**Despite the progress made over the years, equality is still a far-off dream; more so with an 'unequal pandemic' that has impacted women harder and threatens to push the gender equality timeline by more than 50 years. Globally, more women than men (5 percent versus 2.8 percent) have lost their jobs during the pandemic and there's been a 16.5 percent average decline in women's incomes compared with 10.1 percent for men. The situation is no different in India. The participation of women in the Indian workforce is just 19.9 percent with their earnings being 34.5 percent less than men for the same work.**

Disability inclusion is another area where we are lagging far behind. Only one - fourth of persons with disabilities in the country are employed. And, while LGBTQ+ employees have progressed in the workplace, it is important to take note that underneath this success, they are experiencing unseen challenges and privately held fears at work that are hindering their ability to thrive.

Accelerating equality for all has never been more relevant for businesses and governments. We are at a unique moment in time when the post - pandemic recovery offers a real opportunity to fast - track equality for all. It is an opportunity we must seize. Afterall, when leaders prioritize equality, organizations grow twice as fast. The business outcomes are immense. Employees' innovation mindset, or their willingness and ability to innovate, is **6x** higher in the most-equal cultures. However, the socio-economic benefits outweigh all else. For India, a more balanced workforce could mean a **27 percent** boost for the economy.

As responsible businesses are seeking to make a positive impact on the world we live in, companies must take the lead in enabling this change. Prioritizing a culture of equality where everyone can thrive is a good starting point. For women, persons with disabilities or those belonging to the LGBTQ+ community to achieve their full potential, the workplace culture must change. More importantly, leaders must see the need for change. According to our **Getting to Equal 2020** research, there is a large gap between what leaders think and what employees experience. Leaders may think they are inclusive, but employees may not agree.

This Equality Playbook serves as a mirror of the modern workplace, taking a closer look at the perception gap and recommending actions for leaders to close that gap and create meaningful change for themselves, their employees and society at large. But first, let's start with organizational culture.

# WHAT IS A CULTURE OF EQUALITY?

Workplace culture is complex, fluid and hard to define. One way to articulate it is by breaking down the factors that form it and asking employees to weigh the importance of each factor. Over the past **3 years** we have surveyed more than **70,000** employees in more than **30** countries to measure their perception of factors that contribute to the culture in which they work. Out of more than **200** personal and workplace factors such as policies, behaviors and collective opinions of employees, we identified three categories of factors that are statistically shown to influence the advancement for all employees, and in turn, an organization's ability to innovate and grow.
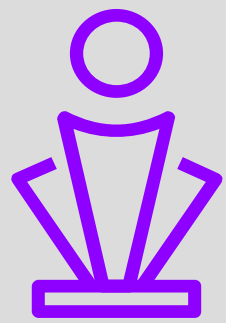
**Bold leadership**
A diverse leadership team that sets, shares and measures equality goals openly
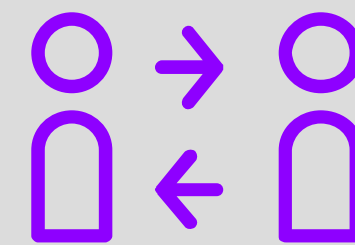
**Comprehensive action**
Policies and practices that are family friendly, support all genders and are bias-free in attracting and retaining people

**Empowering environment**
One where employees are trusted, respected as individuals and offered the freedom to be creative as well as train and work flexibly.

How 'equal' a workplace culture is can be determined from the presence and strength of these categories of factors or pillars. Companies can use these as anchors to build, strengthen and sustain an equal environment where everyone can be their best and thrive.

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# THE EQUALITY PERCEPTION GAP

A challenge to be consciously addressed

Today, companies recognize that equality and inclusion are not just the right thing to do, but are also good for business. An analysis from an IMF Report, mentioned in our research for **W2O, 'If Not Now, When?'** , shows that closing the gender gap in workforce participation alone would lead to a **35 percent** increase in the GDP for emerging markets, and a **US$172 trillion** boost to global wealth if women earned the same as men. However, despite a growing recognition about the benefits they bring, progress on equality and inclusion just isn't fast enough.

# 6%
of women among
FORTUNE Global 500 CEOs

# 18%
of firms globally
led by women

Making matters worse is the gap between leaders' perception and employees' experience. While leaders believe a culture of equality is important and think their organizations are inclusive, employees feel differently.
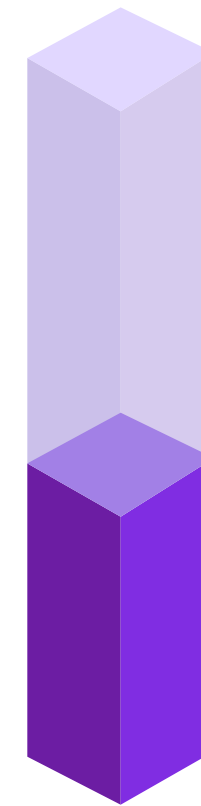
[Source: IMF Report]

Consider this - our **Getting to Equal 2020** report shows that **68 percent** of leaders feel they create empowering environments where their employees can be themselves, raise concerns and innovate without fear of failure. But just **36 percent** of employees agree.

**68%**
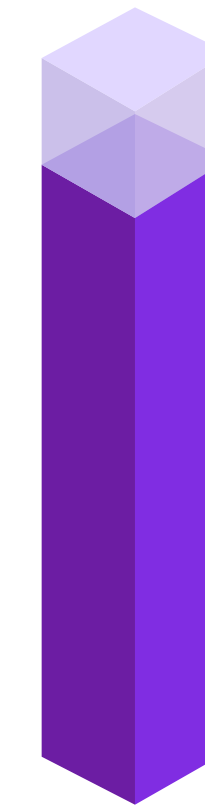of leaders

**36%**
of employees

**76%**
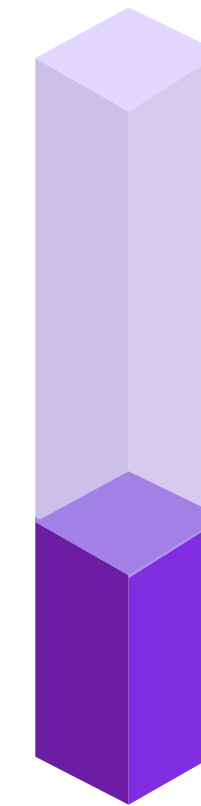of leaders

**29%**
of employees

Two-thirds of leaders **(68 percent)** feel they create empowering environments in which, for example, employees can be themselves, raise concerns and innovate without fear of failure.

**Just one-third (36 percent) of employees agree.**

More than three quarters of leaders **(76 percent)** say employees have good control over when, where and how they work.

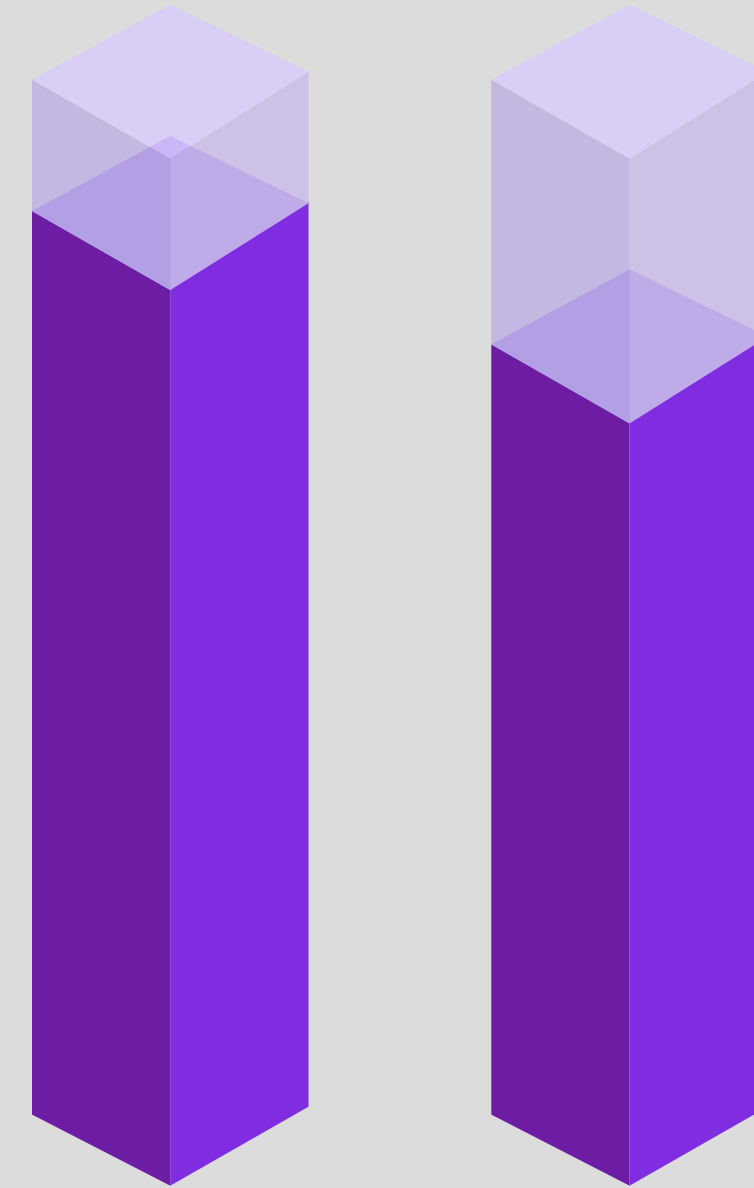**Just 29 percent of employees agree.**

The proportion of employees who do not feel included in their organizations (20 percent), i.e. who do not feel they are welcome at work and can contribute fully and thrive, is **10x higher than that of leaders who believe otherwise (2 percent).**
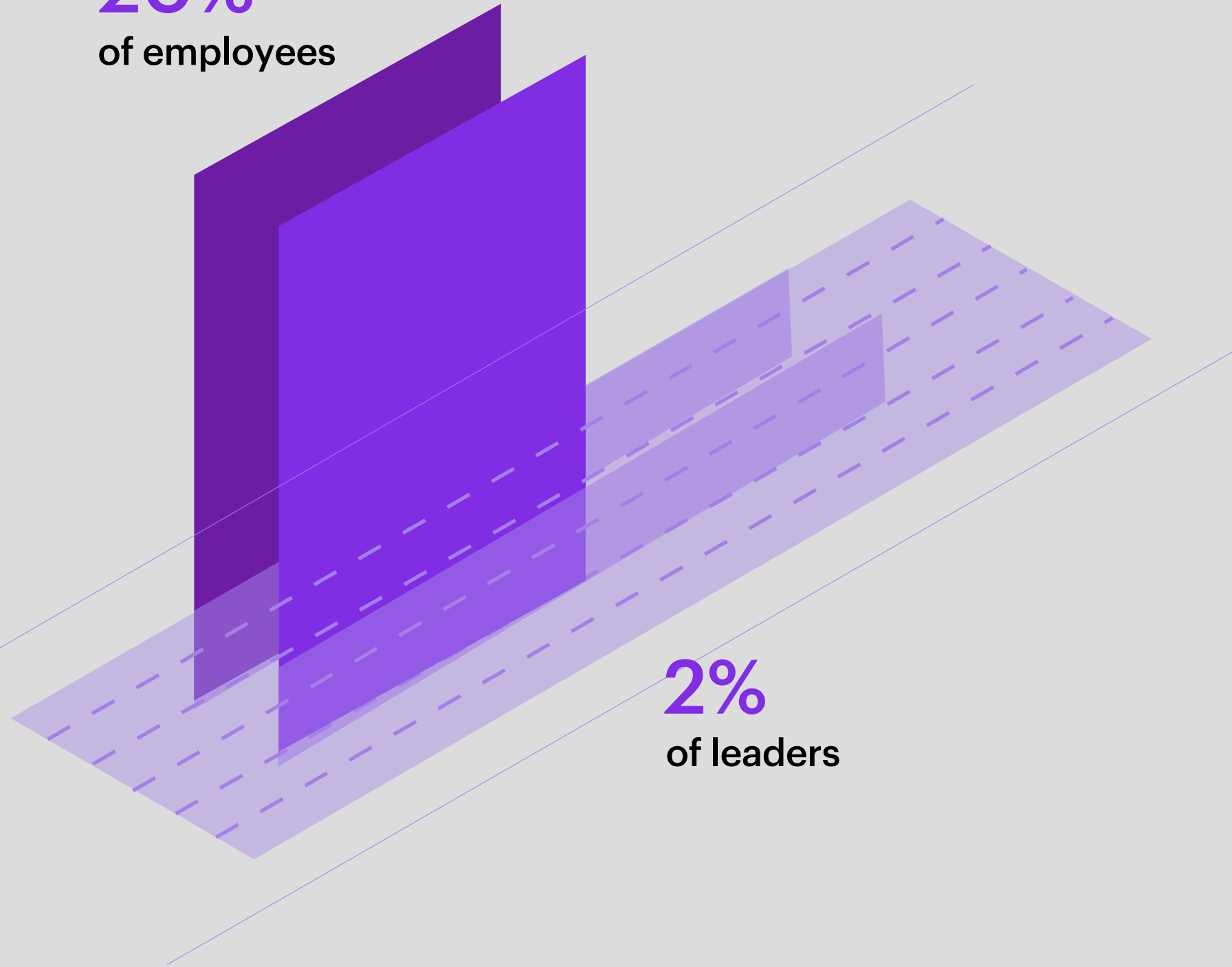
**88%**
of leaders

**73%**
of employees

Approximately two-thirds of employees feel comfortable reporting a range of sensitive issues, such as a concern about their mental health or the behavior of a senior colleague.
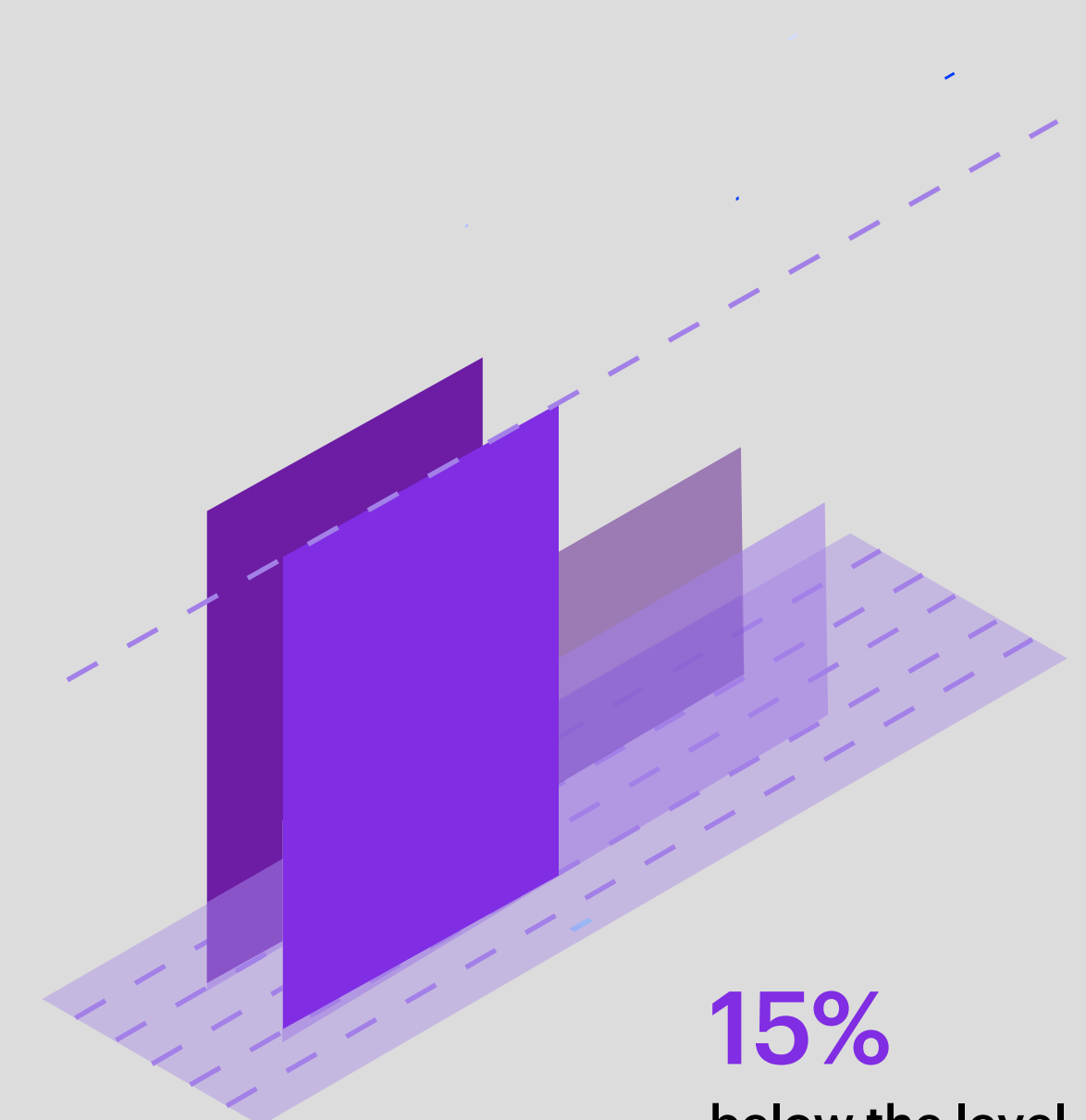
**20%**
of employees

**2%**
of leaders

88 percent of leaders say their organization offers training/upskilling opportunities, **but only 73 percent of employees say the same.**

**15%**
below the level leaders believe.

Persons with disabilities represent about **15 percent** of the world's population. But their participation in the workforce is disproportionately low. Worldwide, estimates hold that up to **80 percent** are not employed while **60 percent** of those in jobs are more likely to feel excluded at work. **77 percent** and **80 percent** of leaders with disabilities are not open about their disability at work.

Even if companies hire persons with disabilities, many aren't nurturing their talents or helping them reach their potential.

[Source: Getting to Equal 2020: Disability Inclusion]

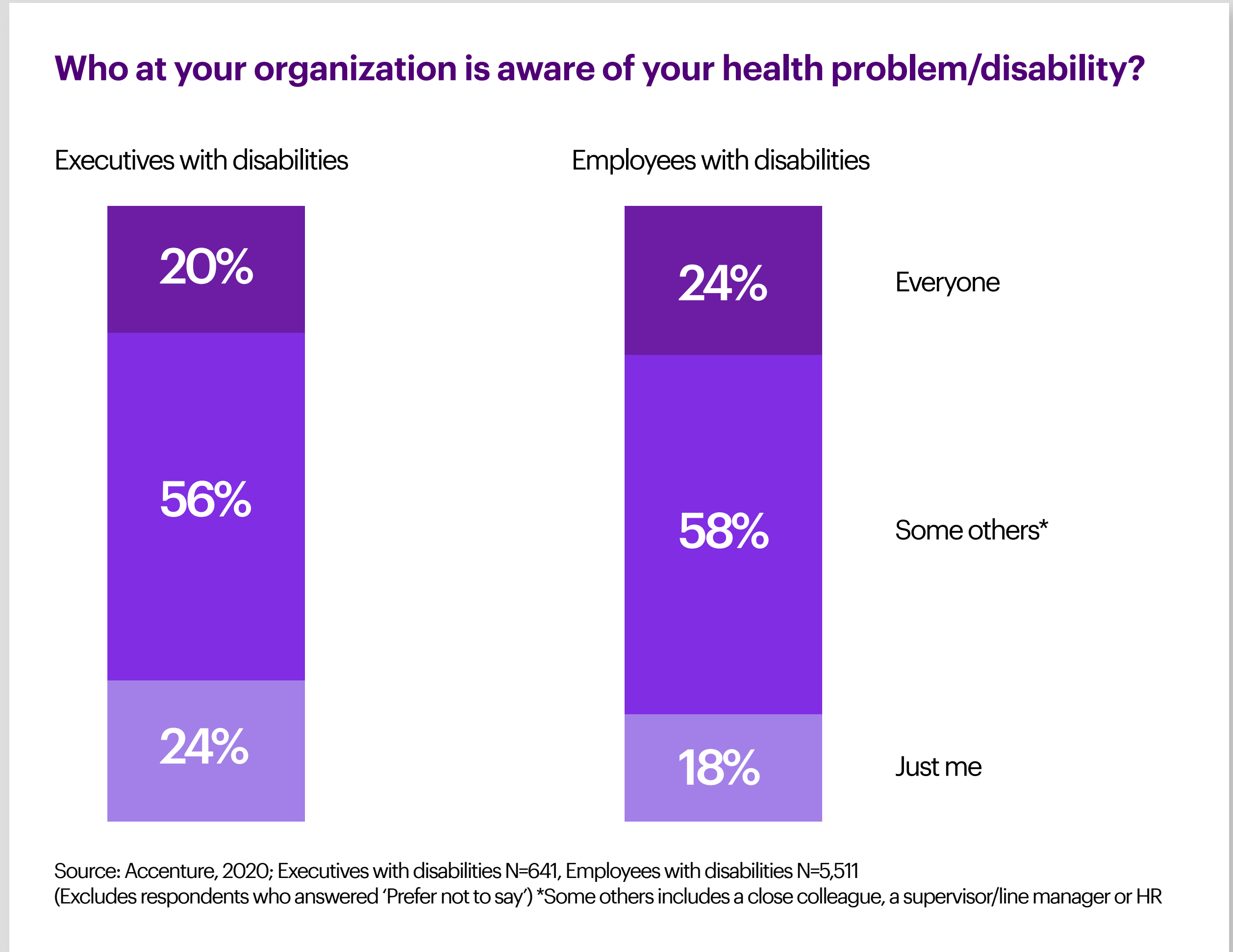# Workplaces suffer from a lack of transparency and trust

How important are the following factors in helping you thrive in the workplace?

## 77%

Having the freedom to be the same person at work as I am at home

## 71%

Seeing people like me in senior leadership positions

**Who at your organization is aware of your health problem/disability?**

Executives with disabilities

Employees with disabilities

| Executives with disabilities | Employees with disabilities | |
|---|---|---|
| 20% | 24% | Everyone |
| 56% | 58% | Some others* |
| 24% | 18% | Just me |

Source: Accenture, 2020; Executives with disabilities N=641, Employees with disabilities N=5,511
(Excludes respondents who answered 'Prefer not to say') *Some others includes a close colleague, a supervisor/line manager or HR

[Source: Getting to Equal 2020: Disability Inclusion]

The LGTBQ+ community also knows adversity well. An OutRight Action International report predicts that this already-vulnerable group will experience greater anxiety, fear of societal stigma and risk of family violence owing to the current scenario. Experts have warned that the ongoing pandemic can lead the LGBTQ+ community to disproportionately experience negative economic and health impacts.

**77** out of **195**

countries prohibit discrimination in employment because of one's sexual orientation

**40%**

according to our latest research, even in the most socially progressive countries only around 40 percent of LGBTQ+ employees are fully open about their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at work—indicating that discomfort still abounds.
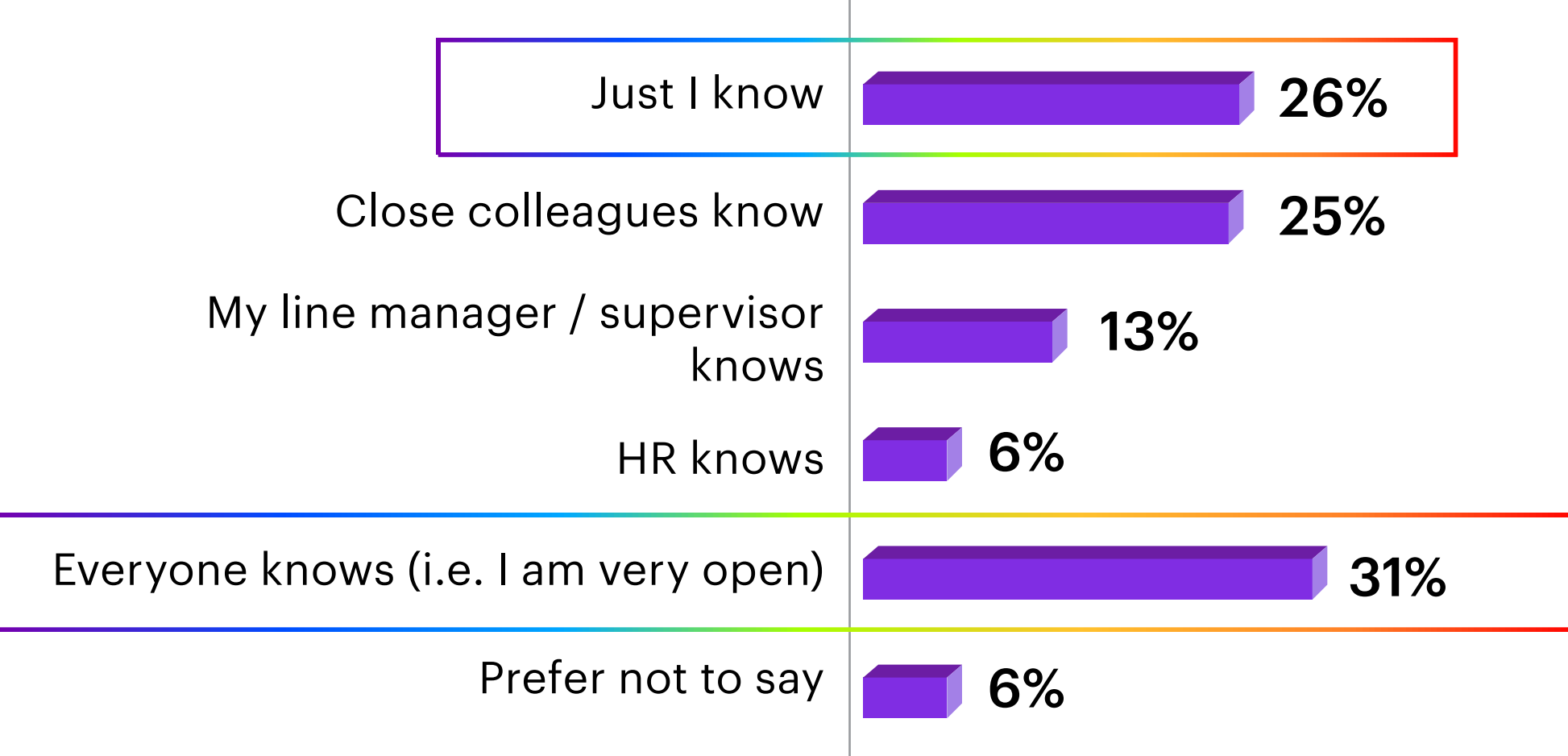
Although data suggests a fair representation of LGBTQ+ employees among management, we dug deeper and found that behind the outward signs of progress, LGBTQ+ employees experience often unseen, but deeply felt, challenges and privately held fears on the job.

We discovered that only **31 percent** of LGBTQ+ employees are fully open about their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at work. Even more worryingly, this figure falls to just **21 percent** among those in senior leadership positions (leaders).

Note: Respondents in the employee survey were able to select multiple options (unless they selected 'Just I know', 'Everyone knows' or 'Prefer not to say'). Respondents in the leader survey were not able to select multiple options.

**Employees' openness about their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at work:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Just I know | 26% |
| Close colleagues know | 25% |
| My line manager / supervisor knows | 13% |
| HR knows | 6% |
| Everyone knows (i.e. I am very open) | 31% |
| Prefer not to say | 6% |

**Leaders' openness about their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at work:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Just I know | 18% |
| Close colleagues know | 34% |
| The senior leadership team knows | 25% |
| The entire organization knows | 21% |
| Prefer not to say | 3% |

[Source: Getting to Equal 2020: Pride]

# 57%

Employees believe that their gender identity/ expression or sexual orientation has slowed their progress at work, owing to workplace cultures that aren't truly inclusive and leaders who don't have their ear to the ground
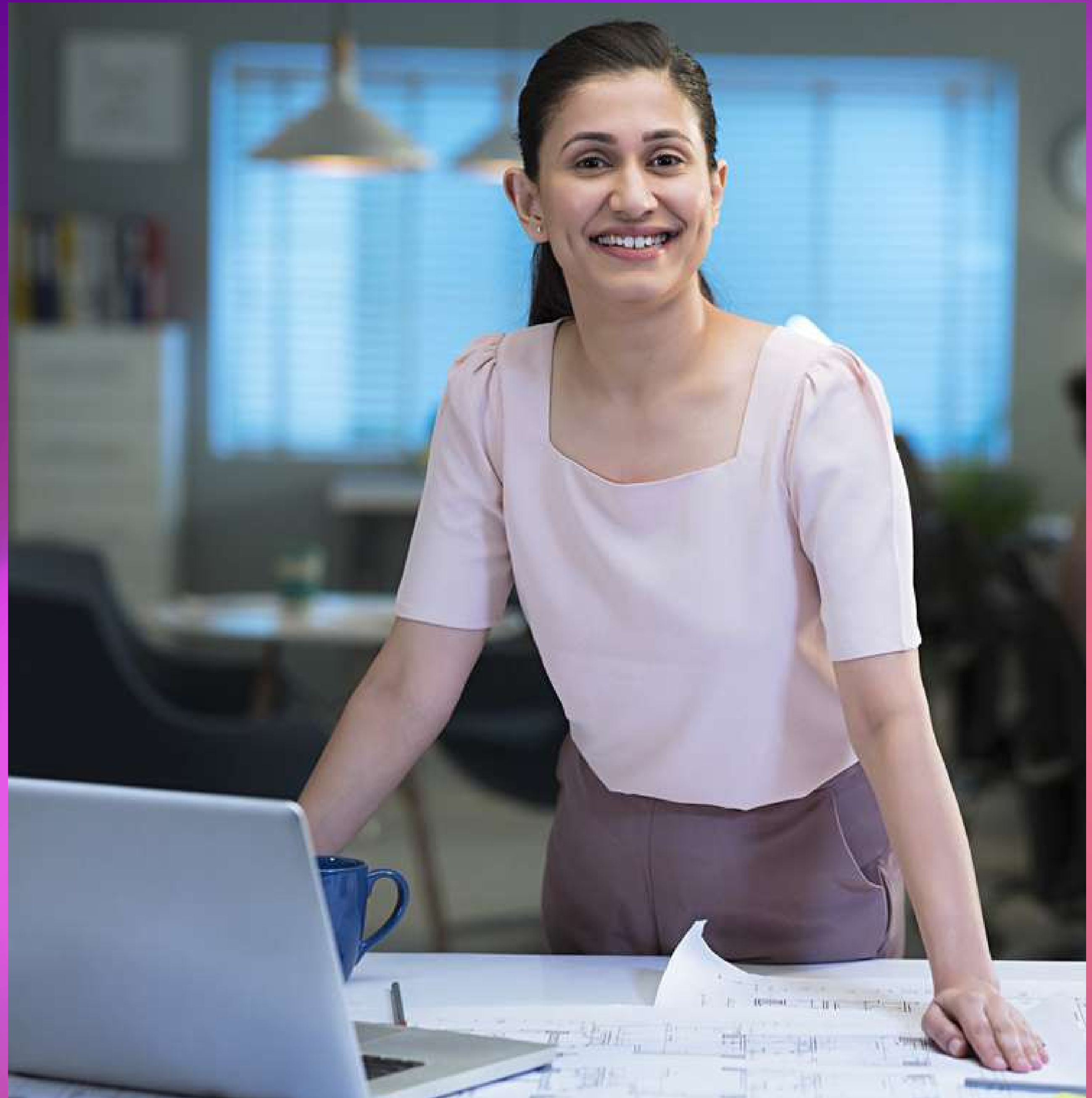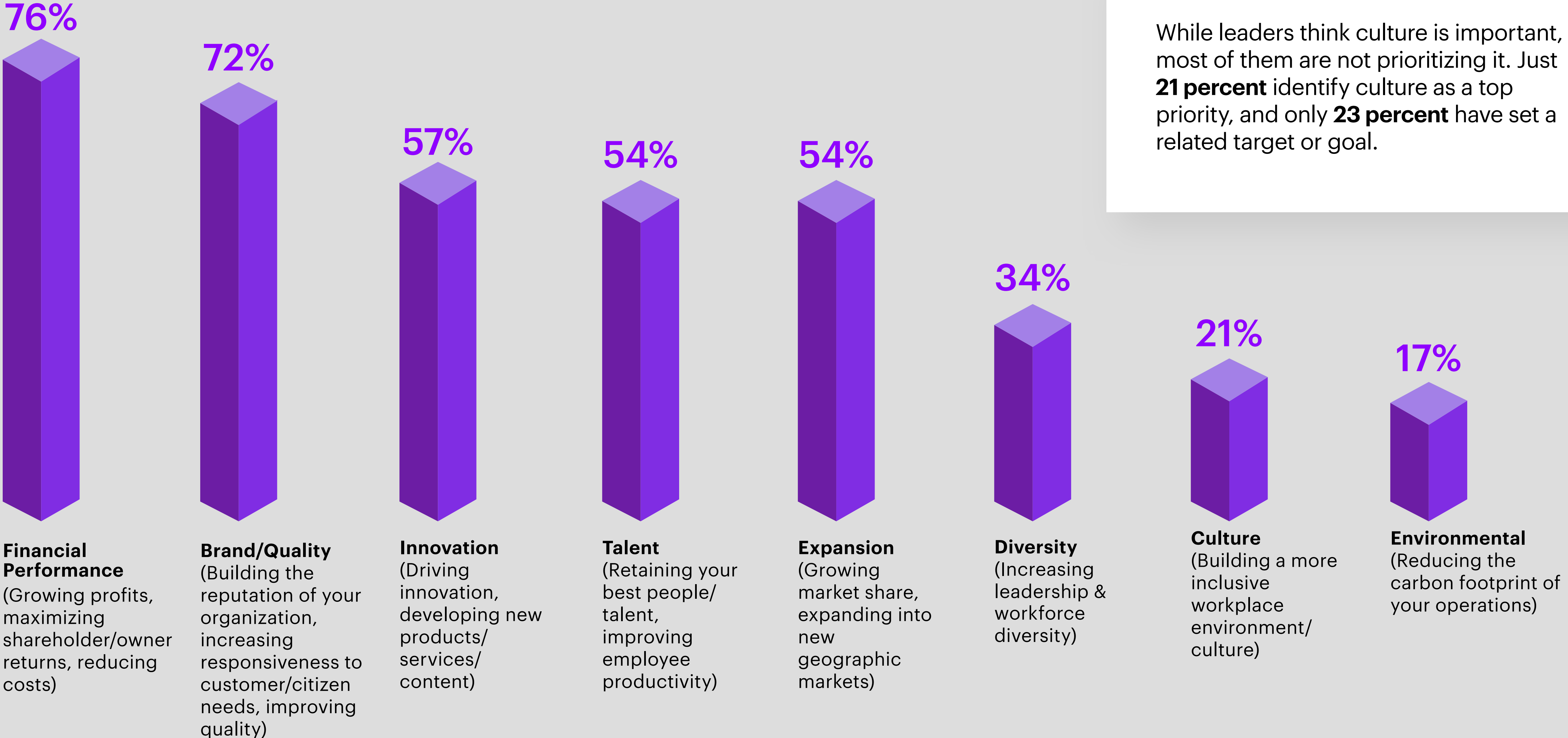
[Source: Getting to Equal 2020: Pride]

# MAKING EQUALITY AS IMPORTANT AS FINANCIAL GROWTH

To make equality in the workplace a reality, companies must prioritize it. They must make it as important as financial growth, talent and productivity. The challenge is that while leaders think culture is important, most are not prioritizing it. Just **21 percent** identify culture as a top priority, and only **23 percent** have set a related target or goal. If leaders prioritize a culture of equality now, they will create an environment that is more likely to produce the financial results they want and need. Eventually, leaders will see profit and culture as tightly interdependent goals that are equally crucial to success.

# Leader priorities



**76%**

**72%**

**57%**

**54%**

**54%**

**34%**

**21%**

**17%**

**Financial Performance**
(Growing profits, maximizing shareholder/owner returns, reducing costs)

**Brand/Quality**
(Building the reputation of your organization, increasing responsiveness to customer/citizen needs, improving quality)

**Innovation**
(Driving innovation, developing new products/ services/ content)

**Talent**
(Retaining your best people/ talent, improving employee productivity)

**Expansion**
(Growing market share, expanding into new geographic markets)

**Diversity**
(Increasing leadership & workforce diversity)

**Culture**
(Building a more inclusive workplace environment/ culture)

**Environmental**
(Reducing the carbon footprint of your operations)

While leaders think culture is important, most of them are not prioritizing it. Just **21 percent** identify culture as a top priority, and only **23 percent** have set a related target or goal.

[Source: Getting to Equal 2020: The Hidden Value of Culture Makers]

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# MAKE THE WIN WITH CULTURE

If the leader-employee perception gap were narrowed, employees, and the organizations they work for, could benefit significantly.

**That's because equality = growth.**

Our report 'The Hidden Value of Culture Makers', used an econometric data model to identify **40 factors** that influence advancement and characterize a culture of equality.

**A full list of the 40 Factors**

**BOLD LEADERSHIP**

- **Gender diversity is a priority for management***
- **A diversity target or goal is shared outside the organization***
- **The organization clearly states gender pay-gap goals and ambitions***
- Progress on gender diversity is measured and shared with employees
- Leaders are held accountable for improving gender diversity
- A diversity target or goal is shared inside the organization
- The leadership team is diverse

**COMPREHENSIVE ACTION**

- **Progress has been made in attracting, retaining and progressing women***
- **The company has a women's network***
- **The company's women's network is open to men***
- **Men are encouraged to take parental leave***
- Employees trust that the organization pays women and men equally for the same work
- The proportion of women in senior leadership has increased over the last five years
- The organization is fully committed to hiring, progressing and retaining women
- Progress has been made in improving gender equality in senior leadership
- There is a clear maternity policy in place
- Women are encouraged to take maternity leave
- There is a clear parental policy in place
- The organization hires people from a variety of backgrounds
- Leaders take action to get more women into senior roles

**\*Cultural Drivers**

[Source: Getting to Equal 2018: When She Rises, We All Rise]

**AN EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENT**

- **Employees have never been asked to change their appearance to conform to company culture***
- **Employees have the freedom to be creative and innovative***
- **Virtual/remote working is widely available and is common practice***
- **The organization provides training to keep its employees' skills relevant***
- **Employees can avoid overseas or long-distance travel via virtual meetings***
- **Employees can work from home on a day when they have a personal commitment***
- **Employees are comfortable reporting sex discrimination/sexual harassment incident(s) to the company***
- Employees feel trusted and are given responsibility
- Employees have the freedom to be themselves at work
- Leadership has a positive attitude toward failure
- Leaders set a positive example around work–life balance
- Networking events with company leaders take place during office hours
- Employees can decline a request to work later without negative consequences
- Employees can decline a request to attend early-morning/late-evening meetings without negative consequences
- Sex discrimination/sexual harassment is not tolerated at work
- The company has made progress in reducing tolerance of sex discrimination or gender-biased language
- Company training times and formats are flexible
- Supervisors respond favorably to flexible working requests
- The organization respects employees' needs to balance work with other commitments
- The organization has made progress on building a workplace where no one feels excluded

**\*Cultural Drivers**

[Source: Getting to Equal 2018: When She Rises, We All Rise]

That same data model now reveals the top five cultural issues that employers should address to create a workplace where LGBTQ+ employees in particular can not only rise, but also feel supported, heard and understood.

**O1.** Senior leaders must talk openly about their own personal issues and challenges to **convey bold leadership.**

**O2.** **Comprehensive action should be taken** to ensure that flexible working arrangements are not only available, but properly supported and encouraged.

**O3.** The workplace should be **an empowering environment** in which employees who are different from the majority are able to settle in quickly and thrive from the outset.

**O4.** That kind of empowering environment is also one in which employees are helped to understand that **it's OK to fail at work** sometimes without fear or recrimination.

**O5.** Employees should **feel safe raising concerns with (and about) leaders,** especially when it comes to harassment and discrimination.

ENABLING CHANGE
WITH CULTURE MAKERS

Our **Getting to Equal 2020** report identified the critical role that a small group of leaders, whom we call Culture Makers, play in enabling change. What's unique about them? Their 'say-do-drive' behavior and policies create more equal cultures. They are more in tune with the workforce, recognizing the importance of cultural factors such as pay transparency, availability of family leave and the freedom to be creative in helping employees thrive.

## These leaders...

### SAY:
Building a more inclusive culture is an organizational priority.

### DO:
Recognize the importance of culture and identify change as a personal goal.

### DRIVE:
Reward their people for building a more inclusive culture.

## Culture Makers make the difference.

They are more in tune with the workforce, and they recognize the importance of cultural factors like pay transparency, the availability of family leave and the freedom to be creative in helping employees thrive.
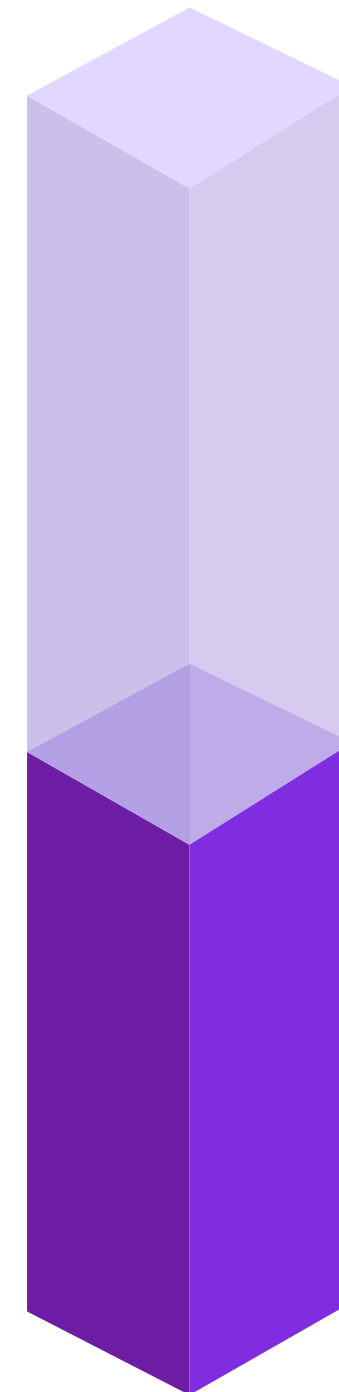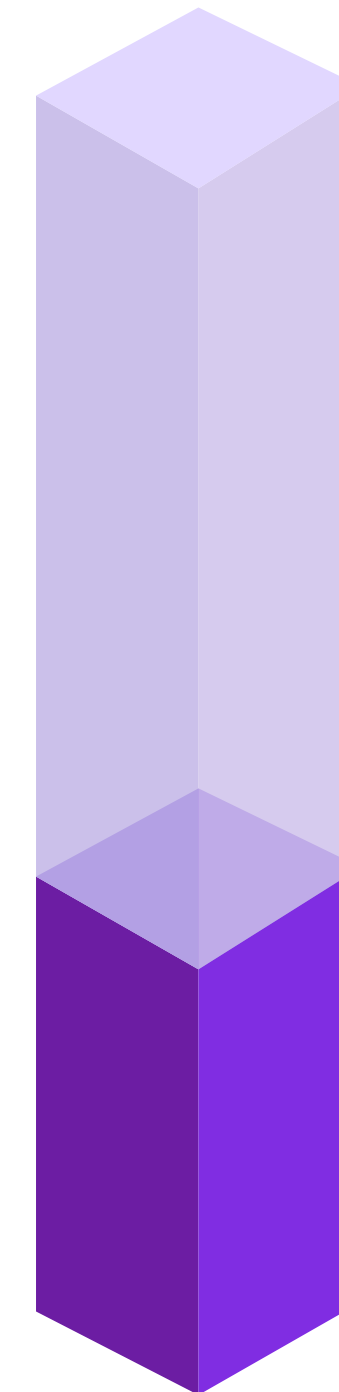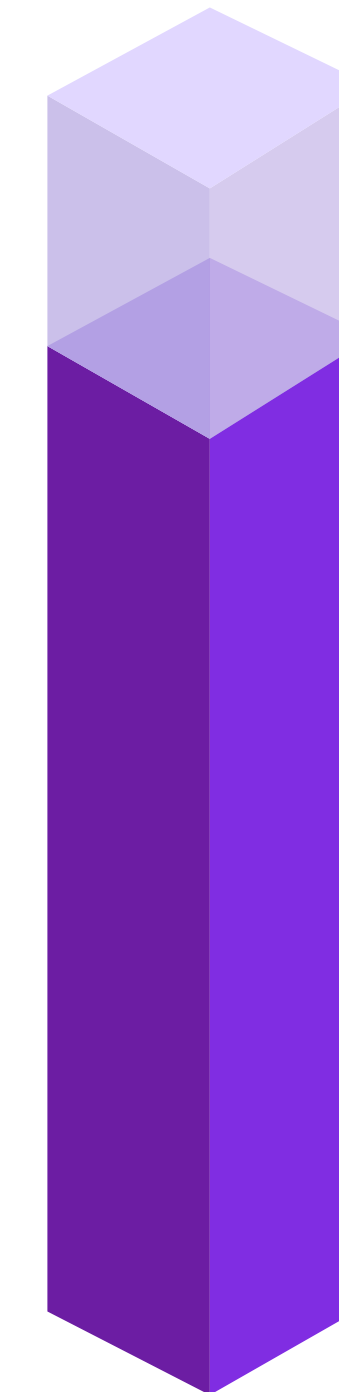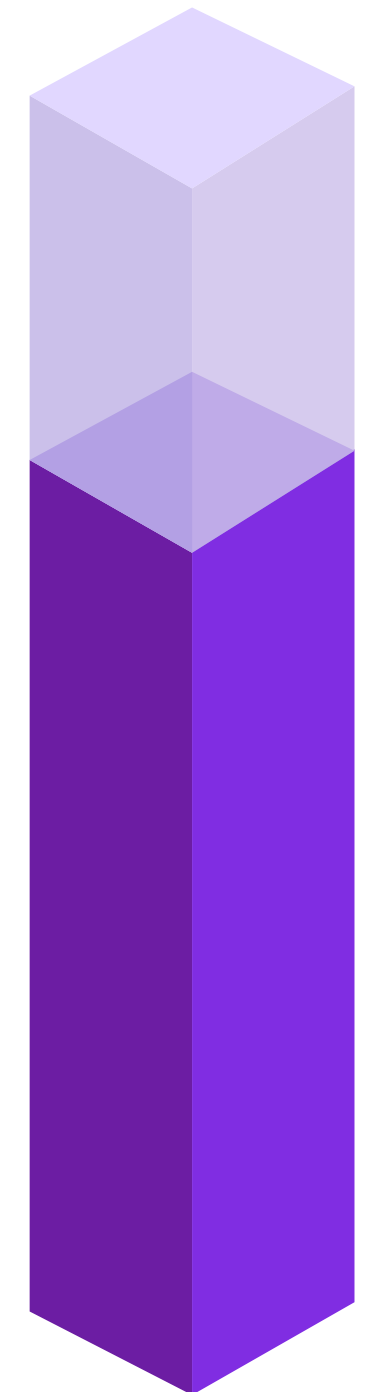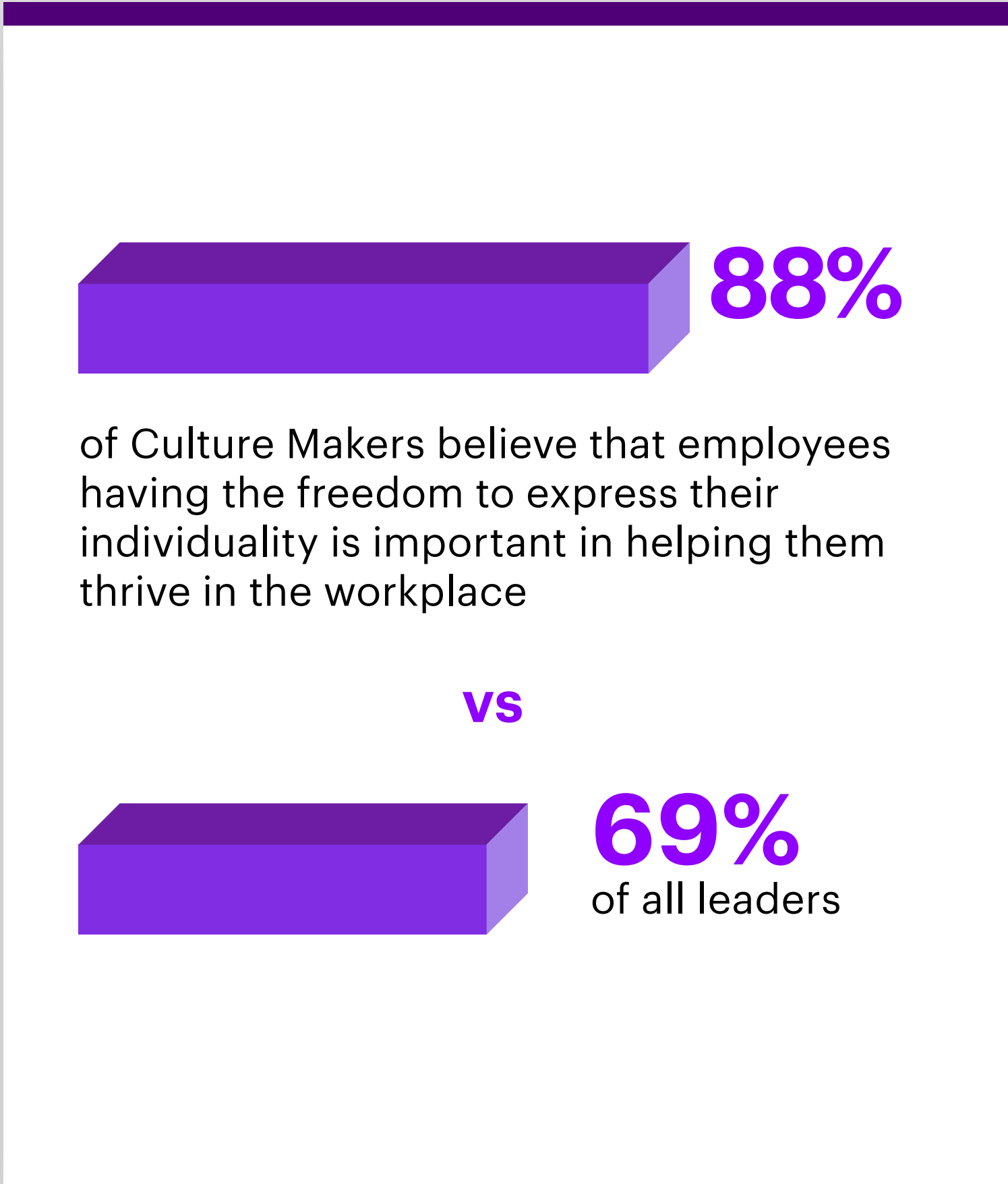
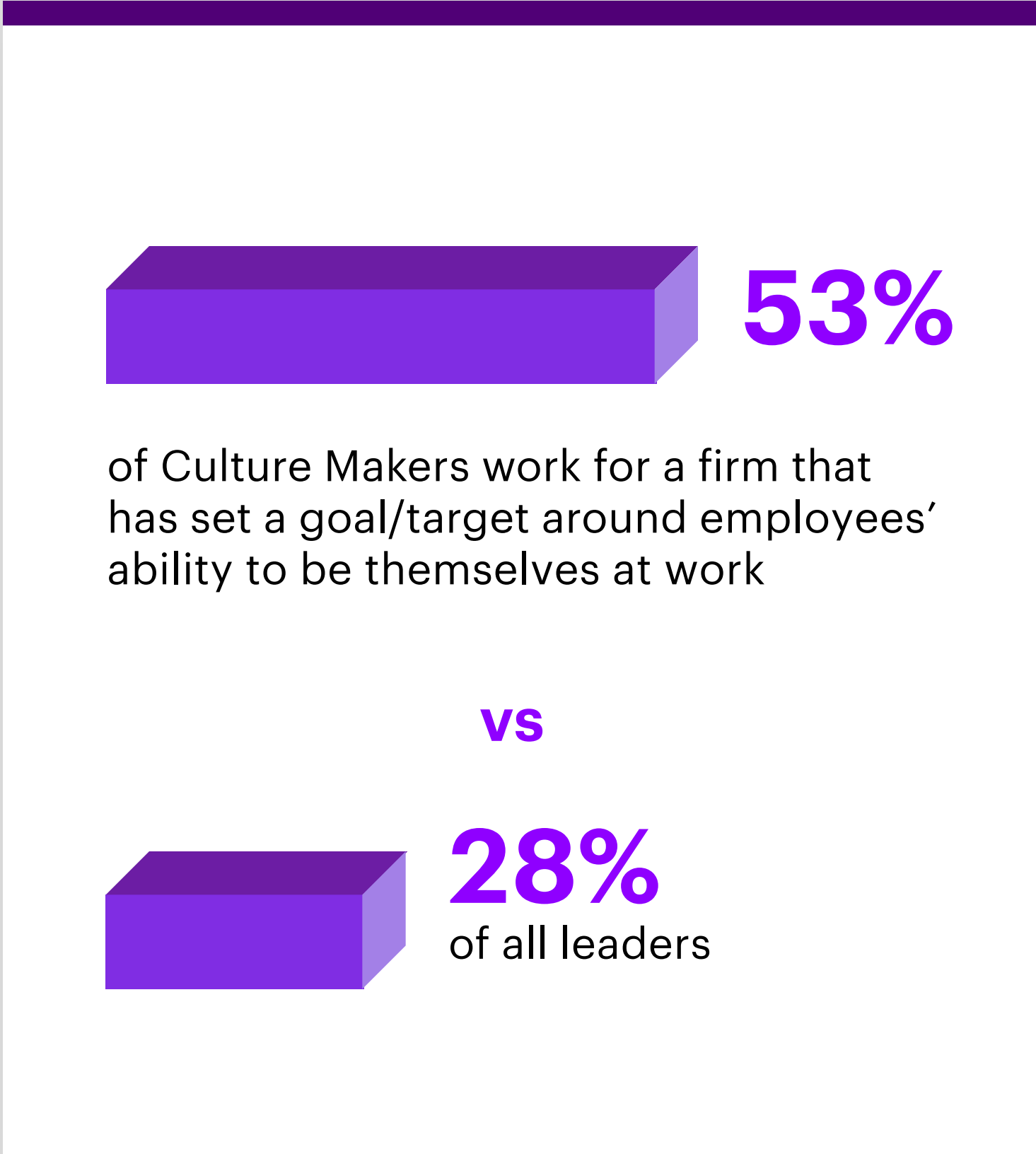| Culture Makers | All Leaders | | Culture Makers | All Leaders |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **45%** women | **32%** women | | **68%** Millennials | **59%** Millennials |

This younger, more gender-balanced group of people, comprising of **6 percent** of leaders, runs organizations growing more than twice as fast on average than those of their peers, and is ahead of the curve when it comes to promoting key factors that drive LGBTQ+ inclusion

**34%**

of Culture Makers have personally campaigned for or publicly spoken about LGBTQ+ rights

**vs**

**19%**
of all leaders

**88%**

of Culture Makers believe that employees having the freedom to express their individuality is important in helping them thrive in the workplace

**vs**

**69%**
of all leaders
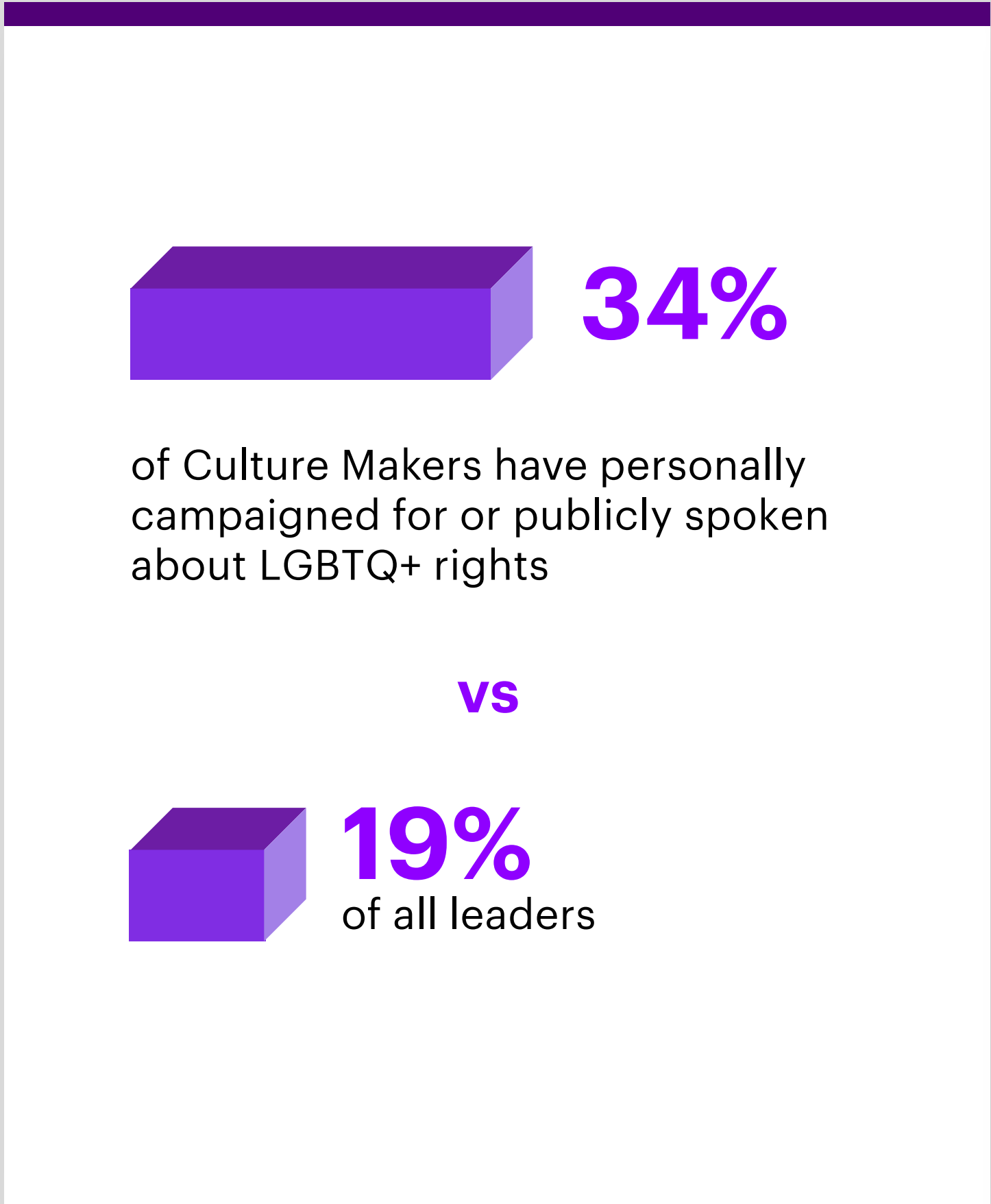
They are more likely to have spoken on a range of issues, including gender equality (**52 percent** versus **35 percent** of all leaders) and sexual harassment/discrimination (**51 percent** versus **30 percent**). They hold themselves accountable, leading organizations that are **1.8x** more likely to have publicly announced a target to bring more women into the workforce. When led by Culture Makers, organizations grow twice as fast, reporting **2.2x higher** sales and **3.2x higher** profits than their peers.

**53%**
of Culture Makers work for a firm that has set a goal/target around employees' ability to be themselves at work

**vs**

**28%**
of all leaders

**50%**
of Culture Makers believe that employees in their firm feel 'completely safe' to openly identify as LGBTQ+

**vs**

**39%**
of all leaders

# FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY IN 8 WAYS

It's critical for companies to improve their workplace culture as it has a direct impact on the confidence and engagement levels of employees and on the companies' potential for growth. Indeed, a culture of equality is a powerful multiplier of workplace innovation and growth. Employees' innovation mindset - their willingness and ability to innovate - is nearly **6x higher** in companies with a robust culture of equality, where everyone can advance and thrive, than in least-equal ones.

Here are eight important factors, from visible role models to flexible work, that leaders can consider right now to build more inclusive cultures for all employees to unlock their-and the company's-full potential.
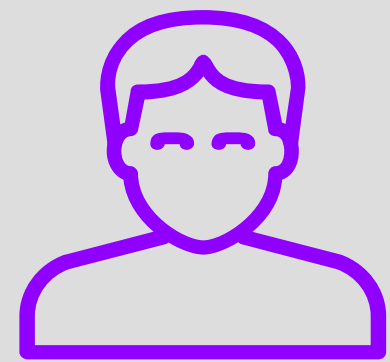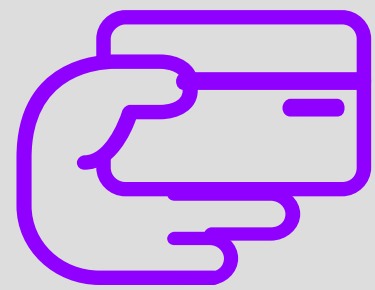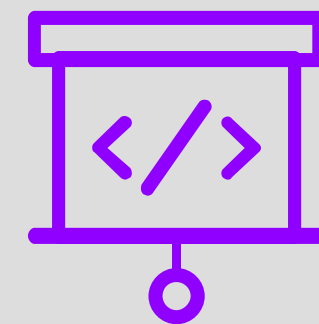
Clear role models
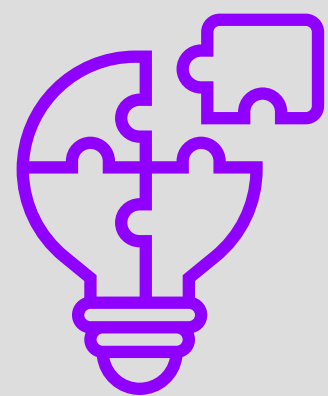
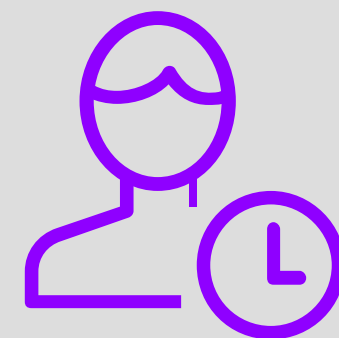Employee resource groups

Parental leave

Fair and transparent pay

Training

Mental well-being policies

Freedom to innovate

Flexible working options

A MORE EQUAL
FUTURE BECKONS

There's no doubt that the more equal and inclusive an organization is, the more successful it is. While inclusion and diversity strategies will continue to evolve and expand, the guidelines outlined above will help companies accelerate to equality, unleash innovation and create positive change for all. Together, we can make this the decade of delivery and shared success.

LET THERE
BE CHANGE.

# REFERENCES:

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2.  https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-147/Accenture-W20-2020-Final-Report-If-Not-Now-When.pdf#zoom=50

3. https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-the-workforce-in-dia/#:~:text=India's%20economy%20is%20growing%2C%20with,800%20million%20people%20by%202050.&text=Despite%20this%20growth%2C%20less%20than,to%2076.0%25%20of%20men)

4. https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-128/Accenture-Getting-Equal-2020-Visible-Growth-Invisible-Fears.pdf#zoom=40

5. https://www.accenture.com/in-en/about/inclusion-diversity/_acnmedia/Thought-Leadership-Assets/PDF-2/Accenture-Getting-To-Equal-2020-Research-Report.pdf

6. https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-142/Accenture-Enabling-Change-Getting-Equal-2020-Disability-Inclusion-Report.pdf#zoom=40

7. https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-73/Accenture-When-She-Rises-We-All-Rise.pdf