



2022 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

# The Importance of Belonging *in the Workplace*



# Executive Summary

**Belonging is a hot topic for HR and DEI teams, as organizations realize that without belonging, their efforts for diversity, equity and inclusion aren't having the intended impact. Our study points to practical actions individuals, managers and organizations can take to increase belonging, as well as providing a clearer understanding of why belonging matters.**

**Belonging matters:** 90% of our respondents agree that a sense of belonging is important in the workplace.

**Most people feel a sense of belonging at work:** A great majority of our respondents (82%) say they feel like they belong.

**There are significant differences based on race/ethnicity:** White respondents have the highest ratings, followed by Asian respondents and then Black respondents.

**Working collaboratively and being authentic are more important than sharing social identity:** Sharing a common social identity is among the lowest rated of 11 possible factors that contribute to a sense of belonging at work (it is the lowest rated for White and Asian respondents, and in the bottom three for Black respondents).

**Tools for cultivating belonging:** Data and insights from this study offer practical tools and actionable next steps to support individuals, managers, and organizations in fostering a sense of belonging at work.

**“I was making plans to leave my industry. ...Before quitting, I took a risk and joined a new group that was much more inclusive. Now I feel a fire to stick around and show that I have so much to give. I have no desire to leave now.”**

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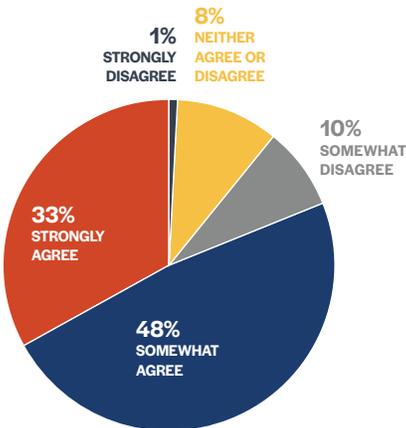
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When at work, do you feel like you belong?

**81% of survey respondents say that when they are at work, they feel that they belong.**

We sent the survey to members of our community in September 2021; 597 people responded.



## WHY

# The benefits of belonging at work



**Key finding:** When employees feel a sense of belonging at work, it benefits both the individual and the organization.

**Employees who feel a sense of belonging report feeling more engaged and confident, and are more likely to go “above and beyond” for their organization.**

### A sense of belonging is important at work

90% of our respondents agree that a sense of belonging is important in the workplace. In fact, almost half (47%) agree that it’s extremely important. The remaining 10% said it’s somewhat important, with none saying it isn’t important at all.

### Belonging is good for the individual

According to our respondents, when they feel a sense of belonging, they are more engaged, confident, inspired and happier. They also feel more connected to their colleagues.

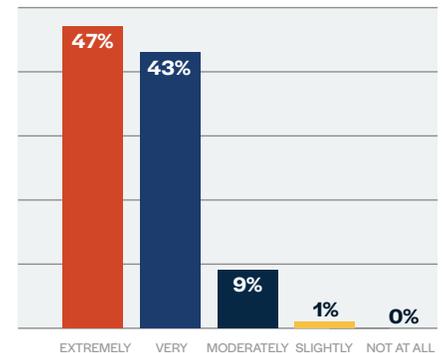
### It’s also good for the organization

These feelings translate to positive outcomes for the organization. The top answers to, “What is the impact when you feel like you belong,” are:

- I am more likely to go “above and beyond” for my organization
- I am more able to do my best work
- I build stronger relationships with my colleagues
- I am more productive
- I am more effective
- I am more committed to staying with my organization

These results point to the importance of fostering a sense of belonging as a key tool, especially during a global pandemic when many employees are feeling burnout, and organizations are continuing to feel the impacts of the “great resignation.”

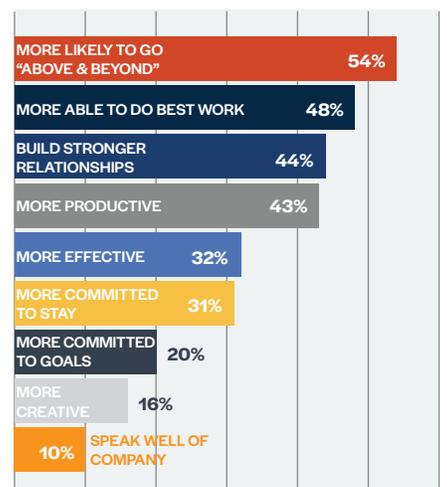
When you’re at work, how important is it for you to feel like you belong?



How do you feel when you have a sense of belonging at work?



What is the impact when you feel like you belong?



# Sense of belonging varies significantly based on race/ethnicity



**Key findings:** A strong majority of our respondents feel that they belong. However, the numbers are significantly lower for Asian<sup>1</sup> and especially for Black respondents than for White respondents.

## Most respondents report feelings of belonging

Overall, 82% of respondents agree with the statement, “At work, I feel like I belong,” with 33% strongly agreeing and 49% somewhat agreeing. In addition, 83% of respondents say their organization does at least a moderately good job of supporting their sense of belonging, with 38% saying they do very well, and 13% saying extremely well. A full 90% agree that their co-workers make them feel they belong, and 84% of respondents say their immediate manager makes them feel that they belong. We were curious whether the gender of the manager would have any impact on these perceptions, but we didn’t see any significant differences.<sup>2</sup>

**“I have recently been added to a workstream where I am the only White woman on a team of all Black women. It has been humbling to experience my sense of not belonging 100% to this group. They are not overtly excluding me at all, but when meetings open up with them sharing about personal experiences that relate to their culture - I am appreciative of how they must feel in 99% of their meetings. I wish more of us from the majority populations could experience this first hand.”**

1) For simplicity in this report, we are using these terms to refer to larger categories of race and ethnicity. Survey respondents chose from the below categories and identified with the following percentages:

- Caucasian/White (For example: German, Irish, Italian, Polish, French, etc.) - 71%
- Asian or Asian American (For example: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, etc.) - 11%
- Black, African, or African American (For example: African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Ethiopian, etc.) - 10%
- Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish (For example: Mexican, Cuban, Dominican, Colombian, etc.) 3%
- Prefer to self-describe/prefer not to say - 3%
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (For example: Samoan, Native Hawaiian, Chamorro, etc.)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (For example: Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, etc.) - 1%
- Middle Eastern or North African (For example: Lebanese, Iranian, Syrian, Moroccan, etc.) - 1%

In addition, 94% identify as women, 62% are in mid level management positions or higher, and 61% are between the ages of 34 and 54. Our findings are limited to the general characteristics of our particular sample.

2) In our response sample the number of respondents who have managers who identify as men and those who identify as women are almost the same (51% vs 48%). 15% of respondents whose managers are men disagreed that their managers make them feel that they belong. The number was 18% for those whose managers are women. Although more respondents whose managers are men feel strongly that they don’t make them feel like they belong, we didn’t see any significant difference in impact in terms of the gender of the manager overall.

### **There are significant differences based on race/ethnicity**

However, when we break down the responses to all of these questions by race and ethnicity, we see statistically significant variations, especially for respondents who identify as Black, African or African American. Overall, White respondents have the highest ratings, followed by Asian respondents and then Black respondents. Our survey population didn't include statistically significant numbers for other racial and ethnic populations, so we are focusing our analysis only on these groups.

### **Black respondents are less likely to feel a sense of belonging**

When we look at the statement, "At work, I feel like I belong," 84% of White respondents agree, but only 68% of Black respondents agree. Similarly, 68% of Black respondents agree that their managers make them feel they belong, and 79% agree that their co-workers do the same. These numbers compare with 84% and 90% of White respondents, respectively. When it comes to how their organizations support their sense of belonging, only 62% of Black respondents say moderately well or better, compared with 86% of White respondents. In addition, 20% of Black respondents answer the question on their organization's support with "not well at all." This compares to only 10% of White respondents.

### **Bias is the key factor**

These respondents say that their managers undermine their sense of belonging by demonstrating bias, not providing them with opportunities for growth, and demonstrating negative interpersonal behaviors towards them like being rude and disrespectful. The top responses for how coworkers undermine their sense of belonging also include demonstrating bias and microaggressions. One respondent said, for example, that coworkers "insist that discrimination does not exist."

### **Asian respondents also report lower levels of belonging**

Asian respondents show more positive responses than Black respondents, but less positive than White respondents. 77% agree that they feel that they belong, 87% agree their managers make them feel they belong, and 96% agree their coworkers do the same. 49% of Asian respondents say their organization supports their sense of belonging moderately well or better. For the Asian respondents who don't feel that their sense of belonging is supported by managers and/or coworkers, the top reason was also demonstration of bias.

### **IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

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"(When I feel a sense of belonging at work) I am valued, I receive meaningful feedback and I am given equitable opportunities for leadership and advancement-- all without having to navigate microaggressions, concealing my identities or working twice as hard than my colleagues."

"As an African American woman it is just easier to avoid those spaces that are riddled with oppressive racisms, biases, and microaggressions."

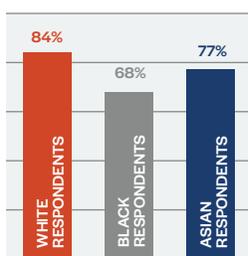
## Race/Ethnicity play an important role in how easy or hard it is to feel a sense of belonging

We asked our respondents, “Compared to others, do you think it’s easier or harder for you to feel a sense of belonging at work?” 61% of Black respondents say it’s harder for them (36% somewhat harder and 25% much harder). For Asian respondents, 44% say it’s harder (31% somewhat and 13% much harder), while for White respondents, only 23% say it’s harder. When we asked why it was harder, 23% of the Black respondents pointed to their racial identity. Other answers include biases and microaggressions, underrepresentation and values differences.

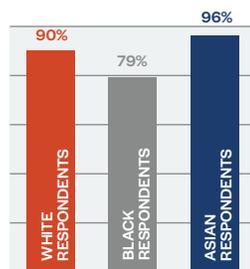
Asians’ responses as to why it’s harder for them are more diverse, although 15% also pointed to their identity, which makes that the most mentioned reason for this group. Other reasons include personality traits like being shy or introverted, as well as reasons similar to those mentioned by Black respondents.

By contrast, 50% of White respondents think it is easier to feel a sense of belonging (27% responded “the same,” and 23% “harder”). For those who think it’s easier, the top reason they give is being in the majority group (11%). Other responses include experience or time in the job, their personality, and their job level or position, among others. For the 23% of White respondents who feel that it’s harder, the top reasons are lack of collaboration and team cohesion.

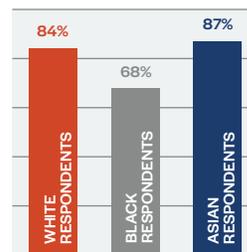
These findings support, and provide more granularity to other studies that point to the unique experiences of Black and Asian women in the workplace.<sup>3</sup>



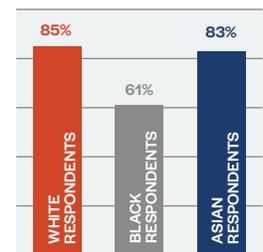
I feel I belong



My coworkers make me feel I belong



My manager makes me feel I belong



My organization supports my sense of belonging

See the “Tools” section on p. 14 for more information on what organizations can do to foster belonging.

3) See Formation and Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative (2021), SHRM (2020) and McKinsey and Leanin.org (2020).

# What does it mean to belong at work?



**Key finding:** People define belonging at work in terms of being valued and appreciated, being heard and listened to, and being included. They also cite feeling a sense of community and being welcomed as their authentic selves.

**“Sense of belonging can be the single most important factor in a job. When it isn’t there, it can impact work and home life. In the times that I have not felt a sense of belonging, it actively made me want to quit, and seriously decreased my mental health.”**

### Top five qualities of belonging

#### 1. Being valued

The most common definition of belonging involves being valued and appreciated, which was noted by half of our respondents. In addition to being appreciated, valued and respected as a person, this category includes having their opinions and contributions be respected and valued, feeling that they matter, as well as being recognized and seen. These responses are supported by the 92% of respondents who agreed that “My achievements are recognized” contributes to their sense of belonging.

#### 2. Being included

Being included, whether in social events, or in meetings and decision making is the next most common quality, cited by 31% of our respondents. For those who noted being included in decision making, many were specific about being included when the decisions are important and/or affect them directly.

#### 3. Being part of a team

Feeling like a team, working together towards a common goal, and having strong relationships is an important factor for 20% of our respondents. This includes being comfortable with colleagues, having friends or friendly relationships, and feeling cared about as an individual. Perhaps more importantly, 98% of our respondents selected “I work in collaboration with others” as a contributing factor in belonging, making it the top answer to this question.

#### 4. Being heard

Being heard or listened to is also cited by 20% of our respondents. This group includes respondents who used more active framing like, “My leaders solicit my ideas/perspective to make sure that my voice is heard,” and, “I am able to speak my mind without fear of backlash.” This data is supported by the 92% of respondents who agree that, “My leaders solicit my ideas/perspective to make sure that my voice is heard,” contributes to their sense of belonging.

#### 5. Being accepted for who they are

Being their authentic self and being accepted and understood as a person is our fifth most important factor, cited by 17% of respondents. Several of these respondents specify an absence of microaggressions or the need to hide part of their identity at work. In the question about what contributes to your sense of belonging when at work, “I am able to be authentic,” is our third highest factor, selected by 95% of respondents. A related factor, “I am able to be true to my personal values” is our second highest factor, selected by 97% of respondents.

Taken together, these factors paint a clear picture of what belonging looks like - you are valued, your opinions are sought out, you’re included in important decisions, you don’t have to hide aspects of who you are, and you have people to collaborate with who care about you as a human being. What our research points out is that these everyday behaviors are critical for reaping the benefits of a workforce that experiences a sense of belonging at work.

#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

##### When you’re at work, what does it mean to belong?

“To be included in conversations, planning, etc. To know and understand the goals and to be actively working toward them as a tightly engaged team.”

“Belonging means that I have a peer group that I can reach out to for support. It means that I can ‘bring my whole self’ to work. I don’t have to worry about hiding aspects of my life, like parenthood, that might make me feel less professional or qualified than others. I have mentors who look and have life experiences like me and understand the challenges I face.”

“Not being excluded. I can’t tell you how many times over my career I have not been involved in conversations or projects that directly impacted me or that I should be doing. Being on the outside looking in feels terrible.”



# Fostering a sense of belonging at work



**Key finding:** Authenticity and collaboration are more important than sharing common characteristics with coworkers, even for Black and Asian respondents.

## Top 4 factors that contribute to belonging

In our survey, we asked respondents, “To what extent do you agree that each of the following contributes to your sense of belonging when at work?” Here are the percentages of respondents who agree (strongly or somewhat):

To what extent do you agree that each of the following contributes to your sense of belonging when at work?

I work in collaboration with others	98%
I am able to be true to my personal values	97%
I am able to be authentic	95%
I have someone in the office who has my back (i.e. an ally)	95%
My leaders solicit my ideas/perspective to make sure that my voice is heard	92%
My achievements are recognized	92%
I understand how to navigate the culture of my organization (i.e. the unwritten rules)	92%
I am able to speak my mind without fear of backlash	90%
I have regular opportunities to interact with others on a personal basis	86%
I have close friends at work	73%
I share common characteristics of my social identity with my co-workers (e.g. racial, ethnic/cultural background, educational level)	70%

“When my previous boss came up with the idea that we all have one friend in our group, I frowned on the idea. ...To me work is a place where I come to, I do the job, and find my own network of people and go home.

So when you say belonging at work, I only want to belong as it relates to me having the right tools, the right support system to get the job done and respect while I do the job.”

4) Although the top 4 factors are the same across racial and ethnic categories, there are some notable differences in their relative ranking. For White and Black respondents, the top contributing factor is “I am able to be true to my personal values,” followed by “I work in collaboration with others.” For Asian respondents, “I work in collaboration with others” and “I have someone in the office who has my back (i.e. an ally)” were the top two factors.

## Collaboration is key

“I work in collaboration with others” is our top response. This finding coincides with the [2020 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends](#) which emphasized the importance of “forging a stronger link between belonging and organizational performance by *strengthening workers’ connections with their teams* and fostering their sense of contribution to meaningful shared goals” (Volini, et. al, 2020, 13. Emphasis added).

Work structures that allow for collaboration introduce people to each other and allow them to know each other. This means that opportunities to increase belonging are inherent in team dynamics, and thus provide “low hanging fruit” for managers and organizations who want to increase a sense of belonging for their team members. As we noted above, many of our respondents included feeling like part of a group, feeling a sense of connection, and collaborating together in their definitions of belonging.

## Followed closely by being authentic and living your values

“I am able to be authentic” is in the top four factors across all racial and ethnic identities, along with the closely related factor, “I am able to be true to my personal values.” Taken together, these factors suggest that the key to fostering belonging is to create psychological safety so that all team members can bring their full and authentic selves to work. The additional dimension that this new research adds is that for belonging, those authentic selves can’t just be accepted, but they need to be valued, respected and welcomed.

As we noted in our prior report, [The Importance of Authenticity in the Workplace](#), 12% of our respondents report being able to be extremely authentic at work, with a further 59% saying very authentic. For the remaining group, taking steps to increase their ability to be authentic will have a positive impact on belonging as well. Our data from that survey further showed that for the population we surveyed there weren’t significant differences by race/ethnicity in ability to feel authentic at work. However, among those respondents who found it harder to be authentic (17% somewhat harder and 3% much harder), the top reason was being a minority in their team or organization, whether in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and religious belief.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### How organizations foster belonging:

“Build a culture of respect, where knowledge, perspective and values of all employees are celebrated. This gives more employees the visibility needed to connect with others, and ultimately, the platform to add greater value to the organization.”

“Small things like a beautiful surrounding, quiet zones to work inside and outside, freedom in organizing work, home office, free tea/coffee, regular town halls (not actually my taste but they try), support for learning and education even not job-related, respectful interactions, regular feedback (to the organization, and bidirectionally in team), christmas gifts, offsite team activities”

This finding is important for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts, which many organizations have [renamed to include the term Belonging](#). Although our findings shouldn't be taken to minimize the importance of representation, organizational efforts that address creating a culture and environment that cultivates and fosters authenticity should help increase belonging across race and ethnic groups.<sup>5</sup>

### Social connection is significantly less critical

Perhaps the most striking finding is that the two factors related to social connection were at the bottom of the list: "I have regular opportunities to interact with others on a personal basis," and "I have close friends at work."

When we look at the responses by racial and ethnic categories, we see the following results for those who strongly agree and somewhat agree.<sup>6</sup>

	White	Asian	Black
I have regular opportunities to interact with others on a personal basis	89%	87%	66%
I have close friends at work	73%	77%	57%

One hypothesis for why our Black respondents rate these two factors so much lower than other groups is that they have lower expectations for the possibility for social connection in the workplace, where they are significantly underrepresented. Further research would be needed to determine the true cause, however.

Although these are among the bottom three factors, personal connection is still important for belonging. From the write-in definitions, it's clear that having friendly relationships and being cared about as a person also matter for belonging. Sharing of personal information isn't the main driver, but a consequence of those friendly relationships that allow people to connect on a personal level. Individuals can choose what they want to share, but the key is genuine and sincere interest. Colleagues should be friendly with each other, but they don't need to be "best friends."

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### How organizations foster belonging:

"A strong focus on equity and building a culture of being inclusive to all - supportive of opening up difficult conversations and committed to change."

"Be more transparent. Be honest about what you value, and what needs to be addressed. And stop pretending the rest of us don't notice."

"Seek more input from the less represented groups of people to share feedback and allow them to be a part of the solution."

5) A study by the HR Research Institute (2019) found that "Feeling free to be myself at work" was one of the top drivers of a sense of belonging.

6) Respondents were only given four response options: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree and strongly disagree.

It's interesting to contrast this data with Gallup's finding that, "I have a best friend at work," is the single biggest predictor of engagement, and that it's particularly important for women. In fact our findings reinforce the takeaway from Gallup's data:

"The best employers recognize that people want to build meaningful friendships and that company loyalty is built on these relationships. But friendships at work need to be put in the proper context.<sup>7</sup> Managers should not try to manufacture friendships or to make everyone be friends. Rather, they should create situations where people can get to know each other."

Ultimately both sets of data support the importance of cultures of inclusion and belonging, and creating opportunities for employees to create personal connections that make their work more meaningful and worthwhile.



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7) <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/356045/q12-question-summary.aspx>

### Sharing social identity is the lowest rated factor

We were fascinated to see that “I share common characteristics of my social identity with my co-workers” was the lowest ranked factor (although still important to 70% of respondents.) Looking at the responses by different racial and ethnic categories, provides a more nuanced view. We found that this factor is more important for Black and Asian respondents than it is for White respondents: 79% of Black respondents and 71% of Asian respondents agreed, compared with only 68% of White respondents. Of the 22% of respondents who strongly agree that sharing social identity is a top contributor to sense of belonging, 51% are Black, 21% are Asian, and only 18% are White.

Again, these findings should not be interpreted to downplay the importance of representation. However, they show that in organizations that haven’t met their goals around representation, taking steps to increase belonging can substantially support the engagement, confidence and happiness of people who identify with underrepresented social identities.



### BELONGING IS ALSO A PERSONAL CHOICE

One of our objectives in creating this survey was to understand the individual’s role in their own sense of belonging. Our theory was that regardless of the efforts an organization makes to cultivate an environment of belonging, if the individual doesn’t feel it (or doesn’t care for the efforts), then it won’t matter. This aspect of belonging was raised by some of our respondents. Although it was a small number, those who did made sure to add this point at the very end of a long survey. Some of the responses were:

- I think that it begins with me to ensure I feel this way. I should not let how others perceive how I feel, I need to be accountable for ensuring this.
- A lot of it comes from within--the more confident I feel, the more I feel I belong (am legitimate).
- I used to think it was only the environment and people around me that contributed to a sense of belonging but now 15 years into my career and having worked across industries during this time, I also chose to belong somewhere.

This confirms that the work of cultivating a sense of belonging is not uni-dimensional - organizations, managers, co-workers and individuals all have a role to play. It’s important to bear in mind, however, that some individuals, especially BIPOC women, may have already been “traumatized” by prior, negative experiences. In the words of one of our respondents “I am comfortable speaking up, taking chances, and self initiating but I recognize that not all people feel that way and (some) have had negative experiences in their past that have instilled fear in them. This ... inhibits their ability to feel that they belong.” This is another reason why organizations and managers must prioritize their role in creating cultures of belonging.

# Belonging-building tools for individuals, managers and organizations



**Key findings:** We offer the following tools for creating more belonging at work, whether as an individual, a manager, or on behalf of the organization. These tools are derived from the data in this study, insights gained from our survey results, suggestions offered by our respondents, and our own expertise.

**“It takes a village. It’s not all just about my supervisor. It’s about a team committing to shared goals and values and then acting those out in behaviors that create a sense of belonging.”**

## TOOLS FOR INDIVIDUALS

**Bring your authentic self to work:** If you feel it is safe to do so, and you aren’t fully authentic at work today, experiment with sharing more about your personal values and who you are. Find ways to be more open, honest and vulnerable, without crossing the line into oversharing. See our report on [The Importance of Authenticity in the Workplace](#) for lots more information on how to be more authentic at work. If you don’t feel safe to be authentic in your workplace, it may be time to consider other options.

**Speak up:** Look for opportunities to share your opinion and make yourself more visible. If you find that challenging, consider asking for support from allies and others who can make space for you to enter the conversation.

**Build connection with your colleagues:** Look for opportunities to join group projects and to connect socially. Expand your network beyond the people you interact with all the time, and include others who you see are being left out.

**Increase your awareness of microaggressions and bias:** Biases and microaggressions negatively impact others’ sense of belonging, among other harms that they cause. Educate yourself about these topics and use your learning to be mindful of how you interact with your colleagues. Be part of the solution in cultivating others’ sense of belonging. Our Inclusive Leader’s Playbook (available on Amazon) has many resources to help.

**Engage in Employee Resource Groups (ERG):** ERGs are a great way to connect with people you don't work with everyday, and to learn more about people with social identities that are different from your own. If your organization doesn't currently have an ERG or equivalent, investigate starting one.

## TOOLS FOR MANAGERS

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**Show that you value your team members:** Value your direct reports' perspectives by soliciting their opinions, thoughts and insights when making decisions. This is the top response from respondents about how managers make them feel that they belong. When you genuinely solicit ideas and listen to them, you are recognizing the value that your team members bring.

**Be intentional about including everyone:** Look at who you're communicating with, whom you invite to meetings, whom you meet for lunch or coffee, and whom you see on a daily basis. Be intentional about not leaving anyone out and be careful not to play favorites.

**Communicate regularly:** Schedule regular meetings and communicate openly and transparently with all of your team members.

**Create psychological safety:** Ensure that all team members can be heard, can make mistakes, and can raise concerns and unpopular opinions without fear of retaliation or ridicule.

**Recognize contributions in ways that are meaningful to the individual:** Different people prefer different kinds of recognition, and knowing what people prefer is part of showing that you see and value them as individuals. If you don't know what they would find meaningful, ask!

**Encourage collaborative work:** To the extent that it makes sense for the business operation, look for opportunities for people to work together and/or collaborate on specific aspects of their work.



**Demonstrate that you care:** Check in with team members individually; inquire how they are, how they are doing professionally and personally. Ask how you may best support them. Without oversharing, find opportunities to tell them a bit about yourself as well.

**Be your authentic self and support others' ability to be authentic:** Create a culture of psychological safety and bring your authentic self to work. Our report on [The Importance of Authenticity in the Workplace](#) provides more details and suggestions.

**Create opportunities for your team to socialize:** Find opportunities that work for all team members to socialize and chat. Make it part of your business day so that you aren't placing an extra burden on people who have caregiving responsibilities or other barriers to meeting outside of regular business hours.

## TOOLS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

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**Adopt organizational policies that value diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB):** Demonstrate that the organization truly values these policies by having the top leadership articulate, model, and reward the behaviors of inclusive leadership. Support the policies by allocating budget for programs geared towards DEIB.

**Create practices and norms that allow your employees to be authentic:** See our report on [The Importance of Authenticity in the Workplace](#) for more tools on how to foster authenticity in your organization.

**Develop a culture of transparent and open communication that encourages voices to be heard.** Hold community meetings and/or establish other mechanisms to inform everyone of what's going on in the organization and to solicit input.



**Create and support Employee Resource Groups:** Encourage employees to participate and give them time and space to meet. Demonstrate your support by allocating resources, including budget.

**Conduct belonging and engagement surveys:** Regular surveys can highlight strengths and opportunities to increase belonging and engagement among employees. Use the results to address the issues raised, and communicate about both opportunities and strengths with the organization.

**Encourage collaborations across teams and departments:** These allow employees to get to know others outside of their immediate teams.

**Implement allyship, mentorship, and sponsorship programs:** Having an ally/someone who has my back is one of the top factors that foster a sense of belonging.

**Enact a zero tolerance policy for bullying, aggression, favoritism, disrespect, and other toxic behaviors:** People who engage in toxic behaviors shut down engagement and contribution from those around them.



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Dr. Maria Elena Rivera-Beckstrom, also known as Annelle, conducts research to support the development of thought leadership for the Institute's practice areas. She also teaches and engages in research and publication on comparative legal culture. Annelle is the coauthor of [The Importance of Authenticity in the Workplace](#), as well as the forthcoming article, "[What's Power Got to do With it? Seeking gender-equity in organizations through male ally initiatives](#)" in the *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, among other publications.

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Drawing on her expertise in gender equity and women's leadership, Elisa creates innovative programming that develops the mindset and skills of leaders at all stages of life so they can foster gender parity and cultures of inclusion. Elisa is a coauthor of [The Inclusive Leader's Playbook: The Work of the Inclusive Leader™](#). In addition to collaborating with Annelle on [The Importance of Authenticity in the Workplace](#), Elisa is a coauthor on several publications, including *Professional Women and Confidence: A New Understanding of the "Gap"* (October 2017) and *Women's Experiences with "Male Allies"* (November 2018).



## ABOUT US

Our mission is to develop the mindset and skills of leaders at all stages of life so they can foster gender parity and cultures of inclusion. We offer research-driven programming for individuals and leadership journeys for entire organizations.

Learn more:

[inclusiveleadership.com](https://www.inclusiveleadership.com)

2022 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

# The Importance of Belonging *in the Workplace*

**This comprehensive report explores the importance of belonging in the workplace, what it really means, and its impact on individuals and organizations. Based on the results of a survey with over 590 respondents, we provide new insight on what it means to belong when at work, and offer tools for increasing a sense of belonging as an individual, a manager, and as an organization.**



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**Institute for  
Inclusive Leadership**

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