

ASCENTIAL

Act today, win tomorrow.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Ascential

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External

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Paul Harrison

Chief Operating Officer
& DEI Board Sponsor

Executive introduction

Dear Colleague,

This past year has seen considerable focus on the role of business in society. Whilst acronyms fly around, one of the more common ways this topic is considered is under the umbrella of ESG (Environment, Social and Governance). The Board of Ascential strongly supports the principle underlying ESG which is that businesses should consider how their activities impact each of these areas and the steps that they can take to make a positive difference.

We have active programmes to address all aspects of ESG. In our 2021 annual report, you will see us report on carbon emissions to a greater level of detail than ever and the actions we are taking to minimise them. With that said, it is also important that we consider where we can make the greatest difference. Compared to businesses in, say, the manufacturing world or oil and gas industries, our activities present a less significant environmental threat. So, we have thought hard about where we can seek to make the greatest impact.

Consequently, we have adopted Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as a key priority. Why? Firstly, we believe our business and the sectors we work in should reflect the society in which we operate and secondly, it is extremely important to us that our people can thrive at Ascential, regardless of their background.

Alongside focussing our resources to make the most meaningful impact, understanding our colleagues' Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) priorities is key to setting our overall strategy. To ensure we are delivering in the rights areas, we conduct a global employee engagement survey, which provides valuable feedback on DEI. From the 2020 survey we established the 2030 commitments which are presented, outlined and updated in this report and in 2021 we have established key enablers to help us achieve those commitments.

These enablers include setting up the capability for our colleagues to voluntarily share their demographic data on Workday, our HR system. Having this data enables us to better understand where work needs to be prioritised and we continue to invite colleagues to share their data, which we handle with the utmost care. Another key enabler has been providing the education and training that our colleagues need in order to take effective action. We have delivered both 'Designing and Delivering effective DEI programmes' training for HR and DEI leads and 'New rules of Leadership' for all leaders - putting inclusivity at the heart of the way operate.

I look forward to seeing the action and progress both these enablers, and others, help us achieve in 2022.

Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Approach

Diversity and Inclusion approach: 10 year commitments

These were originally published in our Diversity & Inclusion Report January 2021 – you can read the full report [here](#)

Vision

For Ascential, diversity is core to us. Our value as an employer and to our customers is greater when we draw on the full range of our collective perspectives and experiences. We continue to be committed to attract, retain, develop and engage a diverse workforce, and we will work constantly to ensure that everyone at Ascential feels comfortable to be themselves. This is the right thing to do to ensure a sustainable future for our organisation and to make a positive impact for our people, customers and society.

Commitments

Employees:

- We will co-create an inclusive culture with equitable systems throughout our workforce, so that people are comfortable in bringing their authentic selves to Ascential, to thrive, and progress their career.

Customers:

- We will deliver the ideas, perspectives and cultural richness that our customers – and their customers – need to future-proof their products and services.

Society:

- We will play our part in imagining and developing a brighter, more equal society, starting with our own company and the industries we work in. We will report openly and regularly on our progress to enable others to learn from us and hold us to account.

Objectives

Employees:

- We aim to create a workforce that fully reflects, at all levels, the ethnic diversity of our major markets before 2030.
- We aim to ensure our senior leadership represents an equal gender split before 2030.
- We commit to measuring and assessing any possible gender and ethnicity pay gap.

Customers:

- Each of our major brands will develop specific, measurable and public ways of championing diversity in their respective industries, and track progress systematically.

Society:

- We will report honestly on our workforce diversity data and initiatives on an annual basis to create accountability, show progress and share our lessons.
- We will continue to manage and seek appropriate charity partners in line with our ambitions to support young people to succeed in the digital world.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap:

Initiating

- DEI programmes initiated by passionate individuals.
- Programmes are brand/industry specific with the opportunity to connect them centrally across all Ascential.
- Focused specifically on gender as an area of diversity.
- Programmes designed from assumption as data insight unavailable.
- Employee Networks established and led by colleagues.

Advancing

- Central DEI Governance and Exec Sponsorship create central strategy and commitments.
- Focus broadened to incorporate 2-3 areas of diversity.
- Focus on equitable career development and inclusive recruitment.
- D&I data collection initiated and some demographic data available to provide insight on areas requiring focus e.g D&I Engagement Questions, Anonymous Diversity Survey.
- Programme leadership, building more accountability as delivery models develop across the business.

Integrating

- Central strategy, targets and commitments with clear accountability throughout the business.
- Specific senior ESG resource influences, connects and equips leaders on DEI across the business.
- Programmes are starting to deliver business value, over and above making the business an inclusive place to work.
- Individuals delivering DEI work within the business are resourced accordingly.
- Sophisticated and representative diversity data available to inform decision making and priorities.
- Employee Networks resourced and empowered to deliver against own and organisational DEI priorities.

Leading


- Workforce, at all levels, matches the demographics of the communities in which we operate.
- DEI supports and enables business strategy and effectiveness.
- Accountability is clear throughout the organisation.
- Company seen as a DEI thought leader in the sectors in which it operates, and shares learning and opportunities to enable others to progress.
- Employee Networks represent entire workforce, are active across brands and drive focus across the business.



2021 priorities: progress update

In the January 2021 Diversity & Inclusion report, we set out nine actions to be undertaken in 2021. They established some of the key foundations from which we will continue to build and grow our work in this area.

- 1** Establish firm governance and reporting for all DEI-related activity, with Tracey Gray our exec lead and Paul Harrison as our board lead.
- 2** Build out specific plans for each region to address local challenges.
- 3** Introduce a company-wide succession planning approach that will allow us to proactively identify opportunities to enable a more diverse pipeline and promote talent within our business.
- 4** Review our talent attraction processes, suppliers and recruitment requirements so we can better support our hiring managers to effectively recruit diverse talent and remove unnecessary barriers to entry.
- 5** Review our policies, to identify any potential bias or preference for particular groups, to inform activity required to ensure equitable support for all.
- 6** Develop a range of outreach opportunities which align with our signature activity to support young people from under-represented groups to thrive in the digital world, including reviewing our work experience, internship and apprenticeship opportunities.
- 7** Launch an Inclusive Leadership training programme for our senior leadership team.
- 8** Launch a Global Diversity & Inclusion calendar to raise awareness of major holidays, festivals, awareness days and months.
- 9** Further analyse the data and investigate the root causes of issues through employee focus groups. We want to ensure we are working from a place of fact, not assumption, to address the priorities highlighted in these surveys.

 Objective achieved in 2021

 Work on objective underway and continuing into 2022



2022 priorities:

Employee actions

1

We will empower and enable Regional DEI structures to take the lead on designing and implementing programmes and initiatives that support their DEI priorities.

2

By the end of the year we will have trained over 400 people leaders in New Rules of Leadership to further embed inclusive leadership across all Ascential Leadership.

3

We will continue to collect Diversity Data in Workday, demonstrating to our colleagues how and where their data is used. By the end of the year all Business Unit Board updates will use DEI data to inform business decision making.

4

Employee Networks will continue to be supported to achieve their own priorities, while also being equipped to support the overall Ascential commitments. Exec Sponsors will work to provide the right resource to create action as well as rewarding and recognising the ERG's efforts.

5

We will create a specific and measurable succession and development plan for the top 20% of roles taking our diversity goals into account.

6

In 2022 we will publish an action plan to close the gender pay gap in the UK and continue to collect the data required to reasonably assess other potential pay gaps.

2022 priorities:

Customers actions

1

We will develop accountability measures on DEI for our Exec and Business Unit Leaders.

2

We will assess the feasibility of using our business products and tools to support diverse owned businesses within both our existing and new sectors and networks.

3

We will measure the diversity in our supply chain and identify where improvements may be required in order to align with customer and investor expectations.

Society actions

1

We will double the number of UK Early Talent opportunities provided in 2021 by continuing to grow our work experience, intern and apprenticeship programmes.

2

Signature move/game changer activity: Identify an external partner in our key digital commerce region (North America) who can support us in our diversity goals for the sector.



DEI Governance

Board and Exec

DEI Board Sponsor
Paul Harrison

Exec Sponsor
Tracey Gray

Set and sign off 2030 and annual commitments.

Central Support:

- Diversity Demographic Data.
- Track progress against commitments.
- Both internal and external best practise surfaced and shared.

Business Unit Leaders

Support with regional roll out of central commitments.

Brand Leaders

Support Ascential wide commitments and set specific Brand commitments where required.

Employee Network Groups

Set focused commitments specific to Network and support Ascential wide commitments.

Brand Change Committees and HR:

Lead DEI activity within the brand and region. Supported by Leadership and with best practise shared across committees.

Activity snapshot

Key activities from the year

Employees:

- We have built on our strong inclusion scores, believing that by focusing on inclusion first, broader diversity will follow. 92% (up 6% from 2020) of our people believe that anyone can thrive at Ascential regardless of their background, identity and beliefs.
- Launched the Inclusive Recruitment toolkit, focussing on eliminating any potential bias from our recruitment process.
- Launched 'New Rules of Leadership' - a training programme to be rolled out across all Leadership which puts inclusive leadership at the core of the way we operate.
- Launched the Early Talent Hub to support colleagues create opportunities for diverse early talent entering the sector.

For customers:

- The focus this year has been on equipping our Content and Marketing teams with the tools, research and data they need to deliver inclusive and representative content. We've produced a series of 'Avoiding Stereotypes' guidelines, delivered training events and conducted two content audits to assess the gender split and perceived race and ethnicity representation of imagery and contributors.
- In Q4 2021, LIONS appointed a DEI specialist consultancy who are examining practices across all areas of the brand, and will advise on changes to the way the brand works so that they can ensure that everything they do as a business and brand is considered through the lens of equality.

Society:

- WGSN Future Makers programme works with underrepresented groups in the design industry and supports them with career development. The programme received over 1,000 applications and 26 mentees were matched with 24 WGSN Mentors. Tangible outcomes from the programme include mentees finding jobs and accessing business grants to scale their small businesses.
- Money20/20 committed to focus on progressing diversity within its industry. Their Do Better Pledge, works to increase representation around gender, and race and ethnicity, on panels at Money20/20 events. Since 2018 over 150 women across the world have participated in the RiseUp programme, with more than 60% of participants being women of colour. Over half have received a promotion or moved into a more senior role since RiseUp.
- The Glass Lion at Cannes Lions recognises work that implicitly or explicitly addresses issues of gender inequality or prejudice, through the conscious representation of gender in advertising. In 2021 they donated the profits from the Glass Lion to causes that support gender equality with €69,000 split between The Geena Davis Institute and the UN Unstereotype Alliance.



Employee Networks



Ascential Pride

Ascential Pride's mission is to create a safe, open, and inclusive space for our LGBTQ+ colleagues, educate allies and build a community through events, activations and fundraising for LGBTQ+ charities. We meet at least monthly to plan priorities and events, produce a newsletter each quarter, and ensure regular contributions to the Pride Slack channel to share important news, boost awareness and keep the conversation going.

Highlights from 2021:

Ascential Pride began 2021 by co-organising and producing the first ever Ascential's Got Talent (AGT) in collaboration with Black in Business, a widely successful event with more than 700 global colleagues voting for a winner. AGT's reach extended far beyond the Ascential Awards, with the video submissions providing entertainment and additional content during Digital Commerce Live and other events throughout the year.

During Pride Month, Ascential Pride organised weekly events with more than 260 total participants across Ascential. Those events included hosting Ascential's corporate partner Just Like Us for a panel discussion on allyship, facilitating an educational panel on intersectionality featuring four Ascential colleagues, hosting Drag Queen Bingo, and fundraising nearly \$3000 to donate to The Okra Project.

Throughout the year Ascential Pride continue to raise awareness and support colleagues through newsletters and activations on days such as 'National Coming Out Day'.

Employee Networks



Black in Business

Black in Business (BiB) was formed in October 2019 by Arielle Kalu and Parris Francis. It originated as a group chat, and has evolved into a space for Black colleagues to network, advance their professional and personal development, share experiences and celebrate diversity. We are committed to building an inclusive environment that supports and encourages Black colleagues to advance their professional and leadership potential through connection, mentorship and collaboration, with Tracey Gray (EVP People) as our Executive Sponsor. BiB aims to build an inclusive environment that supports and encourages Black colleagues to thrive, acting as a sounding board for meaningful change within Ascential.

Highlights from 2021:

- Ascential Got Talent was a highlight for Black in Business, the first event of its kind. Run in collaboration with Ascential Pride, it provided a great platform to raise awareness of the network.
- During Black History Month both in February for the US and October for the UK, the network produced a series of engaging newsletters to educate and inspire colleagues about Black History. A personal highlight for the group was that one of our apprentices took the lead on this content, building her confidence and raising her profile across the organisation.
- Overall a highlight for many individuals in the network has been having an open space, free from judgement to discuss a wide range of topics from current affairs, work related issues and personal passions.

Employee Networks



EmPower: Ascential Women's Network

EmPower: Ascential Women's Network launched in early 2022

Their mission is threefold:

Unite & Inspire:

To build a community that is centered on collaboration and empathy, jointly amplifying each other's voices and creating inclusive spaces where everyone is encouraged to share their experiences.

Educate:

To facilitate and promote lifelong learning for colleagues across the business and partner organisations.

Trailblaze:

To drive change, help women achieve their goals and celebrate each other's accomplishments.

Diversity data 2021

Notes on data collection:

The data on the following slides was collected from WorkDay in December 2021. The data was managed in line with our Privacy Policy and individual's anonymity was maintained throughout.

The data was provided on a voluntary basis via WorkDay where colleagues were asked to share their gender, race and ethnicity and sexual orientation.

So far, we do not have a representative data set for either race and ethnicity or sexual orientation. We are therefore not comparing this data to the data we shared in the 2021 D&I report as it would not be an accurate comparison.



Gender

99% of total Ascential population have completed their Gender on Workday.

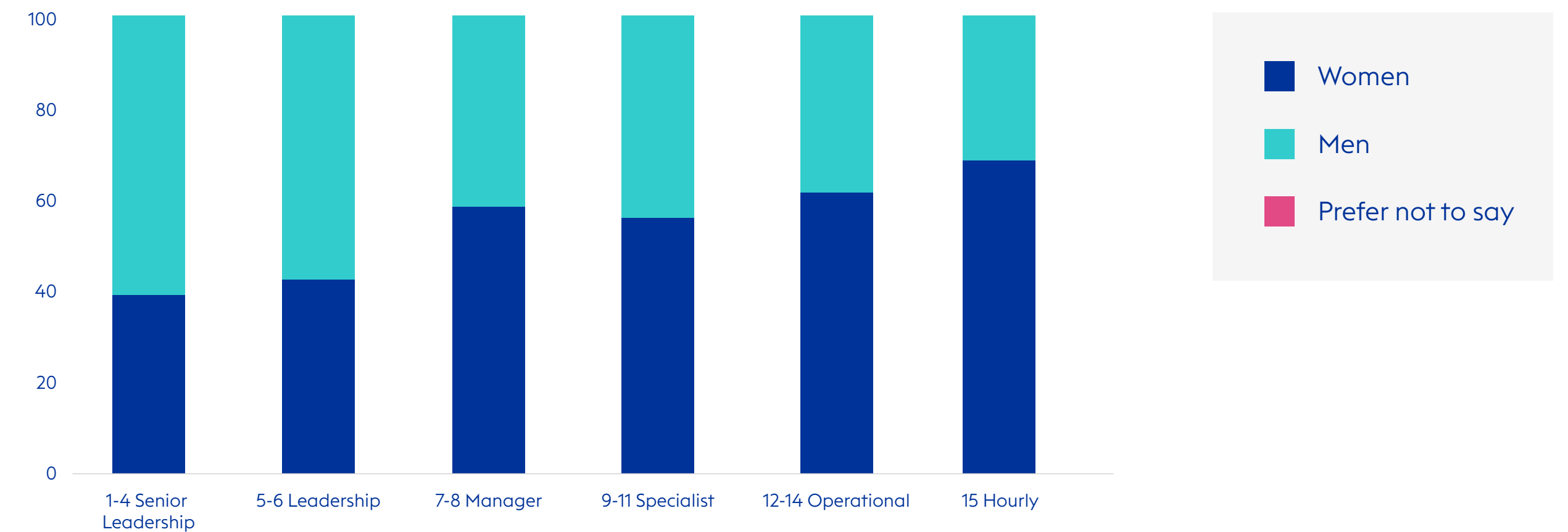
The dataset used for this analysis is representative of the overall Ascential population.

Overall the gender split across the organisation remains unchanged from 2020.

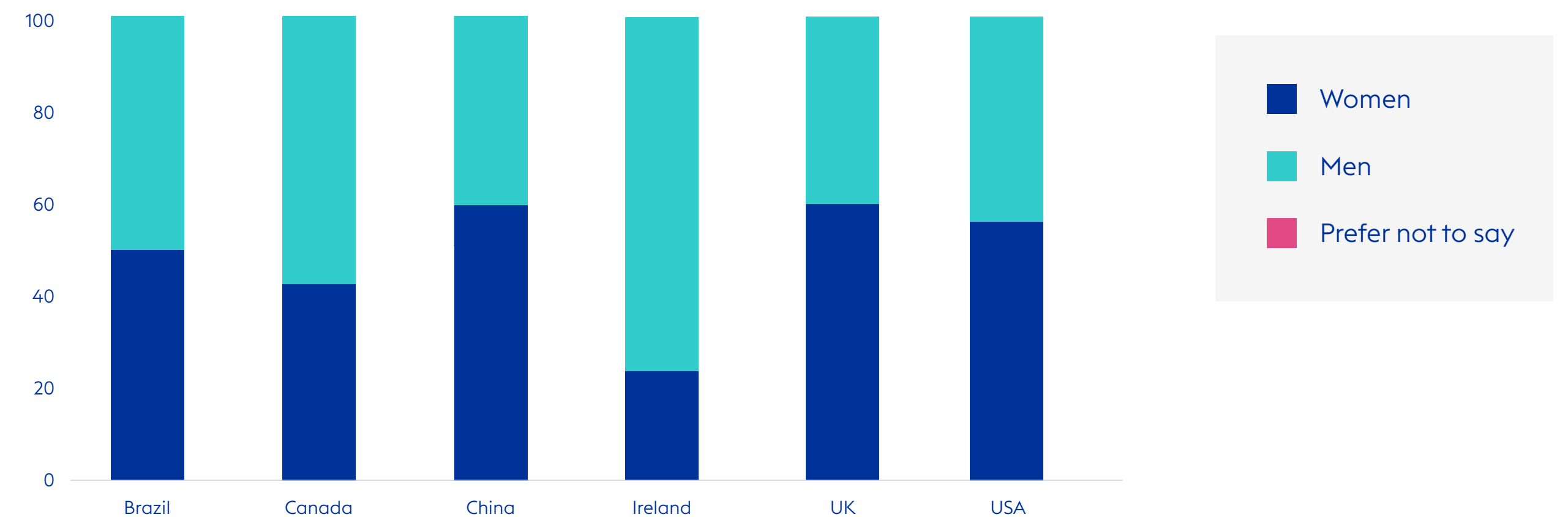
The focus will remain on the Senior Leadership population which has 3% more women than in August 2020 but remains the organisational level with the most unequal gender split.

The number of people who identify as non-binary was not high enough to be represented in the these charts. We continue to work with Ascential Pride to support our non-binary colleagues and make sure their voices are heard and represented at Ascential.

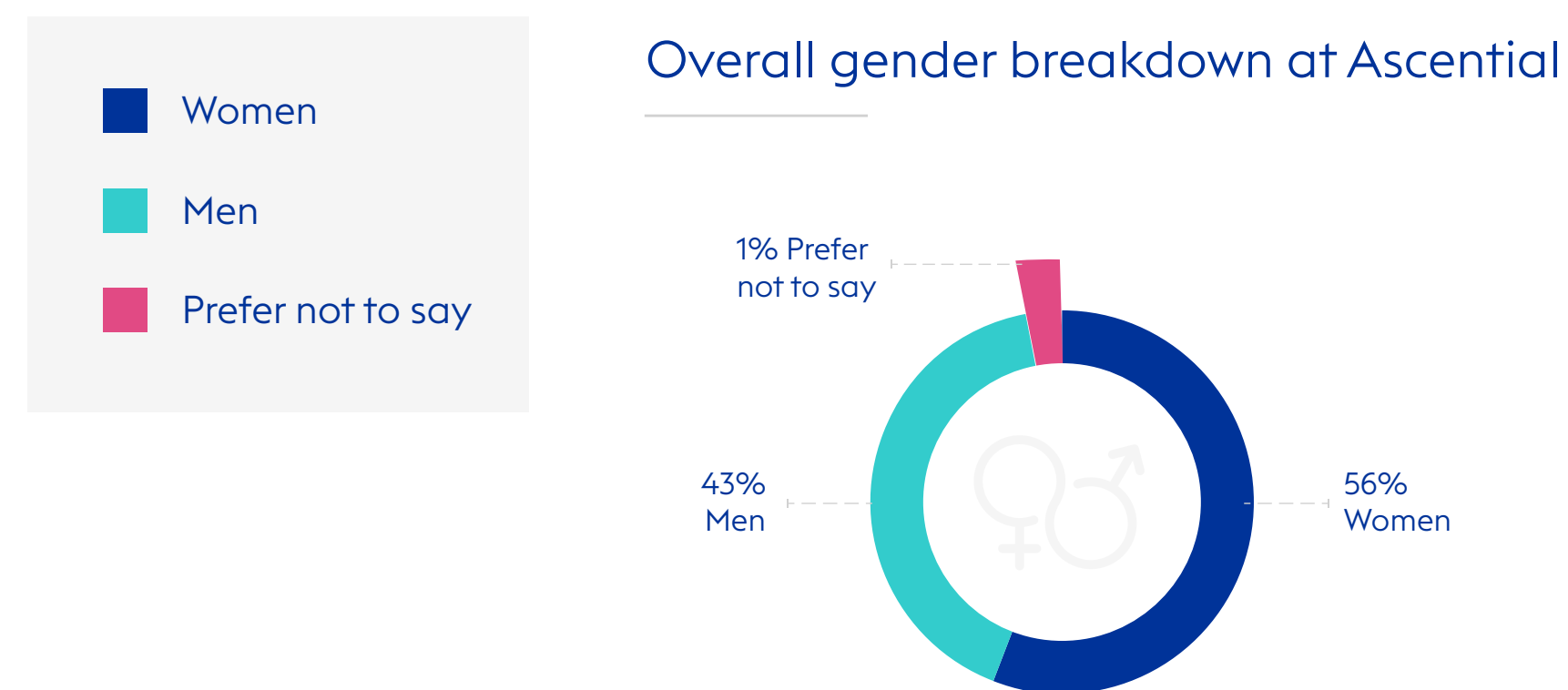
Gender breakdown by organisational level



Gender split in our largest regions



Overall gender breakdown at Ascential



Race & Ethnicity

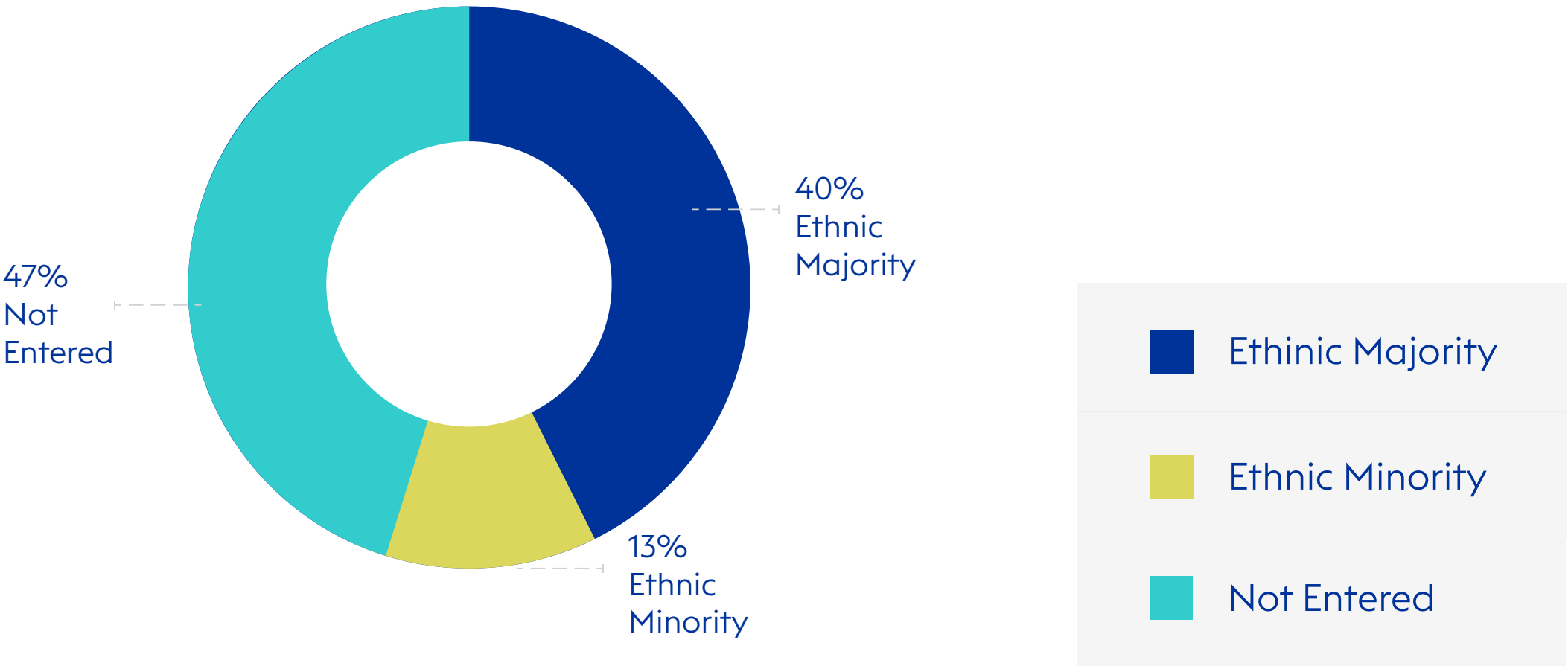
This graph represents 54% of the total Ascential population which is everyone who has completed their race and ethnicity data on Workday.

This data is not representative of the whole population but gives an indication of where focus needs to be given.

We commit to publishing the data we have available to give an indication of our demographics and demonstrate transparency. We hope this encourages further colleagues to share their data so we can focus in the right places.

The terms Ethnic Minority and Ethnic Majority allow us to aggregate data across our regions. Each answer provided in Workday is attributed to either Ethnic Minority or Majority depending on the demographics of the country in which the data is supplied.

Overall race and ethnicity breakdown at Ascential



Sexual Orientation

29% of total Ascential population have completed their Sexual Orientation on Workday.

Overall sexual orientation breakdown at Ascential

