



# How Big Is the Gender Gap Between Men and Women in SEO?

To anyone working in SEO, it's fairly evident that this is a male-dominated industry. Although there are powerful women SEOs in the field (like Moz CEO Sarah Bird, for example), if you glance at a conference speaker lineup or peruse the bylines on search-related blogs, you'll see that those who identify as female are few and far between. A recent list of the 140 most influential SEOs featured 104 men and just 36 women.

So how big is the gender gap? And how does it translate to tangible things like pay and job titles? To find out, we mined the data from our State of SEO 2020 survey, which featured 652 SEOs in 51 countries. Here are some of the things we learned.

But first, a mea culpa. If SEOs who identify as women have an uphill climb in this industry, there's no doubt that female-identifying SEOs of color have a hill that is steeper still. I deeply regret not asking demographic questions on race and ethnicity which would have allowed us to analyze the disparate impacts that bias plays on BIPOC women SEOs. It was a missed opportunity. That said, we are currently running a survey on BIPOC in SEO that aims to cover those issues and more as we continue to take an introspective view of our industry.

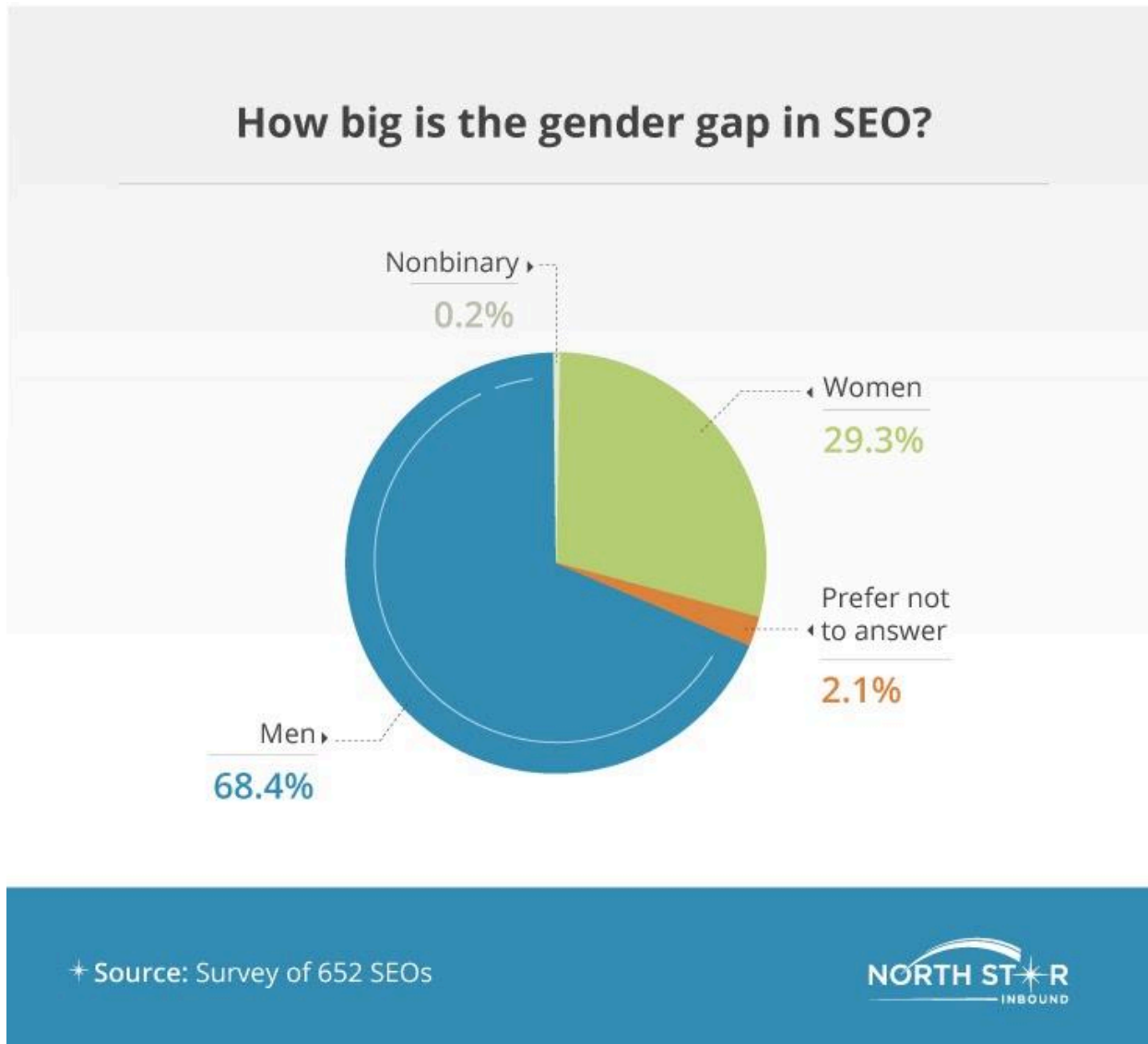
## Men outnumber women by more than 2 to 1 in SEO

Of the 652 SEOs who participated in the study, 191 identified as women (29.3%) and 446 identified as men (68.4%). Additionally, one identified as non-binary and 14 preferred not to say. Data was collected on a SurveyMonkey form. We reached out to our own database, purchased lists of SEOs around the world, and promoted the survey on social channels for respondents. We offered no compensation or reward for participating. Non-binary, persons who chose not to identify a gender by choosing "preferred not to say", and SEOs from the African continent were underrepresented mostly due to the outreach database itself. Finally, respondents selecting non-binary and "preferred not to say" were not calculated in the men/women percentages.

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A voluntary survey is not a scientific sampling, but those percentages mesh with previous studies by Moz that found those who identified as women made up 22.7% of SEOs in 2012, 28.2% in 2013, and 30.1% in 2015. In all four studies, men outnumbered women by more than 2 to 1.

Importantly, the new results suggest the gap hasn't narrowed over the past five years.



This was not a surprise to many female-identifying SEOs who participated in the study. “I started out in the SEO industry about 10 years ago. Compared to that, I do see more women at conferences, on online platforms, and in the day-to-day work with clients,” one said. However, she added that she hasn’t seen much progress in the last 5 years. “It’s like we are kind of stuck. I suspect it’s at least partly a visibility issue: Men have been there forever, building their reputation and expertise. It is hard to keep up with that if you had a late start.” We interviewed more than a dozen female-identifying SEOs, most of whom asked not to be named. Although a few had supportive bosses, clients, colleagues, and mentors along the way, many shared experiences of being passed over for promotions, having to fight to be heard in meetings and, in some cases, being paid less than men for the same work.

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