

# The Changing Face of Women and Sustainability



The leadership role women play in advancing sustainability is multifaceted — it's evident in how **female consumers are exercising their buying power**, as well as in how **female sustainability executives are charting the course** toward a more resilient and regenerative future.

## Women Driving Change

Women have traditionally placed a greater importance on sustainability, and that's only been amplified by the pandemic. Women make most purchasing decisions and put their wallets behind issues they care about most, with environmental impact being a key consideration. **The data is even stronger for BIPOC women**, who are 12% more likely than white women to say their awareness of how their choices impact the environment has gone up over the past year.<sup>1</sup>

- Women are more likely to consider the environmental impact of food, housing and brand choices.<sup>1</sup>
- Environmental sustainability is one of the top 3 societal issues women want brands to help address.<sup>1</sup>
- 83% of women believe that companies need to collaborate with others to solve environmental problems.<sup>1</sup>

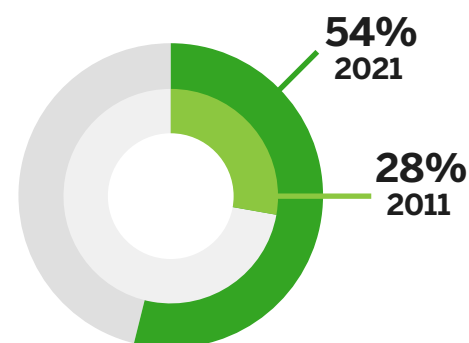


85% of women say they are aware of how their choices impact the environment.<sup>1</sup>

## A Seat at the Table

There are increasingly more **women in executive roles focused on citizenship and sustainability**, but **there is a clear need to make space for more racial diversity**, with only 16% of U.S.-based sustainability professionals identifying as a race other than white.<sup>2</sup>

- Women are more likely to believe a Chief Sustainability Officer needs to embody specific types of leadership qualities, relative to other C-suite positions.<sup>1</sup>
- People say Chief Sustainability Officers, more so than other "C-suite" positions, must be collaborative, adaptable, excellent communicators, inspirational and empathetic.<sup>1</sup>



Women now hold 54% of Chief Sustainability Officer positions among Fortune 500 companies, up from 28% since 2011.<sup>2</sup>

## Meeting Evolving Expectations

For brands and sustainability leaders alike, **the path forward must be rooted in deeper engagement** with employees, stakeholders and communities. Seventy-one percent of executives are focusing more on learning and engagement with women, Black and Indigenous people, and People of Color in employee and community settings.<sup>3</sup> That means **leaders must start prioritizing increased representation, collaboration and listening.**

**74%**  
of executives say  
being collaborative  
with employees and  
stakeholders is more  
important to them  
than it was a year ago.<sup>3</sup>

## Learn more by contacting [Purpose@we-worldwide.com](mailto:Purpose@we-worldwide.com).

Female-founded, female-led and fiercely independent, WE Communications is a full-service global communications agency. We work with clients in the midst of transformation and help them define what they stand for, show up with purpose and meet business goals.

We can't wait to meet you!

1. "Women & Sustainability Leadership": WE Communications and YouGov, September 2021, with 1,385 adults, segmenting out those who identify as female
2. "The Chief Sustainability Officer 10 Years Later: The rise of ESG in the C-suite": Weinreb Group Report, March 2021
3. "Rethinking the Purpose and Meaning of Leadership": WE Communications and YouGov, February 2021