



# GLOBAL INFLUENCE TRENDS

A LOOK AT HOW 19,000 MANAGERS AROUND THE WORLD  
INFLUENCE THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM

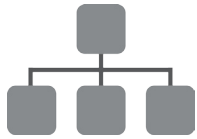
UNDERSTAND  
YOUR INFLUENCE  
STYLE.  
BECOME A  
MORE EFFECTIVE  
LEADER.

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# Introduction

## INFLUENCE IN A CHANGING WORKPLACE



Today's workplace is characterized by unprecedented levels of change and complexity. Emerging leaders must be able to manage complicated, diverse and often dispersed teams, and people in all levels of an organization must frequently span boundaries where differences like culture, gender, age, geography and hierarchy present unique challenges. Whether you are leading, following or collaborating, chances are you need to get your opinions and ideas recognized by the people around you to be successful. As a result, influence—the ability to impact the ideas, opinions and actions of others—has become a key skill for a new generation of leaders and professionals.

Effective influence increases trust, support and ownership for your priorities. Ineffective influence can promote doubt, intimidation and resentment. Understanding and being able to adapt your influence style to different situations and audiences is key to becoming an effective leader.

Influence strategies can range from reliance on position and power to emphasis on encouragement and collaboration. In 2009 and 2010, Discovery Learning International and Innovative Pathways conducted research to identify and measure the different

influence styles people prefer to use. That research identified five dominant influence styles and resulted in the development of the Influence Style Indicator®, an assessment tool designed to understand and measure an individual's preferred influence style or styles.

Since the creation of the Influence Style Indicator® in 2010, Discovery Learning International has conducted extensive research about the influence styles and preferences of professionals around the globe. Through a review of Influence Style Indicator® scores for more than 19,000 participants, we have uncovered some unprecedented and remarkable trends in the ways managers deal with influence across organizational levels, ages, genders, industries, countries and world regions. This report reviews the compiled normative data for Influence Style Indicator® through these various filters and consequently, we are able to provide new insight into influence style preferences for large populations.

Our hope is that emerging leaders and organizational development professionals can use this information to gain eye-opening perspectives into their organizations and maximize effective influence strategies.

## THE MODEL

The self-rating assessment tool uses 40 items to establish a raw score on five distinct influence styles. Scores for each influence style fall on a scale from 1-16. The instrument addresses one's dominant, preferred, secondary and underutilized styles. The online assessment provides individuals with a personalized feedback report based on their unique influencing preferences. The report addresses individual strengths and challenges, explains how to address underutilized styles and provides tips for influencing effectively.

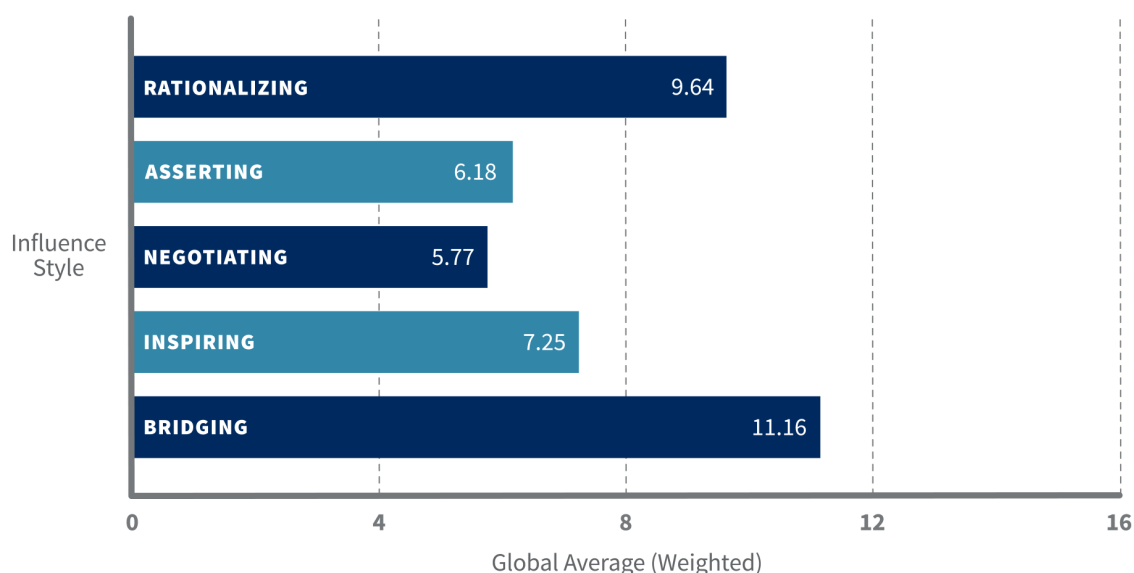
5 DOMINANT INFLUENCE STYLES	
RATIONALIZING	Using logic and reasoning to present your ideas
ASSERTING	Stating preferences clearly and applying pressure
NEGOTIATING	Compromising and making concessions to find common ground
INSPIRING	Influencing others through shared purposes and broader possibilities
BRIDGING	Engaging and connecting with others

## Influence Style on a Global Scale

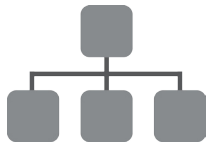
People across the globe demonstrate distinctive influence styles. You may instinctively understand and appreciate some of these styles and view others as ineffective, unclear and frustrating. Knowing the characteristics and capabilities of your influencing style is essential to developing your leadership effectiveness and maximizing your impact.

Universally, the influence style with the strongest and most consistent preference is Bridging, followed by Rationalizing. People prefer Asserting and Negotiating the least.

## INFLUENCE STYLES: GLOBAL AVERAGES (Weighted)



# Organizational Level

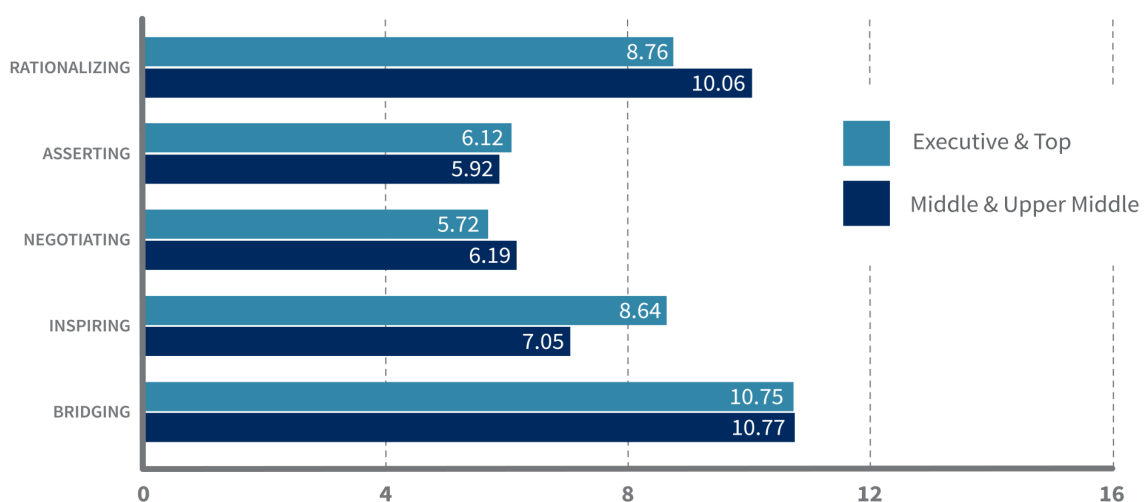


## HOW ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL AFFECTS INFLUENCE STYLE

As part of our analysis of Influence Style Indicator® normative data, Discovery Learning International reviewed the style preference scores of hundreds of participants who identified their seniority level within their organizations. While it was one of the smallest data samples in the report, we found notable patterns in the ways people influence across organizational positions—from middle-level supervisors to top-level executives.

Leaders at the highest levels of an organization tended to rely on an inspirational approach to build buy-in for their ideas. Preference for the Inspiring influence style was about 22 percent stronger at the executive level than at the middle and upper middle levels.

### RATIONALIZING & INSPIRING INFLUENCE: FROM TOP DOWN



Leaders at the highest levels of an organization tended to rely on an inspirational approach to build buy-in for their ideas.

## INFLUENCE: STYLE BY ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL



Regardless of your seniority level within your organization, if your Bridging skills are not at least moderate, you should consider developing them to maximize your influencing effectiveness.

People with more seniority were less likely than their lower-level colleagues to use the Rationalizing and Negotiating styles to exert influence over others. According to the data, top-level leaders were 13 percent less likely to use the Rationalizing style than middle-level supervisors.

Since executives at the highest levels of an organization often have more decision-making power, might they not always need to prove their ideas to others with meaningful data or compromise? Do people at lower levels of an organization with less positional authority need to depend more on cooperation, bargaining and trade-offs when trying to win over colleagues? According to the data, middle and upper middle-level participants showed an 8 percent stronger preference for the Negotiating influence style.



### Inspiring influence from the top down

Preference for the Inspiring influence style was about 22 percent stronger at the executive level than at the middle and upper middle levels.

With this trend in mind, leaders should try to adapt their influence style to their target audience to get the most beneficial outcome. While people with more positional authority might be slightly more likely to assert themselves during the influencing process, overall preference among Influence Style Indicator® participants for the Asserting style was consistently low across organizational levels.

On the other hand, Bridging was the most preferred and universally consistent of the five influencing styles. So, regardless of your seniority within your organization, if your Bridging skills are not at least moderate, you may consider developing them to maximize your influencing effectiveness.

# Age



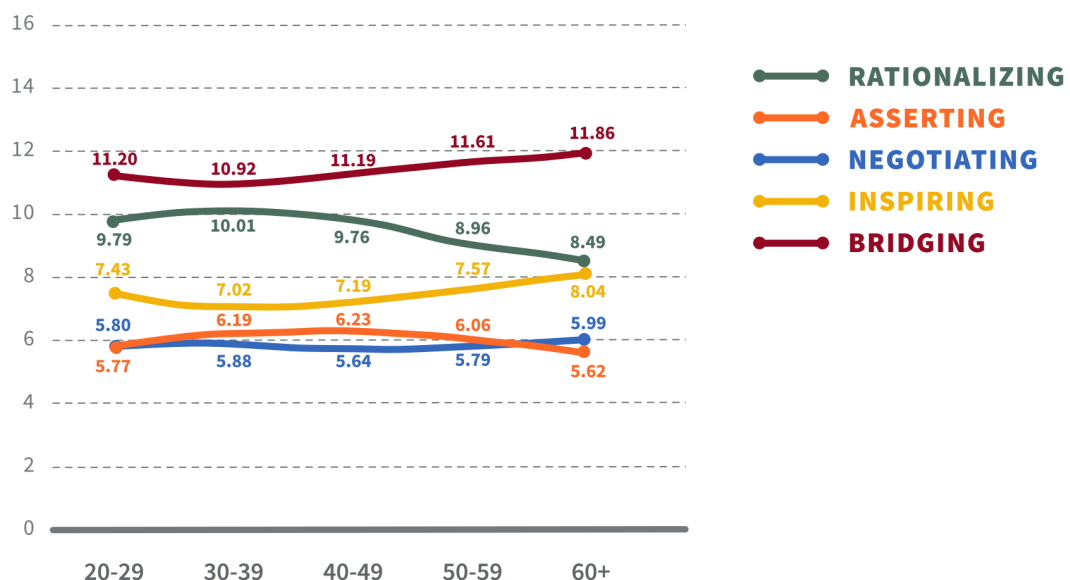
## HOW AGE AFFECTS INFLUENCE STYLE

In evaluating the nearly 12,000 influence profiles of Influence Style Indicator® participants who provided their age, we found clear preference patterns within and across age groups.

When trying to influence others, younger people preferred to rationalize more than older people. In fact, people 50 and older were up to 15 percent less likely to choose the Rationalizing style than people in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Thirty-somethings tended to rationalize the most when it comes to influence. Are 30-somethings more likely to find themselves in implementation roles where attention to detail is key? Are older managers more often in bigger picture, strategic thinking roles? Regardless, older leaders might consider this influence trend when trying to get buy-in from younger team members. Millennials might keep in mind that influence styles that feel comfortable to them might work better on their peers than on their bosses.

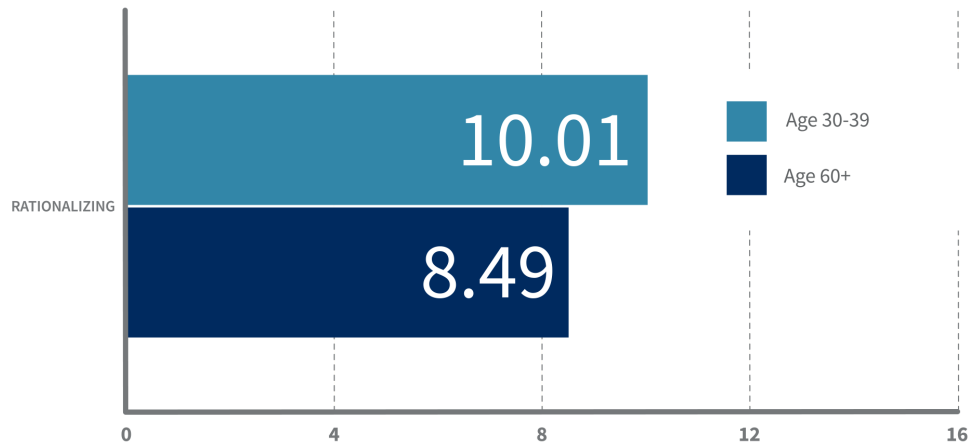
The data suggests the older you are, the more likely you are to prefer Inspiring as an influence style. People ages 60 and up—who might also be more likely to take on mentoring roles in their organizations—were up to 14 percent more likely than people in their 30s and 40s to use an inspirational approach to influence others.

### INFLUENCE: STYLE BY AGE





## RATIONALIZING INFLUENCE: YOUNG VS. OLD



### Rationalizing influence: Older people are less likely

People 50 and older were up to 15 percent less likely to choose the Rationalizing style than people in their 20s, 30s and 40s.



### Inspiring influence: Older people are more likely

People ages 60 and up were up to 14 percent more likely than people in their 30s and 40s to use an inspirational approach to impact others.

While Bridging scores were relatively high across all age groups, older people also tended to prefer Bridging more than younger people, with people over 60 showing an 8 percent stronger preference for it than people in their 30s. Might this be indicative of the competitive atmosphere of a young workforce fighting to establish themselves in the early stages of their careers?

The youngest and oldest members of the age spectrum were less likely than those in the middle to use the Asserting style. Compared to people in their 30s and 40s, people in their 20s preferred an Asserting influence style roughly 7 percent less, and people 60 and older preferred it 9 percent less. Interestingly, people in their 40s tended to score highest on Asserting and lowest on Negotiating, one of the least popular influence styles across the board.

# Gender



## HOW GENDER AFFECTS INFLUENCE STYLE

5.9

Female

6.2

Male

[ average Asserting scores ]

In reviewing the nearly 12,000 respondents who specified their gender, we uncovered some influence preference trends some might find surprising.

The Rationalizing and Asserting styles had the most notable preference gaps between men and women. However, those gaps were not as big as many might expect. Women preferred Rationalizing about 12 percent less than men, and Asserting only about 5 percent less.

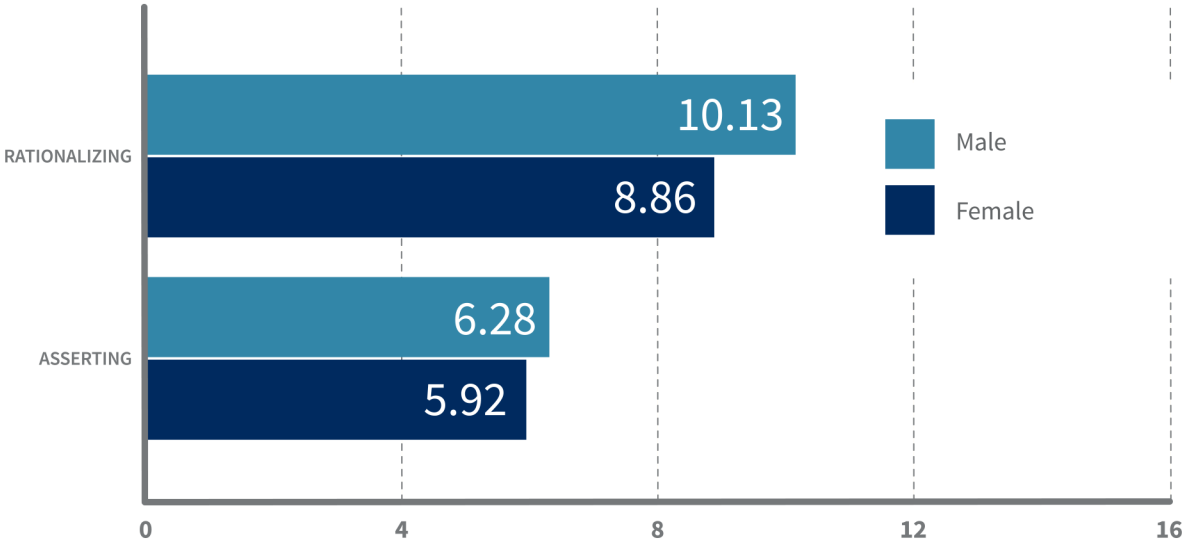
On average, women had a stronger preference than men for Negotiating, Inspiring and Bridging—

but not by more than 10 percent in any of these three styles.

Does this style preference data challenge familiar stereotypes that women might be significantly less likely than men to challenge others or advocate for their viewpoints in the workplace?

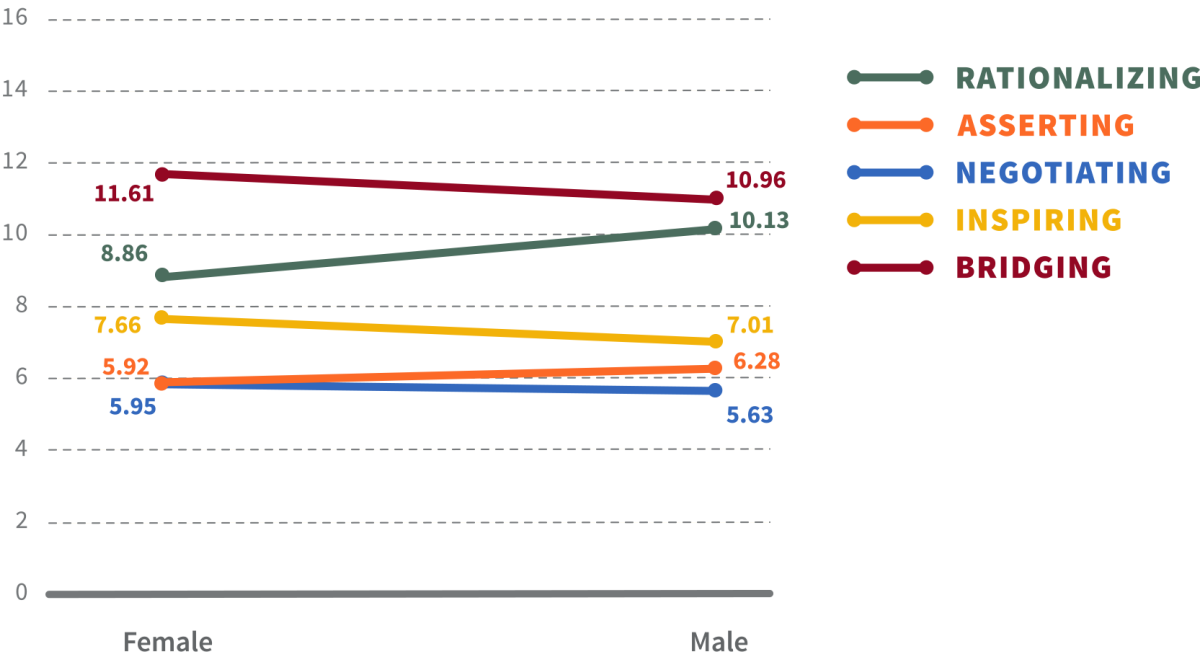
Male and female leaders alike should be careful not to rely on such gender stereotypes to gauge how women might respond to certain influence styles and tactics.

# RATIONALIZING & ASSERTING INFLUENCE: MEN VS. WOMEN



Male and female leaders alike should be careful not to rely on gender stereotypes to gauge how people might respond to certain influence styles and tactics.

# INFLUENCE: STYLE BY GENDER



# Industry



## HOW INDUSTRY AFFECTS INFLUENCE STYLE

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Many highly regulated industries tended to prefer Rationalizing and Asserting  
over Inspiring and Bridging.

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Influence Style Indicator® participants come from several different industries and our data from nearly 10,000 managers shows distinct trends within and across the various fields they identified.

While people across most of the industries in our data sample showed a relatively strong preference for Rationalizing, people in the aviation/aerospace and banking/finance/investing industries preferred it most. Conversely, people in the non-profit industry preferred Rationalizing 13 percent less than the global average.

There was an even stronger industry-wide preference for Bridging, and the public health sector preferred this style upwards of 10 percent more than the global average.

The data suggests that highly regulated industries, for the most part, tended to have a stronger preference for Rationalizing and Asserting, and a milder preference for Inspiring and Bridging. However, trends like this are not one-size-fits-all. Along with the field of work, does the nature of the work impact influence preferences as well? The utilities field, for example, is regulated but scores lower on Rationalizing and higher on Bridging preferences than other regulation-heavy industries. The utility industry is focused on delivering services efficiently without interruption, while other high-regulation industries like aviation and pharmaceuticals are focused on creating and testing new products. Does

this reflect the different in mission between industries and the reality that effective influence requires flexibility and adaptation?

With the exception of the energy, transportation/shipping/logistics and military/defense industries, most sectors showed a weak preference for the Asserting influence style. People in the public health industry were 14 percent less likely to use Asserting to influence others. People working in communication/publishing and at colleges or universities were 11 percent less likely to use it.

There was also a minimal industry-wide preference for Negotiating, with the pharmaceuticals, retail/wholesale trade and banking/finance/investing industries showing the strongest preference for that style. The overall industry-wide preference for Inspiring was slightly higher than the one for Negotiating.

People in the banking industry were 17 percent more likely to use Negotiating than the global average and 14 percent less likely to use Inspiring. People who work in energy were almost 12 percent less likely to use Inspiring. Not surprisingly, mission-driven organizations that focus on education and fundraising tended to have a strong preference for inspirational influence tactics. Nonprofit workers were 24 percent more likely to use Inspiring and people in elementary/secondary education were 20 percent more likely to use it.

# INFLUENCE: STRENGTH OF STYLE PREFERENCE ACROSS INDUSTRIES

INDUSTRY	RATIONALIZING	ASSERTING	NEGOTIATING	INSPIRING	BRIDGING
Aviation / Aerospace	11.28	5.9	6.36	6.42	10.04
Banking / Finance / Investing	10.56	6.16	6.77	6.23	10.27
College / University	8.99	5.46	5.89	8.19	11.47
Communication / Mass Media / Publishing	9.54	5.49	5.63	7.51	11.84
Consulting / Training / Coaching	9.53	6.14	5.8	7.3	11.22
Consulting / Training < 10 Employees	10.15	6.29	5.86	6.76	10.94
Education: Other	9.41	5.79	5.26	8.12	11.42
Elementary / Secondary Education	9	5.58	5.06	8.73	11.63
Energy	9.73	7.16	5.55	6.41	11.15
Executive Education / Development	9.46	5.98	6.12	7.19	11.25
Government Agency / Municipality	9.84	5.92	6.09	6.75	11.41
Health: Clinic / Hospital / Integrated	8.95	5.74	5.38	8.1	11.83
Health: Products / Equipment	9.87	6.25	5.55	7.03	11.3
Health: Public Health	8.75	5.31	5.53	8.06	12.35
Manufacturing - Heavy	9.63	6.15	5.49	7.7	11.03
Military/Defense	9.93	6.64	5.57	6.59	11.26
Nonprofit Agency	8.36	5.52	5.69	9.02	11.41
Pharmaceuticals	9.53	6.13	7.06	6.55	10.73
Retail / Wholesale Trade	8.94	5.96	7.04	6.75	11.31
Technology / Software / Information	9.65	6.3	5.82	7.22	11.01
Transportation / Shipping / Logistics	9.76	6.72	4.01	7.78	11.74
Unknown / Mixed Industries	9.6	6.16	6.16	7.29	10.79
Utilities	8.81	6.33	5.74	6.95	12.17

0-4

5-8

9-12

13-16

+24%

## Inspiring influence: Mission-driven organizations

Nonprofit workers were 24 percent more likely to use Inspiring than the global average. People in elementary/secondary education were 20 percent more likely to use it.

+17%

## Rationalizing influence: High-regulation organizations

Many highly regulated industries tended to have a stronger preference for Rationalizing. People in aviation were about 17 percent more likely to use it and people in banking/finance were about 10 percent more likely to use it.

# Nationality & World Region

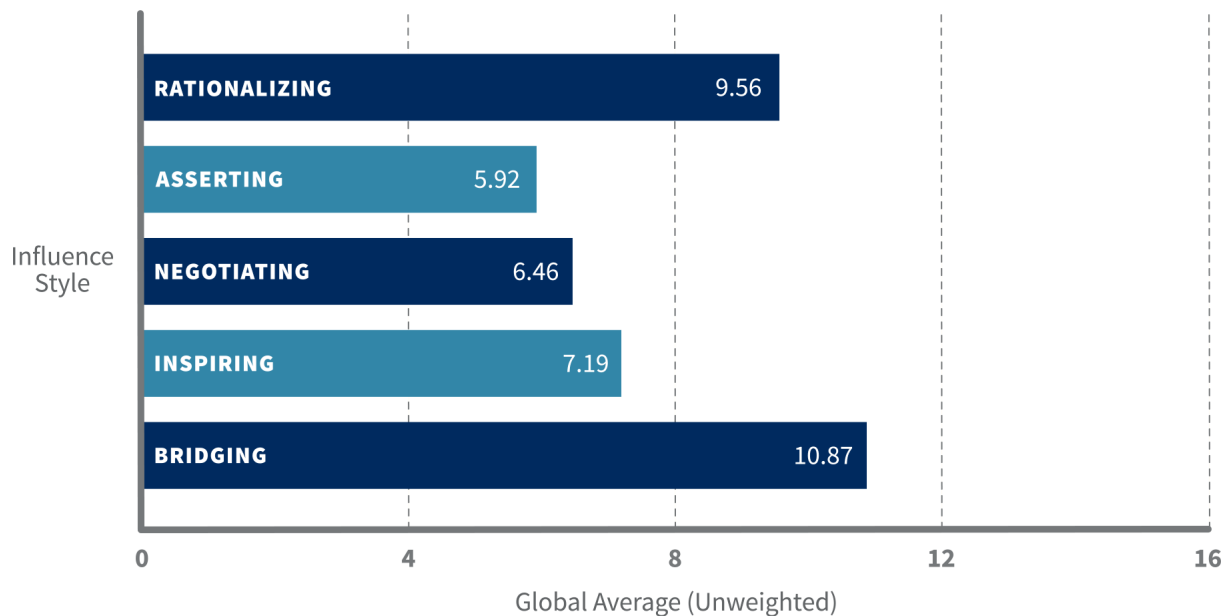


## HOW GEOGRAPHY AFFECTS INFLUENCE STYLE

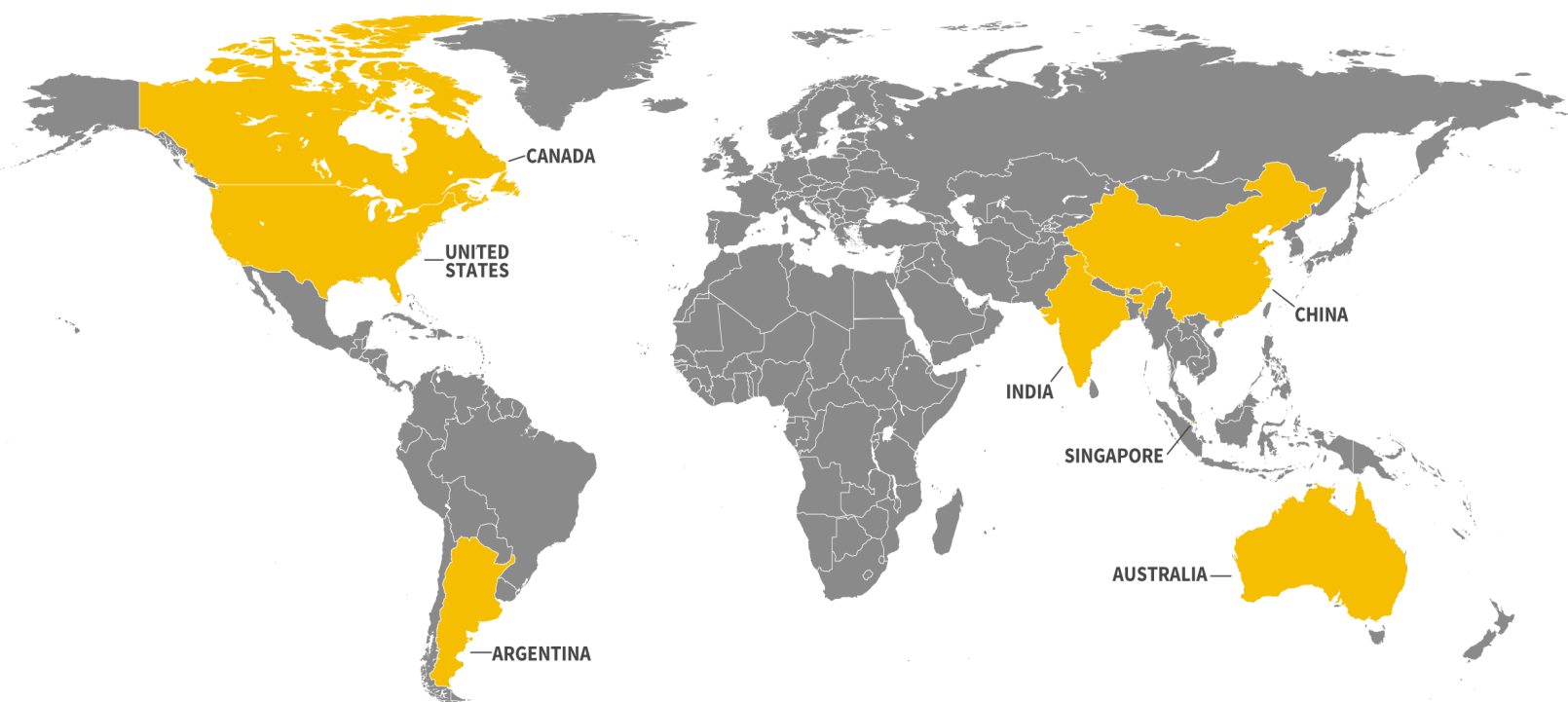
Today's workforce is rapidly becoming more global and complex, meaning influential leaders need to be able to build and maintain productive relationships with people from all over world. Knowing how effective (or ineffective) your influence style might be with someone from a different culture makes you better prepared to maximize your influence and your organization's success.

Influence Style Indicator® participants come from several different countries and regions across the globe. The data we collected from nearly 11,000 managers who identified their nationality shows compelling influence style trends in seven countries and six regions around the world.

### INFLUENCE STYLES: GLOBAL AVERAGES (Unweighted)



For this section, we have compared average scores to an unweighted global average.



### Argentina

In the Asserting and Bridging styles, managers from Argentina were fairly typical of global averages. However, Argentine managers had the second highest preference for Negotiating (23 percent above the global average) and the lowest preference for Inspiring (16 percent below the global average).

They also had the lowest preference for Rationalizing. Argentine managers had a 20 percent lower preference for Rationalizing than managers from Singapore, which is the biggest gap within that style among the seven countries. Compared to managers from India, Argentine managers had a 27 percent lower preference for Inspiring and a 72 percent higher preference for Negotiating.

When trying to satisfy their larger interests, Argentine managers might approach a situation with a readiness to compromise or make concessions.

### Australia

Australian managers were most similar to managers from the United States in their influence style preferences. Their most unique influence style characteristic was their low preference for Negotiating—11.5 percent below the unweighted global average. They also had a stronger-than-average preference for Asserting. In fact, Australian managers preferred Asserting 22.5 percent more than their counterparts from China. When Australian managers are trying to be influential, they may be more likely to challenge the ideas of others than to make concessions toward them.

### Canada

Canadian influence trends somewhat resembled those from India and the U.S., and may be most different from Singapore's.

Canadian managers did not have a strong preference for Negotiating, and had a much stronger preference toward an Inspiring approach. Along with the U.S., Canadian participants had one of the highest tendencies toward Bridging, which suggests they might respond well to influence approaches that prioritize relationship building and that explain an issue's relevance and impact on the greater good.

### China

The influence preference trends of Chinese managers were most different from those of managers in the U.S. and Canada.

Chinese managers showed a clear preference for Negotiating. In fact, they scored below the unweighted global average on all four other influence styles. They had the strongest Negotiating preference—29.5 percent above the global average and a full 80 percent above the average for managers in India. Managers with such a strong Negotiating preference might be less likely to openly advocate for and communicate their positions and expectations. They might also put more focus on beneficial outcomes than mutual concerns.

Chinese managers preferred the Asserting and Bridging influence styles less than any of the other six countries. And China and Argentina were the only nationalities represented that preferred Negotiating to Asserting and Inspiring.

## India

Indian managers had the lowest preference for the Negotiating style of all the countries represented (28 percent below the global average). They scored highest on Inspiring and Rationalizing.

Based on this data, Indian managers might be more effectively influenced by an approach that emphasizes logical reasoning or broader communal needs and stakeholder interests.

## Singapore

Managers from Singapore also showed a strong preference for Rationalizing—25 percent higher than managers in Argentina and 20 percent higher than managers in China. However, of the seven countries, they had the second lowest preference for Asserting and Inspiring.

The data suggests that a manager in Singapore might not be as inspired by collective interests that are not data-driven or grounded in logic.

## The United States

The influence style trends of American managers were least similar to those of managers from Singapore and China, and most similar to those of Australian and Canadian managers—but with an even lower preference for Negotiating (almost 14 percent below the global average).

Compared to all of the represented countries, managers in the U.S. showed the second highest preference for Asserting (behind Australia) and the highest preference for Bridging, but didn't differ significantly from the rest of the world on either of these styles.

Based on the data, you might expect an American manager to clearly communicate his or her position and respond more to relationship building than bargaining.

# INFLUENCE: STRENGTH OF STYLE PREFERENCE IN 7 COUNTRIES

	RATIONALIZING	ASSERTING	NEGOTIATING	INSPIRING	BRIDGING
Argentina	8.86	5.92	7.97	6.07	11.18
Australia	9.81	6.38	5.73	7.38	10.69
Canada	9.31	5.93	5.66	7.77	11.33
China	9.21	5.21	8.36	7.05	10.17
India	9.78	5.97	4.64	8.33	11.28
Singapore	11.06	5.56	6.54	6.25	10.59
United States	9.59	6.23	5.57	7.27	11.34

0-4

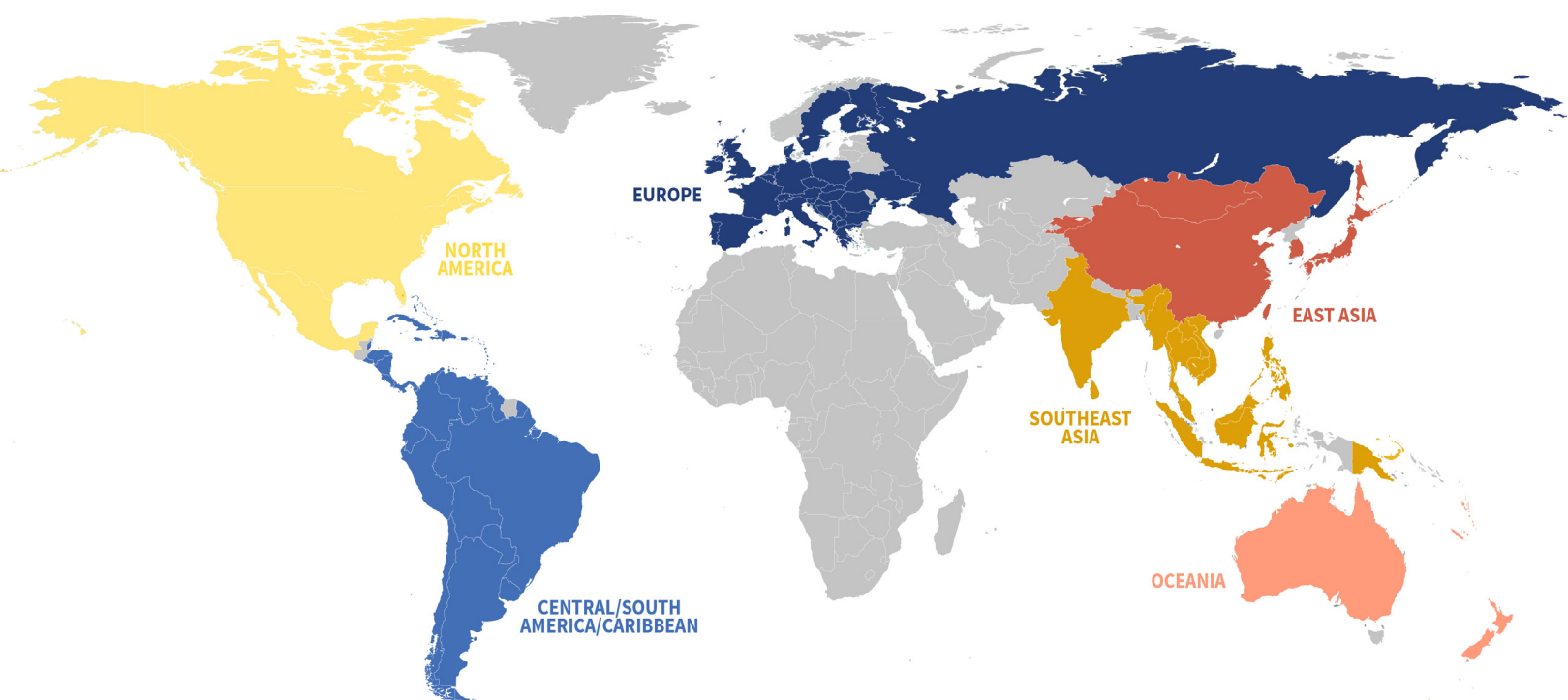
5-8

9-12

13-16

Bridging and Rationalizing were the most preferred influence styles across the seven main countries represented.





## East Asia

This region was one of the most unique compared to the global norms, with notable deviations in two of the five preferences. Participants in East Asia preferred Bridging less than any other region represented. Compared with the unweighted global averages, they also showed a considerably lower preference for Asserting and a higher preference for Negotiating.

[ QUICK LOOK ] East Asia	
[ HIGH ] Negotiating	[ LOW ] Asserting
[ NEGOTIATING ] 44% > North America 37% > Southeast Asia	
[ ASSERTING ] 13% < Southeast Asia	

[ QUICK LOOK ] North America	
[ HIGH ] Bridging	[ LOW ] Negotiating
[ NEGOTIATING ] 31% < East Asia 24% < South/Central America	
[ BRIDGING ] 8% > East Asia	

## North America

The North American region was fairly typical of the global influence style trends, with the exception of its Negotiating preference, which falls below the global average. Across all influence style preferences, North America was most similar to Oceania. Of the six world regions in our report, North America preferred Bridging the most and Negotiating the least.

## Oceania

This was one of the most unique regions, with notable variance from the global averages in three of the five influence styles. Oceania showed one of the strongest preferences for Asserting and Inspiring.

[ QUICK LOOK ] Oceania	
[ HIGH ] Asserting, Inspiring	[ LOW ] Negotiating
[ NEGOTIATING ] 30% < East Asia	
[ ASSERTING ] 28% > East Asia	
[ INSPIRING ] 14% > South/Central America	

## South/Central America

This was another unique region that differed from the global norms on three of the five preferences. Participants in this region showed higher preferences than any of the other five regions for Inspiring and Rationalizing, and far lower preferences for Negotiating.

[ QUICK LOOK ] South/Central America	
[ HIGH ] Negotiating	[ LOW ] Inspiring, Rationalizing
[ RATIONALIZING ]	13% < Southeast Asia
[ NEGOTIATING ]	31% > North America
[ INSPIRING ]	10% < Europe

[ QUICK LOOK ] Southeast Asia	
[ HIGH ] Rationalizing	[ LOW ] Negotiating
[ NEGOTIATING ]	27% < East Asia
[ ASSERTING ]	15% < East Asia
[ RATIONALIZING ]	15% > South/Central America

## Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia participants had the highest preference for Rationalizing of any region. In terms of the Bridging style, Southeast Asia, North America, Oceania and South America were most similar in preference.

## Europe

The European region was fairly typical of the global influence style trends, with the exception of its strong Asserting preference. European managers were significantly more likely to prefer Asserting than managers in the other five regions. European managers were most similar to managers from Southeast Asia in their Bridging preference. They were most similar to North American managers in their Inspiring preference.

[ QUICK LOOK ] Europe	
[ HIGH ] Asserting	
[ NEGOTIATING ]	14% < North America
[ ASSERTING ]	28% > East Asia
[ BRIDGING ]	7% > North America

## INFLUENCE: STRENGTH OF STYLE PREFERENCE IN 6 WORLD REGIONS

	RATIONALIZING	ASSERTING	NEGOTIATING	INSPIRING	BRIDGING
East Asia	9.46	4.98	8.05	7.04	10.47
North America	9.56	6.2	5.58	7.32	11.34
Oceania	9.6	6.38	5.61	7.58	10.84
S/C America	9.04	5.85	7.31	6.65	11.13
Southeast Asia	10.35	5.74	5.85	7.18	10.89
Europe	9.35	6.39	6.36	7.38	10.52

0-4	5-8	9-12	13-16
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Bridging was the most preferred influence preference across the six global regions represented, followed by Rationalizing, Inspiring, Negotiating and finally Asserting. Negotiating produced the most difference in scores across regions.

DATA SAMPLES	
ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL	Executive/Top Level: 228 Middle/Upper Middle Level: 332
AGE	20-29 years: 630 30-39 years: 3463 40-49 years: 4483 50-59 years: 2742 60+ years: 525
GENDER	Female: 5041 Male: 6864
INDUSTRY	Aviation/Aerospace: 105 Banking/Finance/Investing: 425 College/University: 355 Communication/Mass Media/Publishing: 170 Consulting/Training/Coaching: 1498 Consulting/Training < 10 Employees: 133 Education: Other: 421 Elementary/Secondary Education: 207 Energy: 279 Executive Education/Development: 177 Government Agency/Municipality: 961 Health: Clinic/Hospital/Integrated: 646 Health: Products/Equipment: 373 Health: Public Health: 142 Manufacturing-Heavy: 290 Military/Defense: 1082 Nonprofit Agency: 216 Pharmaceuticals: 333 Retail/Wholesale Trade: 255 Technology/Software/Information: 258 Transportation/Shipping/Logistics: 229 Unknown/Mixed Industries: 1037 Utilities: 102
NATIONALITY	Argentina: 276 Australia: 154 Canada: 909 China: 150 India: 315 Singapore: 451 United States: 8460
WORLD REGION	East Asia: 257 North America: 9406 Oceania: 200 South/Central America: 468 Southeast Asia: 944 Europe: 542

This report treats 5 percent above/below the global average as a practical and meaningful difference.

Some differences may not be statistically significant.



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