

# Equity vs Equality: Why Gender Equity Is the Way Forward



This International Women's Day, we celebrate the commendable strides women are making toward equality in the workplace. Women now hold a record [32%](#) of senior leadership positions, and 90% of companies employ women at the C-suite level. However, to fully appreciate this progress, we must also recognize the obstacles professional women have faced and those that are still to come.

Much of the road to gender equality remains untraveled. Discrimination and unconscious biases have long hindered forward movement. As women continue to face deeply ingrained and prejudicial norms, the IWD 2023 campaign challenges the world to not only strive for equality, but to [#EmbraceEquity](#).

Embracing equity is as essential for high-performing organizations as it is for societal progress. Workplace leaders must recognize how equity and equality stack up, and why equity is important for the long-term success and health of their businesses.

## Equity vs Equality in the Workplace

The difference between equity and equality is best illustrated by how companies allocate resources and opportunities to employees. A workplace that focuses on equality gives all team members access to the exact same opportunities. In an equitable workplace, historically underrepresented groups receive additional resources to account for the disparities they face.

Equity empowers [women in the workplace](#) to achieve the same outcomes as men. It acknowledges women face different circumstances that negatively affect their ability to progress. If women are inherently starting from behind, true equality can't be achieved. However, equity initiatives—such as flexible schedules and mentorship opportunities for women—can help them catch up and move workplaces toward gender equality. Regular pay audits and employee satisfaction surveys can also expose the inequities organizations must repair before achieving equality.

Gender equality is a long-term goal that all organizations should strive for. However, equity is a necessary means to achieve equality and a significant milestone in itself.

## Why Is Gender Equity So Crucial?

Gender equity leads to measurable financial results. Companies with the most diverse executives are [significantly more likely](#) to experience above-average profitability. In fact, a study by Pipeline Equity found every 10% growth in gender equity within a business results in a 1-2% [revenue increase](#). Nationally, gender equity can add \$3.1 trillion to the economy—closing the [gender wage gap](#) alone can account for \$512 billion growth.

So why is gender equity so powerful? Companies that commit to it can benefit from more diverse perspectives, which can lead to more innovative ideas and more business prospects. Plus, equitable investment in employees can lead to equal upskilling and improved performance across a team.

Embracing gender equity can also alleviate the effects of the growing labor deficit. [Nearly 80%](#) of professionals want to work for businesses that prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). Investing in DEIA initiatives can

help organizations effectively attract and retain top talent, including the many qualified women across industries.

## Progression and Roadblocks in Workplace Equity

The global commitment to DEIA is surging. Voluntary disclosures of gender-related data have [risen by 11%](#) in one year. This has allowed researchers to identify positive trends in gender equity, including a rising hire-to-loss ratio of women in businesses. The gender pay gap among CEOs has also decreased.

Glassdoor, an employer review platform, has also contributed eye-opening insights by launching its Equity Xray. This annual report assesses millions of reviews to identify disparities across genders, races, and ethnicities. However, while growing research is certainly a reason for optimism, it has also uncovered the large amount of work left to be done. The [2023 Equity Xray](#) found that women and men have significantly different experiences in approximately 1 in 5 workplaces. In fact, in two-thirds of businesses, women rate their workplace lower than men.

While more companies are recognizing the importance of gender equity, with many taking action to improve it, the fact is progress is slowing down. The [2022 Women in the Workplace](#) report by LeanIn.Org and McKinsey found women in leadership are leaving companies at unprecedented rates—the highest recorded the annual study began in 2015.

## How Organizations Can Embrace Gender Equity

One of the biggest challenges companies face when aiming for equity is improving the effectiveness of DEIA programs. These programs often fail to produce results despite their rising prevalence, and [nearly half](#) of workers agree lack of accountability is at fault. Senior leaders frequently promote DEIA initiatives to the public without overseeing their implementation across their organization.

A culture that embraces equity doesn't trickle down without active effort. Effective DEIA programs require regular evaluation and iteration at every level of an organization. Identifying and tracking key DEIA metrics, like employee satisfaction and pay equity, is essential for identifying where improvements are needed.

In addition to increasing accountability, organizations can improve equity by creating better paths for career development. Formal internal talent mobility programs, which prepare employees to move between positions and projects, can encourage workplace leaders to proactively identify skills gaps—many of which women on their teams can fill with appropriate training. Internal recruitment can also give women more opportunities to discuss their career goals and receive the resources they need to achieve them.

Increasing internal mobility can also address issues with retention that hinder gender equity. The 2022 Women in the Workplace study found that turnover of women in leadership positions is often a result of overwork and under-recognition. By committing to the internal advancement of women, businesses can adequately reward them for their performance.

## **Equity as a Shared Responsibility**

Male allies must recognize their role in advancing gender equity, as well. While over 75% of men believe they are actively advocating for equity, only [45% of women](#) agree. This suggests a significant disparity between men's perceptions and the lived experiences of women.

Men—especially men in leadership—can play a significant role in improving gender equality and equity by regularly inviting women to the table and challenging their personal perceptions. When more people in power collaborate with underrepresented groups, advocacy can become more effective.

As you #EmbraceEquity this International Women's Day, keep in mind there's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all solution. Workplace leaders must do the work to identify how they can best empower women—and all underrepresented groups—with the right resources and opportunities.

How will your organization advance gender equity and move toward equality?