

Boyden Survey Reveals Top HR Executives Say Increasing Diversity in C-Suite Is a Priority

Final installment of new global poll finds most HR executives consider diversity of views and methodologies more important than diverse backgrounds

NEW YORK and FRANKFURT, July 24, 2019 – Nearly seven in 10 (69%) of Chief Human Resources Officers and HR executives say increasing diversity in the C-suite is a priority, while 61% say their organizations are prioritizing efforts to increase diversity on their boards, according to a [new survey](#) released today by [Boyden](#), a premier talent and leadership advisory firm.

Part 3 of the report, [Boyden Senior Executive Survey: The CHRO and the Future Organization](#), titled *Diversity of People and Thought*, looks at global changes and opportunities including connections people strategy, approaches to the board and management, global workforce alignment, hiring and training.

“On diversity of people and thought, the results are mixed,” said [Robert Winterhalter, Ph.D.](#), Global Leader, Human Resources Practice and Managing Partner, Boyden Germany. “Our data show that the junior levels of organizations are diverse, but diversity numbers drop notably in the senior executive and C-suite ranks. In most organizations diversity is still regarded as a bottom-up challenge and not so much top-down.”

The survey included a global panel of 310 CHROs, senior HR executives and other HR decision makers across all industries in the United States, Germany, United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, Brazil and Australia. Additional key findings related to diversity of people and thought include:

Skills vs. Background

- Most (70%) of HR decision makers believe it’s most important to have diverse opinions, approaches and methodologies, regardless of background. Only 30% feel it is important to have teams that are diverse in terms of background.
- Almost all (97%) of HR decision makers say it is important for companies to diversify their talent pool and hire people from diverse industries with different skill sets; just under two-thirds (63%) say it is very important.

“The preference for ‘diversity of skills’ over ‘diversity of background’ is concerning and a potential risk,” notes [Steve Nilsen](#), a Partner of Boyden United States. “It is a temptation to stock the boardroom and C-suite with people with similar backgrounds, just from different corners of the business world. The true value of diversity is captured when team members approach the same challenge based on different backgrounds, thought processes, and problem-solving techniques.”

“Diversity is an important issue and has to be considered in a holistic sense, not as a process,” explains Gerhard Bohne, Country Divisional Head, [Bayer Crop Science Brazil](#). “I do not like the word ‘diversity.’ Rather, ‘inclusion’ is a more relevant issue. Unfortunately, we still see many organizations promoting diversity without inclusion.”

Current State

- Only 45% of HR execs report diverse C-suites. Just under half (47%) say that senior management is diverse, and only 19% say that senior management is extremely diverse. This number was highest again in Mexico, with 72% saying that senior management is extremely diverse, and lowest in Canada and the UK (34% each).
- Only 58% say that middle management is diverse, and 22% say middle management is extremely diverse.
- Nearly three-fourths (72%) of HR decision makers say that entry-level and junior members of their organizations are diverse. This number is slightly lower in Canada (60%) and Germany (62%).

"Gender diversity in business is still a major challenge," said Christian Gollasch, Ph.D., former Deputy CHRO, [Carlsberg Group](#). "Companies that want to increase the number of women across all ranks should focus first on their board and C-suite. A more equal distribution of men and women at the top level shows a credible commitment to gender diversity."

"At Boyden Australia, since 2014, 44% of all our executive search appointments have been women," said [Barry Bloch](#), a Partner of Boyden Australia. "This is a positive step towards achieving sustainable gender diversity at the most senior levels of leadership."

To view the first and second installments of the Boyden CHRO report, *Impact of AI and Technology* and *The CHRO Role in the C-Suite & Board*, please visit [Boyden.com](#).

About Boyden

Boyden is a premier leadership and talent advisory firm with more than 65 offices in over 40 countries. Our global reach enables us to serve client needs anywhere they conduct business. We connect great companies with great leaders through executive search, interim management and leadership consulting solutions. For further information, visit [www.boyden.com](#).

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