

Women's Leadership Development Survey



Organizational size of respondents

- Fewer than 1,000 employees – 34%
- 1,000 to 4,999 employees – 23%
- 5,000 to 24,999 employees – 23%
- 25,000 or more employees – 20%

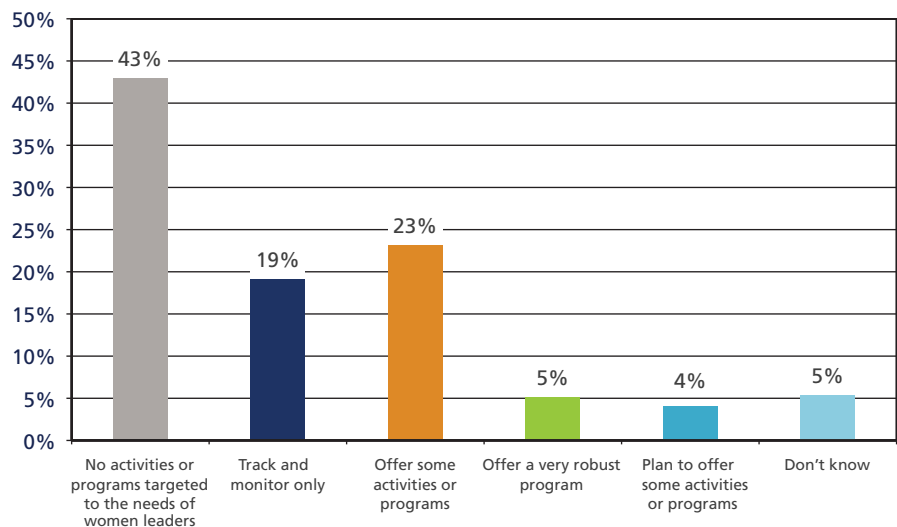
Most employers lack a strategy for developing women leaders, Mercer survey shows

Despite organizations' efforts to achieve a diverse workforce, the majority – 70% – do not have a clearly defined strategy or philosophy for the development of women into leadership roles, according to the Women's Leadership Development Survey conducted by Mercer in conjunction with *Talent Management* and *Diversity Executive* magazines.

The survey, which was conducted in September 2010, received responses from more than 540 human resource, talent management and diversity leaders at organizations across the US. The survey included a broad cross-section of industries, with health care, for-profit services, government/public sectors, financial/banking and high-tech/telecommunications organizations representing the largest segments. Key survey findings were initially presented at The Women's Conference, held Oct. 24-26, 2010, in Long Beach, Calif.

According to the survey, more than two-fifths (43%) of the employers surveyed indicated that their organizations do not offer any activities or programs targeted to the needs of women leaders. While 23% of organizations said they offer some activities or programs, another 19% said their approach to the development of women leaders is to track and monitor progress only. Just 5% said they currently provide a robust program, and 4% said they plan to add programs and activities in the future. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: General approach to the development of women leaders





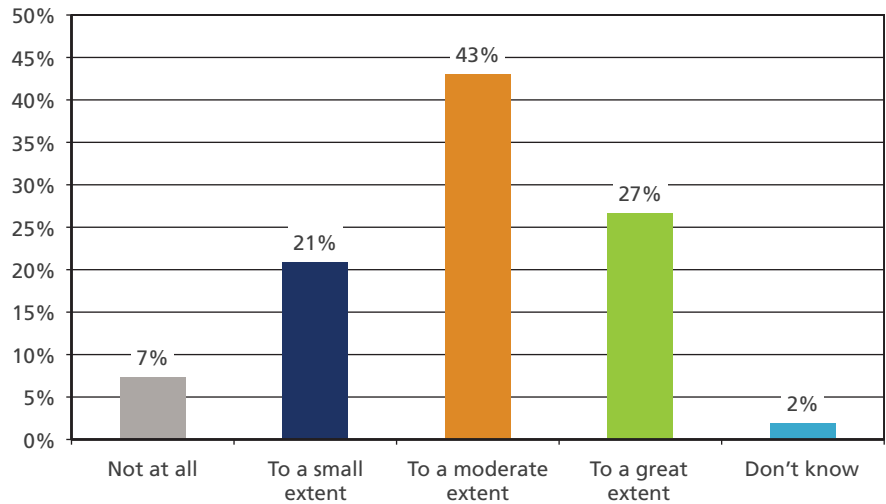
Biggest challenge woman face regarding development as leaders

- "There is not enough recognition that this targeted development is important."
- "Lack of visibility and exposure, as well as executive sponsorship."
- "(Lack of) opportunities to move to positions across the company to gather a broader depth of experience."
- "Traditional values held at the top of the organization maintain an organization resistant to change."
- "(Lack of) leadership support regarding specific policies targeted for women."
- "Most women in our organization struggle to be able to relocate or work on a long-term global assignment, due to spouse work commitments and inability to travel."

Representative quotes from survey respondents

When asked how well the organizational climate supports the development of women, 43% of respondents said their organizations support development to a moderate extent, 27% said to a great extent, 21% said to a small extent and 7% said not at all. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: How well organizational climate supports the development of women leaders



"A few decades ago, many US organizations offered specific programs and activities to support women as they advanced into management and leadership roles," said Colleen O'Neill, PhD, a Senior Partner and leadership expert in Mercer's Human Capital consulting business. "Today, as our survey shows, there's less certainty about what's appropriate and what's effective with respect to women's leadership development. Additionally, when companies do take steps to support women, they often focus narrowly on tactics like flexible work schedules. That may be a good starting point, but it's certainly not a complete solution."

When asked about the types of programs currently offered, specifically targeted to the needs of women leaders, the top programs listed by employers were flexible work arrangements, diversity sourcing/recruiting, coaching and mentoring. These same four programs were identified by respondents as most effective in developing women leaders. See Figure 3

Figure 3: What's offered, and what's viewed as effective

Programs most frequently offered today to support women's leadership development	Programs considered most effective today to supporting women's leadership development
1. Flexible work arrangements options	1. Flexible work arrangements options
2. Diversity sourcing and recruiting	2. Diversity sourcing and recruiting
3. Coaching	3. Mentoring
4. Mentoring	4. Coaching



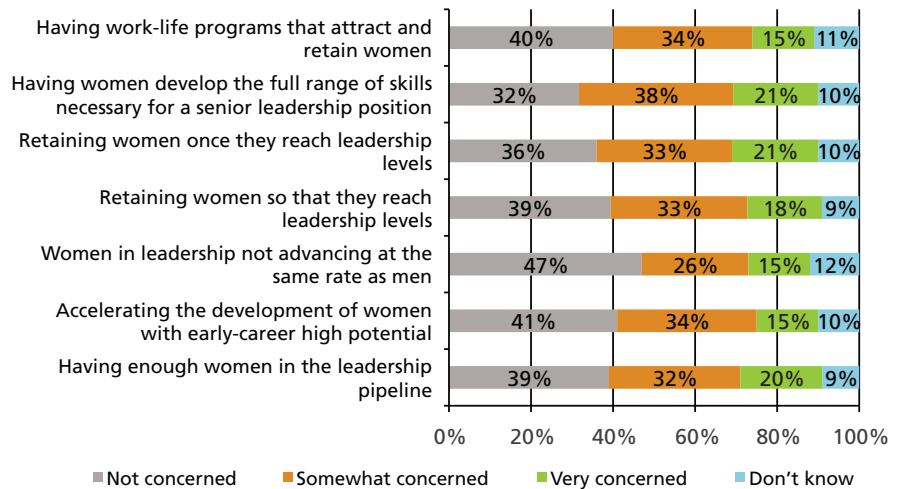
One wish for improving the development of women

- “Provide more opportunities for emerging leaders to get visibility and face time with the executive team.”
- “Acknowledgement of the need and specific plans for developing women in leadership. Saying nothing currently says ‘we don’t care.’”
- “Better understanding of valid programs that are economically sensible and add value.”
- “Creating a mentoring/coaching program specifically designed to develop women leaders.”
- “We need planned and intentional rotation assignments for identified female high potentials.”
- “Have our women feel there is a place at the leadership table for them.”

Representative quotes from survey respondents

Additionally, the organizations surveyed were asked about their current level of concern regarding various aspects of women in leadership. Only three aspects garnered a response of “very concerned” from one-fifth or more of the respondents: having women develop the full range of skills necessary for a senior leadership position (21%), retaining women once they reach leadership levels (21%) and having enough women in the leadership pipeline (20%). See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Organizational concern about women’s leadership development



“The majority of respondents indicated that their organizations were somewhat concerned or not at all concerned about most aspects of women’s leadership development,” said Dr. O’Neill. “That’s a fairly surprising finding. It represents quite a shift from what we’ve seen historically, and it doesn’t fit with organizations’ concerns today around diversity.”

Identifying the obstacles

Survey respondents were asked to identify the top three factors preventing women in their organizations’ leadership talent pools from advancing to the next level. The leading responses, from among 13 choices, were lack of an executive sponsor (43%), followed by insufficient breadth of experience (36%) and work-life balance (31%). See Figure 5.

Figure 5: Factors most likely to prevent women from advancing



For more information about the survey or Mercer's leadership consulting services, contact:

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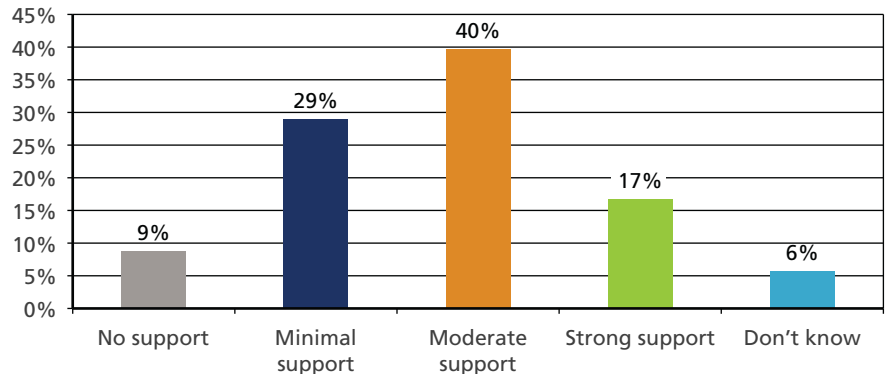
Similarly, respondents said that the biggest challenges women face regarding their development as leaders within the organization pertain to lack of role models, lack of opportunities for career advancement and lack of support from upper management. And while their organizations may not have expressed significant concern about women's leadership development, many respondents indicated their own desire to improve the effectiveness of their programs through actions such as developing formal mentoring/coaching programs for women leaders, identifying high-potential leaders early in their careers and promoting greater awareness of women's leadership development at the board and executive levels.

"Most respondents seemed to feel strongly that their organizations should pay greater attention to this issue," Dr. O'Neill said. "Some, however, were adamant that women be treated no differently than men from a leadership development perspective."

Assessing women's perceptions

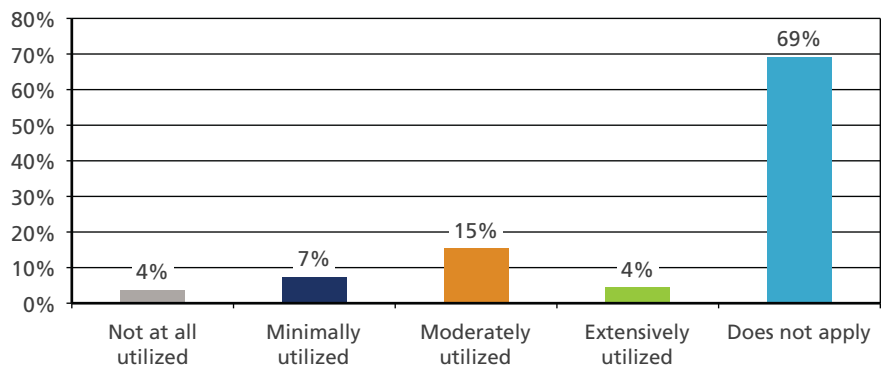
Survey respondents said the women in their organizations believe the organization provides only moderate (40%) or minimal (29%) support for women leaders. Just 17% said women perceived the organizational support to be strong. See Figure 6.

Figure 6: Women's perceptions of organizational support for women leaders



Among the approximately 30% of respondents who said their organizations provided some type of gender-specific development or leadership programs, about half reported that the programs were moderately utilized by women in the organization. Far fewer said the programs were extensively utilized. Some said the programs were not utilized at all or were minimally utilized. See Figure 7.

Figure 7: Current utilization of gender-specific development or leadership programs



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