

Follow-up to the "Experience of Women Participating in the IETF" Report



IETF 121 Syssters Meeting

Roman Danyliw

7-November-2024

Broad participation and input into the standards process is critical for the success of the IETF

Agenda

- Commitment of IETF leadership to gender diversity
- Summary of specific planning and actions framed by the LLC-commissioned report on the [Experience of Women Participating in the IETF](#)
- Begin an ongoing dialog on plans and priorities to improve, prioritize and guide future initiatives

Report Suggestions

Experience of Women Participating in the IETF

Merike Kaao
6 October 2023

Introduction

The IETF Administrative and Chairs of Systems and Chairs of Systems experiences of women participating in the IETF was to interview information pertaining to the IETF or those who were accommodated.

An introduction between established prior to issues that would require legal counsel.

The goal was to interview that included: areas of operational, academic engagement with the non-binary people and relevant information.

A total of 31 interviews

While some interviews nor having any comments to keep their identity participate in the IETF did not want to be identified findings in this report

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Experience of Women Participating in the IETF

A few women voiced that the leadership was still very white and very male, and that the same people get recycled to leadership positions.

One individual noted that there was an improvement over time in getting better at noticing social ineptitude versus rude behavior.

A few women expressed missing the old IETF because men are now so cautious and they would prefer honesty over politeness. However, they did also mention that having worked in the technical industry for a long time they felt they had thicker skins and the self-confidence to handle any attack as long as it wasn't ad hominem and personal.

[Suggestions for Enhancing Experience of Women Attending IETF](#)

Several suggestions were made on how experiences of women attending the IETF can be enhanced and to ensure that women continue to participate.

Mentorship

Multiple individuals mentioned the importance and incredible value of mentorship programs and how important it is not to feel isolated. One individual mentioned how overwhelmed she was by the amount of mail on the attendee list and had missed seeing information on mentoring. Suggestions for enhancing the mentorship programs were:

- Make the mentorship program more prominent on the website or as part of the registration process.
- Check in with guides and their mentees to ensure new folks do not feel uncomfortable if the guide/mentor does not show up.
- Have younger and less experienced individuals work with senior people, since it is typically a long-term effort to help mentor and shepherd.

Initiatives

Many individuals suggested promoting outreach initiatives to universities, industry, and other forums. The suggestions were:

- Have leadership go to organizations and events where female participation is common, such as the Grace Hopper event, to promote the IETF.
- Provide some kind of template on how to create a proposal for managers to showcase the work being done by an individual and continue getting budget and approval to get the organization to approve continuing contribution.
- Work with industry employee resource groups (ERGs) which are employee-led groups that are focused on particular characteristics (i.e. women, religion, etc.) and encourage IETF participation.

31 suggestions across the following topic areas:

- Mentorship
- Initiatives
- Systems Program
- Training and Awareness
- Anti-Harassment
- Leadership
- Governance and Process
- Social Events

Whole of IETF Community Effort

Mentorship	#12 - Provide guidance on less expensive hotels ■	Leadership
#1 - Make Mentorship more prominent ■	#13 - Continuing the childcare programs ■	#23 - Create better training for leadership roles ■ ■
#2 - Check in with guides/mentees if there is a “no-show” ■	Initiatives: Research	#24 - Don’t apply pressure to fulfill diversity obligation ■ ■ ■
#3 - Pairing younger mentees with senior people ■	#14 - Research use of non-English language ■	Governance & Process
Initiatives: Outreach	#15 - Research past contributions of women in IETF ■	#25 - System of meritocracy is broken ■ ■
#4 - Provide templates for a business case to participate ■	#16 - Research diversity in volunteer efforts ■	#26 - Stronger moderation ■
#5 - Promote IETF where female participation is common ■ ■	Training & Awareness	#27 - Guidance on credit ■ ■
#6 - Work with industry ERGs ■ ■ ■	#17 - Enhancing the newcomer experience with training ■ ■	#28 - Guidance on capturing comments ■
#7 - Work with universities to raise awareness ■ ■ ■ ■	#18 - Training for IETF leadership roles ■ ■	#29 - Conduct policies without community consensus ■ ■
#8 - Work with industry/universities to send more women ■ ■ ■ ■	Systers	Social Events
#9 - Follow-up with companies on returning women ■ ■	#19 - A Systers technical session ■	#30 - Social Events without drinking ■
Initiatives: Financial	#20 - Have Systers collaborate with the Guides program ■ ■	#31 - Encourage invite-only events ■ ■
#10 - Utilize scholarship programs from other orgs ■ ■	Anti-Harassment	
#11 - Provide scholarship opportunities ■ ■	#21 - Ombudsman recommendations ■	Legend
	#22 - Term limits for leadership ■	■ = IESG ■ = IAB ■ = IRTF ■ = LLC ■ = Systers

Topics Covered Today

Mentorship		Leadership
		#23 - Create better training for leadership roles ■ ■
	Initiatives: Research	
		Governance & Process
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Initiatives: Outreach

SUGGESTION #4: *Provide some kind of template on how to create a proposal for managers to showcase the work being done by an individual and continue getting budget and approval to get the organization to approve continuing contribution.*

- Early IESG exploration identified that persuasive business case were organization dependent and difficult to generalize
- (IESG led) IESG has begun providing on-request “IETF participation letters” or “IETF reference letters”
 - Question for Syssters: would such letters be helpful?

Initiatives: Outreach - 2

SUGGESTION #5: *Have leadership go to organizations and events where female participation is common, such as the Grace Hopper event, to promote the IETF*

SUGGESTION #6: *Work with industry employee resource groups (ERGs) which are employee-led groups that are focused on particular characteristics (i.e. women, religion, etc.) and encourage IETF participation.*

SUGGESTION #7: *Create initiatives to work with university programs to make female engineers aware of the IETF, for example the Society for Women Engineers (SWE).*

SUGGESTION #8: *Work with universities and industry to create programs to enable more women to attend the IETF.*

- Secretariat researching organizations to approach
 - Question for Syssters: which of these would be the highest priority?

Training and Awareness

SUGGESTION #18: *Training on cultural norms and respectfully resolving contentious issues was suggested for at least IETF leadership roles*

- (IESG and LLC led) Since 2021, the IETF LLC has been providing on-demand and live [training](#) on a voluntary basis for current and aspiring WG chairs (e.g., Promoting Contribution, Resolving Conflict, Building Consensus).
 - Question to Syssters: Does this material cover the needed topic?
- Unconscious bias training provided to the 2024 NomCom for the first time.

Anti-Harassment

SUGGESTION #21: *Currently, the Ombudsteam has liaisons into other parts of the IETF organization, which presents a problem when a complainant wants to make a statement about someone that is part of the liaison chain. A suggestion was made to create a more HR focused structure and create better anonymity and privacy for harassment discussions*

- IESG would benefit from understanding the concerns around liaisons and privacy
 - Ombudsteam has no liaison relationship in the IETF and no reporting chain to any IETF leadership (e.g., IESG, IETF LLC)
 - To the knowledge of the IESG, the Ombudsteam provide complete confidentiality for harassment discussions
 - Question to Syssters: is there any insight into these concerns?

Anti-Harassment - 2

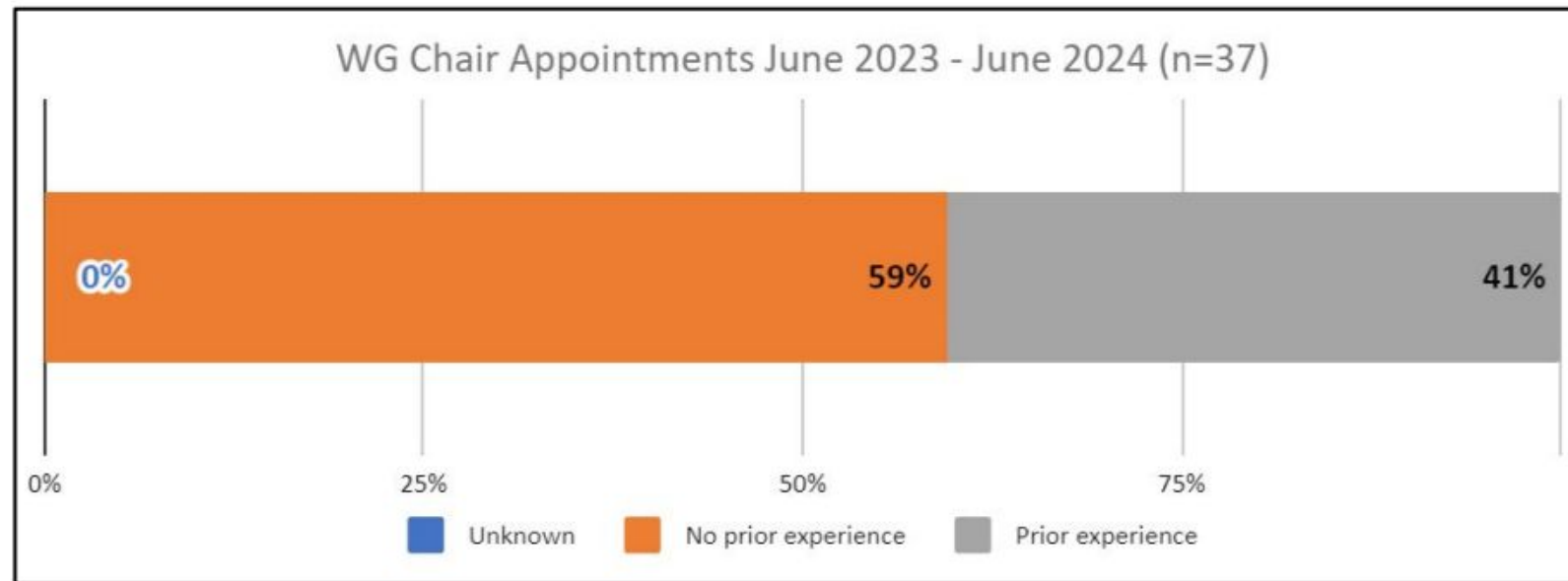
- (IESG led) Actions to improve the Ombudsteam (within the limits of [RFC7776](#))
 - Appointment of three new team members – Thank you to Sofia Celi, Avri Doria and Shivan Sahib for your willingness to serve!
 - Additional appointments likely to increase on-site presence at plenary meeting
 - Revision of the [Ombudsteam public webpage](#) to include appointment dates
 - Explored contracting for professional ombuds persons to add to team – contracting for support is possible, but prohibited by RFC7776
 - Awaiting contracting options for a professional ombuds consulting organization to review IETF procedures
 - Requested that Ombudsteam provide a “Transparency Report” to community
 - Awaiting Ombudsteam’s public release of their working procedures
- (LLC led) [Second IASA 2 retrospective](#) highlighted risk management challenges

Leadership

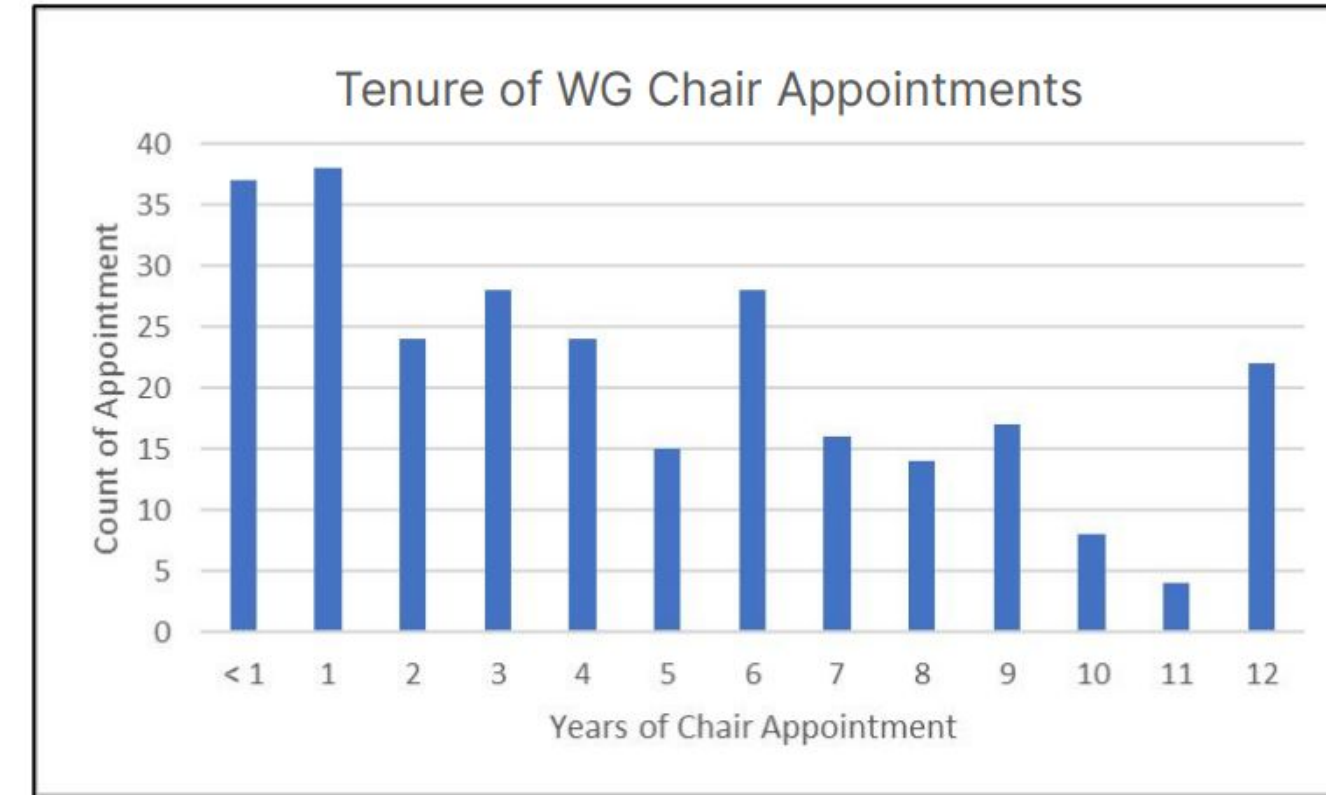
SUGGESTION #22: *Create term limits for WG chairs and other leadership to create more opportunities for new individuals to attain these positions*

- IESG makes appointment of WG Chairs and Directorate leadership positions
- IESG assesses that the cadre of WG chairs sees sufficient turn-over to provide new opportunities while providing stability in leadership. No action will be taken on term limits
- (IESG led) Exploring changes to the meeting registration to signal willingness to serve as a WG chair (just like NomCom service) – provides a cross-IETF mechanism to identify candidate WG chairs
- On term limits for NomCom appointment positions
 - Formal term limits require changes to consensus RFCs
 - Concerns around the tenure of specific candidates could be handled via NomCom feedback

Leadership - 2



59% of WG chair appointments in the last year were individuals with no prior IETF chairing experience



46% of WG chair appointments have served ≤ 4 year

Note: (as of June 21, 2024) the cadre of WG chairs is 213 unique individuals, serve in 275 WG chair roles appointed to 127 unique WGs. 76% of all WG chairs have 1 appointment. 96% of WG chairs have either 1 or 2 appointments.

Source: slide 20, [IETF Chair Slides at the IETF 120 Plenary](#)

Leadership - 3

SUGGESTION #23: *Create better training for leadership roles along with more opportunity. Many females do not think they are qualified to be an Area Director and if they do not get selected after an initial try they may just figure why bother*

- IESG and LLC needs more information on this suggestion to consider action
- Questions for Systers
 - Starting with the [existing WG chair training](#) as a baseline, what additional training would be helpful?
 - Any insight into the form of additional opportunities?
 - Is discussion with NomCom Chair needed – is candidate feedback not helpful? not coming?

Governance and Process - 2

SUGGESTION #26: *Have stronger moderation on IETF email lists and chat channels to avoid confrontational dialogue*

- (IESG led) Moderation Procedures ([MODPOD](#)) WG has been chartered to revise existing and define new moderation procedures suitable for all IETF communication channels

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SUGGESTION #28: *Ensure that everyone's comments are documented and all are addressed in a written tracker since mailing list comments are NOT all captured. Then, someone's comments on the mailing list can be tracked which can provide an equal playing field and acknowledgment for all contributions*

- IESG assesses that mandatory and uniform use of a tracker across WGs is a change to the standards process requiring community consensus. Unilateral IESG action is not possible.
- Community discussion on [RFC2026bis](#) / [RFC2418bis](#) has begun (and will be an ALLDISPATCH item at IETF 121). The dispatch result may guide the engagement strategy.

「discussion」

BACKUP

Follow-up to the "Experience of Women Participating in the IETF" Report

Note: the slides that follow are a comprehensive review of each of the suggestions from the "Experience of Woman Participating in the IETF". This material could not be delivered in the allotted time during the the IETF 121 Syssters meeting.



IETF 121 Syssters Meeting

7-November-2024

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Mentorship

Assumption: “mentorship program” is the [IETF Guides program](#)

SUGGESTION #1: *Make the mentorship program more prominent on the website or as part of the registration process.*

- (LLC led) Options for promoting the Guides program during meeting registration is being explored for roll-out at the IETF 122 meeting

Mentorship - 2

SUGGESTION #2 *Check in with guides and their mentees to ensure new folks do not feel uncomfortable if the guide/mentor does not show up*

- New text has been added to the “match email” to better identify “no show” situations
 - *If either of you (both guide and participant) fail to contact each other by the end of the day Sunday, please mail lead@guides.ietf.org and let us know so we can make a different match when possible. Finally, please let us if there is any other way in which we can support your interactions. Please mail any questions you have to lead@guides.ietf.org.*
- New text has also been added to the [Guides FAQ](#)
 - *In the event that a guide or participant is unresponsive or the pair decide that the match is not constructive (extremely rare!), the leads can be contacted to request a new pairing by sending mail to lead@guides.ietf.org.*

Mentorship - 3

SUGGESTION #3: *Have younger and less experienced individuals work with senior people, since it is typically a long-term effort to help mentor and shepherd.*

- (IESG/Guides led) [IETF Guides program](#) “matches experienced IETF participants with new participants at IETF meetings in order to aid their integration into the IETF community through advice, help, and collected wisdom”.
 - Pairings do NOT consider age (less experience/new to IETF or experienced in the IETF is independent of age)
 - Pairings do consider topics of interest by the individual seeking a guide
- Question to Syssters: Is there feedback for EODIR on the guide pairings?

Initiatives: Outreach

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 - Question for Syssters: which of these would be the highest priority?

Initiatives: Outreach - 3

SUGGESTION #9: *Follow up with companies on whether the woman who is coming will get sent again*

- IESG and LLC saw multiple challenges with implementation. No action at this time
 - What is the mechanism to use for identifying the population to inquiry about?
 - Does this population consent to the IETF reaching out on their behalf to their employer?
 - How to identify the targeted point of contact to follow-up with about a particular IETF participant?
 - Might this have unintended consequences?

Initiatives: Financial

Assumption: these suggestions are about on-site participation. There is already an unlimited use

[Remote Fee Waiver Program](#)

SUGGESTION #10: *Utilize scholarship and fellowship programs that work with other organizations and replicate what can work for the IETF. This would also tackle diversity more holistically*

SUGGESTION #11: *Provide more scholarship opportunities since men are usually selected over women to attend the IETF (which also ties into working with universities and industry to create programs to enable more women to attend the IETF).*

- The IRTF has the [Travel Grant](#) program
- The IETF Chair and IRTF Chair have a limited on-site Fee Waiver Program
- (IESG + LLC-led) IESG is in early stage exploration the criteria to use for awarding an expanded scope fee waiver or scholarship program for on-site. Next step is finding funding.

Initiatives: Financial - 2

SUGGESTION #12: *Provide guidance on less expensive hotels to signal that in-person meetings aren't just designed for corporate high budget travelers*

- (LLC led) Contracted hotels are vetted for suitability and price.
- The meeting wiki provides a listing of alternative hotels in the venue area.
- Site inspections typically take place 3 years in advance of the IETF meeting - unless we contract with a hotel we cannot keep up with changes impacting suitability or pricing.

SUGGESTION #13: *Continuing the childcare programs since it lessens the burden of cost to single parents who already incur added costs by traveling with their child to the in-person meetings*

- (LLC led) The IETF LLC is committed to continuing the childcare program indefinitely. No additional action planned.

Initiatives: Research

SUGGESTION #14: *Research that does not only use English for feedback should be investigated.*

- (IETF LLC led) Based on the [Third Community Survey \(Dec 2023 - January 2024\)](#), use of English does not appear to be significant barrier. No further action planned.

Q26. How true are the following statements about your participation in the IETF?

	Europe	North America (USA, Canada)	Asia	Oceania (Australia, New ..	Latin America (Mexico, Centra..	Africa	Middle East
My skill in English is good enough for me to participate fully	4.59	4.89	3.91	4.92	3.93	4.58	4.63

Q26. How true are the following statements about your participation in the IETF?



Initiatives: Research - 2

SUGGESTION #15: *Research past contributions from women at the IETF and create a historical report to highlight these contributions*

- (IETF LLC led) On the IETF LLC todo list.
- Question for Systers: Is this report something that Systers could help prepare?

SUGGESTION #16 *Research how you get diversity in volunteer efforts*

- (IETF LLC led) IETF LLC main focus here is on identifying, exposing and reducing barriers to diversity, on the basis that it would be problematic to encourage diversity only for people to turn up and find significant barriers in place.

Training and Awareness

SUGGESTION #17: *Enhancing the newcomer experience by creating added training to help navigate how to join meetings and what systems to use for what*

- (LLC led) The new participant onboarding is being expanded to a full day event on the Sunday of the plenary. Target launch meeting is IETF 122.

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 - Question to Syssters: Does this material cover the needed topic?
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Systemers Program

SUGGESTION #19: A Systemers technical session

SUGGESTION #20: Have Systemers collaborate with the Guides program at the IETF

- IESG plans to take no action on these suggestions and defers to Systemers to self-organize as needed
- IESG endorses the second suggestion

Anti-Harassment

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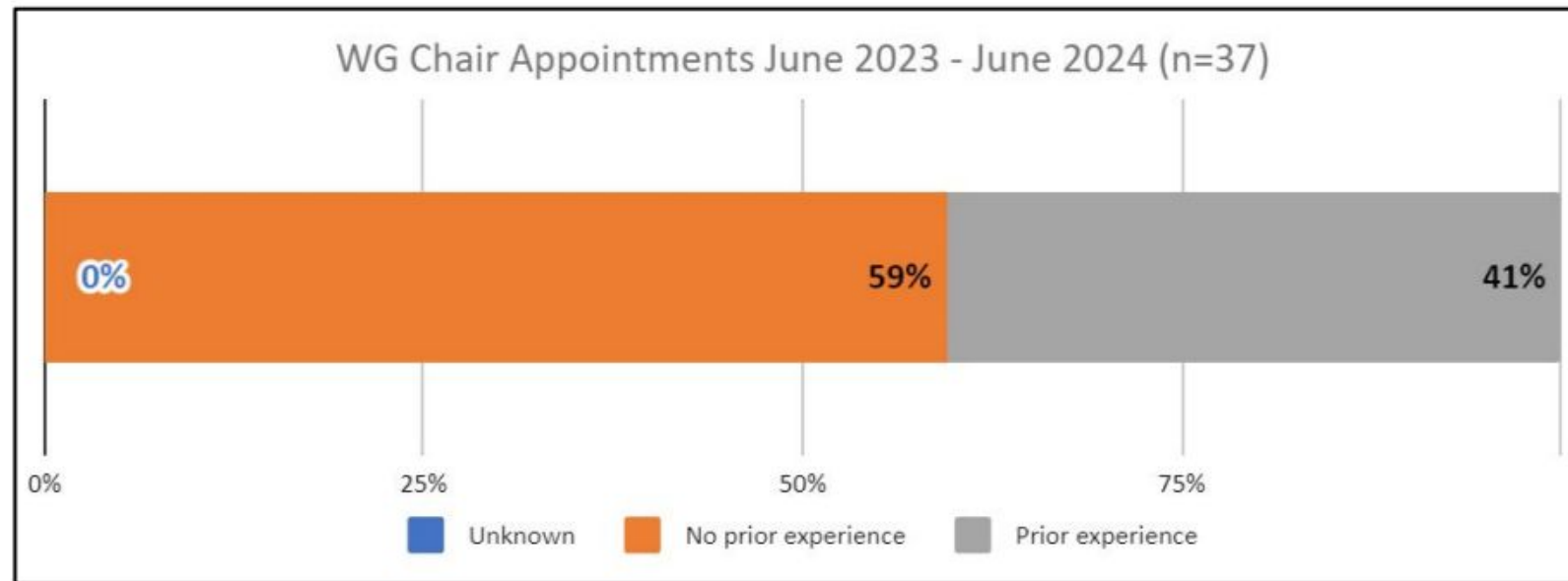
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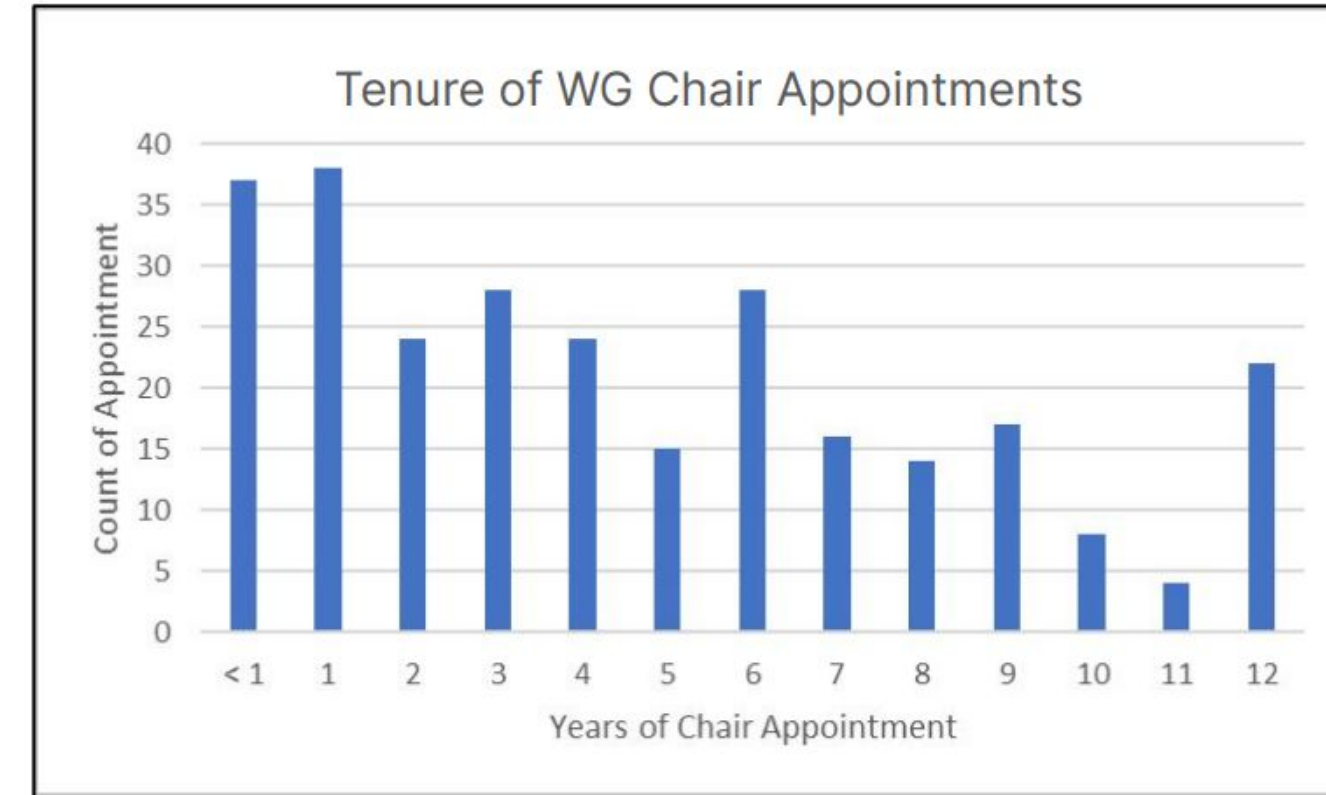
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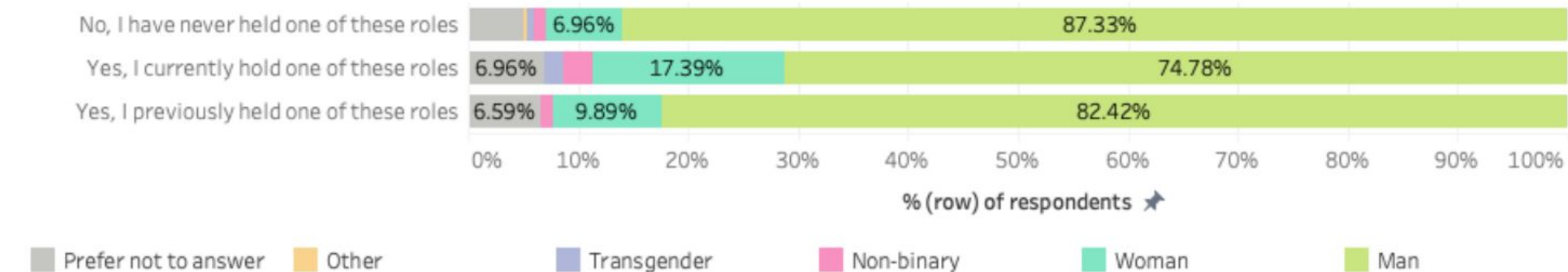
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Leadership - 4

SUGGESTION #24: *More women in leadership positions is a good first step but IETF must be careful not to put too much responsibility on one individual woman just due to diversity aspects since that can be stressful to fill the obligation.*

- Helpful caution. IESG takes this under advisement.

By gender normalised by option:



Commentary

24. The percentage of women in leadership roles is significantly higher than the percentage of women overall. The pool of women for leadership roles is much smaller than for men and so a greater proportion of women are in leadership roles than the proportion for men.

Source: [2023 IETF Community Survey](#)

Governance and Process

SUGGESTION #25: *One individual felt that the culture is systematically broken and as long as meritocracy is the basis of the organizational culture then they weren't sure anything could be done to be more inclusive, of gender or otherwise*

- IESG believes there are numerous opportunities for improving inclusivity within the IETF culture of rough consensus
- Additional initiatives on inclusivity not otherwise mentioned elsewhere in the slides include:
 - (IETF LLC led) Commitment to the [Remote Fee Waiver](#) – to ensure participation is possible from anywhere in the world in all meetings
 - (IETF LLC led) Registration open for two future meetings at a time – provides an additional 3 months to obtain a visa, funding, and/or management approval
 - (IESG led) ALLDISPATCH experiment – to simplify the onboarding of new work

Governance and Process - 2

SUGGESTION #26: *Have stronger moderation on IETF email lists and chat channels to avoid confrontational dialogue*

- (IESG led) Moderation Procedures ([MODPOD](#)) WG has been chartered to revise existing and define new moderation procedures suitable for all IETF communication channels

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- Community discussion on [RFC2026bis](#) has begun (and will be an ALLDISPATCH item at IETF 121). The dispatch result may guide the engagement strategy.

Governance and Process - 4

Assumption: “conduct policies” is the IETF Guidelines for Conduct ([RFC7154](#))

SUGGESTION #29: *Conduct policies cannot be subject to community consensus. Loud folks may be the objectors and conduct violators–suggestion was to create community buy-in but not consensus.*

- Under current IETF governance, changes to “conduct policies” require community consensus
- Procedures to address behavior which deviates from “conduct policies” is in-scope for the new Moderation Procedures ([MODPOD](#)) WG
- IESG plans no further action at this time pending discussions in MODPOD
- [IRTF Code of Conduct](#)

Social Events

SUGGESTION #30: *Enable more social events that do not revolve around drinking since some women do not feel safe around an environment where men are drinking*

- (LLC led) At least one alternative, non-drinking activity is now a regular feature of the plenary meeting (e.g., T-Shirt making/IETF 119, Game Night/IETF 120). No additional action is planned.

SUGGESTION #31: *Encourage more openness and inclusiveness for smaller social events which are invite only*

- IESG will support Syssters in additional meetings beyond this scheduled lunch meeting
- IESG has no plans to convene additional, official “invite only” social events