



Crossroads for Men Resources: Engagement or Exit in the DEI World

Resources from The Inclusion Allies Coalition
Gathered and Created by Effenus Henderson, IAC Advocacy Committee



WHY ENGAGING MEN IN DEI STILL MATTERS

A man with short, light-colored hair is looking upwards with a thoughtful expression. He is wearing a red button-down shirt. The background is a textured wall with a mix of red and grey tones. The text "DEI TRAINING IN SESSION" is overlaid on the top left in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

DEI TRAINING IN SESSION

Why Engaging Men in DEI Still Matters And Why Efforts Stall

Recent backlash against DEI has surfaced an uncomfortable but necessary reality: many men—particularly white men—do not feel included in today’s DEI efforts, even when those efforts are well-intentioned. This disconnection is borne out by the data. Research from Equimundo and others reveals several consistent trends shaping engagement:

Key Engagement Signals to Understand

- Support for DEI among employed men has declined, while skepticism and resistance are rising.
- Men are more polarized than women on the value and effectiveness of DEI.
- Younger men remain more supportive than older cohorts.
- Fear of “saying the wrong thing,” being publicly shamed, or socially punished is now a major barrier to participation.
- Many men perceive DEI as a zero-sum game—that progress for others means loss for them.
- A significant portion of men report feeling unwanted or irrelevant in DEI conversations, even when they support fairness in principle.

Simultaneously, men continue to express strong support for specific, equity-adjacent practices such as:

- Flexible work arrangements,
- Pay transparency,
- Family-supportive policies,
- Respectful workplace culture—often without explicitly connecting these practices to “DEI.”

The strategic failure has not been that men oppose equity. The failure has been that many DEI efforts have not helped men clearly understand:

- How they belong in the work,
- What constructive participation looks like,
- How change benefits organizational performance and human dignity—not just compliance.

SHIFT FOCUS
→ FROM →
“WHAT MEN
SHOULD DO
TO “WHAT
ORGANIZATIONS
MUST CREATE.”

Five Drivers of Men’s Engagement

1. Identity & Belonging

Men engage more when they **see themselves included in the DEI conversation**, rather than positioned only as the problem or as outsiders.

2. Psychological Safety

Many men fear **saying the wrong thing**. Engagement increases when programs allow curiosity, questions, and learning without shaming.

3. Relevance and Shared Benefit

Men respond when DEI is framed as improving **team effectiveness, fairness, and workplace culture for everyone**, not just specific groups.

4. Masculinity Norm Awareness

Research shows traditional masculinity norms (competition, emotional restraint, status protection) strongly influence male engagement. Helping men reflect on these norms increases participation.

5. Leadership and Culture Signals

Men engage when leaders clearly communicate that **inclusion is part of organizational success and leadership expectations**, not just a side initiative.

Organizational Supports that Encourage Men’s Engagement

- Leadership commitment
- Psychological safety
- Clear communication of benefits
- Opportunities for dialogue
- Visible inclusive practices

This shifts the focus from *“what men should do”* to **“what organizations must create.”**



Engaging Men Also Means Activating Those with Power

Engaging men in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is not about redirecting attention away from women or other underrepresented groups.

It is about activating the people who hold significant organizational power—formally and informally—to help remove barriers, strengthen culture, and improve outcomes for everyone.

This guide is a practical resource hub for leaders, HR professionals, DEI practitioners, and facilitators responsible for:

- Building inclusive leadership capability,
- Increasing allyship and accountability among men,
- Navigating resistance, fatigue, or backlash toward DEI efforts.

The selected resources in this report meet the following criteria:

- Offer usable tools, not just theory,
- Are grounded in research and proven practice,
- Can be adapted across corporate, nonprofit, education, and public-sector settings.



INCLUSIVE
LEADERSHIP
SESSION

REHUMANIZING MEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN DEI



Rehumanizing Men's Engagement in DEI

Before organizations ask men to act differently, they must create conditions where men can *engage* differently. The “heart” of effective engagement is not persuasion; it is psychological safety, moral clarity, and relational inclusion.

Effective programs acknowledge three core realities:

Men are not only power holders—they are also shaped by workplace harm. Burnout, identity pressure, rigid masculinity norms, and performance cultures affect men as well. Ignoring this reality narrows empathy and blocks trust.

Defensive reactions often reflect fear, not malice. Fear of being labeled, exposed, or mischaracterized leads many men to withdraw rather than learn.

Belonging must be modeled, not demanded. Men are more likely to engage when they are explicitly invited as contributors to solutions—rather than positioned only as problems to be corrected.

In practice, this means designing engagement spaces where:

- Men can ask imperfect questions without humiliation
- Responsibility is shared without erasing historical or structural realities
- Learning is framed as leadership development—not ideological re-education
- Allyship is defined as a skillset, not a static moral identity.

When men are invited into DEI work as partners in improving systems—rather than as symbols of what is wrong with those systems—they are far more likely to use their influence to support policy change, challenge exclusion, and model inclusive leadership.

Challenges Experienced by Inclusive Male Leaders

The *Men for Inclusion* study found that 68% of male champions had only been involved in DEI work for the last five years, indicating that male allyship or inclusion leadership is still a nascent area.

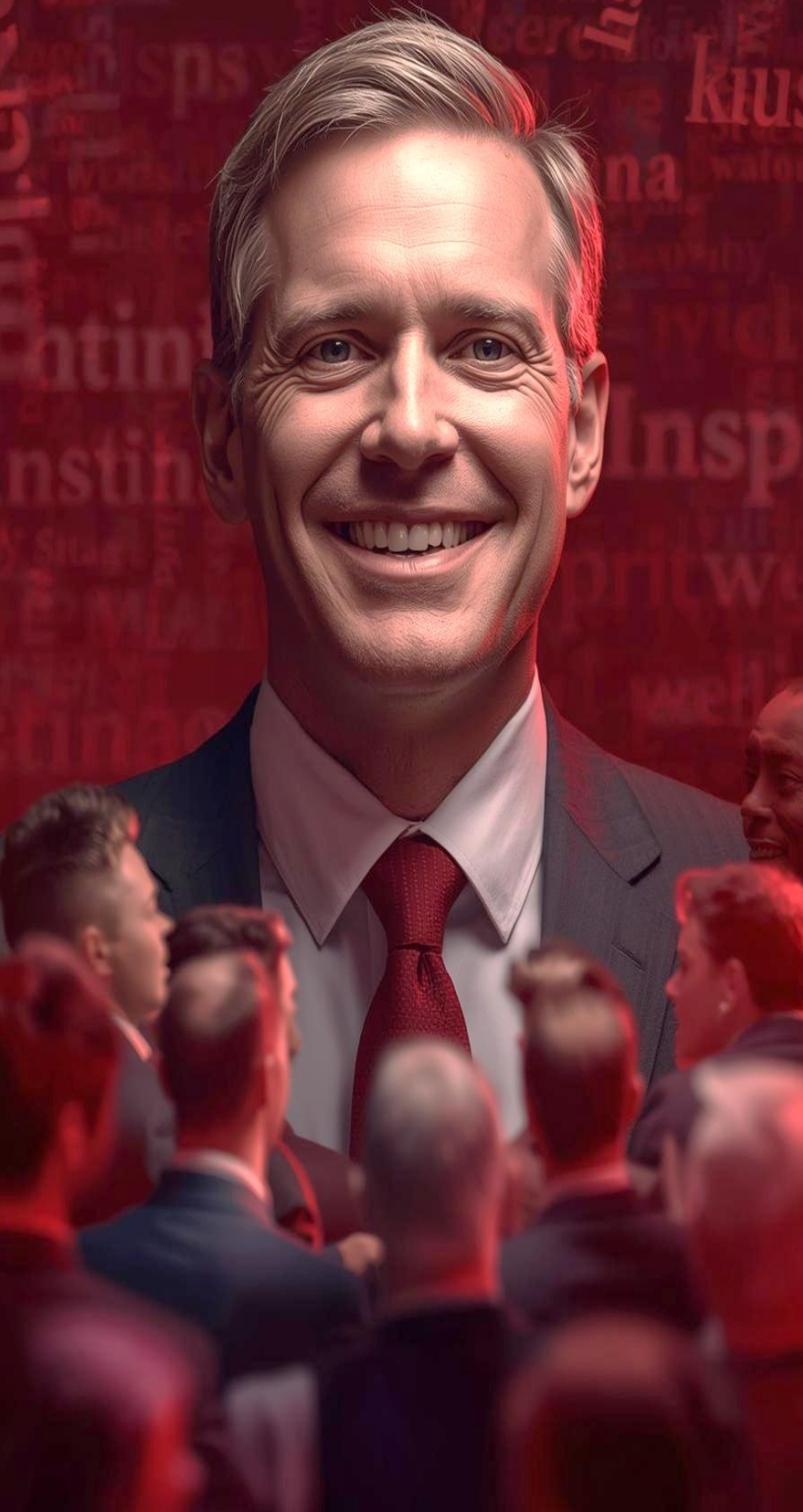
The study asked what difficulties inclusive male leaders were currently facing within their organizations. The challenges they highlighted were:

- DEI work not always being prioritized and equally supported by all colleagues, particularly by men in senior leadership positions
- a reluctance by organizations to admit when they're not putting enough focus on DEI, and a reticence by organizations to speak up
- senior leaders not taking DEI seriously, seeing it as a 'tick box exercise', only carrying out work to meet targets and not role modelling inclusive behaviors themselves
- organizations not actioning initiatives that are discussed and agreed
- data collection being insufficient to demonstrate the impact of initiatives
- a lack of reward and recognition for DEI efforts; and
- over balancing and creation of new forms of discrimination

<https://bit.ly/Men-for-Inclusion>



He gets it!
I wan to be like him.



Voices of Inclusive Male Leaders

“I benefited from being part of a leadership team that beat the competition as a result of having a diverse team with equal voices.”

“I have seen the diversity dividend actualize particularly around innovation income.”

“I would like others to look at me and say: ‘he gets it, I want to be like that.’”

“It helps me to be a better role model for my team and my children.”

“Working as part of an inclusive team keeps me on my toes, forces me to think differently and be more creative.”

“Involvement in DEI is hard work, challenging and time-consuming, but rewarding and worth investing resources in.”

<https://bit.ly/Men-for-Inclusion>

A futuristic control room or data center. In the foreground, several people are seated at desks, viewed from behind, looking towards a large digital display. The display shows a glowing globe composed of many small lights. The room is filled with vibrant red and blue light trails, suggesting data flow or network activity. The overall atmosphere is high-tech and dynamic.

Engaging Men in DEI

WHAT WE CAN DO: RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Research Focused on Male Allyship

Catalyst

Engaging Men: The Journey Toward Equity (2020)

<http://www.catalyst.org/insights/2022/engaging-men-equity>

Citation: Prime, J., & Foust-Cummings, H. (2020). Engaging Men: The Journey Toward Equity. Catalyst.

Note: Catalyst provides a public executive summary for these three reports; the full report requires membership.)

Catalyst

Most Men Support Gender Equity But Face Barriers to Action

<http://www.catalyst.org/insights/2025/men-support-gender-equity>

Citation: Catalyst. (2025). Most Men Support Gender Equity But Face Barriers to Action. Catalyst.

Catalyst

Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know

<http://www.catalyst.org/insights/2009/engaging-men-gender-initiatives-change>

Citation: Prime, J., & Moss-Racusin, C. A. (2022). Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know. Catalyst.

Bentley University Center for Women and Business

Men as Allies: Engaging Men to Advance Women in the Workplace

<https://www.bentley.edu/centers/center-for-women-and-business/men-allies-research-report-request>

Citation: Bentley University Center for Women and Business. (2016). Men as Allies: Engaging Men to Advance Women in the Workplace.

**RESEARCH
REPORTS
MALE ALLYSHIP**



RESEARCH REPORTS FOCUSED ON MEN

Research Focused on Men

Engaging White Men in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

This section summarizes influential research on **men's engagement, identity, and participation in inclusive workplace cultures.**

Majority-Group Engagement Research

Coqual: What Majority Men Really Think About D&I (2020)

<https://coqual.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CoqualMajorityMenBelongingKeyFindings090720.pdf>

One of the most widely cited studies on engaging men in DEI. The research identifies three groups of majority men—**Believers, Persuadables, and Detractors**—and shows that most men fall into the persuadable category when inclusion efforts emphasize fairness, belonging, and organizational performance.

Seramount: Engaging White Male Middle Managers in Advancing Inclusion

<https://seramount.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/engaging-white-male-middle-managers-in-advancing-inclusion-1.pdf>

This research examines how middle managers, often the demographic with the greatest influence over workplace culture, perceive diversity initiatives and how organizations can reduce defensiveness and increase engagement.

Diversity Messaging and Majority-Group Reactions

Victoria Plaut: Plaut, V. C., Garnett, F. G., Buffardi, L. E., & Sanchez-Burks, J. (2011).

What About Me? Perceptions of Exclusion and Whites' Reactions to Multiculturalism

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022832>

This study found that majority-group members sometimes perceive diversity messaging as excluding them. Such perceptions can reduce engagement and increase resistance to diversity initiatives.

Michael Norton: Norton, M., & Sommers, S. (2011).

Whites See Racism as a Zero-Sum Game

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691611406922>

This research shows that many majority-group members interpret progress toward racial equality as coming at their expense, highlighting why perceived status threat can influence reactions to diversity efforts.



RESEARCH REPORTS FOCUSED ON MEN

Research Focused on Men

Engaging White Men in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Psychological Foundations of Male Identity

American Psychological Association

APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Boys and Men (2018)

Direct guideline PDF

<https://www.apa.org/about/policy/boys-men-practice-guidelines.pdf>

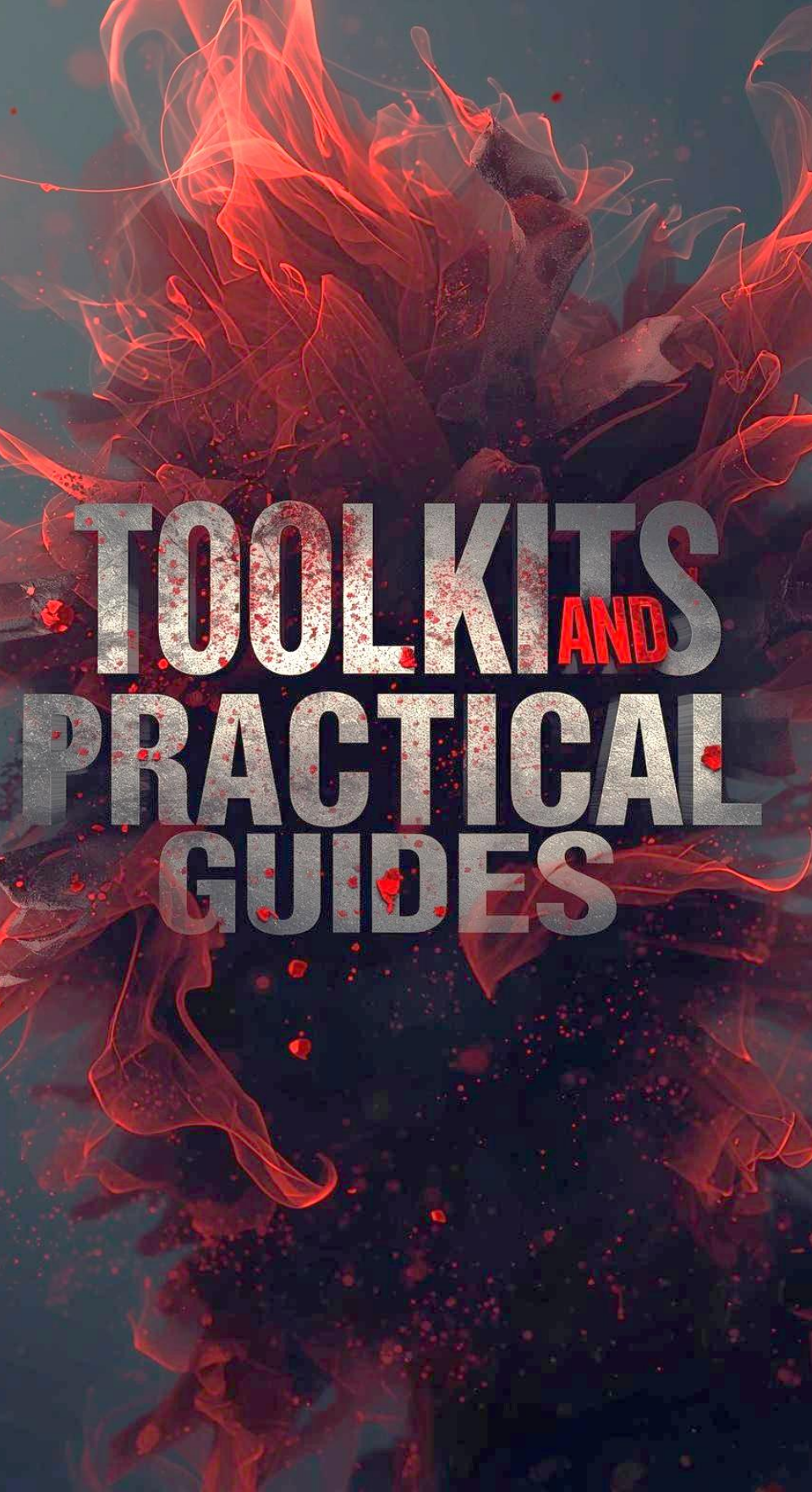
Key insight

Traditional masculinity norms influence emotional expression, help-seeking, and identity formation.

Key Insights from the Research Focused on Men

Across these studies, several themes consistently emerge:

- **Most men are persuadable**
Many men are not opposed to DEI but disengaged.
- **Masculinity norms shape engagement**
Cultural expectations about masculinity influence behavior and participation.
- **Status threat can drive resistance**
Some men perceive diversity initiatives as threatening their opportunities or identity.
- **Messaging matters**
DEI initiatives that emphasize belonging and shared organizational goals are more likely to engage men.
- **Organizational culture change is essential**
Structural change is often more effective than training alone.



Toolkits and Practical Guides

HeForShe (UN Women) – Male Allyship Toolkit (2024)

<https://www.heforshe.org/en/resources>

<https://www.heforshe.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/HeForShe%20Male%20Allyship%20Toolkit.pdf>

Citation: HeForShe. (2024). *Male Allyship Toolkit*. UN Women.

UN Women – “How men and boys can push for gender equality” (2024)

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/how-men-and-boys-can-push-for-gender-equality>

Citation: UN Women. (2024). *How men and boys can push for gender equality*

OSCE – “Engaging Men in Gender Equality” Toolkit

https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/6/e/524598_0.pdf

Citation: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). (2022). *Engaging Men in Gender Equality: A Toolkit for OSCE Staff*.

OSCE – “Engaging Young Men in the Promotion of Gender Equity

”https://www.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/2026/03/ENGAGING%20YOUNG%20MEN%20OF%20CENTRAL%20ASIA%20IN%20THE%20PROMOTION%20OF%20GENDER%20EQUALITY_final.pdf

Citation: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). (2026). *Engaging Young Men in Central Asia in the Promotion of Gender Equality*.

UN Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) – “Toolkit for Male Allies in the Private Sector” (2025)

[https://www.weps.org/sites/default/files/2025-](https://www.weps.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Gender%20Equality%20in%20the%20Private%20Sector%20A%20Toolkit%20for%20Male%20Allies%20in%20the%20Arab%20States.pdf)

[02/Gender%20Equality%20in%20the%20Private%20Sector%20A%20Toolkit%20for%20Male%20Allies%20in%20the%20Arab%20States.pdf](https://www.weps.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Gender%20Equality%20in%20the%20Private%20Sector%20A%20Toolkit%20for%20Male%20Allies%20in%20the%20Arab%20States.pdf)

Citation: UN Women’s Empowerment Principles. (2025). *Toolkit for Male Allies in the Arab States*.



ACTION GUIDE

Toolkits and Practical Action Guides

WisePlant / University of Calgary — Male Allyship Tool Kit

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/552/DIGITAL%20WisePlant%20Male%20Allyship%20Tool%20Kit%20DIGITAL%20FINAL.pdf>

Citation: WisePlant Program, University of Calgary. (2024).

Male Allyship Tool Kit.

Brussels Binder – “All For One: Engaging Men as Allies” Report (2023)

https://brusselsbinder.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2023_BB_Allyship-report.pdf

Citation: The Brussels Binder. (2023). *All For One: Engaging Men as Allies.*

FUTURES Without Violence – Engaging Campus Men Toolkit (2024)

https://engagingmen.futureswithoutviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Campus-Engaging-Men-Toolkit_FUTURES.pdf

Citation: FUTURES Without Violence. (2024). *Engaging Campus Men: A Toolkit for Leaders.*

CHiPs Network – Male Allies & Gender Equity Action Guide (2025)


<https://chipsnetwork.org/male-allies-action-guide/>

Citation: CHiPs Network. (2025). *Male Allies & Gender Equity Action Guide.*

A Call to Men – “Five Questions for Men Who Want to Be Better Allies”

<https://www.acalltomen.org/five-questions-for-men-who-want-to-be-better-allies/>

Citation: A Call to Men. (n.d.). *Five Questions for Men Who Want to Be Better Allies.*



**ENGAGE
MEN
AS
ALLIES**

Guides, Podcasts and Program Resources

The Diversity Project – “Male Allies” (2024)

<https://diversityproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Diversity-Project-Male-Allies-Guide.pdf>

Citation: The Diversity Project and Men for Inclusion. (2022/2023) Male Allies Guide

HBR Podcast – “Helping Men Help Us” (2020)

<https://hbr.org/podcast/2020/06/helping-men-help-us>

Citation: Harvard Business Review. (2020). Helping Men Help Us [Audio podcast episode]. HBR IdeaCast.

Psychology Today – “Male Allies Program Guide” (2023)

<https://cdn2.psychologytoday.com/assets/2023-06/US%20-%20The%20Male%20Allies%20Program%20Guide%20-%20Register%202023%20Early%20Bird.pdf>

Citation: Women Rising. (2023). Male Allies Program Guide.

Columbia University – “Allyship from the Perspectives of Women in Technology” (2023)

<https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/ewyw-nj27>

Citation: Columbia University Library. (2023). Allyship from the Perspectives of Women in Technology (2023).



SPECIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS

Specialized Organizations

White Men as Full Diversity Partners (WMFDP)

<https://wmfdp.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Welp-and-Schein-book-chapter.pdf>

Citation: Book Chapter. (2021) The Role of White Male Culture in Engaging White Men to be Inclusive Leaders

Retrieved from <https://wmfdp.com/>-now evolving brand name to Full Partner Leadership

Equimundo – State of American Men 2025

<https://www.equimundo.org/resources/state-of-american-men-2025/>

Citation: Equimundo. (2025) (2026-2025)State of American Men 2025

Promundo/Equimundo + UNFPA – “Engaging Men and Boys... Tool for Action”

<https://www.equimundo.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/50694-Scaling-up-Men-and-Boys-web.pdf>

Citation: Equimundo & UNFPA. (2023). Engaging Men and Boys: A Tool for Action.

MenEngage Alliance – Toolkit Collection

<https://menengage.org/resources/>

Citation: MenEngage Alliance. (2026-2025) Resource Hub.



ARTICLES

Articles with Actionable “How-To” Steps

Harvard Business Review – “Male Allyship Is About Paying Attention” (2021)
<https://store.hbr.org/product/male-allyship-is-about-paying-attention/H0665V?srsId=AfmBOorBjBbvSSXFeR4MWRSqllD7qR27YWQStXbOXKEus1SJPh2tRpJX>

Citation: Williams, J.C., & Mulvey, G. (2021). Male Allyship Is About Paying Attention. Harvard Business Review.

Stanford Social Innovation Review – “How Business Can Engage Men as Allies for Gender Equality” (2020)
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/how_business_can_engage_men_as_allies_for_gender_equality

Citation: Giscombe, K. (2020). How Business Can Engage Men as Allies for Gender Equality. Stanford Social Innovation Review.

Catalyst – Guidance on welcoming allies into ERGs (2024)
<https://www.catalyst.org/insights/2024/inviting-allies-to-ergs>

Citation: Gurchiek, K. (2024). ERG leader’s guide to gender partnership, Catalyst.

PERSONNEL TODAY (2024) – “Why Male Allyship is Good for Wellbeing and Inclusion”

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/male-allyship/>

Citation: Personnel Today. (2024). Why Male Allyship is Good for Wellbeing and Inclusion”.

Research on Effective Allyship



“Women’s experiences With Male Allies Briefing Note (2019)

<https://www.massgeneral.org/assets/MGH/pdf/faculty-development/mentoring/allies-in-action/Womens-Experiences-with-Male-Allies.pdf>

Citation: Massachusetts General Hospital. Source: Simmons University Center for Gender in Organizations



Elsie Initiative Fund – Gender-Responsive Leader’s Handbook (2024)

https://elsiefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/fba_the-gender-responsive-leaders-handbook_2024.pdf

Citation: The Elsie Initiative Fund for Women in Peace Operations. (2024). Gender-Responsive Leader’s Handbook