

let's get real about equality

View key findings from the When Women Thrive 2020 Middle East and North Africa (MENA) report

It's time to get real about Diversity and Inclusion in the Middle East and Africa (MENA). Around the world, leaders understand that diverse teams bring value to organizations, and that companies with capabilities to develop an inclusive culture and balanced gender representation substantially outperform those without. Yet, we are still a long way from equality in the workforce.

Globally and across industries, women continue to face challenges — from unequal pay to the absence of support systems and limited access to opportunities for career development and advancement. These are the reasons why, six years ago, we at Mercer founded our When Women Thrive, Businesses Thrive research and consulting practice.

In our research, 88% of respondents from the MENA region report that their organizations are already focused on improving diversity and inclusion. As leaders, we know much more must be done to surmount the challenges women face in our region, including their underrepresentation in leadership roles, executive positions, and management.

So, what will move the needle towards gender equality and true diversity and inclusion?

Our 2020 When Women Thrive research shows that three key components, when put together, will drive real change. Gender equality can thrive at organizations that:

1. Use data-driven analysis and insights to inform decisions and measure success, leveraging assessments, such as Mercer's Internal Labor Market Analysis® methodology.
2. Set clear and visible goals to ensure values don't get diluted.
3. Drive culture and tone from the top: A deep leadership commitment to taking action and engaging employees is another critical part of the solution.

To get a jump on things, here are some of the key findings from the When Women Thrive 2020 MENA report, Let's Get Real About Equality. The upshot: The future is looking brighter. There are optimism - inducing Bright Spots around the world and across organizations. From positive progress to tremendous gains, these areas demonstrate forward momentum with the potential for lasting impact. In other areas, we found clear Learning Curves and Room to Grow.

About the research:

Who

7 million employees

1,157 organizations

Where

54 countries in
6 regions

Asia, Australia and New Zealand,
Europe, Latin America, Middle East
and Africa, North America

What

26+ industries

When

Conducted from

**Sep 23–Nov 22
2019**

Bright spots

From positive progress to tremendous gains, these areas demonstrate forward momentum with potential for lasting traction.

Key highlights	Supporting data	Implications
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Bright future

Women are stepping in and stepping up.



Talent flows (hiring, promotion, and retention rates) for women are favorable/comparable to men.

+3% ↑

increase in representation at both executive and senior-manager levels globally.

We have proof of concept for what it takes to achieve gender equality in the workforce.

Companies can learn from effective practices and must persevere to bridge the gaps.

Take it from the top

Senior executives are leading the charge; boards are getting engaged.



Senior leaders are passionate about making gender equality a business priority.

65%

report senior executives are actively engaged in D&I initiatives and programs vs 66% globally



56%

board engagement overall — vs 57% globally.



Purpose-driven senior leaders are critical for creating long-term culture change. They are seizing the opportunity to drive passion and commitment down through the organization.

Pay equity progress

Tremendous progress has been made.



Companies are adopting more disciplined methods of analyzing pay equity.

Strong upward trends in formal pay equity analysis and accountability measures:

70%



organizations in MENA report pay equity is included as part of their compensation strategy - (74% globally). In MENA 43% organizations are conducting pay equity analysis using a robust statistical approach - vs 56% globally.

Pay equity is a proven driver of current and future representation of women.

Learning curves

Organizations can improve results and impact by identifying, understanding and addressing what's impeding progress.

Key highlights	Supporting data	Implications
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Pushing past parity

Although hiring, promoting and retaining at similar rates is critical, it's not enough to achieve overall organizational parity or effectively change representation.



While talent flows across organizations are now at comparable or at even better levels for women, organizations are not in a position to achieve parity in the near future.



For MENA even with comparable/ favorable talent flows, projections revealed over a **10** year period, female representation is forecasted to increase by a modest **5%** points for the professional level and above.

Achieving parity may require over-indexing, or favoring women, in hiring, advancement and retention efforts.

Hardwiring for an inclusive culture

Overcoming cultural impediments will require "hardwiring" programs, policies and processes that drive equality of opportunity, experience and pay.



Managers are in a unique position to drive inclusion through the utilization of existing resources and through their day-to-day interactions with employees.

Frontline manager engagement in D&I programs and initiatives is **23%** in MENA.

For MENA only **44%** engagement from middle management, which is below the level of senior executive and C-suite involvement.

Effective manager training on implementing policies and initiating meaningful conversations are key to driving acceptance and implementation of D&I efforts.

Getting ahead

Companies say women have equal access to critical roles; the data says otherwise.



Research shows that women who have management and profit and loss (P&L) responsibilities are more likely to advance.

77%

of organizations in MENA say that women have access to the roles that are more likely to lead to advancement into leadership.

However, only **47%** of organizations in MENA say women are equally represented in people-manager roles.

And less than half (**37%**) have equal representation of women in P&L roles in MENA.

Organizations need to understand and align on their criteria for advancement, and then ensure there are equal opportunities for advancement for all employees.

Room to grow

Identifying and understanding areas of improvement will give us the roadmap to keep moving forward.

Key highlights	Supporting data	Implications
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Game plan required

Ability and willingness to track and analyze data affects accurate assessment of root causes, trouble spots and progress.



Although leadership is engaged and confident, there is minimal data-based evidence, strategic planning or dedicated staff.

88%

focus on improving D&I, yet only **44%** track gender representation by career level, and even fewer track hires, promotions and exits by gender.

Only **44%** of organizations in MENA have a documented, multiyear strategy; **51%** set formal, quantitative D&I goals and targets.

There's still a significant need for data-driven, evidence-based decision-making. Actions should be rooted in proof and ladder up to overall business performance.

Care beyond career

Women's health and financial needs and caregiving roles place unique burdens on them.



Although organizations are more committed to gender-based health initiatives than to financial ones, there has not been progress in either area globally.

12%

of organizations in MENA track gender-specific health needs, and **7%** track gender-specific financial wellness.



Supporting the whole person is critical: Financial wellness, health and well-being, and caregiving should be examined holistically — and at higher rates than they are currently — to enable women to thrive both in and outside of the workplace.

Disclosure support needed

Applied correctly, disclosure can enable scalable, consistent implementation of practices, processes and programs that support D&I.



Many organizations do not place a value on investing in or disclosing D&I commitments and data.

Only

13%

of organizations who disclose pay-equity data (**27%** globally)



Greater public disclosure and transparency can accelerate change and advance accountability.