

### IUKEN The H Cons MAN

## MASCULINITY IN THE WORKPLACE 2022 RESEARCH

How do men stay relevant

in the workplace?





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### FOREWORD

We find a workplace which is at a tipping point. Many are aware of what they are expected to do, and understand the correlation with inclusion, trust, positive and role modelling masculinity. However, knowing this and actually implementing it are different things.

When planning our event and the accompanying research, we found ourselves circling around the topics of what men should be doing in the workplace. As coaches we know that the word 'should' is loaded with prescriptive advice-giving and can create negative and stressful feelings. As event organisers, we realised that it might not lead to particularly engaging content!

The breakthrough came when a member of our steering group revealed what her male boss said kept him up at night. It was, he told her: "The fear of irrelevance". Suddenly, it all clicked into place. We have a backdrop of a previously unimaginable speed of change. Of course that creates fear. This fear might more accurately be termed shame, as the thought process is often focused on the unworthiness of self: i.e. 'Am I good enough?' and 'Can I keep up?'. And we knew from Brené Brown's research that the number one response to shame is to armour up - which would prevent leaders from embracing the inclusive behaviours that are needed to manage more diverse and inclusive teams. The tension we wanted to explore was set.

The event and the research have tackled this head on, asking the bold question, 'How can men stay relevant in the workplace?'. Ultimately the stories we heard at the event are consistent with Brown's research and also our own. To be relevant, we need to be vulnerable. We need to be able to step into 'uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure' (which is Brown's best definition of vulnerability). Another is 'we have to embrace the suck'...!

Systemic change is needed and our research shows that there is still a long way to go. Leaders have the ability to step up and show the way. But it's obvious that too many male leaders are still not engaged with inclusion and diversity. Even when they are engaged, we know they often do not feel confident enough to implement change. It's clear that we need to create cultures in which traits such as empathy, kindness, collaboration and vulnerability are far more rewarded and ultimately this report is designed to help you create actionable change. Which is why, at the end, we have included insight from key business leaders on what they take from the report and how they will be using it to instigate change.



**Roxanne Hobbs** The Hobbs Consultancy

**Daniele Fiandaca** 

Token Man

Co-founder

Founder

### **OVERVIEW**

2022 saw masculinity in the workplace in the glare of the spotlight, in the public sphere at least. The start of the year saw Cressida Dick, the Metropolitan police force's first female Commissioner resign following the murder of Sarah Everard by a serving (male) officer, while an independent review found damning evidence of similar institutional sexism, racism and homophobia in the London Fire Brigade. In the armed forces, the Red Arrows faced misogyny, bullying and sexual harassment claims, while Labour's deputy leader Angela Raynor was accused in the Daily Mail of a sexualised 'Basic Instinct ploy' to detract the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson, prompting a public outcry.

On the social media landscape Elon Musk's bullish Twitter takeover and "extremely hardcore" work ethic expectations saw his recently acquired workforce leave in droves. The shadowy forces of palace patriarchy were once again the topic of Harry & Meghan, the Sussexes Netflix documentary. The year finished with Jeremy Clarkson's controversial Meghan Markle column and his comments that, "everyone his age felt the same," about the 41-year-old activist, provoking a backlash on Twitter and a record 20,000 complaints to the IPSO.

My approach would be to have empathy with people. As a coach, you always have to be there to support the person. Improving them as a player becomes secondary to a degree... if a player feels that you respect them and want to help them, they're more likely to listen to you and follow you."

- England manager, Gareth Southgate

It wasn't all bad news. Running on a counter thread alongside the headlines were highly praised examples of male leadership and inclusivity in the professional world, with England manager Gareth Southgate being praised for his compassionate style while Andy Murray spoke up about gender and pay equality. The widespread condemnation of Clarkson also showed the shift away from toxic old-fashioned stereotypes to what modern day masculinity looks and feels like in 2022. Away from the public eye, the positive trends show clear signs of continuing. For the first time, kindness was cited as a top inclusive leadership trait, while 56% of respondents said that vulnerability was a key leadership skill. Much like in the public arena, there are contradictions and contrasts. 41% of respondents said they have to show active I&D engagement, despite believing it wasn't relevant to their career, while 41% believed they would be overlooked for promotion due to diversity targets.

Looking at both the research and wider landscape, the complexities are clear. They show the 'pushpull' dynamic of navigating what can be perceived as an unsupportive or uncertain terrain. This was evidenced in our research with three key themes emerging: firstly there is still a lot of work to be done when it comes to Inclusion and Diversity, secondly, we face an ongoing leadership gap and thirdly, a focus on engaging more men and fostering a culture of allyship. **Drilling down further into the key areas, there were a number of themes and trends to highlight:** 

- Navigating the cultural and emotional paradox: the number one cause of shame in the workplace is fear of being irrelevant, while the number one cause of that fear is change
- How to hit that sweet spot the intersection of vulnerability, collaboration and curiosity
- Authenticity versus 'armouring up'
- Uniting rather than polarising female advancement in the workplace but not at the expense of men
- Positive natural masculine behaviours and true selves to be expressed and celebrated in the workplace
- How to stop cancel culture hindering progress
- Looking at the wider picture of where men are now, in terms of mental health and support
- Avoiding defeatism and how to stay positive and motivated

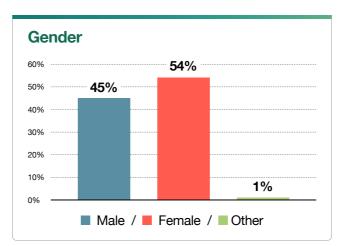
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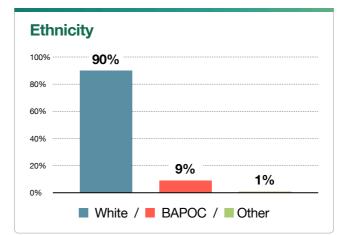
It's not about fixing men but giving them the freedom to be their true authentic selves."

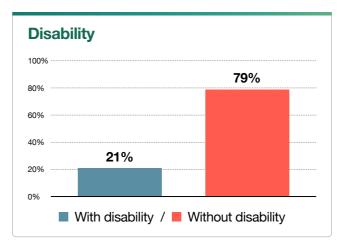
- Josh Connolly, resilience coach and leading mental health advocate

### **METHODOLOGY**

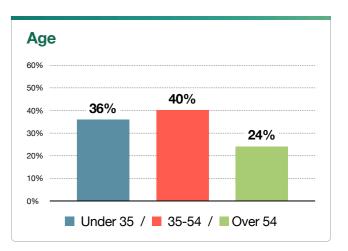
#### Who took part: 2000 responses

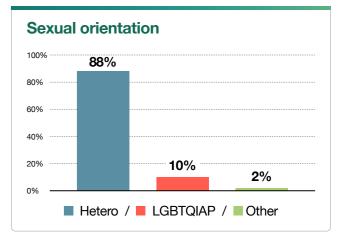


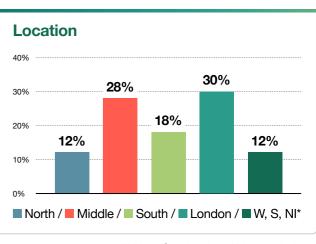




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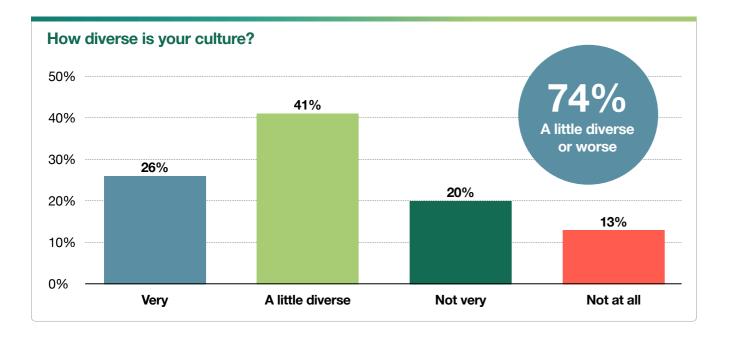




\* Wales, Scotland and Norther Ireland

#### FINDING 1:

### THERE IS STILL A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE WHEN IT COMES TO INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

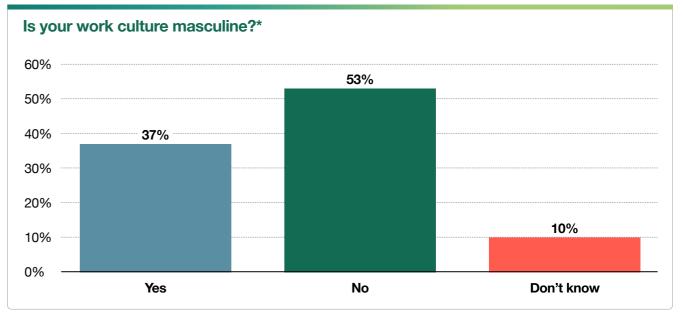


Despite the rise of I&D initiatives in the workplace, a significant number of employees don't feel they have made much difference, or see these drives as something that directly benefits them. 74% say that their culture is a "little" diverse or worse, while 13% say their culture is "not at all diverse." Just over a quarter (26%) say their culture is "very" diverse.

A deeper dive into the data showed a clear divide between the age groups. Those aged 18-34 are most likely to say that their workplace isn't diverse (42%) compared to those aged 35-54 (29%) and 55+ (30%). Those in the older age groups are more likely to be in leadership and management roles and the ones responsible for driving more I&D initiatives. The findings indicate a need for more cross section dialogue rather than a 'top down' approach as to what actually resonates; both at an individual level and within the wider culture. When it came to inclusivity, 50% of respondents said their company culture was either at the start of their journey or exclusionary, suggesting we're at a pivotal midway point to build on previous momentum towards fully inclusive work cultures.

We have very clear evidence that if you look at returns and business performance, these numbers absolutely soar for companies who are focused on diversity and tackling issues around exclusion."

- Laura Bates, conference keynote speaker and founder of The Everyday Sexism Project



\* Based on the stereotype of a masculine workplace where the following behaviours are rewarded: assertiveness, competitiveness, action-orientated and prioritising bottom-line over emotional indicators.

Peeling the layers back further revealed more interesting insights. 40% of men said they worked in a stereotypically masculine workplace, compared to 32% of women, while just over half of both men and women said their workplaces were not traditionally masculine, based on the criteria above. Those who were Other/Preferred Not To Say were the smallest group of respondents but showed the most marked split, with 56% saying their workplace was masculine compared to 38% saying it was not.

The higher proportion of men who said they worked in a masculine culture compared to women also threw up an interesting question about how men perceive themselves, compared to how they are perceived by others. Interestingly, the notion of a stereotypical masculine workplace resonated strongest with those aged 18-35 compared with the older groups, with 42% in agreement. This contrasted with 35% of 35-54 and 25% over 55+.

This trend echoed findings from previous reports: in 2020 under-35 men seemed particularly susceptible to the pressures of a pandemic workplace, with nearly half (49%) more inclined to subscribe to more

masculine stereotypes, including working longer hours and sacrificing family life in order to gain success. Nearly 40% also reported their workplace becoming more exclusionary in that time. Two years on and with a competitive job market, higher levels of work instability and record levels of UK workers suffering burnout, it shows the dial has not moved as far as we hoped and there remains work to be done.

As well as the self-pressure younger males may feel they need to put on themselves, there is a sense of a wider ambiguity and discomfort from men themselves about the traditional roles they've always played. As one conference attendee said about being the main breadwinner: "I am in the provider role and I recognise that my wife isn't happy about it, but it's still the situation that you find yourself in. There's not an easy solution."

#### FINDING 2:

### AN ON-GOING INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP GAP

Traditional masculine traits are still dominant in the workplace although there is a positive move towards more inclusive leadership traits. Flexibility scored highly as a valued leadership trait, but also showed one of the biggest generational gaps, (20% of under 35s in agreement compared to 37% of 35-54 and 43% of 55+). This reflects the statistical trend that those who are older are more likely to have children

or caring responsibilities and the greater demand for flexible working hours. For the first time kindness was cited as a key leadership skill that should be rewarded (position four out of ten), although it was slightly swayed towards female respondents (38%) compared to males (26%). The 55+ age group rated kindness most highly (37%) followed by 35-54 (30%) and the under 35s (23%).

#### Leadership Skills

Most rewarded	Should be rewarded
1. Confident	1. Flexible
2. Flexible	2. Empathetic
3. Result focused	3. Collaborative
4. Collaborative	4. Kind
5. Creative	5. Creative
6. Ambitious	6. Confident
7. Strategic	7. Results focused
8. Action orientated	8. Strategic
9. Competitive	9. Action orientated
10. Assertive	10. Culturally intelligent

For the first time empathy appeared on the list, straight in at number two. Again, this rated highest in the two older age groups, indicating a possible need for more visible role modelling in the workplace by leaders, as well as looking at how best to set up a culture that enables softer skills to be valued, rewarded and encouraged alongside more traditional leadership skills. Encouragingly, collaboration scored highly amongst all respondents as a valued leadership skill, indicating a wider inclusive mindset that prioritised working together to find solutions.



Vulnerability is the holy grail for the workplace in creating environments that are authentic and inclusive."

- Daniele Fiandaca, Token Man

#### The V word

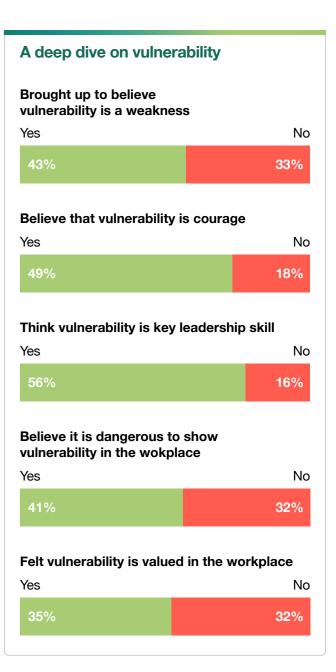
One of the biggest gaps about where we are and where we want to be was vulnerability. While over half of respondents (56%) think vulnerability is a key leadership skill, 41% believe it is dangerous to show vulnerability in the workplace. Just 4% of those aged 35 and over believe that vulnerability is currently rewarded as a key leadership skill, compared to 10% of the under 35s. As again most leaders and managers will fall into the older age groups, there is a potential huge discrepancy in what people internally believe, compared to how it is being actively being played out or demonstrated in the workplace. This shows a definite need to close the 'vulnerability gap.'

People shy away from what they don't know. How we act has an effect on the people around us."

- Jack Parsons, CEO at Youth Group on the need for positive role models in the workplace for young men

One barrier that could be holding back vulnerability in the workplace is a fear of being judged for saying or doing the 'wrong' thing. Several male attendees acknowledged their knowledge gaps but felt they were unable or embarrassed to express themselves, with one respondent saying: "I thought I was doing well on this journey, it's been quite confronting to realise how little I know."

This was echoed by speaker and host of The Vulnerable Man podcast Christopher Veal, who said: "The barriers to talking about vulnerability are shame – others perception, judgement and your own self esteem." Christopher talked about the need for accountability, alongside "room for people to find their way." Overcoming the trope that men can't be masculine and express power skills such as vulnerability and empathy was also vital, as was looking at how cancel culture exacerbates the problem and increases disconnection. "People will change... but they need to interact with the person in front of them right now."



#### Trust - the missing link?

In another deep dive, respondents were asked if their workplace had trained them to understand the link between vulnerability and trust and connection. 37% of respondents disagreed, compared to 33% who did agree they had been trained to understand the link between vulnerability and trust and connection. Figures were similar across the sexes, although 37% of men agreed they had been trained, compared to 29% of their female colleagues and 16% of Other/prefer not to say.

This indicates a need for more discussion and fear dismantling around vulnerability, and how to authentically bring people along on the journey. Encouragingly, the evidence is clear. Alongside the pioneering methods of shame and vulnerability researcher Brene Brown, new research looking at vulnerability and stress has found that vulnerability is associated with higher levels of emotional expression and social support.

People can't be vulnerable in the workplace unless they have that psychological safety and they trust the people around them. However, we can't create trust without there being a degree of vulnerability. If we're waiting for trust before being vulnerable, we are going to be waiting a long time! Put simply, leaders need to show the way."

- Roxanne Hobbs, The Hobbs Consultancy

#### The perception gap

People who 'armour up' and act differently for work get rewarded in my workplace. Of course armouring up may 'keep us safe' but it also will get in the way of creativity, innovation and meaningful connection with those around us.

Agree	Disagree
39%	28%

#### The shame game

There was also a feeling of shame and frustration that some feel now comes with success and privilege, and, as a traditional straight, white, middle class male, guilt for having the 'good things'. One conference attendee acknowledged the difficulty of how to "square the circle" but asked: "If the system has served you well until now, how are you incentivised to change things?"

An increasing feeling of outsider-ship also came with a conviction about men still having value in the workplace. As leaders who were "still holding the wheel," there was uncertainty about how to address that and make everyone feel relevant, rather than creating more division and isolation.

The barriers to talking about vulnerability are shame: [which are] others perception, judgement and your own self esteem."

- Christopher Veal, host of The Vulnerable Man podcast

When you show people vulnerability, the impact is courage and connection."

- Christopher Veal, host of The Vulnerable Man podcast

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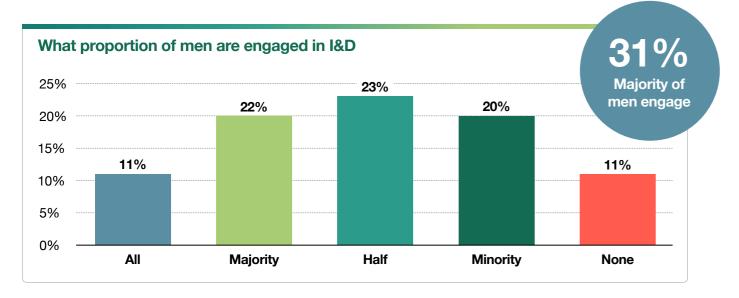
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The traditional provider role is changing; confusion, not knowing what to do and a feeling of being threatened are a recipe for toxic masculinity. If you don't have a clear purpose, or you feel invisible, or you're doing it alone... you risk the fear of shame and ridicule. [But] It's everybody's world and we've all got a part in it. Men have a lot to gain."

- Steve Hobbs, The Hobbs Consultancy

#### FINDING 3:

### A FOCUS NEEDED TO ENGAGE MORE MEN AND FOSTER A CULTURE OF ALLYSHIP



When it comes to changing belief systems and building real change in the workplace, more needs to be done. Overall just 31% of men are 'over the fence' when it comes to being fully engaged in I&D initiatives. This means that over half (54%) are still not engaged or not at all engaged with any form of I&D in their workplace. Rather than solely focusing on the robustness and quality of current I&D initiatives, it would be useful to focus on a perceived 'fear factor' that I&D has a negative impact on men in the workplace. 35% still feel less valued because of diversity initiatives v 37%, while 41% believe they will be looked over for promotion due to diversity targets compared to those who believe they won't (30%).

Nearly half (44%) of male respondents believe they will struggle for another role due to their demographic profile while significantly, double the amount feel they had to show active engagement in I&D despite it 'not being relevant to career (41% compared to 20% who believe I&D is relevant to their career). These figures show there is still a large amount of work to be done on the nature of what I&D initiatives actually look and feel like to individual participants. This is alongside a significant education piece addressing the fear factor around I&D and how it benefits everyone, rather than advancing one group of people at the expense of another. "We need to avoid an 'us versus them' situation," said conference keynote speaker Laura Bates. "Don't frame women's issues at men's expense, it can be very polarising."

Gender equity is in everyone's interest. Rigid gender stereotypes about our roles at home and the workplace... can have a devastating effect on men as well. This isn't just a moral case or undermining men's own needs and outcomes. It's about including people of all genders in the workplace that will benefit all of us, both at a micro and macro level."

- Laura Bates, The Everyday Sexism Project More emphasis is needed on reframing change as a good thing and ensuring men still feel relevant and part of the conversation, including as a leader recognising problems from the acceleration of online working over the past few years, as well as recognising the legacy of Covid and ensuring more mental health support for men. Laura Bates: "We know from very clear research that men are dramatically less likely to experience support when they have a mental health crisis."

Going to the pub with the guys was where the promotions happened.... we don't want to do it again and exclude men to the margins and drive them underground ... it's a dangerous place to be. It's better to be connected to culture, otherwise there is a danger of becoming irreverent."

- Nana Bempah, founder of Pocc

#### **Building allyship**

While the solutions might not be clear yet, the signs are there that the workforce has moved more towards a culture of collaboration and 'figuring it out' together. 52% of respondents believed it is important to have a manager who is an ally (versus 9% who disagree), while nearly half (47%) believe it's important their company fosters a culture of allyship.

If an employee believes their company openly shares the challenges facing it, they're about 10 times more likely to recommend it as a great employer."

- Leadership IQ survey of over 27,000 employees

The impact of I&D Initiatives			
Male employees feel less valued because of diversity initiatives			
Male	Female		
43%	33%		
Male employees feel they will be looked over for promotion due to diversity targets			
Male	Female		
49%	18%		
Male employees will struggle for another role due to demographic profiles			
Male	Female		
56%	16%		
Male employees feel they had to show active engagement in I&D despite it not being relevant to career			
Male	Female		
41%	32%		

### CONCLUSION

As much of the data shows, we are at a crucial tipping point, with the potential to bring many more people along, rather than I&D paradoxically being seen as something for a select few that leaves others behind. Keeping the momentum going is pivotal to stay motivated and optimistic about how far we have come, alongside maintaining a spirit of curiosity and stoic vulnerability. This involves being "allowed to grow together," in the words of Laura Bates.

Rather than feeling defeated or blaming it on biased or ineffectual systems, there is a shift towards all moving forward as individuals with a collective purpose, as well as developing a deeper understanding of the complex emotional, social and gender geography at play. "Men can play an enormous role simply in starting these conversations," states Laura Bates. "There are positive outcomes for everyone."

### **AFTERWORD**

"This report is super insightful and has really made me reflect on our I&D journey so far. How can we expect successful males to want to change the status quo on masculine behaviours in their organisation when those behaviours have supported their career progression and success so far? The total light-bulb moment for me: why are we not supporting allyship and bringing male and females together to discuss, debate and action plan breaking down the barriers to encouraging vulnerability and collaboration? I'd love to use the report's findings to explore learning opportunities around the link between vulnerability, trust and connection. And of course, making sure I have a healthy mix of male and females working together in our I&D networks, taskforces and team meetings!"

- Julie Gallagher, HR Director at Merlin Entertainments Group

"The fact that so many men are still not engaged with any form of I&D in their workplace really stood out for me. We absolutely know that we can't achieve equality without everyone's involvement so this seems like a huge obstacle. It's clear that more emphasis is needed on reframing change as a good thing and ensuring men feel part of the conversation and while we had always aimed to engage everyone in the journey to be more inclusive at Colt, what this research has done is help us to be more intentional in engaging male colleagues. We have spoken about allyship a lot but are now taking further steps to really define what that looks like."

- Rachel Collins, Head of Inclusion & Diversity at Colt Technology Services

"There is a lot of depressing reporting about how men show up in the work place, however this research inspired me because it illustrates that men do want to understand how they can lean into their emotions and vulnerability and be more present and relevant. This research will allow us to have conversations and develop better ways of expressing ourselves and support psychological safety for everyone."

- Mary Fitzpatrick, Global Head of Diversity & Inclusion at Rolls Royce "It's clear in the report that people want and need vulnerability in their leaders (56% of people think it's a key leadership skill), but there's a block (41% believe it would be dangerous to show vulnerability in the workplace). It's noted in the report that without vulnerability there's no trust – you can go further than that and say that without those you can forget about creativity and innovation. So for me that gives a focus for action: helping our people to gain a deeper understanding of what we mean when we say vulnerability, how to unlock it in a way that feels safe, and why it's crucially importance in working relationships and team dynamics."

#### - Phil Bartlett, President at CDM London

- "Listening to Laura Bates [at the event] made me realise how little thought I'd given to the impact of gender inequality on men. I'd always assumed men benefitted from the patriarchy (or at least it was neutral), but that's so far from reality. This realisation has given me huge confidence that we can get more men engaged in the subject. So many men still view gender inequality as women's battle to fight (and 45% of male employees feeling LESS valued because of I&D). All you need to do is look at how many men are in gender affinity groups in your workplace to see this in practice. We must change the narrative and get more men involved."
- Greg Randall, European Head of Customer Supply and Service at Innocent

### REFERENCES

The risk of ignoring employe feedback:

www.leadershipiq.com/blogs/leadershipiq/study-the-risks-of-ignoring-employee-feedback

#### **Vulnerability studies:**

Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms The Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead by Brene Brown

The power of vulnerability | Brené Brown | TEDxHouston

journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/jcsp/aop/article-10.1123-jcsp.2021-0084/article-10.1123-jcsp.2021-0084.xml

journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0265407519853047

#### **Resources for Men**

#### **Books:**

- 1. Fix the system not the Women by Laura Bates
- 2. For the Love of Men by Liz Plank
- 3. How to raise a Boy by Michael C. Reichert
- 4. How not to be wrong: the art of changing your mind by **James O'Brien**
- 5. Of Boys and Men by Richard R. Reeves
- 6. The Descent of Man by **Grayson Perry**
- 7. The Whole Man by Christopher Veal
- 8. Who Stole my Spear? by Tim Samuels
- 9. Work like a Woman by Mary Portas
- 10. You are not the man you are supposed to be by **Martin Robinson**

#### **Content:**

- 1. The Book of Man thebookofman.com/
- Masculinity in the Workplace e-learning module - <u>thehobbsconsultancy.com/product/</u> <u>masculinity-in-the-workplace</u> -e-learning-module/

#### **Events**

1. Uncommon Man www.uncommonman.co.uk/

#### **Helplines:**

- 1. Calm www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help/
- 2. Samaritans www.samaritans.org/

#### Men's Circles:

- 1. Andy's Man Club evryman.com/
- 2. Evryman evryman.com/
- 3. MenSpeak mensgroups.co.uk

#### **Podcasts:**

- Man-down: the Anti man-up movement podcasts.apple.com/za/podcast/man-downthe-anti-man-up-movement/id1513504795
- 2. Time-talk with Alex Holmes podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/time-totalk-with-alex-holmes/id1437894589

#### **Resources for fathers:**

- 1. Being Dads www.beingdads.com/
- 2. Daddilife www.daddilife.com/

#### Therapy:

- 1. Self Space heselfspace.com/
- 2. Mind <u>www.mind.org.uk/information-support/</u> <u>drugs-and-treatments/talking-therapy-and-</u> <u>counselling/how-to-find-a-therapist/</u>

## **TOKEN MAN**

Token Man was launched in 2014 with the aim of engaging men in the gender equity discussion and giving them a greater empathy for the barriers that women and other historically marginalised groups face in the workplace.

Our goal is ultimately to inspire those men to do the work to become agents of change, creating workplaces that are truly inclusive, equitable and diverse. We do this through coaching, consultancy, events, research, training and thought leadership. Find out more at tokenman.org.



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The Hobbs Consultancy are passionate about putting the humanity into the workplace. We are a team of coaches, facilitators and content creators who are all passionate about transforming business through inclusion.

We support businesses in creating a culture in which people feel able to show up as themselves, where diversity of thought is valued and where people are cherished. We recognise that creating diverse and inclusive organisations is not necessarily an easy path and we help businesses to navigate this complexity, learning the skills required for everyone to be able to step into their inclusive leadership.



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### **MASCULINITY IN THE WORKPLACE 2022 RESEARCH**

#### How do men stay relevant in the workplace?

#### **GET IN TOUCH**

If you would like to find out more about this report or would like support for your organisation, please get in touch:

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