



Integrating
WomenLeaders
Foundation

STATE OF ALLYSHIP-IN-ACTION BENCHMARK STUDY

TOPLINE RESULTS | 2022

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STATE OF ALLYSHIP- IN-ACTION



ABOUT THE STUDY

This study was developed and administered by Integrating Women Leaders Foundation (IWL) headquartered in Indianapolis, IN. It is the first nationally-focused comprehensive study to measure the perceived practice of allyship to women in corporate America today, and one that not only surveyed women but also captured the perspectives of men. The study was launched on International Women's Day, on March 8, 2022, and ran until April 10, 2022.

The 2022 study will serve as a baseline measurement for comparison in subsequent years. The primary focus of the 2022 benchmark is allyship towards women in general with a plan to expand the focus in subsequent years to measure allyship towards other marginalized or underrepresented groups in greater depth.


PARTICIPATION: WHEN, WHERE & WHO

30 DAYS 
MARCH AND APRIL 2022

1,150 
RESPONSES

BALANCE 
ROLES TENURE AGES

25% **75%** 
MID-MARKET LARGE ENTERPRISE

CROSS-INDUSTRY 
BANKING AND FINANCE, CONSUMER PACKAGED GOODS, ENGINEERING, HEALTHCARE, INSURANCE, IT SERVICES, UTILITIES, PHARMACEUTICALS, PUBLIC SECTOR, RETAIL, TECHNOLOGY, AND TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

MIXED 
ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS

GENDER 
62% **36%** **2%**
WOMEN MEN NON-BINARY

CLOSING THE ALLYSHIP DATA GAP

Allyship is critical to moving the needle on gender equity — on accelerating the advancement of all women. While there is some progress to note, men still hold most positions of power and influence in corporate America.

WHY THE RESEARCH?

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY*



GENDER
EQUITY



BIAS AS A
START



AWARENESS
TO ACTION

*A FOCUSED EFFORT ON ALLYSHIP
PLUS PERSPECTIVES FROM MEN

Understanding of unconscious bias is foundational to allyship and fortunately more focus and training has been directed to this concept over the past 3-5 years.

While this understanding is a great start, it is just a start. We must acknowledge the need to now push beyond it to turn awareness of our biases into action — into the practice of allyship.

Our data confirmed that unconscious bias training is happening in many organizations. However, this study would suggest that a focus on allyship hasn't truly emerged yet.

Finally, while some new data on allyship is available, it is often an add-on of a few questions to a larger study. IWL saw a gap, and committed to address it, developing and conducting a more comprehensive study specifically focused on allyship, and one that gathered the perspectives of men as well as women.

Survey topics included employees' general attitudes towards their organizations, the perceived advancement of women and other underrepresented groups within their companies, and workplace behavior — including the frequency and prevalence of microaggressions and specific allyship actions taken and not taken within their organizations.

ALLYSHIP? A NEW WORD THAT STANDS OUT FOR ITS ROLE IN THE PATH OUT OF RECENT CRISES

DICTIONARY.COM'S 2021 WORD OF THE YEAR!

2021 WORD OF THE YEAR | SEE WHY

allyship [al-ahy-ship] [SHOW IPA](#)  

noun

- 1 the status or role of a person who advocates and actively works for the inclusion of a marginalized or politicized group in all areas of society, not as a member of that group but in solidarity with its struggle and point of view and under its leadership:

Genuine allyship does not come with special recognition—we do not get awards for confronting issues people have to live with every day.

Understanding what allyship is — and living it — is foundational to establishing equitable workplaces for women and for other marginalized or underrepresented groups in organizations today.

HERE'S WHAT [DICTIONARY.COM](#) HAD TO SAY ABOUT IT'S CHOICE OF ALLYSHIP AS THE 2021 WORD OF THE YEAR:

2021 was a year defined by the many ongoing impacts of the pandemic and the polarization of 2020 — and the various ways we continue to grapple with them.

The vastness of such a year could never be fully summarized with a single word. But there is one word that's intertwined with so many of the things we've experienced in 2021: [allyship](#), our 2021 Word of the Year.

As our Word of the Year for 2021, *allyship* carries a special distinction this year: It marks the first time we've chosen a word that's new to our dictionary as our Word of the Year. Our addition of the word *allyship* to our dictionary in 2021 —

not to mention our decision to elevate it as our top word for the year — captures important ways the word continues to evolve in our language and reflects its increased prominence in our discourse.

Allyship acts as a powerful prism through which to view the defining events and experiences of 2021 — and, crucially, how the public processed them. It also serves as a compelling throughline for much of our lexicographical, editorial, and educational work across Dictionary.com and Thesaurus.com this year.

And while we must acknowledge that efforts at *allyship* are all too often insufficient and imperfect, the word nonetheless stands out for its role in the path out of the continued crises of 2020 for a better 2022.

WHAT ALLYSHIP REPRESENTS

in respondents' organizations



support
inclusion
diversity
women
understanding
active
leadership
opportunity
advocacy

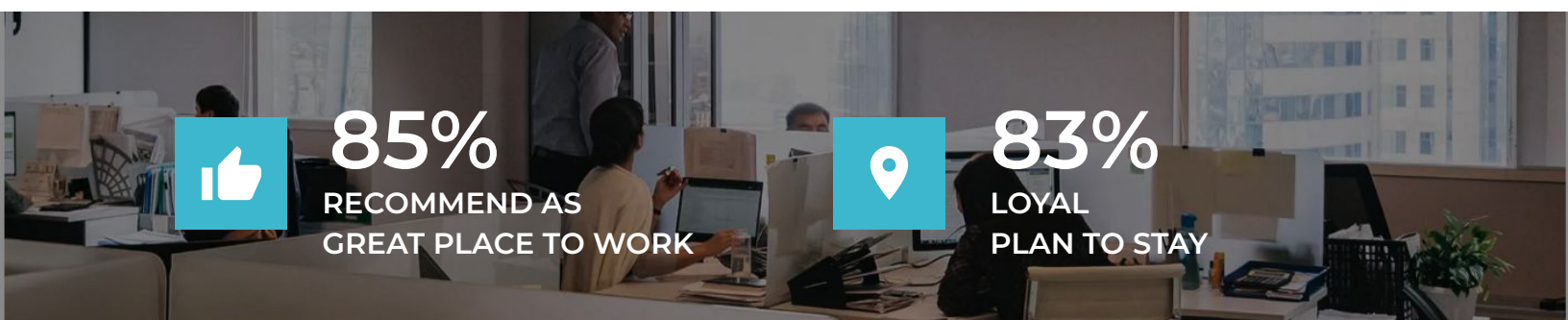


nascent
lip service
inconsistent
challenging
passive

PERCEPTIONS DIVERGE ON PROGRESS FOR WOMEN AND OTHER UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Despite the ups and downs of the past couple of years, most respondents (all genders) reported high commitment levels to their organization.

But, positive associations declined with subsequent statements specific to feeling supported, valued and cared about.



AND, MEN AND WOMEN AGREED SIMILARLY...



While women and men agreed similarly in term of general attitudes toward their workplaces, gender differences began to emerge in looking at the following:

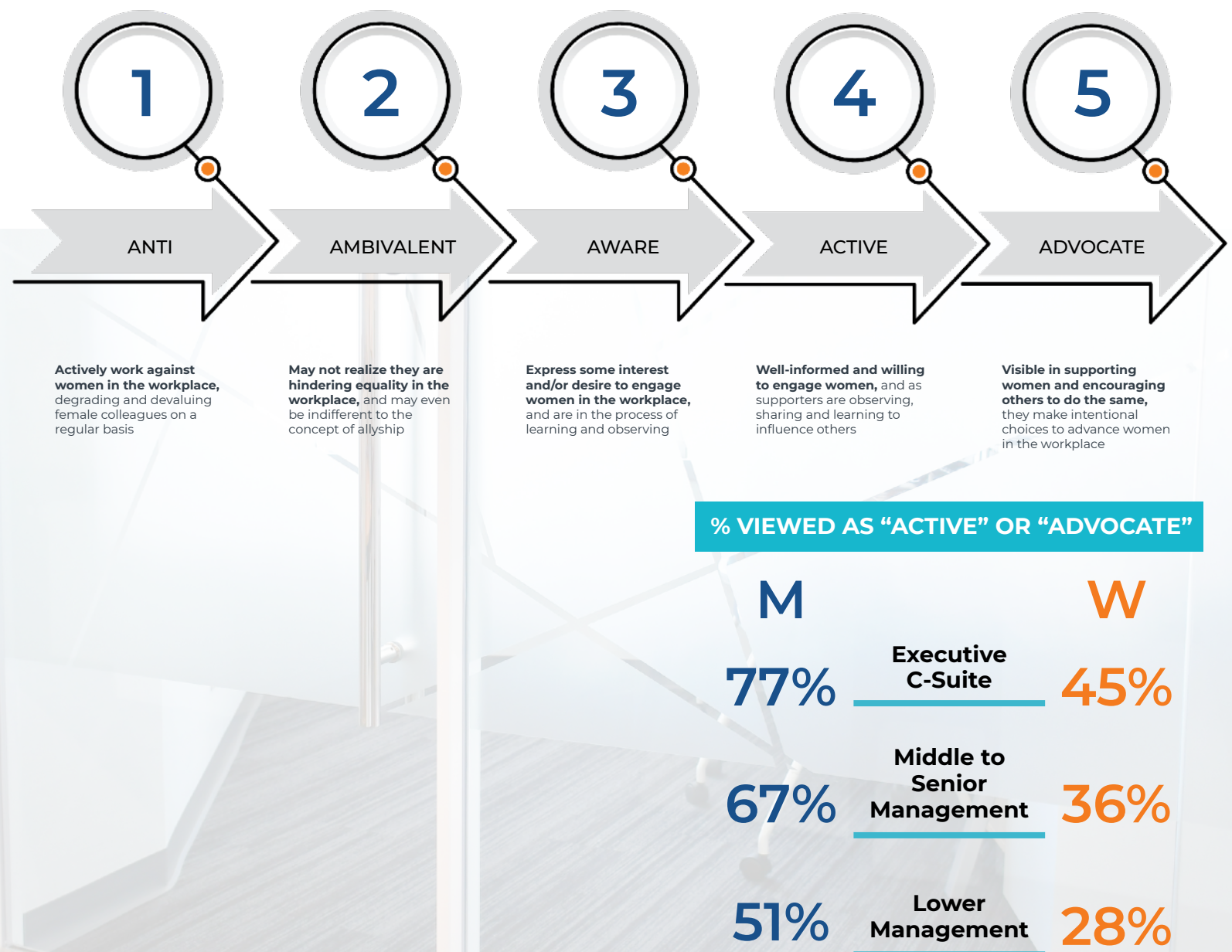
% “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” with the following statements:

- My organization is making great progress in advancing women into leadership roles – 72% women, 88% men (16% variance)
- My organization is making great progress in advancing other underrepresented groups into leadership roles – 55% women, 77% men (22% variance)
- My organization is very transparent with information and metrics around the advancement of women and other underrepresented groups – 46% women, 60% men (14% variance)

THE PRACTICE OF ALLYSHIP

WOMEN AND MEN SEE IT... DIFFERENTLY

Distinct differences were seen between how women and men perceive the practice of allyship in their organizations. As an example, survey respondents were asked to **identify the “stage of allyship” for the men at different levels of their organization on a five-point allyship continuum: Anti, Ambivalent, Aware, Active and Advocate.** At each level of the organization (Executive/C-Suite, Middle to Senior-Management and Lower Management), men viewed other men as being “Active” or “Advocates” nearly twice as often as women.



ALLYSHIP GAP...

When asked a short battery of specific questions tied to allyship only 1 out of 2 men reported seeing men take actions to be allies for women. Cut that number further into half and roughly 1 out of 4 women see it.

But, men are not the only gender “not taking action.” 73% of women report opportunities for WOMEN leaders to be stronger allies for other women — a belief shared by just 1 out of 2 men.

(% WHO “STRONGLY” AND “SOMEWHAT AGREE”)

M

W

49%

28%

“See men regularly taking actions
to be allies for women”

51%

73%

“There are women leaders in their
organization who could be stronger
allies for other women”

ALLYSHIP OPPORTUNITY

THE GAP GROWS LARGER AS PRACTICE STATEMENTS BECOME MORE SPECIFIC

As we drilled down into the practice of specific allyship actions, asking respondents to report on frequency of practices, the allyship gap widens between women and men (reporting happening “always” or “frequently”):

- Men giving credit to women for their ideas and contributions — **31% variance**
- Men advocating for women to be promoted — **25% variance**
- Men advocating for women, even when women aren’t in the room — **21% variance**
- Men speaking up for women in internal meetings — **22% variance**
- Men calling out other men who are devaluing women in meetings and other interactions — **11% variance**

WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE OF ALLYSHIP LOOK LIKE? (PERCEIVE HAPPENING “ALWAYS” OR “FREQUENTLY”)



**AND MEN SEE THEMSELVES AS BEING
MORE ACTIVE THAN OTHER MEN**

MICROAGGRESSIONS REVEAL WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING, AND WHAT'S NOT

Microaggressions were a particular focus of this study. They are the subtle, often unconscious messages that devalue, discourage, and impair workplace performance.

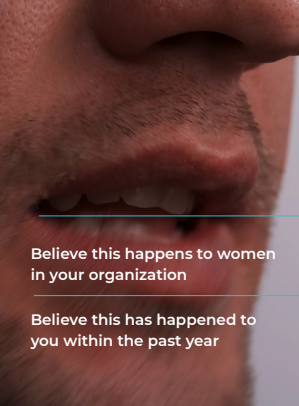
65% of women in the study reported experiencing these commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights.

The everyday experience of microaggressions can be like...



Death by a Thousand Paper Cuts

65%
of women



BEING INTERRUPTED OR SPOKEN OVER.

% "ALWAYS" OR "FREQUENTLY"

MEN WHITE WOMEN WOMEN OF COLOR

Believe this happens to women in your organization

13% 46% 46%

Believe this has happened to you within the past year

10% 30% 37%



HAVING THEIR JUDGMENT QUESTIONED IN THEIR AREA OF EXPERTISE.

% "ALWAYS" OR "FREQUENTLY"

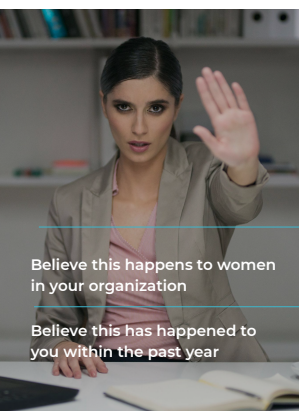
MEN WHITE WOMEN WOMEN OF COLOR

Believe this happens to women in your organization

12% 33% 39%

Believe this has happened to you within the past year

8% 25% 28%



NOT BEING GIVEN CREDIT FOR CONTRIBUTIONS MADE.

% "ALWAYS" OR "FREQUENTLY"

MEN WHITE WOMEN WOMEN OF COLOR

Believe this happens to women in your organization

10% 35% 32%

Believe this has happened to you within the past year

11% 24% 26%



BEING OVERLOOKED FOR A PROMOTION OR STRETCH ASSIGNMENT.

% "ALWAYS" OR "FREQUENTLY"

MEN WHITE WOMEN WOMEN OF COLOR

Believe this happens to women in your organization

8% 36% 34%

Believe this has happened to you within the past year

13% 20% 29%



BEING ASKED TO DO THE "OFFICework".

(e.g., schedule meetings, take notes, etc.)

% "ALWAYS" OR "FREQUENTLY"

MEN WHITE WOMEN WOMEN OF COLOR

Believe this happens to women in your organization

11% 43% 31%

Believe this has happened to you within the past year

7% 21% 22%

MICROAGGRESSION KEY LEARNINGS

The survey asked women and men two questions about 12 different types of microaggressions:

1. Based on your own experience, or what you have observed, how often do you believe these things happen to women in your organization?
2. How often do you believe these things have happened to you within the past year?

The top five microaggressions (out of a battery of 12), identified by women as happening to them "always" or "frequently" were:

- Being interrupted more often than others
- Having their judgment questioned in their area of expertise
- Not being given credit for contributions made
- Being overlooked for a promotion or stretch assignment
- Being asked to do "officework" (schedule meetings, take notes, etc.)

In comparing gender perceptions between women and men, **male respondents reported** the most frequent microaggressions **happening to them about as often as they perceived them happening to women**, and reported personally being "overlooked for a promotion or stretch assignment" slightly more often than they believe the same things happen to women.

And when comparing perceptions among women based on race or ethnicity, all women respondents perceived every one of the top microaggressions happening to women overall **3 to 4 times more than the male respondents**, and happening to them personally **2 to 3 times more often than the men reported it happening to them**.

A BREAKDOWN OF RESPONSES BY GENDER AND BY MICROAGGRESSION FOLLOWS.

Based on your own experience, or what you have observed, how often do you believe these things happen to women in your organization?

	ALWAYS		FREQUENTLY		SOMETIMES		RARELY		NEVER	
Being interrupted or spoken over more often than others	6%	3%	40%	10%	34%	31%	15%	33%	5%	23%
Having their judgment questioned in their area of expertise	6%	2%	29%	9%	36%	22%	24%	37%	6%	29%
Not being given credit for contributions made	5%	2%	29%	7%	35%	18%	25%	39%	7%	33%
Being asked to do the “officework” (e.g., schedule meetings, take notes, etc.)	11%	3%	30%	8%	26%	20%	24%	30%	10%	38%
Being overlooked for a promotion or stretch assignment	7%	2%	29%	6%	38%	17%	19%	37%	8%	38%
Being questioned on their emotional state	4%	1%	16%	4%	30%	14%	33%	35%	17%	46%
Being dismissed because they are viewed as being too new or too inexperienced	6%	2%	19%	4%	33%	17%	28%	35%	13%	40%
Expressing surprise at their language skills or abilities	2%	1%	10%	2%	21%	9%	37%	32%	29%	56%
Hearing or overhearing insults about the culture of people like them	2%	1%	9%	2%	20%	9%	36%	33%	33%	54%
Being confused with someone else of the same race/ethnicity	2%	2%	11%	4%	24%	14%	34%	31%	29%	49%
Feeling expected to speak on behalf of all people with their ethnicity	3%	1%	17%	7%	28%	18%	24%	27%	28%	46%
Having comments made about cultural aspects about their appearance	2%	1%	8%	4%	20%	12%	34%	31%	36%	52%

WOMEN / MEN

How often do you believe these things have happened to you within the past year?

	ALWAYS		FREQUENTLY		SOMETIMES		RARELY		NEVER	
Being interrupted or spoken over more often than others	4%	1%	27%	8%	33%	27%	21%	38%	15%	25%
Having your judgment questioned in your area of expertise	4%	2%	21%	6%	33%	23%	24%	40%	18%	29%
Not being given credit for your contributions made	5%	2%	20%	9%	33%	27%	25%	34%	18%	27%
Being asked to do the “officework” (e.g., schedule meetings, take notes, etc.)	8%	2%	14%	5%	25%	16%	25%	29%	28%	48%
Being overlooked for a promotion or stretch assignment	7%	4%	15%	9%	22%	16%	26%	29%	29%	42%
Being questioned on your emotional state	1%	1%	5%	1%	20%	5%	27%	23%	48%	70%
Being dismissed because you are viewed as being too new or too inexperienced	3%	2%	11%	3%	18%	9%	26%	23%	42%	62%
Expressing surprise at your language skills or abilities	2%	1%	5%	1%	12%	10%	20%	21%	61%	67%
Hearing or overhearing insults about your culture or people like them	1%	2%	3%	4%	11%	5%	21%	19%	65%	70%
Being confused with someone else of the same race/ethnicity	2%	1%	4%	3%	7%	6%	17%	18%	71%	72%
Feeling expected to speak on behalf of all people with your ethnicity	3%	2%	4%	4%	9%	6%	16%	15%	67%	72%
Having comments made about cultural aspects about your appearance	2%	1%	2%	2%	6%	6%	17%	15%	73%	76%

WOMEN / MEN

SECTION 3

TODAY'S DE&I FOCUS IS ON AWARENESS — ACTION IS IN ITS INFANCY

AWARENESS OF PROGRAMMING TO MOVE THE NEEDLE



84%

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAINING

47%

ALLYSHIP TRAINING

34%

ALLYSHIP COMMUNITIES WITHIN ORGANIZATION

When asked about awareness of and participation in different programs in their organization, **unconscious bias training topped the list for participation** with 7 out of 10 respondents saying they were aware of it and had personally participated in a training program. **Allyship training and allyship communities landed at the bottom:**

PROGRAM	AWARE & PARTICIPATED IN	AWARE & HAVE NOT PARTICIPATED IN
Unconscious Bias Training	71%	13%
Mentoring / Reverse Mentoring	52%	32%
Business / ERG Supporting Women	49%	31%
Allyship Training	22%	25%
Established Allyship Community	12%	22%

MOST MALE ALLYSHIP COMMUNITIES ARE NEW, UNKNOWN, OR STILL IN THE "FIGURING IT OUT" STAGE

FAMILIARITY FIRST...

When men were asked specifically about their familiarity with male ally groups or communities within their organizations, most (71%) were “not very familiar,” “not at all familiar” or reported that “no male ally community existed.” Of those who were familiar, they reported primarily being “extremely familiar” (11%) or “somewhat familiar” (11%), with the smallest group (7%) saying they were “very familiar.”

WHAT ABOUT IMPACT?

Those who were familiar with these communities within their companies were asked how impactful they believe the program has been in helping men become stronger allies for women within their organizations. **Nearly 1 out of 3 men (29%) reported their program to be “extremely” or “very impactful,”** with 53% saying it was “somewhat impactful,” and 18% reporting that it was “not very impactful.”

Among those who said *their program was NOT VERY IMPACTFUL*, top reasons for saying so were:

- Too new / still in early stages
- Mission is muddy / disorganized
- No follow through / training without application
- Trying to force behavior instead of making it feel authentic or organic



BOTH PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL MOTIVATIONS DRIVE INVOLVEMENT

Among those men who were familiar with the male ally group or community within their organization, nearly two-thirds (64%) reported they were currently involved in the community. Roughly one-third (36%) said they were not.

And of those who do participate, 71% report being motivated by “both personal and professional reasons.”



64%

INVOLVEMENT IN MALE ALLY COMMUNITY AMONG THOSE FAMILIAR



71%

INVOLVEMENT MOTIVATED BY BOTH PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL REASONS

Among those who are familiar with, *but NOT INVOLVED in*, their male ally community, top reasons for not being involved were:

- Too busy / no time
- Have not been invited / asked
- It's not needed
- Don't know how to get involved
- More interested in other ERGs / in supporting other minority groups
- Program was a “one-and-done” and it ended



RESPONDENTS TELL THEIR STORIES

DO YOU HAVE A STORY WITHIN THE PAST YEAR OF A
**MAN NOT BEING AN ADVOCATE FOR, OR DEVALUING,
A WOMAN** IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

- Women are told not to make a big deal out of microaggressions consistent in the workplace. Otherwise you will never have a career or be taken seriously. Devaluation of women is the norm and something to be accepted. Mansplaining, diminishing intelligence, and assumptions about women and their personal lives impacting work abilities that are not the same assumptions for men, reduce the perceived impact women can make when women are consistently seen as incompetent.
- A male who is now a manager made denigrating comments about another female manager (who happened to be a mother), saying that she is trying to "have it all" by working at a high level while raising children, and that it isn't possible. This same person also referenced a group of males (including himself) intentionally withholding information from this women to prevent her from succeeding.
- I was chastised for the way I communicate and was told the way I communicate would be fine if I was a man... but I am not.
- I was in a meeting with mostly men (IT employees and a vendor partner), when a co-worker facilitating a meeting told me, since I was the woman in the group, I should take meeting minutes (palm in face). I told him to record the meeting. :) Either way, it was still embarrassing.



RESPONDENTS TELL THEIR STORIES

DO YOU HAVE A STORY WITHIN THE PAST YEAR OF A MAN **BEING AN ADVOCATE FOR A WOMAN** IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

- Yes, a few of the male executive leaders of the market unit that I support (specifically mentioned some names!). They regularly use and encourage other leaders to use the demand analysis work that I create in order to help them and our leaders run a healthy business. Every time they do it, they emphasize the quality of my work and help build the quality of my brand. This is not a one-time incident. This quality seems built in their DNA.
- Our female Project Manager was making a valid point in a customer meeting and the customer's Project Manager was speaking to her in a very condescending action. I stopped the meeting, and had a meeting with the Customer. I advised them of this objectionable behavior, telling them we would not put up with it. Customer's Project Manager was obviously counseled and interactions were factual and fact-based thereafter.
- During performance reviews, comments were made about a woman's "up talk" where her voice rose at the end of statements. And some people viewed this as a lack of confidence and lack of professionalism. A Sr. Director advocated for her instead and reminded the room of a VP-man elsewhere in the organization who has the same vocal tendency as a way to indicate that should not be a point of consideration in her review.
- On recurring meetings, I have been the only woman in a group of men. However, one male that I was shadowing in a role always made sure my voice and ideas were heard and valued within the group. He helped add to spreading my voice. This has helped me to have ideas implemented and my thoughts respected. I appreciate him being a great representative of an ally to other men within the group.
- I have supported several women employees in the organization in the last year in their efforts to seek promotions and move up in the company. Specifically, I pushed for one of my reverse mentors to have a place in our organization... I continually work to ensure that women engineers that I work with are taken seriously and promoted equally... I am not in management, but I am a respected senior employee... I also recognize that as a white male, I cannot truly understand the experience – only listen and share the experience.

AWARENESS WITHOUT ACTION DOES NOT CREATE CHANGE

Allyship is critical to moving the needle on gender equity, and our research validates that much more education, awareness, and calling out of devaluing behavior is required. **Women and men *do have* different perspectives** on how allyship is and isn't showing up in their organizations. And **companies and their employees *are on a path to change***, but to be clear, allyship is a journey, not a destination.

CALL TO ACTION: Let's take action together to create the change we need today and for the future.

ABOUT INTEGRATION WOMEN LEADERS FOUNDATION (IWL)

Integrating Women Leaders Foundation (IWL) envisions a community that inspires and empowers authentic, inclusive leadership in high-performing organizations and the personal development of women. Our authentic and passionate team acts as a resource for individual leaders and organizations that share our mission to tackle very real gender issues with optimism and proven strategies that work.

Our work is twofold. We are a resource for organizations and the individual woman. We also believe men are a critical part of the solution to gender equality and invite them to be a part of our work.

Driven by research, our work compliments a company's HR, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and professional development efforts. Studies show that women in leadership lead to an improved bottom line, yet the numbers show few women in leadership roles.

We equip women with the tools to connect and grow to realize their own unlimited potential. IWL Foundation develops existing strengths rather than weaknesses. Women do not need to be "fixed." They are strong, dynamic and inspiring leaders. Our role is to develop the potential that is already in every woman.

Focusing on large-scale change, we work to engage women and men in critical discussions and learning opportunities that will drive action and create advantage for women in leadership. We need more women in these roles. We exist to make it happen.

Learn more at IWLFoundation.org and IWLALLIN.org