POV REIMAGINED:
WOMEN IN CYBERSECURITY

Unlocking a more resilient and secure future.

Deloitte. the FQ FEMALE QUOTIENT

The cybersecurity industry is booming, but faces a critical talent shortage, especially among women, who currently make up only 20-25%[1] of the field.

Women are essential to cybersecurity. Since 2022, Deloitte and The Female Quotient have spotlighted women leaders driving innovation and change.

We're unveiling our groundbreaking report, "POV Reimagined: Women in Cybersecurity," offering insights to transform the industry, and solutions for recruiting and retaining more women.

Cybersecurity offers women job security, growth opportunities, and a chance to make a real difference. Women's unique skills—collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking—are vital to tackling complex digital challenges.

Join us in reshaping the future of cybersecurity. As we continue to break through the cyber barrier, it's clear that when women thrive in this field, we all win. Together, we can create a more inclusive and secure digital world.

— **Emily Mossburg & Shelley Zalis**

EMILY MOSSBURG
Global Cyber Leader
at Deloitte

SHELLEY ZALIS
Founder & CEO
at The Female Quotient

Deloitte.

the **FQ**
FEMALE QUOTIENT

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POV REIMAGINED: WOMEN IN CYBERSECURITY.

The lack of women in leadership positions is a problem worth solving.

Women bring unique perspectives and problem-solving skills vital in combating complex challenges. History proves that when women are involved, game-changing solutions are born. Women created windshield wipers, WiFi, Bluetooth, home security systems, diapers, and the first all-electric programmable computer, to name but a few.

Conversely, there are lessons to be learned when women are left out of the equation. In 2019, NASA was forced to delay the high-profile, first-ever all female spacewalk due to a lack of spacesuits designed for women. In 2023, the first female car crash dummy was introduced after research revealed that women are more likely to suffer injuries in car crashes due in part to the design of the standard car crash dummy mimicking an average male's body.

To outsmart cybersecurity risks, the teams in the industry need to be as diverse as the threats they're up against. The need to integrate more women is clear.

CRACKING THE CODE FOR MORE WOMEN IN CYBER STARTS **NOW.**

AS OF 2023, WOMEN MAKE UP

20-25%

OF THE CYBERSECURITY FIELD GLOBALLY.

The shapeshifting landscape of cybersecurity presents a wealth of opportunities, demanding diverse perspectives to combat emerging threats. As the field anticipates a surge in demand for skilled professionals, projected to reach over 85 million by 2030[2], now is the perfect time to tap into an underrepresented talent pool: women.

By fostering a deeper understanding of the current landscape and dismantling barriers to entry, we can unlock the potential of women in cybersecurity. We must encourage initiatives that attract, retain, and empower women, inspiring future generations to join this dynamic and vital field.

This research provides crucial information to create a future where cybersecurity thrives on inclusivity and diverse perspectives. It's time to turn this around.

" Cyber is a team sport.

- Ann Barron-DiCamillo, Managing Director, Global Head of Cybersecurity Operations, Citi

The Female Quotient and Deloitte joined forces on an in-depth survey investigating the state of women in cybersecurity.

To change the equation for women in cybersecurity, we've uncovered misconceptions, barriers, insights, and opportunities to disrupt the status quo.

In addition to conducting extensive research with non-cybersecurity professionals to understand their interest in cybersecurity as a career, we also went straight to the source – women cybersecurity leaders across the globe who are thriving despite the lackluster gender diversity in the workplace. We asked about changes they want to see in the future, recommendations to get more women into the field, and more.

Together, equipped with thought-provoking insights, context, and analysis in this report, we can identify the problems and take actions towards closing the cybersecurity gender gap.

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Our research includes findings from both qualitative and quantitative research.

15

Lived experiences group discussions

These discussions were composed of men and women from several countries who are college students and professionals employed both within cybersecurity and other industries. Cybersecurity employees and employees from other industries participated in separate group discussions.

60+

In-depth interviews with women global cybersecurity leaders

Top women leaders and professionals in cybersecurity were interviewed to showcase their achievements and advice to the next generation. The goal is to foster recognition that cybersecurity is a field open to women, and a worthy fulfilling career.

8,000

Perspectives from working people around the world

Online self-administered surveys were conducted from January 19-24, 2024, among employed adults aged 21 and older who are not cybersecurity professionals, across 10 countries.

10 COUNTRIES

Australia	Canada	China	Germany	India
Japan	Netherlands	Spain	United Kingdom	United States

Report notes

01 For the purpose of this study, respondents will be referred to as working people when looking at the data in total. If the data represents a subgroup, they will be defined as such (e.g., by gender, age group, college students).

02 The data is weighted so that each country's sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the country's employed population according to the most recent census data.

03 Unless otherwise noted, all data presented in this report are from our proprietary research conducted in the past year.

04 Quotes are from the women cybersecurity leaders we interviewed, as well as cybersecurity and non-cybersecurity women who participated in our lived experiences group discussions.

NOW ENTERING
MISSION I̶M̶POSSIBLE.

A majority of women (51%) report they don't think "there is room for someone like me" in cybersecurity. However:

48%

OF WORKING WOMEN BELIEVE THERE IS A LOT OF GROWTH POTENTIAL

44%

BELIEVE A CAREER IN CYBERSECURITY OFFERS THE POTENTIAL FOR A THRIVING CAREER

These findings bring up more questions. Do such opposing views cancel each other out? And what are the misconceptions our research can help identify in order to create solutions? Once equipped with these insights, we went to the experts for solutions - we asked the top women leaders in cybersecurity for their point of view on how best to recruit and retain women. Read on for what we learned.

"

Working in cybersecurity has a real positive societal impact. You protect people and organizations. Plus, cybersecurity professions are so diverse. I'd encourage women around me to take up a career in cybersecurity.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

01

DECODING UNREALIZED CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

CYBERSECURITY IS ONE OF THE **MOST RELEVANT GLOBAL INDUSTRIES** FOR WOMEN.

Our research shows that the cybersecurity industry has everything women want in a career:

57%
JOB SECURITY

53%
OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ON THE JOB

52%
A SENSE OF PURPOSE

Many women just don't realize it (yet). And that's where the potential for change lies.
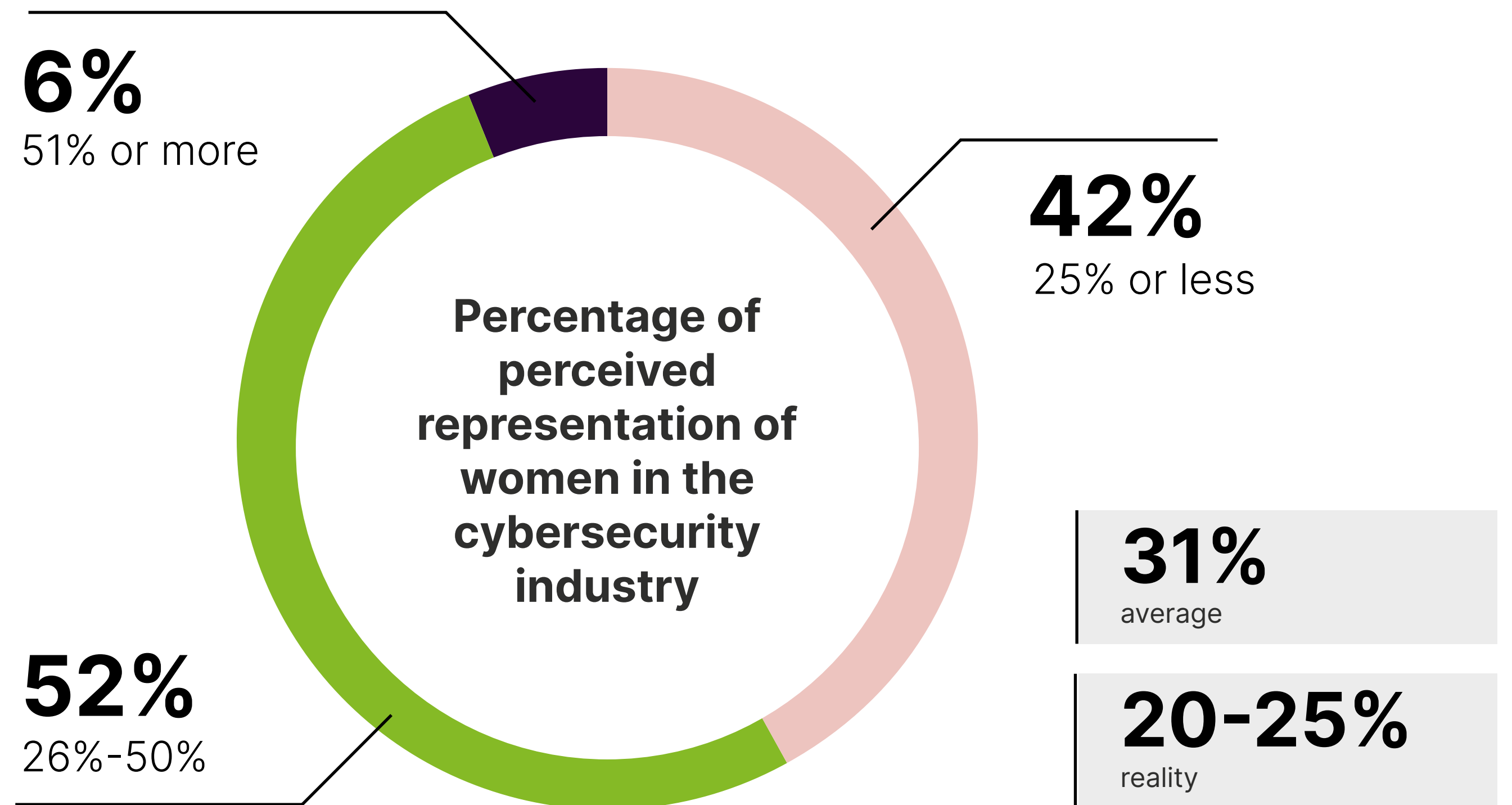
There's an opportunity to bridge the gap between how women currently perceive cybersecurity jobs, lifestyle, and career growth, and the reality. We can catalyze change and boost women's representation in cybersecurity by increasing awareness and raising the visibility of women already thriving in the field. Amplifying their voices and creating new opportunities will further empower women to enter and excel in cybersecurity.

CYBERSECURITY IS VIEWED AS A CAREER THAT **INTERESTS WOMEN SIGNIFICANTLY LESS** THAN MEN.

31% of working people believe cybersecurity is more likely to attract men.

Around the world: the perception that cybersecurity is a field more likely to attract men is highest among working people in China (46%), Japan (39%), and Germany (38%).

Yet working people inflate the percentage of the industry that they believe women represent.

6%
51% or more

42%
25% or less

Percentage of perceived representation of women in the cybersecurity industry

52%
26%-50%

31%
average

20-25%
reality

AT PRESENT, FEWER WOMEN ARE INTERESTED IN CYBERSECURITY, **HINDERING RECRUITING OPPORTUNITIES**.

Percentage of working people ever considering cybersecurity as a career

23%   35%

WOMEN   **MEN**

Women in the cybersecurity field emphasize the importance of companies showcasing women already in the industry to demonstrate that cybersecurity is an achievable and viable path for them.

"
[It's so important] to go out to high schools and work with students in STEM classes and talk to them as a female in the industry, showing them that it doesn't mean they have to be an engineer; they can be in human resources, sales, whatever area they want.
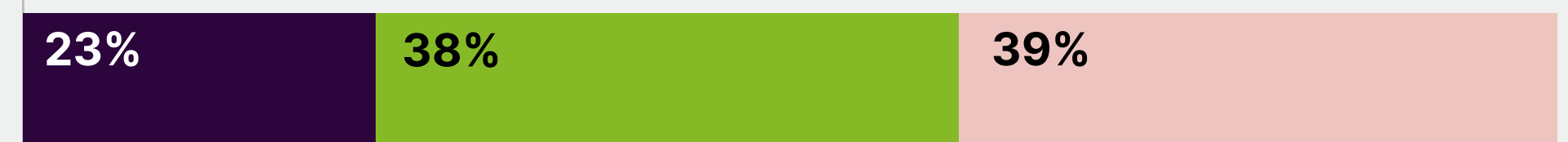
- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

"
I did not think that there would be that many jobs out there in this field.
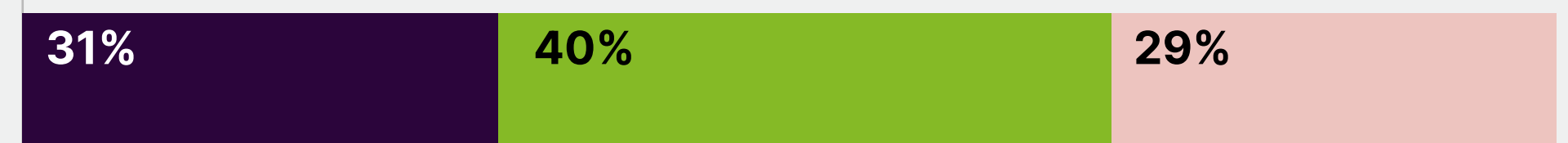
- Woman Non-Cybersecurity Professional

Level of interest* in cybersecurity as a career

● HIGHLY INTERESTED   ● MIDDLE OF THE ROAD   ● HIGHLY UNLIKELY

WORKING WOMEN

23%	38%	39%

WORKING MEN

31%	40%	29%

*Based on a 10-point scale where highly interested is equal to 8-10 rating, middle of the road is 4-7, and highly unlikely is 1-3.

WOMEN IN CYBERSECURITY **HIGHLY RECOMMEND THE FIELD.**

The industry's fast-pace and excitement, growth and learning opportunities, impact, job security, and competitive salaries rise to the top.

"
I find the constant change and human element to be challenging and exciting. It is also one of the few fields where we lock arms across companies, industries, and governments.

- Mary Rose Martinez, Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) and VP of Infrastructure, Marathon Petroleum Corporation

"
What I love most about cybersecurity is helping people across the world in this rapidly advancing technological era so they can shop online and in retail stores while feeling safe.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

"
It's exciting, technical, but also at the heart of it, it's about people, connections, and risk. I encourage everyone to consider it as a career. There are so many areas to specialize in, and it pays well.

- Penny Longman, Director, Information Security, Fraser Health Authority

"
I love the human side of cybersecurity. At the end of the day, you're trying to help others solve a complex issue when there is a scarcity of resources. It's never a boring day, and you always learn something new.

- Ivelina Koleva, Director, Deloitte UK

"
Helping businesses and consumers protect their data and safely enable their business with technology is my career and passion. I regularly mentor and encourage women to pursue cybersecurity as a way to either re-enter the workforce after taking time off for family reasons or to pivot their careers.
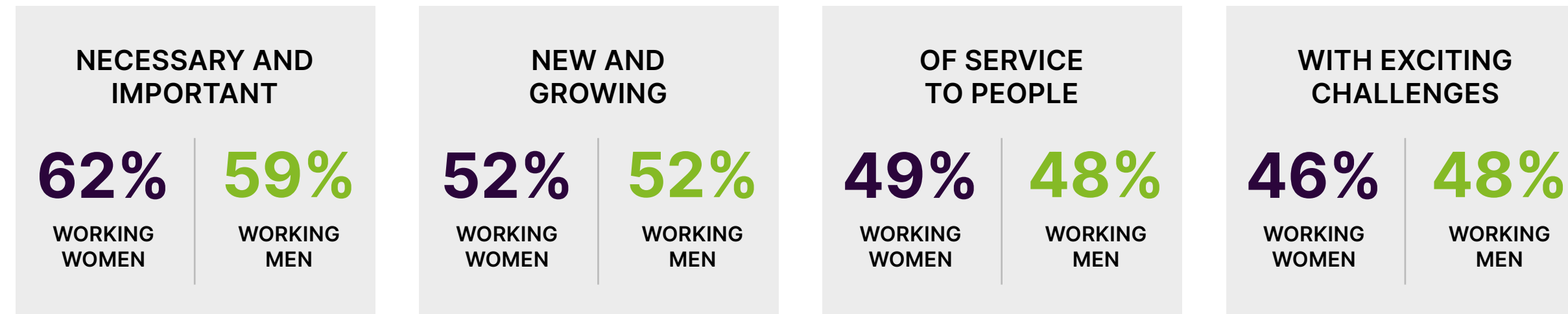
- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

"
Cybersecurity has global relevance and high stakes that impact our everyday lives, which can make it a meaningful and fulfilling career choice.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

EXCITING AND **ESSENTIAL.**

Recruiters don't need to reinvent the wheel to build demand, as working people find the industry to be flashy and new and, perhaps more importantly, an industry that serves a purpose.

Working people agree that the cybersecurity industry is:

NECESSARY AND IMPORTANT		NEW AND GROWING		OF SERVICE TO PEOPLE		WITH EXCITING CHALLENGES	
62%	**59%**	**52%**	**52%**	**49%**	**48%**	**46%**	**48%**
WORKING WOMEN	WORKING MEN	WORKING WOMEN	WORKING MEN	WORKING WOMEN	WORKING MEN	WORKING WOMEN	WORKING MEN

These attributes should be highlighted in cybersecurity job descriptions, as they will be highly impactful in attracting talent.

Percentage of working people who feel the following are important in a job description

BEING AN ESSENTIAL INDUSTRY
52%
51%

BEING AN INDUSTRY WITH PURPOSE
52%
50%

● WORKING WOMEN
● WORKING MEN

BEING A GROWING AND EXPANDING INDUSTRY
51%
50%

> " When you see your code getting used by clients, it gives you a different kind of gratification that I really love. It feels like I'm adding value to the cybersecurity world. Maybe I saved someone from getting hacked.

**- Woman Cybersecurity Professional**

> " I can be at the forefront of innovation, helping organizations adapt and strengthen their security posture. I love driving organizational change and the challenge of staying ahead of cyber threats while finding creative solutions to protect against them.

- Antonietta Martino, Senior Manager, Deloitte Italy

CYBERSECURITY IS NOT ONLY SECURE,
IT'S ASPIRATIONAL.

An emphasis on being indispensable is pivotal for working women.
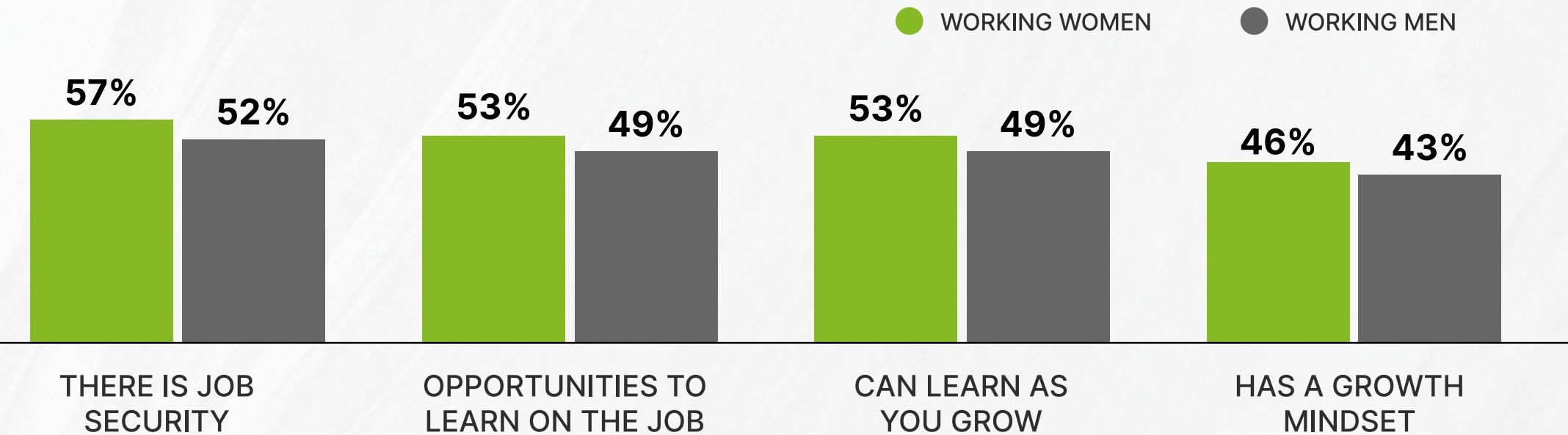
Working women already view a career in cybersecurity as having the attributes and versatility they value most.

Percentage of working people who feel the following are important in a job description

● WORKING WOMEN ● WORKING MEN

	THERE IS JOB SECURITY	OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ON THE JOB	CAN LEARN AS YOU GROW	HAS A GROWTH MINDSET
Working Women	57%	53%	53%	46%
Working Men	52%	49%	49%	43%

Percentage of working women who agree the following describe a career in cybersecurity

THERE IS A LOT OF GROWTH POTENTIAL	48%
OFFERS THE POTENTIAL FOR A THRIVING CAREER	44%
OFFERS A LOT OF OPPORTUNITIES	42%
HAS JOB SECURITY	37%
CAN LEARN ON THE JOB	36%

35% of working women would describe a cybersecurity career as one that **has positions for all specialties, offering a pathway to build out in order to attract more female talent.**

" I think cybersecurity is a growing industry with endless applications and uses, especially in a world that increasingly relies on technology and user information.

- Woman Non-Cybersecurity Professional

HOW DID **WOMEN IN CYBERSECURITY** GET STARTED?

While some women choose cybersecurity as a career, others get their foot in the door in different ways, from working in relevant roles at companies or within tech departments, or pursuing an education in tech studies.

> " I never thought I'd be in IT or cybersecurity. I was getting an MBA, then took a chance and furthered my studies in IT and realized I liked cybersecurity in particular.
>
> **- Parichart Jiravachara, Partner, Deloitte Thailand**

> " I didn't choose it; rather, I became increasingly involved through my work as a Data Protection Officer.
>
> **- Woman Cybersecurity Professional**

> " This career offers various roles to create your own path, from ethical hacking, penetration testing, threat intelligence, architecture, engineering. This allows individuals to pursue areas that match their interests.
>
> **- Amber Pearson, Deputy CISO and Executive Director of Information Security Policy & Strategy, Department of Veterans Affairs**

TAKEAWAYS

- There's an awareness gap of what cybersecurity careers entail, from diverse career paths and growth opportunities to benefits like high job security, purpose-driven work, and competitive salaries. The key? Spark more conversations highlighting why cybersecurity is an aspirational field for women, and amplify role model stories and voices.

- It's crucial to help women understand that there's a place for them in cybersecurity. BUT, we need to start early and pique their curiosity and interest in cybersecurity by exposing them to it at a young age.

02

BREAKING DOWN MISCONCEPTIONS

STEREOTYPES VS. REALITY: CYBERSECURITY PROFESSIONALS AREN'T ALWAYS MALE HACKERS IN HOODIES WORKING ALONE IN DARK ROOMS FACING MULTIPLE COMPUTER SCREENS.

Cybersecurity is broader than that. It includes risk analysis, data protection, project management, collaborating with stakeholders across the company, and much more. However, it's no surprise that cybersecurity has a reputation for being very male-dominant, like other STEM roles.

Yet, a compelling story for women is not being told about the impact women have already had in the sciences and STEM fields. Women working in cybersecurity, and tech in general, haven't been spotlighted enough in pop culture, and many role models have been flying undetected.

STEM fields were historically perceived as masculine industries until "The Scully Effect". **According to a report by the Geena Davis Institute, nearly two-thirds of women who work in STEM credit Gillian Anderson's character, Scully, in *The X Files* for inspiring them to make the leap.**[3]

It's also been nearly 30 years since Sandra Bullock starred in the hit cyberthriller film, The Net, portraying a heroic computer programmer saving her identity and life.
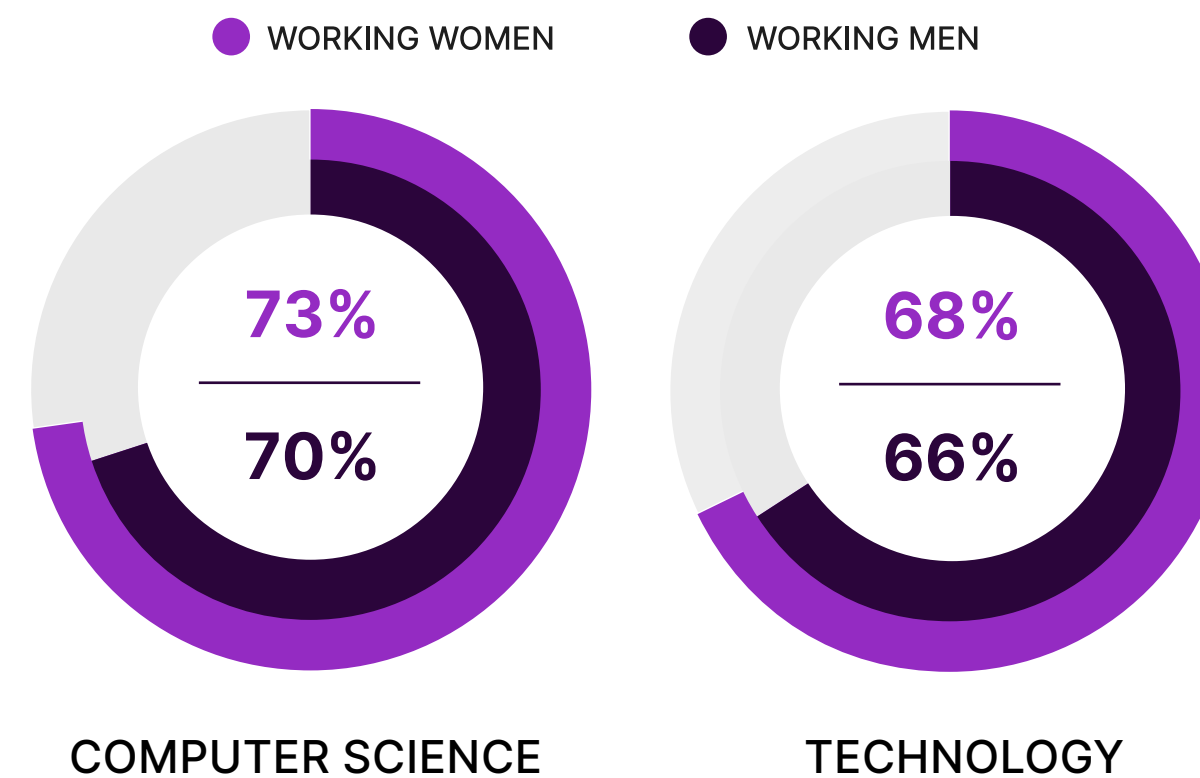
"Sharing success stories and highlighting prominent female cybersecurity professionals can inspire and motivate other women to consider careers in this field, break down stereotypes, and show that women can not only thrive, but also lead in cybersecurity.

**- Sara Albishr, Data Privacy and Protection, Diriyah Company**

YOU **DON'T NEED A TECHNICAL DEGREE** TO BREAK INTO AND SUCCEED IN CYBERSECURITY.

That's right, you don't need to be a computer analyst or programmer to get your big break in the industry. Our research shows that 70% of working women believe they must possess proficient technical skills to be qualified to work in cybersecurity. For women, 50% who are not interested in cybersecurity believe they lack sufficient knowledge about the field, and 48% express a similar sentiment towards technology. Compounding these misconceptions is the fact that working people globally only really recognize two positions in the industry: 75% computer specialist, and 72% data specialist.

Perceived experience needed

● WORKING WOMEN   ● WORKING MEN

73%
70%
COMPUTER SCIENCE

68%
66%
TECHNOLOGY

Top industry barriers
(Among those not interested in cybersecurity)

● WORKING WOMEN   ● WORKING MEN

50%
41%
LACK OF KNOWLEDGE IN CYBERSECURITY

48%
35%
LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

"
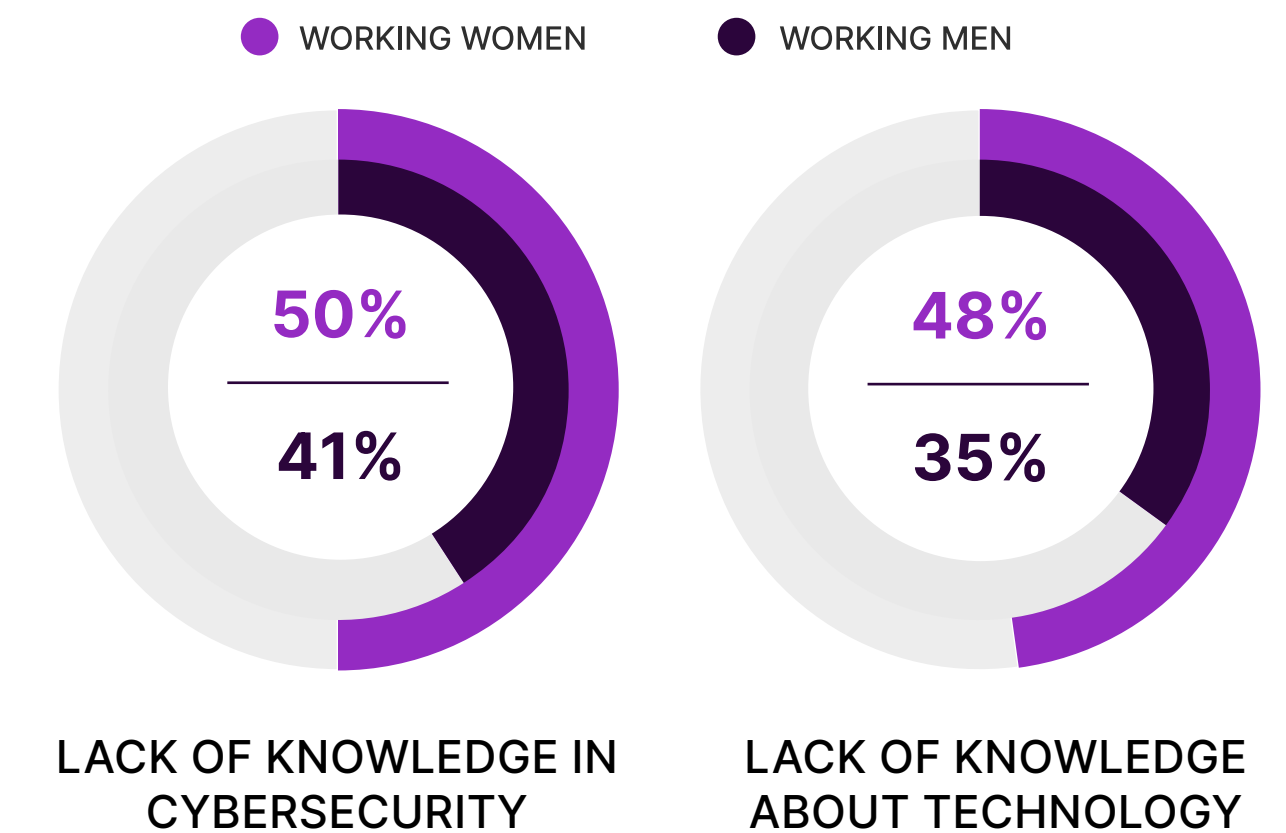
I wasn't aware of what classes to take in college to begin this path. I was also unsure of my computational skills.

- Woman Non-Cybersecurity Professional

However, our group discussions uncovered that the path to cybersecurity is diverse and varied among women in the field. The truth is, many people succeed in cybersecurity without computer hardware or software expertise. Skill sets including creativity, problem solving, and collaboration are also paramount for cybersecurity success, and are all skills women excel at. This helps explain why Hedy Lamar, a Hollywood star without a tech background, invented what would later become WiFi, and why it was a nurse, Marie van Brittan Brown, who invented the home security system.

Every cybersecurity professional must have **an open, curious mind and hunger to learn, adaptability, problem-solving skills, and interpersonal skills**. Job opportunities in cybersecurity are diverse and span various functions, including communications, operations, marketing, analytics, and beyond. The industry can be a high-stress, high-variability field that demands ongoing learning due to the constantly evolving threats.

"

What I love about my job is that the breadth of topics you can work in cybersecurity is so big, and the skills required are so diverse, that I think there is space for everyone to find their sweet spot and to play up their strengths.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

"

The reason I came into cybersecurity is because the recruiter contacted me, and they needed someone to come in and build a technical writing center in their company from the ground up. That was just something I couldn't pass up.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

TAKEAWAYS

- The misconception that technical skills are required for entering cybersecurity discourages many professionals from giving it a chance. To undo this stigma, we need to amplify success stories of unconventional career paths into cybersecurity, and highlight job opportunities that don't require heavy technical expertise.

- To make cybersecurity feel less niche and technical, we can better frame cybersecurity as an essential element of digital transformation, which is more broad and mainstream. This will help more women perceive cybersecurity as being familiar and accessible, making it easier to envision themselves thriving in the field.
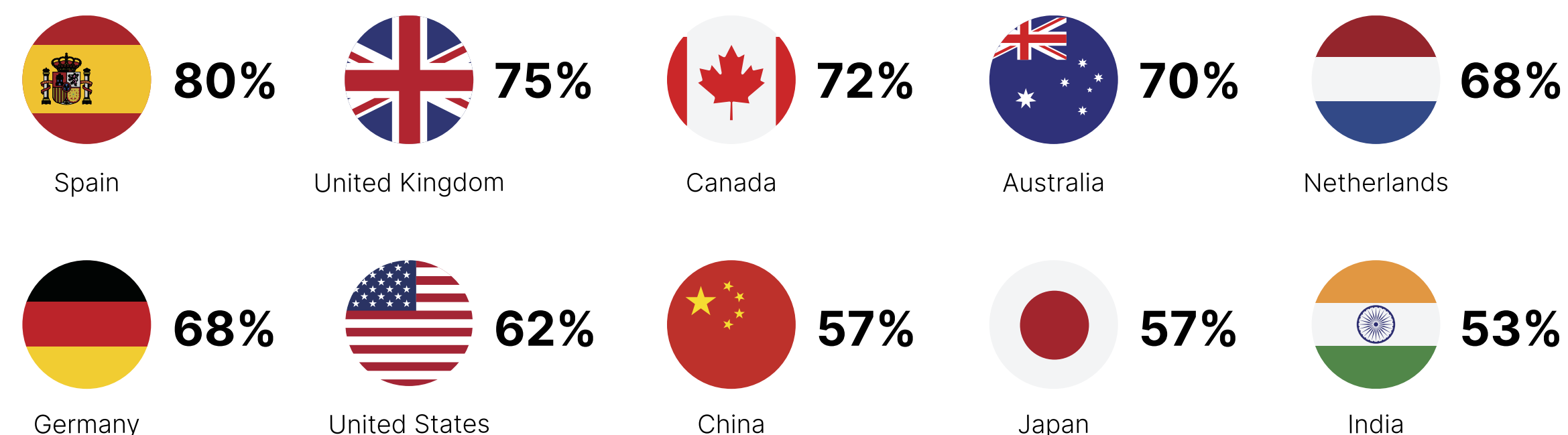
03

WHAT WOMEN WANT

WOMEN LEADERS AGREE THAT HAVING MORE **WOMEN IN CYBERSECURITY FUELS DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES**, DRIVING MORE INNOVATIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS.

With women comprising 20-25% of the cybersecurity industry...

Percentage of working people who agree 25% representation is too little in the industry

WORKING WOMEN — 72%

WORKING MEN — 61%

This sentiment ranges across the globe, as majorities in countries surveyed agree that one quarter of the industry is too little representation.

80% Spain	**75%** United Kingdom	**72%** Canada	**70%** Australia	**68%** Netherlands
68% Germany	**62%** United States	**57%** China	**57%** Japan	**53%** India

" Diversity of all types–gender, culture, age, disability–brings power. We think differently and look at problems from different angles.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

" Diversity drives innovation, and women's involvement in cybersecurity can lead to the development of new technologies, methodologies, and practices that might have otherwise been overlooked.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

BUT, WE HAVE A GLITCH. WORKING WOMEN **DON'T FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG** IN THE INDUSTRY.
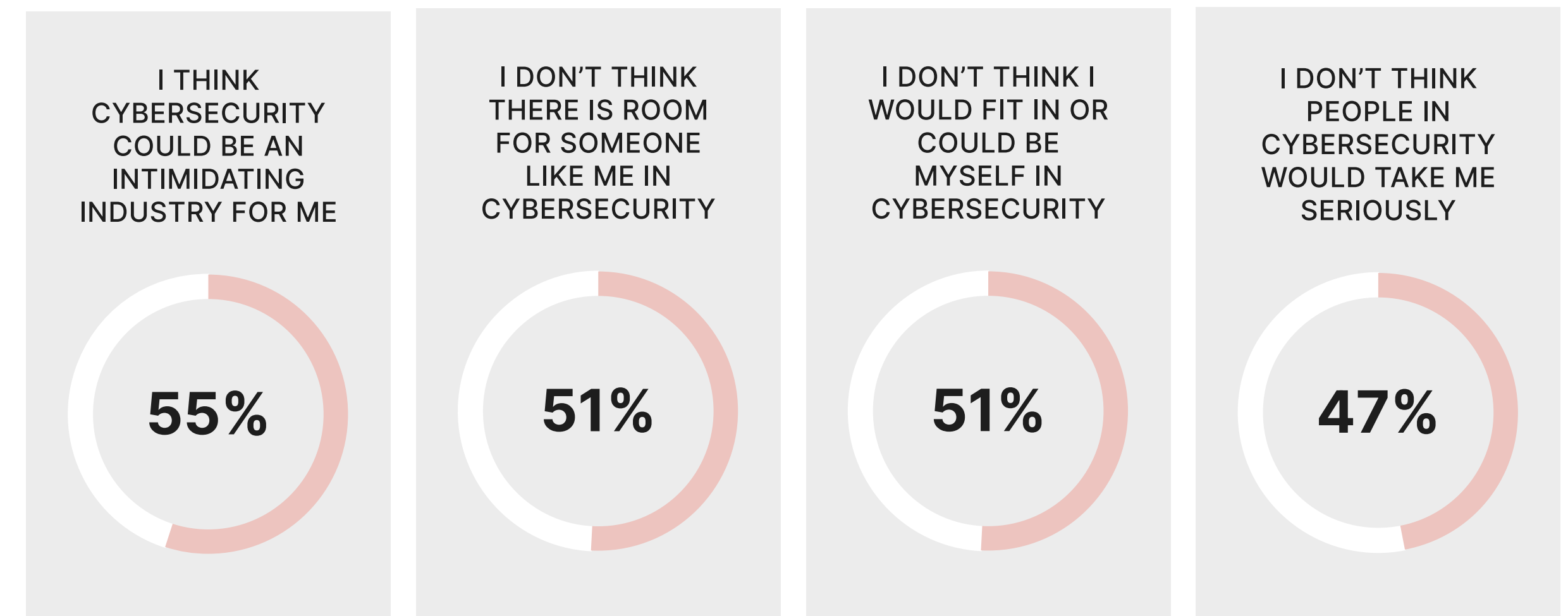
> "[Cybersecurity companies] are really putting forth the effort now. I appreciate the diversity and inclusion clubs and all these resource groups they have.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

Let's dig deeper*:

I THINK CYBERSECURITY COULD BE AN INTIMIDATING INDUSTRY FOR ME	I DON'T THINK THERE IS ROOM FOR SOMEONE LIKE ME IN CYBERSECURITY	I DON'T THINK I WOULD FIT IN OR COULD BE MYSELF IN CYBERSECURITY	I DON'T THINK PEOPLE IN CYBERSECURITY WOULD TAKE ME SERIOUSLY
55%	**51%**	**51%**	**47%**

*Based on a rating of 6 through 10 on a 10-point scale

WHILE THE CYBERSECURITY INDUSTRY LOOKS TO YOUNG TALENT TO HELP DIVERSIFY THE WORKFORCE, **YOUNG WORKING WOMEN STILL SEE ROADBLOCKS** TO ENTERING THE INDUSTRY. UNDERSTANDING HOW TO DISPEL THESE BARRIERS IS CRUCIAL TO ATTRACTING YOUNG WOMEN WHO CAN RESHAPE THE INDUSTRY.

INDUSTRY LIMITATIONS ACCORDING TO **YOUNG WORKING WOMEN***.

01 A perceived need for cybersecurity expertise and a deep technology background.

47% of young working women who aren't interested in cybersecurity believe they don't know enough about cybersecurity, and 43% say they don't know enough about technology.

02 A great concern that the inclusive culture they crave does not exist within the industry.

44% of young working women say having an inclusive work culture is important to see in a job description for a cybersecurity position, yet 27% also say a career in cybersecurity can be described as lacking in diversity in terms of employees.

03 The need for fair, transparent compensation.

Nearly half of young working women say that it's important for job descriptions for positions in cybersecurity to include information about competitive salaries (49%), yearly bonuses (48%), and pay transparency (47%), yet just 17% strongly agree** that a career in cybersecurity has excellent salary and benefits, and just 12% say there's pay transparency.

Our discussion with college women uncovers that many believe a background in technology is a prerequisite for entering the industry.

" I feel like it would be really hard to be in the space if you don't really understand the technical aspect of it. I see the necessity in understanding the basics of [technology] in order to understand the industry to help your team.

- Woman College Student

The lack of inclusivity is seen at the college level as well.

" In my cybersecurity classes we had group discussions, but I felt hesitant to talk every time. There were a maximum of five women in there at any given time.

- Woman College Student

College women note that if a company provided competitive compensation, they would be willing to learn any required skills.

" I feel like for any amount of money I could learn whatever I needed to. If [the company] is really paying me that much, I could take the time outside of my 9-to-5 to try to educate myself.
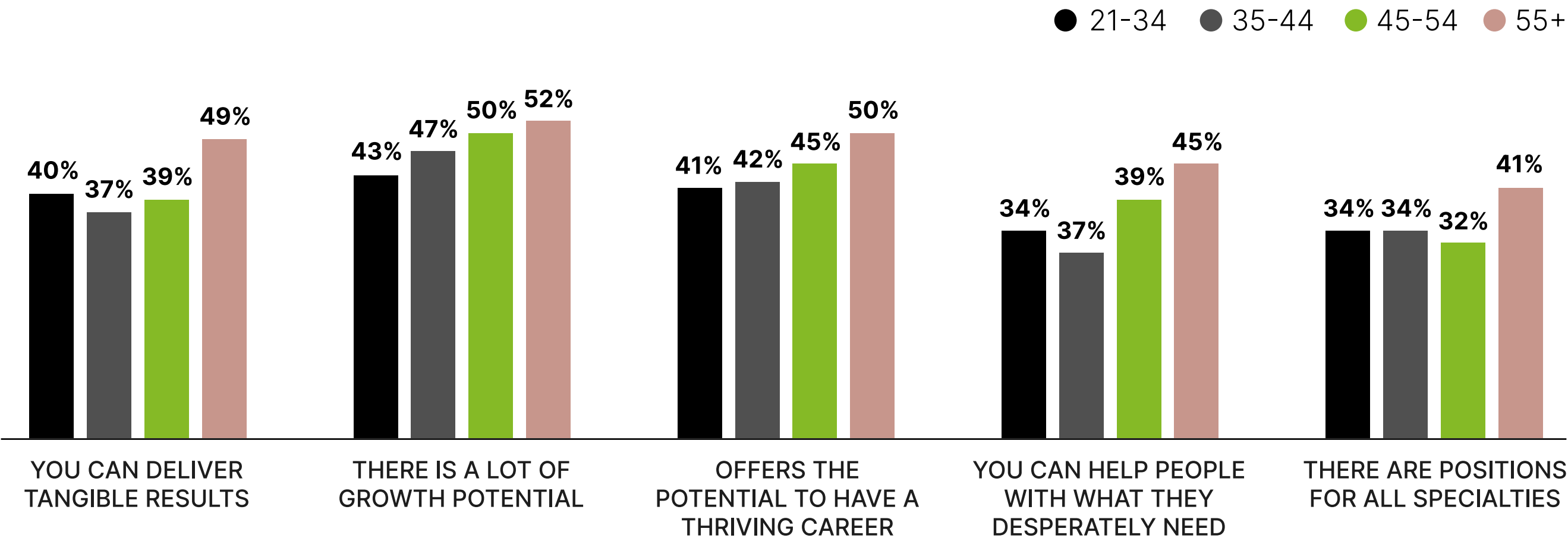
- Woman College Student

*Young working are between the ages of 21-34
**Based on a rating of 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale.

TAP INTO EXISTING RESOURCES: THE INDUSTRY HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK TO TENURED WORKING WOMEN AS A POTENTIAL EMPLOYEE POOL.

Tenured working women* recognize the growth and opportunity potential within the industry, with an emphasis on wanting to make a difference. So much so, that they're more inclined to agree that the following describe a career in cybersecurity:

● 21-34   ● 35-44   ● 45-54   ● 55+

	21-34	35-44	45-54	55+
YOU CAN DELIVER TANGIBLE RESULTS	40%	37%	39%	49%
THERE IS A LOT OF GROWTH POTENTIAL	43%	47%	50%	52%
OFFERS THE POTENTIAL TO HAVE A THRIVING CAREER	41%	42%	45%	50%
YOU CAN HELP PEOPLE WITH WHAT THEY DESPERATELY NEED	34%	37%	39%	45%
THERE ARE POSITIONS FOR ALL SPECIALTIES	34%	34%	32%	41%

*Tenured working women are 55+

THE INDUSTRY AND THE MAJORITY OF LEADERS MUST **OVERHAUL THE ALGORITHM** THAT CHANGES INDUSTRY CULTURE PERCEPTIONS TO ATTRACT MORE WOMEN.

3 IN 10

WORKING PEOPLE SAY THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO FOCUS ON THEIR WORK MEASURES AND GENERAL BEHAVIORS TO BE MORE DIVERSE AND ATTRACTIVE TO WOMEN.

This includes focusing on:

WORK MEASURES
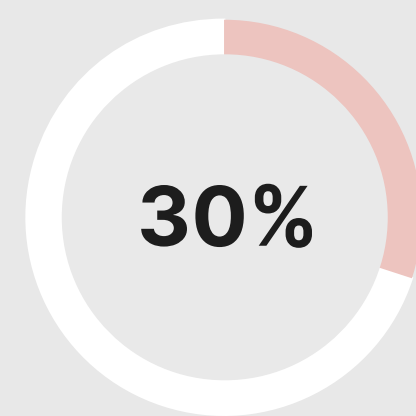
30%
- RECRUITING AND HIRING MORE WOMEN
- OFFERING BETTER/MORE JOB POSITIONS
- PAY EQUALITY

GENERAL BEHAVIORS
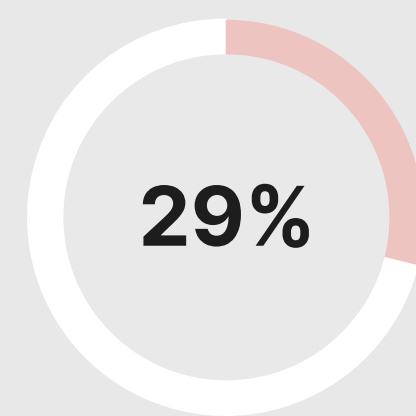
29%
- AWARENESS/PUBLICITY OF THE INDUSTRY
- INCREASING DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE
- HAVING MORE WOMEN MENTORS AND LEADERS

*Tenured working women are 55+

RECALIBRATING THE ALGORITHM MEANS THE INDUSTRY CAN **USE WHAT WORKING WOMEN** WANT TO SEE AS A STARTING POINT.
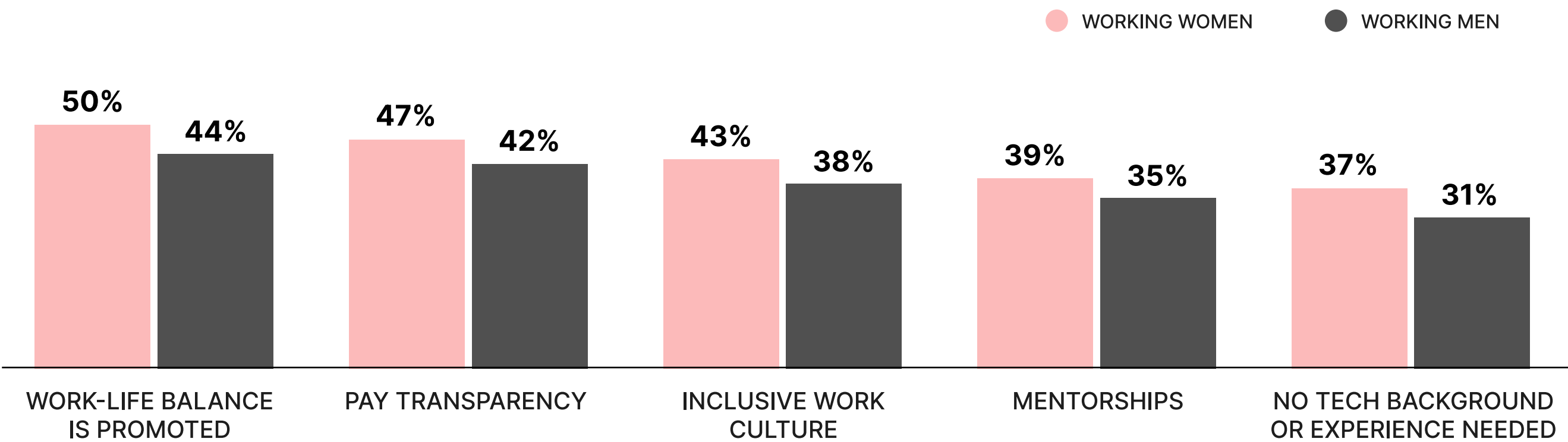
> " We see that there aren't enough female leaders in senior leadership roles, so there's more work to be done to promote them. That will go a long way in driving gender balance across the industry.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

Percentage of working people who feel the following are important in a job description

● WORKING WOMEN   ● WORKING MEN

WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS PROMOTED	PAY TRANSPARENCY	INCLUSIVE WORK CULTURE	MENTORSHIPS	NO TECH BACKGROUND OR EXPERIENCE NEEDED
50% / 44%	47% / 42%	43% / 38%	39% / 35%	37% / 31%

Women in cybersecurity have a call to action for the industry: examine the leadership roles within organizations. Ensuring diversity and fair treatment at these levels is a crucial starting point for effective, meaningful change.

LET'S UNPACK **THE BENEFITS**.

Increasing women's representation in cybersecurity can:

- **Strengthen the future by diversifying cybersecurity capabilities.** Teams will be able to better identify, collaborate, and develop response strategies for diverse risks and threats.

- **Close the talent gap in cybersecurity and tech.** More representation means more role models to inspire and encourage women to join the field. Plus, this helps promote gender equality and empower women in technology in general.

- **Foster new innovations and strategies.** Bringing people of diverse backgrounds together can unlock groundbreaking solutions, strategies, and innovations that are more effective and impactful.

" Overall, increasing the presence of women in cybersecurity can strengthen the industry, making it more innovative, resilient, and capable of addressing the complex challenges of the digital age.

- Amber Pearson, Deputy CISO and Executive Director of Information Security Policy & Strategy, Department of Veterans Affairs

" More women and women of color coming to cybersecurity will make the community more diverse, which will attract new talent and make the community even stronger.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN MORE WOMEN, IT'S **CRUCIAL TO NURTURE AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE** THAT VALUES AND APPRECIATES EMPLOYEES. AT THE SAME TIME, MANY WOMEN SHY AWAY FROM CYBERSECURITY BECAUSE THEY DO NOT SEE SENIOR WOMEN IN THE FIELD.

For younger women thinking about career paths, they need to see it to believe it. That's why role model visibility is crucial. Yet, diversity tends to be more evident at lower level roles compared to senior level roles.

Women emphasize the importance of representation at the leadership and management levels within organizations. Additionally, ensuring diversity and fair treatment in these positions is viewed as a crucial starting point for meaningful change.

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I encourage younger women to at least think about cybersecurity. Many don't even know it's an option, or they have a perception that it's boring or only for men.

– Meredith Ward, Deputy Executive Director, NASCIO

TAKEAWAYS

- Cybersecurity or not, women want inclusive work environments, fair pay, and equal career advancement. To support women, companies should eliminate pay and promotion gaps, ensure equitable treatment and opportunities, and provide benefits that meet women's needs—like flexible hours and child care.

- Women want to see more women leaders in cybersecurity to prove that there's an opportunity for them to thrive and rise in the field. The good news? These leaders exist. However, there's ample room for more recognition and visibility to inspire future generations of women to join the industry.

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THE NEW EQUATION: MAKING CYBERSECURITY A SOUGHT-AFTER CAREER

" The industry has to change its perception of what a cybersecurity person is and isn't. We need to show the world that **cybersecurity is cool**, and can be a **very rewarding career**.

- **Meredith Ward, Deputy Executive Director, NASCIO**

WOMEN AT THE **FOREFRONT OF CHANGE.**

Women in cybersecurity agree that the industry can attract and retain more women in the field in several ways.

01 Squash the myth that technical skills are required.

Change the conversation by highlighting unconventional career paths to cybersecurity, and dispelling antiquated concepts about technical roles being more legitimate compared to non-technical roles. If a candidate doesn't possess technical skills, recruiters can highlight learning opportunities and encourage them to give a job a try.

02 Introduce cybersecurity to women earlier.

Early exposure can spark interest and curiosity about the field, encouraging more women to pursue cybersecurity-related education and careers. This means exposing girls to cybersecurity concepts and opportunities starting in elementary school, through relevant programs and workshops.

03 Implement inclusive hiring practices and benefits.

Companies should show they prioritize diversity by making job descriptions and recruitment conversations more inclusive, and not over-emphasize on technical skills when they're not important. Companies can also support women by closing pay and promotion gaps, giving equal opportunities to women, and offering more family-friendly benefits, such as flexible work hours. Informational interviews and job fairs are other effective ways to connect women of various backgrounds to the industry.

04 Create clear pathways to cybersecurity roles.

Launch internships, mentorship programs, grants, scholarships, or other targeted recruitment efforts. Companies can also offer reskilling opportunities to women who are interested in pivoting into cybersecurity, and create more entry level positions to increase access to jobs.

06 Connect women to cybersecurity communities.

This offers a powerful environment for women to connect with new opportunities, resources, mentors, and peers. Companies can create mentorship and community-building initiatives in the workplace to create a space for women to support one another on their career journeys.

05 Raise visibility of women role models.

Girls and women can't believe in what they can't see. That's why publicizing women's achievements in cybersecurity through media, conferences, industry events, and more is so important. Promoting more women to leadership positions will also help other women recognize that growth opportunities in cybersecurity exist.

07 Bust the myth that cybersecurity is a 24/7 job.

There's a misconception that working in cybersecurity means you're "always on" because cybersecurity attacks can happen anytime. Proactively describing a typical workday in the field to women to show that there's work-life balance is critical, especially to non-cybersecurity professionals.

08 Continue to demystify the industry to make cybersecurity more accessible.

Reducing technical jargon and simplifying how cybersecurity is talked about or taught can make the industry more appealing for people without technical backgrounds. Additionally, we must flip the narrative pigeon-holing women into functional roles and men into technical roles to show that all types of cybersecurity jobs are for everyone.

09 Shift the cybersecurity narrative to encompass digitalization.

Our society is more digital than ever before, and young women in particular are growing up in a digital-first world. By framing cybersecurity as an integral part of digital transformation, people can better perceive cybersecurity as less abstract and more familiar, making it easier for women to envision themselves thriving in the field.

10 Create a safe space for learning, knowledge-sharing, and experimentation.

The field is broad. There are so many roles to choose from, that it's important to create a supportive environment that encourages talent to shadow different teams, learn about the industry and career options, and upskill or reskill to stay on top of the ever-evolving landscape. Also, equip employees who are new to cybersecurity with training to adapt to the nature of cybersecurity work and job expectations, while helping them discover their specialization within organizations.

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Don't shy away from a challenge. You might be surprised about how much you learn and grow through it.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

11 Help them find their confidence and voice.

That mixed feeling of excitement and vulnerability at a new job? We've all been there. For women just breaking into cybersecurity, build up their confidence by emphasizing the valuable and positive impact of their work. Be their confidante and coach in carving out their space and asserting their strength to succeed.

12 Help them build their support system.

Introduce women employees to people, resources, forums, and communities where they can build their own network. Encourage mentorship pairings, tapping into local cybersecurity communities and more to facilitate further growth.

13 Help them realize there IS a place for them in cybersecurity.

There are incredible career opportunities and job security in the cybersecurity space. Emphasize the high demand for cybersecurity roles, growth trajectories, endless learning opportunities, and various ways to break into the industry. It's not just a boy's club or exclusive industry for people with technical backgrounds.

"Advocate for yourself. No one else will do it for you!

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

"Don't be afraid to speak up. You might have to pull up your own chair to the table.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

"There are no stupid questions in cybersecurity, and don't let the technical people make you feel otherwise!

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

"Never ever say 'I'm not technical' even if your background is Art History. If you can communicate well, you're more valuable than the run-of-the-mill techies who don't like talking to real people.

- Woman Cybersecurity Professional

CONCLUSION:
WOMEN BELONG IN CYBER.

Diversity drives innovation, and women are the key to unlocking it.

Boosting women's representation in cybersecurity doesn't just benefit them—it's a win for the entire industry's future. Elevating women's voices and stories will show that cybersecurity is an attainable, exciting, and opportunity-filled career path.

This report isn't just about data. It's a reimagining of what could be, based on the insights and experiences of women leading the charge in cybersecurity today. It's also a call to action to get more women in cybersecurity to unlock a more resilient and secure future for all.

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RESOURCES

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