

# More Women Move into Supply Chain Careers



**New Gartner survey finds that women comprise 41% of the supply chain workforce, up from 39% in 2020.**

**W**omen comprise 41% of the supply chain workforce in 2021, up from 39% in 2020, according to a recent survey by [Gartner, Inc.](#) Every leadership level saw an increase in representation, except the executive level where there's been a slight decline. In 2021, women account for 15% of executive level roles, down from 17% in 2020.

The Women in Supply Chain Survey 2021 by Gartner and AWESOME surveyed 223 supply chain organizations from February through March 2021. The findings showed the highest percentage of women in the supply chain workforce since the first edition of the survey in 2016.

“Contrary to other industries, supply chain’s mission-criticality during the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that many sectors did not reduce their workforce, but rather continued to hire and even faced talent shortages, especially in the product supply chains,” said Dana Stiffler, vice president analyst with the Gartner Supply Chain practice, in a [press release](#).

“This resulted in many women not only standing their ground in supply chain organizations but increasing their representation in organizations,” Stiffler continues. “We also documented a record number of specific commitments and supply chain-led actions and saw existing programs starting to pay off.”

## Retaining Women Mid-Career isn't Easy

According to Gartner, the pandemic didn't disrupt supply chain gender equality efforts. In fact, 84% of responding organizations stated that COVID-19 had no discernible impact on their ability to retain and advance women.

However, 54% of survey respondents said that retaining mid-career women (i.e., those in the “middle third” of their careers) is an increasing challenge. Lack of career opportunities is the top reason that mid-career women left a supply chain organization or provider, Gartner says, with the second-most selected option being a lack of development opportunities.

“Supply chain leaders who are serious about their gender equality efforts must create tailored leadership development programs,” said Stiffler, “and explore flexible work policies that cater to the needs of mid-career women.”

## Setting Goals for Gender Diversity

For its Women in Supply Chain Survey 2021, Gartner partnered with AWESOME to develop the survey and recruit participants. Qualified participants worked in companies that have an internal supply chain organization or in firms where supply chain is a separate business unit, specialty or practice area, or those who are vendors of supply chain services and solutions. Organizations tracked and analyzed needed to have a minimum of \$100 million in annual revenue.

Gartner says previous years' surveys reveal that setting goals and having stated objectives are crucial drivers for improvements in pipelines and other diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) outcomes.

In 2021, the proportion of supply chain organizations with any type of goal jumped to 73% from 64% in 2020, it adds. Within the subset of respondents (29%) who have stated objectives, 68% said the supply chain organization had a targeted initiative focused on women, a huge step up from 46% in 2020.

“It’s encouraging to see that the larger share of this jump was for more formal targets and specific goals on management scorecards,” Stiffler added. “For these respondents, there is greater accountability for results — and we see the correlation with stronger representation and inclusion showing up in pipelines.”

#### **Vital to Continued Success**

Jennifer Kabbara, director of global sales at Smith & Associates, an electronic components distributor headquartered in Houston, is enthused by the new Gartner findings and says they align with what’s taking place within her own organization. “The rise of women in the supply chain industry is vital for continued business success,” she says.

“At Smith, women are an essential part of our global sales force—making a significant impact in our business relationships, operations and record-breaking revenue,” Kabbara continues. “In the over two decades I’ve spent in the industry, it’s been incredible to watch the contributions women have made to the supply chain.”