

2020 STATE OF SALES SUMMARY

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THE
OTHER
SIDE
OF
SALES

ABOUT

In early 2019, when [The Other Side of Sales](#) was founded, [Kasey](#) and [Ashleigh](#) looked for data on the experiences of sales professionals so the podcast could fill gaps in the market. And couldn't find anything. Nothing.

Walking around most sales floors, it's clear: this is a white, cisgendered, male-dominated field; but, the world is changing.

Thanks to the support of our sponsors, *The State of Sales* collected demographic information, stories, and hard data around the frequency of discrimination and harassment in sales. *The State of Sales Survey* was open from February to July 2020 and received over 500 responses.

While not a scientific study, we hope this is the first step toward progress by collecting data to understand reality.

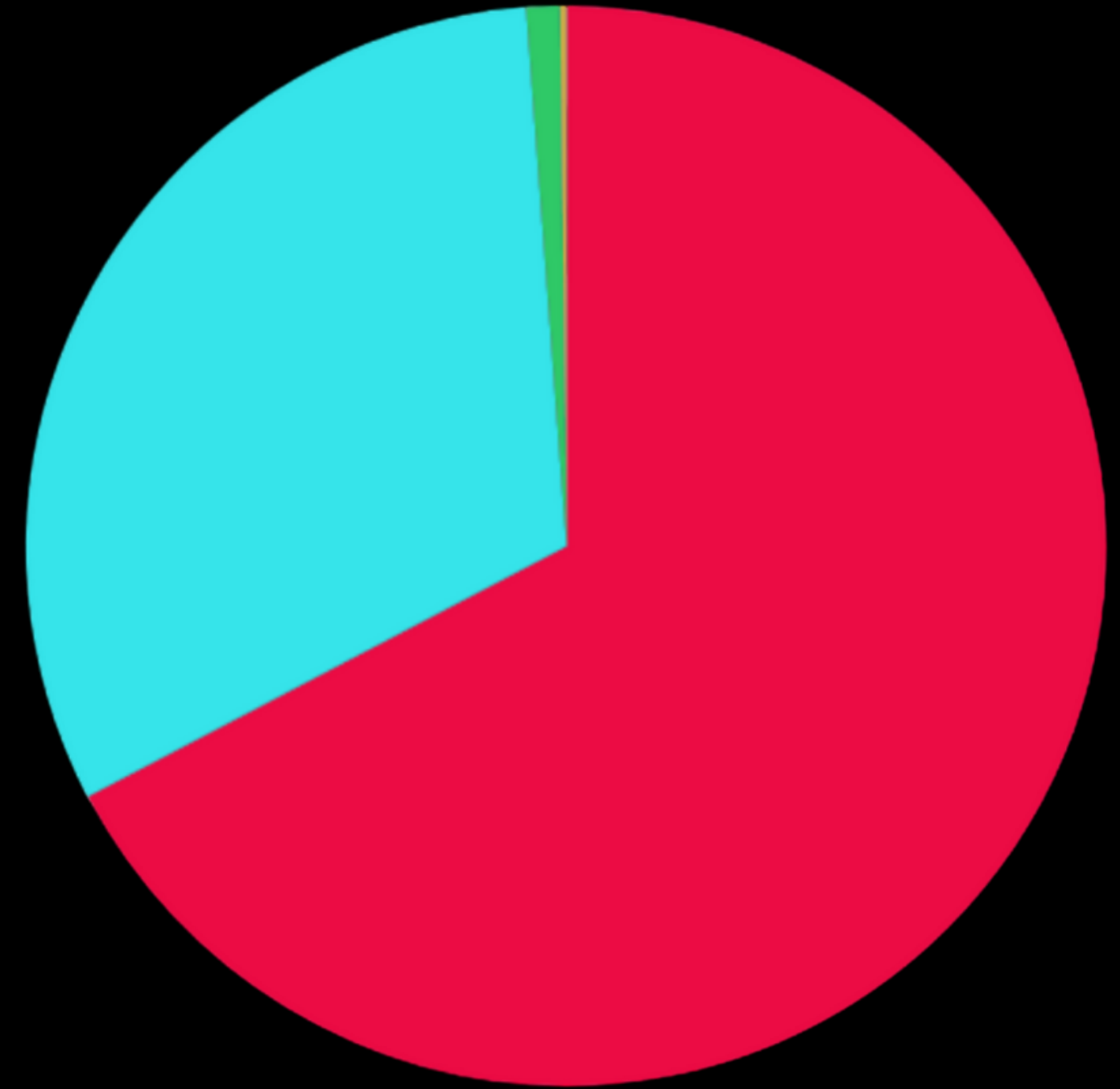


DEMOGRAPHICS OF SALES PROFESSIONALS

GENERAL

Women represent 31.6% of total respondents to the survey. According to publicly available information on LinkedIn, women represent 35% of sales professionals; that number drops to 25% when looking at director titles and above. So on the whole, it appears that:

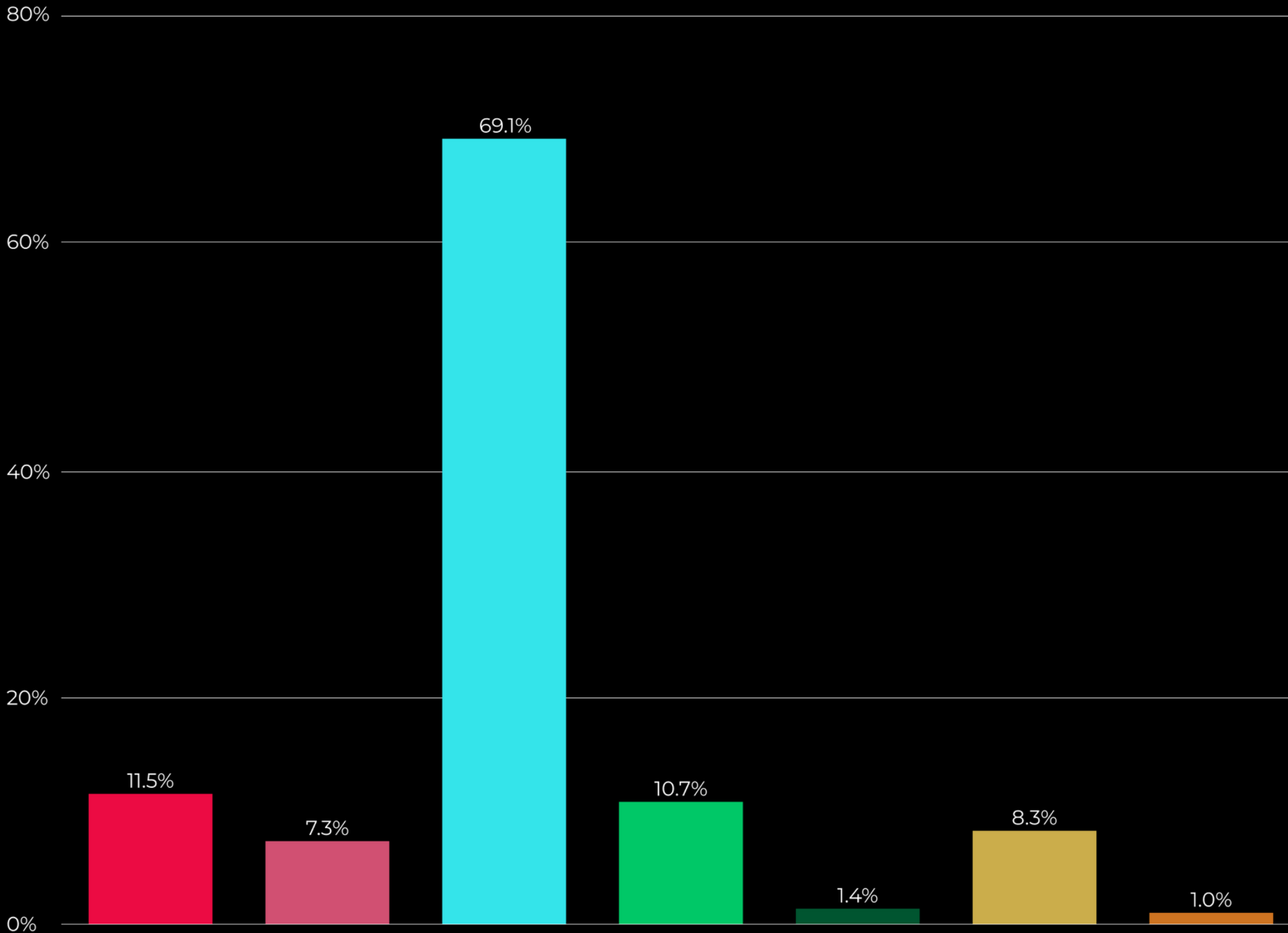
- The survey received a representative cohort of respondents who identify as female if we use LinkedIn members as a target population.
- The number of women in sales is still well below the percentage of women in the general population of the United States, which sits at 49%.



●	Man	67.2%
●	Woman	31.6%
●	Non-Binary	1%
●	Transgender	0.2%

RACE

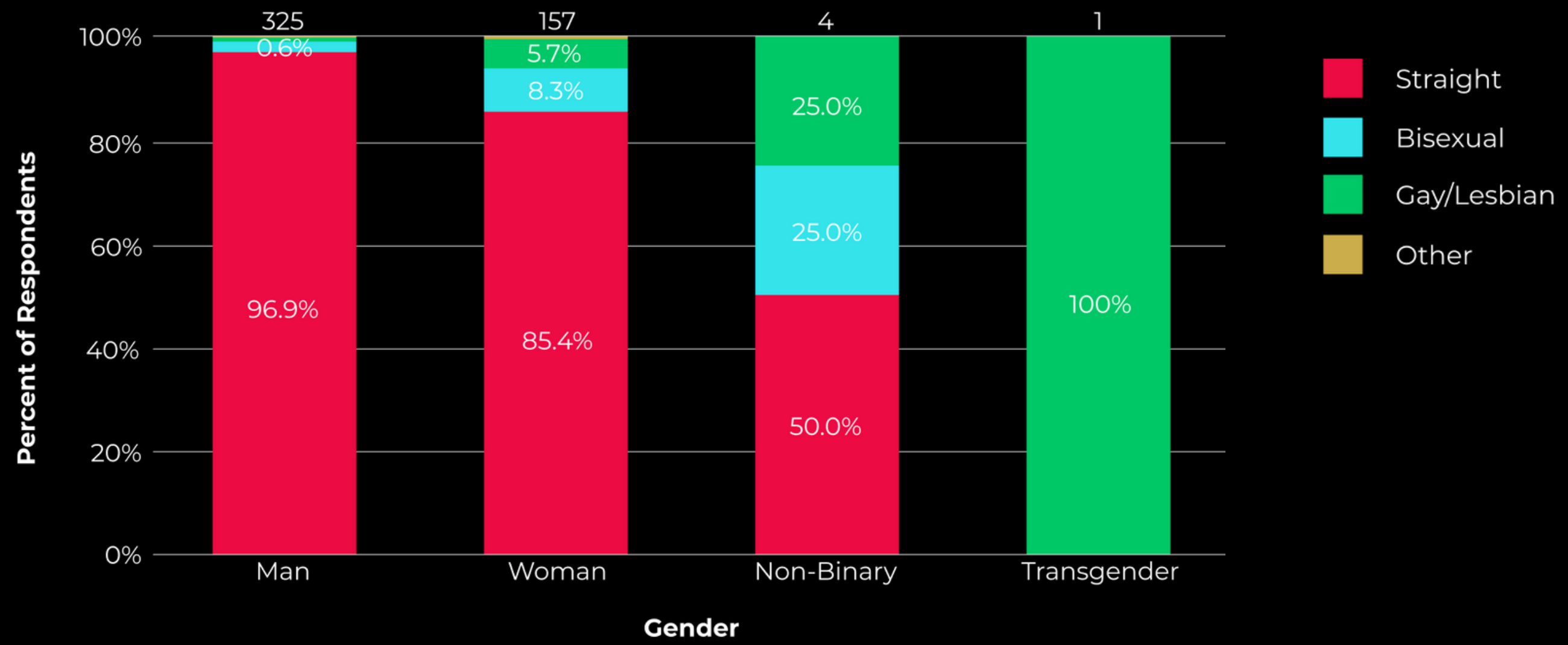
In general, all non-caucasian races are significantly underrepresented in survey respondents and therefore likely underrepresented in sales teams.



- Asian
- Black/African-American
- Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Native Hawaiian
- Other
- Pacific Islander

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

GENDER BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION



According to a [2017 Gallup Poll](#), 4.5% of Americans identify as LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer), with 5.1% of women and 3.9% of men identifying as LGBTQ. Interestingly, total LGBTQ representation in our study was above the national average (8.4% of survey respondents versus 4.5% of the US population).

Surprisingly, 14.5% of respondents who identified themselves as women also identified as LGBTQ - nearly 3 times the national average!

RELATIONSHIP STATUS

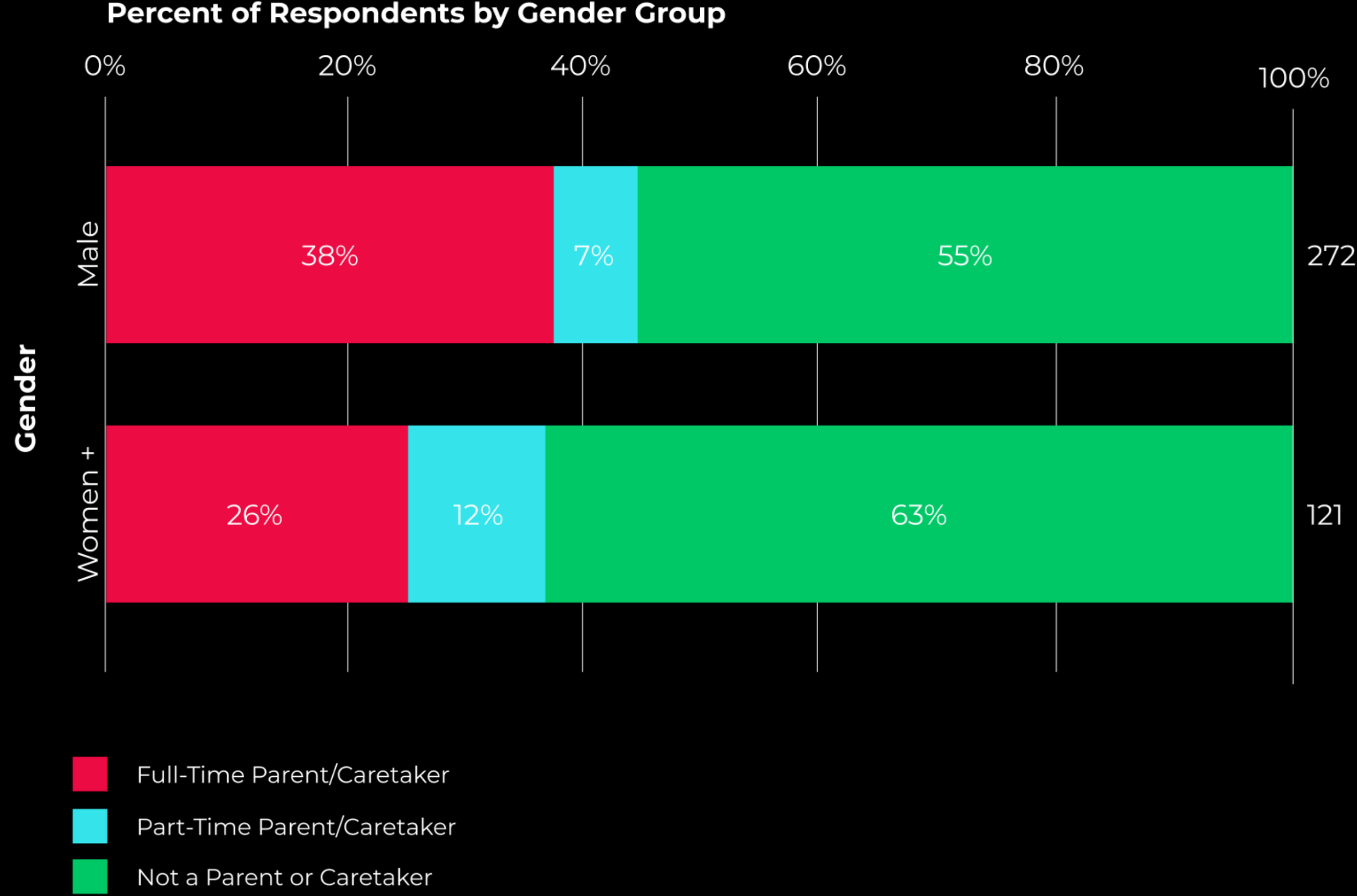
Given the stereotype of sales professionals as being a bunch of “bros” who enjoy a “work hard, play hard” lifestyle (see John Barrows' [“We Need to Talk”](#) webinar, [this article in Inc. magazine](#) and [this one in Business Insider](#)), it's interesting to see that 64.2% of respondents are either married or in a long-term relationship. We're unable to draw any conclusions from this data point at this time but will continue to monitor across genders, age groups, and races.



● Married	46.2%
● Not Married	35.6%
● Long-Term Relationship	18.2%

PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS BY GENDER

PARENT/ CARETAKER STATUS



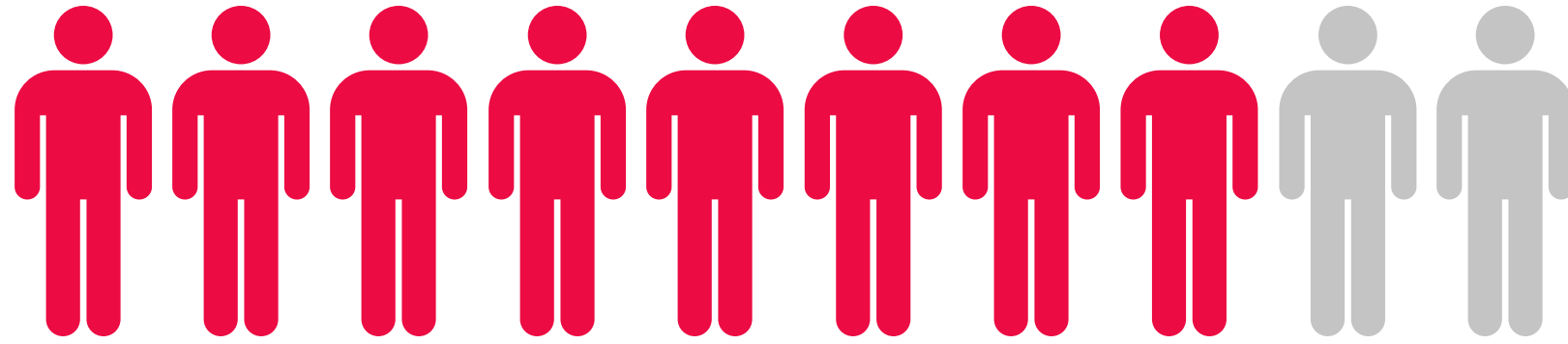
Men reported being a full-time parent or caretaker at a higher rate than women; interestingly, women reported being a part-time caretaker at a higher rate than men. In the future, more attention will be given to understanding this so companies can support all sales pros who are building families or caring for loved ones.

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT IN SALES

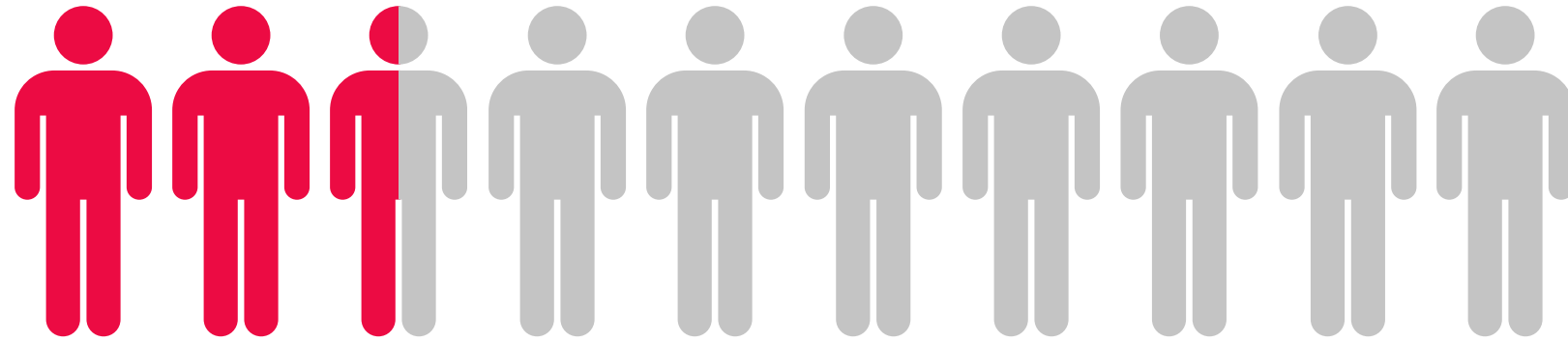
84%

OF SALES PROFESSIONALS HAVE WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION

8 OUT OF 10
BLACK RESPONDENTS
HAVE EXPERIENCED
RACIAL
DISCRIMINATION.



2.5 OUT OF 10
OTHER MINORITY GROUP
RESPONDENTS HAVE
EXPERIENCED RACIAL
DISCRIMINATION.



81% OF BLACK SALES
PROS EXPERIENCE
DISCRIMINATION - A RATE
3X HIGHER THAN ALL
OTHER MINORITY GROUPS

"I have had countless people underestimate my skills and abilities due to my race. I've heard my director of sales say "I'm glad you're so punctual. Black people are never on time." I also have had several white women in my office make comments that compare me to a predator, making me very uncomfortable."

"I've been harassed sexually as a female and I've been given poor opportunities because I'm a black woman - lowest on the totem pole."

"I am black woman in sales that often is the only black person in the room besides the janitor thus I experience the Bretts & Karens of tech saying all kinds of inappropriate things since "I'm not like those other ones" (direct quote from a Sales Manager). I really only feel comfortable and safe in my own skin when I am around other people of color at work."

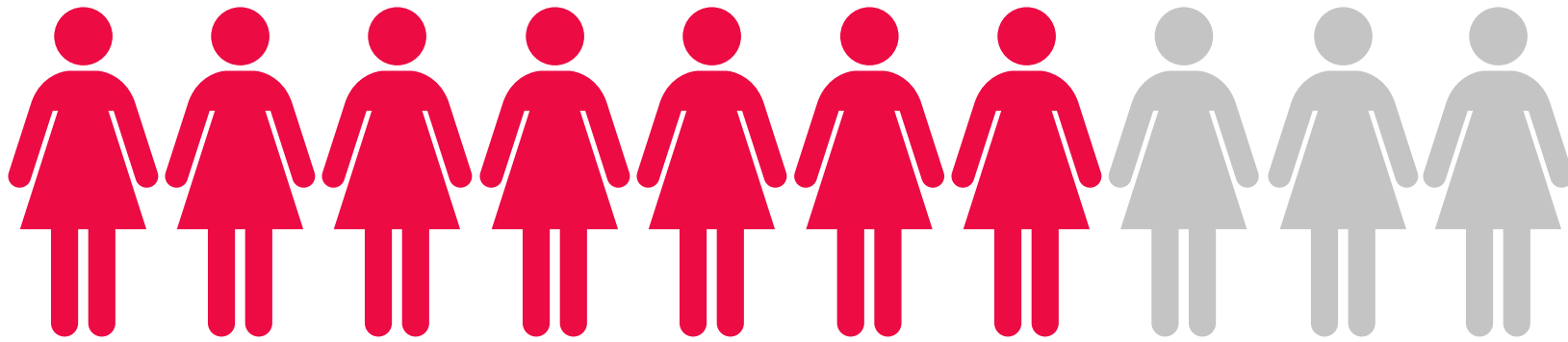
"I remember I was taking the elevator from the office and this white lady was standing next to me and she looked at me and said please don't rob me."

"My old COO at one time mentioned that Caucasian college graduates sell more because they have that "look" that makes people want to buy from them."

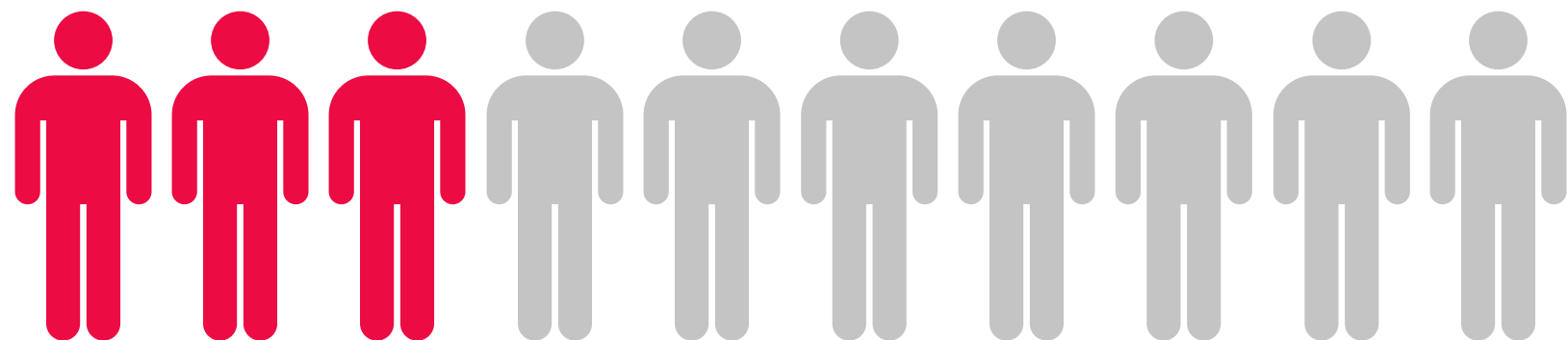
69%

OF WOMEN EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION

**7 OUT OF 10
WOMEN AND OTHER
GENDER MINORITIES
HAVE EXPERIENCED
DISCRIMINATION.**



**3 OUT OF 10
MEN HAVE
EXPERIENCED
DISCRIMINATION.**

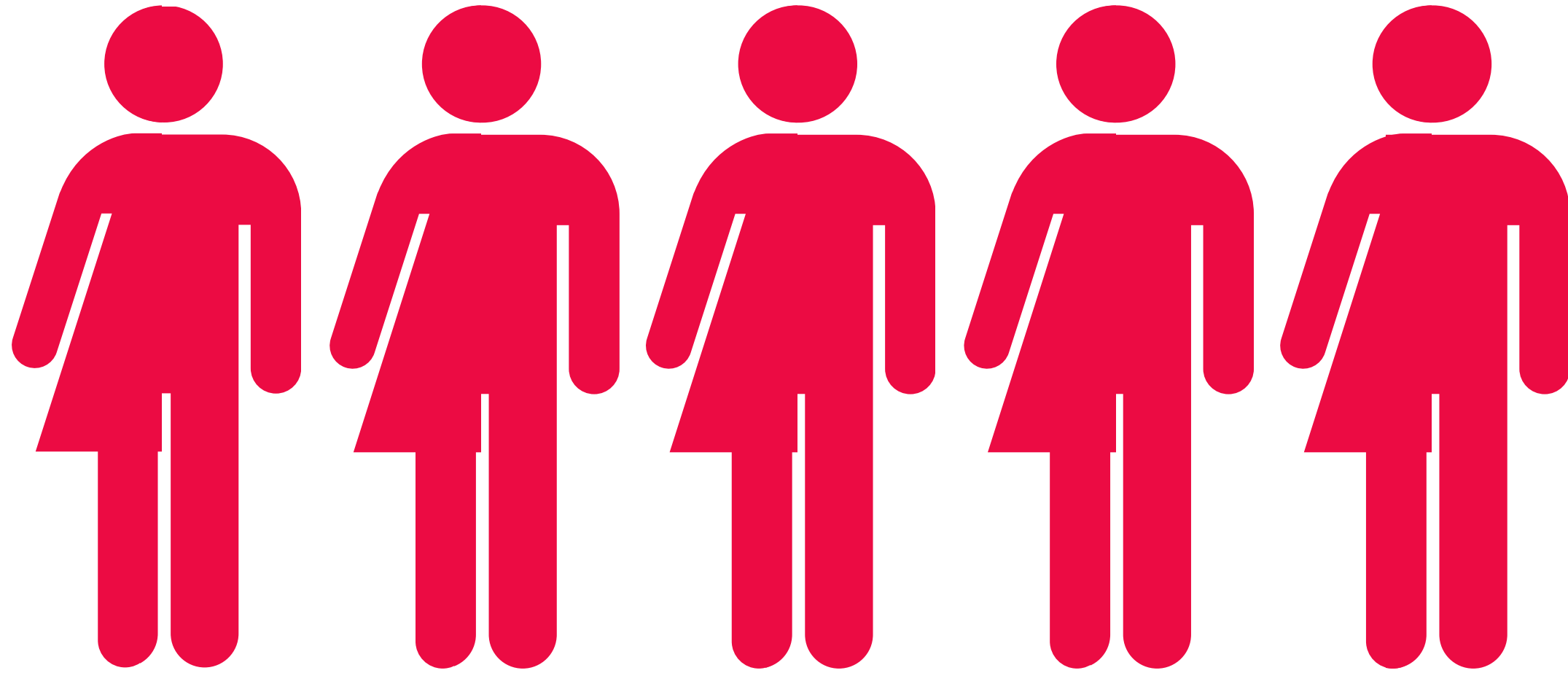


“Male reps would attribute my sales success to having a female voice and insinuate that I was flirting with prospects. [I would] ask reps on my team why they aren’t reaching their KPIs, one responded by asking if I was just hormonal (I was pregnant). When a female candidate would come interview, the men in the office would purposefully walk by her and come back to report her hotness rating to the rest of the men.”

“I’ve seen many women who are strong leaders with huge potential, leave a company because they have hit their ceiling. They feel as though they cannot rise any higher as they are not being valued or heard. I’ve been in situations where the mid-level leadership is primarily female to give the ‘face of female leadership’ when in reality, all the decisions were made by the exclusively male Executive Team.”

“Once, I was applying for a job over the phone (before computers). The interviewer asked me if I was calling about a job for my husband, and I said that no, I was calling for myself. We then got disconnected. I called back, and said I was sorry, but it appears we were disconnected. He then said, ‘I hung up on purpose. We don’t hire women here.’ He then hung up on me again.”

“Primarily not being taken seriously or ignored by male/white colleagues, not getting promotions I deserved, accused of sleeping with my boss when I was successful, as if my success were not a result of my hard work.”

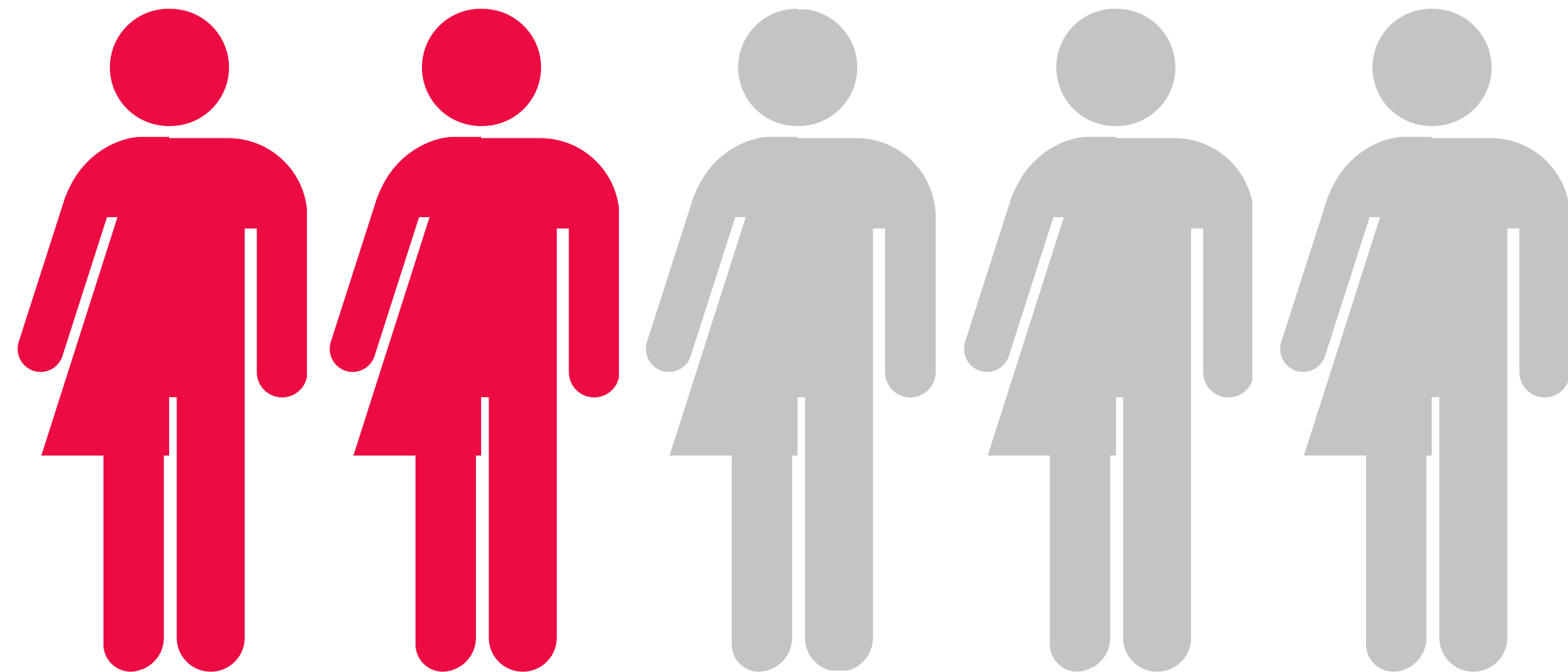


72% OF LGBTQ+ EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION

"I interviewed for a startup and was told I wasn't technical enough...I've had men open doors for women I was walking with then step in front of me and let the door shut behind them. When I came out, we shared rooms at a sales kickoff event. I shared with another woman. The rumors were ridiculous."

"Direct Area Manager didn't care for my sexual orientation and made it obvious to other peers in conversation. Never to me personally until a week before I was "let go"."

"I had a coworker gossip to new team members about how I gamed the system and cheated to reach my sales targets. I was harassed verbally by members of the team and excluded from outside of work gatherings. On a second occasion, I had the COO of the company kiss me on the cheek while he was drunk at a work party. The same COO made comments about my skin color and orientation (transgender) constantly."



**OTHER
STATISTICS
OF NOTE**

30% OF LATINO RESPONDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

BLACK WOMEN WERE THE MOST LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE GENDER DISCRIMINATION

90% OF LGBTQ MEN REPORTED WITNESSING DISCRIMINATION OR HARASSMENT - THE MOST OF ANY GENDER OR RACIAL GROUP

THE AWARENESS GAP

Sales as a community has an awareness problem. Whites are the majority race who say discrimination never or rarely happens.

The rate of *experiencing* is approximately **DOUBLE** the rate of *witnessing* discrimination or harassment. We call this the awareness gap.

This awareness gap is one of the least discussed obstacles standing in the way of real progress - until we as a community can close it through care for each other, robust reporting, and response protocols, progress will be slow.

DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED



71% OF THE RESPONDENTS WHO SAY DISCRIMINATION NEVER OR RARELY HAPPENS ARE CAUCASIAN.

RESPONDENTS BELONGING TO **AT LEAST ONE MARGINALIZED GROUP** (ACROSS GENDER, RACE, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION) ARE ALMOST **3 TIMES** MORE LIKELY TO HAVE PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION THAN RESPONDENTS BELONGING TO NOT MARGINALIZED OR MINORITY CLASSES.

STORIES

"I won a sales contest at a tier 1 fortune 100 CPG org. The prize was a snowboard - I had several people (including leadership) laugh at me and were saying do your people even snowboard. What are you going to do with that? It's a small example, but I think about it often. It's sucks when these types of things are used to characterize what people can and can't do."

"I was made fun of for my Mexican heritage, and even called 'The Mexican' once by my boss in front of a client. I didn't feel I could do much about the situation, but it was definitely uncomfortable and tarnished my relationship with this person."

"I have had countless people underestimate my skills and abilities do to my race. I've heard my director of sales say 'I'm glad you're so punctual Black people are never on time.' I also have had several white women in my office make comments that compare me to a predator, making me very uncomfortable."

"As a female I have experienced and seen gender discrimination over time. It shows up with men treating women as assistants instead of peers, refusing to talk directly to women in a meeting, calling women 'emotional' when they are actually passionate, and of course the pay disparity. Sexual harassment is also still an issue. I once had a male client text me asking for pictures and to meet him at a bar late night (after our client dinner that just ended)."

"When my oldest daughter was 2 years old I got a call from a large Tier 1 tech company asking if I would be interested in what I thought would be my dream job. I was living in San Jose and the office was in San Francisco so I asked the recruiter if I could work from home 2 days a week because I am a mom and the commute to the city was 3 hours a day. I also told her that I would work harder than anyone on the team and I was willing to sacrifice some family time but needed them to meet me halfway. The recruiter's response was 'we don't allow work from home and there are a hundred people in line for this job if you don't want it.' From that moment on I knew that being a working mom in the very competitive Silicon Valley was going to be difficult."

"A former manager tried to extort my bra and panty size from a friend/colleague. Another former manager made fun of plus size clothing. I've been treated differently than male colleagues (some good, some bad). I was warned about sharing any familiarity or industry experience with colleagues because my young age meant they wouldn't take me seriously (even after 10 years)."

"I call this the 'askhole' syndrome. Often, I am touted as the smartest, most valuable person in the room, until I give an opinion. Then, my thoughts are dismissed, I fight to have them heard, and then they are regurgitated to me by male colleagues while I receive a verbal pat on the head. Luckily, at age 41, I rarely get the 'that's cute, little girl' tone of voice to accompany it, but it still happens occasionally - and it happened daily up until I turned about 35. In addition, as a single mom, I have been penalized over and over for choosing to take care of my children before taking care of work - especially as I tend to work in male dominated fields."

"I have been at companies where despite being the number one performer on the team for both revenue and sourced opportunities at the time I was told I seemed, 'Checked out' and asked if I was interviewing in the middle of the day when I worked quite literally next to my manager that day for hours. One of the white member of my team who was one of the lowest performers was promoted. I've been at jobs where I have more direct reports, responsibilities, quota attainment, than that of any Director or VP at the company (all white males) yet I make less and am always looked to to solve the problems of those same white individuals. Despite the fact that they have on average 54% quota attainment and I have not had less than 100 percent quarter over quarter. I make less money. I have a lower title. There is no one who looks like me in leadership past me."

"Most frequently, prospective customers making racist comments on the phone. I sound white on the phone, so people speaking disparagingly about other races (people who should go back where they came from, black people protesting in the US that need to shut up and be grateful, etc) has really impacted my ability to feel comfortable stepping onto video calls. These are B2B encounters, so that means I'm speaking to people who I could be working for, but fortunately wasn't. It means that there is a lurking sense that I could be experiencing racist discrimination from people who would never make their motives/biases known (they might not even know that they have those biases themselves). That's intimidating and frustrating. Being pretty devastated some days about a recent extrajudicial killing of a black person in the US and being treated pretty insensitively about it by management and peers ('get over it man, get back on the phones'). I was a quota achieving rep at the time, so dismissing it as normal underperformance isn't a reasonable rationalization. Also, trying to have conversations about inappropriate Halloween costumes (wearing cultures as costumes) was one of the first times I tried to deal with an issue of cross-cultural respect on a salesfloor (especially with other people of color who don't represent those cultures but think 'it's fine and I can't be discriminating because I'm a person of color') was genuinely one of the more frustrating moments of trying to navigate DEI as a rep in the workplace with nowhere else to turn, because my managers maintained it wasn't a problem."

"I was sexually harassed by a sales guy who thought that I was an SDR within my company and told me that he always has those relationships with his 'help' and that he said that I was beautiful and that he had one of me 'back home' but she was a little darker than I was. A VP reported it to HR and they did nothing because he was intoxicated. It shattered my lack of trust and safe space within my organization however in all of these situations I am very vocal about it and speak up on behalf of other victims to anyone that will hear it and can do something about it."

"I was written up and told I was 'too emotional'. The entire story is too much to type at this moment, but they blatantly lied on an official write up. They then told me I was to sign it by the end of the day or lose my job, I wouldn't sign because it wasn't true... I was undermined often. Eventually, they changed my pay plan so I was making less money after being in the role for two years and getting my BA in business. My manager told me 'you can't be making more money than me'. Essentially I was eventually fired for being too good at my job and because I was a woman outperforming my male manager."

"Colleagues laughing at my accent and dismissing my points for the sake of being foreign and not speaking perfect English."

"In 2011 I was diagnosed with bi polar disorder. It ended up being a mis diagnosis as it was later determined it was not bi polar but an anxiety disorder. Both still mental health issues. This was a very stressful period in my life and I struggled with whether or not to share with my employer at the time because it did have somewhat of an effect on my performance in the sense that the medication I was prescribed made me tired. I still showed up everyday, still hit my numbers, but I was drowsy at times. When I was asked what was going on by my manager I decided screw it, I have worked here 3 years I trust this as a good company that will support me if I am honest. Well that couldn't have been farther from the truth. When I told my manager what was going on. I was immediately pulled from my territory and given a very difficult one instead. My every movement was monitored including my trips to the restroom. It was awful and made my condition worse, to the point where it did start to effect my performance and I was fired. I tried to report them to the Oregon unemployment department for unfair treatment but didn't win my case. This situation has made it very difficult to ever feel comfortable being honest in an corporate environment, even at my current company which I love and I know would support me if I told them. But unfortunately because of this past experience I will never disclose my conduction."

"A colleague did not want to work with a prospect because the prospect was black...he assumed that the prospect was not qualified. I'm black, so it was offensive, but you can't let shit like that ruin your day...I went on to do quite well at the company, which educated him that blacks have just as much ability at others as I flourished in the organization."

"Was told by a previous executive leader that my age and family situation make me less of a fit for the company. In other words, the leader communicated that in hindsight, he should've hired young people without kids and less responsibility. Used that against me in many conversations and also changed my compensation plan over 3 times and reduced my pay (the reason was not based on performance). I finally resigned. Was let go from a position many years ago because I was affiliated with Jesus."

AND HUNDREDS MORE

GET INVOLVED

Want more detail? Purchase the full survey analysis at ****[LINK](#)****

Sign up at OtherSideofSales.com to get alerts about the 2021 survey!

Contact hello@othersideofsales.com with any comments, concerns, or questions about this survey or any other initiatives.

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