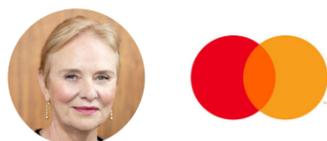


# Female founders continue to outperform

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, female founders continued to outperform—exiting quicker and at higher valuations. While we at Beyond The Billion (BTB) are not surprised, we wanted to gather some of our best funders and asset allocators to share their insights on what they’re seeing on the ground and, importantly, how they’re fueling a more inclusive future.



**Ann Cairns**  
Global Vice Chair, Mastercard

From new products and services, to adapting to an increasingly digital status quo, we’ve witnessed female-led businesses show even more resilience in the face of the global economic downturn. It is not news that businesses that incorporate diversity throughout their business, from senior leadership right through to entry level roles, outperform those that don’t.

Therefore, at Mastercard, we’re committed to supporting 25 million women entrepreneurs by 2025 as part of our broader financial inclusion goal. We help women entrepreneurs get paid, get capital, and get digital, because they drive global growth and innovation. As part of our ongoing investment into and support of women innovators and their funders, we are a sponsor of BTB itself, and also a lead investor in Astia’s early-stage venture fund, a BTB

Partner Fund aimed at addressing the extraordinary disparity in funding for companies that include women in founding or executive roles. We want to lead the charge in reshaping the way our world is designed, coded, and constructed by bringing diverse perspectives to the table to help unlock capital and powerful ideas that open our industry and the world’s possibilities to women.



**Ollen Douglass**  
Managing Director, Motley Fool Ventures

Our fund continues to benefit from the talent and success of our women-led companies. We’re proud that, in total, we have placed approximately 35% of our invested capital into their businesses and continue to reap the returns. In 2021 alone, public companies acquired two of our women-led startups:

- Citus Health, led by CEO Melissa Kozak, was acquired

by Brightree, a cloud-connected medical device subsidiary of ResMed.

- Affectiva, led by CEO Rana el Kaliouby, Ph.D., was acquired by Smart Eye, a global leader in eye-tracking solutions.

These acquisitions underscore the value being created by our founders and their ability to grow world-class technology companies. While the first half of 2021 was punctuated by acquisitions, several portfolio companies are positioned to close rounds in Q4 at higher valuations, making 2021 another year of strong performance by our women-led enterprises.

We believe there are still many highly qualified, VC-backable, female-run companies seeking funding, and we look forward to working with them to generate outstanding returns for our limited partners (LPs) and to help make our portfolio reflect the best vision for our future.



**Kay Parry**  
Managing Director, Fund Finance, Venture Banking, Pacific Western Bank

Our Fund Finance team has seen an acceleration of female-led investment funds coming to market over the last five years, especially in the last 18 to 24 months. We’ve observed that women checkwriters are more likely to allocate capital to female-founded companies. We see a number of reasons for this, including the impact of role-modeling. Many see the success stories that have gone before and think “If those women can do it, why can’t I?” The flywheel effect is beginning to take hold.

There is also growing recognition in the venture industry that great ideas and successful entrepreneurs can come from anywhere, and that the best returns are achieved with diverse teams. We have seen this in our business with an increase in the number of funds based outside of traditional large venture markets—namely, Silicon Valley and New York—and those that are led by women and/or other underrepresented groups. As importantly, this recognition extends to the LP community where diversity within portfolios is now a part of their diligence process. We have seen an uptick in the number of LPs with established dedicated allocations to funds led by women and other diverse groups, which should help great new funds come to market. We are excited by the progress made in 2021 and remain committed to

working toward the goal of a private investment industry that more fully reflects the breadth and depth of innovators and risk-takers in our country.



**Anna Snider**  
Managing Director and Head of CIO Due Diligence, Bank of America

It is now a well-known fact that allocators from diverse backgrounds tend to allocate more capital to women and founders from other underrepresented groups compared with non-diverse allocator teams. In my role as head of manager selection, we have focused on looking at the diversity of the investment managers who are allocating capital to women and diverse founders. Our clients, both individual and institutional, are demanding greater transparency about how their capital is being allocated.

We are, of course, being driven by this demand, but also by our belief that it is important to 1) ensure that diversity across one’s portfolio not only relates to asset class and sector, but reflects the full universe of investable businesses 2) provide access to businesses that are transformative to our economies and communities and 3) provide clients with access to the returns that women and founders from underrepresented groups can generate. To this end, we have doubled down on efforts to not only source investments

that reflect Bank of America’s \$250 million-plus commitment to inclusive development, but have incorporated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) criteria into our investment conviction in the managers to whom we entrust client capital.



**Andrée-Lise Méthot**  
Founder, Cycle Capital Management

When it comes to investing in female-founded companies, it’s business as usual—we are dealing with the same target sector, the same teams, and the same core commitments. None of those things have changed and, in many ways, they are more important than ever. As a GP, I’m focused on making the most impact through our investments and delivering returns to our LPs. Our continued outperformance as GPs invested in female founders will help us close the gender venture investment gap. The fund business is tough, but we must remain steadfast. I recall the difficulty raising our first fund during the last global financial crisis. While we were underestimated, our value proposition of clean tech and sustainability was clear, and with the right targeting of aligned corporations and institutions, we built a strong foundation for the firm you see today—Canada’s largest clean tech VC investment platform with CAD\$500 million in AUM.