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2023 Women in Supply Chain Survey: Women Represented at Historic Levels

An excerpt from the Gartner/AWESOME
Women in Supply Chain Survey



Enterprises might be wrestling with the “Great Breakup,” yet the urgency for more gender-diverse organizations has never been so pronounced. Gender equality initiatives will be a necessary proactive approach to meeting the work demands of today and tomorrow.

Fortunately, according to our 2023 Women in Supply Chain Survey, women are represented within the supply chain at historic levels. Chief supply chain officers (CSCOs) must remain committed to gender diversity and prioritize goal-setting, leadership inclusion and compensation.

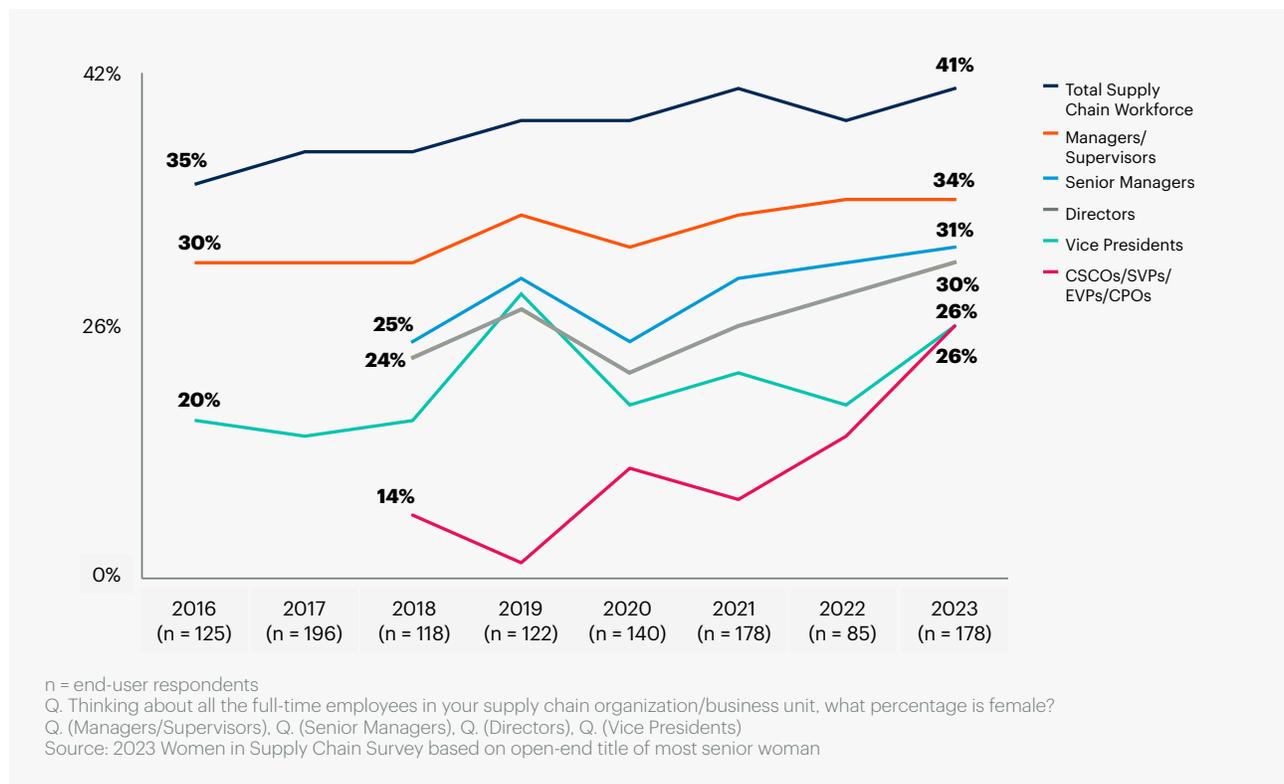
This report provides an overview of the survey’s four key findings:

1. Representation levels of women in supply chain make a resounding comeback
2. Women are noticeably more absent from the front line
3. Midcareer attrition among women remains a concern
4. Organizations seeing progress cite leadership inclusion, recruiting and development for women

1. Representation levels of women in supply chain make a resounding comeback

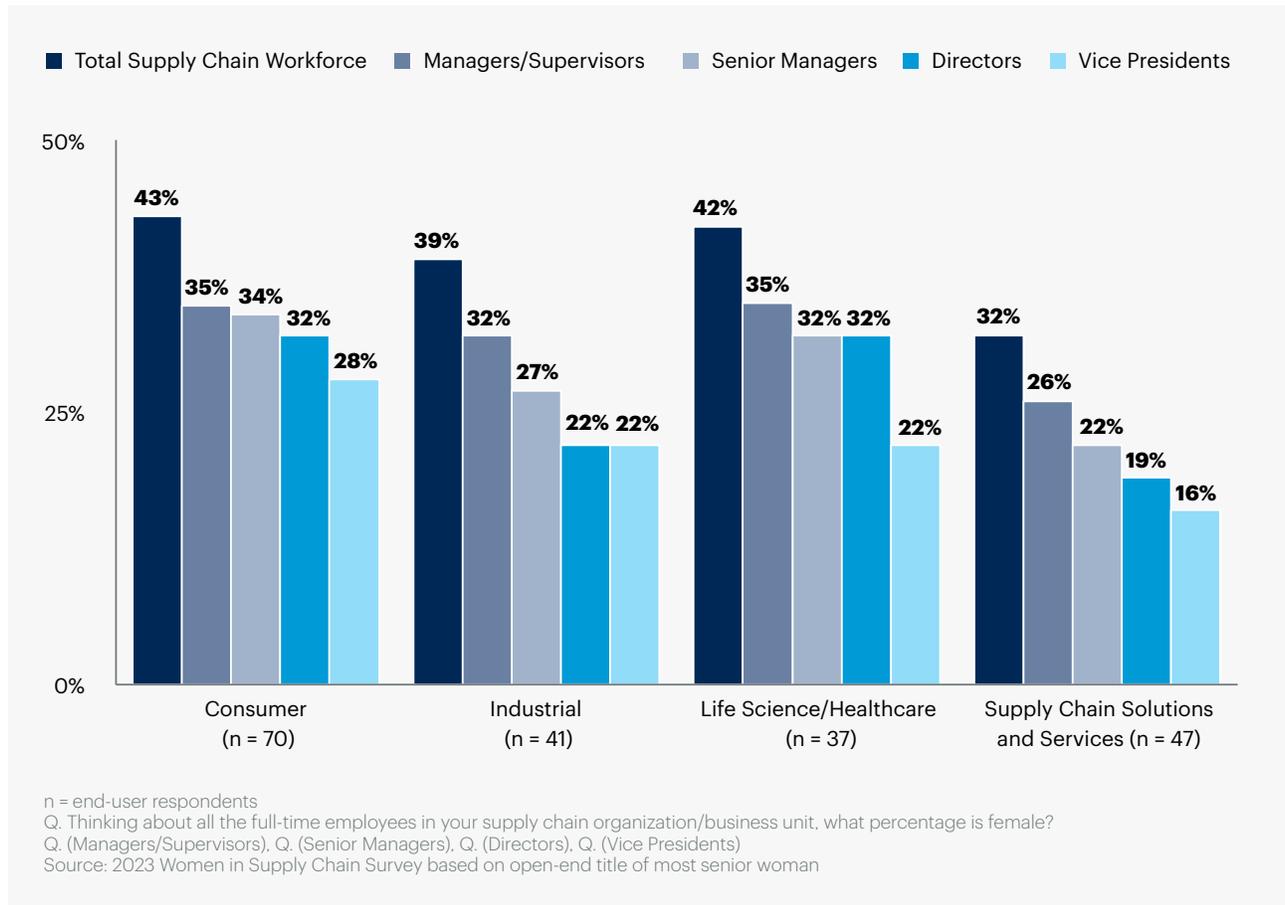
Women make up around 41% of the total supply chain workforce, which was the all-time high that our 2021 survey recorded as well (see Figure 1). Also, women now make up a record-breaking 26% of the C-suite and executive leadership. While our 2022 survey results showed mostly stasis in representation of women across supply chain levels, 2023 showcases remarkable strides.

Figure 1: Representation of Women in Supply Chain Increased at Almost All Levels of Leadership



That isn't to say that there isn't still work left for supply chain leaders to do. As the corporate ladder advances, the proportion of women leaders declines. This is one trend that neither the supply chain nor any individual sector has been able to shake. The percentage of women in the total supply chain workforce is highest in the consumer segment, while supply chain solutions and services providers continue to lag behind other sectors, as has been the case in prior years (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: The Consumer Segment Leads in Representation Across Industries



2. Women are noticeably more absent from the front line

Labor shortages and triple-digit annualized attrition in frontline roles have disrupted global supply chains since 2021. While conditions have settled somewhat, the top concerns of CEOs responding to the 2023 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey, are inflation and the talent shortage.

For many CSCOs, frontline teams in manufacturing and logistics form the cultural heart of their organization, and may comprise the majority workforce. Yet in 2022, according to a Gartner survey of the frontline worker experience, more than a third of employers reported attrition rates over 20% for frontline workers, compared to just 13% of employers reporting the same high attrition rates for desk-based workers.

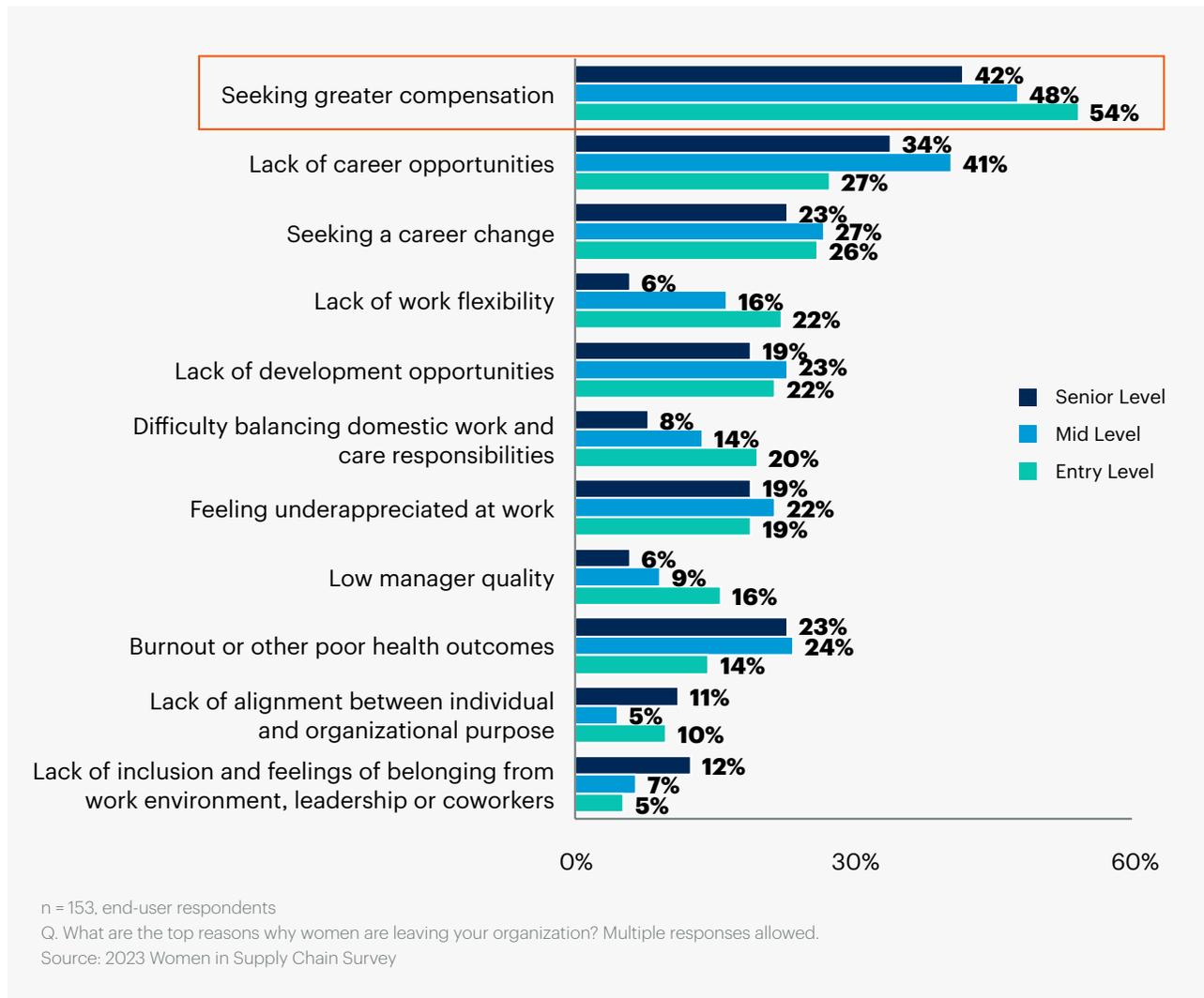
If these CSCOs can hire and retain more women — 50% of the population — this larger labor pool provides a material competitive advantage over those who can't, or don't. What's more, the employee value proposition (EVP) they craft to attract and retain more women will be more attractive to everyone: Gen Z and the caregivers of all genders, to name two key demographics.

The advancement of women leaders through the physical operations ranks would add crucial experience to the leadership pipeline, which would be material in succession planning forums for senior and C-level jobs. It's not uncommon to find female CEOs of Fortune Global 500 companies in supply-chain-intensive industries that have all spent significant parts of their careers in these roles.

3. Midcareer attrition among women remains a concern

Our 2021 and 2022 surveys indicated that the primary attrition drivers among women in supply chain were career advancement, development opportunity and compensation. According to our 2023 survey, greater compensation is overwhelmingly the top reason that women have left the supply chain organization at all levels (particularly midcareer), while lack of career opportunities is the second biggest reason (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Greater Compensation Is the Main Reason Women Leave at All Levels



This comes as no surprise in an environment where, according to Gartner's 4Q22 Global Labor Market Survey, supply chain employees are expecting a 10.4% increase in total compensation when switching jobs. Meanwhile, they're only expecting a 4.9% merit pay increase with their current employer. Leaving offers a more significant opportunity for greater compensation.

Gartner recommends taking the following actions to avoid midcareer attrition among women:

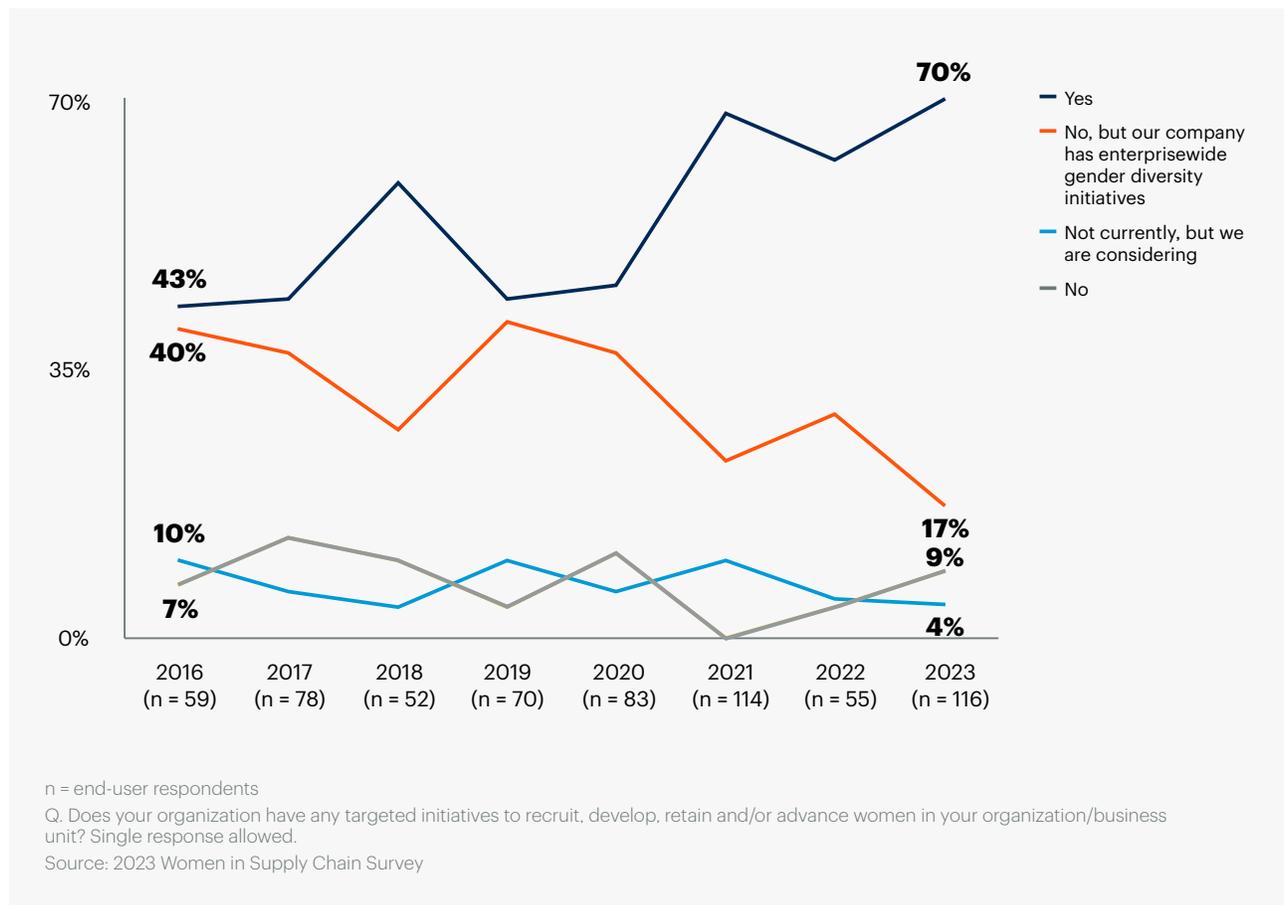
- Partner with HR to uncover pay inequities in your organization. Co-develop a plan for bridging the gap, and determine what information you are willing and able to share publicly. Also, find ways to improve pay transparency to ensure women understand the competitiveness of their salaries.
- Retain women by improving career path visibility and mobility. Identify critical work experiences required to reach new levels of leadership (e.g., leading a cross-functional project), and ensure women are provided greater opportunities to participate in these experiences.
- Be disciplined about supporting women at mid and senior leadership levels as they are subject to burnout.



4. Organizations seeing progress cite leadership inclusion, recruiting and development for women

Seventy percent of supply chain organizations have established gender diversity objectives, up a healthy eight percentage points from 62% in 2022 (see Figure 4). Seventeen percent rely on enterprisewide DEI initiatives (a decrease from 29% in 2022), and 4% say they are considering starting supply-chain-specific initiatives.

Figure 4: More Supply Chain Organizations Lead Their Own Initiatives

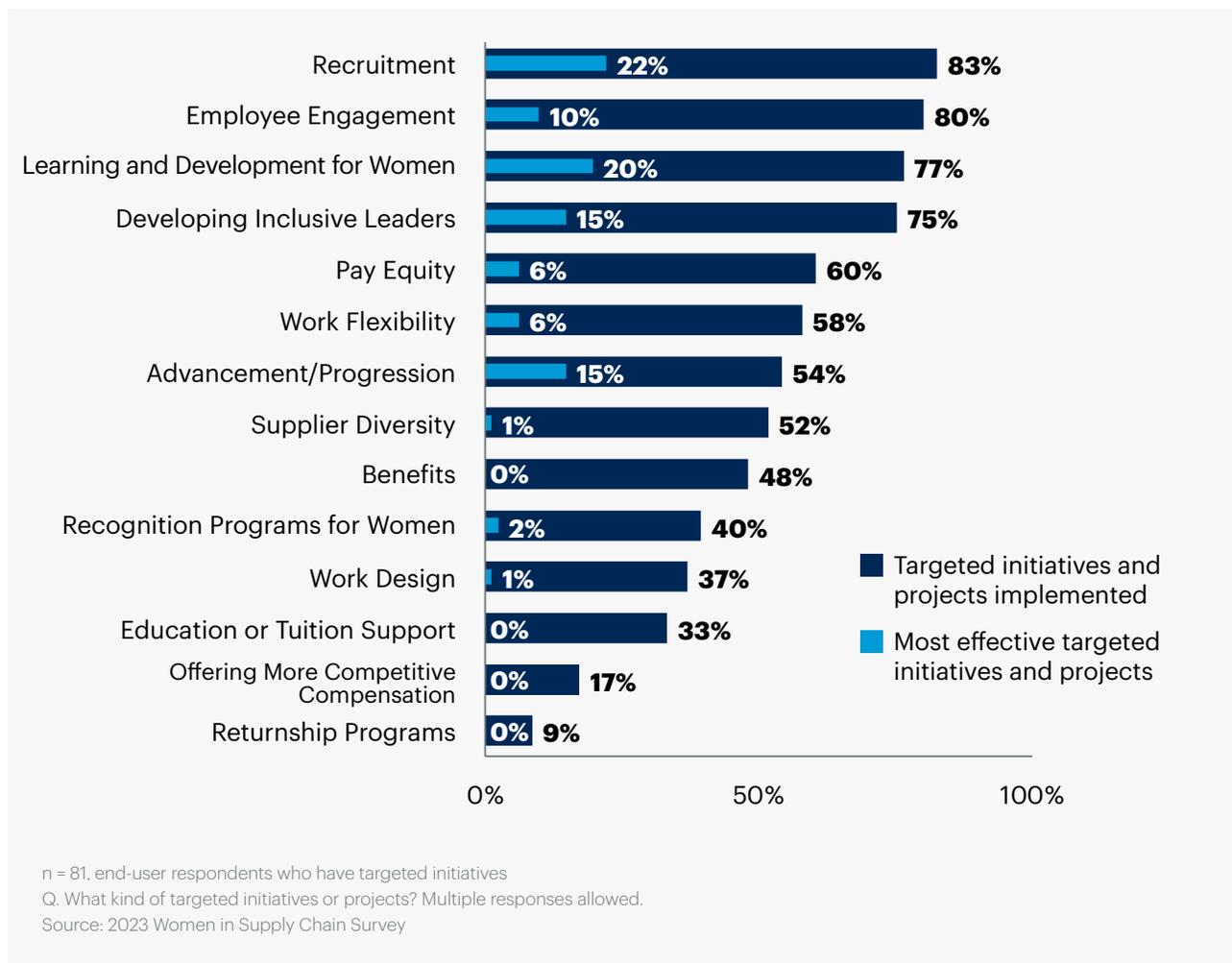


Of the organizations that have targeted initiatives, there are four types of initiatives that are most likely to receive investment:

- Recruitment, which might involve reshaping the interview process or removing gendered language from job descriptions
- Employee engagement, which might include investment in employee resource groups (ERGs)
- Learning and development programs specifically for women
- Development programs focused on inclusive leadership

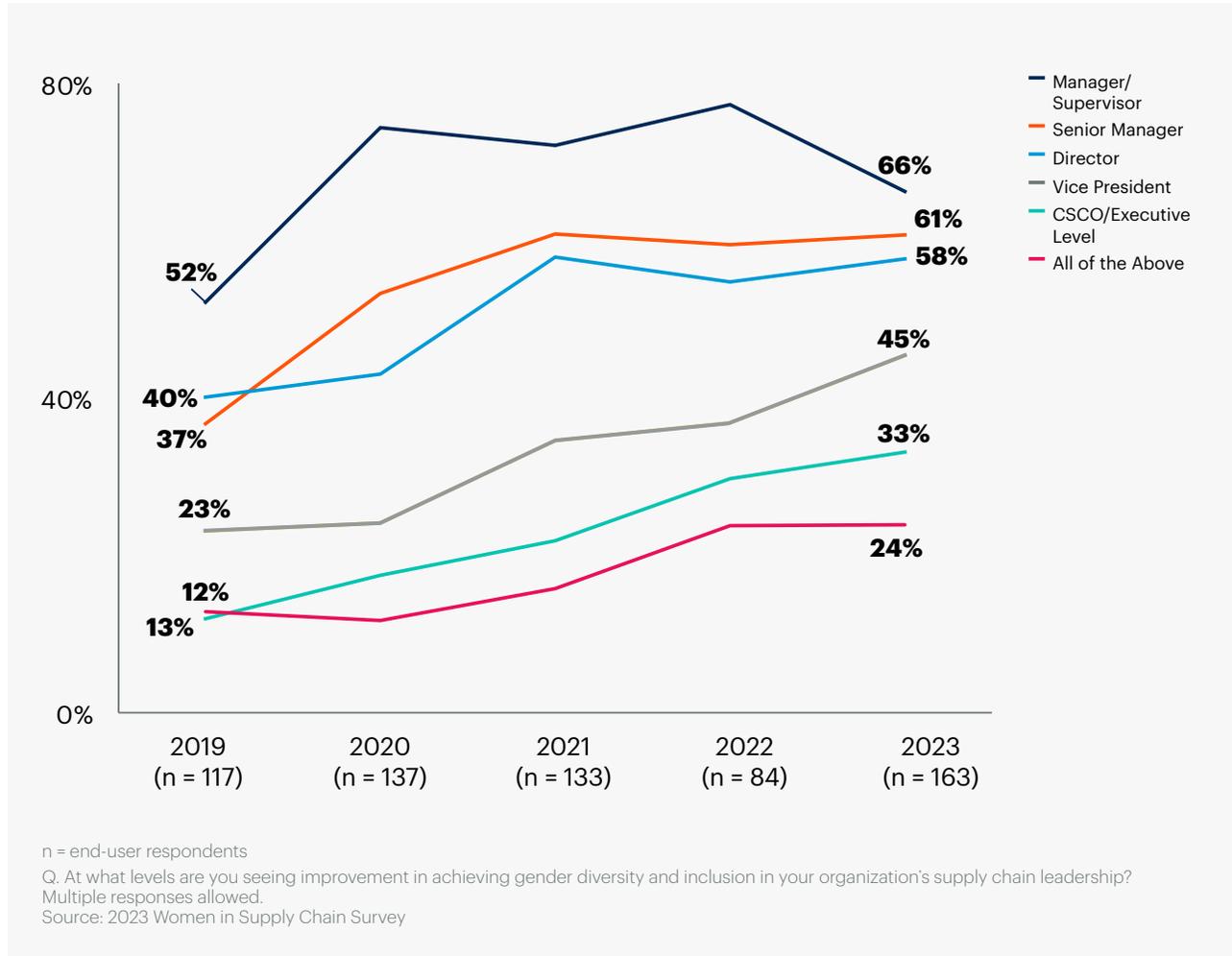
Less than two out of every three supply chain organizations are implementing initiatives focused on pay equity, advancement and progression of women, work flexibility and supplier diversity. Given that pay and progression were called out as top reasons women at all levels are leaving their organizations, Figure 5 demonstrates a clear gap in investment.

Figure 5: Supply Chain Organizations Are Implementing Initiatives Related to Recruitment, Engagement and Learning and Development



Amid pay equity and the myriad other initiatives led by supply chain, are they actually paying off? The answer appears to be a resounding “yes.” Roughly one-fourth of end-user organizations have reported improvement in achieving gender diversity and inclusion goals at all levels of the leadership pipeline (see Figure 6). Over half of manager/supervisor, senior manager and director roles are showing improvement in gender diversity and inclusion.

Figure 6: VP- and CSCO-Level Representation Most Improved



About the Survey

The **2023 Women in Supply Chain Survey**, the eighth annual, is a collaborative effort by a team of **Gartner** analysts who research supply chain workforce and organization dynamics, and **AWESOME**, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization focused on advancing women's supply chain leadership. We also worked with **boom!**, a U.K.-based global community formed to support and link women in the supply chain profession, with membership spanning 30 countries.

Gartner and AWESOME worked together to develop the online survey and recruit participants. The survey sample was augmented with recruitment efforts from social media and Gartner clients.

The survey period ran from 14 February 2023 through 17 March 2023. The survey respondents totaled 225 supply chain organization leaders, primarily from companies headquartered in North America. Qualified participants worked in companies that earned at least US\$100 million in annual revenue and operated an internal supply chain organization or operated supply chain as a separate business unit/specialty/practice area or served as vendors of supply chain services and solutions.

Survey questions were designed to examine companies' goals and initiatives to improve recruitment, development, retention and advancement of women. We also asked questions about: representation of women from underrepresented races and ethnicities; practices that increase the engagement with, and success of, women in supply chain organizations; pay equity plans and transparency; frontline engagement practices for women in on-site roles in manufacturing, distribution and transportation; and attrition challenges and reasons for departure of women.

Also, we collected baseline data on how many women are in first-line manager, senior manager, director, vice president and executive-level roles within supply chain organizations.

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