



ADVENTURE TRAVEL
TRADE ASSOCIATION



The Influence & Impact of Women in Adventure Travel

With Sustainable Examples from Switzerland
March 2022



FOREWORD

It is a critical moment for women in adventure travel. Women leaders are putting their teams first as they make their way through the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses have shrunk in size, teams are struggling to handle the recovery, and yet global issues such as sustainability, climate change, and overtourism still remain of utmost importance.

Inside this report you will discover how women and men lead differently and how women and men respondents perceive their companies. Leaders of any gender will learn what is on the minds of their employees and discover that there is much work to be done.

Let's create change together as an industry! Sexual harassment and assault must not be experienced by a third of our staff in 2022 and beyond. More than 11% women must run larger adventure travel organizations. If we see it and then acknowledge the inequities and focus on change, it will come.

- Casey Hanisko, President, ATTA

About 150 years ago, Lucy Walker was the first woman to reach the summit of the Matterhorn. Neither the gloating of men at the time nor the voluminous skirt she had to wear on the climb could stop her. But even today, female climbers and guides are in the minority.

Yet the conditions for more women in outdoor sports are improving. The number of well-educated, independent women with a need for sporting adventures is growing.

This report shows you why more initiatives like "100 % Women" are needed and how Switzerland Tourism was able to create more female role models in the first year of the initiative and thus mobilise a wide variety of women for mountaineering.

- Letizia Elia, Head of Business Development, Switzerland Tourism

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KEY FINDINGS

1

The percentage of board members identifying as women (34%), and the percentage of boards that have at least one woman (74%) have both decreased in the past 5 years.

2

Half of respondents' organizations have a woman as a CEO/top leader, although this is due to the higher volume of responses from small companies.

3

Only 33% of companies with 2021 revenue of \$5-10 million are led by women, and a slim 11% of companies with 2021 revenue over \$10 million have a female CEO/top leader.

4

Work benefits related to schedule flexibility and working virtually are more likely to be offered by women leaders, possibly due to the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on women related to childcare and other family responsibilities.

5

35% of respondents have experienced sexual harassment or assault at work by a coworker. 30% have experienced sexual harassment or assault at work by a client or guest.

6

Overall, respondents were pleased with the level of equality in their own organizations. However, many view the adventure tourism industry and the overall tourism industry as only being "somewhat equal" in opportunities for men and women.

7

Organizations with female leaders are perceived as paying employees more fairly. Female respondents are more likely to believe pay is unequal, with men being paid more.

8

23% of respondents have personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender bias in their own organization and 53% have personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender bias in the adventure industry.

9

Respondents' organizations do take actions to address the specific needs of women travelers, particularly hiring women guides, ensuring proper gear, offering products on trips that women request, and having women-only trips.

10

Women comprise 57% of respondents' clients on average, showing a clear demand for adventure travel. Products and marketing need to support this demand by listening to what women want and encouraging equity in all areas.

An aerial photograph of a small, picturesque village nestled in a mountain valley. The village features numerous white buildings with dark roofs, some with traditional wooden balconies. It is surrounded by lush green forests on the slopes. In the background, majestic snow-capped mountain peaks rise above a layer of low-hanging clouds or mist. A winding road is visible on the left side of the village.

Part I:

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

This report is the second in a series from the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and Switzerland Tourism that discusses how the adventure travel industry can use the current interruption in travel to reassess their impact on the world around them and put sustainability first. The purpose of this series is to identify where the industry is now, what initiatives are happening, and where it needs to go to make tourism sustainable for the future of our planet and people.

Sustainability must respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities and provide fairly distributed socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders.¹ **Sustainability in travel and tourism cannot be achieved without gender equality and empowerment of all women;** denying rights and access to opportunities from an entire gender stops humanity from achieving a sustainable world.² In 2015, the United Nations adopted seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the aim of ensuring all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.³ One of these global goals on the 2030 Agenda is to achieve *gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.*

“Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.”²

- United Nations



INTRODUCTION

Some efforts toward gender equality have taken place during the recent decades. For example, laws that protect equal rights, access to education, and employment opportunities have been adopted, and many countries and companies have set hiring guidelines to promote gender equality in a business environment. Despite the efforts made in ending discrimination, gender equality, and women's rights, the progress over the years is limited and women still face barriers to the labor market in all countries around the globe. Gender inequality remains a major challenge that affects not only individual lives but is argued to stunt economic growth and hold back development.⁴

Tourism is widely recognized as an essential tool to promote gender equality; therefore, it has an important role in reaching the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The limited progress made over the past decades is in danger of reverting back due to the COVID-19 outbreak; therefore the gender impacts of this pandemic need to be recognized in every recovery plan.²

The purpose of this study was to:

- Learn what roles are held by women at adventure businesses
- Understand the types of benefits offered to employees to support a work-life balance and encourage leadership development
- Identify what adventure travel businesses are doing to serve the needs of women travelers
- Gather information about how the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and its members might be proactive about identifying and supporting pathways to success for women
- Find out if there are changes in women leadership in adventure tourism compared to the data collected in a similar project in 2017 and how COVID-19 might have affected women at adventure businesses

METHODOLOGY

- A survey was conducted throughout January 2022 of members of the ATTA community. All were welcome to participate, including men and people identifying as non-binary.
- 166 respondents started the survey; 120 completed it.
- Both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered in the survey and used in this report.
- A similar survey was conducted in 2017, resulting in the ATTA report [Out in Front: Tracking Women's Leadership in Adventure Travel](#). Many of the same questions were asked in 2022, to track changes over the past 5 years.



Before Barbara Banks passed in 2020 she influenced tour operators and inspired travelers around the world with her deep passion for and knowledge of the adventure travel industry.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a grey and white patterned long-sleeved shirt and a large grey backpack, stands on a rocky mountain peak. Her arms are outstretched horizontally to the sides. The background is a misty, overcast landscape with green shrubs in the foreground. The text 'Part II:' is overlaid on a blue rectangular background on the left side of the image.

Part II:

The Current Landscape: Women in Adventure Travel



WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Historically leadership positions in all fronts of the economy are dominated by men. The low number of women in executive positions is often explained by the false assumption that women simply do not want leadership roles. In the early 2000s, it was easier for a woman to become a successful entrepreneur rather than wait for a promotion,⁵ and this trend seems to continue still today.

Tourism is a sector dominated by small businesses and entrepreneurs offering a large variety of opportunities for self-employment and better options for women's participation in the workforce and leadership. Women are using these optimal circumstances for entrepreneurship to their benefit; women are almost twice as likely to be employers in the hotel and restaurant sector than in any other sector.⁶

Women represent 54% of the tourism workforce worldwide,⁶ however, that is not proportionally reflected at leadership-level positions. Neither in government (as of 2019, 23% of tourism ministers were women),⁶ nor in the private sector.

Women are almost
TWICE
as likely to be employers in
hotel/restaurant sector

Women represent
54%
of the tourism
workforce worldwide.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Based on the World Economics Forum's 2021 report on the Global Gender Gap, the hiring of women into senior management positions increased between 2015-2019 in all major industries, including recreation and tourism.⁷ However, in 2020, this improvement has reversed in many industries,⁷ signifying that the global COVID-19 pandemic may have had an impact.

A study conducted by Adventure Travel Trade Association in 2017 suggested that female leadership in adventure tourism companies was in a more advanced position compared to the private sector of the economy as a whole.⁸ In the pre-pandemic world, McKinsey and Company had estimated that in a scenario in which women play an identical role in labor markets to that of men, as much as \$28 trillion, or 26 percent, could be added to global annual GDP by 2025.⁹

However, likely due primarily to the effects of COVID-19, industries around the globe, including adventure tourism, have been set back in many of the goals and optimistic scenarios proposed by pre-pandemic research.

The percentage of women hired in senior management roles
INCREASED
in 2015-2019, but
REVERSED
BACKWARDS
in 2020.

WILD WOMEN EXPEDITIONS

Who would better understand the diverse needs and desires of a group of female travelers other than women themselves? Founded in 1991 and still women-owned and women-led, [Wild Women Expeditions](#) has grown to be the largest women's travel company in the world. The company is proud to employ women in every role in management and office staff to tour leaders and local guides. Diversity is valued among their employees, guests, and destination residents; the community consists of and welcomes women of all ages, sexual orientations, and identities.

"It is essential that women leaders are setting the narrative for women in the adventure travel industry and that representation is at the highest levels to ensure that women are controlling the decisions made about how women are portrayed. We aren't just selling to women travellers."

In Wild Women Expeditions the choices of how we represent women in our marketing go to the very top of our organization, because we are women-owned and led at all levels of the business. Our experience is that women setting the tone for marketing to women makes a huge difference in engaging women travellers in an authentic way. Our business is growing radically in spite of the pandemic, in large part because of our commitment to women's community building."

- Jennifer Haddow, Owner/Director
of Wild Women Expeditions



A woman with blonde hair, wearing a black baseball cap and a black long-sleeved shirt, is smiling and working in a dense, green, and brown bushy environment. She is leaning forward, touching the leaves of a plant. The background is filled with various types of foliage, including ferns and broad-leafed plants. The overall scene suggests a field research or conservation activity.

2a.

Current Challenges



CURRENT CHALLENGES

In this section, we discuss a few current challenges regarding women's rights and leadership including social norms, discriminatory laws, the increasing gender wage gap, and the unequal effects of COVID-19.

SOCIAL NORMS: SOCIETY'S EXPECTATIONS FOR WOMEN CONFLICT WITH LEADERSHIP POSSIBILITIES

Women are often seen as not having the needed education, skills, and toughness to survive in the business world. Also, traditional gender roles around starting a family creates certain internal strife within mothers themselves, and external pressure from among colleagues, clients, partners, and society at large. For example, mothers are more likely to face child care questions when working than their male counterparts; it is uncommon to doubt men's ability to work after becoming a father.^{27,28} This combination of challenges often leads women to accept and remain in lower positions at a company, to maintain their expected roles at home and in society.

There are also negative preconceptions about female leadership and guiding. The bar to prove one's competence tends to be higher for women, especially in the outdoors.⁸ In addition to not being taken seriously because of their gender, sexual harassment against women in the tourism and hospitality industry is recognized as a major problem. Especially in the context of tour guiding, female guides experience harassment not only by customers but by their male counterparts and this naturally impacts women's wellbeing in the workplace.^{8,12} Being sexually harassed is not only experienced by tourism workers but also by female travelers, indicating that women and men have different needs regarding workplace and tourism products.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

DISCRIMINATORY LAWS: WOMEN ARE AT A LEGAL DISADVANTAGE AROUND THE WORLD

Women worldwide face discriminatory laws including unequal treatment regarding inheritance, a lack of laws to protect them from domestic violence, and a lack of autonomy over their own body and decisions. When it comes to employment, in 18 countries, men have a legal right to prevent their wives from working.²

Despite the tourism industry being more favorable for female entrepreneurship compared to the economy at large, with limited or no access to collateral, financing, and markets many women are unable to expand their enterprises into medium- or large-sized businesses.¹⁰ Also, given that it is critical for businesses' survival in times of crisis to have access to credit, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused women-owned businesses to now be at an even higher risk of closure and bankruptcy than their male-owned counterparts.¹¹

GENDER WAGE GAP: WOMEN ARE AT A FINANCIAL DISADVANTAGE IN THE EMPLOYMENT MARKET

Globally, women earn 82 cents for every dollar that men earn.¹³ Despite wages across the tourism industry being generally lower for both men and women employees compared to the broader economy, a gender wage gap exists also in tourism.⁶ Based on the UNWTO's Global Report on Women in Tourism (2019), the wage gap between genders was narrower in tourism than in the economy at large. Globally, women employees in the tourism sector earn 14.7% less than men for the same work, while the same number in the broader economy is 16.8%.⁶ Given that tourism employment is female-intensive in nature, this gender pay gap is highly concerning.¹⁴

CURRENT CHALLENGES

COVID-19 IMPACTS: A CRISIS OFTEN REVERSES WOMEN'S LIVING CONDITIONS

Pandemic outbreaks affect women and men in differing ways. As frontline workers representing 70% of the global health and social sector workforce, times of crisis such as a disease outbreak put women at higher risk than men. In addition, as seen in the COVID-19 pandemic, existing inequalities and discrimination of women and other marginalized groups tend to change for the worse.¹⁵ Due to an increased demand for health professionals to deal with the urgent needs of a pandemic, women-focused sexual and reproductive health services related to family planning, safe pregnancies, childbirth, and menstrual health may be diverted and become less available to the most at-risk populations.¹⁵

In addition to the increased risk of impaired access to health services,¹⁵ dozens of countries such as France, Argentina, the United States, and the United Kingdom have reported that violence against women, particularly domestic violence, has intensified since the outbreak of COVID-19.¹⁶ Based on the World Economic Forum's 2021 report on the Global Gender Gap, forced isolation and changes in routine have increased general stress levels for both women and men. However, compared to men, women have experienced more anxiety and lower productivity throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, especially women with children.⁷

Moreover, the travel and tourism industry has been under major restrictions throughout the pandemic and companies have created coping strategies which may include layoffs, wage cuts, and other worsening employment scenarios.¹¹ Overall, the average pay gap in hospitality, tourism and leisure increased from 7.4% to 9% during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷ Given the dominance of females in the tourism industry, especially in positions with lower skill level requirements, women are at a more increased risk of losing their jobs.

FERNWEH FAIR TRAVEL: UPLIFTING COMMUNITIES

[Fernweh Fair Travel: Uplifting Communities](#) is a women-led organization developing rural tourism in remote villages of Uttarakhand, India, seeking to uplift rural communities and underprivileged tribes through sustainable tourism. The organization started with the aim to empower the women in these areas and blossomed into delivering transformational experiences and positively impacting the lives of the local communities.

Fernweh's goal is to provide guests with memorable adventures while empowering the local women. Typically in Uttarakhand, women have unpaid work in the fields and homes and look after the animals, while men go out of the house and earn money. Founder Poonam Rawat-Hahne says, "It took me a substantial amount of time to convince the communities to let these women step out of their homes and work on our responsible travel project."

Many of the women involved in Fernweh are widows and victims of domestic violence. The organization gives women an opportunity to earn their own living, while paying fair and equal wages to women and men. Women are supported in opening their own home-stays and trained to become guides in cultural and nature immersive experiences.

Fernweh is currently building a boutique eco-retreat and farm-stay and designing new immersive experiences. They are also working to create various channels of livelihood for women by making and marketing products like pickles, jam, essential oils, scrubs, soaps, and other local handicrafts. In addition, they plan to host various retreats and will be offering space to their business-to-business partners and guests, all with the focus on helping local women overcome the many challenges facing them on a daily basis. Fernweh is looking for B2B partnerships with companies that have the same values and ethos—please [contact Poonam through their website](#) if you are interested.



Part III:

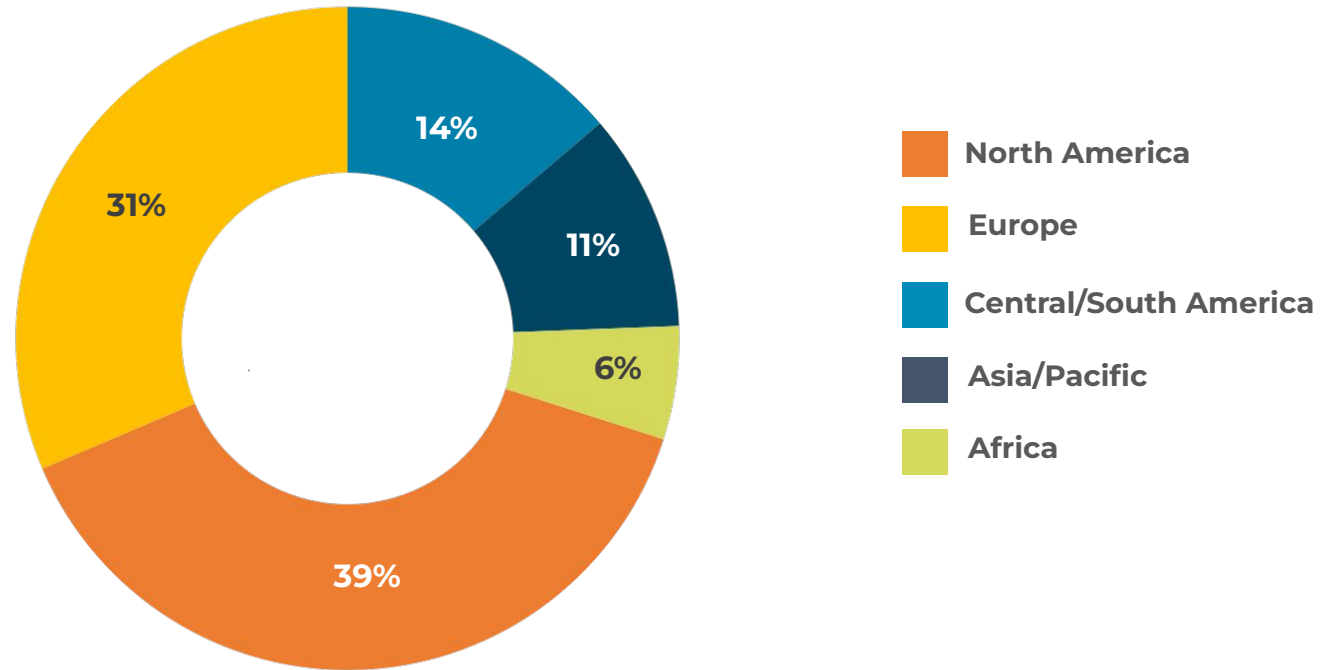
Survey Results



3a.

Profile of Respondents

ORGANIZATION HEADQUARTERS



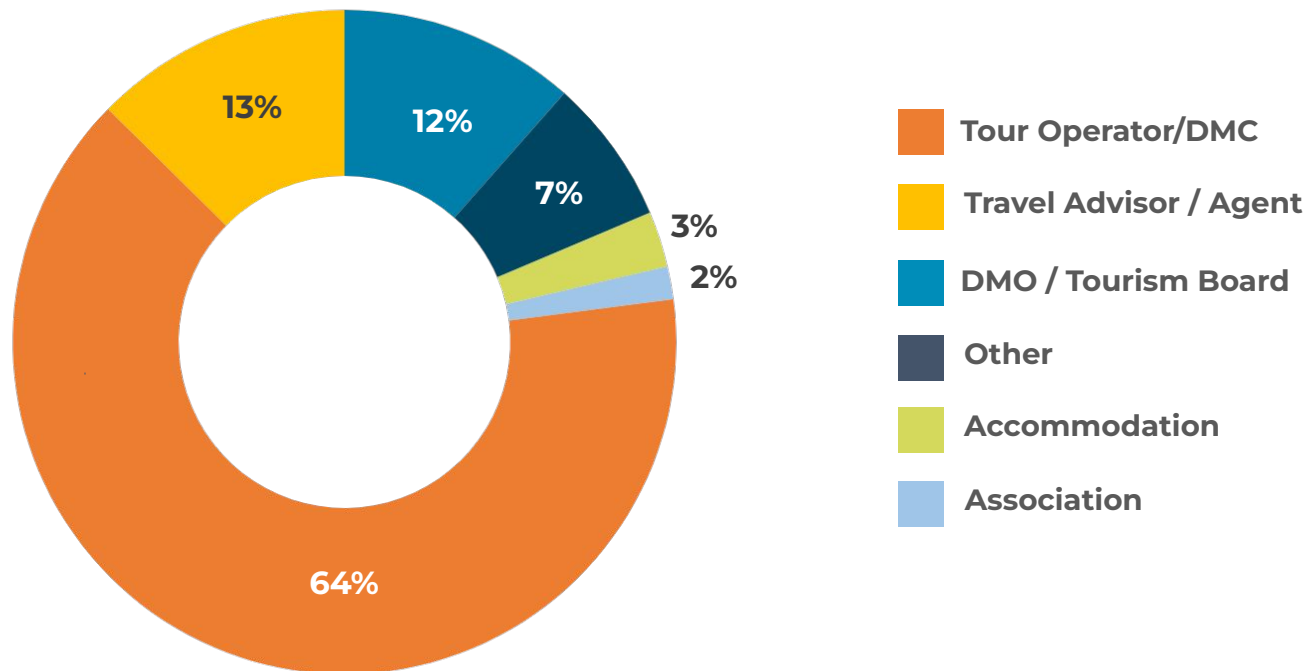
Q2: In which country is your organization headquartered?

Base: All respondents (n=182)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

*Notes: Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.
Middle Eastern countries are included in Asia due to low response rate.
Caribbean countries are included in Central/South America.*

ORGANIZATION TYPE



Q2: In which country is your organization headquartered?

Base: All respondents (n=182)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

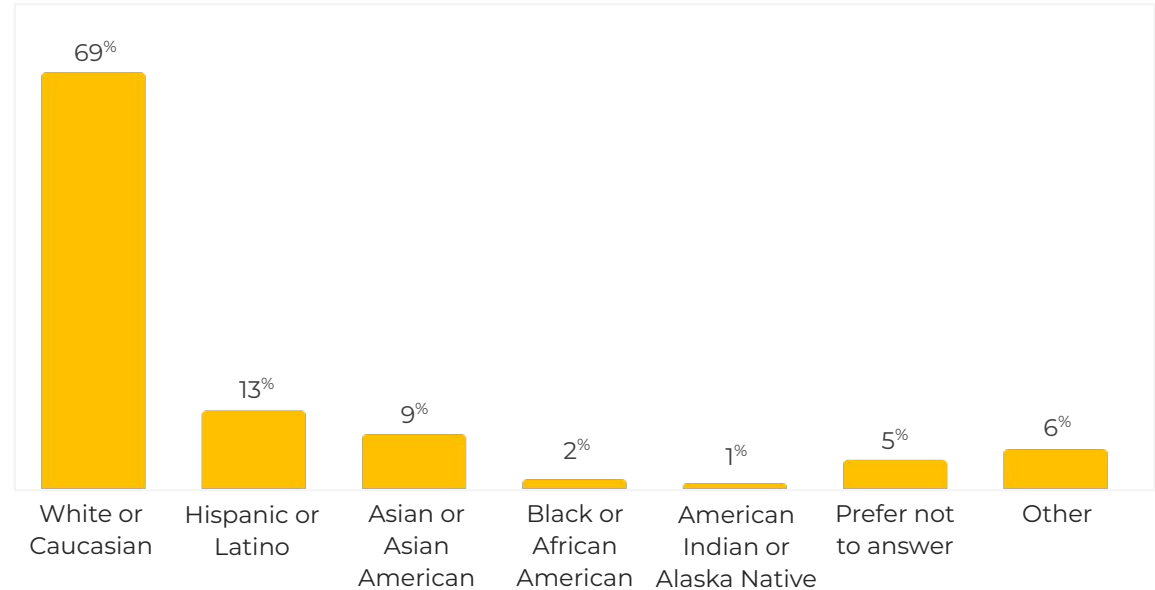
DEMOGRAPHICS

Survey respondents are primarily female and white.

76%
FEMALE

21% MALE

3% NON-BINARY
OR PREFER NOT
TO SAY



Q34: With which gender do you identify?

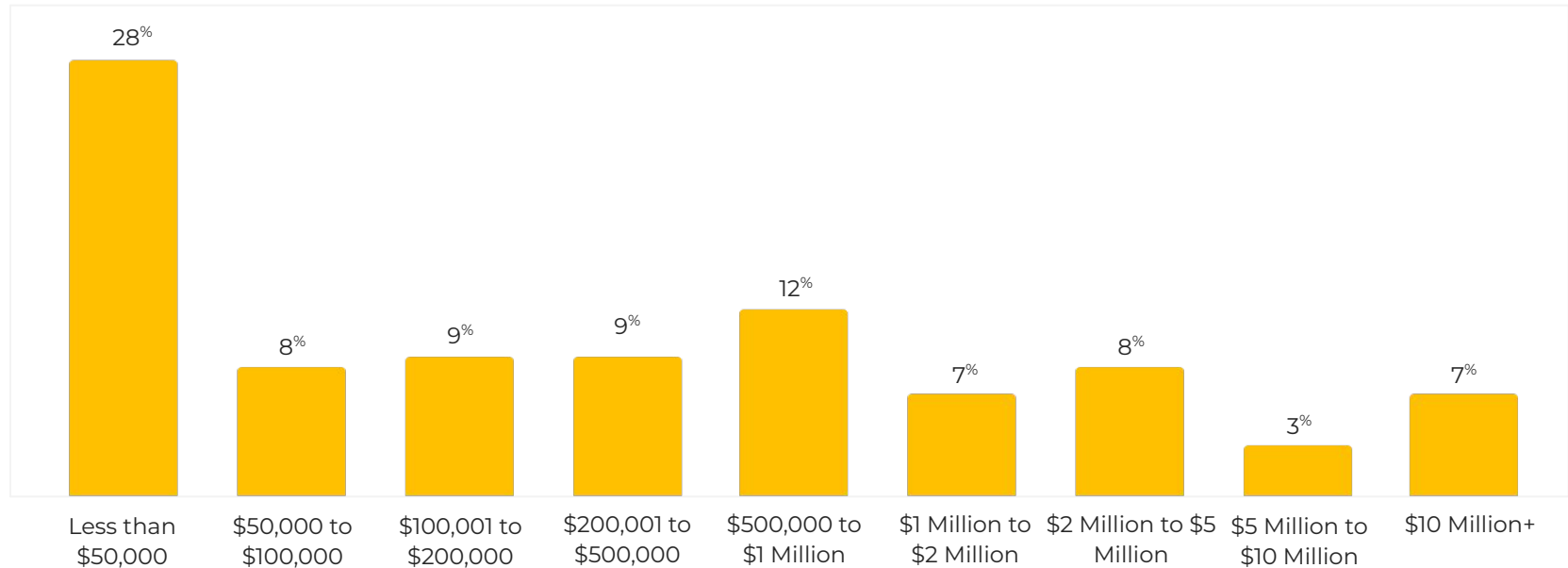
Q35: With which race do you identify (select all that apply)?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=124)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

2021 ANNUAL REVENUE

Respondents' organizations were most likely to have made less than \$50,000 in revenue in 2021.



Q4: What is your organization's 2021 estimated gross annual revenue in USD?

Base: All respondents that responded with a valid numerical amount (Q3 n=165, Q4 n=166)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

2021 WORKFORCE SIZE

Respondents tended to be from small companies with fewer than 20 employees, although companies of all sizes are represented in the results.

16

average full-time
employees*

14

average part-time
employees*

14

average non-staff
subcontractors**

Q5: Please share the size of your 2021 workforce:

Base: All respondents (n=182)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

**Four outlying values were labeled and omitted from calculations using a 2.2 multiplier (Hoaglin & Iglewicz, 1987)*

***One outlying value was labeled and omitted from calculations using a 2.2 multiplier (Hoaglin & Iglewicz, 1987)*

SUMMARY: RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents were primarily from tour operators in North America and Europe. Three quarters (76%) of respondents were female, and 69% white. This geographic and demographic breakdown means the results cannot be generalized globally, but as North America and Europe are the most important source markets for many adventure travel companies, the survey findings are a valuable starting point for understanding the current status of women's representation in the industry.

Small companies with less than \$50,000 in 2021 annual revenue and fewer than 20 full-time employees were also the most common respondents. This is representative of the adventure travel industry as a whole, which is composed of many small independent companies. Many of these companies became even smaller in terms of revenue and number of employees due to the industry being hit hard by COVID-19.

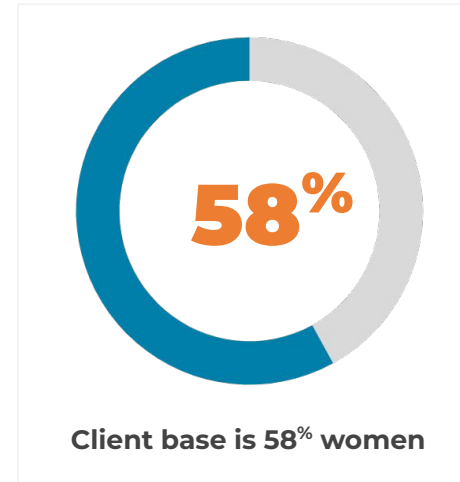
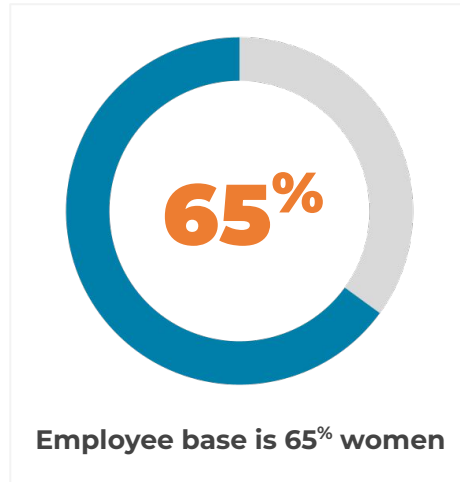
A photograph of two women running and laughing on a cobblestone street at night. The woman on the left is wearing a teal jacket, a grey beanie, and a patterned scarf. The woman on the right is wearing a bright red hooded jacket. They are both smiling broadly. The background shows a building with lit-up windows and street lamps, creating a warm, urban atmosphere.

3b.

Representation of Women

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

On average, respondents' companies were approximately 65% women employees, which is higher than the worldwide tourism average of 54%. Their clients are also more likely to be women, which comprise an average of 58% of respondents' client base, than men or those identifying as non-binary.



Q6: What percentage of your employee base do you believe identifies as a woman?

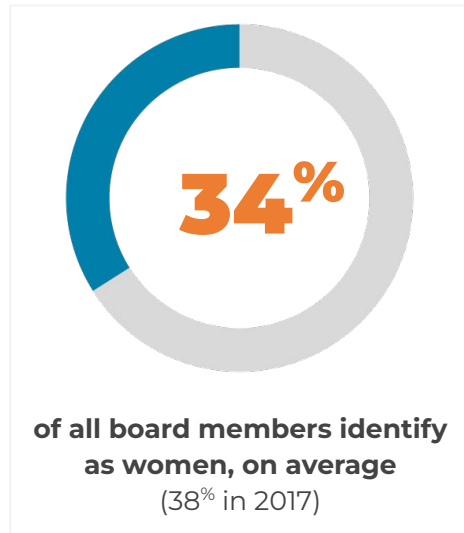
Q7: What percentage of your client base do you believe identifies as a woman?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=172)

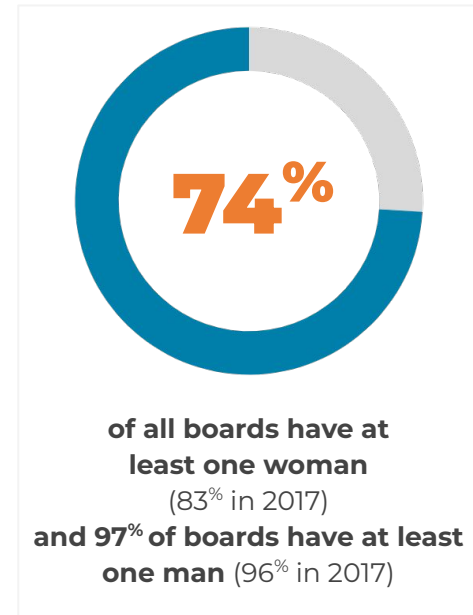
Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

WOMEN ON BOARDS

As in 2017, this survey found no correlation between the number of people on an organization's board and the percentage of board members who are women. However, the percentage of board members identifying as women, and the percentage of boards that have at least one woman have both decreased in the past 5 years.



5.4
people per board on average
(5.6 in 2017)



Q9. How many people are on your organization's board of directors?

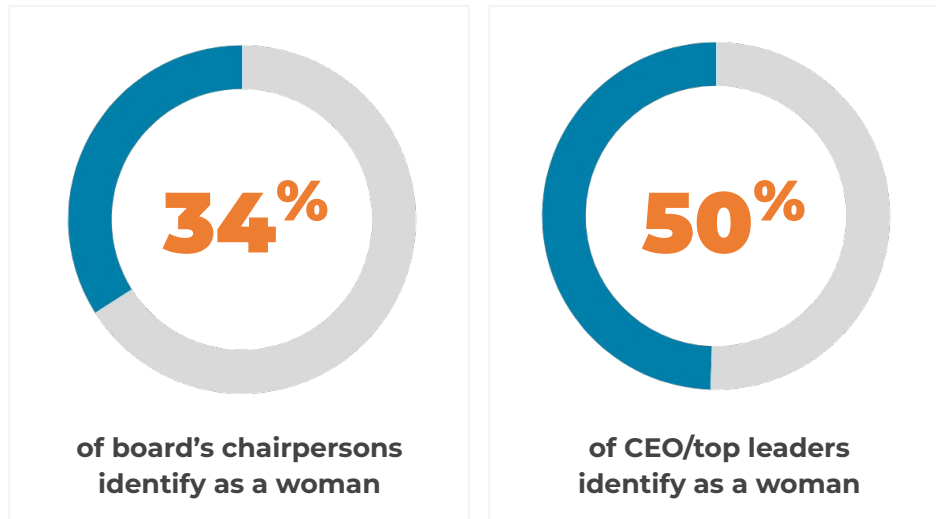
Q10. How many people on your organization's board identify as a woman?

Base: All respondents whose organization have a board of directors, excluding those left blank (n=74)

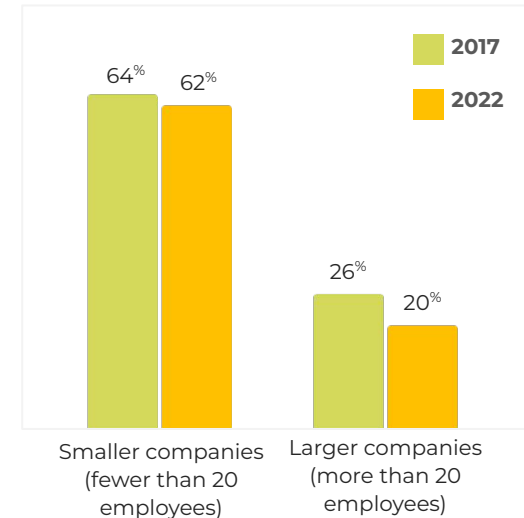
Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

WOMEN BOARD CHAIR/CEO/TOP LEADERS

One-third (34%) of respondents' companies have a female board chairperson. While exactly half of respondent companies have a woman as a CEO/top leader, this is due to the higher volume of responses from small companies, as they are three times as likely to have a woman leader (64%) than larger companies (20%).



Companies with a woman as a CEO/top leader:



Q11. Does the chairperson of your organization's board identify as a woman?

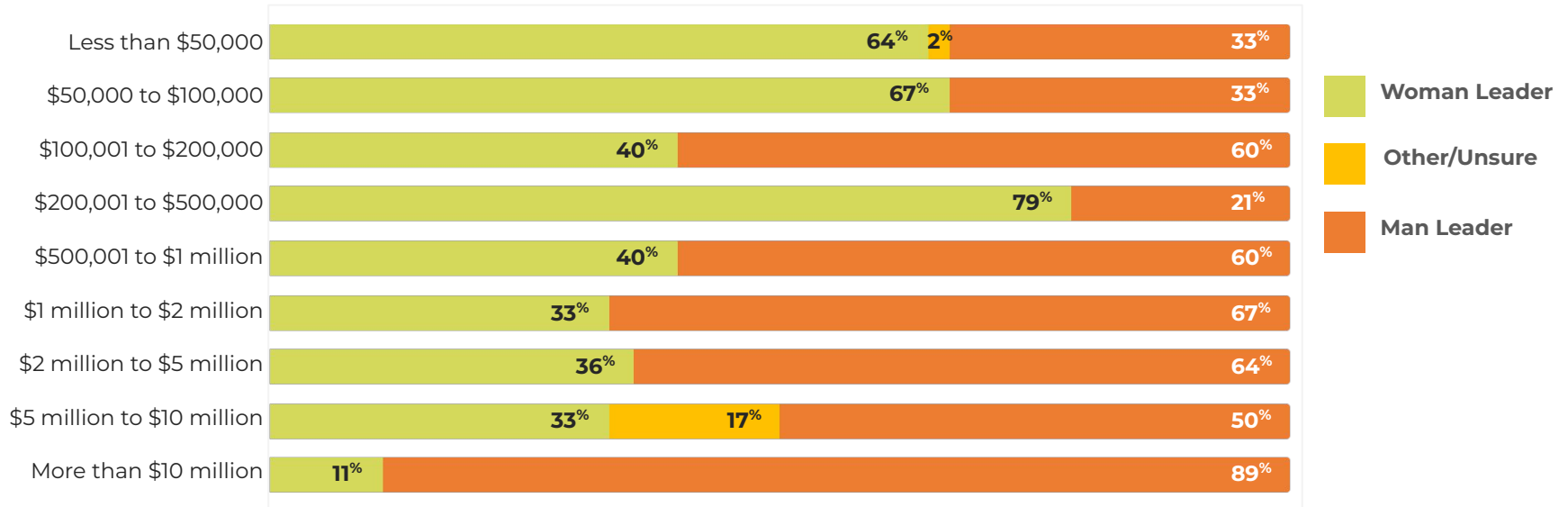
Q12. Does the CEO or top leader at your organization identify as a woman?

Base: All respondents whose organization have a board of directors (Q11 only), excluding those left blank (Q11 n=74, Q12 n=158)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

TOP LEADERS BY 2021 REVENUE

As with the company size based on employees, women are much more likely to lead small companies making less than \$500,000 (in 2021 annual revenue) than larger companies. Only 11% of companies worth more than \$10 million are run by women.



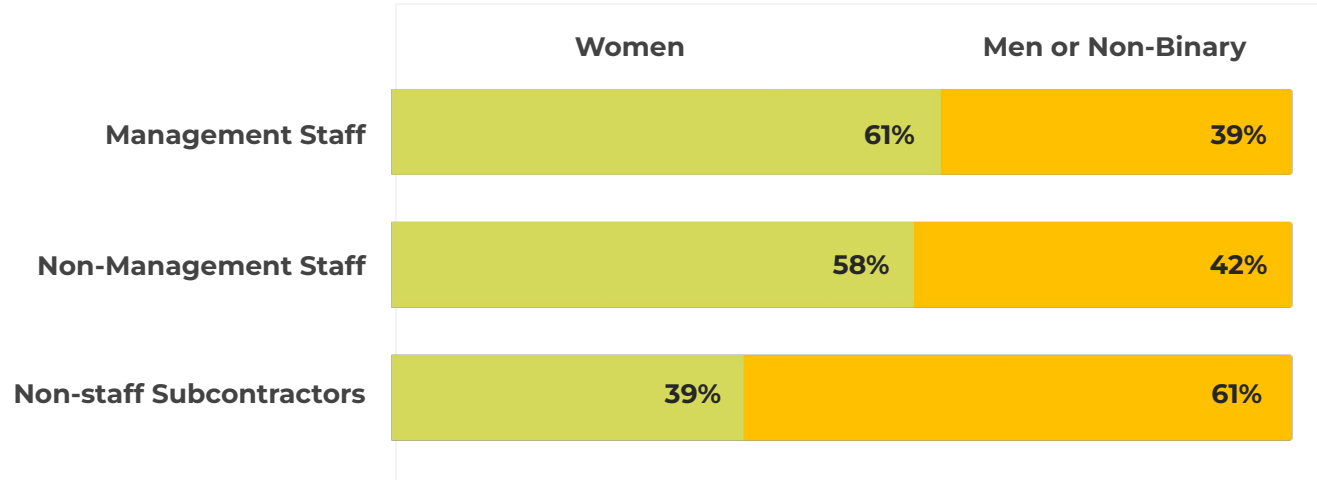
Q12. Does the CEO or top leader at your organization identify as a woman?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=150)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

WOMEN ON STAFF

Staff are more likely to be women, but non-staff subcontractors are more likely to be men.



Q13. What percentage of your organization's management staff identify as a woman?

Q14. What percentage of your organization's non-management staff identify as a woman?

Q15. What percentage of your organization's non-staff subcontractors identify as a woman?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=158)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey



WOMEN LEADERS: FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

"As I listened to a male leader saying not to hesitate when going for your goals and that "you don't have to be an expert," I felt like it seemed out of touch with the couple hundred women he was speaking to, where, in my experience, you have to prove above and beyond that you know what you're talking about. So in general, I would say it's really a bit less than equal, just because of how our society reacts to women who position themselves as any sort of authority. I have dealt with many male clients where I especially have to prove why and how I know what I know."

"Women do well in adventure travel (travel in general) to a certain point). Unless you start your own company there are limited opportunities given to women for anything higher than management."

"It seems that men in the adventure tourism industry have played a dominant role, and it would be great to see more opportunities for women to build their confidence in leading adventure experiences. The general tourism industry does seem weighted toward women involvement. Adventure tourism looks quite a bit different. I would love to see more women guides/tour leaders/and women involved in product development. It would be great to see programs designed to specifically support women entrepreneurs who are building adventure travel businesses."

"The company I work for has made good strides in terms of getting women into leadership/mid management roles, however we have no female board members."

"Upper management has shifted to almost all male with new CEO."

"The industry is equal except in management or positions of power."

Note: Comments have been edited slightly for clarity and to maintain anonymity.

SUMMARY: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

Although women comprise more than half of the tourism workforce, and more than half of respondents' clients, they are much less likely to be present at the top levels of organizations. Only a third of board members are women, and although half of respondents' CEOs/top leaders are women, they typically run smaller companies.

Only 33% of companies with 2021 revenue of \$5-10 million are led by women, and a slim 11% of companies with 2021 revenue over \$10 million have a female CEO/top leader. This means that the largest and most visible organizations in the industry are overwhelmingly led by men, who therefore have more access to resources and more influence.

Smaller companies in the industry look at what the big players are doing and often try to model after them. Larger companies have much bigger marketing budgets and are putting out the content that travelers are consuming, giving them more influence in the market.

Companies with higher revenue also often have more of a financial reserve, and more connections and resources to obtain more cash when struggling financially or looking to grow. This has likely given them more of an advantage while navigating through and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A photograph of two women sitting at a table, facing each other and wearing face masks. The woman on the left has red hair and is wearing a dark blue camouflage-patterned shirt and a black face mask with the 'Willand' logo. The woman on the right has dark hair in dreadlocks and is wearing a black face mask and a light blue tank top. They appear to be in a meeting or workshop. On the table, there is a laptop with a blue sign that says 'TABLE 37', a water bottle, and a coffee cup. A blue banner with the text '3c.' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

3c.

Workplace Benefits

PARENTAL LEAVE

On average, respondents' companies offer 99 days of paid maternity leave and 34 days of paid paternity leave. It appears that men-led companies offer longer maternity leave (117 days compared to 83 days at women-led companies), but women-led companies offer more paternity leave (40 days compared to 27 days at men-led companies). This is approximately the same as in 2017. It is also important to note that many companies are governed by country-level policies.

99

**average days of paid
maternity leave**

women-led companies: 83
men-led companies: 117

59

**average days of unpaid
maternity leave**

women-led companies: 35
men-led companies: 79

34

**average days of paid
paternity leave**

women-led companies: 40
men-led companies: 27

49

**average days of unpaid
paternity leave**

women-led companies: 40
men-led companies: 52

Q16. What parental leave does your organization offer? Please enter the number of days that apply to each of the following: maternity leave (a. paid/b. unpaid)

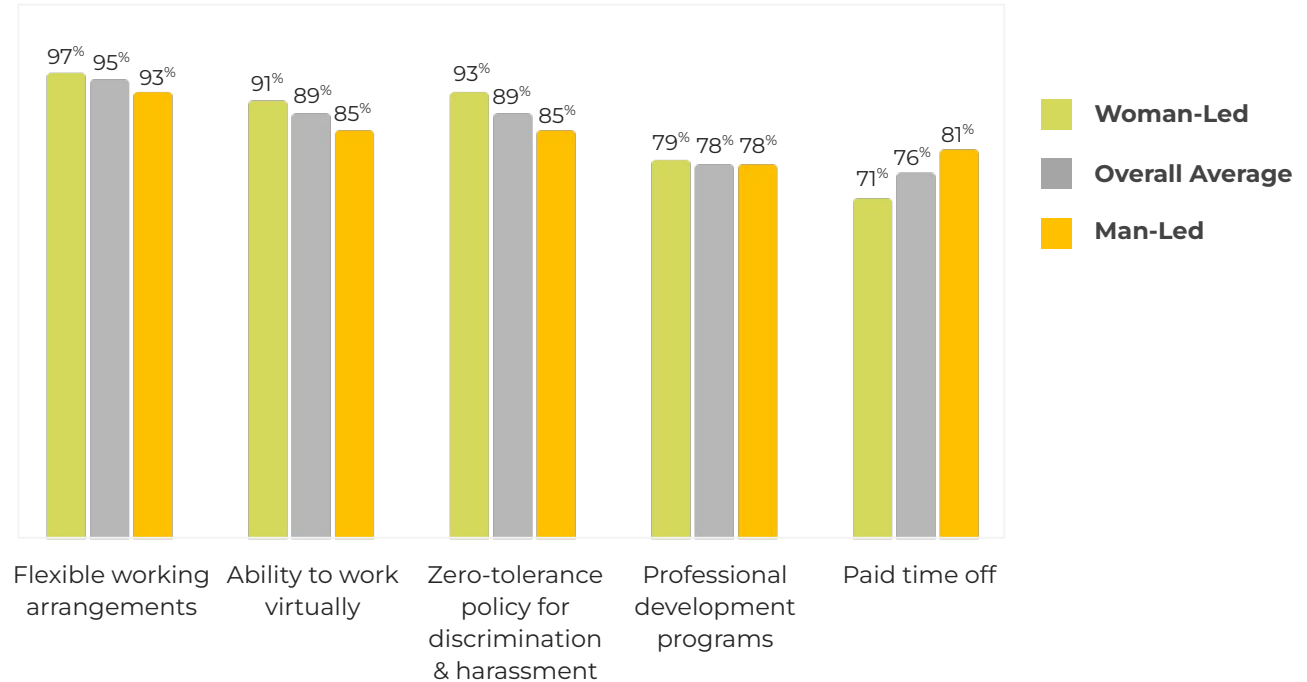
Q17. What parental leave does your organization offer? Please enter the number of days that apply to each of the following: paternity leave (a. paid/b. unpaid)

Base: All respondents providing valid numbers (Q16a n=114, Q16b n=94, Q17a n=108, Q17b n=88)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

BENEFITS

Many benefits are similar between woman-led and man-led organizations, although women leaders are more likely to offer the ability to work virtually and have a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination and harassment. Companies with men leaders are more likely to provide paid time off.



Q18: Are the following benefits available to you?

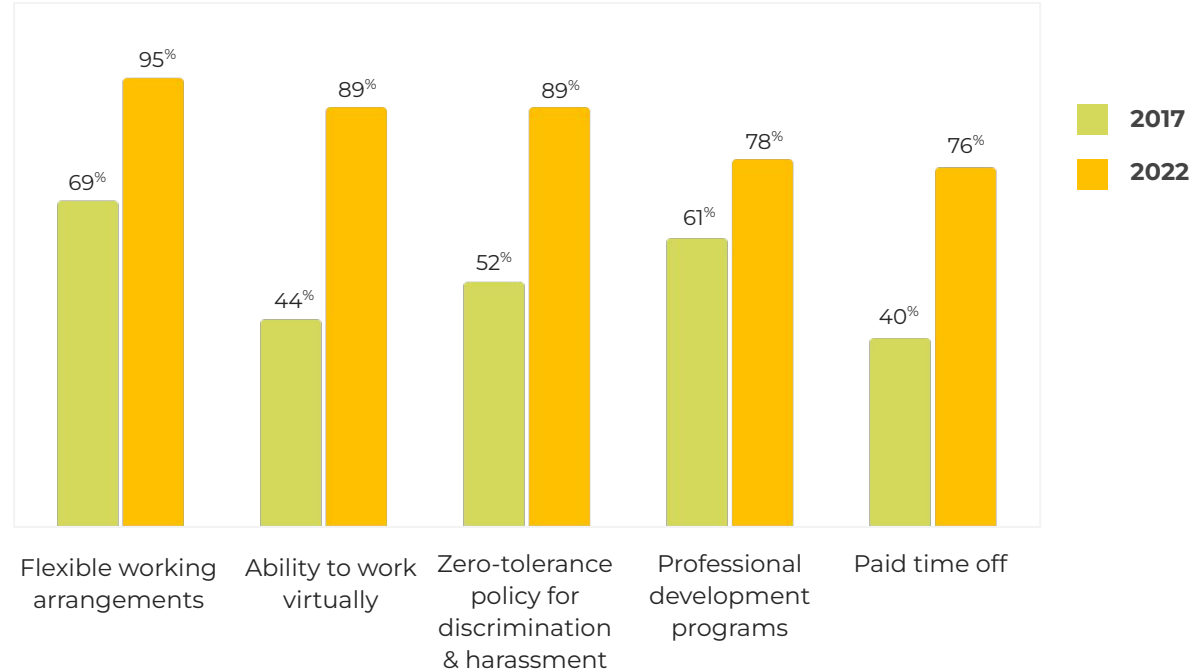
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=131)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded "yes."

BENEFITS

All benefits in this section are more likely to be offered in 2022 than in 2017. Some may be a result of adapting to COVID-19, such as the ability to work virtually and with more flexible arrangements. Others may have resulted from social pressure to have initiatives like zero-tolerance policies for discrimination and harassment.



Q18: Are the following benefits available to you?

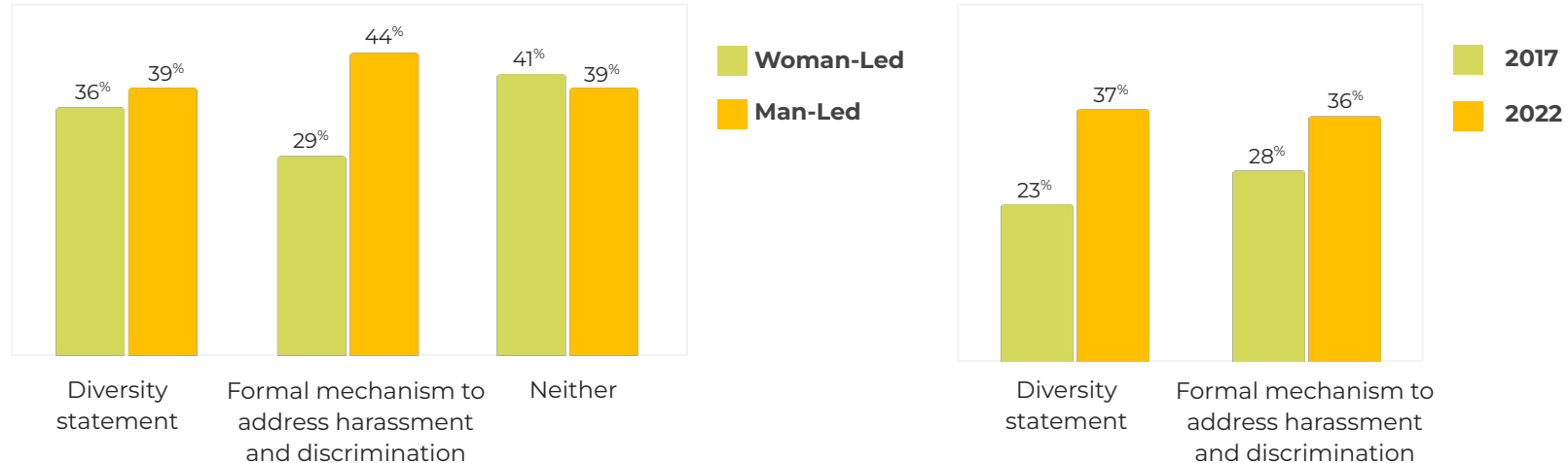
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (2017 n=263, 2022 n=131)

Source: 2017 Women in Adventure Travel Survey, 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded “yes.”

DEI POLICIES

Although women-led companies are more likely to have a zero tolerance policy against harassment and discrimination, those led by men are more likely to have a formal mechanism to address issues in this area. However, it takes time and resources to implement these formal mechanisms which are more likely to be available at the larger companies led by men. On average companies are much more likely in 2022 to have a diversity statement and a formal way to address harassment and discrimination than in 2017.



Q19: Which of the following diversity, equity, and inclusion policies does your organization have? Please check all that apply.

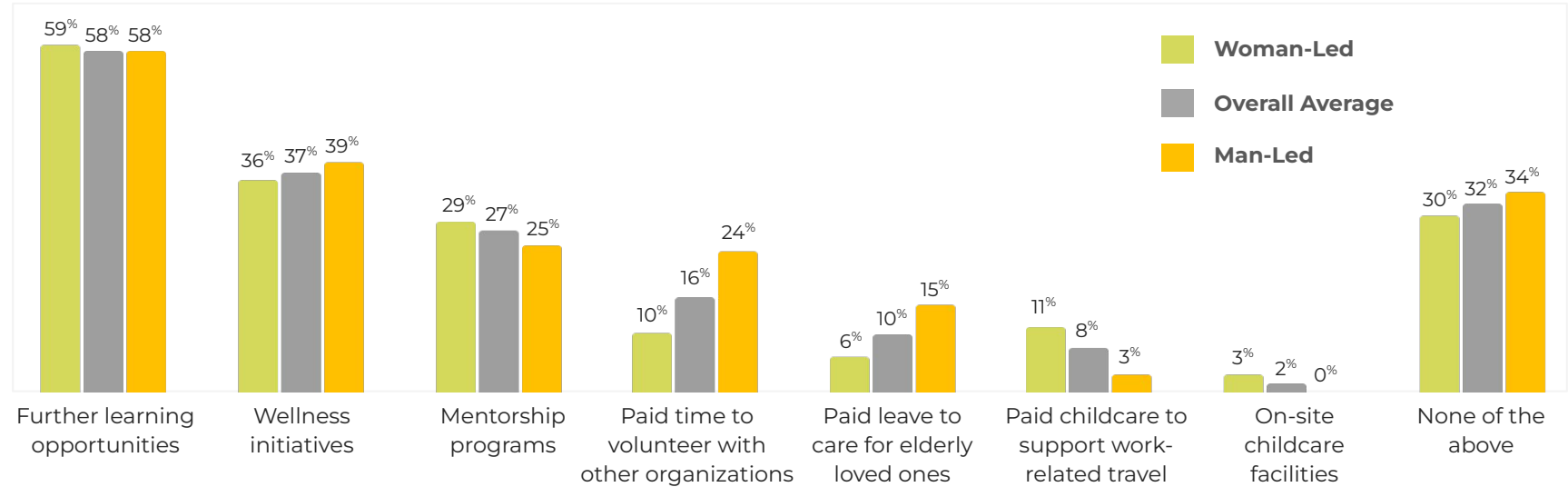
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (2017 n=263, 2022 n=131)

Source: 2017 Women in Adventure Travel Survey, 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded “yes.”

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Again, most work-life balance benefits are consistently offered among respondents. Woman-led companies are more likely to offer paid childcare to support work-related travel, and male-led are more likely to offer paid time to volunteer with other organizations and paid leave to care for elderly loved ones. This may be because women are often the primary caregivers for children and prioritize that benefit, whereas the larger companies led by men have more capacity to offer hard-cost benefits.



Q20: Which of the following work-life balance policies does your organization have? Please check all that apply.

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=131)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

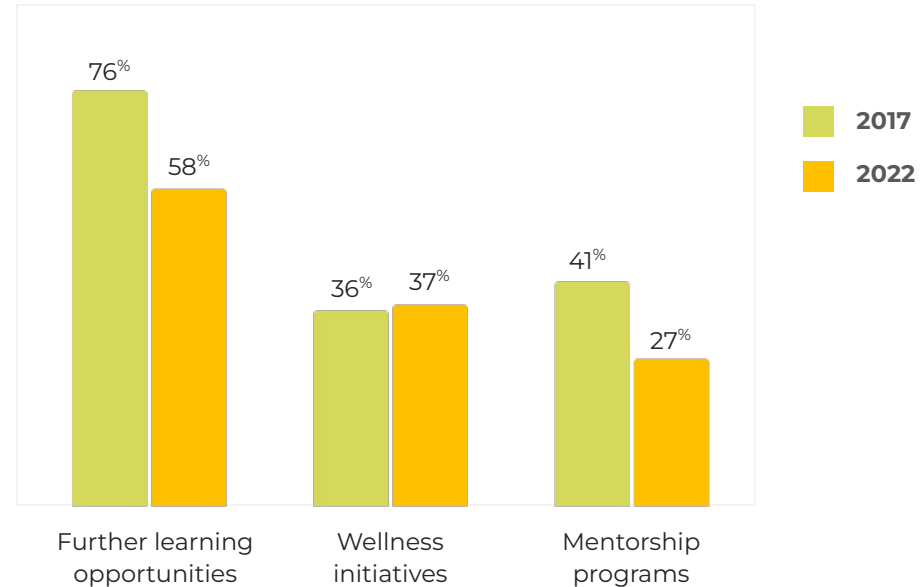
Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded “yes.”

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Unlike the earlier benefits mentioned, organizations are less likely in 2022 to offer work-life balance benefits than in 2017.

Others benefits offered in 2022 include:

- Paid gym membership
- Coaching sessions
- Flexible hours and the ability to schedule one's own hours
- The ability to have kids on hand while working
- Long-term leave opportunities
- Travel stipends
- Other informal flexibility



Q20: Which of the following work-life balance policies does your organization have? Please check all that apply.

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=131)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey, 2017 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: The 2017 survey did not ask the other questions on the previous page.



WORKPLACE BENEFITS: FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

"I think the biggest issue for women in adventure travel is motherhood, because being a tour guide/leader means being out and traveling a lot which with small children can be limiting for mothers wanting to nurse or be very present at that young age. In terms of office positions or management, there is less limiting factor, but any assistance with child care for traveling to conferences or traveling for work (fam trips or scouting trips) is helpful."

"As someone who identifies as female and is in a leadership role I personally have recently asked our HR team, which I am also a member of, to add diversity, equality and inclusion to their next meeting agenda. My hope is to open discussion around how we can improve gender equality addressing the lack of female membership at board level and identifying if we have a gender pay gap and how that can be resolved moving forward."

"My organization is non-discriminatory by default and competency focused. When it comes to our team. How people live their private life is private and my organization respects that so long as it is legal and ethical. It works! Sometimes simple is better."



SUMMARY: WORKPLACE BENEFITS

Work benefits related to schedule flexibility and working virtually are more likely to be offered by women leaders, possibly due to the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on women related to childcare and other family responsibilities. Male leaders are more likely to provide paid time off, but this again may be due to the higher access to resources and need for more formal policies in larger companies. Smaller companies led by women can likely be more informal and flexible with benefits.

Organizations led by women are more likely to have a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination and harassment, but those led by men are more likely to have a formal mechanism in place to address complaints, possibly due to a more formal human resources presence in larger organizations. Based on some of the survey comments, it may be true that in a women-owned workplace with all women employees, policies like DEI may just not be as much of a priority.

While organizations led by men tend to offer longer maternity leave (117 days compared to 83 days at women-led companies), women-led companies offer more paternity leave (40 days compared to 27 days at men-led companies). This may be again due to the difference in company size, with larger men-led companies offering more traditional benefits, and smaller women-led companies being able to offer more flexible and progressive benefits.

Most benefits are more likely to be offered in 2022 than in 2017, with the exceptions of further learning opportunities and mentorship programs. COVID-19 may have had an effect here, with the increased need to work virtually and more flexibility. Further learning opportunities and mentorship programs may have become lower in priority as companies struggled through the pandemic.

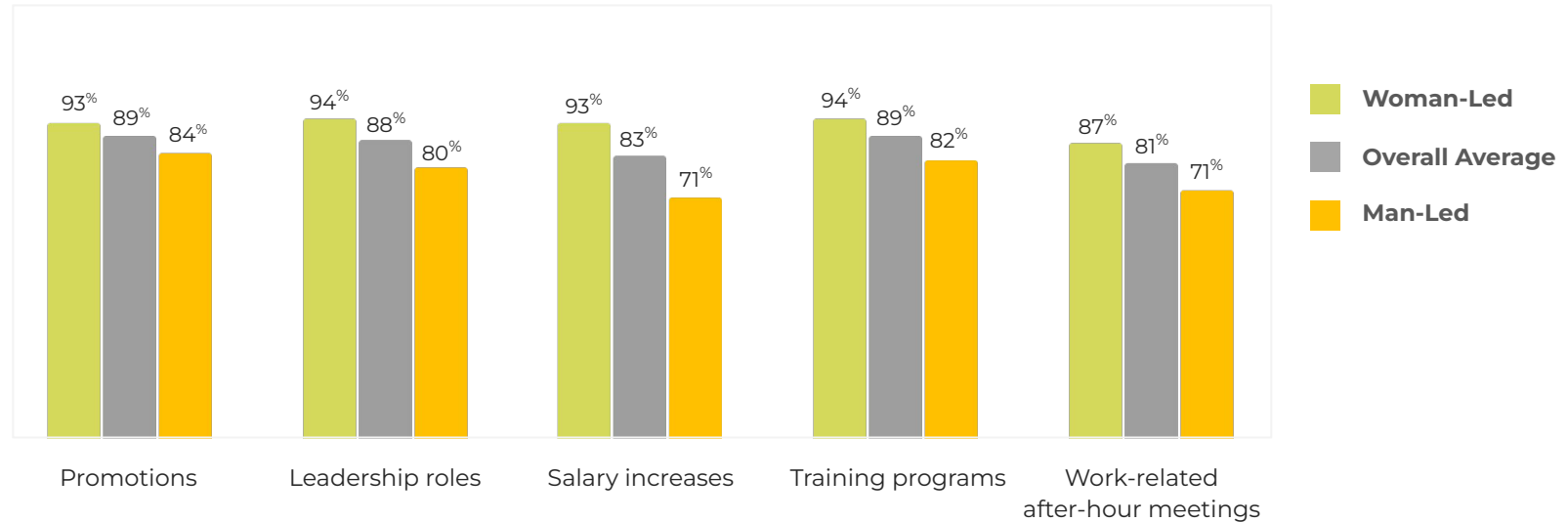
A photograph of three hikers on a mountain trail. In the foreground, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a black cap and a black long-sleeved shirt, is smiling and looking towards the right. She has a large red backpack on her back. To her right, another hiker with long blonde hair is seen from the back, also wearing a red backpack. In the background, a third hiker wearing a red cap is visible. They are standing on a grassy mountain slope with a lake and distant mountains in the background. A blue rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

3d.

Equality in the Workplace

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Overall, respondents feel that their organization offers equal professional development opportunities for all genders. However, women-led companies are perceived to be more fair in terms of equal opportunity for professional development.



Q21. Do you feel that all employees of your organization, regardless of gender identification, have equal opportunity for the following professional development initiatives?

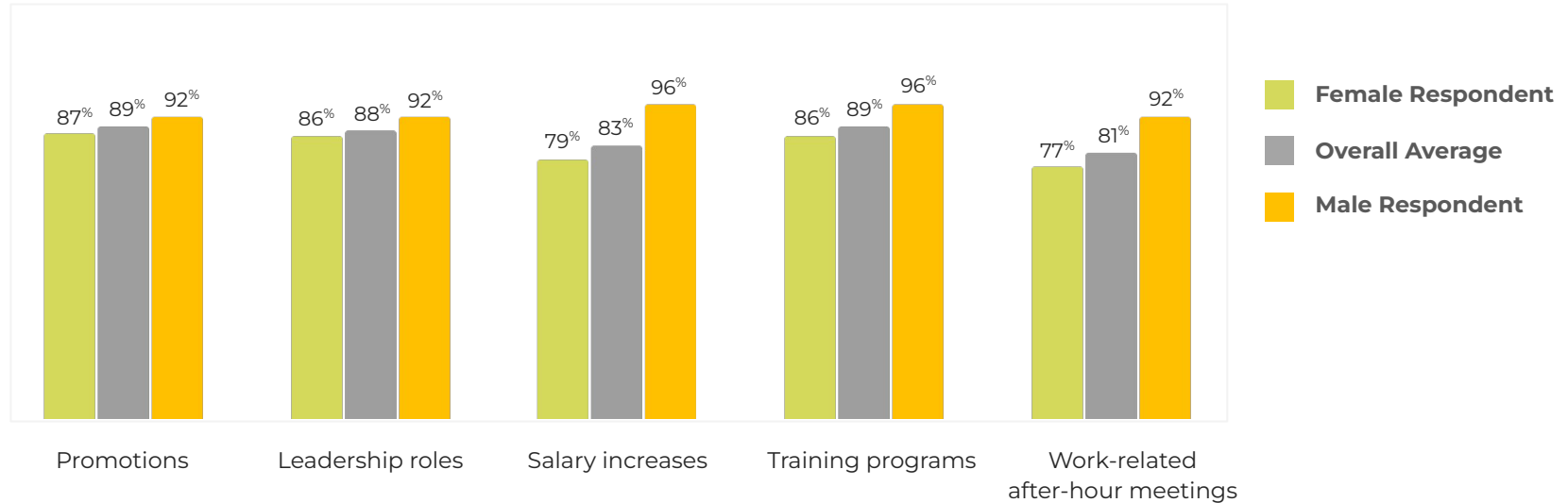
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (2017 n=263, 2022 n=131)

Source: 2017 Women in Adventure Travel Survey, 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded "yes."

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Male respondents perceive their organization as being more fair for professional development than female respondents do. There were minimal differences between 2017 and 2022 survey results.



Q21. Do you feel that all employees of your organization, regardless of gender identification, have equal opportunity for the following professional development initiatives?

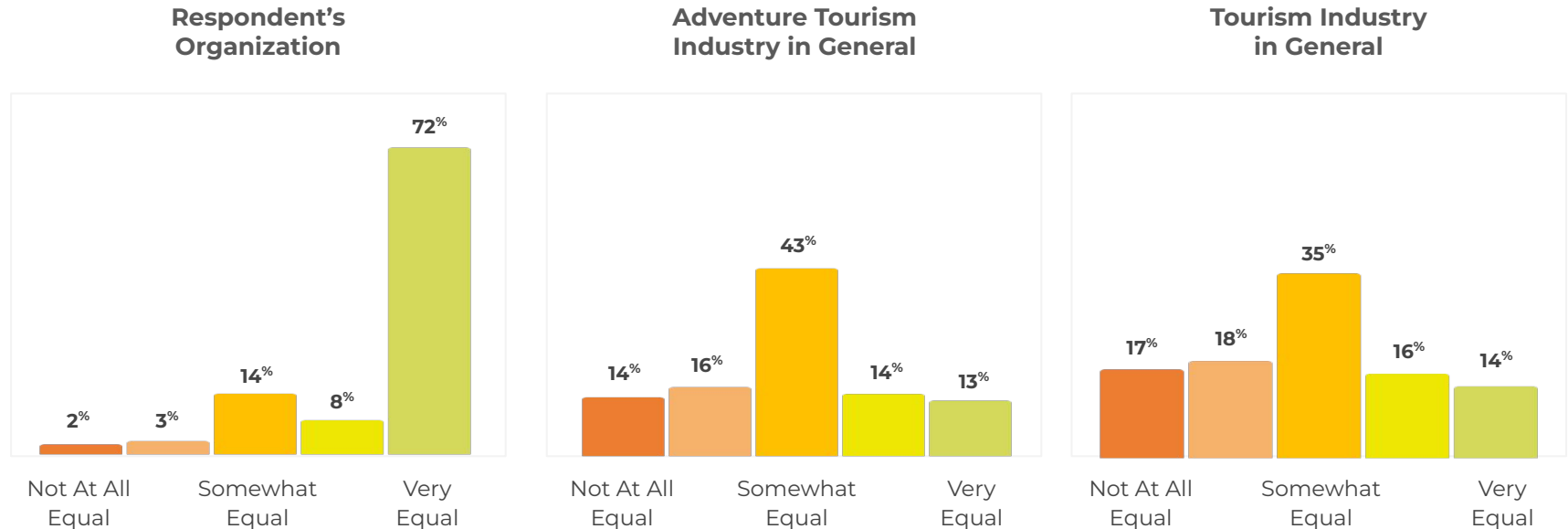
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (2017 n=263, 2022 n=131)

Source: 2017 Women in Adventure Travel Survey, 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded "yes."

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Overall, respondents were pleased with the level of equality in their own organizations. However, many view the adventure tourism industry and the overall tourism industry as only being “somewhat equal” in opportunities for men and women.



Q22. How would you rate the following in equal opportunities for men and women?

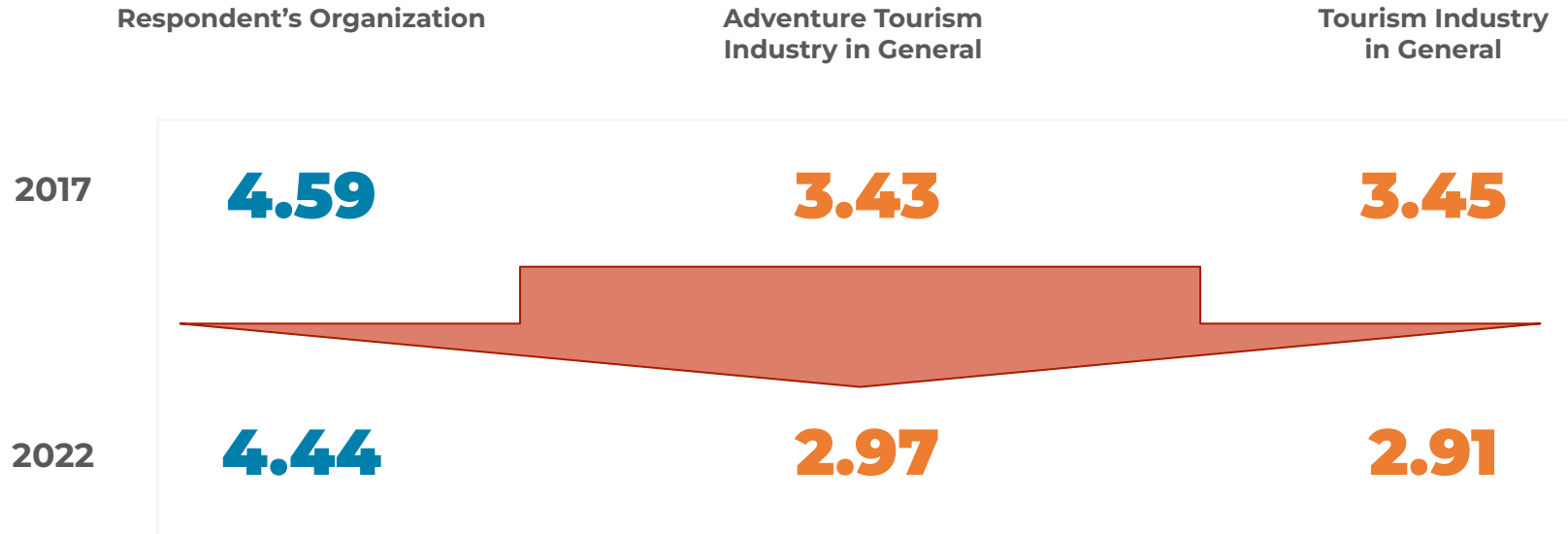
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=125)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

*Note: Numbers represent percentage of respondents.
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.*

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The perception of equality for all genders has worsened across the board since 2017, but respondents perceive their organization as much more fair than the industry in general.



Q22. How would you rate the following in equal opportunities for men and women?

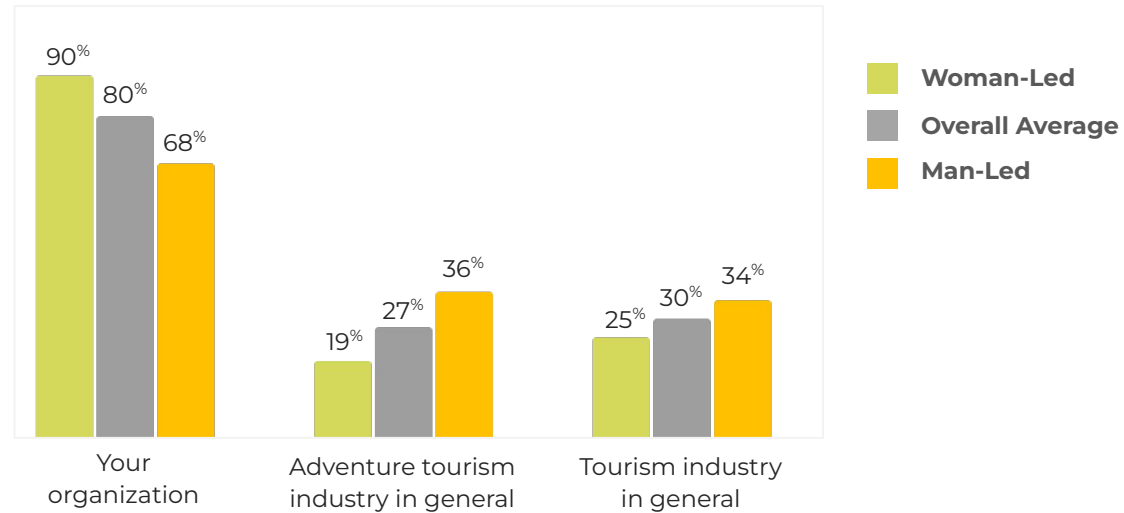
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (2017 n=263, 2022 n=125)

Source: 2017 Women in Adventure Travel Survey, 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent average rating out of 5.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Respondents working for a woman-led organization perceive it as having more equal opportunities for men and women, and female respondents in general think their organization is quite equal. However, the numbers flip when looking at the broader industry—those who work for women-led organizations and female respondents see the rest of the industry as being less equal.



Q22. How would you rate the following in equal opportunities for men and women?

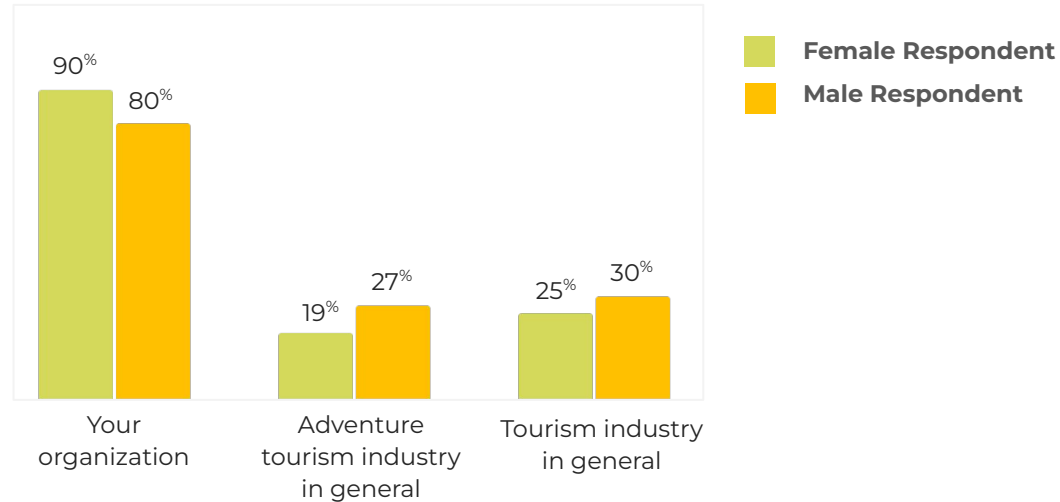
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=125)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded "quite equal" (4) or "very equal" (5).

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The results on the previous page are magnified when looking at the breakdown between male and female respondents. Females are more likely to believe their organization has equal opportunities for men and women, and less likely than male respondents to view the wider tourism industry as equal.



Q22. How would you rate the following in equal opportunities for men and women?

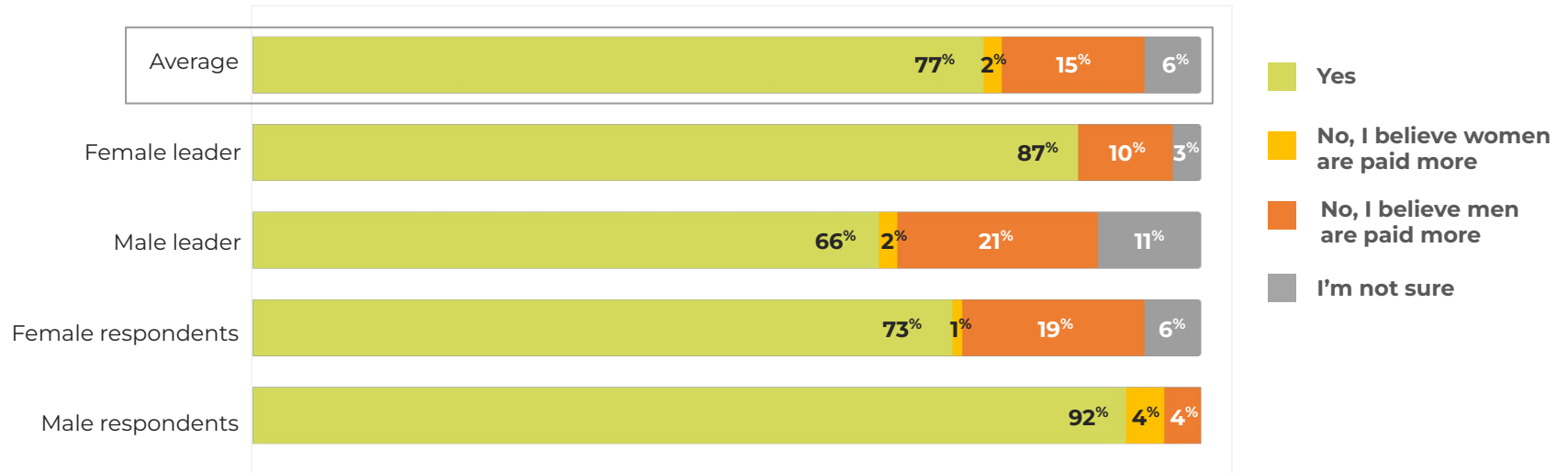
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=125)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded "quite equal" (4) or "very equal" (5).

EQUAL PAY

Organizations with female leaders are perceived as paying employees more fairly. Female respondents are more likely to believe pay is unequal, with men being paid more.



Q23. Do you believe pay at your organization is equal and fair for all employees, regardless of gender identity?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=125)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

GENDER BIAS

23%

**have personally
experienced or
witnessed instances of
gender bias in their
own organization**

72% have not
5% prefer not to respond

53%

**have personally
experienced or
witnessed instances of
gender bias in the
adventure industry**

43% have not
4% prefer not to respond

Q24: Have you personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender bias in your own organization?

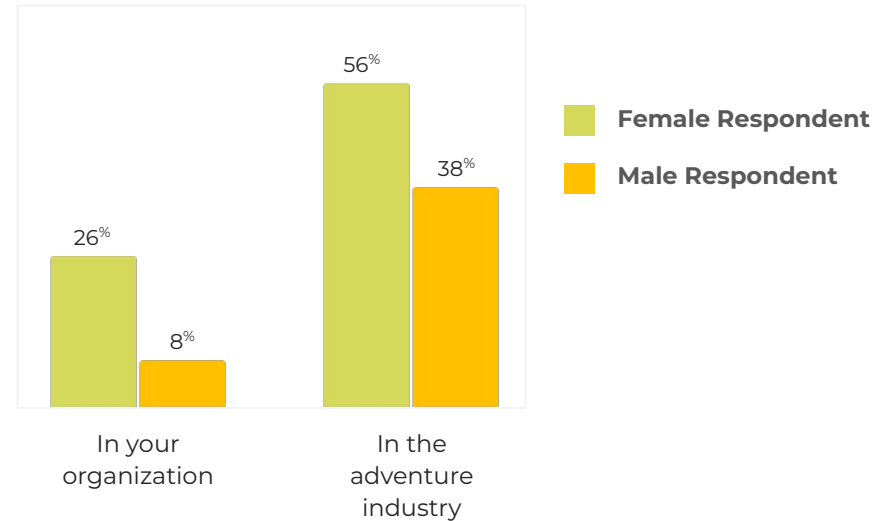
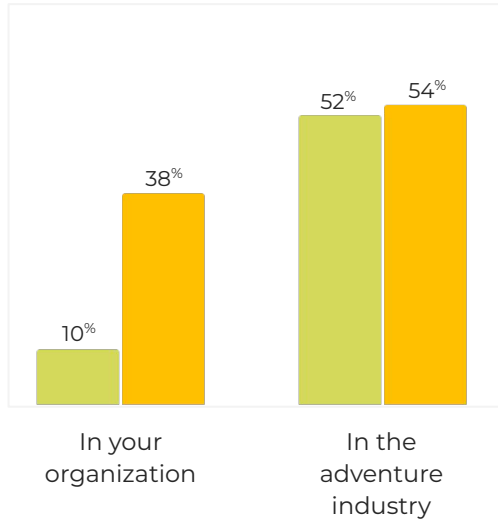
Q25: Have you personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender bias in the adventure industry?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=125)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

GENDER BIAS

Respondents from a woman-led company are much less likely to have perceived gender bias within their own organization. However, women are much more likely than men to have noticed unfair treatment in both their organization and the wider adventure industry.



Q24: Have you personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender bias in your own organization?

Q25: Have you personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender bias in the adventure industry?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=125)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded "yes."



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES: FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

"Employees may not take advantage of the opportunities but they are available to all regardless of gender."

"I believe we all have equal opportunity for salary increases, however there is no formal process or structure around how increases are awarded. I believe historically male colleagues have probably been able to negotiate higher salaries than people who don't identify as male."

"More needs to be done to encourage female guides."

"If anything, I'd say we've found females perform better in trip planning/client-facing roles (historically) than males. It seems more people like to book travel when working with a female agent rather than a male, perhaps due to an incorrect perspective they are more trustworthy?? We are mystified by this ourselves."

"It seems that men in the adventure tourism industry have played a dominant role, and it would be great to see more opportunities for women to build their confidence in leading adventure experiences. The general tourism industry does seem weighted toward women involvement. Adventure tourism looks quite a bit different. I would love to see more women guides/tour leaders and women involved in product development. It would be great to see programs designed to specifically support women entrepreneurs to build adventure travel businesses."

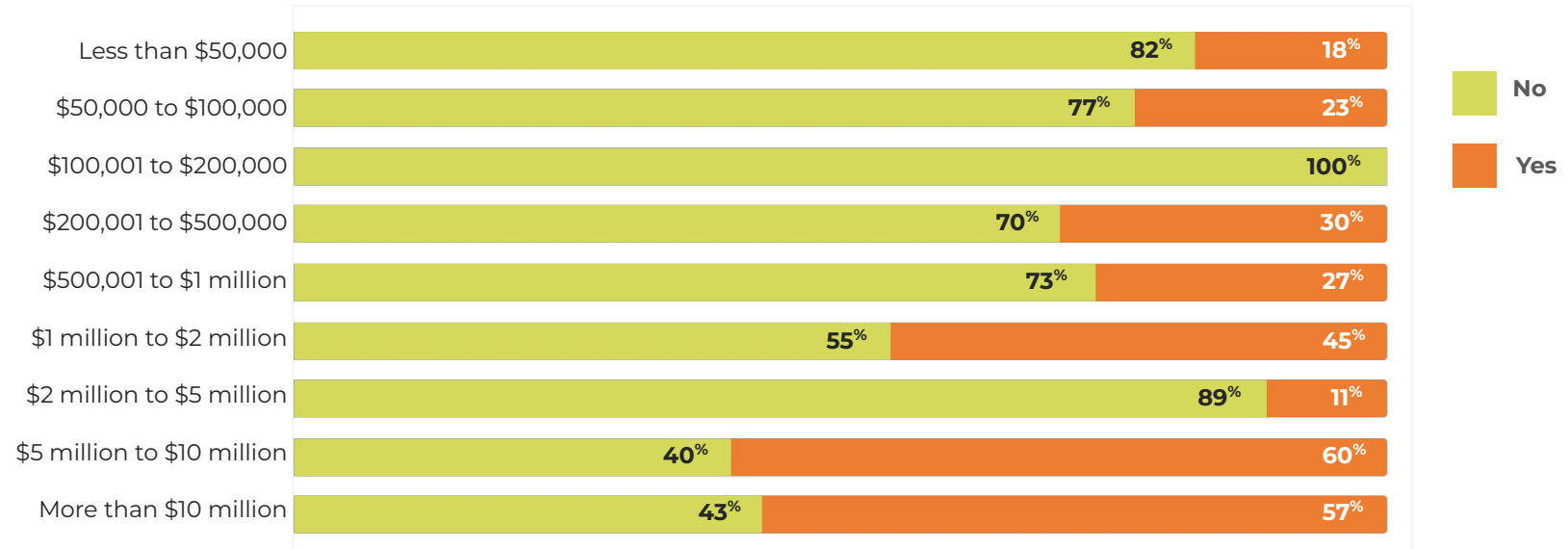
"I've been leading an adventure tour operator for more than 20 years. I work very hard to train women adventure guides, because a high percent of the guides still now, are men. I think women need to hear more from women that work in the business to motivate them to be part of this amazing lifestyle that adventure and outdoors mean in our lives!!"

"In my work as a photographer and videographer I intentionally hire women guides, work with women-owned organization and cover stories that empower women."

Note: Comments have been edited slightly for clarity and to maintain anonymity.

GENDER BIAS: OWN ORGANIZATION

It appears that in companies that bring in more revenue, gender bias is more likely to be noticed as an issue within the organization itself.



Q24: Have you personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender bias in your own organization?

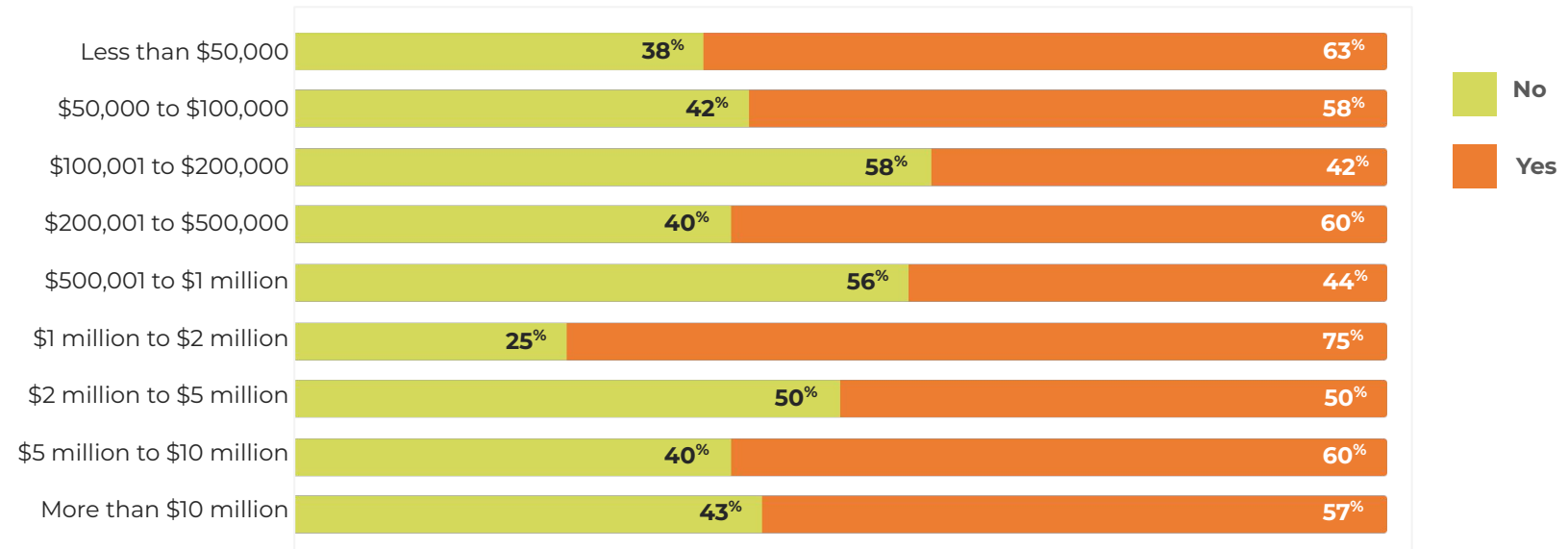
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank or responding “prefer not to say” (n=116)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

GENDER BIAS: ADVENTURE INDUSTRY

There is no clear trend in respondents from differing sizes of organizations (in terms of revenue) noticing gender bias in the adventure industry as a whole. It is acknowledged widely by respondents from all sizes of organizations.



Q25. Have you personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender bias in the adventure industry?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank or responding “prefer not to say” (n=116)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

GENDER BIAS: FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

"Adventure travel still has a very "old school, old boys" network. I feel my voice isn't heard as readily or my opinion valued/asked for as often as male counterparts."

"I positively discriminate towards women in hiring."

"I see gender bias against men."

"Male colleagues answer questions for me (rude), male colleagues direct their questions (that I would answer) to another male."

"In our organisation bias does not show itself in blatant discrimination or harassment. There are subtle things I have noticed such as female leaders not being as listened to as male leaders in meetings and women being interrupted or talked over more. Male colleagues also tend to take part social events that female colleagues have told me they feel they are excluded from."

"Mostly related to cultural differences. Within the US, with other American men and women, no. Definitely experience bias from men from other cultures."

"I have certainly had instances where people don't take me as seriously or have talked to me in a way they wouldn't to my male colleagues."

"Nothing comes to mind, but I'm sure it's happening even if I don't always realize it."

Note: Comments have been edited slightly for clarity and to maintain anonymity.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR ASSAULT

35%

**have experienced
sexual harassment or
assault at work by a
coworker**

62% have not
2% prefer not to respond

30%

**have experienced
sexual harassment or
assault at work by a
client or guest**

68% have not
2% prefer not to respond

Q26: Have you experienced sexual harassment or assault at work by a coworker at any job, current or past?

Q27: Have you experienced sexual harassment or assault at work by a client or guest?

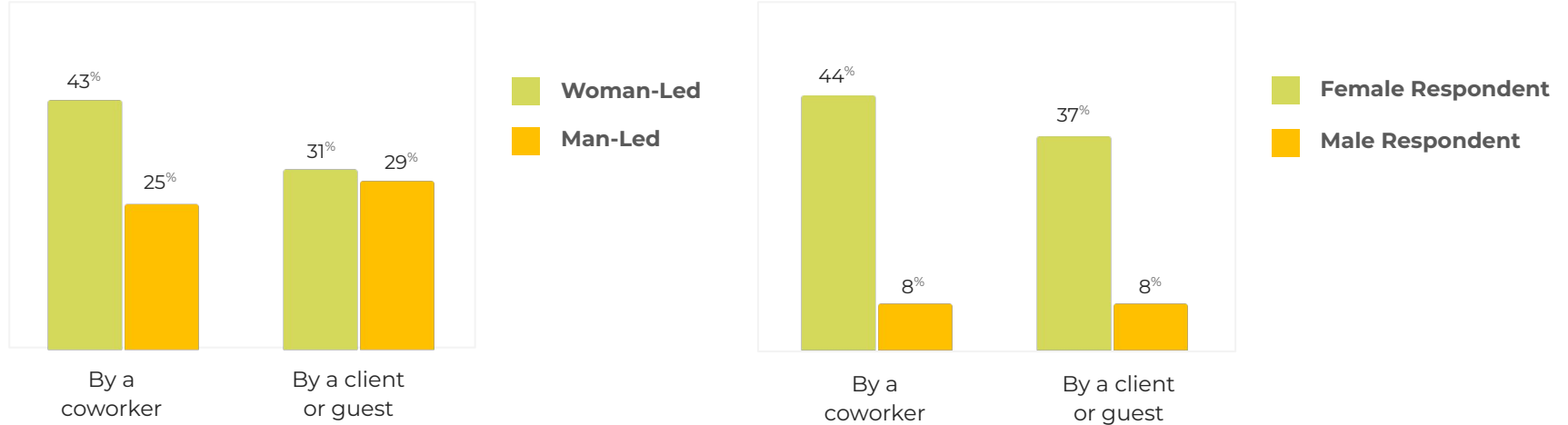
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=125)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR ASSAULT

Respondents from organizations with woman leaders are more likely to have experienced sexual harassment or assault at work by a coworker (**although the question asked about *any job, current or past***). Female respondents are much more likely to have experienced harassment or assault in general, although it is also a concern among male respondents.



Q26: Have you experienced sexual harassment or assault at work by a coworker at any job, current or past?

Q27: Have you experienced sexual harassment or assault at work by a client or guest?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=125)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded "yes."

SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR ASSAULT

Analysis found that organizations with a formal mechanism in place for addressing harassment and discrimination are less likely to have incidents of sexual harassment or assault (but it is still an issue).

26% of respondents whose organization has a policy like this have experienced sexual harassment or assault by a **co-worker**, compared to **40%** of respondents whose organization does not have this kind of policy.

21% of respondents whose organization has a policy like this have experienced sexual harassment or assault by a **client or guest**, compared to **34%** of respondents whose organization does not have this kind of policy.

Q26: Have you experienced sexual harassment or assault at work by a coworker at any job, current or past?

Q27: Have you experienced sexual harassment or assault at work by a client or guest?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=125)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey



SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR ASSAULT: FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

"What woman hasn't experienced sexual harassment or assault at work?!"

"As part of our training program our guides/porters are advised that we will not accept any sort of gender-based violence or abuse of any kind toward women."

"We are a small team of 5 with a shared ethos and mutual agreement. No written document on this topic."

"Haven't had the need to create a harassment policy. I find the travel industry is incredibly diverse, inclusive naturally as it is."

"There is a harassment policy in the staff handbook but it is outdated and antiquated."

"We are gathering information on the best ways to ensure we serve a diverse, equitable, and inclusive client base while also ensuring that our business practices uphold the highest standards for fair & ethical labor across our suppliers."

"We have informal policies with an equitably diverse workforce."

"Not in my current job, but yes in previous jobs. Groping, unwanted advances, being kissed by a colleague without consent, being asked to wear more revealing clothing to work. Most of this happened while working in the hospitality industry (restaurants, nightclubs, bars)."

"I host a corporate group once a year, and the men are often making comments about how I look, staring, or even touching me inappropriately."

"A guest after a tour tried to get me to send him nude photos."

Note: Comments have been edited slightly for clarity and to maintain anonymity.

SUMMARY: EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Overall, respondents feel their own organization is quite fair in the areas of professional development opportunities and equal pay, and do not see a large gender bias internally. However, it appears that many people see the wider adventure travel industry and the travel industry as a whole as being quite biased and unequal. This is the same trend identified in 2017, with even lower scores, meaning respondents are perceiving a higher rate of inequality and bias across the board. This again may be due to the impacts of COVID-19, with women in many cases holding the burden of increased childcare and family responsibilities.

The high prevalence of sexual harassment and assault also has to be called out as a concern for the industry as a whole. Even for organizations that are led by women and employ mostly (or all) women, this is an issue that must be recognized and changed. Sexual harassment and assault is less likely to have occurred in organizations that have a formal mechanism for addressing these situations, but it is unclear if this is due to higher resources in general available to these organizations, a more formal team culture, or some other reason. This topic needs further research and guideline development.

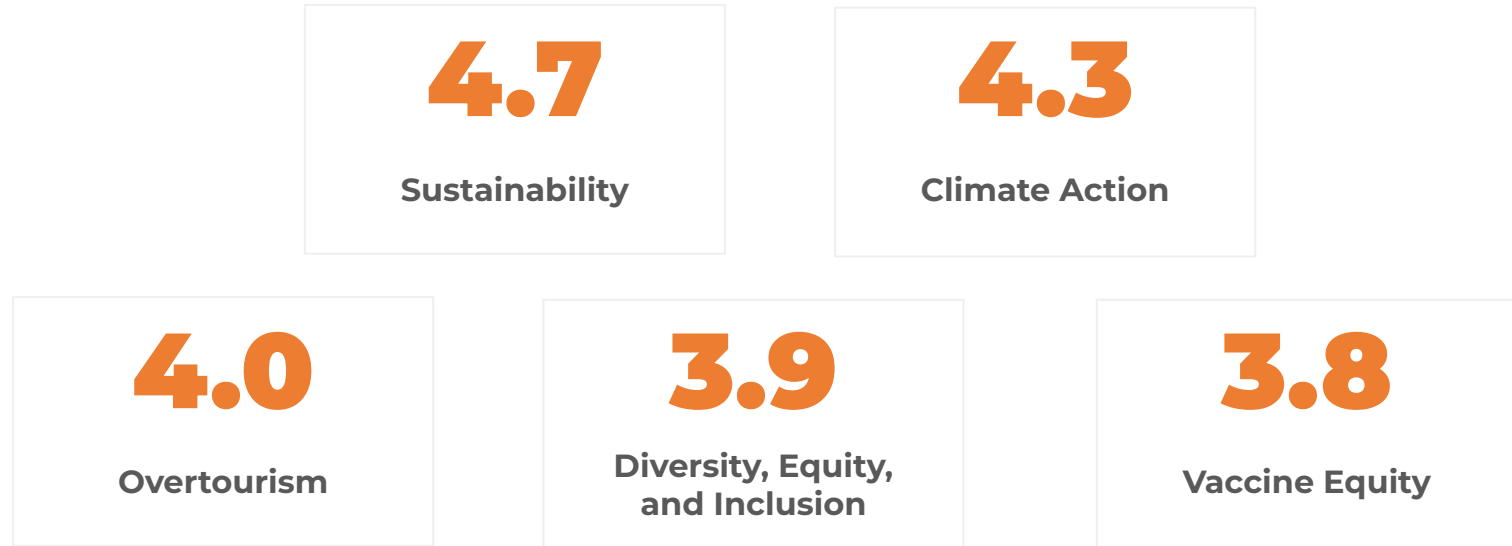


3e.

Critical Issues Worldwide

CRITICAL GLOBAL ISSUES

Sustainability is seen as the most critical global issue overall, followed by climate action and overtourism.



Q29: How would you rate the following critical global issues in level of importance for your organization?

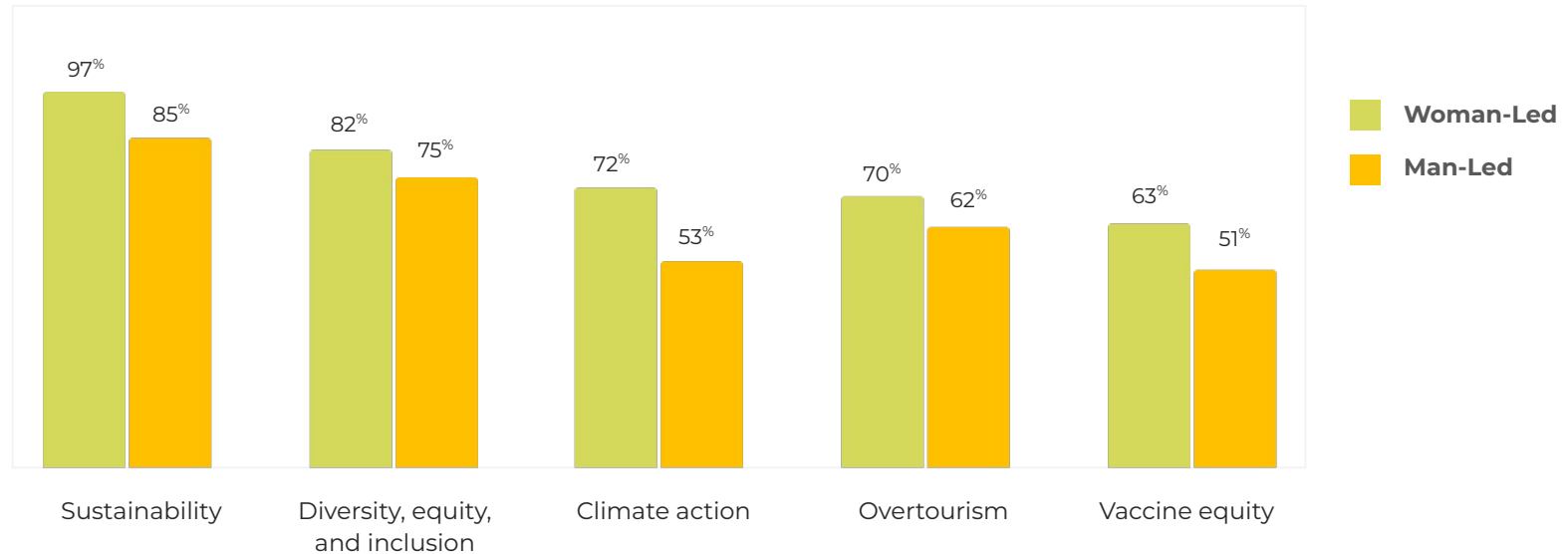
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=124)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent average rating out of 5.

CRITICAL GLOBAL ISSUES

All global issues appear to be of a higher level of importance for women-led organizations. Sustainability in particular is the most important issue overall—learn more about sustainability in adventure travel in the first report in this series from ATTA and Switzerland Tourism: [High Moments, Low Impact: Rethinking Adventure Travel's Sustainability Efforts](#).



Q29: How would you rate the following critical global issues in level of importance for your organization?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=124)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded "quite important" (4) or "very important" (5).

CRITICAL INTERNAL ISSUES

Internally, the most critical issues overall are finances, team culture, and business development and sales.



Q30: How would you rate the level of importance your organization places on the following?

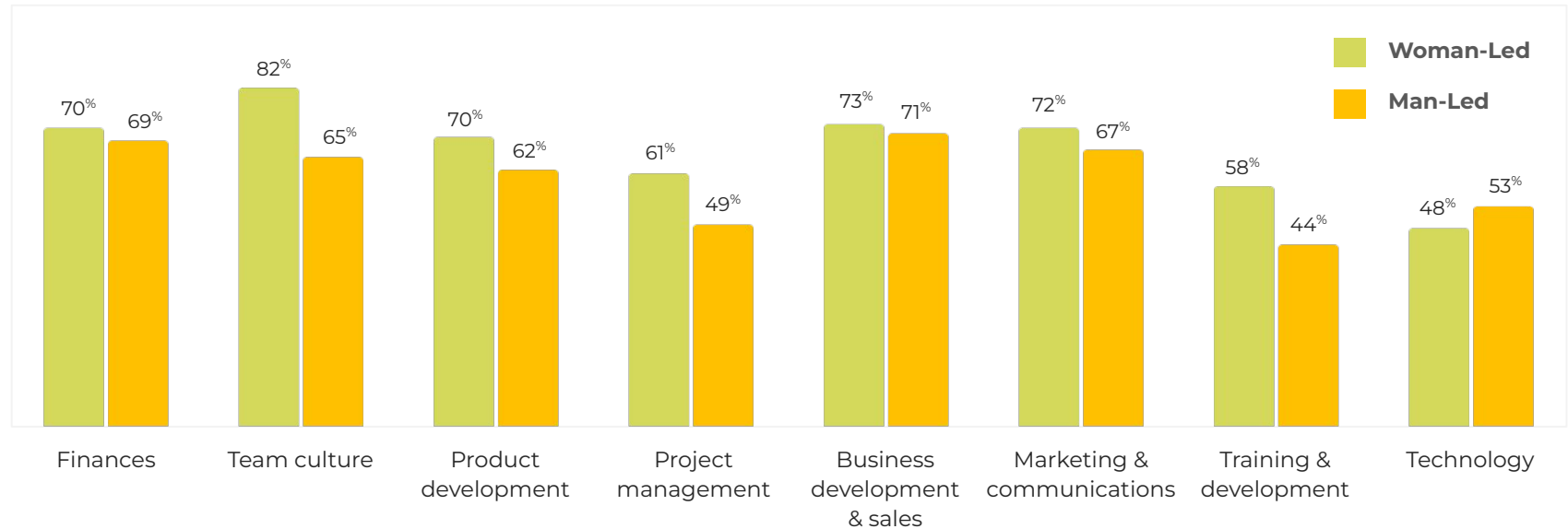
Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=124)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent average rating out of 5.

CRITICAL INTERNAL ISSUES

Team culture is the most important issue for women-led organizations, and business development is the most critical for organizations led by men.



Q30: How would you rate the level of importance your organization places on the following?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=124)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

Note: Numbers represent percentages that responded "quite important" (4) or "very important" (5).

SUMMARY: CRITICAL ISSUES

Sustainability and climate action are the most important issues for respondents' organizations, which aligns with the priorities being seen in the industry right now. Overtourism, DEI initiatives, and vaccine equity are also seen as important. All of these initiatives appear to be a higher priority for women-led organizations, but this could be due to their likelihood of being smaller and therefore possibly more deeply involved with a narrower selection of locations and communities.

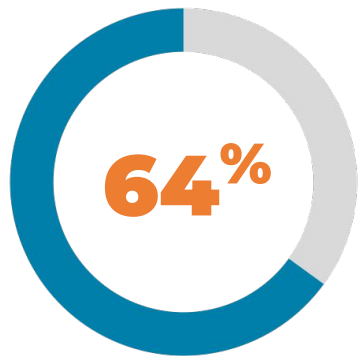
The most critical internal issues are finances, team culture, and business development. This aligns with financial stress from the COVID-19 pandemic, along with recovering in a healthy and sustainable way. Organizations led by women are more likely to be concerned about team culture, product development, project management, and training & development. Men-led organizations are more likely to be concerned about technology.

A photograph of four women sitting on a wooden bench in a mountainous landscape. The women are dressed in outdoor gear, including jackets and hats. Behind them is a dense forest of evergreen trees. In the background, majestic, rocky mountain peaks rise above a layer of mist or low clouds. A cable car is visible on a line stretching across the mountain range. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue. The overall scene is a beautiful alpine setting.

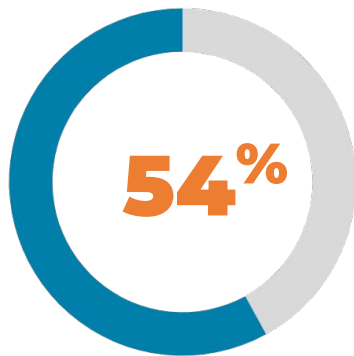
3f.

Responding to Needs of Women Travelers

CLIENT MAKEUP



**of clients at women-led
businesses are women**



**of clients at men-led
businesses are women**

57%

**of clients are
women, on
average**

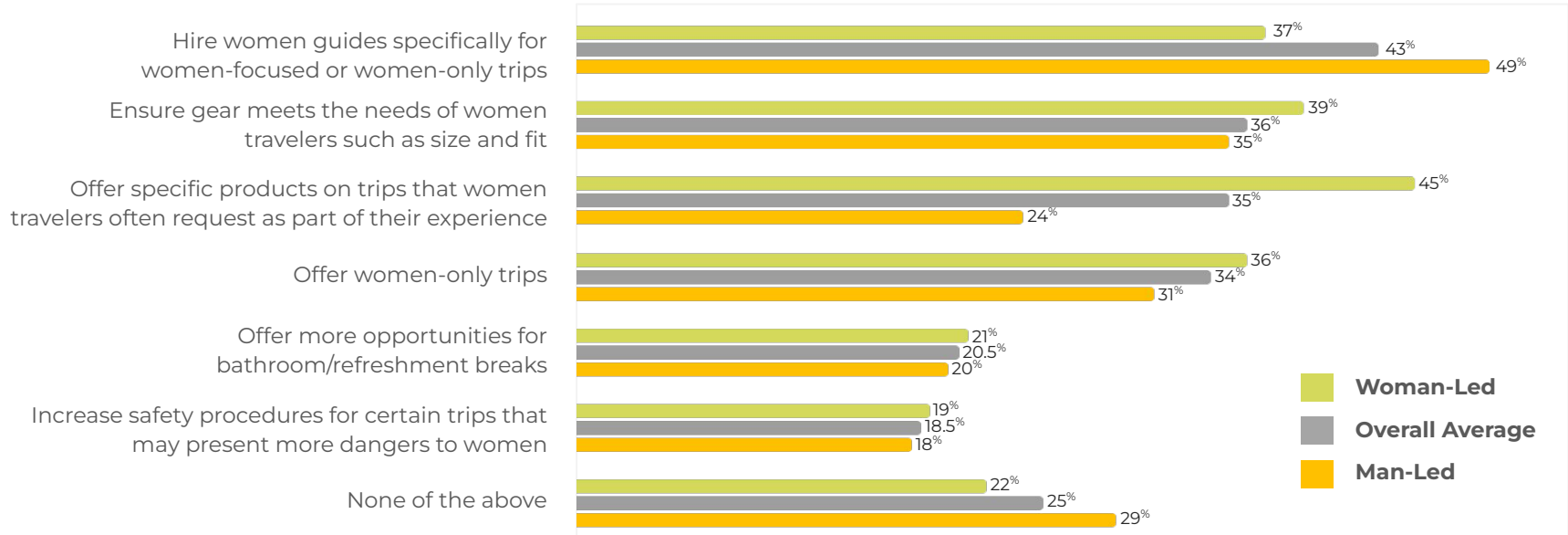
Q31. Approximately what percentage of your clients are women?

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=124)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey

ADDRESSING WOMEN TRAVELERS

Respondents' organizations do take actions to address the specific needs of women travelers, particularly hiring women guides, ensuring proper gear, offering products on trips that women request, and having women-only trips.



Q32: Does your organization try to appeal to women travelers specifically and address women-specific needs? Please select all that apply:

Base: All respondents excluding those left blank (n=122)

Source: 2022 Women in Adventure Travel Survey



ADDRESSING WOMEN TRAVELERS: FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

"We emphasize the safety and comfort that comes with traveling in private - if you are a solo female traveler, having a private (trusted and pre-vetted) guide and driver can make all the difference in the world."

"For the needs listed above, we cater to the client, male or female."

"Our business was created as female-forward, so much of this was instilled from the beginning."

"We do not 'target' women but we definitely see more women on our tours, and have a good number of repeat travelers because of how safe and comfortable our trips are for women."

"We always personalize our services."

"It has been a philosophy to not have women only trips in order to be gender equitable."

"We look for opportunities to hire women guides, but not just for women-focused trips. We prefer to provide experiences that can appeal to all genders, and encourage a balance across the needs of the individuals."

"As a DMC we work with operators to create women-only trips, but don't offer these on our retail side."

"If a trip is dangerous for a woman, it is also dangerous for a man."

SUMMARY: ADDRESSING WOMEN TRAVELERS

Travelers are obviously an essential part of the adventure tourism industry, particularly women, which make up an average of 57% of respondents' clients. Many organizations are taking actions to address the specific needs of women travelers, particularly hiring women guides, ensuring proper gear, offering products on trips that women request, and having women-only trips.

Women-led organizations tend to focus more on women traveler needs than men-led organizations do. The one exception appears to be the hiring of women guides specifically for women-focused trips, but this may be because women-led organizations tend to hire women guides more for all trips, not only women-focused trips.

There also seems to be a push to treat everyone as individuals, not as broad categories divided by gender. As one survey respondent commented, "I do not see women as less capable than men, and thus do not provide any special accommodations that would not be offered to any person of any gender. If a need exists, we try to meet it, regardless of gender or other background." Another stated, "As a woman I appreciate women-only rooms when lodging or women-only trips, but I want those experiences to be the same as lodging or trips that would be open to either gender. Sometimes the tourism industry goes overboard with "women's" offerings and it's just insulting. I don't need a pink Bic pen to be happy and neither do my clients."

A photograph of two women sitting outdoors at sunset. The woman on the left is smiling and looking towards the right. The woman on the right is looking towards the left. They are both wearing backpacks. The background shows a desert landscape with mountains under a warm, orange sky.

Part IV:

Making Women a Priority

4a.

Making Women Leaders and Employees a Priority



WOMEN LEADERS & EMPLOYEES

As discussed in part two of this report, women in all industries and around the world face many challenges in their careers. Many sources identify the choice to become a mother as a limitation on a woman's career—these limits are both internally and externally imposed, with time off required to have children, cultural pressure to spend an unequal (higher) amount of time raising them as opposed to male caregivers, and many women self-limit and opt out of opportunities because of a fear that they will not be able to properly balance the increased responsibilities of work and family.⁸

Women represent 54% of the tourism workforce worldwide, and 65% of the average company's employees in this survey. However, that quantity is not proportionally reflected at leadership-level positions. While 50% of this survey's respondents had a female CEO/top leader, they were clearly grouped in the smaller companies; only 11% of the largest category of companies in terms of revenue have female leadership.

Among boards, only 34% of chairpersons are women, and only 74% of boards have at least one woman (compared to 97% of boards that have at least one man). As mentioned in section 3b of this report, the largest and most visible organizations in the industry are overwhelmingly led by men, who therefore have more access to resources and more influence. This means that the multitude of smaller companies led by women are not being equally represented in the industry, even though there is a clear demand for services specifically for women travelers.

"It's shocking that there are so few women-owned businesses in the adventure travel industry, especially businesses that are at the 8-figure annual revenue level. We applaud the efforts of the ATTA to help empower women adventure travel leaders from the grassroots, to step up into positions of power and prosperity. We need this industry to be led by a diversity of gender perspectives, and commend the ATTA for illuminating the massive gaps that challenge women at the highest positions of leadership and ownership of the adventure travel industry."

- Jennifer Haddow, Owner/Director
of Wild Women Expeditions

WOMEN LEADERS & EMPLOYEES

While this survey did not specifically ask what benefits respondents feel are most valuable to them, other surveys have found that employees highly value remote work, paid time off, flexible hours, and paid family leave, among others.²⁶

Gender bias is also clearly a concern in the travel industry that needs further discussion. Although the majority of respondents feel their own organization is relatively equal generally and in terms of professional development opportunities, the broader industry is seen as being only somewhat equal. The perception of equality across the board has worsened since 2017, meaning the industry is trending in the wrong direction.

On average, only 77% of respondents feel pay at their organization is equal and fair for all employees. This number increases to 87% for organizations with a female leader, and decreases to only 66% for organizations with a male leader. In the same pattern, only 73% of female respondents feel pay is equal, compared to 92% of male respondents. This also shows that work needs to be done on setting policies around equality, and then communicating and implementing them.

It is also unnerving and unacceptable that a third of respondents have experienced sexual harassment or assault from co-workers and/or clients. It is critical that employees are able to feel safe at work, both in the office and in the field. Action needs to be taken to create methods to respond to these issues and concerns.

WORLD EXPEDITIONS

Women taking time off work to raise children is one of the principal reasons women do not occupy as many management positions overall as men do. World Expeditions, Australia's longest-established adventure travel company, has responded to this challenge by creating a working environment that encourages parents with children to continue to work and advance in their careers.

Under Sue Badyari's leadership, World Expeditions has embraced this initiative and the benefits are proven to be far-reaching. The openness to flexible working conditions remained an advantage when COVID-19 restrictions first forced the team to work from home; the existing process made the transition easier to manage operationally.

World Expeditions also has zero tolerance for any form of discrimination or harassment. Its staff policy document clearly states that diversity, equality and inclusion is encouraged in workplace ethos, and it outlines the process for managing complaints. The company's affirmative action goal to recruit more women to join the traditionally male-dominated Australian guiding team has demonstrated to be effective—the current 50:50 diversity of male/female guides is found to be complementary to the needs and interests of mixed groups.

“A flexible work environment benefits not only staff but also has a positive impact on the company. As well as retaining good staff, whose experience is such an asset, offering flexible conditions builds loyalty and has a positive impact on the team environment. A significant proportion of our team has parental responsibilities and we’ve always offered part-time work, flexible hours and, where possible, the opportunity to work from home.”

- Sue Badyari, CEO of World Expeditions

4b.

Making Women Travelers a Priority





WOMEN TRAVELERS

Women account for a half of the population worldwide. Still, women in outdoor sports is often described as a niche market.¹⁸ However, according to Harvard Business Review (2009), women represent a growth market more than twice as large as China and India combined,¹⁹ with particularly strong demand in adventure, culture, and nature tour.²⁰

Generally speaking, women make 80% of all travel decisions in spite of with whom and where they are traveling to or who is paying for it. Regarding adventure, culture, and nature-themed travel, women aged between 20 and 70 account for 75% of the clientele.²⁰

Outdoor women represented in advertising and the media are often young, slim, with long hair, and perfectly styled creating a biased assumption of who average women-adventurers are.¹⁸ Also, many may think that 28-year-old male would be the average adventure traveler, when in fact it is a 47-year-old female, who wears size 12.²⁰ These real women want to see themselves portrayed in marketing images, therefore, giving visibility and airtime to as many different types of women as possible plays an important role in creating more welcoming and supporting travel environment.

Women account for
75%
of those taking adventure,
culture and nature trips

The average adventure
traveler is a
**47-YEAR-OLD
FEMALE**

WOMEN TRAVELERS

When traveling, women tend to use more tourist services, take public transportation more often, and are likely to plan and organize their trips to further in advanced than men in general. Furthermore, women are more likely to travel alone; solo women travel was booming just before the pandemic hit.¹⁸ Also, National Geographic identified women-only trips a leading travel trend for 2020.²¹

Despite the tendencies of behaving in a certain way, categorizing people based on their biological gender may be a mistake. Neither women nor men as a target group are homogenous. For example, an experienced 50-year old female mountaineer may feel she has more in common with a 25-year old male mountaineer than another 50-year old woman.¹⁸

Some destinations such as Switzerland have reacted to this opportunity by focusing on the needs of women in adventure travel. Their [100% Women](#) program was created to encourage women in outdoor sports. The report [What outdoor women want](#), includes a checklist, which helps adventure professionals to see what methods they are already using to support more women to be part of the industry, as traveler and tourism professionals, and what more can one do.

“A single target group of women doesn’t exist any more than a single target group of men does. Across all ages and skill levels, outdoor sportswomen can be divided into many individual target groups that differ in terms of ability, skills, motives and motivation. Nonetheless, there are parallels between many women’s needs that are conditioned by biological and cultural factors.”¹⁸

- Switzerland Tourism

100% WOMEN PEAK CHALLENGE

The roots of adventure travel are in the great expeditions of intrepid explorers: people ascending high peaks and descending wild rivers, taking journeys into the depths of jungles. While historically the headlines are dominated by men, Switzerland's [100% Women Peak Challenge](#) inspired over 700 female mountaineers from 20 countries to climb all 48 Swiss mountains with 4,000m peaks within 7 months in 2021.

Part of Switzerland Tourism's overarching [100% Women](#) initiative, the Peak Challenge was no competition, but an encouragement for all women brave enough to climb a 4,000m peak with appropriate fitness, equipment, and potentially accompaniment by a mountain guide to explore impressive Swiss mountains and share their experiences on social media. The challenge was made easy to participate; no registration was needed and one of the only requirements was that the group should be all female, including the guide.

Given the success of the campaign in 2021 with more than 700 women from 20 countries participating, 100% Women will be continued for the next three years (2022 - 2024). In 2022 the campaign focuses on mountaineering and outdoor sports in general, followed by biking in 2023.



A photograph of two women in a pottery workshop. The woman on the left wears a blue cap and a blue face mask, gesturing with her hands. The woman on the right wears glasses, a white face mask, and a brown apron over a blue shirt, holding a small object. In the background, another person is visible working at a pottery wheel. The workshop is filled with pottery-related items and tools.

4c.

Making Women in Local Communities a Priority

WOMEN IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Women travelers often want to connect more with local communities, as they have a hunger to hear women's stories and learn about their lives, to understand the local culture through a woman's perspective. They want authentic connections with women from other countries through tours led by local women. This leads to opportunities for local suppliers and guides, but needs to be managed carefully.

The gender gaps discussed throughout this report affect women in local communities serving as hosts to adventure travelers. In many cases, they have been impacted more by COVID-19 than travelers or industry organizations, particularly in underdeveloped tourism destinations and poorer countries. Women generally struggle more in these countries as they often have less access to capital and are paid considerably less than men.

In addition, concerns about COVID-19 testing and vaccine equity, access, and affordability remain high. As of 16 February 2022, 68% of people in high-income countries had received at least one dose of a vaccine, compared to only 12% in low-income countries. To cover the cost of vaccinating 70% of their population, high-income countries have to increase their health care spending by 0.8% on average, whereas low-income countries have to increase theirs by 56.6% on average.^{[22](#)}



WOMEN IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Women suppliers and guides need to be paid fairly and equally. This is particularly important in destinations where equal pay is often not the case. Women typically invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than men. This means women's economic participation and their ownership and control of productive assets speeds up development, helps overcome poverty, reduces inequalities and improves children's nutrition, health, and school attendance. As discussed throughout this report, women are less likely to have access to the full range of credit, banking and financial services and facilities essential to more fully develop their assets, their land and their businesses.²³

Research shows that education and employment of women is also one of the most promising reducers of mitigating climate change.²⁹ Around the world, countries with more women in parliament are more likely to establish protected areas, and more equitable participation of men and women in forest management leads to significantly greater improvements in forest conditions.²⁴

This is one area where adventure travel can make a massive difference. By putting forth an effort to work with local communities and leave as much money as possible in them, adventure travel companies can increase women's earning power, therefore magnifying the positive impacts. Supporting women in local government and encouraging participation in conservation efforts will also result in a more positive world.

ADVENTURES WITH LOCALS

[Adventures with Locals](#) is a female-owned responsible tourism company in Uganda, founded with a vision to provide exceptionally authentic experiences. They focus on tailoring current programs to the most urgent and current needs of their guides and host communities while recognizing their very different socio-economic factors. Everyone is treated respectfully and fairly regardless of identity or ability, all are given equal access to opportunities and resources, and all can fully contribute to business success.

Working exclusively with female guides, Adventures with Locals strives to empower the local Ugandan people by sharing their culture, history and different aspects of nature. All their experiences are local and they encourage visitors to use sustainable and local services, eat at local restaurants and stay at local accommodation.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Adventures with Locals strategized to alleviate hardships brought by quarantine. They provided 600 food parcels to those in need, as well as handwashing stations, sanitizers, soaps and face masks to safeguard local families from the spread of COVID-19 and help children stay in school. The company has many more plans in the future to continue supporting local communities throughout and after the pandemic.



A photograph of four hikers standing on a rocky mountain peak. They are all smiling and wearing outdoor gear like backpacks, hats, and sunglasses. The background shows a vast mountain range with snow-capped peaks and a layer of clouds below them. The sky is clear and blue.

Part VII:

Recommendations & Taking Action

RECOMMENDATIONS: LEADERS + EMPLOYEES

BENEFITING WOMEN LEADERS & EMPLOYEES

1. When looking at leadership, add more women to your boards, especially as you consider the global and business issues that differ between genders. This will allow a more balanced representation of priorities. In addition, when you consider succession planning and professional development, look to women in management in your organization as potential future leaders, especially those in larger companies. And lastly, reconsider mentorship programs—they may have become informal during COVID-19 but consider reinstatement if applicable.
2. Your employees want to be heard. Create a safe space via a team survey to ask what benefits are of the most value to your employees; make sure and ask them for ideas on how you might better support them and ask how they are doing.
3. Consider your policies and benefits carefully, in addition to zero tolerance policies for harassment, create formalize mechanisms for handling complaints. Regarding compensation, pay transparency can help support concerns about pay equity. Pay ranges can be made visible so staff know where they fit in compared to others and where they might be able to progress in their development.
4. ATTA's 2017 research report suggested that small companies without a specific HR person may consider identifying and training a person within the organization to take on this role to provide a safe place for employees to address any workplace issues. This is still true today.

RECOMMENDATIONS: TRAVELERS

BENEFITING WOMEN TRAVELERS

1. Be more inclusive in your organization's marketing and communications. Travel advertising and the media often show young, slim, perfectly styled models in staged scenes. However, women travelers relate to "real women" who look like them, are similar in age or behavior, or who could be their best friend. Adventure travel needs to be welcoming to all by breaking away from prevailing stereotypes and showing as many different women as possible in varied, realistic roles and situations in life. Having women at the top levels of leadership is beneficial here, as they make the final decisions on how the creative team represents women.

From the media side, one survey respondent said, "There should be more mentorship opportunities and women support groups for women in media - photographer, videographers, filmmakers and writers. I would love to specifically see industry support for women photographer/videographers/filmmakers as we usually fall through the cracks in any category yet visual media is shaping how we view travel. Most often it is seen through a male lens. We need more industry support and ways for women in visual media to connect and support each other."

2. Equalize women in sports. Beyond age, life situation and skill levels, women identify time, money and family responsibilities as their greatest hurdles to participating in outdoor activities. Many also are not connected to other women with similar interests in outdoor adventure. Female athlete role models are limited and not often promoted by the media, and six out of ten women believe that male interests in outdoor sport are taken more seriously than theirs. Moreover, it is especially difficult for larger and very small women to find female-specific gear—a key point when considering how important (life)style is for many women.²⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS: LOCAL COMMUNITIES

BENEFITING WOMEN IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

1. While the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the tourism industry worldwide, its effects have been far worse for women, especially in developing tourism destinations. Adventure tourism organizations can make conscious programmatic choices to benefit women in local communities; for example Wild Women Expeditions recently decided to change one of the camps on their Tanzania tour to a location that is run entirely by women and doing great work around the empowerment of local Tanzanian women.
2. On a policy level, programs are needed to prevent job losses in tourism for both men and women. Example programs include incentives for job retention through wage subsidies and/or fiscal payment reliefs. In some cases, income support programs like unemployment benefits need to be given or extended. Most importantly, these policies need to cover not only the formal sector (e.g., employees of major hotel chains) but also the informal sector (e.g., self-employed guides and local businesses) where disadvantaged groups, including women, are highly represented.¹¹ Other infrastructure and training programs will generally benefit the industry's recovery and should have a gender component.
3. Broader changes also need to be made to ensure the rights of women around the world. Emerging data shows that, since the outbreak of the pandemic, violence, particularly domestic violence, against women and girls has intensified. UN Women has developed a rapid and targeted response to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women and girls and to ensure that the long-term recovery benefits them, and the adventure tourism industry must take note and develop their own policies with awareness, input from women, and an action plan.



RECOMMENDATIONS: SWITZERLAND'S "SELF-CHECK" (1/2)

Switzerland Tourism has compiled a list of items for organizations to use when taking an account of their current approach to women. This may be a useful starting point for your organization. Self-check questions are included on the next page.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Kick-off: As a starting-point, let competent experts raise awareness for you and your colleagues

Representation: Support women in teams, as decision-makers, speakers, etc.

Self-confidence: Be aware of the "confidence gap" (job interviews, meetings, calls for tender, offer descriptions, etc.)

Encouragement: Encourage women to apply for exciting jobs too

PARTICIPATION

Areas of responsibility: Research the day-to-day needs of female customers and integrate these into your offerings: outdoor sport as a catalyst, e.g. for self-confidence

Value innovation: Research the true needs of the target group and create real value instead of falling for male/female stereotypes

Communities: They are your partners of choice when it comes to inspiring the outdoor sportswomen of tomorrow

Inclusion: Tell boys and men about your female role models and where appropriate include men who are interested in women's issues and perspectives in your offers

VISIBILITY

Continuity: No single shot (e.g. for International Women's Day): set out the precepts of priority and continuity

Women as producers: Award photo, film or textual commissions to women

Distribution: Produce high-quality images and moving images and make this material available to your partners and media through stock providers

Quantity: Show more women

Quality: Show more diverse women and a wide range of life plans, from young to old, fuller figures to slim ones, etc.

Authenticity: Women want "real women" (not models) who look like them, are similar in age or behaviour or could be their best friend

Recognition: Show real female athletes as role models

Identification: Create reference points that female (and male) customers can identify with, e.g. breaks in the biography, career topics, etc.

Authenticity: Emotional stories and real value instead of superficial copy & paste. Sense of being part of a group or community rather than individual models, real feelings

Active women: Don't show women as just passive and sheltered, but explicitly in action, management, as demonstrators

Diversity: Ensure that it's not just individual women or couples who are visible, but also mixed groups of women as well as groups of men and women

Language: Do not belittle

Masculinity: Also break free of the "typically masculine" stereotypes



RECOMMENDATIONS: SWITZERLAND'S "SELF-CHECK" (2/2)

GROWTH

Transformation: Highlight opportunities, how and via which (small!) concrete steps women can grow in their sport

Early start: Create special offers for girls too

Strategy: Invest in communities, communities, communities. Beginners become advanced students, who become professionals, who in turn act as role models for advanced students, who in turn act as role models for beginners

Accessibility: Build a bridge between beginners and professional athletes, so that women at all levels can rediscover themselves

CONNECTIVITY

Linkage: Link "internal" role models (e.g. in the company, at the destination) with "external" role models (e.g. female scientists, journalists, etc.)

Approachability: Create opportunities for female customers to meet their role models

Networks: Show exciting women from other divisions, professions and branches of industry, who are also sportswomen and can introduce their networks to the sport

OVERALL

Raising awareness: Discuss the issue of female role models and stereotypes at the family dinner table and with groups of friends and colleagues

For women: Take centre stage, become the role model that you never had. Be a mentor, share your knowledge and support other women and girls

For everyone: Consider as a next step where you have the power to make a difference

SELF-CHECK QUESTIONS

- Which points are you already complying with?
- Which points would you like to tackle quickly?
- In what areas do you have a backlog in demand?
- Who could support you in this where appropriate?

READING RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 [United Nations: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#)
- 2 [World Tourism Organization: 2019 Global Report on Women in Tourism – Second Edition](#)
- 3 [World Economics Forum: 2021 Global Gender Gap Report](#)
- 4 [Adventure Travel Trade Association: 2017 Out in Front: Tracking Women's Leadership in Adventure Travel](#)
- 5 [Switzerland Tourism: What Outdoor Women Want](#)
- 6 [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Investing in Women and Girls](#)
- 7 [Conservation International: Gender Equality](#)
- 8 [ATTA's Women in Adventure Travel LinkedIn Group \(all are welcome\)](#)

A dramatic mountain landscape featuring a sharp, rocky peak in the center, surrounded by green slopes and a cloudy sky. The scene is captured in a cinematic style with high contrast and a slightly desaturated color palette.

Part VIII:

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

It is clear that women and men in adventure travel do not have the same advantages. One survey respondent said, “I think it's a little more difficult to be a woman in the adventure travel space than it is in say, resort travel or family travel. There are simply less other women around to retreat to, and I have learned that I may need to be more guarded and less immediately friendly when in a male dominated space.” This awareness is the first step toward change.

COVID-19 has been detrimental to the progress of women in travel. An effort must be made to increase women in leadership roles, and employees need to be seen and heard. Women lead differently; they care about team culture first. Benefits, both formal and informal, need to be revisited in order to keep team members. Although respondents see their organization as rather equal overall, they believe pay is not equal, and the broader industry is quite biased.

The social pressures of the last few years have increased the priority placed on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues, leading to hope that women's progress in closing the gender gap will accelerate for the better. Policies against discrimination, bias, and harassment are not enough; there must also be action plans in place to enforce them and enact change.

Company storytelling and the media need to be more diverse in the way they portray women travelers. Women of all types and ages and abilities need to be incorporated; women travelers want to see themselves represented. Equality in adventure activities also needs to be promoted, with equal opportunities for all genders, ways to encourage community building with others who have similar interests.

Further research is needed on how to increase women's leadership at the top level (of revenue), and more work needs to be done on addressing the concerns raised by this report and research by other organizations in the tourism industry and adventure travel in particular.

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Switzerland.

Switzerland Tourism & Swisstainable.

Switzerland Tourism is the Swiss National Tourism Board with the mandate to promote Switzerland as a premier travel, holiday and convention destination. Based in Zurich, Switzerland, Switzerland Tourism is present in 22 markets worldwide, employing around 240 people. Swisstainable is the new sustainability initiative of the whole Swiss tourism industry. To learn more about Switzerland and Swisstainable, [visit MySwitzerland.com](https://www.myswitzerland.com).

INFLUENCE AND IMPACT OF WOMEN IN ADVENTURE TRAVEL RESEARCH REPORT

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ABOUT THE ATTA

Established in 1990, the Adventure Travel Trade Association is the largest global network of adventure travel leaders. Our community is made up of ~30,000 individual guides, tour operators, lodges, travel advisors, tourism boards, destination marketing and management organizations, outdoor educators, gear companies and travel media who share a belief and commitment to sustainable tourism. The connections and creativity of this vibrant community come together both virtually and in person to create and deliver the solutions that propel our businesses and our communities toward a responsible and profitable future.

ABOUT OUR RESEARCH

The ATTA strives to produce regular reports that take the pulse of the industry through our membership as well as the global travel industry. In addition, consumer research studies lend insight into the fast paced and changing world of travel and travelers' perceptions of it. At adventuretravel.biz, our Research Reports can be located that dive deeply into the motivations of adventure travelers, the size of the industry, the landscape and health of the industry at large, as well as other targeted reports on subjects ranging from Travel Agents to adventure travel in specific destinations.

THE ATTA'S WEB PROPERTIES



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The ATTA's homepage online
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