WOMEN'S VOICES

IN OUR ORGANIZATIONS

" WOMEN ARE
THE KEY TO THE
TRANSFORMATION
ORGANIZATIONS NEED.

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UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Carla Clarissa, women's leadership coach, author of the book "Born to change the game" and expert on the subject of leaking leadership pipeline, partnered with Motivaction for this research. Their shared goal? Gaining more insight into women's perceptions of diversity & inclusiveness initiatives within organizations.

1021 working Dutch women participated in this study. The research was conducted and completed in September 2022.

BACKGROUND

Our organizations are increasingly challenged to be more conscious of people, climate and technology. The pressure on our ecosystems is enormous. And the number of crises in the world is increasing. The world needs leaders who see connections in the system in which we live. People who above all lead from an understanding of what sustainability, social connectedness and well-being mean.

Every organization will have to take responsibility for this in the next years and following that, they have to adapt their business models and business processes. A cultural shift is already taking place in many companies: from a hierarchical top-down organization to a network organization. This requires leaders who can give shape and content to this. We need people who have the ability to create networks, who approach the world with curious openness and listen to and empathize with all stakeholders involved.

And lastly, people who are flexible and take on responsibility for their role in the organization.

Previous major studies by McKinsey & Company and others showed that key leadership competencies in this, such as intellectual stimulation, inspiration, participatory decision-making, people development and providing a role model, are more often applied by women. Women, especially in leadership positions, can play a vital role in the culture change that organizations now need.

THE REALITY

Of the total workforce 34% are women. Over 68% work part-time (CBS). And according to an Equileap report on gender equality in the corporate sector worldwide (2022), Dutch companies have only 16% women in their leadership stratum and 23% in senior management [1].

The untapped potential is huge. As many women as men enter our labor market, but do not advance equally with their male colleagues. They experience little incentive from their employers to fulfill their ambitions and develop their full potential.

From the hundreds of conversations Carla Clarissa has had with women about their work experiences, we see the same pattern underlying this: women experience sexism, harassment and discrimination in our organizations. And it takes an incredible amount of their strength to confront this. Let alone to change it within their sphere of influence. The experiences of women in leadership positions, a position where you could change the culture, are only worse. The power dynamics between men and women are increasing and women experience sexism and (sexually) intimidating behavior even more than before.
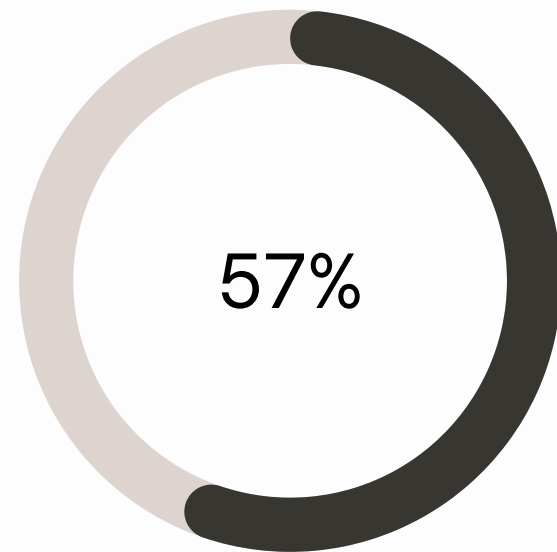
This report offers insight into the barriers women face in the workplace, the scale at which this still happens, and what organizations can do to retain and utilize female talent.

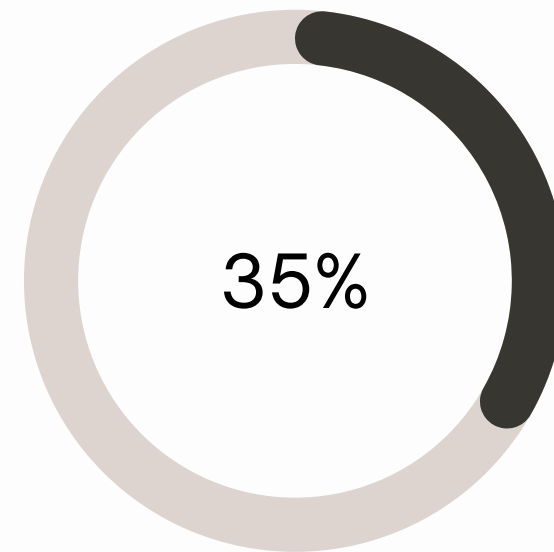[1] 2022, Equileap: Gender Equality Global Report & Ranking
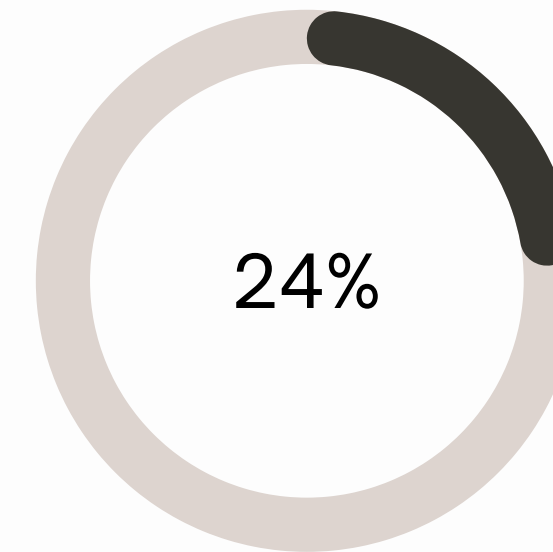
KEY FINDINGS

01

57%

do not feel the support to take the next step in her career. While a large group of women (28%) aspire to and see a leadership position within the organization.

02

35%

of the women considers throwing in the towel when working for organizations where male managers are in the majority. In organizations where there are more women in management, the percentage is 18%

03

24%

indicates they would want to work longer for their organization if they felt more at home there. In organizations with D&I policies aimed at women, the figure is 28%.
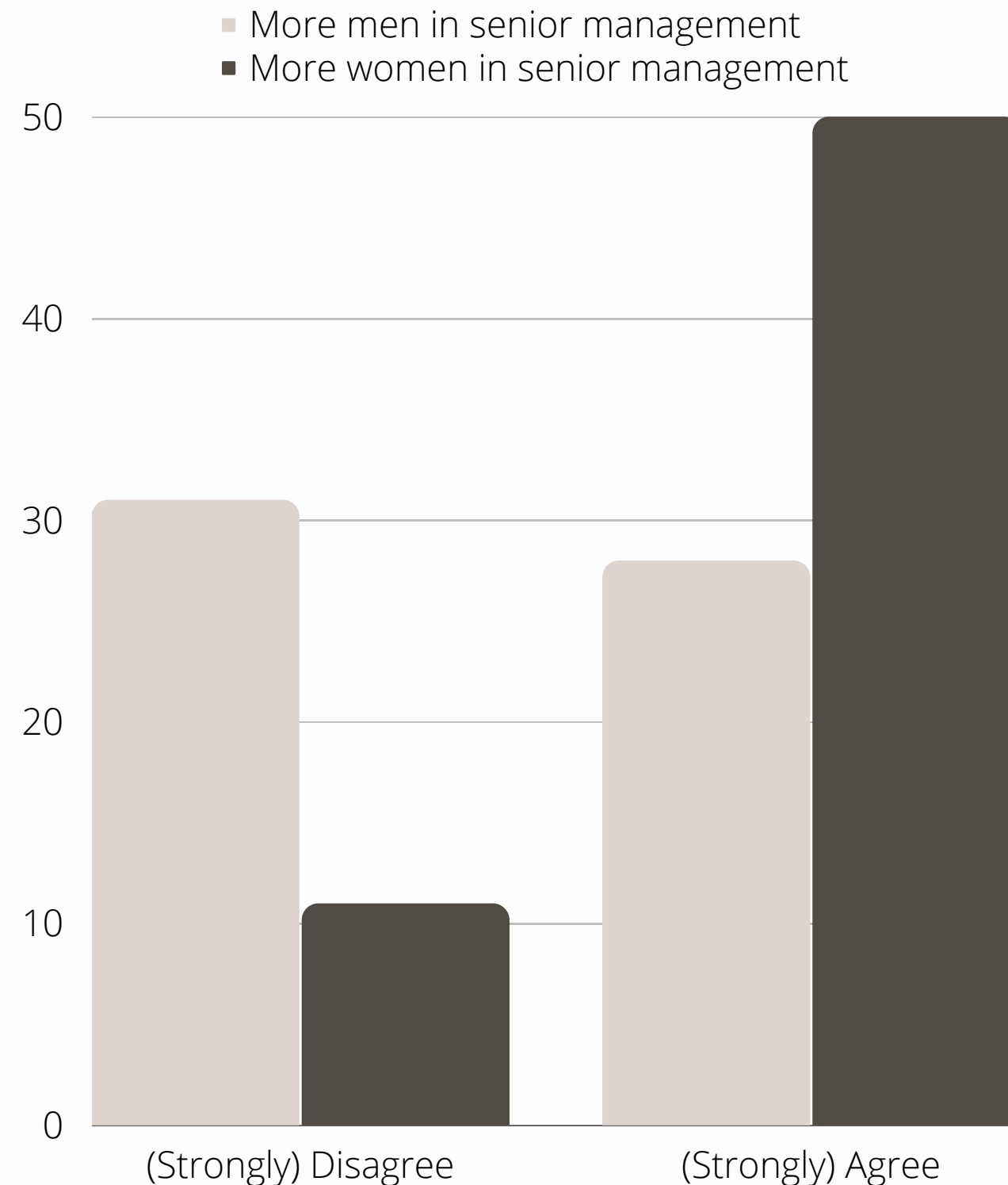
THE LEAKING LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

LACK OF SUPPORT FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT

"WOMEN IN OUR ORGANIZATION ARE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE ON LEADERSHIP ROLES."

Legend:
- More men in senior management
- More women in senior management

One of the important topics of the study is to what extent women feel encouraged in their development and advancement within the organization. It shows that six out of ten women do not feel the support to take the next step in their career.

While a large group of women, 28%, aspire to ánd see a leadership position within their organization.

Companies with more men than women at the top also seem to perpetuate this situation. One-third of the women within those companies indicate that women are not encouraged to hold a leadership position.

This is in contrast to organizations with more women at the top, where over 50% do feel this incentive.

DO I REALLY WANT THIS?

I don't see any example of a radiant, gentle woman in a leadership role around me. I am now on the list to be promoted to the highest leadership ranks, but I feel all alone there.

I am the only more feminine woman around here and feel no connection with the only other woman at the top of this company, who in my eyes is hardened and soured. I don't want to become like that, but I also feel that I am losing my sparkle in this place.

- Finance Director
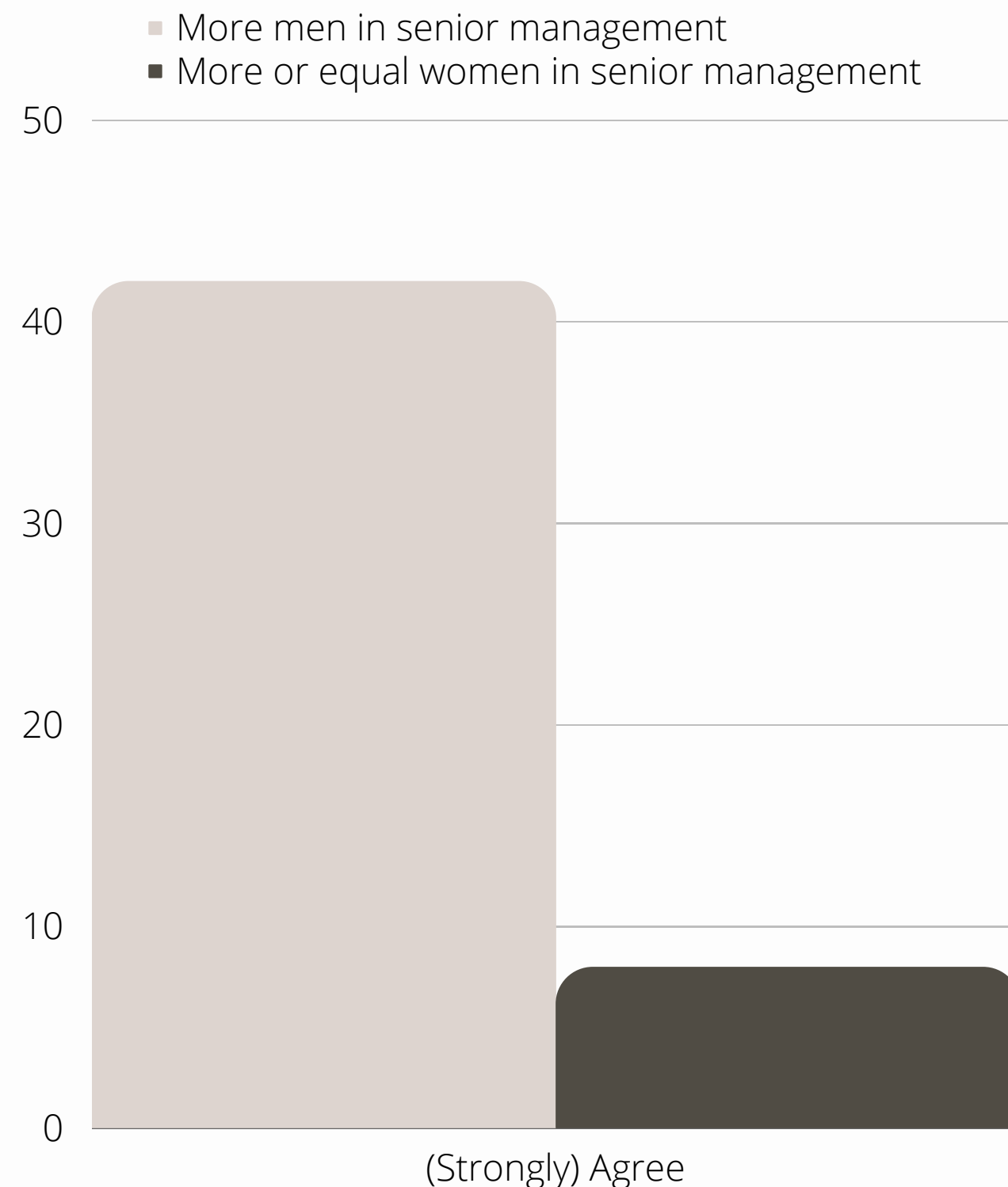
BREAKING THE PATTERN IN PROMOTIONS

(W O) M E N

Even though most people think they don't approach or treat women differently than men, they do. It is ingrained in the way we have structured our society for generations.

The current generation of working women is among one of the first to have gone to college and made professional careers. For the past several thousand years, practically all leadership positions in our society have been filled by men. Everywhere. In business, academia, religious institutions, healthcare institutions, hospitality, the sports world.

Because men held leadership positions almost everywhere, they determined how a company was run, what was researched, how education was designed, how we treated the earth and its resources, where our retirement money was invested in, and what technologies, products and services entered the marketplace. We live in a world largely designed for and by men. Today, this still determines who we consider fit to hold influential positions within an organization and to whom we tend to listen. Men.

"IN MY ORGANIZATION, MEN BECOME LEADERS FASTER THAN WOMEN"

Legend
- More men in senior management
- More or equal women in senior management

Y-axis
50
40
30
20
10
0

(Strongly) Agree

In companies with more men at the top, 42% of women report that men become executives faster than women.

"What I already knew from experience, but what we have never before seen reflected so clearly in a study is how many women put their ambitions on the back burner when their organization consists of mostly male leaders. These women experience fewer advancement opportunities, are not prepared to take the next step in their careers, and see their ambition and potential dissipate. That does something to your motivation, to your self-confidence and to the choices you make in your professional and personal life."

- Carla Clarissa

OUTCOME: WOMEN LEAVING

"YES, I PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE OR SEE WOMEN IN MY ORGANIZATION THINKING ABOUT 'THROWING IN THE TOWEL' AND PLACING THEIR AMBITIONS ASIDE."

- Majority top men
- Majority of top women
- Top evenly divided
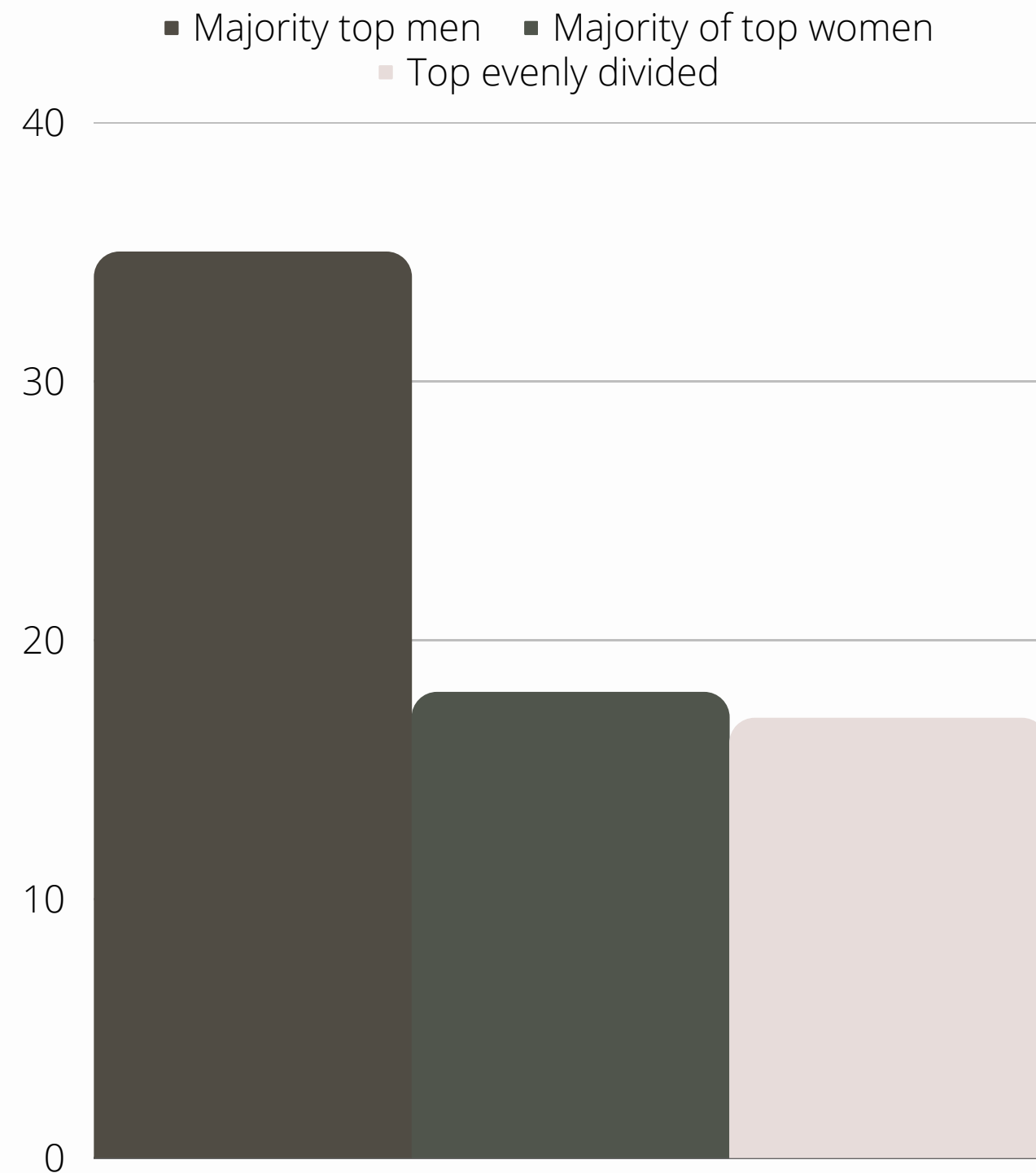
Almost a quarter of the Dutch women, 24%, are currently considering throwing in the towel and quitting their jobs. In organizations where more men work at the top, this percentage is even higher; 35%.
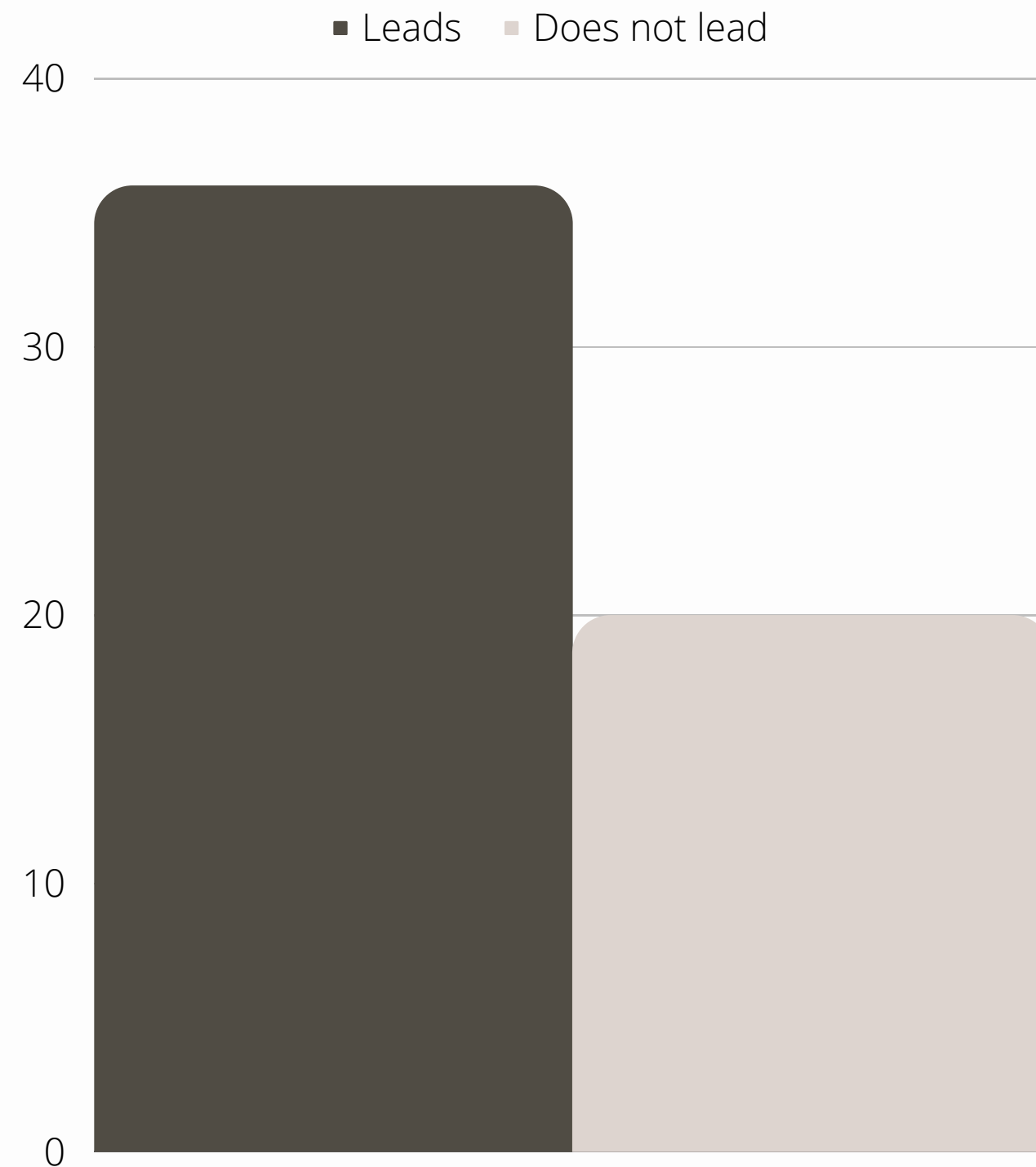
"YES, I PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE OR SEE WOMEN IN MY ORGANIZATION THINKING ABOUT 'THROWING IN THE TOWEL' AND PLACING THEIR AMBITIONS ASIDE."

■ Leads ■ Does not lead

Women in leadership positions are also more likely to think about throwing in the towel (36%) than women who do not work as executives (20%).

"I know the stories behind these figures better than anyone else: women who are thinking about 'throwing in the towel' always blame themselves for the problems they face. 'It's probably just me', 'the role doesn't suit me', 'maybe I don't have enough ambition'. Women only tend to take action when it is too late: burned-out, tired, leaving the organization. Only after events like these they look for help and support. This can be done differently, and companies have to take responsibility in this."

- Carla Clarissa

WHERE CAN I FIND SOME INSPIRATION?

"Who will lift me to the next level? I feel empty and, to my mind, I have stated that a thousand times. The reason I wanted to make a career and reach the top was to make the world more beautiful. But I find myself holding back in meetings and then being irritated afterwards about all that was not said and decided.

Yet I don't speak up. I am in the wrong spiral, I want to get out. I want to feel empowered, less lonely than I feel now. I'm looking for a source to draw from, but I have no idea where to look for it."

- Energy Sector Manager

"IF I FELT MORE AT HOME IN THE COMPANY I WOULD:"

25	
20	
15	
10	
5	
0	

- work more hours
- want to take on a leadership position
- dare to pursue my ambitions
- want to work for this organization longer
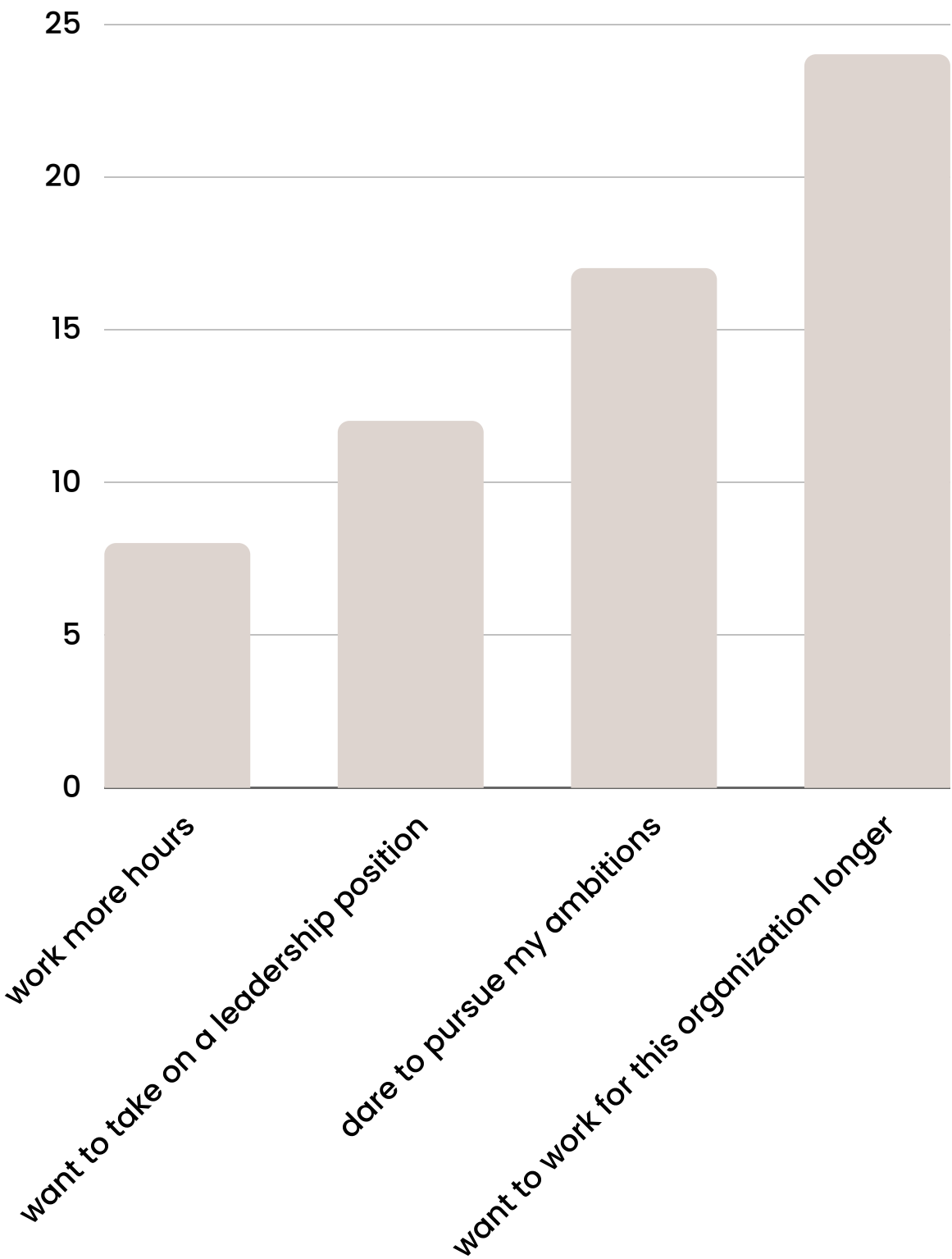
This thought of giving up your job or even whole career does not appear to be insurmountable or out of unwillingness. In fact, 24% of women say they would like to work longer for their organization if they felt more at home in it.

PART 2

WHAT WOMEN FACE AT WORK

SECTION 1

CORPORATE CULTURES ARE NOT INCLUSIVE ENOUGH

OUR CORPORATE CULTURE IS MORE ATTRACTIVE TO MEN THAN TO WOMEN.
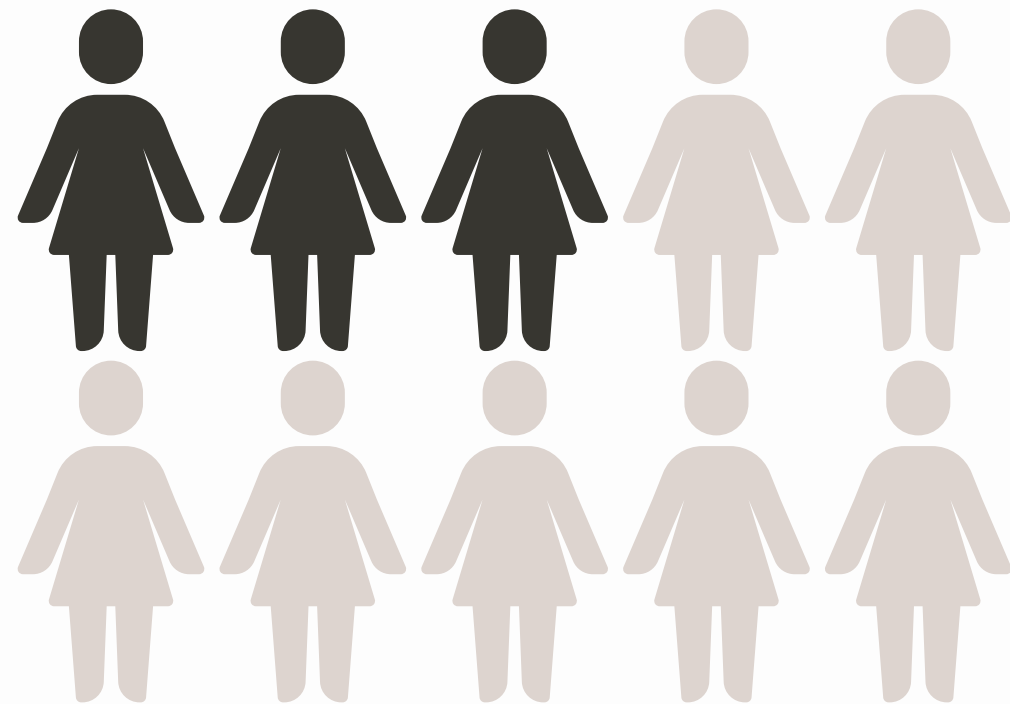
We also asked respondents about the current cultural conditions within which they work. The study shows that the corporate culture is often not inclusive enough for women.

Especially where men dominate top management, 30% of the respondents found that the corporate culture is significantly more attractive for men to work in than for women.

DO WOMEN HAVE TO ADAPT TO GET PROMOTED?
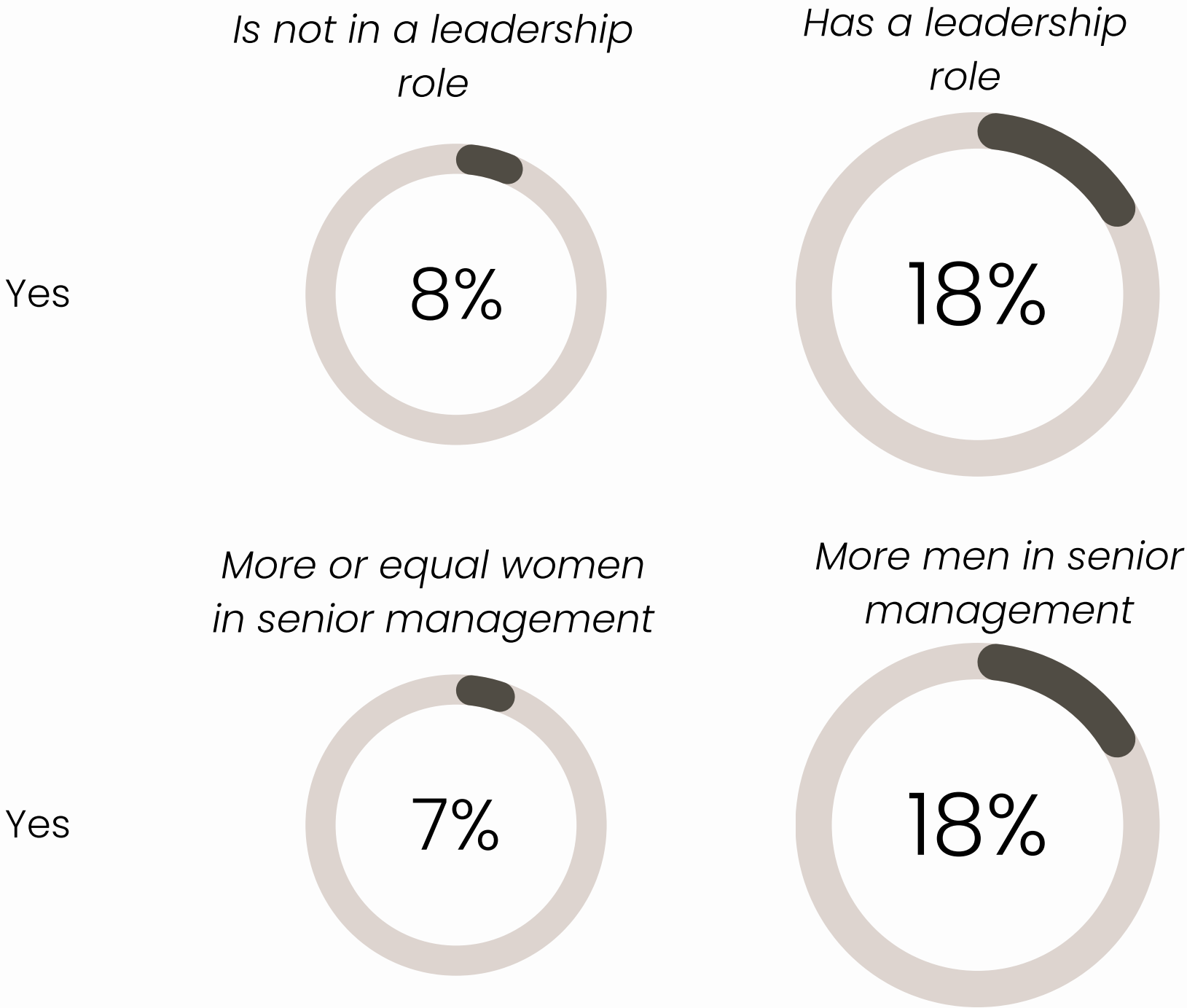
These corporate cultures also seem to affect promotion opportunities for women. Some women, 10% on average, currently feel they have to adapt if they want to be promoted. Among women who are in a leadership position, this percentage almost doubles to 18%.

The masculine leadership model is still the prevailing norm to which everyone, including women, must conform.

Is not in a leadership role

Yes

8%

Has a leadership role

18%

More or equal women in senior management

Yes

7%

More men in senior management

18%

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

"When during a meeting the chairman of the board told me that all I had to do was listen and learn from how real men play this game, and that otherwise he would put me in the corner, I couldn't ignore it anymore. Each time he bullied me and I decided to ignore it I myself pushed my limit of acceptable behavior. Until we got to this point."

- Healthcare Sector Administrator

PREGNANCY UNFAVORABLE FOR CAREER

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

To get a better picture of what happens in a corporate culture that makes women feel less at home in it and makes it more difficult to advance their careers, we asked respondents what kind of behavior they encounter at work.

This revealed that nearly one-third of women are being spoken to less during meetings, and 38% of women currently experience their word being taken for less. The numbers are even more shocking when we consider issues such as pregnancy and inappropriate behavior.

In fact, women report that pregnancy is less beneficial to their careers in 41% of cases. In organizations with more men at the top, that percentage is 52%. An average of 44% of respondents additionally experience sexual comments within their company.

WHY WOMEN DON'T FEEL AT HOME

	Management equaly divide	More men in senior management	More women in senior management
Women get to speak less often/shorter	21%	40%	21%
Women are taken less seriously than men	23%	44%	30%
Pregnancy is unfavorable for career woman	37%	52%	31%
Sexist/sexual jokes are being made	39%	54%	30%
Women are addressed as 'girl,' 'gal,' 'miss'	27%	29%	19%
Women are judged on appearance rather than quality of work	44%	49%	33%

* % van stellingen beantwoord met "soms", "vaak" of "altijd"

WORKING BELOW PAR

When I returned from maternity leave, I was told that my position had been eliminated and I would have to do temporary supported tasks. There would be no room for work at my level. However, after a few months, new positions were created, incorporating my old work, and new people were appointed. When I discussed this, the story remained that there was currently no suitable work for me. This while working below your level is killing your motivation and self-esteem. It is so frustrating how disadvantaged women are treated. So much talent is lost this way... and I too eventually left the organization. "

- Content manager

WOMEN & POWER

Women in leadership positions are significantly more likely to experience sexism and harassment.

Previous international research in 2020 has shown that sexual harassment is more common among female executives than among female employees [1].

Women in positions of power and influence are more likely to encounter unacceptable behavior. Not only from their boss, but also from peers who pressure them, customers, shareholders, and even male co-workers who try to undermine her position. The impact of these daily, dormant power plays on the health, psychological security and self-confidence of women leaders is underestimated by companies.

It perpetuates the gender gap in income, status and voice.

[1] 2020, O. Folke, J. Rickne, S. Tanaka, and Y. Tateishi: Sexual Harassment of Women Leaders

EXPERIENCE EXECUTIVE WOMEN

	Female manager	Female employe
Women get to speak less often/shorter	35%	27%
Women are taken less seriously than men	47%	35%
Pregnancy is unfavorable for career woman	49%	39%
Sexist/sexist jokes are being made	54%	38%
Women are addressed as 'girl,' 'gal,' 'miss'	42%	22%
Women are judged on appearance rather than quality of work	52%	38%

SEXISM IS COMMONPLACE

Sexism (prejudice against women due to skewed power relations) is commonplace within our organizations. It manifests itself in advancement opportunities and in the level of salaries. It manifests itself in name calling, meant to discourage women. It manifests itself in endless debates around the women quota which continues to prevent real change. It manifests itself in a statement like "Will you keep it short this time?" which suppresses the voice of women in a meeting. It manifests itself in comments like "Can you handle that?", "Will you keep working full-time?" or "How will you do that with your children?

It even manifests itself in lower financial esteem for typical female professions such as elementary school teacher, nurse and administrative assistant. Sexism manifests itself in hundreds of these subtle signals women receive day in and day out that make them feel inadequate every time, regardless of their education, hours of work or successes achieved.

"

WOMEN FACE A LOT AT WORK. WHEN I SEE THESE FIGURES, I THINK: WHO WOULD BLAME WOMEN IF THEY STOP WORKING AND ADJUST THEIR AMBITIONS WHEN YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS AND IT ONLY GETS WORSE THE HIGHER UP YOU GO?

WHILE: WOMEN ARE CRUCIAL FOR THE GROWTH OF OUR ECONOMY AND IN SOLVING COUNTLESS CRISES. BUT THE PRESSURE ON WOMEN IS SO INCREDIBLY HIGH DUE TO POOR EMANCIPATION POLICIES IN THE NETHERLANDS THAT MANY SUCCUMB TO IT.
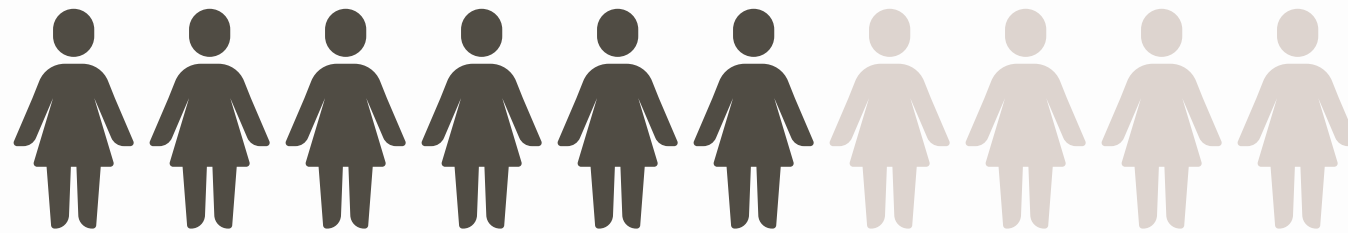
WHY SPECIFIC D&I POLICIES ARE ESSENTIAL

SECTION 1

FOCUS ON GENDER DIVERSITY

WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Dutch organizations can do more about gender diversity and an inclusive work environment for both men and women. As many as 64% of respondents currently indicate that there is no clear D&I policy or that this is not known.

There is also good news, because when organizations do take D&I initiatives and specifically focus them on encouraging gender diversity within the organization, 55% of all working women experience positive effects.

When an organization does engage in diversity but lingers in generalities without specifically targeting women, 29% notice a positive effect, significantly less. So diversity policies seem to work positively when they are targeted. The positive effect manifests itself in different forms, shown on the next page.
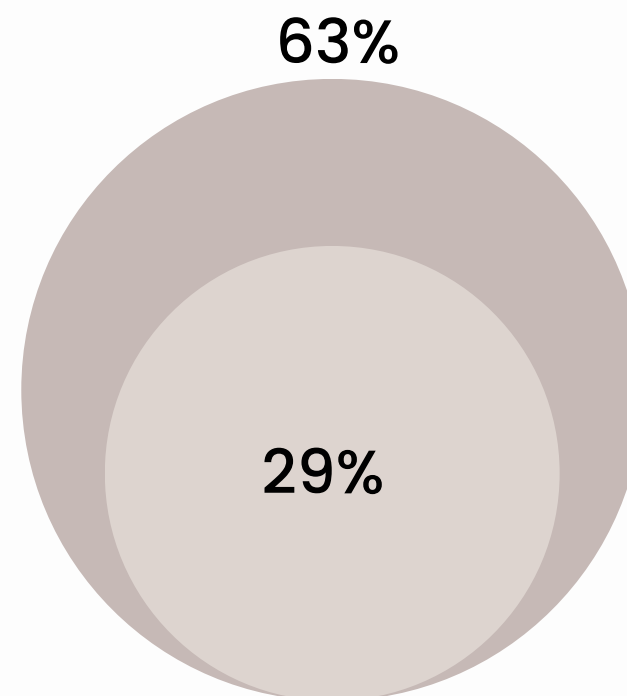
SPECIFIC VS. GENERAL POLICY

01

53% indicate that specific D&I initiatives lead to better manners with women. With a general policy, this percentage is 29%
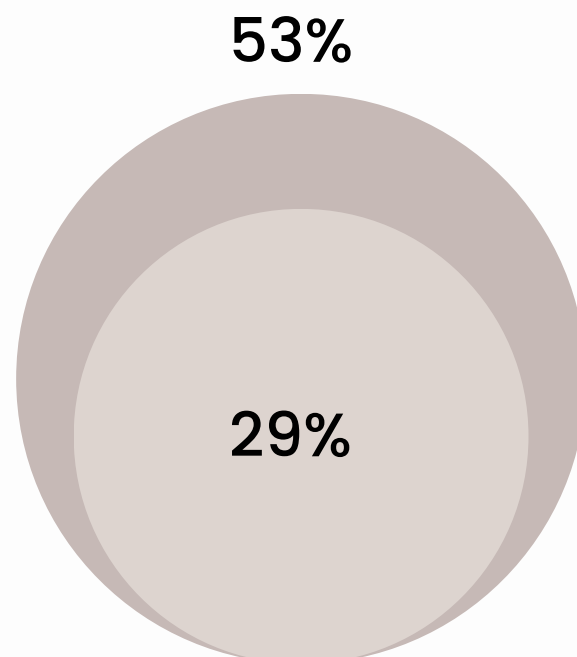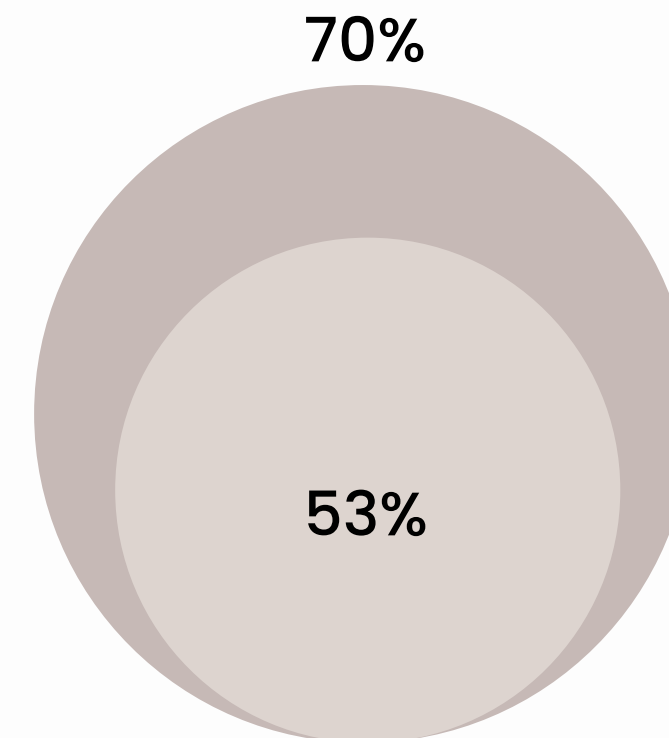
02

In 63% of cases, women executives are taking more initiative to encourage opportunities for and development of women.

03

And 70% of women note that their supervisor encourages equal behavior. Substantially higher than general policy: 53%.

53%

29%

63%

29%

70%

53%

* % van stellingen beantwoord met "soms", "vaak" of "altijd"

THE POWER OF WOMEN

"Often diversity policy is a nice slogan for image, but in practice it is not reflected. Especially the woman/man appreciation is a problem. I don't necessarily need to be on a gender-neutral toilet as a woman, but I do want more attention to the power of women, which is now being misunderstood."

- Medical advisor

MORE APPRECIATION LEADS TO HIGHER COMMITMENT

WORKING LONGER FOR THE ORGANIZATION

It also appears that greater appreciation from within the organization leads to higher commitment from women themselves. Especially when the initiatives focus on women.

Women within organizations with a D&I policy focused on women indicate that if they would feel more at home within their organization or more appreciated, they would work more hours (10%), hold a leadership position (20%), dare to go for their ambitions (26%) and work longer for an organization (28%).

In fact, respondents to this study indicate that in many cases, an overall D&I policy has less effect than the absence of such initiatives. Thus, one could argue that the only route and wise investment for organization to move forward on diversity and inclusiveness is a specific policy.

IMPACT OF D&I INITIATIVES

	Women-focused	General policy	No policy (known)
Work more	10%	6%	8%
Take on a leadership position	20%	7%	10%
Dare to pursue ambitions	26%	16%	14%
Work longer for the organization	28%	26%	20%

* % van stellingen beantwoord met "soms", "vaak" of "altijd"

GENDER DIVISION IN MANAGEMENT

D&I vrouw
62%

D&I algemeen
45%

Geen D&I
29%
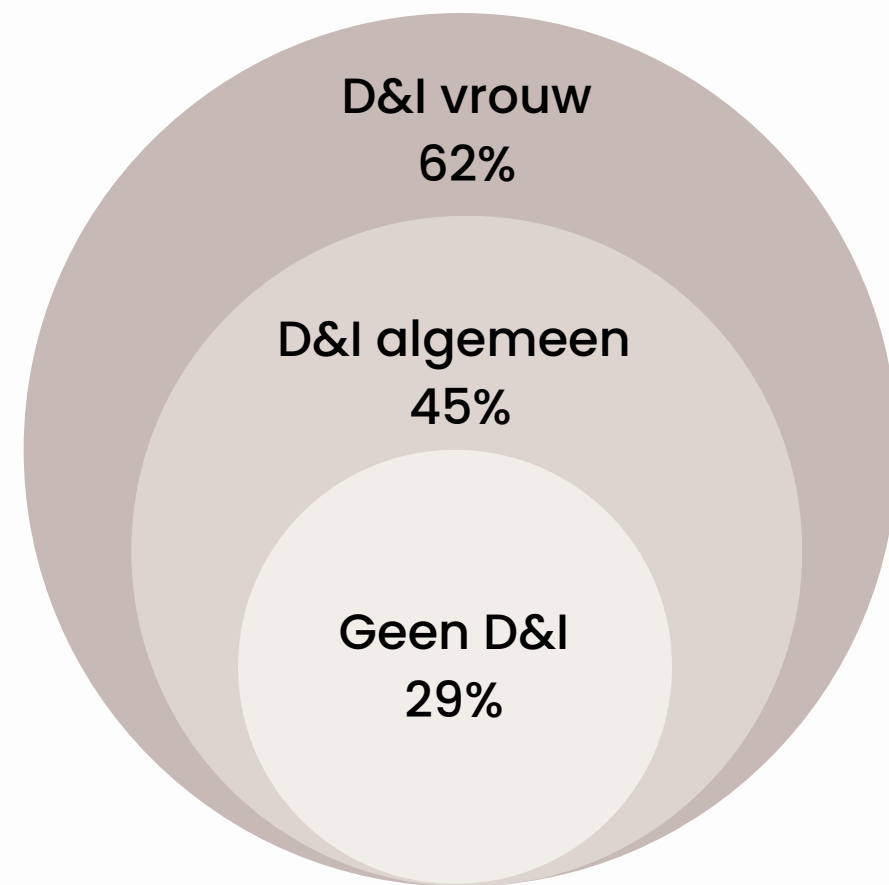
Targeted D&I initiatives also appear to make a big difference in the number of women who feel encouraged to take on leadership roles. This is 62% in organizations with specific policies while it remains between 29 and 45% in organizations without policies aimed at gender diversity.

This is good news because in addition to the effect of specific D&I policies, this research also clearly shows that the gender distribution in management has a major impact. A top layer in which at least half are represented by women has a positive effect on women's experiences and career paths in the organization.

The more women hold official power roles and influence how organizations are shaped, the closer we can get to inclusive organizational cultures.

"

WITH ALL THE CRISES WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH TOGETHER AND ALL THE TALENT WE NEED, DIVERSITY SHOULD BY NOW BE A STRATEGIC THEME IN EVERY ORGANIZATION.

IF YOU SUCCEED IN RETAINING AND ADVANCING THE WOMEN WHO CURRENTLY WORK FOR YOU, IT ALSO BECOMES MORE APPEALING FOR NEW WOMEN TO WORK FOR YOU.

PART 4

WHAT ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO DO

GENDER BALANCE IS BETTER FOR THE BUSINESS RESULTS

Promoting gender diversity in your organization is not only a moral issue, but also a practical one: multiple studies show that gender diversity has positive impact on business results.

Organizations that actively seek to integrate diverse perspectives, experiences and leadership styles consistently outperform competitors with homogeneous leadership teams.

Ten years of research by McKinsey and LeanIn.org provides key statistics that support this [2]. For example:

- companies in the top 25% for gender diversity were 27% more likely to outperform their national industry average in terms of profitability.
- companies with the highest number of women on the board achieved a 47% higher return on equity than companies without female executives.

[2] 2020, M. S. Emerson: Why Gender Equity in the Workplace is Good for Business – Harvard division of continuing education

Other research shows that companies that are committed to gender diversity and have an inclusive organizational culture are 60% more likely to attract and retain talent [3].

Moreover, companies with low rates of both gender and racial diversity are 29% more likely to make less money [4]. In other words, it is detrimental to business results if leadership teams are not diverse.

BETTER DECISIONS

Why is this? Diversity increases creativity and innovation, promotes higher quality decisions and economic growth because it stimulates deeper information processing and complex thinking. This complex thinking enables diverse groups to respond more effectively to constantly changing contexts and unforeseen challenges [5].

In fact, research shows that inclusive teams make better business decisions 87% of the time, require only half the time and appointments to do so, and with 60% better results [6]. In today's world, this is only becoming more important. Diversity and an inclusive corporate culture is not a nice to have but a must have for a successful organization.

[3] 2018, International Labour Organization enterprise survey
[4] 2020, C. Carosella: Why Gender Equality Matters In Business Success – Forbes
[5] 2015, A. D. Galinsky et al.: Maximizing the gains and minimizing the pains of diversity: A policy perspective – Perspectives on Psychological Science
[6] 2017, E. Larson: New Research: Diversity + Inclusion = Better Decision Making At Work – Forbes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Organizations have long known which spearheads deserve attention. Promote as many women as men. Encourage women to hold leadership positions. Straighten out rewards and salaries between men and women in the same position. Tackle discrimination, sexism and harassment. All measures that may seem like open doors, but currently too many women report that organizations are not inclusive enough. The opportunities are truly there for the taking, and if you don't do that now you are indirectly saying enough to your female employees and women will leave your company.

That while many talented women feel the call and responsibility to make balanced decisions, articulate holistic goals, develop sustainable business models and bring meaning to everyone's work. I know they crave this and I also know their leadership can be game changers for a company.

However, the energy that leading in the still mostly masculine-dominated corporate cultures demands of them takes its toll on many women at some point in their careers. Women working in a masculine-driven leadership model tend to be flexible and possess the talent to adapt to circumstances in order to be successful. They parlay sexism, harassment and discrimination, but it actually addressing it does not happen.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What was a successful adaptation strategy at the start of her career later turns out to lead to a loss of authenticity, self-confidence and an inner compass. The imbalance and the enormous energy leak that women experience ultimately leads to losing female talent.

Also, the (often unconscious) desire and motivation to balance this unbalanced culture also plays a role. How to integrate the feminine traits of leadership into the masculine-driven corporate culture? In addition to their highly developed masculine leadership style, how can women use their natural feminine leadership talents for a balanced culture and sustainable business results? Often this is a lonely struggle within them. Fueled by a lack of example women and men within the company. This desire is insufficiently nurtured, which weakens the ambition to fill the female leadership role. The diminishing ambition is often not recognized and acted upon in time by the organization. This phenomenon is also known as the 'leaking leadership pipeline': although almost as many highly educated women as men enter the company, ultimately far fewer women than men reach the top.

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU

Would you also like to do this research within your organization; and in doing so, go for a more diverse and inclusive company with better results?

Carla Clarissa and Motivaction can help. Request a free quote at carla@carlaclarissa.com or 020 220 1715.

COLOPHON

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