



2023 Survey  
**Women in Safety**



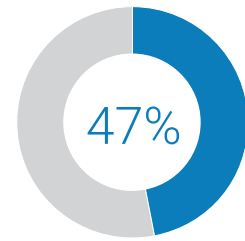
## 2023 SURVEY

# Women in Safety

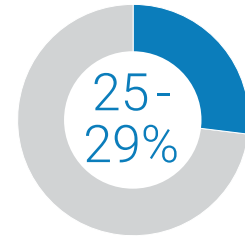
In many industries, gender diversity in the safety workplace has been and continues to be a challenge. While women make up 47% of the American work-force, they account for just 25-29% of safety profession. Workplace diversity brings new perspectives thanks to employees with a range of backgrounds and life experiences, and that is perhaps even more important when it comes to safety.

To improve workplace health and safety products and practices, accurate representation of the people we are trying to protect is important. And within the profession itself, the key to getting more women interested in safety is to understand the working climate and identify areas of opportunity to make positive changes.

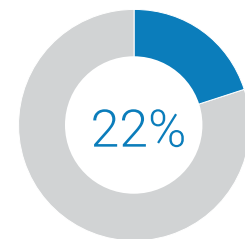
The purpose of this survey is not to reach any scientific conclusions or present hard facts. Our goal is to get a pulse on the real challenges and experiences of women working in safety. The responses we received highlighted positive experiences, negative experiences, and a few stories that were difficult to read. But all responses revealed very honest, open, and thoughtful survey takers.



Women in Workforce



Women in EHS



Women CSPs

## The Survey Methodology

This survey was created by female safety professionals, for female safety professionals. Beginning in August 2023, we sent our Women in Safety survey out to safety professionals within the HSI and the EHS Advisor databases. We also posted the survey on social media with open calls to complete the survey and share with others.

The survey consisted of 12 multiple-choice questions, plus two open-ended questions. Certainly, we could have included many more questions or focused on specific topics, but we wanted the survey to be accessible and easy to complete (less than five minutes).

Overall, we collected over 865 survey submissions. The survey included demographic questions, such as age and ethnicity, but did not include any questions regarding gender. Surveys were kept completely anonymous, and we offered no reward or prize for submissions.

## Quick Facts

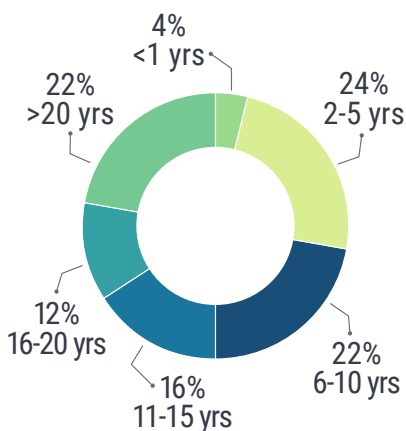
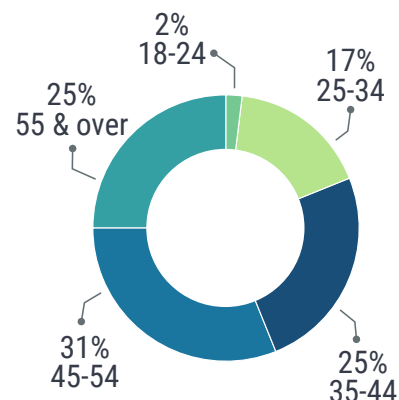
Before we dive into the survey results, we want to highlight a few facts about what the safety profession looks like regarding women in the workforce.

- Women make up 47% of the workforce in America
- Women make up 25-29% of the EHS workforce
- Just 22% of all Certified Safety Professionals (CSPs) are women

# The Survey Results

## What is your age?

The responses to this question align similarly with the percentages of women in the total U.S. workforce. We would expect to see low numbers with those just entering their professional careers, peaking with millennials and Gen X, and then tapering off.

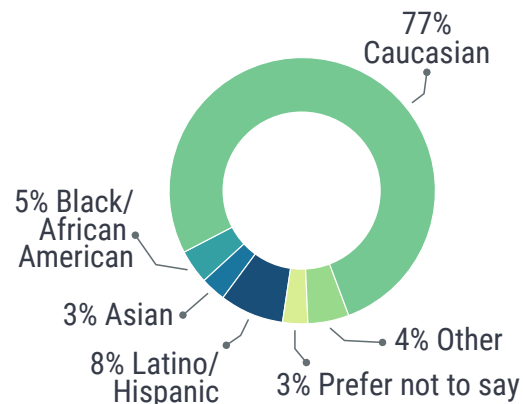


## How many years have you been in the EHS/safety profession?

These results might also be expected, with many safety professionals finding this career after starting on a different path.

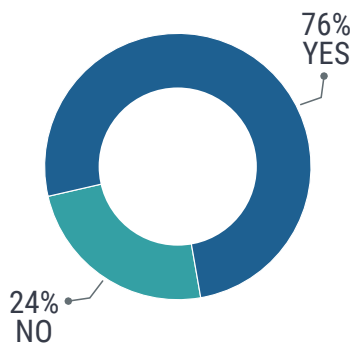
## What is your ethnicity?

These responses may seem heavily skewed, but the numbers align with the general U.S. population in 2023, with Caucasian being the predominant ethnicity, followed by Hispanic, Black, and Asian.



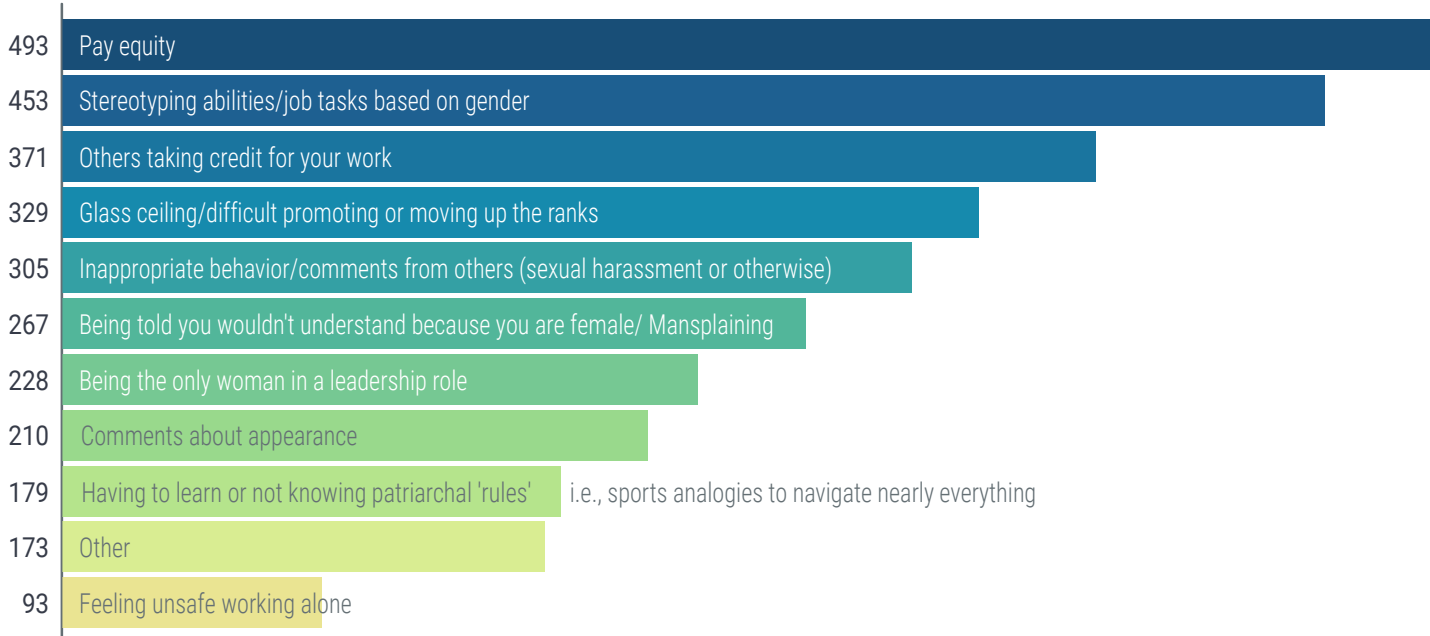
## Are you in a leadership role?

Regardless of gender, more subscribers to profession newsletters are likely to be those in leadership positions, so these responses were to be expected due to our method of distributing the survey.



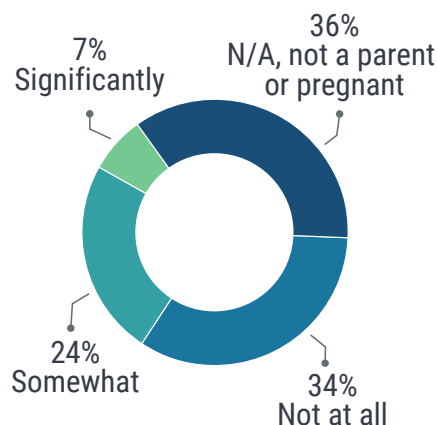
## What are the challenges you face as a female EHS professional? *(select all that apply)*

The top challenges facing our survey respondents were not all that surprising. Even in 2023, women are paid just 83.7% of what men are paid in equal positions, so pay equity being the number 1 challenge is to be expected. Other top challenges, such as others taking credit for work done by a woman, are unfortunately not uncommon in any workplace.



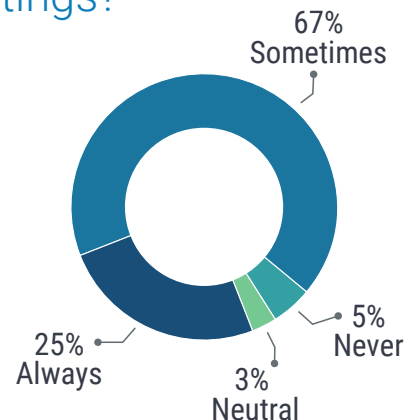
## Has being a parent/pregnant impacted your career negatively?

Less than 60 total survey respondents felt that being a parent had significantly impacted their career, while almost 60% said that being a parent had only somewhat – or not at all – negatively impacted their career. Perhaps that is a testament to the fact that there are currently more women in the workforce than ever before, and it is no longer unexpected to have working mothers at any given company.

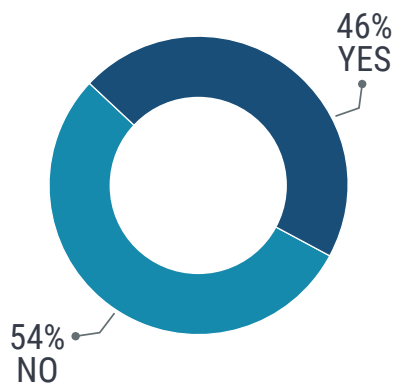


## Do you feel as if your voice is heard in meetings?

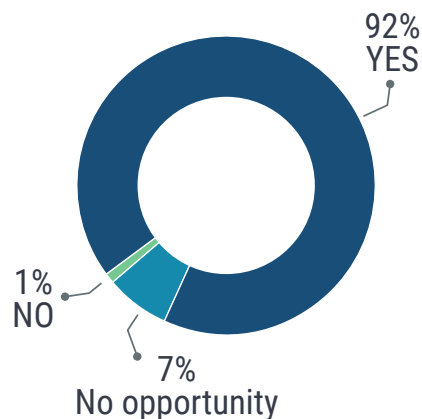
Despite over 75% of survey respondents holding a leadership position, 72% experience not being heard in meetings. Many of the comments submitted by women describe experiences of being treated differently than male counterparts, talked down to, ignored, and even their ideas dismissed but then when a male colleague says the same thing, it's taken seriously.



## Have you felt undermined or unsupported by females at work?



## Do you support the growth of other women (informal, formal mentor, etc.)?



Interestingly, despite 92% of respondents saying they do support the growth of other women at work, almost half said that they have felt unsupported by other women. This shows an interesting dichotomy and may reflect how women perceive their support vs. how those actions come across. This highlights room for growth, as we can all work toward be more outspoken and forthright in our support of women in the workplace.

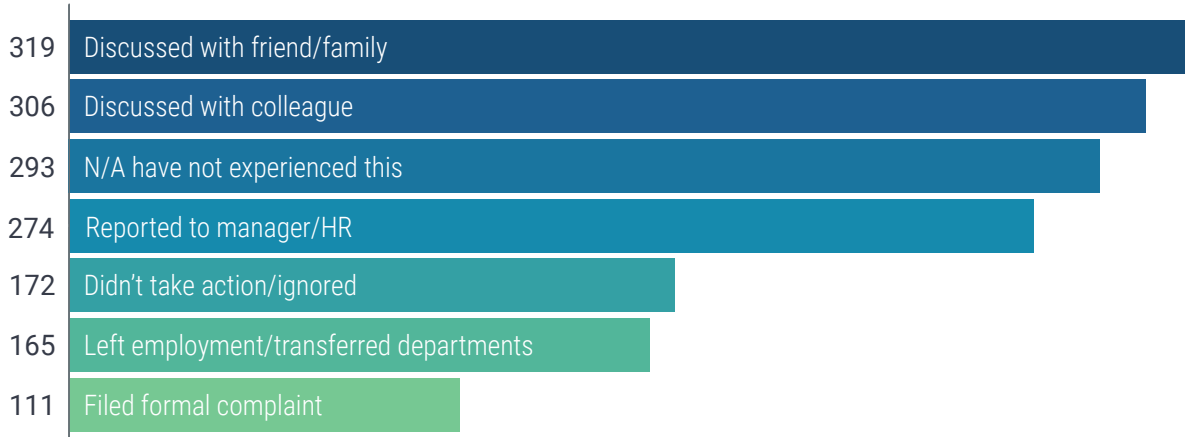
## HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Harassment in the workplace occurs disproportionately to females vs. males, as reported through survey data and U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) complaints. One study reported that 90% of individuals who experienced harassment never take formal action. Those who do file complaints with the EEOC, the vast majority are women; 78.2% of sexual harassment claims and 62.2% of all harassment claims.



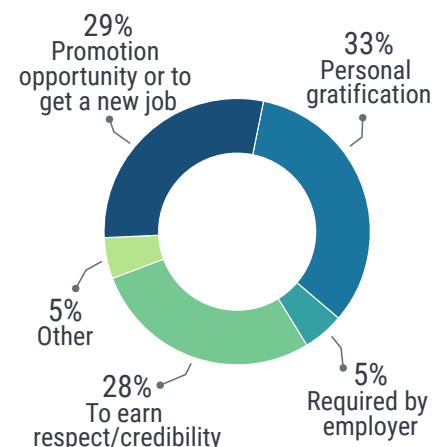
### If you have been harassed or discriminated against at work, how did you respond? *(select all that apply)*

The most common response to experiencing harassment or discrimination being to discuss the incident with a friend, family member, or colleague is not all that surprising. We know that, in general, harassment is underreported both in and out of the workplace. In a male-dominated profession like safety, this can be especially difficult. As noted above, many respondents experience stereotyping and inappropriate behavior, so it becomes to feel like part of the norm and, typically, women don't want to "rock the boat" or be labeled "a troublemaker" for fear of retaliation or a negative effect on their career. But we all must understand that when harassment or discrimination goes unreported, it will only continue.



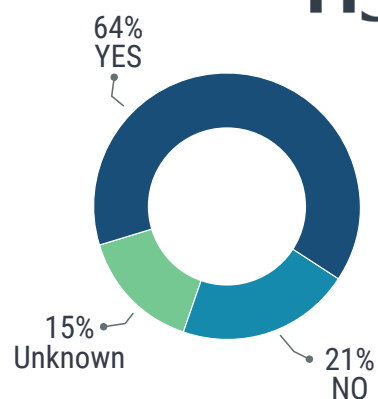
### If you have a professional certification, what was your motivation to achieve it?

Even though the most common answer here was personal gratification, it must be noted that just slightly fewer respondents noted that they sought certification to gain credibility. While it may not be required, plenty of women do still feel that extra step is needed to be considered an equal in their job.



## Do you have an advocate at work (someone has your back, speaks for you when you're not there)?

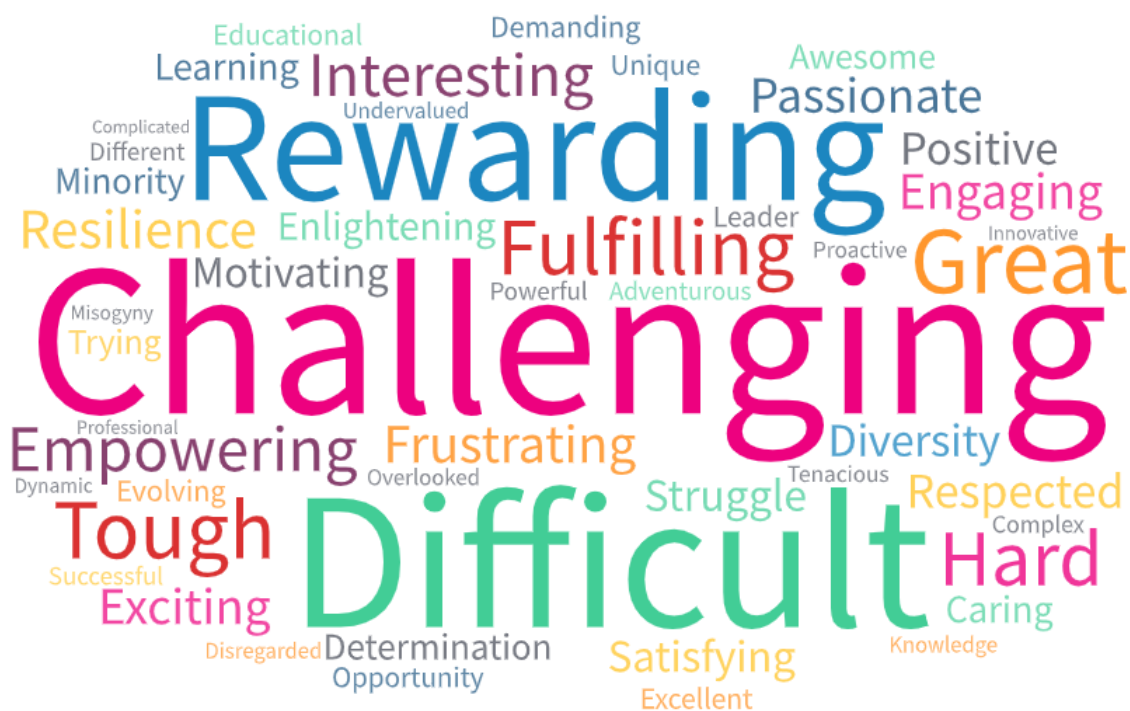
While a majority of women said they do have an advocate, a good number remained unsure. This shows that advocates for women in the workplace need to do more to be vocal about their support.



### Open comments

The last question of the survey included a space for “additional comments.” This optional answer box was filled in on nearly 30% of the survey submissions, and there were many prevalent themes we found in those responses.

1. **Seeing improvements over time:** We received many comments discussing how, after being in their respective field for many years, they have noticed positive changes over time.
2. **Industry-specific experiences may vary:** As to be expected, there was mention of some industries being better than others. Some fields are more supportive of women and integrate and treat women better.
3. **Takes more to prove themselves:** Many respondents noted they need to work harder and do more to get the same respect as their male counterparts. Some listed examples of being talked over, not being listened to, and having their ideas stolen or being taken more seriously if presented by a man.
4. **The importance of leaders:** We noted many comments pointing out that the difference in healthy vs. toxic environments is often a good manager or leadership. The trickle-down effect works here in both good and bad ways. If they have a good relationship with positive leadership, it increases their job satisfaction. But the inverse is also true.
5. **Need to be more like a man:** There were a few comments noting things might be easier for women in safety if they didn't focus on women vs. men or if they just took on the mentality and work style of the men around them. While some comments indicated this approach was how they gained acceptance amongst male colleagues, many others noted the strengths and unique perspectives females bring to the safety profession. In the end, authenticity and staying true to oneself is valued and needed in the workplace, rather than conforming to what has been dominant in the workplace.
6. **Gaining the respect of colleagues:** Of course, several people noted that good working relationships with colleagues make a big difference, and that once they gained their respect, the workplace became better and healthier.



What one word best describes your experience as a woman in safety ▲

## So Now What?

We can produce all the surveys we want, but if we don't try to identify and implement action items based on our findings, then the survey was all for naught. Luckily, the numerous responses we received helped us identify several takeaways for any employee at any level.

### IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.

This seems like a very typical safety phrase, but it works in this situation as well. For instance, a woman may approach another woman after noticing them being talked over or not respected in a meeting. That intention and support is kind, but something needs to happen in those situations, not after the fact. In many cases, the offender in that meeting may not even realize they are doing it. Bringing awareness in that moment can make all the difference.

**Advice for men.** Simple ask how to be an ally. Instead of asking "how can I help?" ask female

colleagues "what do advocacy and allyship mean to you?" Offering to help can imply weakness, but offering allyship shows value and sameness. And remember the responses to our open comments question about colleague relationships. Simply being there for female co-workers can help tremendously.

**HELP MEN BECOME ALLIES.** On the flip side, when men seek to understand, women should offer specific and actionable examples. How do men become more actively involved? Advocate for women? Uncover inequities? Think about your workplace and what actions can be taken.



**UNDERSTAND PAY INEQUITY AND LEARN TO NEGOTIATE.**

Look up pay scales for your area and profession. Be open to discussing salaries with coworkers at your same level. After that, understand the skills required to go into negotiations confidently. There are many articles or courses specifically for women, as they are far less likely to initiate promotion or pay increase conversations. Negotiation skills aren't just useful for salary conversations but also for promotions, safety budgeting, and other job task specific conversations with higher-ups.

**WIELD YOUR POWER.** This survey showed us that women with more experience and in positions of leadership can say and do things to change the environment at work. For those women that are more senior, help women that are new to your field and without power. Remember the comments about how top-down

leadership can affect the entire working environment.

**HAVE SELF-AWARENESS.** It is not only men that can tear women down. Remember that almost half of our respondents felt unsupported by women at work. Pay attention to your actions – or inactions – involving other women. Are you part of the problem? Can you help become part of the solution?

**BUILD A SUPPORT TEAM.** If you are in a leadership position, offer to be a mentor to lower-level employees. Or, on the flip side, reach out to a female leader you respect about becoming your mentor. Connect with women in other positions, fields, or industries. Build a strong, supportive network to discuss your challenges and your successes. Connect monthly or quarterly, formally, or informally, to provide support and guidance to each other.



**Credits:** this survey was created by women, primarily safety professionals, for the purpose of inclusion in a panel presentation at National Safety Council Conference in October 2023.

**A special thanks to:**

Jill James, MIS, Chief Safety Officer

Layne Myles, CSP, MS, ASP, Assistant VP of EHS

Monique Parker, CSP, Sr. VP of EHS

Kristi McClure, LCSW, Marketing Director

for the hard work, collaboration, and desire to advocate for and support the success of females in the workforce.