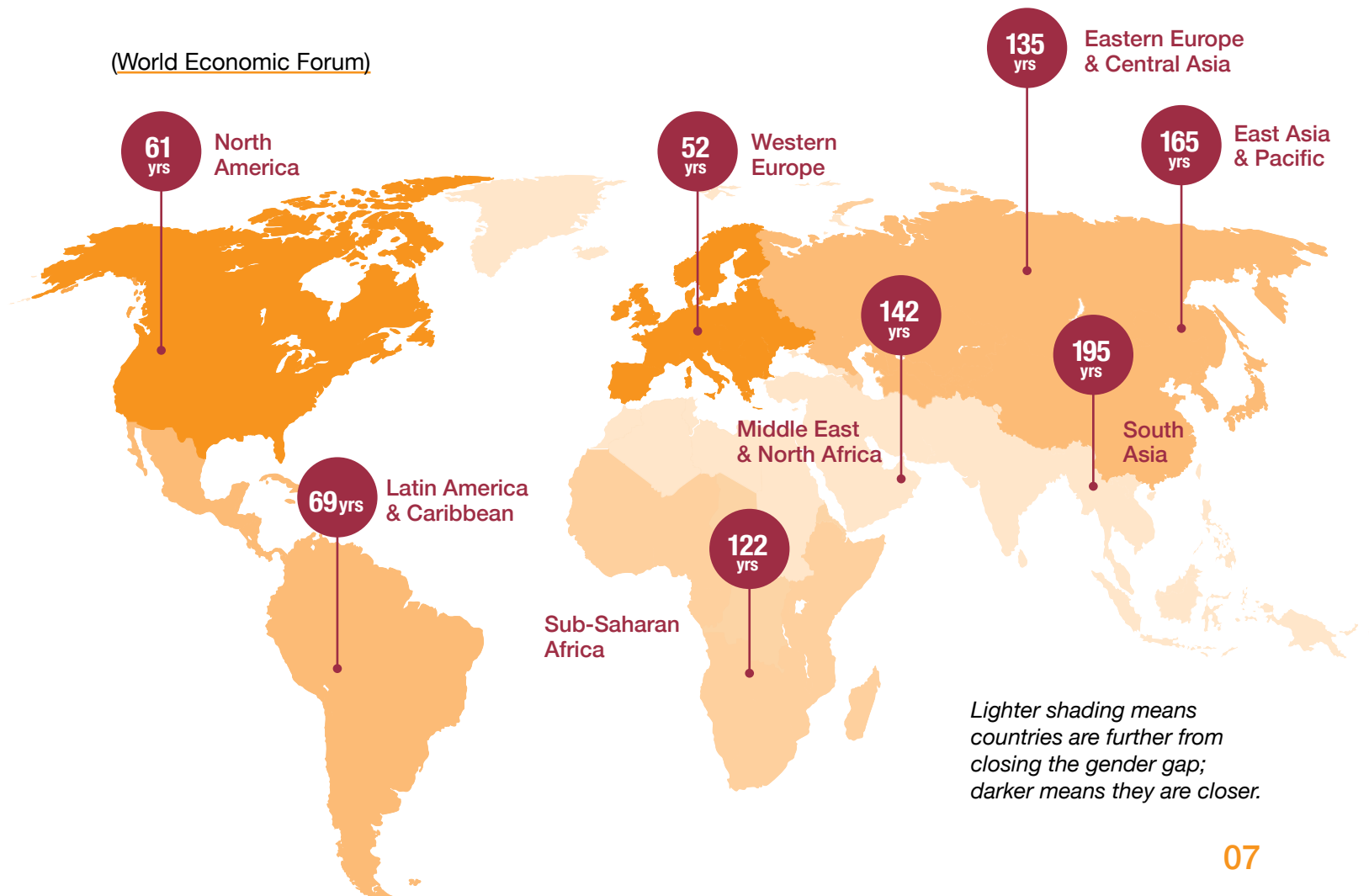
Research shows that empowering women can lift the lives of everyone—something more important than ever as the world works to recover from a health and economic crisis ([UN Women](#)). While women have made gains over the past decades regarding access to education and workforce participation, there are still significant gaps in gender equality both at work and in the wider society. Although

women have entered the workforce at rates similar to men, they are promoted far less frequently, paid less, and the talent pipeline continues to lose more women as they move up in organizations. For every leadership opportunity, there are 37 women to every 100 men, and only 41 of Fortune 500 companies are led by women ([Fortune](#)). Women earn an estimated US\$0.77 for every US\$1 men make ([UN Women](#)). Outside of work, most women still experience a “second shift” of care and housework, and one in three women experiences intimate partner violence in her lifetime ([OECD](#); [WHO](#)).

HOW CLOSE ARE REGIONS TO CLOSING THE GENDER GAP?

The gender gap, currently at 136 years globally, is the difference between women and men as reflected in social, political, intellectual, cultural, or economic attainments or attitudes.

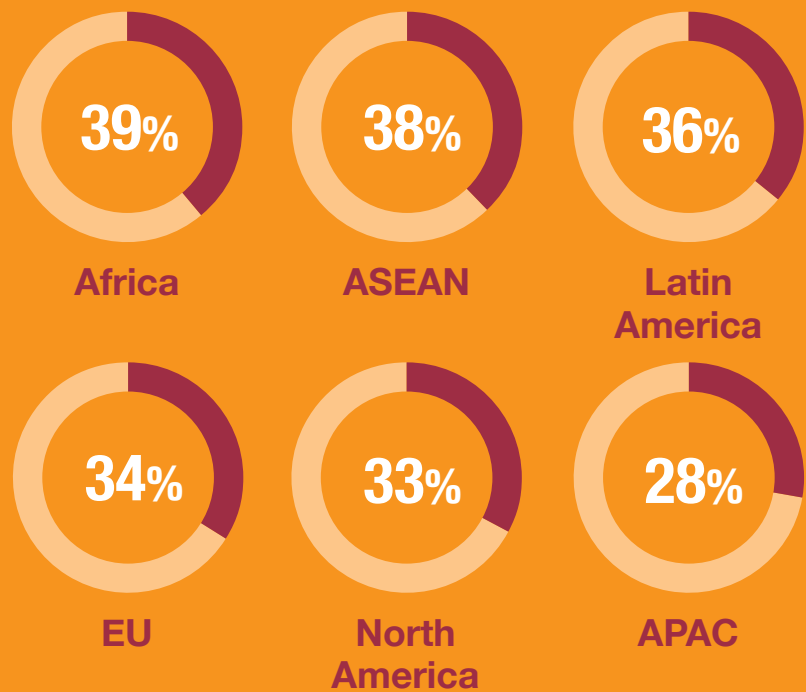
([World Economic Forum](#))





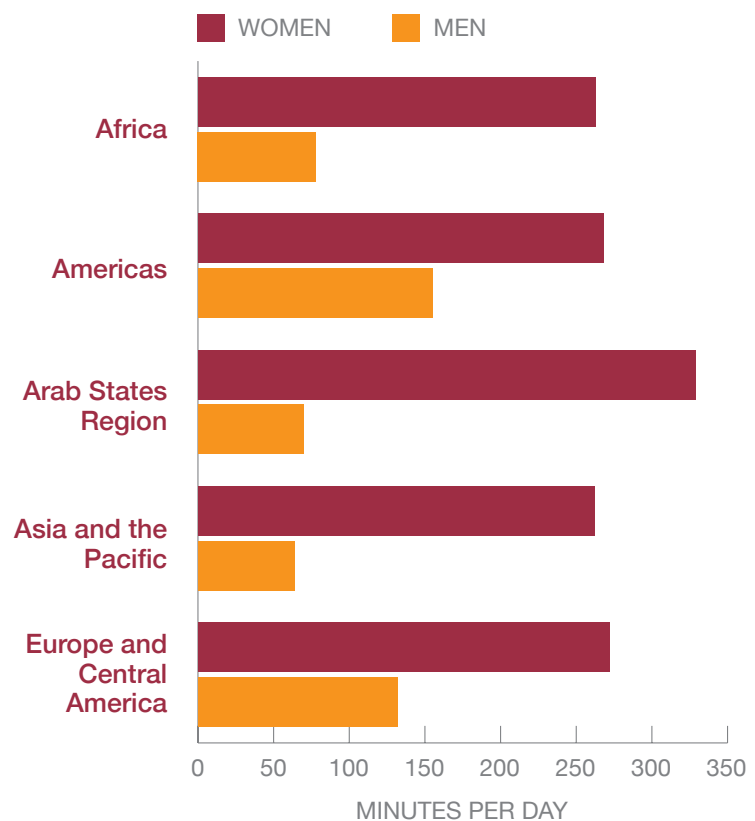
SHARE OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT BY REGION*

*Grant Thornton



The COVID-19 pandemic has made circumstances for many women more challenging. As COVID-19 spread across national borders, women were once again expected to shoulder the largest share of unpaid care work as schools closed and hospitals reached capacity. At the same time, rates of domestic violence increased and women disproportionately lost their jobs or were forced to leave the workforce ([UN Women](#)). Since the pandemic, the number of women employed globally has dropped by 13 million, and unemployment for women is expected to increase in 2021; most male employment has recovered ([ILO](#)). Overall, the global health crisis has turned back progress on gender equality: at the end of 2019, the estimated time to reach gender equality was 100 years. In 2021—just over 12 months later—the estimated time increased to 136 years ([WEF](#)).

TIME SPENT ON UNPAID CARE WORK*



*ILO

Enabling Women to Reach Their Full Potential

In 2020, Mars launched “[Full Potential](#),” a platform for action on gender that shares efforts the company is taking to advance gender equality in the workplace, sourcing communities, and the marketplace. In 2021, Mars created a global listening campaign, #HereToBeHeard, to hear from women around the world, use their insights to inform further actions the company can take, and share what it learned to spark new thinking.

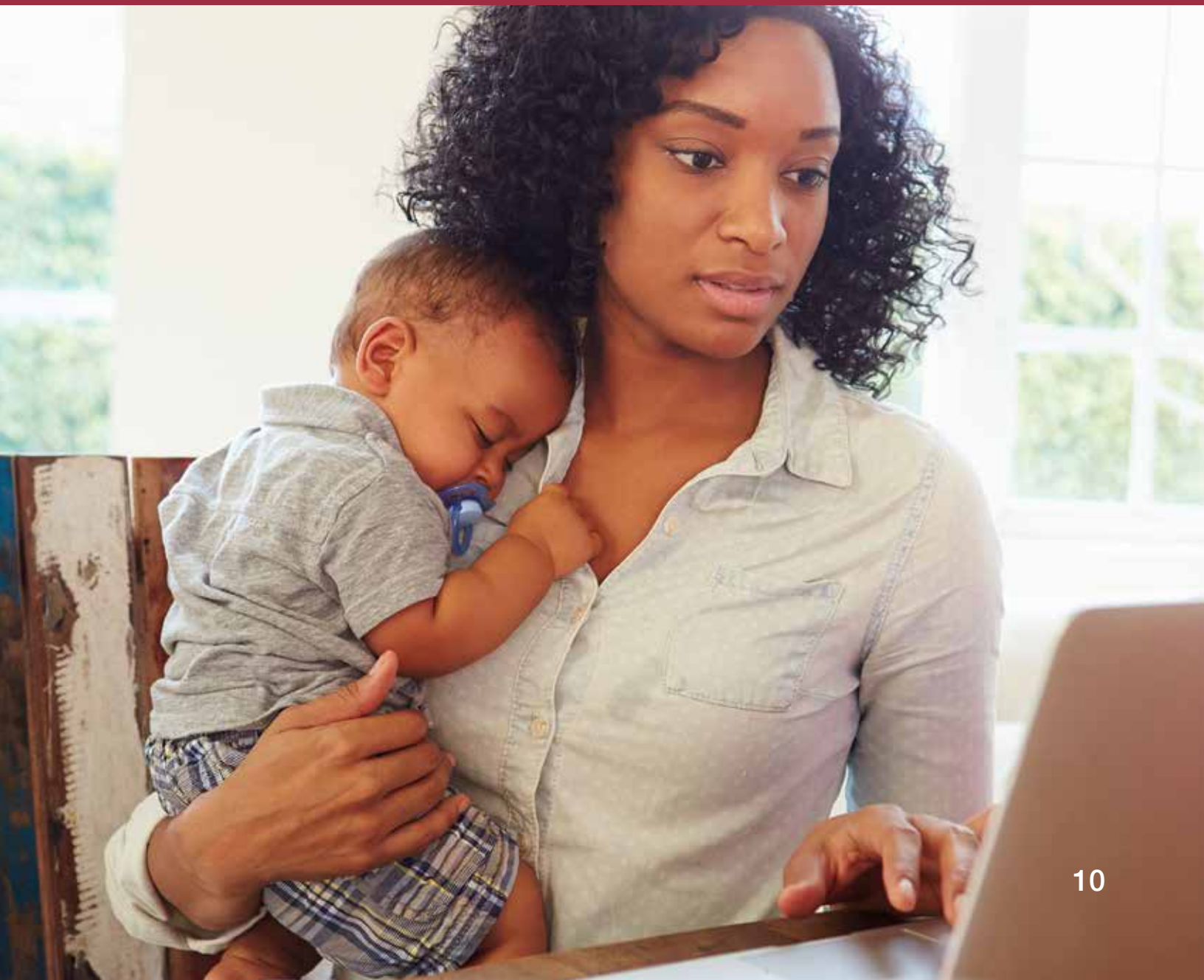
The listening campaign asked one question: **What needs to change so more women can reach their Full Potential?** More than 10,000 women across 88 countries shared their stories, including 1,268 Mars Associates, representing a range of ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, and lived experiences. Together, their voices shine a bright light on where more attention and action are needed, and offer concrete ideas for how companies can make changes too so that more women can reach their full potential. While this campaign is all about hearing from women around the world in their unique circumstances, Mars is using these insights to prioritize actions it can take in its own workplaces, relevant sourcing communities, and the marketplace.

“
People often underestimate the power of being asked for their opinion. ... It’s amazing what you uncover when you take the time to ask why.”



“

We need to tell our stories honestly, earnestly, bravely. Tell our stories, share our choices, share the experiences that we've gone through making life-changing choices. ... This will help another girl, another woman, overcome obstacles quicker and faster.”



WHO PARTICIPATED?

10,319

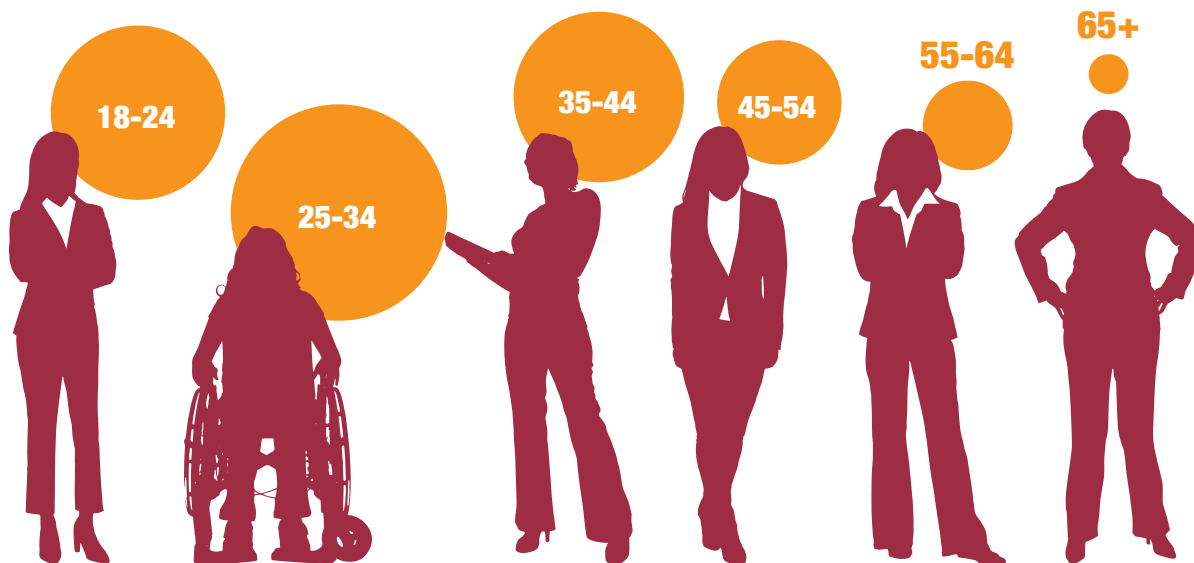


**Women from
88 countries**



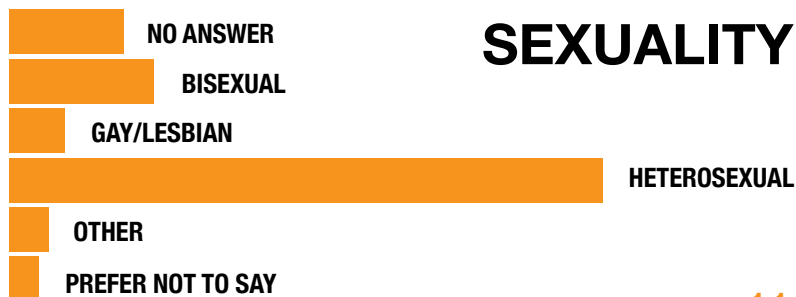
AGE

*of all
respondents*



12%

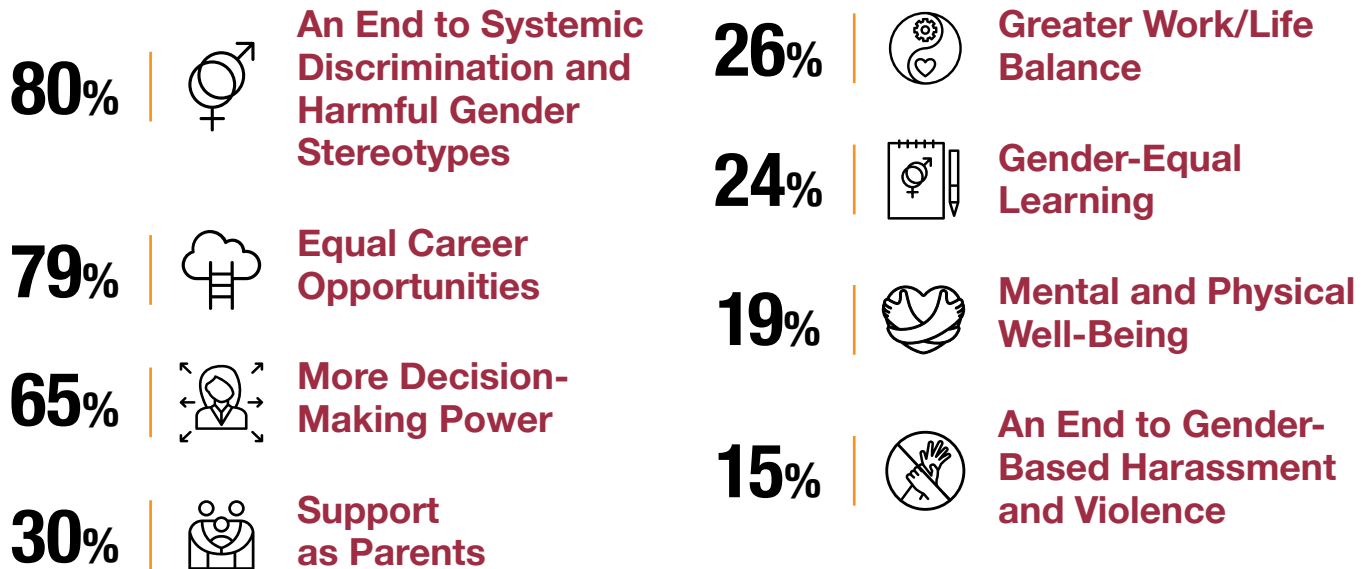
*of all
respondents
reported having
a disability*



WHAT DID WOMEN SAY?

Mars worked with a team of scientists from the Oxford University Saïd Business School's Future of Marketing Initiative and external qualitative analysts to examine women's responses. Through a combination of machine learning and network analysis, the Oxford team identified 28 topics, which were subsequently qualitatively grouped into eight themes most frequently mentioned by women.

These themes and subthemes represent the areas that most women reported need to change so they can reach their full potential:



“

We are not perfect in any way. No human being is, but we deserve to be heard.”

BSR was commissioned to review these findings and to work with in-house gender experts and external organizations at the forefront of advancing women's rights to recommend key areas for business action to address the gaps and opportunities these 10,000 women shared. What Mars heard was moving. Women shared personal experiences of discrimination and harassment and recognized wider societal norms that perpetuate harmful behaviors. They shared their dreams for a world where discrimination is eliminated and where young girls grow up free from stereotypes.

Women called for safe communities, workplaces, and homes so they are never subjected to sexual or physical violence. Women also called for an intersectional approach, recognizing that advances in gender equality have not been felt equally by all women, particularly women of color and Indigenous women, women with a disability, LGBTQ+ women, and women from lower socio-economic groups.

“**Treat [women] as human beings, not as sexual objects, not as people who cannot make decisions, not as people who have less ability. In order to reach the maximum potential, you have to be treated with respect, like any living being.**”



“

... Oftentimes, we talk about women's issues or feminist issues, but these issues are centered on the experiences and needs of privileged white women. And oftentimes, these movements are completely oblivious to the breadth of challenges women across the country, let alone the world, are actually facing. We need to listen to women from different communities; we need to reconceptualize our understanding of women's issues. ...”

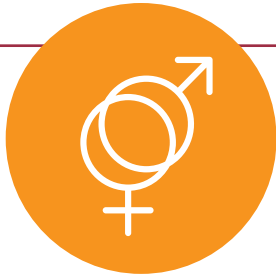
Women called for change at both the individual and societal levels, with most women mentioning at least four of the eight themes in their responses. Of the eight themes, the top three (An End to Systemic Discrimination and Harmful Gender Stereotypes [80%], Equal Career Opportunities [79%], and More Decision-Making Power [65%]) resonated strongly with most women who responded, regardless of their age, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, education, geography, or work status. The remaining five themes were more common based on certain characteristics (e.g., geography, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, profession, etc.).

WOMEN SAID MEN CAN BE EITHER ALLIES OR BARRIERS TO PROGRESS

While the eight themes represent opportunities for specific programmatic or policy changes, the data analysis revealed one more trend: the role of men in achieving gender equality. Most women (71%) mentioned men as either a barrier or ally to achieve their full potential. Women were clear in their call for men to change and assume accountability for harmful and discriminatory actions against women. They stressed the need for men to step up at home and take on their share of domestic and care work, to speak up at work when they hear derogatory comments, and to make space for women's voices to be heard.

“Men need to change. ... Men have to choose to be different on their own, and until that happens, I think it's going to be very hard for women to reach our full potential.”

“More men need to step up and get involved as allies. This includes [in] the workplace, through mentorship or career-planning or encouraging women to consider roles or development opportunities that they might not otherwise pursue. But it also includes at home, by working to abandon the stereotypical ‘gender roles’ that society projects onto men and women.”



80%

*of women
mentioned
the theme*

An End to Systemic Discrimination and Harmful Gender Stereotypes

Including these five topics:

- **Structural Inequality**
- **Entrenched Gender Roles**
- **Treating Women as Inferior**
- **Women not Treated as Humans**
- **Lack of Motivation and Confidence**

“

Society in general needs to accept that women have an important role to play. Women need to be confident and allow themselves to express their potential. Men need to be open-minded to accept seeing women as their equal.”

Many of the women who responded called for **“An End to Systemic Discrimination and Harmful Gender Stereotypes”** that define women as “weak” or “inferior” and negatively impact their self-confidence. Women mentioned the need to address patriarchal systems and norms permeating politics, sports, work, education, family, and social life. They stressed the need to change how society views women’s strengths and skills, recognizing that both women and men have a role to play in changing these mindsets. Women just beginning their careers, ages 18–24, were the most likely to mention this theme (87%), as were women in the U.K. (84%), and the U.S. (87%).

Gender-based discrimination and harmful stereotypes are rampant. One study found that 90% of women and men across 75 countries hold gender bias ([UNDP](#)), and even the most committed countries have not achieved gender equality ([OECD](#)). At work, discrimination and stereotypes confine women to certain tasks and jobs (e.g., care and domestic work and administrative support roles) and undervalue “soft” skills traditionally associated with women (e.g., communication, listening, and empathy). Addressing these systemic issues will require action by all stakeholders to challenge long-standing beliefs about the value of women. It also will require a systemic review of leadership competencies that are consciously or unconsciously biased against women.

“

A new system is needed: one where women are conceived as strong, respected, and with the same abilities as any human being, without any prejudice. Different possibilities are needed for each woman, including transgender, Indigenous, immigrant, and single mothers.”



79%

of women
mentioned
the theme

Equal Career Opportunities

Including these six topics:

- The Gender Wage Gap
- Lack of Equal Pay
- The Glass Ceiling
- No Level Playing Field
- Male-Dominated Professions
- Unequal Career Opportunities

“

Expectations about how to develop a senior career must change to give women the space to grow their career alongside their personal aspirations. ... We must find a way to support nonlinear career paths to give women the confidence they need to make the right choices in their personal and professional life.”

Women said “**Equal Career Opportunities**” are critical to “break the glass ceiling” and “level the playing field.” They called on government and company-led initiatives to drive this change, including the importance of mentors and sponsors. The gender pay gap was widely mentioned alongside its negative financial impacts on women and their families. While women across geographies and from diverse backgrounds spoke to this theme, particularly high levels of Hispanic and Latina women mentioned the gender pay gap (88%).

Globally, pay inequality impacts women in all sectors, with women of color often being paid the least. Additionally, women often experience a pay decrease when they become mothers ([UN Women](#)). Women are underrepresented in highly paid roles and industries, including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), which explains some of the pay gap. However, even when women enter professional fields such as biology or recreation and parks, the average pay declines, while when men enter into professional fields, pay increases, as was seen for computer programmers, which were largely female until recently ([New York Times](#)). Gender bias and discrimination in recruitment, hiring, performance review, and promotion processes contribute to gender workforce gaps today. Addressing these gaps will require both systemic approaches to ensure equity in wages, and opportunities and initiatives to address negative gender stereotypes and bias.

“

Continue encouraging women and girls’ interest in male-dominated fields. ... Making male-dominated fields more inclusive and safer for women is also imperative to make women more comfortable in joining these fields.”

“

With our system as it is, women are often not given the same chances and opportunities as men, not due to their own skill level but instead as a result of ingrained sexism.”



65%

of women
mentioned
the theme

More Decision-Making Power

Including these three topics:

- Excluding Women's Voices
- Excluding Women from Decision-Making
- Lack of Women in Leadership

“

We need more women at the forefront of policy change, especially intersectional groups of women (women of color, disabled women, queer women, neurodivergent women, etc.). We need a wide variety of voices to contribute.”

The third most commonly mentioned theme was **“More Decision-Making Power”** for women in governments, businesses, communities, and families. African American and Black women were more likely to speak to this topic (75% compared to 65% for the global group) as were women from the U.S. and U.K., particularly in relation to needing more women of color and other underrepresented groups in positions of power.

Despite progress in some countries, women’s political representation remains low globally. Similarly, in the corporate world, women hold only 23% of executive positions compared to 47% of support staff roles globally ([Mercer](#)), and men still hold 90% of all C-level executive roles ([Rozenzweig & Company](#)). Some groups of women face even lower levels of representation, including women of color, Indigenous women, LGBTQ+, and women with a disability. Research within both the private and public sectors shows that a significant number of women on boards improves the overall business outcomes and corporate governance, with increased return on equity, better understanding of the customer base, and more innovation ([ILO](#)). Globally, enterprises with a female CEO are 2.8% more likely to have increased productivity, and profits and 3.5% more likely to have better business outcomes ([ILO](#)).

“

... More women need to be present in leadership roles across all industries. Women—and not just white women, ALL women (women of color, transgender women, etc.)—need to be better represented in our country’s government. With better representation of women in roles of leadership across all industries, society will hopefully shift to be more inclusive and intersectional.

...”



30%

*of women
mentioned
the theme*

Support as Parents

*Including these three
topics:*

- **Unaffordable
Childcare**
- **Not Enough Parental
Leave**
- **The “Stay-at-Home
Mom” Stereotype**

Women called out the lack of “**Support as Parents**” as a barrier to fully engaging as mothers, caretakers, and employees. Women were very aware of the sacrifices they made for their family and their career, plus the additional challenges to balance or afford childcare—especially during COVID-19. They stressed the need for adequate paid leave to care for their newborns, assurance that their career would not be impacted by maternity leave, and a culture that accepts and encourages all parents to take leave regardless of their gender. This theme stood out among employed women in the 35–44 age range and women in the U.K., who mentioned “Support as Parents” 20% more often than the global group.

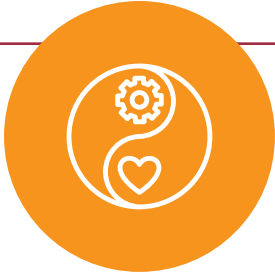
Women’s share of unpaid care and domestic work greatly increases when they become parents, while men’s stays more or less the same. This unequal sharing has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with women spending roughly 15 more hours per week on unpaid labor than men ([Catalyst](#)). Institutional changes are needed to enable women to fully participate in the workforce and pursue fulfilling careers, and to enable women and men to have the time and support they need to care for their family. However, currently less than half of all countries provide 14 weeks or more of paid maternity leave, around 60% provide no leave for fathers, and only one-third provide leave for elder or dependent care. This is in addition to the childcare crisis currently taking place in many countries, including the U.S. ([ILO](#)). A recent study found that 67% of U.S. employees would be more willing to consider staying with their current employer if they had access to employer-subsidized childcare, while 60% of employees said their work performance would improve if childcare benefits were available ([CARE](#)). Along with retention and productivity benefits, companies that provide comprehensive childcare assistance see a 30% decrease in employee absenteeism and a 60% decrease in turnover ([U.S. Chamber Foundation](#)).

“

When a man works late, he’s providing for his family. When a woman works late, she’s abandoning hers. This is the cultural shift that needs to come with the paternity leave, telecommuting options, and affordable childcare.”

“

Breaking down the gender stereotypes also means for men—especially so they have more opportunity to be stay-at-home dads, if that is what they want, and greater parental leave to be able to allow women to go back to the workforce if they want to.”



26%

*of women
mentioned
the theme*

Greater Work/ Life Balance

*Including these three
topics:*

- **Inflexible Working Arrangements**
- **Lack of Work/Life Balance**
- **Household Chores**

Many women cited a need for “**Greater Work/Life Balance,**” with mothers in particular calling out the challenge of balancing personal responsibilities and paid work, with little flexibility around working hours, location, and expectations. Regardless of location, women between the ages of 25–44 were 23% more likely to mention this theme than other groups. All people need the time and space to pursue their passions, take time to relax, and invest in themselves and their communities, whether through education, art, or athletic pursuits. Their solutions covered ideas such as more flexibility at work, and a strong push to break the stereotypes of women as the only suitable caretakers by having men take on their fair share of care outside of work.

Increased flexibility and support at work can empower women to stay in the workforce by enabling them to balance their personal and professional schedules instead of forcing them to choose one over the other. Flexible workplaces mean fewer women are forced to leave the workforce or take unwanted breaks in their careers ([Pew Research Center](#)). A recent survey found roughly 31% of women who took a break in their career after having children did not want to, but felt they had to due to a lack of workplace flexibility, and 70% said it was difficult for them to re-enter the workforce after taking time off ([Flexjobs](#)). COVID-19 forced many companies to allow remote work, proving that it is feasible, can lead to greater productivity, and, in some cases, may be preferred by workers. Flexible work has the potential to balance the scales of equality and provide greater work/life balance for all workers. But if done poorly, it could continue to tip the scales toward men, who may choose to spend more time in the office than women, who continue to balance their personal and professional responsibilities.

“

... In my case, I do not want to stay connected to work when I pick up my daughter from school or ... when I eventually sit down with my partner to watch a movie in the evening. I want to have work/life balance. But for me, that means ... safeguarding certain areas in my life.”

“

I would love to continue doing what I love and what I’m passionate about, but ‘full time or nothing’ really is the only option in a lot of situations. I think we need different work arrangements for women to be able to balance their families – during the pandemic and even after.”



24%

*of women
mentioned
the theme*

Gender-Equal Learning

*Including these three
topics:*

- **Gender Stereotypes in Early Education**
- **Educating Future Generations**
- **Lack of Role Models**

Gender-Equal Learning and the importance of education free from gender stereotypes were cited by women as critical for girls to see themselves in roles and fields where women are still underrepresented, such as STEM. This topic was raised by roughly 20–30% of women across different age, geographic, and ethnic groups, with a slightly higher rate for women in the U.S. Women emphasized the need for gender-neutral participation in all activities (e.g., sports, science, and tech) and stressed that boys, like girls, need to be taught that everyone can achieve whatever they set their minds to and are not limited by their gender. They called for more role models for girls from different careers to inspire the next generation of female leaders in all fields. Women in France had a much higher instance of this theme: 34% compared to 24% globally.

Parents, teachers, marketing, and media representation all contribute to discouraging girls from pursuing careers in STEM. In the U.K., where men outnumber women three to one in STEM professions, male STEM characters are twice as common as female STEM characters on TV and are more likely to be shown as leaders in the STEM field ([Geena Davis Institute](#)). Analysis of the most popular TV shows for young boys found male characters less likely to show emotion than female characters and more likely to show aggression and risky behavior, perpetuating harmful masculine stereotypes from a young age ([Geena Davis Institute](#)). Breaking down these stereotypes will require a concerted effort in schools, media, entertainment, and marketing, as well as at home. It will mean redefining what is valued in a leader by publicly celebrating women's contributions to their communities—for example, with more statues of great women, more women represented in education and history books, and more focus on valuing professions where women are overrepresented, such as nursing and teaching.

“

... It's also hard to understand what your full potential might be without seeing what other women are able to accomplish. We need to ensure that girls are taught from a young age how much they can achieve by seeing women in positions of power and important roles in society.”

“

... Women need to be seen as equal or seen as more capable in regular media, television, and movies. ... We need more roles [for] women in television and media to have a strong sense of empowerment so that we have good role models for little girls to see that women are just as good as [men].”



19%

*of women
mentioned
the theme*

Mental and Physical Well-Being

*Including these
two topics:*

- **Poor Mental, Physical, and Emotional Well-Being**
- **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

Women called for better access to healthcare services for both **“Mental and Physical Well-Being.”** They cited difficulties receiving proper healthcare, situations that were often exacerbated for women of color or those who cannot afford proper care. Women called out their health as under-researched and underfunded, leading to undiagnosed illnesses or misdiagnoses. They stressed the need to have control over their bodies and have the ability to make the right decisions for themselves by having access to resources such as contraception and mental health support, control over their reproductive rights, and proper sex education. Women who were either fully employed or between the ages of 25–44 cited this more frequently than other groups.

Research in the U.S. has shown that women are less likely to receive important medical exams ([Rand](#)), and doctors often miss signs of diseases when they manifest differently in women and men ([Harvard](#)). During COVID-19, women also faced higher levels of mental stress and illness, due in part to the enormous care burden placed on them ([University of Chicago Medicine](#)). In many countries, women’s access to reproductive and sexual health is limited by laws or discriminatory practices ([OHCHR](#)). In addition, lack of information, social stigma, and harmful stereotypes block women from receiving care for their periods, during menopause, or for eating disorders. Businesses need to recognize that women may need different support than men at different life stages. Menstruation, childbearing, and menopause each come with a set of mental and physical challenges that have real and distinct impacts on women’s lives in and out of the workplace.

“

Women experience pain differently than men. Women experience mental health conditions differently than men. It’s common for women’s issues to be dismissed, overlooked, or downplayed by medical professionals, preventing women from receiving necessary treatment and support, which sometimes has fatal consequences.”

“

Culturally, women’s health issues can be quite taboo. Going for a smear test, breast cancer checks, suffering from period pain, doctor appointments about contraception are just some examples. This needs to change in order for us to feel comfortable in explaining to our line manager and taking the time out to do these necessary things. ...”



15%

*of women
mentioned
the theme*

An End to Gender-Based Harassment and Violence

*Including these
three topics:*

- Harassment and Domestic Violence
- Threatening Male Behavior
- Men Not Taking Accountability

Women called for “**An End to Gender-Based Harassment and Violence**,” stressing the need for greater accountability from governments and businesses to implement laws and policies to protect women and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. They called on men to take accountability for and stop misogynistic thinking and behavior. Women asked men to actively call out violent words and behavior by other men to create safer environments for everyone. While women of all backgrounds mentioned this topic, they did so to varying degrees. Asian and Hispanic/Latina women (23%), women with a disability (28%), and LGBTQ+ women (33%) mentioned this topic more often than the full group. U.S. respondents were also more likely to raise this theme than the global average.

Globally, one in three women will experience intimate partner violence, and research from the U.S. has found that 85% of women will experience workplace sexual harassment in their lifetime. This has long-lasting implications and costs women anywhere from a few hundred dollars to US\$1.3 million throughout their career ([Time's Up](#)). During COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, there was an enormous spike in domestic violence, increased economic insecurity, and higher levels of stress ([UN Women](#)). Few women report or seek help when they experience gender-based violence or harassment, meaning few perpetrators are held accountable. Ending gender-based violence and harassment requires addressing underlying power imbalances, along with empowering women to be comfortable speaking up when violence and harassment occur.

“

We need to be seen as people, not objects. We need to be heard and [we need people to] believe what we say when we do it. We need our decisions to be respected.”

“

Women need to be able to wear whatever they want without being blamed for what men choose to do. Reports of sexual assault and harassment need to be taken seriously by police without victim-blaming. Sexual violence must have real consequences.”

What Can Be Done?

Eight recommendations for business action so more women can reach their full potential.

The themes women spoke to encompass all aspects of women's lives and socioeconomic status. They will require actors from governments, businesses, civil societies, and all individuals to drive change. The ways different actors can support women to reach their full potential are diverse, but when taken together and at scale, they can drive meaningful cultural change. This section explores actions business can take to break down the barriers women face at home, at work, and in their communities.

Using findings from #HeretoBeHeard, BSR worked with gender experts from CARE, the Unstereotype

Alliance, and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in the Media to develop eight recommendations to break down barriers women say are preventing them from achieving their full potential. While businesses are the primary stakeholders in mind for these actions, governments, civil society groups, and every one of us has an important role to play. These recommendations are a starting point, intended to help organizations work with women to design and implement concrete actions that take into account women's needs and life experiences including women of color, Indigenous women, LGBTQ+ women, and women with disabilities.



1 Make gender-balanced leadership a reality.

“Create a culture in which women can stand out by themselves and not seek to imitate men to excel [with] more women leaders who have new ideas and create real change.”

Businesses should commit to achieve gender-balanced leadership:

- Set time-bound, measurable goals for women at all levels of leadership and on corporate boards, with C-level accountability and succession plans.
- Review recruitment and promotion processes to remove gender bias.
- Ensure gender-balanced panels and interview teams.
- Establish sponsorship, mentorship, and training programs for women tailored to support women from diverse backgrounds and communities and measure their impact.

2 Embrace flexible work.

“What needs to change is the attitude of employers toward flexible working for men and women.”

Businesses should offer flexible work options in their own operations and work with suppliers to do the same:

- Offer back-up child-, elder-, or dependent-care options or care reimbursement.
- Provide flexible work options, such as remote work, flexible hours, part-time roles, reduced hours, and job-sharing.
- Ensure people-managers are trained and equipped to reduce bias against remote workers in performance reviews and promotion cycles.
- Ensure equal pay for equal work, regardless of when and where employees choose to work.

In addition, businesses should ensure quality jobs for hourly workers and work with their suppliers to do the same:

- Ensure scheduling stability and openly discuss how to protect time throughout the day to ensure breaks that support workers' mental and physical health.
- Provide a guaranteed minimum number of hours to hourly wage workers.
- Pay a living wage to all workers in operations and work with suppliers to ensure they are paying a living wage.

3 Step up parental leave.

“Workplaces should offer paid parental leave to both genders to make the workplace and parenting a more even playing field.”

Businesses should enable parents, whether salaried or hourly Associates, to take parental leave and make the transition to and from leave easier:

- Provide all new parents (e.g., single, same-sex, heterosexual, and adoptive parents) with adequate paid leave. In ILO Recommendation 191, at least 18 weeks of parental leave are recommended. UNICEF and the OECD recommend six months of parental leave as ideal for health of parents and children.
- Establish adequate off/on-boarding plans for parents and allow flexibility for parents when they return from leave.
- Provide managers with training and resources to promote leave uptake and support their teams during transition periods.
- Provide paid time off for fertility treatments, after miscarriage, and flexibility to accommodate for adoption processes.

4 Support gender-equal learning.

“Misogyny and sexism are taught from the earliest moments and permeate through the rest of our lives at work, school, and everyday life. It needs to be nipped at the bud and that can only be done through generational work, seeing women get to work in any industry they want, and equalizing social and gender roles.”

Young girls need supportive mentors, teachers, friends, and family members to cultivate and improve their interest and pursuit of STEM. The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media is a research-based organization working within the entertainment industry to create gender balance, foster inclusion, and reduce negative stereotyping in family-entertainment media. The institute recommends that businesses support and advocate for gender-equal learning within their local and global communities:

- Brands should consider how stereotypes are present in marketing and advertising should work to tackle harmful gender stereotypes about the role of women in society.
- Invest strategic philanthropy in STEM and other historically male-dominated fields to increase engagement of young girls and youth within these fields.

“Take women's health seriously.”

Business should provide equitable benefits packages to support women's physical and mental health needs:

- Conduct internal audits to ensure health insurance covers women-specific health needs, including contraception and abortion without restriction, menopause, and other needs.
- Provide pregnancy and breast-feeding accommodations, access to contraceptives, menstruation and menopausal leave, and support for mental health issues.
- Monitor the shifting legislative landscape and explore opportunities for advocacy on issues that advance workers' access to sexual and reproductive healthcare.
- Engage with suppliers to promote information and services to women workers on issues related to physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive rights.

“Women need to feel safe that they can leave their houses at night, go to a club and walk alone without men kidnapping, raping, or assaulting them. Women need to be able to leave their houses without men catcalling them. Women need to be able to wear whatever they wanted without being blamed for what men choose to do. Reports of sexual assault and harassment need to be taken seriously by police without victim blaming. Sexual violence must have real consequences. ...”

Gender-based violence and harassment are global problems that affect women across countries, ethnicities, and socioeconomic status. In line with ILO Convention 190, employers must adopt a higher standard of prevention, protection, and redress to keep all workers safe from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence. As such, CARE recommends that businesses:

- Commit to the prevention of and response to gender-based violence and harassment as a leadership priority and assess their own workplace policies and practices – such as through the Gender-based violence and harassment guidelines for the garment sector – to ensure companies measure up to the new ILO Convention 190 benchmark by working with employee representatives and partners.

- Advocate for governments globally to ratify and implement ILO Convention 190.
- Develop and require harassment and violence policies and training for all employees and suppliers.
- Establish a safe, anonymous, and transparent reporting procedure and process for handling grievances.
- Develop and educate employees and suppliers on grievance mechanisms, ensure businesses are openly communicating and creating access, and cultivate a culture that encourages reporting.



7 Men step up as allies.

“...More men need to be allies to women. They need to give us the safe space, respect, and the representation to flourish, ... actively call out other men, and hold them accountable if they are pushing women down....”

Businesses should identify, finance, and implement policies and programs that enable and encourage men to be active allies:

- Explore rewards and incentives that deepen executive and management accountability on diversity and inclusion, including gender-diversity.
- Implement policies that encourage men to take parental leave, use flexible work practices, and take time off to care for their families and dependents. This can create a culture of acceptability for other men to do the same without fear that it will hinder their professional advancement.
- Invite men to attend discussions and events on gender equity in the workplace.

Men should play an active role in supporting women and girls and be role models for other men in their professional lives:

- Take their entire parental leave and paid time off to care for a child or elderly parent.
- Actively seek out learning opportunities to develop allyship competencies.
- Commit to only participate on gender-balanced recruitment and speaking panels.
- Hold other men in their workplaces accountable for discriminatory and biased actions, whether it is a sexist joke or interrupting a female colleague.

8 Brands take a stand.

“We need to crush the demeaning and hurtful stereotypes that bring women down.”

Brands and advertisers have a responsibility to help create a more equal world by producing “unstereotyped” content that portrays all individuals as authentic, multidimensional, and empowered. The Unstereotype Alliance, an action platform convened by UN Women to eradicate harmful stereotypes in advertising and media, recommends the following actions for businesses:

- Integrate gender considerations into marketing strategies and policies to ensure equal and unstereotyped representation of women, taking into consideration the intersectional diversity

of women. Audit advertising annually for the presence of stereotypes and publish results on progress.

- Develop gender-inclusive marketing messages and advertising content using gender-sensitive language.
- Use brands and communications materials to challenge discrimination and negative stereotypes of women with progressive, nontraditional portrayals that drive positive change.

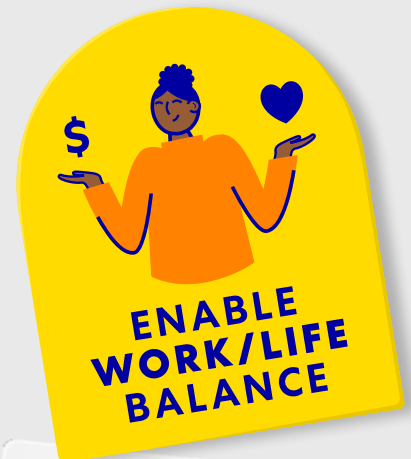
Afterword: What's Next for Mars?

Our #HereToBeHeard campaign has been about listening to the diverse perspectives and life experiences of women all around the world. As the Mars Leadership Team sponsors of this work, we've been moved by the power behind these voices and are grateful for each and every woman who contributed her insights. As we consider how we use our influence and reach as a global business, this research, and more importantly, these 10,000 women's voices, are helping us shape our priorities and our investments.

Since launching our Full Potential platform in 2020, we continue to advance gender equality with targeted actions in our own workplaces, sourcing communities and the marketplace. #HereToBeHeard has spotlighted that there is more work to be done, building on the strong foundations we've been creating with our Associates and our network of stakeholders.

In our workplaces, we are progressing toward our ambition of 100% gender-balanced business leadership teams. Gender Balanced is defined as 40 – 60% of any one gender, in Leadership Teams with five or more Associates. Currently, 41% of Mars leaders are women and we have advanced the number of gender-balanced leadership teams from 43 to 50% over the past year. To ensure we continue to deliver equal pay for equal work for male and female Associates across our global businesses, we're regularly reviewing our pay practices. Additionally, we're improving a range of family support benefits such as more paid parental leave in the U.S. and the UK, as well as actively exploring ways to enhance parental leave support globally. In 2020, our Banfield Pet Hospitals expanded its emergency assistance fund, the Better Together Fund to include grants that support Mars Veterinary Health Associates in situations of domestic violence.

Moving forward we will continue progressing against our gender-balanced leadership team target and increase representation in our talent pipelines. We're launching standards for diverse interview panels and candidate slates, and we are reviewing our leadership development programs to enhance their focus on inclusion and diversity. Our flagship Women Leading Purposefully course - designed by Harvard University - has already reached over 200 women. We will continue to expand this program and are also building tailored programs to reach 2,000+ women. Mars is piloting male allyship programs to increase inclusion competencies and to scale up these efforts more effectively. We're also actively exploring new ways to strengthen accountability of leaders and Associates to deliver on our inclusion and diversity priorities.



In sourcing communities, we have reached thousands of women with cash, food, personal protective equipment, and entrepreneurship training as part of our ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Through our sustainable sourcing strategies, we've reached more than 4,500 women in our Indian mint supply chain with self-help groups. In our cocoa supply chain, we've invested with KIT to inform a robust gender strategy using insights from their Empathy Report to reach women in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Indonesia. We've also hired a new lead for supplier diversity, as we accelerate our support for underrepresented groups, including women who own and operate businesses in our supply chains.

Moving forward we are committing to spend \$1 billion with diverse suppliers by 2025, including a \$500 million focus on women-led suppliers. We've joined the global WeConnect network and sit on the Leadership Advisory Council in the EU to support our procurement teams around the world as we drive toward this goal. We're also working to better understand how we can best support more training and innovation for women-owned businesses across supply chains as well as deepen our focus on gender inclusive sourcing strategies at origin in key raw materials starting with cocoa, shea, mint, palm oil and fish, where relevant.

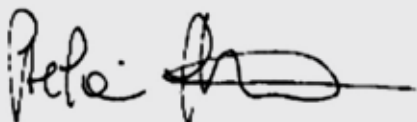
And in the marketplace, we're taking action with our brands, bringing attention to topics such as motherhood, gender equity, and intersectional representation. Ben's Original™ is inviting everyone around the table, featuring single mothers and their families as well as challenging norms such as who is doing the cooking. In the UK, MALTESERS® is shining light on maternal mental health through their #TheMassiveOvershare #LoveBeatsLikes campaigns with over 75,000 visits to the support website for information and resources to date.

DOVE®/GALAXY® has put women empowerment as a key part of its cocoa sustainability efforts. The brand is championing women's empowerment through #IChoose, an anthem written and performed by women in the Middle East & Africa and invited a majority female team to develop and produce its campaign in China. In the US, we recently announced a scheme in conjunction with the Bentonville Film Festival Foundation to give opportunity to female and other diverse filmmakers in collaboration with M&Ms®. And in the UK, we have evolved our SNICKERS® partnerships with the English & Scottish Football Associations to include sponsorship of their women's teams too.

Moving forward we are deepening our work on the representation and portrayal of characters in our advertising. Already a founding member, we recently joined the executive leadership of UN Women's Unstereotype Alliance, and we are committed to publishing the results of the annual audit of our marketing with the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media. We're also exploring how our branded sponsorships of sporting events and other properties can support more gender equity – through what we support and how we engage with sponsored athletes, influencers, and celebrities.

None of this work is possible alone and we're continuing to expand the targeted expert organizations, nonprofit groups, government associations and other partners we work with to drive more impact together, at greater scale and faster pace.

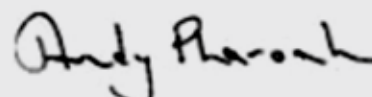
The world we want tomorrow starts with how we do business today. The #HereToBeHeard campaign has elevated our focus on a world where everyone can thrive and where society is inclusive – and we're committed to continue taking action to make that a reality.



Stefanie Straub
Vice President & General
Counsel



Eric Minvielle
Vice President, People &
Organization



Andy Pharoah
Vice President, Corporate
Affairs & Sustainability



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BSR™ is an organization of sustainable business experts that works with its global network of the world's leading companies to build a just and sustainable world. BSR™ provides insight, advice, and collaborative initiatives to help you see a changing world more clearly, create long-term business value, and scale impact. BSR's Consumer Sectors team works with member companies in food and agriculture, across the spectrum of sustainable business issues, including diversity, equity and inclusion and women's empowerment.

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