Tapestry

Leveraging the Rich Diversity of Women in Retail and Consumer Goods

network
of executive women
CONSUMER PRODUCTS / RETAIL

About the report

This report is based on research; interviews with retail and consumer goods industry leaders; and an online survey conducted by the Network of Executive Women exploring multicultural women's advancement opportunities, the workplace experiences of women and men of all backgrounds, corporate practices and the role of white women and men in closing the career achievement gap.

The NEW Multicultural Women's Leadership Survey was conducted May 12-26, 2014. An email invitation from NEW President and CEO Joan Toth was sent to 24,076 Network members and supporters on May 12, 2014. A reminder email was sent on May 21, 2014. Approximately 8,300 of the recipients were Network members; the remaining recipients were NEW supporters. Supporters were defined as non-members who have attended a NEW regional event. The survey was completed by 1,950 recipients, a response rate of 8.1 percent.

Survey respondents were provided this definition: "Multicultural as defined by this survey includes persons who are African American, Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino regardless of race, Native American, Native Alaskan, mixed race, members of sexual and religious minorities, and immigrants of any race or ethnicity."

One-on-one interviews with nine senior industry executives and two subject-matter experts were conducted in May and June 2014.

About the Network

Founded in 2001, the Network of Executive Women, Consumer Products and Retail, is a not-for-profit educational association representing more than 8,500 members, 100 corporate sponsors and 20 regional groups in the United States and Canada. Network members come from more than 750 industry organizations, including grocery, chain drug, mass retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, service providers, associations and universities.

The mission of the Network is to attract, retain and advance women in the consumer products and retail industry through education, leadership and business development.

To support this mission, the organization provides best practices on gender diversity, career development opportunities, research, learning events and networking programs designed to advance women's leadership in the industry. NEW is open to women and men, emerging leaders and senior-level executives. NEW hosts dozens of regional learning and networking events each year. The Network also produces two annual national conferences, the NEW Leadership Summit and the NEW Executive Leaders Forum.

For more information on the Network's programs and events, visit newonline.org.

The next frontier

More than 36 percent of U.S. women are multicultural — by 2050, they'll comprise more than half the nation's female population. This ongoing shift has already transformed our retail consumer base and workforce — but it's not being reflected in our leadership ranks.

Not so long ago, diversity was seen as black and white, male and female. Little attention was paid to the extraordinary experiences and contributions of multicultural women. This created a gap in understanding that persists today.

Multicultural women face two distinct career challenges, as women and as persons of color. Company policies and corporate cultures that ignore the unique qualities of multicultural women are doing a disservice to them and to the organization.

As Rodney McMullen, CEO of The Kroger Co., told NEW recently, "People are making progress in advancing the presence of multicultural women, but not enough. We must not be satisfied until the diversity of our workforce reflects the diversity of our customer base. We have to find a way to do more and do it faster."

We agree. And we applaud the industry's top-performing organizations that are working to leverage the value of multicultural women's leadership and realizing its benefits. We present this report as a conversation-starter, a guide to closing the achievement gap and, most important, a call to action.

Multicultural women face two distinct career challenges, as women and as persons of color.

Joan Toth
President and CEO
Network of Executive Women

Overlooked and misunderstood, multicultural women grapple with unique barriers

A 20-year veteran of the retail/consumer goods industry, Charlene (not her real name) was well respected as a savvy business leader at the large consumer goods company where she worked.

Throughout her career, Charlene had been laser-focused on becoming a general manager and, ultimately, a senior vice president of one of the company's business units. However, as she approached the senior leadership level, her career began to stall, even as her white peers were promoted to vice president and higher levels. Each time she asked her manager for advice on getting to the next level, she was told, in effect, "Keep doing what you're doing. You just need a little more time for people to get to know you."

Charlene grew increasingly frustrated as it became clear that her career goals seemed unobtainable. Her frustration turned to resentment and she wondered if she had done something wrong or lacked a competency others had.

She questioned the company's commitment to offering women of color equal opportunity for advancement. Despite the recent establishment of a multicultural women's employee resource group, Charlene believed systemic issues kept multicultural women from succeeding.

Eventually, she was offered a vice president position with a small business unit. Although her area of responsibility was small, she welcomed the opportunity to demonstrate her capabilities. However, many of her colleagues believed she was promoted because the company had very few women of color in senior positions and Charlene felt many of her peers and the company's senior leaders were not comfortable with a multicultural woman in the role.

Charlene decided to leave the organization. Within 60 days she had three job offers, all for vice president positions with significantly larger scopes of responsibilities. After determining which would be the best match for her, Charlene accepted a new position.

■ ■ ■

Charlene's story — hardly unique — illuminates the difficulty many multicultural women encounter as they navigate the halls of corporate America.

"There are folks [of color] who were superstars [at their jobs], but who are no longer with their companies because they weren't considered for

advancement," said Valerie Lewis, assistant vice president, assistant secretary and senior corporate counsel for Safeway Inc. "Sometimes a person of color will get feedback that sounds a lot like, 'Gee, you are doing so well, why aren't you happy? Look at what you have now.' Senior management may promote one or two minorities who they are comfortable with and think we should be happy with that 'diversity.' However, for there to be meaningful change, there has to be a top-down commitment to diversity in all areas of the enterprise."

Companies that consider the careers of "all women" in the organization and assume that all women's career trajectories and challenges are the same marginalize multicultural women, ignore their unique life and workplace experiences — and perpetuate the achievement gap.[1]
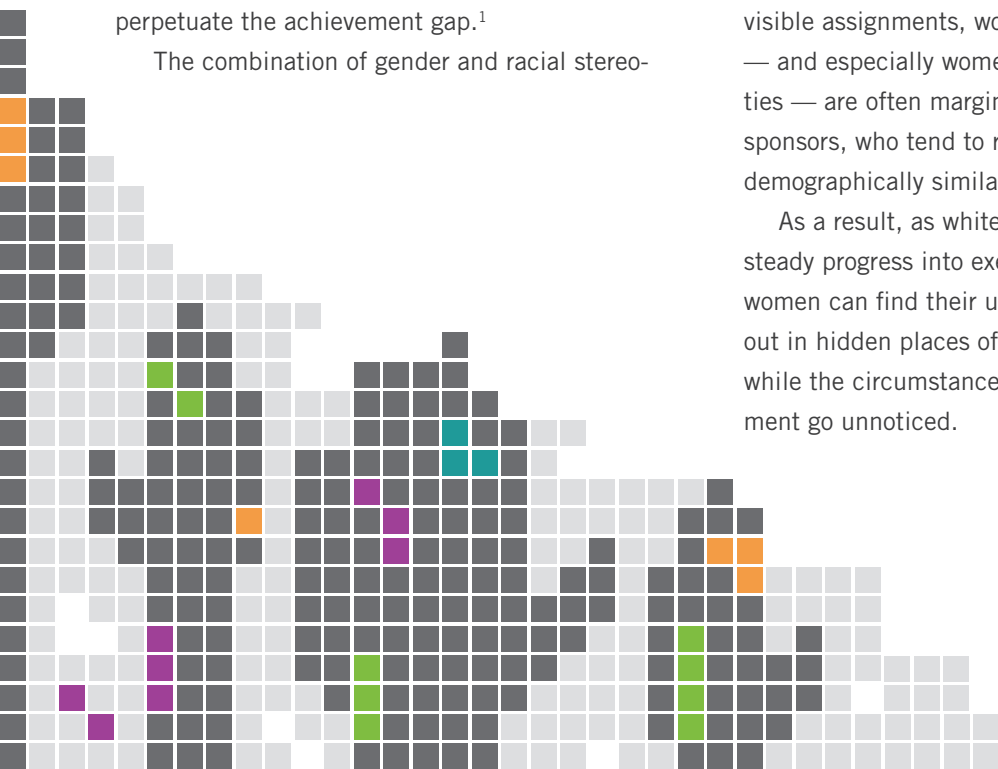
The combination of gender and racial stereotypes that lead to biased perceptions and discrimination — probably largely unintentional or unconscious — show themselves in everyday social interactions, limited opportunities for development and advancement, and biases in workplace evaluations, according to Robin Ely, senior associate dean for culture and community at the Harvard Business School.

"In organizations in which white men are the primary gatekeepers, and sponsorship is necessary for identifying and getting developmental opportunities and visible assignments, women and racial minorities — and especially women who are racial minorities — are often marginalized because they lack sponsors, who tend to reach out to people who are demographically similar to them."

As a result, as white women make slow but steady progress into executive levels, multicultural women can find their upward advancement stalling out in hidden places of the organizational chart while the circumstances that hinder their movement go unnoticed.

As white women make slow but steady progress, multicultural women can find their upward advancement stalling out.

Summary

1 **Multicultural women are underrepresented in the retail/cpg industry's leadership.** In traditional corporate hierarchies, few multicultural women are developed and tapped for growth opportunities or included in succession planning.

2 **Multicultural women's unique challenges are not being addressed.** Multicultural women have different workplace experiences and career challenges related to their gender and their race/ethnicity. But companies often evaluate the experiences and careers of "all women" in their organizations; the barriers to success unique to multicultural women are often overlooked or ignored.

3 **White women and multicultural women perceive the workplace differently.** Multicultural women are much more likely to perceive the dual impact of gender and race/ethnicity on career advancement than white women, who are more likely to perceive only the impact of gender. If white women only see the similarities they have with multicultural women, without seeing how their lives differ, white women may be inadvertently supporting the conditions that hold multicultural women back. To nurture an inclusive environment, companies must recognize the differences in how women perceive the workplace and promote changes to policies and culture that will leverage the talents of multicultural women leaders.

4 **Most corporate cultures encourage "covering."** Multicultural women feel pressure to hide certain aspects of their life and are sometimes uncomfortable being authentic at work. In many cases, multicultural women deal with additional cultural, community or religious demands that make work/life balance even tougher than it is for white women.

5 **To compete effectively, companies must advance multicultural women leaders.** Companies perform better when their senior leaders and board members role-model inclusion, support initiatives that develop diverse leadership and demand executive accountability for creating effective, multicultural, gender-diverse teams.

Organizations cited in this report

Altria	Harvard Business School	Prudential
American Express	Kimberly-Clark Corporation	Safeway Inc.
Catalyst	Korn Ferry	U.S. Army
The Coca-Cola Company	The Kroger Co.	Working Mother Media
DDI	McKinsey & Co.	Yes To Inc.
Deloitte	Navigator Sales and Marketing Co.	
General Mills	PepsiCo Inc.	

The Growing Power of Women

Why closing the women's leadership gap is a business imperative

A quick look at the influence of women in today's marketplace and their roles in the workplace reveals the wide gap in career achievement between men and women — and why it is hurting businesses' bottom lines:

- U.S. women have tremendous — and growing — purchasing power, estimated between $5 trillion and $15 trillion each year.[2]

- U.S. women report controlling nearly 73 percent of household spending, and Canadian women report controlling or influencing more than 67 percent of their household spending.[3]

- Women are nearly half of the U.S. labor force, but hold just 15 percent of executive positions. Only 24 women hold Fortune 500 CEO seats; just two identify as women of color.[4]

- In 2013, women held 17 percent of board seats in Fortune 500 companies. Women of color held just 3.2 percent of those seats.[5]

Why should corporate America care about the advancement of women — and, more specifically, multicultural women?

"In the broadest sense, we all discriminate," according to Valerie Lewis of Safeway Inc. "We are still most comfortable picking people to work with who are like us and who we like. It's hard to move out of your comfort zone when you're used to everyone around you looking the same — more specifically, like you."

Lewis adds, "Previously, there was no need for these white male-dominated industries to move beyond that comfort zone. But now, we are seeing a big difference in performance between companies that are more diverse and those

that are more insular. Compare companies with significant diversity in their management ranks. Their advertising is exciting and fun and very diverse; it benefits from different perspectives. Who does not remember the courage displayed by General Mills when it stood up for its Cheerios commercial [featuring an interracial family] against a small, but loud segment of the population? Talk about ROI! The companies who fail to get different perspectives and hear and engage different voices, will be the same companies who fail to move forward and to grow."

Research shows that organizations that have been intentional about building a workforce that reflects the faces of consumers at all levels are more profitable. Indeed, a 2011 study by Catalyst showed companies with three or more female board members significantly outperformed those with no women directors. These companies saw an 84-percent higher return on sales, a 60-percent higher return on investment capital and a 46-percent higher return on equity in at least four of the five years analyzed.[6]

DDI's "Global Leadership Forecast 2014-2015" report, confirms better-performing organizations have more women in leadership roles.[7]

In the bottom-performing 20 percent of companies studied, 19 percent of leaders were women. The top-performing 20 percent of companies had 37 percent female leaders.

> **"We are seeing a big difference in performance between companies that are more diverse and those that are more insular."**
>
> **— Valerie Lewis, Safeway Inc.**

Women find corporate culture isn't always friendly

Companies have missed — or ignored — opportunities to close the gender achievement gap.

Women of all races report "mostly positive" experiences during their career, according to the NEW Multicultural Women's Leadership Survey of nearly 2,000 women conducted in May 2014 — but say their organizations or colleagues do not always support their career goals.
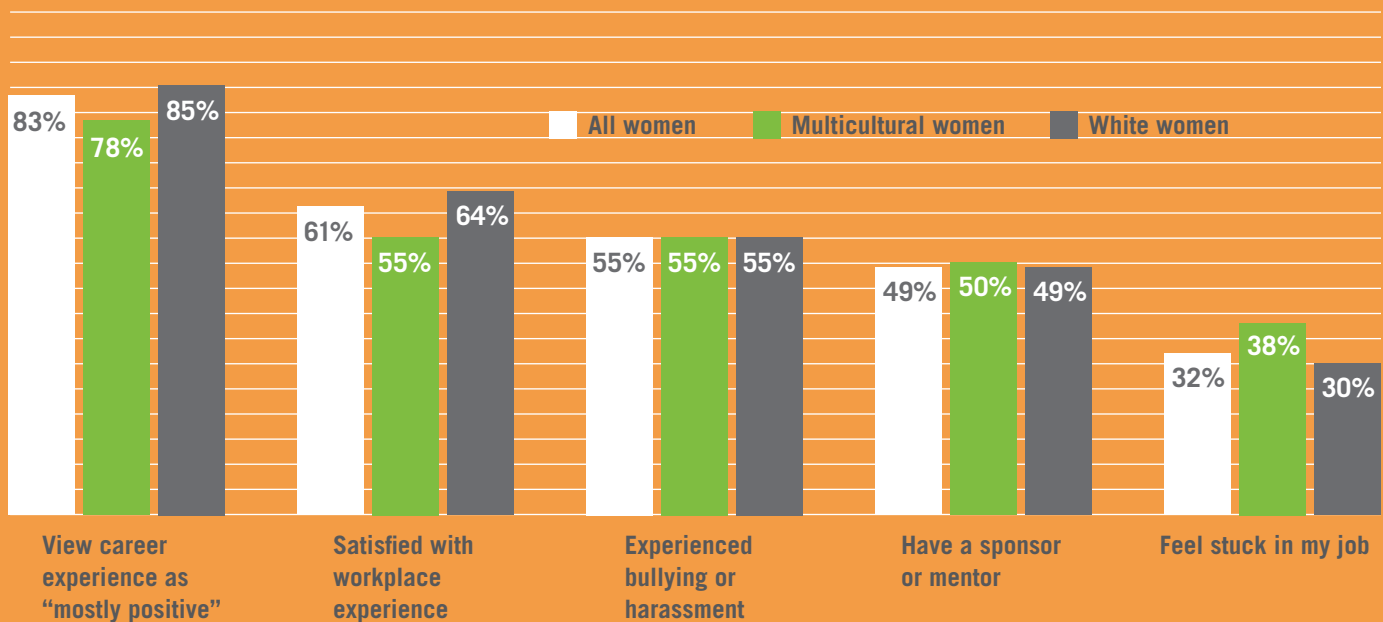
While more than 75 percent of both multicultural and white women partic-ipating in the NEW survey said their workplace experiences have been "mostly positive," only six in 10 are satisfied with them. Nearly one-third said they felt "stuck" in their jobs.

The respondents' reasons for feeling stuck varied, but common themes were culture, family responsibilities, inability or unwillingness to relocate and having a poor manager. A close look at the survey results reveals that companies have missed — or have ignored — opportunities to increase

Workplace experiences

While the majority of women say they have had "mostly positive workplace experiences," a majority have experienced harassment and only half have a sponsor or mentor.

	All women	Multicultural women	White women
View career experience as "mostly positive"	83%	78%	85%
Satisfied with workplace experience	61%	55%	64%
Experienced bullying or harassment	55%	55%	55%
Have a sponsor or mentor	49%	50%	49%
Feel stuck in my job	32%	38%	30%

Source: NEW Multicultural Women's Leadership Survey, 2014

job satisfaction and close the gender achievement gap.

One Latina survey respondent wrote about the impact a bad manager had on her career. "In my case, my new manager introduced great initiatives for commercial results, but [also] great bias [into] the culture of our company and the development plans of the members of his team. This last year, my career stuck. However, it is up to me to handle it, professionally and emotionally."

An African American analyst for a consumer goods manufacturer said, "I have been under terrible management for the past seven years. Trying to move without supervisor support is very difficult. I am confident with my new approach to networking and a new manager, better days are on their way."

A significant number of survey respondents cited negative behavior by peers or managers — from frustrating to morale-crushing to abusive. More than half of the NEW survey respondents reported being bullied or harassed at work at least once. "In my first role, my male coworker found my college nickname on Facebook and would call me that at work and also made some cracks about how some of my work clothes were too tight,"

reported a white female professional. "I was embarrassed, but laughed it off and stopped wearing that skirt. But I'm used to laughing things off and this might have been a bigger deal to someone more sensitive."

A mixed-race woman who holds a director-level position at a consumer goods company said she was bullied by a manager for four years. "He was eventually let go when another employee initiated a harassment claim against him," she wrote. "He was derogatory with female employees."

And despite the known benefits mentors and sponsors have on women's career trajectories, only one half of the women surveyed have a sponsor or mentor to guide them and advocate for them. Multicultural women, the survey results indicate, often view their managers as their mentors, rather than stepping out and building strategic relationships with others who could serve as advocates and sponsors.

"As much as I have looked for [mentoring], it is not available," reported one white female who holds a director's position at a retail company. "I believe [the scarcity of mentors] is because folks are too stretched in their job responsibilities."

Diverse leadership unlocks new and underleveraged markets

Women not only comprise an expanding pool of underutilized (and underappreciated) talent, but the world's largest emerging market.[8]

Meanwhile, 85 percent of the America's population growth will come from people of color through 2050.[9]

With this population expansion comes an increase in the spending of multicultural consumers. Last year, U.S. Latino consumers spent $1.2 trillion; African Americans, $1.1 trillion; Asians $212.8 billion; and Native Americans, $96 billion. By 2018, minority spending is expected to grow by at least 24 percent.[10]

"People are making progress in advancing the presence of multicultural women, but not enough."

—Rodney McMullen, The Kroger Co.

Outside the United States, global demand and competition continues to grow, and the battle for the brightest, most skilled, most innovative talent rages unabated, as companies strive to increase their knowledge and understanding of non-U.S. cultures and consumers.

Business experts in all fields, especially the retail and consumer goods industry, are driving home the critical importance of increasing the number of multicultural women in the pipeline and executive levels.

In "Diversity as an Engine of Innovation," Deloitte's Alison Kenney Paul, Thom McElroy and Tonie Leatherberry note: "The United States is a far more diverse country than it was just 10 years ago, and it is far less diverse today than it will be in another 10 years. Increasingly, retailers and consumer goods companies must embrace diversity as a market force, and that includes

diversifying their workforces — not simply to do what is right, but because they know that a diverse employee base will drive affinity with and understanding of the customer."[11]

While industry leaders have been talking about the importance of the multicultural consumer for the last decade, no real progress has been made advancing multicultural women to senior roles. As a result, most retail and consumer products companies are not fully benefitting from the rich diversity of thought these employees offer.

At PepsiCo Inc., multicultural women have helped grow businesses that may not have been developed by other employees, according to Tom Greco, president of Frito-Lay North America and executive vice president of PepsiCo Inc. For example, a Latina employee helped PepsiCo see the opportunity in securing the sponsorship of the Mexican national soccer team in advance of the 2014 World Cup. "We embraced the multicultural consumer and we advanced multicultural leaders who have a visceral understanding of our consumer," Greco said. "As a result, we're growing faster."

"As others in the industry see PepsiCo benefit from multicultural leadership, I am optimistic that we will see even more opportunities open up for diverse talent," added Anne Fink, senior vice president, PepsiCo Sales, PepsiCo Inc.

Rodney McMullen, CEO of The Kroger Co., put it this way: "People are making progress in advancing the presence of multicultural women, but not enough. We must not be satisfied until the diversity of our workforce reflects the diversity of our customer base. We have to find a way to do more and do it faster."

The Intersection of Race and Gender

Multicultural women face bigger hurdles on their career journeys

Despite many common workplace experiences, multicultural and white women have very different perspectives of the workplace and perceptions of bias and other barriers to advancement.

Given the lack of multicultural women in senior positions, there are men and women who persist in believing women of color do not aspire to advance into executive roles. "Multicultural women don't get the respect that they deserve," said Subriana Pierce, a former retailer and consumer goods senior executive, now managing partner at Navigator Sales and Marketing. "They have to prove themselves over and over again. The stereotypes that multicultural women face are real. Bias impacts the lives of multicultural women holistically."

Research shows multicultural women are much more likely to perceive the impact of race and gender in the workplace, while white women are more likely to see the impact of gender alone. This difference in perception is a critical one since white women, although still facing significant workplace hurdles and gender bias, are making slow but marked inroads into the corporate landscape.[12]

Rather than walking down the halls of corporate power together, multicultural women and white women are walking along different paths, with multicultural women striving to catch up. It is as if the women are separated by a transparent wall and occasionally glimpsing, but rarely touching or fully understanding, each other's journey.

The study of "intersectionality," which analyzes the experiences and perspectives of people who have multiple identities, is key to understanding why groups of women are often on divergent corporate paths.[13] Having multiple minority identities, in this case gender and race/ethnicity, adds complexity to how individuals see themselves, how they understand their experiences and how others see and understand them.

Multicultural women have several lenses through which they filter the events of their lives. A Latina, for instance, is likely to perceive her experience through both her gender and Latin background. And, although a white woman also filters through race and gender, her race, which is part of the established national norm, may not be a lens that is as evident to her as gender.[14]

Results of the NEW Multicultural Women's Leadership Survey reveal the impact of having multiple identities on perceptions of the workplace. While more than half of all women (59 percent) surveyed said they believe white men have an advantage at work, more than 70 percent of multicultural women perceive this bias. Multicultural women (49 percent) are also much more likely than white women (37 percent) to believe multicultural women face greater bias than multicultural men do.

The most striking difference of perspective, however, is the 28-percentage-point gap on the question of whether multicultural women face greater bias than white women do. Here the women's views diverge sharply, with 56 percent of multicultural women saying they face greater bias than their white female peers, and only 28 percent of white women agreeing.

Understanding and recognizing these

> **"Multicultural women leaders should be authentic about their professional journey and any hurdles they have faced."**
>
> — **Deepti Modgekar, Deloitte**

differences in perception is key to closing the multicultural women's leadership gap, because whether and how women recognize the experiences, behaviors and attitudes related to race and ethnicity is often connected to their own racial and ethnic status and to their life experiences.

"Certain cultures do not encourage women to speak up," noted one NEW survey respondent, an Asian woman who works as an IT professional at a consumer goods company. "This can be an impediment in the workplace. Women wait to be invited to participate. Layer cultural background over this, and we see why the issue of women finding a voice is exacerbated."

An African American woman responding to the survey noted the majority of high-level executives — white males — are more comfortable working with white women than multicultural women, because "[white women] were the first to break through the ceiling, and they're what

white men executives are used to [as] wives, mothers, sisters. [Among men of all races and ethnicities], there's a comfort level of talking sports, etc. Women of color just don't have that one thing that brings comfort to the executives, so it can sometimes provide a barrier."

People tend to associate with those with whom they share similar cultures and like values, said Deepti Modgekar, senior manager, Deloitte & Touche LLP. "Those are easy relationships to cultivate. However we all have the responsibility to raise our hands and say 'I have the desire and goal to be a leader. What can you do to help me do that?'

"Unless there are specific initiatives in place in which developing and sponsoring multicultural women is institutionalized, such as Deloitte's Emerging Leaders Development Program, it can be challenging to make yourself known, raise your hand, and say, 'I need the help, please guide me.'"

Differences in perspective

There are sharp differences in the way white women and multicultural women perceive workplace bias.

■ **All women**   ■ **Multicultural women**   ■ **White women**

	All women	Multicultural women	White women
White men have an advantage	59%	70%	55%
Multicultural women face more bias than multicultural men	40%	49%	37%
Multicultural women face more bias than white women	35%	56%	28%

Source: NEW Multicultural Women's Leadership Survey, 2014

More career challenges

Each woman's viewpoint is the result of both common and individual cultural and workplace experiences, and it is important to avoid stereotyping others' perceptions. But the great disparity in understanding between white women and women of color is critical to acknowledge because it has implications for how and in what way women support other women. If white women can only see the similarities they have with multicultural women, without seeing how these women and their lives differ, white women may be inadvertently supporting the conditions that hold multicultural women back.

Multicultural women are confronted with challenges that men and other women don't face. A Catalyst report on law firms, for example, found that multicultural women face more limited growth opportunities and have greater outsider status than their white male and female peers. Multicultural women are subject to more gender stereotyping and feelings of sexism compared to white women, and they lack access to high-profile client assignments and engagements, the study found. Further, multicultural women often do not receive candid feedback from their colleagues.[15]

Other research shows that multicultural women are often subject to ethnic stereotypes and biases and lack mentors, sponsors, role models, authentic relationships and direct and honest feedback from bosses.[16]

Responding to the NEW survey, 44 percent of multicultural women said they have experienced bias in the workplace because they are "different." Less than one-third (32 percent) of white women reported the same experience.

Asian females have to work "two to three times harder than white peers to get attention from senior executives, even when value-add-

ed work and high performance is recognized," according to an Asian department manager at a consumer products company who responded to the NEW survey.

Some multicultural women are addressing bias head on. "While I have experienced bias at work, I am still very satisfied with my workplace experience," a Native American retail senior manager shared. "I am satisfied because the situation was resolved. Having isolated negative experiences does not negate my overall satisfaction with my workplace."

"Covering" to fit in

As multicultural women continue to push forward and maneuver around situations of bias, being "different" at work often takes a toll. Multicultural women are less likely than white women to trust their supervisors (62 percent vs. 73 percent), according to NEW survey results. Almost half (45 percent) of the multicultural women surveyed say they don't share important aspects of their lives at work, compared to 35 percent of white women.
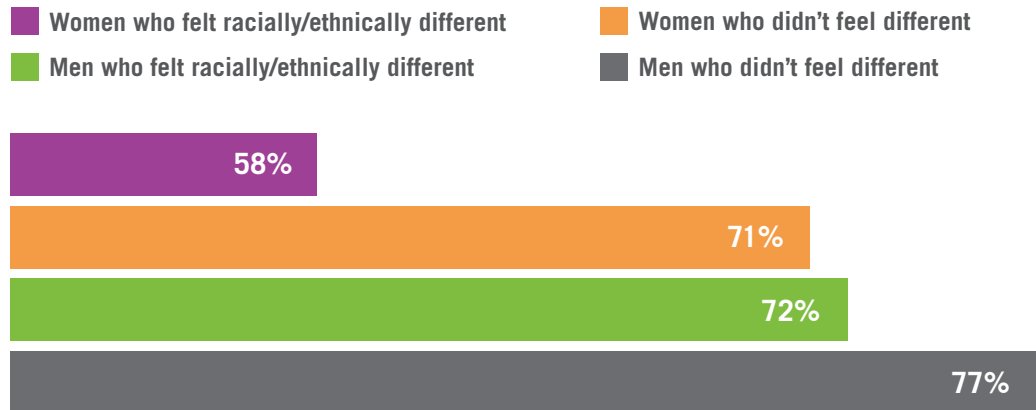
"I prefer to keep my personal life personal; I'm unsure that others would understand," wrote one Asian woman who works in retail.

Similarly, an African American research scientist said she didn't feel free to be herself at work. "When I express any emotion at all, people take it the wrong way."

"Covering," or hiding aspects of your life outside the norm, is especially prevalent among multicultural women. According to the 2013 Deloitte report "Uncovering talent: A new model of inclusion," 83 percent of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals; 79 percent of blacks; 66 percent of women; 67 percent of women of color and 63 percent of Hispanics cover some aspect of themselves at work.[17]

Likelihood of having a CEO
or senior executive mentor

According to Catalyst, women who felt racially or ethnically different are less likely to have a CEO or senior executive mentor than any other group.

- ■ Women who felt racially/ethnically different
- ■ Women who didn't feel different
- ■ Men who felt racially/ethnically different
- ■ Men who didn't feel different

Women who felt racially/ethnically different	58%
Women who didn't feel different	71%
Men who felt racially/ethnically different	72%
Men who didn't feel different	77%

Source: Catalyst survey of 2,463 male and female MBA graduates, 2014.

In certain cases, organizations have actively pushed employees to conform to established norms. The U.S. Army recently promulgated and then partially withdrew a set of rules that banned certain neat, professional-looking hairstyles that are common among black women. This type of appearance-based "covering" is actively or subtly encouraged in many U.S. companies and underscores the nation's discomfort with black hairstyles.[18]

There are many such messages that multicultural women receive about hairstyles, language, cultural style of dress and other appearance or behavioral traits. These messages tell multicultural women that who they are is not quite acceptable, and help create a murky atmosphere of misperception and distortion through which the women must manage on top of the stresses of their job.[19]

Individuals who feel different tend to feel sep-

arated from the core features of the norm group and, consequently, may be excluded from the group. And though not all multicultural women feel "other," many do.[20]

But the impact of "otherness" is not just a psychological or physical separateness from key organizational groups. Research shows being "other" has a tangible impact on the kind of mentoring support multicultural women are given. "Of those with mentors, women who felt racially/ethnically different were less likely to have senior-level mentors than any other group," according to a Catalyst.[21]

Work/life balance for the multicultural woman

PepsiCo Inc. CEO Indra Nooyi — one of the few multicultural women who has reached the highest levels of the retail and consumer goods

Glass ceilings, sticky floors and divided hallways

Researchers and authors have talked about the "sticky floor" and the "glass ceiling" for decades. While the dynamics that these labels describe have long existed, they are one dimensional and do not acknowledge the realities of corporate women — streams of individuals traveling on separate paths down an organizational hallway.

A better metaphor is a hallway divided by transparent walls resting on a mirrored floor.[22] The floor reflects the dominant white male culture and provides a standard by which all organizational perspectives and behaviors are measured. In this hallway, groups of women see each other, but are unable to touch each other or feel and understand the different experiences the other group is having.

White women are likely to be more comfortable than multicultural women with the company's racial/ethnic culture. They can more easily understand the codes that will help them succeed.

Multicultural women, on the other hand, are not really connected to the floor's reflection. They are distanced by race/ethnicity and gender and find fewer ties to the power structure. They are more likely than their white peers to feel out of sync with the reflections of gender and register the "otherness" that comes from being different than the norm.

"Fifteen years ago, when I went to my first few Food Marketing Institute events, I was one of two or three women. I was the only African American woman, period," said Safeway's Valerie Lewis. "Being 'the only one' can be 'helpful' sometimes. When you contribute something that your peers recognize, you stand out and are remembered. If I wasn't the only African American woman in the room, I may or may not have been recognized.

"But many times, it works against you. I also have been in the room when my contribution went unheard or failed to be acknowledged — until my white male colleague repeated the same thing. Also, while some colleagues may remember you, they still may not remember to include you," Lewis said.

The fact that women are often cut off from each other's experiences makes the divided hallway more difficult for each group to navigate. Rather than embracing the wonderful tapestry of their unique cultures and standing together, women are working separately and often getting stuck in mid-level jobs. And, if they do make it to the top, are finding themselves alone.

industry — has been candid about her journey and the personal sacrifices she has made to reach the top.

At the Aspen Ideas Festival in July 2014, she said it remains difficult for her to manage personal and professional demands. "I don't think women can have it all," Nooyi said. "We pretend we have it all. Every day you have to make a decision about whether you are going to be a wife or a mother, in fact many times during the day you have to make those decisions. And you have to co-opt a lot of people to help you. We co-opted our families to help us. [My husband and I] plan our lives meticulously so we can be decent parents."

When she missed her daughter's school events, she said, "the first few times I would die with guilt. But I developed coping mechanisms," such as getting a list of other moms who missed the event.

"Stay-at-home mothering was a full-time job," Nooyi said. "Being a CEO for a company is three full-time jobs rolled into one. How can you do justice to all? You can't."[23]

Most women carry the lion's share of responsibilities for their family's personal needs, but multicultural women in leadership roles bear an added layer of responsibility. "A study published in the British Journal of Management found that both white and minority women struggle with work/life balance to a greater degree than men," noted Bea Perez, chief sustainability officer for The Coca-Cola Company. "However, minority women often have to deal with additional cultural, community or religious demands that make this balance even tougher."

In a 2014 article for *The Huffington Post,* Carol Evans of Working Mother Media wrote about some of the extra concerns multicultural women have: "Women of color are more likely to have to help manage extended family issues that go far beyond white women's more contained nuclear families. All women face enormous challenges of child care and elder care, but senior multicultural women may be the first in their extended family in a professional-level position. They may feel the need to help nieces and nephews to go to college and other obligations most white women don't contend with."[24]

Multicultural leaders are more likely to take responsibility for supporting extended family because they are more financially secure, better educated than some of their relatives and/or better able to navigate educational, medical, legal and other community institutions. They may also be culturally socialized to extended family models.[25] As a result, they often become the go-to people for their extended families and may serve as coach, therapist and banker and invite relatives to live in their homes.

In many cases, multicultural women are the first in their families to achieve a certain level of success in corporate America. Middle-class African Americans, for example, often support extended family members, according to "The African American Financial Experience," a 2013 study by Prudential. They are significantly more likely than the general population to financially support parents and other relatives.[26]

"Multicultural women leaders should be authentic about their professional journey and any hurdles they have faced along the way," Deloitte's Modgekar said. "Sometimes, I think, these leaders want to just fit in with other leaders and they don't want to highlight their differences. But I think these differences make these women more interesting and more relatable."

A New Strategy for Better Results

Women can move ahead by building bridges

To further their careers, all women, but in particular multicultural women, must find the confidence to overcome workplace challenges and build relationships outside their comfort zone.

"Like most [women], multicultural women face challenges personally, interpersonally and organizationally," Audra Bohannon, senior partner at Korn Ferry, told NEW. "If they are not aware and intentional about how to manage these challenges, they can become less confident in embracing the key requirements of success. They will focus primarily on working hard and will not spend the time required to build strong political, navi-gational and relationship skills."

In many cases, women are helped by managers who offer support in the workplace, but who cannot take the place of a mentor or sponsor, relationships that are critical to career advancement. To build cross-functional, strategic relationships outside of their relationship with their managers, women must overcome their reluctance to embrace their vulnerability and reveal who they are as people. They must also closely examine their own unconscious and conscious biases. Were they taught to mistrust the "other"?

A to-do list for all women

All women must take responsibility for each other's advancement and be intentional about opening the door for other women. But to support, mentor and sponsor each other, they must first understand each other.[27] Here are strategies for women of all races and ethnicities for building bridges and connecting to each other:

- Increase your awareness of your group and your own privileges and disadvantages.
- Acknowledge and challenge your own biases and stereotypes.
- Be honest, explore the critiques and concepts you most wish to reject.
- Take responsibility for your own lack of knowledge about other groups of women.
- Read, watch documentaries and begin to educate yourself about others.
- Be willing to honestly and thoughtfully engage in courageous conversations, where you will hear others' truths about you.
- Recognize that each group of women has something to learn and to share.
- Become comfortable in the roles of teacher and student.
- Ask for help. Give help when asked. Offer help when possible.
- Embrace your own power and influence.
- Be open to new relationships.
- Seek a mentor or sponsor outside the company.

Agenda for Corporate Change

How to champion and leverage cultural fluency to achieve multicultural women's leadership

To leverage the diversity of thought and leadership skills that multicultural women bring to corporate America, companies must champion cultural fluency through role modeling, policies and procedures.

1 Appoint and develop ambassadors of change

C-suite leaders must expect executives in the succession planning process to be culturally competent. "We must develop cultural fluency — having an understanding of multicultural women and the challenges they face," Frito-Lay's Tom Greco said. "Recognizing what factors are important for them and how they might be different than those of a majority male is a key part of what we focus on in developing cultural fluency."

Boards, too, have a part to play in creating cultural fluency in an organization. Directors should exercise their oversight role on human capital issues to ensure the organization is making progress addressing diversity and other human resource issues. Increased oversight along these lines is a sign of an effective board. Indeed, research by McKinsey & Co. found the highest-performing boards focus on succession planning and talent management.[28]

After the CEO and C-suite members are on board with creating a more equitable culture for multicultural women, they can authorize the creation of — and skill-development programs for — ambassadors of change. The job of these early adopters is to lead by example and help

the organization and other leaders become more culturally aware.

The combination of board and executive support helps create the appetite for change in the rest of the organization. "The tone from the top sets the foundation for any culture, and, likewise, issues of gender and diversity," according to Suzan Kereere, senior vice president and general manager, national client group, at American Express. "This is the first critical step to building a more inclusive, more profitable, business and culture whose people and leaders — women and men of all diversities — reflect the demography of the customers served."

2 Reward mentoring and sponsorship

Despite the widely acknowledged importance of mentoring and sponsorship, women, especially multicultural women, lack both. A "lack of mentors and sponsors" was the third-most-cited reason by NEW survey respondents for why there are not more multicultural women leaders in the retail and consumer goods industry.

Organizations must intentionally link sponsors to high-potential multicultural women who can advance one or two levels higher than their current positions. One caution: Sponsors must be passionate about helping multicultural women gain high-visibility opportunities. Too often, multicultural women are buried within their organizations so that senior executives don't know them, their work or their potential. Without forming real

and authentic relationships — with a high level of trust — with mentors and sponsors, multicultural women will find it difficult to advance.

"Multicultural women need sponsors that have influence and understanding of the unique challenges that [these women] may encounter during their career," according to Dr. Willie McKinney, regulatory affairs, at Altria Client Services. "A sponsor can provide 'air cover,' which may give multicultural women the opportunity to make learning mistakes without damaging their reputation and opportunities for advancement.

"Men often pursue and obtain promotions into leadership positions based on their potential to grow into the position, while multicultural women have to prove themselves prior to promotion. Sponsors can help multicultural women have the confidence to pursue and excel in new leadership positions."

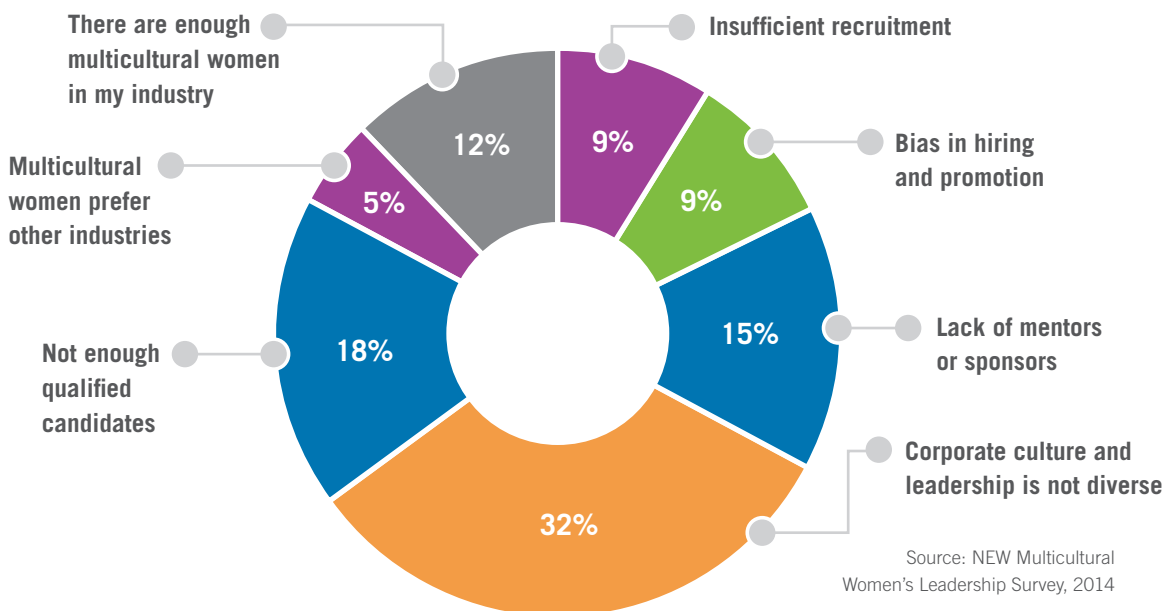## 3 Embrace different leadership styles

Women's worldview and life experiences produce a gender-specific way of engaging others. In their authentic space, multicultural women lead differently than white male leaders. The business world continues to promote and reward a leadership style created by white men. Without a willingness to embrace different leadership styles, companies will continue to prevent multicultural women from offering their best leadership traits and abilities.

Like all women, multicultural women must navigate others' preconceived notions of how a successful leader looks and acts, according to Joy Chen, CEO of Yes To Inc. "[Most corporate executives] hire and advance in their own likeness.

"You won't find many women or multicultural

"Main reason there are not more multicultural women leaders in my industry"

NEW members and supporters named "corporate culture and leadership is not diverse" the number-one reason there are not more multicultural women in leadership roles in the retail/consumer products industry.

- There are enough multicultural women in my industry
- Insufficient recruitment — 9%
- Bias in hiring and promotion — 9%
- Multicultural women prefer other industries — 5%
- 12%
- Lack of mentors or sponsors — 15%
- Not enough qualified candidates — 18%
- Corporate culture and leadership is not diverse — 32%

Source: NEW Multicultural Women's Leadership Survey, 2014

women candidates considered for senior jobs because their leadership style is different," Chen said, "For instance, Asian women tend to be hard working, but fairly soft spoken when it comes to their style. This is rarely acceptable as a leadership style, even if that woman has delivered great results with that style."

Susan Cain, author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking,* suggests Western culture has deemed extroverts to be ideal leaders. Cain cites research in biology, psychology, neuroscience and evolution to demonstrate that introversion is both common and normal, noting that many of mankind's most creative individuals and distinguished leaders were introverts. She urges changes in the workplace, at schools and in parenting.[29]

> ## "We have to continue providing multicultural women with the opportunities to lead and grow."
> ### —Bea Perez, The Coca-Cola company

4 Develop the pipeline

Developing the pipeline should be part of every leader's expectations. As president of North American Consumer Business for Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Mike Hsu knows the value of a diverse talent pipeline. "By 2050 one out of two women will be multicultural. We need more multicultural women in leadership positions in our industry to help us be more representative of our consumers and obtain insights in innovation, marketing and sales to meet their needs and advance our businesses."

With an eye on developing accelerated programs, more cross-functional assignments and access to senior-level mentors for multicultural women, Kimberly-Clark recently conducted a series of events with African American, Hispanic and Asian women in the company prior to a planned "think tank" strategy session with representatives from all groups.

"This activity is driven by wanting the best team to drive the best results. It's not about numbers or 'checking the box,'" Hsu said. "It is important for us to have everyone included in the process and respected for their individuality and what they can contribute. We are looking for diversity of thought, experience, culture, race, gender — because that is the world we live in and sell to. If you are picking a team, you want to pick from the entire room, not just half the room."

The company invested in a development program that saw immediate results, with four out of five women who participated being promoted to director-level positions.

At The Coca-Cola Company, the Odyssey Network Business Retreat is specifically designed for mid-senior-level multicultural women and entrepreneurs and focuses on their unique challenges in the workplace and marketplace, according to Coca-Cola's Bea Perez. The Odyssey's boot camp format enables Coca-Cola to support the professional development of its high-potential multicultural women in a culturally relevant way while empowering multicultural women entrepreneurs.

"As a company, we have to continue providing multicultural women with the opportunities to lead and grow," Perez said. "As we do, we'll

unleash a powerful force within our business that will help us achieve our 2020 Vision of doubling our business by the end of the decade."

At Deloitte, the Emerging Leaders Development Program is an initiative dedicated to further developing high-potential multicultural managers and senior managers across the organization. This is done through private coaching, executive sponsorship and career workshops to propel participants to the next level.

"This is important for women who don't have strong role models who can say, 'This is how to do things' or give honest feedback," said Deloitte's Deepti Modgekar. "It's important for organizations to create an environment for each team member to feel comfortable, challenged, supported, valued and recognized for their achievements."

5 Create opportunities for multicultural women to be heard and recognized

Women's employee resource groups help women advance their careers and create opportunities for women to understand each other's journey and support each other. Moreover, organizations that support employee resource groups specifically for women of color have made great strides in the development and advancement of multicultural women leaders.

6 Measure multicultural performance

The retail/consumer goods industry is known for tracking data and rewarding employees who meet performance goals. If companies want to improve representation of multicultural women in their leadership ranks, why aren't most tracking these women's careers trajectories, starting with recruitment?

"We can't find good multicultural females to work for us" is an often-heard excuse for the lack of women of color in leadership roles and is not reflective of the pool of talented multicultural women. Senior leaders must set a stake in the ground and measure progress. Too often, companies declare victory after the promotion of one multicultural woman to a leadership position and organizations remain static until that woman leaves.

After multicultural women are in an organization, surveys, mentoring and sponsorship will help the management team understand their experiences. Succession planning should be tracked and scored to promote transparency and diversity of candidates.

Applying a high level of discipline and rigor to the measurement process will ensure that leaders focus on the abilities, talents and potential of every viable candidate for advancement.

Company leaders must ask: What conditions enable people to thrive and succeed in the organization — and are these conditions in place for all members of the organization? "If not, then companies must experiment with new practices and new ways of evaluating work and people," said Harvard Business School's Robin Ely. "In other words, they must engage in organizational culture change, learn from those experiments and institutionalize practices that create equal opportunities for employees to thrive and succeed."

Additional resources

These resources offer more insights and strategies for tackling personal and workplace bias and the multicultural women's achievement gap.

- *Our Separate Ways* by Ella Bell and Stella Nkomo
- *Double Outsiders: How Women of Color Can Succeed in Corporate America* by Jessica Fay Carter
- *Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling: Career Strategies for Asians* by Jane Hyun
- *Salsa, Soul and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age* by Juana Bordas
- *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America* by Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden
- *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* by Kenji Yoshino
- *Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace* (vols. 1, 2 and 3) edited by Margaret Foegen Karsten
- DiversityBestPractices.com
- The Project Implicit Social Attitudes Test (no fee); implicit.harvard.edu/implicit
- Intercultural Development Inventory (fee-based tool); idiinventory.com
- The Whole Brain Dominance Instrument (fee-based tool); herrmannsolutions.com

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Final thoughts

Multicultural women leaders are underrepresented at senior levels of the retail and consumer goods industry. Leaders, especially CEOs, need to step back and recognize the impact of changing demographics and realize this underrepresentation makes their companies vulnerable to competition from more diverse organizations.

But advancing more multicultural women won't just happen. Gender and race equity will require advocacy, tenacity, resiliency and a resolve to push forward.

Coca-Cola's Bea Perez offers this advice: "As the world becomes more connected and the U.S. becomes more diverse, it's increasingly important that organizations reflect the consumers they serve. There's tremendous value in the various experiences, perspectives and expertise that a diverse and multicultural team can bring to the table."

We couldn't agree more.

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As senior faculty for the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), Ancella Bickley Livers works with Fortune 500 companies, government agencies and nonprofit organizations to design and deliver leadership solutions. She previously served as executive director of the Institute for Leadership Development and Research at the Executive Leadership Council. Livers also has served as an assistant professor in the School of Journalism at West Virginia University and spent a decade as a newspaper journalist. Her writing credits include co-author of *Leading in Black and White: Working Across the Racial Divide* and "Dear White Boss" in the Harvard Business Review. She is the author of "Coaching People of Color" in *The CCL Handbook of Coaching: A Guide for the Leader Coach* and "Black Women in Management," published in the three-volume *Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace*.

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