

AIST Breaking Down Barriers for Steel's Next Generation

The Association for Iron & Steel Technology's (AIST) mission is to advance the technical development, production, processing and application of iron and steel. While a majority of our work is focused on this mission, promoting a diversified industry workforce is vital to retain and grow our membership. In addition, we are cognizant of the need to remove barriers to entry for many prospective AIST members, which can transcend the Association and have a positive impact on the industry as a whole.

Presently, AIST is assessing barriers to entry for women in steel, which has been a member-driven focus over the past year. To that end, AIST organized a Women in Steel Focus Group, which met for the first time at AISTech 2018.

It was an invitation-only event, engaging a cross-segment of AIST members and non-members, to learn more about the perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes of women employed in the steel industry.

The initial course of action was to create a survey to better understand how members of the steel industry perceive the importance of attracting female workers to the industry. This survey was issued to AIST networks, via email distribution and social media outreach, in September 2018. A total of 581 individuals completed the full survey.

Case Studies

Over the past decade, AIST has worked to better understand the needs and preferences for two specific audience segments

1 Steel Professionals Living in Non-High-Income Countries

Based on the feedback received, AIST has implemented new communications and programs to service these segments, both achieving tremendous growth:

Since 2011

227% growth in new international members

These members add value to the AIST network by more accurately representing the markets served by many companies and people working in the steel industry.

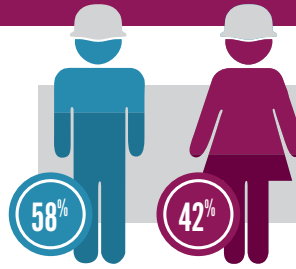
2 Steel Professionals Under the Age of 30

Since 2014

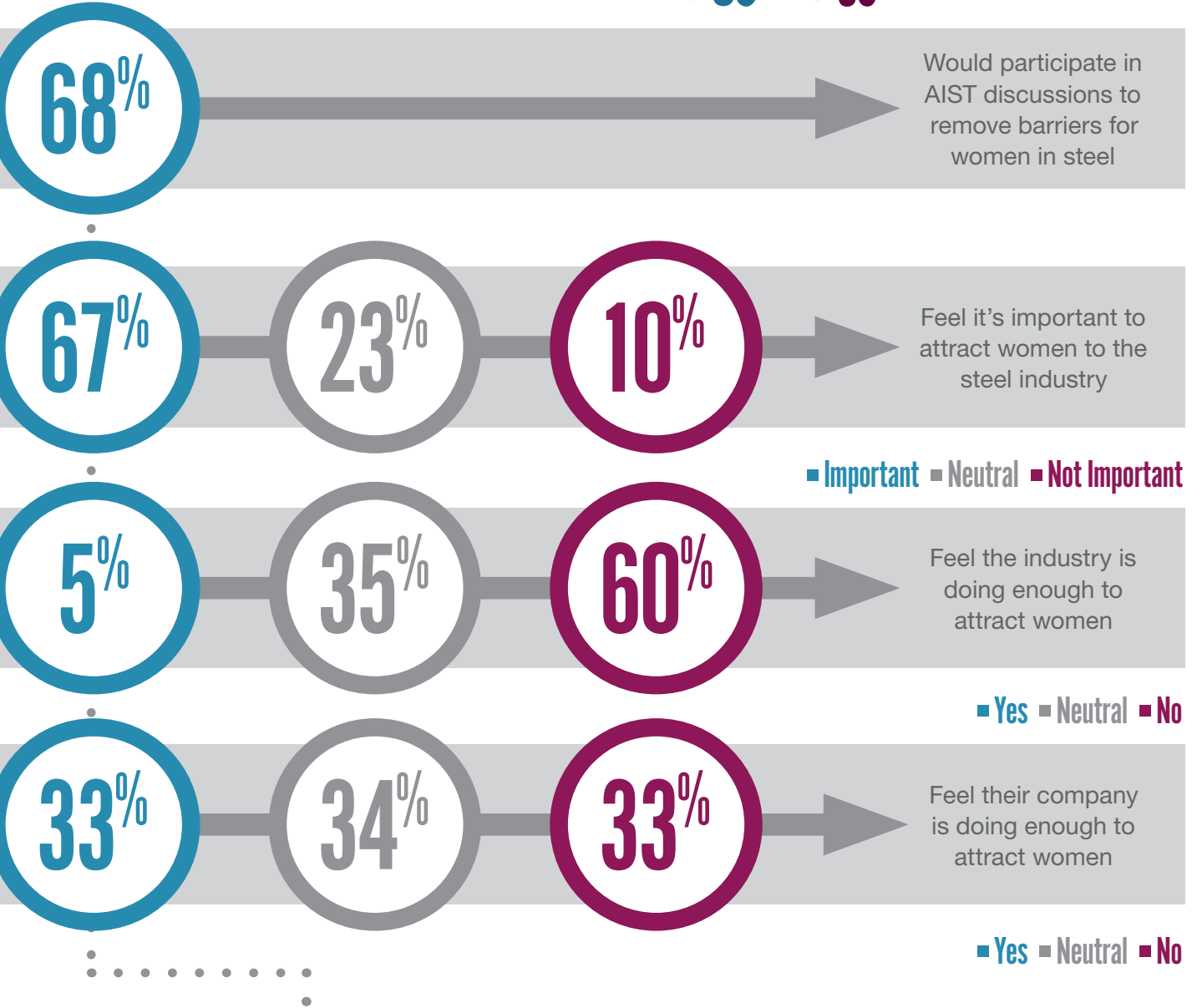
77% increase in our Young Professional network

These new members represent the next generation of young engineers and scientists urgently needed in today's steel industry.

Key Survey Results



581 individuals completed the full survey



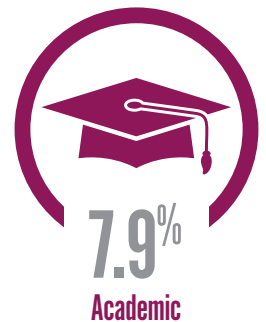
78%

said women make up less than a quarter of their company workforce

90%

said women make up less than a quarter of their company leadership

Survey Respondent Demographics



As a follow-up, survey-takers were also offered the opportunity to provide comments regarding its importance.

Attracting Women to Steel Is a...

Good Idea

“Not only does it double the talent pool, but diverse teams have higher sales and profits compared to male-dominated teams, and a recent Gallup study found that gender-diverse business units have higher average revenue than less diverse business units. We NEED this in the steel industry TODAY.”

“It is proven that women and men problem-solve differently. It is important to have diverse problem-solvers in any industry to improve efficiency.”

“I unapologetically strive to hire women and minorities whenever I can. In my estimation, a workforce that reflects society at large supports and drives their company to be a better, more well-rounded and aware organization that is ultimately better to do business with.”

Bad Idea

“I don’t see what the benefit is to the industry. The benefit would be to the females. Females would be able to be in a manufacturing world which is known for making more money than the admin world. The fact that you are a male or female shouldn’t affect the quality of the steel, should it?”

“Stop being so PC like all of the other lemmings. As other areas have found, if you try to attract people to a certain field, they may not actually like that field once they get into it. Attracting people to a field they really don’t like is pointless.”

“Depends on the job, but my own personal experience is that in the plant, women are not strong enough or willing to do the dirty jobs. One complained to me that she couldn’t get the grease off her hands, and another said that her nails were ruined. Never had a guy say that!”

As you can see, a large percentage of survey respondents feel it’s important to attract women to the steel industry and are willing to participate in future discussions. So while there are varied opinions around the topic of engaging women in steel, the need for additional discussion is warranted.

AIST's leadership has identified the following action items for implementation to support the growth of women in steel



Use targeted recruiting for female involvement as officers in Member Chapters and Technology Committees



Provide mentoring opportunities for young female members



Explore joint meetings between AIST and the Association of Women in the Metal Industries (AWMI), the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), etc.

How Can I Help?

While AIST begins to tackle this challenge from a holistic standpoint, individuals in the steel industry are encouraged to support the inclusion of women within companies or academic institutions by adopting small behaviors in daily routines. These efforts can include:

Pay attention to bias within your organization, make the environment safe for problems to surface and effect positive change.

You are complicit when you listen and remain quiet, not neutral. Acknowledging issues can be uncomfortable, but this discomfort does not equate to the experiences of marginalized groups on a day-to-day basis. Stand up and address these issues.

Encourage girls to study scientific fields at younger ages.

Research conducted by Microsoft in 2017 shows that introducing young women to positive female role models in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields is a way to increase awareness and encourage a new generation of women to study science and engineering.

Girls who know a woman in a STEM profession are substantially more likely to feel empowered when they engage in STEM activities than those without this connection.

As more STEM opportunities and community encouragement become available to women during early learning and higher education, the number of women in these fields is likely to increase.

Advocate for the best candidate in leadership roles.

Major strides have been made in overall workplace gender equality, but there has been less progress regarding women in leadership positions.

The number of women in chief executive roles fell by 25% in 2018, and the total number of women in leadership positions in general pales in comparison to the number of men, as stated by *Fortune* in its 21 May 2018 article titled "The Share of Female CEOs in the Fortune 500 Dropped by 25% in 2018." *Fortune's* 2018 list shows there are now 24 women, down from the all-time high of 32 in 2017. To change the status quo and increase the diversity and equality of your organization's leadership team, you should strive to think more broadly and creatively.

Creating a diverse workforce isn't easy. It takes strong leadership and support to effect change. But by making these small adjustments, the potential for positive growth is unmistakable.

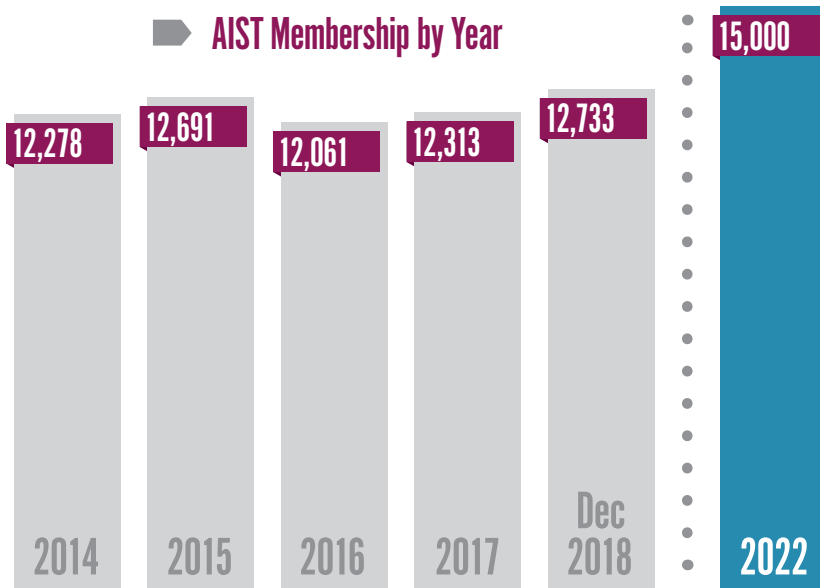
AIST will be holding a sold-out Women in Steel Roundtable, Sunday, 5 May 2019, during AISTech, Steel's Premier Technology Event, in Pittsburgh, Pa., USA. We welcome everyone interested in determining AIST's role in support of further expanding the number of women in steel and in encouraging this segmented audience to join the Association.

- ▶ If you have feedback or personal stories to share, please contact Stacy Varmecky (svarmecky@aist.org) or Danielle Schleiden (dschleiden@aist.org).

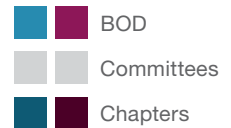
The AIST Landscape

As of 31 December 2018, AIST's membership base is comprised of 756 females out of 12,733 members.

Of these 756 females, 26 (3% of all female members) hold leadership positions amongst AIST's Board of Directors, Technology Committees and Member Chapters. Compare to 231 males (2% of all male members) occupying leadership positions in AIST.



AIST Leadership Positions by Gender



AIST has 15.5 times more male members than female members

