

# The Masculinity in the Workplace study 2023



# Introduction

This is the fifth year that we have explored the underlying culture of workplaces across the UK alongside our annual Masculinity in the Workplace event. From our own personal experiences as I&D consultants, there is no doubt that there's still a dominant culture which pervades most workplaces which often leads to exclusion. Yet early on we recognised that asking the question "Do you have a masculine culture" was simply not enough because those in the in-group often don't see it. So we have also explored which leadership traits are rewarded in the workplace.

This year we also dived a little deeper into male allyship so we can better understand where the gaps are and what the key barriers are to getting more men engaged.

Finally we have added questions around parental status as we wanted to explore how parents are feeling as it's clear that the glass ceiling and the gender pay gap is often driven by the impact of becoming a parent. We are glad we did as the results are striking.

We do hope you find the data, our engaging men framework and subsequent recommendations useful in formulating your own I&D strategy especially as we believe engaging men is the key ingredient to creating workplaces that are truly inclusive, equitable and diverse.



Roxanne Hobbs  
Founder  
The Hobbs Consultancy



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Founder  
Token Man Consulting

**Context**

# The big questions for the research

1. How inclusive and diverse is your workplace?
2. What leadership traits are currently rewarded and which should be rewarded?
3. How many men are being allies and what does that look like?

# Overview

# The key stats

**38%**

Feel that their culture is masculine

**51%**

Feel that their company is only a little diverse or worse

**43%**

Feel their company is either exclusionary or only at start of their inclusion journey

**37%**

Believe their workplace values vulnerability

**61%**

Say that a minority of their men are actively engaged with I&D

**39%**

of male employees feel less valued because of diversity initiatives

**46%**

of male employees feel they will be looked over for promotion due to diversity

**47%**

Of male employees feel they had to show active I&D engagement despite it not being relevant to career

**Our respondents**

# About the survey

2001 responses

45% female  
54% male  
1% other

9% 18-24  
27% 25-34  
26% 35-44  
17% 45-54  
21% over 55

16% North  
33% Middle  
19% South  
18% London  
14% W, S, NI\*

\* Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland



# About the survey

86% White  
14% BAPOC\*  
0% other

91% hetero  
8% LGBTQIAP\*\*  
1% Prefer not to  
say

15% with  
disability  
84% without  
disability  
1% Prefer not to  
say

74% Parents  
33% No children  
3% Expecting  
children

\* British, Asian and People of Colour

\*\* Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual & Pansexual

# Key Findings

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1. Still a long way to go when it comes to creating inclusive and diverse workplaces

2. Parents feel exclusion far more than those with no children

3. Vulnerability is still struggling to be rewarded

4. Still need to recruit far more men as allies but we now have a better understanding of the key barriers

The background features stylized silhouettes of several people's heads and shoulders in profile, facing each other as if in conversation. The silhouettes are rendered in various shades of dark blue, teal, and maroon. The overall composition is layered and artistic, with the text overlaid in the center.

**1. Still a long way to go when it comes to creating inclusive and diverse workplaces**

# How diverse is your culture?

**Not at  
All**

**9%**

**Not very**

**15%**

**A little  
Diverse**

**27%**

**Moderately  
Diverse**

**27%**

**Very  
Diverse**

**22%**

# How diverse is your culture?

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**Not very**

**15%**

**A little Diverse**

**27%**

**Moderately Diverse**

**27%**

**Very Diverse**

**22%**

**51% a little diverse or worse**

# How inclusive is your culture?

**Often  
Excludes**

**11%**

**Occasionally  
Excludes**

**14%**

**Just starting to  
consider inclusivity**

**18%**

**On the  
journey**

**25%**

**Inclusive of  
Everyone**

**32%**

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**25%**

**Inclusive of  
Everyone**

**32%**

**43% at the start of journey or exclusionary**



# Is your culture masculine?

**Yes**

**38%**

**No**

**53%**

**Don't know**

**9%**

# My culture is masculine

## Industry Hotspots

**Agriculture**

**Business Services**

**Construction**

**IT/Computing**

**Transport**

**63%**  
**agree**

**53%**  
**agree**

**61%**  
**agree**

**56%**  
**agree**

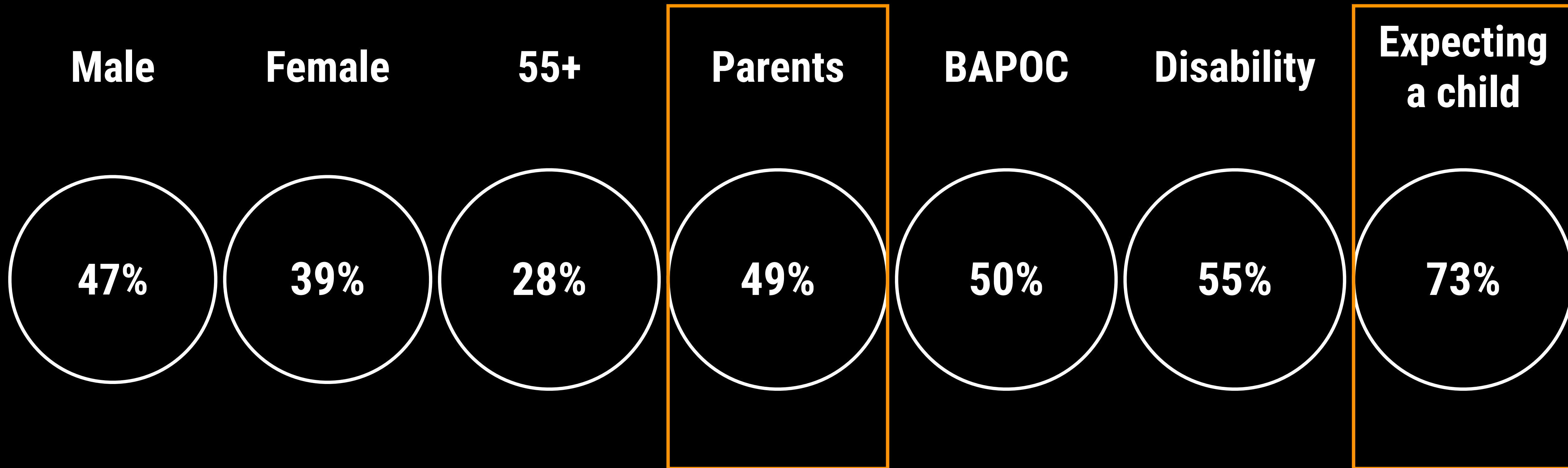
**53%**  
**Agree**



**2. Parents feel exclusion far more than those with no children**

# My workplace isn't inclusive

Parents clearly feel far more exclusion, especially those who are expecting a child



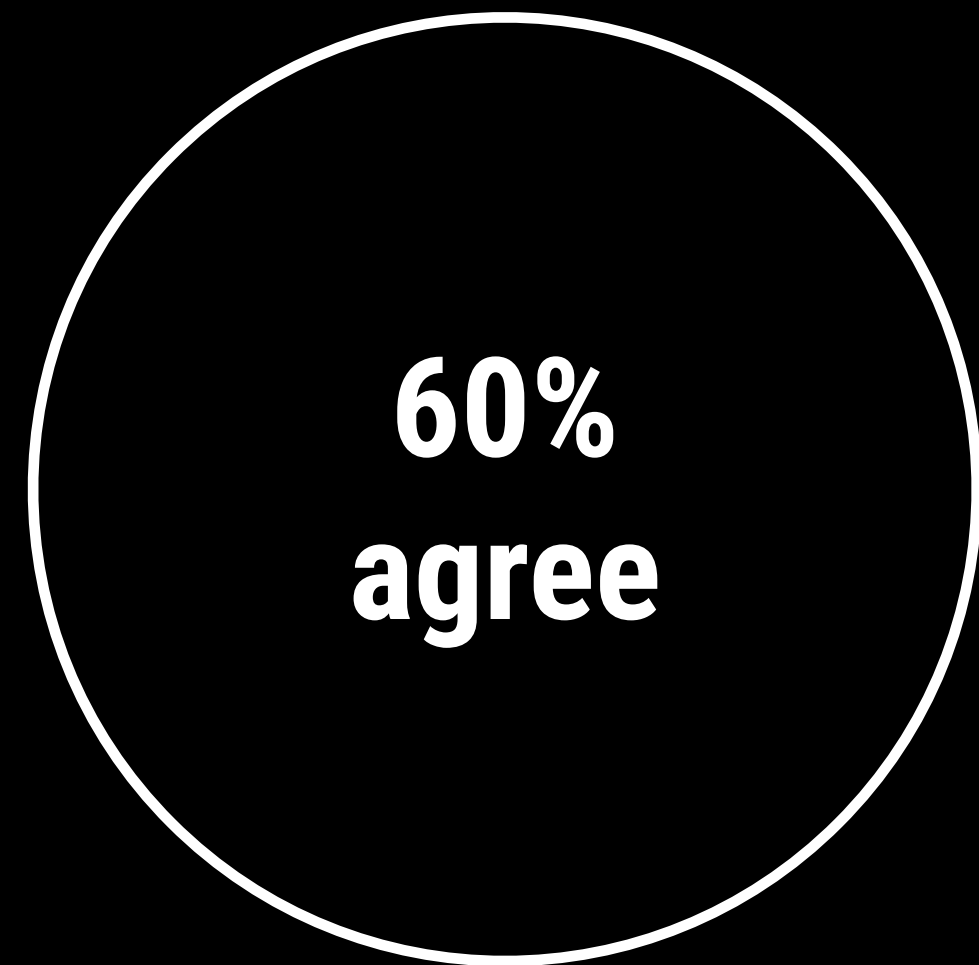
\* Answered often excludes, occasionally excludes or just starting inclusivity journey to 'How inclusive is your culture?'



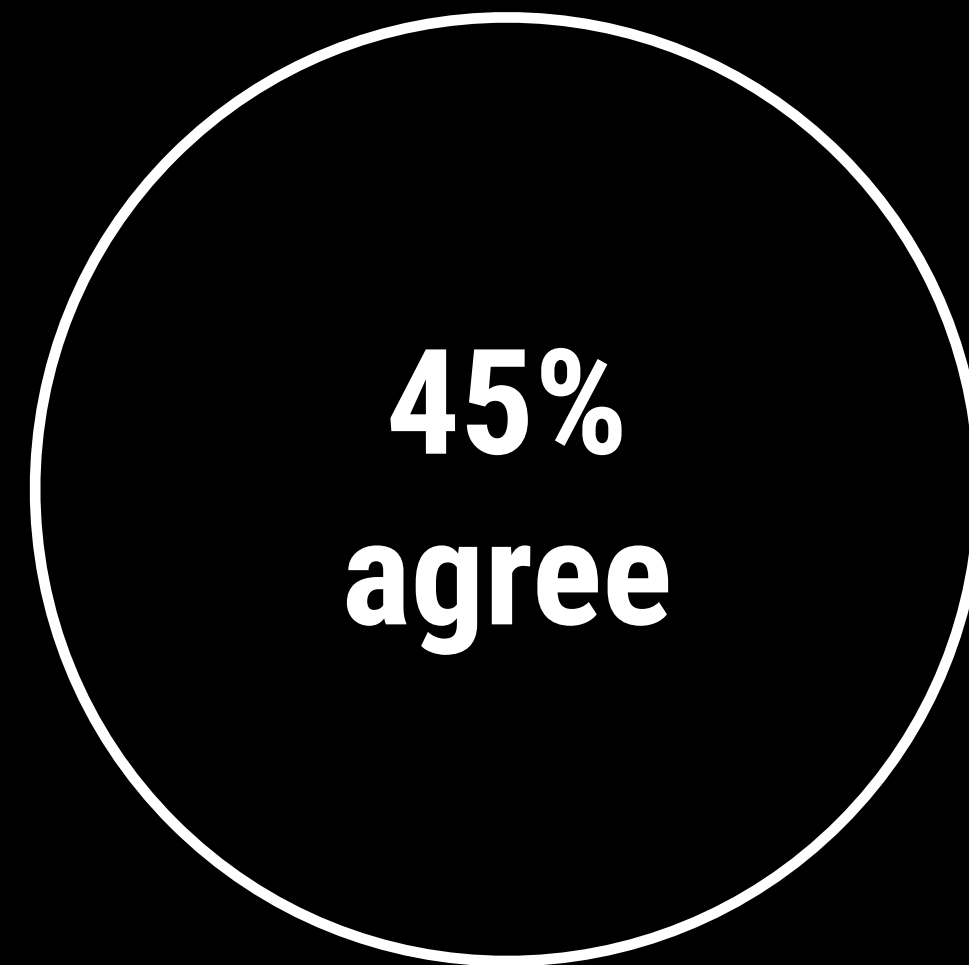
# My culture is masculine

## Through prism of parental status

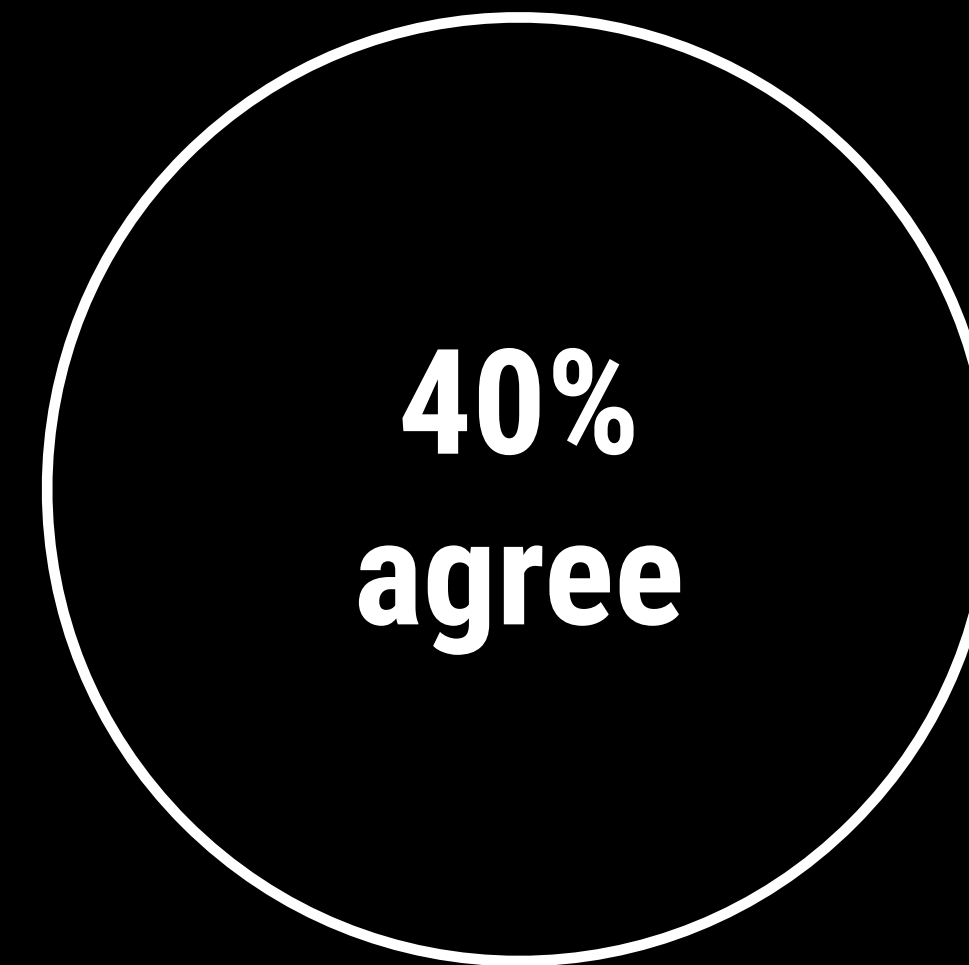
**I am currently  
expecting a child**



**Parents of U18**



**Other Parents**



**No Children**



Expecting parents and those who have children under 18 see and feel the masculine culture far more and this may also be driven by lack of paternity leave for fathers



**3. Vulnerability is still struggling  
to be rewarded**

# Leadership Skills

## Most rewarded

- 1 Confident
- 2 Flexible
- 3 Result focused
- 4 Creative
- 5 Ambitious
- 6 Collaborative
- 7 Strategic
- 8 Kind
- 9 Compassionate
- 10 Assertive

# Leadership Skills

## Most rewarded

- 1 Confident
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- 8 Kind
- 9 Compassionate
- 10 Assertive

## Should be rewarded

- 1 Flexible
- 2 Compassionate
- 3 Kind
- 4 Empathetic
- 5 Collaborative
- 6 Creative
- 7 Confident
- 8 Strategic
- 9 Results focused
- 10 Ambitious



# Some context on vulnerability

We believe that vulnerability is the key to creating truly inclusive workplaces.

Vulnerability provides the essential foundation for openness and trust and provides the platform for people being open about their own challenges.

As Brené Brown once said “To be a leader is to be vulnerable everyday. You don’t get to opt out. If you don’t understand vulnerability, you cannot manage and lead people.”

Which is why in our survey we go deeper on vulnerability. Especially as it’s the inclusive leadership trait we know most leaders struggle with the most.

# Vulnerability

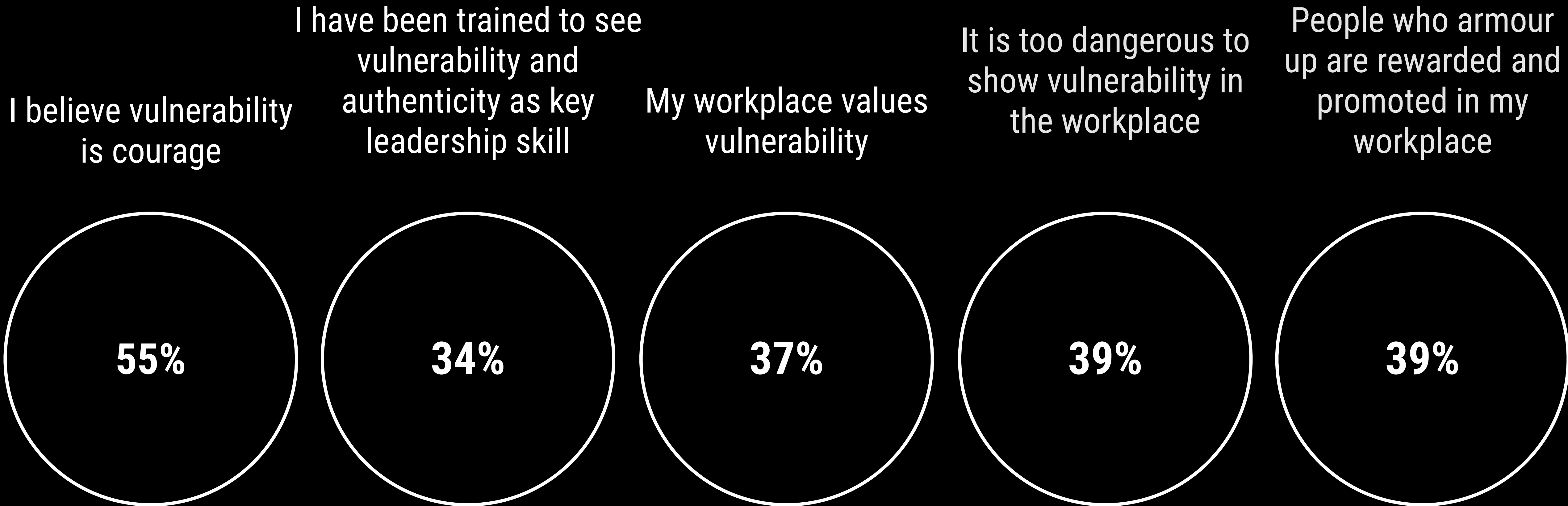
**Most rewarded**

**Should be rewarded**



\* This represents the % of respondents that chose vulnerability as one of the key leadership skills either most rewarded or should be rewarded

# Deep dive on vulnerability



# How comfortable or uncomfortable do you feel sharing your emotions?

## At work

## With your friends

Uncomfortable

Neither

Comfortable

Uncomfortable

Neither

Comfortable

34%

28%

38%

20%

21%

59%

# Gender differences between those who feel comfortable with sharing their emotions

## Female

## Male

At work

With friends

At work

With friends

35%

64%

41%

54%

29%

Masking gap for women between work and friends is far higher

13%



A photograph of a business meeting with several people shaking hands over a table. The image is dimly lit and serves as a background for the text.

**4. Still need to recruit far more men as allies but we now have a better understanding of the key barriers**

# Importance of allyship\*

**3.6**

Having an ally/allies,  
for your career  
development

**3.6**

Believe it is  
important that my  
manager is an ally

**3.5**

That my company  
fosters a culture of  
allyship

**3.6**

That being an ally is  
seen as a valuable  
activity

\* Average score out of 5

# Do you consider yourself to be an ally to..

Women

**76%**  
Yes

Non-binary  
people

**56%**  
Yes

Disabled  
people

**63%**  
Yes

LGBTQIAP+  
people

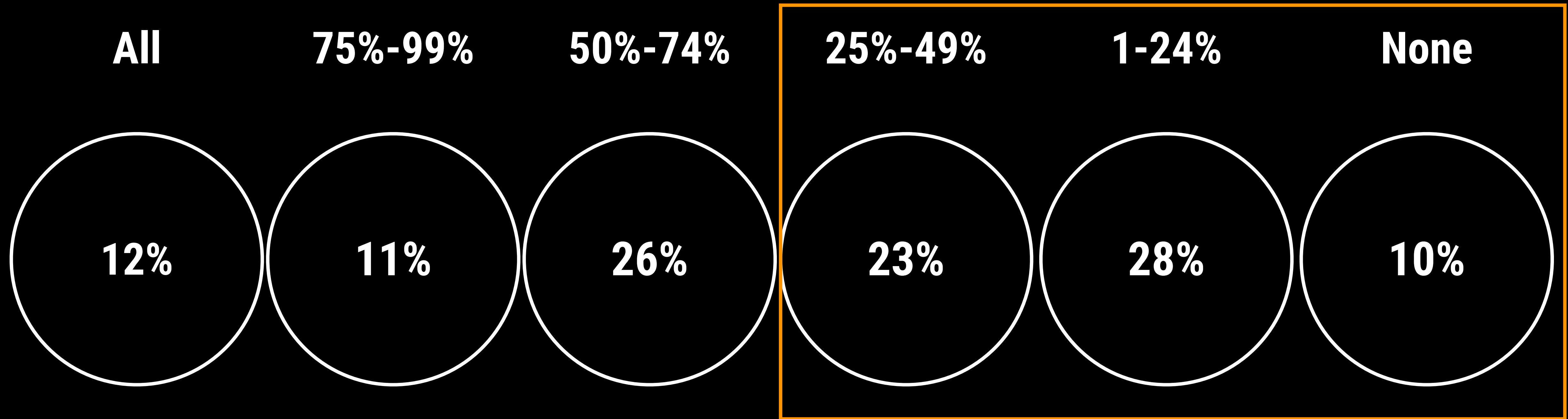
**60%**  
Yes

People from  
ethnic minority

**67%**  
Yes



# What proportion of your men are actively engaged in I&D?\*



**61% have minority of men engaged  
(2022: 37%)**

\* % are adjusted to exclude N/A

# The impact of I&D Initiatives on men



\* % are adjusted to exclude N/A

# What are men doing as allies?\*

Educating and developing themselves to become more inclusive (33%)

Actively calling in and calling out bad behaviours (32%)

Promoting the importance of inclusion and diversity (31%)

Working to change the system (28%)

Mentoring or sponsoring diverse talent (25%)

Recruiting more people to become allies (19%)

Joining an employee resource group as an ally (17%)

\* Note on this question and following two questions, you could choose multiple answers so they will not total 100%

# What are the biggest barriers for men becoming better allies?\*

Time  
(24%)

A lack of  
understanding  
(18%)

I don't have  
enough  
knowledge  
(17%)

Its not a priority  
for me  
(12%)

Fear  
(12%)

I don't have the  
right tools  
(11%)

I don't believe it  
is my  
responsibility  
(12%)

\* 22% felt there were no barriers to becoming a better ally

# When it comes to the workplace, what are men's biggest fears?

I don't have any fears  
(26%)

Fear of failure  
(22%)

The impact of my current workload on my mental health  
(21%)

Fear of saying the wrong thing in the workplace  
(20%)

Not being able to fully provide for my family  
(18%)

Becoming irrelevant in the workplace  
(18%)

The impact of my current job on relationship with family and friends  
(15%)

Decreased lack of opportunities due to diversity initiatives  
12%

**A better framework for engaging men**

# A better framework for engaging men

Much of the focus from I&D teams with corporates has been to recruit men as allies. But as we have seen from the data, it's clear that many men are not ready to become allies. Companies need a more balanced strategy which incorporates the following:

## Support

Supporting men in their everyday life e.g. mental health or being a father

## Inspire

Provide men with the skills and tools to be a better manager and leader

## Recruit

Recruiting men to become better allies and/or agents of change

**Examples of how this framework  
can be executed**



# 1 Create a network for fathers (Support)

The first event we did back in 2017 was Fathers in the Workplace and for many of the fathers in the room it was the first time they had ever spoken about being a Father in the workplace.

It's why we have recommend the creation of a support network for fathers as the first step for engaging more men with I&D. Because we know that one of the keys to creating gender equity is helping more fathers to take primary or equal care-giving duties.

## **2 Run Brave Spaces or Men's Circles (Support)**

Brave Spaces are designed to create a safe and inclusive space where those who identify as men can openly share their experiences, challenges, and triumphs. It's an opportunity to break down stereotypes, challenge societal norms, and foster empathy. We have already started to see the positive impact from running Brave Spaces at Colt around how people are feeling about leaning into I&D.

We are also increasingly seeing more and more businesses run Men's Circles to help support men's mental wellbeing. Andy's Man Club is a brilliant partner to consider for supporting you on this.

# **3 Train all your leaders to be inclusive (Inspire)**

Inclusive Leadership is a key pillar for any I&D strategy and its fundamental that you implement a programme which covers the core skills of cultural intelligence, empathy and vulnerability.

Too many programmes try and take a short cut by delivering the training in one go (the traditional approach). This approach does not work. Any programme needs to be at least 6 months and needs to provide opportunity for on-the job testing between sessions and should ideally be supported by group or individual executive coaching.

# **4 Launch a Male Allies network (Recruit)**

Companies such as Barclays, Hitachi Vantara, HSBC, Lloyds Bank, Natwest, Sky and UBS have all created Allies networks of some format to specifically help engage more men with inclusion, equity and diversity.

The key benefit of an allies network is that its purpose is extremely clear and should provide all members with the tools, training and confidence to be better allies in the workplace.

# 5 Become a MIW partner (Recruit)

Masculinity in the Workplace is the only event that is specifically designed to better engage those who identify as men with inclusion, equity and diversity and inspire them to become better allies and agents of change. The in-person event is exclusive to partners although we also stream it more widely to a far larger audience. We are currently recruiting for 2024 partners now.

*“We have been MIW partners for 3 years now and we see it as a cornerstone for engaging more men with our I&D agenda. It is an incredibly inspiring afternoon which has acted as an invaluable platform for recruiting more men to become better allies and agents of change.”*

*Mike Vallis, MD at Merlin Entertainments*

**Thanks**

# Big thanks to our MIW event partners



**Contact**



# Contact

If you are interested in getting involved with this year's Masculinity in the Workplace event on 19th November or would simply like support to better engage your male employees with I&D and train your leaders to be more inclusive, please do get in contact us as follows:



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**Thanks**



**TOKEN  
MAN!**