

## Diversity a Priority for More Than Half of UAE Workplaces

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*UAE Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace Survey reveals strength in diversity and opportunities for improvement*

- 57% of respondents say diversity is a priority at their workplace
- 74% of women aspire to senior leadership roles
- Only 24% of women believe their gender makes it more difficult for them to advance their career
- Flexible working programme and mentoring could be key to boosting diversity and inclusion in the UAE

**Dubai, UAE** — Diversity and inclusion (D&I) appears to be a clear strategic priority for more than half of UAE organisations, according to results from the UAE Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace Survey Report released at the Global Women in Leadership (WIL) Economic Forum today. Commissioned by international law firm Winston & Strawn LLP, in conjunction with the Global WIL Forum and conducted by YouGov, the UAE D&I survey saw 57% of respondents describe workforce diversity as a top priority where they work.

Respondents also believed they see diversity in action every day, with 57% regarding their workplace as ‘relatively’ or ‘very diverse.’ Interestingly, respondents who work in the public sector showed a higher positive response rate (59%) to this question, compared to those who work in the private sector (45%).

Overall, 61% of respondents agreed that women are well represented in management at their organisation, with women (69%) notably more positive than men (54%) about the level of female representation in management. The survey also found that 74% of women in the UAE workforce aspire to senior leadership roles within their organisations (versus 66% of males), while 62% were happy about their opportunities for advancement.

However, there are clear opportunities for improvement, with 24% of women also believing their gender would make it harder for them to advance their career—compared to just 17% of men. The survey findings also revealed approaches which may positively contribute to D&I. These included having a flexible workplace, with more than half of female respondents (51%) indicating that their workplace offers support for reduced hours, working from home or extended maternity leave.

Career guidance from senior colleagues also looks to be a crucial contributor to successful diversity and inclusion. Mentoring was found to have played a key role in helping people make career progress, with 79% of women and 71% of men having had one or more senior staff members actively assist them in getting ahead.

Sophie Le Ray, CEO, Naseba and Founder of the WIL Economic Forum, said: “The survey results demonstrate that women want to take on leadership roles, and organisations that successfully harness this desire can improve their chances of securing fresh leadership talent as well as the new ideas and perspectives that they bring with them. I first came to the region in 2003 and since then, I have witnessed incredible change here within D&I. Women in the Arab world are truly changing the game, and I am very optimistic for the future.”

While men and women had about the same chance of having a dedicated mentor (55% and 54% respectively) there are clear challenges in finding enough women to offer the guidance of a mentor. It is clear many of the respondents’ mentors are men, with 80% of male respondents having a mentor of the same gender, while only 52% of women could say the same.

Sylvia James, Director of Diversity & Inclusion, Winston & Strawn LLP, said: “We see having more women in senior leadership positions and able to serve as mentors as a crucial step to developing all parts of our talent pool. One of the key things it takes to advance women in the workplace is vocal, visible support from the top down. At Winston, supporting women’s careers is embedded into our culture—not just as a goal, but as core pillar of our business success. Diversity & Inclusion is truly a global priority for us.”

Notably, in the survey more UAE Nationals than any other nationality group reported having had a career mentor (70%). UAE Nationals were also far more likely to work somewhere that supports flexible working arrangements, with 73% responding they have access compared to 49% of the overall survey respondents. Both insights offer clues as to how organisations might improve their performance, by creating diverse work environments that attract, retain and develop the best talent available locally and enhance the economic prospects of the UAE as a whole.

To download a copy of the full report, [please click here](#).

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[Sylvia James](#)