



# STRIVE FOR MORE 2.0

The Female Portrayal Guide for  
Growth-Obsessed Marketers

**April 2025**

**SEEHER**



## Foreword by SeeHer



**Christine Guilfoyle**  
President  
SeeHer

The business case for marketing to women has never been stronger. The rise of the Sheconomy underscores a massive revenue opportunity, but women's economic influence isn't about singular spending moments. It's about sustained economic power, projected to reach \$40 trillion globally in just a few years from now. Women drive spending and influence nearly every major purchase category, yet advertising still struggles to portray women authentically. Only 15% of women say that advertising truly reflects their identities.

At SeeHer, we have long championed the power of accurate representation—as a proven growth driver. Our work with Ipsos, a valued SeeHer member and research partner, has deepened this understanding. Strive for More 2.0 builds on our foundational study to uncover not just what resonates with consumers, but why—and how brands can translate these insights into growth. Our findings confirm that ads ranking in the top third of Ipsos' GEM® database for portraying women are significantly more likely to drive a +30 pt boost in choice intent and a +31 pt lift in brand relationship.

As consumer expectations rise, and younger generations bring new perspectives on self-identification and how they relate to brands, which brands will they choose? We believe the future belongs to brands that embrace and continually optimize multidimensional, authentic, representations and narratives of women – and, at SeeHer, we are committed to helping marketers strive for and achieve more impact and growth.

## Foreword by Ipsos

In the ever-evolving landscape of consumer behavior and marketing effectiveness, one truth remains constant: understanding your audience is paramount. At Ipsos, we recognize women as economic powerhouses, yet our research shows a disconnect between this reality and their portrayal in advertising.

The 'Strive for More 2.0' study, a collaboration between Ipsos and SeeHer, bridges this gap. By leveraging our advanced research methodologies and SeeHer's Gender Equality Measure (GEM®), we've reaffirmed the business case for authentic representation of women in advertising.

As leaders in market research, we at Ipsos are committed to providing data-driven insights that fuel informed decision-making. We're proud to partner with SeeHer and look forward to seeing how marketers will use these insights as a roadmap to create advertising that can drive success and contribute to positive societal change.



**Mary Ann Packo**  
CEO  
Ipsos North America

# Key Takeaways

- 1. She Matters – Bottom Line!:** Accurate portrayals of women drive business success. High GEM® scores correlate positively with creative effectiveness and sales lifts.
- 2. Close the Portrayal Gap:** Only 15% of women feel their depiction in advertising reflects their identity –compared to nearly 40% of men. Authentic portrayals aren't just about inclusivity; they drive connection and influence purchase decisions. Brands have a major opportunity to do better.
- 3. Move Beyond The Minimum:** While appropriate and respectful representation has improved over the past five years, progress has stalled where it matters most. The quality of women's presentation has not been elevated to where it should be, and women still don't see themselves as aspirational figures in ads. To deliver more effective portrayals, it's time to go beyond the basics.
- 4. Deliver Powerful and Success-Driven Depictions:** Understand women's needs, values, and how your brand can authentically reflect their lives and stories. Evolve creative strategies to foster connection by portraying women successfully exercising agency, achieving upward mobility, and demonstrating skill and strength. Actively show women making purchasing decisions, engaging in commerce, and driving brand impact.





# Positive portrayal of women in advertising generates 10% sales lift and more value for your media investment

Our initial "[Strive for More](#)" research established a clear link between accurate portrayals of women in advertising and measurable business outcomes through the GEM® index. Developed by SeeHer and Advertising Benchmark Index, GEM® (Gender Equality Measure) is the global standard for measuring creative effectiveness through the lens of human portrayals.

High GEM® scores strongly correlated with both short-term sales lifts and long-term brand equity. We continue to see that relationship hold in our 2025 update, with accurate portrayals of women in advertising measure with GEM® resulting in a +31pt increase in the Ipsos Creative Effect Index (CEI).

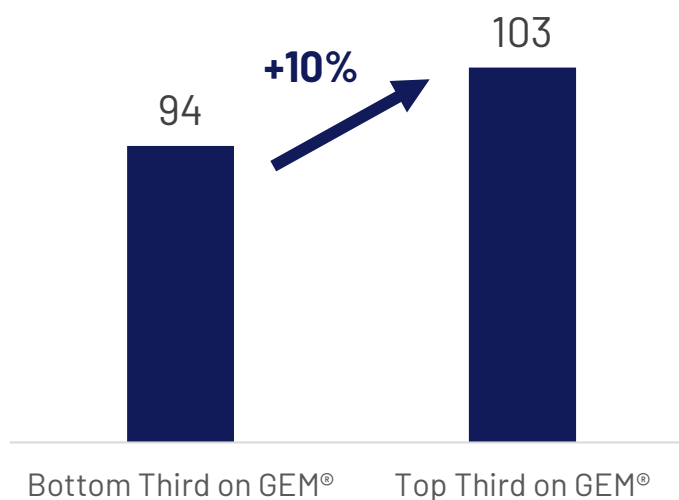
The Ipsos Creative Effect Index (CEI)<sup>1</sup> is a validated metric that correlates with sales lift as measured through Market Mix Modeling. Advertisements that rank in the top third of the Ipsos database based on CEI show an average sales lift of 44% more than lower performing ads.

When we look at the CEI results of high vs. low GEM® scoring advertising, we found that ads with stronger GEM® scores deliver 10% more value for your media investment. For example, a \$10 million media spend achieves the same impact as \$11 million would typically deliver. This means you're effectively getting an extra \$1 million worth of media value at no additional cost. It is clear that positive portrayal of women leads to more effective creative and stronger sales effects.

**She matters – bottom line!**

**Strive for more by making pre-testing with GEM® your competitive advantage to drive short-term and long-term sales and to garner incremental value for your media investment**

Average Indexed Sales Lift for High vs. Low on the GEM® Index



1. The Ipsos Creative Effective Index is a composite metric of **sales lift potential**. The metric is based on evidence-based measures of Brand Attention, the ad's ability to be encoded in memory and linked to the brand, and Choice Effect, the effectiveness of the ad to strengthen the brand's choice in the mental network of the target audience. This metric is validated to end sales lift outcomes measured in Market Mix Modeling.

Source: Ipsos U.S. Database with 6,265 GEM® cases

# Realistic portrayals of women are missing from advertising; men's depictions also require rethinking

In 2025, only **15% of U.S. women** feel that the women they see in ads reflects who they truly are, while **nearly 40% of men** feel that way<sup>1</sup>. This finding has important implications for advertisers, as relevance is the top driver of advertising effectiveness<sup>2</sup>.

## Women who feel like their identity is reflected in ads



## Men who feel like their identity is reflected in ads



We know from behavioral science research that consumer identity significantly influences purchasing decisions, as people select products or brands that align with their self-identity and help them express their identity to others. In fact, **high identity alignment drives a 10% increase in brand interest and a 17% increase in purchase intent**<sup>3</sup>. This is amplified when individuals feel a particular aspect of their identity is highly salient – e.g. highly relevant in a moment or context, or because a part of oneself feels jeopardized or vulnerable—thereby cueing the need to affirm that part of oneself through a choice or purchase. Importantly, ads that **are more reflective of women's "actual" (vs. idealized) self** have been found to elicit more positive responses – e.g., balancing responsibilities of being a professional and a mom vs. solely one dimensional, as one or the other. **When consumers identify with brands as for "someone like me" they are more likely to purchase, engage, and recommend to others**<sup>5</sup>.

## Close the Portrayal Gap

**Strive for more by reflecting the real identities and values of women and rethink the depiction of men to achieve portrayal parity and drive consumer resonance.**

1. Ipsos FastFacts study fielded February 13, 2025, among N=1,000 U.S. Adults 18-65 60% Female / 40% Male

2. Ipsos Creative Spark database analysis – drivers of the Creative Effect Index

3. Xue, F., & Phelps, J. E. (2013). Self-concept, product involvement, and responses to self-congruent advertising. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 34(1), 1-20.

4. Kuanr, A., & Malhotra, N. (2025). Perfectly imperfect: how body-positive advertisements in social media foster consumer engagement. *Journal of Advertising*, 54(1), 79-98.

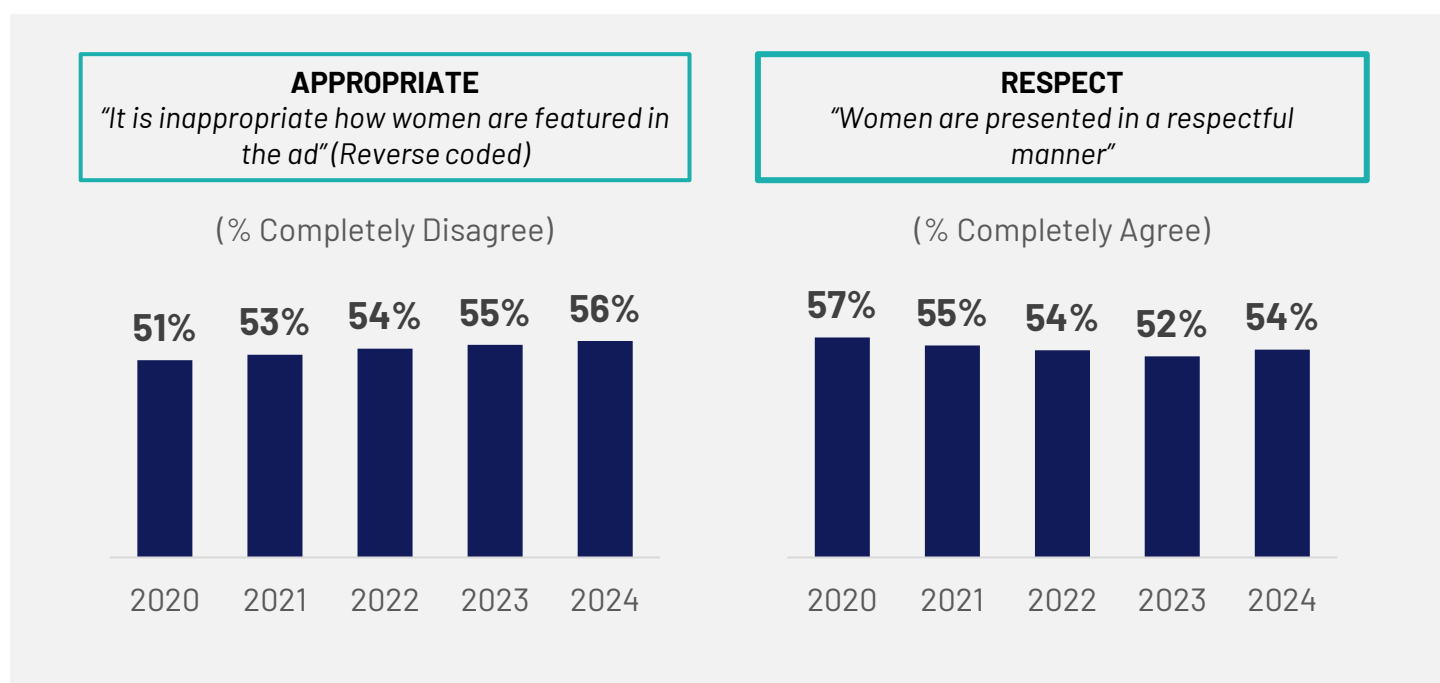
5. Ipsos, Misfits: How Creativity in Advertising Sparks Brand Growth, <https://www.ipsos.com/en/misfits>

# Appropriate and respectful portrayals only meet consumer baseline expectations

Since 2019, Ipsos has integrated the SeeHer GEM® questions in all CreativeSpark projects when the ad being assessed features a woman or girl, creating a comprehensive dataset of 6,265 cases in the United States.

A closer analysis of the four pillars that drive the overall GEM® score: Presentation, Respectfulness, Appropriateness and characters in advertising being perceived as Role Models continues to validate and expand upon previous findings.

The “Appropriate” pillar has steadily trended upward over the last 5 years, and we also see “Respect” remaining above 50% top box agreement. Showing women in appropriate and respectful ways should be considered table stakes for advertisers. While these foundational elements are important, the real opportunity lies in elevating portrayals of women to be more multifaceted and aspirational.



## Move Beyond the Minimum

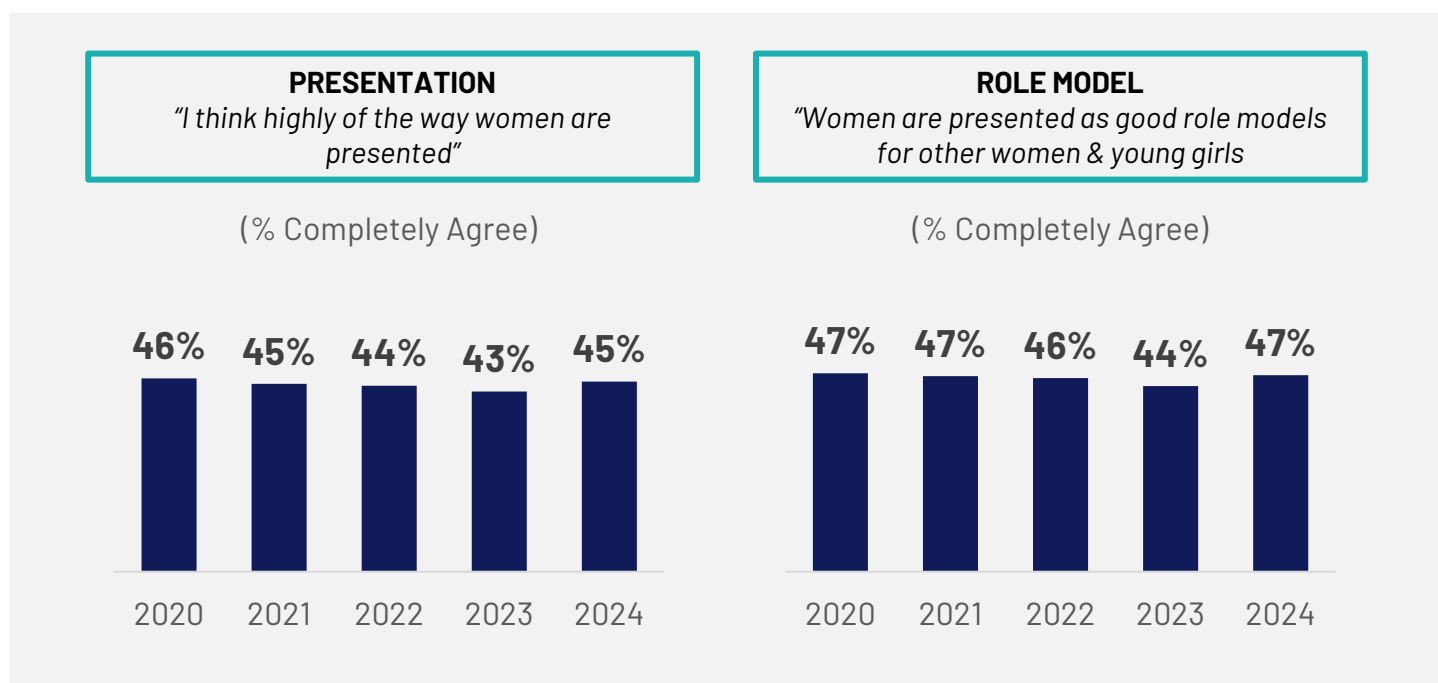
Strive for more by continuing to portray women in an appropriate and respectful manner in advertising, not regressing to outdated stereotypical roles, and going beyond this minimum.

Source: Ipsos U.S. Database with 6,265 GEM® cases from 2020 to 2024

# Elevate portrayals to exceed and go beyond consumer expectations

Our initial research highlighted the "Presentation" and "Role Model" pillars as being the most impactful. Despite these findings in our last report, we've observed that too few brands have taken advantage of this opportunity. Over the past five years, the "Presentation" and "Role Model" pillars have shown little to no improvement. They continue to lag behind other aspects of gender representation in advertising.

These pillars represent higher-order elements of portrayal that are crucial for elevating the overall quality and impact of how women are represented in ads. While many brands have improved basic representation, it's now time to raise the ceiling of how women are portrayed in advertising.



## Move Beyond the Minimum

Strive for more by enhancing quality of presentation, reflecting multi-dimensionality and aspirations to improve the Positive Presentation and Role Model pillars and overall GEM® scores.

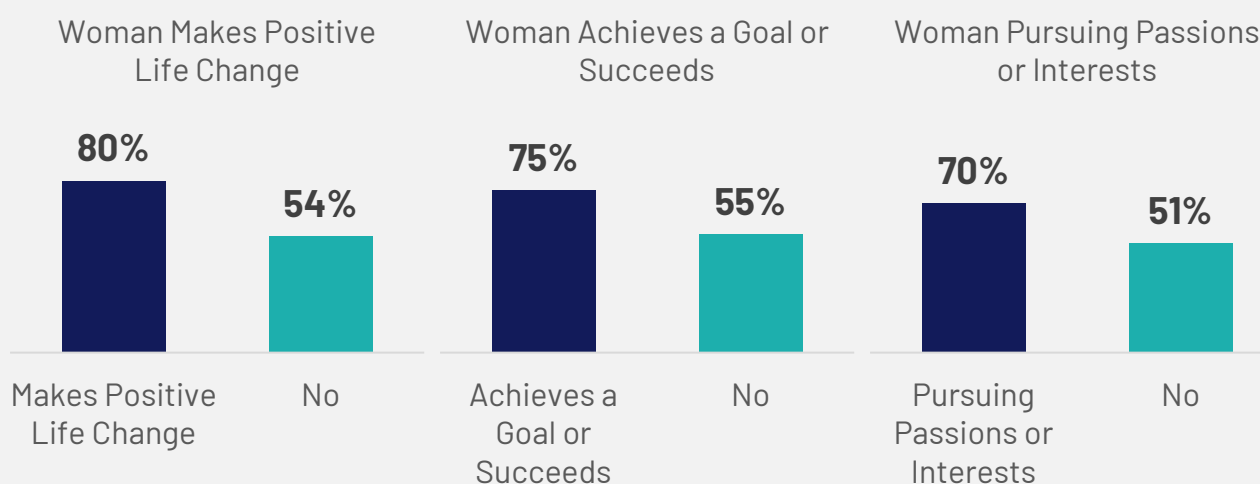
Source: Ipsos U.S. Database with 6,265 GEM® cases from 2020 to 2024

# Deliver powerful and success-driven depictions

In our first “Strive For More” analysis, we found that there were several thematic elements that could be considered predictive drivers for positive portrayal of gender equality. As we revisited this analysis this year, the same three storytelling themes rose to the top:

## Storytelling Themes in Advertising and their Impact on GEM® Scores

Share of Above Average GEM® Score Case Count



There remains a disconnect between women’s portrayals in advertising and how they live their lives, so we dove deeper to find out exactly what do these themes look like. What do women in 2025 identify with as a positive life change? How do they define success? What are their goals and passions?

Ipsos asked American women to find out. Four key themes emerged:

1. Women want to have **agency**. They are focused on **financial independence**, ability to make decisions, and having power over their **own mental health, balancing family and work**.
2. Goals and success for women often looks like **upward mobility** and advancement. This can be in **education, in career, and personal growth in the pursuit of life passions**.
3. Women want to see themselves portrayed as being **physically strong**, athletic and capable, featuring a variety of body shapes and sizes.
4. Women ultimately want to see advertising reflect their roles as **powerful economic forces** shaping **purchasing decisions**.

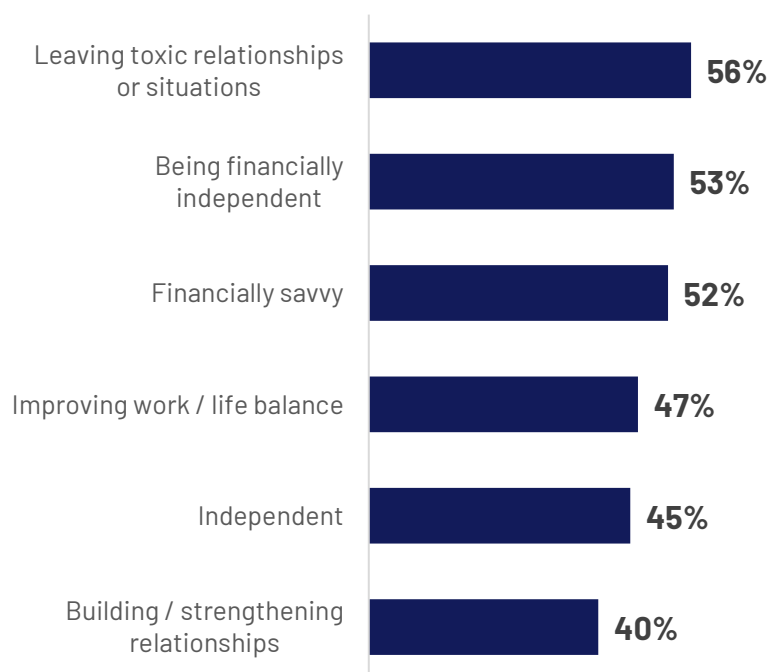
Source: Ipsos U.S. Database with 1,359 GEM® ads tagged



# Women want to see advertisers feature women who have **agency**.

A key theme across the responses from women was the importance of financial independence as a critical first step to having agency in other areas of her life. Women focus on being debt-free and able to weather unexpected expenses as a hallmark of being financially independent. While women are as likely as men to be a part of day-to-day financial decisions like budgeting and bill paying, they are significantly less likely to influence larger decisions like managing investments.<sup>1</sup>

## % Agree – “I would like to see women depicted like this more, there’s not enough of it in advertising”



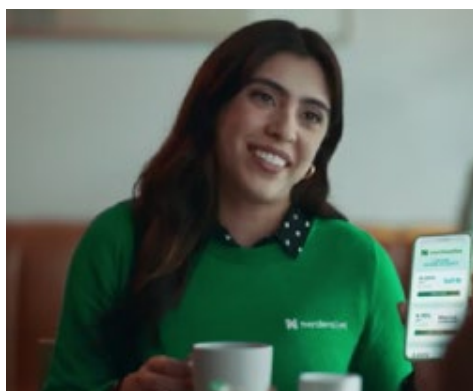
## In her words...

*“She strives for independence and self-determination. Her success looks like having **financial independence**, doing something she loves with her time and her life. **Not having to rely on anyone else** for anything she wants.”*

*“She is striving to be able to **do everything herself** so she doesn’t rely on others, pays everything on time, and she works hard even when she wants to have fun. She is disciplined and **she’s the boss** where she works.”*

*“This woman strives for financial independence from others and being able to buy **what she wants**, travel **where she wants**, and work less if she wants to.”*

## NerdWallet Normalizes Financial Expertise



### NerdWallet – Up in the Air

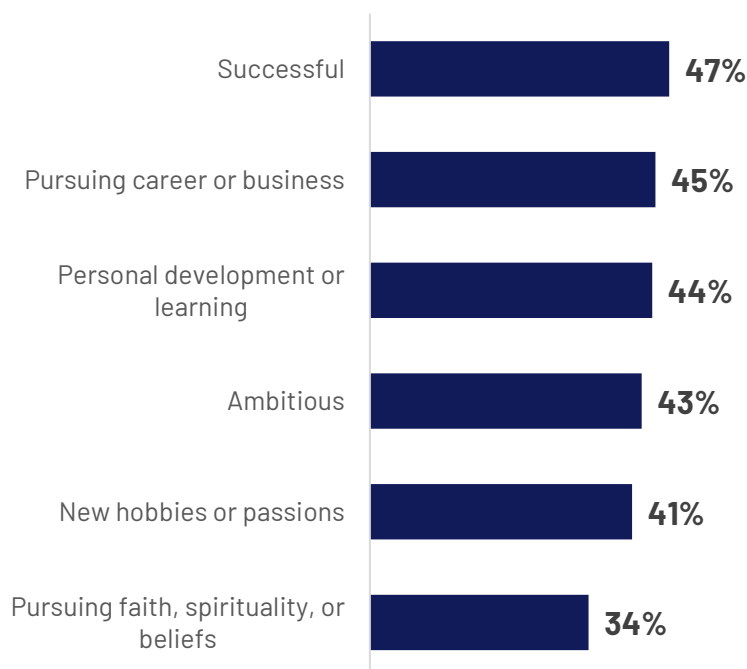
NerdWallet depicts not just one, but two women with agency in this spot. The best part? They do it naturally and authentically, reflective of what a real conversation between two women regarding finance might actually be. The brand doesn’t spotlight these females’ financial knowledge as surprising or applause-worthy, but for what it is — a reality that women can and do have financial literacy, independence, and decision power. And that they may hold a career in the space. NerdWallet does this all while communicating information about their benefits and incorporating creative tactics like humor.

1. Bank of America, [Bank of America Study Finds 94% of Women Believe They’ll be Personally Responsible for Their Finances at Some Point in Their Lives](#), June 2022  
Chart and Verbatim Source: Ipsos FastFacts study fielded February 13, 2025, among N=1,000 U.S. Adults 18-65 60% Female / 40% Male

# Women want to see advertisers feature women who have **upward mobility** in their lives.

Upward mobility for women can be shown through education, career advancement, or status. Time spent on personal development and life passions are also depictions of this larger life goal for women. Interestingly, [Ipsos research](#) reveals that fewer women claim to have less desire to advance to the next role at work than men (58% vs. 73%) with the top barrier as concerns due to work-life balance. This indicates that women value a balanced life. Their goal achievement often combines career success with other personal aspirations, rather than focusing solely on professional advancement.

% Agree – I would like to see women depicted like this more, there's not enough of it in advertising



## In her words...

"A woman making a positive life change might be **remaking herself or enhancing what she already possesses**. Going back **to school to learn a new trade or vocation**, starting a business, purchasing or leasing real estate as part of a move or investment, exercise: All of these examples promote a positive life change."

"A woman strives for goals that will not harm her, but that will instead **allow her to grow as a person**. These goals can be to become a singer, artist, engineer, IT tech, and much more."

"Upgrading her life. Getting **a large house, car, more monetary** and physical things if you want to make it clearer. Or you could have a **shift from desk job** where she shuts her computer and goes out into the world, maybe sees more of nature, goes backpacking, and **travels** around the world"

## Ambition Drives in Chevy Ad



## Chevrolet – Chevy Equinox Coach Em' Up

Chevy takes you along for the ride with a successful, ambitious woman pursuing her passion for coaching soccer. The ad follows her driving to her first day as a new coach, preparing for this opportunity with a confident monologue. As she embraces this challenge, we see her as a role model not just for her team, but for all women aspiring to push their boundaries. The ad showcases how passion and determination can drive personal and professional success.

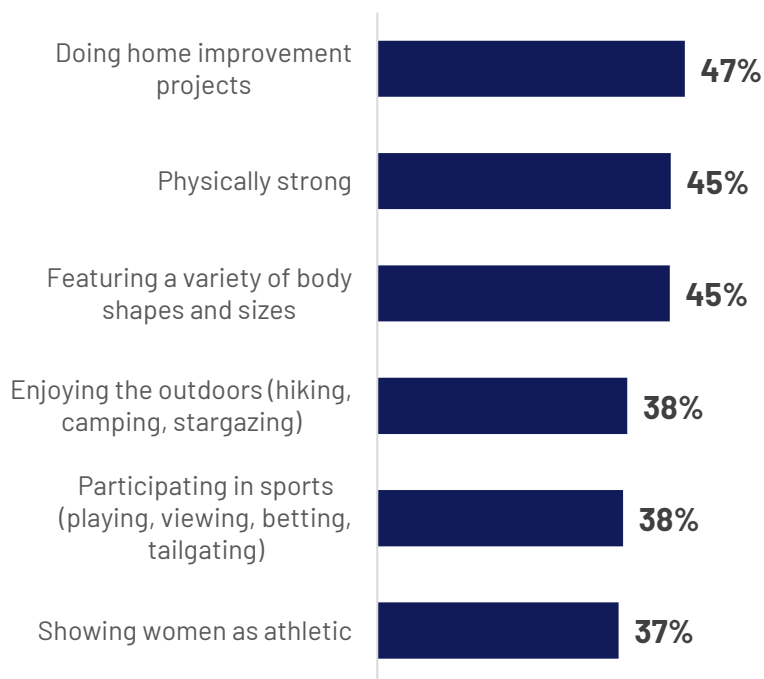
Ad Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdONCBV0XCw>

Chart and Verbatim Source: Ipsos FastFacts study fielded February 13, 2025, among N=1,000 U.S. Adults 18-65 60% Female / 40% Male

# Women want to see advertisers feature women who are **skillful and physically strong**

Women want to see themselves portrayed as someone who can demonstrate resourcefulness and skill as well as someone who is physically strong. They also prefer when advertisers feature women with a variety of body shapes and sizes.

% Agree – I would like to see women depicted like this more, there's not enough of it in advertising



## In her words...

"Purchasing her own house, it **looks like home**. New exercise room to start daily work out routine. It looks like healthy and happy."

"She makes lists of her priorities and makes sure that she is **healthy physically and mentally**."

"She's **getting herself together physically**, mentally and financially she's making a change that's going to help her become who she wants."

"She could hold office, **be an athlete** or in any environment."

## Lowe's Spotlights Women's DIY Skills



### Lowe's – Making the Holidays Look Easy

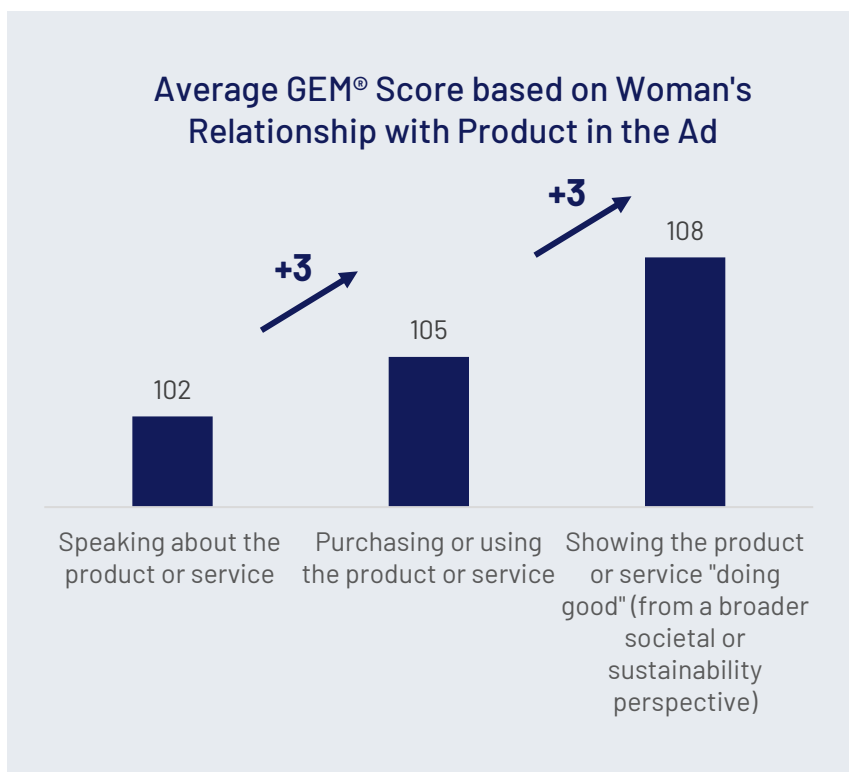
This Lowe's commercial features a young woman preparing her home for the holidays. She demonstrates handiness and physical strength by hanging a wreath, assembling a Christmas tree, and completing home improvement projects. The ad effectively highlights how Lowe's products enable her to easily host holiday gatherings, showcasing her independence, resourcefulness and competence.

# Women want to see advertisers feature women as economic forces with purchasing power

Women want to see advertisers feature them as economic forces with significant purchasing power, moving beyond passive portrayals in ads. Our research reveals an opportunity for marketers to **showcase women as direct economic powerhouses**. This means actively depicting women in roles that drive commerce and strengthen brand connections.

Effective strategies include featuring women as **narrators or voiceovers** discussing product benefits, **showing women directly endorsing products or services doing good**, and importantly, portraying women making purchasing decisions.

By highlighting these moments of direct interaction between women and brands, advertisers can convey a powerful message: **women are not merely passive observers in the marketplace, but vital economic engines driving growth through their purchasing choices**. This approach acknowledges and celebrates women's substantial influence in the economy, emphasizing their role as key decision-makers in consumer spending.



## Green Power: Girls Lead the Way



### Seventh Generation EasyDose – Half the size. Half the plastic

The Seventh Generation EasyDose detergent ad effectively showcases women as economic forces with significant purchasing power. By featuring a young girl educating a cashier about sustainability, the ad portrays even the youngest female consumers as knowledgeable and influential in purchasing decisions. The ad positions women as informed decision-makers who use their buying power to support brands aligned with their values, emphasizing how women's economic choices can drive positive change in the market and beyond.



## Conclusion:

# Strive For More Impact and Growth

**The message is clear: She matters – bottom line.** Women are not just a target audience; they are economic powerhouses, decision-makers, and purchase influencers. As marketers, you have an unprecedented growth opportunity – and responsibility – to strive for more in your advertising.

It starts with bold, intentional action.

### Four Ways to Strive for More Impact and Growth:

#### 1. Make GEM® Pre-Testing Your Competitive Advantage

Strive for more by using GEM® (Gender Equality Measure®) pre-testing to ensure your creative is set up to drive both short-term and long-term sales. Pre-testing with GEM® increases the effectiveness of your advertising and the value of your media spend by ensuring that women see themselves **represented in powerful, meaningful ways**.

#### 2. Close the Portrayal Gap

Strive for more by achieving portrayal parity in your advertising – reflecting the real identities, ambitions, and influence of women while also rethinking the depiction of men. Avoid surface-level inclusion. Push toward resonance by reflecting the richness of women's lives in your creative.

#### 3. Move Beyond the Minimum

Strive for more by rejecting outdated, stereotypical portrayals of women – and refusing to backslide. It's not enough to simply include women in an appropriate and respectful manner; your portrayal must move beyond the past. Staying rooted in outdated narratives is a missed business opportunity.

#### 4. Deliver Powerful and Success-Driven Depictions

Strive for more by depicting women as leaders, decision-makers, and economic power players. The days of passive portrayals must end. Women should be seen successfully in control of their careers, finances, and choices – because that's how they see themselves, independent, in control and strong. Showcase women's economic power in your creative – as purchasers, decision-makers, and brand influencers. Actively show women making purchasing decisions, engaging in commerce, and driving brand impact. Advertising that captures this reality will drive measurable business growth.

### Strive for more and watch your business grow – Turn Insights Into Action:

The opportunity for growth is clear: better portrayals drive better business outcomes. The brands that commit to closing the portrayal gap – and pushing beyond traditional narratives – will be the ones that win with women, and all consumers, and drive long-term impact.

To ensure your advertising is maximizing its potential, partner with SeeHer and Ipsos for GEM® Pre-testing and practical guidance on integrating GEM® themes and drivers into your creative development process to drive more value, more connection, and more growth.

Contact [SeeHer](#) and [Ipsos](#) to learn more about GEM® Pre-Testing and Predictive Drivers for Creative Effectiveness.



# About this research

Our initial "[Strive for More](#)" research established a clear link between accurate portrayals of women in advertising and measurable business outcomes through the GEM® index. Developed by SeeHer and Advertising Benchmark Index, GEM® (Gender Equality Measure) is the global standard for measuring creative effectiveness through the lens of human portrayals. High GEM® scores strongly correlated with both short-term sales lifts and long-term brand equity.

Among the key pillars, "Presented" and "Role Model" were most impactful, showing that complex, multidimensional female roles drive stronger consumer engagement. However, too few brands were tapping into this opportunity.

Strive for More 2.0 validates previous findings and builds on our understanding of what drives high GEM® scores by exploring:

1. The continued strength of the link between female portrayals and business growth
2. How well current ads meet evolving consumer expectations
3. Specific tactics to enhance the "**Presented**" and "**Role Model**" pillars

## Strive for More 2.0 Methodology:

- Ipsos assessed data from 2018-2024 which included the GEM® questions for 6,265 ads with female character portrayals, across various ad lengths and formats in the United States.
- Reexamined the relationship between high/low GEM® Index scores and overall creative effectiveness, or Creative Effect Index, a measure validated to in-market sales, proving positive gender portrayal and business impact are connected.
- Identified how advertisements were stacking up against the four pillars of GEM® compared to recent years to isolate where brands are doing well, and where there is room to grow.
- Conducted primary research to deep dive into the drivers of the higher order pillars. Ipsos utilized our Fast Facts methodology in the U.S., gathering input from n=1,000 general public consumers. With a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions, Ipsos assessed tangible examples of the predictive drivers, viewer identity overlap with advertising, and appetite for more or less of specific scenarios brands can use to inform creative tactics.

## GEM® Research Module

As a key part of our shared commitment to gender equity in advertising, Ipsos includes the SeeHer GEM® questions in all its creative assessment research projects when an advertisement includes a woman.

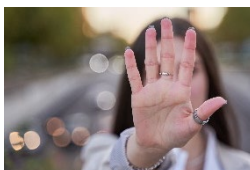


GEM® quantifies consumer reaction to the depiction of women in advertising and content, focusing on four key dimensions:



### PRESENTATION

I think highly of the way women are **presented**



### APPROPRIATE

It is **inappropriate** how women are featured\*



### RESPECT

Women are presented in a **respectful** manner



### ROLE MODEL

Women are presented in a manner where they can be seen as good **role models** for other women and young girls

To generate the total GEM® Index score, each measurement characteristic is benchmarked and indexed against the average score for that characteristic. The total GEM® Index score is the average index of the of the four characteristics giving equal weight to each input. An index of 100 signifies an average score for an ad.

## Authors & Contributors

### Ipsos



**Lisa Zielinski**

Senior Vice President  
Ipsos Creative  
Excellence



**Shelley Yang**

Senior Director  
Ipsos Creative  
Excellence



**Rachel Herzig**

Vice President  
Ipsos Creative  
Excellence



**Sarah Mittal**

Director  
Ipsos Behavioral  
Science Center

### SeeHer



**Yatisha Forde**

Senior Director,  
Insights and Thought  
Leadership  
SeeHer



**Susan Leibovich**

Senior Manager,  
Analytics, Insights &  
Measurement  
SeeHer



## About SeeHer

[SeeHer](#) was launched in 2016 by the Association of National Advertisers (ANA). SeeHer's coalition of leaders is committed to improving the accurate representation and portrayal of women and girls to drive business growth. To help its members benchmark success and become catalysts for change, SeeHer spearheaded the development of the Gender Equality Measure (GEM®), the first research methodology that quantifies gender bias in ads and programming. A winner of the prestigious ESOMAR Research Effectiveness Award, GEM® is the global measurement standard, proving that content accurately portraying women and girls dramatically increases purchase intent and brand reputation. SeeHer's suite of training and resources, including GEM®, enables marketers to prioritize best practices as part of an always-on approach to driving growth. The movement includes the following vertical expertise: SeeHer in Sports, SeeHer Entertainment, SeeHer Health, and the SeeHer Media Task Force. Visit [SeeHer.com](#) to join the movement and follow SeeHer on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).

## About Ipsos

Ipsos is one of the largest market research companies in the world, present in 90 markets and employing 18,000+. Our Ipsos Creative Excellence team expertly partners with clients through the creative development journey, from upstream insight generation that fuels creative briefs to exploring creative ideas to optimization and post-launch learnings that drive future success. Our focus is on guidance that nurtures and optimizes the creativity that is essential to success. We work with 75% of the top 200 national advertisers. We are proud to partner with SeeHer in our pursuit of effective, inclusive creativity.