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# ► A closer look: Insights from a survey on how employer and business membership organizations drive gender equality





► **A closer look: Insights  
from a survey on how  
employer and business  
membership organizations  
drive gender equality**

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## ► About the survey

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The International Labour Organization Bureau for Employers' Activities (ILO-ACT/EMP) and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) conducted a global survey involving employers and business membership organizations (EBMOs) to evaluate the representation of women in governance, leadership, and management roles within their respective organizations. Additionally, the survey sought to explore EBMO services aimed at enhancing gender equality and diversity.

This online survey was conducted in English, Spanish, and French between April and May 2023. It engaged 95 EBMOs across 87 countries in Africa, the Arab States, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia. Of the respondents, 66 per cent were in senior executives roles, 21 per cent were managers, and 13 per cent were staff members. This report presents the principal findings from the 2023 survey at the global level and provides in-depth regional perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

ILO-ACT/EMP conducted a comparable survey among EBMOs in 2017, enabling a comparison of results between the 2017 and 2023 EBMO surveys. This facilitates the identification of changes and progress regarding women's representation in governance and leadership roles within EBMOs over the past six years.

The primary findings of the survey are incorporated into the main ILO-IOE report on [Women in Business: How employer and business membership organizations drive gender equality](#). This supplementary report is designed to offer a comprehensive analysis of the survey findings, offering detailed insights at the regional level.<sup>2</sup> Chapter 1 of this supplementary report focuses on survey results that emphasize the business case for EBMOs to prioritize gender equality and diversity. Chapter 2 delves into the representation of women across governance, management, and staff structures within EBMOs. Chapter 3 examines EBMO initiatives, including member services, aimed at promoting gender equality and diversity. Chapter 4 offers a summary of EBMOs' advocacy efforts based on the survey results. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a short conclusion to the survey report's overall findings.

## Survey demographics

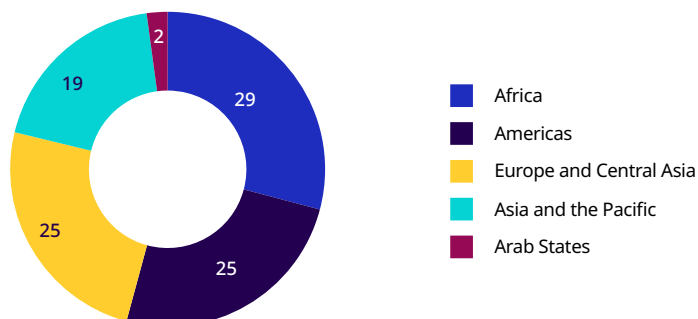
The ILO and IOE distributed the survey to all five ILO regional groups: Africa, Americas, Europe and Central Asia, Asia and the Pacific and Arab States. Among the total respondents, the highest share came from Africa (29 per cent), followed by the Americas (25 per cent), Europe and Central Asia (25 per cent), Asia and the Pacific (19 per cent), and the Arab States (2 per cent) (see figure 1).

---

<sup>1</sup> The report does not include visual representations of results for the Arab States since only two EBMOs from that region participated in the survey.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Vega Orozco, an economist and data analyst, undertook the analysis of the survey and led the drafting of this report. Jae-Hee Chang, Senior Relations Specialist of ILO-ACT/EMP managed the survey and supported the drafting. Deep appreciation is expressed all EBMOs who led the dissemination and collection of the survey.

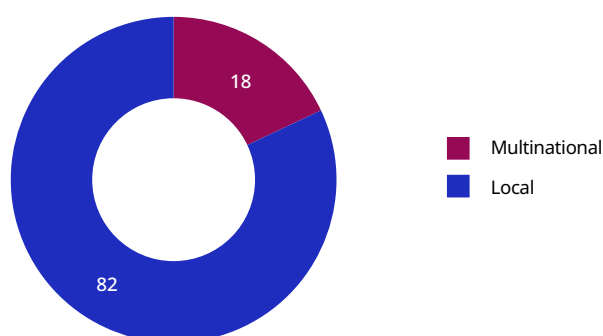
► **Figure 1. Percentage of EBMO respondents to the survey, by region**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

On average, surveyed EBMOs represented 82 per cent of multinational enterprises and 18 per cent of local enterprises (see figure 2).

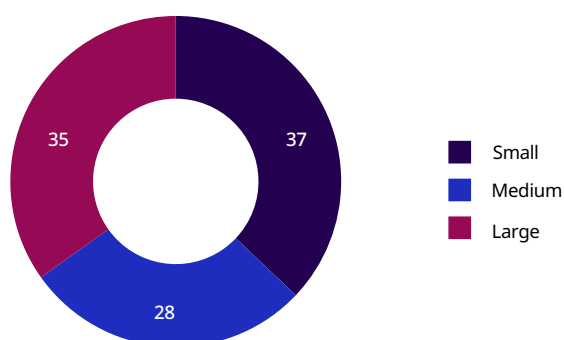
► **Figure 2. Share of multinational and local enterprises represented by EBMOs, all results**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

The survey engaged organizations of various sizes. Among the total responses, 37 per cent came from small-sized organizations (employing 1 to 10 workers), 28 per cent came from medium-sized organizations (employing 11-30 workers), and 35 per cent came from large-sized organizations (employing over 30 workers) (see figure 3).

► **Figure 3. Size of EBMOs, all results**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

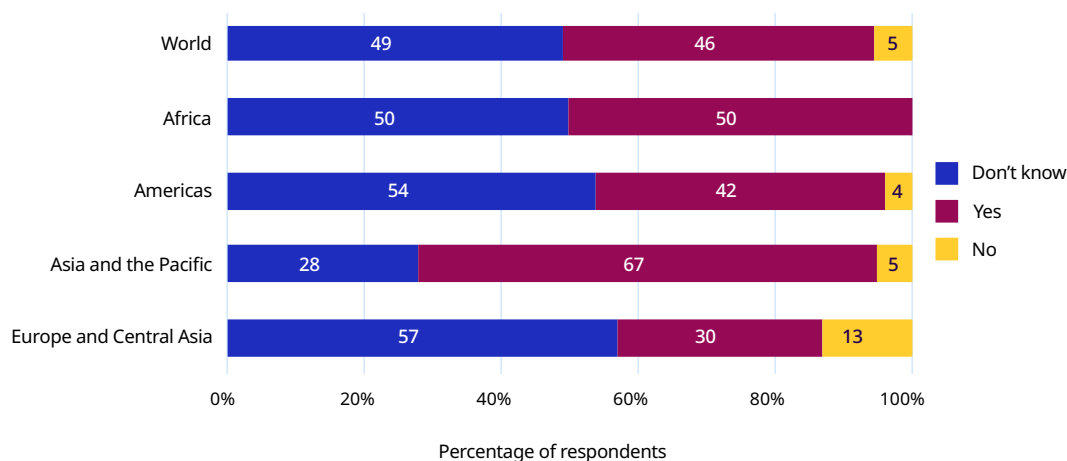
## 1. Gender diversity: A strategic imperative for EBMOs

Numerous studies have highlighted the positive organizational impacts of fostering gender diversity, such as improved financial performance, productivity, and innovation.<sup>3</sup> For example, in 2019 the ILO conducted a global survey with nearly 13,000 enterprises demonstrating the enhanced business outcomes associated with gender diversity.<sup>4</sup> In this survey by ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE, EBMOs were queried about the perceived benefits of gender diversity and equality initiatives within their organizations.

**Almost half of the EBMOs surveyed (46 per cent) say that their initiatives on gender equality and diversity have positively impacted business outcomes.** However, the other half (49 per cent) are either unsure or lacked clarity on whether such initiatives contributed to improved results. Only 5 per cent of respondents expressed skepticism about the business case for gender diversity and equality (see figure 4). Among EBMOs unable to ascertain the benefits of gender diversity and equality, three-quarters still regularly conducted activities or initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality among their members. This suggests that approximately half of EBMOs lack systematic data collection mechanisms to evaluate the impact of their gender-related initiatives.

Regionally, the survey revealed varying degrees of support for the connection between improved business outcomes and gender diversity initiatives. Notably, Asia and the Pacific displayed the strongest support with 67 per cent of EBMOs endorsing this correlation. Conversely, Europe and Central Asia reported the lowest proportion of EBMOs attributing enhanced business outcomes to gender equality and diversity initiatives, standing at 30 per cent.

► **Figure 4. “Have your EBMO’s initiatives on gender equality and diversity helped enhance business outcomes?”, results by region**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

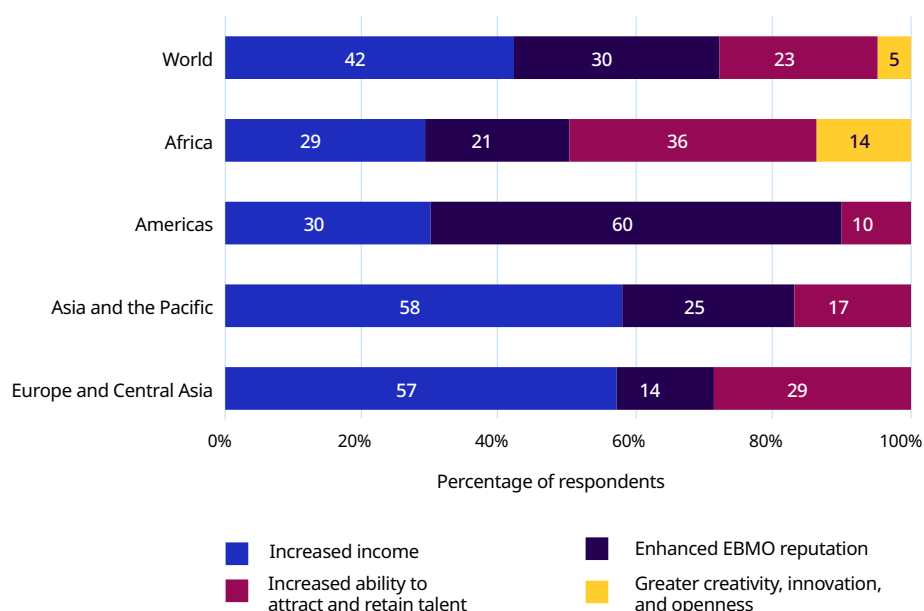
<sup>3</sup> McKinsey, 2015; Accenture, 2019; Turban, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> ILO, 2019.

**EBMOs surveyed report that initiatives promoting gender equality and diversity lead to enhanced business outcomes across various dimensions.**<sup>5</sup> Four out of 10 EBMOs highlight increased income from sources like membership subscriptions, training revenue, and other advisory services as the most commonly observed improvement (see figure 5). EBMOs also indicate that such initiatives on gender equality and diversity bolster organizational reputation (30 per cent) and enhance the ability to attract and retain talent (23 per cent). A smaller proportion of EBMOs (5 per cent) cite fostering creativity, innovation, and openness as a positive outcome (5 per cent).

More than half of EBMOs in Asia and the Pacific, as well as Europe and Central Asia, report experiencing increased income due to gender equality and diversity initiatives. In contrast, EBMOs in the Americas frequently emphasize improvements in organizational reputation (60 per cent).

► **Figure 5. “How have your business outcomes improved?”, results by region**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> The survey question on “How have your business outcomes improved” was asked to 46 per cent of EBMO respondents that reported experiencing improved business outcomes from initiatives on gender equality and diversity.

## 2. Advancing gender equality and diversity across EBMOs' governance, management and staffing

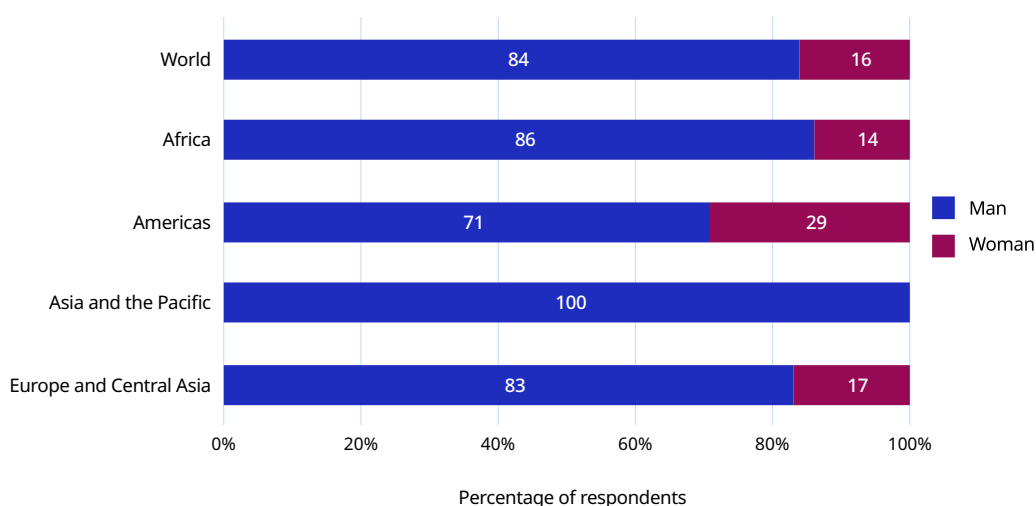
### 2.1. Board of directors

The board of directors serve as the governing and strategic decision-making body within EBMOs, led by board chairpersons who guide critical decision-making processes. Historically, research has indicated a significant overrepresentation of men in board chair and board member positions across EBMOs globally.<sup>6</sup> However, there has been a notable increase in women assuming leadership roles and gaining representation on EBMO boards.

**Globally, men predominantly hold the position of board chair or president within EBMOs, occupying the highest echelons of decision-making.** Survey data reveals that 84 per cent of EBMO boards are chaired by men while only 16 per cent are chaired by women (see figure 6). Although minor, there have been discernible improvements in female board leadership since 2017, when only 8 per cent of women chaired EBMO boards worldwide (see table 1). Further analysis of the 2023 survey highlights the positive impact of female leadership on the overall gender composition of EBMO boards. Indeed, EBMOs with a female board chairperson are 22 per cent more likely to achieve a critical mass of over 30 per cent female board members—a threshold often considered indicative of women's influence on institutional decision-making.

**Female representation in board chair positions remains low across all regions.** The Americas have the highest proportion of female board chairpersons (29 per cent), followed by Europe and Central Asia (17 per cent), and Africa (14 per cent). In contrast, the survey reveals that all EBMO boards in Asia and the Pacific are chaired by men.

► **Figure 6. "Is your EBMO's current chairperson/president of the board of directors a woman or a man?", results by region**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

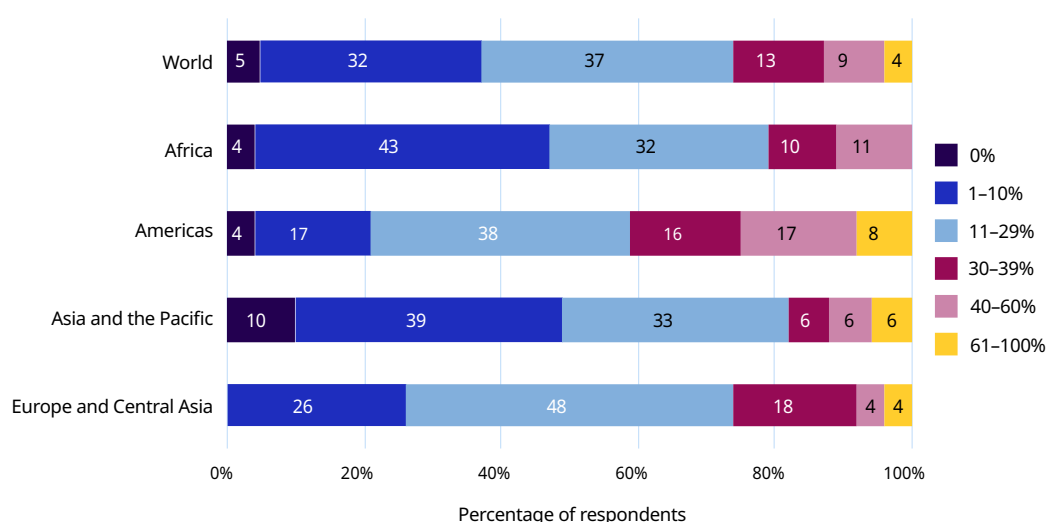
<sup>6</sup> ILO, 2021.

Research indicates that organizations must achieve a critical mass of women in leadership and governance roles to fully realize the benefits of gender diversity.<sup>7</sup> The 2023 survey findings underscore the positive drivers for gender equality stemming from increased representation of women on boards, particularly in the most senior leadership positions. Specifically, EBMOs with boards comprising at least 30% women are 14% more likely to have a female board chairperson.

Organizations strive for gender balance across various levels, including the boardroom, managerial positions, and staff roles, typically aiming for gender representation between 40 to 60 per cent. However, **the majority of EBMO boards still exhibit gender imbalance**. Only 13 per cent of EBMOs report women constituting 30 to 39 per cent of board members, while a mere 9 per cent have achieved gender balance (see figure 7). This representation is slightly higher compared to 2017, with 11 per cent of EBMOs having 30 to 39 per cent female board members and 8 per cent achieving gender balance.

The Americas boast the highest proportion of gender-balanced board members, with approximately 17 per cent of EBMOs reporting 40 to 60 per cent female representation. Conversely, Europe and Central Asia have the lowest share of EBMOs with gender-balanced boards (4 per cent), followed by Asia and the Pacific (6 per cent), and Africa (11 per cent).

► **Figure 7. “What is the proportion of women board members?”, results by region**



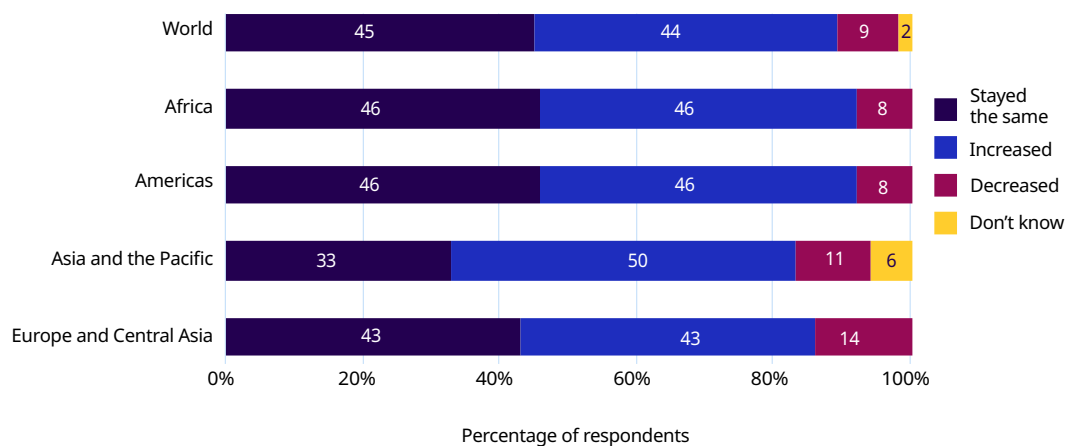
Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

**Women’s representation on boards is experiencing growth in certain EBMOs.** Forty-four percent of surveyed EBMOs indicate an increase in women’s representation on boards of directors over the past two years (see figure 8). However, over half of EBMOs report that the number of women board members either remained the same (45 per cent) or decreased (9 per cent) during the same period. The progress regarding increased representation of women on boards appears somewhat mixed, as the proportion of EBMOs with a critical mass of women on boards only rose by 6 per cent between 2017 and 2023 (see table 1).

In terms of regional trends, a higher proportion of EBMOs from Asia and the Pacific reported an increase in women’s representation on the board of directors over the past two years compared to slightly lower shares of EBMOs in other regions.

<sup>7</sup> ILO, 2019.

► **Figure 8. “How did the number of women board members change in the past two years?”, results by region**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

► **Table 1. Key indicators of women’s representation on boards of directors, 2017 and 2023 survey results**

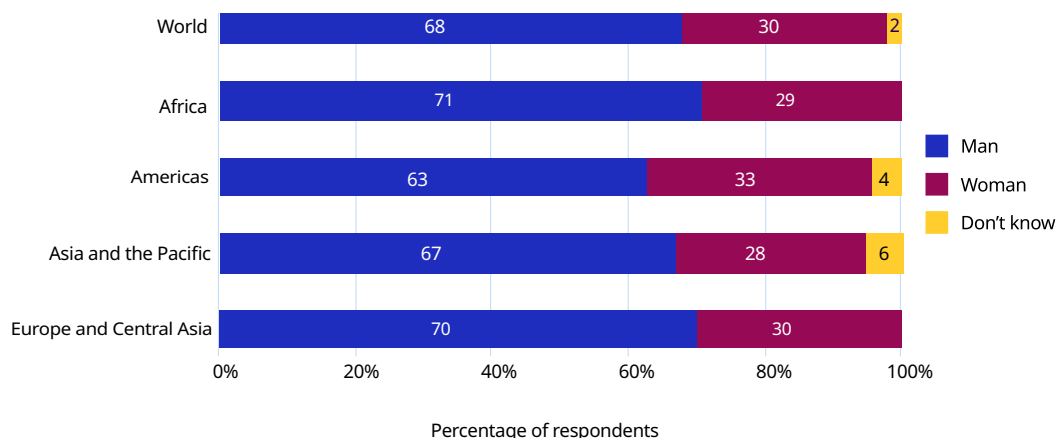
| Key indicators                                         | 2017 | 2023 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| Female board chairperson                               | 8%   | 16%  |
| Boards with at least 30 per cent female representation | 19%  | 26%  |

Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

## 2.2. Executive management

**The majority of chief executive officers (CEOs) in EBMOs are male, with women holding the CEO position in 30 per cent of the surveyed EBMOs** (see figure 9). This proportion has remained relatively stable over the past six years, as women accounted for 34 per cent of EBMO CEOs in 2017. Additionally, there are no significant regional variations in the percentage of EBMOs led by female CEOs.

► **Figure 9. “Is your current top management position (chief executive officer) held by a woman or a man?”, results by region**



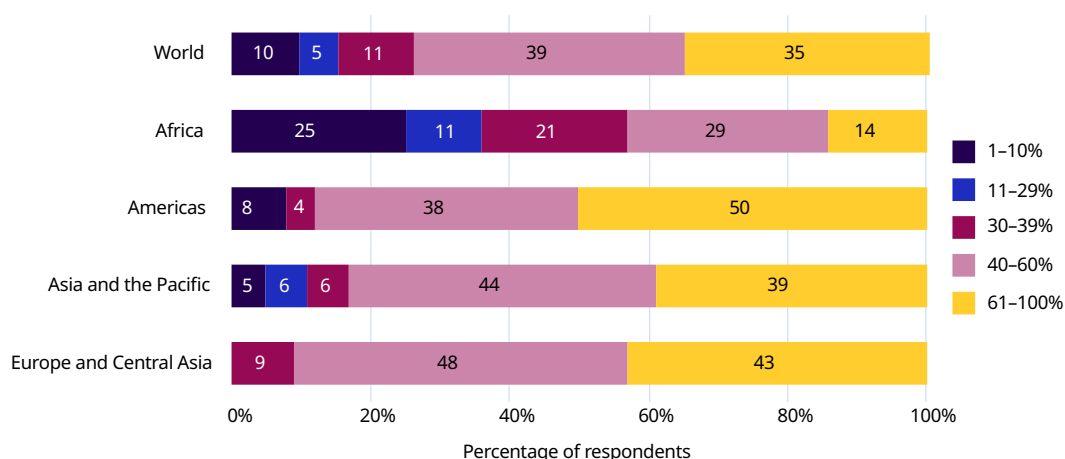
Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

Organizations that have women in executive positions tend to foster greater gender diversity across various levels. Findings from the 2023 survey indicate that EBMOs with female CEOs are 25 per cent more likely to have over 40 per cent of women in managerial positions compared to EBMOs led by male CEOs.

## 2.3. Staff and managers

**Women are prominently represented in staff positions within EBMOs.** A significant majority of EBMOs (74 per cent) employ over 40 per cent of women in staff roles, with certain EBMO secretariats notably staffed predominantly by women (see figure 10). Over the past six years, the number of female staff members has remained relatively consistent, as evidenced by a comparable proportion of EBMOs (76 per cent) employing over 40 per cent women in staff positions in 2017.

► **Figure 10. “What is the proportion of women staff members?”, results by region**

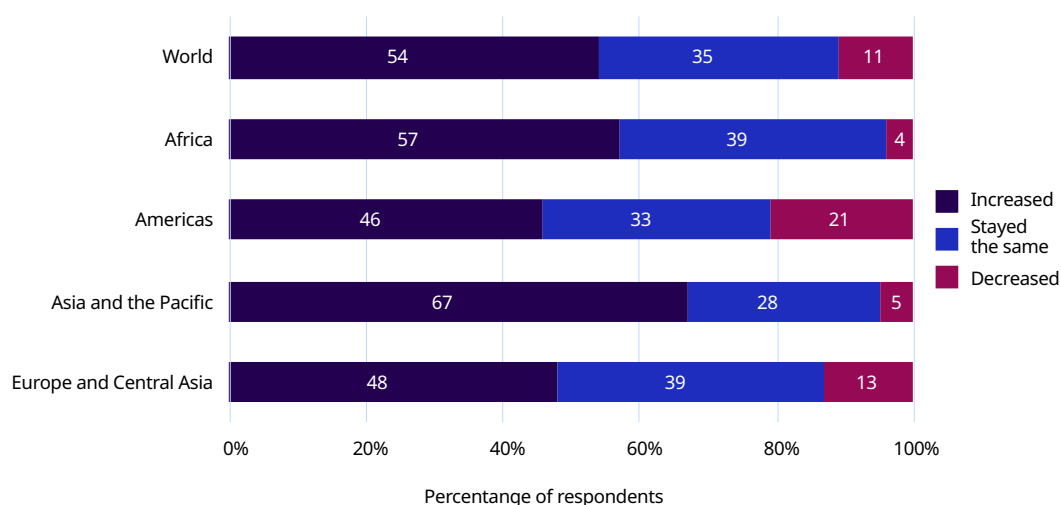


Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

**The number of female staff members has either seen an increase or remained relatively stable over the past two years.** Among the total EBMOs surveyed, more than half (54%) report an uptick in female staff members, while around a third indicate that the number of female staff has remained unchanged during this period (see figure 11).

EBMOs in Africa and Asia-Pacific have experienced the most significant increase in female staff members over the past two years. In contrast, EBMOs in the Americas and Europe-Central Asia report the lowest increase in female staff members during the same period.

► **Figure 11. “How did the number of women staff members change in the past two years?”, results by region**

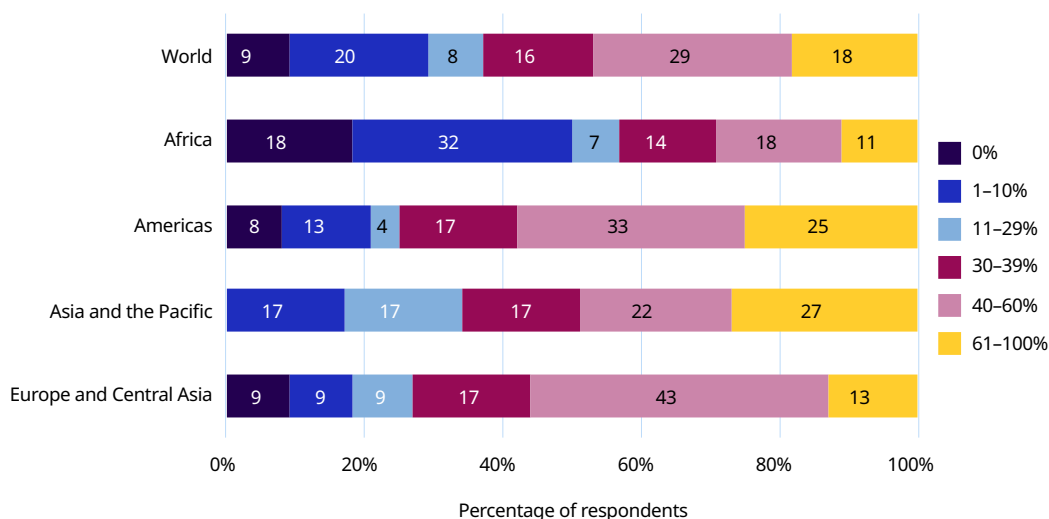


Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

**Achieving gender balance in management positions remains a challenge for most EBMOs.** Nearly 30 per cent of the surveyed EBMOs report having between 40 and 60 per cent women in management roles (see figure 12). This percentage is slightly higher than the 24 per cent of EBMOs achieving similar gender balance in 2017.

In terms of regional distribution, Europe and Central Asia lead with the highest proportion of EBMOs (43 per cent) reporting between 40 and 60 per cent women in managerial positions. Meanwhile, approximately one-third of EBMOs in the Americas have achieved gender balance in managerial roles. In contrast, Africa and Asia-Pacific have the lowest proportions of EBMOs achieving gender balance in management, standing at 18 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively. Additionally, half of the African EBMOs report that women represent 10 per cent or less of total managers within their organizations.

► **Figure 12. “What is the proportion of women managers?”, results by region**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

Table 2 presents a comparison of the percentages of EBMOs with women CEOs and EBMOs achieving gender balance in management for the years 2017 and 2023. Globally, there has been limited progress in increasing women's representation in managerial positions over the past six years.

► **Table 2. Key indicators of women in EBMO management roles, 2017 and 2023 survey results**

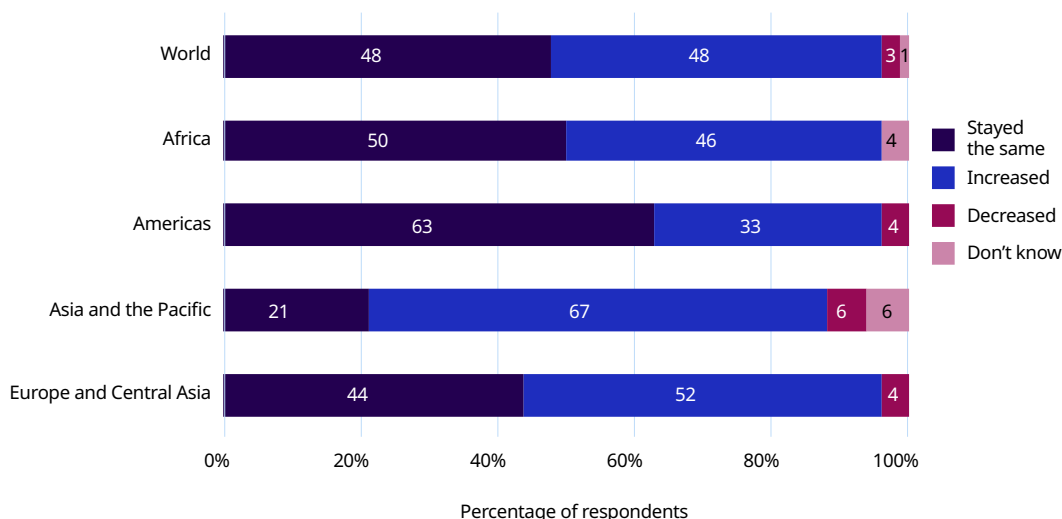
| Key indicators                                                                   | 2017 | 2023 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| EBMOs with a female CEO                                                          | 34%  | 30%  |
| EBMOs with a representation of women managers ranging between 40 and 60 per cent | 24%  | 28%  |

Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

Likewise, the count of women in managerial roles has either risen or remained relatively steady over the past two years. Nearly all EBMOs (96 per cent) indicate that the number of women managers has either increased or remained unchanged during this timeframe (see figure 13).

Asia and the Pacific, along with Europe and Central Asia, stand out with the highest proportions of EBMOs reporting an uptick in the number of women managers over the past two years.

► **Figure 13. “How did the number of women managers change in the past two years?”, results by region**

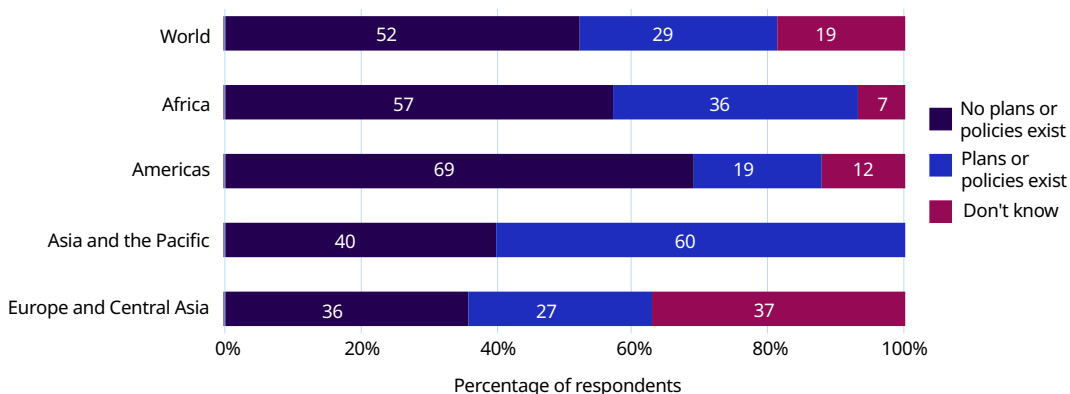


Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

Formal policies or plans aimed at enhancing women's representation in managerial roles play a crucial role in achieving gender balance in leadership positions and facilitating women's career advancement opportunities. However, such policies or plans are notably lacking among the EBMOs surveyed. Globally, only 3 out of 10 EBMOs have implemented policies or plans for this purpose (see figure 14).<sup>8</sup>

Among regions, Asia and the Pacific exhibit the highest proportion of EBMOs (60 per cent) with policies or plans aimed at advancing women in management positions. Conversely, the Americas have the lowest share of EBMOs (19 per cent) with such initiatives in place to promote women into managerial roles.

► **Figure 14. “Does your organization have policies and/or plans to recruit or promote women into managerial positions?”, results by region**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> This question was asked of the 45 per cent of EBMOs that the number of women managers decreased or stayed the same in the last two years.

**Despite the significant presence of female staff members, women remain underrepresented in managerial roles within EBMOs, highlighting the occurrence of the “leaky pipeline” phenomenon.**

The leaky pipeline refers to a trend where the representation of women decreases as one ascends through higher management levels. Consequently, women’s underrepresentation becomes more pronounced at the upper echelons of management within EBMO Secretariats. This trend is evident in the data, as the proportion of EBMOs with 40 to 60 per cent women decreases with increasing seniority (see table 3). While nearly 40 per cent of EBMOs have achieved gender balance at the staff level, this proportion diminishes significantly at the management and board levels, with only 28 per cent and 9 per cent of EBMOs respectively achieving gender balance. This pattern is consistent with the findings from the 2017 survey.

► **Table 3. Gender balance at different levels in EBMOs, 2017 and 2023 survey results**

| EBMOs with a representation of 40 to 60 per cent of women | 2017 | 2023 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| On boards of directors                                    | 8%   | 9%   |
| In management                                             | 24%  | 28%  |
| As staff members                                          | 36%  | 39%  |

Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

► **Box 1. Empowering change: EBMO initiatives for gender equality and diversity in Asia and the Pacific**

In the realm of gender equality and diversity initiatives, EBMOs in Asia and the Pacific region emerge as global leaders, implementing multifaceted strategies to address these issues comprehensively. A notable aspect is the region’s proactive approach to fostering a gender-inclusive internal structure, offering member services, and engaging in policy advocacy on gender equality.

Asia and the Pacific leads the charge with 67 per cent of EBMOs designating a focal person, team, or department specifically dedicated to advancing gender equality and diversity. Moreover, six out of 10 EBMOs in this region have established policies or plans aimed at promoting women into management roles. These concerted efforts have yielded positive outcomes, with 67 per cent of EBMOs reporting an increase in the number of women in managerial positions over the past two years.

In terms of member-focused initiatives, Asia and the Pacific again leads with 56 per cent of EBMOs having standing committees or councils dedicated to promoting gender equality and diversity. These formal platforms play a vital role in addressing policy concerns and fostering gender parity within the membership. Additionally, seven out of 10 EBMOs in the region have members representing women’s interests, indicating a strong commitment to advocating for gender equality within the organization.

Furthermore, more than half of EBMOs in Asia and the Pacific regularly conduct various initiatives to promote gender equality, including supporting associations of businesswomen, organizing promotional events for women business owners, providing training on workplace gender equality, and hosting social dialogue events on gender issues. These proactive measures underscore the region’s dedication to fostering gender equality and diversity across multiple fronts.

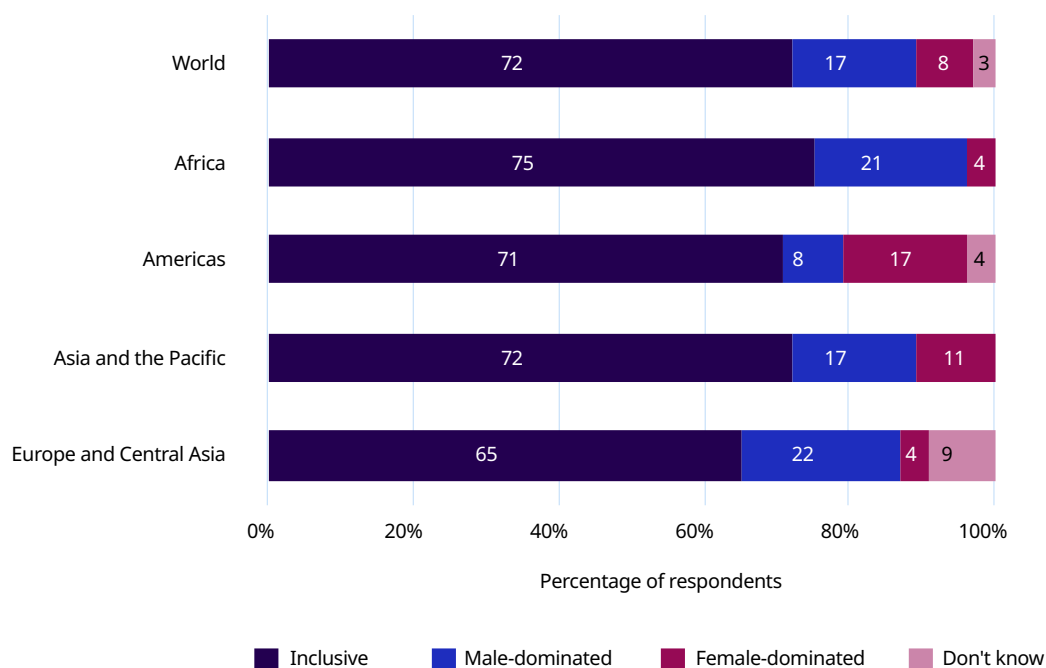
## 2.4. Shaping values: Understanding organizational cultures in EBMOs

Organizational culture encompasses a set of values, behaviors, and practices within an organization, whether consciously or unconsciously established.<sup>9</sup> Typically, it is shaped and reinforced by CEOs, managers, or board members who communicate and exemplify these values to staff members. While cultural practices and behaviors may not always be explicitly stated, they significantly influence the sense of inclusion and appreciation felt by staff and managers within EBMOs.

In the context of gender inclusivity, **most EBMOs are perceived to have a gender-inclusive organizational culture**. According to the survey findings, 72 per cent of EBMOs reported having an inclusive culture, while 17 per cent described their culture as male-dominated, and 8 per cent as female-dominated (see figure 15).

Interestingly, the distribution of organizational culture across regions showed relatively similar trends. However, Africa and Europe-Central Asia had the highest proportions of EBMOs reporting a male-dominated culture, standing at 21 and 22 per cent, respectively. On the other hand, the Americas exhibited the highest proportion of EBMOs with a female-dominated culture, accounting for 17 per cent. These variations highlight the diversity of organizational cultures within EBMOs and their impact on workplace dynamics.

► **Figure 15. “How would you assess your organizational culture on gender equality and diversity?”, results by region**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Westerman et al, 2019.

### 3. Driving change: EBMO initiatives for gender equality and diversity

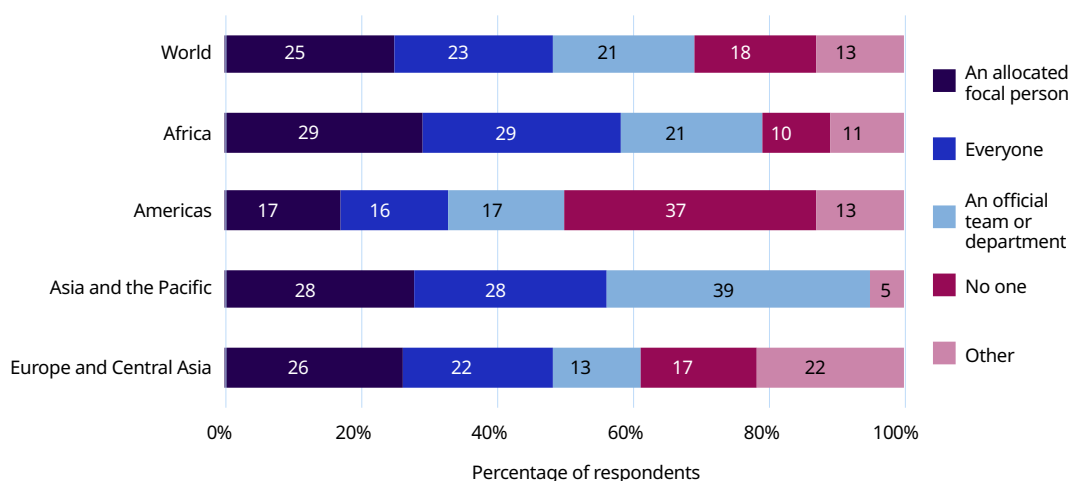
EBMOs play a pivotal role in promoting women into leadership and management positions within their organizations. This involves implementing various measures, such as assigning specific responsibilities for advancing gender equality and diversity across staff, managers, and boardrooms. Additionally, EBMOs can establish formal mechanisms, policies, or initiatives to support work-life balance and gender equality at both organizational and operational levels.

**A majority of EBMOs have dedicated staff responsible for promoting gender equality and diversity initiatives.** Nearly equal proportions of EBMOs have designated either a focal person (25 per cent) or an official team or department (21 per cent) to oversee these efforts. Moreover, in about a quarter of EBMOs, the responsibility for gender equality and diversity is shared among all staff members. In 13 per cent of EBMOs, these responsibilities fall on other staff members, including Human Resources (HR) personnel or committees operating externally to the EBMO secretariat (see figure 16).

**EBMOs have increasingly assigned gender equality and diversity responsibilities in their organizations.** Over the years, EBMOs have increasingly prioritized gender equality and diversity within their organizations. In 2023, only 17 per cent of EBMOs reported having no designated personnel responsible for these efforts, a significant decrease from 36 per cent in 2017. Moreover, there has been a notable rise in the allocation of focal persons (15 to 25 per cent) and official teams or departments (6 to 21 per cent) dedicated to gender equality and diversity initiatives over the same period.

Regionally, there is considerable variation in the proportions of EBMOs with designated focal persons, teams, or departments. Asia and the Pacific lead with the highest percentage (67 per cent), followed by Africa (50 per cent), Europe and Central Asia (39 per cent), and the Americas (33 per cent). These regional differences underscore the diverse approaches taken by EBMOs to address gender equality and diversity within their respective contexts.

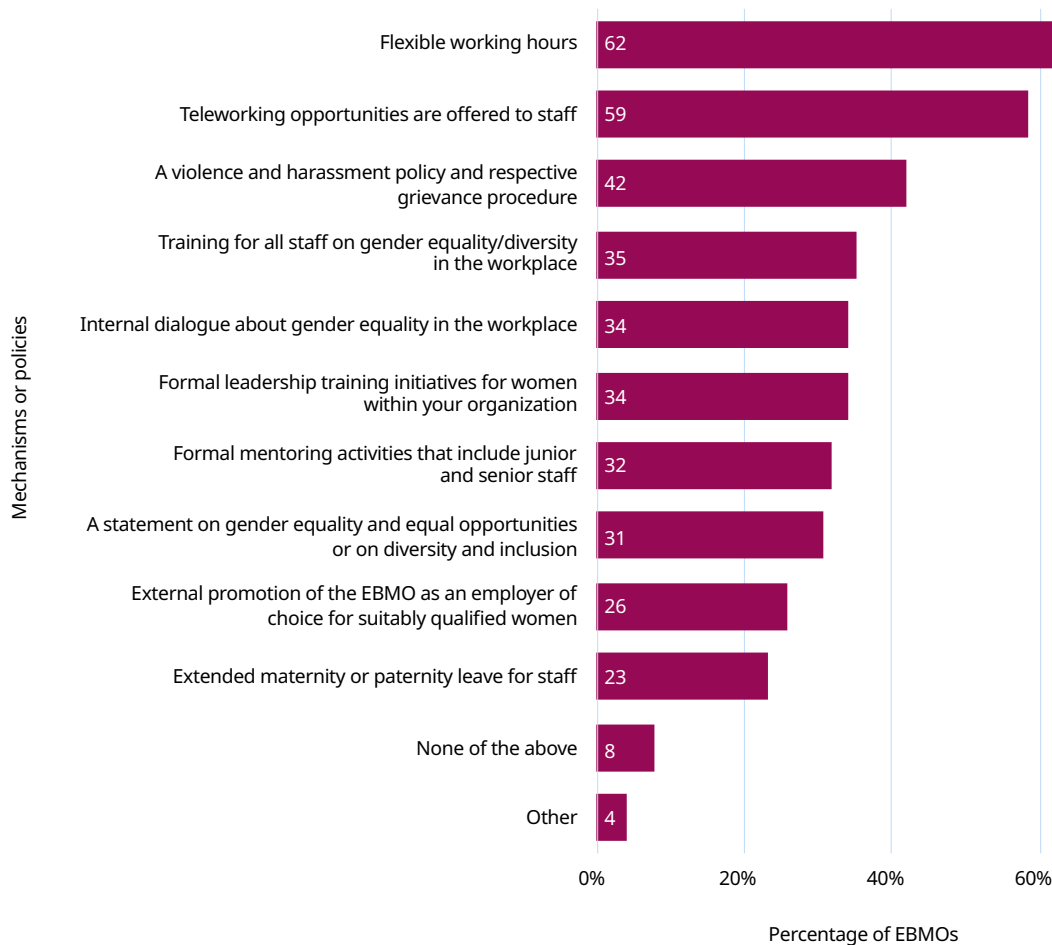
► **Figure 16. “Who in the EBMO is responsible for working on gender equality and diversity?”, results by region**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

**EBMOs employ diverse strategies to foster work-life balance and promote greater gender equality within their organizations.** According to EBMOs, the most prevalent mechanisms for achieving these goals include flexible working hours (62 per cent), teleworking (59 per cent), and the implementation of policies addressing violence and harassment (42 per cent) (see figure 17).

► **Figure 17. “Does your EBMO have any of the following mechanisms/policies/initiatives to support work-family balance and greater equality internally?”, all results**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

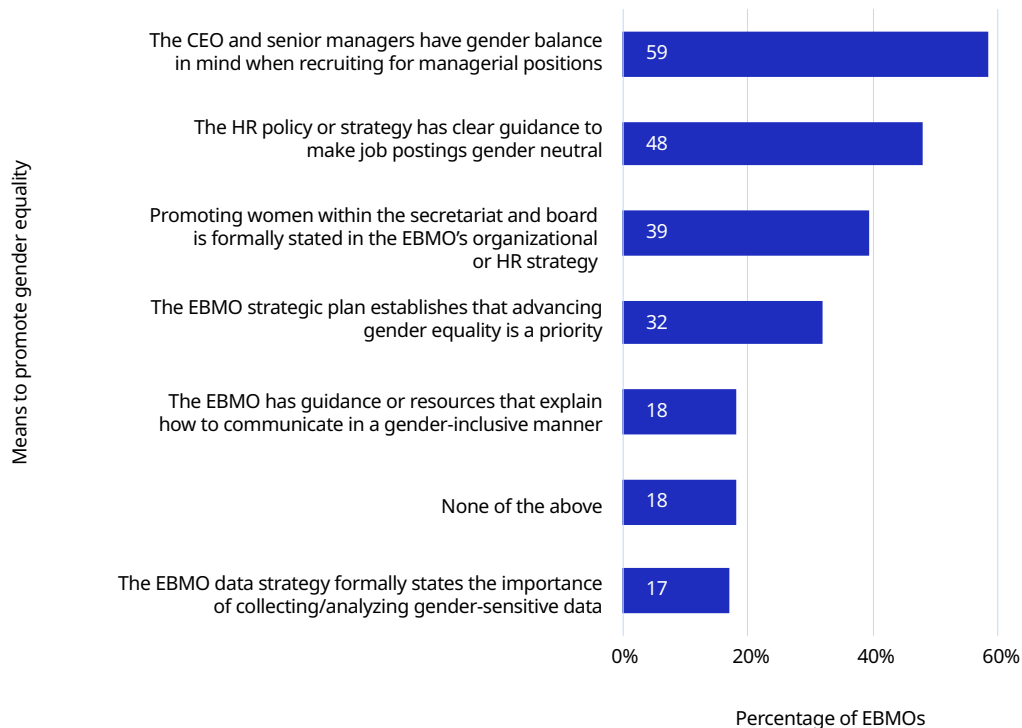
Below are key mechanisms aimed at supporting work-life balance and enhancing equality across various regions:

- Flexible working hours and teleworking opportunities emerge as the most prevalent mechanisms across all regions. Notably, four out of five EBMOs in Europe and Central Asia offer teleworking opportunities to their staff.
- More than half of EBMOs (56 per cent) in Asia and the Pacific have implemented violence and harassment policies, compared to slightly lower shares in the Americas (42 per cent), Africa, and Europe and Central Asia (39 per cent).

- In Asia and the Pacific, over half of EBMOs (56 per cent) provide mentoring activities for both junior and senior staff, whereas the proportions are slightly lower in Africa (29 per cent), Europe and Central Asia (26 per cent), and the Americas (21 per cent).
- Promoting the EBMO as an employer of choice for qualified women is a focus for four out of 10 EBMOs in Africa, with comparatively lower proportions in Asia and the Pacific (28 per cent), Europe and Central Asia (22 per cent), and the Americas (13 per cent).

Furthermore, EBMOs employ diverse strategies to promote gender equality within their operations. In the majority of EBMOs (60 per cent), the CEO and senior managers prioritize gender balance when recruiting for managerial positions. Other strategies include ensuring gender-neutral job postings through HR policies or strategies (48 per cent) and formally stating the promotion of women within the secretariat and board in the EBMO's organizational or HR strategy (39 per cent) (see figure 18).

► **Figure 18. “Does your EBMO do any of the following to promote gender equality in its operations?”, all results**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

The primary means to promote gender equality in EBMO operations in different regions are as follows:

- In Europe and Central Asia, seven out of 10 EBMOs ensure that senior managers prioritize gender balance when hiring for managerial positions, representing the highest proportion globally. This measure is reported by 68 per cent of EBMOs in Africa, 50 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, and 46 per cent in the Americas.
- Six out of 10 EBMOs in the Asia-Pacific region have clear guidelines to create gender-neutral job postings, compared to half of EBMOs in Africa, and four out of 10 EBMOs in both the Americas and Europe and Central Asia.

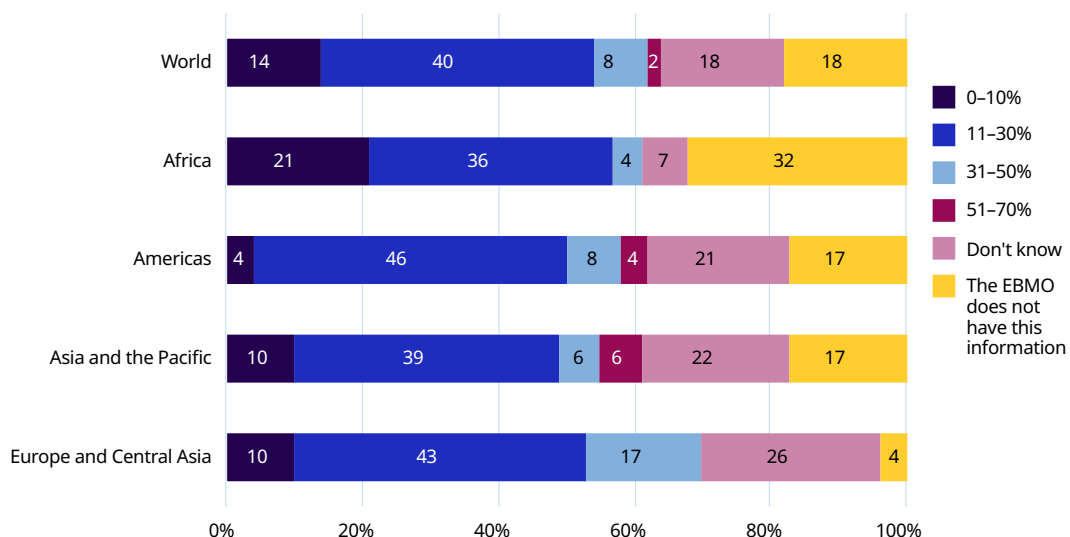
- The highest proportion of EBMOs formally stating women's promotion in their organizational policies comes from the Asia-Pacific region (56%), followed by Africa (46%), Europe and Central Asia (43%), and the Americas (17%).
- Four out of 10 EBMOs in Europe and Central Asia prioritize advancing gender equality in their organizational strategic plans, compared to one-third of EBMOs in Africa, and one-quarter of EBMOs in both the Americas and Europe and Central Asia.

## 4. EBMO advocacy efforts and member services

EBMOs play a crucial role in fostering workplace gender diversity and equality both within their membership and the broader business community. They actively support member enterprises and associations dedicated to assisting women business leaders and managers. Additionally, EBMOs advocate for their members to prioritize women's issues and provide them with services aimed at improving gender balance across all organizational levels.

**Over the past six years, there has been a notable increase in the representation of female-led enterprises within EBMO memberships.** Approximately 40 per cent of EBMOs surveyed reported that 11 to 30 per cent of their direct enterprise members are led by women, marking a significant rise from 15 per cent in 2017. However, despite these advancements, about one-third of EBMOs in the 2023 survey either lacked information on the proportion of women-led enterprise members or did not have this data available (see figure 19). This lack of systematic data collection to measure progress on gender diversity and equality remains a prevalent issue affecting EBMOs worldwide, particularly in Africa, where it is reported by 32 per cent of EBMOs.

► **Figure 19. "What estimated percentage of your EBMO's direct enterprise members are headed/led by women?", results by region**

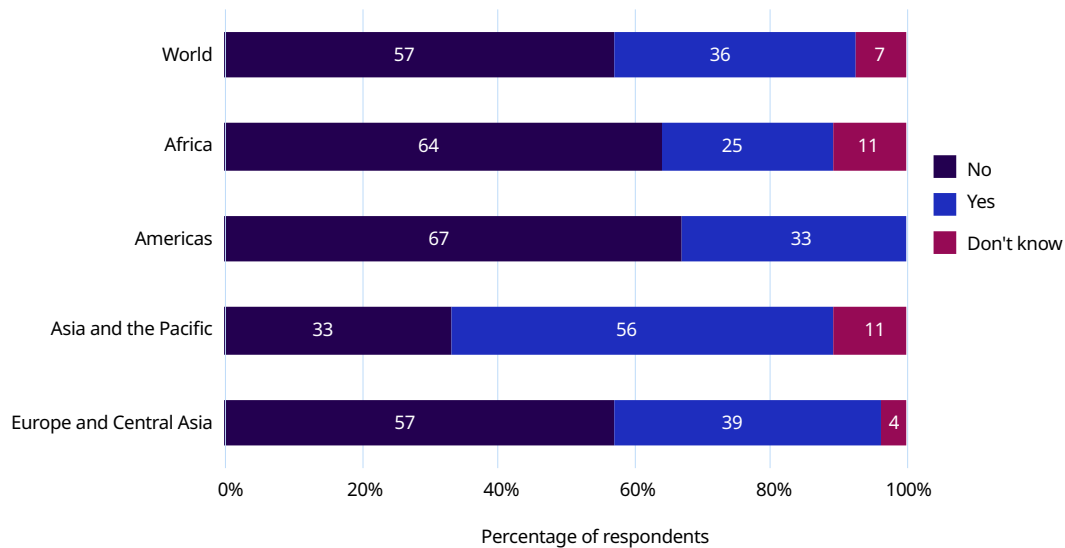


Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

Standing committees or councils are typically established to address specific policy issues or concerns, facilitating member engagement and contributing to the overall work and perspectives of EBMOs.<sup>10</sup> However, a significant portion of EBMOs (57 per cent) currently do not have such committees or councils dedicated to promoting gender equality and diversity. Approximately one-third of EBMOs do have these specialized bodies (see figure 20), and notably, this proportion has remained unchanged over the past six years.

Among the regions, Asia and the Pacific stand out with the highest representation of EBMOs reporting the existence of standing committees or councils focusing on gender equality and diversity. Conversely, Africa exhibits the lowest representation of EBMOs with such committees or councils.

► **Figure 20. “Does your EBMO have a standing committee/council that specifically focuses on promoting gender equality and diversity?”, results by region**

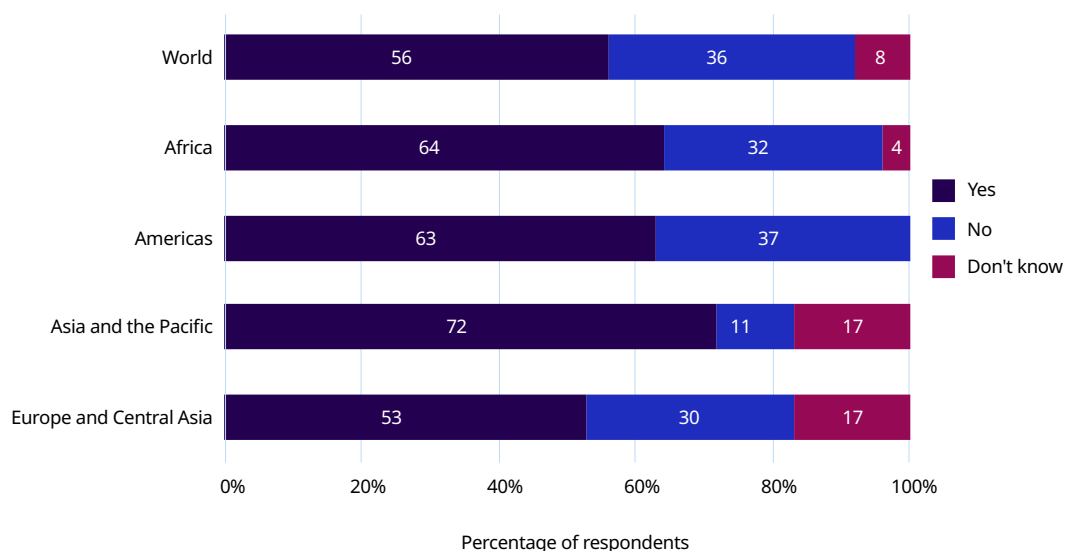


Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

More than half of EBMOs surveyed globally have members specifically representing the interests of women (see figure 21). Moreover, there has been a notable increase in the overall proportion of EBMOs with members representing women's interests over the past six years, rising from 39 per cent in 2017.

<sup>10</sup> ILO, 2021.

► **Figure 21. “Do any of your EBMO’s members specifically represent the interests of women?”, results by region**

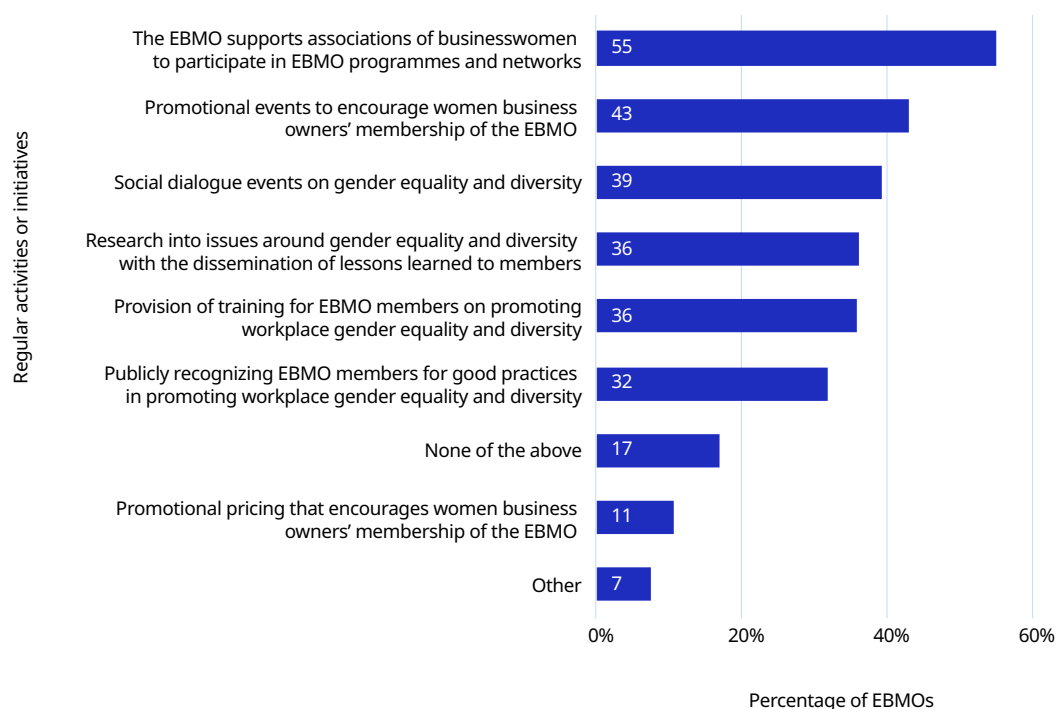


Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

Across regions, the majority of EBMOs have members representing women’s interests, with varying shares. Notably, the highest proportion of EBMOs with members advocating for women’s interests is found in Asia and the Pacific (72 per cent), followed by Africa (64 per cent), the Americas (63 per cent), and Europe and Central Asia (53 per cent).

In the 2023 survey, EBMOs were queried about regular activities or initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality among their members. Among these initiatives, the most prevalent, reported by 55 per cent of EBMOs, is supporting businesswomen’s associations to engage in EBMO programs and networks (see figure 22). Additionally, other strategies include hosting promotional events to encourage female business owners to join EBMO membership (43 per cent), organizing social dialogue events on gender equality and diversity (39 per cent), conducting research on gender equality issues (36 per cent), and providing members with training on workplace gender equality and diversity (36 per cent).

► **Figure 22. “Are there any initiatives and activities that take place regularly that target members and are aimed at promoting gender equality?”, all results**



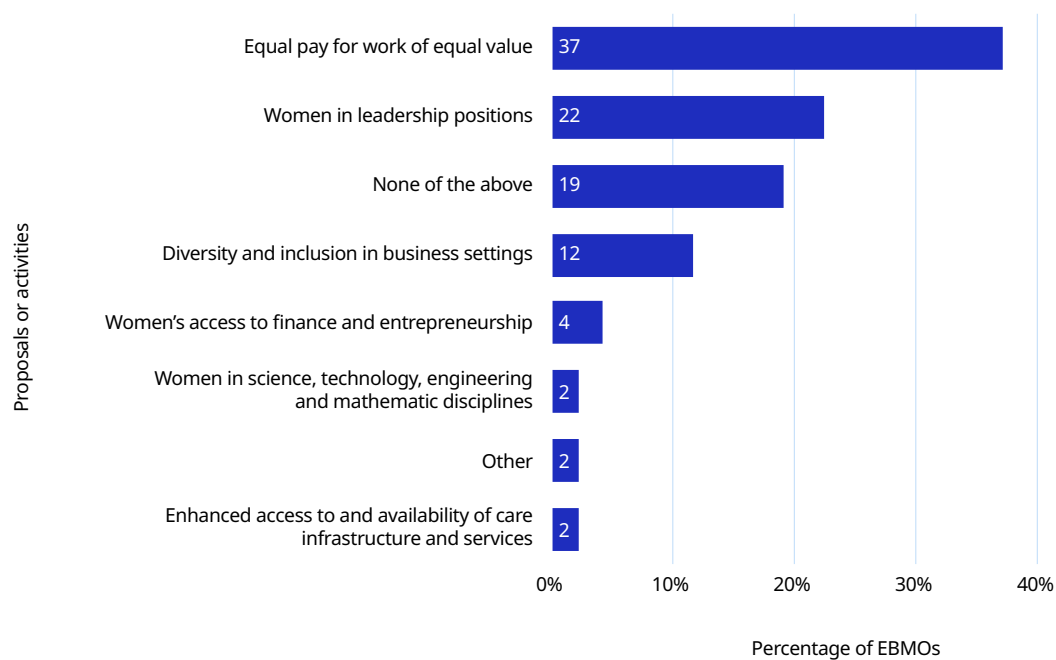
Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

Key regular initiatives and activities implemented by EBMOs across different regions are below:

- In Asia and the Pacific, two-thirds of EBMOs host promotional events to encourage business owners to join their EBMOs as members. In comparison, 43 per cent of EBMOs in Africa and Europe and Central Asia, and 25 per cent of EBMOs in the Americas undertake similar initiatives.
- More than half of EBMOs (56 per cent) in Asia and the Pacific reported holding social dialogue events on gender equality and diversity, compared to about a third of EBMOs in other regions.
- Approximately half of EBMOs in Asia and the Pacific, as well as Europe and Central Asia, conduct research on gender equality and diversity. This contrasts with about a third of EBMOs in the Americas and only 2 out of 10 EBMOs in Africa.

Equal pay for work of equal value emerges as the primary advocacy issue concerning gender equality and diversity among EBMOs (see figure 23). A significant proportion, over a third, of EBMOs have submitted policy proposals or undertaken advocacy initiatives in support of equal pay for work of equal value. Additionally, other prevalent areas of focus include advocating for women in leadership positions (22 per cent) and promoting diversity and inclusion in business settings (19 per cent). However, it is noteworthy that despite these efforts, almost 20 per cent of EBMOs did not engage in submitting proposals or conducting advocacy activities to support gender equality and diversity issues.

► **Figure 23. “Has your EBMO submitted policy proposals to the government or conducted advocacy activities supporting any of the following issues?”, all results**



Source: ILO-ACT/EMP and IOE survey on women leaders in EBMOs, 2023.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this survey report provides a comprehensive assessment of women's representation within EBMOs across various critical dimensions. The findings underscore regional variations in the efforts and outcomes related to gender diversity within EBMOs. Across different regions, varying levels of leadership commitment and organizational practices were observed, reflecting cultural, economic, and regulatory contexts. In regions where there is strong leadership commitment to gender diversity, exemplified by active engagement from board members and senior leaders, organizations tend to demonstrate more dedicated policies and practices aimed at promoting gender equality. This includes enhancing women's representation not only within EBMO staff, management and boards but also within their member services and policy engagements.

Looking ahead, continuous improvement remains imperative. EBMOs are encouraged to regularly review and update their gender equality and diversity policies and practices based on feedback and assessments.<sup>11</sup> By fostering collaboration with external partners and sharing good practices, EBMOs can collectively advance gender diversity efforts across the sector. Ultimately, through sustained commitment and concerted efforts in these areas, EBMOs can drive meaningful change and create inclusive environments where women thrive in boards and senior management roles, contributing to broader organizational success and societal progress towards gender equality.

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<sup>11</sup> An EBMO self-assessment questionnaire with aims to enhance women's representation in boards and executive management is available in Annex 2.

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## ► Annex 1. Countries covered in the 2023 survey by region

| Region                  | Countries                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Africa                  | Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Uganda |
| Americas                | Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay                         |
| Arab States             | Jordan, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Asia and the Pacific    | Bangladesh, China, Cook Islands, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vanuatu, and Viet Nam                                             |
| Europe and Central Asia | Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine                          |

## ► Annex 2. EBMO self-assessment questionnaire on increasing women's representation in boards and executive management

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This self-assessment questionnaire is designed to assist EBMOs in evaluating their initiatives and advancements toward promoting gender equality and diversity in their boards and executive management. EBMOs are encouraged to regularly review these questions, preferably annually. Regularly revisiting and updating the self-assessment tool can help track progress and ensure ongoing commitment to gender diversity initiatives. The assessment outcomes should be utilized to formulate an action plan. This plan should outline specific improvements to the organization's policies and practices aimed at enhancing women's representation in both the EBMO's board and executive management.

### 1. Leadership commitment

Assessing whether the EBMO demonstrates clear public commitment and active engagement from board members and senior leaders in promoting gender diversity.

- Does your EBMO have a clear and public commitment to increasing gender diversity in boards and senior management?
- Are board members and senior leaders actively engaged in promoting and supporting gender diversity initiatives?

### 2. Policies and practices

Examining the presence and consistency of policies promoting gender diversity, such as voluntary targets for women in boards and executive management.

- Does EBMO have policies in place to promote gender diversity, such as voluntary targets for women representation in boards and executive management?
- Are these policies consistently implemented and enforced across all levels of the organization?

### 3. Recruitment and selection processes

Evaluating whether recruitment processes minimize bias and actively consider diverse candidates, alongside provision of unconscious bias training.

- Are recruitment and selection processes designed to mitigate bias and promote diversity, including the consideration of diverse candidates for board and senior management positions?
- Is unconscious bias training provided to those involved in recruitment and selection processes?

### 4. Retention and advancement

Checking if equal career and professional development opportunities are provided for women, supported by mentorship and sponsorship programmes.

- Does your EBMO provide equal opportunity for career development and professional development for women?

- ▶ Are mentorship and sponsorship programmes available to support career progression of women within your EBMO?

## 5. Workplace culture and inclusivity

Reviewing initiatives fostering an inclusive culture and addressing gender-based discrimination and harassment within the EBMO.

- ▶ Does your EBMO foster a culture of inclusivity and respect, where all employees feel empowered and valued to contribute?
- ▶ Are initiatives in place to address and prevent gender-based discrimination and violence and harassment in the EBMO?

## 6. Transparency and accountability

Assessing if the EBMO tracks and reports gender diversity metrics and holds leaders accountable for achieving gender diversity goals.

- ▶ Does your EBMO regularly track and report gender diversity metrics, including the representation of women in boards and senior management?
- ▶ Are leaders held accountable for progress towards gender diversity goals?

## 7. External engagement and collaboration

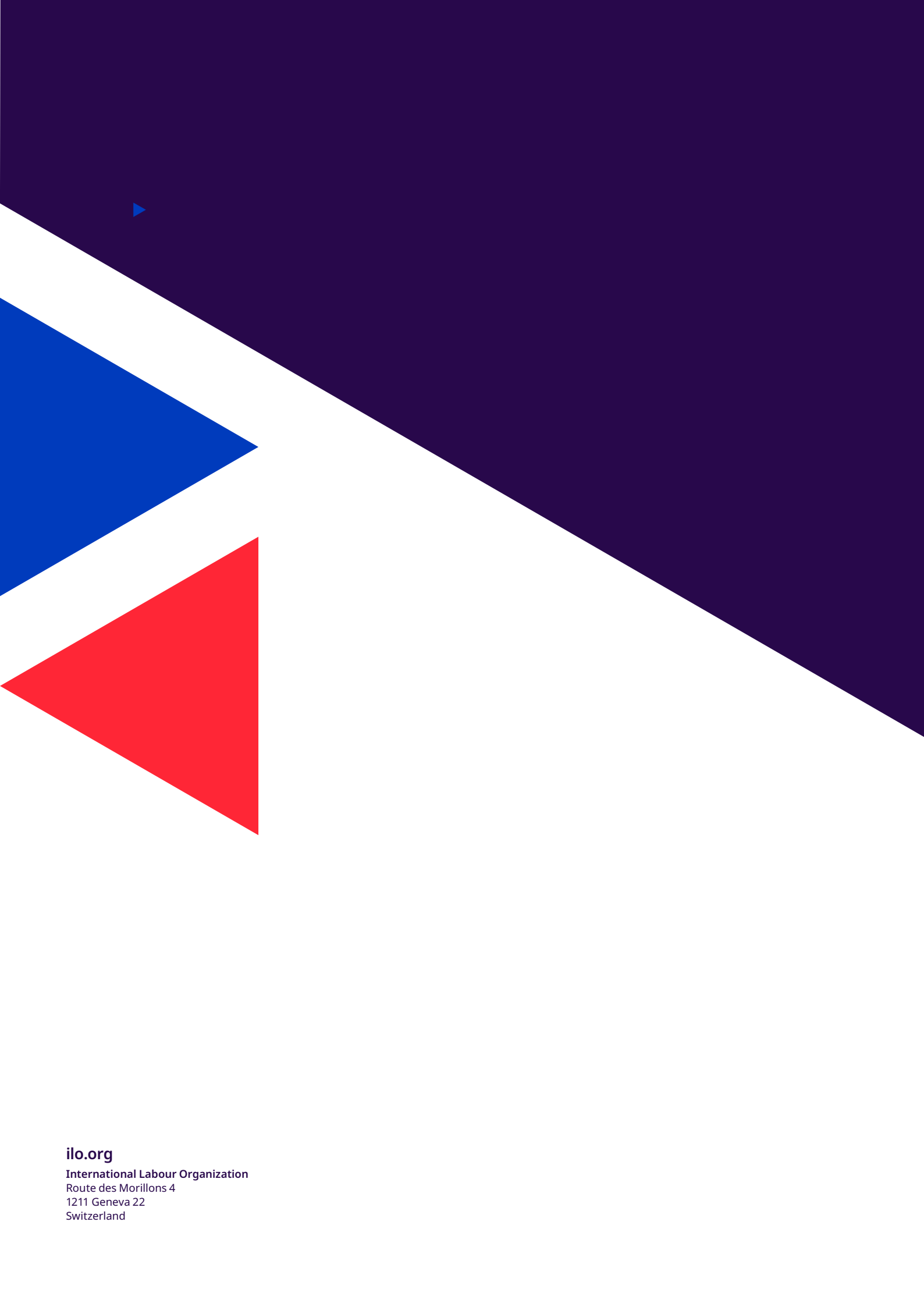
Examining involvement in gender equality services, collaboration with advocacy groups, and sharing best practices on gender diversity.

- ▶ Does your EBMO offer regular member services on gender equality and diversity?
- ▶ Does your EBMO engage or collaborate with other partners, such as women's advocacy groups, business associations, academia or government agencies to advance gender diversity initiatives?
- ▶ Are best practices and lessons learned on gender equality and diversity shared among EBMO members and other partners?

## 8. Continuous improvement

Ensuring regular review and updating of gender equality policies and practices, with a focus on ongoing innovation and improvement in promoting gender diversity in boards and executive management.

- ▶ Does your EBMO regularly review and update its gender equality and diversity policies and practices based on feedback and evaluation?
- ▶ Is there a process in place for continuous improvement and innovation in promoting gender diversity in boards and executive management?



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