

GENDER INTELLIGENCE REPORT 2023

WHAT IF ... GENDER EQUALITY WAS AN ANSWER TO THE SKILLS SHORTAGE?

Executive Version



WELCOME TO THE GENDER INTELLIGENCE REPORT 2023

The Gender Intelligence Report is a collaboration between Advance and the Competence Centre for Diversity & Inclusion at the University of St.Gallen. The yearly report creates transparency about the development of gender diversity in the Swiss workplace. The 2023 edition is based on analyzing close to 400,000 anonymized employees' HR data, more than 147,000 in management positions, from over 100 Swiss companies and organizations. This is a unique data set in quantity and quality, corresponding to 7.6% of the Swiss workforce.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Progress remains slow**

Across all key performance indicators (KPIs) measuring gender equality in business, there is little progress overall compared to the previous year. Men are still by far overrepresented at all management levels. Starting from near equality in non-management, women's representation drops significantly with each level up, reaching 22% in top management.
- The female leadership pipeline is slightly less leaky**

The female talent pool remains underutilized. On the upside, the pipeline is slightly less leaky than the year before: promotions and hiring have increased by low single-digit percentage points.
- Advance members do better than non-member companies**

Conscious efforts pay off! Advance members perform considerably better than non-members across all gender equality KPIs. The so-called Glass Ceiling is much thinner in Advance members, and their share of women is consistently higher at each management level.
- Employer competition is becoming tougher in the drying labor market**

Not much has changed in the (often rigid) corporate norms (e.g., in how we work, careers are molded and genders split when it comes to organizing professional and private lives). However, the labor market has seen dramatic changes in recent years, with labor shortage being one of the most important challenges. At the same time, employee needs have been changing (especially in younger generations), leading to an increasing mismatch between how we would like to live and work and how we actually do it.
- Exploring "hidden" potentials to help close the skilled labor gap**

With unemployment at a two-decade low, skills shortage at an unprecedented high and a seismic demographic shift as the baby boomers retire, Swiss companies need to radically rethink how they recruit, develop and retain talent. Therefore, this year's report explores how equity win-wins and flexibility gains can enrich the talent pool for a thriving economy.
- Switzerland's got more talent that could be leveraged if ...**

... we changed some of the outlived norms to equalize paid and unpaid work, if we found ways to leverage diverse talent, and we managed to gain efficiencies by moving from rigid to inclusive, flexible, and trust-based work models. These levers could literally unleash 100,000s of additional full-time equivalents.
- More insights and tools for gender equity**

This report offers Executives insights and tools to leverage the potential of gender equity for their business. The detailed version of this report, including an overview of all key performance indicators and industry-specific data is accessible online: www.advance-hsg-report.ch.

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HOW GENDER EQUAL IS SWISS BUSINESS TODAY?

The Gender Intelligence Report measures key performance indicators in all career-relevant dimensions year by year to determine the status quo of gender equality in Swiss Business. This lens allows us to evaluate the development over time and derive targeted recommendations for business leaders, decision makers and policy shapers. Numerous studies have proven that gender equality has a positive impact on the economy and society at large.

Men are still by far overrepresented at all management levels

Starting from being almost equal at the non-management level, the female representation drops significantly as we move to the top. Compared to the previous year¹, there is a slight increase in female representation at almost every level except the critical springboard positions in lower management, where careers are launched, and robust pipeline building needs to start.

Gender representation by management level 2022 – 2023

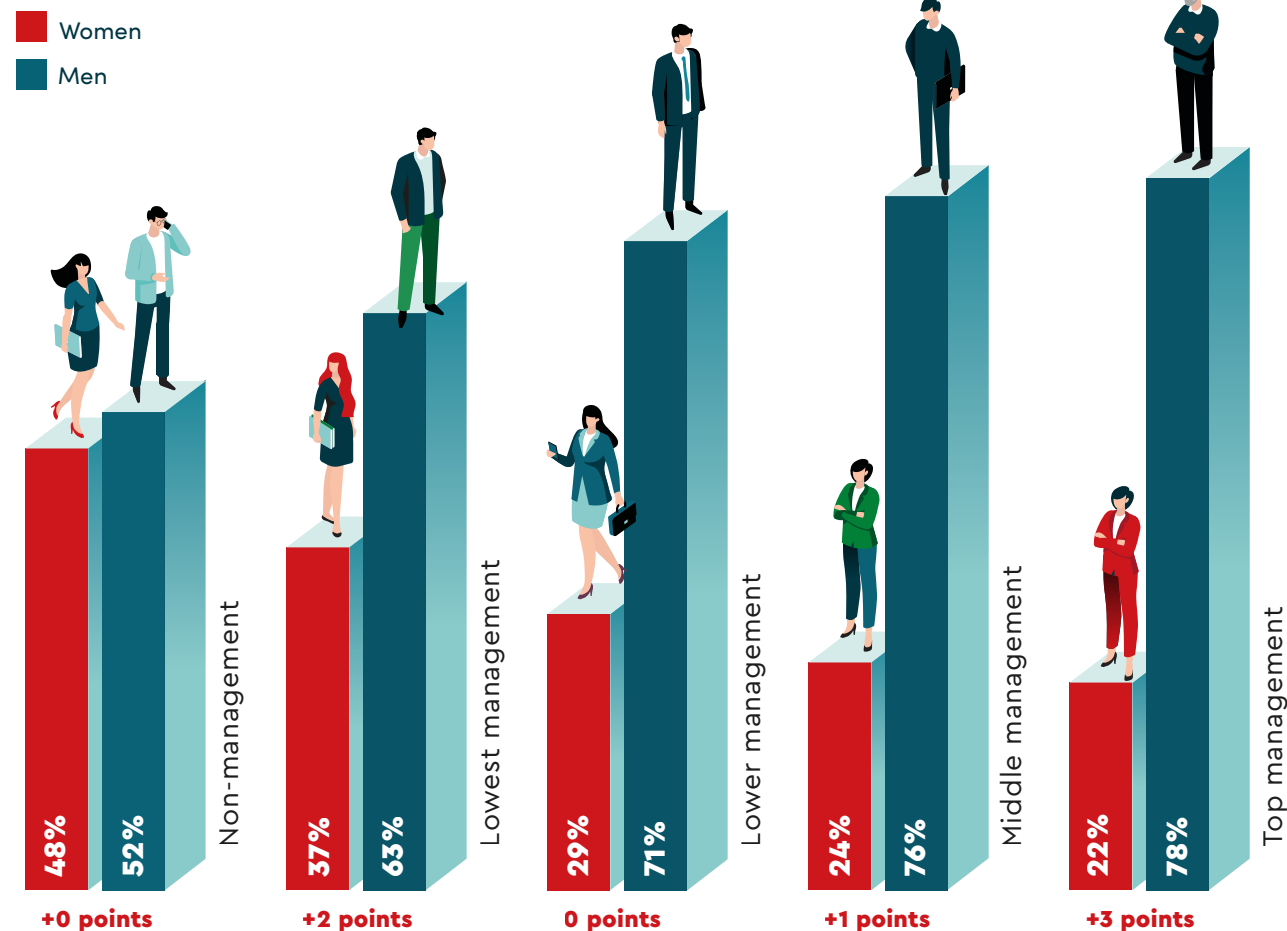


Figure 1: Gender representation by management level

Advance member companies do better than companies that are not a member of Advance

Gender equality efforts pay off! Advance members commit to consciously fostering gender equality in their organizations and benefit from the Advance program.

Advance member companies vs. non-member companies

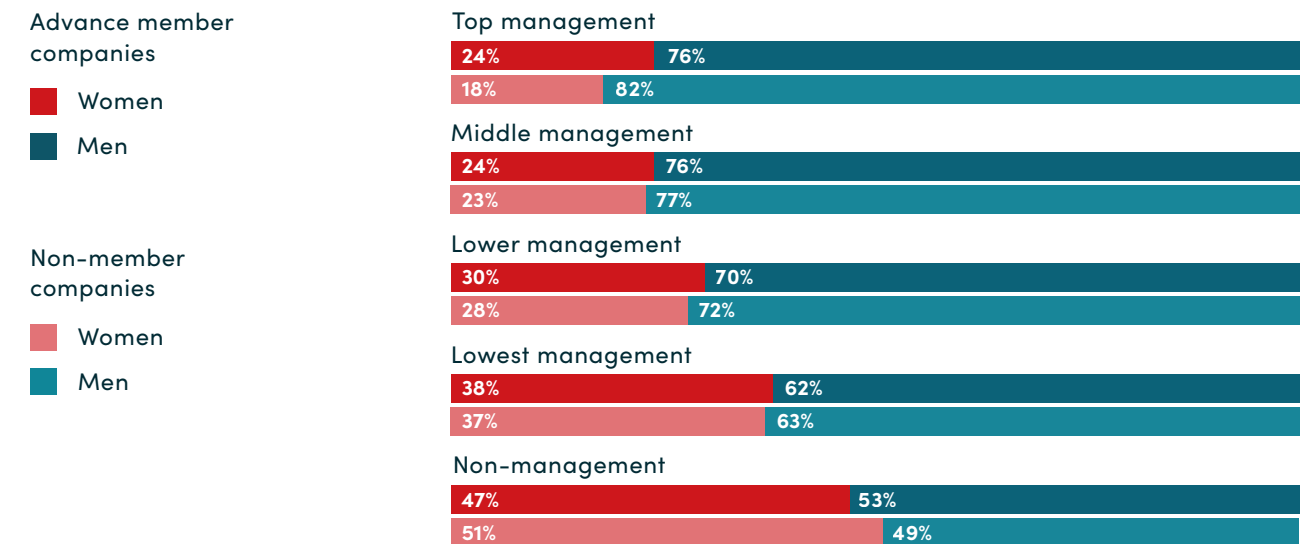


Figure 2: Advance member companies vs. non-member companies

The Glass Ceiling remains thick in Swiss Business

With the ideal value of 1, the Swiss Business world still has a thick Glass Ceiling, with a Glass Ceiling Index (GCI) of 2.4. Compared to 2022, the GCI has not changed¹. Advance members show a considerably better GCI result.

What is the Glass Ceiling Index?

The Glass Ceiling Index shows if women and men have the same opportunities to reach a management position. Ideally, the percentage of women in the total workforce will be the same at all management levels. In this ideal case, the GCI would be 1.

The higher the index, the thicker the Glass Ceiling and the more pronounced the overrepresentation of men. A GCI of 2.4 means that men are overrepresented by 2.4 times in middle and top management compared to the overall workforce.

Glass Ceiling Index – middle and top management

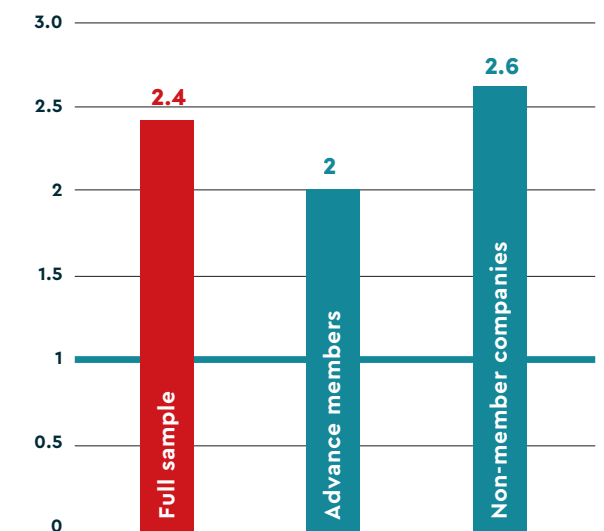


Figure 3: Glass Ceiling Index – middle and top management

¹ Based on a comparison sample with all companies that deliver data year by year

The power gap shows: it's a men's world

Personnel responsibility by gender and management level

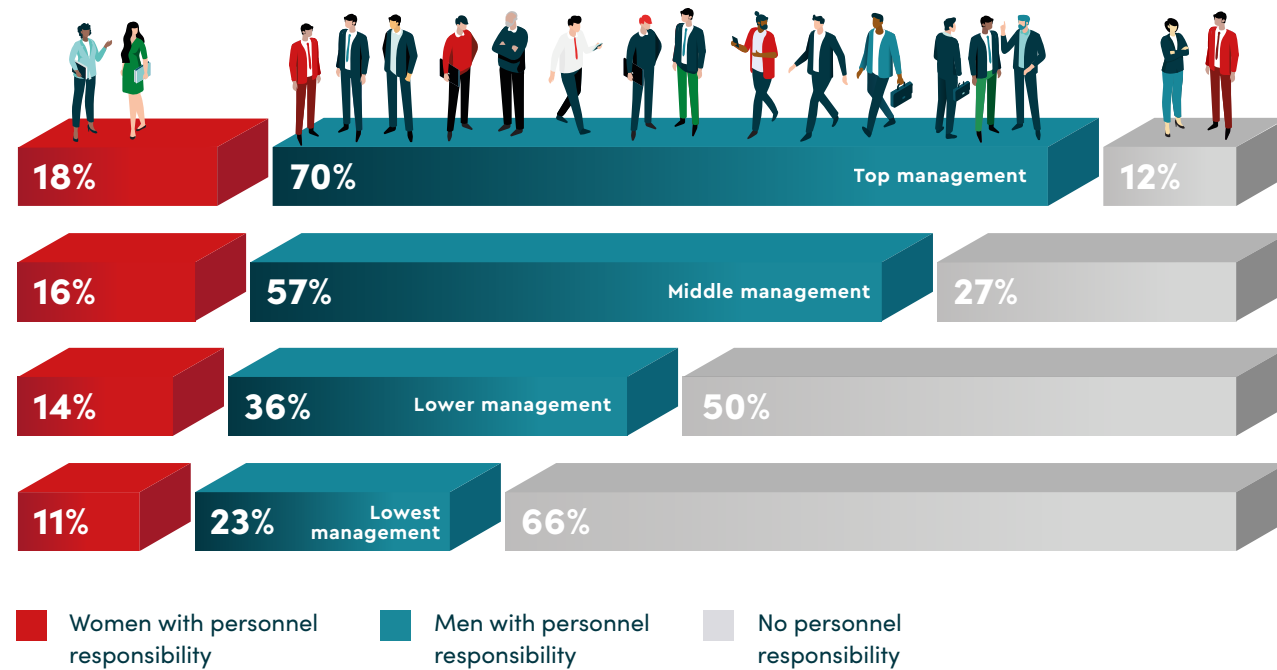


Figure 4: Personnel responsibility by gender and management level

Compared to 2022, the power gap has stayed much the same. Men are still overrepresented in positions with personnel responsibility. Measured by the Power Index, women are underrepresented in such positions at factor 1.8 (compared to their distribution in the overall workforce, full sample). Also, regarding the Power Index, Advance members show a considerably better result with 1.7 compared to non-members with 2.3.

Power Index

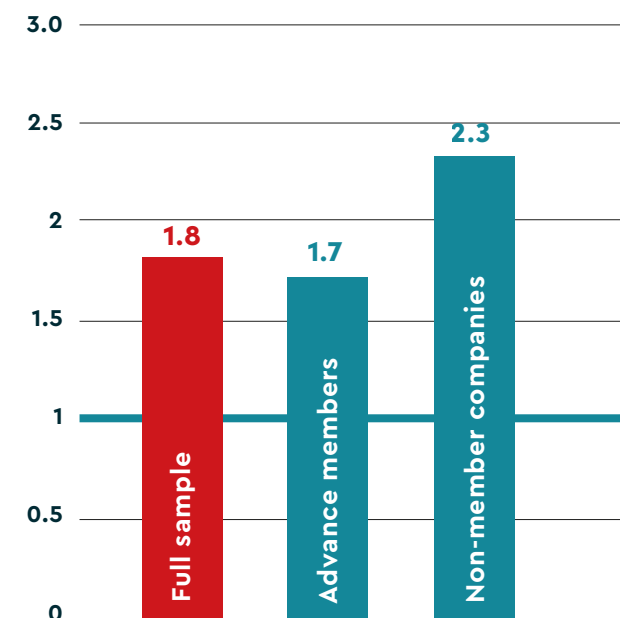


Figure 5: Power Index

What is the Power Index?

The Power Index shows how easy (or difficult) it is for female talent to be promoted or hired into a position with personnel responsibility. Ideally it is at 1, meaning that the percentage of women in positions with personnel responsibility would be the same as their percentage in the overall workforce.

The female leadership pipeline is still broken

The female talent pool remains underutilized, as can be seen by the decreasing proportions at each management level. This is particularly pronounced from non- to lowest/lower management, where the foundation for future leaders is built. On the upside, the pipeline is slightly less leaky than the year before as promotions and hiring have increased by low single-digit percentage points¹.

How to read the pipeline chart?

In order to increase the female representation at a certain management level, the percentage of female hires and promotions should be higher than the current percentage at this level. To utilize the talent pipeline well, the percentage of female promotions should correspond to the percentage of women at the management level below.

Female talent pipeline, including promotions and hiring

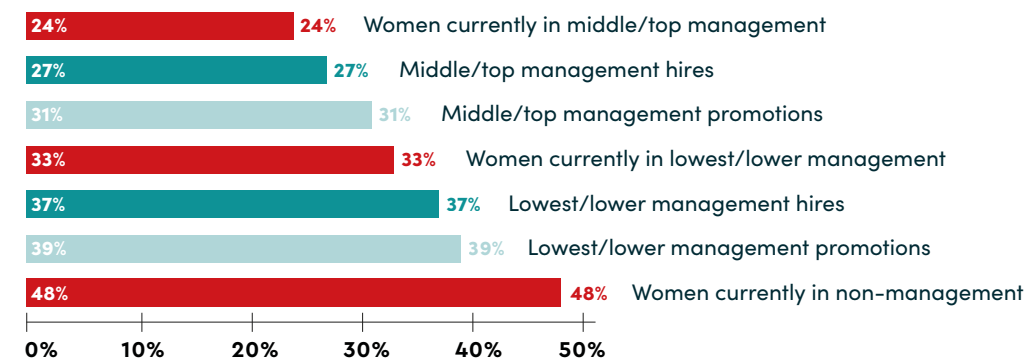


Figure 6: Female talent pipeline including promotions and hiring

Companies are losing most women in their 30s and 40s

In the so-called rush hours of life, companies lose a substantial part of their female talent potential. The majority of women reduce their employment percentages after 30, while men's employment rates even increase. This indicates that the traditional gender norms, with men as full-time breadwinners, are still at play.

Employment percentage by gender and age

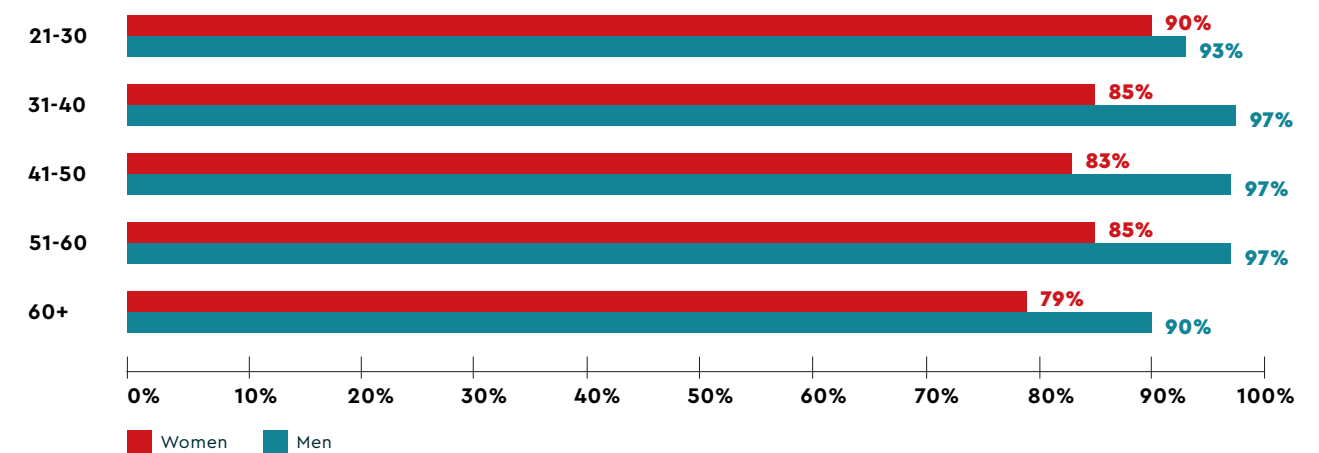


Figure 7: Employment percentage by gender and age

In sum, not much has changed in the gender norms, yet business requirements have been changing fast

Over the last years, the needle of gender equality in Swiss Business has been moving at a very slow pace. In contrast, the labor market has been undergoing rapid changes to the effect that in many industries, business as usual won't be an option anymore. Why?

¹ Based on a comparison sample with all companies that deliver data year by year

THE TRADITIONAL LABOR MARKET IS DRYING UP – FAST!

We live in unprecedented times. Never before have so many positions been vacant for so long. The rapidly worsening skills shortage is perhaps *the* challenge in the Swiss labor market today and comes at a steep cost. Jobs are advertised online for an average of 43 days, and around 1 in 10 jobs are online for more than 100 days. Because jobs stay vacant, the Swiss GDP suffers an annual loss of 0.66%. This loss corresponds to five billion Swiss francs (Kaiser, Möhr & Siegenthaler, 2023).

At the end of 2022, there were 34,000 more vacancies than registered unemployed people (FSO). Scenarios by the Federal Statistical Office paint a bleak picture when extrapolating the development of labor demand and supply (cf. figure 9)

Unemployed people and vacancies 2003 - 2022

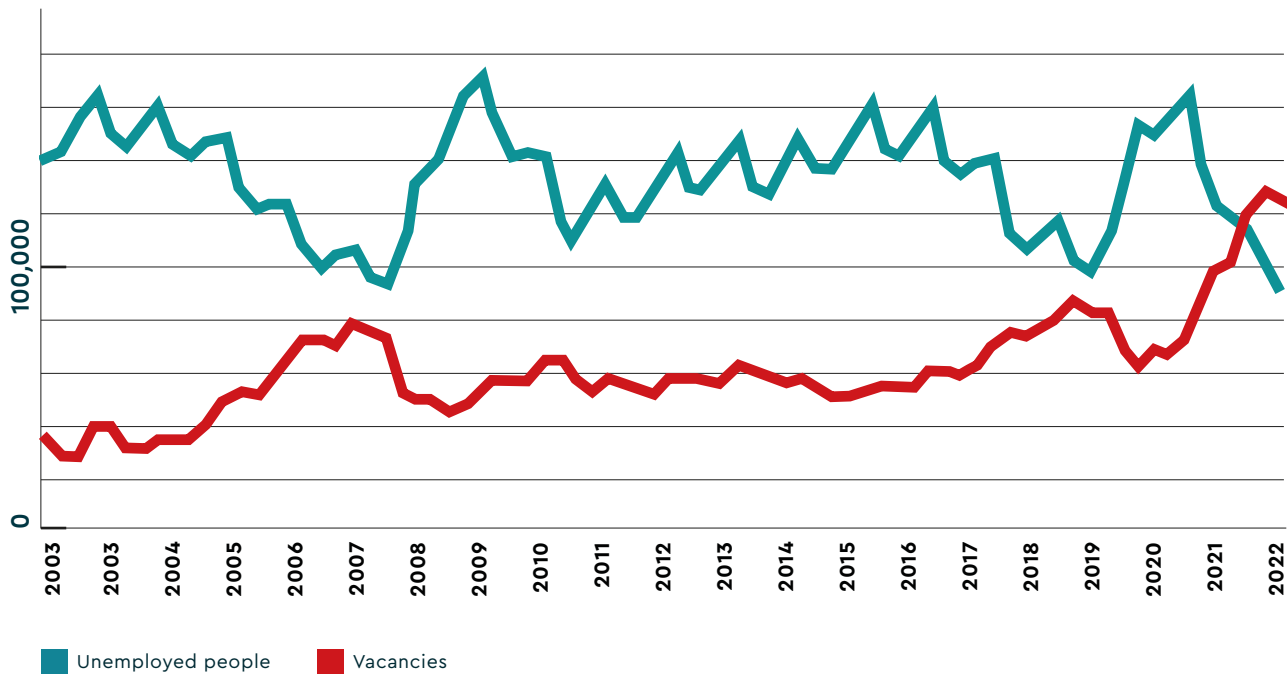


Figure 8: Unemployed people and vacancies 2003 - 2022

The skilled labor gap is one of the key challenges the Swiss economy needs to solve

Due to demographic change, the domestic labor supply will decrease while demand is expected to go up. Without immigration, the Swiss labor market would shrink by about 300,000 workers (approx. 5%) by 2030. If the current economic growth is to be maintained, about 340,000 jobs cannot be filled in 2025. In 2030, the figure could be as high as 800,000 – which means about one in seven jobs (GDI, 2023).

The traditional "gender-split" set-up in how we work and live starts hitting a wall

Filling this huge number of vacancies will not be achievable if we keep operating by the same traditional norms currently defining Swiss culture. Even when calculating with a scenario based on moderate net immigration of 50,000 employees per year, we would have approximately 400,000 vacancies by 2030. Besides, skilled labor is also short in many other countries.

Employer competition will become tougher in the coming years

The "war for talent" is in full swing and will only intensify in the (near) future. Glossy employer branding campaigns will not be enough to be among the winners. Winning takes a more fundamental shift in how companies recruit, engage, develop, and retain all their talents – male and female – at high enough employment percentages and across life events.

Estimated labor demand and supply by 2030

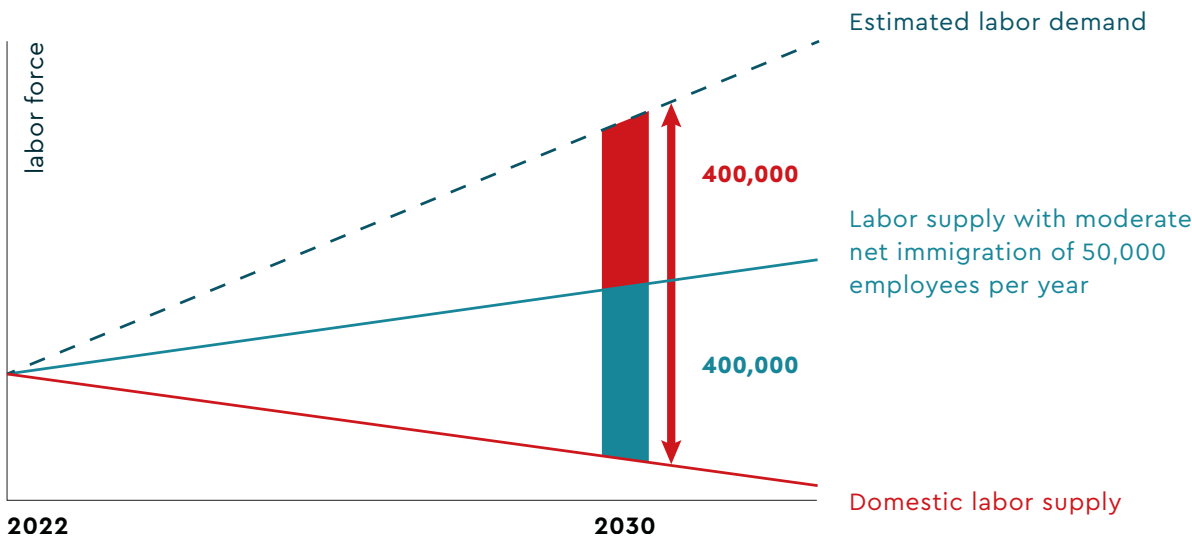


Figure 9: Estimated labor demand and supply by 2030

Pressure for progress is increasing – first movers will be winners

Skills shortage is clearly an employer problem, not an employee issue. In fact, the power is shifting more and more towards talents as they are in high demand and can choose for which employer they want to work. Finding new employees is only one part of the story. The skills shortage makes it more important than ever to develop and retain the talents that companies already have.

The bigger the mismatch among outdated rigid corporate norms, business needs, and employees' needs, the higher the pressure for transformation will get.

MOVING FROM LIMITED TALENT UTILIZATION TO A ROBUST FUTURE TALENT SUPPLY

The models of how we work and drive careers and how we live and split the care tasks are still much the same in Switzerland as they were five decades ago. Unsurprisingly, these models seem to be approaching their end as they severely limit (domestic) talent supply.

In Switzerland, male and female talents are educated and trained equally, generally at a high invest, which is in part taken over by the state, in part by businesses (e.g. apprenticeships, up-skilling), and, in case, of private education, by individuals. To ensure a sustainable future talent supply - and socio-economic thriving with it - the time has come for a more progressive set-up.



"Only by moving to equal can we sustainably reduce the skilled labor gap for a robust Swiss talent pool."

Alkistis Petropaki
General Manager Advance



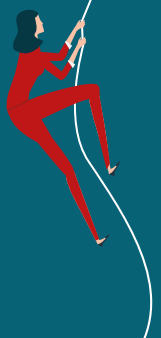
"It's in our hands to create equality in the way we work and in the way we live as the two dimensions are inseparably intertwined."

Dr. Ines Hartmann
Co-Director Competence Centre for Diversity & Inclusion

Imagine: what if ...

- ... we removed the barriers that are currently holding women and minority groups back?
- ... we had structures and a culture in place that enabled women and men to participate in the labor market at equal rates?
- ... men could take on their fair share of care work and household chores?
- ... we had affordable child-care and day schools rolled out nation-wide?
- ... we worked in less rigid but more flexible and efficient ways?

Let's play out some of these scenarios and explore the impact that they may have on closing the skilled labor gap.



How about the older generations?

Another important potential to fight labor shortage are employees nearing or at retirement age. The attrition rates for employees nearing (but not at full) retirement age are considerably higher than those of employees overall. This can be a problem for employers. Older employees who have often been with the company for years have unparalleled knowledge and expertise. At the same time, retirement-agers are frequently hailed as a potential stopgap to the skills shortage. Over-65-year olds represent a promising potential for GIR companies because the share of employees older than 65 is currently 0.3%. In addition, these employees work mainly in part-time positions (on average, 45% for women and 49% for men). Find out more on the potential of that group of employees in the full report online: advance-hsg-report.ch

WHAT IF ... THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN WERE NOT "OBLIGED" TO WORK PART-TIME?

Only 16% of women in couples with children between the ages of 4 and 12 work 90-100% (FSO, 2021). The majority work part-time, some do not work at all (17%). The reasons for the massive gender gap in employment percentages are largely systemic. Costly child-care, missing tax incentives, traditional norms coupled with social expectations on both women and men and rigid work structures "force" women to reduce their paid work time. Women currently shoulder 11.2 hours more of unpaid work than men. This concerns child-care and care for elderly family members, voluntary work, and household chores.

Women and men work the same amount of hours if paid and unpaid work are taken into consideration

The real gender gap appears in the split between paid and unpaid work. Yet, the traditional "gendered" model is becoming obsolete as younger generations strive for egalitarian partnerships on the one hand, and the labor market has a huge need for well-educated (female) talent on the other.

Time spent for paid and unpaid work by gender 2020

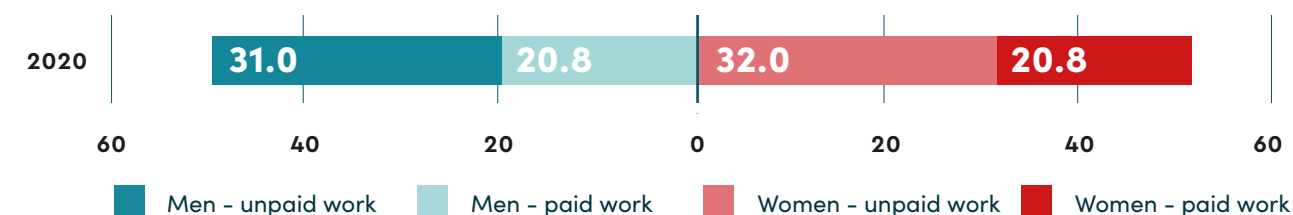


Figure 10: Time spent for paid and unpaid work by gender 2020 (FSO, 2022)

What if everybody worked (paid) at 85%?

New work-life models aim to distribute paid and unpaid work better while increasing overall productivity. It's not about working more but about utilizing the full talent pool and enabling all skilled individuals to contribute and participate in the labor market at equal employment rates.

If the current full-time equivalents (FTEs) at work in Switzerland were distributed equally among all employees, everyone would work 83% (FSO, 2023). Assuming we had structures that allowed everyone to pursue paid work a bit more at 85%, leaving enough time to split the unpaid care work among the genders equally, we would gain 87,360 FTEs across the Swiss workforce.

Full-time in Norway equals 85% part-time in Switzerland

Full-time standards vary greatly across Europe. While a standard week counts 37.5 hours in Norway, it's 35 in France, equaling 80% by Swiss measures. A lower norm in expected weekly paid work hours leads to better work life compatibility for both genders and a more level distribution between paid and unpaid work. Plus, increasing paternal leave can strengthen women's positions in the labor market by breaking caregiver stereotypes through greater equity in child caring (Wong et al., 2020).

Up to 230,000 additional full-time equivalents could be gained by equally splitting unpaid work

If men took on half of the unpaid work that women currently do more (11.2 hours), women would have 5.6 hours more at their disposal to pursue paid work. This time corresponds to 13.3% of a Swiss standard working week of 42 hours. With 1,732,000 full-time equivalents currently worked by women in the Swiss labor market (FSO), this would amount to a staggering additional 230,356 FTEs. Even in a more conservative scenario, calculating with a quarter of the 11.2 hours "overtime" that women currently do unpaid, the gain would amount to a decent 115,178 FTEs.

Labor supply gain if women could increase their paid work capacity by 5.6 hours per week

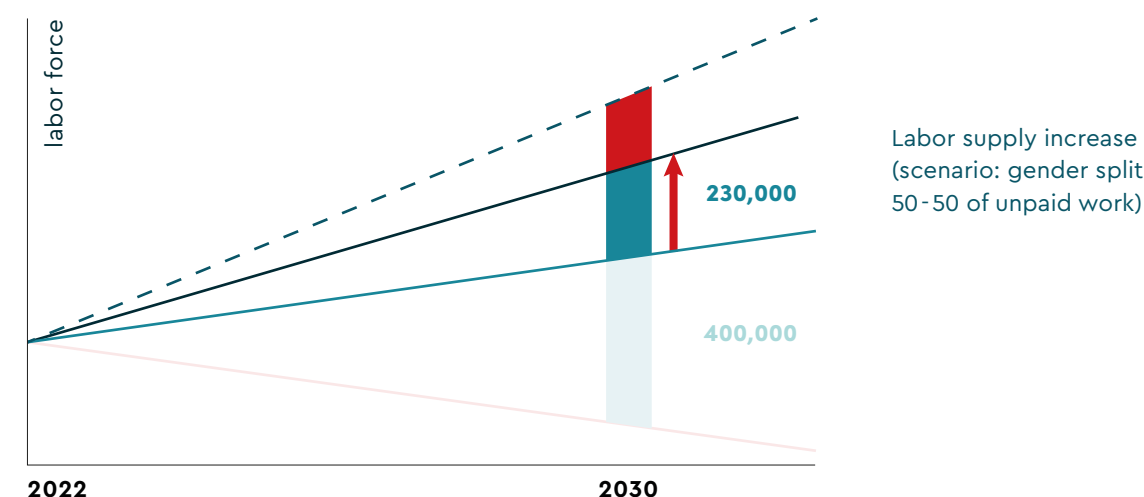


Figure 11: Labor supply gain if women could increase their paid work capacity by 5.6 hours per week

Potential GDP increase of up to 20%

According to the Gender Strategy Report 2024 - 2030 by the World Bank Group, the long-run Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is estimated to be almost 20% higher when women's employment is raised to the same level as men's.

Key levers to equalize paid and unpaid work

- Treat fathers as parents and mothers as career women, i.e., build structures to normalize parental leave and part-time also for men (e.g., during the rush hours of life), and make it a standard to consider female talent as potential leaders (cf. recommendations p. 18).
- Normalize parenthood as an expected life event that happens to all genders and most people since about two thirds of the Swiss population between 25 and 80 years old are parents (FSO, 2021).
- Incentivize men to take parental leave – many still feel taking it could be detrimental to their career – and campaign the new parental normal with positive role models in your company.
- Introduce flexible ways to retain women after maternity at high enough employment rates.

WHAT IF ... COMPANIES WERE ABLE TO RETAIN MOTHERS?

Swiss mothers² spend an average of five years outside the workplace, one out of seven doesn't return to the labor market at all. However, 55% of mothers not pursuing paid work at the moment would be willing to rejoin the workforce sooner if an interesting opportunity presented itself, according to the Federal Statistical Office. More than 92% of women who do return to work do so on a part-time or flexible basis. Their average employment rate is very low at 36%.

What if we had structures in the workplace and beyond that would enable well-educated women to shorten their career break to a maximum of two years and return at a minimum employment percentage of 70%? Why 70%? According to the Federal Gender Equality Conference (SKG), this is the threshold at which enough money can be paid into one's pension fund to stay financially independent in retirement.

► Mind the long-term financial gaps

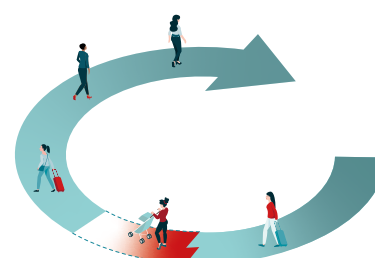
The unequal division of gainful employment and care work translates into inequalities in pension savings and benefits ("Gender Pay Gap", "Gender Pension Gap"; FSO, 2022). While most families with children choose part-time models, only 27% of Swiss parents are thinking about the long-term financial impact (Swiss Life, 2019). This is particularly problematic in the case of a divorce.

In 2021, the Federal Tribunal implemented a strict interpretation of Art. 125 CC, stating that the principle of self-sufficiency applies to post-marital maintenance. In other words, post-divorce alimony is now scarcely granted (Federal Tribunal, 2021). Women who have been out of the labor market for a long time can find it difficult to re-integrate.



Discover the Advance Returnship Guide 2023

Gain insights into how returnship programs work and how powerful they can be, based on existing practices in Switzerland. [Read more](#)



Over 50,000 full-time equivalents could be gained if retention after maternity was optimized

55% of the currently 137,000 stay-at-home mothers are willing to return to work (FSO, 2021). Assuming they were enabled to do this flexibly at an employment rate of 70%, we would gain an additional 52,745 full-time equivalents. Imagine the even bigger potential, if the average career break was only two years instead of five.

Labor supply gain if retention after maternity was optimized

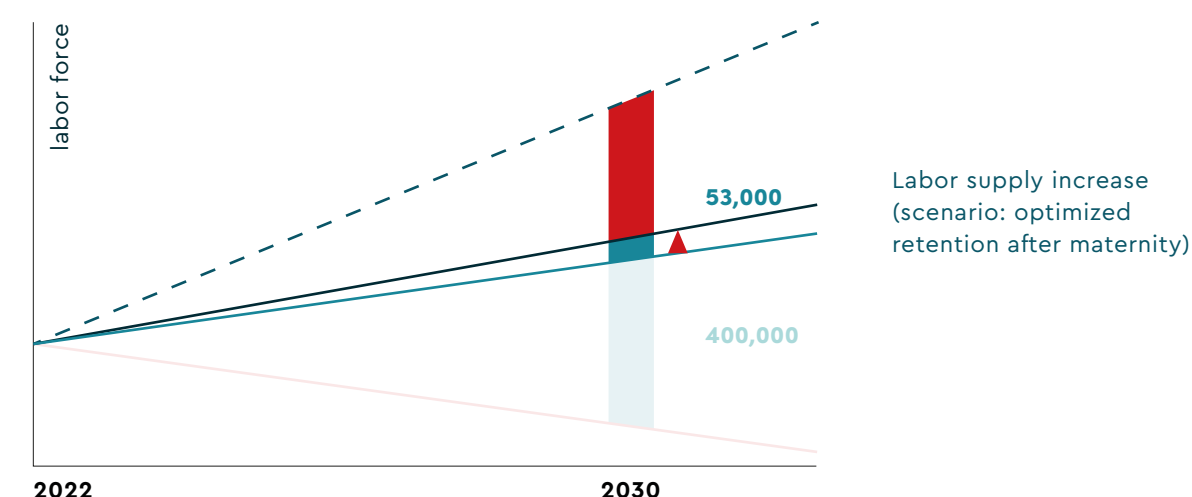


Figure 12: Labor supply gain if retention after maternity was optimized

Key levers to retain mothers in the labor market

- Pro-actively plan career return *before* maternity or paternity leave and implement "stay-in-touch" programs for during the leave (cf. recommendations p. 18).
- Through educational initiatives, inform parents-to-be on the financial impact of career breaks and low employment percentage deals on their pension plans as well as on potential financial dependency on the earning partner.
- Offer flexible re-entry possibilities matching individual needs.
- Offer returnship or re-skilling programs at scale to tap into the potential of currently inactive high-skilled women.

² Included are all mothers between 25–54 with at least one child below 15; in 2021, they made up 42.7% of all women in Switzerland.

WHAT IF ... FLEXIBLE WORKING WAS A LIVED REALITY?

Flexible working as a new standard bears a huge potential if it comes with a shift in leadership away from control and command towards a trust-based culture of achievement, inclusivity, and self-management.

Today's career model still follows yesterday's norms in Switzerland

Full-time and physical presence are the norm for a Swiss business career. Only 4% of promotions go to employees working below 80%. The current career model has stayed much the same as it was 50 years ago, molded along the traditional male trajectory.

Studies confirm the positive impact on engagement, collaboration, and retention

Flexible work options increase loyalty and engagement, according to Avgoustaki & Bessa (2019). Productivity and innovation are better in companies with trust-based working time than in companies without (Godart, Görg, & Hanley, 2017; Beckmann & Hegedues 2011). According to Godart et al.: "The positive relationship between the adoption of trust-based working hours and innovation seems to be driven by the degree of employee control and self-management [...]."

Rigid work structures can be limiting

A recent survey found that employees in Switzerland perceive 20% of the work they do as unnecessary (GDI, 2023). Among the activities mentioned are unproductive meetings, excessive emails, bureaucracy, complicated reporting lines and inefficient decision-making processes. Reducing bureaucracy and reviewing hierarchical structures while striving for flexible, hybrid and lean set-ups are thus promising ways to unleash hidden potentials and increase productivity – aided by smart collaboration tools and the use of AI.

Full responsibility in a "part-time" role: from paradox to new blueprint

There is a stigma attached to part-time that may be related to the assumption that part-timers would not be able (or willing) to take on full responsibility. Is this really the case? Leadership can be thought of as a team sport rather than a single combat. Top-sharing – also known as leadership tandem, co-, or dual leadership – offers the opportunity to combine leadership responsibilities and part-time work, thus reconciling career and private life demands (cf. weshare1.com). Top-sharing can also mean two (near) full-time employees who share responsibilities, giving them the chance to bounce ideas off each other to boost creativity and make better-founded decisions. Among other key advantages are reducing managers' stress levels and having built-in deputies on hand.

Leveraging flex-work and trust-based leadership could unleash between 200,000 and 400,000 full-time equivalents

If the current 20% perceived inefficiencies could be reduced by half across the Swiss workforce, we would gain an additional 437,000 full-time equivalents. If they could be reduced by only a quarter (5%), the impact would still be substantial by gaining the Swiss labor market an additional 218,500 FTEs.

Labor supply gain with flex-work and trust-based leadership

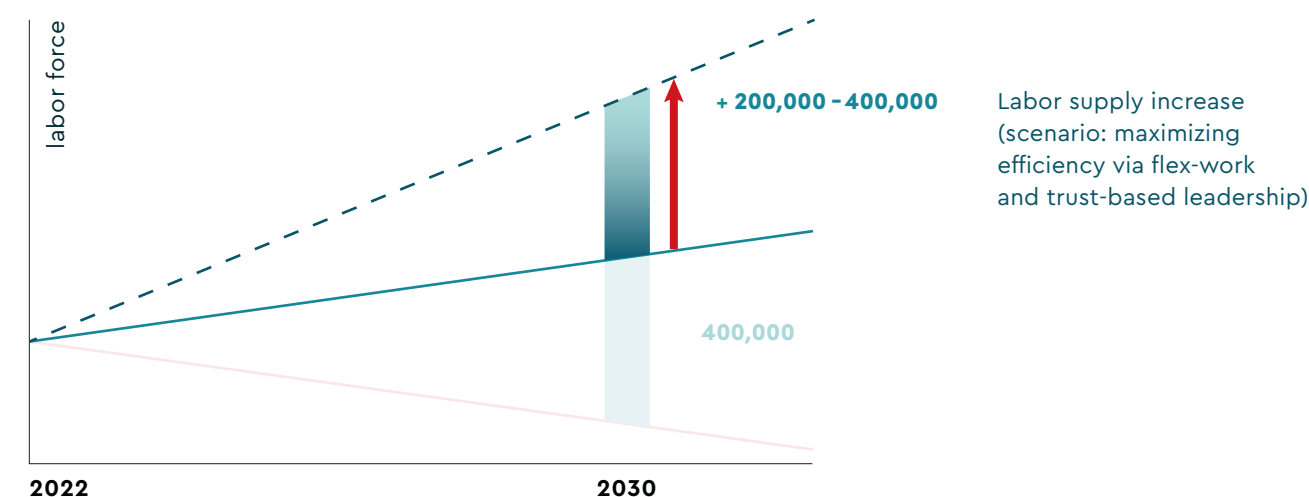


Figure 13: Labor supply gain with flex-work and trust-based leadership

Key levers to increase productivity via flex-work and trust-based leadership

- Conduct management trainings at all levels in inclusive, trust-based leadership and in managing hybrid teams (cf. recommendations p. 18).
- Implement a culture of achievement vs. a culture of presence.
- Empower employees for self-management and enabling smooth collaboration in hybrid structures.
- Roll out flex-work policies with options such as part-time (e.g. during certain life phases), flexible working hours, ability to do a 100% job in four days a week, working from home, trust-based working hours, or "buying" more holidays by reducing the employment percentage by 2.5 or 5%.

FROM INSIGHTS TO IMPACT: GAME-CHANGING ACTIONS TO LEVERAGE "WHAT IF" POTENTIALS

With a view on macro- and socio-economic developments, we conclude that striving for equal labor market participation is a promising route to sustainably supply the Swiss labor market with talent. It takes a transformational shift at the level of our norms to achieve this. Such a shift would not only drive gender diversity in business but also equality in care while empowering individuals to pursue a financially independent life no matter what gender. Among the game-changers on this journey are conscious steps to normalize female careers across life events on the one hand, and fatherhood as a respected and incentivized role on the other.

The mounting pressure in the labor market will likely accelerate the will to change the traditional norms in the business world. Immigration alone won't solve the problem. Conscious efforts to change the way we work may soon become a "must" to keep attracting and retaining talent. Gender equity powered by high levels of flexibility, inclusive trust-based leadership and technological progress does offer powerful solutions for future-proof talent supply. So, let's change the norms to make it happen!

Actions organizations can take

To equalize paid and unpaid work – treat fathers as parents and mothers as career women.

- Entitle all fathers to parental leave – and communicate that you expect them to take it. Make caregiving fathers visible role models and expect managers to initiate conversations to understand the "why" if their direct reports are not taking their leave.
- Create equitable parental leave policies for all parents (including same-sex couples). The policy should not make assumptions about which parent (birthing or non-birthing) is the primary caregiver.
- Plan a transition of responsibilities. Create succession and deputy plans that enable the transition from full-time to part-time, leave, and back. This is a great opportunity to give more junior talent a chance to prove themselves. Give especially young talented women roles with P&L responsibility early.
- Set targets for equitable talent management, e.g., if you have 40% of women in the workforce, aim at reaching 40% at each management level. Deploy conscious career planning, mentoring and sponsoring initiatives to stay in close touch with your female (high potential) talent.

As the labor market is drying up – leverage your diverse talents and retain women beyond motherhood.

- Make an empathetic and caring culture part of your organizational framework to attract, develop and retain diverse talent. A caring culture tangibly places employee wellbeing, employee needs and human development at the center. Expect leaders to role model supportive behaviors.
- Utilize engagement surveys, interviews or focus groups to learn what employees need. As it's currently women who drop their employment percentages the most or take longer career breaks, ask them: What do they need to stay in the company? How do they assess their development opportunities? What barriers might they encounter? What can be done to make them feel included, valued and thriving?
- Make pro-active and flexible return planning before maternity or paternity leave a standard. Educate your employees about the financial impact of adopting part-time.
- Go deeper in identifying toxic practices. Many of these practices are subconscious, invisible, and reproduced in most workplaces, not only by men. They are also found in female leaders who have subconsciously incorporated them. Dismantling toxicity requires deep introspection and (self-)education.

To stay attractive and gain efficiencies – accommodate diverse needs and move from rigid to inclusive, flexible and trust-based work models.

- Use tools for effective coordination between team members with different work schedules. Build social and professional connections between employees in teams without fault lines between remote and in-person employees.
- Set the stage for smooth communication where everyone can speak up and be heard regardless of location or time by practicing psychological safety and transparent top-down communication.
- Align capacity planning with employee and labor needs. Work with a global budget per area instead of headcounts, which incentivizes hiring full-time employees. This gives you more freedom in allocating the budget flexibly to different workloads. In addition, encourage part-time workloads or job-sharing if tasks can be distributed accordingly.
- Enable employees to work how they know best – and put this as a benefit into your job ads too. Offer a "menu" of flexible work options: Part-time? Flexible working hours? Ability to do a 100% job in 4 days a week? Work from home? Ensure these are options eligible to as many employees as possible and not contingent on individual managers. Empower managers to lead hybrid teams.

EXECUTIVES' BEHAVIORS ARE MAKE-OR-BREAK – HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO AS A LEADER

Executives play a key role when it comes to transformation of norms. Not only do they need to lead the change, they need to be the change.

Actions leaders can take

Make it abundantly clear that you support "share the care".

If an employee reveals to you that they are planning a family, see it as an opportunity to support him or her. Help organize a succession plan for their role while they are gone. This continuity will help maintain team cohesion, unity, and care.

Instead of succumbing to the "maybe baby" bias (Gloor, 2021), recognize retention and hiring opportunities.

A female employee who has not yet had children but may be planning on it should not be considered a risk, but an opportunity to be retained by supporting her manage the transition to return after maternity leave at a high enough employment rate and maximum flexibility. Consciously plan the return together before the leave starts.

If you are a parent yourself, talk about it openly and role model being a parent at work.

Your attitude and behavior create a cultural blueprint for your team (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). Be open to talk about your own challenges and ways to manage career and care. Adapt meeting times to fit child-care needs. If your company has a program or resource group for parents at work in place (which we recommend), actively participate.

Sponsor female high-potentials!

Visibility is key: sponsor female high-potentials whose track record you know. Open doors for them and support them to get opportunities for the next step, also – or especially – if they are in their 30s and family planning might be under way.

Make sure your employees have their seat at the table.

Be an ally to employees from underrepresented groups, or who are introverted, or who are undergoing personal or professional challenges. Invite them to ask questions, speak up and join activities. Use your voice to amplify theirs. Understand their needs and be willing to listen and be present.

Build trust among and towards your employees.

A working relationship built on trust does three vital things:

1. it encourages cooperative behavior
2. it reduces conflict
3. it makes employees think well of their manager (Gill, 2008)

How do you build trust?

- Trust that your employees know what they need to do their best work.
- Trust that they pursue their goals and want to achieve their targets even if they are not physically present or working during times when you are not online.
- Be consistent and keep your commitments to your employees. For example, if you promise weekly check-ins, do check in every week.
- Practice transparency and honesty: explain your reasoning and answer your team's questions truthfully. Sometimes, this can be uncomfortable, for example if restructuring is planned.
- Listen to your employees and implement their ideas and feedback, giving them credit where credit is due. In turn, give them honest fact-based feedback on their work, the good and bad.



Discover new Best Practices

For inspiration on what works in other companies, visit the rich selection of Best Practices published with the Gender Intelligence Report. [Read more](#)

CREDITS

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Issued by

Alkistis Petropaki

General Manager Advance
Advance – Gender Equality in Business
alkistis.petropaki@weadvance.ch
www.weadvance.ch

Alexandra Rhiner

Communication Manager & Editor in Chief
alexandra.rhiner@weadvance.ch

Faye Witteveen

Program Manager & Best Practices Lead
faye.witteveen@weadvance.ch

Visual illustrations & layout

Sandra Medeiros

Art Direction, Illustration
www.wildfactory.ch

Dr. Ines Hartmann

Co-Director Competence Centre for
Diversity & Inclusion (CCDI)
Research Institute for International
Management, University of St.Gallen
ines.hartmann@unisg.ch
www.ccdi-unisg.ch
www.diversitybenchmarking.ch

Prof. Dr. Gudrun Sander

Co-Director CCDI
gudrun.sander@unisg.ch

Dr. Nora Keller

Senior Project Manager CCDI
nora.keller@unisg.ch

Christian Pierce

Project Manager CCDI
christian.pierce@unisg.ch

Brice Olivier Mbigna Mbakop

Research Assistant CCDI

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In collaboration with the University of St. Gallen, Advance continuously develops diversity insights and resources to support companies on the journey towards gender equality in business.

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