



# The design of everyday men

A new lens for gender equality progress

Deloitte's Doblin Human-Centered Design and Human Capital Consulting practices bring together the capabilities to understand how employees behave in, experience, and navigate workplace culture and then devise innovative ways to transform the organization for the better. Doblin's empathy-driven approach surfaces the most pertinent issues to solve for through ethnographic research with relevant stakeholders, while Human Capital Consulting establishes the structures, mechanisms, and processes to make change real. Contact the authors of this report for more information or visit [Doblin's website](#) and the [Human Capital Consulting website](#) for more information on how you can advance workplace culture for all people.

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# Executive summary

**A**LL BUSINESS LEADERS—not just human resources and talent professionals—are facing a wave of diversity megatrends.<sup>1</sup> The talent they employ and the customers they serve are more diverse, requiring leaders to build inclusive organizations as a competitive priority. The numbers support it too: Inclusive cultures outperform the market in terms of financial performance and innovation.<sup>2</sup>

However, one diversity issue has proven to be very difficult to solve: the underrepresentation of women in the most senior levels of organizations. In 2017, among companies listed on the S&P/TSX 60 Index, women occupied only 28 percent of board seats, 18 percent of executive officer positions, and 3 percent of CEO positions.<sup>3</sup> This is despite the fact that upwards of 90 percent of companies report making investments in gender diversity programs to help women advance.<sup>4</sup>

So why haven't we cracked the code yet on gender equality in leadership? Deloitte set out to reframe the issue starting from an unlikely source: the perspective of men.

## Men taking on new roles could be key to closing the gender equality gap

It's no secret that men have done well at work: There are more of them, they earn more, and they hold more senior leadership positions than their female counterparts.<sup>5</sup> As such, organizations haven't typically looked at men's experiences as a way to build better gender equality since, on the surface, they seem to be doing fine.

However, the world is changing.

The default gender roles of the 1950s no longer apply. Just as women have entered the workforce in droves, men are now taking on new roles outside the office with their families and in their communities.<sup>6</sup> This transition for men hasn't been smooth. Today's "always on, always available" corporate culture has led to higher levels of work/life conflict.<sup>7</sup> Men are struggling to balance their new roles in society and they face backlash when stepping outside of traditional masculine gender norms.<sup>8</sup> Also, cultural and biological aspects of masculinity encourage men to prioritize societal roles that more directly link to measurable status, like job titles and salaries.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these challenges, the results for gender equality have been encouraging: As men take on more outside-of-work roles, women win in the workplace. Evidence shows that when men take more paternity leave, women are more likely to stay employed full-time, the wage gap decreases, and more women earn senior leadership positions on boards.<sup>10</sup> For organizations, this means more gender equality in the workplace and greater competitiveness in today's diverse marketplace. For men, this means more freedom to express their whole selves beyond their role as financial providers.

So how might business leaders create more space for all genders to succeed in the workplace by helping men bring more of their whole selves to work? To answer this, Doblin—an interdisciplinary innovation consultancy composed of ethnographers, designers, and strategists within Deloitte—explored the lives of 16 professional men in and around the Greater Toronto Area. We investigated their past and current work experiences in a broad range of for-profit corporate businesses, including banks, professional services firms, and major corporations. From this, we uncovered insights that illustrate how

today's corporate culture isn't working for anyone, and that achieving gender equality is so much more complex than simply hiring more women.

## Men are trying to change—but they need support

Just as we've seen women lean in to evolving gender roles, men are trying to change too, but they're stuck and need business leaders to lead the way.

Our research uncovered four themes and implications for business leaders that illuminate men's experiences in today's corporate culture. These themes are not exclusive to men; all genders may have similar workplace experiences. This research is simply meant to complement existing research on gender in the workplace and highlight that men also face nuanced barriers to change.

- **“It's on me.”** Men place enormous pressure on themselves to handle responsibilities on their own as individuals.

*Implication:* Corporate cultures that prioritize individualism over collectivism risk burning out their people and devaluing collaboration, where responsibilities and trust are more equally shared.

- **“I'm terrified.”** Men are afraid of failure, which leads them to overcompensate with hypercompetitive behavior to mask their insecurity and earn professional success.

*Implication:* The most ambitious people may also be the most insecure, which puts their long-term performance at risk; they also set an unrealistic expectation for the devotion required to be successful in the organization that others can't meet.

- **“I can't turn to anyone.”** Personal relationships and vulnerable interactions help to alleviate pressure and fear, but men have difficulty building these connections.

*Implication:* Discouraging vulnerability in the workplace reduces trust between people and increases barriers to getting the help people need to take on challenges.

- **“Show me it's okay.”** Men look to leaders and peers in their organizations to understand what behaviors are acceptable and lead to status.

*Implications:* Policies and programs for change are not enough; senior leaders need to role-model and reward the behaviors they want to see in order to establish new norms for people to follow.

## Three calls to action for leaders

These themes suggest three calls to action for business leaders to change the game on advancing gender equality—with men as active participants.

First, **recognize that the expectations we set for success are causing gender inequality.** Today's “always on, always available” corporate culture, where individuals are expected to prioritize work over family, personal commitments, and sometimes personal well-being, is a key barrier holding back gender equality.<sup>11</sup> Our insights show that men may more readily adhere to this expectation and sacrifice their outside-of-work commitments to maintain their status in the workplace. As a result, those that succeed in the organization and become senior leaders are, more often than not, men—since women end up taking up the slack on these outside-of-work responsibilities, thereby disadvantaging themselves.

However, research shows that organizations can maintain and even improve performance without an



“always on, always available” culture. Studies have repeatedly shown that working more hours leads to poorer outcomes for everything from interpersonal communication and making judgment calls to increased insurance costs and employee turnover.<sup>12</sup> Further, scheduled and predictable time off, specifically for knowledge workers, actually improves business outcomes such as overall productivity and quality of output.<sup>13</sup>

Second, **reflect on our own behaviors, particularly as business leaders, and how we are establishing expectations for what success looks like through our day-to-day actions.** We developed a set of discussion questions to help business leaders assess if their actions are fostering a culture of inclusion based on how they lead, how they nurture the whole self, how they build community, and how they help people grow.

Third, **take action on breaking down the barriers to change.** We have identified tactical steps for business leaders and organizations to take in rethinking how they approach advancing gender

equality today. These steps range from starting each meeting with a personal story to more transformational initiatives such as performing an audit of the informal behaviors that lead to success.

## Business leaders have a great responsibility to shape a more gender-equal society

The role of men in society has been under scrutiny lately, and as this research shows, business leaders have the power to make a lasting impact on the role of men at work and at home. This power comes with an important responsibility to lead change and improve gender equality for all.

The time is now for business leaders to set the right example and encourage men to be active participants in a more equal and inclusive future. If they do, organizations will be more competitive, women will be more empowered, and men will be more fulfilled.

# Why research men?

## Men's success: An overlooked opportunity for gender equality

For decades, men have been stalwarts of the working world. In numbers, earning potential, and senior leadership representation, they've done well for themselves inside organizational walls.

Their participation at work has been sustained even as women have increasingly entered the workforce. From 1953 to 2014, in Canada, women's labor force participation rate exploded from 24 to 82 percent, whereas men's participation has never dipped below 90 percent.<sup>14</sup> This growth is mirrored in the increase of dual-earner households from 36 percent in 1976 to 69 percent in 2015.<sup>15</sup>

However, as paid work has become a role for all genders, men are still out-earning women. In dual-earner households in Canada, men still earn relatively more than women in 51 percent of homes, whereas women earn more in only 17 percent.<sup>16</sup> Further, full-time female workers still only make CAD\$0.87 for every dollar a man makes on an hourly basis.<sup>17</sup> This number has grown from CAD\$0.77 back in 1981, but parity has still not been achieved.

The disparity in numbers for women appears to compound at the senior leadership level. For companies listed on the S&P/TSX 60 Index in 2017, only 28 percent of board seats, 18 percent of executive officer positions, and 3 percent of CEO positions were held by women.<sup>18</sup>

Despite this dismal news for gender equality, the gap in female representation at the top could be masking an opportunity for business leaders keen on building more inclusive cultures. If men have traditionally been the primary beneficiaries of the status quo and dominate senior leadership, could better understanding their experi-

ences shed new light on how to break down barriers to gender equality?

## Reframing the gender equality discussion

To date, inclusion and diversity (I&D) initiatives have focused on helping underrepresented groups fit into the status quo. However, this study takes a novel approach by viewing the status quo from the perspective of the ones it has benefitted so much. Doing so repositions men from allies to active participants in the I&D discussion.

To do this, Deloitte's human-centered design and innovation consultancy, Doblin, performed ethnographic research on 16 professional men spanning a range of family and marital statuses, sexual orientations, and ethnic backgrounds (see Appendix for details on the research approach, participants, and analysis framework). Each research participant was employed full-time with a large business (more than 5,000 employees) in and around the Greater Toronto Area and brought work experiences from a variety of different for-profit organizations, including banks, professional services firms, and other major corporations.

This research, paired with insights from secondary sources, produced surprising revelations on men's relationships with work, family, and masculinity. Our method represents a fundamentally different approach to studying gender equality: Instead of trying to find ways to "fix" people with policies and programs, the research focuses on understanding people's day-to-day experiences and why people act the way they do. With this understanding, business leaders can change the game on how they lead and advance gender equality for everyone.

# The context of men's experiences

## The end of default gender roles

Women have been closing the gap with men in the workforce for decades. In the process, the definition of womanhood has changed to include the financial provider role.

But as time studies show, women still shoulder a disproportionate number of outside-of-work duties. In 2015, amongst Canadians aged 25 to 54, women engaged in about 55 minutes more housework per day than men and 30 minutes more caregiving for children.<sup>19</sup> While these differences may seem small, they don't account for the extra mental load related to planning and managing these chores while at work.<sup>20</sup> In other words, men have traditionally had more time and mental freedom to focus on paid work instead of on managing the household and providing care to others.

However, role expectations are starting to change for men as well. Research shows that “the ‘ideal’ man today is not only a good employee working long hours to be a successful breadwinner, but also is a nurturing husband/partner, father, and son.”<sup>21</sup>

## In dual-earner households with children under 18, 60 percent of men reported work-family conflict, compared to 47 percent of women.

The same study found that in dual-earner households with children under 18, 60 percent of men reported work-family conflict, compared to 47 percent of women. This is a reversal from 1977, when men reported less conflict (35 percent) than

women (41 percent). For men, the growing demands to nurture children, support their spouses in their careers, and manage household responsibilities are increasingly coming into conflict with their work responsibilities.

At the core of men's increasing work-family conflict is their adherence to the financial provider role in their family unit. A 2014 study showed that while men are taking on more roles outside of work, they do so in addition to their financial provider role and are unlikely to reduce their commitments to work.<sup>22</sup>

## Men can advance gender equality by taking on more outside-of-work roles

Men's reluctance to shed the financial provider role is a key impediment to gender equality. The expectation of today's financial providers is that they will exhibit high devotion to the job. This limits the amount of outside-of-work responsibility these people can take on. If men remain committed to being the primary financial provider, women end up disadvantaged since they must take on more caregiving and household roles, while men miss out on leading fuller lives outside of the workplace.

Research shows a correlation between men taking on caregiver roles and women advancing professionally. In societies where men take paternity leave more often and for longer lengths of time, more women stay in the workforce, the wage gap is smaller, and more women occupy senior leadership positions on boards.<sup>23</sup> All these measures are a positive sign for gender equality.



Therefore, the more men can take on caregiver and household roles outside of work, the more space is created in the workplace for women to succeed and close the gender equality gap.

## Why aren't men embracing outside-of-work roles?

As women take up financial provider roles and earn income for the family, men should hypothetically be more enabled financially to assume caregiver and household roles. But time studies and work-life conflict research show that men are struggling to do so. Why?

One answer is that men are encouraged to seek status because of biological and cultural aspects of masculinity—and organizations offer an ideal environment for men to measure and compare status through job titles and salaries.

From a cultural perspective, the social construct of masculinity makes men feel as though they are “never secure.”<sup>24</sup> This forces men to seek out others' approval to “affirm and reaffirm to themselves and to others who and what they are.”<sup>25</sup> Men feel like they need to posture their status, which is measured based on what others think and constantly needs to be proven.

From a biological perspective, masculinity also manifests through testosterone. Studies have shown that testosterone “enhances behaviors involved in obtaining and maintaining a high social status.”<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, these studies found that status-seeking behaviors can be antisocial, such as aggression, or prosocial, such as generosity. One study linked being more generous to status and found that men with higher levels of testosterone became more generous. So it's not the behaviors themselves, like being aggressive, that are linked to testosterone necessarily; instead it's the way behaviors are rewarded and given status that encourages men to act in certain ways.

For organizations, which allocate status in the form of pay, promotions, and authority, this means they play a key role in reinforcing the behaviors men

## From a cultural perspective, the social construct of masculinity makes men feel as though they are “never secure.”

engage in to earn the status they desire. It follows that rewarding behaviors that allow individuals to share financial provider, caregiver, and household roles more equally is vital to advancing gender equality in organizations.

## Organizations shape men's behavior inside and outside the workplace

So how do organizations provide measurable and comparable status to their workers?

Research shows that organizations tend to view devotion to the job—being “always on, always available”—as a primary indicator of someone's value to the organization.<sup>27</sup> Individuals who sacrifice family and personal needs in favor of organizational demands succeed more. For men, this means their need for status comes into direct conflict with how much they value and engage in outside-of-work commitments. As time studies show, women pick up the slack on caregiving and managing the household as a result.

Men are also actively punished when they step outside of masculine norms. One collection of studies showed that “men face backlash when they don't adhere to masculine gender stereotypes—when they show vulnerability, act nicer, display empathy, express sadness, exhibit modesty, and proclaim to be feminists.”<sup>28</sup> Men who do this earn less, get promoted less often, and overall receive worse performance reviews than women who engage in similar behavior.



Fortunately, organizations can play a powerful role in undoing these dynamics and encouraging more positive and equal behaviors for all genders.

A study done on a management consulting firm showed that when individuals were forced to take scheduled and predictable time off to focus on personal interests or commitments outside of work, metrics related to employee retention, job satisfaction, learning and development, communication, and value delivered to the client all increased.<sup>29</sup> The time away encouraged employees to focus on collaboration and efficiency in the workplace to deliver even more value in their work.

Many other research studies dating back to the early 1900s also prove that time away from work and working closer to a 40-hour work week lead to positive outcomes for business.<sup>30</sup> People think more clearly and make better decisions, errors and mistakes occur less frequently, and efficiency and productivity increase. This fact holds true for both manual labor jobs and knowledge worker jobs. One study puts the number of productive working hours

for a knowledge worker at six hours a day.<sup>31</sup> Further, a study on a management consulting firm showed little evidence that business leaders could even differentiate between who was actually working an 80-hour week and who was just pretending to based on their performance.<sup>32</sup>

Aside from hours worked, masculine norms can also be influenced by organizations that reward alternative behaviors. A study on an oil drilling platform, where masculine behaviors such as infallibility, posturing, and dominance typically prevail, showed that these norms could be “undone” once status was linked to learning, admitting mistakes, and collectivism over individualism.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the company’s accident rate dropped by 84 percent, and productivity, efficiency, and reliability of production all came to surpass industry benchmarks.

The research is clear: Organizations have a strong impact on men’s behavior both in the workplace and at home. When the organization rewards behavior that diminishes the importance of outside-of-work commitments, men’s need for status drives them to deprioritize these duties. Unfortunately for women, they end up taking on these outside-of-work commitments, making it more difficult for them to succeed at work.

The dynamic between masculinity, a desire for status, workplace expectations, and the balance of roles that men must play served as the basis for our research. We wanted to understand *how* this dynamic is playing out in today’s corporate culture. What factors haven’t we considered yet that might hold men back from fully participating in a new, more gender-equal culture where men better balance their roles?

# What we found

**W**E WANTED TO know how men are managing workplace expectations given their changing gender roles. Specifically, we were interested in how they are navigating traditional and emerging roles in society, how they are rationalizing the decisions and tradeoffs they have to make, and how workplaces and social networks affect their decisions.

The insights presented here are our interpretations of the stories, actions, body language, intonation, and interactions we documented during the interviews and observations. The findings are meant to provide nuance and depth of understanding to the experiences of men as they navigate changing roles at work and at home. The goal is not to compare and contrast experiences between men and other genders, but instead to highlight the perspective of men as an under-researched area of interest while acknowledging that their perspectives may be shared by others as well.

Our research identified four themes that characterize the experiences of men in the workplace, summarized in figure 1.

## “It’s on me”

How can organizations help men leverage their community of peers at work to collectively share responsibilities?

### “MY COMPETENCE COMES FROM MY OWN INDEPENDENCE”

Men can feel that their value comes from how well they fulfill their own duties. They take pride in their ability to complete tasks independently and attribute their success to their own hard work, time management, or savviness.

However, this mindset can also lead men to place additional pressure on themselves to perform. Both asking for and giving help can be seen as undesirable since men value the individualism that comes along with their independent ability to manage their own responsibilities.

At the extreme, men can believe they have to endure hardship. As one interviewee stated, to succeed, he feels he has to “put his head down and

### LYRON: “I WILL NEVER ASK FOR HELP”

Lyron started at his organization a year ago. Still early in his career, he’s in the process of figuring out what it takes to succeed, but what he’s seen so far leads him to believe that the top priority is “independent thought. Being independent in the way that you do things and being confident in your skill set. Can you project enough confidence for someone to take what you say as word of law?” As a result, Lyron says, “I will never ask for help. I will stay up as long as it takes for me to figure out how to do something before I ask somebody senior how to get it done.”

The expectations for Lyron’s job can be ambiguous at times and he intentionally volunteers for challenging projects. He does this because he wants to feel successful by overcoming hurdles on his own. “My mentality in life is to just dive headfirst into something and figure it out later. Even if I don’t know how to do it, I’m going to put my hand up, because this could be awesome. This could help my career. I think I’m smart enough to figure it out, and that excitement, that adrenaline of not knowing but going in and figuring it out, is thrilling to me.”

get through it” alone rather than seek help, emotional support, or accommodations.

While this belief may make some men appear to be devoted and self-sufficient employees, it also has the consequence of fostering workplace cul-

tures where “everyone looks out for themselves.” Multiple men we interviewed mentioned how the importance of individualism is reinforced by performance evaluations that emphasize individual contributions over offering support to teammates.

FIGURE 1

## Four themes characterize men’s experience in the workplace

Theme	What this means for your organization
<p><b>“It’s on me”</b></p> <p><b>Men place enormous pressure on themselves to handle responsibilities as individuals.</b> Men take pride in their independence and manage growing expectations at work and at home by pushing themselves to fulfill their responsibilities. They feel valuable when they individually succeed at managing duties on their own.</p>	<p>Individuals who place a burden on themselves to fulfill their own duties without outside support may be at risk of burnout and less likely to show weakness by admitting they can’t handle pressures at work. Further, organizations that prioritize individual achievement over collective success may devalue collaboration and restrict how much individuals share the burden of responsibility.</p>
<p><b>“I’m terrified”</b></p> <p><b>Men are afraid of failure, which leads them to overcompensate with hypercompetitive behavior to mask their insecurity and earn professional success.</b> Men feel that the value they bring to the world needs to be earned, and they can be insecure that they aren’t doing enough. As such, they invest heavily in workplace demands to overcome insecurity. Only when they become secure with their own personal value do they feel comfortable prioritizing personal interests over workplace responsibilities.</p>	<p>Individuals who show the most ambition may also be the ones who are the most insecure about their value. This insecurity may lead them to overprioritize work demands at the expense of personal responsibilities or well-being.</p> <p>In the long run, their performance may not be sustainable. They also set an unrealistic expectation that many others can’t meet for the level of devotion to the job required to be successful in the organization.</p>
<p><b>“I can’t turn to anyone”</b></p> <p><b>Personal relationships and vulnerable interactions help to alleviate pressure and fear, but men have difficulty building these connections.</b> Men often don’t feel equipped to develop close relationships in the workplace. However, instances of vulnerability and empathy with colleagues or leaders can have a lasting impact, leading to improved trust, self-confidence, and openness.</p>	<p>Individuals who fear showing vulnerability may miss opportunities to learn from others that could be facing similar challenges. A culture in which individuals are afraid to be vulnerable may limit how often people reach out for help, reduce trust, and discourage people from bringing their whole self to work.</p>
<p><b>“Show me it’s okay”</b></p> <p><b>Men look to leaders and peers in their organizations to understand what behaviors are acceptable and lead to status.</b> Men are afraid to step outside the norm on their own. How organizations reward behavior, and how that is modeled by leaders and colleagues, indicates to men what behaviors are acceptable.</p>	<p>Individuals who desire change may be reluctant to take the first step until they see new behavior modeled by others in the organization. Policies and programs for change aren’t enough; individuals learn through social interactions what behaviors are appropriate and whether or not they should engage in them.</p>

Source: Deloitte analysis.

## “I DON’T GET A PASS ON TRADITIONAL EXPECTATIONS”

Men can still feel very tied to the financial provider role in their families. They’re driven to advance professionally and ensure financial stability for their families. They can view this role as core to their value as a person.

For many of the men we interviewed, they also became the sole or primary income-earner for their household after having a child. These men describe this decision as simply practical. They talk about having a discussion with their partner and both concluding that the man should be the financial

### SUFJAN: “I’VE GOT TO BE SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE I’VE GOT A FAMILY”

Sufjan, a senior leader at his organization, wants to better balance the roles he and his wife take on at home. However, he acknowledges it has been financially difficult to do so. “After my son was born, I actually took him to day care in my building, so my wife went back to work. But then, after my daughter was born, we looked at the cost of putting two kids in day care, and whatever amount of money that she was making at the time, and we were like, ‘Okay, for an extra \$6,000 a year, is it really worth having our kids raised by a stranger?’ At that point, she decided that she would stay home and watch the kids.”

After his wife and children supported him in getting a master’s degree, Sufjan now feels enormous pressure to be the primary breadwinner and succeed in the workplace. “As you’re climbing up the corporate ladder, you feel that you can’t make mistakes, that you have to work a lot, that you’ve got to put in the hours, that you’ve got to do all this kind of stuff. And you’re extremely—at least I was—worried about your job. The constant feeling is, *I can’t fail. I’ve got to close this deal. I’ve got to be successful because I’ve got a family. I gotta bring home the money.*”

provider. This was usually informally calculated based on some combination of the partner’s earning potential, the cost of child care—particularly if planning for multiple children—and the extent of their partner’s desire to be involved in raising the kids.

## Only one man we interviewed, whose spouse also had a high-paying job, considered working less or not at all in the future in order to take more of a caregiver and household role.

In many cases, it appeared that the fact the man had a higher-paying job meant that he defaulted into the financial provider role more easily, thus following traditional gender norms.

For the men who desired to be more involved with their family, it became their responsibility to figure out how to balance their financial provider role with their responsibilities at home—while still advancing their careers. In many instances, accomplishing this came at the sacrifice of personal hobbies and interests. Only one man we interviewed, whose spouse also had a high-paying job, considered working less or not at all in the future in order to take more of a caregiver and household role.

## “IT’S GOING TO GET BETTER AS I RISE INTO LEADERSHIP”

Some men believe that they can’t make their own choices around how to balance work and outside-of-work responsibilities until they’ve earned a more senior role. They perceive that more seniority will give them more flexibility to focus on activities that they want to engage in, such as being more present at home or taking personal-interest classes.



Yet some men we interviewed who are in senior roles described how being a leader has only expanded their obligations. They continue to make tradeoffs such as working through their vacation or paternity leave. They also talk of going back online after their children have gone to sleep to continue working. Even when flexible work policies are

### **MALIK: "YOU CAN DO THAT, BECAUSE YOU'RE THE BOSS"**

Malik is in mid-level management. When he and his wife had a child, he didn't feel like he had permission to take advantage of flexible work policies. After returning from paternity leave, his boss pulled him aside and encouraged him to "focus on making work fit into my life, and not the other way around." Malik replied, "Well, sure, *you* can do that, because you're the boss." He felt it was still his responsibility to consistently overdeliver at work because he was "only as good as my last project."

After more conversations with his boss, Malik now leverages his existing reputation as a hard worker to justify working more flexibly. "There might be a project you worked super hard on, and you kind of build your reputation around that. You now have 'equity to cash in' to get a bit of relief in other areas. If I had to come in late because I had to take my son to a 10 a.m. vaccination, I can do that. People know it's not a big deal because they know I get my stuff done anyways, and the quality is high. So people still have that trust."

Malik believes that, while flexibility policies have existed since he started, "It would really be tough if you're on day one and nobody knows who you are, and you try to do that. Even though, in theory, we should all be able to do it at all levels, I don't think that's how reality is. People want to have trust in someone before they give them enough leeway to be as flexible as you sometimes need to be."

offered, these men don't necessarily feel fully able to use them. If they do, it's because they're relying on their existing reputation as a hard worker to counterbalance their usage of the flex policy.

As a result, men who are extremely devoted to their jobs can rationalize working hard because they believe that it's the price you have to pay for success. However, the men that have achieved senior positions don't appear to have reduced their devotion to their work, and only once they have achieved this seniority do they reflect on the degree to which their sacrifices impacted their lives.

### **"I'm terrified"**

How can organizations help men acknowledge and manage their fear of never being enough?

### **"MY WORTH COMES FROM HOW OTHERS SEE ME"**

Surprisingly, some of the men we interviewed who appeared to be the most successful (for instance, senior men or men who behaved confidently in the workplace) revealed deep feelings of insecurity about their value. These men placed great importance on how others viewed them in the workplace as the primary indicator of their value. They were constantly worrying about how others perceived their capabilities, especially when encountering new people in the workplace with whom they did not have an established reputation.

To make their value real, these men would seek reaffirmation. This could be formal reaffirmation, such as a promotion or leadership role, or informal reaffirmation, such as being the "go-to guy" for advice, getting texts from senior leaders, or being able to sit at the boss's table during the holiday party.

These men tended to measure their value in terms of their impact on other people, such as helping others solve their problems or mentoring others. They didn't feel like their value was innate; it needed to be established through positive reinforcement from others.

**MATEO: "I WOULD ALWAYS DO SOMETHING TO PLEASE"**

Mateo, in mid-level management, grew up with a very strict father. During his childhood, when he would "bring home a 99 on an exam, my dad wouldn't sign it. He was like, 'Why wouldn't you get 100? Why'd you make a mistake?'" This need for approval from superiors carried on throughout his life with sports coaches and bosses.

Mateo tends to switch jobs about every three years because he "loves solving problems" and proving his value in new contexts on a consistent basis. "Again, it's that whole pleasing thing. If I can go in somewhere, find a problem, and solve it, it's like a gold star. As a kid, I remember getting these stickers, or those rewards like, 'Here's a certificate for putting in a whale of an effort, for doing unassigned homework.' I would always do something to please. I think, when I switch from job to job, it's an opportunity to push myself, challenge myself, and also make things easier for people."

**"DOING MORE AND DOING IT FASTER IS BETTER"**

Some men prove their worth by understanding what actions earn respect, and then undertaking as many of those actions as possible. Ideally, these actions come with quantifiable status, so individuals can know where to focus and compare themselves to others.

Organizations offer a great environment for men to earn quantifiable status by performing the right actions. Indicators such as the length of time until promotion, pay raises, decision-making authority, and sales numbers are all tangible metrics that men can use to compare their own status with colleagues.

For men, being able to achieve more and faster is often perceived as the best way to pursue a career, as it proves that a man is doing well. It is unacceptable to reach equilibrium. One interviewee stated:

"Staying the same actually means you're going down." Therefore, the mentality can be one of constant and accelerating achievement.

**CHARLES: "I'VE ALWAYS HAD A HANG-UP ABOUT NOT BEING GOOD ENOUGH"**

Charles, a senior leader at his organization, grew up in a fragmented family environment. During our interview, he tenderly acknowledged that he was "emotionally insecure about having the financial security to have kids." Charles felt that he struggled in his career throughout his 20s and didn't get his break with a well-paying role until he was 30. "I've always had a hang-up about not being good enough, so I always try to set goals. Goal-setting is interesting. It's like, 'Hmm, what do we do now?' because you always want to be on the upper curve instead of flat. Flat means you're just going down."

Though Charles has been a senior leader for many years, he continues to feel pressure to take on larger roles at work because he does not believe he should be satisfied with where he is. Charles believes that his organization would not allow him to start doing less either. Even as his spouse reentered the workforce, we asked if that meant that he would work less. He laughed before soberly saying, "No, you think anyone's going to let that happen? It just means I'll work more on the weekends."

**"WHEN I FEEL SECURE, I NO LONGER NEED TO PROVE MYSELF"**

We interviewed several men who had been caught in a situation of burnout, leading them to rethink how they perceived their value and what was important in life.

Initially, these men had felt insecure and became hyperfocused on succeeding in the workplace. Their spouses would help with managing outside-of-work

responsibilities, and they would forgo personal interests such as going to the gym or socializing with friends.

However, these men reached a turning point where they felt something needed to change. Either through a pivotal personal experience or an influential interaction with a leader, they began to realize that they didn't need to keep proving themselves and they had become "enough."

Interestingly, the transition from feeling insecure to feeling secure, and therefore not needing

### JAE: "I REALIZE IT'S YOUR OWN JOURNEY"

Jae is in mid-level management. His attitudes toward work were transformed after a period of intense burnout earlier in his career. He pursued a role to help him accelerate in his organization, and circumstances led him to being asked to leave after three months. He took over a year off to recover: "It cleared my mind, and I realized, again, what was important. I lost the focus on family. I got into the rut of, 'Why is that other person higher than me?' I got into that comparison game, feeling pity for myself. That mentality was wrong. I realize it's your own journey. Who cares about anybody else in that respect? You've really got to live your own life."

Returning from his time off, Jae feels his approach to work is different. He tries to focus on "gratitude, being more appreciative of people." He reflects on the difference between where he is now and where he was then: "I think a lot of the confidence I had was, not fake, but maybe forced, just because I thought I was in this race to get as high as I could as quickly as I could. Now, I'm not necessarily as concerned with that. I can't 100 percent say I'm 100 percent divorced from understanding rank and things like that, but it wouldn't make my top 10, while it was definitely in my top three back in the day. And you know what, I'm actually enjoying my job now."

to prove themselves anymore, appeared to be an internal decision. These men realized that their financial situation, job level, and relationships with colleagues and family were sufficient once they personally decided that they were fulfilled. Typically, this meant changing what they defined as success in their own eyes to better reflect their current reality—regardless of where they stood in the organization's hierarchy.

Once these men felt secure, they appeared to place more importance on personal endeavors that brought meaning to their lives, whether that was spending more time with family or engaging in personally enriching professional initiatives. They didn't feel the need to prove themselves as much at work at the expense of their personal interests.

### "I can't turn to anyone"

How can organizations help men feel comfortable asking for and getting support from others?

### "I WANT PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, BUT THEY'RE HARD TO FIND"

Men believed that personal relationships were vital in the workplace: They establish trust between employees, make it easier to get work done, and help with personal growth and well-being. However, many men in our study expressed reluctance or outright fear of building personal relationships at work.

Men tended to create thresholds in their mind around which topics are considered work-appropriate. In general, personal topics such as uncommon hobbies, family issues, and spirituality are treated as taboo.

The reluctance to share personal information and build relationships in this way may be linked to men's feelings of individualism, in which insecurities are considered one's own problem. Holding this value, men weren't likely to reach out to others, nor did they expect others to reach out to them.

Yet, paradoxically, the men we studied repeatedly spoke about the power of a personal relationship at work and the impact that can have.

Especially with respect to navigating unique family issues or sharing a common interest, men felt that having a meaningful personal relationship was incredibly important.

#### **ANAND: "I THINK IT'S ALWAYS A MASK"**

Anand, in upper-level management, takes pride in knowing his colleagues for who they are as people, beyond who they are as employees. However, he understands that it's not always easy to build deep connections with coworkers. "We have a good rapport, and we even talk about personal stuff to a certain extent. I know that my coworker likes to spend time with his daughter, that he likes golf, et cetera. But I don't think we have gotten to know each other in the personal sense. How do we make the time for that? When you talk about what you did last weekend, you can share a few things, but that's just a micro glimpse. I think it's always a mask. The fact that we have had a miscarriage, I wouldn't even have occasion to talk about. Nobody at work knew, except for my boss because I had to ask for time off."

Anand thinks that a workplace where everyone knows each other on a more personal and vulnerable level "would be incredible. I've had certain conversations at work where others have revealed things to me beyond just a superficial level. That develops a sense of empathy, big time. It also creates a bit of vulnerability, because to open up to somebody, you have to be vulnerable to the fact that 'Listen, I trust you, and I know you're not going to judge me on that.'"

#### **"I NEED TO FEEL TRUSTED BEFORE I CAN TRUST OTHERS"**

Men tended to respond to trust from leaders by passing that trust on to their colleagues and direct

reports as well. Once they felt that their bosses trusted them, they then felt less need to micro-manage their own teams and even provided their team members with more opportunities to lead on their own.

Further, men who felt trusted also tended to view mistakes more as a learning opportunity and less as a personal fault. This mindset made it easier for

#### **NATHAN: "MY BOSS THINKS I CAN DO THIS JOB"**

Nathan, a senior leader, initially felt self-conscious about how he fit in to the business world given his working-class background. He describes being "lucky" because his leaders believed in him and gave him opportunities. "You go from a kid who showed up to work wearing hiking boots to the 23-year-old kid now who's got, on any given day, at least three or four media interviews. There's elements of it that push me way out of my comfort zone. But my boss thinks I can do this job. And in a way, she's put her professional reputation on the line. You kind of take that as encouragement."

In his current position, Nathan feels like he's paying forward the kindness and trust he received from his leaders to his own team. "Someone on my team is like, 'I don't think I can do it.' I'm like, 'What do you mean, you can't do it?' She's like, 'I don't know this, and I don't know that.' I said, 'You gotta start somewhere. And you'll learn it. And I always say if you know 50-60 percent of a job, you'll figure out the rest.'" Nathan focuses on uplifting his team. In the workplace, we noticed he would acknowledge when he didn't know something and would give his direct reports the opportunity to speak during group meetings. One of his direct reports, completely unprompted, stated, "You should know, he is the best boss I have ever had. Ever."

men to be more open and honest about their actions and feelings with their bosses and colleagues.

However, as men pointed out in our interviews, trust can feel precarious: Just because one boss trusts you does not necessarily mean the next one will. As a result, men can feel the need to actively manage their reputation with senior leaders to maintain trust, or they may default into hypercompetitive behavior to build trust with a new leader.

**RAVI: "THERE ARE NOT A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO DO THAT"**

Ravi is new to his organization and early in his career. In his role, he has periodically intense phases of work. He believes that peers supporting each other during these stressful periods is important: "If you've got a good team, in the middle of the busy period, you might be exchanging some work with your colleagues. Work is kind of interchangeable at the lower levels. If the manager sees you're struggling, they might move the work around for you, but if you have a really good relationship with your team, you might take it off somebody yourself. That really shows the quality of the relationship you have with somebody: for them to volunteer, 'I want to take this away from you. Let me do this part, because I think I'm gonna get done with my part.' There's not a lot of people who do that. That's the right quality of people."

However, this communal help wasn't always recognized by leadership. Earlier in his career, Ravi recalls a colleague on a different team volunteering his weekend to help Ravi's team with a piece of work. Unfortunately for his colleague, this act of generosity wasn't recognized by their organization: The colleague was eventually held back from promotion that year.

**"UNDERSTAND THAT I WON'T ASK FOR HELP FIRST"**

Some men revealed that asking for help simply was not an option. They viewed asking for help as

tantamount to admitting weakness and feared it would give the impression that they were less valuable. These men also appeared to be the ones who could have used help the most: They were struggling with managing their workload and figuring out how to accomplish tasks.

## The men who couldn't ask for help also saw cultural reinforcements of their behavior.

However, not all men felt this way. Some men learned from their workplace's culture that asking for help was both acceptable and actively encouraged. When they saw their peers and leaders asking for help, they felt more permission to seek support as well. In these cultures, help was viewed as something that benefits everyone, including the individual, by allowing people to share learning and grow together.

Conversely, the men who couldn't ask for help also saw cultural reinforcements of their behavior. They feared being scolded for asking simple questions or saw little evidence that top performers were asking for any help at all. In these scenarios, men rarely felt able to ask for help, and instead would wait until someone else proactively reached out, if they received any help at all.

## "Show me it's okay"

How can organizations encourage men to bring more of their whole selves to work?

## "ROLE MODELS HELP ME BE MORE HUMAN"

Men tended to be heavily influenced by how their leaders in the organization acted. Given men's drive for status, they observe the behaviors that leadership engages in and tend to embody those as a way



to show value. Formal policies and programs (such as paternity leave or flex time) were less important than the examples they saw from leaders and their peer group.

Some of the key indicators men picked up from leadership related to how they prioritized family commitments, whether they showed fallibility by



### JORGE: “I DON’T THINK MY DAD EVER MISSED A BASEBALL GAME”

Jorge, in mid-level management, is at an inflection point in his career. He’s been successful in his job so far, and he is now planning for a family and thinking about what that means for his career. His wife works a demanding job with high earning potential—even greater than his own—and he personally wants to be very involved in raising his family. “I think about my parents when I was growing up, and I don’t think my dad ever missed a baseball game. Even when I was a kid and going to swimming lessons, he was there. He worked long hours, but at the same time, when it came to that stuff, there was no sacrifice. So I’m going to be there.” Yet, when Jorge looks at his senior leaders, he doesn’t see himself in their shoes. “There’s a senior leader in my division, and he somehow manages to do everything. But he also color-codes his schedule, and his schedule goes from 6 a.m. to midnight every day. I like to have a bit of spontaneity in there, and I feel like the only way he’s able to accomplish that is being stuck to his calendar as opposed to actually enjoying the things that are in front of you. If you inquire and dig a bit deeper into senior leaders’ lives—typically, their success has been based upon the ability to make some sort of conscious decision with their partner around whose career is going to take the lead.”

Jorge does really love his job and his company, but he feels torn because he doesn’t see his leaders leading the life he wants for himself when he starts a family.

admitting mistakes or their own imperfection, and the degree to which leaders developed genuine personal relationships with others. These examples sent messages to men around what it meant to be a leader in the organization, and ultimately influenced whether men could see themselves staying with the organization long-term.

Perhaps indicating a generational divide between older leaders and younger emerging leaders, none of the men we interviewed who were in middle management or below stated any clear desire to aspire to leadership positions in their own organization. They felt that leadership held different values around family, work/life balance, and personal connection that didn’t align with how they wanted to lead in the future.

### “THE EVERYDAY MOMENTS MATTER THE MOST TO ME”

Men interpreted what behaviors were acceptable based on the everyday moments between individuals: a look on someone’s face, their tone of voice, a conversation over lunch. These small interactions became the primary signposts for how men received positive or negative reinforcement on their or others’ actions.

Several men spoke of perceived gaps between their organizations’ stated policy and what was actually rewarded in terms of expectations about working from home, paternity leave, and embracing individual differences. These perceptions were derived from the informal interactions they experienced day-to-day in the workplace.

As a result, men tended to default to conformity to ensure that they fit in with others in the organization, which can perpetuate the status quo. Only men who felt they had developed a sufficient professional

reputation or gained enough trust from leaders had the confidence to act differently if they believed enough in doing so.

### **SUMAN: "I JUST WANTED A HUMAN ANSWER"**

Suman is new to his organization and early in his career. He came to Canada in hopes of starting a family, as in his home country, it's not acceptable for gay men to have children. Suman describes himself as confident and outgoing, but as he put it: "You kind of always have the fear in you: 'Hey, they might be judging me.' I have this feeling inside my heart. Because I grew up saying, 'They will judge me for being gay,' it's always there. Although I know it won't happen anymore, it just doesn't go away, because I grew up like that."

Before he started at his organization, he wanted to ensure that his new company would be accepting. "I called the manager who hired me and said, 'Hey, I am starting here, and I want to understand how inclusive it is. I'm a gay individual and I want to make sure that the team I'm going into is inclusive.' I got a very standard answer: 'We are a very inclusive company, we send our managers to training, and it's an inclusive environment.' I think it was standard corporate jargon. I didn't want that answer. At that point, I realize that, maybe she has not herself been in a training like that—or she has, but no one has asked her this question. What if everyone asked that question? She'd be more prepared. All I was looking for was someone to say, 'Hey, it's okay, it's all right. We cherish you, we like it.' That's it. I just wanted a human answer, not a corporate answer from a website."

### **"SEE ME AS MORE THAN JUST 'A MAN'"**

The men we interviewed unanimously wanted progress on gender equality in the workplace. However, many of them worried about their organization's focus on gender as a trait that groups

people together. Many men we spoke to see their identity as being many things: raised working class, a newcomer to Canada, LGBT+, introverted, single, a family man.

Because of this, some men didn't believe that being "a man" was a unifying factor between the men they saw in the organization—specifically, at leadership levels—and their own identity. They felt that their manhood wasn't even necessarily core to their being. Many of the men felt that being a good man was no different than being a good person overall.

These men desired an organizational approach to inclusion that treated them as a more nuanced, unique individual beyond whether or not they "ticked the box" as a man.

### **RAJ: "WOMEN HAVE GOT EACH OTHER'S BACK. THAT'S NOT THE CASE FOR MEN"**

Raj is early in his career. He went to university in Canada in hopes of providing a better future for his family abroad. Though he is just in his 20s, he is providing a substantial amount of financial support to his parents and siblings. He feels that since he is male, he's not receiving very much support to succeed, even though he believes that his background and unique situation make him different than other men he works with. He feels that his male superiors are not looking for someone like him. "You're seeing some people being very supported. And they should be. But then there are others who are not being supported by anybody."

Raj notes, "There's a nice camaraderie sort of thing going on within the female environment overall, which is nice to see—that they have got each other's back. That's not the case for men. I don't see that. Particularly if you're somebody who's different, you're going to have to work a little harder for somebody to have your back. You need to find people who are ready to be invested in you. Sometimes it's hard to find those people."

# What we should do

## Three steps for business leaders

**T**HE THREE STEPS presented here are meant to help business leaders:

1. Understand that an organization's expectations for success affect gender equality;
2. Self-assess their own behaviors to understand that they signal what is valued; and
3. Tactically take action to build a more gender-equal workplace.

### Step 1. Recognize the impact that organizational expectations for success have on gender equality

Recent research suggests that many organizations view the “ideal worker” as one who is “totally committed to, and always available for, his or her work.”<sup>34</sup> The expectation is that “workers be wholly devoted to work, such that they attend to their jobs ahead of all else, including family, personal needs, and even their health.”<sup>35</sup>

This “always on, always available” expectation has become the measure of success for many organizations in a world where outputs are not clearly measurable and knowledge work is increasingly common. The expectation has persisted despite decades of research that prove that working longer hours and not taking scheduled, predictable breaks

throughout the week lead to poorer business outcomes in areas including financial performance, value delivered, employee well-being, and employee retention.<sup>36</sup>

As our research shows, the “always on, always available” expectation for success leads to gender-unequal outcomes. Men who seek status and feel pressure to prove their worth as individuals may be more likely to sacrifice their outside-of-work commitments to meet this expectation, giving them an advantage in the working world. Women are then stuck picking up the slack, which limits their ability to embody the “always on, always available” persona. Further, status-seeking men in the workplace can create less space for others to advance by establishing hypercompetitive expectations for success that are difficult to match.

Business leaders should have internal conversations to reflect on expectations for success and assess if these expectations are causing certain genders or identities to be excluded from leadership. Reflecting on both the formally established expectations in performance evaluations and the informally reinforced expectations that are rewarded through day-to-day interactions and behaviors can lead to a more equal and less biased experience for all.

At the crux of this conversation should be a concerted focus on the “always on, always available” culture: Why are organizations so certain that this provides additional value? And is this expectation more important than achieving gender equality and inclusion?

## Step 2. With your peers, reflect on your own actions to understand how you are fostering an inclusive environment

In step 2, we encourage leaders to reflect on their own personal behaviors and how they affect expectations in the workplace.

The discussion questions below are meant to help leaders reflect on their own behavior in the realms of leadership, community-building, and employee development as it relates to building a more gender-equal workplace. The questions can be shared with peers so leaders can understand how their actions are perceived by others. Based on the responses to these questions, leaders can identify appropriate actions to take, some of which are described in step 3.

1. **How you lead: How are you, as a leader, role-modeling the behavior you want to see from others?** Individuals can be heavily impacted by role models in the organization. Business leaders should be conscious that others look up to them to set the expectation of what ideal behavior looks like, both in what leaders do and what leaders reward.
2. **How you build community: How are you showing individuals that their peer group supports and embraces their actions, specifically in the everyday interactions between individuals?** Individuals can fear change unless they think others are also engaging in that change too. These influences don't just happen at a macro level, but in the everyday conversations between people. Business leaders can show individuals they aren't alone and set the expectation that every interaction is an opportunity to encourage and promote the right behavior.

3. **How you develop the whole self: How are you considering the individual's interests, needs, and desires beyond their development as an employee?** Individuals gravitate to business leaders and organizations that see them as more than an employee. Business leaders can consciously consider how individuals are being encouraged to bring their whole selves to work each day.
4. **How you help individuals grow: How are you helping individuals embrace and accept their own imperfection as they develop both as employees and as people?** Fear of failure can be a powerful deterrent to sharing one's mistakes. Business leaders who see failure as a step toward growth can encourage individuals to take on learners' mindsets where mistakes are freely shared in an effort to grow as an employee and a person.

## Step 3. Act on building a more inclusive, gender-equal organization with men as active participants

Tactically, the 10 actions for more inclusive organizations presented here show business leaders and organizations what they can do to increase gender equality in the workplace.

### FIVE ACTIONS FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

1. **Start all meetings with a thoughtful personal story.** Show individuals you're more than just a business leader. Talk about a personal interest or family event to bring more of yourself to the workplace and give others the permission to share as well.
2. **Put your own imperfection on display.** Show that you make mistakes too and that you're also trying to learn and grow. Revealing your vul-

nerability opens the door for others to feel safer in sharing their own fears and shortcomings.

3. **Have one-on-one conversations with people that go beyond workplace formalities.** Don't ask people what they do; ask who they *are* and what they value most in their lives. Do this with all the members of your team, especially the ones you know the least or who seem different from you; it builds trust in the team.
4. **Check in on people who seem like they need it the least.** Realize that some individuals use ambition as a mask for insecurity and might hide their need for help. Don't take silence for satisfaction; reach out proactively to each person to see how they're doing.
5. **Take vacation and parental leave—actually.** Fully turn off when taking extended time away from the office. Whether for a mental break or to care for a child, time away can help people invest in their outside-of-work selves without distraction and create space for your colleagues to succeed and grow while you recharge.

#### FIVE ACTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

1. **Offer personalized coaching to all individuals.** Help people feel autonomy in their careers by giving them access to coaching. Coaches can

provide a safe place to get help as individuals navigate difficult challenges in the workplace.

2. **Build learning and development programs around life goals, not just professional aspirations.** Enable individuals to build comprehensive life plans that include both personal and professional goals. This helps reduce the barriers between an individual's work self and outside-of-work self.
3. **Audit the informal behaviors that lead to success.** Interview individuals to assess the informal behaviors (such as "getting the job done at all costs") that earn status. Perform a gap analysis to see if these informal measures align with the formal measures written in performance evaluations.
4. **Define the desired behaviors for success through a diversity lens.** Establish desired behaviors for success and then use feedback from diverse individuals to ensure this list does not inadvertently disadvantage specific individuals or demographics.
5. **Identify and transform jobs to capitalize on the unique human value people bring to work.** Forecast how technology and automation may affect your organization in the future and catalog the human values (such as empathy and caring) that will be vital to success.



# Conclusion

## Helping men show up differently

**B**USINESS LEADERS WIELD great power in helping men show up differently at work and at home. Role models in the workplace set the right example on what behaviors lead to status, and modeling behaviors that encourage men to better balance work and outside-of-work priorities can lead to very real change for gender equality.

For decades, women have fought for their equality in the workplace, and while progress has been made, it appears to be stalled at the executive ranks. Men are now facing their own reckoning with

expanding roles outside of the workplace that offer the opportunity to lead more full and diverse lives.

If you as a business leader truly believe in the moral and business imperative for change toward a more diverse and inclusive organization, it will be vital to reflect on how your behaviors can evolve and how you and your organization can foster a more equal culture. If you are successful in doing so, you will develop a more competitive and higher-performing organization for the future.

# Appendix

## Research methodology

**T**HIS RESEARCH WAS conducted by Doblin, Deloitte’s human-centered design and innovation consultancy. Human-centered design (HCD) helps organizations identify opportunities for change by first understanding people’s behaviors and experiences. HCD leans on established methods from the social sciences that systematically study and develop insight into how people, cultures, and society function. For this project, we focused on ethnographic methods from anthropology.

By the numbers, our research consisted of:

- 32 hours of in-home interviews;
- 480 pages of transcribed interview notes;
- 35 hours of in-person observational research in the workplace;
- 100 pages of detailed observational notes; and
- 2,752 individually tagged quotes and observations.

### Our methodology

The discipline of anthropology emphasizes seeing culture through the eyes of people who belong to it. This means understanding the culture of men in corporate life from their perspective. To do this, it is key to observe people in their contexts, not just talk to them; according to Margaret Mead, a famous American cultural anthropologist, “What people say, what people do, and what people say they do are entirely different things.”

We conducted two-hour in-home interviews and in-office observational research with each participant to hear how men reflected and rationalized

their experiences and to see their lives in context. Qualitative research allows us to understand both facts and the meaning behind facts (for instance, if 70 percent of men believe something, why do they believe it?), bringing depth and nuance to our analysis of men’s experiences in corporate culture.

All interviews were audio-recorded and made anonymous during transcription. Each interview followed a semistructured protocol, deliberately designed to feel conversational and elicit stories. Our interview protocol included four sections:

- The individual’s upbringing;
- Their work life;
- Their family life; and
- Reflections on what it means to be “a man.”

Throughout the interviews, we probed deeper on certain topics, such as the individual’s perceptions of success and how it is achieved; relationships with parents, siblings, spouses, and children (if applicable); experiences in the workplace; and perspectives on the future.

We also observed participants in the workplace as they went about their day: attended their meetings, rode in the back seat of their cars as they dropped off their kids at school, sat with them during individual heads-down time, and followed them between floors and buildings. Our goal was to understand the influence of workplace culture on their lives, and to gain empathy by walking with them in their shoes.

Due to logistical constraints, only 12 of the 16 research participants participated in the in-office observational research.

All names and identifying information have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the research participants.

## Our sampling process

We intentionally selected a group of men who represented a range of family and marital statuses, sexual orientations, and ethnic backgrounds to ensure a diverse representation of men (figure 2).

FIGURE 2

### Study participants represent a range of attributes

Ethnicity		Sexuality	
10	White	14	Heterosexual and cisgender
4	South Asian	2	Homosexual and cisgender
1	Black	1	White
1	East Asian	1	South Asian
Family status		Level of seniority	
9	Have children	5	Are C-suite, SVP, or VP level
5	Have young child(ren)	6	Are senior director, director, senior manager, or manager level
4	Have teen/adult child(ren)	5	Are below manager level
7	Have no children		
2	Married		
5	Unmarried		

Source: Deloitte analysis.

The final 16 participants were selected through an extensive sampling and screening process at select for-profit large businesses (those with over 5,000 employees) in the Greater Toronto Area and cities of Hamilton and Waterloo. More than 120 potential participants were identified, from which a shorter list of ~75 individuals were prioritized based on our diversity requirements for job level, family and marital status, sexual identity, and ethnicity. Approximately 40 candidates were screened via 15-minute phone calls before the final 16 partici-

pants were selected based on interest, availability, and diversity criteria. We were overwhelmed by the generosity of these men; many more were willing to participate than we were able to study.

All participants were gainfully employed in professional careers, and every participant willfully agreed to participate in research about the experiences of men in the workplace. Therefore, we acknowledge that the research sample is skewed towards individuals with economic privilege and those with a predisposed interest in sharing their experiences as a man.

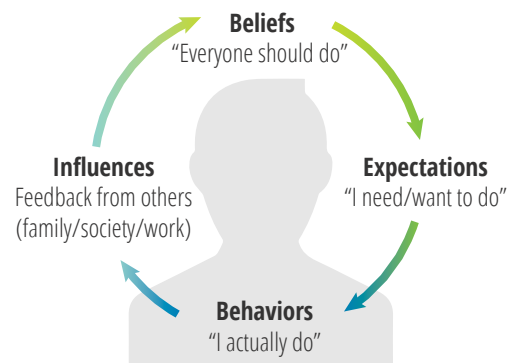
## Our analysis

Once our interviews and observations were complete, the 2,752 quotes and observations were systematically tagged based on a four-component framework (see figure 3).

- **Beliefs:** The man’s mental model of values, or what a good person should do. These are shaped by life experiences, role models, upbringing, and other influential events in a person’s life.
- **Expectations:** What the man feels he wants or needs to do. These can be seen as a desirable choice (such as biking to work to stay fit) or an

FIGURE 3

### Four-component framework



Source: Deloitte analysis.

obligation that must be met (such as having to work late to meet a deadline).

- **Behaviors:** The actions that an individual actually takes in real life. These are stated experiences of what our participants did (such as, “Last week, I had a coaching meeting with my direct report,”) or what we saw them do.
- **External influences:** Instances of feedback or reinforcement. This could be formal or informal and could be delivered through organizations

(such as from bosses, colleagues, performance reviews) or in outside-of-work interactions (such as from family and friends).

The findings and conclusions in this report are the *researchers’ interpretation* of the spoken words, intonation, body language, mannerisms, setting, and contextual observation from each interaction with an interviewee. We grounded our ability to interpret this data by reading peer-reviewed secondary literature from the domains of gender studies, organizational behavior, and sociology.

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## About the authors

**ERIC ARTHRELL** developed *The Design of Everyday Men* report concept when he was trying to figure out how he could best support his wife once their first child was born and felt there was opportunity for men to be more positive and active participants in gender equality. Arthrell has been with Deloitte since 2013 and has split his time between the Corporate Strategy Consulting practice and the Human-Centered Design and Innovation Consulting practice. Before Deloitte, he worked in commercial banking and earned a BBA from the Lazaridis School of Business and Economics at Wilfrid Laurier University and an MBA from the Schulich School of Business at York University. In March 2018, his wife and he had their first child, and he loves sharing the load with his wife while they both succeed in the workplace.

**CAROLYN LAWRENCE** is a mother to a boy and has dedicated her career to advancing gender equality in the workforce. In 2019, Lawrence was appointed as the first-ever inclusion leader for Deloitte Global after more than three years as gender diversity & inclusion leader in Deloitte Canada's Human Capital Consulting practice. She continues to support the Canadian firm's inclusion strategy, provides advice to clients, and strives to convene the market on leading thoughts to further progress. She also has 10 years of experience as president and CEO of a Canadian women's advancement business in events, media, courses, and consulting, where she was deeply committed to understanding and listening to women who aspire to leadership roles and working with clients who want to both attract and retain female talent, as well as market to influential and affluent women. Prior to that, Lawrence worked in the financial services industry, and therefore brings an appreciation for corporate culture and business mandates.

**JODI BAKER CALAMAI** is a mom of two and constant juggler, continuously learning how she can best balance it all and where to trade off. At Deloitte, Calamai is a partner and leader of the Canadian HR Transformation Financial Services practice. She has worked with some of the world's leading organizations on their HR transformation journeys, focusing on reducing structural costs while creating a world-class employee experience. A published author, Calamai has written a book on the topic of global HR transformation (Gower Publishing, 2009) focused on designing the right HR operating model. In addition to her client work, Calamai is the Canadian executive sponsor for the 2019 Deloitte *Global Human Capital Trends* report, campus recruitment champion, and active mentor and coach to our future leaders.

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