



# Kane

WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO KNOW

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## ***The State of Working Women in Wisconsin***

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KANE INSIGHTS 2021

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing yellow safety glasses, a blue denim shirt, and a patterned scarf, is focused on working with a piece of wood. She is wearing a grey and white patterned cardigan. The background is a blurred workshop or construction site with wooden beams.

*“Women now drive  
the world economy.”*

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

# The State of Working Women in Wisconsin

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KANE INSIGHTS 2021

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# MESSAGE FROM KIMBERLY KANE

*President and CEO, Kane Communications Group*

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My mother was the primary breadwinner for most of my childhood. She worked in corporate America during the 1980's and '90's. I still remember the shoulder-padded power suits she wore to work as if she were going into battle.

Today, most of us recognize that women like her were fighting for opportunity, equity and a place at the table. And we don't have to look far to see how our economies, businesses, families and communities have benefited. In 2009, the Harvard Business Review put the spotlight on The Female Economy pointing out that "women drive the global economy." A 2018 World Economic Forum report found that "when more women join the workforce, everyone benefits." Women's active participation in the workforce is recognized at the highest political levels as essential for the prosperous, healthy and sustainable development of communities as part of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on decent work, economic growth and gender equality.

**However, in 2020, the world changed.** The COVID-19 pandemic brought entire industries to a halt. No one anticipated how significantly the pandemic would impact women. More than 2.5 million women dropped out of the labor force during the pandemic. Today, as employers scramble to rebuild their teams, women are not returning quickly. In fact, women are quitting their jobs at a faster pace than men.

Does the experience of working women in Wisconsin mirror what's happening across the country? If it does, what do employers in our state need to do to recruit and retain female employees? In this post-pandemic era, what does a modern-day work environment look like that enables Wisconsin women to be at our best? As a female CEO and a mom of four, I wanted answers to these questions and I couldn't find them. I also believed this information could be valuable to our clients as we help them build reputations as strong corporate citizens and employers of choice in our state. So, Kane Communications Group partnered with a group of respected researchers to find out. We spoke with nearly 1,000 working women across Wisconsin and convened groups of women to discuss the findings and develop the recommendations you will find in this report. I can't thank these women enough for their participation and their honesty.

We want this report to empower employers with insights they can use to create a modern-day workplace that women want to be a part of. I encourage you to discuss what you've learned with your teams, working women, even a woman who has left your workplace. The changes we need to make as employers require new thinking and robust commitment and they will be most sustainable when we tackle them together. No shoulder pads needed.

**Kimberly Kane**  
President & CEO  
Kane Communications Group



***50% of Wisconsin's working women consider quitting work constantly, often or sometimes.***



# WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

## About the Study

The *Kane Insights: State of Working Women in Wisconsin* report represents the first detailed study of Wisconsin working women, assessing their current feelings of well-being, support and satisfaction with their jobs and wider industries, including their levels of stress and what they need to make work, work. This inaugural report seeks to provide a baseline from which Wisconsin employers and industries can annually work toward moving the needle.

We are happily surprised by some of the results. Overall, respondents reported that Wisconsin companies are making progress. 86% of Wisconsin working women believe they work for a purpose-driven organization. 88% of Wisconsin working women not only believe it's important to work for a company that's intentional about making a positive impact in the world, 78% feel their organization is actively pursuing this goal.

Despite these high points, mental health challenges, stress and feeling underappreciated remain significant barriers for Wisconsin working women. Our research reveals a startling statistic:

**50% of Wisconsin's working women consider quitting work constantly, often or sometimes.**

This is 25% higher than the national average, as reported in McKinsey's 2021 Women in the Workplace report. The number of Wisconsin women considering quitting rises even higher — to 60% — for those working in the retail, food service and hospitality industries. The primary reason Wisconsin's working women consider quitting is that they feel undervalued in their current role. These women also state that positive recognition is important, but women without college degrees report that they receive less positive recognition than women with college degrees.

This report offers analysis that highlights the challenges facing Wisconsin working women, coupled with actions that companies can take to improve these figures. It is our hope that this research will be the catalyst for Wisconsin employers to measure their progress in addressing the wellness needs of women in their companies, identify areas where they can improve and take steps to change.

**Even as a swing state in an already polarized political climate, Wisconsin's working women are extremely consistent across the board, regardless of political leaning, when it comes to their feelings about their employer's communication and social impact.**



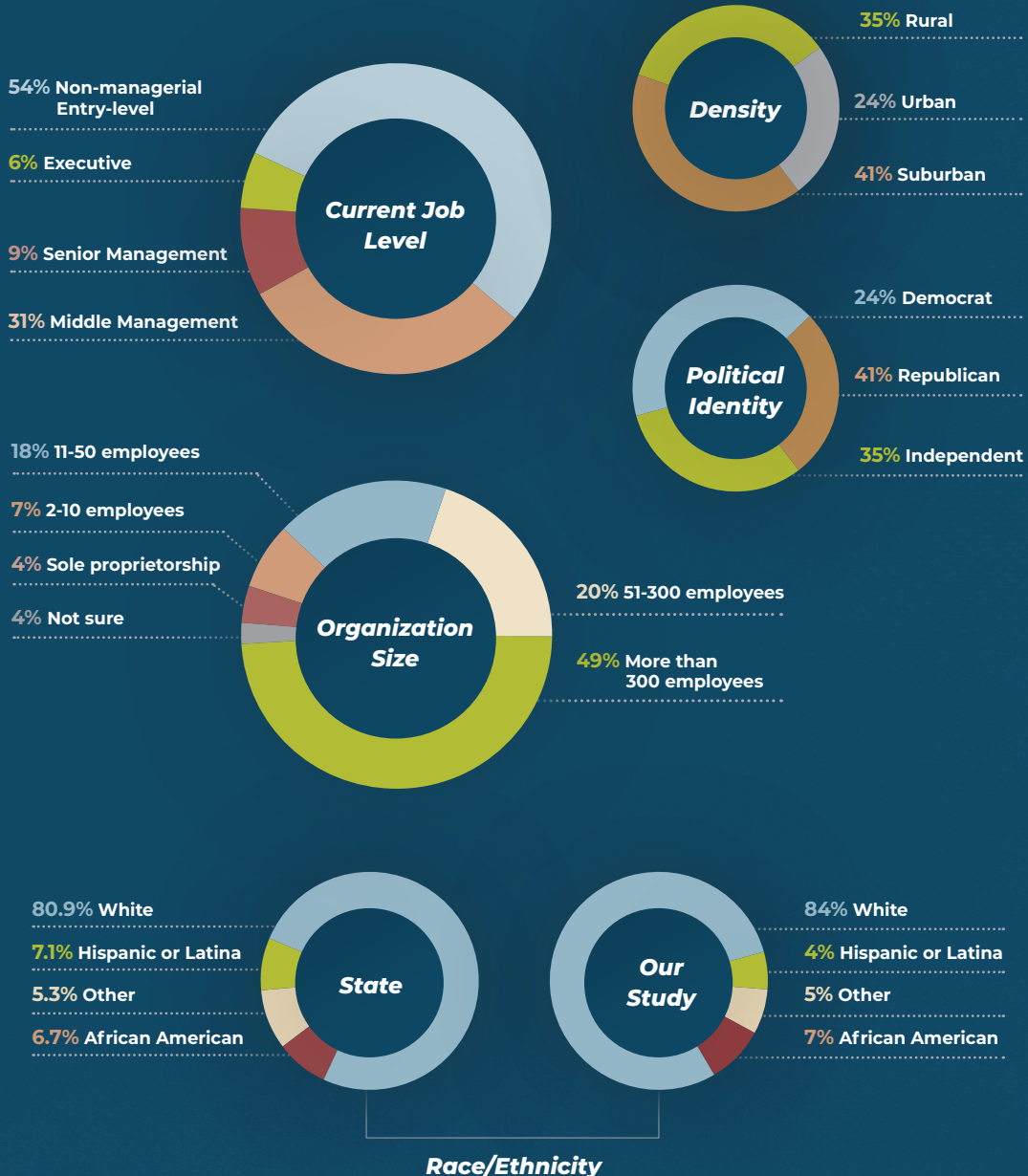
## ABOUT THE DATA

The 2021 Kane Insights report is a scientific analysis of working women in Wisconsin.

A telephone and text messaging survey was developed by Kane and conducted by Santiago Global Consulting, who collected and analyzed data from a random sample of 980 Wisconsin working women. The data collected has a margin of error of +/-3.1% with a 95% confidence interval. Essentially, what this means is in 95 out of 100 cases, the results based on our sample of 980 respondents will differ by no more than 3.1 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all women working in Wisconsin. Additionally, a series of qualitative discussions with Wisconsin working women was conducted by Kane to develop recommendations included in the report.

## Who We Surveyed

We surveyed Wisconsin women about their work lives, exploring their experiences particularly over the last year and a half of the pandemic. Our survey sample of 980 women represented the demographic makeup of the state. Some highlights from the demographics include: Nearly half (49%) of Wisconsin working women work in organizations with more than 300 employees. Only 4% work for sole proprietorships employing only themselves. More Wisconsin working women (27%) work in healthcare and social services than any other industry.



INVESTING IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS

# STRESS & MENTAL HEALTH



**61% of Wisconsin working women agree that stress impacts their productivity.**

## STRESS IN WISCONSIN

**Women who are experiencing some, very or extreme levels of stress recently**







## ***As Wisconsin businesses negotiate a new normal, they have an opportunity to build better, less stressful workplaces.***

It's no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated stress and mental health challenges for Wisconsin's working women. In the midst of these challenges, employee well-being must take greater priority for Wisconsin business leaders. There's work to be done. Currently, **one in four Wisconsin working women does not think that their employer cares about their mental health.** And 20% disagree that their employer's policies support mental health. These challenges are coupled with the disproportionate degree to which workplace stress impacts women harder than men. Developing and communicating a wellness plan is now more important than ever.

### **SIX WAYS TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK**

#### **Regularly Conduct Employee Satisfaction Surveys:**

These surveys provide employers with a wealth of valuable data and insights, including on stress and satisfaction. Conducting surveys regularly can help employers establish a baseline of employee satisfaction and identify and manage trends that emerge.

#### **Engage Employees at all Levels in Your Culture:**

Data shows that when employees feel connected to their workplace both the employer and employee benefit, including reduced stress levels, improved job satisfaction, job retention, productivity and profitability. Give entry-level employees opportunities to contribute ideas, take ownership of special projects and speak with senior-level team members. When employers shift to organization-level approaches for reducing stress at work they foster employee well-being and improve business performance.

#### **Make Positive Recognition Part of Your Culture:**

Make positive recognition of staff an expectation of all managers. Build this into their performance metrics based on how often they provide positive feedback to their employees. Incorporate ways for employees to give "kudos" to one another in meetings or through recognition programs. Survey employees to find out how often they feel they're getting positive recognition.

#### **Offer Benefits that Alleviate Stress:**

Offer workshops in stress management, mindfulness and mental well-being. Provide an employee assistance program that helps employees gain access to mental health services. Check in with employees to assess their current levels of stress and provide therapy sessions for those who may be showing signs of burnout.

#### **Communicate How To Access Mental Health Resources:**

Organizations are quick to promote "wellness" programs - like free chair massages and yoga - but are less likely to offer guidance on how to find clinical support for those who are struggling. Review your benefits package and educate employees about how they can access available mental health resources. Consider adding a recurring "did you know" section of your internal newsletter or agenda item during standing meetings that highlights these offerings and encourage your staff to take advantage of these important services.

#### **Ensure Employees Take Time for Self Care:**

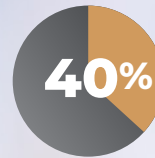
At the beginning of each year, begin encouraging employees to plan to take their PTO. Encourage employees to block time for clarity breaks or mindfulness exercises and offer coaching on how to balance productivity expectations with mental health to avoid burnout.

WISCONSIN

# WORKING MOTHERS

*“We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back.”*

MALALA YOUSAFZAI



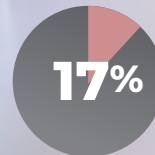
**40%**  
*Wisconsin working women with two children under 18.*



**60%**  
*Hispanic/Latina working women with children under 18.*



**50%**  
*African American working women with children under 18.*



**17%**  
*LGBTQ working women with children under 18.*

## LIMITED BENEFITS

***Only half of Wisconsin working women have jobs that offer flexible hours or work from home options. And less than half (46%) have jobs that offer paid family leave.***

**Wisconsin mothers are almost three times more likely to report responsibilities at home to be impacting their ability to thrive at work than Wisconsin women without children (17% vs 6%).**

**54% of Wisconsin mothers are experiencing some level of difficulty balancing work and home responsibilities, compared to just 36% of Wisconsin women without children.**

**Wisconsin working mothers are experiencing 12% more stress recently than Wisconsin women without children.**

There's no doubt that parenting creates an additional layer of responsibility for working mothers and fathers. Working mothers accounted for nearly one-third of working women in the United States in 2020, making moms a vital part of the workforce. And that's not all. In 2019, McKinsey found working mothers had greater interest in being promoted and becoming managers and top executives than women without children. However, the pandemic changed how working mothers feel about their careers.

In Wisconsin, working mothers are more than twice as likely to cite personal or family reasons as the primary reason they'd consider quitting their job and they are almost three times more likely than those without children to report responsibilities at home to be the biggest problem impacting their ability to thrive at work.

## FOUR INNOVATIONS TO SUPPORT WORKING MOTHERS

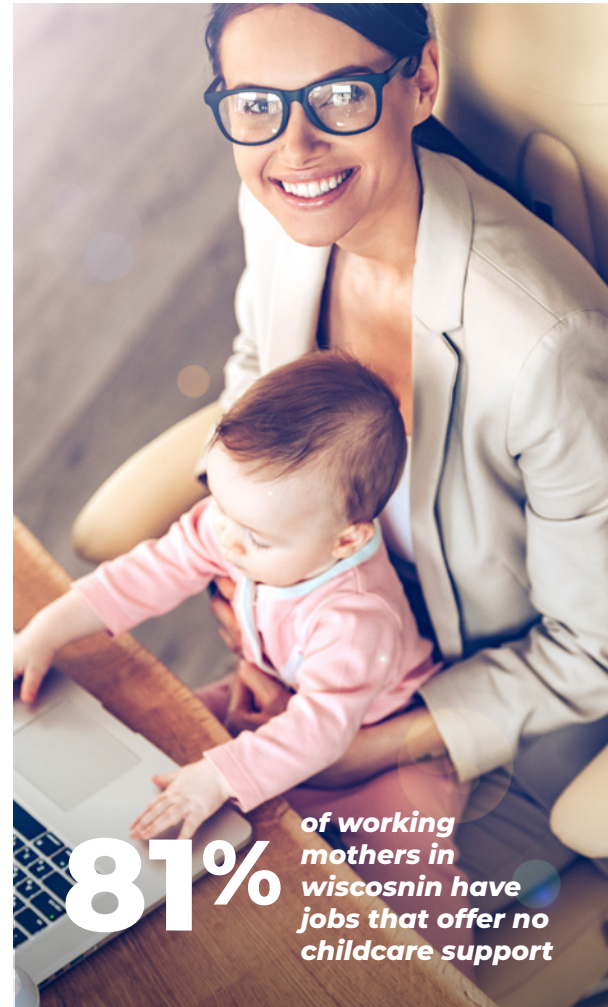
Below are four ways in which Wisconsin employers can develop integrated, family-friendly packages that respond to the needs of working mothers, especially in the COVID-19 era:

**Modernize Policies:** In addition to development of policies that recognize the responsibilities required of mothers, employers should consider making policies more gender-neutral to support the reality that parenthood responsibilities fall on all genders and family structures include all sexual orientations. Consider swapping outdated maternity leave policies for "parental leave" policies, for example.

**Adjust Work Hours and Schedules:** Consider setting "no meeting" hours early in the day and late-afternoons to accommodate parental responsibilities. Offer flexible hours including "school day shifts" to account for school drop-off and pick-up responsibilities, work from home options and paid family leave to help mothers stay in the workforce. Allow parents to adjust schedules around medical appointments.

**Embrace and Support Parenthood:** Create a parent-employee resource group run by parents in your organization to share ideas and offer support. Offer educational opportunities to truly understand benefits so parents can make informed choices about benefits.

**Focus on Childcare Support:** Employees are less likely to leave jobs when their children are settled in supportive care. Develop a list of additional resources available in the community, outside of work, to help with child rearing. Or, tackle the problem head on by offering on-site childcare or stipends at a sliding scale. For a comprehensive resource, see the International Finance Corporation's "Tackling Childcare: A Guide for Employer-Supported Childcare."



**81%** of working mothers in wisconsin have jobs that offer no childcare support

Childcare support is defined as "access to viable childcare options that are aligned with their needs, values, income status and work hours."

Nationwide, lack of childcare is one of the top five challenges of working women. Wisconsin mothers face a difficult reality—lack of employer support has led women to reduce hours or leave the workforce altogether.

When women are forced to choose between family and work, our economy suffers both statewide and nationally. Data shows that the United States could have a 5% higher GDP if women participated in the workforce at the same rate as men. Wisconsin businesses that develop childcare support policies set themselves apart. These "sticky" benefits are a win-win for both employees and employers.

***One in five African American women who left their jobs did so because their values didn't align with the organization's mission.***

### **FOSTERING A BUSINESS CULTURE THAT SUPPORTS WOMEN OF COLOR**

**Provide Formal Mentoring:** Studies show that women of color find formal mentoring to be extremely valuable to their careers. What's more, formal mentoring programs have shown to increase employee engagement and retention overall. Identify other women of color leaders in your organization to serve as mentors and provide mentor training to create consistency in your program.

**Create an Employee Resource Group With Leadership Involvement:** Create an employee resource group where women of color feel safe speaking honestly. Ask them to share feedback with your company's leadership team and have leaders report back to the group about how the feedback is being used. Practice regular, active listening sessions to capture ideas and concerns as they arise.

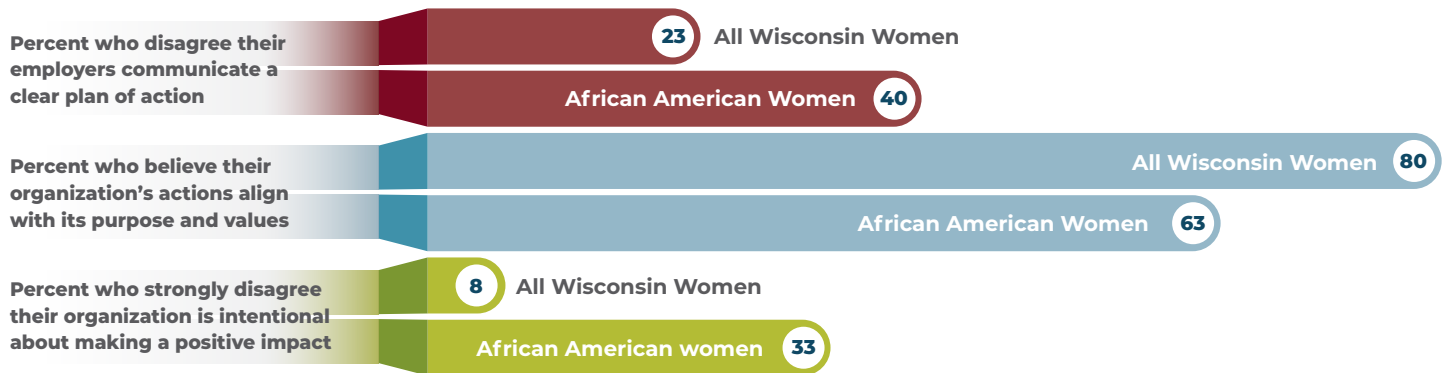
**Combat Implicit Bias:** No business wants to admit that it's fostering a culture of bias that's negatively affecting the lives of its employees. Reluctance to explore such challenging topics, however, allows discrimination to fly under the radar. Track race and gender as it relates to recruitment, hiring and promoting practices to make sure implicit bias isn't clouding your company's decision-making process.

**Storydoing vs. Storytelling:** You may talk about the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion, but your employees and job candidates may not see it in action. Offer programs and policies that align your actions with your words and highlight successes and outcomes. Top leaders must be visibly and consistently involved in your DEI initiatives.

# WOMEN OF **COLOR**



**29% of Hispanic/Latina women in Wisconsin left their jobs because they felt undervalued in their current role, six times higher than any other racial or ethnic group.**



Numerous studies have confirmed that women of color are more likely to face distinct challenges in the workforce, compared with their white female and male colleagues. These include more systemic barriers and harassment, less support from managers and mentors and exclusion from advancement. It's clear that Wisconsin business leaders' efforts to improve women's experiences in the workforce also must take into account which women are most likely to benefit from such initiatives.

Women of color working in Wisconsin also face additional demands at home. Compared with Wisconsin working women overall, more women of color are raising children under 18 years (50% of African American and nearly 60% of Hispanic and Latina working women vs. 33% of White women). It comes as no surprise, then, that 37% of Wisconsin's African American women find it extremely or very difficult to balance work and home duties, more than double the average. Flexible working — that is, the ability to control when and where one works — plays a significant role in helping women successfully negotiate the competing needs of family and career. Yet, when asked about the biggest problem affecting their ability to thrive at work, African American women cite lack of flexibility almost three times more than the average.

Evidence suggests that Wisconsin employers may not be aware of the extent of the problem. African American women in Wisconsin are twice as likely to feel discomfort sharing their challenges with their teammates or managers. When companies lack safe spaces for employees to voice concerns, the burdens faced by women of color may go unreported. This can lead to workers who feel isolated and hopeless.

## LEAVING THE WORKFORCE

While the percentage of Wisconsin working women who have left the workforce in the past year and a half is low (5% overall), African American women are more than twice as likely (13%) to have left Wisconsin's workforce. One third of these women left to go back to school or change career paths.

**As Wisconsin's economy begins to recover from the pandemic, the choices businesses make today will have long-term consequences for the state's ability to attract and retain top, diverse talent.**

# GEN Z

## GENERATIONAL SPOTLIGHT 18-29 YEAR OLDS



### UNDERSTANDING THEIR DIFFERENT WORLDVIEW

Challenges facing 18-29 year olds entering the workforce will require unique solutions from employers in order to train and retain younger workers. Nearly half (46%) of 18 to 29-year-old women working in Wisconsin do not feel their employers value women as equally as men. That's 20% higher than what women ages 30+ felt. Overall, Wisconsin women ages 18-29 more widely differed in their views related to employer communications and values; their reasons for considering leaving their workplace; and frequency of considering quitting their jobs than any other intersectional group. For example: Democrat and Republican women in Wisconsin had more responses in common than 18 to 29-year-olds and 30+-year-olds.

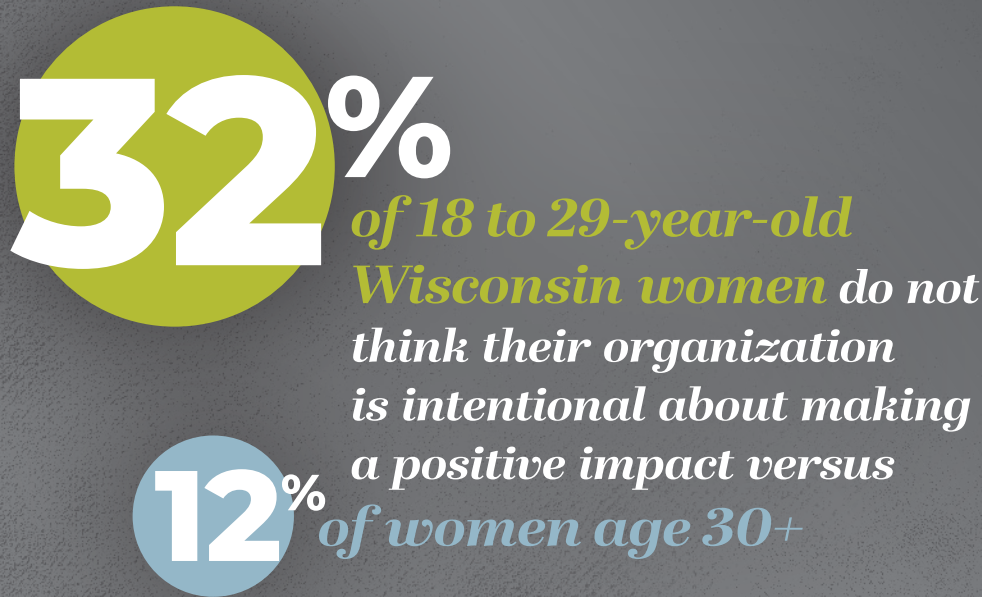
***Gen Z women are three times more likely to identify as bisexual and two times more likely to identify as gay or lesbian than any other age group.***

### HARNESSING THEIR POTENTIAL

**18-29 year olds entering the workforce want to work for employers who are responsive to their needs and values.**

Wisconsin business leaders who want their Gen Z employees to stay with their organizations and flourish should focus on their key motivators, which include working for companies who care about more than just the bottom line. Overall, 49% of Gen Z made choices about the kinds of work they would do or organizations they would work for based on personal ethics. That's on point with global trends showing that far more Gen Z employees cite a desire for an employer that's a better fit with their values (59%) than they do higher pay or career advancement (31%).

Building Gen Z employee loyalty and advocacy demands that Wisconsin businesses start thinking and acting differently. Statewide, 18 to 29-year-old Wisconsin women are twice as likely than the average Wisconsin woman to somewhat disagree that they work for a purpose-driven organization. Additionally, Gen Z women report they "often" think about quitting their jobs, nearly twice the average of all age groups.



### ENGAGEMENT

Wisconsin's GenZ women are twice as likely than the average to strongly disagree that their supervisor keeps them informed.

### MENTAL HEALTH

Wisconsin's GenZ women are twice as likely than the average to strongly disagree that their employer cares about their mental health

### BENEFITS

Wisconsin's Gen Z women are three times more likely than the average to have left the workforce because they did not like the hours or compensation. Recent reports note that the majority of young workers would like the opportunity to work from home and/or have flexitime.

## 5 WAYS TO ACTIVATE GEN Z EMPLOYEES

**Involve and Engage Them in Planning:** Practice bottom-up strategic planning that incorporates Gen Z ideas for making a positive social impact. Create consistent feedback loops to keep them informed and get their opinions on workplace developments. Use these check-ins to establish personal connections and to hold your organization accountable for their work-life balance and mental health.

**Ensure Your Brand Is Purpose-Driven:** Reevaluate your brand through the lens of corporate citizenship and sustainability. Perform an assessment of the issues most material or important to your employees. Consider issues that Gen Z cares about, such as the environment and social equity, and provide opportunities for them to get involved. Ensure these programs are authentic and inclusive, with standards for accountability in order to build trust and track progress.

**Provide a Long-Term View That Includes Them:** Today's young employees are hungry for change and may start looking for change in their career months after they've started. Make sure paths for advancement are communicated early, set clear expectations about how to achieve that next step and make sure support is in place to help them clearly track their progress. Overall, be transparent with young employees about how they can get promoted and, if possible, provide a road map supported by mentoring.

**Create New Ways to Network:** While Gen Z women value a flexible schedule and embrace working remotely, they also recognize that this has made networking more challenging. Facilitate networking with senior-level employees or professionals from other organizations. Start a "coffee connections" event, pairing up professionals to chat over coffee, which can be done in person or remotely. Consider organizing a reverse mentoring program — where an entry-level employee mentors a senior-level employee about what they've learned or something they are passionate about.

**Consider Nontraditional Work Schedules:** GenZ prioritizes time away from work more than any other generation. In addition to remote work options, consider flexible schedules that also enable them to work full weeks, like four 10-hour days. Just be sure to set clear objectives and check-in times.

*“The pandemic sapped younger generations’ optimism but not their drive to compel real change in society and business.”*

# CONNECTING TO **PURPOSE**



**The events of the past year in Wisconsin and around the world have given us a lot to think about. Our lives, communities and workplaces have radically changed. The global pandemic, devastating climate catastrophes, unprecedented social upheaval, rise of misinformation and huge economic challenges have shown that business success is linked with social and environmental developments, not separate from them.**

In fact, the most successful businesses emerging today recognize that profit is connected to purpose. In a letter BlackRock CEO Larry Fink wrote to the CEOs of

companies his firm invests in, he stated, “Companies that fulfill their purpose and responsibilities to stakeholders reap rewards over the long-term. Companies that ignore them stumble and fail. This dynamic is becoming increasingly apparent as the public holds companies to more exacting standards.”

The Kane Insights report found the vast majority of Wisconsin’s working women (88%) believe it’s important to work for a company that’s intentional about making a positive impact in the world and many (78%) feel their organization is actively pursuing this goal. However, critical segments of working women in Wisconsin don’t feel this connection.

***“Purpose is not a mere tagline or marketing campaign; it is a company’s fundamental reason for being – what it does every day to create value for its stakeholders.”***

LARRY FINK, PROFITS & PURPOSE



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**Only 63% of African American women believe that their organization's actions align with its purpose and values (compared with 80% across all races).**

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Today, consumers, talent and investors are increasingly choosing companies that lead and operate from a place of purpose. The younger generations in our workforce today have high expectations for business and government.

The Deloitte Global 2021 Millennial and Gen Z Survey noted that these generations "...are channeling their energies toward meaningful action—increasing political involvement, aligning spending and career choices with their values and driving change on societal issues that matter most to them. In turn, they expect institutions like businesses and governments to do more to help bring about their vision of a better future."

### **Trust Rules**

According to Edelman, "Brands have entered a brave new era, where trust rules. People expect businesses to address and solve their personal as well as society's challenges. The heightened expectations of business bring CEOs new demands to focus on societal engagement with the same rigor, thoughtfulness and energy used to deliver on profits."

### **Stakeholder Activism Is on the Rise**

Investors are paying attention, too. The global pandemic may prove to be a major turning point for sustainable investing as the pandemic alters society's values. According to Silvia Wegmann, Head of Sustainable Investment Solutions at Julius Bär, "Sustainable companies have proven to have more innovative solutions to meet today's sustainability challenges and thereby support the transformation of entire sectors."

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**18 to 29-year-old women are twice as likely than the average to strongly disagree that they work for a purpose-driven organization.**

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### **Consumer Attitudes Are Changing**

The COVID-19 Barometer study by Kantar found up to 27% of people aged 18 to 34 they surveyed feel brands should play an active role in making the world a better place. Consumers across all age groups are spending more on sustainable products and services. A recent analysis by BCG found globally 46% of consumers are willing to forgo preferred brand names in favor of eco-friendly products.

### **Talent Decides**

Another trend companies are paying attention to is an increased interest by top talent, especially Millennials and Gen Z, to work for employers and in sectors that have sustainable business models.

### **Resilience**

Research by Deloitte found that companies that are purpose-led are more resilient to disruption and able to turn risks into opportunities. A study published by Fortuna Advisors in the *Journal of Applied Corporate Finance* finds that "High Purpose" companies delivered significant out-performance across a broad range of financial, valuation and value creation metrics; and that the performance gap expanded materially as consumers and investors flocked to purpose-led companies during the COVID-19 crisis. McKinsey's latest Global Survey on the corporate board, found boards of companies that adapted most to the pandemic are increasingly focusing on external trends, including corporate purpose.

## **WHERE DO YOU START?**

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### **Focus On What Matters for Your Business and Your Stakeholders**

Dig deep and assess your company's most important material issues. Materiality creates a foundation for an approach that is embedded in a company's business strategy and authentically addresses the issues material to your internal and external stakeholders.

### **Include Purpose in Your Market Research**

While assessing your market position, review the purpose statements and corporate citizenship approaches of your direct peer group and the sector as a whole. This benchmarking exercise provides inspiration, helps identify the areas of greatest impact and serves as a useful baseline from which to set targets and craft the company's brand strategy.

### **Analyze the Insights**

Review the results collectively, taking a look at the rankings for each indicator per key stakeholder group (e.g. internal vs external stakeholders, management vs. employee) or other factors, such as value creation for the company and risk.

### **Draw From International Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Standards**

Companies can use ESG frameworks as a guide for identifying the issues that are mission-critical for their industry. There are several frameworks out there, including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the Sustainable Accounting Standards Board (SASB), the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) as well as the UN with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is no need to start from scratch or to reinvent the wheel.

### **Social Listening**

The fast-changing and dynamic voices of the public and the media can sway opinion and give rise to new social movements, almost overnight. In an increasingly digital age, companies can't only rely on regulatory reporting criteria and predefined lists to determine the material issues that matter most. Activate social listening to assess diverse voices across a range of channels.



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DISPARITIES ACROSS

# WISCONSIN INDUSTRIES FOR WORKING WOMEN

**Our survey reveals that Wisconsin women experience starkly different realities depending on their industry.**

Case in point: women in the state's finance, tech and IT industries are three times more likely to receive benefits like paid family leave, flexible hours and work from home options than those working in retail, food service and hospitality.

**Wisconsin's female educators stand out as a group deeply invested in their work's mission — 94%, more than any other profession, believe it's important to work somewhere that is making a positive impact.**

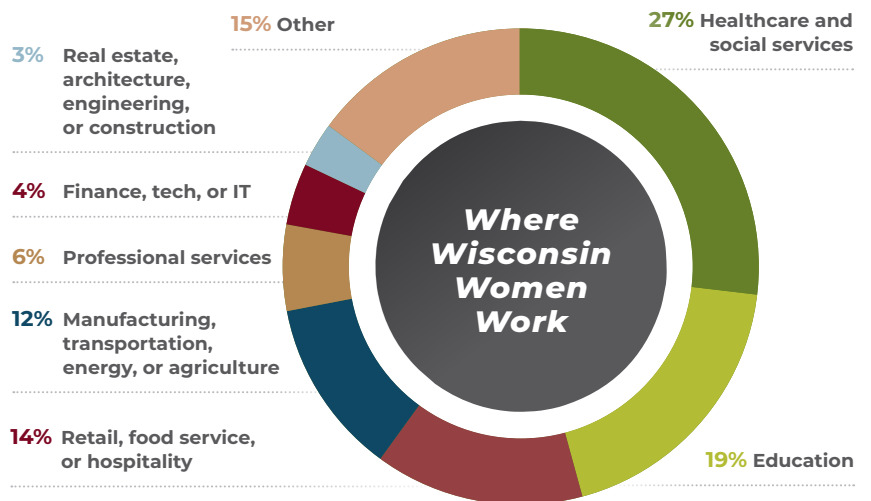
Stressful working conditions, however, may strain their dedication. 30% of Wisconsin's female educators (double the average) find balancing home and work duties very or extremely difficult. Not surprisingly, educators are also twice as likely to list flex time or work from home as the most important improvement their employer could offer.



**Compared with all other sectors, Wisconsin's manufacturing, transportation, energy and agriculture industries (MTEA) have the most ground to make up.**

Maintaining clear and open lines of communication seems to be a major issue between employers and their female employees. One third of MTEA women in Wisconsin disagree that their supervisor keeps them informed. These workers are twice as likely than the average to somewhat disagree that their employer communicates a clear plan of action. 35% have not received feedback in the last three months (vs. 20% on average across all industries) and 32% have not been recognized for good work in the last month (vs. 19% on average across all industries).

What's more, 42% of MTEA women disagree that their employer cares about their mental health (vs. 23% across all industries).





## NEXT STEPS FOR **CHANGE**

**Wisconsin has a proud history of promoting rights and equality for women. 100 years ago, in 1921, Wisconsin became the first state in the nation to pass an equal rights bill promising that “women shall have the same rights and privileges under the law as men.” Wisconsin was also the first state in the nation to ratify the 19th Amendment, providing voting rights to women.**

While the pandemic has clawed back progress made on expanding women's participation in the workforce, it has also provided a critical window for employers to listen, learn and change.

» The International Labor Organization found that without action by business and governments, the employment inequalities between women and men exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic will persist in the near future. A 2021 policy brief from the International Labor Organization found that globally there would be 13 million fewer women in employment in 2021 compared to 2019, while men's employment will have recovered to 2019 levels.

« The National Women's Law Center notes that without significant action, such as additional employer support and training programs, there is a real danger that female labor force participation could face its steepest sustained decline since World War II. Female workforce participation has already dropped to 57%—the lowest level since 1988. Without the increasing participation of women in the workforce, household income growth of the middle class would have remained largely stagnant since the late 1970's.

***The full participation of women in labor forces would add percentage points to most national growth rates— double digits in many cases. This is why the UN calls for governments and businesses alike to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.***



## Actions Employers Can Take

Through our research, we have learned that Wisconsin's working women have clear ideas about the challenges they face with work today and what employers can do to retain and recruit female employees. In addition to the recommendations in each section of the report, there are global practices employers should consider.

### Leaders Must Be Role Models.

The working women in our study agreed that it's important for leaders to communicate a clear call to action. In our qualitative discussions, working women shared that these messages must be role modeled by leaders. For employees to trust change and see it as authentic, leaders have to walk their talk and communicate regularly and clearly with their employees at all levels.

### Consider Reverse Mentoring.

Reverse mentoring can build greater equality in the workplace by shifting power to individuals who bring unique insights. The culture born from spaces dominated and managed by white men permeates the business world. As a result, women and diverse individuals struggle to feel like they belong. Reverse mentoring can create significant learning opportunities and build greater connection and empowerment for employees. Include top leaders in your company.

### Communicate Consistently and with Transparency and Authenticity.

The COVID-19 crisis challenged many leaders to think differently about how they communicate with employees. Companies that rose to the occasion with transparent and authentic communication built loyalty with their employees and customers. Wisconsin's working women want consistent communication from their employers. Survey employees at your organization to find out how they feel about employee communication today, ask what they want to hear from you and how they want to receive information. Develop a program that reflects what you have learned.

### Offer Enhanced Employee Services for All Employees.

Remember working women, and especially working mothers, juggle a tremendous amount in addition to their jobs. Identify concierge services in your community like dry-cleaning, meal services, car washes, oil changes, etc. and make them available to your employees.

### Provide a Roadmap for Promotion and Include Pay Transparency.

One in three Wisconsin working women cite better pay as one of the most important improvements employers can make. Women in our working groups added to this, sharing the importance of transparency around promotion and pay. Hold quarterly conversations with direct reports, discuss career progression opportunities and be transparent about how women can grow in their careers at your organization. Make pay equality and transparency a priority. The U.S. Department of Labor offers pay transparency resources.

### Assess Your Readiness for Change.

Building a work environment that is inclusive and recognizes the diverse needs of female employees requires more than a new program or two. From the top down, companies and their leaders have to be ready for change. Conduct an assessment of your readiness for change and take intentional steps to help you implement new initiatives that are sustainable and produce measurable outcomes.

CONCLUSION

*“When more women enter the workforce, everyone benefits.”*

THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM



*The United Nations recognizes women’s and girls’ empowerment as essential to expand economic growth and promote social development.*

*Today, Wisconsin employers have the opportunity to lead the way with **a commitment to equality for women in the workforce** and sustainable efforts that make this commitment real.*

**CONTACT US**

Learn how you can build a workplace culture that is aligned with what Wisconsin women want.

Contact Kane Communications Group at **Insights@KaneCommGroup.com** or **(414) 635-7000** and visit **KaneInsights.com**.

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## ABOUT KANE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

Kane is a purpose-driven branding, marketing and public relations agency that builds, activates and protects reputations for organizations around the world. We envision a future in which businesses take responsibility for their place in the world, and we work with brands who want to drive impact – in their business, their industry and their communities.

Founded in 2013 by award-winning journalist, Kimberly Kane, the company has offices in Milwaukee, Racine and Geneva, Switzerland. Kane focuses on driving progress through research-based planning; brand development; marketing; content development; video production; internal communications; public, media and community relations; and more.

Kane is a woman-owned, WOSBE-, WBENC-, DBE- and SBE-certified firm and a participant in the United Nations Global Compact. In 2021, Kane was recognized by Inc. Magazine as one of the fastest-growing private companies in America.



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