



Men for
Inclusion

The importance of male involvement in accelerating gender equality

A study to analyse the motivators and success factors of male engagement in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI).





A snapshot of gender equality progress

The 'lived experience gap', an indicator of inclusion, shows that women in most professional firms have between a 15-25% poorer experience than men on many measures.¹ The 2023 gender pay gap is 14.3% across all workers, according to data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in November, only a 0.1% reduction from 2022 figures.²

Male involvement is essential to advancing gender equality, as they often hold the majority of executive positions in most organisations. However, research points to 'diversity fatigue' amongst men, and an increasing resistance to DEI initiatives, with some feeling they are becoming the most victimised group.³

Our insight

Men For Inclusion and Barnett Waddingham (BW) have undertaken a joint study to further explore the motivations of male inclusion leaders and allies, as well as the benefits and challenges of their work. The survey was issued to 2,771 of existing clients in both organisations - yet only 71 people completed the survey, 54 of which (76%) were men. This reinforces the need for further work to be done to encourage male engagement and involvement in supporting DEI.

Gary Ford, Co-Founder of Men for Inclusion conducted the survey and Riaan van Wyk, Senior Wellbeing Data Consultant at BW analysed the data.

1 - www.menforinclusion.com/uploads/library/MFI_-_Lived_Experience_-_Report_Feb_2023.pdf

2 - Gender pay gap in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

3 - <https://www.gartner.com/en/articles/how-to-navigate-pushback-to-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-efforts>



Current male engagement in DEI initiatives

Our study indicates that many men are not fully committed to driving DEI initiatives within their organisations.

The participants in our study felt that:

57% of men are reactive, passive or resistant to DEI initiatives;

24% of men are focussed on improving diversity; and

19% of men are focussed on improving inclusion.

“Men regularly engaging in DEI initiatives would help accelerate progress.”

Mark Freed, Co-Founder at Men For Inclusion

Motivators for male involvement in DEI

Gaining insight into what motivates men to become active in DEI activities is key for inspiring and engaging others and can expedite companies in achieving their DEI goals.

The principle of fairness in the workplace is a greater motivator for DEI involvement amongst men than the business case.

We discovered that the top reasons for men getting involved in DEI initiatives were:

- 'wanting to work in a fairer and more equitable workplace now and for future generations' (scoring 38 points out of 100);
- 'seeing colleagues being treated unequally and/or unfairly' (23 points);
- 'the business case' (12 points); and
- 'My family and/or close friends being negatively affected by exclusive behaviours' (10 points).

Key benefits of inclusive male leadership

The motivating factors reflect the three core benefits of inclusive male leadership and involvement in DEI which were uncovered by our study, all being people-based factors.

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The voice of male inclusive leaders

"I benefited from being part of a leadership team that beat the competition as a result of having a diverse team with equal voices."

"It helps me to be a better role model for my team and my children."

"I have seen the diversity dividend actualise particularly around innovation income."

"Working as part of an inclusive team keeps me on my toes, forces me to think differently and be more creative."

"I feel proud to be part of an inclusive organisation."

"I feel more job satisfaction as a leader."

"I would like others to look at me and say: 'he gets it, I want to be like that.'"

"Involvement in DEI is hard work, challenging and time-consuming but rewarding and worth investing resources in."

Personal benefits for inclusive male leaders

Aside from the broader organisational benefits, men were also asked how they had personally benefited from being more actively involved in DEI. They scored several benefits out of a hundred and the top four answers are shown below.

28/100

Better benefits available to employees where I work

26/100

It makes me a better leader/manager and work contributor

24/100

It makes my everyday work experience more enjoyable

21/100

It gives me more flexibility in how I balance work with my personal life

Overall, we found that men felt being involved in DEI made them better at their jobs, made their everyday work experience better, and drove better benefits for all employees, especially when it came to flexibility in managing their work and personal life.





Challenges experienced by male champions for DEI

Our study found that 68% of male champions had only been involved in DEI work for the last five years, indicating that male allyship or inclusion leadership is still a nascent area.

We asked what difficulties inclusive male leaders were currently facing within their organisations. The challenges they highlighted were:

- DEI work not always being prioritised and equally supported by all colleagues, particularly by men in senior leadership positions;
- a reluctance by organisations to admit when they're not putting enough focus on DEI, and a reticence by organisations to speak up;
- senior leaders not taking DEI seriously - seeing it as a 'tick box exercise', only carrying out work to meet targets and not role modelling inclusive behaviours themselves;
- organisations not actioning initiatives that are discussed and agreed;
- data collection being insufficient to demonstrate the impact of initiatives;
- a lack of reward and recognition for DEI efforts; and
- over balancing and creation of new forms of discrimination.



Best practice tips from male champions

So, what actions do work and what could organisations look to include in their DEI initiatives? Our survey respondents suggested:

- men holding other male peers accountable;
- board level sponsorship;
- ensuring agreed improvements and initiatives relating to DEI are followed through - actions, not just words;
- a holistic approach to mentoring that includes both peer and reverse mentoring, alongside senior men mentoring under-represented individuals;
- sharing examples and stories, and promoting role models;
- challenging policy and procedures that are not equitable;
- ensuring work is allocated fairly;
- making sure social time is equitable amongst all work colleagues;
- ensuring group situations are managed and represented inclusively;
- calling out non-inclusive behaviours; and
- being visible at your organisation's DEI events.

Our experts at Men For Inclusion and BW delve into this question further:



Mark is the CEO of E2W, a company that focuses on supporting women in their financial services careers. He also co-founded Men For Inclusion, an organisation that helps companies engage with their male population on DEI programmes.

"The path to true diversity, equity, and inclusion calls for a dynamic shift in engagement strategies. It's time for those responsible for DEI initiatives to steer towards a brighter future, one where our male majority stand as enthusiastic leaders in the journey.

Gone are the days of solely relying on the business case or highlighting the impact of unconscious bias and micro-aggressions. Our study reveals an empowering truth: when we engage men positively and meaningfully, they become champions for diversity, igniting the crucial cultural, behavioural, and value changes needed to foster greater inclusion and equity.

It's undeniable that those already championing inclusion are reaping the personal benefits, even if these rewards often remain unspoken in workplace conversations. It's high time we amplify these success stories, create a chorus of role models, and foster open dialogues about the personal advantages gained from active engagement. It's a powerful recruitment tool to inspire more men to join the ranks of active participants.

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The time is now for firms to invest in creating safe spaces for passive, resistant, and reactive individuals, urging them to explore what lies ahead on this journey. What's in it for them? The motivation of their colleagues, the personal rewards from active engagement, and a future of true diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.
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Mark Freed

Co-Founder,
Men For Inclusion



Melissa leads our pay gap proposition, offering clients gender, ethnicity, CEO pay ratio and other pay gap reporting, together with benchmarking and deeper analytical insight.

“Given men are often key decision makers and influencers, usually holding the majority of senior leadership and managerial roles, engagement with them is vital for women’s career progression, representation and closure of the gender pay gap.

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70% of our survey respondents were keen to see an increase in female representation in the workplace, 54% thought their organisation still had work to do and one in four weren’t aware of their organisation’s gender pay gap and action plan. There is a continued need to focus on gender equality.

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We need to be sensitive to the fact that just as one woman does not represent all women, the same is true for men. It was interesting in our study that men were defining themselves beyond gender, emphasising their family situation, where they grew up (distinct from ethnicity), age, educational opportunities, and neurodiversity.

The message needs to get through that gender equality is not at men’s expense – this study identifies key business and personal benefits to men who help improve diversity. So, as a result of this study, do organisations need to revisit how they engage with men, as key influencers in accelerating gender diversity?”



Melissa Blissett

Pay Gap Analytics Lead,
Barnett Waddingham



Find out more

Please get in touch with [Mark Freed](#) or [Melissa Blissett](#) if you would like to discuss any of the topics in more detail.

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