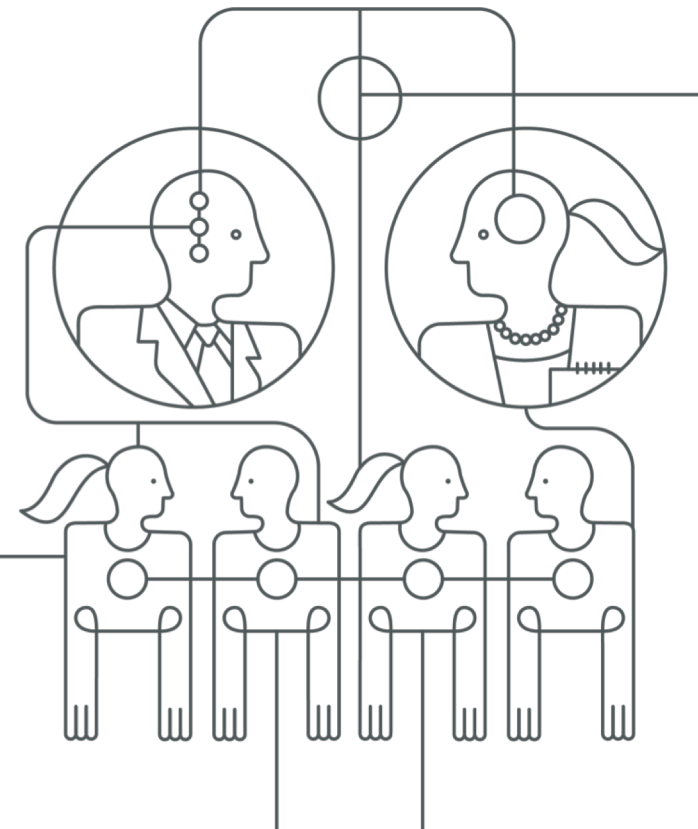


# Pervasive Workplace Toxicity

*In Partnership with HR Research Institute*

**Jesse Bridges**, EVERFI

**Elizabeth Bille**, JD, SHRM-SCP, EVERFI

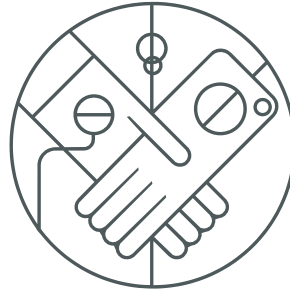


# EVERFI Conduct and Culture at a Glance



**1.4M**

learners  
enrolled  
since 2016



**1,900+**

partners



**7+**

in-house lawyers  
tracking legislation

# Featured Speakers



**Jesse Bridges**

SVP of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)



**Elizabeth Owens Bille**

Head of Impact, Workplace Culture

EVERFI

## What We'll Cover

1

### **Workplace Toxicity**

*Data pulled from a powerful survey with HR Research Institute and EVERFI*

2

### **Strategies for Addressing Toxic Behaviors**

3

### **Leadership's Role in the Problem – and the Solution**

“Billions of wasted dollars. Millions of miserable people. **It’s not a warzone—it’s the state of the American workplace.**”

**Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., SHRM-SCP**  
SHRM president and CEO

# Toxicity in the Workplace

**1 in 5**

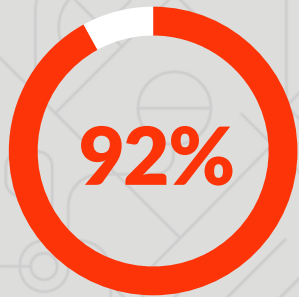
Americans have left a job  
in the past year due to  
toxicity in the workplace

**\$223 billion**

in company losses due  
to bad culture driving away  
their workforce

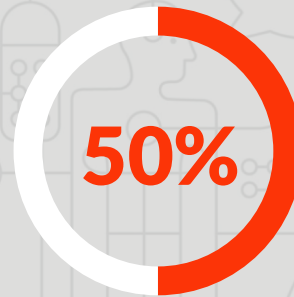
Source: SHRM "The High Cost of a Toxic Workplace Culture," Sept 2019

# Employer Brand Affects Recruitment and Retention



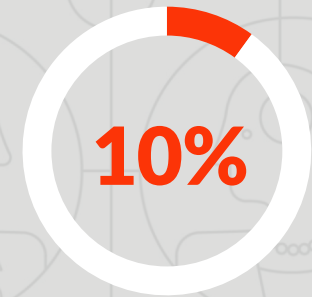
92% of people would consider changing jobs if it meant going to a company with an excellent reputation

Source: Corporate Responsibility Magazine



50% of candidates say they wouldn't work for a company with a bad reputation — even for a pay increase

Source: LinkedIn



Negative reputation costs companies at least **10% more per hire**

Source: LinkedIn

# Our Findings: Workplace Toxicity



# Survey: Toxicity in the Workplace – Background

## Key research questions:

- What are the factors that influence workplace toxicity?
- Which organizational practices are effective in creating positive cultures?
- What impact does organizational leadership have on building healthier cultures?

## Methodology:

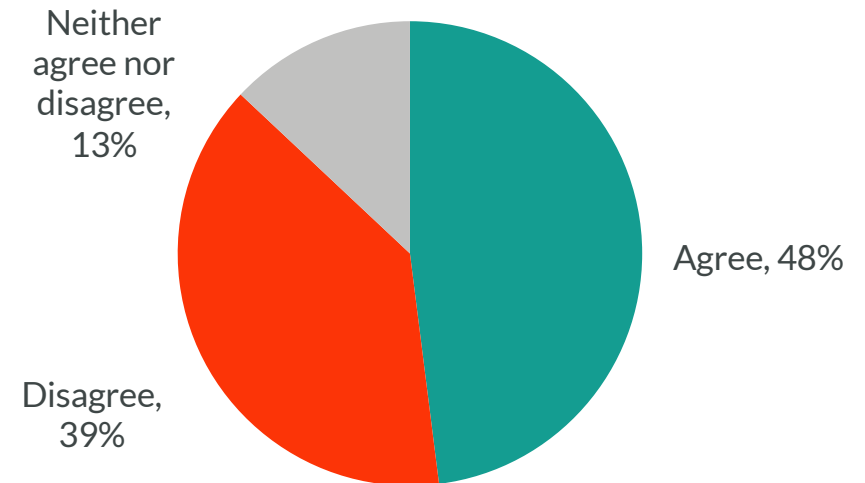
- Conducted online among HR professionals, via HR.com's opt-in contact list
- 548 participants representing a range of company sizes and industries

# High Rates of Toxic Cultures and Negative Behavior

## Toxic Workplace:

Characterized by productivity-hindering interpersonal conflicts such as distrust, bullying, resentment, unethical behaviors, manipulation, mean-spiritedness, or even harassment or discrimination.

Overall, my organization's culture is positive and non-toxic



# High Rates of Toxic Cultures and Negative Behavior

**% Agree or Strongly Agree**

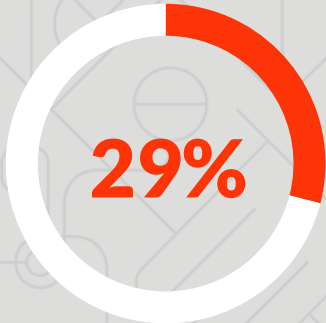


## Poll Question

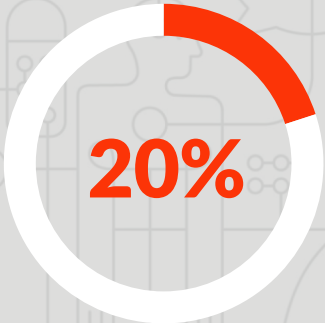
Are any of the following negative behaviors common in your workplace?

- **Distrust between leaders and employees**
- **Distrust between coworkers**
- **Resentment**
- **All of the above**
- **None of the above**

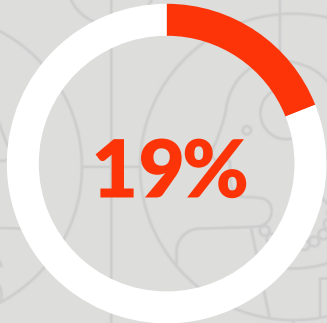
# Respondents Agree Colleagues Are Often:



Bullied

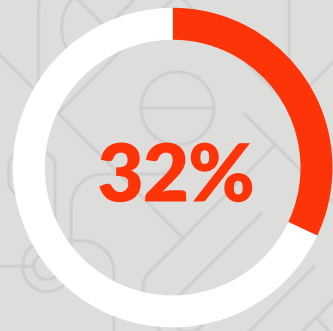


Discriminated against



Harassed

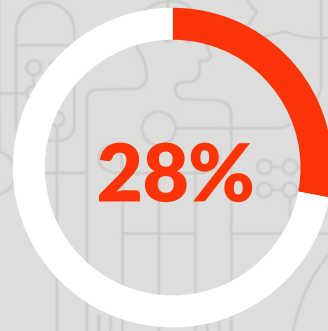
# And They Disagree That Employees Feel Safe Reporting When They Have:



Been  
bullied

**30%**

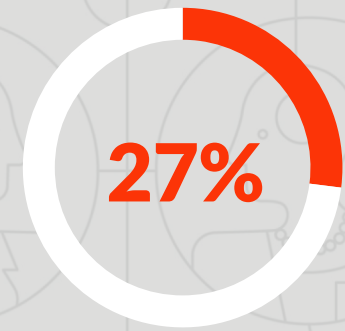
*witnessed bullying*



Been  
discriminated against

**29%**

*witnessed discrimination*



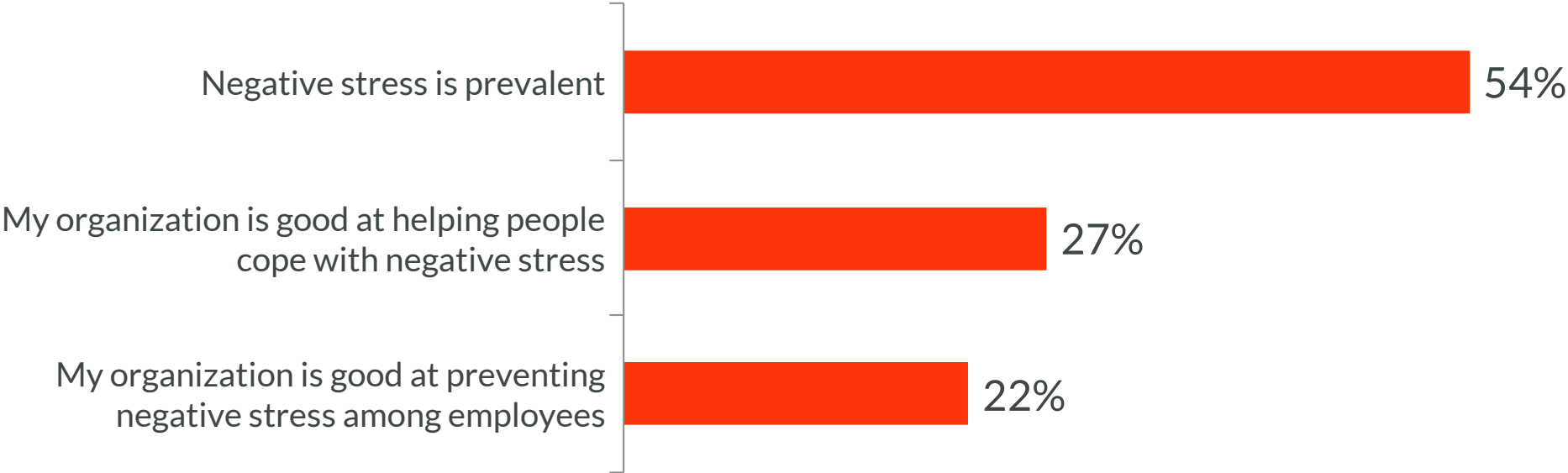
Been  
harassed

**29%**

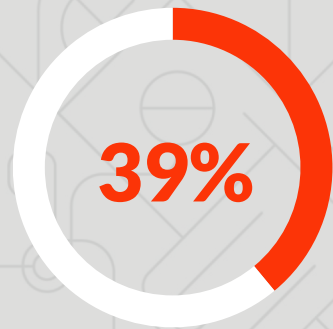
*witnessed harassment*

# Negative Stress Is Overwhelmingly Common

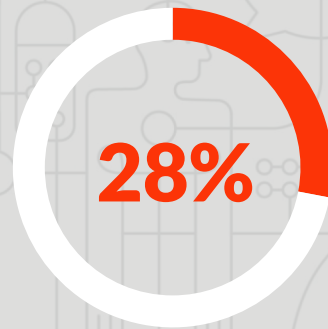
**% Agree or Strongly Agree**



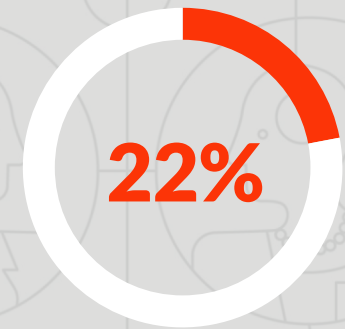
# Respondents Cite Key Gaps in Critical Training



“No bullying training provided”



“No discrimination training provided”



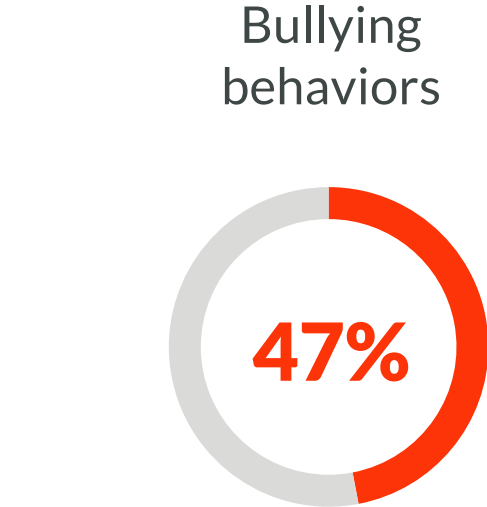
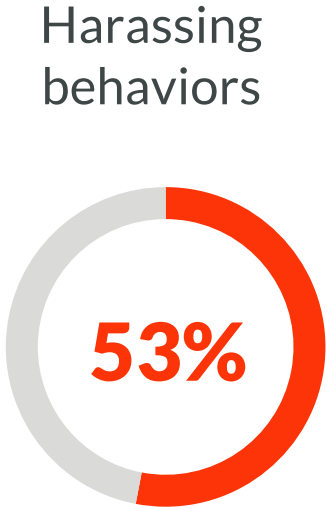
“No harassment training provided”

**1 in 5 (20%)** do not provide training in any of the three areas.



# Common Belief: Our Current Training Is Ineffective

Only about half of respondents agree that their training is effective in preparing employees to prevent and react to:



# Most Harassment Training Focuses on Compliance Not Culture

Which of the following areas are included in your organization’s training about harassment issues (n=430)

What behavior is prohibited under laws	75%
The process for reporting behavior	74%
Specific behaviors constituting harassment	67%
The steps that will be taken against those who engage in behaviors	58%
Issues such as civility and respect	56%
Bystander intervention techniques	37%

Other 5%

Compliance Culture-Building

# Training Effectiveness: Culture-Building > Compliance-Only Training

Training viewed as effective

<i>Training Type</i>	<i>Culture-building content</i>	<i>Compliance-only content</i>
<b>Harassment</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Bullying</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Discrimination</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>29%</b>

# Positive and Non-Toxic Workplaces Are More Likely to Have Culture-Building Training

## Workplace viewed as positive

<i>Training Type</i>	<i>Culture-building content</i>	<i>Compliance-only content</i>
<b>Harassment</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Bullying</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>49%</b>
<b>Discrimination</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>43%</b>

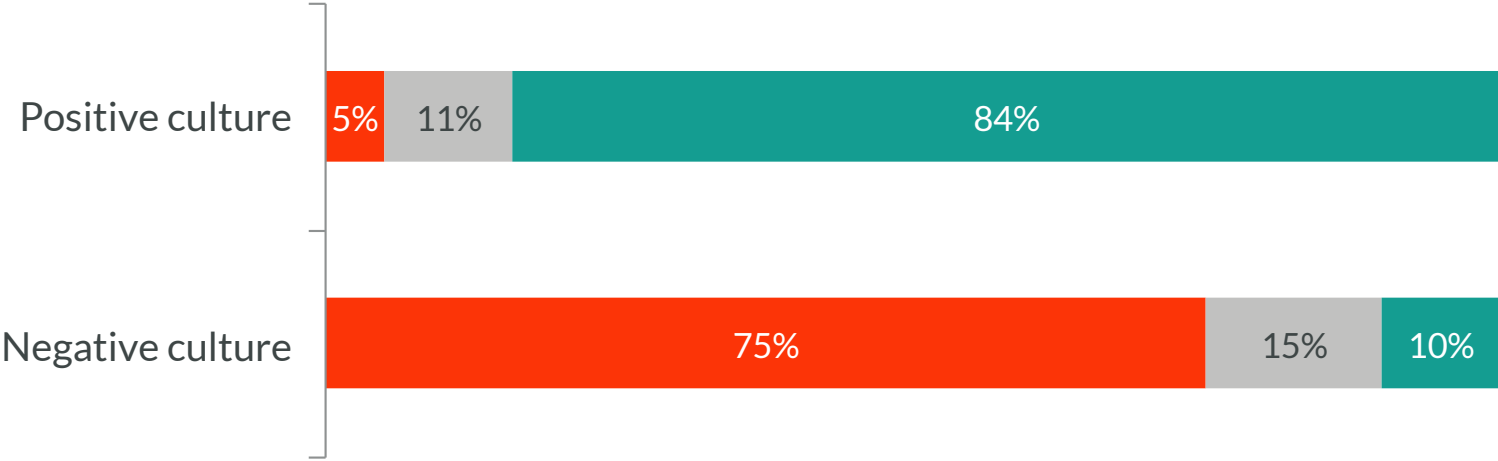
## Poll Question

Will you likely provide training on these topics in the near future?

- Bystander intervention techniques
- Respectful workplace
- Civility
- All of the above
- None of the above

# Positive Cultures Better Align Behaviors and Procedures with Organizational Values

In my organization, behaviors and procedures tend to be aligned with our core values.

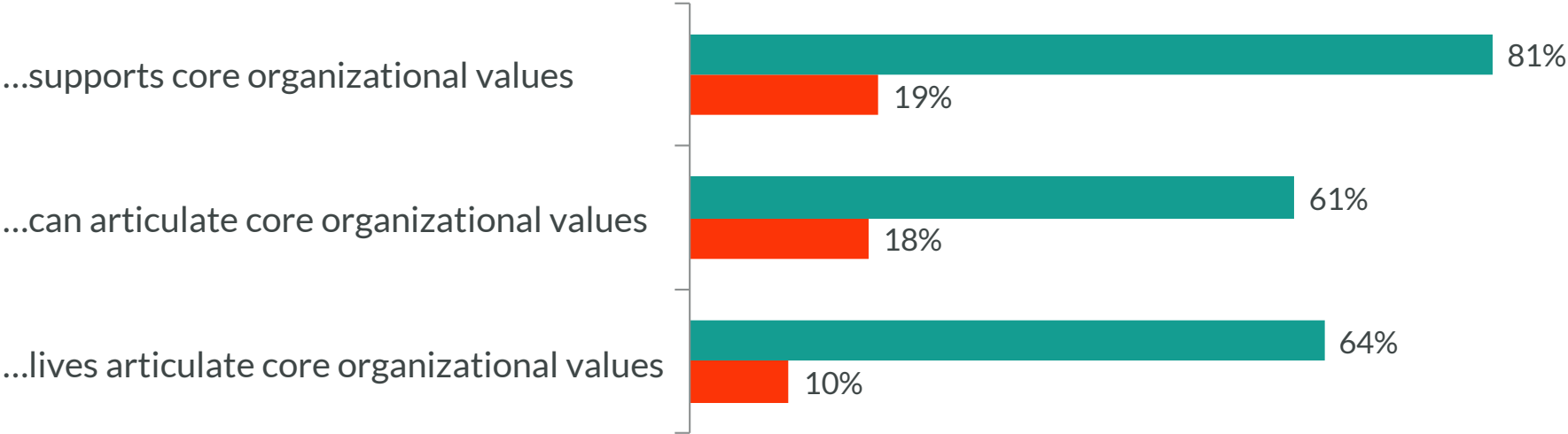


Disagree    Neither agree nor disagree    Agree

# Positive Cultures: Employee Alignment with Organizational Values

Just about everyone in my organization...

% Agree or Strongly Agree



Positive culture Negative culture

# The Importance of Organizational Values

How lived values are the strongest lever in promoting a positive workplace culture

*How does, “Overall, my organization’s culture is positive and non-toxic,” correlate with...*

## Just about everyone in my organization...

Lives core organizational values	.65
Supports core organizational values	.64
Works collaboratively toward common goals	.63
Is engaged in their work	.51
Can articulate core organizational values	.50





## Key Takeaways

- 1** Aligning behaviors and procedures to organizational values is vital for creating and maintaining a positive workplace culture.
- 2** Organizations should take proactive steps, such as creating a comprehensive plan, to prevent, address, and “break the culture of silence” about toxic behaviors.
- 3** Compliance training alone is not effective in driving a positive, non-toxic working environment. Training should also include culture topics such as respect, professionalism, and bystander intervention to maximize effectiveness.

# How Do We Address Toxicity?

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# Encourage Reporting Through Increased Transparency



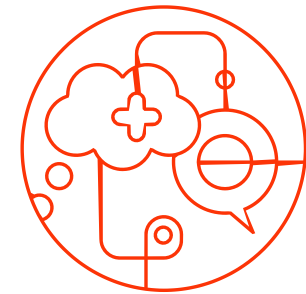
## Explain your process

- Complaint handling
- Investigation procedures



## Follow up

- Reporters
- Witnesses



## Gather & share information

- Steps taken
- Report handling and outcomes

# Break the Culture of Silence – Prevent Retaliation

## A non-retaliation policy alone is not enough

- **Communicate** leadership's unequivocal commitment to non-retaliation
- **Follow-up with incident reporters** proactively and periodically
- **Scrutinize** all proposed work changes before finalized communication



# Aligning Procedures and Behaviors to Values

- Check your organizational values — what behaviors are they really driving?
- Make your values a key part of your company's daily conversations
- The power of leaders' specific words
- Check your reward and feedback systems — what behavior are you reinforcing?
- Receive, investigate, and escalate complaints appropriately
- Hold people accountable for actions that undermine your values/culture

# Retool Training to Focus on Culture and Values

- Root training in **positive cultural values**
  - “Protect & Serve” in policing organizations
- **Establish a professionalism standard** — Professionalism ≥ Compliance
- **Train on culture-building subjects** like civility, respect, allyship, and other behaviors that promote positive interactions
- Focus on **bystander intervention** techniques

**SKILLS WORKSHOP**


## A Spectrum of Concerning Behavior

[Listen ▶](#)

Problematic and discriminatory behavior exists on a wide spectrum—from small, unintentional comments to more severe, even criminal forms of discrimination.

Explore each of the examples.

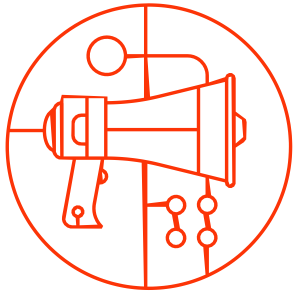
A coworker is discussing a new non-binary employee with another coworker: “They’ pronouns are just confusing and hard. I don’t get why we have to do this... it’s so high-maintenance.”



[Continue →](#)

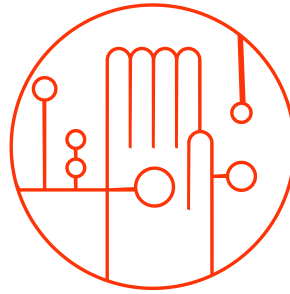
# Provide Training on Bystander Intervention

Three-part benefit: By actively engaging your employees, you can:



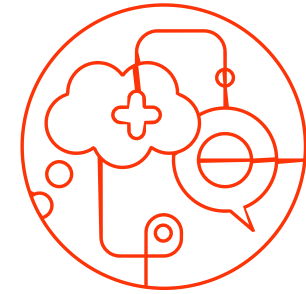
## Address harmful behavior

Equip every employee with tools to interrupt or respond to concerning conduct.



## Prevent toxic behavior

Employees can help shut down disrespectful behaviors before they escalate.



## Create a positive culture

All employees play a critical role and share responsibility to make it a great workplace.

# Importance of Effective Leadership

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# The Importance of Organizational Values

How lived values are the strongest lever in promoting a positive workplace culture

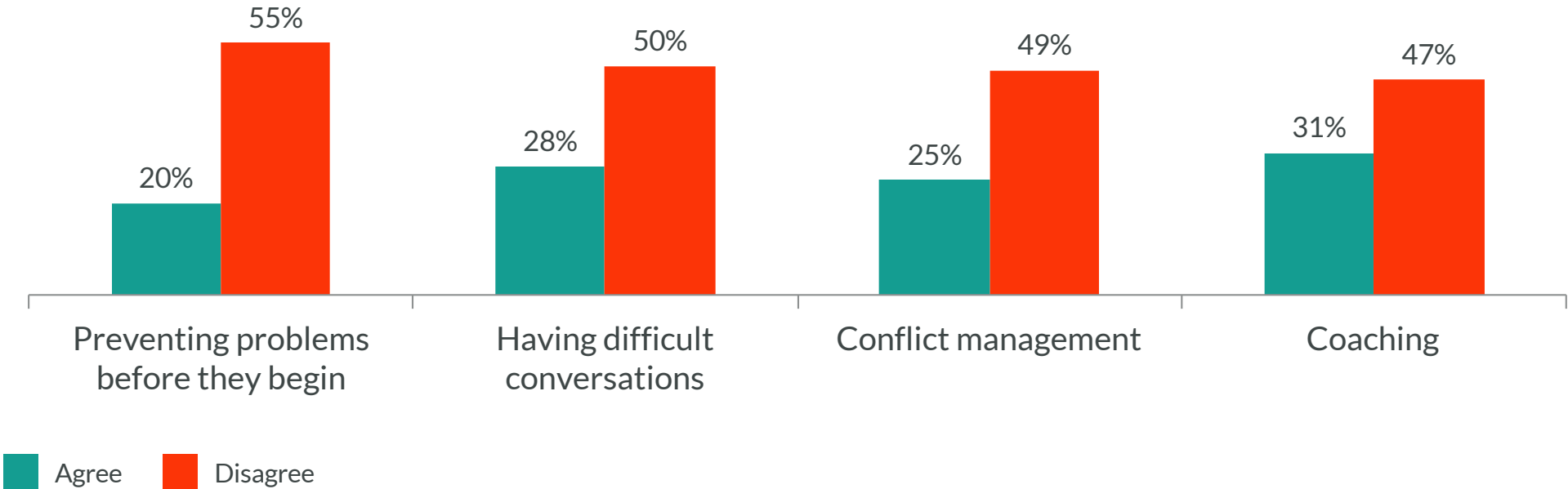
*How does, “Overall, my organization’s culture is positive and non-toxic,” correlate with...*

## Our leaders tend to ...

Uphold the stated values of our organization	.63
Take proactive steps to create a healthy workplace culture	.61
Be good at coaching	.50
Listen to employee concerns	.49
Be good at having difficult conversations	.44

# Respondents Say Leaders Lack Critical Culture-Building Skills

Our leaders tend to be good at...



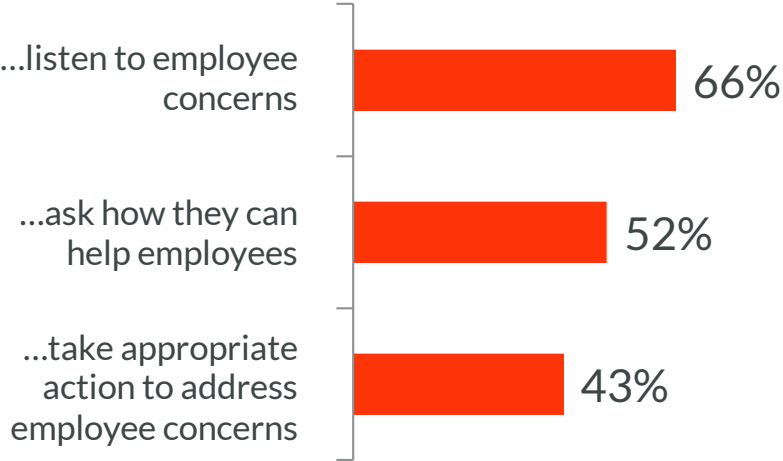
# Leadership Struggles to Create a Positive Culture

## Our leaders tend to...



% Agree or Strongly Agree

## When employees have concerns about something, managers will typically...



% Agree or Strongly Agree

“Leaders are able to shift people’s views on social issues regardless of key characteristics that may already inform their opinions... **The role leaders play in shaping the organizational climate is not merely correlational but causal.**”

**Hart, Crossley, & Correll (2018)**

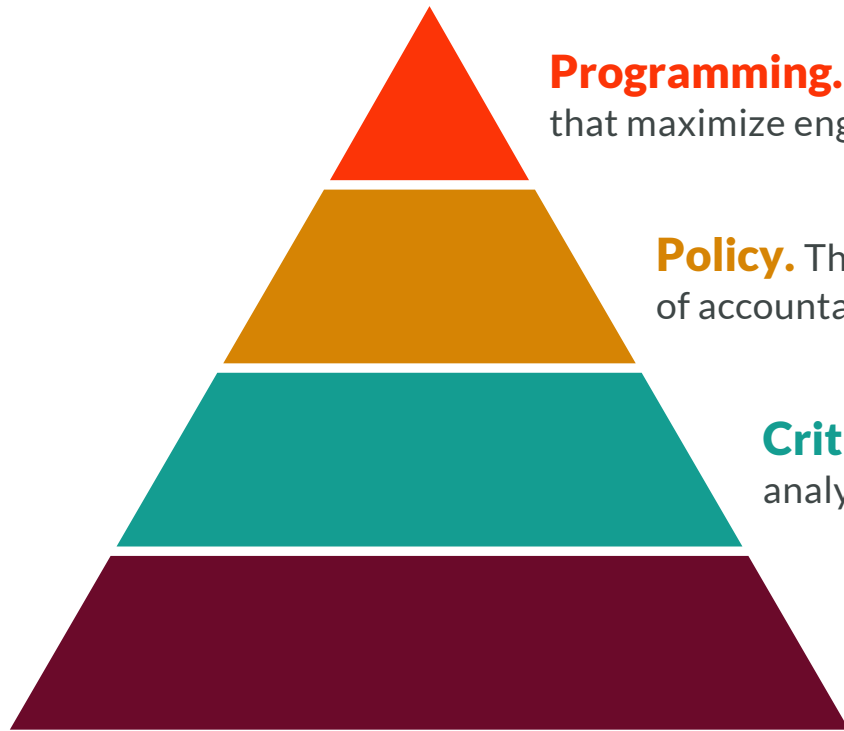


# Considerations for Leadership

Get CEO/Exec  
Leadership Support

- Cultivating the Tone from the Top
- Supporting Leaders Through Skill Building
- Creating Accountability for Living the Values

# Workplace Culture Strategy Framework



**Programming.** Prevention training, programs, and communication strategies that maximize engagement and drive impact.

**Policy.** The values and expectations of the organization, and the system of accountability to uphold and enforce them.

**Critical Processes.** Using goal setting, strategic planning, and data analysis to inform and evaluate prevention work.

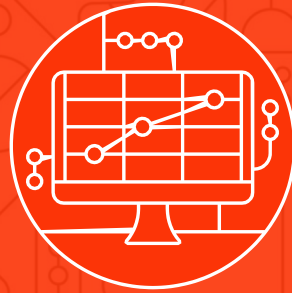
**Institutionalization.** System-wide buy-in, visible commitment, and investment in effective prevention initiatives.

# The EVERFI Difference



## Engaging Design

Gain lifelong skills applicable in everyday interactions that can drive business outcomes and shape workplace culture



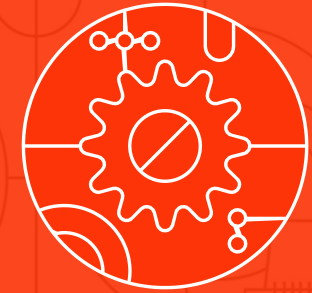
## Robust Technology

Best-in-class, online workplace training with engaging content and interactive modules



## Data Impact Driven

Platform dashboards display actionable information about the perception, behaviors and attitudes of your employees



## Customizable Content

Incorporate your company logo, images, welcome letter and policies

EVERFI

EDUCATION FOR THE REAL WORLD