

# State of Women in Dairy



**2025 Report**



**IDFA**  
International  
Dairy Foods Association

# About the Study

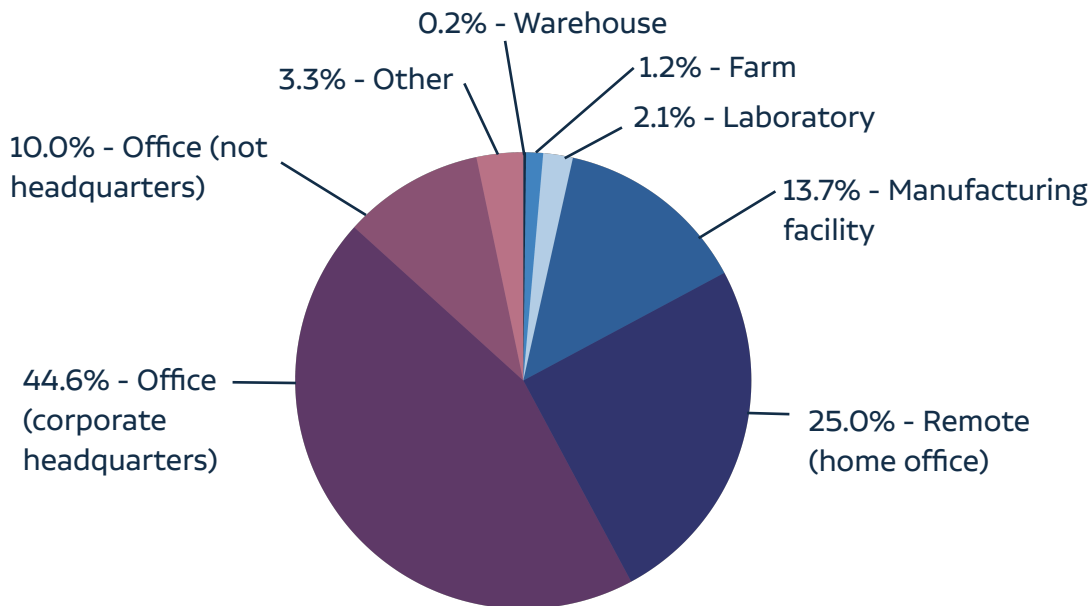
The 2025 State of Women in Dairy survey was conducted by the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Washington, D.C., between Oct. 16 – Nov. 7, 2024, to continue gender equality benchmarking for the U.S. dairy sector that began the prior year. Survey results were then used by IDFA to develop recommendations for possible industry actions to improve opportunity and work environments for women in the industry.

The survey was conducted online among a sample of 608 professionals across the dairy industry—519 women and 89 men of varying ages, job functions, and lengths of experience in the global dairy industry, including those working for processors, farmer cooperatives, farms, retailers, and suppliers.

Collection of demographic data including age groups, length of experience in the industry, and job function were used to represent these segments of the dairy industry workforce. IDFA made a concerted effort to reach demographics underrepresented by the survey that informed the 2024 report, in particular those who work in processing, warehousing and farm environments.

**608 Responses**

## Question: Please indicate your primary work environment.



The survey focused on three categories of questions: demographic data, experiential responses, and policy-based responses. The survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions for responses, with the latter focusing on perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes. Statements describing experiences working in the dairy industry were taken directly from long-answer responses submitted to the online survey.

# Executive Summary

## 2024 State of Women in Dairy Report

IDFA's first annual State of Women in Dairy Report in 2024 provided IDFA members and the dairy industry with seminal benchmarking data to inform industry programming, company policies and individual actions that improve opportunity for women in the dairy industry. The report focused on six key areas of impact: treatment; compensation; mentorship, allyship and support; opportunities for advancement; factors in recruiting and retention; and discrimination policies and gender equality goals.

The report found key strengths for improving gender equality within the industry, such as widespread anti-discrimination policies, access to flexible work schedules, and opportunities for advancement. More than half of female respondents indicated they are aiming for senior roles, with an additional 34% already in leadership positions. However, the survey also revealed significant gender disparities in career advancement, workplace experiences, pay equity, and mentorship. Women reported feeling overlooked, undervalued, underpaid, and that their ambitions may be misrepresented. The report also highlighted a need for stronger mentorship and allyship, as well as cultural shifts to ensure the effectiveness of existing policies and to remove persistent barriers to leadership.

## 2025 State of Women in Dairy Report

This year's survey focused on the same areas of impact as the 2024 survey, with new questions added at the request of IDFA members to explore key themes in greater depth. IDFA also made a more concerted effort to reach women and men working in "frontline" work environments—such as processing plants, warehousing facilities, and farms—and women ages 44 and under in the Generation Z and Millennial generations. The Key Takeaways and Recommendations sections in this report highlight the largest disparities in datasets, largest changes year-over-year, and noteworthy consistencies in datapoints year-over-year.

This year's report again shows areas of strength within the industry:

- **Women Are Taking Initiative to Lead:** More women (54%) reported asking for promotions compared to men (47%), with 62% of those women saying they received those promotions—a rate equal to men.
- **Opportunities for Advancement Are There:** Two-thirds of women (63%) expressed satisfaction with advancement opportunities within their organization.
- **Many Dairy Companies Are Investing:** Half of female respondents across generations acknowledge having access to programs that support their professional development and retention.

The report also found opportunities for improvement:

- **Perceived Imbalance in Opportunity for Advancement:** Nearly half of women (48%) believe they have fewer advancement opportunities than men.
  - **Gender Pay Gap:** Gender disparities in compensation remain a concern, with 55% of women reporting that their gender negatively impacts their pay, compared to only 5% of men.
  - **Access to Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and Mentoring Programs Are Limited:** 37% of respondents were unaware of ERGs for women and 56% reported no access to mentoring programs.

- **Experiences and Retention Among Female “Frontline” Workers:**<sup>1</sup> Female frontline workers report higher rates of experiencing gender inequality in promotions, compensation, and opportunities compared to other groups.
  - Three in ten (29%) female frontline workers have left a job in dairy due to lack of opportunities and promotion and an additional 16% tried to leave without finding other opportunities. Moving forward, nearly half (47%) of them would consider leaving their job if gender were playing a role in preventing their advancement.
- **Gen Z and Millennial Women Have a Bleaker Outlook for a Future In Dairy:** Gen Z and Millennial women are more likely to believe their gender will impact their ability to advance in their careers within the dairy industry than Gen X and Baby Boomer women and men of all generations.
  - Gen Z and Millennial women report career advancement (62%) and pay (62%) as their top reasons for considering leaving their job and the dairy industry, and women in these generations are significantly more motivated by compensation than their Gen X and Baby Boomer counterparts (43%).

These opportunities informed IDFA’s recommendations to the industry:

- **Create and/or Improve Advancement Opportunities for Women:** Implement unbiased hiring and promotion practices, enhance networking opportunities, and invest in leadership succession planning to provide women with visibility and accountability for their career growth.
- **Develop Support & Benefits Targeted to Populations Facing Greater Disparities:** The deeper dive into sub-demographics of female respondents made it clear that diverse women have diverse views, experiences, and needs. Dairy companies should address the unique needs of women of different ages, workplaces, and backgrounds through expanded maternity leave, flexible policies for family care, targeted training for advancement, and pay equity audits.
- **Grow ERGs and Formal Programs that Level the Playing Field for Women:** Invest in employee resource groups, mentorship initiatives, and professional development programs to support women and create pathways for equity and inclusion.
- **Foster “People First” Workplace Cultures and Communications:** Workplace policies are not enough. Cultivate empathetic, inclusive workplace cultures by prioritizing open communication, transparency in addressing concerns, and ensuring the availability and awareness of development opportunities.

Along with encouraging members and the broader industry to implement these recommendations, IDFA will incorporate them into its Women in Dairy network initiatives, member training and education programs, and future IDFA event programming.



<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this report, IDFA defines: A) “frontline workers” as those respondents who indicated they work in manufacturing facilities, warehouses, or farms; and B) “young women” as those aged 44 and under (also generally known as the “Millennial” and “Generation Z” generations), and women aged 45 and above as “Generation X” and “Baby Boomers”.