

# Representation of Women in the Hospitality Industry

A global survey by WiH Global (WiH) in partnership  
with Questex Hospitality & Hospitality Insights

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## Introduction

WiH Global (WiH) is pleased to share the findings of this landmark global survey on women and ethnic minority representation across the hospitality industry. We look forward to publishing our findings annually to provide both a baseline of where we currently stand and what needs yet to be accomplished as we drive for greater diversity and inclusion in our industry.

Thank you to Karen Friebe for leading this key initiative, in collaboration with Questex and with the support from Aradhana Khowala, Katherine Doggrell, Peggy Berg, Rekha Toora and our WiH global community.

- **Lissa Engle**, Founder & CVO, WiH Global (WiH)



## Change coming from the ground up, says diversity study

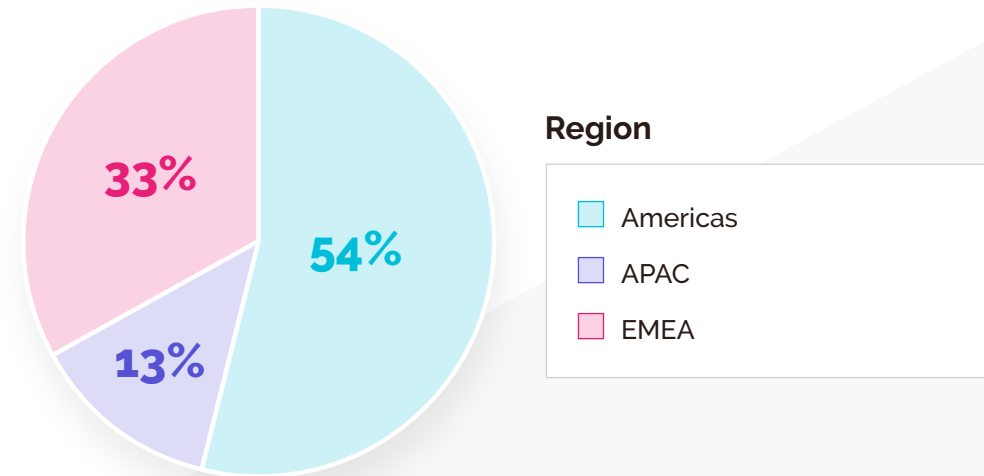
Ethnic diversity in the hospitality sector is improving from entry level up, according to a recent survey of over 400 global participants carried out by WiH, supported by Questex. However more action is needed to drive change at the leadership level.

The picture is the same when looking at the representation of women in the sector, with 66% of middle management being female, indicating potential for levelling up at board level in time.

**Peggy Berg**, Founder & President, Castell Project, says "The US hospitality industry employs more women than men and it employs Black workers at 44.6 per-cent above their 12.1 percent pro rata share of the employed US civilian labor force. This does not carry through to leadership; at the director to CEO levels 1.6 percent are Black. The odds of a woman reaching the executive leadership level in the US (CEO, partner/principal, president, C-suite) were one woman to 5.7 men at the end of 2020. At the highest levels, white men have been the majority of people selected for US public board positions every year, including years when women and Black people have made the greatest

gains. Change at these levels is slow because they are usually career capping long-term positions. However, economic drivers including the strain of responding to COVID-19 and demo-graphic drivers, such as a preponderance of Baby Boomer men in these roles, will result in significant turnover in the next few years. The challenge for the industry is to fully develop a diverse talent pool so that the best candidate for the company can emerge. The best candidate is sometimes, but not always, male."

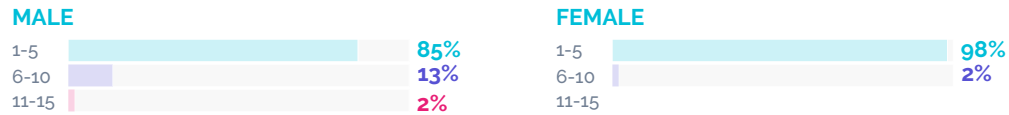
The pie chart below shows the split by region of the respondents to the survey.



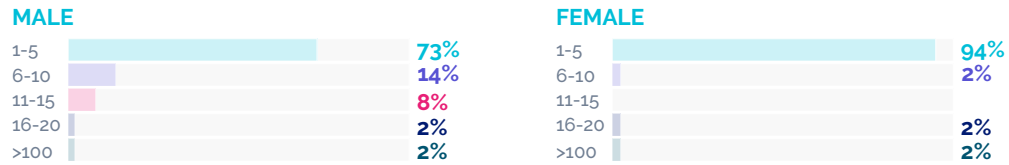
# Summaries & Pivots

The number of employees in your company at the following levels, split by gender

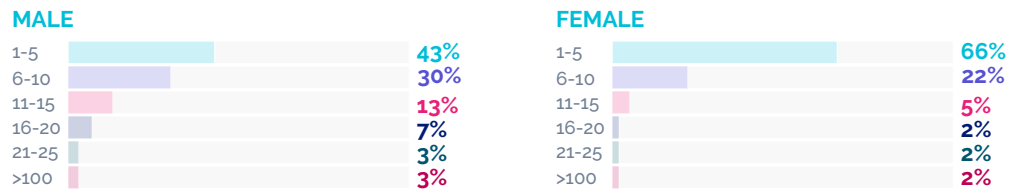
## Board



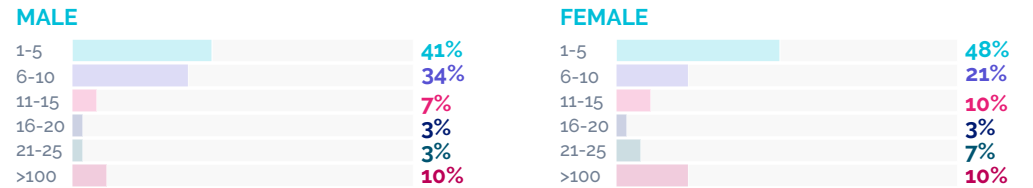
## Senior/Leadership Levels



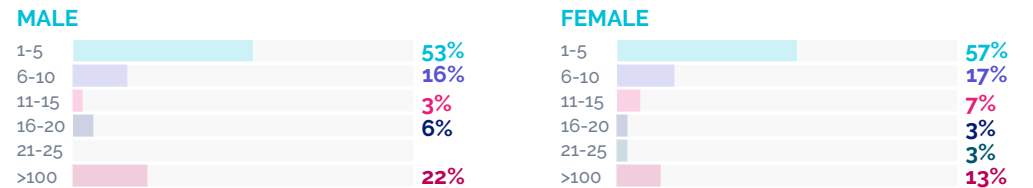
## Middle Management



## Graduate/Entry Level

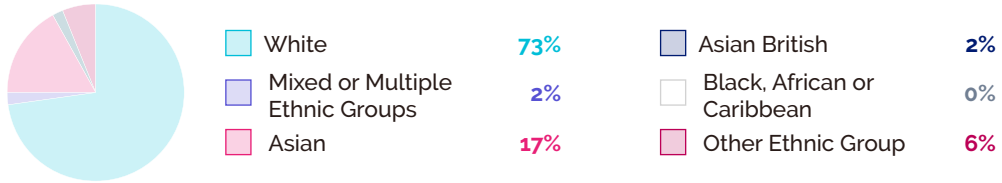


## Support Staff/Other

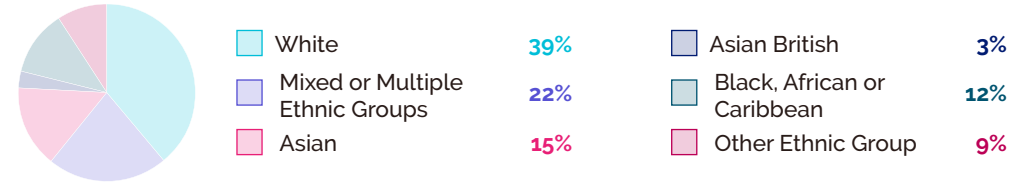


The number of male employees in your company at the following levels

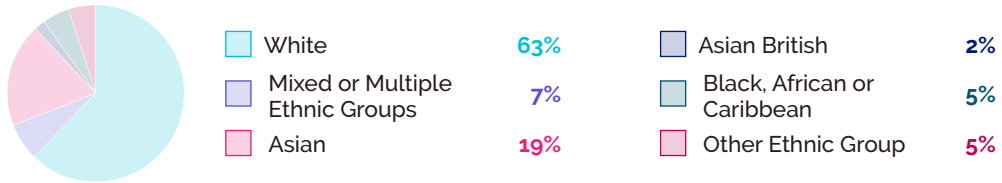
**Board**



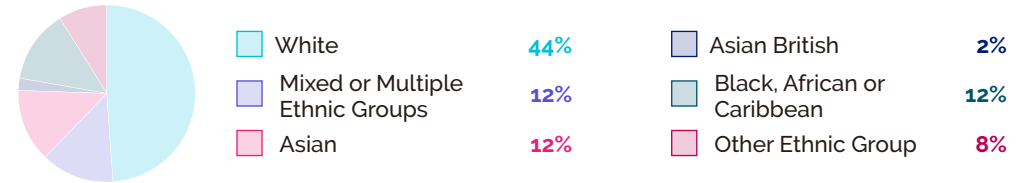
**Graduate/Entry Level**



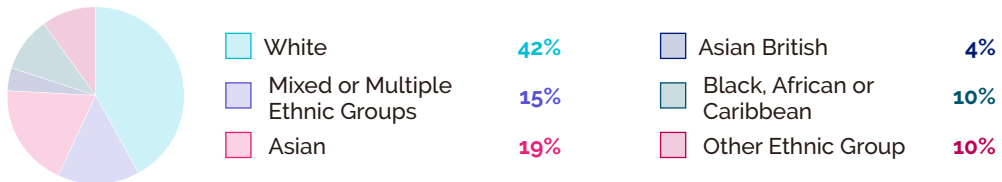
**Senior/Leadership Levels**



**Support Staff/Other**

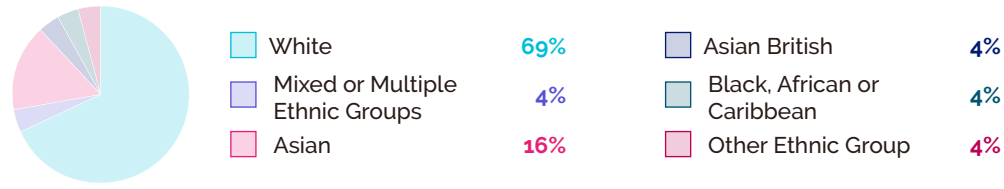


**Middle Management**

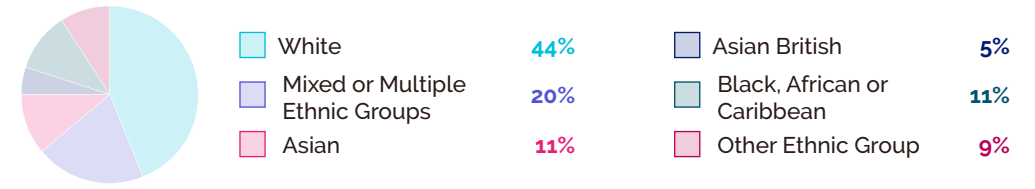


## The number of female employees in your company at the following levels

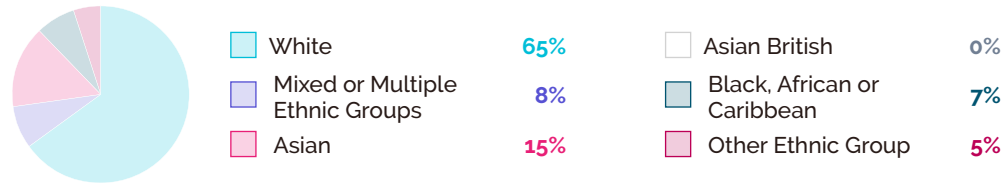
### Board



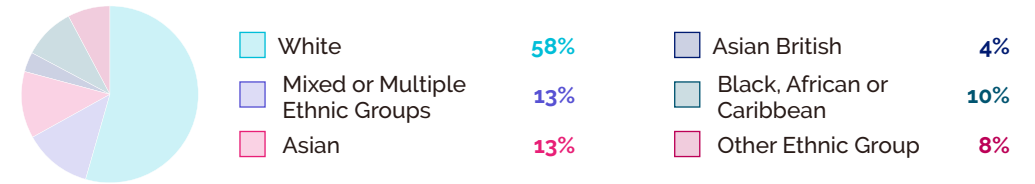
### Graduate/Entry Level



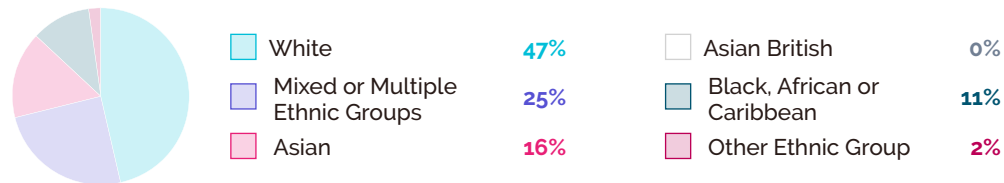
### Senior/Leadership Levels



### Support Staff/Other

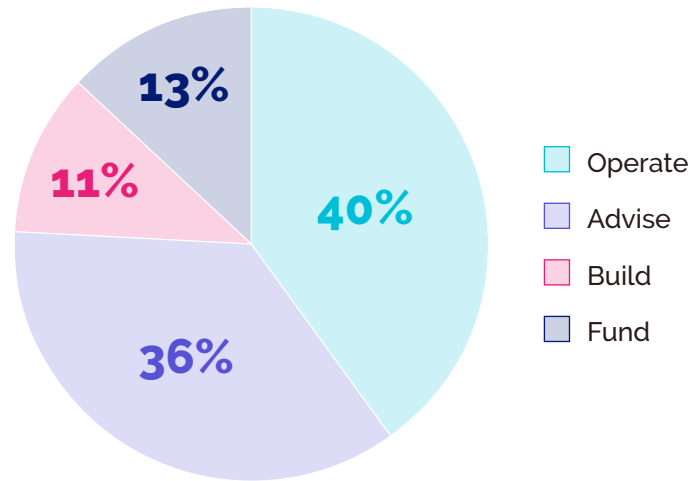


### Middle Management



## BFOA

The pie chart below shows the split by role of the respondents to the survey.



By ethnicity, 73% of respondents said that the majority of their boards were white and male, with 17% replying that they were led by Asian men, with British Asian boards at only 2% of replies. The responses were similar for senior leadership with 63% white, while in middle management this fell to 42%, lowering again to 39% at graduate level. Of female employees, 69% of companies had between one and five

white women on their boards, followed by 16% Asian women. In senior leadership, 65% were white, with Asian at 15%. As with the men, the disparity fell moving down to middle management, with 47% white - and at graduate level 44% of employees were white.

Looking at gender, the study found that 85% of companies had between one and five female employees at board level, with 94% having at least one woman at a senior level.

Respondents felt that talent development has the greatest chance of addressing gender disparity, followed by mentoring and board-level commitments.

Comments gathered from respondents showed positive intent and efforts being made to address the issues, with several companies having implemented positive discrimination policies and actively hiring from minorities. Respondents reported that the most popular and successful policies to drive inclusion and diversity at their companies relate to flexible working, with 25% of those replying having such policies in place. Diversity and inclusion policies featured at 19% of companies, third behind talent development. The importance of management training was also noted.

**Karen Friebe**, Partner, Bird & Bird, commented "It's disappointing to note how few companies have D&I policies in place - only 19% of our respondents. There is a real need for improvement here in the short term and generally more positive action is needed to accelerate and drive permanent positive change."

While there seems to be confidence that the sector is travelling in the right direction, there were concerns voiced by respondents over a lack of available talent, a common complaint in a sector struggling to attract suitable employees. Respondents did not speculate on the reasons behind it, although one was taking action, saying: "We have plenty of women, but few of non-European descent in management or higher levels. We will work on this, promoting from within."

The WiH study came as the World Travel & Tourism Council pledged to work towards women's equality and boost female representation in leadership roles.

**Gloria Guevara**, WTTC president & CEO, commented as follows: "Globally, women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic which has exacerbated the pay gap, the opportunity gap and the shocking lack of senior positions and leadership roles across

the Travel & Tourism sector.

This needs to be changed, WTTC research shows women play a vital role and represented 54% of Travel & Tourism's employment worldwide. Yet while more than half the sector is accounted for by women, all too few occupy any senior or strategic roles."

Both WiH and the WTTC's Women's Initiative recognise the importance of developing skills and creating formal sponsorship and mentorship programmes for young women in business.

In 2020 WiH launched its mentorship programme with over 60 participants and is currently rolling out its global mentorship programme to all 500 members in order to ensure senior leaders amongst the community share their skills and experience with the next generation of women leaders in the hospitality sector as a means of nurturing and developing new talent. Furthermore all mentees are also encouraged to share their knowledge and reach out to young professionals starting out in the industry through a series of outreach initiatives.

**Aradhana Khowala**, CEO & Founder, Aptamind Partners, stated "Gender diversity specifically is high on the agenda for many hotel companies



and great strides have also been made which would be very interesting to track going forward. All major hotel chains like Hilton, Marriott, IHG, Accor and many others have made bold pledges to support as well as launched internal initiatives and external partnerships to develop future female executives. However, we need not only a change in numbers but also in the associated behaviour and in corporate cultures to ensure true gender parity. It's not just a battle for bringing more girls to consider joining the sector, but even a bigger battle to bring them to leadership positions.

These timely insights from WiH are very much aligned to the findings in the Gender Diversity Report we published earlier this year where we analysed the universe of the largest publicly listed Hotel companies. See report here <https://www.aptamind.com/diversityandinclusion>.

Our biggest takeaway from the Gender study was that the number of women decreases at every subsequent level in the hotel business. So even as hiring and promotion rates to the Excom and C-Suite improve for women, women as a whole are unable to catch up as there are simply too few women to advance. Hence, the efforts really need to be focussed on building that strong pipeline of women senior leaders so

we have more candidates for the C-suite and Boards of Hotel companies."

Gender Diversity Report's data set comprised of the 15 largest hotel companies in the world, representing more than 1.2 million employees. The results of Gender Diversity Report show that women represented about 52% of all employees; however, the number drops down significantly when looking at the higher management levels. Following the goal to achieve 21% of women represented at the C level, every major hotel chain has reported to have at least one female C level executive. The report also shows that governance data/metrics in terms of independent directors were more transparent than D&I data, 'as only five companies disclose data related to gender pay gap and only two companies give any data related to representation on minorities'.

## Key Quotes by Region

Below are some of the key quotes provided by respondents to the WiH survey, collated according to the region in which those respondents are based.

### EMEA

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We have a 50/50 female/male Board split. Our founder is LGBTQ+ and we are active in supporting this community. We also have a set of 6 culture values, originally written by the whole company, and re-published this year after collaboration with the whole company.

Flexible working programme - which we have used for over 10 years, well before COVID-19- has enabled employees to join at various times in their lives (e.g. mothers with young children) and to stay with company even if they have moved to a different country / continent.

It is important to see change at all levels of the organisation, and since we are currently not diversified in terms of ethnic minority groups, I believe that is where the focus should be. But this applies, more

generally I believe, to any company.

To have tools for achieving gender balance is important but to change the culture and behaviour is the real challenge.

We employ more women than men because of their profiles being stronger than their male colleagues at the time. But having programs in place and creating awareness definitely will improve the focus on BAME, and make the efforts more consolidated towards inclusion.

In terms of promoting cultural awareness and attracting more BAME people [...] we have run workshops to educate senior leadership on the challenges facing BAME colleagues, providing a sounding board for colleagues experiencing difficulties in the workplace [...] We have received resounding support across all levels and are constantly assessing the effectiveness of various approaches.

## Americas

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Flexibility in schedules allows employees to manage their schedules around their families - which largely impacts women. The ability to execute on deliverables without the constraint of a 9-5pm position, allows for best performance while allowing for balance to the employees.

It's a start that we are finally talking about it and recognizing the need. Still a long way to go.

Our staff can choose between home and office work locations. However they are most efficient is the best.

Our team has multi-ethnic, LGTQ and almost equal female to male ratio.

As a small, inclusive company with many employees of long standing, we had not had to consider written/fixed policies around diversity.

## APAC

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Acceptance from senior leadership is critical.

By having top management acquire the ideal management philosophy, it is possible to form the soil of a flexible and fair organizational culture.

Flexibility is one of the most important characteristics among workers.

[Flexible working policies] have been recognised in improved performance and ease of doing business to incorporate family commitments.

## About WiH Global (WiH)

WiH Global (WiH), which stands for women in hospitality, is a global not-for-profit and best-in-class community. We believe that by collaborating, we can have greater impact and raise the game to create a more diverse and inclusive hospitality industry. The global community includes members cross-segment who Build, Fund, Operate and Advise ('BFOA') in hospitality. We are announcing our final members in WiH (450 women & 50 men) across Americas, EMEA and APAC and targeting representation from over 400 companies and 50 countries to ensure the global community drives for positive change with purpose and impact.

### Key pillars are mentoring, knowledge share and outreach.

#### Since April 2020 WiH has:

- Hosted dozens of panel discussions including a series on leadership, market talks, sustainability and speaker training
- Initiated a mentoring programme which is being rolled out globally to all 500 members
- Partnered with leading global hospitality conferences to promote more diverse and inclusive panels

- Organised a special week of panel discussions with WiH members for International Women's Day (IWD)
- Curated a book of stories for IWD and continue to share member stories across all platforms
- Interviewed members on Instagram to inspire the next generation starting out in the industry

We will soon announce further mentoring, knowledge share and outreach initiatives.

Bring your best self and together we will raise the game.

[wihglobal.com](http://wihglobal.com)

**#StrongerTogether**