

How Reducing the Gender Gap Can Strengthen the Auto Industry



*This article is the first of a three-part series, *Women in Car Care*, which details the challenges and opportunities for women in the automotive industry. By exploring recent statistics and speaking to women currently in the industry, the series highlights the evolving landscape and the tremendous potential for women to shape the future of car care.*

The automotive industry plays a big role in the American economy—employing over 1.7 million people, and men have long outnumbered women in the automotive industry.

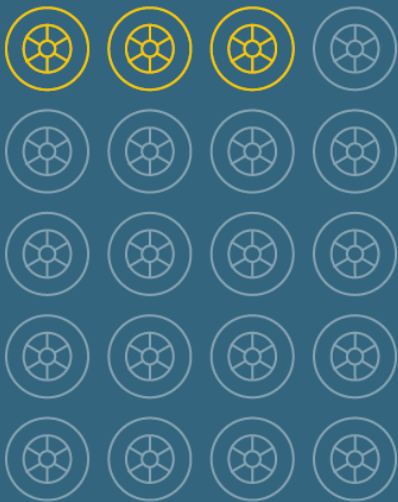
Though the balance has improved over time, statistics show that most positions within the field are still male-dominated. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

- Women make up only 12.1% of automotive repair and maintenance roles.
- Women workers are underrepresented in jobs at automotive parts and tire stores (15.1%) and automobile dealers (21.8%).
- Women account for just 29.3% of *all* manufacturing jobs, many of which are vital to the production and maintenance of vehicles nationwide.

Can you believe that only...

15.1%

of automotive parts
and tire store owners
are women



21.8%

of automobile dealers
are women



29.3%

of manufacturing jobs
are held by women



12.1%

of automotive repair
and maintenance
specialists are women

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022

Why The Gender Gap Matters Now More Than Ever

The gender gap in the automotive industry is an important issue to explore because:

1. There is currently a high demand for skilled labor. A study by the technology company MarketScale found that the demand for auto technicians outpaces supply by a ratio of nearly 5-to-1.

2. Auto leaders are retiring, and there may not be enough people with the right training and experience to take their place. By 2030, the manufacturing industry is expected to face a global shortage of approximately 2.1 million workers.

These labor issues don't just affect the automotive industry, but the American economy as a whole. Not enough workers means not enough cars, vans, and trucks to keep our population cruising down highways and getting people and goods to where they need to go.

And this is why understanding and closing the gender gap is important. Drawing from a larger pool of workers—including women—means more people to step into unfilled jobs and support the future of the industry, and manufacturing more generally.

Positive Impacts of Equity in the Auto Industry

A better gender balance in the auto industry can mean not only more jobs for women who need them, but increases to the talent pool and skill sets for the companies that employ them. Everybody wins.

Expanding Job Opportunities For Women

Right now, the majority of women (6 out of 10) work in a handful of fields: education and health; leisure and hospitality; and retail and wholesale trade. These silos limit their career possibilities and put them at risk when the industries hit hard times. As more women join the auto industry—and other industries where they've been historically underrepresented—they have additional, profitable career paths.

Strengthening the Auto Industry

Widening the talent pool through better policies to attract and retain women could add millions of potential employees to the automotive industry. The total number of women in the labor force continues to reach record highs, but there's still room to grow!

In a wide-reaching study that determined the in-demand skills that the manufacturing industry will need to stay competitive in the coming years, researchers found analytical, interpersonal, communication, collaboration and critical-thinking skills are among employers' most sought-after needs. According to Pew Research, women have long led in these types of skills in the workplace. Whether women transfer these existing skills into the automotive industry or are

trained to develop them through education and training, women are well positioned to support positive growth for the industry.

How Diverse Thinking Leads to Booming Industries

There's strong evidence that having more diversity drives innovation and economic growth.

Research has shown positive outcomes of establishing inclusive environments.

- **Diversity Can Help the Bottom Line:** Studies show that balanced work environments enhance innovation and reduce risk. In fact, companies with three female board members or other representative leadership experienced positive earnings gains. Fair policies can have financial benefits, and we'll see how much as the industry continues to evolve.
- **Diversity of Thinking Bolsters Innovation:** People think differently based on their unique identities, cultures, and experiences. Deloitte found that this diversity of thinking among company leaders can increase innovation by 20%, and can enhance problem-solving capabilities in groups to reduce risks by as much as 30%.

Better Together: A Bright Future

The automotive industry has always been a place of creativity and resilience, from the Ford Model T to modern electric vehicles. A workforce powered by men *and* women will ensure that the industry continues to meet the challenges of the global economy.

With women in the mix, we can ensure a stronger outlook for the automotive industry as a whole.

Looking to learn more about women in the auto industry? Continue to Part 2 of Synchrony's Women In Car Care series, "Strategies for Change: How to Get More Women Working in the Auto Industry" or jump ahead to Part 3, "The Role of Building Community for Women in the Auto Industry."