

WHITE PAPER | JUNE 2021

THE STORY OF US:

2021 Evolution of Women in the Retirement Industry



INTRODUCTION

An assessment of the attitudes and behaviors of women in the retirement industry show there are bright spots in their roles, relationships and compensation. However, there is plenty of opportunity for both employers and employees to emphasize and create structures around the things that matter most.

In the fall of 2020, WE Inspire. Promote. Network. (WIPN) and research firm Escalent, along with sponsor OneDigital Retirement + Wealth, embarked on a first-of-its-kind assessment of the attitudes, experiences, behaviors and perceptions women in the retirement industry hold about their roles, relationships, and compensation.

The findings from the research point to a range of achievements for women, their direct leadership and organizations that support them that is encouragingly positive. Specifically, the research highlights bright spots in the areas of job satisfaction, achieving goals and working with other women. Where the positive experiences are not broadly shared, the research identifies opportunities for improvement.



KEY RESEARCH INSIGHTS:

- Understanding career progression is critical to satisfaction and retention – only half of the women surveyed feel their career path looks promising.
- Connections yield new opportunities – networking helped one in three respondents get jobs via work connections.
- Diverse employees stay when inclusion is achieved – one in five of the women of color surveyed consider leaving their employer due to company culture.
- Skillsets may grow while paychecks do not – compensation does not appear to keep pace with responsibilities for more than half of those surveyed.
- Burnout puts businesses at risk – three in five of the respondents are not highly satisfied with their work-life balance.

Recognizing the Importance of the Pathway to Success

For women, satisfaction with career performance comes mostly from having a promising career path, more so than reaching the highest possible position.

Unfortunately, only half (51%) agree that their career path looks promising, representing one of the largest gaps in this research between defining and achieving success.

Two in five women have considered leaving their employer over the past year due to a lack of opportunities for advancement, and one in five consider this often – statistics that should concern all employers.

Further, one in three don't believe they have the education and training needed to advance, demonstrating there may be a need for employers to revisit training offerings to employees.

Employers also need to clearly communicate career paths for all levels to enable upward growth for those who seek it.

OUR TAKE

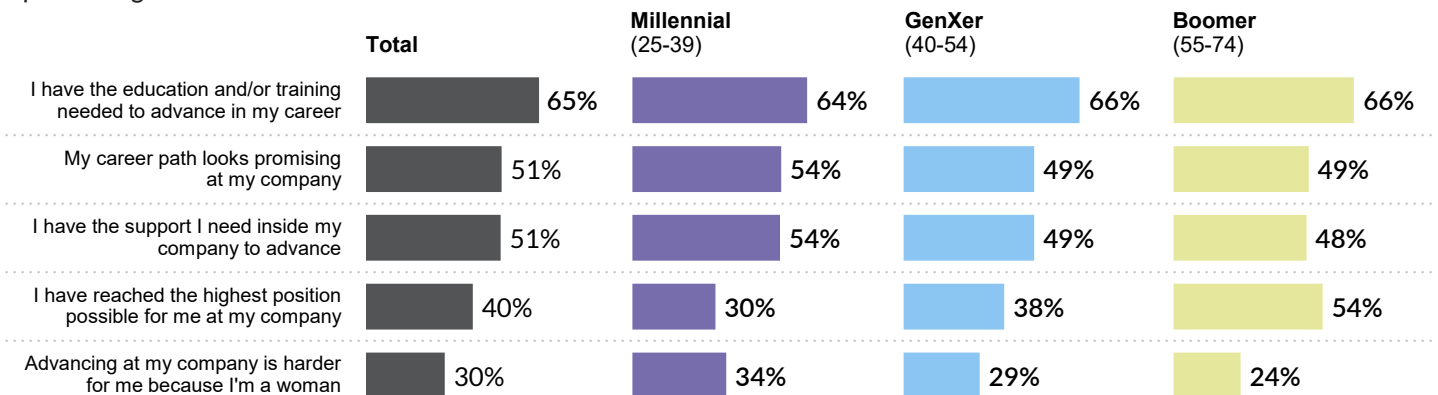
It's critical for employees to pursue long-term objectives while managing short-term tasks to future-proof themselves. It's common to think of success in outcomes, but that minimizes the importance of the journey.

"It took me much longer to get to my pay level than others. I feel like many factors were involved, but being a female didn't help. I wasn't part of the boys' club when managers were looking to promote or pass clients down. I had to prove every bit of my skill, talent and professionalism over and over again to gain the respect that I deserved the whole time."

Multi-racial GenXer, working for an asset management firm

CURRENT JOB

Top-3 Box Agreement



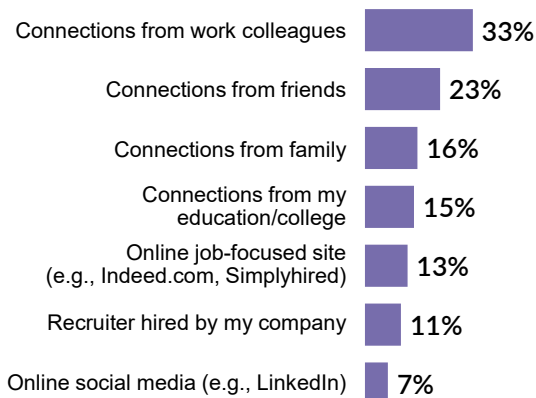
A promising career path is the #1 driving factor in satisfaction with career performance.

Amplifying the Perceived Value of Networking and Mentorship

While some may question the need for women's networking groups, the data show they are needed and that they help women advance. One in three of the survey respondents got their current job through work connections — the most common resource by far — while seven in ten feel networking played a role in getting to their current level of career achievement.

Not only can networking benefit women by getting jobs, but mentor/sponsor connections can help organizations grow and retain top female talent.

RESOURCES THAT HELPED GET CURRENT JOB



A key component of networking is having formal and/or informal mentor or sponsor relationships. Having an identified individual committed to each woman's success enables a range of benefits including networking introductions, counsel and connecting to opportunities.

Mentors and sponsors can improve a less-than-promising career path, enable women to better know what they're worth and break down the biggest perceived barrier to success at work: a lack of available opportunities.



OUR TAKE

The data suggest there is a need for a more concerted effort on the part of employers to create more access to these networks and mentorship programs for women of color and to encourage all female employees to seek out mentors or sponsors.

“A mentor gives you knowledge about how to grow in your life and career—a sponsor ‘sits on the same side of the table’ with you in that growth. A sponsor has a vested interest in your success.”

White/Caucasian GenXer, working for a broker/dealer

Mentorships and sponsorships are both valuable, but women agree that a sponsor is more likely to help with advancement than a mentor (64% and 47%, respectively). The value of having a mentor or sponsor is recognized by many – as not having one is among the top five barriers to success – but unfortunately, only 17% of respondents have a sponsor, though this increases to 42% of women with a mentor.

The lack of mentors and sponsors is a particular concern among women of color where almost a quarter (24%) cite lack of a mentor/sponsor as a barrier to career growth.

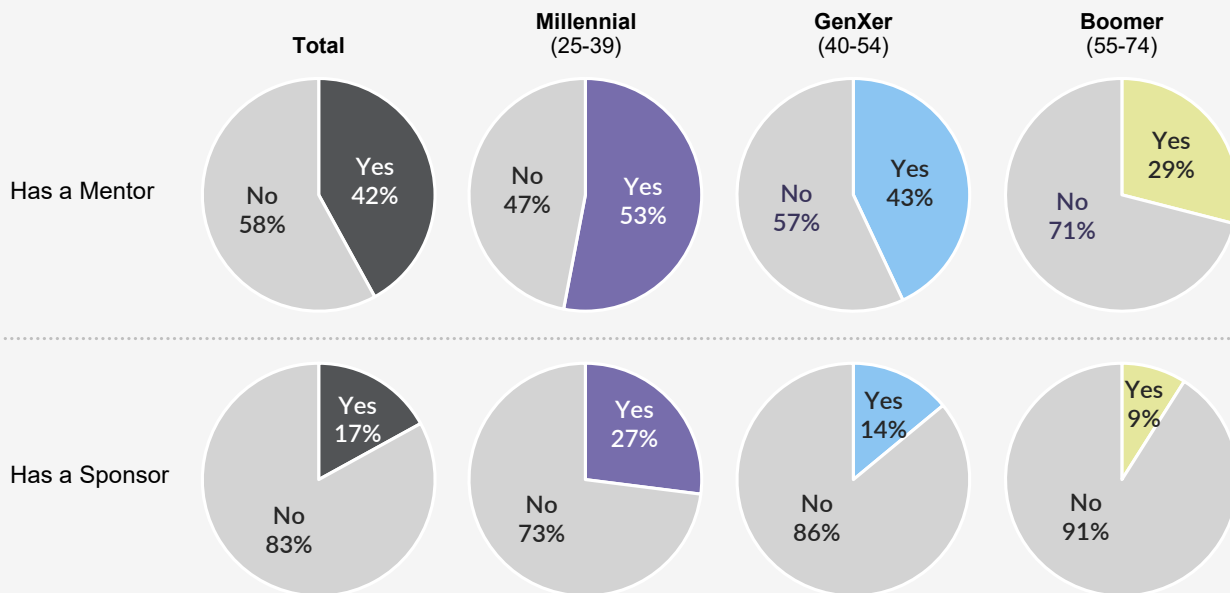
Women of color who do not have a mentor say that this is often due to an inability to find one who is a fit.

Additionally, the data show that a significantly higher proportion of women of color feel excluded from formal and informal networks at work as compared to white women.

“A sponsor is an advocate for you and can get you involved in things, introduce you to people, help navigate your organization. But, a mentor is both an advocate and a teacher. A mentor can help you identify your goals and objectives and how to reach them. They can get involved in your projects and make recommendations. They can suggest additional training you might need. I feel like a mentor is a more in-depth role that both individuals need to commit to. A mentor doesn't need to be a part of your organization.”

White/Caucasian Boomer, working for an asset management firm

CAREER GUIDANCE AVAILABILITY



Bridging Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Job Satisfaction

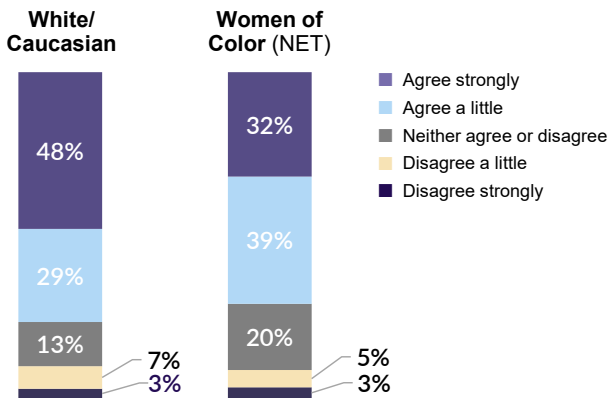
Women of color not only express higher levels of dissatisfaction with their careers, but they also bear the dual burdens of having to “represent” their race and ethnicity and they’re not able to bring their “full selves” to work.

Together, these factors can serve to inhibit career growth and a sense of belonging. These sentiments are not just home-spun, but rather stem from the cultures of many workplaces where employers’ actions often do not align to their stated values, even when formal diversity, equity & inclusion efforts exist.

WORKPLACE CULTURE & INCLUSION Top-3 Box Agreement

	Total	White/ Caucasian	Women of Color (NET)
Reluctant to bring up issues that concern me in fear it will affect chances of promotion	18%	15%	27%
Colleagues expect me to represent the point of view of my gender	15%	14%	20%
Feel excluded from informal networks within organization	14%	13%	19%
Colleagues expect me to represent the point of view of my race/ethnicity	14%	11%	23%
Feel excluded from formal networks within organization	11%	9%	22%

COMPANY'S ACTIONS ALIGNED WITH VALUES/COMMITMENTS



“I reached out to my manager at the very beginning of the year to make sure I was on track with my goals and objectives. She was very dismissive and very unhelpful.”

Working in a consulting or advisory firm,
Black/African-American Millennial



An encouraging finding is that half of all women, regardless of race or ethnicity, believe their goals/aspirations seem achievable, their career paths look promising and they have the education/training needed to advance in their career. Similarly, more than half also agree that they have a clear idea of what they are worth and should be paid.

An inclusive work environment also extends to age and the study shows that feelings of success and barriers to it differ by generation.

For example, Gen X women are the least likely to have high satisfaction in their career job performance. They cite the inability to navigate workplace politics and low visibility of their work as areas where a mentor could help them.

“My manager is competitive, and will not advocate for me...Although I merit a promotion and raise based on contributions and analysis and problem solving, my professional weaknesses are my soft skills, such as presence, confidence and persuasive communication skills. I am working on my soft skills, and will need to change companies since my manager is not supportive.”

Working for a Private Bank/Trust Company,
Asian GenXer



OUR TAKE

Despite similar perceptions between women of color and white women in some areas, improvements can still be made as a whole to further strengthen these beliefs.

Advocating for women of color to have mentors in their organizations may be one way to help workplaces follow through on promises of opportunity and inclusion. This is important since women of color (more than white women) are noting the lack of mentorship/sponsorship as a high barrier to their success.

In contrast, Millennial women identify areas they can control as some of their biggest barriers: being uncertain of what their goals are and caring too much about what others think.

Similar to women of color, they are also changing their behavior, appearance and communication style more than others, changes that contribute to an overall sense of uncertainty and identity challenges.

These are areas where a mentor or sponsor could shine, though Millennials also see a barrier in the availability of resources that can help them navigate their careers.

Gen X women are the least likely to have high satisfaction in their career role performance.

BIGGEST BARRIERS TO SUCCESS AT WORK

	Total	Millennial (25-39)	GenXer (40-54)	Boomer (55-74)	White/Caucasian	Women of Color (NET)
Availability of opportunities	26%	24%	28%	24%	26%	27%
Inability to navigate workplace politics	19%	18%	26%	13%	20%	15%
Visibility of my work	18%	24%	19%	12%	18%	19%
Lack of mentorship/sponsorship	17%	16%	20%	14%	15%	24%
Poor communication skills among your team/manager	16%	21%	16%	11%	16%	17%
Uncertainty in what my goals are	16%	24%	16%	8%	15%	18%
Lack of relationship with decision-makers	15%	15%	18%	11%	15%	14%
Caring too much what others think	14%	21%	12%	9%	14%	13%
Rigid company culture	13%	14%	15%	8%	13%	11%
Availability of resources for work	11%	16%	9%	9%	11%	12%

Unpacking Compensation

As an industry that's widely known to have higher pay relative to other industries, the retirement industry's key driver of interest in the field is compensation, though not the only one. Having the necessary skillsets and a general interest in the industry were the two most common drivers, with compensation coming in third.

While there are plenty of women who feel content with their salary, over half believe theirs has not kept pace with their experience and responsibilities. Further, fewer than four in ten (37%) believe they are paid equally to men at their company in a similar role.

RESOURCES USED TO DETERMINE IF CURRENT COMPENSATION IS APPROPRIATE



Compensation frequently has a cloud of secrecy hanging over it, a lack of transparency, as companies keep internal as well as external data to themselves. Thus, the relationship to compensation is largely based on perception as over one in five women have never researched this issue before.

“I think I am paid a tiny bit less than men in my role, but I have no way to prove this.”

Working for a private bank/trust company,
White/Caucasian Boomer Woman

Additionally, some research approaches like talking to colleagues may not paint a complete picture. Perhaps most striking is the prevalence of inward-facing information-gathering approaches — asking a manager, asking HR for salary bands — that keep the frame of reference solely within the organization instead of at a market level.

Another self-imposed challenge women face is that only about half (54%) of them are willing to negotiate their compensation. Those who do, seek raises at a critical point in their career.

OUR TAKE

“WIPN advocates for every woman's right to be paid her full value. The diverse responses to our survey indicate while some women have what they want, others have not yet attained equitable pay. WIPN is one resource for women to attain pay equity.”

Jennifer Norr, WIPN President

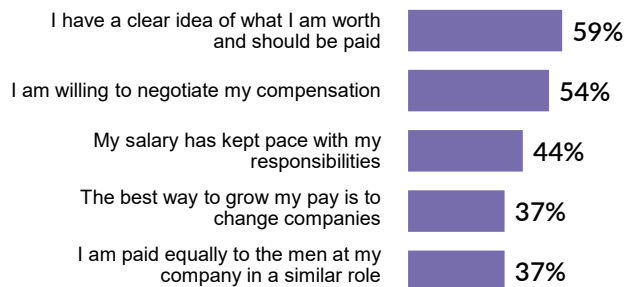
UNPACKING COMPENSATION

Thus, many cite the paradox of having stronger negative feelings about asking for a raise and not getting it than positive feelings from asking for a raise and getting it.

Recognizing and rewarding women employees promptly for excellent work encourages satisfaction and loyalty to the company, as about four in ten women currently feel the best way to grow their pay is to change companies.

VIEW OF COMPENSATION

Top-3 Box Agreement



"I am definitely paid less than my peers. Compared to others in my role at other companies, but also compared to others in my role at my current company. I have not jumped around companies often which I believe to be a major factor ... I also believe having been out on 3 maternity leaves in the last 5 years has been a very clear detractor to my promotion schedule; in fact, I missed a promotion last year with the comment "you will not be able to get enough face-time before the end of the year" (baby was due in early Sept)."

Working for an asset management firm,
White/Caucasian Millennial



"The pay at our company is incredible. It allowed me to replace my income in my old career to transition into financial services."

White/Caucasian GenXer, working
for a broker/dealer

Despite ongoing challenges with salary perceptions such as transparency, there are certainly bright spots to celebrate for women in the retirement industry. The women in this study are overall doing well compared to women in other industries that typically require a college education.

Although the retirement industry still has a way to go to overcome perceptions of gender pay equity, our survey shows that it remains an industry that allows women to live comfortable lifestyles.

Employees should seek to benchmark their salaries outside of their organization to stay aware of what they are worth, whereas employers may want to explore the value of benchmarking salaries as a recruitment strategy.

Challenging a ‘Fitting It All in’ Perspective

One out of every three women places work-life balance as a top factor that makes them feel successful at work.

Despite this, it’s an area with the lowest satisfaction. While seven out of ten are satisfied with their career job performance, only about half are satisfied with their work-life balance, making it the area of least satisfaction among seven areas tested.

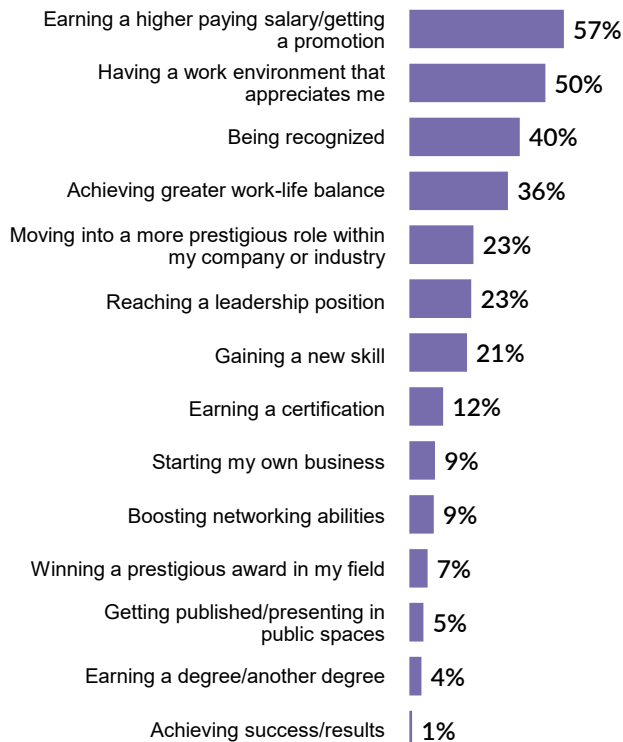
It’s also one of the few areas where older women do not have meaningfully higher satisfaction than younger women.

There are clear signs of women facing a heavier day-to-day load when adding in their personal responsibilities.

3 in 5
are not highly satisfied
with work-life balance.

FACTORS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL SUCCESSFUL AT WORK

Ranked in Top 3



OUR TAKE

The struggle for work-life balance is well-documented, with some workplace experts suggesting that true “balance” is unachievable. However, that doesn’t prevent it from being a desirable goal.

CHALLENGING A 'FITTING IT ALL IN' PERSPECTIVE

Women in a partnership often dedicate more hours than their partners to caretaking and household management—a point commonly discussed as reality for most women and one that still holds true in the retirement industry.

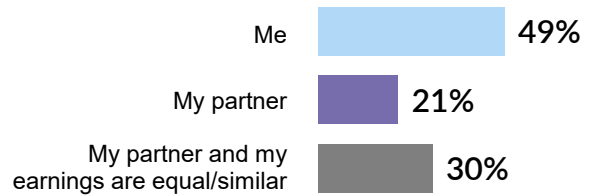
Importantly, only about half of these women are satisfied with their approach to caretaking, confirming this isn't the desired household division of labor.

When taken with the fact that nearly half of the women in a partnership are the primary earners, there is room to improve in the search for "balance."

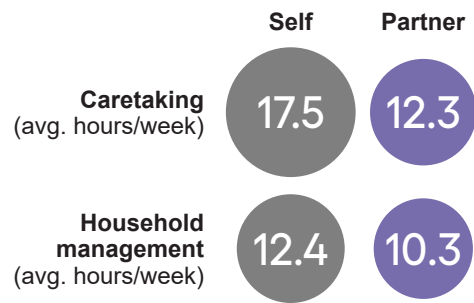
Fortunately, we do see that 39% often take time for activities to support their wellbeing, and 85% do this at least sometimes. While time available may be scarce, many women are still finding opportunities for important self-care.

Providing remote options/schedule flexibility can help support caregiving women to excel in their careers, while also allowing more personal time.

PRIMARY EARNER IN PARTNERSHIP

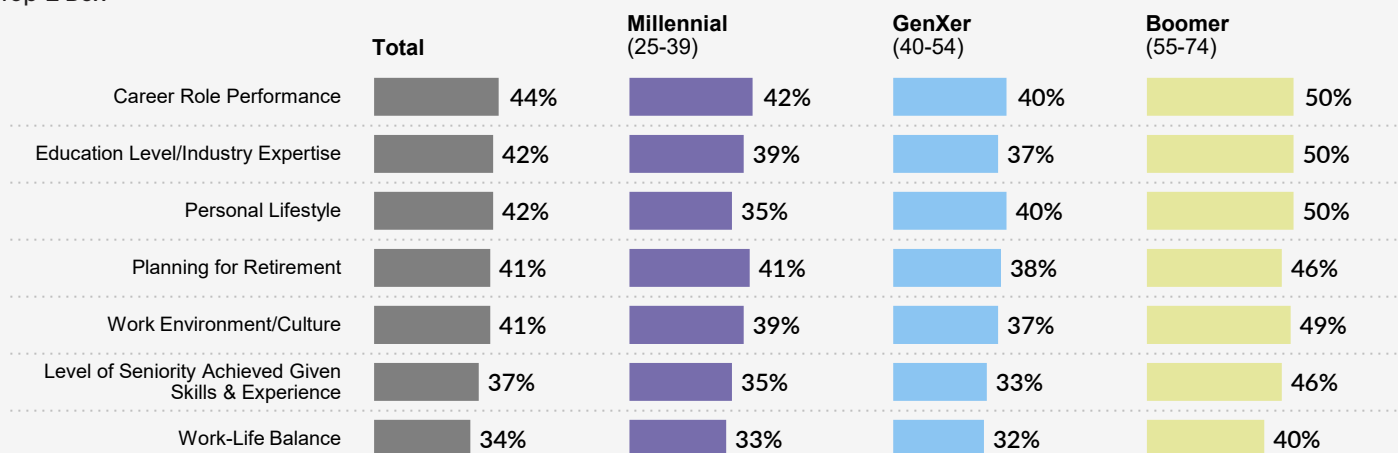


RESPONSIBILITIES IN PARTNERSHIP



SATISFACTION IN LIFE AREAS

Top-2 Box



Now What: Opportunities for Women and Their Employers

Looking across the research findings, women employees and employers alike should ask themselves questions in three key areas:

1. TRANSPARENCY

What does it take to advance at the company? How does pay compare between experience, potential, gender, race, etc.?

2. CONNECTION

What formal and informal networks are available to foster critical networking and mentor/sponsor relationships?

3. AUTHENTICITY

How can diverse opinions be more easily and safely shared? How can more voices be heard? What steps can be taken for all employees to bring their authentic selves to work?

Employers and employees should take specific concrete actions to improve compensation and ensure other desired outcomes are achieved. These include:

EMPLOYERS

Carefully craft job descriptions and use hiring practices that value skills and potential, in addition to education and past roles.

Align training and career path communications to business needs and look at them within the context of what women are actually experiencing.

Create a more formalized approach to talent development that relies less on informal networks. This can help give visibility to women to help them develop. An example could be by delegating projects with senior leader visibility to more diverse team members to create a proving ground for inexperienced members.

Create a formal mentor matching program within your organization and clearly communicate to employees how to engage. Focus on finding mentors for women of color to create more opportunities for success.

Consider creating a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion council/Business Resource Group if one does not already exist, or hosting regular luncheons that support interconnectivity. Efforts should focus on creating a culture of inclusivity where employees can be their authentic selves.

Create formal processes and incentivize goal attainment (if they do not already exist) to:

- Recruit and retain diverse candidates
- Assess performance regularly and with transparent measurement protocols so that female employees know that they are valued and seen
- Create work/life balance and greater flexibility to account for greater caretaking roles that fall disproportionately on women; for example, no meeting Fridays, encouraging PTO use, flexibility in work hours

EMPLOYEES

Engage managers in “next steps” conversations about what it takes to move towards goals.

Document and discuss your current contributions and where you want to have an impact – no more head down, work hard, someone will notice behavior. Take an active role in creating opportunities for yourself.

Reach out to your manager about who might be the best fit to become your mentor/sponsor to help you grow in your career. Or volunteer to become that role model for someone newer in their career.

Be an active participant in conversations in your organization with those who have different life experiences than you.

Find reading materials/podcasts/movies to educate yourself on how to foster diversity & inclusion.

Take the time to evaluate your pay against any standards that may be available in the industry/organization as well as continuously be considering how your compensation (monetary and non-monetary) fits in with your lifestyle.

Make the effort to take time for yourself to recharge despite how challenging it can be to take time off with busy workloads. Include activities that support your well-being (exercise, nutrition, sleep and stress management).



WIPN Can Help Women Succeed

WE Inspire. Promote. Network. (WIPN) is the leading nonprofit retirement industry organization advancing equity and opportunity for women in the retirement industry. With more than 5500 subscribers, 1400 members, and over 30 local chapters nationwide, WIPN membership includes women at all career levels — from entry-level to senior management — representing all segments of the retirement industry including recordkeepers, TPAs, DCIOs, insurance, broker-dealers, RIAs, ERISA attorneys, advisors, consultants, and the broader retirement industry. For more information, visit www.wipn.org.

WE

Inspire each other to achieve our professional goals and personal aspirations through a national network of local chapters.

Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the retirement industry.

Network to share our knowledge and experience, informed by research.



METHODOLOGY

Escalent, partnering with WIPN, conducted an online survey of 806 U.S. women in the retirement industry from September 24, 2020, through November 6, 2020. Survey participants were required to be 18 years or older, not be or have a household member who is employed by the marketing research or advertising industries, and must be working for pay in a qualifying financial services category at least part-time. The data have a margin of error of $\pm 3.45\%$ at the 95% confidence level.