



UNITED WE ROW INCLUSION STRATEGY



INTRODUCTION

At USRowing, we have the opportunity to broaden the definition of “who” a rower is and help the sport of rowing reflect the rich and valuable demographics of this country. A slowing growth rate in the US, changing demographics, and more competition to attract young rowers, all point towards a need to evolve. We must raise awareness of our sport as a viable option for anyone with interest, eliminate barriers to rowing, and upend presumptions – and some realities – about the sport’s exclusivity. Expanding the talent pool will also lead to higher performance on the international stage.

In the last two years, USRowing has taken action to make our sport more inclusive. We formed an Inclusion and Community Impact Committee. We brought in the STEM to Stern program to support rowing clubs in becoming more competitive and inclusive by breaking down barriers for youth from underserved communities to join the sport. USRowing launched a Community Engagement team with experience and passion for inclusivity in sport. We gave away hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships to camps over the past three years.

Inclusion and Belonging require an ambitious and holistic approach. USRowing's goal in developing a specific I&B plan is scalable, impactful change. Thus, a I&B strategic planning process ran in parallel to that of the organization. The result is a distinct I&B strategic plan that has been integrated into our organizational strategy.

Shared here is a summary of the Inclusion and Belonging Strategic Plan.

INCLUSION AND BELONGING

At USRowing, Inclusion and Belonging is broadening our sport, expanding the opportunity to all, breaking down barriers of entry, and making rowing relevant to new audiences.

It is paramount to USRowing's mission to:

- Steward and grow the sport of rowing.
- Recruit From a wider pipeline to help fuel the High Performance Team and increase performance at the highest levels.

Our mission is to bring more people in and not push anyone out. If we grow and sustain our sport, we all win.

In 2020, USRowing's Board of Directors created a Inclusion and Community Impact Committee. The ICI Committee advises and serves as a sounding board and counsel regarding developing, refining, funding, marketing, and reflecting on initiatives and programs to make USRowing and the sport more inclusive. The committee meets once a month along with staff liaisons and board representatives.

The partnership among USRowing staff, Board of Directors, and ICI Committee, along with the commitment and work from individuals in local communities, are crucial to the success of making rowing more welcoming, accessible, and inclusive.

PROCESS

USRowing community engagement staff and the ICI Committee worked closely to develop the United We Row Inclusion Strategic Plan from August 2022 through March 2023.

In mid-2022, a strategic planning subcommittee of the ICI Committee, which consisted of the two co-chairs, an athlete representative, two at-large members, and two staff members, was formed to vet and hire a consultant to complete the strategic plan.

The strategic planning sub-committee selected Truclusion in June of 2022 to lead the strategic planning effort.

The process consisted of 16 working sessions among the staff, ICI Committee, and the ICI Strategic Planning Sub-committee.

To gather critical stakeholder feedback, Truclusion launched a Belonging and Inclusion Assessment and USRowing launched a membership survey. The surveys captured 800 and 1500 responses, respectively.

In addition to the assessment, the ICI strategic planning sub-committee consulted numerous stakeholders and held six listening sessions.

The ICI strategic planning sub-committee has played a significant role in the development of the Inclusion Strategic Plan and their part going forward is to partner with the USRowing team to ensure the staff execute the strategic plan.

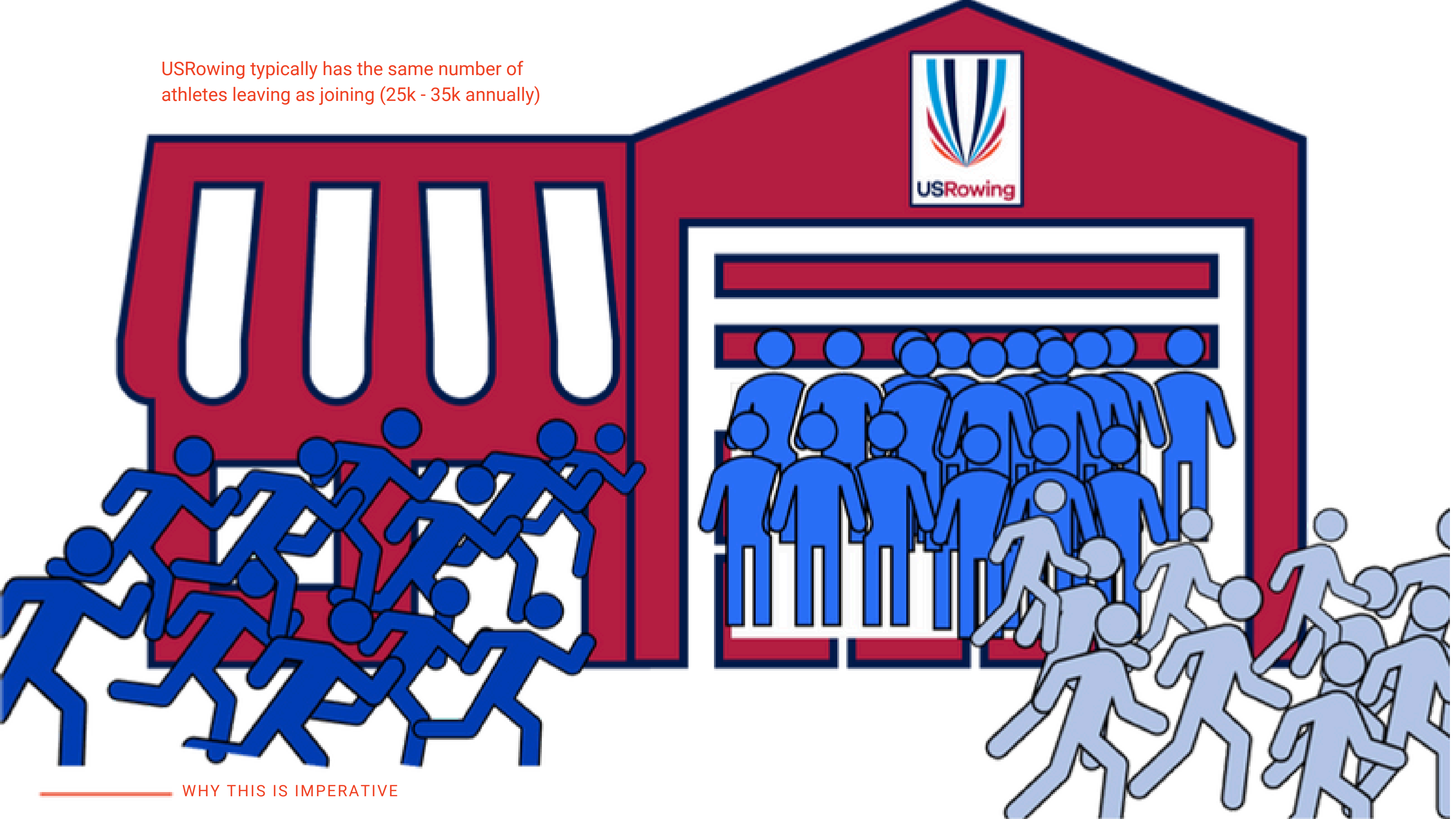
WHY THIS WORK IS
IMERATIVE

INCLUSION IMPACTS RETENTION

Intentional inclusion does not mandate that to make one person feel welcome, another must feel less welcome. Inclusion does not mean those currently in the sport of rowing will lose out, miss opportunities, achieve less, or no longer feel they belong. Those who love rowing today will not be asked to love rowing any less. In fact, inclusion requires valuing those who currently feel that rowing is just for them as much as those who don't.

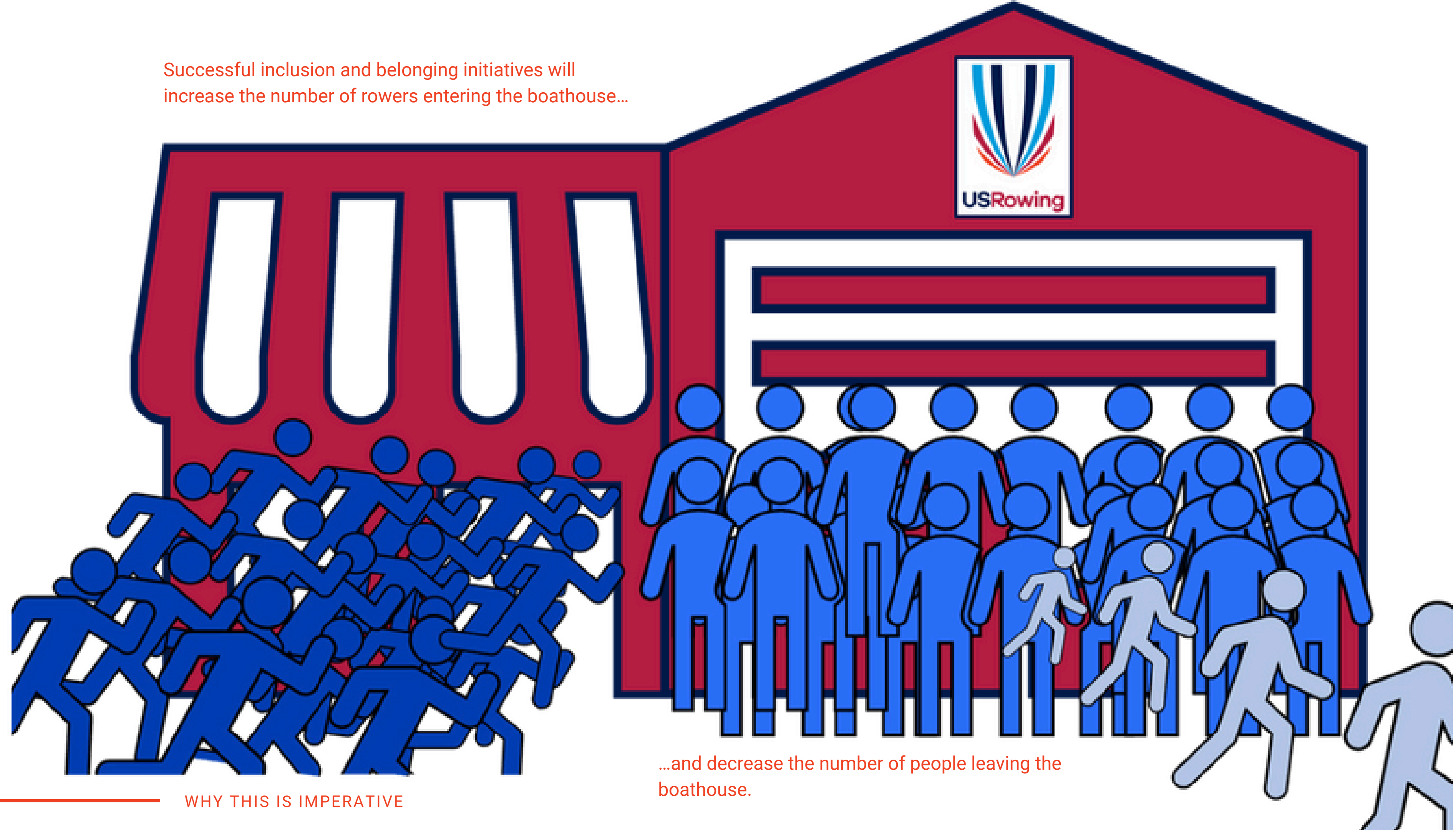
Intentional inclusion will improve the member experience in rowing. More coaches, referees, and athletes will remain in our sport and the result will be a stronger USRowing than ever before.

USRowing typically has the same number of athletes leaving as joining (25k - 35k annually)



WHY THIS IS IMPERATIVE

Successful inclusion and belonging initiatives will increase the number of rowers entering the boathouse...



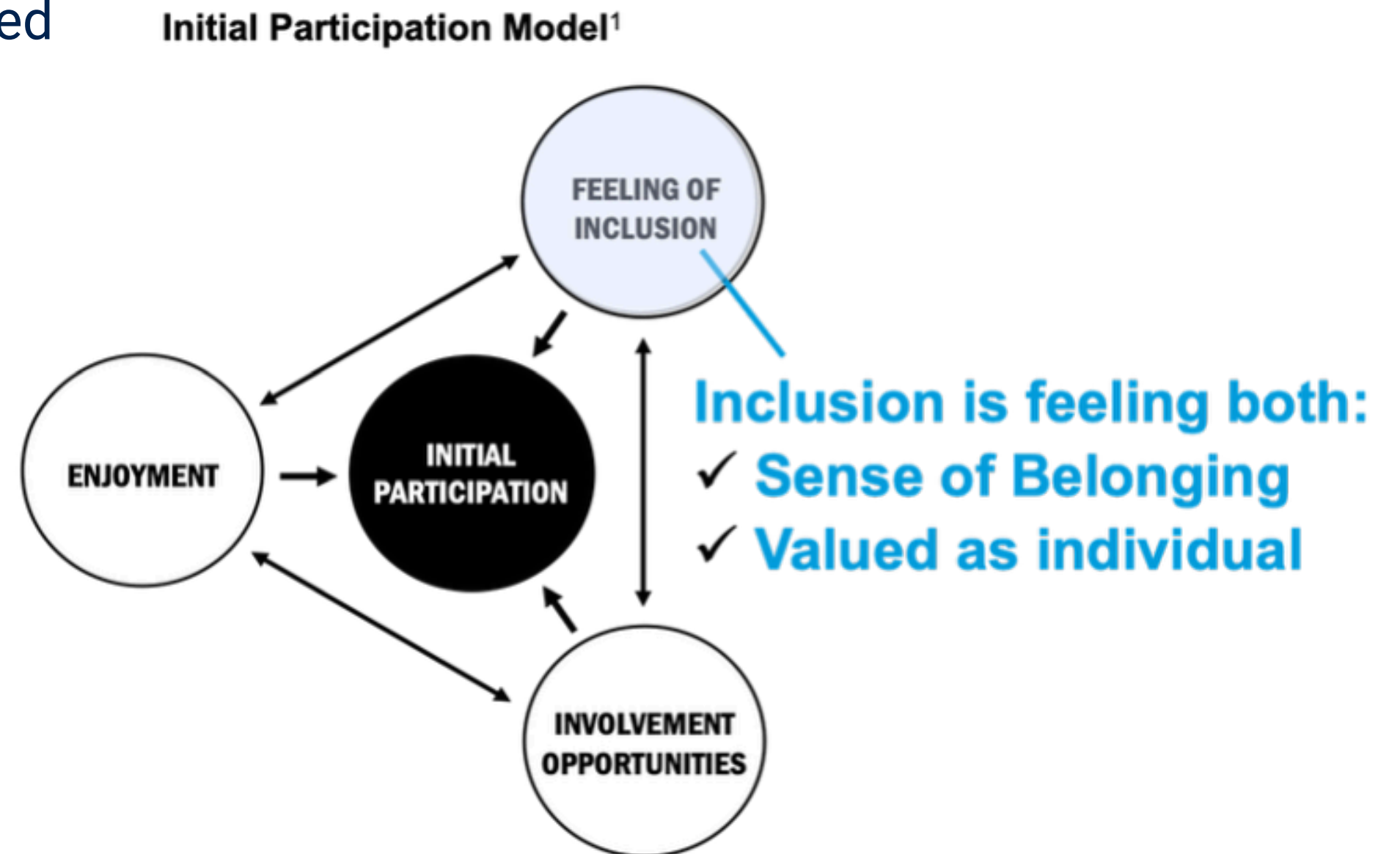
...and decrease the number of people leaving the boathouse.

WHY THIS IS IMPERATIVE

INCLUSION PARTICIPATION MODEL

Rowers will leave or stay in the boathouse based on the cumulative effect of:

- Enjoyment
- Sense of belonging
- Feeling valued as a unique individual
- Opportunities



¹ Wolfrom, Murray, & Dominguez (2018). International Journal of Aquatic Research & Education.

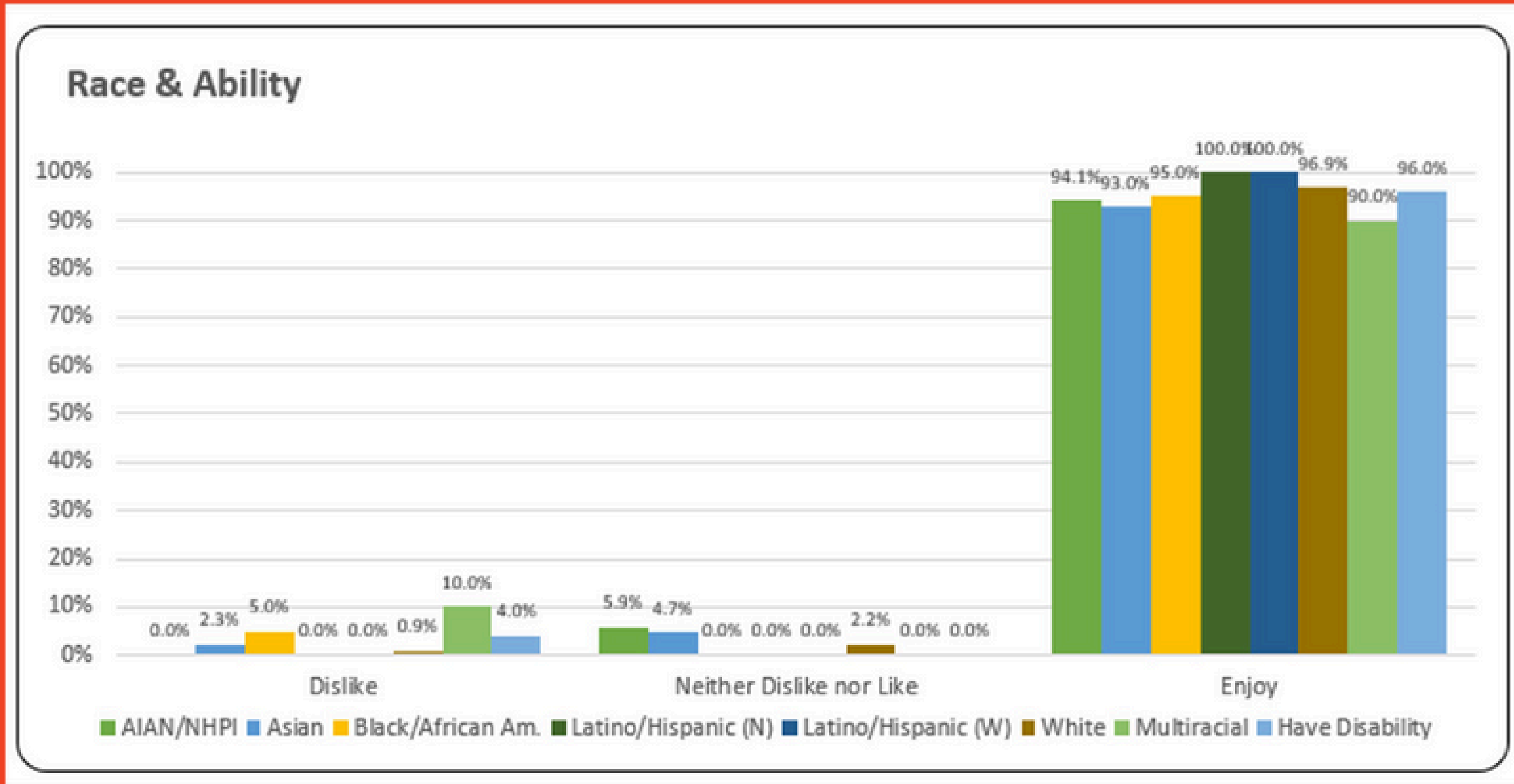
OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS MORE

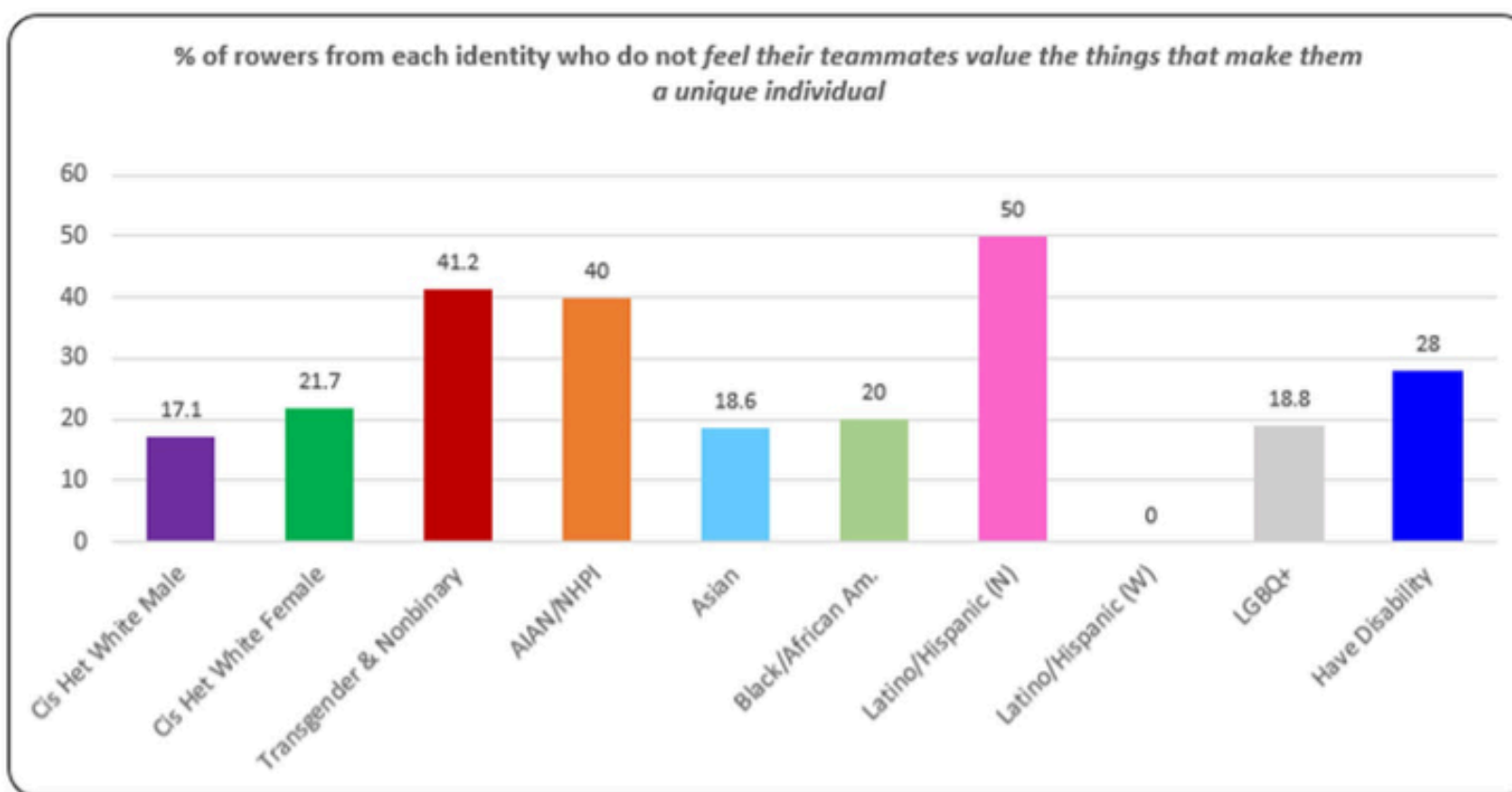
The results of the Truclusion Inclusion and Belonging Assessment indicate a marked discrepancy among our constituents and the experience they have in rowing. The value, sense of belonging, pride, and overall relationship rowers have in rowing is not equal.

“While I love the sport, most of the rowing communities I have been a part of have not been particularly welcoming.”

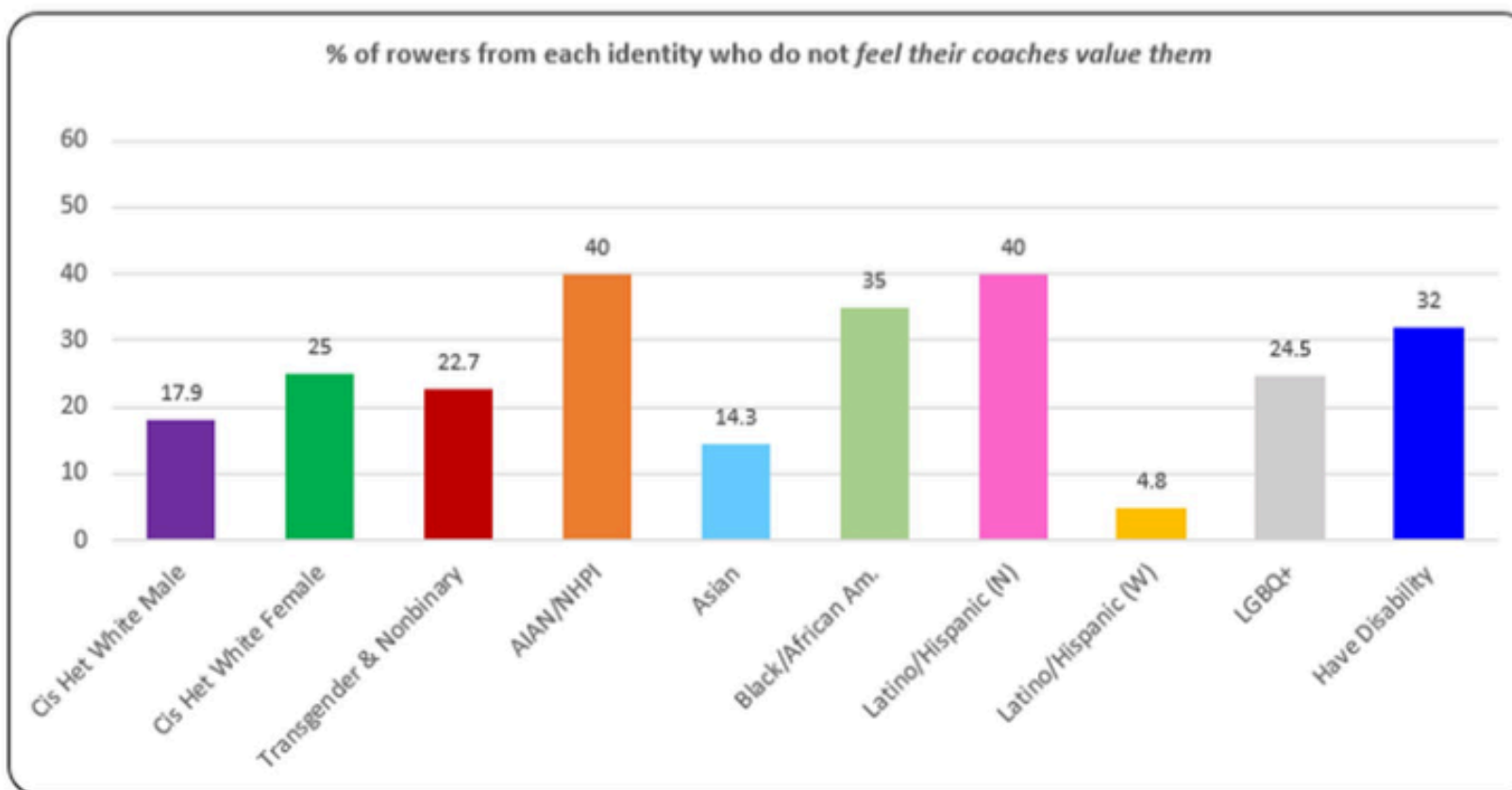
- USRowing member and female coach

90% OR MORE OF ALL GROUPS SURVEYED CURRENTLY ENJOY ROWING





Almost half of Transgender & Nonbinary, AIAN/NHPI, and Nonwhite Latino/Hispanic rowers surveyed said they do not feel valued by their teammates.



35-40% of AIAN/NHPI, Black/African American, and Nonwhite Latino/Hispanic rowers surveyed said they do not feel their coaches value them.

USRowing members were asked which best described their rowing experience...

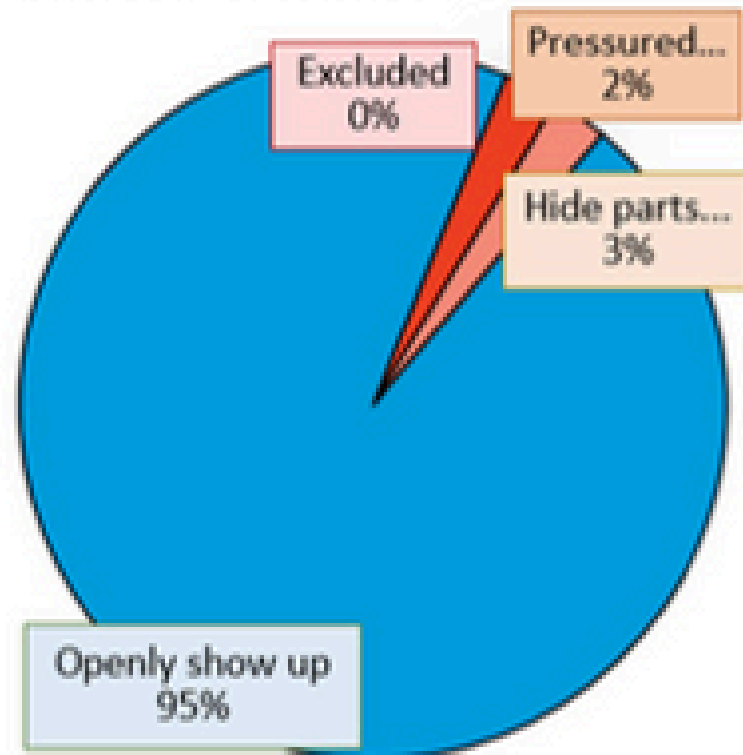
- “I feel excluded from what Rowing has to offer.”
- “I feel pressured to adopt norms that are not really me.”
- “I hide parts of my full identity and culture.”
- “I openly show up with my full identity and culture.”

“At my current club I do not observe discrimination, but I did at my last club so now I drive 70 miles one way to row.”

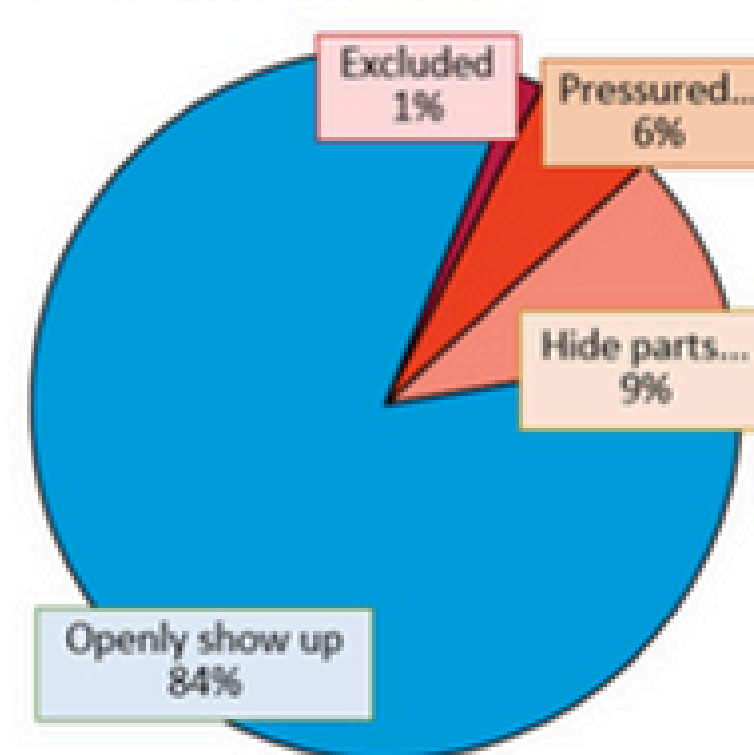
- USRowing member

Current Rower Experience of Inclusion

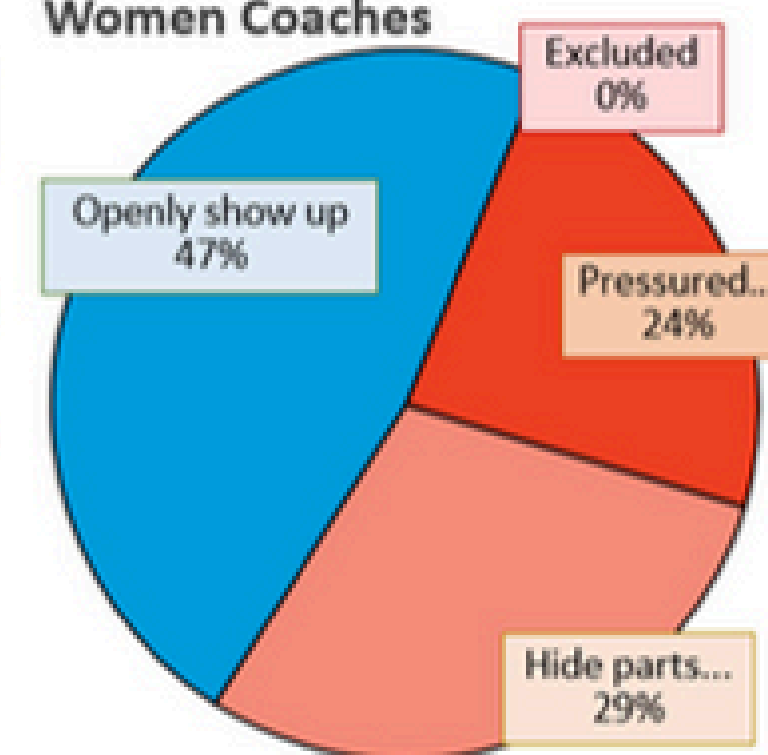
CisHet White Men



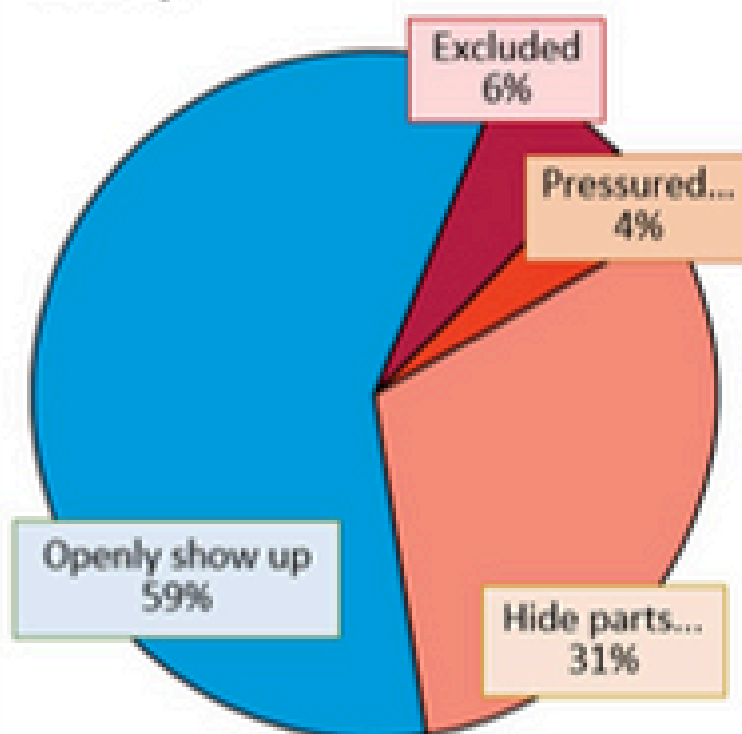
CisHet White Women



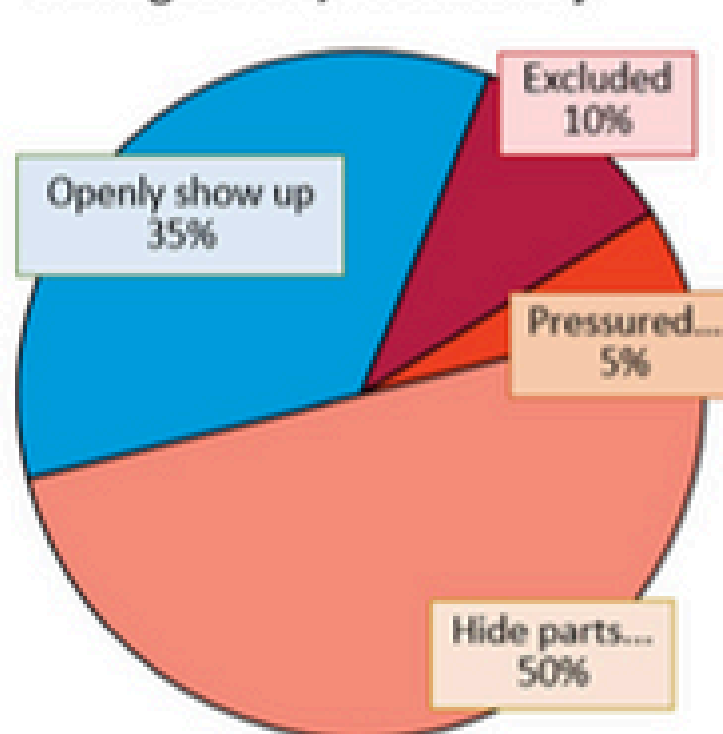
21-34yo CisHet White Women Coaches



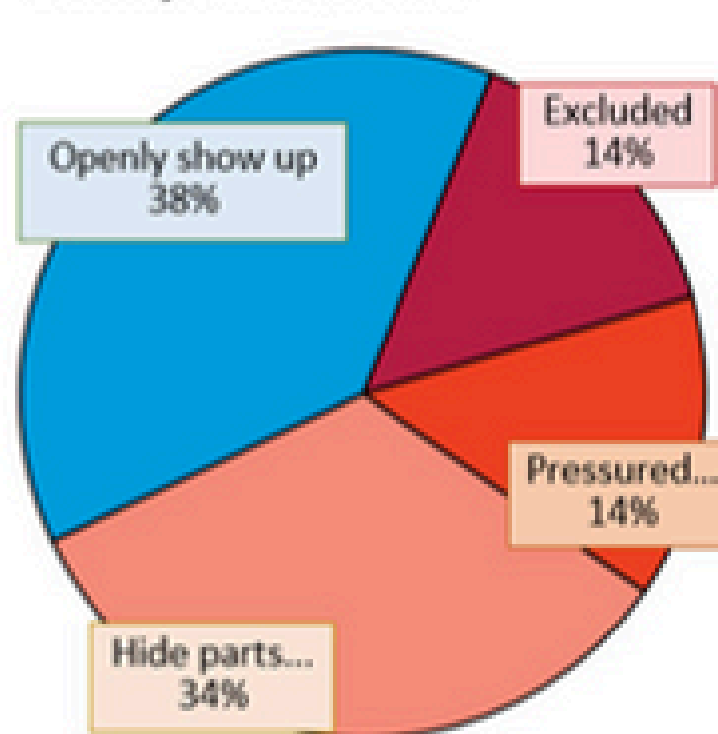
LGBQ+



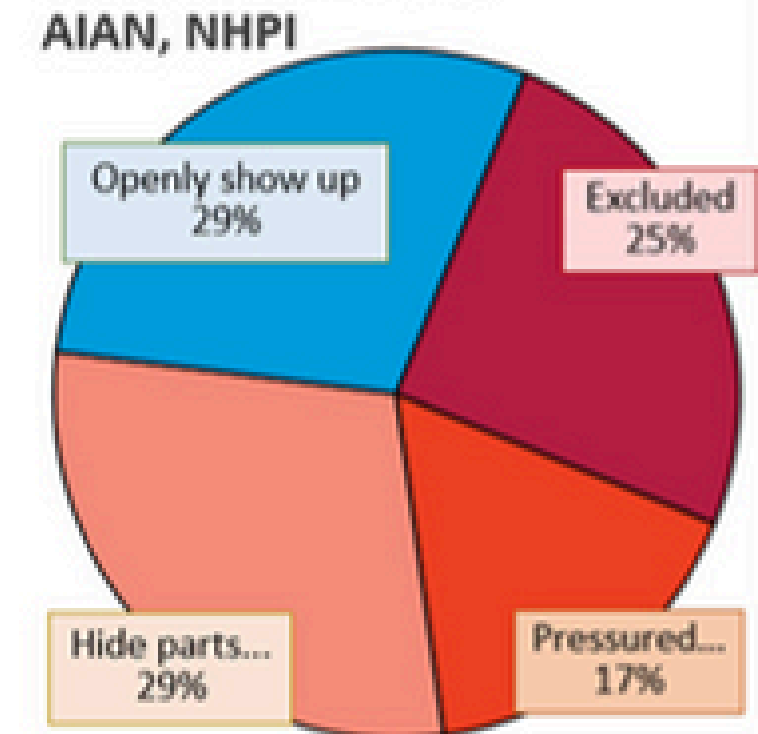
Transgender / Nonbinary



Black / African Am.



Latino/Hispanic (N), AIAN, NHPI



76.3% of cisgender female coaches across all ages reported having experienced challenges based on gender (i.e., sexism) occasionally or often in the past two years. There is also a steep age decline in female coaches, with 61% fewer female coaches 35-49 years old than female coaches 21-35 years old (compared to a 12% drop for male coaches in same age groups).

People from traditionally power-holding identities were asked whether they believe discrimination exists or not, and if it exists, whether they believe they personally contribute to it, unintentionally or intentionally. 11% of respondents said that they intentionally discriminate against at least one social group identity.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

MISSION, VISION, AND STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

ICI COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT:

We champion transformative change that makes participation in rowing at every level accessible and welcoming for all current and future members.

ICI COMMITTEE VISION STATEMENT:

We envision a future in which the culture of rowing creates an environment where each rower feels they belong and the sport reflects the diverse local communities.

ICI COMMITTEE VALUES:

Community. Education. Growth. Results.

PROGRESS TO DATE

USROWING is committed to making rowing more inclusive

- Formed an Inclusion and Community Impact (ICI) Committee in 2020
- Brought the STEM to Stern program into USRowing in fall 2021, and grew the number of clubs we support from 12 to 30+, working to break down barriers in youth rowing
- Launched a Community Engagement team of six professionals at USRowing, focusing on inclusion initiatives – both internally and externally
- Staff more accurately represent the demographics of the United States
- Raised three years of \$100,000 of ODP scholarships (over 125 athletes) to make development and high-performance camp possible for more U19 athletes
- Formalized low-cost Organizational and Individual Membership options to make USRowing memberships financial accessible

Over the last two years, we have worked hard to make rowing more accessible, and it is time to expand this work, build on our experience, and make impact at scale.

INCLUSION AND BELONGING STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028



WHAT WILL CHANGE

CULTIVATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT



- Media images/stories representative, fun/engaging
- Inclusive language across all USRowing platforms
- Inclusive materials provided to boathouses

- YouTube series on topics with diverse presenters



- Add fun and exciting race formats
- Expand Masters Offerings
- Intentional venue selection



- Develop National Team members as Ambassadors



Celebrate stories of shared experiences

SUPPORT CLUBS AND ATHLETES



Reach New Rowers

- Elevate national public perception of Rowing



Support Club in inclusion work

- Offer Club Inclusion Support
- "Find a Club" feature on website
- Club recognition plan
- Coordinate equipment sharing/transport for clubs/rowers
- Local funding support
- Expand capacity for junior rowing
- Deepen impact of STEM to Stern



Connect Rowers with Resources

- Funding to clubs for inclusive programs
- Funding for Juniors and Adaptive rowers



Celebrate local club efforts and outcomes.

INVEST IN LEADERSHIP AND COACHING



- **Include Referees in Leadership**
- **System for building diverse hiring pipelines**
- **Ensure Board and Committees reflect Rowing's future**



- **Imbed ICI in job descriptions**
- **Training for staff and membership**
- **Mentorship and professional coaching for leaders, coaches, and referees from underrepresented groups**



- **Collect member demographics**
- **Belonging Surveys**
- **Learning participation rates**
- **Harassment inquiries and complaints**
- **Phone-based tracking of Junior experiences**



Celebrate successes of underrepresented leaders and coaches.

ENHANCE THE HIGH PERFORMANCE PIPELINE



- Consider *potential* talent when providing resources
- Expand Development Pipeline
- Opportunities for post-college rowers



- Structure pipeline for clarity, transparency and equity
- Provide funding for under-resourced HP rowers
- Diverse representation on High Performance coaching staff



Celebrate performance successes of underrepresented athletes.

IN CLOSING

United We Row

WHAT COMES NEXT

Our Inclusion Strategy provides a roadmap to make scalable, impactful change at all levels of rowing. We have an opportunity to celebrate our differences, bring more people into this sport we love, and unite people through the sweat, pain, and joy that rowing brings.

To achieve the ambitious goals we set forth, we ask you to be an active member of the rowing community. Please reach out, respond to surveys, ask questions, and take advantage of opportunities to connect, learn, and grow together.

We strive to serve you, our members and future members, in a way that keeps you rowing for a long, long time.

Take action:

- Take the [United We Row Pledge](#).
- Reach out with questions or feedback on the strategic plan: ourfuture@usrowing.org.
- [Sign up for our community newsletter](#) to get quarterly updates.
- [Register](#) for monthly inclusion community Zooms.