

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is seen from the side, looking out a large window in an office. The background is blurred, showing other people working at desks.

# **INTERRUPTING SEXISM AT WORK: HOW MEN RESPOND IN A CLIMATE OF SILENCE**

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# Silence Is Not Golden

A groundswell of courageous voices has brought increased attention to the day-to-day experiences of sexism that women face, often in the workplace. Indeed, for many people from all walks of life, these experiences are far too common.<sup>1</sup> What can we do to stamp out workplace sexism?

While everyone has an important role to play in combatting sexism, men are uniquely situated to press for change because they hold the majority of positions of power. Indeed, many gender-equity programs call out men as vital to addressing sexism in the workplace and beyond.<sup>2</sup>

This report finds that **the overwhelming majority of men (86%) say they are personally committed to interrupting sexist behaviors when they see them in the workplace—but only 31% feel confident they can do so.** Men want to be part of the solution. Yet they also sense that the costs of doing so at work are high—and this perception may conflict with their personal drive and intentions to interrupt sexism at work. As more and more companies strive to build inclusive work cultures, this finding is especially concerning.

We found that for many men, the costs they perceive are associated with an organizational climate of silence that discourages men from speaking up. Whether or not this climate of silence is created intentionally, it disables men from becoming agents of change.<sup>3</sup> When speaking up is not encouraged by those who hold power in organizations, employees are more likely to remain quiet, behave passively, or react in unconstructive ways when witnessing sexist behavior. Organizational silence fortifies men's silence, and the cycle of injustice, inequity, and sexism deepens.<sup>4</sup>

What can companies and leaders do to break the silence and encourage and support men to step up and use their voices to combat sexism at work? The first step is to build awareness. The second step is to take action.

## WHAT IS A CLIMATE OF SILENCE?

**A climate of silence is an environment in which employees feel restrained from constructively speaking up about organizational or work-related problems, concerns, or challenges.<sup>5</sup>**

It emerges as part of a shared belief that speaking up will bring either repercussions or no meaningful change. Fear runs rampant. Trust that employee voices matter is absent. Employees feel caught in a no-win situation, with limited options for speaking up to disrupt inappropriate or sexist behavior.<sup>6</sup>



**SEXISM** is the result of assumptions, misconceptions, and stereotypes that rationalize discrimination, mistreatment, and objectification of people based on their sex, gender, or sexual orientation.

Sexism can take many forms.<sup>7</sup> Overt sexism is intentional, visible, and unambiguous. While overt sexism is less prevalent than it has been in the past, covert sexism is still common. With covert sexism, incidents are subtle, hidden, or invisible because they are built into social and cultural norms.<sup>8</sup> Everyone is vulnerable to thinking and acting in ways that might be sexist—in many cases, unintentionally and unconsciously.<sup>9</sup>

Prevalence of sexist attitudes and practices in the workplace can predict tolerance of more harmful behaviors toward women such as sexual harassment.<sup>10</sup> While our data is not particularly focused on incidences of sexual harassment, our findings highlight the importance of creating a workplace climate in which sexism, as a potential pathway to sexual harassment, is not neglected and tolerated.

## Study at a Glance

Catalyst initiated foundational [research](#) on engaging men in gender initiatives in 2009. That research sparked [MARC](#) (Men Advocating Real Change), Catalyst's program for engaging male leaders as role models and influencers for gender equity.

This study builds on our previous work and is part of a new research initiative that explores organizational conditions affecting men's intentions and ability to interrupt sexism in different contexts. It is the first in a series of reports that will focus on understanding how men interrupt sexism in North America.

We surveyed<sup>11</sup> 338 men across job levels working in three multinational corporations in Mexico.<sup>12</sup> We also conducted eight in-depth interviews with men in different industries to gain further insights into what holds men back or encourages them to interrupt sexist behaviors when they witness these behaviors at work.<sup>13</sup> Quotations highlighted throughout this report reflect the voices of the men interviewed.



In other companies, the problem of the exclusion of women exists. There

are some really bad situations. It's an offensive environment for women.

There was a situation where they asked me not to say anything. I preferred to leave the company.

I was marked for not supporting a situation that to me was disagreeable.

— Front-line Manager

# Climate of Silence Harms Women and Organizations

All over the world, women are underrepresented in high-level managerial positions and overrepresented in low-level, part-time, and informal jobs.<sup>14</sup> This power differential leaves women especially vulnerable to harmful sexist acts. Indeed, all women can be exposed to sexism at work. Neither age, income, nor social status provide immunity from these experiences.<sup>15</sup>

When organizations explicitly or implicitly endorse men's silence in the face of sexist behavior, women suffer. Silence and inaction can be interpreted (or misinterpreted) as support for the status quo. When we're silent, people who act in sexist ways may feel their behavior is justified or acceptable—and the people they target feel marginalized and powerless to fight back.<sup>16</sup> Even when sexism is unintentional, it's still important for us to speak out against it so it doesn't become normalized as part of the culture.

Failing to act has measurable costs. Both organizations and employees are harmed when sexist behavior goes unchecked. Research shows that sexism imposes costs on organizations by negatively affecting employees' health, self-efficacy, and job performance.<sup>17</sup> Creating a workplace where sexist behavior is not tolerated not only benefits employees but the organization as a whole.



Someone told a sexist joke. It didn't have anything to do with a woman from our company. I laughed and didn't say anything. However, I did not feel comfortable....That type of comment we take as meaningless chatter, we think that they are jokes, and we make them like it's nothing.

— Front-line Manager

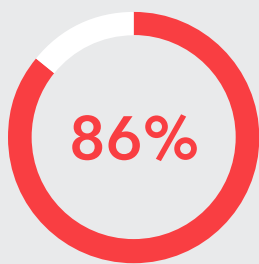


We cannot tolerate sexist comments or behaviors. And men, we are the first to set the example. To avoid [those behaviors] and orient others so that they stop and don't [do or say sexist things]. Because if they do that once...and you are seeing it, then tacitly—not expressly—you are accepting it. If you are a leader in an organization and you accept that conduct, tacitly you are saying "it's okay to do that."

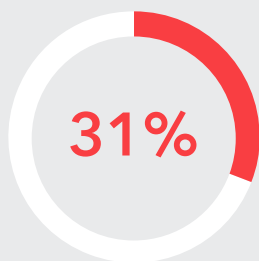
— Executive

# Men Are Committed But Not Confident When It Comes to Interrupting Sexist Behavior

Our study found that **most men (86%) say they are personally committed to interrupting sexism**—a finding that bodes well for progress. However, many men surveyed also have a striking lack of confidence in their ability to interrupt sexism: **only 31% feel confident, regardless of whether a climate of silence pervades their workplace**. This disparity is a call to action for organizational leaders to equip men with skills to effectively address day-to-day incidents of sexism in the workplace.



Percentage of men who report being personally committed to interrupting sexism



Percentage of men who report being confident about interrupting sexism, regardless of whether a climate of silence pervades their workplace



There are people that attack you and laugh, but if you are convinced of what you are doing, you have to explain, without attacking. It doesn't have to be defensive or aggressive. It has to be an intelligent thing—to explain it correctly and to say to the person why you are convinced. If they ask, "Why are you pro-women?" you have to know how to answer why.

— Executive

# Organizational Silence Prevents Men From Speaking Up

Organizational climates where silence is the norm suppress men's instincts to speak up. In fact, as organizational silence increased, men were:

- **50% less likely** to be committed to interrupting sexism.<sup>18</sup>
- **40% less likely** to be confident in their ability to interrupt.<sup>19</sup>

Organizational silence also deters men through threats of punishment. A climate of silence flourishes when there is a sense of unease and fear that people who speak up will be penalized.<sup>20</sup> Our findings show that men who perceive higher levels of silence also recognize:

- More **interpersonal costs**<sup>21</sup> such as being viewed as a complainer, as overly sensitive or irritating, or as a troublemaker.
- More **work-related costs**,<sup>22</sup> including damage to relationships with supervisors or threats to career security.
- Fewer **benefits** of confrontation.<sup>23</sup> Respondents who reported higher levels of silence were less likely to believe that if they confronted, doing so would reduce workplace sexism.



I have felt attacked for supporting inclusion. People have said to me...  
"You are pro-women. [It's like] you already changed gender."

– Executive

# Men Respond Differently in Climates of Silence

To understand whether and how an organizational climate of silence impacts men's behavior, we asked men how they would respond if a colleague made a sexist comment in the workplace.<sup>24</sup>

We found that a large percentage of men said they would respond in a direct manner,<sup>25</sup> either questioning the colleague<sup>26</sup> or remarking on the appropriateness of the comment.<sup>27</sup>

But we also found that a climate of silence had a significant effect on men's likelihood of responding directly. In particular, as organizational silence increased, men were:

- **30% less likely** to question their colleague.<sup>28</sup>
- **35% less likely** to comment on the appropriateness of their colleague's comment.<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly, indirect responses in the form of sarcasm or humor were more likely to be used when men perceived a higher climate of silence. We found that as organizational silence increased, men were:

- **75% more likely** to use humor or sarcasm when responding to their colleague.<sup>30</sup>

This is noteworthy because it shows that when organizational silence prevails, men don't feel that they have a wide range of options available to interrupt sexist behavior. And while it may seem simply like "guys being guys," the use of sarcasm and humor is especially concerning because those tactics can produce adverse consequences.

For example, some forms of humor can invoke negative feelings such as anger, distrust, or discomfort, and as a result, reinforce interpersonal conflict and aggression.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, sarcasm can be used or interpreted as a way of indirectly criticizing a person. The potentially antagonistic or biting undertone of sarcasm, along with its indirect nature, often shuts down the potential for open and effective communication.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, sarcastic humor can weaken or mask the point and may be more likely to provoke counterarguing—rather than inviting constructive dialogue.<sup>33</sup>

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In a meeting of [a mix of] women and men, another woman showed up. She was very-well-put together, well dressed. One of the people made the following remark, "Surely they arranged her for the boss." Another person responded, "Seriously, you're making that comment?" To which he responded, "But it was just a joke, we're friends, we've known each other for a long time." The other man said, "It doesn't matter if you are friends, the impression that you're making is not okay."...The person who made the joke, he didn't take it well. But because of this situation, the company developed an initiative in which they share different situations, without revealing who was involved, of inappropriate scenarios that illustrate different situations that occur in the company, where people identify exclusionary or sexist behaviors, and the message it sends is, "If this behavior continues, you have to take it to the next level."

- Executive



# Take Action as a Leader to Break Through a Climate of Silence

Men's willingness to interrupt everyday acts of sexism is critical to creating fair and inclusive workplace cultures. Leaders and managers can dismantle the climate of silence by practicing the following actions.

- 1. CHALLENGE YOURSELF.** Don't make assumptions that things are "just the way they are" or "not that bad," and don't trick yourself into thinking that the sexist comment, joke, or behavior was not really what you saw or heard. If you think what you saw or heard might be sexist and harmful, it probably was. Challenge yourself to understand the importance and urgency of the impact you can make.
- 2. TAKE OWNERSHIP.** It is not the sole responsibility of women or other marginalized groups to educate others about sexism and how to respond to sexist behaviors. Take ownership of your own learning. If this feels daunting, ask for help. For example, consider bringing in an expert—from inside or outside your workplace—to help you get started, or seek out the support of a mentor. Also remember that taking ownership does not mean you have to do it alone. Identify like-minded colleagues and ask them to support you when you speak up, offering to do the same for them.
- 3. TAKE STOCK.** Organizational climate matters. Critically evaluate and reflect on how pervasive a climate of silence might be within your company, business units, and teams. Take proactive steps to understand the implicit and explicit rules, rewards, and penalties that might foster or hinder an environment in which people feel comfortable speaking up. For example, conduct small focus groups. Start by asking employees if they feel heard and if their opportunities for sharing ideas are suppressed.

- 4. LISTEN—AND LISTEN AGAIN.** Encourage employees to break through the silence. Find ways to assure them that their voices matter and that everyone can play a role in changing workplace culture. Engage in conversations about sexism and other biases employees face, even when those conversations may be uncomfortable. Pay particular attention to the experiences of those in lower-ranked positions and from non-dominant backgrounds or groups. Listening to and discussing their experiences may help put a stop to harmful behaviors before they start.
- 5. IDENTIFY POWER DYNAMICS.** Be mindful that your job position, gender, race, ethnicity, age, and many other factors may come into play when employees—including you—decide whether it feels safe to speak up. As a senior leader, for example, your relative power may afford you more leeway to speak up in many situations. Understand and recognize that you may have privileges others do not. Play a role in creating an environment in which speaking up is not diminished or penalized.
- 6. LEAD THE CHARGE.** Speak out against sexist behaviors or comments when you see them in your workplace. As a leader, not only does speaking up let employees know that it is safe to stand up for their values even when it may seem risky; speaking up also lets others know what types of behaviors are not acceptable or tolerated in your organization. It can be very difficult for men to speak up because they may feel that they are breaking ranks with other men to disrupt the status quo. Modeling this behavior can be highly impactful in helping other men face that challenge. That said, speaking out directly and spontaneously isn't always possible or a reasonable approach in every work environment and situation. In these cases, consider other avenues of communication, such as private one-on-one conversations or facilitated safe discussions.



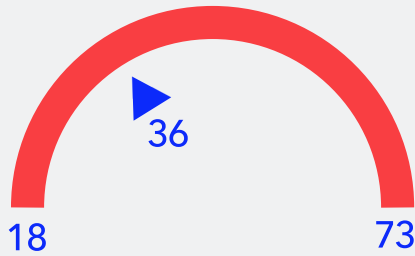
I have changed because of my role and my responsibility in the company....I learned the hard way. I had a different way of thinking about failure, [that] it helped me to grow. But we fail as leaders because we feel that it is not our responsibility to promote inclusion and make sure things happen. We blame everyone else, or we externalize it and say it's a consequence of the culture. We want to justify ourselves.

— Industry Leader

## ABOUT THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

N = 338 MEN

### AVERAGE AGE



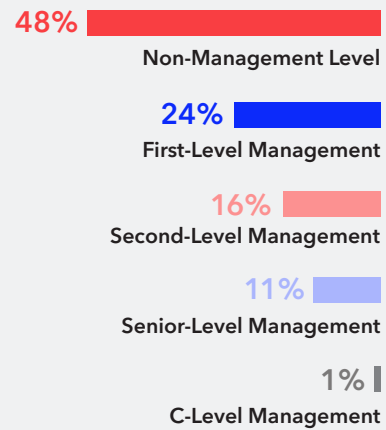
SELF-IDENTIFIED MEMBER  
OF A RACIAL/ETHNIC  
MINORITY GROUP IN  
THEIR COUNTRY<sup>34</sup>

5%

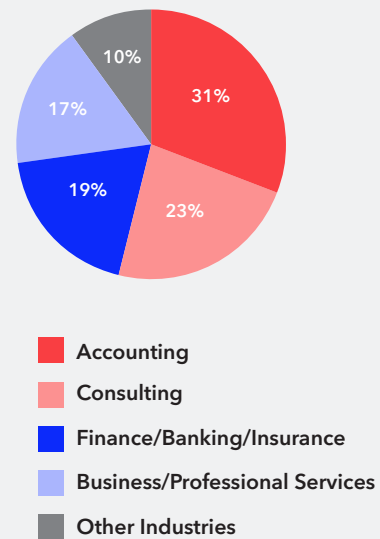
SELF-IDENTIFIED LESBIAN,  
GAY, BISEXUAL, QUEER,  
AND/OR ASEXUAL

8%

### JOB LEVEL



### INDUSTRY<sup>35</sup>



## Endnotes

1. Elyse Shaw, Ariane Hegewisch, M. Phil, and Cynthia Hess, *Sexual Harassment and Assault at Work: Understanding the Costs* (Institute for Women Policy Research, 2018); Joseph Chamie, "Sexual Harassment: At Least 2 Billion Women," *Global Issues*, February 1, 2018.
2. See, for example, [MARC](#), [PROMUNDO](#), and [UN programs](#) for engaging men in efforts to achieve gender equality in various contexts.
3. Fearing being viewed negatively, feeling unprepared to act, and fearing retaliation are some of the barriers that might prevent men from speaking up. For a closer look at barriers to men's engagement, see Catalyst, *Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know* (May 4, 2009).
4. Leslie Ashburn-Nardo, John C. Blanchar, and Jessica Petersson, "Do You Say Something When It's Your Boss? The Role of Perpetrator Power in Prejudice Confrontation," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 70, no. 4 (2014): p. 615-636; Frances J. Milliken and Elizabeth Wolfe Morrison, "Shades of Silence: Emerging Themes and Future Directions for Research on Silence in Organizations," *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 40, no. 6 (2003): p. 1563-1568; David G. Smith and W. Brad Johnson, "Lots of Men Are Gender Equality Allies in Private. Why Not in Public?" *Harvard Business Review*, (October 13, 2017).
5. Elizabeth Wolfe Morrison and Frances J. Milliken "Organizational Silence: A Barrier to Change and Development in a Pluralistic World," *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 25, no. 4 (October 2000): p. 706-725.
6. Craig C. Pinder and Karen P. Harlos, "Employee Silence: Quiescence and Acquiescence as Responses to Perceived Injustice," *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* (December 2001) p. 331-369; Morrison and Milliken.
7. Peter Glick and Susan T. Fiske, "The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating Hostile and Benevolent Sexism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 70, no. 3 (1996): p. 491-512; Janet K. Swim and Laurie L. Cohen "Overt, Covert, and Subtle Sexism: A Comparison Between the Attitudes Toward Women and Modern Sexism Scales," *Psychology of Women*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1997): p. 103-118.
8. Swim and Cohen; Lilia M. Cortina, "Unseen Injustice: Incivility as Modern Discrimination in Organizations," *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2008): p. 55-75.
9. Anthony G. Greenwald and Mahzarin R. Banaji, "Implicit Social Cognition: Attitudes, Self-Esteem, and Stereotypes," *Psychological Review*, vol. 102, no. 1 (1995): p. 4-27; Catalyst, *Infographic: What Is Unconscious Bias?* (December 11, 2014). Note that sexism intersects with other axes of inequalities and discriminations such as racism, ageism, and classism in shaping individual experiences and underprivileges.
10. Brenda L. Russell and Kristin Y. Trigg, "Tolerance of Sexual Harassment: An Examination of Gender Differences, Ambivalent Sexism, Social Dominance, and Gender Roles" *Sex Roles*, vol. 50, nos. 7/8 (2004): p. 565-573.
11. The survey measured men's sensitivity to both overt and subtle forms of sexism. It also included measurements of men's sense of commitment to confront sexism, their level of comfort with confrontation, and their perceived benefits, costs, and consequences of confronting sexism in their workplace. The survey also examined participants' perceptions of their organizational climates and the types of values promoted in their workplace. Three hundred and thirty-eight men of diverse organizational ranks took part in an online survey designed to measure several dimensions of their work experiences, perceptions, and behaviors particularly in relation to incidences of sexism at work.
12. For more information about women in the workplace in Mexico, see Catalyst, *Quick Take: Women in the Workforce - Mexico* (January 14, 2019).
13. Our research partner in Mexico conducted eight interviews in two of the three companies which participated in the survey (three in company A and five in company B). Seven of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, and one was conducted via telephone. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and translated to English for this report. Interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes, and all the face-to-face interviews occurred in participants' work offices. Participants were recruited through snowballing; the interviewer used their professional connections with Human Resources departments of companies to find men with diverse levels of involvement with diversity and inclusion causes. The sample includes men proactively working toward improving equality and inclusion and also those without such engagements and sensitivities. Regardless of their level of engagement with diversity and inclusion causes, the interviews provided an opportunity for all participants to express their perceptions and attitudes on sexism and share their experiences with interrupting it. Interviews, therefore, appeared to provide a platform for them to make their voices heard and engage in this dialogue in ways that they had not experienced prior to the interviews.
14. Catalyst, *Quick Take: Women in the Workforce - Global* (January 30, 2020); International Labor Organization, *Violence and Harassment Against Women and Men in the World of Work* (2017).
15. UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*; International Labor Organization, *Violence and Harassment Against Women and Men in the World of Work* (2017).
16. System justification theory suggests that people predominantly tend to justify and rationalize the order of things as they are rather than posing challenges to societal arrangements. Silence in the face of organizational problems reinforces the shared belief that things are good as they are. For a review of system justification theory, see John Jost and Orsolya Hunyady, "The Psychology of System Justification and the Palliative Function of Ideology," *European Review of Social Psychology*, vol. 13 (2002): p. 111-153.
17. Catherine E. Harnois and João L. Bastos, "Discrimination, Harassment, and Gendered Health Inequities: Do Perceptions of Workplace Mistreatment Contribute to the Gender Gap in Self-Reported Health?" *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, vol. 59, no. 2 (2018): p. 283-299; Susan H. Berg, "Everyday Sexism and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Women: A Correlational Study," *Violence Against Women*, vol. 12, no. 10 (2006): p. 970-988; Kristen Jones, Kathy Stewart, Eden King, Whitney Botsford Morgan, Veronica Gilrane, and Kimberly Hylton, "Negative Consequences of Benevolent Sexism on Efficacy and Performance," *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2014): p. 171-189.
18. Eight items measured perceived organizational silence. Responses to this scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scale adapted from Elif Daşçı and Necati Cemaloğlu, "The Development of the Organizational Silence

- Scale: Validity-Reliability Study," *Journal of Human Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2016): p. 33-45. Five items were used to measure commitment to interrupting sexism on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 6 (very much). The composite variable was then dichotomized into groups reflecting the top two response choices (averaging 5 or higher) or the lower four response choices (averaging less than 5). Logistic regression revealed that organizational silence was a significant predictor of commitment,  $X^2(1) = 16.15, p < .001$ , such that as organizational silence increased by 1 unit, the odds of men being committed to interrupting sexism decreased by a factor of .51. The commitment to confronting scale was developed by J. Nicole Shelton, Jennifer A. Richeson, Jessica Salvatore, and Diana M. Hill, "Silence Is Not Golden: The Intrapersonal Consequences of Not Confronting Prejudice," *Stigma and Group Inequality*, (2006): p. 79-96.
19. Six items were used to measure confidence on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The composite variable was then dichotomized into groups reflecting the top two choices (averaging 4 or higher) or the lower three response choices (averaging less than 4). Logistic regression revealed that organizational silence was a significant predictor of men's confidence in their ability to interrupt sexism,  $X^2(1) = 12.14, p < .001$ , such that as organizational silence increased by 1 unit, the odds of men being confident decreased by a factor of .60. This scale was developed by Cheryl R. Kaiser and Carol T. Miller, "A Stress and Coping Perspective on Confronting Sexism," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 28, (2004): p. 168-178.
  20. Elizabeth W. Morrison, "Employee Voice and Silence," *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, vol. 1 (2014): p. 173-197.
  21. Interpersonal costs were assessed on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). The correlation between perceived organizational silence and interpersonal costs was significant,  $r = 0.29, p < .001$ . Higher organizational silence was associated with higher perceived interpersonal costs to interrupting. This scale was adapted from Cheryl R. Kaiser and Carol T. Miller, "Stop Complaining! The Social Costs of Making Attributions to Discrimination," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 27, no. 2, (2001): p. 254-263.
  22. Work-related costs were measured on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The correlation between perceived organizational silence and work-related costs was significant,  $r = 0.44, p < .001$ . Higher perceived organizational silence was associated with higher perceived work-related costs.
  23. The benefits to interrupting sexism were measured using a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). The correlation between perceived organizational silence and the benefits of interrupting sexism was significant,  $r = -0.53, p < .001$ , such that higher perceived organizational silence was associated with fewer perceived benefits. Adapted from Kaiser and Miller, 2001.
  24. Participants were presented with scenarios of sexist behaviors in the workplace and asked to report the likelihood of responding in certain ways, such as directly commenting on the appropriateness of the behavior or ignoring the behavior.
  25. It's important to note that these findings measure men's predictions of their behavior given a hypothetical situation, not their actual behavior—which may or may not match up with their intentions or aspirations. Indeed, previous research has shown that although people tend to report that they would interrupt a sexist comment, fewer actively interrupt sexism when presented with an opportunity to do so. See Janet K. Swim and Lauri L. Hyers, "Excuse Me—What Did You Just Say?!: Women's Public and Private Responses to Sexist Remarks," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 35, (1999): p. 68-88; Lauri L. Hyers, "Resisting Prejudice Every Day: Exploring Women's Assertive Responses to Anti-Black Racism, Anti-Semitism, Heterosexism, and Sexism," *Sex Roles*, vol. 56 (2007): p. 1-12.
  26. Participants reported on the likelihood that they would question their colleague who made a sexist remark using a scale of 1 (definitely would not) to 7 (definitely would). Participant responses were then dichotomized to represent a low (responses under 5) or high (responses of 5 or greater) likelihood of responding in this way. Eighty-two percent of men indicated that they would question their colleague. This question was adapted from J. Nicole Shelton and Rebecca E. Stewart, "Confronting Perpetrators of Prejudice: The Inhibitory Effects of Social Costs," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 28, (2004): p. 215-223.
  27. Participants reported on the likelihood that they would comment on the appropriateness of a colleague's sexist remark using a scale of 1 (definitely would not) to 7 (definitely would). Participant responses were then dichotomized to represent a low (responses under 5) or high (responses of 5 or greater) likelihood of responding in this way. Seventy-two percent of men reported that they would comment on the appropriateness of the remark. This question was adapted from Shelton and Stewart.
  28. Questioning was measured on a scale of 1 to 6. The variable was then dichotomized to indicate scores equal to or higher than 5 or scores lower than 5. Logistic regression revealed that organizational silence was a significant predictor of the likelihood that men would question their colleague,  $X^2(1) = 5.96, p < .02$ , such that as organizational silence increased by 1 unit, the odds of men questioning decreased by .70.
  29. Commenting was measured on a scale of 1 to 6. The variable was then dichotomized to indicate scores equal to or higher than 5 or scores lower than 5. Logistic regression revealed that organizational silence was a significant predictor of the likelihood that men would comment on the appropriateness of their colleague's remark,  $X^2(1) = 10.36, p < .001$ , such that as organizational silence increased by 1 unit, the odds of men commenting decreased by .65.
  30. Participants reported on the likelihood that they would respond to a colleague's sexist comment with humor or sarcasm using a scale of 1 (definitely would not) to 7 (definitely would). The variable was then dichotomized to indicate scores equal to or higher than 4 or scores lower than 4. Logistic regression revealed that organizational silence was a significant predictor of the use of humor or sarcasm in reply to a colleague's sexist comment,  $X^2(1) = 16.59, p < .001$ , such that as organizational silence increased by 1 unit, the odds that men would use humor or sarcasm increased by a factor of 1.75. This question was adapted from Shelton and Stewart.
  31. Josephine Chinyang Lang and Chay Hoon Lee, "Workplace Humor and Organizational Creativity," *The International Journal of Human Resources Management*, vol. 21, no. 1 (January, 2010): p. 46-60.
  32. Joshua M. Averbeck, "Comparisons of Ironic and Sarcastic Arguments in Terms of Appropriateness and Effectiveness in Personal Relationships," *Argumentation and Advocacy*, vol. 50 (2013): p. 47-57.



33. Irina Alexandra Iles and Xiaoli Nan, ["It's No Laughing Matter: An Exploratory Study of the Use of Ironic Versus Sarcastic Humor in Health-Related Advertising Message,"](#) *Health Marketing Quarterly*, vol. 34, no.3 (2017): p. 187-201.
34. Participants were asked, "Do you consider yourself to be a member of a racial/ethnic minority group in your country?" Participants were able to respond "yes," "no," "not sure," "prefer not to say," or were able to skip the question.
35. The number of industries presented reflects participant self-responses in our survey.

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## ABOUT CATALYST

Catalyst is a global nonprofit working with some of the world's most powerful CEOs and leading companies to help build workplaces that work for women. Founded in 1962, Catalyst drives change with pioneering research, practical tools, and proven solutions to accelerate and advance women into leadership—because progress for women is progress for everyone.

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