



Actions Speak Louder Than Words: Evidence-Based Strategies to Eliminate Bias

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Equality Action Center

**Your company could be making
steady year-over-year progress
towards your DEI goals**

If you have a problem with diversity at the top

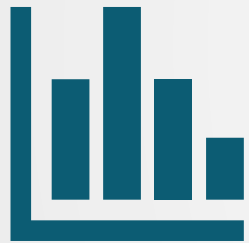
Typically, it's because bias is constantly being transmitted through your basic business systems

Diversity committees, ERGs, diversity initiatives...

Solution? Fix the business systems

The Bias Interrupters Model

Evidence



Develop key metrics to pinpoint where bias exists, establish baselines, and measure progress.

+

Action



Implement evidence-based Bias Interrupters into existing business systems.

+

Commitment



Measure progress, implement stronger Bias Interrupters until metrics improve.

Metrics matter!

- Metrics pinpoint which groups are being affected
- Metrics pinpoint what kinds of bias are arising
- Metrics pinpoint the exact mechanism to target

Start with evidence

1. Prove-it-again: *need to be more competent*
2. Tightrope: *need to be politically savvy*
3. Maternal wall: *bias against mothers*
4. Tug of war: *bias against a group fuels conflict within the group*
5. Racial experiences: *stereotypes about different racial and ethnic groups create a different set of obstacles for people of color*

Today's webinar: real company data

- Generous grant from Walmart to do experiments within companies
- Unique opportunity for companies to participate in groundbreaking research
- Report to be released soon

Bias Interrupters Work!

*Evidence-based actions you can start
implementing today*

The recipe for success

In any system you're working on:

- 1. Leadership buy-in*
- 2. Email from the CEO or executive sponsor*
- 3. Well-designed data systems*
- 4. A strong internal project manager*
- 5. The commitment to take action*

Interrupting bias in informal interactions



Workplace Experiences Survey

- 10-minute climate survey:
 - Is there bias?
 - If so, where?
 - Impact on outcome measures

National Samples:



Engineering (US & India)



Computer science



Law (US & Chile)



STEM



Architecture



Construction

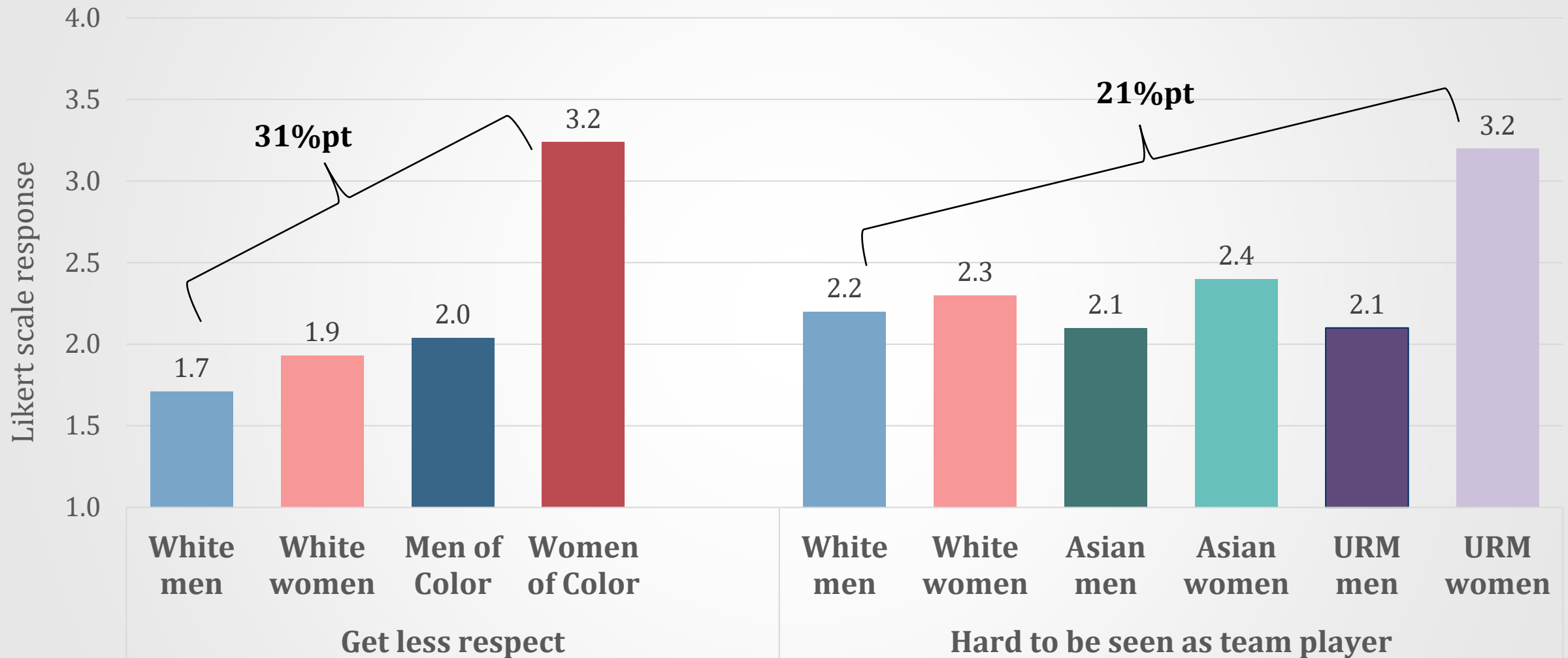
Purpose of Workplace Experiences Survey

- Experiments → bias exist
 - WES: same patterns of bias reported *in the workplace*
 - Clear & complete picture of the experiences of different groups

Data changes the conversation!

- Also, aids long-term strategic planning

The problem: bias in everyday interactions



Professional services firm

Financial institution

Evidence-based actions



Bias Interrupters Workshop

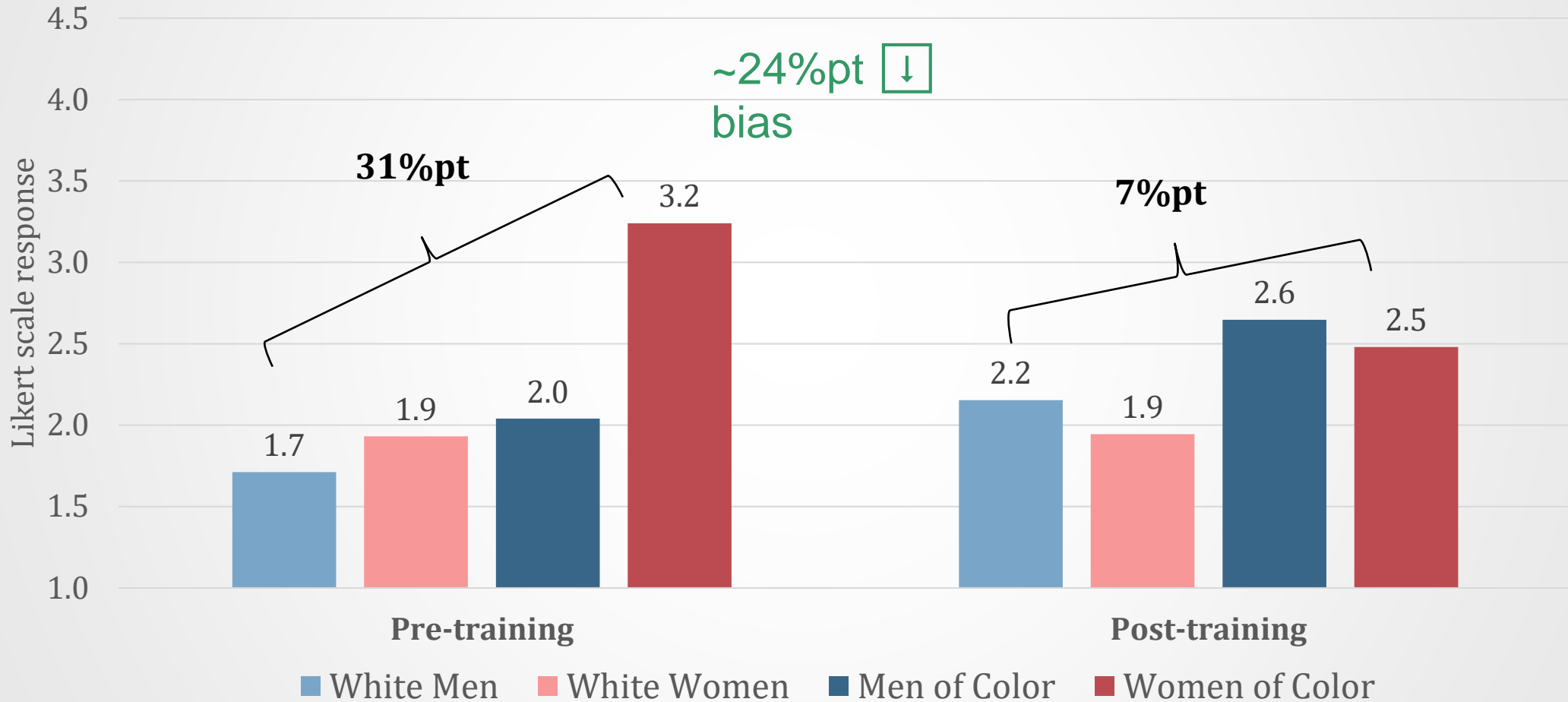
Individual Bias Interrupters Workshop

- Basic bias training
- Introduces **5 basic types of workplace bias**
- Describes how bias plays out in today's workplaces
 - Ideally includes data from your organization
- Presents a **specific scenario**
- **Breakout sections of 6 colleagues** gives participants the opportunity to brainstorm how they would feel comfortable interrupting bias in the scenario



The results: women of color respected more

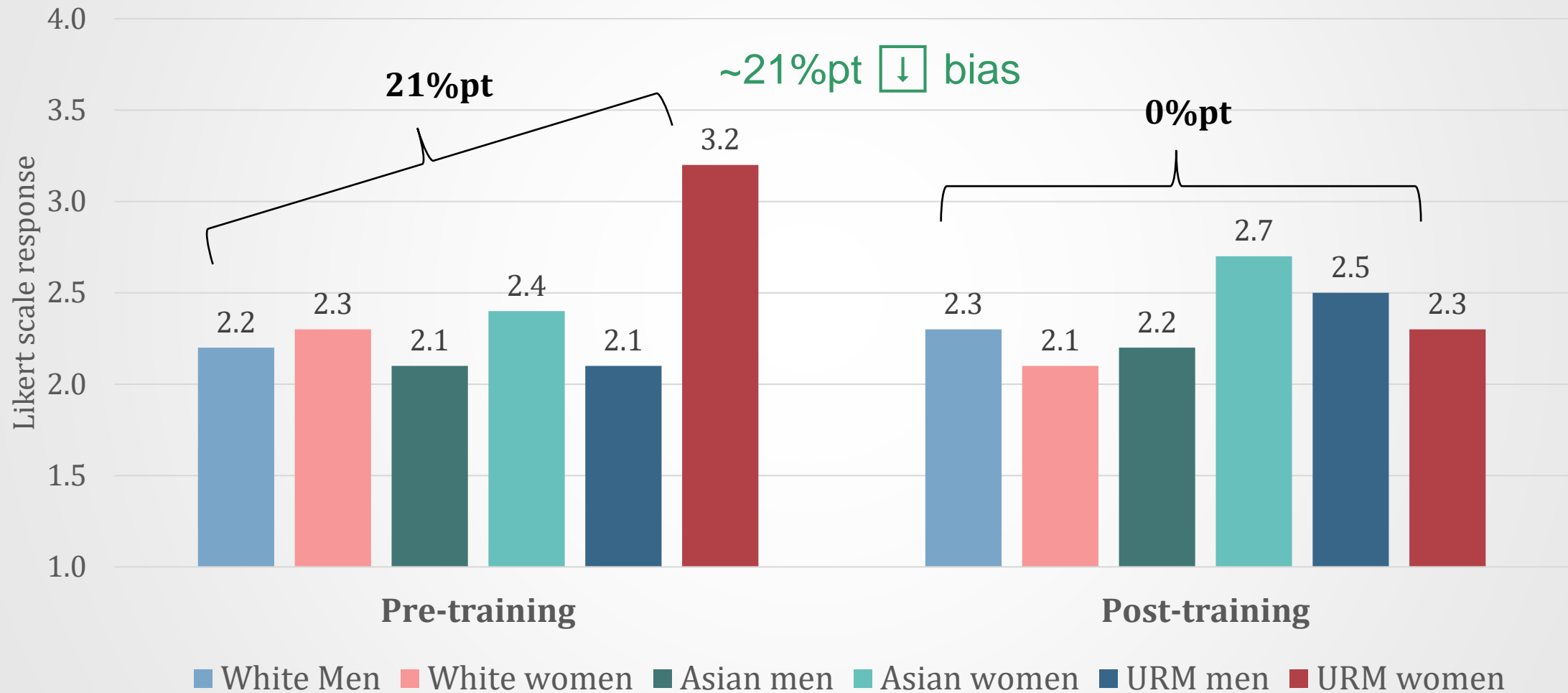
I get less respect than my colleagues for the same level and quality of work



Professional services firm

The results: more equality in “team player”

Have to work harder to be seen as a team player



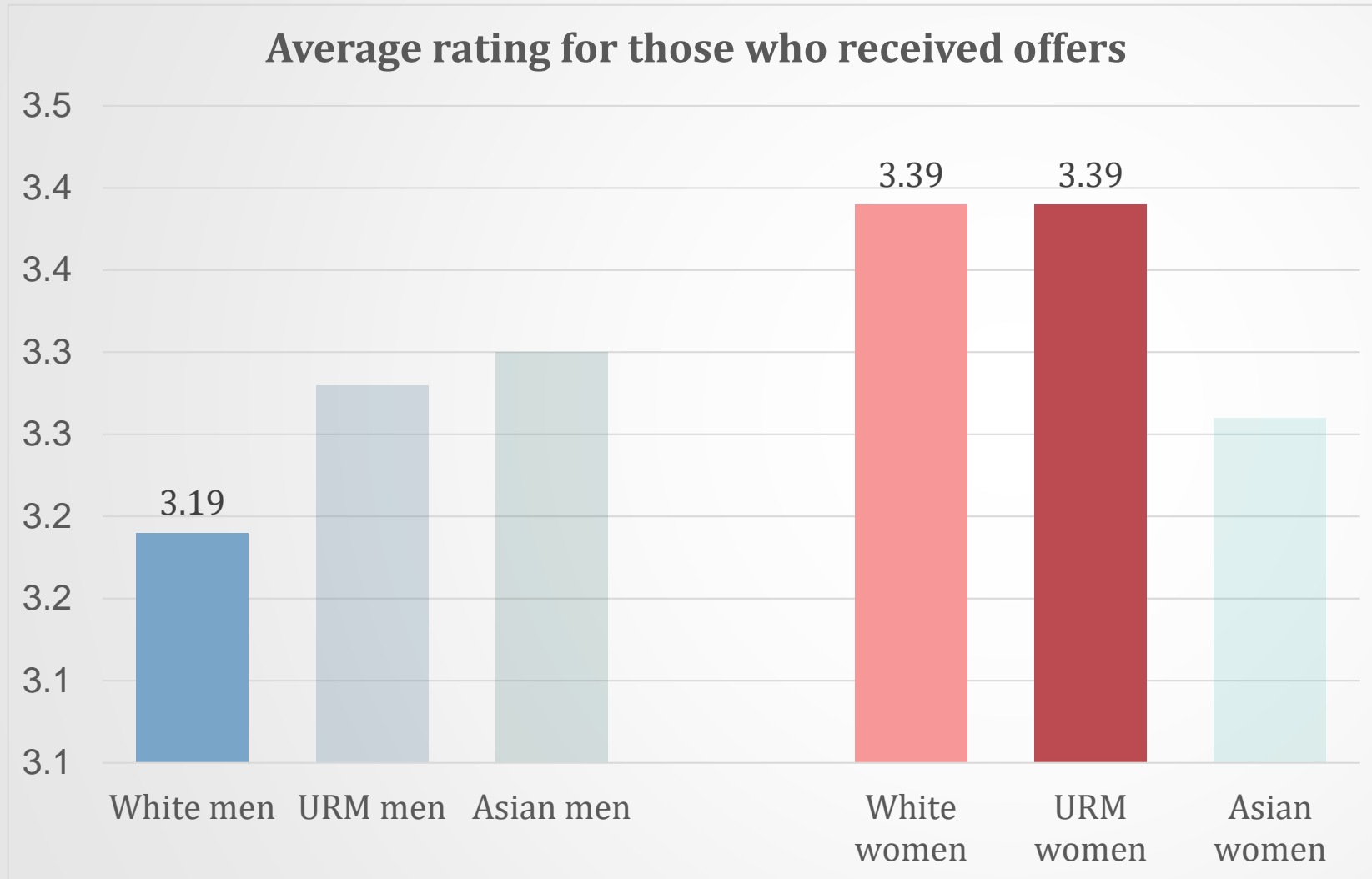
Financial institution

A bias training is not enough to
interrupt bias in your business
systems!

Interrupting bias in hiring



The problem: shifting standards for groups



White men getting offers with lower scores than all other groups.

White women and URM women need to have much higher scores to get offers

Tech startup

Evidence-based actions



Structural changes to interview process:

➤ *Use rubrics and require evidence*



Fair and Effective Hiring Workshop

How to implement structure

For both resume review and interviews

At initial meeting...

- Pre-commit to specific requirements
 - Remind people of criteria
- Use grading rubrics & require evidence
- And clearly define rating scale
- Register responses before meetings

Better interview questions

For interviews

- Use behavioral questions
 - “Describe a time you disagreed with your manager and how you handled it”
 - “Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and had to prioritize”

Culture fit? Handle with care

- ***Define culture fit***
 - Work values and dispositions
 - NOT the “lunch test”

- ***Culture add***
 - Bringing something new to the table

Don't rely on school prestige

- 2/3 of first-gen professionals are people of color
- First-gen tend to go to schools closer to home
- Top students from lower-ranked schools often just as successful; tend to stay longer
- Skills vs. credentials

Where to begin?

[**BIAS INTERRUPTERS**] *small steps
big change*

IceMiller
LEGAL COUNSEL

Toolkit for Interviewing Roadmap

1. *Preparing interview questions:*

One of the strongest Bias Interrupters in hiring is to pre-commit to what qualifications are important — and require accountability. Prior to conducting interviews, determine the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs)¹ that are essential for success in the role:

Knowledge: the understanding of concepts, theories or subject matters that can be applied to the job (i.e. federal regulations, statistics)

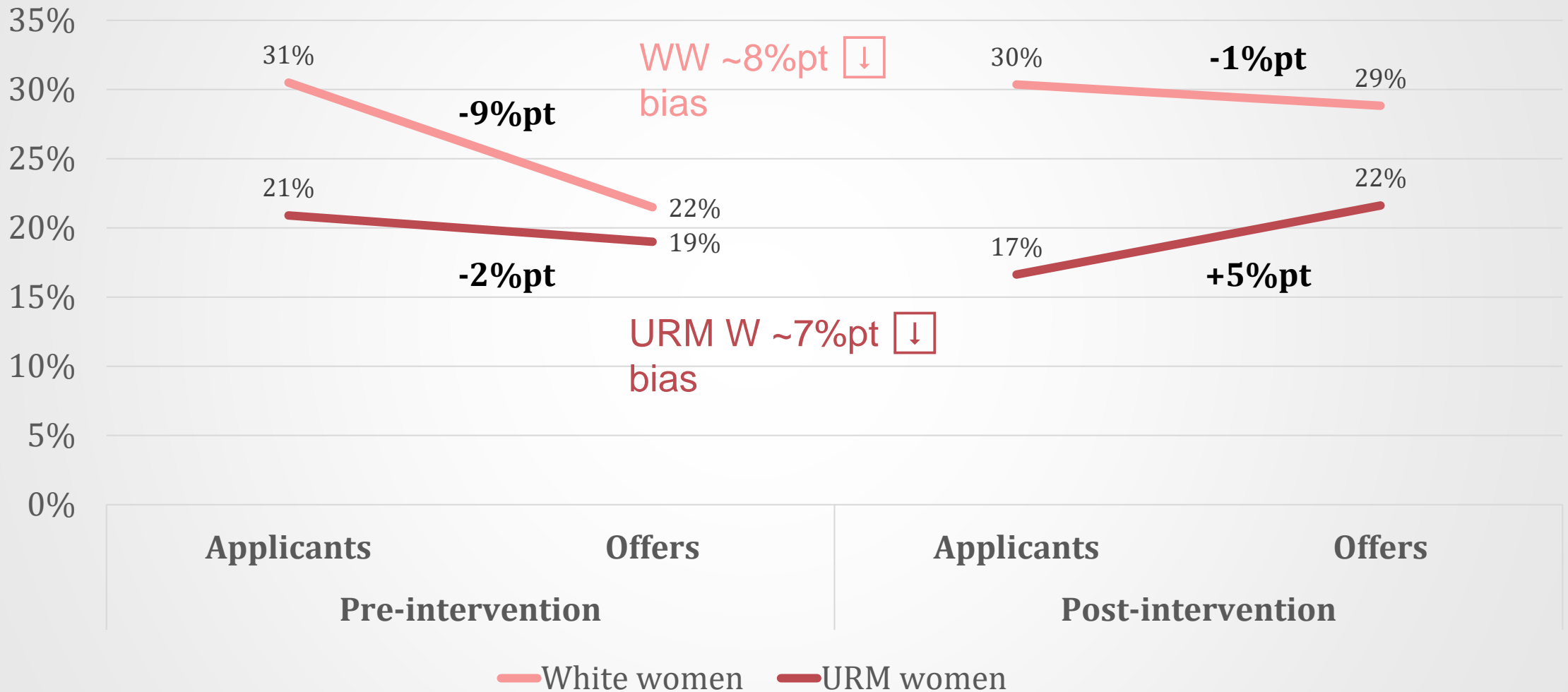
Skills: the capabilities or proficiencies developed through training or hands-on experience (i.e. project management, public speaking, writing)

Abilities: talents or expertise that a person brings to a task or situation (i.e. political savvy)

Once you've determined the KSAs, develop interview questions that will yield information about the candidates' capabilities in those categories. Behavior-based interview questions, which require candidates to explain how they've dealt with previous work situations (i.e. "tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a manager and how you handled it") more accurately predict future performance of a candidate than unstructured interviews.² Then, develop a rubric that clearly defines what excellence in each category looks like. Use these [sample interview questions, rubrics, and notes pages](#) created by Ice Miller as a template. After the interview, give candidates a separate rating for each factor.

<https://biasinterrupters.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Tools-for-interviewing.pdf>

The results: a more level playing field



Tech startup

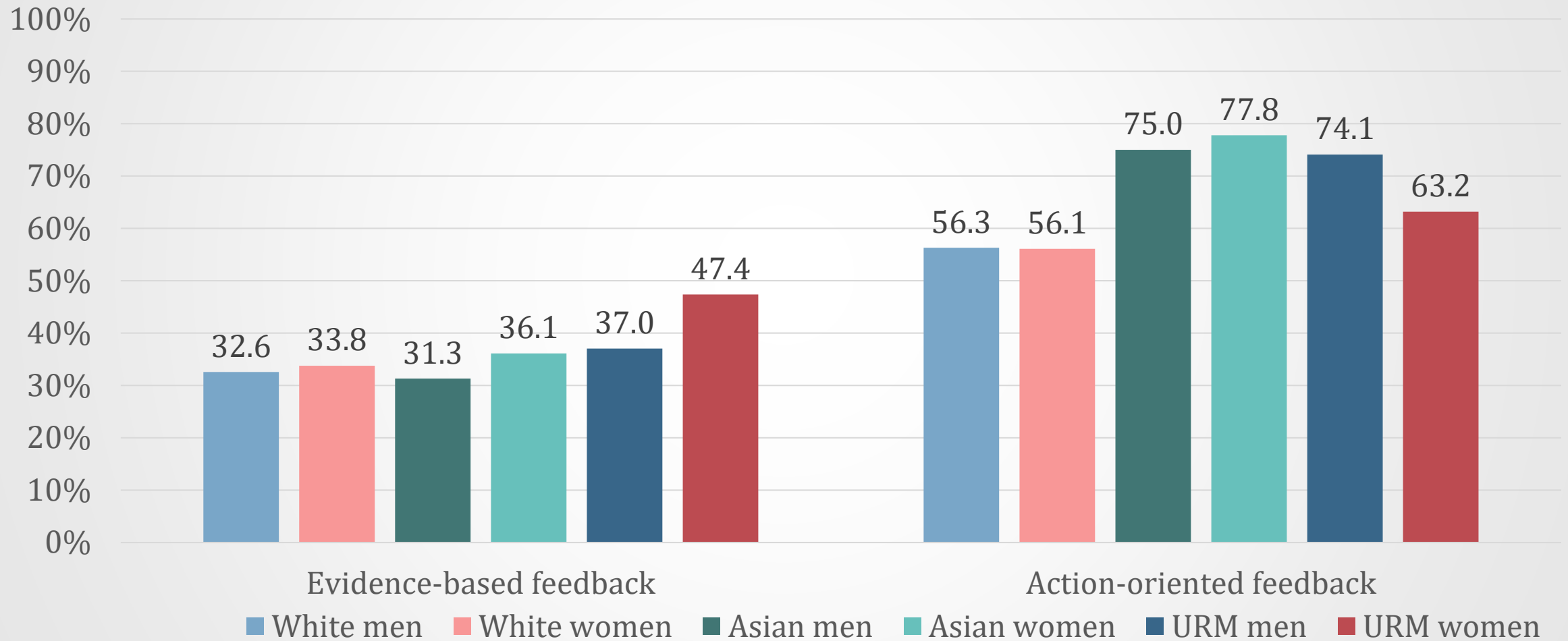
Challenges & opportunities

- Setting clear standards to apply to all candidates
- Keep track of demographics at each step of hiring
 - Lack of a diverse pool is different from:
 - Referrals disproportionately helping one group
 - No woman ever survives the interview because each is either “too meek” or “too much”

Interrupting bias in performance evaluations



The problem: unclear feedback



Consumer goods organization

Evidence-based actions

 Structural changes to evaluation process:

➤ *From global ratings to job-relevant competencies with evidence*

 Fair and Effective Performance Evaluations Workshop

Structural changes to evaluations

- Require evidence from the evaluation period
- Clear and specific performance criteria
- Related to job requirements
- Consider performance and potential separately
- Separate personality issues from skillsets

Train evaluators on the SBI Model

- Situation
- Behavior
- Impact
 - Will help interrupt bias
 - Will help people improve



Situation



Behavior



Impact

Situation



“At the team meeting last week, you spoke in a very tentative way and kept your voice so low I had trouble hearing you. This made me feel like you weren’t well prepared, or else didn’t care much about your presentation.”

Situation/ **behavior**



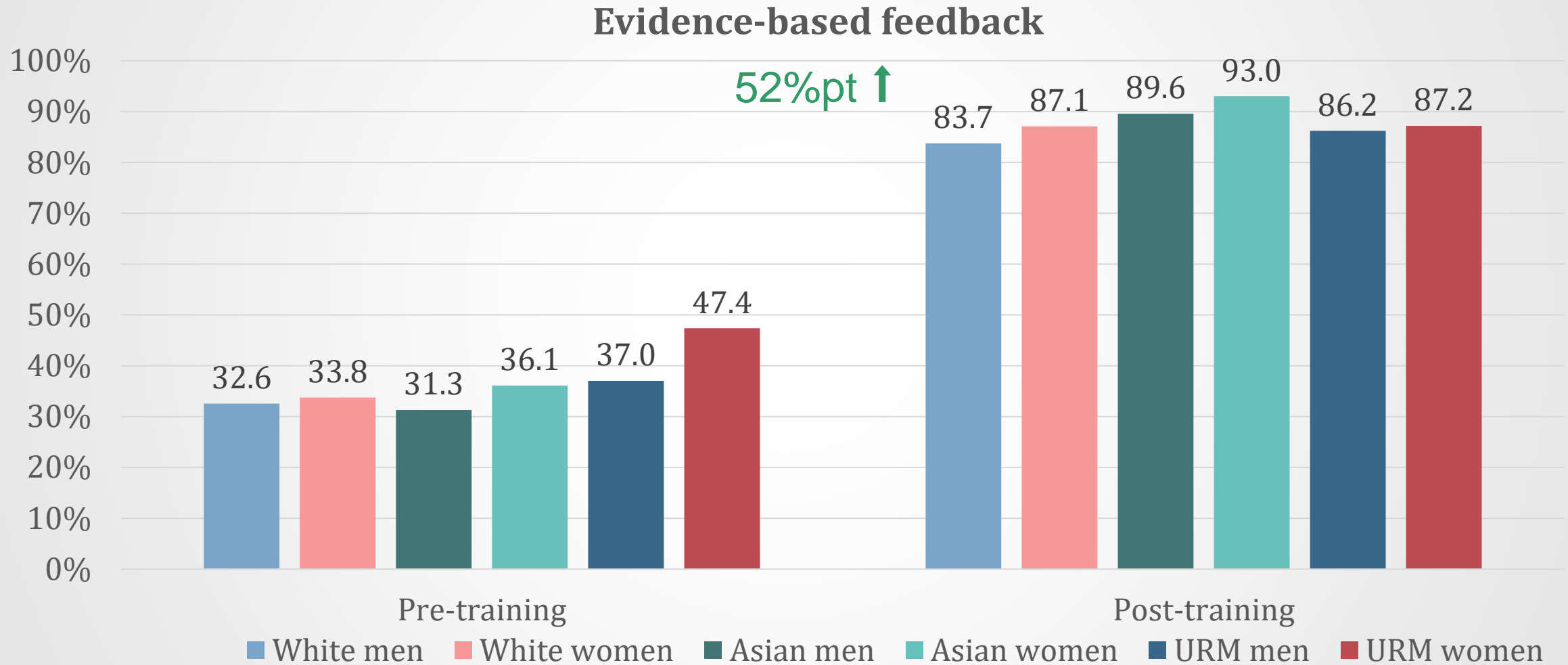
“At the team meeting last week, you spoke in a very tentative way and kept your voice so low I had trouble hearing you. This made me feel like you weren’t well prepared, or else didn’t care much about your presentation.”

Situation/ behavior/ **impact**



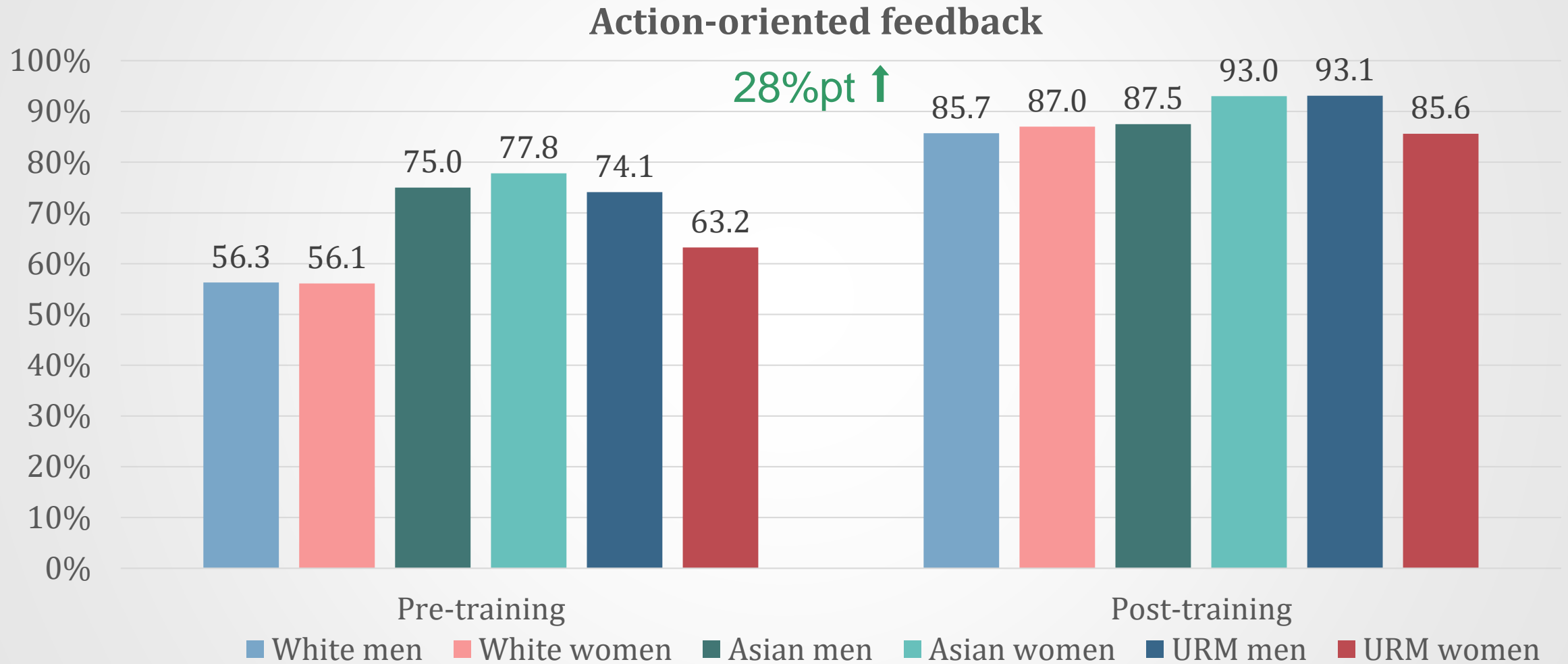
“At the team meeting last week, you spoke in a very tentative way and kept your voice so low I had trouble hearing you. **This made me feel like you weren’t well prepared, or else didn’t care much about your presentation.**”

The results: more evidence-based feedback



Consumer goods organization

The results: more action-oriented feedback



Consumer goods organization

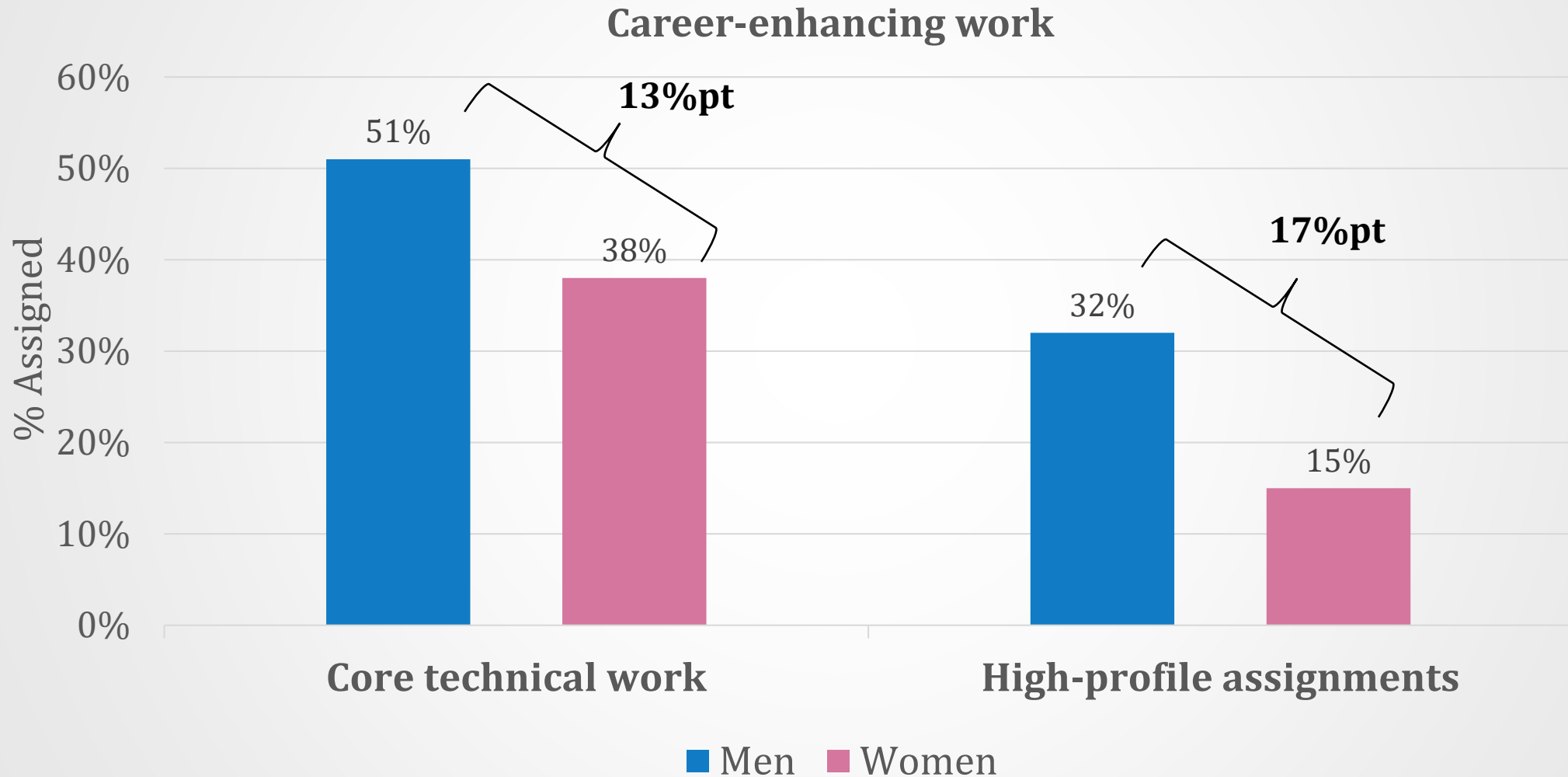
Common challenges & opportunities

- Moving to a competency-based system
 - Have managers list 3-4 competencies, rate employee on each, with 2-3 pieces of evidence
- Evaluation data and demographic data may be stored in different locations
 - Gender and race might be stored elsewhere
 - Solution: well-designed data systems

Interrupting bias in access to opportunities



The problem: \neq career-enhancing work



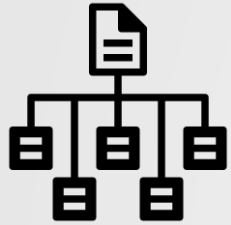
Two departments at an energy company

Evidence-based actions

-  Creation of a Tasking Tool:
 - *Managers can now keep track of assignments*

 Ensuring Fair Access to Opportunities Workshop

Figure out the career-enhancing work



Create typologies of work

- Opportunity to gain new knowledge
- Display knowledge to leadership
- Leading or managing teams



Track assignments

[BIAS INTERRUPTERS] *small steps big change* 4

ASSIGNMENT TYPOLOGY WORKSHEET

Fill out the worksheet below with specific projects/types of work/assignments that are high-profile and fall under the categories provided below:

This process applies to: (circle one) Junior Senior Intermediate (_____) Other (_____)

HIGHER-PROFILE WORK:

Roles that provide the opportunities to gain new knowledge or become a subject matter expert (SME):
1.
2.
3.
4.
Opportunities to display knowledge to important audiences:
1.
2.
3.
4.
Opportunities to develop relationships inside the company that are important for promotion/comp:
1.
2.
3.
4.
Opportunities to develop relationships outside the company that are important for promotion/comp:
1.
2.
3.
4.
Opportunities that grant access to business development resources:
1.
2.
3.
4.
Other high-profile assignments in your organization that lead to promotion:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Start keeping track: Tasking Tool

Tasking Tool

Fill out this page with types of work/assignments that fall under the categories provided below.

Feel free to label each opportunity in a way that makes sense to you. The objective is to make sure you are placing the task in the right category, not to explain it to an outside party.

Core Technical Products – roles that provide the opportunities to develop deep technical expertise. (Examples: novel analyses, tool development, research):

Opportunity/ task

Opportunity/ task

Opportunity/ task

Technical Leadership – leadership and mentoring opportunities. (Examples: leading a team on a project, mentoring a junior employee):

Tasking Tool

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Feel free to label each opportunity in a way that makes sense to you. The objective is to make sure you are placing the task in the right category, not to explain it to an outside party.

Core Technical Products – roles that provide the opportunities to develop deep technical expertise. (Examples: novel analyses, tool development, research):

Opportunity/ task

Opportunity/ task

Start keeping track: Tasking Tool

Tasking Tool

Please match up your direct reports with the opportunities they have worked on during the past month by checking the corresponding boxes.

Core Technical Products

	Rachel	Asma	Joan	Raafiya
Novel analyses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tool development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Equalize access to the career-enhancing work

Step one: Ask yourself – what is the reason that only a select few people are getting the high-profile opportunities?

Too busy?





But I trust him to do a
good job!

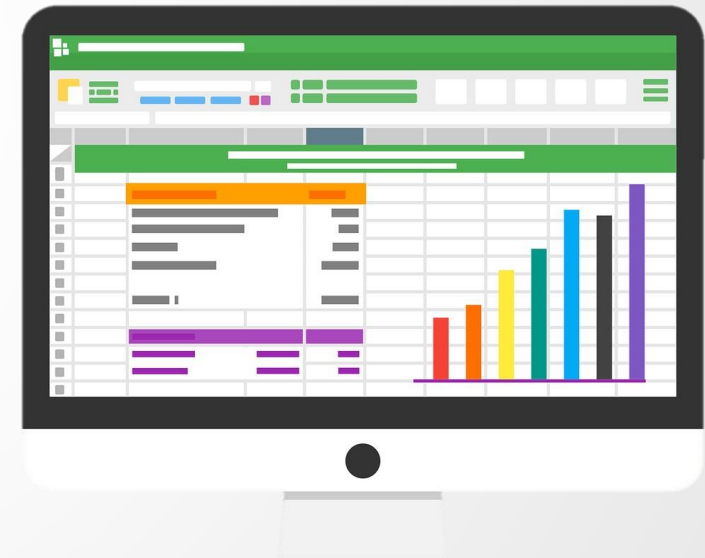


Single point of failure

If you only rely on a few “go-to” people for high-profile assignments, you’ll be left scrambling if someone unexpectedly leaves the company or goes on leave

If a diverse pool has the requisite skills...

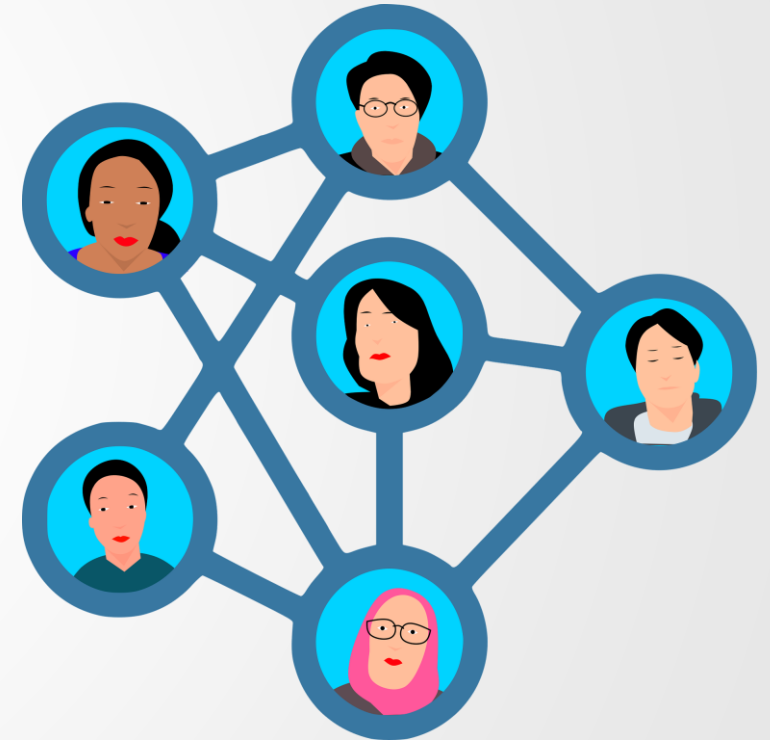
- 1) Write down who is in the pool
- 2) Implement a rotation
- 3) Keep track!



Equalize access to the career-enhancing work

If the pool is not diverse...

- 1) Revisit the assumption:
Is it true that only a select few have the skills?
- 2) Analyze how the pool was assembled:
Do you rely on self-promotion or volunteers?
- 3) Widen the pool



Equalize access to the career-enhancing work

If only a small group has the requisite skills...

Create a development plan

- Identify skills an employee needs to be eligible for the high-profile work.
- Find ways to help more employees to develop those skills.

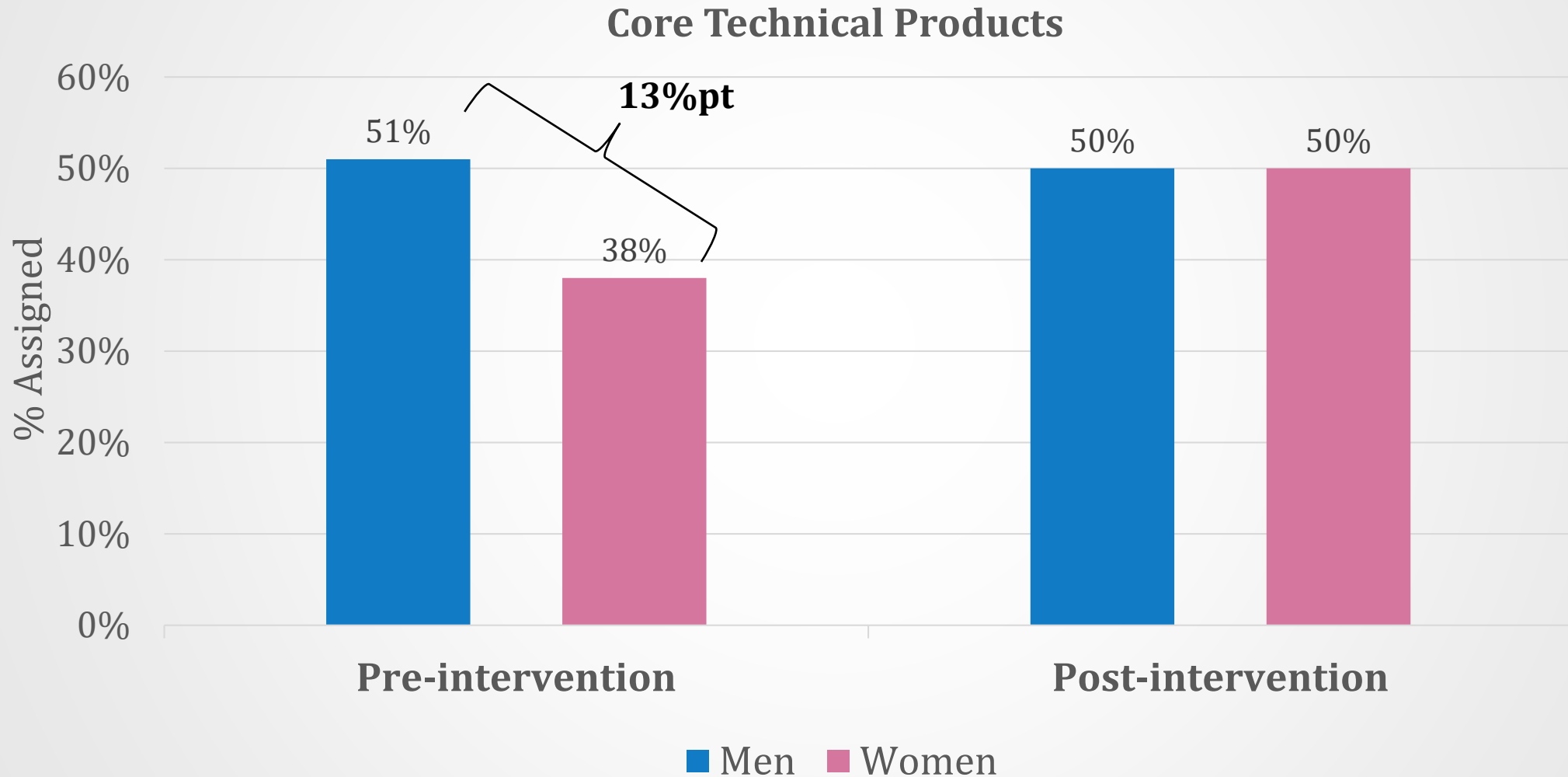
Try the plus-one system

- Have junior-employees shadow experienced ones.
- Mentor provides career advice + help them build skills.

Break up the assignment

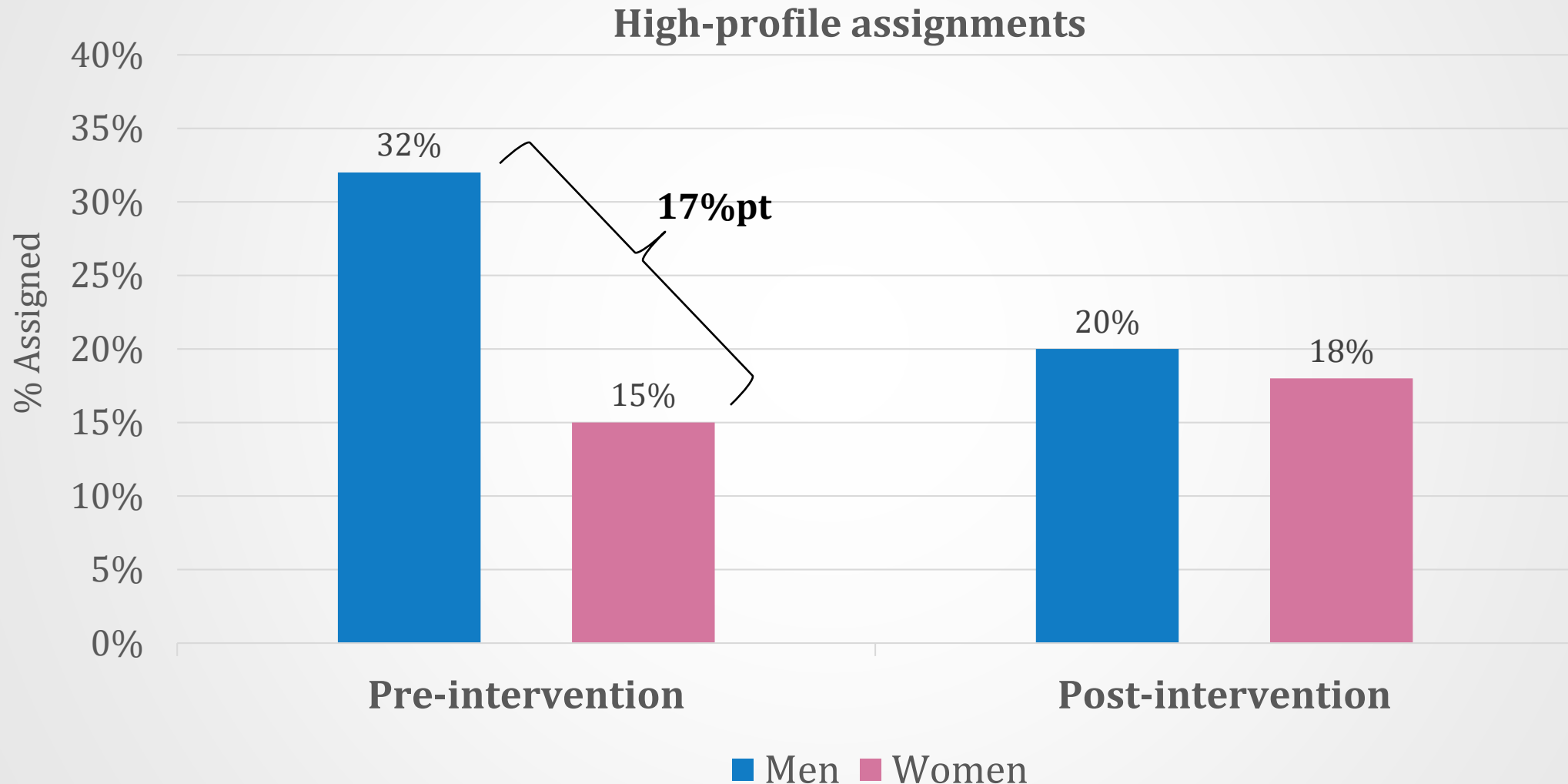
- Can you break up the high-profile assignments so more people can participate and get the experiences they need?

The results: more equitable allocation



Energy company

The results: more equitable allocation



Energy company

A two-step process

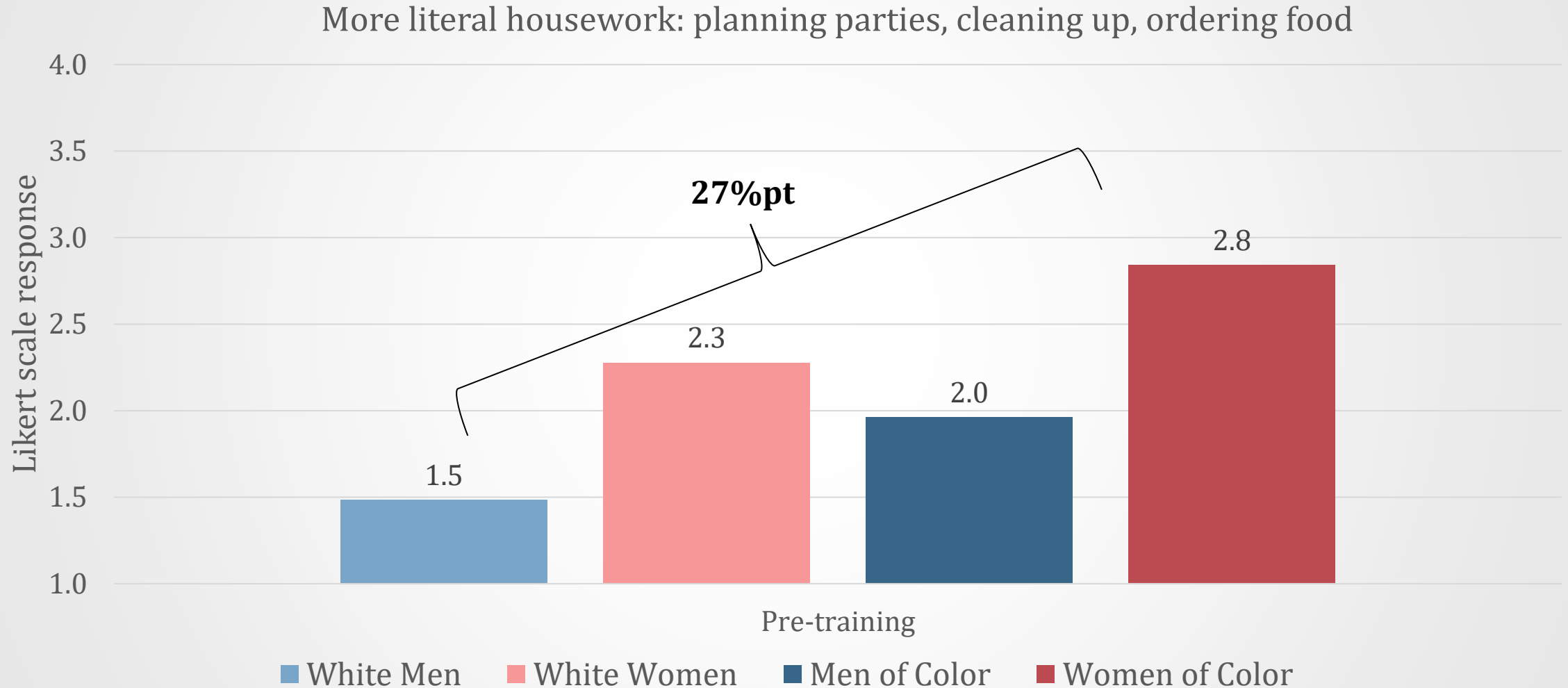
Equalizing access to career-enhancing opportunities requires both

Equal
responsibility for
non-promotable
work



Equal access
to high-profile
work

The problem: uneven office housework loads



Professional services firm

Admin work

- Taking notes, finding a time to meet

Emotion work

- Mentoring/being the peacemaker

Undervalued, behind-the-scenes work




- Project management, coordinating

Literal housework

- Washing the cups, planning parties

Evidence-based actions

In staffing non-promotable work:

-  DON'T ask for volunteers
-  DO establish a rotation of admin & literal housework
-  OR assign to support personnel

Start keeping track

Office Housework Survey

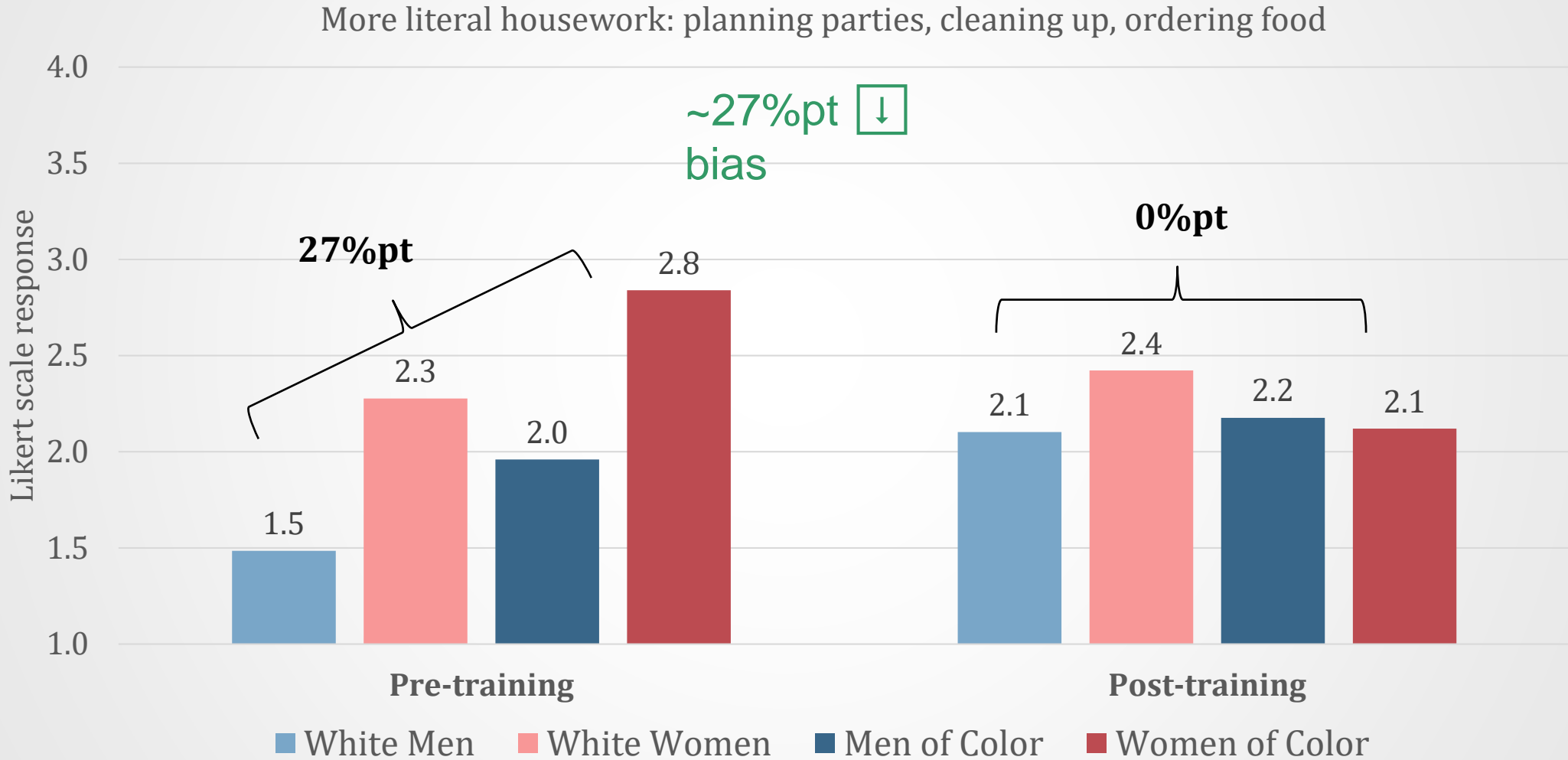
How much time have you spent on the following tasks compared to peers with similar seniority and experience?

For each task, check the box under the category that most closely corresponds with the amount of time you have spent on a task compared to peers.

	Less than peers	Same amount as peers	More than peers
Admin work – taking notes, finding a time to meet, scheduling meetings, managing paperwork and budgets			
Literal housework – planning parties or showers, getting coffee/food for meetings or cleaning up after			
Undervalued work – mentoring or behind-the-scenes work that has to get done but does not typically lead to promotion			
Opportunities to display knowledge to higher-ups/leadership			
Working on high-visibility/desirable assignments			
Opportunities to gain new knowledge or become a subject matter expert			
Internal or external networking opportunities that are critical for promotions or compensation			
Leading or managing teams			

<https://biasinterrupters.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Office-Housework-Survey.pdf>

The result: office housework more equitable



Professional services firm

Common challenges & opportunities

- Start small with a pilot
- Be ready to take a second step if you don't immediately reach the results you want

Final tips for sustainable DEI initiatives



- Don't try to fix everything, everywhere, all at once
- Keep metrics
- Build Bias Interrupters into normal business processes
- Interrupting bias in one system doesn't mean you won't need to in others

Do you want to make steady year-over-year progress towards your DEI goals?

www.biasinterrupters.org