

Women in mining  
2022: You can't  
be what you  
can't see



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# Introduction

The lack of gender diversity in mining and metals has long been a challenge for the sector, but it is receiving fresh attention from business leaders, investors and community. For a sector in the midst of transformation, increasing the participation of women in mining – and all the proven benefits it brings – is simply too big an opportunity to ignore. At EY, we are committed to supporting companies to create the gender diversity we believe is a business imperative if mining and metals companies are to build a strong, sustainable future.

This report reflects this commitment to progressing diversity in mining. In 2021, we were privileged to interview an amazing group of women in the sector to gain their perspective on key gender diversity challenges and explore potential solutions.

We would like to thank these interviewees for their candid insights and genuine passion for the sector. Despite the challenges they have faced in a male-dominated sector, there was a resounding response of “go for it” when asked what they would say to women considering a career in mining.

We hope sharing these insights will provide leaders with some food for thought on what needs to change and, critically, inspire young women to join mining for a rewarding career. The transformation of mining and metals opens up some exciting opportunities to make a difference to the sector and our world.

You can watch the interviews in full via the EY Global YouTube Women in Mining channel: <https://bit.ly/3Ef267K>.





Anita Bertisen	Women In Mining USA
Nataly Betancur	Mineros S.A.
Harpreet Dhaliwal	NexGen Energy Ltd.
Florence Drummond	Indigenous Women in Mining and Resources Australia (IWIMRA)
Nolitha Fakude	Anglo American plc and Minerals Council South Africa
Catherine Gignac	Cameco Corp
Meroonisha Kerber	Impala Platinum Holdings Limited
Tijana LaBianca	South32
Amanda Lacaze	Lynas Corporation
Michelle Lawson	WIMnet NSW
Deirdré Lingenfelder	Rio Tinto
Gabriela Maceira	Pan American Silver
Elena Mayer	Women Who Rock
Deshnee Naidoo	Vale S.A.
Beatrice Opoku-Asare	Newmont Corporation
Renata Roberts	Bloomfield Group
Fiona Robertson	Whitehaven Coal, Bellevue Gold and 29Metals
Sofia Sanchez Kramer	Anglo American plc
Andree St-Germain	Integra Resources
Angela Vasconcelos	Equinox Gold Corp.
Thando Zulu	Anglo American plc

At the time of the research, interviewees held these positions.

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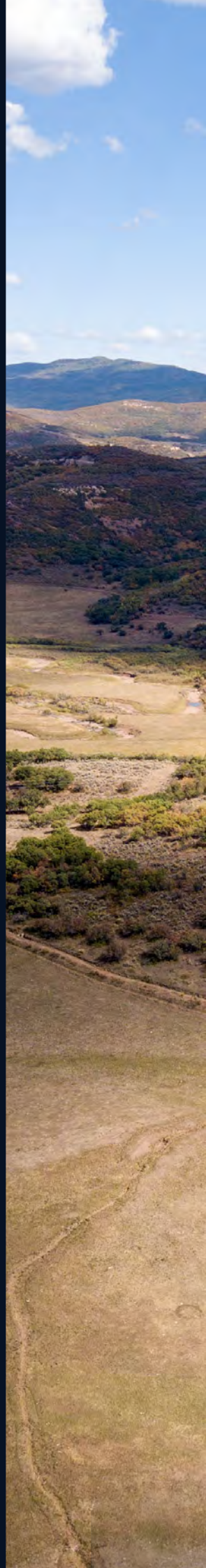
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# Executive summary

## Why is the mining sector still overlooking its greatest resource?

Inclusion of women in the mining sector has improved, but more progress is needed.

In 2022, women make up roughly 12% of the global mining and metals workforce. Work to improve the underrepresentation of women has been ongoing for decades, but progress is clearly inadequate. In the US, for example, the percentage of females in mining improved just 0.3% from 2015 to 2020, remaining at 14.3%, compared with the 47% participation rate of women in the overall US workforce.

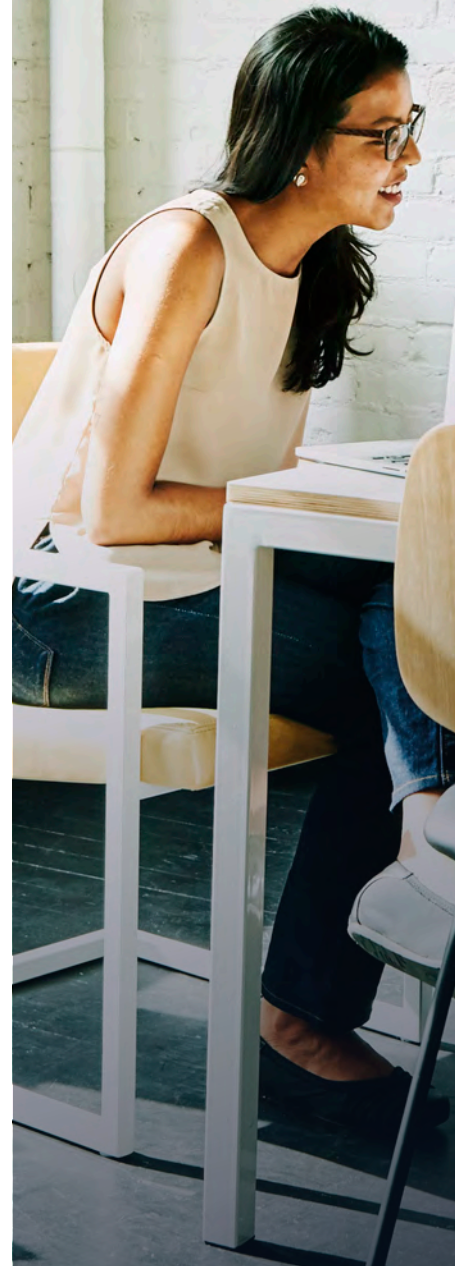
### Share of women employees, by sector 2019



World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2021, March 2021.

<sup>1</sup> "Mining firms fail to lure women," Wall Street Journal, 11 June 2021, via Factiva, accessed on 17 January 2022

Why is the mining and metals sector overlooking its greatest resource: people? As the global skills shortage intensifies, companies need to do more to attract, recruit, retain and promote more women in mining. Evidence shows that greater gender diversity brings multiple benefits, including:



- ▶ **Enhanced economic results:** Companies with women in managerial positions are more profitable than those without female leaders.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ **Better environmental performance:** Companies with gender diverse boards have better environmental performance than their peers.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ **Greater innovation:** Gender diversity is positively linked to innovation.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ **Improved safety outcomes:** Women yield better safety outcomes and are more productive than their male counterparts.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ **Strengthened community relationships:** Hiring more women can enhance a company's relationship with the community.<sup>6</sup>



# Insights from female leaders offer opportunities for change

In 2021, we spoke to 21 women working in global mining and metals companies across seven countries. Their insights into the experience of women in mining across both corporate and on-site roles form the basis of this report and offer food for thought on the challenges – and opportunities – in improving gender diversity.

## Attracting and recruiting women to the mining sector

The women we spoke to discussed an early passion for science and maths. Encouraging and enabling girls to study Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) can help build a career path to mining, but the sector will need to work hard to compete for people with these skills. Role models can help talented women envision and aspire to a future in the sector. Shifting perceptions of mining, from one that is “dirty” and old-fashioned to one that is helping build a digital, clean energy future, can help attract the next generation of young women. Ultimately, mining companies need to make diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) a strategic business issue, leading to changes in behavior, recruitment practices and remuneration.

## Tackling the biggest challenges for women in mining

Women in corporate headquarters, and those on-site, report very different experiences of mining careers. Both face challenges that miners will need to address, including major infrastructure gaps on remote sites and serious safety concerns, if they are to retain promising women. More flexible working arrangements and creative approaches to profiling and promotion can accelerate the closure of the gender gap.

## Retaining and promoting female leaders

Growing the female talent pipeline requires miners to think beyond technical skills when promoting leaders, and take action to address unconscious bias and build equitable, visible career paths that women can aspire to. Mentoring and sponsorship, as well as industry associations, can offer the networks and advocacy that encourage women to take bolder career risks.

## Building a better future for women in mining – quotas or targets?

All the women interviewed agreed the pace of change around mining's gender diversity is too slow. But they were divided as to the role of quotas in fast-tracking progress. Some supported their wider adoption, pointing to their positive impact on gender diversity in the South African mining sector. Others believed data-backed targets would be more effective in driving measurable change.

We do not claim that this report contains all the solutions to the challenges of improving gender diversity in mining, but we hope it adds to an important discussion. For a sector in transformation, increasing the participation of women – and all the proven benefits associated with this – is simply too big an opportunity to ignore. Gender diversity should be a business imperative for mining and metals companies as they build a strong, sustainable future.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.piee.com/research/piee-charts/companies-women-leadership-positions-are-more-profitable-those-without>

<sup>3</sup> “Women as Levers of Change,” March 2020, FP Analytics

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_701767/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_701767/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>5</sup> <https://commdev.org/publications/the-business-case-for-gender-responsive-climate-smart-mining/>

<sup>6</sup> “Investing in Women's Employment: Good for Business, Good for Development,” 2013, International Finance Corporation – The World Bank

# 01

## Attracting and recruiting women to the mining sector





## Encouraging girls to study STEM is a critical first step

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I had a deep passion for mathematics and science and I didn't want to do some of the more traditional roles back then. So I was looking for sectors where I could still use my mathematics and science ability.

Deshnee Naidoo

Our first question to the women we interviewed was: “What attracted you to the mining sector?” Interestingly, few said they knew much about mining or had any aspirations to work there – but they did have a deep interest in sciences. Catherine Gignac says: “I've always been interested in science, and I found that geology was an all-encompassing science. That attracted me from geology into the mining industry and, in particular, into hard rock geology and hard rock mining.”

Our interviews highlight that attracting more women to mining starts with first encouraging and enabling more girls to study STEM. A Microsoft study showed various reasons why girls are less interested in STEM studies, ranging from peer pressure to a lack of role models and support from parents and teachers, to a general misperception of what STEM careers look like in the real world.<sup>7</sup> The study suggested that engaging girls requires a range of strategies, including developing a more relatable curriculum, increasing the number of mentors or supporters (including parents) and creating inclusive classrooms that value female opinions.

Of course, in some communities where miners operate, girls have no access to technology or the internet, making it difficult to pursue study or consider a STEM career. Mining organizations could consider how to fill this need, in collaboration with governments and others within the private sector. Doing so could also promote mining as a career while girls are still in primary school, helping to improve the sector's brand and remove its stigma as male-dominated. Internships, bursaries and scholarships can also help boost girls' education and interest in STEM and mining.

<sup>7</sup> <https://news.microsoft.com/features/why-do-girls-lose-interest-in-stem-new-research-has-some-answers-and-what-we-can-do-about-it/>



# Role models help girls envision a future in mining

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Women don't feel that they can see themselves at senior levels because they physically cannot see someone like them in those roles. I think this is changing for sure, and you know at South32 we have a number of awesome female role models in our senior leadership ranks, as do most of the other big miners now.

Tijana LaBianca

It's often said that "you can't be what you can't see." Increasing the number of female role models can increase awareness among young girls of mining roles and career pathways. Thando Zulu explains: "Representation is so important – when you see someone who looks like you and sounds like you or has the same background as you achieving certain things, it breaks the barrier and makes you think, 'Well if they can, so can I.'"

Associations have been trying to do this for some time, Anita Bertisen explains: "I'm the President of Women In Mining USA (WIM USA), and our current goal is to make our industry more attractive to a diverse group of people, not just women. But what you see in the industry, it's typical in the United States, it's your middle-aged white male that really dominates the industry.

"One of the things that that I'm focused on with WIM USA is really to showcase WIM and to showcase other women in our industry and how successful they are, how exciting their work is, how much they travel, how much they get to learn and meet others, and have them as an inspiration. I don't want to call it mentors, but examples of somebody to associate yourself with and say, 'Hey, that's who I want to be when I grow up.'"

We also see more mining organizations and associations launching initiatives that bring female mining professionals into schools and universities to present to students and answer questions. Some are running "bring your kids to work" days to inspire and attract the next generation.

Miners could also consider how to partner with existing public and private sector programs designed to encourage girls to study STEM. For example, Australia's national science agency, the CSIRO, runs a nationwide volunteer program, STEM Professionals in Schools,<sup>8</sup> that facilitates partnerships between schools and industries to bring STEM into the classroom.

Also in Australia, mining group Bloomfield Group has developed an initiative, Educators meet industry, designed to give career advisors, teachers and parents a "boots on the ground" experience of the sector. It includes female employees sharing stories of their career path.

In a competitive job market, understanding why women are attracted to mining, why they stay – and why they leave – can help miners compete for female talent. Companies must ask themselves: "Why would women choose our company over the competition?" Self-reflection is needed to see whether the organization has created the environment and systems that genuinely support satisfying career journeys for women. Without this, any recruitment messaging will not be credible, and companies are just creating a revolving door for female talent.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.csiro.au/en/Education/Programs/Generation-STEM>



## Shifting perceptions of the sector

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**One of the big challenges is the industry’s place in society — the negative perceptions of mining and the misinformation around the important role it plays.**

Fiona Robertson



Recent Australian research found that three in four Gen-Zers would not work for a company that they didn’t believe was doing enough to combat climate change.<sup>9</sup> With young workers increasingly driven by purpose, mining companies face an urgent need to demonstrate theirs – to communicate their contribution to economic development, health and safety, and community support. The effective articulation and broader communication of how mines are influencing and contributing to a lower-carbon future is key to attracting a more diverse workforce. As Amanda Lacaze says: “Without minerals and mining, we would be unable to enjoy the lifestyles that we love in the 21st century.”

Companies may need to reconsider current communication methods and channels, as Gabriela Maceira explains: “Young people are different. I see it in my kids. Their attention span is different, the way they communicate is different, their interests are different. So probably we need to make changes in that too so that we can reach that public.”

Miners also need to better communicate how the impact of technology has changed careers in the sector. In particular, the emergence of remote operating centers (ROCs) has altered roles, and changed where they are based. EY research found that 44% of miners plan to expand their use of ROCs in the next one or two years, which has the potential to improve the appeal of the sector to women.<sup>10</sup> City-based ROCs mean women can take on technical roles and more easily balance family and work life, with greater access to support networks and childcare.

But, as Thando Zulu says, the positive changes brought by technology are not widely known. “A lot of people still have an idea that if you’re working in the mining industry, you’re living in a hostel and you are subject to very poor conditions. They don’t understand the differences that technology improvements have made to the mining sector itself and conditions for women.” Catherine Gignac agrees. “What we’ve seen evolve is technology, mechanization, automation and artificial intelligence. You can operate remotely from a distance, improving health and safety and attracting more people to the sector from broader backgrounds, including different genders.”

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/careers/gen-z-workers-willing-to-reject-jobs-based-on-climate-change-values-20211110-p597pu>

<sup>10</sup> “Top 10 business risks and opportunities for mining and metals in 2022,” 2021, EY.

# Attracting and recruiting outstanding female talent needs a new approach

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If you have policies in place but are still just paying lip service to DE&I, nothing will change, and women won't stay in your organization. It's a relatively small sector with a wide grapevine and, if this is the case, it will be harder to attract women or a broader diverse workforce versus your peers.

Fiona Robertson

Mining companies also need to go beyond striving for DE&I and take action to drive real change. Investing in the radical restructuring of organizational practices can create an environment that promotes equity and values a diverse, inclusive workforce. Evidence shows that capital markets increasingly expect this change, but miners should move before they are pushed. A positive culture that focuses on equity improves competitiveness in a tight labor market and, evidence shows, is linked to better performance.

Genuine change in traditional behaviors, attitudes and stereotypes around women in mining comes from the top. DE&I must be elevated to CEO level; considered a strategic business issue, not a matter for HR. Renata Roberts says: "If we don't have that leadership on board with the rationale for increasing diversity, it will forever just be words on a page or lip service."



# Changing the recruitment process

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Newmont did some work around testing the impact of blind resumes and the impact of the language we use in job postings. We also tested the impact of a diverse interview panel. And all these studies showed that they make a difference. And some of them even make a difference across cultures. We have to begin to think about the recruitment systems we use and disrupt any bias.

Beatrice Opoku-Asare



A rigorous review of current recruitment processes could help mining organizations make changes that progress diversity of all kinds. Our interviewees, many of whom are involved in hiring decisions, shared many ideas that may overcome biases and encourage women to take the leap and apply for roles. Many of us are familiar with the statistic that women only apply for jobs when they meet 100% of qualifications; men, in comparison, will apply even if they only cover 60%.<sup>11</sup> But lesser-known research reveals that women who do go ahead and apply are 16% more likely than men to get hired – a figure that rises to 18% for “stretch” jobs.<sup>12</sup> Interviewees’ guidance includes:

- ▶ **Think beyond technical skills:** Asking for purely technical experience can exclude many women. For example, asking applicants for truck-driving jobs to present 10+ years’ experience will likely uncover few female candidates.
- ▶ **Adopt “blind” recruitment processes:** Hiding information that implies gender during the screening process can ensure women’s CVs are reviewed on merit.
- ▶ **Set a shortlist target of 50/50:** Aim to achieve an equal number of female and male applicants. If the target is missed, question why women aren’t applying.
- ▶ **Have a mixed interview team:** Interviewers of different genders can counter natural biases.
- ▶ **Create a psychologically safe environment:** Recruitment managers need to ensure applicants feel comfortable in demonstrating their true talent and authentic self during the interview process.
- ▶ **Make decisions transparent:** Recruitment teams should be ready to explain their final choice of candidate to allow examination for any bias.

Making these changes won’t happen overnight, but organizations that begin the journey can move the needle on gender bias in recruitment. Amanda Lacaze says the sector can, and must, do more. “I often get frustrated when I hear people say, ‘Gosh, it’s hard. We put out these ads and we don’t get any women applicants,’ because the ways to attract and retain women are well known and have been proven via any number of different research methodologies.” She says tracking gender diversity is critical. “You will not manage something if you do not measure it, and so be alert to the issue of gender diversity in the workforce.” Amanda also urges companies to ensure they explicitly highlight the value they place on attracting diverse talent. “Make sure that your ads make it very clear that you welcome diversity, and not just gender diversity, but diversity in all of its other facets.”

<sup>11</sup> Mohr, Tara Sophia, “Why Women Don’t Apply for Jobs Unless They’re 100% Qualified,” Harvard Business Review, 25 August 2014.

<sup>12</sup> “Gender Insights Report: How Women Find Jobs Differently,” 2018, LinkedIn.

# Go for it! Women are urged to pursue a mining career

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We need young, bright, talented women to come into the industry to see it as a career, but also to help shape an industry that's already in transition. We then need mining companies to get their house in order to make sure that these women do thrive in the industry.

Deshnee Naidoo

When we asked interviewees if they would advise women to seek a career in mining, the response was clear – go for it! Many of our interviewees with daughters said they wanted them to feel they could do whatever they wanted, and believe that mining is a sector that has enriched their own lives with opportunities for travel and growth. “Go for it. Go for it,” urged Sofia Sanchez “Mining is changing, the world is changing, and we need to change to create a better world.”

Amanda Lacaze urges women: “Don't underestimate your skills ... It might not be that you tick every box on the job description, but there may be things that you bring to the role which are even greater than the ones which have necessarily been identified. But understand those skills and make sure that you apply them, because the more valuable you are to the business, the better the outcomes for both parties.”

A key piece of advice to the next generation is to not feel you must be someone else to fit in – people seek the different perspective that diversity brings.

Angela Vasconcelos encourages women to be empowered to be their true self and raise their voice. “Be honest, be honest with yourself, and be transparent with yourself and others ... If you are participating in a meeting and you don't like something, you need to say it.”

Women should be empowered to be their true self and raise their voice. Deirdré Lingenfelder encourages women to “... make your voice heard – I remember starting off in the sector feeling incredibly intimidated because I would, more often than not, be the only female at the table, and that made me not speak and not make my voice heard. If I could give any woman coming into the sector advice, irrespective of age, it's to make your voice heard. Speak up when you feel you've got a point to make, because it will add value to the conversation.”





# 02

## Tackling the biggest challenges for women in mining



Our interviewees agreed that improvements have been made in leveling the playing field for women in mining – but say there is still a long way to go to create a truly diverse and inclusive sector. A 2020 review of miners' progress against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) awarded poor marks to the sector for SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, citing a lack of action.<sup>13</sup>

Much of the positive change so far has resulted from pressure by employees, communities, industry bodies and non-government organizations (NGOs) that expect more from mining. We anticipate this pressure will only grow, with expectations from capital markets set to intensify.

<sup>13</sup> "Mining and the SDGs: a 2020 status update," 2020, Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment and the Responsible Mining Foundation.



# Experiences are not equal for women in mining

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Stepping onto a mine site can still be a pretty confronting cultural adjustment for many women, and the industry will need to continue to focus on breaking down some of these softer cultural barriers that prevent females from feeling really comfortable within those environments.

Tijana LaBianca



A key point raised in many of our interviews was that women in mining will have very different experiences depending on whether they work on-site or in corporate headquarters. This diversity of experience is not always recognized by leadership or in DE&I initiatives and policies.

Women in offices tend to be in the city, close to childcare and support networks. Site shifts, on the other hand, are not conducive to dropping children at day care or picking them up from school, putting more pressure on families or support networks. Mining sites are considered high-risk zones and out of bounds for pregnant women – meaning many female workers lose out on experience during pregnancy as well as maternity leave. Unfortunately, given the fly-in-fly-out nature of the sector, many women don't return to it once starting a family. Nataly Betancur suggests: “Organizations need to shift their mentality from ‘we are losing a pair of hands’ and place more value on bringing life to this world. Guaranteeing positions upon return, flexibility and in-house day care will all give women motivation to reintegrate into the workforce.”

Women in headquarters face different challenges. Interviews with women in corporate roles flagged the barrier of not having sufficient operational mine site experience to progress to senior leadership positions. Elena Mayer explains: “Once women get to senior positions, they're required to have experience at an operational site level, and they might come from different backgrounds – for example, legal or accounting and finance – and they might not necessarily have that exposure to the operational side. Flexibility from the leadership team on identifying exactly what trades they need for that individual to actually get to this higher leadership position [would help].”

For many, gaining this on-site experience means taking a demotion, which can turn into a glass ceiling. This may explain why many of the world's top 100 mining companies have very few females in leadership positions. Across these 100 companies, just 108 women hold executive or leadership positions. Forty companies had no women in executive positions and 30 had only one.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>EY analysis of Boardex company reports, August 2021

# Major infrastructure gaps must be addressed

Women on mining sites also face more fundamental challenges that threaten their career progression and even their safety. A recent report found that, in Australia, the mining industry has one of the country's highest rates of workplace sexual harassment, with 40% of workers experiencing it in the past five years (compared with an average of 31% across all industries).<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in Canada, a survey of Inuit women found half had experienced sexual harassment on mining sites, ranging from unwanted sexual comments or jokes to "intense and varying forms of sexual violence and harassment on a recurring basis."<sup>16</sup>

Many mines still do not provide basic female-designated facilities such as bathrooms or changing rooms. Nolitha Fakude explains how this impacts women's wellbeing on-site: "We still find in some organizations that even changing rooms are not enabling women to feel comfortable or safe because those have not been converted into spaces that are private and that can be for women. So it's a big issue that even from a Minerals Council of South Africa perspective, we are championing with all CEOs to create a space for women that enables them to feel physical safety and protected when they're in the workplace."

Miners are moving to address the issue, including terminating the employment of workers found to have engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior, increasing security on-site, reviewing alcohol policies, and developing better systems for reporting sexual harassment and assaults.<sup>17</sup> Paul Everingham, CEO of Western Australia's powerful Chamber of Minerals and Energy, admits the sector must do "a much better job if we expect [women] to come to our sites."<sup>18</sup>



<sup>15</sup> <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/submission-the-equal-opportunity-commission-the-inquiry-sexual-harassment-against-women-the-fifo-mining-industry>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.canadianminingjournal.com/news/inuit-women-working-in-mining-report-high-levels-of-sexual-harassment/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-20/bhp-sacks-workers-over-inappropriate-sexual-behaviour/100395186>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/business/workplace/fifo-inquiry-hears-horrific-evidence-of-widespread-mistreatment-of-women-20211019-p591ev.html>

## More flexibility can help attract and retain female talent

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That’s just the nature of the industry — the structural nature of the industry — mines are designed with men in mind. So, the shifts were also designed with men in mind.

Thando Zulu

## Lack of promotion and profiling

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We have to challenge ourselves ... when we’ve made a decision, ask ourselves, am I choosing this person for this role because they are more like me? Or is it because they’re going to challenge my thoughts and challenge my assumptions and they are very different from me?

Beatrice Opoku-Asare

How can mines break down the barriers to greater female participation? Increasing flexibility in the workplace could help, said many interviewees, who recognized that achieving this in remote mines requires complex solutions. Shorter, more flexible shifts is one suggestion that would be welcomed as a way of helping balance family commitments. A fly-in-fly-out role or a residential stint in a mining town isn’t for everyone, so if careers can take different pathways, it will help to build a more diverse workforce. Organizations should also consider the impact of paid maternity leave on retention of talent, particularly in countries where this is not the norm.

Unless miners address this lack of flexibility, they are likely to see women continuing to leave the sector, believing that a professional career in mining is not compatible with raising a family – a perception amplified by a lack of female leaders. Some interviewees felt that this is the reason that potential future female CEOs instead move into non-executive director (NED) roles.

Fiona Robertson says: “I have seen many women, because of the challenges of juggling, step back from promising careers and develop NED careers. And while I think NED roles provide an opportunity for more balance and perhaps more control over work-life responsibilities, it is depleting the industry of capable women who could fill C-suite and top leadership roles.”

The harsh reality is that there is still some resistance to women being underground. And sadly, there are still men who will leave women out of meetings and not give them relevant exposure and experience. Leaders need to think differently to close this gap, says Deshnee Naidoo: “Some of the things that worked for me, both at CEO and in other C-suite roles, is being innovative – if we had to wait for spaces to be created, we’d be waiting for a long time. I used to create deputy or shadow positions for women to make sure that they had a seat at the table and have a voice where it matters most.”



# 03

## Retaining and promoting female leaders



Increasing gender diversity in mining, particularly in leadership, will require a renewed focus on building and growing the female talent pipeline. Current progress is just too slow. We asked female leaders for their thoughts on the actions that will make a real difference in retaining and promoting women to senior positions.

# Rethinking leadership and the definition of a good leader

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We need to rethink leadership roles and how we hire and promote. We can't just be promoting people based on technical skills or hard skills ... we also need to think of the critical soft skills that make a good leader. That's going to open people's minds to having more women in managerial positions.

Andree St-Germain

Being a good leader is no longer just about technical skills or hard skills – soft skills, including compassion and emotional intelligence, are needed to ensure organizations' greater focus on operating with purpose.

There is also a need to break through the perception that women may not be ready for leadership roles in mining – a belief preventing many talented women from reaching the top. Deirdré Lingenfelder explains: “This 'not ready yet' concept is a barrier that we need to break through culturally within organizations, especially technical organizations like mining, where there's a very traditional skill set around engineering or technical skill sets.”



# Addressing unconscious bias

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**One of the most important and interesting things that I've seen actually work in practice is where you review and calibrate performance appraisals across the organization to make sure that there's a genuine attempt to eliminate unconscious bias. It's important that it's very much endorsed and championed from the top; that the leadership is seen to be committed to eliminating unconscious bias.**

Fiona Robertson

Miners must build a supportive and equitable culture if they are to attract and retain female talent. This culture must be one where unconscious bias is challenged and sensitive issues are dealt with proactively. Many of those interviewed have seen positive progress toward this cultural change, but say employers need to be more proactive in an industry dominated by men where affinity bias means male leaders tend to support other men.

Cultural bias in women is also a major barrier to their advancement in mining. If women don't see other women in leadership, the effect is twofold, says Andree St-Germain. "I didn't see myself in a senior leadership role and I hate to admit it, but I thought that men were better leaders than women. It's a boy's club and it makes you question: 'Will I be accepted as a woman? Will I be respected as a woman?'"

Fiona Robertson agrees. "Women are often traveling solo in their career journey in the mining industry, particularly those in technical and operational roles. So, there's a risk that they are judged on traditional criteria, which gives rise to an unconscious bias, if you like, and certainly makes it harder for them to progress and develop their careers. That also means you've got a lack of role models for women," she says.

Programs need to be developed to change long-held industry mindsets about women, but Andree St-Germain says training is not enough. "Employers have to find ways to expose and address those really deep cultural sources of bias across the organization." Removing biases will help build women's confidence to compete for leadership roles, while achieving a level playing field can accurately evaluate the potential and performance of top talent.

Women also have a role to play in empowering other women to be their best, by sharing their experiences and leading by example. "It's all about using your voice wherever you are to ensure that you speak up for other women. That's intentional leadership and the sponsorship that's required. That could definitely break down the barriers that exist," says Thando Zulu.



## Equity rather than equality is needed for career development

Employers should focus on equity rather than equality when considering career development. Equity recognizes that women are different and have different biases. Their insecurities differ from men's, meaning that women's career development programs should be tailored to address their needs.

To help women chart a path to leadership, mining companies should improve visibility around growth opportunities and next steps, always ensuring role scopes and accountabilities are clear. Organizations that consider how to keep women engaged through the challenging period of juggling family responsibilities stand a better chance of retaining top female talent. It's not always remuneration that makes a difference, but the ability to continue to recognize what people bring to the table and create an environment where they can grow and flourish. Miners make significant efforts in attracting women to the business but, if the reality of working culture does not match expectations, they will create a revolving door of talent.

## Mentorship and sponsorship are key to career advancement in the sector

Sponsorship and mentoring were cited as clear enablers for supporting women in mining. A supportive network helps remove self-doubt and negativity, and enables self-promotion (which women don't do enough of). Many of the women we spoke to said that having a mentor has delivered many benefits, and urged others to embrace the opportunity.

Elena Mayer echoed many interviewees that we spoke to who encouraged women to be proactive in seeking counsel and guidance. "A number of studies say women are over-mentored and under-sponsored, and I would say that the responsibility and onus in this aspect is relying on women to take hold of their own careers. They should actively look for sponsors in their organization and ask them to use their name and equity to help them to achieve those leadership positions."

Sponsorship and intentional leadership are important because sponsors can advocate for women in settings they may not have access to, helping them progress to roles and positions they may not even be aware of. Beatrice Opoku-Asare says sponsors are "people who are willing to go above and beyond to advocate for women when they're not in the room, and to say, 'Look, I think we should give this person a chance, and give them the right support and make sure that they are successful.'"

Male champions of change are critical to demonstrating that DE&I is not a female issue but a societal one that everyone has a responsibility to improve. DE&I should no longer be just women advocating for women, it should be everyone working together to create an inclusive environment in its broadest sense.

“

**I'm a big proponent of mentorship and leadership and setting by example. If more younger girls see that this is possible, they are going to be more inclined to go down that route as well.**

Harpreet Dhaliwal

## A personal change of mindset

“

I think all our talents add up to 10 and what I mean by saying this is that we all have unique contributions we make to business, to a role, to a team. And I wish I knew this earlier because I put so much pressure on myself to measure up to what I perceived to be the preferred model of what it takes to succeed in mining, versus just being my authentic self and not feeling that I need to apologize for that.

Deirdré Lingenfelder

The leaders we spoke to urge women to put aside self-doubt and take risks to attain leadership positions. Deshnee Naidoo says: “If you are an engineer in the mining sector, there’s certain things you have to do to climb up. I set up a meeting with the then CFO of Anglo Platinum and told him who I was, that I was good at numbers and asked him to give me a chance in the corporate finance team. And he did. So instead of going to a remote plant site, which I would have loved if I wasn’t a mother of such a young daughter, I changed the course of my career path by having a very bold conversation.”

The women we spoke to encouraged others to stop waiting for someone else to make the change for them, and, like Deshnee, have the grit and tenacity to ask for opportunities, not be shy about expressing an opinion, and be proactive with building relationships with senior people.

Many interviewees said the critical thing is to always be authentic and not apologize for who you are.

Meroonisha Kerber says: “I don’t believe that I have to fit into any male or female stereotypes to be successful. At different points in my career, I’ve been expected to be tough, and unemotional like my male counterparts, or, in some instances, nonconfrontational and easy to work with, being female. As women leaders and managers and as individuals, we bring different leadership qualities to the teams and organizations we lead. And these qualities often inspire, motivate and empower the teams that we lead and actually make them successful. So, what I’ve learned along the way is really to remain authentic to who I am.”





# Sector associations can galvanize gender diversity progress

Women in mining organizations play an important role in supporting women, bringing them together with key stakeholders, and being an advocate and voice for women in regional, national and local sector initiatives.

WIMnet NSW is one such organization, working to accelerate gender diversity through networking events, mentoring and professional development. As Co Chair Michelle Lawson explains, participation of men in WIMNET NSW is crucial. "It's definitely not a secret society for women. Approximately 20% of our members are men, because it's really important to have our male champions of change to be involved in this important process."

Fiona Robertson says the WIMnet NSW mentoring program has been hugely successful in helping many women progress in the industry in careers that include geology and engineering, environmental sciences, accounting and HR roles. "The continuing interest that we have in this program, not just from women in the industry, but from companies operating in this sector, and both mining and mining services companies, show that there really is a need for something like that. It provides the networking and external support base that allows women to develop meaningful careers."

Sector associations also give women a safe place to discuss challenges and to see their potential, both of which are needed to gain more confidence, according to the women we spoke to. Women thrive with the help of these organizations, whose objectives are to support, nurture, promote, connect and empower the women in the sector.

In Australia, **Indigenous Women in Mining and Resources Australia (IWIMRA)** aims to create opportunities for Indigenous women. IWIMRA co-founder Florence Drummond explains: "There are so many opportunities for us to share stories, because there are women who are doing amazing things and we just don't celebrate them enough ... And for women who are aspiring to be in these spaces, to also reach up and to learn more, build friendships, build communities using a digital platform to connect. There is much richness in terms of knowledge and also cultural exchange."

Connect to your local Women in Mining group here: <https://internationalwim.org/wimchampion/wim-organisations/>



# 04

## Building a better future for women in mining – quotas or targets?



The mining sector is still playing catch-up when it comes to gender diversity. It's worth remembering that women were legally not allowed to work in Australian underground mines before the 1980s.<sup>19</sup> In Chile, laws were not changed until the 1990s. And, according to the World Bank, 60 countries still have laws that restrict women's employment in mining, most notably in sub-Saharan Africa, where one-third of countries prohibit women from working in mines.

The slow pace of change is frustrating. Could quotas make the difference? When we asked our interviewees this question, opinion was divided.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup><https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-15/the-battle-to-keep-women-in-mining/10118930>

<sup>20</sup> "Women, Business and the Law 2020," 2020, World Bank Group

# The argument for quotas

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I think that quotas will be the only thing that could significantly shift the dial. We still only have 10 female CEOs in the ASX 200. The statistics don't lie. People like to tell you all sorts of reasons for this but, even if we accept that fewer women than men aspire to be CEOs, the statistics should be significantly ahead of that. I think it won't shift until we have quotas.

Amanda Lacaze

Of the women we spoke to, those who were in favor of quotas pointed out the benefits of having a regulatory framework in place, such as that in South Africa, where female participation in mining has increased. Deshnee Naidoo says quotas can be the “push factor” the industry needs. She explains: “Coming into Canada, I'm quite staggered at the low percentages of representation – and it's not only about diversity and representation, it's about inclusion, but you can't have one without the other.”

Canada is one of several countries that has implemented policies aimed at encouraging diversity but has not set hard numerical targets. Its “comply or explain” disclosure policy forces companies to disclose how they are complying with diversity measures – and if they're not, explain why not. Unfortunately, these policies have failed to improve the sector's gender diversity, as Cameco Group's Catherine Gignac explains: “We've had minimal change in terms of the numbers of women at board levels, management levels and within the sector. My sense is that we [should] put in quotas.” It seems investors agree – a recent capital markets modernization report suggested that investors and stakeholders in capital markets in Canada will push for a 50% quota within the next few years.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> McDougall, A., Valley, J., Jeffrey, J., 2021 Diversity Disclosure Practices – Diversity and leadership at Canadian public companies, 2021, Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP.



## The argument against quotas

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**I'm against quotas and prefer targets that can be tailored, monitored and adjusted by a company, so it's appropriate for that organization and the environment it's operating in. My main issue with quotas is that women may be marginalized and viewed as tokens rather than have achieved the role through merit and I have seen that in the past. Also, quotas may mean that a good male candidate may be overlooked, which would be disadvantageous for the business itself, and again may possibly cause women to be viewed less favorably.**

Michelle Lawson

Others we spoke to believed that if organizations need legislation to buy into the value proposition of a more diverse leadership and workforce, something is wrong. Real change comes from organizations' desire to improve gender diversity because they understand its benefits. Regulation may help change the numbers, but it does very little to change the bias and the attitudes that lead to gender inequality in the first place. In the UK, where the government has urged companies to promote women to boards but ruled out quotas, a recent Women in Mining UK report stated: "The argument for more women in leadership roles in the mining industry is a business imperative, not just a debate about equality."<sup>22</sup>

However, some women we spoke to were in support of data-backed targets, which they say can be a game changer in companies with progressive D&I policies. Beatrice Opoku-Asare explains: "I think what gets measured gets done or what gets measured gets attention. Data shows that having targets work, and I believe it works. It doesn't mean that it works easily ... There's a lot of work that needs to be done around those targets from a change management perspective to even help people to understand why you're setting the targets, how you're setting the targets, and accountabilities around those targets."



<sup>22</sup> <https://www.mining-technology.com/news/newstop-mining-firms-fail-to-obtain-gender-balance-at-board-level-women-in-mining-uk-4493917/>



# Conclusion

There has never been a better time for the mining and metals sector to accelerate efforts to increase the participation of women. A gender-diverse workforce is proven to yield many operational and business benefits, including the increased innovation that can help the sector overcome complex challenges and improve its license to operate.

Addressing legacy issues that have hindered women in mining for decades will take time, but current progress must be fast-tracked. At EY, we're committed to supporting mining and metals companies on this journey, helping create an inclusive culture that enables women to help transform the sector into one fit for a very different energy future. For more information how we can help your organization, visit [https://www.ey.com/en\\_au/women-fast-forward](https://www.ey.com/en_au/women-fast-forward) or get in touch for a discussion.

## How the EY Global Mining & Metals team can help you

The transition to a low-carbon future demands that mining and metals companies reshape their role in what will be a new energy world. Bolder strategies that embrace digital innovation can help overcome productivity and cost pressures, create long-term value and secure a stronger LTO. The EY Global Mining & Metals team brings together the breadth of experience and talent needed to approach the entire transformation process. By considering four key pillars of change – structure and culture, customers, technology, and skills and capabilities – we can help you adapt for today and reap the opportunities of tomorrow. And together we can build a better working world.

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