



## **Corporate Landscape in Mexico:**

Understanding Approaches  
to Talent Management and  
Women's Inclusion

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## About the Catalyst Research Centers



### The Catalyst Research Center for Equity in Business Leadership

examines and documents workforce demographics and their impact on employees, companies, communities, and society. In particular, the Center identifies how women's underrepresentation affects corporate governance and executive teams, and it explores how diverse leadership contributes to business success. By verifying gaps in representation and creating results-oriented solutions, the Center's findings and recommendations help organizations diversify leadership.



### The Catalyst Research Center for Career Pathways

exposes root causes of gender gaps from the classroom to the boardroom, conducting research that sorts myth from fact, identifies the true problems that hold women and other underrepresented groups back from advancement, and provides a solid basis for more effective talent development. The Center's findings allow businesses, media, governments, and individuals to gauge women's progress and develop solutions and action plans to advance women into leadership.



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explores a central challenge facing today's business leaders: how to leverage employee diversity to achieve success through inclusive decision-making and talent management. The Center's research examines the nature, impact, and practice of inclusive leadership. It helps committed leaders learn how to become individual change agents, shaping the workplace culture by role modeling effective interpersonal interactions and capitalizing on opportunities to build inclusive talent management systems.



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conducts research distinguishing sound talent management strategies from programmatic fads and documents best practices. These findings enable organizations to strategically create and support inclusive cultures for both women and men. The Center's partnership with its Expert Community, a consortium of business leaders who contribute to and act on the Center's work, informs organizational policy and practices, leading to actionable solutions and systemic change.

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## About Catalyst

Founded in 1962, Catalyst is the leading nonprofit organization expanding opportunities for women and business. With offices in the United States, Canada, Europe, India, and Australia, and more than 700 members, Catalyst is the trusted resource for research, information, and advice about women at work. Catalyst annually honors exemplary organizational initiatives that promote women's advancement with the Catalyst Award.



# Corporate Landscape in Mexico:

## Understanding Approaches to Talent Management and Women's Inclusion

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Catalyst Publication Code: D125

ISBN Number: 0-89584-335-8

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# Context Matters: Prevailing Cultural Norms and Barriers to Inclusion

In recent years, Mexico, Latin America's second largest economy,<sup>1</sup> has seen an increase in women's representation in the workforce—a trend consistent with global demographic shifts. Interestingly, however, female labor force participation is still lower than in nearly all other emerging markets, and women continue to face challenges entering the workforce.<sup>2</sup> Research shows that the gender gap in workforce representation is due as much to general socio-cultural factors as it is to more specific elements of organizational culture. Organizations are not exempt from the influence of prevailing cultural norms and other sociocultural dynamics. Rather, organizations tend to reproduce elements of the larger social contexts in which they are located.<sup>3</sup>

With 45% of women in Mexico currently working outside the home<sup>5</sup> and 27% of women pursuing tertiary degrees,<sup>6</sup> women in Mexico comprise a significant proportion of the available talent pool. Many are seeking opportunities for career development and advancement across a range of industries and organizations. To remain competitive in this new global business landscape, talent management—in particular a focus on diversity and inclusion (D&I)—is critical.<sup>7</sup> Organizations looking to maintain their financial growth and competitive advantage in Mexico must recognize the business case for gender diversity, and in so doing, harness the full power of all talent.

Despite advances, traditional gender roles and a shortage of programs or policies to support women's entrance and advancement in the workforce continue to pose challenges and stifle progress.

## Vista del Futuro<sup>4</sup>

*Las cosas están cambiando de manera rápida... El mercado está empezando a surtir más mujeres.... México todavía tiene bastante progreso que hacer....La esperanza son las chicas jóvenes. La facultad de 25 años y lo vemos y se ve la esperanza que las cosas están cambiando. Están viendo su futuro y no están viendo la vida en la sombra de su marido.*

—Hombre  
Gerente

## View of the Future

*Things are changing rapidly....The market is starting to supply more women....Mexico still has a lot of progress to make.... The hope is with our young women. The workforce of 25-year-olds, we see them and can see the hope that things are changing. They are looking to their future, and they are not looking to live in the shadow of their husband.*

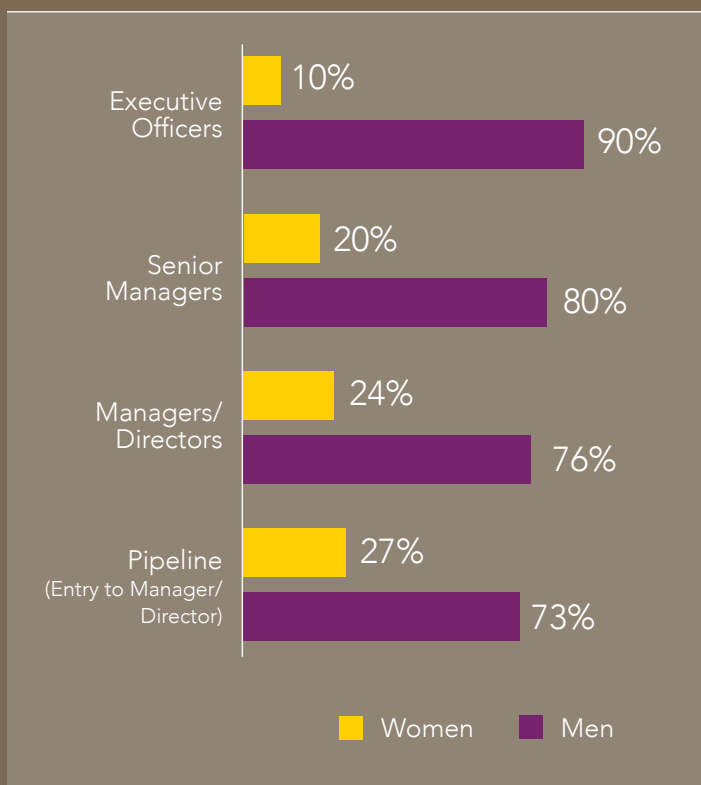
—Male  
Manager



## ABOUT THE SAMPLE

This report is based on survey and interview data from Mexico-headquartered and multinational companies with subsidiary operations in Mexico across 12 industries.<sup>8</sup> This included 29 companies that provided detailed workforce representation<sup>9</sup> and programming data as part of an in-depth survey of company efforts.

FIGURE 1  
Workforce Representation



Twenty senior leaders from 11 of these companies also participated in in-depth qualitative interviews. These interviews, together with three additional interviews with leading business experts, offered context and firsthand understanding of the critical factors affecting company talent management and women's inclusion strategies in Mexico.

- Survey data provides a view of the range of organizational approaches in Mexico for talent development and women's inclusion, reflecting practices at both multinational subsidiaries and Mexico-headquartered companies. Survey data is used to explore the frequency of distinct strategies as well as the unique elements and complexity of those approaches.
- Qualitative interview responses illustrate the socio-cultural and organizational contexts within which these strategies are considered. Qualitative interview data also reflects the relevance of recurring cultural and workplace-related themes, and the impact of the absence or existence of related organizational practices on women's career experiences in Mexico.

## Gender Norms

*Las cosas han evolucionado pero hay una idiosincrasia machista.*

—Directora

*Things have evolved, but there is a machista idiosyncrasy.*

—Woman Director

In Mexico, a notably “masculine” society<sup>10</sup> has led to the creation of a workplace culture that is, intentionally or not, a highly masculine environment. In such an environment, attitudes, behaviors, and strategies socially determined as “masculine” are privileged over those more commonly accepted as “feminine.”<sup>11</sup> As explained:

*The expectations for women [in the workplace] are the same as they are for men, but the men don't necessarily see us as equal—equal in terms of us being equally as capable, having the same capacities as them. We have to fight harder to occupy the same levels that the men occupy.*

—Woman Director

*A woman's primary strategy is to not show her feminine side. We have to be more intelligent. We have to go above and beyond; exceed in order to be equal. We can't show that we're weak. We can't say, “My child is sick,” or “I have to go pick up my child from school.” You can't say that you are pregnant. Because in that moment, you become less.*

—Woman Director

Senior leaders and business experts alike identified this as a core contextual consideration. These perspectives were expressed as relevant both for companies that are multinational subsidiaries and those headquartered in Mexico.

## Work-Life Demands

The expectations for navigating work-life demands, in particular, was also a theme that emerged in interviews with senior leaders and business experts.

- Of those interviewed, 70% of interviewees stated that work-life balance is a key challenge for women professionals in Mexico.

*[The first barrier] is for women who are mothers. Their main barrier and challenge is the planning and management of their dual lives—their professional careers and the administration and organization of their homes... can be a real obstacle for women when they have obligations to care for their families but want a career.*

—Woman Human Resources Manager

*Lo que hay es un miedo, hay temor. Temor a que algo va a pasar. Si la mujer trabaja, la familia va fallar. En el caso de México el temor esta es que históricamente la que ha llevado el pilar de la familia es la mujer. El planteamiento de una mente es que si la mujer va a trabajar que la familia queda al lado. La verdad es que la familia debe de depender de la mujer y el hombre.*

—Profesora

*What there is, is a fear, there is fearfulness. Fear that something is going to happen. If a woman works, the family will fail. In the case of Mexico, this fear is that historically the one who has carried the foundation of the family is the woman. What's planted in their mind is that if a woman is going to work, the family will fall to the side. The truth is that the family should depend on the woman and the man.*

—Woman Professor



## Family Values

The focus on expectations inextricably links to the ideals around family values. In particular, the role of women as mothers (actual or potential) and caregivers is seen as having considerable impact on the companies' expectations of women in the workplace.

*For women in Mexico, what is important is to get married, have children, take care of the family. There are not a lot of women available to fill the higher positions in the workplace. And when there is a woman to consider alongside a man, they prefer the man because they say he's not going to get pregnant; he doesn't have other obligations; he doesn't have the same responsibilities as a woman.*

—Woman Director

- Of those interviewed, 74% also mentioned family values as a key challenge in women's careers.

*Family values are very tight, and that is a variable we have to really take into consideration because that is going to affect women's decisions. Many top [women] executives might decide not to continue their professional careers because of their families. This is because they feel they have to carry the full responsibility of taking care of the family....The decision to work is seen as a decision to break up the family. How can we rescue family instead of putting it at risk when women have to work?*

—Woman Professor

## Programs and Policies for Advancing Women Vary Widely in Corporate Mexico

Approaches to developing talent and promoting women's inclusion at Mexico-headquartered and multinational subsidiary companies fell into three categories:

- **Talent Management:** Interviewees distinguished women's inclusion from talent-management programs. Some interviewees affirmed that organizations in Mexico emphasize a focus on "talent," absent a gender lens, as a business strategy. Talent management, then, reflects broad approaches to developing talent with some programs and policies specifically focused on the advancement or inclusion of women, and others focus more generally on developing talent and building a pipeline of senior leaders.
- **Accountability and Metrics:** Interviews reflected the extent to which companies engage and face challenges in tracking, measuring, collecting and responding to feedback, as well as holding managers and partners accountable with respect to D&I efforts.
- **Work-Life Effectiveness:** Navigating work-life demands and meeting cultural norms around family was a prominent theme among interviews. Approaches to enhancing work-life effectiveness (WLE) are presented as the third category of approaches to distinguish within the Mexico landscape.

**TABLE 1**  
**Framework of Company Programs or Policies<sup>12</sup>**

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Organization-Wide</b>	<b>Organization-Wide With Sub-Emphasis on Women's Inclusion &amp; Advancement</b>	<b>Women's Inclusion &amp; Advancement</b>
<b>Talent Management<sup>a</sup></b>	Sponsorship Program: 31%	Formal Leadership Development Programs: 83%	Coaching: 90%
		Formal Mentoring Program: 69%	Employee-Engagement and Feedback: 80%
		Designated Diversity Network: 41%	Recruitment and/or Retention Strategies: 72%
			Structured Strategy for Advancement/Development of Women: 59%
<b>Accountability &amp; Metrics<sup>b</sup></b>	Measuring Impact: 67%	Tracking Workforce Statistics: 38%	Goals and Targets: 86%
	Program Participation/ Utilization Tracking: 66%		Senior Leadership Involvement: 52%
	Mechanisms for Integrating Employee Feedback: 59%		Manager/Partner Accountability: 35%
<b>Work-Life Effectiveness<sup>c</sup></b>	Leaves of Absence: 83%		
	Work Schedule Flexibility: 76%		
	Dependent Care Assistance: 31%		
	Dependent Care Support: 31%		
	Targeted WLE Networks (Employees on Leave, Responsible for Elder Care, and Working Parents): 10%		

a. Survey questions focus on women's inclusion and advancement as well as organization-wide program or policies.  
b. Survey questions focus on women's inclusion and advancement as well as organization-wide program or policies.  
c. Our assumption is that work-life effectiveness policies apply to all employees, women and men alike; therefore, survey questions did not distinguish among types of programs or policies specifically focused on women's inclusion and advancement.





## Talent Management Approaches Advance Women's Inclusion and Support the Development of Pipeline Employees

Coaching as an organizational development strategy requires that a coach support an employee through a helping relationship centered on improving both the employee's performance and personal satisfaction. Coaches provide guidance through difficult experiences and help the employee being coached gain mastery over their problem areas.<sup>13</sup>

- Most of the companies (90%) reported providing some facet of leadership coaching opportunities for women. Of those:
  - 90% provide coaching for those who express a specific need to help improve performance.
  - 76% provide coaching for those who are not performing at full potential.
  - 69% provide coaching for those who are at risk for attrition due to factors other than dissatisfaction (e.g., at risk for leaving to start a family).
  - 62% provide coaching for those who express dissatisfaction with the organization and/or their job.
  - 52% provide coaching to employees from a diverse or underrepresented group.<sup>14</sup>
  - 52% provide coaching for those who have failed to secure a mentor or sponsor.
- Formal leadership development programs were also widely used as a strategy for talent management (83%), but the focus of these programs and policies is more complex.
  - Of companies with a formal leadership program, 64% used a centralized, corporate structure approach. In comparison, 36% used a local, decentralized approach in which regional teams set their own policies and strategies.<sup>15</sup>
  - Of companies with a formal leadership program, slightly less than one-third (31%) had a formal leadership development program targeting women, with many interviewees stating that gender was not a primary consideration for organizational talent-management strategies.

*We are only interested in the talent that people have without caring about anything but that.*

—Male Human Resources Manager

### SPOTLIGHT ON COACHING

As part of the survey, companies were also asked to provide insights into how they help employees who are struggling. Some companies highlighted that programs of this nature were similarly focused on the development of women and men. Overall comments ranged from providing legal advice to offering management plans.

For instance, one company focuses on “getting rid of stereotypical considerations” that hinder women’s advancement by offering mentoring, coaching, and skill-development workshops that are tailored by job level.

Another company identifies employees who need support during the annual review and leadership development process. Resulting action plans focus on the individual’s need for executive coaching, mentoring, and external programs.

## Employee Engagement and Feedback Offer Opportunities to Empower Employees in the Change Process

Engaging and listening to employees participating in D&I programs through feedback is critical to ensuring the success of those programs. When engaged in organizational change efforts, employees become empowered to invest in the change process and its subsequent success.<sup>16</sup>

- Of those surveyed, 80% of companies engage employees around gender-based D&I efforts, including:
  - 66% that use employee engagement surveys.
  - 62% that offer initiatives or programs to help employees gain awareness about social issues in the region.
  - 59% that hold roundtables and forums.
  - 52% that provide skills training that addresses stereotyping and bias.

## Recruitment, Retention, and Other Structured Strategies Lead to Impact

Building a strategy with both contextual considerations and business-aligned targets is essential to advancing women's inclusion and developing talent.<sup>17</sup>

- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of the companies reported they have programs and policies in place targeting the recruitment and retention of a gender-diverse workforce.

*Everything starts with recruitment; [for instance], having very simple policies like presenting an equal number of female and male candidates that can participate in equitable conditions and then choose the best person based only on ability.*

—Male Human Resources Manager

- In addition, 59% of companies had a structured strategy to advance and develop women talent. Of these, most (65%) reported having a centralized, organization-wide strategy in place to advance women.
- The remaining (35%) had a decentralized/ local approach where policies and procedures were set by local or regional teams.



## Developing Talent Through Formal Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs

Interpersonal connections with other women, mentors, and sponsors play an important role in advancing and developing women in the workplace by providing support, guidance, and advocacy.<sup>18</sup> Formal mentorship and sponsorship programs for women were used across surveyed organizations in Mexico.

- Ranging from those organizations that target groups such as men and high-potential employees to programs open to all employees, 69% of companies surveyed offered a formal mentorship program.
- Of those companies with a formal mentoring program, 24% had a mentoring program for women. However, no companies had a formal mentoring program for diverse women.
  - The focus on gender-inclusive talent management is reflected in the percent of companies that provide mentorship for high-potential employees (38%), open for all employees (28%), or for executive on-boarding (17%).
  - A few companies offer specialized mentorship for new employees (3%) or working parents (3%). None offer opportunities for employees on leave.

Formal mentoring programs are often facilitated or overseen by a designated employee, office, or division within the organization.

- Of the companies with a formal mentoring program, 45% had an organization appointed senior-level program sponsor.

### SPOTLIGHT ON SPONSORSHIP

One organization is adopting an executive shadowing and sponsorship program, modeled on a strategy in place in the company's Asia offices. The practice is currently being formalized and deployed in Mexico and across Latin America.

*[The organization is] giving opportunity for women to meet with executives and organizational leaders to talk about their career interests, to network, and have as an outcome the opportunity to shadow an executive, go to a client meeting with them, develop a mentoring relationship with them. [It's a form of] executive sponsoring. Once the executive knows the woman, he will make sure she is known, will advocate for her.*

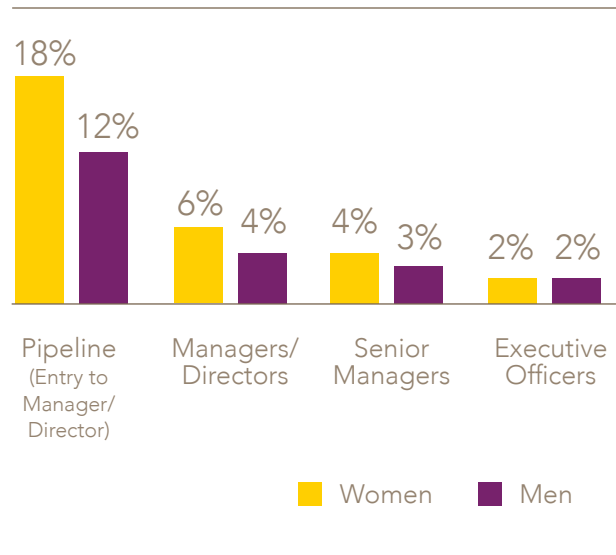
—Woman Human Resources  
Diversity Leader

Sponsorship programs are distinct from mentoring programs. Sponsorship goes beyond solely providing advice. Sponsors focus on promoting the protégé by serving as an advocate, increasing visibility, and helping secure projects and assignments to enhance the protégé’s position.<sup>19</sup>

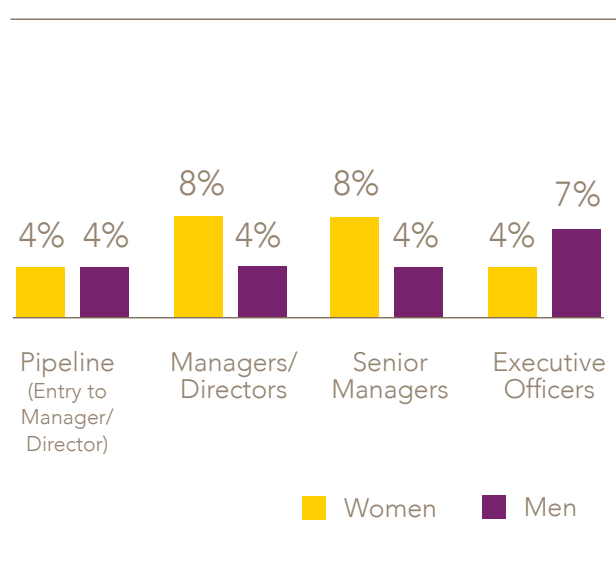
- 31% of companies reported having a sponsorship program in place.
- 69% of companies reported they did not have a sponsorship program in place.

Mentorship and sponsorship programs help reduce attrition and ensure equitable rates of promotion for women and men.<sup>20</sup> Figures 2 and 3 show participating companies’ attrition and promotion rates. Attrition<sup>21</sup> rates reflect an organizations’ success at retaining employees by gender and level. These rates indicate whether or not members of certain groups are leaving companies or firms at disproportionate rates relative to other groups. Promotion rates indicate whether or not members of certain groups are advancing at disproportionate rates relative to other groups.

**FIGURE 2**  
Attrition Rates



**FIGURE 3**  
Promotion Rates





## Designated Diversity Networks Offer a Range of Support for All Employees, Especially Women

Organization-sponsored diversity networks link employees to resources and support with the goal of promoting employee advancement and talent development.<sup>22</sup>

Forty-one percent of companies had an organization-sponsored diversity network program targeting a range of employees. Of these companies:

- Nearly one-third (31%) of companies had designated diversity networks for women.
- Only 3% of companies had a designated diversity network group for diverse or underrepresented women.

**FIGURE 4**  
Range of Diversity Networks Offered



## CONSIDER THIS: CLOSING THE EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK LOOP

A majority of companies have initiatives in place that focus on *listening to* employees through engagement surveys and roundtables.

- How can companies effectively “close the loop” with employees to validate concerns, highlight success stories, or respond to employee feedback to recognize contributions of all organizational members and lead to informed action?

A strong business case for D&I is essential for creating well integrated and sustainable practices and securing the buy-in and support of leaders. For many, a personal connection to D&I issues can be a compelling force behind engagement.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, a commitment to understanding how cultural norms, as in Mexico, affect readiness to change is a vital part of the business case. Organizational culture change and sustainable progress in the area of women’s inclusion is often propelled by the leadership and role modeling of key stakeholders.

- Whether driven by personal or professional experience and understanding, or both, how can organizational leaders and practitioners learn from their individual diversity journeys to role model the benefits of inclusive workplace-oriented skills?
- How can organizations showcase senior leader role models to effectively communicate the case for women’s inclusion and highlight examples of desired behaviors and practices?

## Accountability and Metrics Drive Meaningful and Sustainable Change

*Measured, because what is not measured did not happen, right?*

—Male Partner

Accountability and metrics are business imperatives for implementing, refining, and sustaining talent development and women’s inclusion practices. Through accountability and metrics, companies can develop internal structures to cultivate buy-in across job levels, which will help accelerate and sustain progress. Thoughtful accountability systems ensure that individuals, often at senior levels, are responsible for driving inclusion.<sup>24</sup> Metrics offer data-driven insights about progress to leverage what’s working, reshape what’s not working, and support what’s possible.



## Goals and Targets, Tracking Systems, and Measuring Impact

- While more than two-thirds of organizations reported having goals and targets (86%) and measuring impact (66%), nearly two-thirds (62%) **do not** track workforce statistics to gauge, for instance, employee representation in different categories or attrition or promotion rates. Nor do they hold senior leaders accountable for achieving organizational diversity goals.
- Two-thirds (66%) of companies reported having program participation/utilization tracking. Metrics tracking participation in and the impact of gender diversity programs and policies give companies valuable information about program use and success in meeting programmatic goals.
- More than half of the companies (59%) reported having mechanisms for integrating employee feedback on improving D&I in the organization.

Collecting data on the rates of women and men participating in the workforce is a fundamental step in understanding the landscape of gender diversity within organizations. Many interviewees shared a need for developing and enhancing tracking systems in corporate Mexico.

*We haven't done a thorough analysis to understand what are the gaps and what's the baseline to see what the topics are that are keeping women from advancing [not in the last several years].*

—Woman Director

## SPOTLIGHT ON ACCOUNTABILITY

*The expectations are not openly communicated, and when they are dealt with in real life they cause problems. The first great achievement of organizations is to openly talk about this. There are organizations that might say, "We have gender equity here, etc., etc." However, their conduct and the number of women in positions say that their non-explicit behaviors indicate the contrary.*

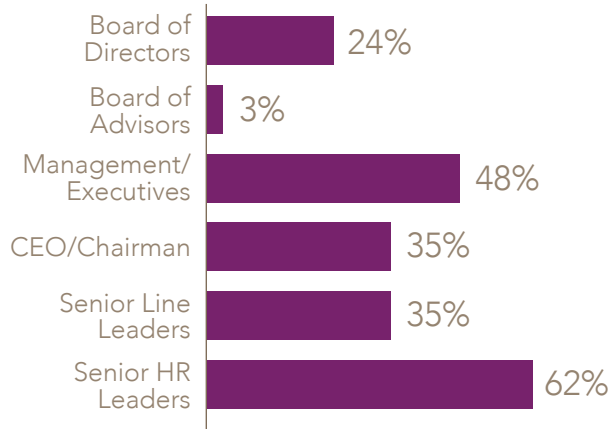
—Male Partner

Catalyst asked companies about the range of approaches for accountability and measuring impact. More than one-third (35%) of companies reported explicitly holding managers and partners accountable for meeting goals related to the recruitment and retention of women. Of those, only 3% provided salary or bonus incentives to managers or partners who met gender diversity goals.

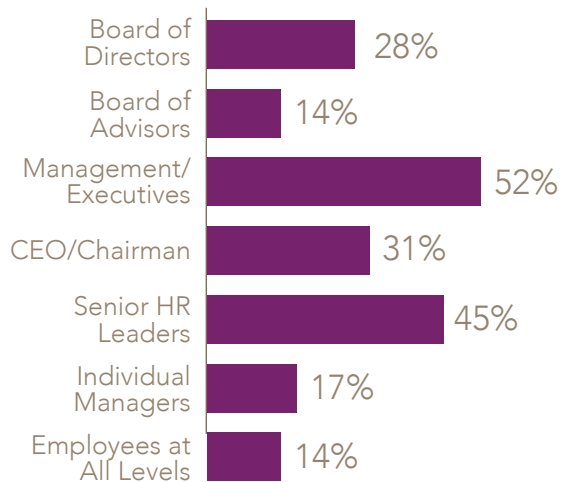
## CONSIDER THIS: LEVERAGING METRICS TO ENSURE SUCCESS

- How can organizations better leverage metrics to further understand and improve the efficacy of women's inclusion and talent development strategies to drive impact?
- What strategies can organizations employ to leverage compelling, tracked and measured, "small wins" to further inclusion and diversity efforts?
- How can strengthening accountability help foster meaningful and sustainable change?

**FIGURE 5**  
**Accountability and Metrics Review**



**FIGURE 6**  
**Senior Leader Involvement in Development of Women-Focused Strategies**



## Senior Leader Involvement in Women’s Inclusion

*My hope is that if we target top management and we lead by example, it will spill over to middle management. It will be more effective....If we start from the bottom to the top, we will not have the effect that we are looking for.*

—Woman Professor

Senior leaders are key in shaping organizational practices and culture. Leader buy-in and involvement in the development of women’s advancement strategies are imperative to ensuring successful strategies to advance women.<sup>25</sup>

- Among surveyed companies, 86% identified having specific goals and targets in place for D&I efforts and a system for diversity metric progress review by organizational leaders.
- Within companies with D&I goals, reviews were most often conducted among senior human resources leaders (62%) and least often among boards of advisors (3%). (See Figure 5.)
- Leadership involvement in the development of women-focused strategies was occurring most frequently (52%) at the Management/Executive Committee level.<sup>26</sup> (See Figure 6.)

## Manager and Partner Accountability

- Slightly more than one-third (35%) of companies reported having a mechanism in place to ensure manager and partner accountability in meeting gender diversity goals.





## Work-Life Effectiveness Promotes Employees' Full Involvement in Their Careers

Work-life effectiveness (WLE) goes beyond flexibility, comprising a collection of practical approaches to support an agile, satisfied, and sustainably high-performing workforce.<sup>27</sup> The business case for WLE is clear: there is a growing demand among top talent for access to flexibility and other support options, making such programs and policies essential to attracting and retaining talent throughout the pipeline. Organizations with flexible work arrangements can use those programs to support the development and advancement of both women and men, ensuring their continued growth and engagement in their careers.<sup>28</sup>

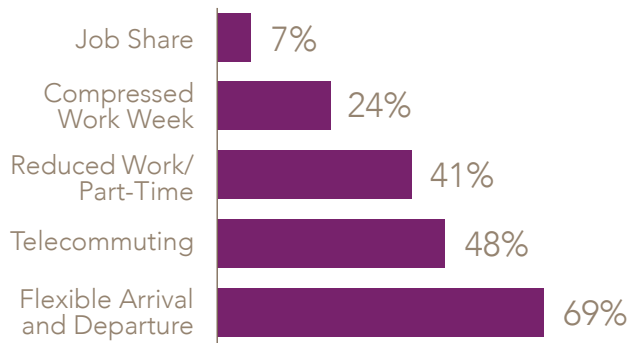
### Work Schedule Flexibility and Leaves of Absence

- Flexible work schedules (76%) and leave of absence programs (83%) were the most widely employed WLE strategies.
- Of the flexible work schedule practices, flexible arrival and departure was the most commonly used.

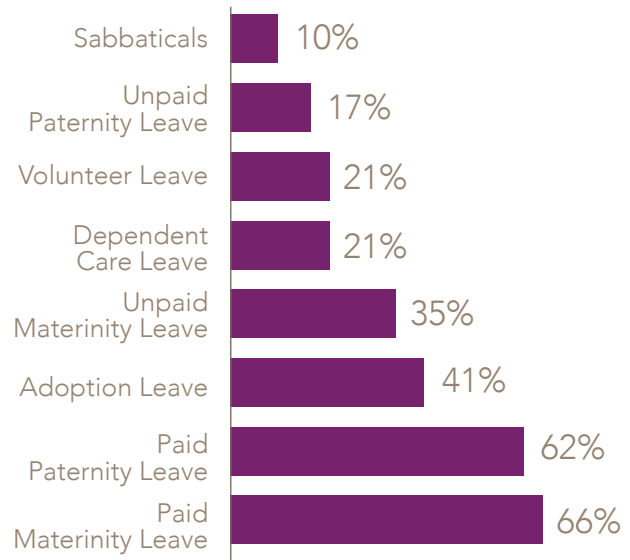
Leave of absence programs play an important role in facilitating employees' ability to effectively address their non-work priorities.

- Paid maternity (66%) and paternity leave (62%) were the most extensively used forms of leave across companies.<sup>29</sup>

**FIGURE 7:**  
Flexible Work Schedule Practices



**FIGURE 8:**  
Leave of Absence Practices



## SPOTLIGHT ON FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility provided by organizations can have a profound impact on women's careers.

*When I look back at what that meant at that time to be a mom and be a full time executive, probably one of the things that I will always thank [my company] for is the flexibility I was given, the maternity leave I was given, and the flexibility I was given to transition back....It was never a challenge for me to advance in my career despite having my kids and dedicating time to them.... When I first resigned [when I decided to try to be a full time mom], they offered me a part time job...I think that was a very good retention strategy for them....There have been so many opportunities and so much flexibility to make my decisions.*

—Woman Director

For some organizations, however, positive intent is not sufficient to achieve successful execution, as the potential for backlash or lack of buy-in and support from peers and managers poses obstacles.

*In our case [the challenge is] when women leave their job to be mothers. A schedule that is too intense can cause them to reconsider work. We have developed policies that help balance. The problem is that, although there are established norms, they were not all using them because the women knew that even if it was possible to use them they were afraid of the consequences—for example facing problems with their direct supervisor.*

—Male Partner

## Organizational Support for Caregiving Responsibilities

Caregiving support to employees with child- or eldercare responsibilities is essential to achieving work-life balance. An inability to meet both work and non-work responsibilities can be a serious source of strain that subsequently affects employee well-being and performance.<sup>30</sup>

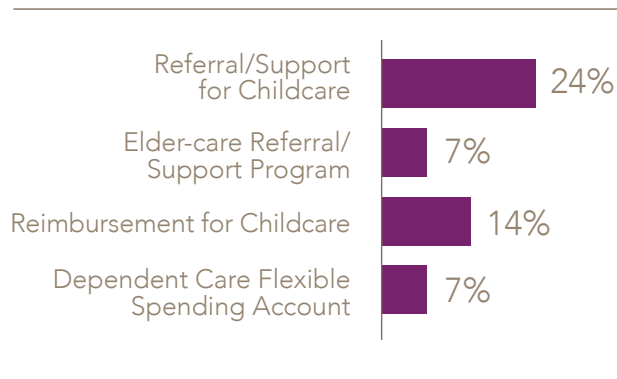
*I can divide my life, especially my life in [my company, into] before and after having my first kid. Before, my priority was my job. I could travel anytime they asked me to... I worked all the time: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., weekends, whenever....I was like any man. Then I got married and had my first kid....The moment of truth came when I returned to the office. The expectations hadn't changed at work, but I had new responsibilities. People were used to [having] me working long hours, and now I had a baby who needed me... I started getting nasty looks from the men as well as the women. I went into a big crisis, I came back from leave, and [a few months later] I went to my boss and told him that I was going to resign. Flexible work wasn't an option—it wasn't even thinkable.*

—Woman Director

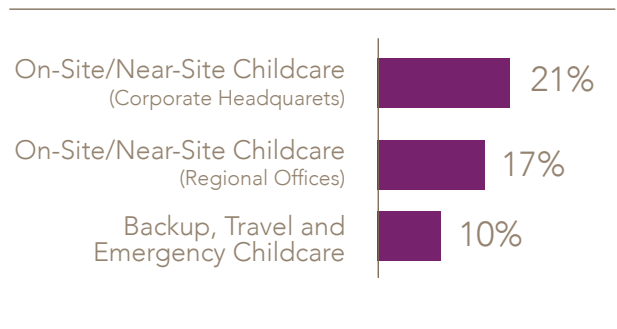
Organizational programs and policies serve as a resource to aid employees in meeting their non-work responsibilities, ultimately facilitating work-life balance. Organizational aid for caregiving responsibilities is a key strategy used by companies to promote WLE.



**FIGURE 9**  
**Caregiving Support**



**FIGURE 10**  
**Expanded Opportunities to Access Childcare**



- Nearly one-third (31%) of companies provided support for caregiving responsibilities to employees.
- An equal number (31%) provided employees with expanded opportunities for accessing childcare.
  - Referrals to and support for childcare were the most frequently used WLE programs across companies (24%).

- On-site or near-site childcare was available at corporate headquarters for 21% of companies, 17% had these same resources in their regional offices, and 10% of companies had back-up, travel and emergency childcare resources available to their employees (Figure 10).

## CONSIDER THIS: USING FWAs TO STANCH A LEAKY PIPELINE

The attrition rate for women at pipeline (entry to manager/director) levels is 18% compared to 12% for men.<sup>31</sup>

- How might flexibility programs and policies and/or organizational support for caregiving responsibilities help mitigate the leaky pipeline?

While many organizations have programs and policies in place related to WLE, only 10% have targeted networks to support employees who use these offerings, including those on leave, responsible for elder care, and working parents.

- What are the advantages, both socio-cultural and to your organization's bottom-line, of having targeted employee networks?
- How can organizations support the development and impact of such groups?

## SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICES

In an effort to address socio-cultural challenges in the workplace, one organization introduced an initiative designed for women who are on the executive path. The program invites executive women to talk about their career experiences and be role models for women in the pipeline. Importantly, the company also asks men to serve as executive sponsors and panel speakers. This gives women the opportunity to learn from different career experiences and see different leadership styles, while also giving executive men the opportunity to meet the organization's women emerging leaders.

*The women are not meeting the men at happy hour or whatever other after-work activities the men are engaging in. The expectation [for this program] is to give the women visibility and to [develop] men champions and sponsors....This will be a really good opportunity for men to act as champions. They are the ones who have the decision-making power, and we need them....We weren't that straightforward about it in the past, because we didn't have a pipeline of women. Now we do, so we are knocking on doors to say, "You really need to get to know these women." I think this can really be a milestone in understanding how men can be effective and successful as champions in women's advancement.*

– Woman Human Resources  
Diversity Leader

## How Organizations Can Promote Women's Inclusion in Corporate Mexico

Internal organizational structures and strategies have significant effects on the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women. While socio-cultural factors such as a workplace environment where "masculine" attributes and behaviors are privileged over those perceived to be feminine<sup>32</sup> cannot be ignored or definitively separated from organizational practice, women's lower representation can, at least in part, be explained by the influence of these factors on company programs and policies.

### Engage Men

Understanding and appropriately responding to prevailing cultural influences as well as gaining buy-in from key stakeholders (e.g., senior leaders, men, line managers) are key to promoting the inclusion and career development of women in Mexico's corporate sector. Vital to success in this area, organizations must advance their understanding of the unique cultural considerations in Mexico to promote meaningful change. This will facilitate stakeholders' ability to thoughtfully build effective and inclusive systems and structures as well as engage champions for the advancement of women.

As the landscape of corporate Mexico continues to shift, engaging men will be a critical next step for organizations looking to evolve their approaches to the inclusion and advancement of women. Cultivating male champions for diversity will be an essential step toward meaningful and sustainable change.



Catalyst's research shows that creating equitable and inclusive work environments that value diversity and the contributions of all employees requires the engagement and support of many stakeholders, including men.<sup>33</sup> Yet, only 10% of companies that provided survey data reported having a strategy in place to engage men in the organization's D&I initiatives. These findings demonstrate that in corporate Mexico, engaging men is a strategy that is still in its early stages.

*[Engaging men is] a theme that's starting to evolve. There continue to be obstacles in terms of acceptableness for certain men, certain groups....But there are others who are more open, more diverse. We are starting to talk about this, and there are men that are more on board and engaged and have diverse teams working for them. But there are still many men who only ever work with men. For them, how can they support women, know how to work and communicate with women, and provide women opportunities, if they do not have the experience?*

—Woman Human Resources Manager

## Get Buy-In

Beyond engaging men and other specific programs and policies, interviewees also reflected on the need for greater buy-in for the idea that what's good for women is good for business. Forward-thinking ideas and approaches in the women's inclusion space were linked to innovation and broader business success in the global corporate context.

*It's about [helping] them understand, and more importantly believe, that gender equity and women's advancement are important for business. We know from research from all over the world that women are the ones who really drive the decisions in terms of consumption. We need to be able to understand our clients, speak the same language of our clients. More and more women are being assigned to lead big companies around the world. Maybe that's not the case in Mexico, but this is a movement, and if you don't understand that, and you don't believe it, that these women deserve to be there, and are not there just because they are women but because they have the talent and the potential, then you are missing out.... Maybe not now, but in the future this will set apart companies that are successful from those that are held back.*

—Woman Human Resources  
Diversity Leader

The landscape of Corporate Mexico is changing rapidly as women's workforce representation increases and the expectations and aspirations of a new generation of talent evolve. Organizations must work to remove gender gaps and barriers to inclusion—be they programmatic, policy-based, or symptomatic of prevailing cultural norms. This requires understanding the dynamic connection between socio-cultural and organizational factors in the Mexican context that support or hinder change. To remain competitive and effectively navigate these shifting trends, companies must employ bold approaches as well as culturally and locally relevant practices to develop talent and advancement opportunities for women.

# Appendix 1: Methodology

*Corporate Landscape in Mexico: Understanding Approaches to Talent Management and Women's Inclusion* is based on survey and interview data from Mexico-headquartered and multinational companies with subsidiary operations in Mexico across 12 industries.<sup>34</sup>

## Data Collection

Data were collected in two phases over a seven-month period.

In phase 1, conducted from January through July 2013, 29 companies provided detailed workforce representation statistics<sup>35</sup> and programming data as part of an in-depth survey of company efforts.

In phase 2, conducted in May 2013, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with 23 key organizational stakeholders in México. This included 20 senior leaders from 11 of the companies surveyed and three interviews with leading business experts from the field.

## Survey Content

The survey gathered information on the following:

- Company background, including the location of headquarters, total revenues, industry, total number of employees, and geographic region of gender diversity/inclusion programs.
- Workforce statistics, including representation, promotions, and attrition statistics by job level and gender.<sup>36</sup>
- Organizational programs and diversity-related efforts, including talent management, flexible work policies/programs, accountability structures and mechanisms, and initiatives to engage men.

## Interview Topics

Interview topics included:

- Socio-cultural and organizational contexts.
- Barriers and successes in women's workplace inclusion in Mexico.
- Types and extent of organizational practices and impact on women's career experiences in Mexico.



## Appendix 2: Profile of Participating Companies and Interview Respondents

Survey participants included 29 Mexico-headquartered and Mexico subsidiary companies as follows:

- 10% (3) Mexico headquartered
- 28% (8) European headquartered (Mexico subsidiary)
- 62% (18) US- and Canadian-headquartered (Mexico subsidiary)

Participant representation by revenue included:

- 7% less than 250 million pesos.
- 29% 250 million to less than 3.5 billion pesos.
- 11% 3.5 billion to less than 8 billion pesos.
- 53% 8 billion or more pesos.

Interview respondents included:

- 23 senior leaders and business experts.
- 16 women, 7 men.
- 20 interviewees from 11 survey participant companies.
- Three interviewees from a leading Mexican business school.

## Appendix 3—Survey Participant Organizations<sup>37</sup>

1. AMECO
2. Avon Products, Inc.
3. AXA Seguros México
4. CH2M HILL
5. Chubb Mexico
6. Coca-Cola de Mexico
7. Deloitte
8. Deutsche Bank
9. DuPont, S.A. de C.V.
10. EY
11. Grupo Industrial Lala
12. Halliburton de Mexico
13. Holcim Apasco
14. Hyatt
15. IBM de Mexico
16. JPMorgan Chase
17. Juniper Networks
18. Libbey
19. MetLife
20. Pfizer Inc
21. Scotiabank
22. Shell Servicios Mexico
23. Unilever de México
24. UPS

## Endnotes

1. The World Bank, "Mexico."
2. OECD, *Closing the Gender Gap: Mexico* (May 24, 2013).
3. Gina Zabludovsky, "Mexico: Mujeres en Cargos de Dirección del Sector Privado," *Academia, Revista Latinoamericana de Administración*, vol. 38 (2007): p. 9-26.
4. Selected quotes from qualitative interviews conducted in Spanish have been kept in their original language alongside their English translations. The use of Spanish text for key quotes is employed to more prominently feature the voice of interviewees in their native tongue illustrating critical socio-cultural phenomena in the Mexican context. The remaining quotes in the report come from interviews conducted in Spanish, English, or a combination of both languages, using English translations only.
5. Shannon K. O'Neil, "Mexico Makes It: A Transformed Society, Economy, and Government," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2013.
6. The World Bank, "Data: School Enrollment, Tertiary, Female (% Gross)."
7. Catalyst, *The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity* (2004); Deloitte, *Only Skin Deep: Re-examining the Business Case for Diversity* (2011).
8. Industries: 1. Accounting; 2. Consumer Products/Hospitality Food Services; 3. Consumer Products: Transportation; 4. Energy Utilities; 5. Financial Services Insurance; 6. Financial Services Investment Banking; 7. Financial Services Commercial Banking; 8. Health Care & Pharmaceuticals; 9. Industrials; 10. Information Technology Products & Services; 11. Management Consulting; 12. Mining and Oil & Gas Petrochemicals.
9. Representation captures the number of employees in an organization's workforce, by gender and level. It includes the actual count of employees in the organization at the end of the 2012 fiscal year (or the most recent fiscal year available). The representation of women was lower than that of men across all organizational levels with the greatest disparity in numbers among those in executive management positions.
10. With a high score (69) on the masculinity/femininity Hofstede dimension, Mexico is categorized as a masculine country, defined by a society driven by competition, achievement, and success—a value system that starts early in the education system and continues throughout organizational behavior. The Hofstede Center, "Mexico."
11. Zabludovsky.
12. Table 1 reflects data from the 29 companies that participated in the survey data collection and are not necessarily representative of companies across Mexico.
13. Richard R. Kilburg, "Toward a Conceptual Understanding and Definition of Executive Coaching," *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, vol. 48 (1996): p. 134-144.
14. The item in the survey reads as follows: The organization provides leadership coaching opportunities for women who are from a diverse or underrepresented background. Organizational survey respondents were able to interpret "diverse or underrepresented" as appropriate.
15. The items in the survey provide the following definitions of centralized and decentralized approaches toward the development and advancement of women: Some organizations follow a more decentralized or local approach where local or regional teams set their own policies and strategies and tailor initiatives based on their geographic areas, and may or may not receive structured corporate support. Other organizations take a centralized or corporate-structure approach where a company-wide team sets policies and programs for the entire organization and provides expertise and support for lines of business or regions.
16. Achilles A. Armenakis, Jeremy B. Berneth, Jennifer P. Pitts and Jack Walker, "Organizational Change Recipients' Beliefs Scale: Development of an Assessment Instrument," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, vol. 43, no. 4 (2007): p. 481-505; Jeanine Prime and Heather Foust-Cummings, *Strategy Matters: Evaluating Company Approaches for Creating Inclusive Workplaces* (Catalyst, 2010).
17. Prime and Foust-Cummings.
18. Sarah Dinolfo and Julie S. Nugent, *Making Mentoring Work* (Catalyst, 2010).
19. Dinolfo and Nugent
20. Dinolfo and Nugent
21. Attrition and promotion statistics were calculated across all companies by dividing the total number of attrited or promoted employees stratified by gender and level by the total representation of employees stratified by gender and level.
22. Catalyst, *First Step: Diversity Councils* (2013).
23. Prime and Foust-Cummings; Catalyst, *A Bright Spot Case Study: How Individual Champions Help Close the Gender Gap* (2013).
24. Catalyst, *Making Change: Using Metrics to Support Workplace Diversity* (2002); Catalyst, *Vital Signs: How They Can Lead to Change in Your Organization* (2013); Catalyst, *Catalyst 20th Anniversary Awards Compendium* (2007).
25. Prime and Foust-Cummings; Anika Warren, *Cascading Gender Biases, Compounding Effects: An Assessment of Talent Management Systems* (Catalyst, 2009).
26. Respondents were able to indicate all that apply.
27. Lisa D'Annolfo Levey, Meryle Mahrer Kaplan and Aimee Horowitz, *Making Change—Beyond Flexibility: Work-Life Effectiveness As an Organizational Tool for High Performance* (Catalyst, 2008).
28. Anna Beninger and Nancy Carter, *The Great Debate: Flexibility vs. Face Time—Busting the Myths Behind Flexible Work Arrangements* (Catalyst, 2013); Catalyst, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Building the Business Case for Flexibility* (2005).
29. In Mexico, 12 weeks of paid maternity leave is mandated by the government, with companies able to provide additional leave on top of that required period. No form of paternity leave is mandated. OECD, "Haciendo lo Mejor Para las Familias: Mexico/Doing Better for Families: Mexico."
30. Catalyst, *After School Worries: Tough on Parents, Bad for Business* (2006).
31. A two-sample test for differences in proportions was used to test if the difference in attrition between men and women was a statistically significant one. A two-tailed test of differences in proportion between men and women yielded





a z-score of 31.83 and a p-value of  $p < .05$ . Based on this finding, the difference in attrition between men and women in the pipeline is statistically significant.

32. Zabludovsky.

33. Prime and Foust-Cummings; Anika Warren, *Cascading Gender Biases, Compounding Effects: An Assessment of Talent Management Systems* (Catalyst, 2009); Catalyst, *A Bright Spot Case Study: How Individual Champions Help Close the Gender Gap* (Catalyst, 2013).

34. Industries 1. Accounting; 2. Consumer Products/Hospitality Food Services; 3. Consumer Products: Transportation; 4. Energy Utilities; 5. Financial Services Insurance; 6. Financial Services Investment Banking; 7. Financial Services Commercial Banking; 8. Health Care & Pharmaceuticals; 9. Industrials; 10. Information Technology/Products; 11. Management Consulting; 12. Mining and Oil and Gas Petrochemicals.

35. Representation captures the number of employees in an organization's workforce, by gender and level. It includes the actual count of employees in the organization at the end of the 2012 fiscal year (or the most recent fiscal year available). The representation of women was lower than that of men across all organizational levels with the greatest disparity in numbers among those in executive management positions.

36. Data were reported as of the end of FY 2012 or the most recent fiscal year available.

37. Twenty-nine companies participated in the survey component of data collection for this report. Of those 29, 24 organizations (83%) agreed to be publicly listed as participants in the study. The remaining five organizations chose to participate anonymously and are not listed.

## Acknowledgments

This report reflects the ongoing teamwork and dedication of many individuals. Catalyst President & CEO Ilene H. Lang and Nancy M. Carter, PhD, Senior Vice President, Research, provided leadership that was critical to the project. Alixandra Pollack, Senior Associate, Research led the project and coauthored the report with Dnika J. Travis, PhD, Senior Director & Center Leader, Catalyst Research Center for Corporate Practice and Erica Lizano, PhD, Catalyst Research Fellow.

We extend our thanks to The Coca-Cola Company, specifically Steve Bucherati and Lucia Dourritzague, for their support on this project, including helping us determine key Mexico-headquartered companies to invite to participate in this study. We also thank our external reviewers for offering keen insights and feedback in development of this report.

We are grateful to the many Catalyst subject matter experts and team members who contributed to this research by providing feedback on early drafts, including Julie Nugent, Vice President

& Center Leader, Catalyst Research Center for Corporate Practice. Marshall Widjaja, Database Administrator, provided database consultation. Nancy Hendryx, Editor and Director, Research, edited the report. Jeannette Roy, Graphic Designer, designed the report. Sonia Nikolic, Art Director, oversaw the design process. Lauren Pasquarella Daley, PhD, Fact Checking Specialist, performed the fact check. Elizabeth Reich, Freelance Editor, proofread the report.

We also thank Deborah M. Soon, Senior Vice President, Strategy & Marketing, Rima Matsumoto, Vice President, Market Development, and Susan Nierenberg, Vice President, Global Marketing & Corporate Communications, for their strategic advice on media dissemination.

Finally, we extend our gratitude to the participating companies and interviewees that provided the data and knowledge that informed this report's findings; and Scotiabank for its generous support as founding partner in establishing Catalyst Mexico.

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