

DIVERSITY
IN THE FITNESS SECTOR

— DIVERSITY **BOOSTS** FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

— **CONSUMERS** CONSIDER DIVERSITY EFFORTS WHEN PURCHASING

— **INCLUSION** DRIVES RETENTION & ENGAGEMENT

FIRST EDITION
JUNE 2024

DIVERSITY
IN THE FITNESS SECTOR

DIVERSITY BOOSTS FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

CONSUMERS CONSIDER DIVERSITY EFFORTS WHEN PURCHASING

INCLUSION DRIVES RETENTION & ENGAGEMENT

SECOND EDITION
NOVEMBER 2025



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

INTRODUCTION

- PURPOSE OF THE REPORT
- GATHERING DATA FOR THE SECTOR
- UNPACKING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS
- DEI INFLUENCES CONSUMERS
- WORKING GROUP THANK YOU

02

GENDER EQUITY IN OUR SECTOR

- UNDERSTANDING GENDER EQUITY
- CASE STUDY- BASIC-FIT
- GENDER EQUITY POLICY CHECK
- CONCLUSION

03

INCLUSION IN THE FITNESS SECTOR

- UNDERSTANDING DEI
- FOUNDATIONS FOR PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS
- CELEBRATING PROGRESS

04

DATA & BENCHMARKING PROGRESS

- SURVEY RESULTS
- CONCLUSIONS & INSIGHTS
- NEXT STEPS

01

YOUR POWER IS YOUR RADICAL SELF. FIND IT.

Aya Chebbi

INTRO

INTRODUCTION DIVERSITY IN THE FITNESS SECTOR



To advance in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), it's crucial to collectively define and measure the issue. Without data, we rely solely on what we observe and hear, lacking broader context.

The next important step involves acknowledging our own unconscious biases. These ingrained stereotypes and attitudes shape our understanding, actions, and decisions, influenced by our upbringing and societal factors. Unconscious bias can inadvertently lead to discrimination (racial, gender, age, ethnicity).

Central to both steps is collective awareness—by researching our industry collectively and individually, unpacking our biases and prejudices. This enables us to make intentional decisions rather than operating on autopilot.

GATHERING DATA FOR THE SECTOR

Gather Data For Our Sector

This report exists because there hasn't been enough focus on DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion). As our sector's first report, the data collected will change that moving forward. Given the global health crisis, a lot is riding on our industry's ability to get itself in order so that we can be part of the solution to preventing lifestyle-related diseases and getting more people more active more often.

Our goal: The primary objective of this study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion-related issues within our sector and develop actionable recommendations to promote equal opportunities, representation and advancement.

This is just the beginning. The plan is to create an evergreen data set that can be easily translated and distributed throughout different markets. We will publish an annual report on this that can be included in the European Market Report and potentially other partners.

This initiative builds upon the efforts of 2022 initiatives on gender equity led by RISE and EuropeActive, including the "Career Progression in the Fitness Industry" study conducted by Aston University. This study aimed to identify areas where support is needed for women and industry leaders to utilise their underappreciated talents and expertise fully. In the same year, EuropeActive, SportAlliance, and WIFA surveyed Gender Equity in the Fitness sector to uncover perceptions of gender inequity among employees at all levels.
A summary and a link to the complete reports are available on the EuropeActive website.



UNPACKING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



> **This report aims to increase the focus on DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) in our sector. As our first report, it will guide future improvements. Amid the global health crisis, our industry's positive impact on preventing lifestyle diseases and promoting active lifestyles is vital.**

Unpack Our Unconscious Bias

Are you prepared for deep work? It requires curiosity, humility, and compassion. Set aside self-judgement to fully engage in this process.

Now, read the report. Pay attention to your reactions.

- Do you feel insecure due to new information/ concepts?
- Annoyed/dismissive because some information challenges your beliefs? (Stay curious!)
- Validated/assured because it confirms your beliefs? (Remain curious!)
- Sad/frustrated because of past aggressions or discrimination? (Remember, you're not alone, and positive change is possible.)

Your emotions and their roots will guide you towards uncovering unconscious biases. We've included resources throughout the report for those ready to delve deeper into this journey.

We welcome you to join us as travellers. We are on this path, too, and a shared experience strengthens us.

DEI INFLUENCES CONSUMERS



EuropeActive, in collaboration with Deloitte, conducted consumer research for the European Fitness Market Report to understand how a company's DEI (Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion) efforts affect consumer behaviour. This research aimed to capture insights into consumer perceptions and behaviours regarding companies' commitment to DEI within the fitness industry.

Key takeaways from the survey reveal the significant impact that DEI efforts have on consumer decisions:

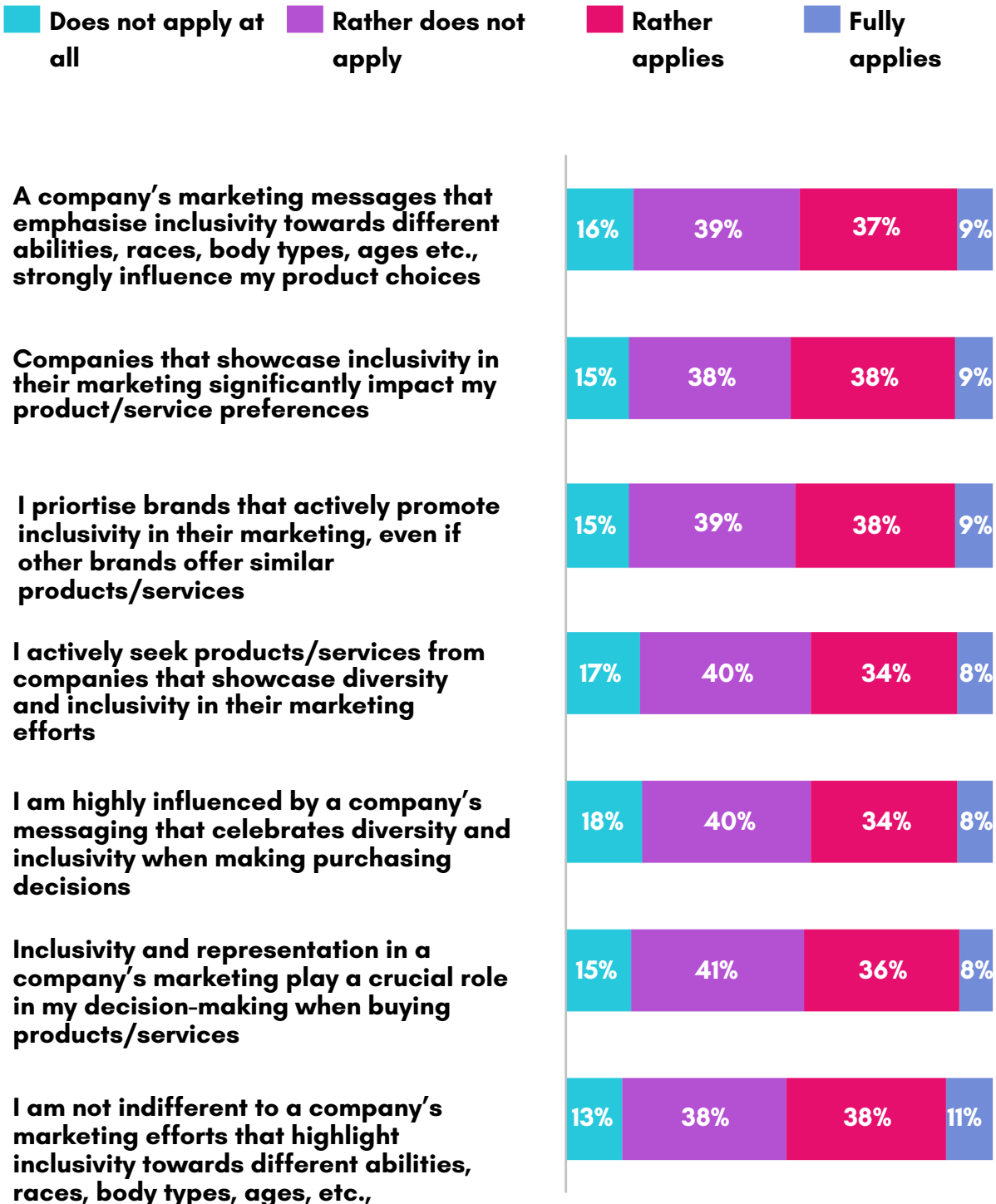
- **Inclusivity in Marketing:** Many consumers prefer brands that promote inclusivity in their marketing messages, particularly those highlighting diversity in abilities, races, body types, and ages. Many respondents indicated that such inclusive marketing significantly influences their product choices.
- **Commitment to Diverse Staffing:** The research showed that consumers support brands that strongly commit to diverse staffing practices. Companies prioritizing diversity in their workforce were favoured even when other brands offered similar products or services.
- **Impact on Purchasing Decisions**: Consumers seek products and services from companies emphasising diversity and inclusivity. The presence of inclusive and diverse messaging plays a crucial role in their decision-making processes.

These findings underscore the business value of diversity and highlight the importance of DEI initiatives in shaping consumer behaviour. By leveraging these insights, the fitness industry can enhance its market appeal and competitiveness while promoting a more inclusive environment.

Please refer to the European Fitness Market Report for details and visual data.

DEI INFLUENCES CONSUMERS
DIVERSITY IN MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

Chart shows the percentage of respondents who (rather) agree/disagree with each statement.



Source: EuropeaActiveConsumer Survey 2024

DEI INFLUENCES CONSUMERS

DIVERSE STAFFING

Chart shows the percentage of respondents who (rather) agree/disagree with each statement.



Source: EuropeaActiveConsumer Survey 2024

WORKING GROUP THANK YOU!

Thanks For Your Passion and Grit!

Behind the scenes, there is a dream team. The efforts going into this work are thanks to our voluntary working group. Thank you, Maike Kumstel, Lou Atkinson, Grace McNamara, Elena La Petra and Rachel Young, for their time, energy and active citizenship.



LOU ATKINSON



JENNIFER HALSALL



MAIKE KUMSTEL



RACHEL YOUNG



ELENA LAPETRA



GRACE MCNAMARA

WITH GREAT APPRECIATION

europe active
MORE PEOPLE | MORE ACTIVE | MORE OFTEN

RISE
FEMALES IN FITNESS COLLECTIVE

SPORTALLIANCE

EXI

02

YOU WILL OFTEN FEEL AS IF YOU DON'T FIT, BUT IT HAS NEVER BEEN YOUR DESTINY TO FIT IN. YOU WERE BORN TO STAND OUT.

Melene Rossouw

GENDER EQUITY

GENDER EQUITY

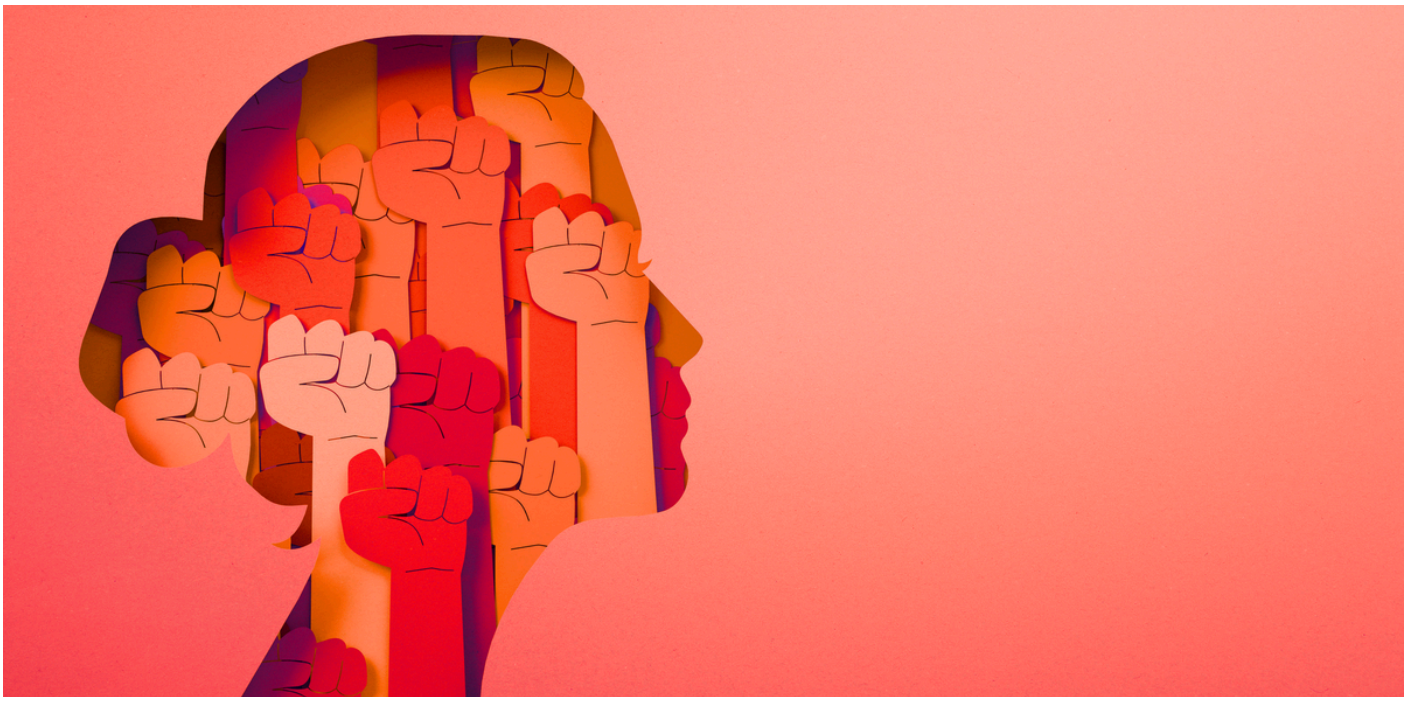
BY JENNIFER HALSALL

Let's start with the good news. There are some bright spots to celebrate in the fitness sector. Many companies are making significant strides in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), particularly in gender equity. In this section, you'll find a case study from Basic-Fit providing links to resources. Seeing the progress and resources available is encouraging, empowering more voices to be heard safely and providing equitable opportunities for underrepresented individuals.

As part of the Inclusion Council, I have participated in many discussions and debates about sensitive topics. In my experience, the foundation for productive conversations around any emotionally charged topic starts with the following:

- Safety: It's OK to admit what you don't know, say the wrong thing and make mistakes.
- Clarity: Get clear on what you are talking about. Don't speak in generalities; say what you mean specifically.
- Definitions: What does the topic or term mean to you? Are there new words that you don't understand? Make sure that all parties have shared meaning to avoid misunderstanding.
- Ownership: Be responsible for your unconscious biases.





Understanding Gender Equity

Gender equity is a ubiquitous problem in every industry and country worldwide. It's #5 on the UN's sustainable goals. Unpacking the issue is more complex than glancing around your gym or organisation and doing a headcount.

Here are three resources to help you build some framework around gender equity:

1. McKinsey Women in the Workplace 2022
2. Lean In- Women in the Workplace Report
3. United Nations Sustainable Goal #5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls

Gender Equity is Out of Balance Worldwide

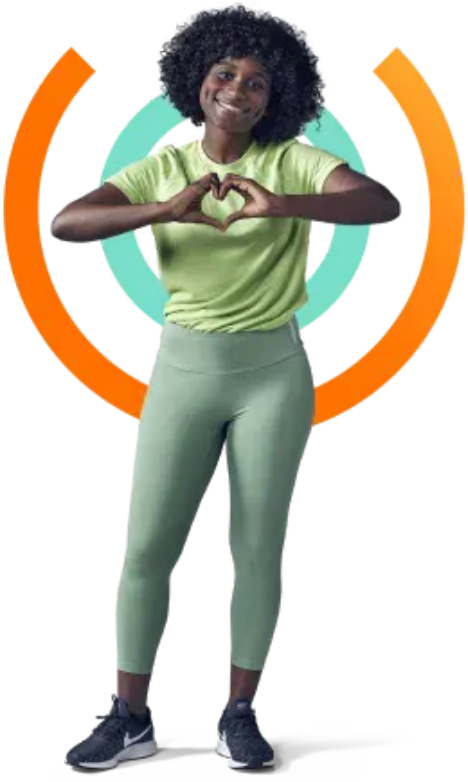
Just scratching the surface, here are five BIG issues affecting women's careers:

1. Masculine leadership is still the norm, and it dominates and infiltrates work culture.
2. Women's leadership style is more democratic, which is better for decision-making but is perceived as weak.
3. Most workplace culture in the C-suite (executive level) is built around the assumption that someone else is taking care of things at home.
4. Motherhood penalty affects career advancement and the gender pay gap.
5. The Menopause penalty is an invisible problem eroding the workforce.

GENDER EQUITY CASE-STUDY

BASIC- FIT

Basic-Fit is an example of a company taking steps towards gender equity and inclusion.



Basic-Fit is committed to gender equity and inclusion through various strategies:

1. Diversity and Inclusion Strategy: Basic-Fit focuses on creating a welcoming environment for all members and employees, emphasising gender diversity at all organisational levels.
2. Women in Leadership: They aim to increase the number of women in leadership positions through targeted recruitment and development programs.

Training and Development: Basic-Fit provides training and development opportunities that emphasise inclusivity and gender sensitivity, ensuring all employees have equal access to career advancement opportunities (Basic-Fit)

GENDER EQUITY POLICY CHECK

- ☐ **Does your company have a formal Diversity and Inclusion strategy that explicitly includes gender equity goals?**
- ☐ **Do you set targets on the percentage of leadership positions in your company held by women?**
- ☐ **Does your company have targeted recruitment and development programs aimed at increasing female representation in leadership roles?**
- ☐ **Are there training and development programs that emphasise inclusivity and gender sensitivity available to all employees?**
- ☐ **Does your company review and update its gender equity policies and practices to ensure they are effective and up-to-date?**

GENDER EQUITY CONCLUSION

How Can We Get Better?

1. Become An Ally. It starts with you. As you read this, tune in and notice if any of these problem statements provoke a reaction in you. Don't judge the response – notice it; this reaction is one of the clues that could point you towards your unconscious biases that affect how you (and the rest of us) view the world. Start learning more about the issues.
2. Share this report and participate in the survey next year- participate here.
3. Join EuropeActive's Inclusion Council—email jennifer.halsall@europeactive.eu for more information.

We are all in the process of becoming, evolving and growing into better humans. Let's Become Stronger Together.

Jennifer Halsall

ACTIVE CITIZEN & EUROPEACTIVE
INCLUSION GROUP MEMBER



03

LIFE DOESN'T ALWAYS GIVE US WHAT WE DESERVE BUT RATHER WHAT WE DEMAND. SO YOU MUST CONTINUE TO PUSH HARDER THAN ANY OTHER PERSON IN THE ROOM.

Wadi Ben-Hirki

DEI

INCLUSION IN THE FITNESS SECTOR

UNDERSTANDING DEI

DEI in the Fitness Sector
In Europe, pursuing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within the fitness sector means addressing a dynamic interplay of cultural, social, and economic factors.

It starts with awareness. Embracing DEI involves acknowledging the diverse needs, backgrounds, and identities of individuals working in and working out in the fitness sector. There's a lot to unpack. From addressing socioeconomic disparities to fostering inclusive gym environments, DEI efforts strive to ensure equitable access and opportunities across the continent.

Defining DEI
Diversity celebrates the unique blend of differences among individuals, such as ethnicity, race, age, style, gender, personality, beliefs, experiences, and sexual orientation. It encompasses a range of psychological, physical, and social distinctions. A diverse group, community, or organisation embraces a variety of social and cultural characteristics.





Equity ensures fairness by providing equal opportunities and addressing barriers that hinder some groups. Understanding the root causes of disparities is key. It promotes justice, impartiality, and fairness in procedures and resource distribution.

Inclusion ensures that every individual feels valued and connected, fosters an environment where our inherent worth is recognised, allows us to express our authentic selves safely, and provides a sense of belonging to something greater.

DEI POLICY CHECK

- [ ] **Is your leadership committing to DEI through dedicated roles and integrating DEI into your strategic goals?**
- [ ] **Do you have inclusive recruitment and advancement practices, diverse hiring panels, and bias-free job descriptions?**
- [ ] **Do you provide regular training on DEI topics, such as unconscious bias, cultural competence, and inclusive leadership, to all employees?**
- [ ] **Are you collecting and analysing workforce diversity, pay equity, and employee satisfaction data to identify gaps and measure progress?**
- [ ] **Do you have policies that promote an inclusive culture, such as anti-discrimination measures, work-life balance initiatives, and employee resource groups?**

FOUNDATIONS FOR PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS

One of the best ways to contribute to a safer and more equitable environment is by using inclusive language. However, this can be tricky because word choice is often driven by unconscious bias and habit. Using inclusive language involves being mindful of the words and phrases you choose to ensure they are respectful, accurate, and free from bias. Here are some steps to start using inclusive language:

1. Educate Yourself on Inclusive Terms

Learn about terms that are considered inclusive and those that are not. This includes understanding the preferred terms for various groups and staying updated as language evolves. For example, instead of "mankind," use "humankind," and instead of "chairman," use "chairperson."

- Inclusive Terms: Humankind, Chairperson, Partner, Parent
- Non-Inclusive Terms: Mankind, Chairman, Boyfriend/Girlfriend, Mother/Father

2. Avoid Assumptions

Refrain from making assumptions about people's identities, backgrounds, or experiences. Avoid generalisations and stereotypes that may not apply to individuals within a group.

3. Use Gender-Neutral Language

Opt for gender-neutral terms to avoid reinforcing gender binaries. For example, use "they" instead of "he" or "she" when the gender is unknown or irrelevant, and prefer terms like "humankind" instead of "mankind."

4. Respect Individuals' Preferred Pronouns and Names

Use the pronouns and names that individuals prefer. If you are unsure, ask someone their pronouns and name pronunciation respectfully. This practice demonstrates respect and acknowledgement of their identity. Common pronouns include "he/him," "she/her," and "they/them," but always confirm with the individual.

5. Be Mindful of Cultural Sensitivity

Recognise and respect cultural differences in language use. Avoid cultural appropriation and be aware of terms that may have different connotations in different cultures. For instance, some phrases or words might be respectful in one culture but offensive in another.

Incorporating these steps into your communication can foster a more inclusive and respectful environment. Regularly seeking feedback and staying informed about evolving language practices are crucial in maintaining inclusivity.

CELEBRATING PROGRESS

We need to celebrate the bright spots!
Some companies are making noise, taking chances and shaking things up in this area.

SATS

SATS has made significant strides in promoting gender equity and inclusion. Here are the key initiatives:

1. Inclusive Policies: SATS has established inclusive policies that support work-life balance, including flexible working hours and comprehensive parental leave options. These policies are designed to accommodate all employees, helping to create a more balanced and supportive workplace environment.
2. Leadership Diversity: SATS is committed to gender diversity in leadership roles and has set specific targets to ensure women are well-represented at all levels of the organisation. This commitment is reflected in their ongoing efforts to recruit and develop female leaders within the company.
3. Employee Resource Groups: SATS encourages the formation of employee resource groups that focus on various aspects of diversity, including gender and LGBTQ+ issues. These groups provide a platform for employees to voice their concerns and suggestions, fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace culture.

Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility: SATS integrates sustainability into its business model, which strongly focuses on social responsibility and inclusivity. Their sustainability efforts are built on four pillars: people, products, presence, and promise, which guide their commitment to making a positive impact on society and the environment (SATS Group) (SATS Group) (SATS Group).





THE GYM GROUP

The Gym Group has implemented comprehensive initiatives to promote gender equity and inclusion. Here are the key highlights:

1. Inclusion and Belonging: The Gym Group strongly emphasises diversity and inclusion, integrating these values into its purpose, values, and behaviours. It has established employee-led inclusion groups that focus on various aspects such as disability, gender, age, cultural diversity, and LGBTQI+ issues. These groups work to identify and tackle barriers, ensuring accessibility for all
2. Inclusive Traineeship Program: The Gym Group launched an Inclusive Traineeship program in partnership with the Down's Syndrome Association and WorkFIT. This initiative brought individuals with Down's Syndrome into their teams, providing them with on-the-job experience and training in the fitness industry
3. Supportive Policies: The Gym Group has implemented several policies to support its commitment to diversity and inclusion, including a Transgender Inclusion & Equality Policy and a Menopause Policy. These policies aim to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all employees
4. Wellbeing Initiatives: Recognizing the importance of holistic health, The Gym Group provides comprehensive well-being support through its Wellbeing Hub. This includes resources for financial, social, emotional, and physical well-being, such as mental health ambassadors, complimentary gym membership, and access to fitness and nutritional guidance
5. Commitment to Sustainability: The Gym Group is also committed to sustainably delivering its services, aligning its efforts with broader environmental and social goals to benefit the communities it serves (Gym Group).

RESOURCES

We have only just begun establishing a framework and providing definitions for these topics. You might be wondering where to find more information. In this section, we have summarised some EU/UK resources on DEI, Gender Equity, and LGBTQIA+, as well as recommended books and podcasts from local thought leaders.

01



DEI RESOURCES

1. **European Commission's** Diversity and Inclusion Strategy: The European Commission provides comprehensive resources and strategies to foster diversity and inclusion within workplaces across the EU.

EU DEI >

2. European Commission's Strategy on Diversity and Inclusion
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD): The CIPD offers guidance and resources for promoting diversity and inclusion within the UK workplace.

CIPD >

3. Business in the Community (BITC): A UK-based charity supporting businesses to improve their DEI policies and practices.

BITC >

4. UK Active's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) score toolkit. UK Active's EDI Score Toolkit is a self-assessment tool for the physical activity sector. It measures EDI maturity and effectiveness, providing an instant score and recommendations for improvement.

EDI Toolkit >



RESOURCES

03



GENDER EQUITY

1. **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)**: An EU agency dedicated to gender equality, providing research, data, and resources to support gender equity initiatives.

EIGE >

2. **Women's Resource Centre (WRC)**: A UK charity that supports women's organisations and promotes gender equality.

WRC >

3. **Fawcett Society:** The UK's leading charity campaigning for gender equality and women's rights.

FAWCETT >

4. **Equileap:** Provides insights and data on gender equality in the corporate sector across various countries, including Europe.

EQUILEAP >

5. **Lean In Organization**: Founded by Sheryl Sandberg, Lean In provides resources, research, and tools to support gender equity and inclusion in the workplace.

LEAN IN >

04



LGBTQIA+ RESOURCES

1. **ILGA-Europe:** The European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association provides resources, reports, and advocacy tools for promoting LGBTQIA rights.

ILGA >

2. **Stonewall UK:** One of the largest LGBTQIA rights organisations in the UK, offering a wealth of resources for fostering inclusive environments.

STONEWALL >

3. **Out & Equal:** Although based in the US, Out & Equal has extensive resources applicable globally, including Europe, for creating inclusive workplaces for LGBTQIA employees.

OUT & EQUAL >

RESOURCES

05



BOOKS

1. **Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men"** by Caroline Criado Perez
This book reveals how data bias creates a world that disadvantages women and provides insights into how to address these issues in the workplace and beyond.

2. "**Straight Jacket: How to Be Gay and Happy"** by Matthew Todd
This book addresses the challenges faced by LGBTQIA individuals, focusing on mental health and happiness, and provides insights into creating a more inclusive environment.

FIX TOOLKIT >

3. **"The Fix: Overcome the Invisible Barriers That Are Holding Women Back at Work"** by Michelle P. King
Michelle P. King provides practical advice for addressing gender inequality in the workplace by understanding and dismantling the barriers that hold women back.

06



PODCASTS

1. **"The Guilty Feminist"**
Deborah Frances-White hosts this podcast and combines comedy and insightful discussions on feminism, gender equality, and inclusion with a UK perspective.

TGF >

2. **“Diversity Gap"**
This podcast, featuring interviews with experts and practitioners, explores the gap between good intentions and good impact in diversity and inclusion efforts.

DG Podcast >

3. **"Out with Suzi Ruffell"**
Hosted by comedian Suzi Ruffell, this podcast features conversations with LGBTQIA individuals about their experiences, providing insights into creating more inclusive workplaces.

Out Podcast >

04

IF YOU BELIEVE IN YOUR IDEA OF CHANGE AND ARE WILLING TO WORK HARD, SOONER OR LATER THAT DREAM WILL BE A REALITY.

Naomi Tulay Solanke

DATA

BENCHMARKING PROGRESS

EuropeActive, RISE, SportAlliance, and EXI have collaborated to conduct an annual survey of the fitness sector workforce on diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI). This survey captures the prevalence of bias and discrimination and monitors DEI determinants based on workforce experiences. By benchmarking against other sectors, we can identify barriers to diversity and equality, positioning the fitness sector as a leader in DEI.
Similar initiatives in the technology industry (e.g., Built In), consulting (e.g., BCG), and global corporations (e.g., Microsoft) provide valuable insights to guide our DEI improvements.
The survey identifies and addresses systemic and organisational barriers to diversity and equality, making the fitness sector a leading force for change.

For more information, you can refer to the following resources:

- Built In: Diversity & Inclusion in Tech
- BCG: Diversity & Inclusion
- Microsoft: Global Diversity & Inclusion



METHODOLOGY & APPROACH



Methodology and Approach
The survey was conducted online and was live for data collection between November 1, 2023, and February 16, 2024. The survey was available in five languages: English, Spanish, German, French & Dutch. The survey was promoted via social media, industry press, personal networks and employee emails.

Survey questions
Data on discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race, culture, religion, disability, and age were collected, along with demographic information. Respondents were also asked about the individual and business impact of inequalities and the factors that contribute to them. Personal comments from respondents enabled deeper insights into the impact of discrimination on their careers and well-being. Respondents also had the opportunity to highlight examples of good practice in DEI.
This comprehensive analysis underscores the importance of addressing discrimination and fostering a more inclusive and equitable fitness sector.

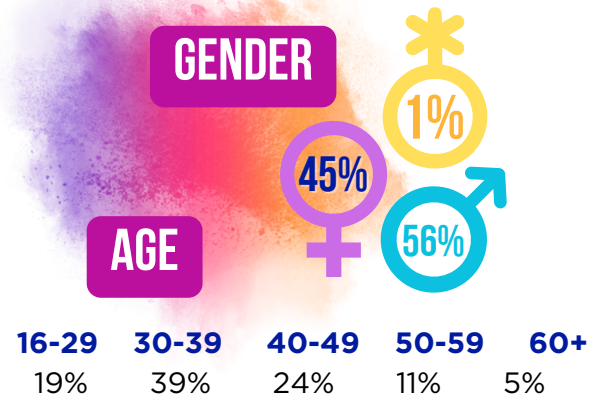
Results
In total, 498 people responded to the survey. Of those who provided demographic data, 56% identified as female, 45% as male and less than 1% as another gender. The age and country breakdowns of respondents are provided below.

SURVEY RESULTS (SUMMARY)

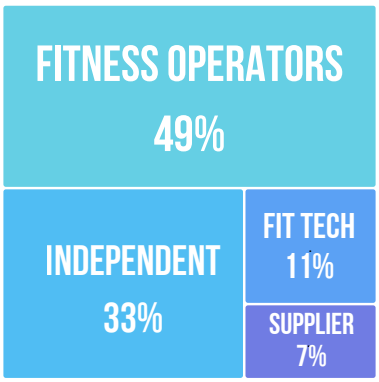
DIVERSITY IN THE FITNESS SECTOR

The aim of this survey is to capture the prevalence of bias and discrimination within the fitness sector, based on the experiences of those who work there. Only by doing so can the sector be benchmarked against others, and focused work begin to address systemic and organisational barriers to diversity and equality, making the fitness sector a leading force for change.

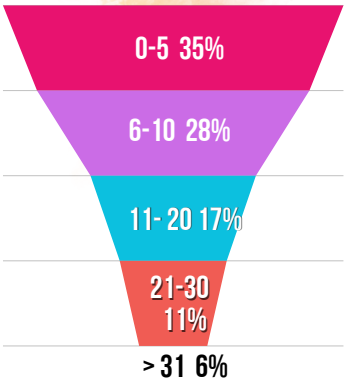
SURVEY PARTICIPANT MIX



EMPLOYED BY

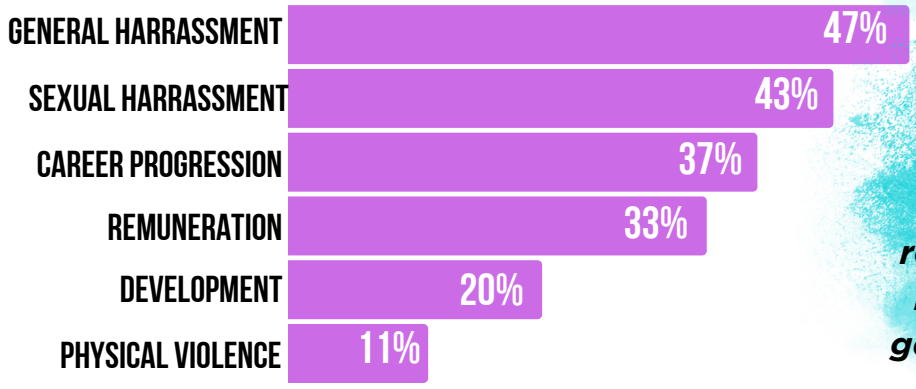


TENURE (YEARS)



Gender-Based Discrimination Remains a Pressing Problem

Respondents indicated if they had observed or experienced any gender-related discrimination.



35%

respondents say mental health is impacted by gender discrimination in the workplace

50%

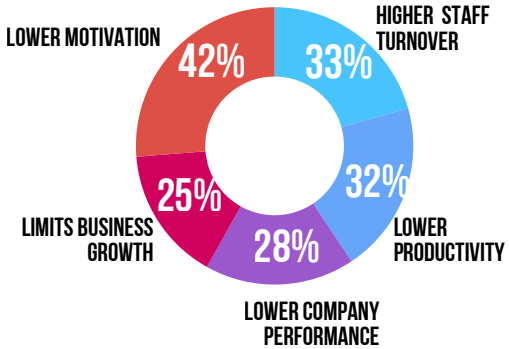
better financial performance achieved by diverse teams

McKinsey 2022

Discrimination Impacts Business



Respondents indicated their perception of how discrimination affects their workplace



SURVEY RESULTS (SUMMARY)

70%

Respondents have never been offered DEI training.

30%

Respondents feel that lack of education about diversity leads to inequality.

40%

Respondents say they don't have enough role models they can relate to.

WHY IT MATTERS

Research underscores the business value of diversity:

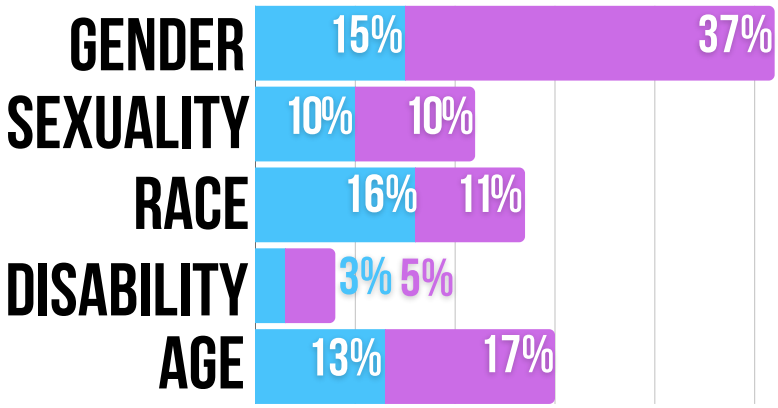
- Gartner reports **organisations prioritising diversity will financially outperform those that don't.**
- The World Economic Forum highlights that **companies with strong diversity initiatives derive 45% of their revenue from innovation**, whereas less diverse companies only generate 26% of their revenue from innovation.
- McKinsey states that **mixed-gender teams outperform single-gender ones by 50%**, with companies in the top quartile for diversity experiencing **36% higher returns for racial/ethnic diversity** and 25% higher returns for gender diversity.
- McKinsey warns that **businesses lacking diversity face a financial penalty of up to 27%**.

Overall, diverse teams exhibit superior decision-making, problem-solving, and talent retention.

> ***Before I went on maternity leave my career was on a positive trajectory, on returning I was no longer invited to the critical important meetings and was not considered for promotion.***

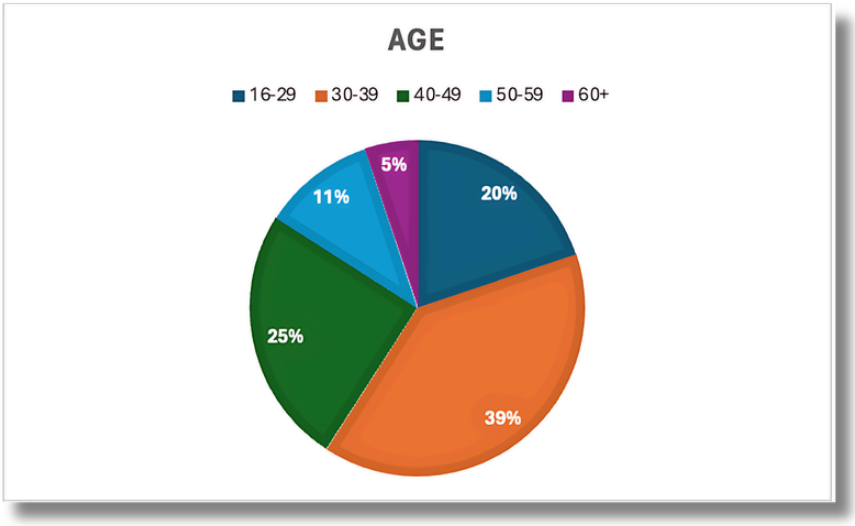
DISCRIMINATION AT WORK

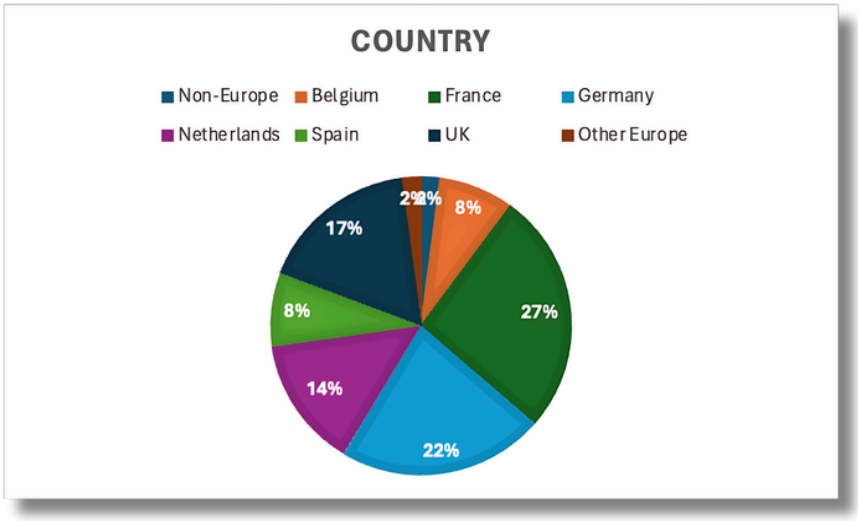
Chart shows the percentage of respondents who witnessed or experienced these types of discrimination at work. ***Answers from Men*** */* ***Answers from Women***



SCAN TO JOIN/SUPPORT THE 2024-2025 STUDY.

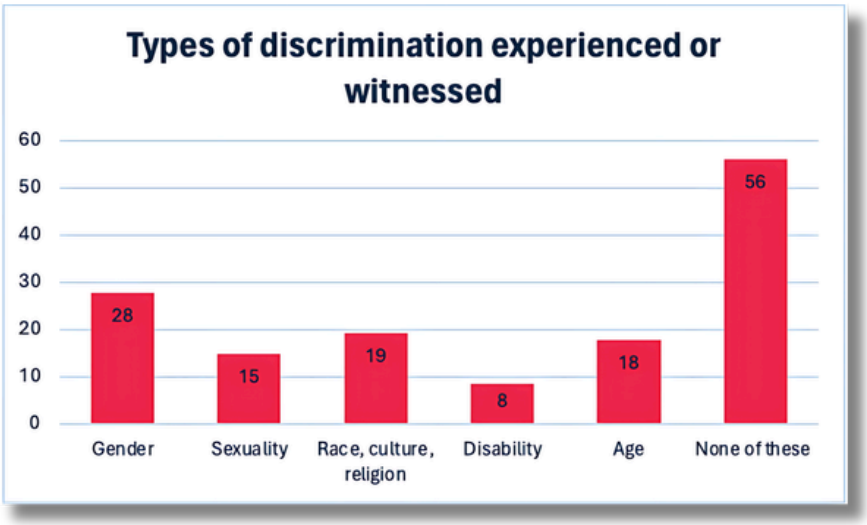
SURVEY RESULTS - RESPONDENTS





Experience of Discrimination

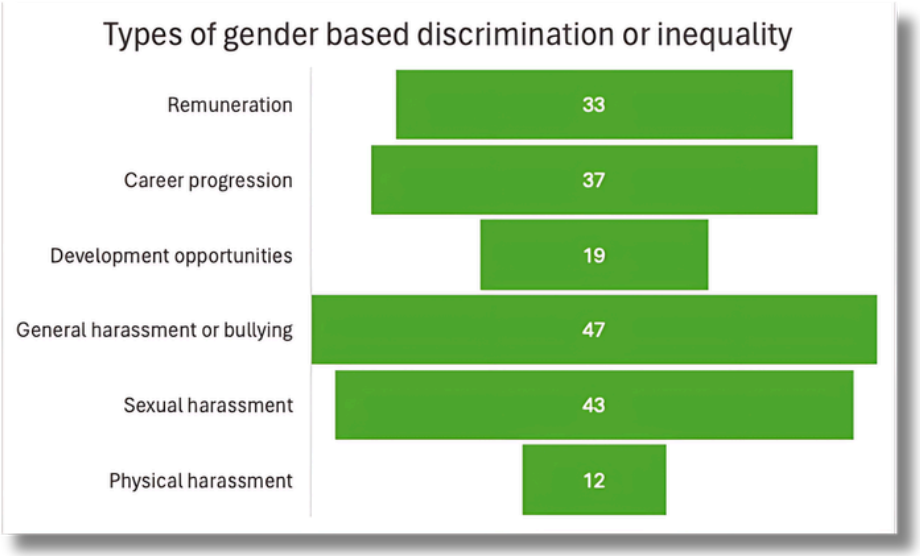
Respondents were asked which forms of discrimination they had either personally experienced or witnessed while working in the fitness industry. Of the total sample, 56% had not experienced or witnessed any forms of discrimination, meaning just under half the workforce may have experienced some form of discrimination. The most frequently reported form of discrimination was based on gender, followed by race, culture or religion, age, sexuality and disability.



SURVEY RESULTS - TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

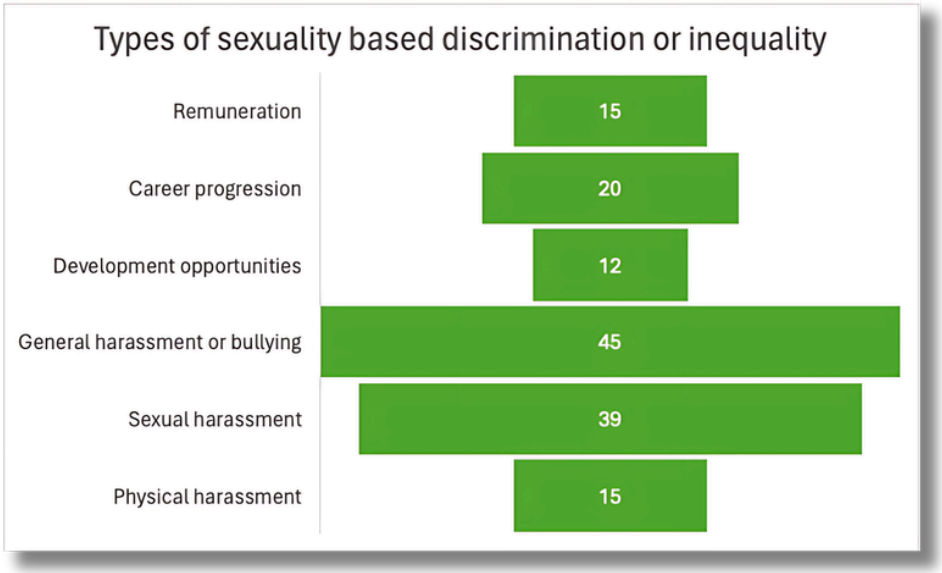
Types of Gender-Based Discrimination

Of the respondents who reported gender-based discrimination, 47% reported general harassment or bullying, 43% reported sexual harassment, and 12% reported physical harassment. From reviewing the comments for this question (see appendix), respondents most frequently described harassment by members/customers, suggesting that gender bias may need to be addressed among staff and clients. 37% reported inequality or discrimination in career progression and 33% reported inequalities or discrimination in remuneration.



Types of Sexuality-Based Discrimination

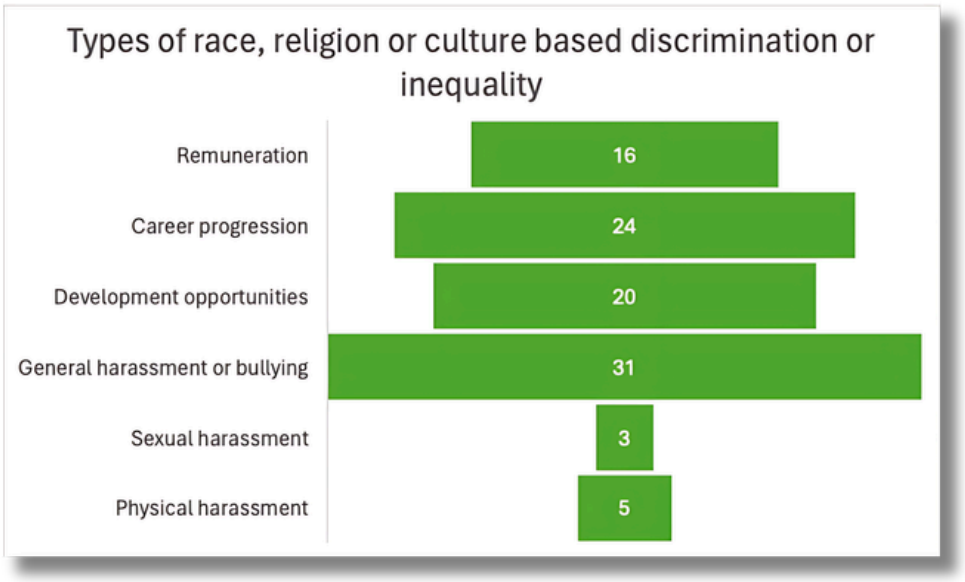
Of the respondents who reported sexuality-based discrimination, 45% reported general harassment or bullying, 39% reported sexual harassment, and 15% reported physical harassment. Inequality or discrimination in career progression was the most frequently reported non-harassment form of discrimination.



SURVEY RESULTS - TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

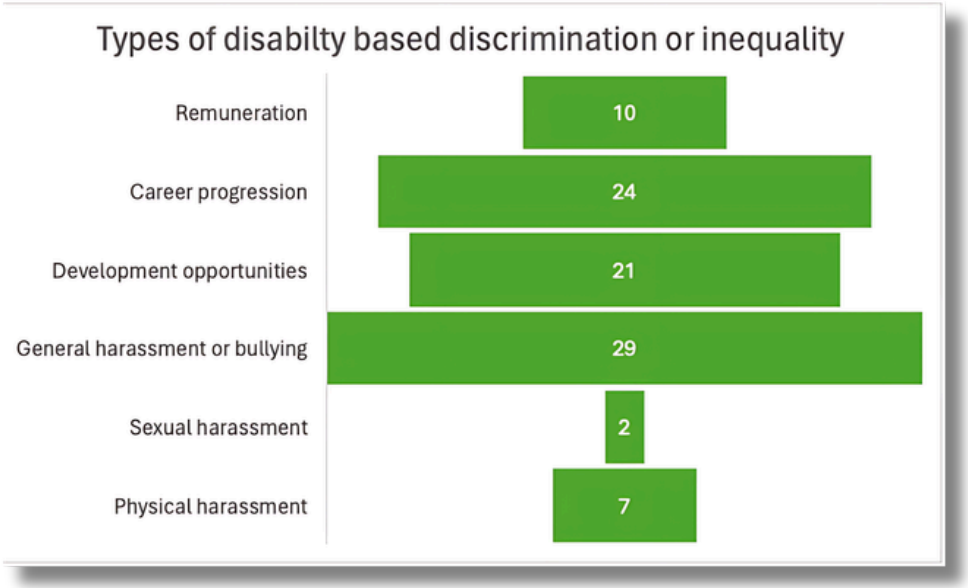
Types of Race, Religion or Culture-Based Discrimination

Of the respondents who reported this type of discrimination or inequality, general harassment or bullying was the most frequently reported type, followed by inequalities or discrimination relating to career progression and development opportunities.



Types of Disability-Based Discrimination

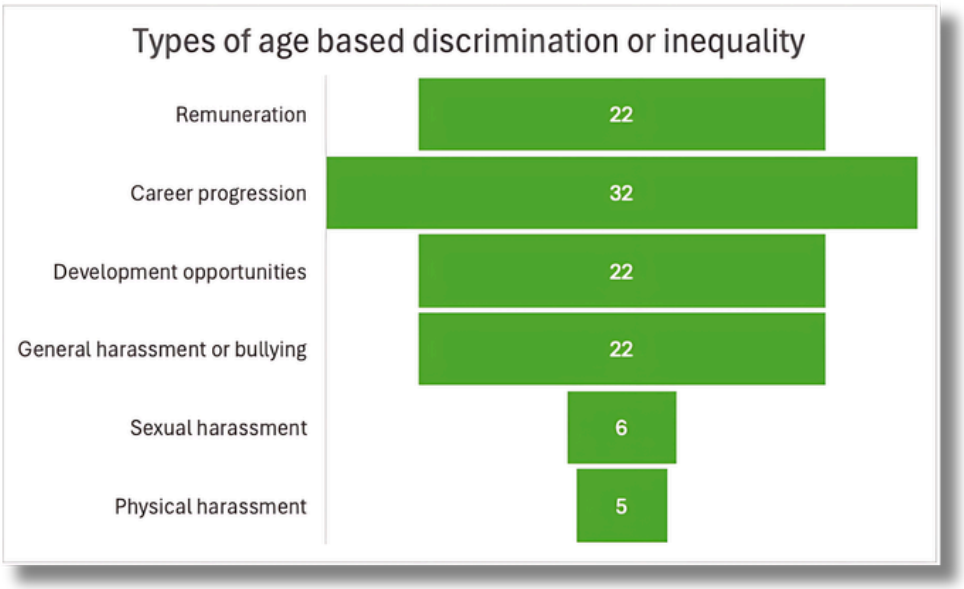
Of the respondents who reported this type of discrimination or inequality, general harassment or bullying was the most frequently reported type, followed by inequalities or discrimination relating to career progression and development opportunities.



SURVEY RESULTS - TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

Types of Age-Based Discrimination

Of the respondents who reported this type of discrimination or inequality, career progression was the most frequently reported type, followed by inequalities or discrimination relating to remuneration and development opportunities and general harassment or bullying.





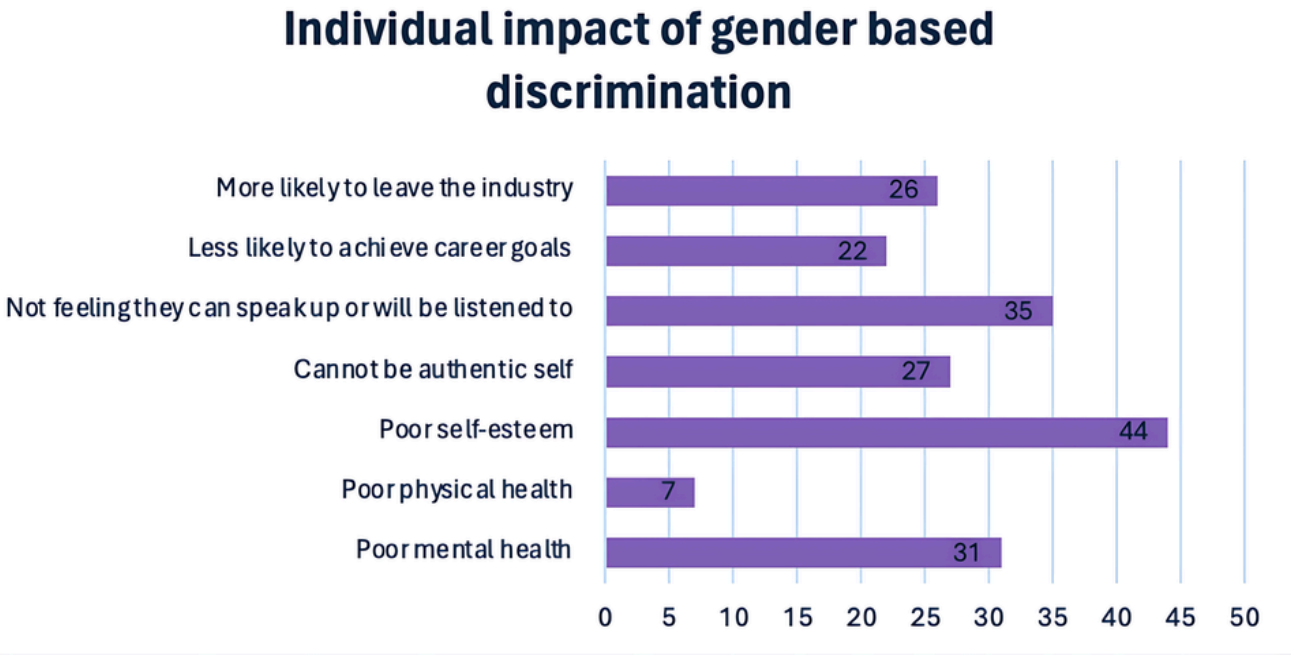
SURVEY RESULTS- GENDER

Experience of Discrimination

Respondents were asked to describe, based on their own experience, the impact of different types of discrimination or inequality on both the individual and businesses in the fitness industry.

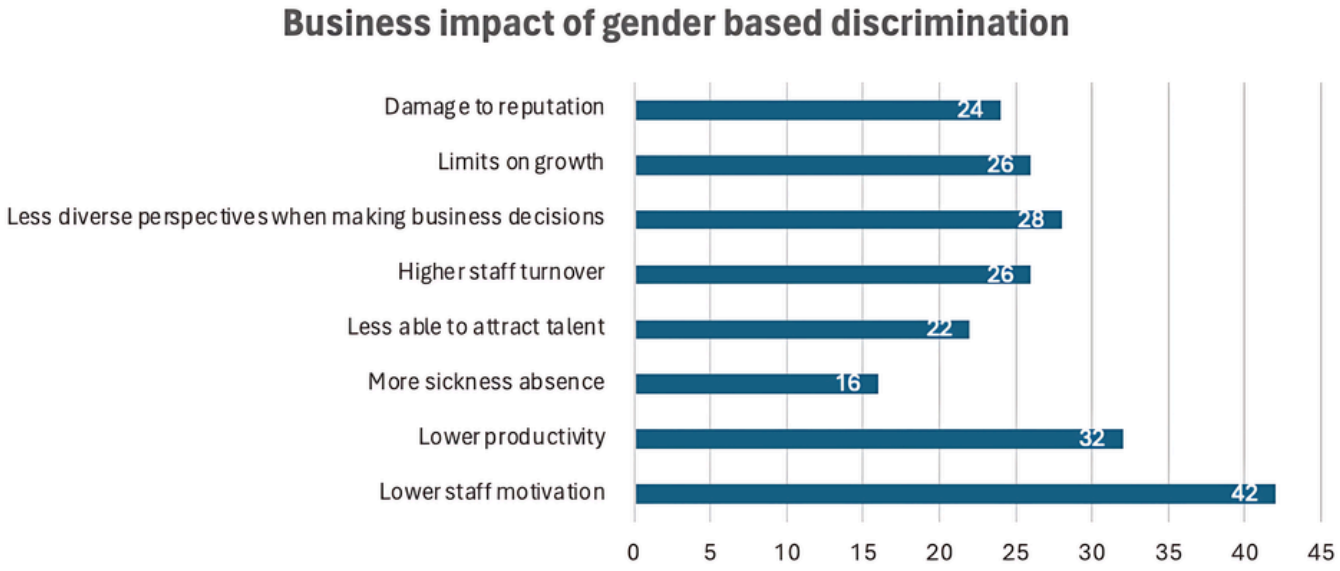
Individual impact of inequality based on gender

Of those who reported experience of gender-based discrimination or inequality, negative impact on self-esteem was the most frequently reported, followed by individuals not feeling able to speak up or that they will be listened to and poor mental health.



Business Impact of Inequality Based on Gender

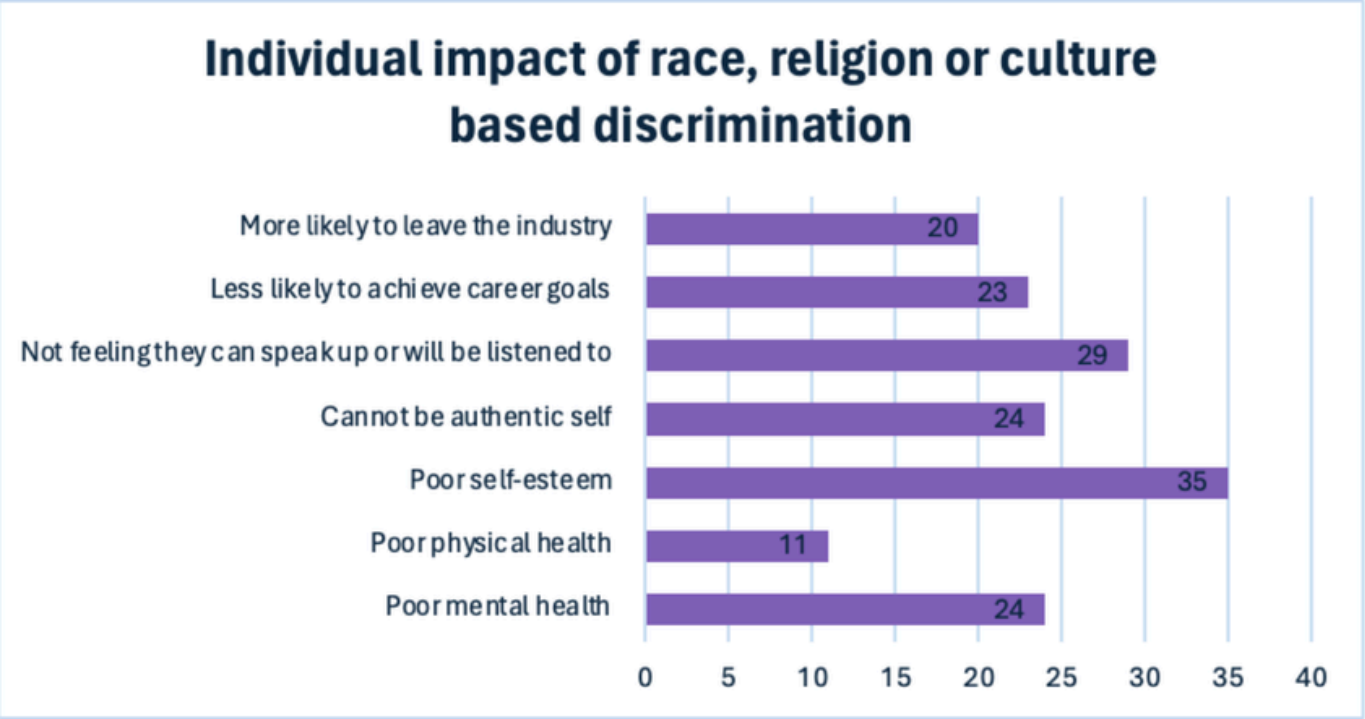
Of those who reported experience of gender-based discrimination or inequality, lower staff motivation was the most frequently cited impact on businesses, followed by lower productivity. Over a quarter of respondents also cited limitations on business growth, higher staff turnover, and less diverse perspectives reflected when making business decisions.



SURVEY RESULTS- RACE, CULTURE, RELIGION

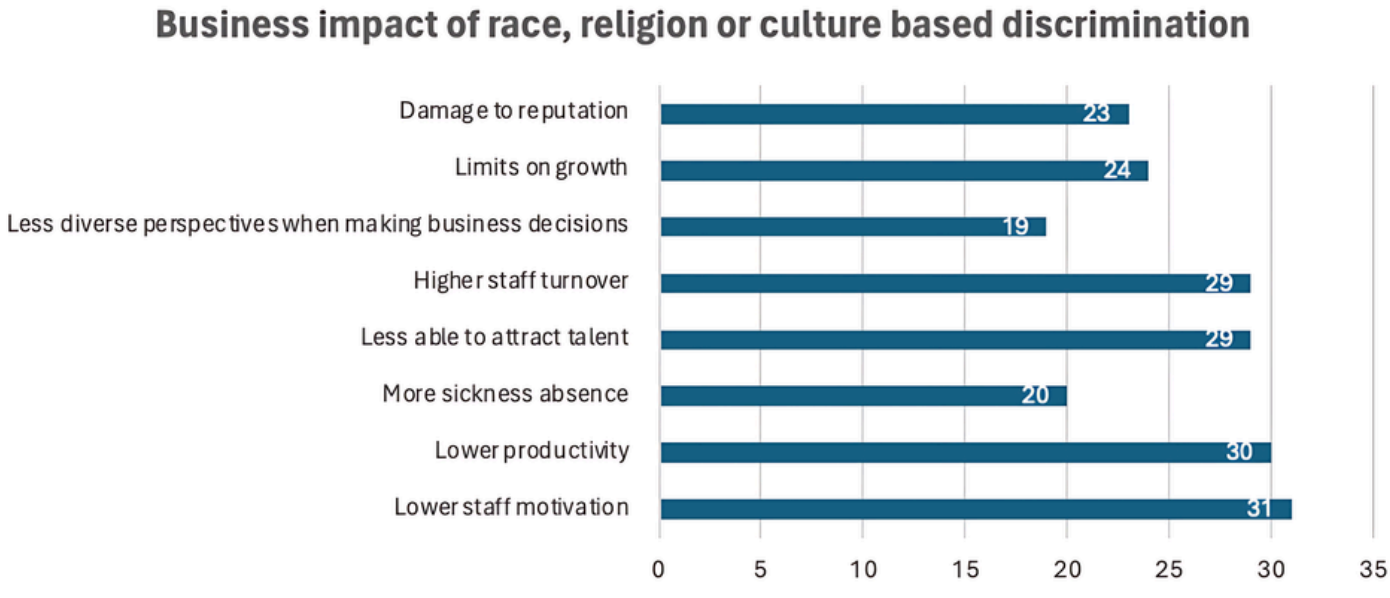
Individual Impact of Inequality Based on Race, Culture or Religion

Of those who reported experience of this type of discrimination or inequality, negative impact on self-esteem was the most frequently reported, followed by individuals not feeling able to speak up or that they will be listened to. Poor mental health, not feeling able to be their authentic self and being less likely to achieve career goals were also frequently reported.



Business Impact of Inequality Based on Race, Culture or Religion

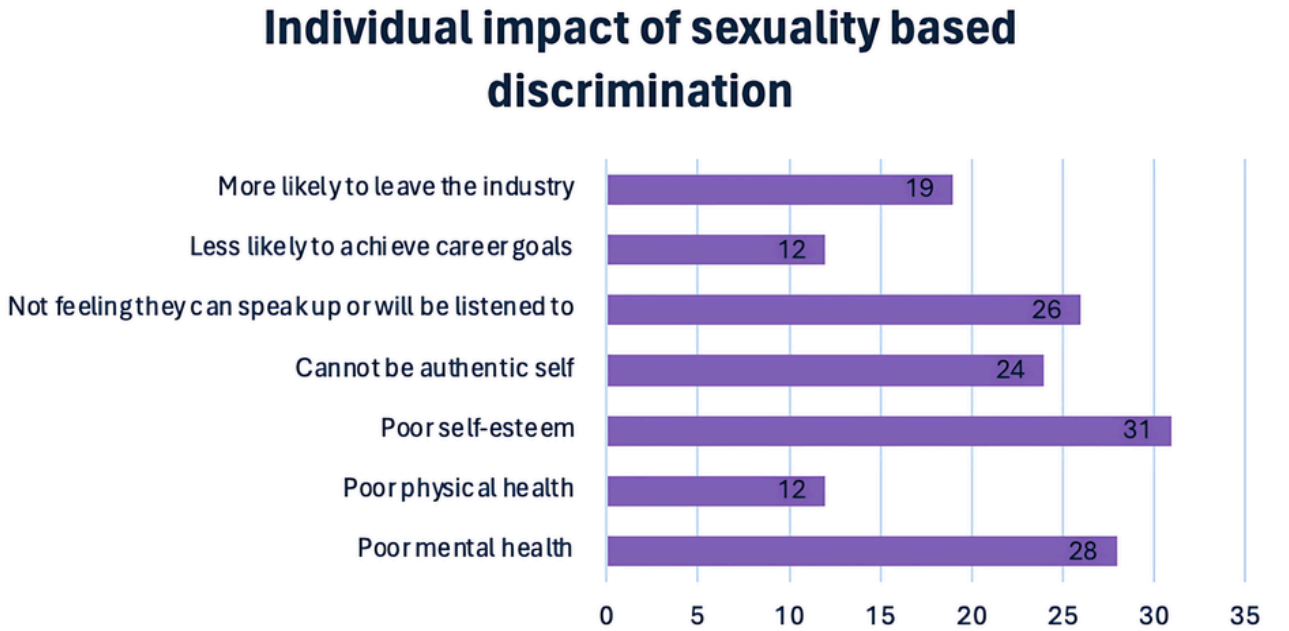
Of those who reported experience of race, culture or religion-based discrimination or inequality, lower staff motivation, lower productivity, higher staff turnover, and less ability to attract talent were the most frequently reported business impacts.



SURVEY RESULTS - SEXUALITY

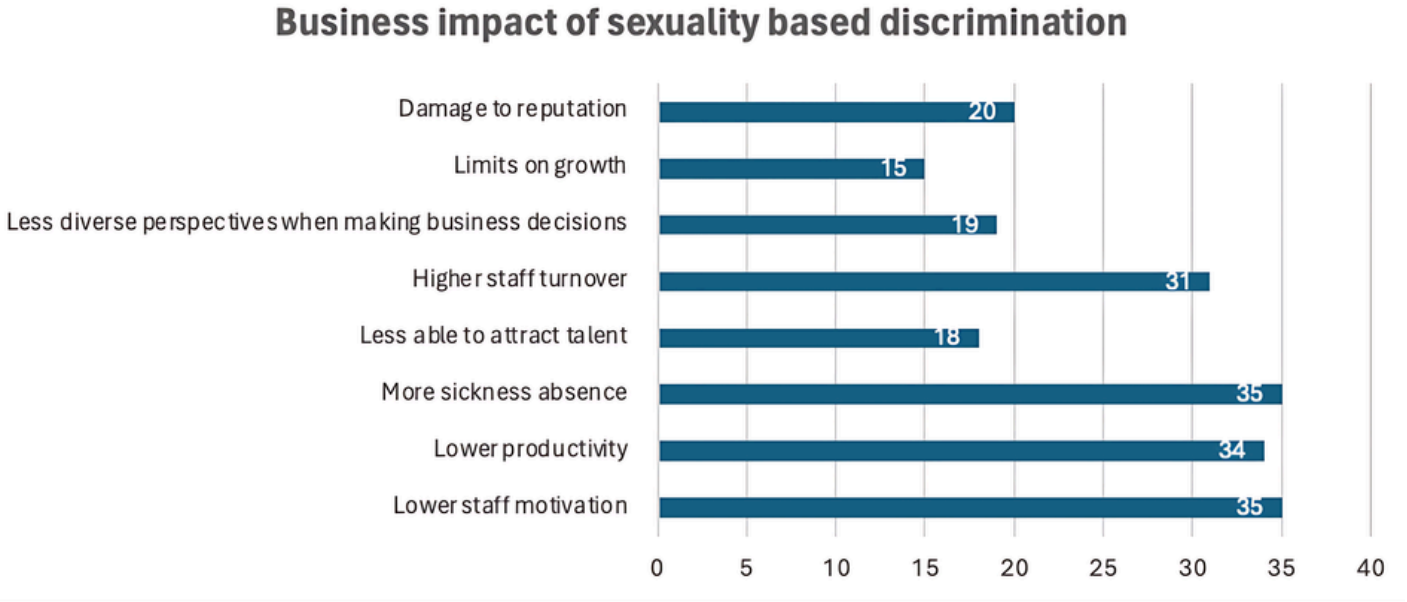
Individual Impact of Inequality Based on Sexuality

Of those who reported experience of this type of discrimination or inequality, similar to other forms of discrimination, the most frequently reported impacts to the individual were poor self-esteem, poor mental health, and not feeling able to speak up.



Business Impact of Inequality Based on Sexuality

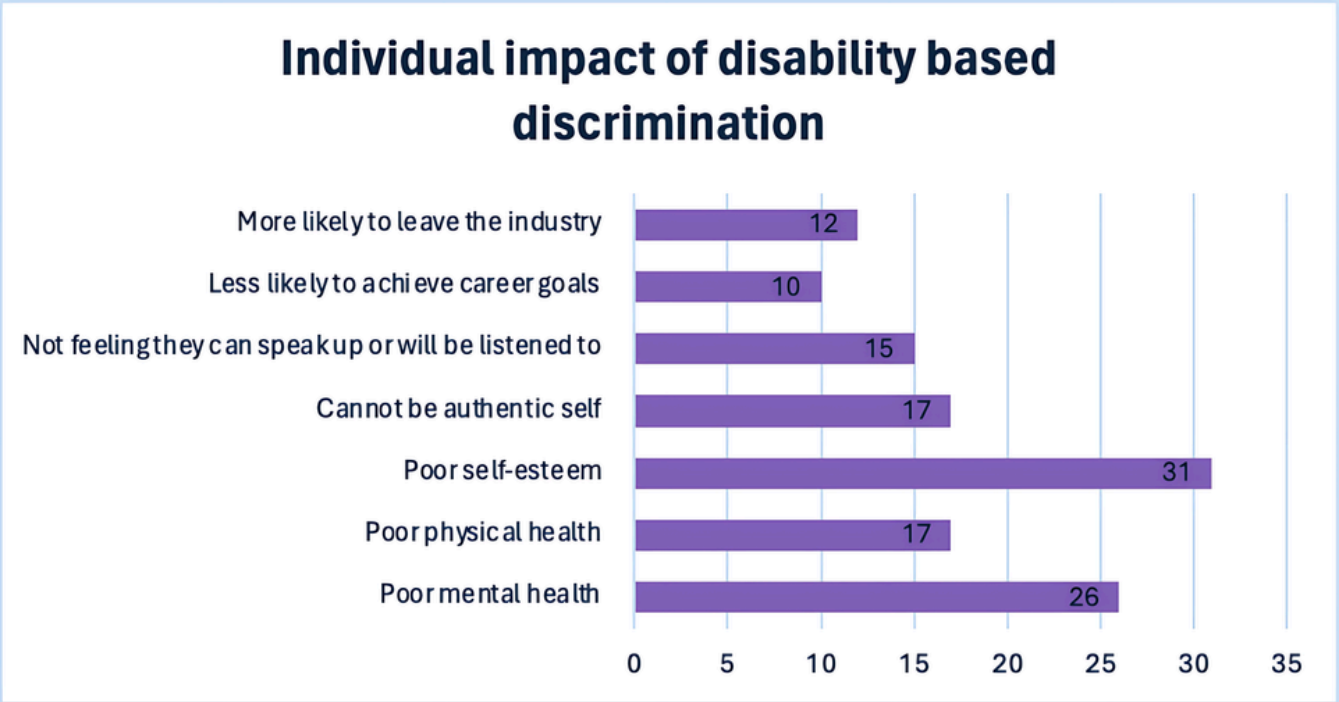
Of those who reported experience of sexuality-based discrimination or inequality, more sickness absence, lower staff motivation, and lower productivity were the most frequently reported impacts on businesses.



SURVEY RESULTS - DISABILITY

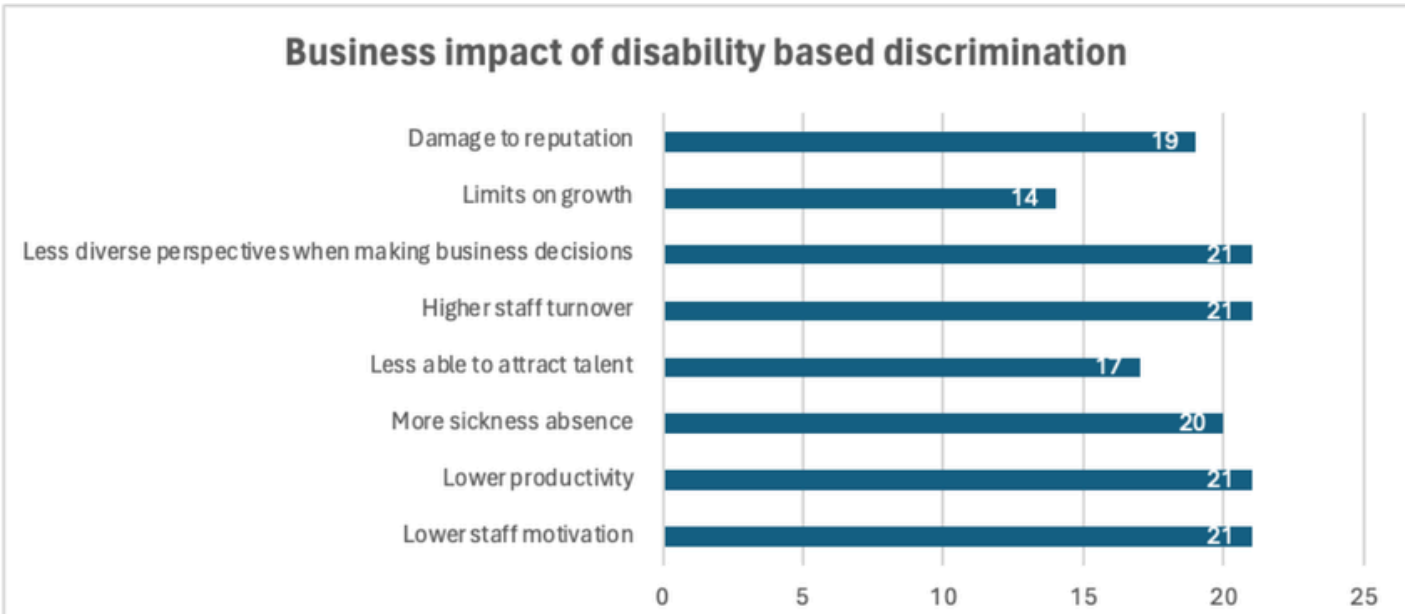
Individual Impact of Inequality Based on Disability

Of those who reported experience of this type of discrimination or inequality, poor self-esteem and poor mental health were by far the most frequently reported impacts to the individual.



Business Impact of Inequality Based on Disability

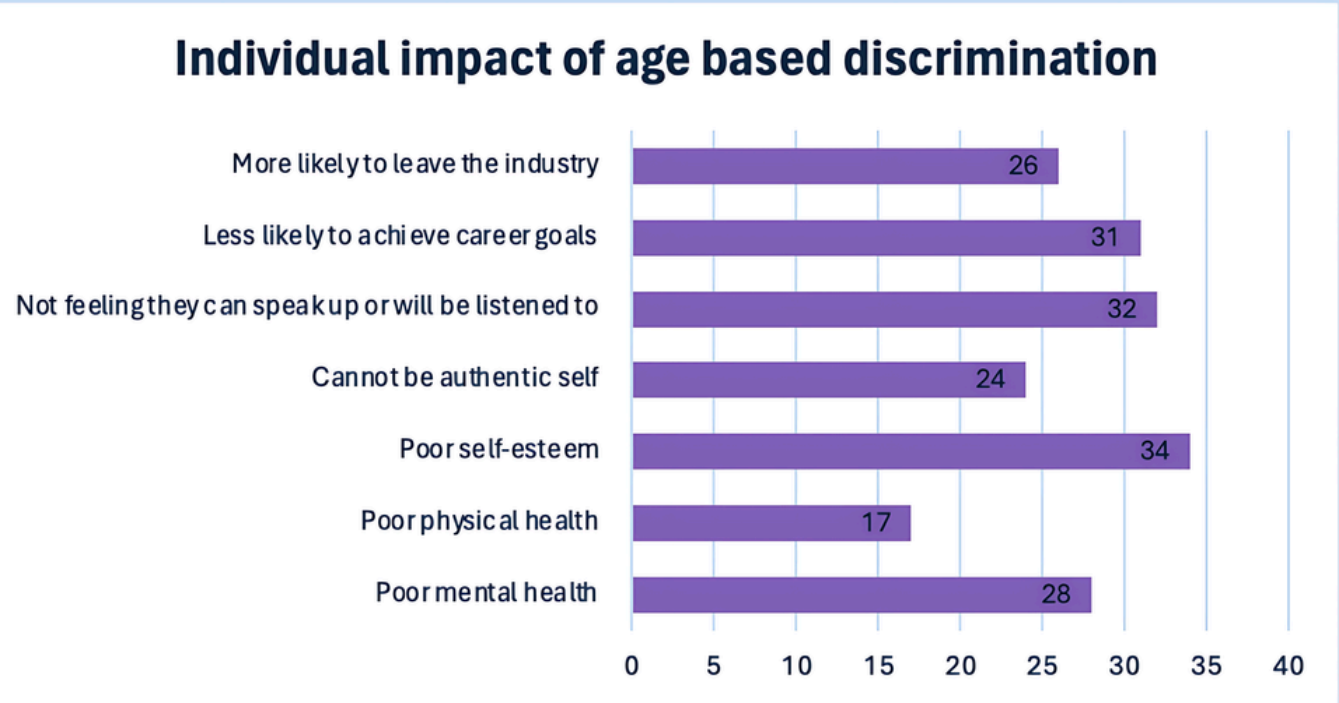
Of those who reported experience of disability-based discrimination or inequality, most of the potential business impacts were reported at similar levels, with limits on growth and less ability to attract talent being less frequently cited.



SURVEY RESULTS - AGE

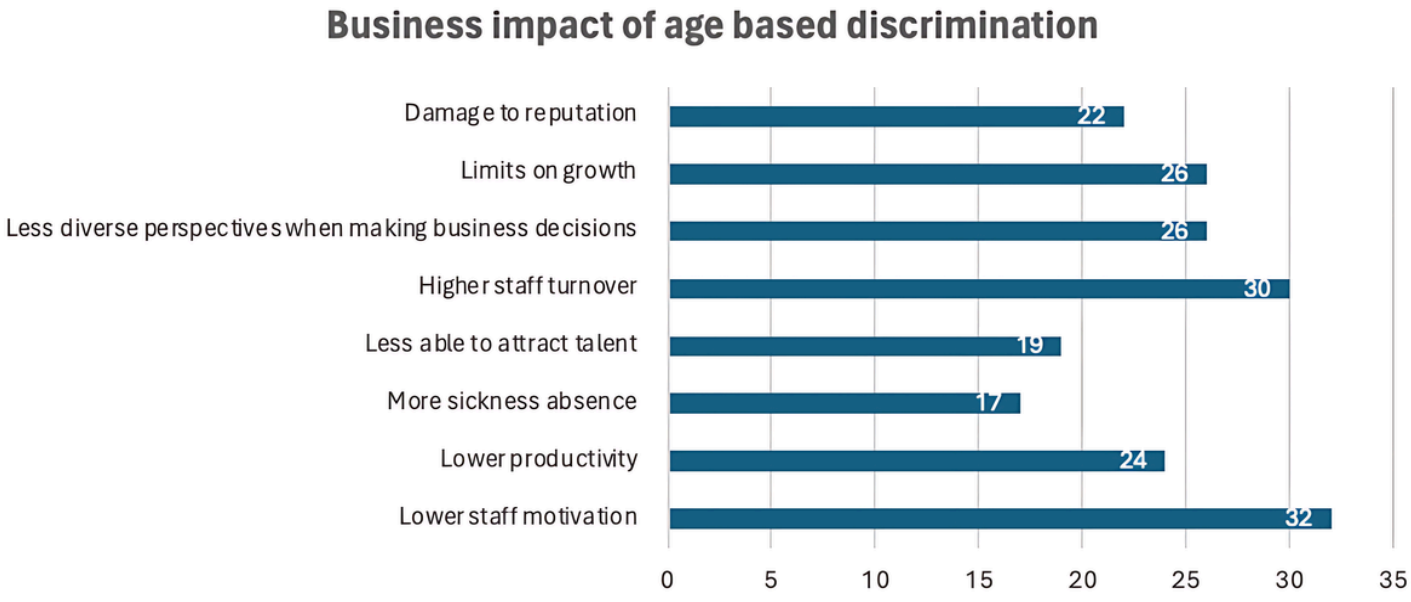
Individual Impact of Inequality Based on Age

Of those who reported experience of this type of discrimination or inequality, poor self-esteem was again the most frequently reported impact, followed by not feeling they could speak up or would be listened to and being less likely to achieve their career goals.



Business Impact of Inequality Based on Age

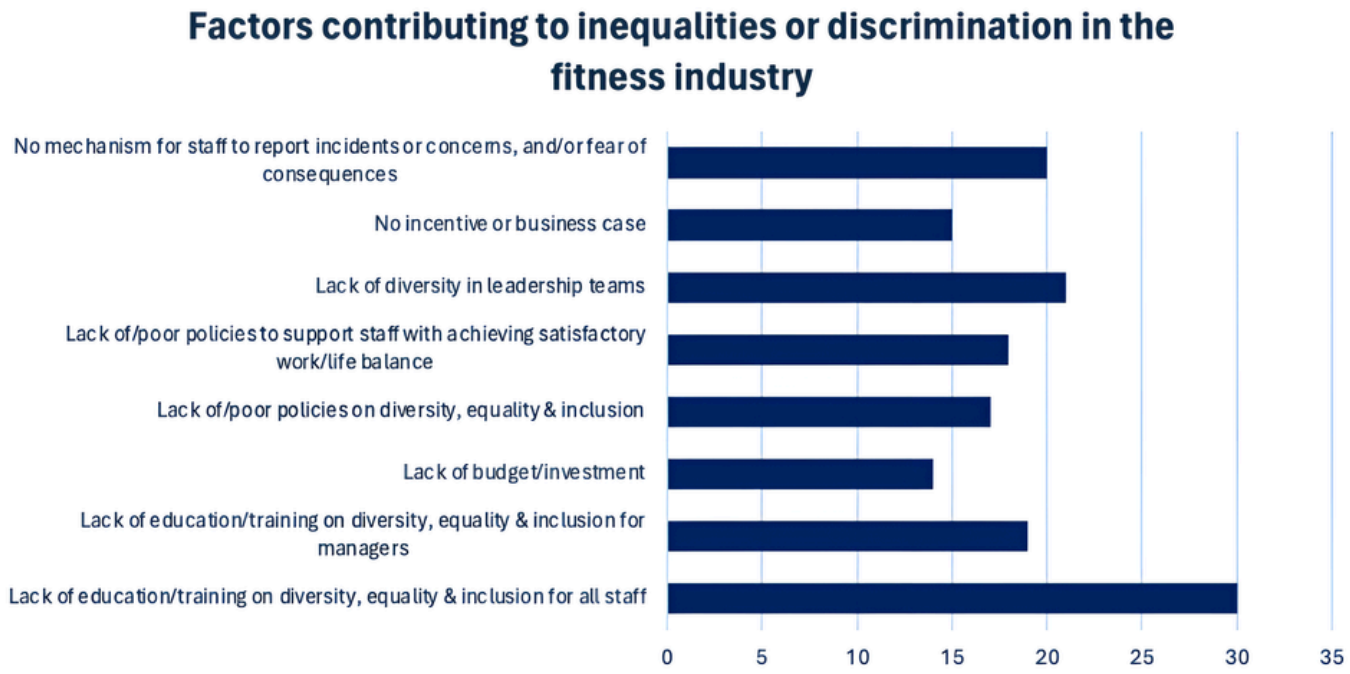
Of those who reported experience of age-based discrimination or inequality, negative impacts on staff motivation and turnover were most frequently cited, followed by limits on growth and lack of diversity in decision-making.

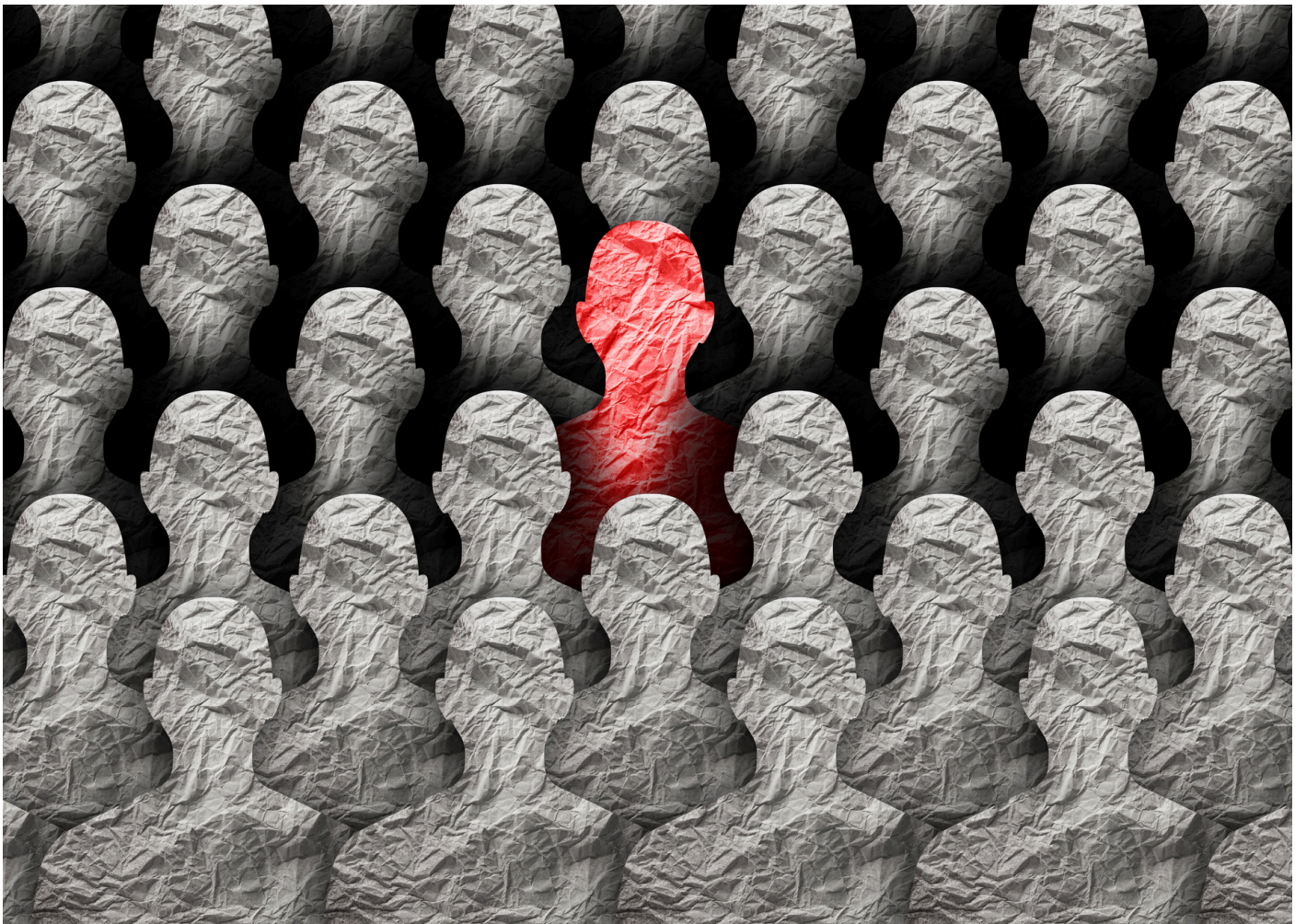


SURVEY RESULTS - CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Contributing Factors

Respondents were asked what they believe contributes to any inequalities or discrimination in the fitness industry. Lack of education or training on DEI for all staff was the most commonly cited factor, followed by a lack of diversity in leadership teams, no mechanism for staff to report incidents/concerns and/or fear of consequences, lack of DEI education or training for managers and lack of or poor policies to support staff with achieving a satisfactory work/life balance.



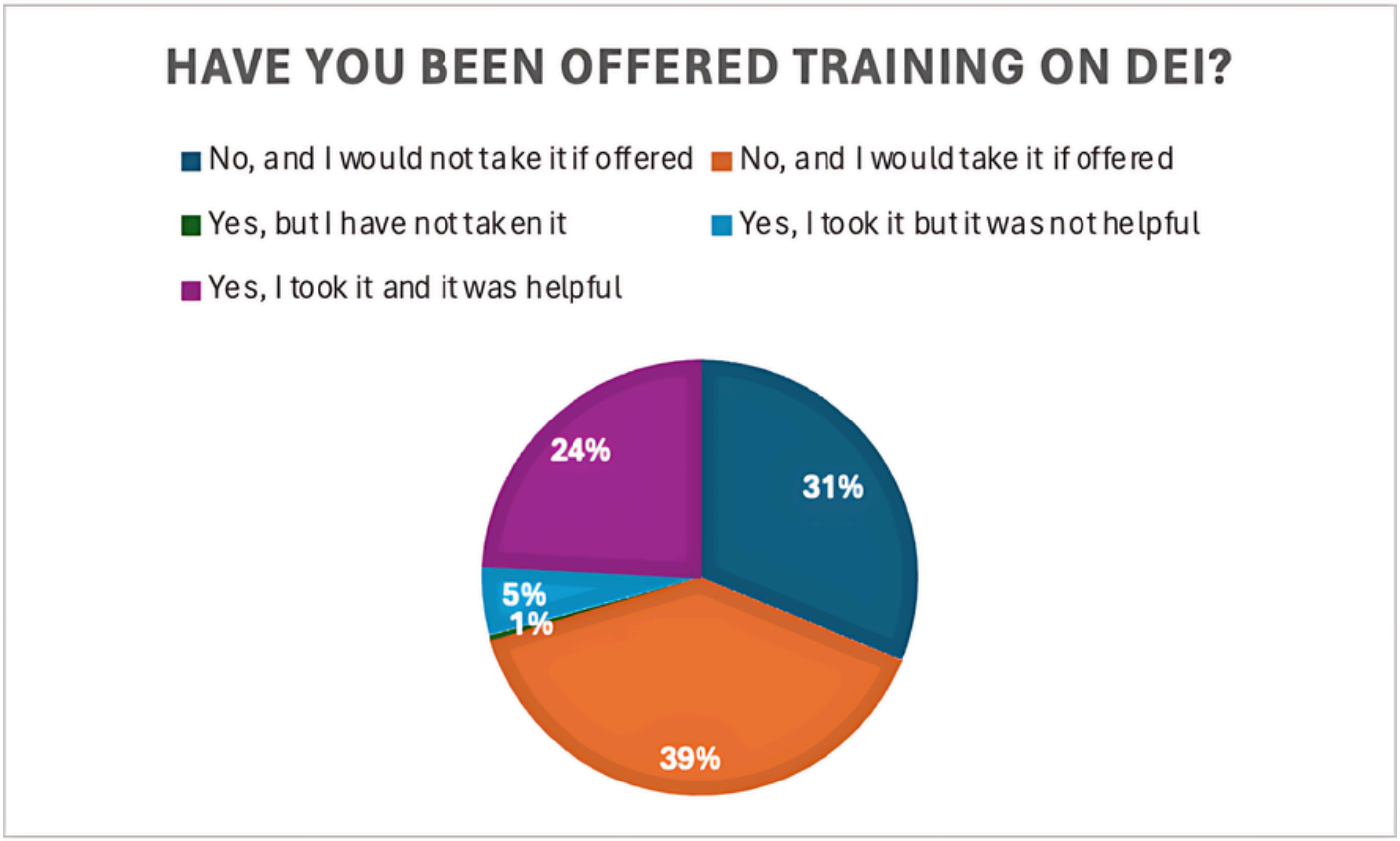


SURVEY RESULTS - TRAINING & RESOURCES

Respondents were asked what training and resources on diversity, equality and inclusion had been made available to them, if they had made use of these, and whether they had found these to be helpful.

Training

Of the respondents who answered this question (276), 70% had not been offered training on DEI. Concerningly, 31% of respondents stated that they would not take the training if offered. There may be various reasons for this reluctance to participate, such as not feeling it would be helpful, negative experiences of this type of training in the past, or concerns that there is some ulterior motive for the training. These attitudes should be further investigated so that concerns can be addressed and good quality training can be widely received. Of those who undertook some training on DEI, most found it helpful while some did not. This again warrants further investigation to ensure training is fit for purpose.

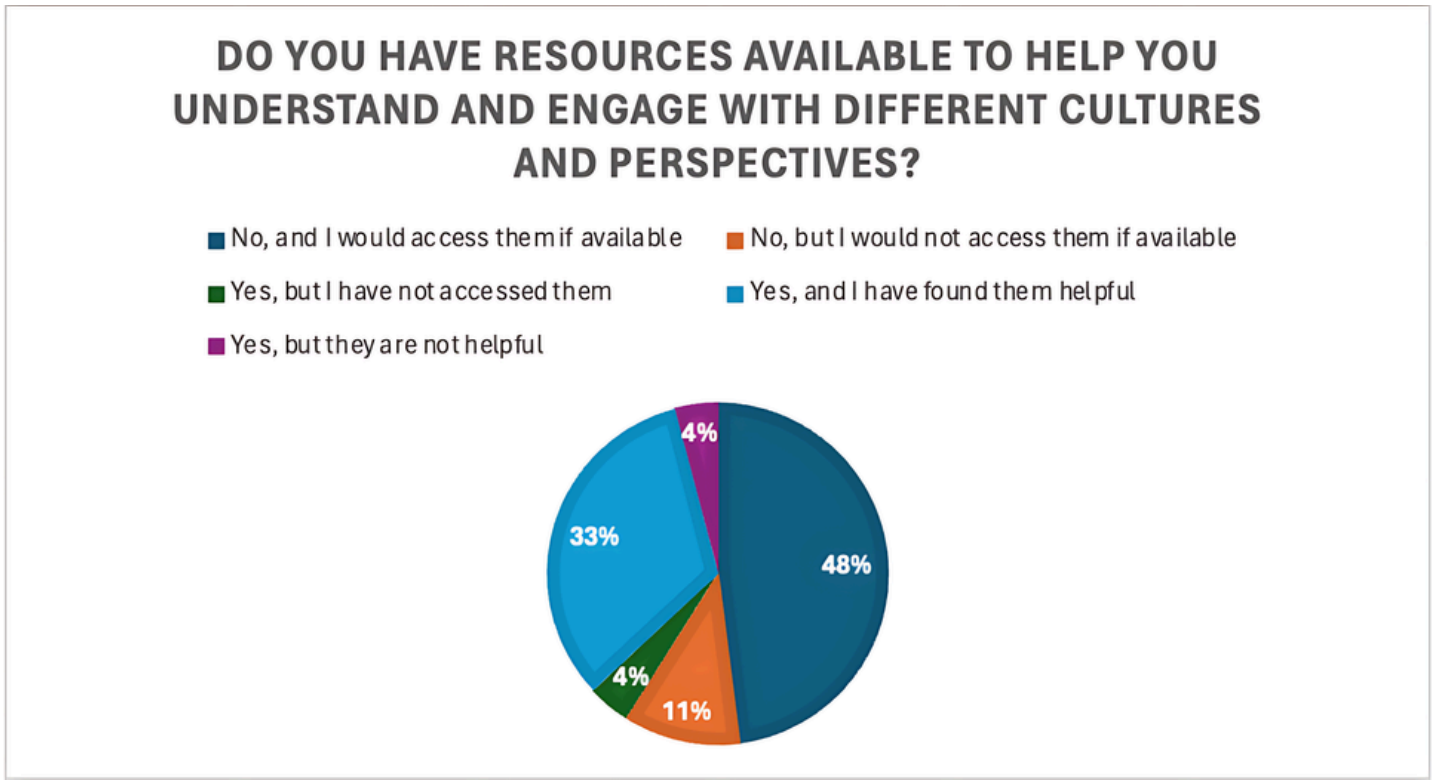




SURVEY RESULTS - TRAINING & RESOURCES

Resources

Of the respondents who answered this question (263), 59% did not have resources available, and most said they would access them if they were made available. The majority of respondents who had access to them stated they had found them helpful.





SURVEY RESULTS - ROLE MODELS

Role models
Respondents were asked whether they felt it was important to have visible role models and/or mentors from diverse backgrounds and whether they personally felt there were enough role models and/or mentors in the fitness industry that they can relate to.

How important is it to have visible role models and/or mentors from diverse backgrounds?
Of the respondents who answered this question (265), 86% agreed it was important, and only 11% felt it was not important, while 3% were unsure.

Do you personally feel there are enough role models and/or mentors in the fitness industry that you can relate to?
Of the respondents who answered this question (262), 38% said they did have enough role models/mentors, while 40% said they did not. 21% were unsure, which warrants further exploration to understand the cause of this uncertainty.



SURVEY RESULTS - APPENDIX & COMMENTS

Appendix

All comments provided by respondents per question, organised under umbrella categories. Any identifying information relating to individuals or organisations has been redacted to maintain confidentiality.

COMMENTS ON GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION OR INEQUALITY

Remuneration

- For equal efforts, my male peers have a better salary than I have and are being promoted to some positions because they are males.
- No progression in career due to age, less pay due to gender.

Career Progression

- Before I went on maternity leave, my career was on a positive trajectory; on returning, I was no longer invited to the critical important meeting and was not considered for promotion.
- Women are not being considered for senior roles due to them needing time off if they're pregnant.

Development Opportunities

- Gossip overlooking someone because of their gender.

General Harassment

- Harassment for being a woman.
- I was told several times 'seriously, she's a woman who runs it'.

Sexual Harassment

- I supervised coaches and several female coaches reported being harassed, being hit on, followed or even experiencing inappropriate physical contact from participants of their sessions. No such reports came from men. The company I worked for was swift in investigating and removing membership/access from the perpetrators.
- Males in female spaces. This is sexual harassment as they font hide the fact that they have penises.
- A former agent spoke of wanting to rape me with another colleague, sticky members waiting in the parking lot for the exit, altercations between women and members following too insistent flirting, women filmed without their knowledge, insults such as 'what is this half man, half woman doing here? or but then what do you have between your legs?'

Physical Harassment

- I supervised coaches and several female coaches reported being harassed, being hit on, followed or even experiencing inappropriate physical contact from participants of their sessions. No such reports came from men. The company I worked for swiftly investigated and removed membership/access from the perpetrators.
- A former agent spoke of wanting to rape me with another colleague, sticky members waiting in the parking lot for the exit, altercations between women and members following too insistent flirting, women filmed without their knowledge, insults such as 'what is this half man, half woman doing here? or but then what do you have between your legs?'

Miscellaneous

- Underlying sexism will have caused detrimental effects to a person's career.
- This mainly concerns members at the gym who regularly make misogynistic comments.

SURVEY RESULTS - APPENDIX & COMMENTS

COMMENTS ON SEXUALITY-BASED DISCRIMINATION

Remuneration

- Different salaries in the same position (m vs f).

Career Progression

- Disadvantages of career development during parental leave/maternity leave - not included in company development/positions have been filled.

Development Opportunities

- Not explicitly mentioned in the comments provided.

General Harassment

- Jokes from men, had a fellow lead tell me he could help me get pregnant once.
- Innuendos and flirting, use of pet names or trivialities, not taking anything related to them seriously.
- This also mainly concerns members who make homophobia and transphobic comments.

Sexual Harassment

- Sexually discriminatory comments from the former management as well as inappropriate touching of employees.
- Innuendos and flirting, use of pet names or trivialities, not taking anything related to them seriously. Unsolicited physical contact, of course. Hugs...

Physical Harassment

- Sexually discriminatory comments from the former management as well as inappropriate touching of employees.
- Unsolicited physical contact, of course. Hugs...

COMMENTS ON RACE, RELIGION, CULTURE-BASED DISCRIMINATION

Remuneration

- If you don't have the right color you need to be 5x more.

Career Progression

- Passed up for promotions, ideas ignored and then passed off as someone else's.
- Not considered for senior roles due to being considered not authoritative or giving the wrong cultural impression. Darker skin being considered less affluent (mainly in Asia).

Development Opportunities

- I was told that some male colleagues were intimidated because I have a strong character and it makes them feel fragile.

General Harassment

- We know all. You can do more and the best. If you don't have the right color you need to be 5x more.
- More like jokes and misapplications of language and word usage.
- A member can't stand seeing a veiled woman.

SURVEY RESULTS - APPENDIX & COMMENTS

COMMENTS ON DISABILITY-BASED DISCRIMINATION

- I saw members manhandling a member with a disability, making fun of him and taking the machine away.

COMMENTS ON AGE BASED DISCRIMINATION

Remuneration

- For salary and image reasons, young people are preferred.

Career Progression

- Being told more experience is required despite proving competent at high levels for a number of years. Resulted in them leaving the industry.

Development Opportunities

- Not explicitly mentioned in the comments provided.

General Harassment

- Older gym members are often annoyed at the youth because of their use of their phones. Also, I witnessed some older man threaten to shoot two kids (they were both 17).
- Witness to insults and rotten jokes against the elderly people in my room.
- Several times not being taken seriously by members and staff in the workplace because I was young. Comments such as 'You could have been my grandchild'. The comments from staff passed quickly, but I still sometimes encounter them among members. I also see it sometimes among young colleagues. Members then absolutely want to speak to the older colleague or the manager (in this case me).

COMMENTS ON THE IMPACT OF INEQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION ON BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY.

Inclusivity and Equality Challenges

- "The impact of inequalities in the fitness industry are exactly the same as the overall effect of decades of 'same.' We talk the talk but, broadly speaking, don't walk the walk. Inclusivity can't be a box tick or token, it must be holistic and altruistic, and not forgotten about towards the end of the month when sales 'priorities' take over for the short term."
- "The hidden bias that is innate, never gets dealt with or is out in the open, and this is often the problem. We are getting much better at dealing with the obvious discrimination but its the hidden bias that is the real challenge."
- "Overall I believe the sector has improved with wider understanding of equality and inclusion - my specific area is working with children and young people and the previous stigma of males working with young children - please to say it,Äôs improving but still can improve."

Gender Issues

- "It is already difficult for females to attend fitness centres due to bring more visible to males, often in fitness gear. Allowing men to say they are women and thereby access female spaces is driving women out of the business and makes gyms far less attractive to female customers."

SURVEY RESULTS - APPENDIX & COMMENTS

Regional Differences

- "I've found this more present in US-based companies and have seen this on multiple occasions."

Workforce Issues

- "Endemic turnover and lack of motivated professionals."

Physical Inequality

- "You need to add the physical inequality, which today is by far the biggest burden the sector suffers."

Negative Experiences and Culture

- "You advertise that everyone should feel comfortable, but the conversations that take place here among members (sometimes also with the staff) are regularly homophobic, misogynistic and xenophobic."

COMMENTS ON FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO INEQUALITIES OR DISCRIMINATION IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY.

Lack of education/training on diversity, equality & inclusion for all staff

- "Induction and training seem to be a foreign concept. At least for small businesses in the countryside."
- "The images and pictorial representations are not inclusive enough across the industry."

Lack of education/training on diversity, equality & inclusion for managers

- "It is all superficial. Sometimes it is driven by people who don't believe there is a problem. But they are scared to speak their mind."

Lack of budget/investment

- "The physical."

Lack of/poor policies on diversity, equality & inclusion

- "You could report cases, but very often, there won't be (lasting) consequences, if any at all. At least, legally, it is difficult to apply."
- "People with disabilities do not apply too much to our offers."
- "Covered in the points above, but the lack of voices and talent from outside of the sector means that the same views live in an echo chamber. External viewpoints are desperately needed, whether this be consultants or leaders, I'm not sure."

Lack of/poor policies to support staff with achieving satisfactory work/life balance

- "No consideration for childcare times. Likewise, no part-time management positions possible!"

Lack of diversity in leadership teams

- "'old boys network', leadership is not being rejuvenated everywhere, and 'old' ideas are therefore often still present. People are also not always aware of what is important for current generations, and therefore cannot respond properly to this."
- "Stuck old, predominantly male leadership teams."
- "It is a white male dominated management structure, none of the 30 top operators have a female ceo."

SURVEY RESULTS - APPENDIX & COMMENTS

No incentive or business case

- "Mentality and worship of a specific image."
- "As mentioned above, a lack of commitment to positive change, which is ironic considering that's exactly what we're striving to get others to do as customers. The industry needs to be more empathetic in realising that just because you don't face the problem, doesn't mean it's not a problem."

No mechanism for staff to report incidents or concerns and/or fear of consequences

- "You could report cases, but very often there won't be (lasting) consequences if any at all. At least, legally it is difficult to apply."
-

Miscellaneous

- "When men who just feel like women 'today' suddenly appear in the women's locker room. Then I'll throw you out and I think that's absolutely right."
- "The person himself gives up responsibility, presents himself as a victim and then calls for equal treatment. Anyone who wants to achieve something will achieve it. To do this, I have to stay true to myself and maybe leave my comfort zone."
- "Apart from Club Operator's, competitors' advertisements only show athletic people, we never see people who are overweight, veiled, transgender, homosexual, etc. They are making the effort now to put, for example, different ethnic origins but that's all."
- "And without professional experience, it is absolutely impossible or difficult to get a position in a fitness company."
- "Despite having an excellent degree as a fitness specialist."
- "Towards mothers."
- "Young people are given priority."
- "I think in my case we are a very inclusive company, however I worry about ageism in some cases. I think all ages should have equal opportunities for roles, and if any performance seems not sufficient at any moment, and is not serious enough for a dismissal, more training should be provided until excellence or dismissal."
- "Accessibility in the centers themselves."
- "I went into self-employment for exactly this reason."
- "I have been working at X Company for 6 months now, I work here 36.5 hours and I must honestly say that I have not had any experience with this in the clubs where I work. It is quite impressive how there is so much diversity in the club and there are hardly any cases. I do think that the lack of active employees can sometimes cause issues here."

SURVEY RESULTS - APPENDIX & COMMENTS

COMMENTS ON GOOD PRACTICE

Ongoing Efforts and Campaigns

- "There have been plenty of good campaigns, but often they're one-and-done spends instead of an ongoing effort with longevity in mind. Progress is being made, but it's two steps forward and one back. Happy to be contacted - ben.hackney@myzone.org"
- "X Company: open to all, marketing campaign with all kinds of different people (not just the super fit) from different origins, different body types, different fitness levels, etc."
- "X Company latest marketing campaigns are also better focused on this: young, old, fat/thin, girl/boy/neutral, all cultures, etc....."
- "Love the move towards all Sizes/shapes / abilities especially with the type of this girl can approach."

Positive Work Environment

- "Never experienced any negative attitudes or discrimination while working in X Company. Good work practices all around."
- "My company is extremely diverse and inclusive so I can not comment on this, it's not really a topic for us, because everything is so normal, and I'm very happy with this."
- "Because almost everyone is in the gym to better themself, this creates mutual respect."
- "Working at the head office of a fitness group, I am extremely proud to have colleagues who are young, elderly, women, men, homosexuals, diversity of religion, of origin. It is a real strength."
- "I myself recruited with an RQTH, and my manager spoke to us regularly about the importance of diversity in teams."
- "Never experienced any negative attitudes or discrimination while working in X Company. Good work practices all around."
- "People are being treated as individuals, not group representatives."

Inclusivity and Promotion

- "Some female colleagues were promoted to another position when they had just returned from maternity leave. They still talk about it because they never expected it! This is proof that they are hired for their skills/abilities and that they have added value even if their family life has changed."
- "Lived practice. Hire and promote diversity."
- "Hiring employees with disabilities."
- "The origins of the employees are executives who are top diversified!!"

Regional and Cultural Differences

- "The US market seems to be more advanced in addressing inequality, but it is still prominent. In Western European countries, the situation is bad. I saw more openness to diversity in Denmark and Sweden. In Asian countries, the gender and age bias is very high, and I saw no interest in improving the situation."
- "To get to know other cultures, I travelled a lot and lived with the local people. This experience really cannot be replaced by any theoretical training."

SURVEY RESULTS - APPENDIX & COMMENTS

Policies and Regulations

- "There are some national and European laws and regulations that will help in the near future, larger and stockmarket listed companies are more likely to address the EDI issues."
- "Simply look at people based on their abilities, for example, HR departments can eliminate personal data (sex, age, etc.) before passing the candidates to the corresponding manager, so that the selection is neutral.
- "For example, when there are group class events or masterclasses, something very positive is that the same number of men and women are always selected."
- "I don't think sexual orientation, ethnicity or age are relevant."

Training and Development

- "Reading, reflecting on your own behavior, training new behavior, experiencing a diverse view of life through workshops and seminars."
- "Targeted working groups dedicated to the topic and developing strategies on how DEI can be integrated into internal communication."
- "Be honest and talk to each other. There is no room for a discussion, seems there is just ONE narrative. If you continue to do this without open discussion, people will continue to fake compliance with a forced worldview."

Support for Underrepresented Groups

- "The creation of an association to help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enable them to practice sports.
- "When you are a curvy woman and you work in fitness, you find yourself confronted every day with derogatory looks and remarks. Whereas it's not because we're round that we have a poor diet and that we don't do sports. Weight problems can be linked to hormones or psychological problems."

Visual and Marketing Diversity

- "Diversity in visuals, Gender, physical and ethnic diversity."
- "Apart from Basic-fit, competitors' advertisements only show athletic people, we never see people who are overweight, veiled, transgender, homosexual, etc. They are making the effort now to put, for example, different ethnic origins but that's all."

OTHER COMMENTS

Accessibility and Inclusivity of Role Models and Mentors

- "To add to the question above about role models, there potentially is enough but not necessarily accessible. For example, there was a networking event at FIBO 2023 for women myself and a female colleague wanted to attend, but the information was extremely limited; we eventually discovered it was an invite-only event. This is an example where access to role models and mentors is limited, and opportunities are only available for those in a certain social circle, which doesn't allow the next generation of female role models and mentors to break through. I know there are memberships such as WIFA available, but in my experience, this isn't particularly friendly for UK members. Overall, my negative experiences have been within the workforce and predominantly from male colleagues/managers. However, the support networks provided by women for women are also not fit for purpose."

SURVEY RESULTS - APPENDIX & COMMENTS

Criticism of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)

- "DEI is a scam and unscientific. It ignores the natural average differences in groups people and attributes it to social behaviour. It tries to force people into unnatural behaviour and, therefore, decreases happiness. The more free a society is the more natural behaviours will automatically take over. See: equality paradox"
- "I feel like forcing diversity will lead to less acceptance. Diversity is something that should come naturally. Everyone should be allowed to form their own beliefs and not force them upon others."
- "I believe in working hard and making progress on that hard work, not making excuses like these mentioned above"

Personal Experiences and Opinions on Discrimination

- "I personally never experienced any inequality or discrimination myself, but I am aware that this is an important topic and still very relevant in this industry"
- "I think we should stop labelling ourselves or pigeonholing ourselves into whether each person has one sexual orientation or another or where they come from or not even asking their age and focus on fitness being by and for everyone."
- "A day of coexistence."
- "I was born in '68 and have already grown up to be tolerant, diverse and diverse. Enjoyed an upbringing with respect, tolerance, gratitude and assertiveness."

Gender and Patriarchy Issues

- "The only bad thing is that the problem is a problem of patriarchy, therefore, of society. But I think that training on feminism or equality would be very positive to teach women to defend their opinions and positions, just as men (due to patriarchy) do. At a structural level, I don't see a problem with X Company as a company, although, of course, I would like to see more women or people from the LGTBI community in senior positions. On the other hand, if they do not deserve it, it would not be fair to give them those positions just because they are women or members of the LGTBI community."

Structural and Cultural Issues

- "Any company that has a big impact within the industry (industry like EGYM, Sport Alliance or Technogym, operators like LFG or RSG Group and associations like DIFG or DSSV) should speak with a unified voice and be a bulwark against discrimination build."
- "It's mainly due to 'old, white men' who own gym chains who have outdated ideas about the topics."

SURVEY RESULTS - APPENDIX & COMMENTS

- "I do not find it important to have to ask this type of question in the form of a questionnaire because indeed, the diversity of thoughts, colors, religions are not elements which will slow down the good evolution of X Company because it is not the values of the French to stop at this kind of thing. We must target motivated people who share the values of our company and who tend to share a common vision of X Company's objectives. I find it a shame to have to face a questionnaire which, in my opinion, represents an identity crisis exported from another country where the problem persists there. For my part, the recruitments that I can carry out are based on a good feeling and the fact of trying to detect talents among the candidates and not looking at their color or their origins. We are at X Company to offer a good service with the best value for money and not to point out the differences of each person, so I do not understand why such questions are asked of us. In any case, I respect that certain people may be affected by any kind of persistent discrimination."

Positive Practices and Experiences

- "I work for X Company where diversity and inclusion are encouraged. Management leads by example and staff training reinforces these values. The difficulties would rather come from the members themselves who discriminate against other members. Employees may need some practical tools to manage potential tensions with affiliates refusing inclusiveness."



MY PRONOUN IS PEOPLE,
I'M DIVERGENT, YET INVINCIBLE.
I AM STRAIGHT, I AM QUEER;
I AM CIVILIAN, I AM SEER.
SPIRIT OF LIFE, I - AM UNIVERSAL!

CALL ME DISABLED OR DIFFERENTLY ABLE,
CALL ME COLLECTIVE OR INDIVIDUAL.
FLESHLY FORMS I'VE GOT PLENTY,
ALL RUN BY SAME LOVE AND LIBERTY -
CULTURE SUPREME IS INCLUSION.

EACH HEART IS A SHELTER FOR ANOTHER,
EACH LIFE IS SANCTUARY FOR ANOTHER.
BLASTING ALL TRADITIONS OF DIVIDE
INTO CINDERS WITH KNOWLEDGE-DYNAMITE,
WE SHALL EMERGE AS EACH OTHER'S KEEPER.

YOU ASK, WHAT AM I - I SAY, I AM HUMAN,
BETTER YET, I'M HUMAN'S IDEA OF A HUMAN.
I AM BUT THE HUMAN ABSOLUTE -
MORALLY UNBENDING 'N DIVINELY CUTE -
EVER EVOLVING TESTAMENT TO EXPANSION.

Abhijit Naskar



europe active
MORE PEOPLE | MORE ACTIVE | MORE OFTEN

CONTACT

EuropeActive
House of Sport
Avenue des Arts / Kunstlaan 43,
B-1040 Brussels, Belgium

Have any questions?
communications@europeactive.eu

communications@europeactive.eu

www.europeactive.eu

EA LinkedIn

EA Instagram

EA Facebook

EA Twitter