



# BLACK WOMEN

READY TO

# LEAD

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Our 2014 report on women and ambition—*Women Want Five Things*—reveals that, at the prime of their working lives, women want to be able to flourish; to excel; to reach for meaning and purpose; to empower others and be empowered; and to earn well.

## WHAT BLACK WOMEN WANT MOST FROM WORK:

- 91% Ability to flourish
- 89% Ability to excel
- 85% Ability to reach for meaning and purpose
- 81% Ability to earn well
- 73% Ability to empower others and be empowered

Black women want these things just as fervently as white women, if not more so—particularly the ability to earn well. They are 50% more likely than white women (81% vs. 54%) to say this is important in their careers. They're also more likely to cite financial independence as one of their top three goals.

However, on one critical front black and white women are extremely different. White women are skittish about wanting the top jobs in their organizations: they are ambivalent about wielding power. Black women on the other hand are shooting for those top jobs. They are much more likely than white women (22% vs. 8%) to aspire to a powerful position with a prestigious title.

Perhaps because they've been "leaning in" for generations, black women on track for leadership are more likely than their white sisters to see an executive position as the means to getting what they want from their careers. For example, much more so than white women without power, black women without power perceive a leadership role enabling them to flourish (26% vs. 14%) and to be empowered and empower others (22% vs. 12%). In addition to these goals, some 39% of black women (as compared to 29% of white women) identify as an important aspect of power the ability to shape the direction of their field or profession; 33% (as compared to 25% of white women) see as an important aspect of power the ability to guide others' career development; and 32% (as compared to 21% of white women) see as an important aspect of power the ability to exert influence on other powerful people.

Black women are  
**2.8 TIMES AS LIKELY**  
as white women to  
**ASPIRE TO A**  
**POWERFUL POSITION**  
with a prestigious title

Black women are far more confident (43% vs. 30%), too, that they can succeed in a position of power. And they're clear on what they want to achieve, personally, as powerful women: financial independence, but also personal growth and social justice. Fully 65% (vs. 34% of white women) want to be faithful to their religion, and 42% (vs. 27% of white women) want to make a significant contribution to their community.

Wanting power and honing their qualifications in order to be in line for it haven't yet delivered black women to the executive suite. They're more likely than white women (44% vs. 30%) to report feeling stalled, and to feel that their talents aren't recognized by their superiors (26% vs. 17%). Like white women, however, black women who do attain leadership roles enjoy more of what they want most from their careers.

**POWER GIVES BLACK WOMEN WHAT THEY WANT:**

**51**  
vs.  
**33** % report having meaning and purpose

**57**  
vs.  
**42** % say they're able to empower others and be empowered

**29**  
vs.  
**9** % report being able to earn well

(% WITH power vs. % WITHOUT power)

Those in power are far more likely than those without power to report having meaning and purpose (51% vs. 33%). They're also more likely to say they're able to empower others and be empowered (57% vs. 42%), and to earn well (29% vs. 9%).

CTI's research points to three ways in which companies might recognize and reward black women's leadership aspiration and readiness. As reported in our 2013 study, *Vaulting the Color Bar*, black women find it extremely difficult to win sponsorship: a mere 11% have sponsors, underscoring the imperative of giving highly qualified, ambitious black women greater visibility and connection opportunities with top executives. But fomenting sponsorship will require calling attention to leaders' unconscious bias—and addressing it. By training leaders to assess black female talent through a more enlightened lens, those currently in power can begin to harness the extraordinary drive, commitment, and experience these women bring to the workplace.

**BLACK WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY THAN WHITE WOMEN TO:**

**40**  
vs.  
**32** % have clear long-term goals

**43**  
vs.  
**30** % be confident they can succeed in a position of power

**But black women are also more likely than white women to report**

**FEELING STALLED**  
(44% vs. 30%)

**FEELING THEIR TALENTS AREN'T RECOGNIZED BY THEIR SUPERIORS**  
(26% vs. 17%)

The Center for Talent Innovation's flagship project is the Task Force for Talent Innovation, a private-sector consortium that helps organizations leverage their talent across the divides of gender, generation, geography, and culture. The more than 85 global corporations and organizations that constitute the Task Force—representing nearly 6 million employees and operating in 192 countries around the world—are united by an understanding that the full utilization of the talent pool is at the heart of competitive advantage and economic success.

For more information or to purchase the complete report, **BLACK WOMEN READY TO LEAD** visit [www.talentinnovation.org](http://www.talentinnovation.org)



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