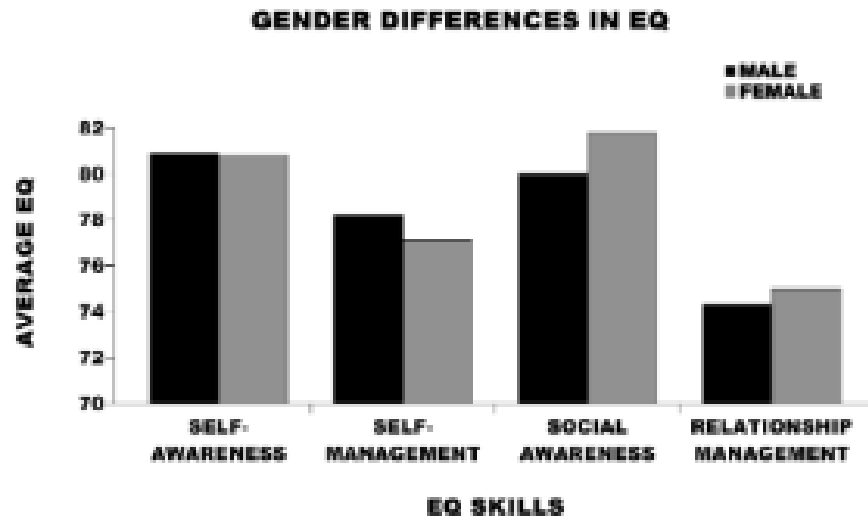


## How Much Does Gender Matter? (2008)

Sheila began her career as a financial consultant specializing in healthcare at a multinational consulting firm. It only took a few years of dazzling clients and garnering rave reviews from upper management before she was eventually snatched up by a new employer—a large regional healthcare system in the Midwest. Still in her early 30s, Sheila was already an assistant vice president on the fast track to a C-level appointment. Her past and current superiors unanimously agree that Sheila was "smart," yet there was something else—something they couldn't quite put a finger on. Early in Sheila's consulting career, after watching her defuse tense situations with clients time and again, her former manager summed up the secret to Sheila's success: "She just gets people."

In 2003, we found some stark contrasts between the EQ skills expressed by men and those found in women like Sheila. Women outperformed men in self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. In fact, self-awareness was the only EQ skill in which men were able to keep pace with women. But by 2008, times had changed and so had men.

As the graph shows, men and women were still neck and neck in their ability to recognize their own emotions—just as in 2003. But men had caught up in their ability to manage their own emotions. Chalk this change up to nothing more than shifting social norms. The evolution of cultural mores benefited men. Men were now encouraged to pay their emotions some extra thought, which goes a long way toward clearer thinking. Not surprisingly, we found that a full 70% of male leaders who ranked in the top 15% in decision-making skills also scored the highest in emotional intelligence skills. In contrast, not one single male leader with low EQ was among the most skilled decision makers. *Although this seems counterintuitive, it turns out that paying attention to your emotions is the most logical way to make good decisions.* So instead of feeling like time spent addressing angst or frustration is somehow a sign of weakness, men are now free to get a stronger handle on their emotions in the name of sound judgment.



**Note:** At the time of this research, gender options in our demographic questions were limited to Male and Female. Our demographic options changed in 2021 to be more inclusive and representative of gender fluidity.