

From the Denver Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/denver/news/2022/08/24/women-on-boards-of-colorado-public-companies.html>

Career & Workplace

Every Fortune 1000 company in Colorado had at least one woman on their board last year

Research shows that more women on boards benefits companies.



Image: Portra

A photo of empty conference table in board room. Chairs are arranged in row at office. Sunlight falling on furniture in work place.

PORTRA

By [Matt Wolfinger](#) – Data reporter, Denver Business Journal
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Women have long been underrepresented in the boardrooms of public companies. But a report released in March shows that Colorado companies are taking a step toward equality.

According to the [Women on Colorado Boards: State of the State analysis](#), a biannual report conducted by the Denver-based nonprofit Boardbound by Women's Leadership Foundation, 100% of Fortune 1000 companies headquartered in Colorado reported having at least one woman on their board last year – the first time those numbers were achieved since the foundation began releasing the report in 2011.

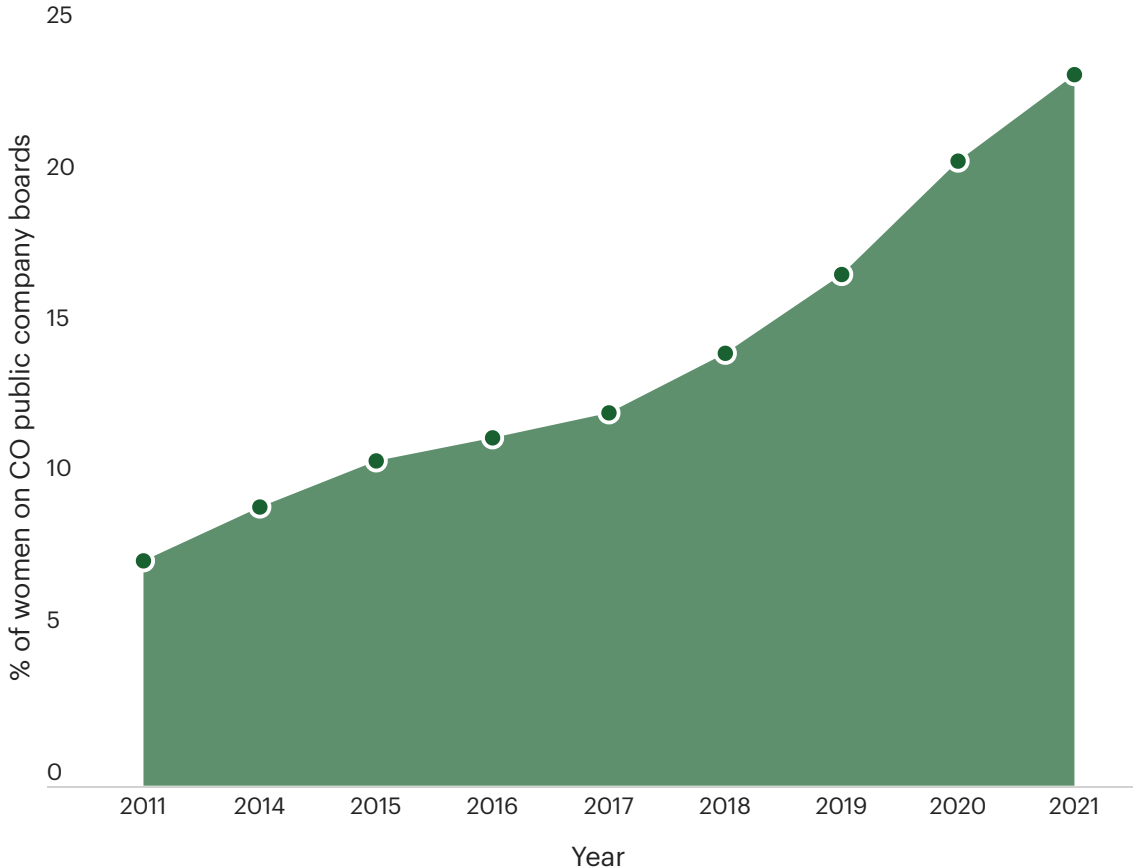
Boardbound works to open board positions to women, [a mission that's been shown to benefit companies](#). Gender-diverse boards are a draw for some women seeking work in their industry, and [data shows](#) having women on the board is associated with an increase in innovation, effective risk management practices and a trustworthy company image in the eyes of the public.

To put together its State of the State report, which includes data about 125 public companies in the state of Colorado, Boardbound analyzes proxy statement filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and audits information from company websites.

The report shares other promising data points. In 2011, just 44% of public company boards in Colorado included at least one woman. Within the last decade, that number has nearly doubled: 86% of public companies in the Centennial State now have one or more women on the board.

Legislation matters

House Joint Resolution 1017's provisions called for public companies to prioritize board diversity. Though the number of women joining the boards of public companies in Colorado had been slowly increasing since Boardbound began its analysis in 2011, the trend accelerated after the resolution passed in 2017.



Source: Boardbound by Women's Leadership Foundation

Boardbound credits that change in part to [a resolution passed by the Colorado Legislature](#) in March 2017, [House Joint Resolution 107](#). The resolution called for equitable and diverse representation on boards of the state’s public companies, including a provision calling for all Colorado public companies with nine or more board seats to have at least three women on their boards. Boards with between five and eight seats were encouraged to have at least two women at the table, and companies with fewer than five seats were encouraged to have at least one woman director.

The deadline to achieve those goals was December 2020, though the law didn’t carry a penalty for companies that failed to meet it.

According to Boardbound director [Jo Lynne Whiting](#), who has overseen the nonprofit's reports through the years, the resolution led to a notable uptick in the percentage of women on Colorado boards.

“We’d been going up about less than one percent per year [prior to House Joint Resolution 1017],” Whiting said. “Then we started going up some years three, some years four percent.”

The proportion of women on boards in the state doubled from 12% in December 2016 to 24% in December 2021. At the same time, all-male boards in Colorado decreased from 47% in December 2016 to 14% in December 2021.

Still, as of December 2021, only 45% of the Centennial State’s public companies have met the goals outlined in the resolution. That puts Colorado behind many of the 25 states with 20 or more Russell 3000 companies that Boardbound highlighted in its March report. Amongst those states, Colorado is ranked No. 19 in terms of gender diversity on public company boards.

California, which is ranked No. 1 on Boardbound's list, [passed a bill similar to Colorado's House Joint Resolution 107 in 2018](#), according to prior Denver Business Journal reporting. That bill included a [one-time penalty](#) of \$100,000 for companies that failed to comply with its requirements – with any subsequent violations increasing that fine to \$300,000.

To continue making progress in the Centennial State, Boardbound calls for companies to improve the pipeline for new board members by opening more executive officer positions to women.

In that arena, there is still work to be done: As of March, 16% of named executive officer positions for public companies in Colorado were held by women. Statewide, the total number of women CEOs for those public companies comes out to six, with seven named as the company's chief operating officer. Half of Colorado public companies have all-male executive officers named in their proxies.

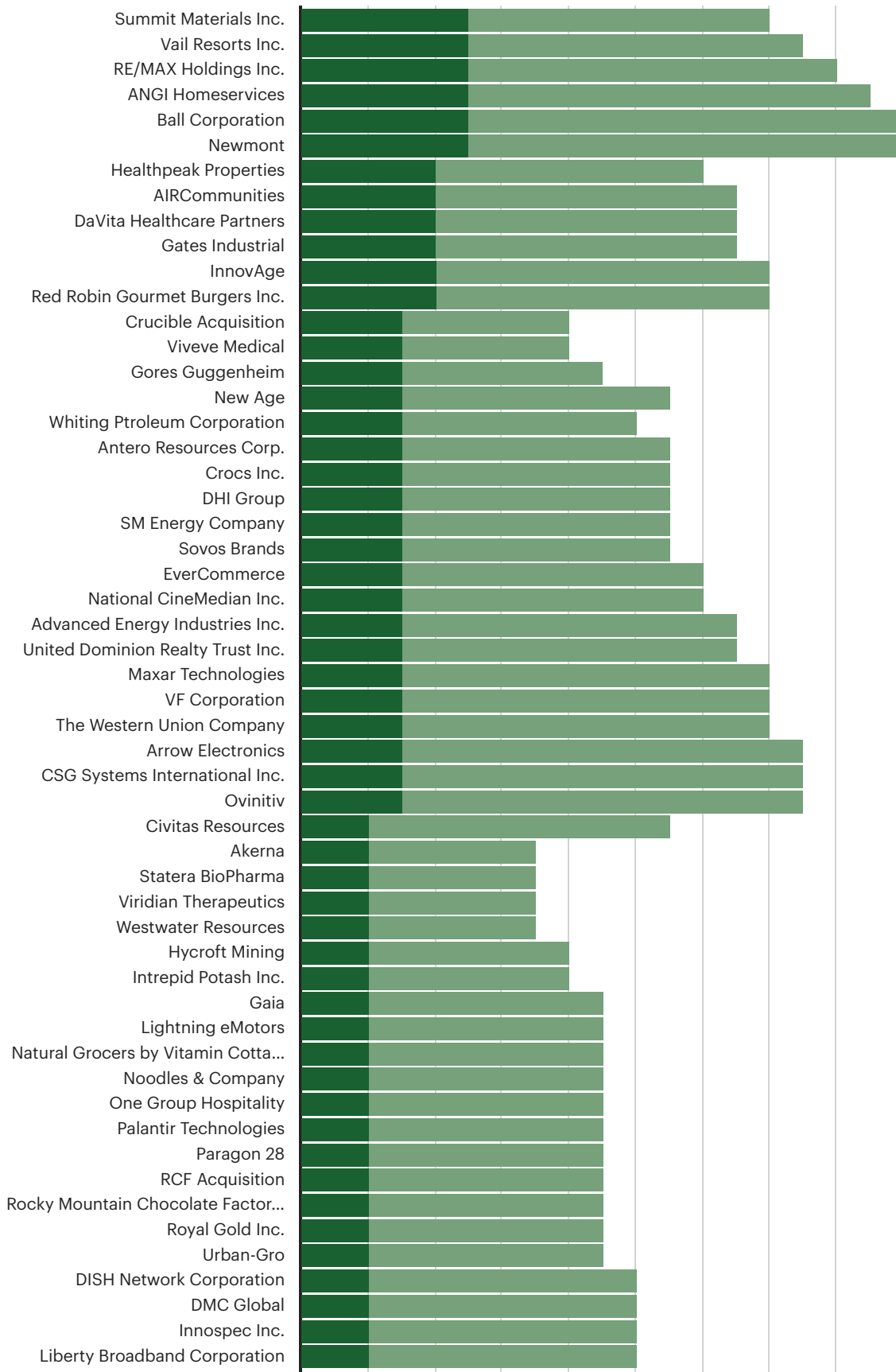
The report also highlights the need for more women of color on boards, though Whiting notes important gains have been made there, too.

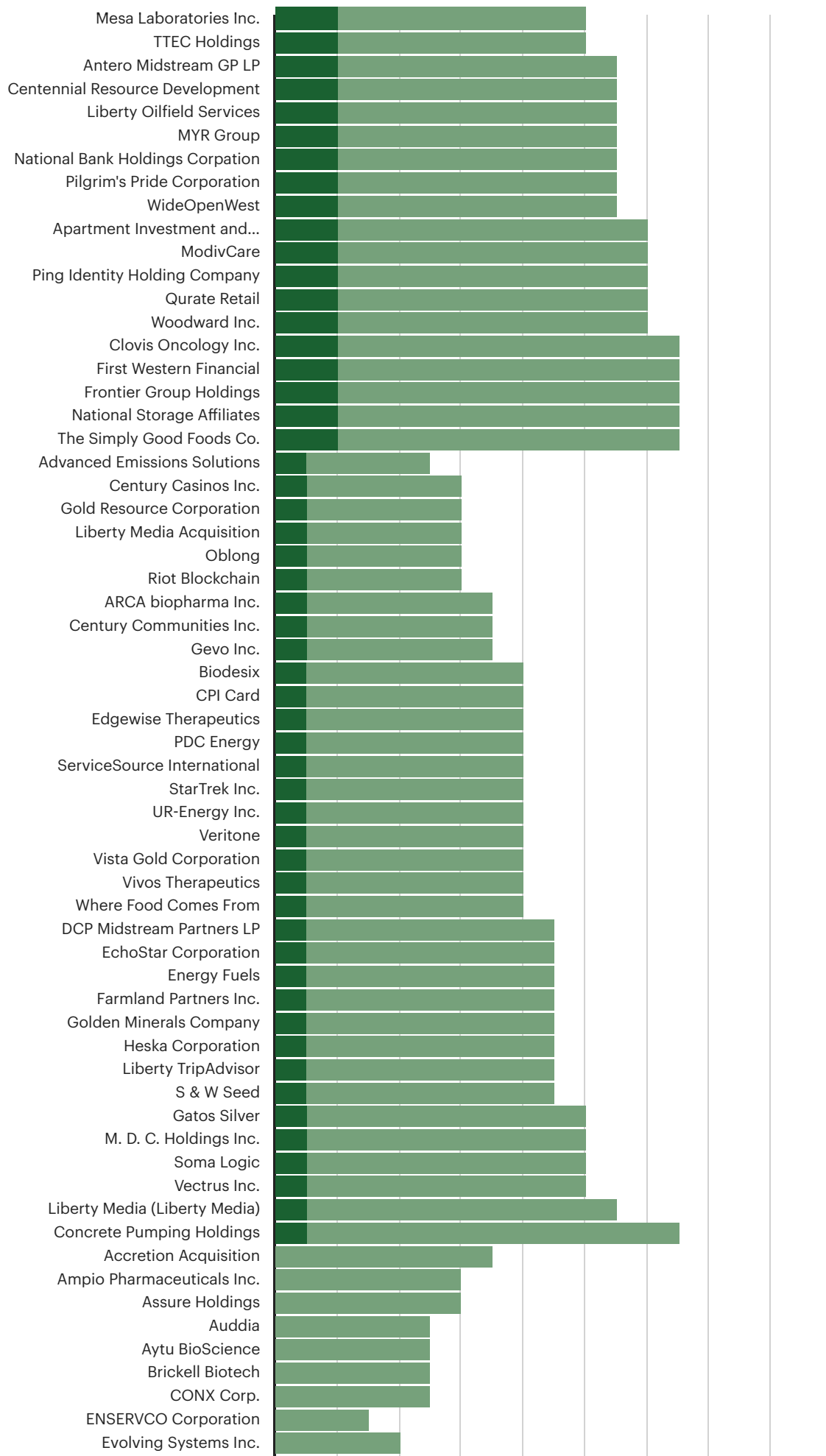
“The real breakthrough of 2021 was more women of color being reported,” Whiting told Denver Business Journal. “I could count the number of women of color on Colorado boards with one hand before.”

Boardbound reported that 20% of last year's new women directors were women of color, though it was not able to provide the total percentage of all Colorado-based public company board seats held by women of color.

Last year saw a slight improvement

Colorado public companies ranked by the number of women on boards as of December 31, 2021.







Source: Boardbound by Women's Leadership Foundation



Moving forward, Whiting believes “gender-balanced” boards where at least half of a company’s board is made up of women – is a reasonable goal. According to Boardbound, Colorado has 16 public company boards that fit those qualifications, more than twice theyear before (the report includes 125 public companies total).

Boardbound’s [Boardconnect program](#) acts as a resource to help public companies find skilled women candidates whose interests and experience align with the missions of each individual company’s board. Companies who aim to expand their overall scope of representation have seen more progress trusting outside sources led by women to facilitate those connections, Whiting said, rather than relying on their internal networks– which can fall victim to unconscious bias.

“A lot of the midsize and smaller companies have been using their informal networks,” Whiting said. "And I think that as long as you replicate that, you’re going to be unconsciously reflecting only what’s on your board.”