When it comes to leading, self-identity matters.I worry that if I try to pursue leadership in my field, people will not take me seriously." What To be sure, there are very real experiences that often inform these fears, especially for underrepresented groups such as women and people of color. But whether these fears are justified or not, it's important to understand their impact on how we view ourselves. And across our studies, we found that people who reported higher levels of fear around these reputational risks were less likely to see themselves as leaders. As a result, they were less likely to act as leaders, and therefore less likely to be seen as leaders by their supervisors. At first glance, this may seem counterintuitive. Why would perceptions of riskiness influence something as deeply ingrained as your identity? From a psychological standpoint, however, this effect is not surprising at all. No one likes to think of themselves as driven by fear, and leadership can often come with substantial challenges. So, when pursuing leadership feels risky, people subconsciously redefine their own identities to justify avoiding it. It's a lot more comfortable to rationalize an unwillingness to lead by telling yourself that you're "just not a leader" than to admit that you're afraid of what others might think.Specifically, we identified three common reputational fears that hold people back from seeing themselves as leaders: Fear of seeming domineering Many of the participants in our study expressed concern about being seen as bossy, autocratic, or domineering if they were to take on a leadership role.What can we do?