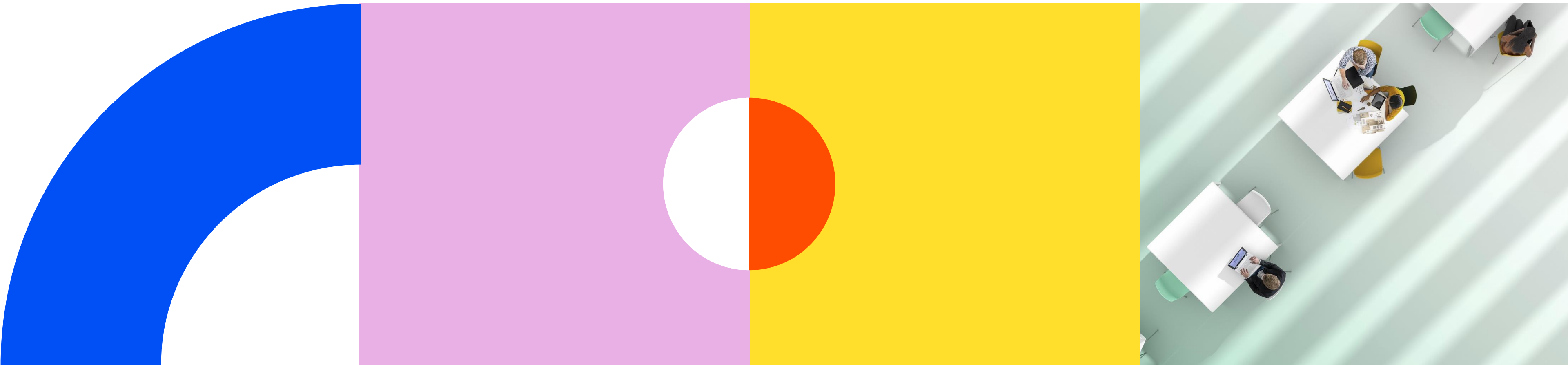Bow Valley College

CPHR Alberta

Research Report 2025

Neurodiversity In the Workplace
Research Report

About

This research project focused on improving neuroinclusion in the workplace by conducting a survey with neurodivergent (ND) individuals and HR professionals, followed by in-depth interviews with HR professionals. Together, these methods helped us explore current challenges, best practices, and opportunities for creating more inclusive organizational cultures. On the following pages, you will find a detailed report of the survey and interview results.

The research project was conducted and developed by:

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Introduction

Experts estimate that [15-20% of adults are neurodivergent](), yet many continue to face hidden challenges in the workplace. Due to persistent stigma and misunderstanding, these individuals often struggle in silence. At the same time, research increasingly shows that supporting neurodivergent employees can lead to lower turnover, higher productivity, and improved overall engagement.

Despite these benefits, societal awareness of neurodiversity remains limited. This lack of understanding creates a lose-lose scenario: organizations are actively searching for talent, while many highly capable individuals are overlooked simply because their unique ways of thinking are not recognized or valued.

As the global competition for talent intensifies, companies are finding it harder to recruit individuals with the right skills. Meanwhile, unemployment rates among neurodivergent adults remain disproportionately high— estimated at [30–40%](). This disconnect highlights a missed opportunity. While many organizations struggle to retain top talent, leading companies like Microsoft, SAP, JPMorgan, and EY report [retention rates above 90%]() in their neurodivergent hiring programs.

This research set out to explore the key challenges neurodivergent individuals face at work, identify practical solutions, and develop a toolkit to help HR professionals and organizations build more inclusive, supportive workplaces.

Methodology

To gather a wide range of perspectives, the research employed two primary methods over a one-month period (April 1–30, 2025). First, an anonymous survey was distributed to both neurodivergent individuals and HR professionals to collect candid feedback and experiences. Second, confidential interviews were conducted with HR professionals to gain deeper insights into their views and practices. This mixed-methods approach provided a comprehensive understanding of both personal experiences and organizational challenges.

We collected 199 responses from:

85 HR Professionals (survey)

24 HR Professionals (interview)

90 Neurodivergent Individuals (survey)

This study was approved by the Bow Valley Research Ethics Board. All participants provided informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and all data was securely stored in accordance with ethical research standards.

Key Findings

Main Challenges and Opportunities Identified

HR professionals are aware of neurodiversity, but few are trained to support it.

91% of HR professionals are familiar with neurodiversity.

Only **29%** have received training.

Interview participants noted, while awareness of neurodiversity is increasing, many organizations still lack the training and structures needed to support neurodivergent talent.

Standard processes often exclude exceptional talent

41% of ND individuals report challenges during job applications.

Only **10%** of HR professionals say their organizations have policies or programs to hire and support ND employees.

Interview participants acknowledged growing awareness around inclusive recruitment, but also emphasized that rigid processes, stigma, and lack of training continue to exclude neurodivergent talent.
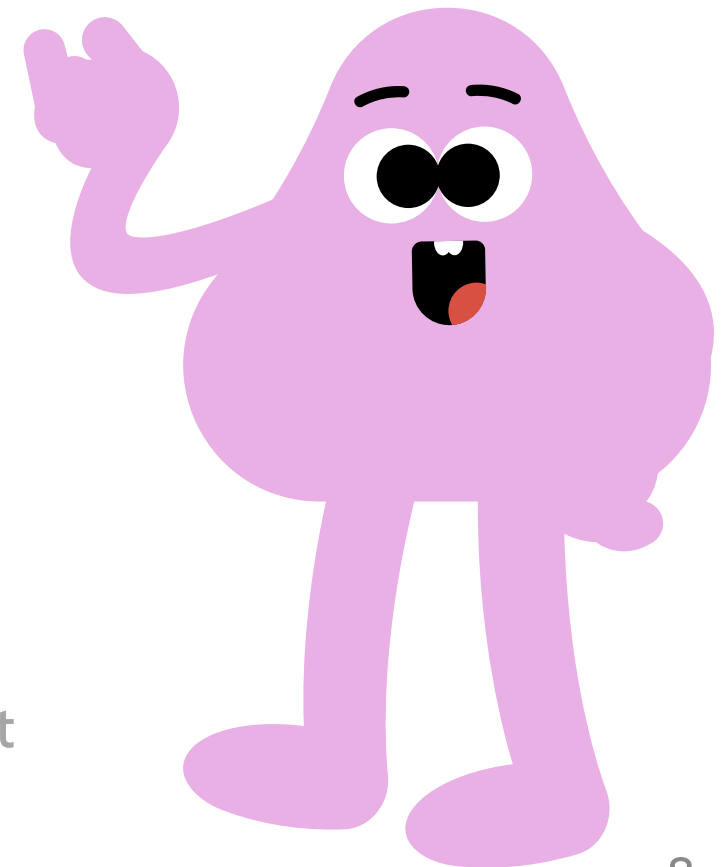
Even when accommodations are available, they're not always accessible or effective.

63% of ND individuals say they've not received accommodations or support.

Of those who did, only **21%** found them "very effective"

Interview participants shared that while accommodations such as quiet spaces, flexible hours, or assistive tools are available, their usefulness often depends on informal processes and varies across roles.

# Without effective neurodiversity training, workplaces miss the opportunity to engage and support neurodivergent talent.

Only **33%** of ND individuals have received neurodiversity awareness training.

But Only **6%** of those who had, found it "Very effective".

Interview participants expressed a strong need for practical training, tools, and leadership buy-in to better engage neurodivergent employees.
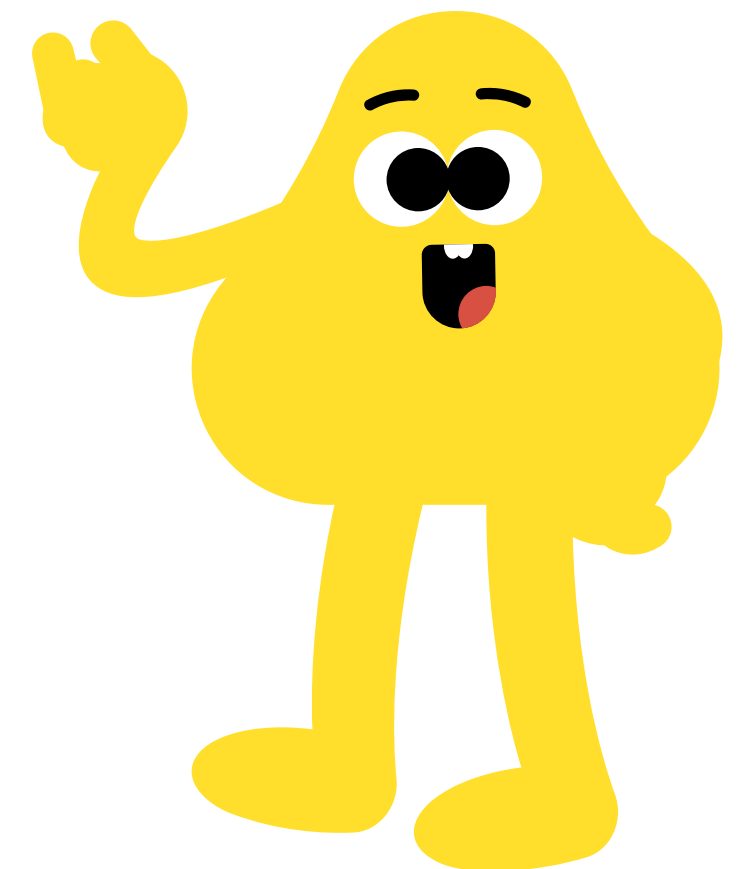
HR professionals are aligned on the value of neurodiversity, but most ND employees don't feel that commitment in their everyday experience.

95% of HR professionals recognize the importance of neurodiversity as part of DEI initiatives.

But only **17%** of neurodivergent employees feel their workplace is "very inclusive"

Interview participants noted that while leadership buy-in and DEI goals are in place, they also shared that stigma, lack of trust, and invisible barriers often prevent neurodivergent employees from feeling genuinely supported.

Detailed Results

In-Depth Analysis of Survey and Interview Data

199 Responses

Experiences and understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace
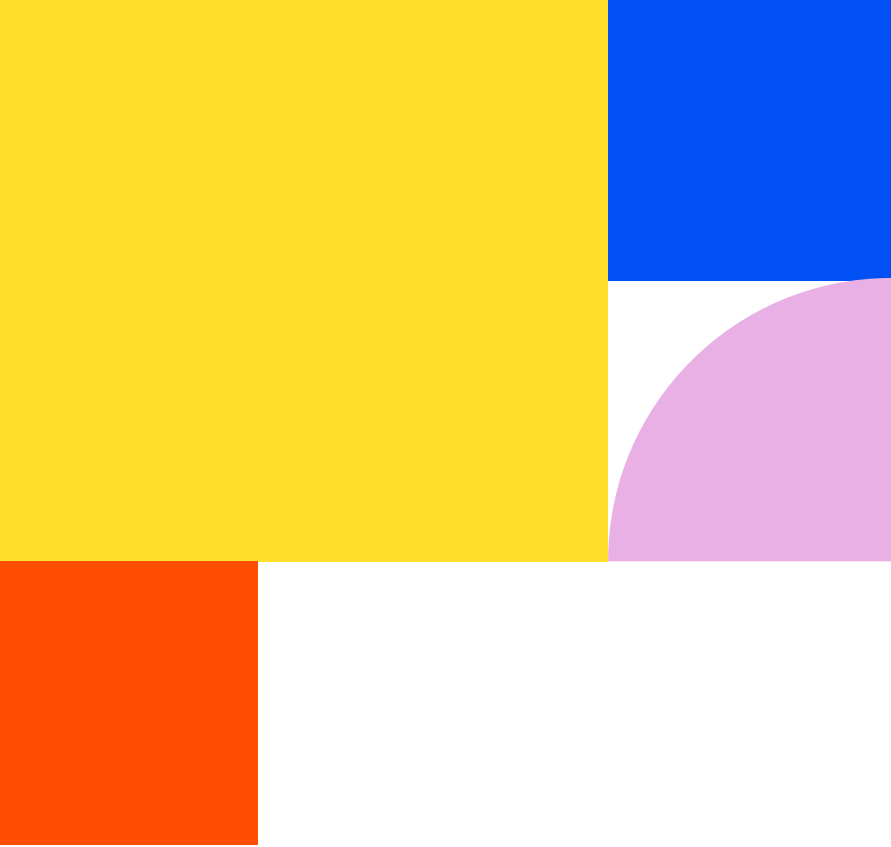
175

Participants in surveys

85 HR Professionals Survey
90 ND Individuals Survey

24

Participants in interviews

The interviews were conducted with
HR Professionals only

HR professionals and ND Individuals Surveys

- A neurodivergent individual
- An HR professional

85 (49%)

90 (51%)

N=175

14
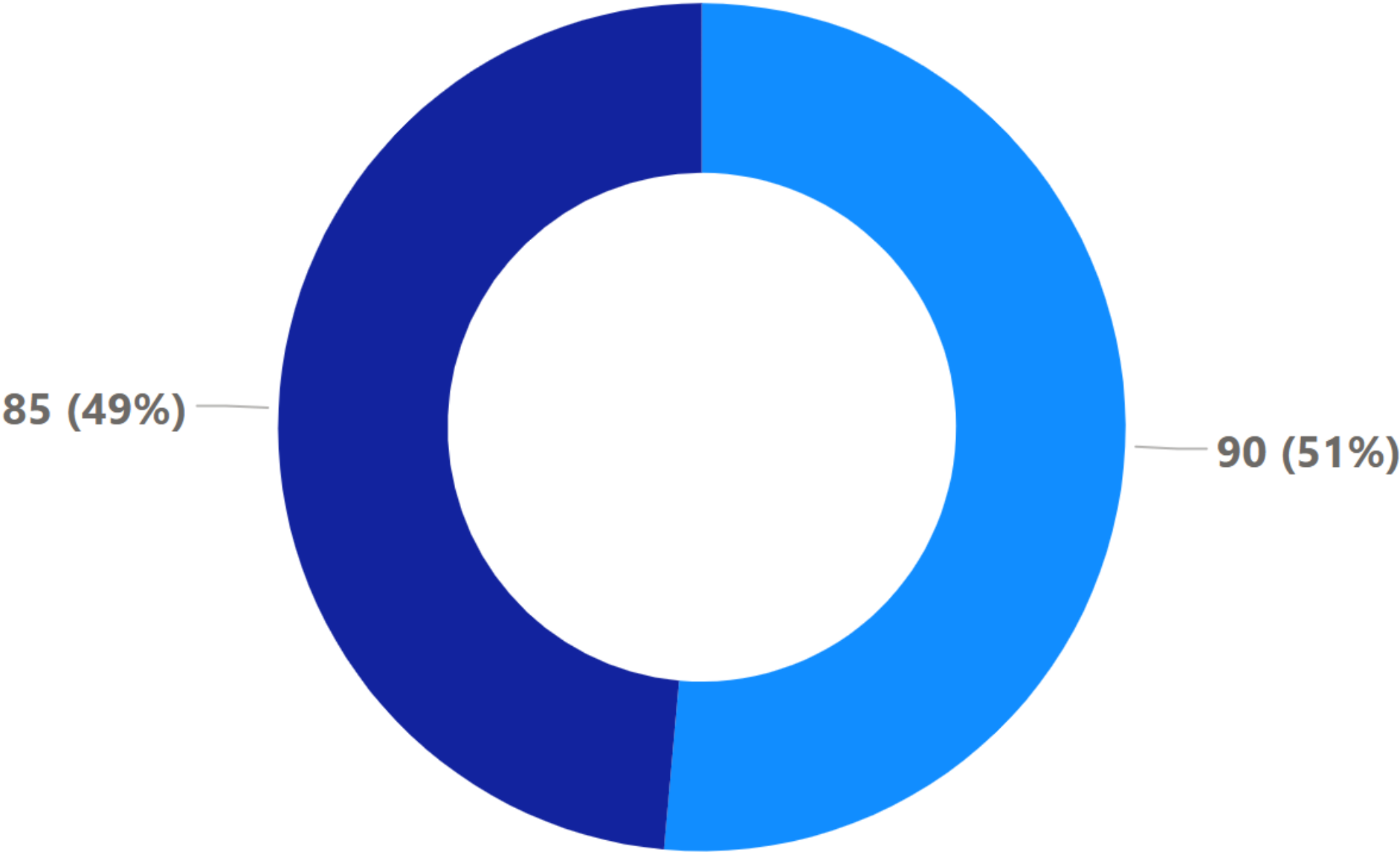
Demographic information

1. What is your age?

Age	%
35-44	36%
25-34	28%
45-54	23%
55-64	9%
18-24	4%

2. What is your gender?

Gender	%
Woman	79%
Man	17%
Non-binary	2%
Prefer not to say	2%
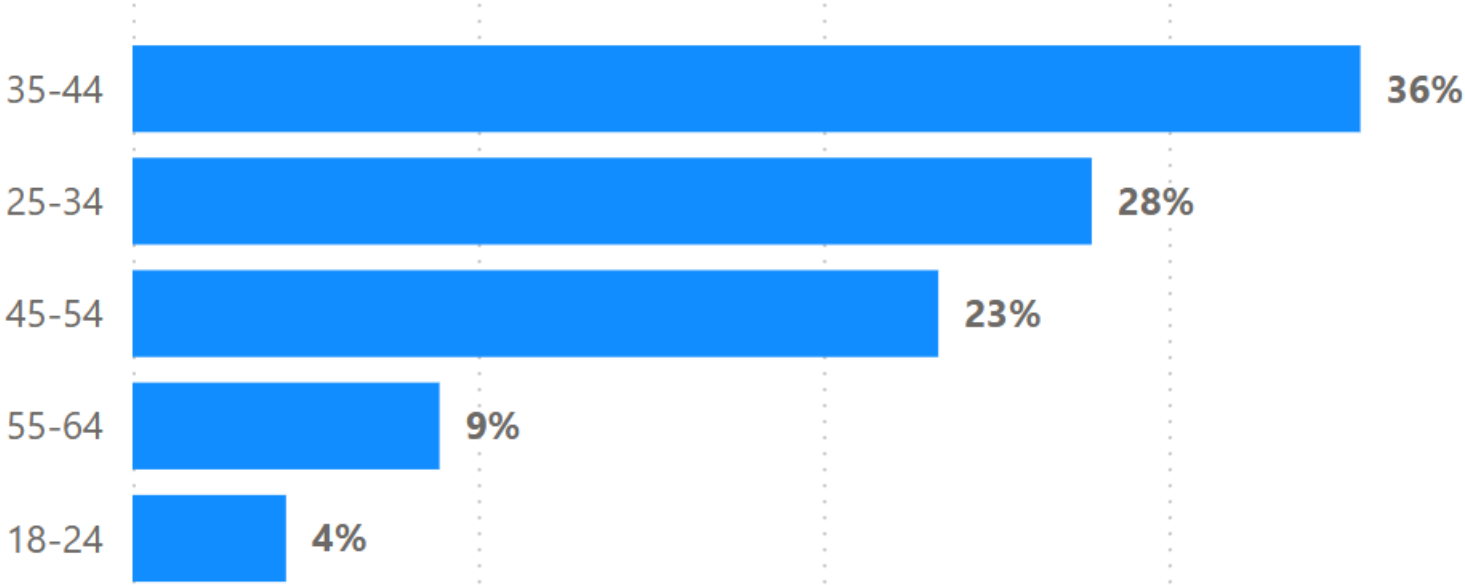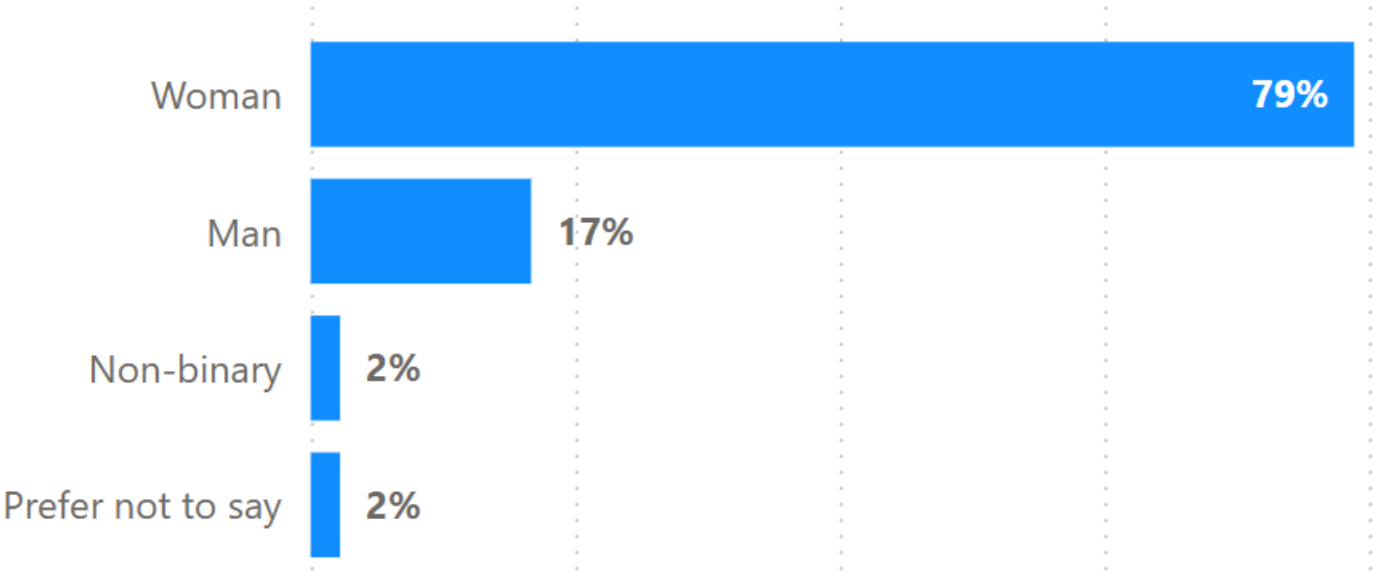
3. What is your current employment status?

Employment status	%
Employed full-time	70%
Unemployed, seeking em...	9%
Other	6%
Self-employed	6%
Student	4%
Employed part-time	3%
Unemployed, not seeking...	2%

15
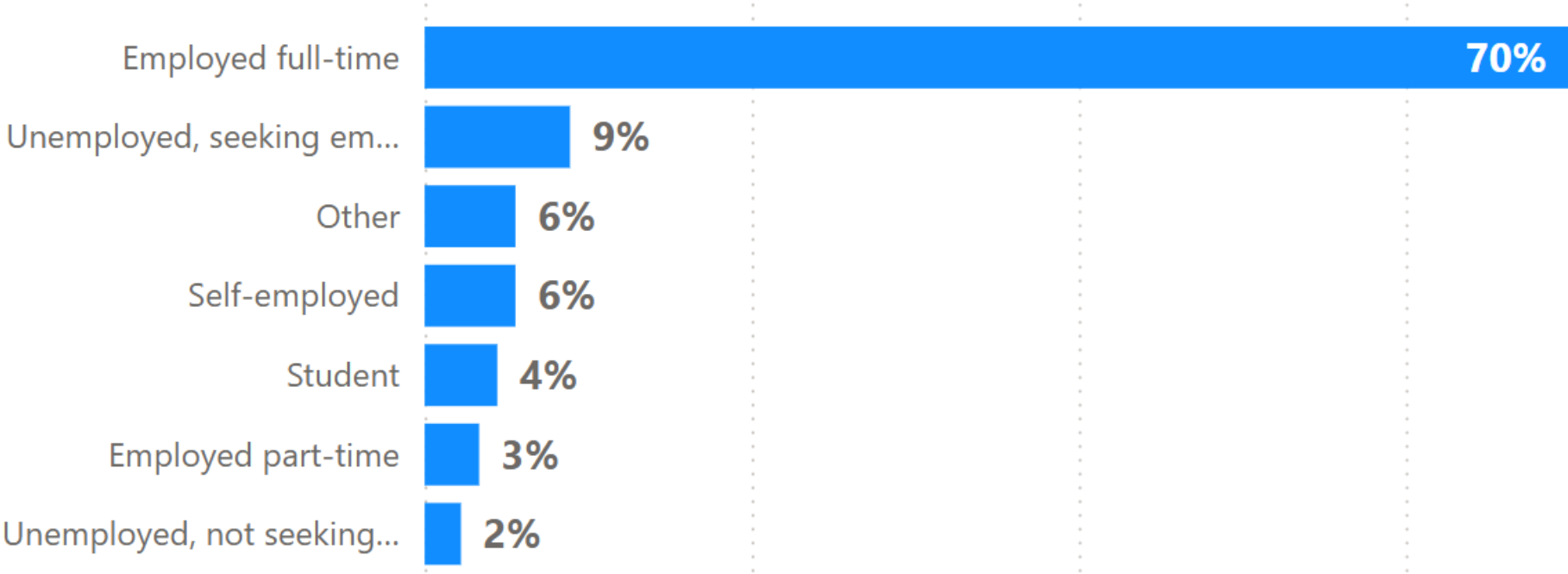
Understanding of Neurodiversity

4. How do you identify your neurodivergent condition(s)?

ADHD	52%
Other	17%
Autism	17%
Dyslexia	9%
Dyspraxia	2%
Prefer not to specify	2%
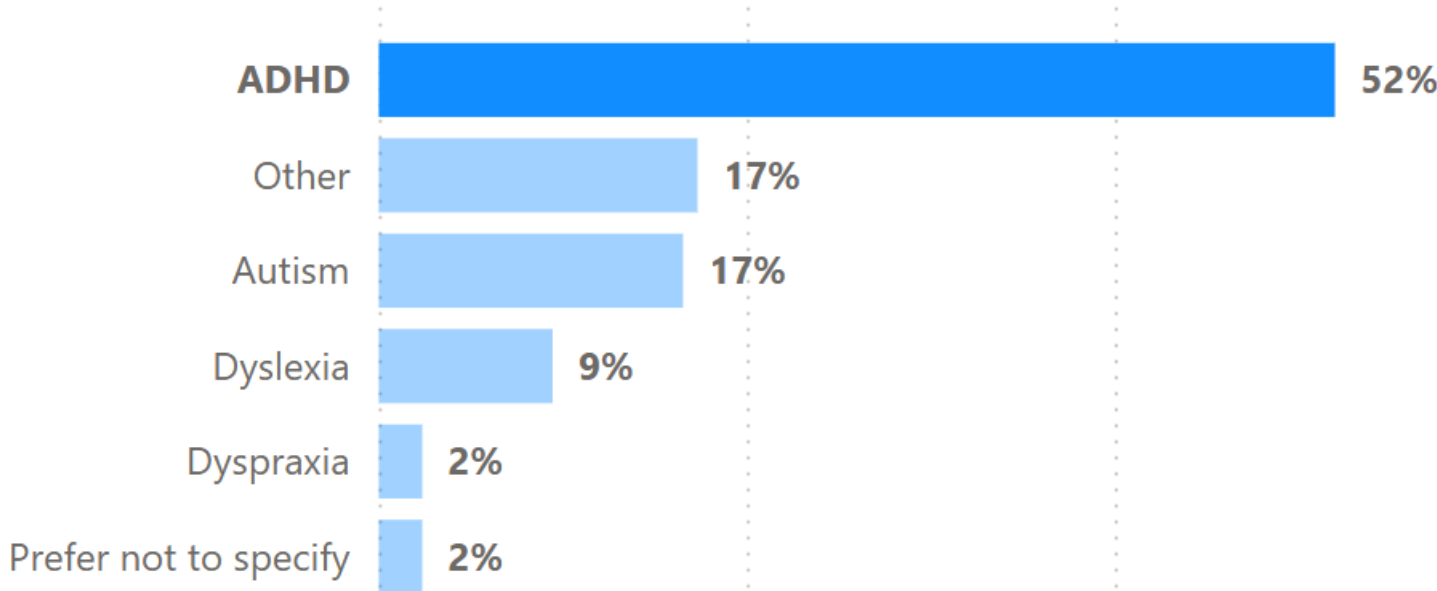
5. How comfortable are you with disclosing your neurodivergent condition(s) to your employer or potential employer?

Somewhat comfortable	31%
Very comfortable	19%
Very uncomfortable	18%
Somewhat uncomfortable	17%
Neutral	14%
Prefer not to answer	1%

Other conditions (4):   Depression   PTSD   Dysgraphia   Anxiety   Bipolar   Epilepsy   OCD
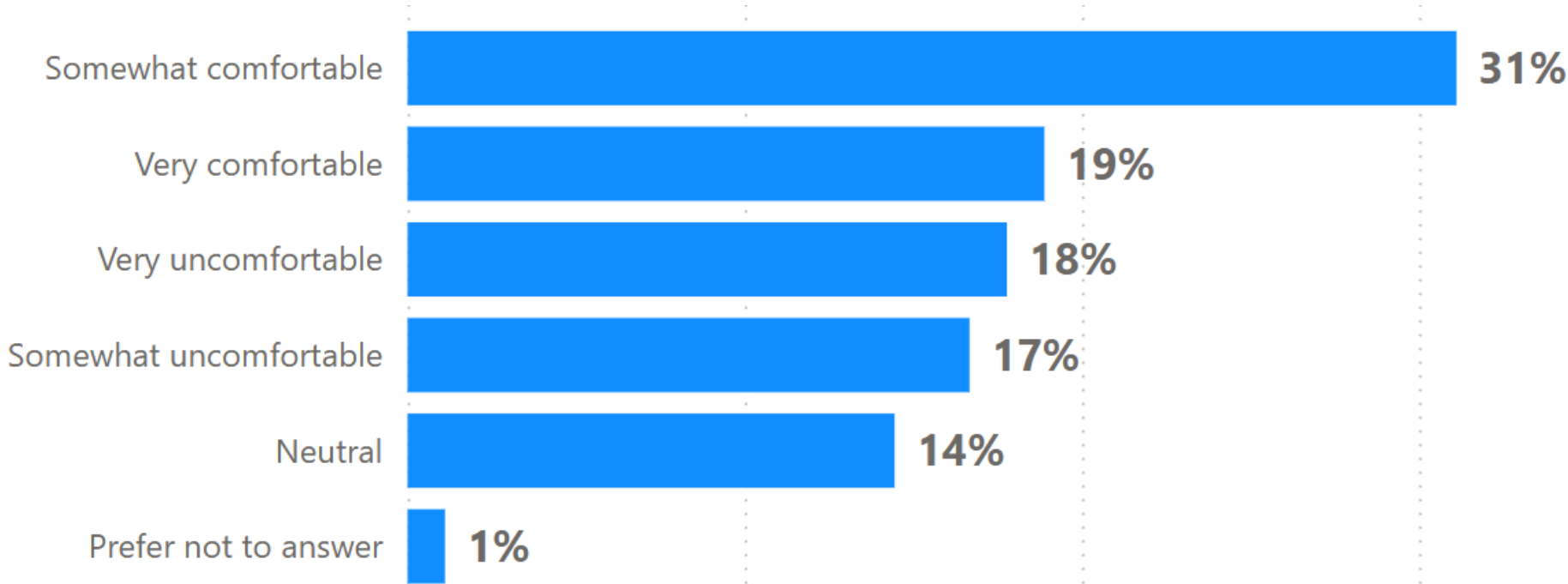
Employment Experiences

6. Have you faced any challenges when applying for jobs due to your neurodivergent condition(s)?

No	56%
Yes	41%
Prefer not to answer	3%
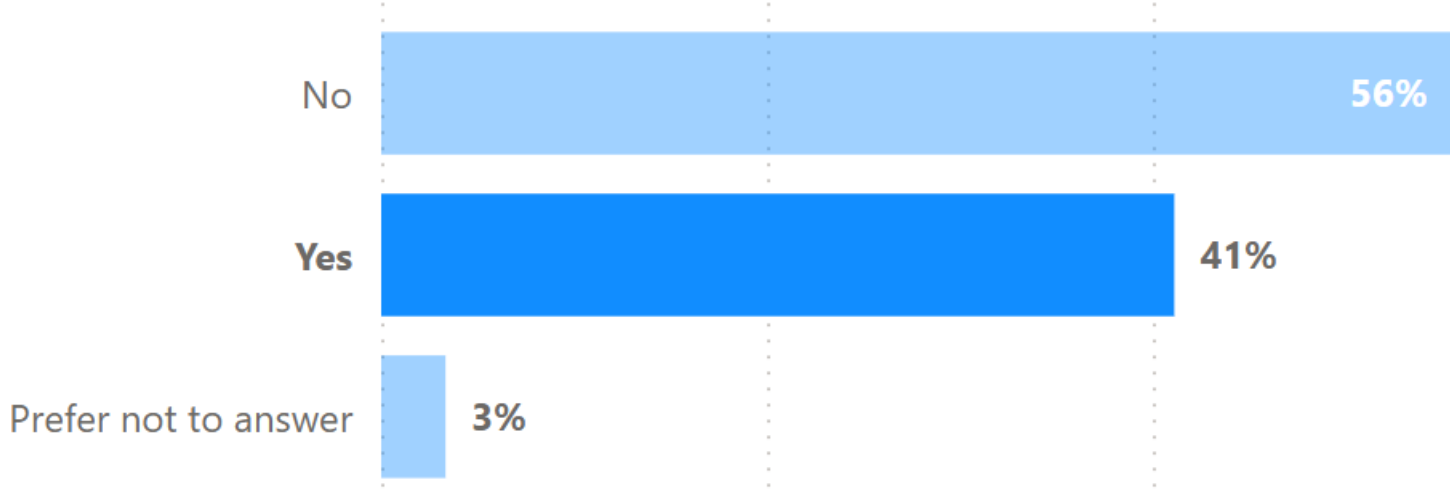
7. Have you received any accommodation or support from your current, past, or potential employers?

No	63%
Yes	36%
Prefer not to answer	1%
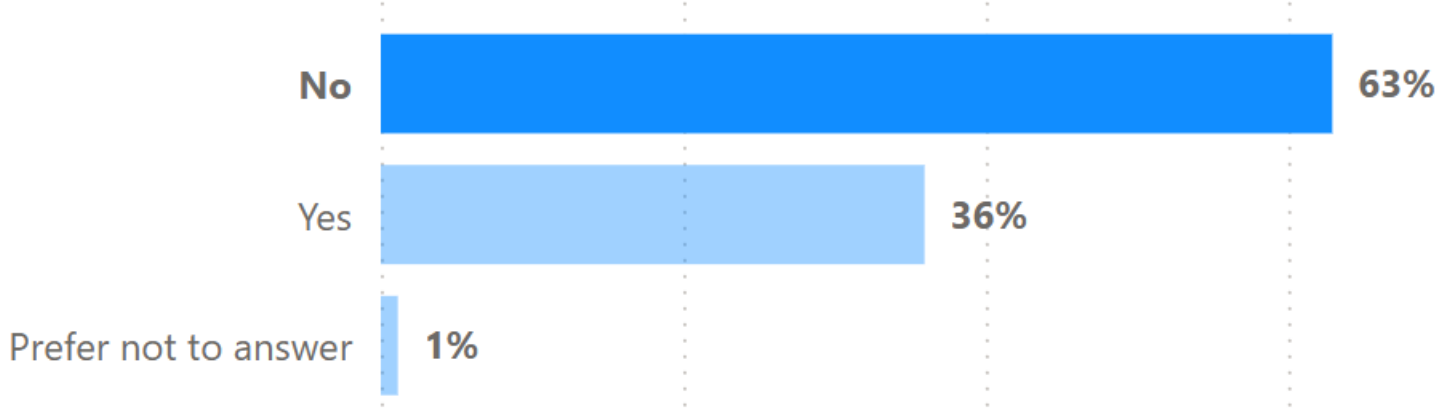
Challenges faced (6): Interview process   Job posting information   Extra steps during application   Accommodation   Flexibility

Stigmas   Long and repetitive process   Match the skills with the job descriptions   Questions

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Employment Experiences

8. What types of accommodations or support have you received?

Flexible work hours	29%
Other (please specify)	24%
Quiet workspaces	22%
Job coaching or mentoring	15%
Assistive technology	10%
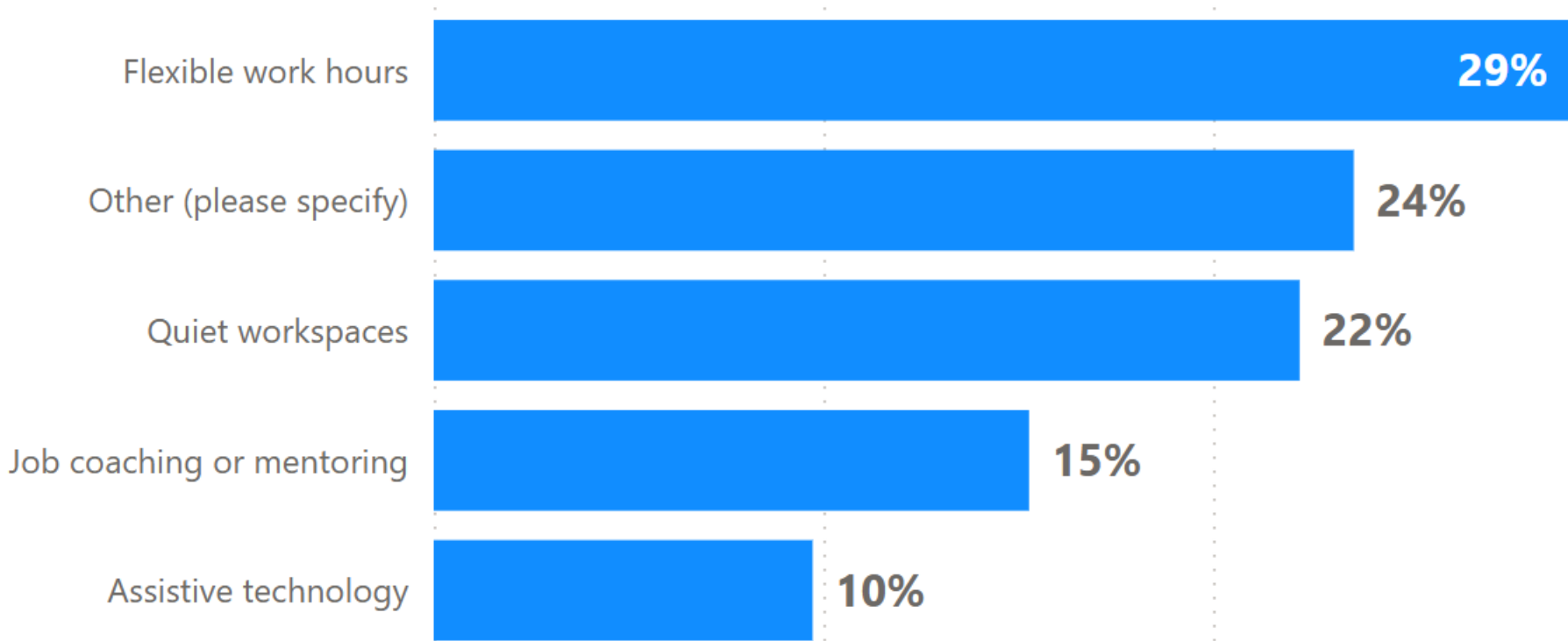
9. How effective were these accommodations in helping you perform your job?

Not applicable	51%
Somewhat effective	25%
Very effective	21%
Neutral	3%
Somewhat ineffective	1%
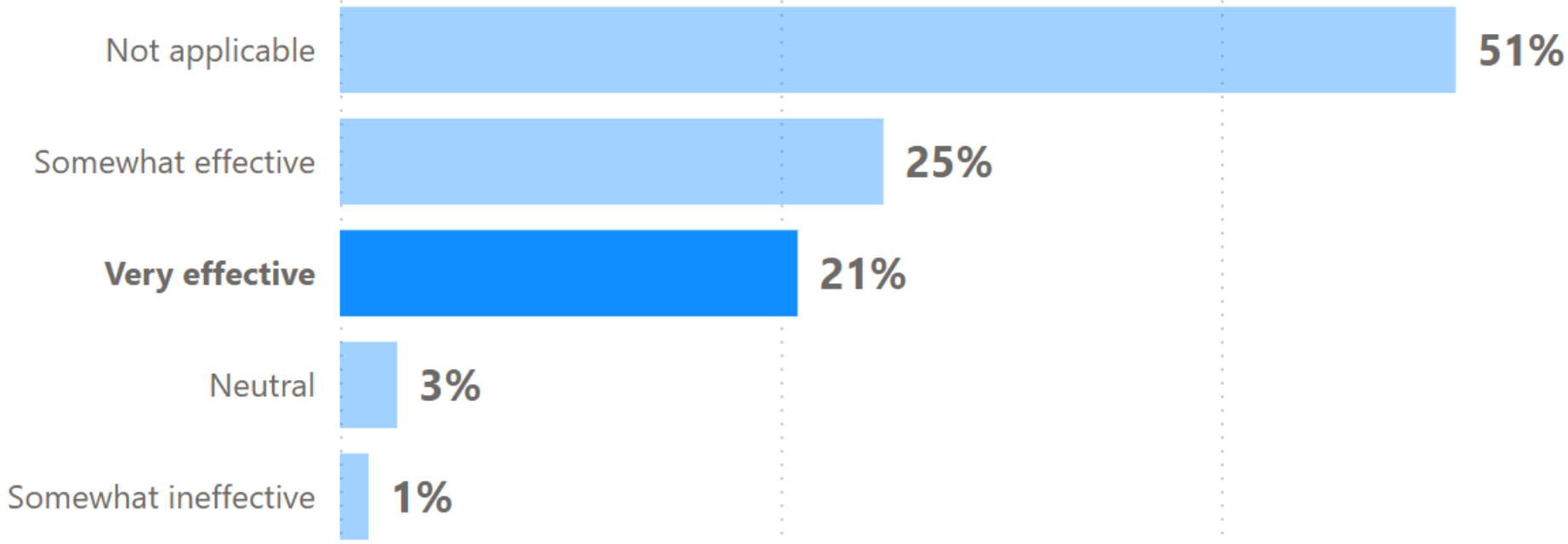
Other types of accommodations (8):

Noise dampening   Dimmable lights   Communication preferences (email, text, video chat instead of phone calls)

Switch to unscented cleaning products   Agendas for meetings   Hybrid workspaces

Workplace environment

10. How inclusive do you feel your current or past workplace is/was towards neurodivergent individuals?

Category	Percentage
Somewhat inclusive	31%
Somewhat exclusive	21%
Neutral	18%
Very inclusive	17%
Very exclusive	12%

11. What would make your workplace feel more supportive and inclusive for neurodivergent employees?

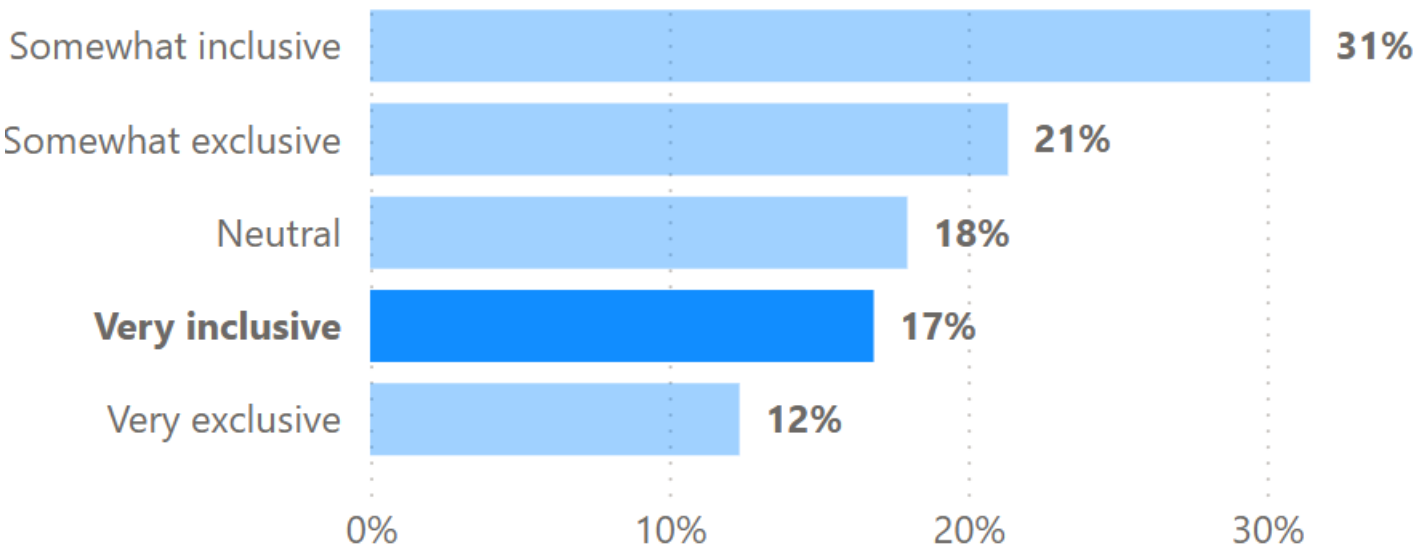| Factor	Percentage
Build a culture where neurodiversity is valued and understood.	20%
Have leaders who actively support neuroinclusion.	19%
Communicate more clearly and consistently.	17%
Offer flexible work options, like remote work or adjusted hours.	15%
Create quiet spaces or adjust lighting to make the environment more comfortable.	14%
Make hiring and onboarding easier to navigate and more inclusive.	10%
Other	5%

Other factors (11):   Reduce stigma   Well-communicated and easily accessible accommodation process   Educating themselves and the organization

Information for everyone   Human-centered design process   Normalize workplace accommodations

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Training and Awareness

12. Have you participated in any training or awareness programs about neurodiversity at your workplace??

No	64%
Yes	33%
Not applicable	2%
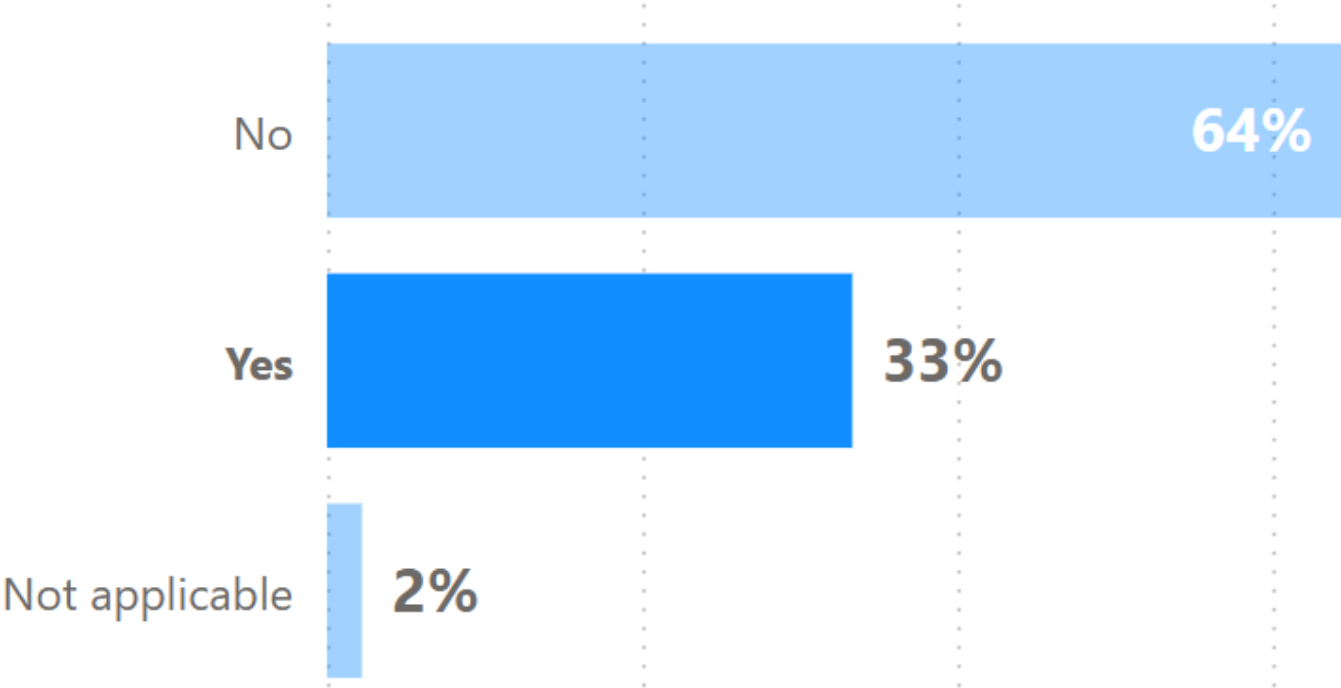
13. How effective were these programs in raising awareness and understanding of neurodiversity among your colleagues?

Not applicable	56%
Somewhat effective	21%
Neutral	13%
Very effective	6%
Somewhat ineffective	3%
Very ineffective	3%
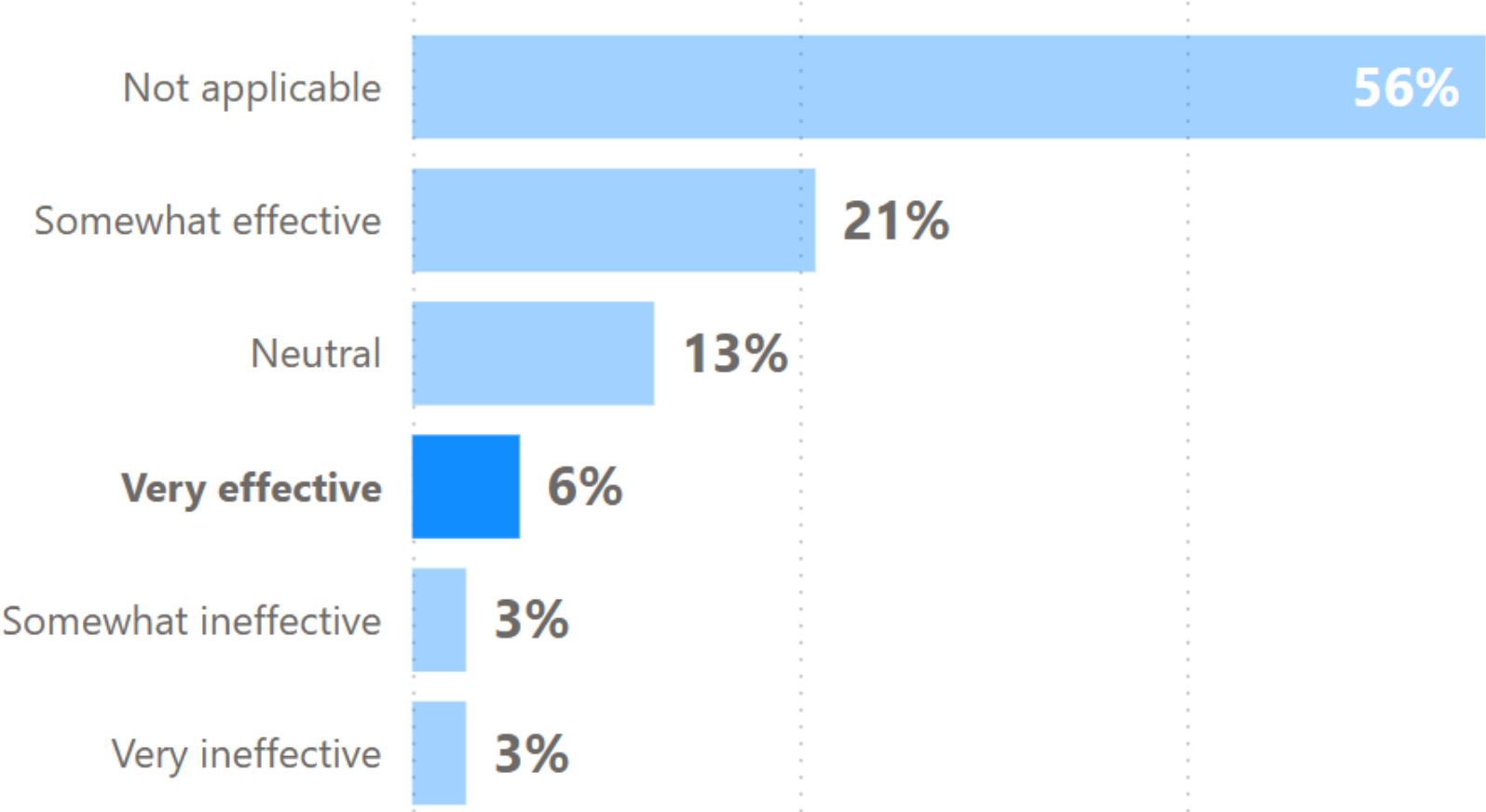
Future Needs and Recommendations

14. What additional support or resources do you think would help you succeed in the workplace?

Category	Percentage
Customizable accommodations based on individual needs	21%
More training for managers and colleagues	20%
Better communication about available accommodations	19%
More opportunities to provide anonymous feedback to employers	14%
Access to mental health resources	12%
Peer support groups	10%
Other	4%
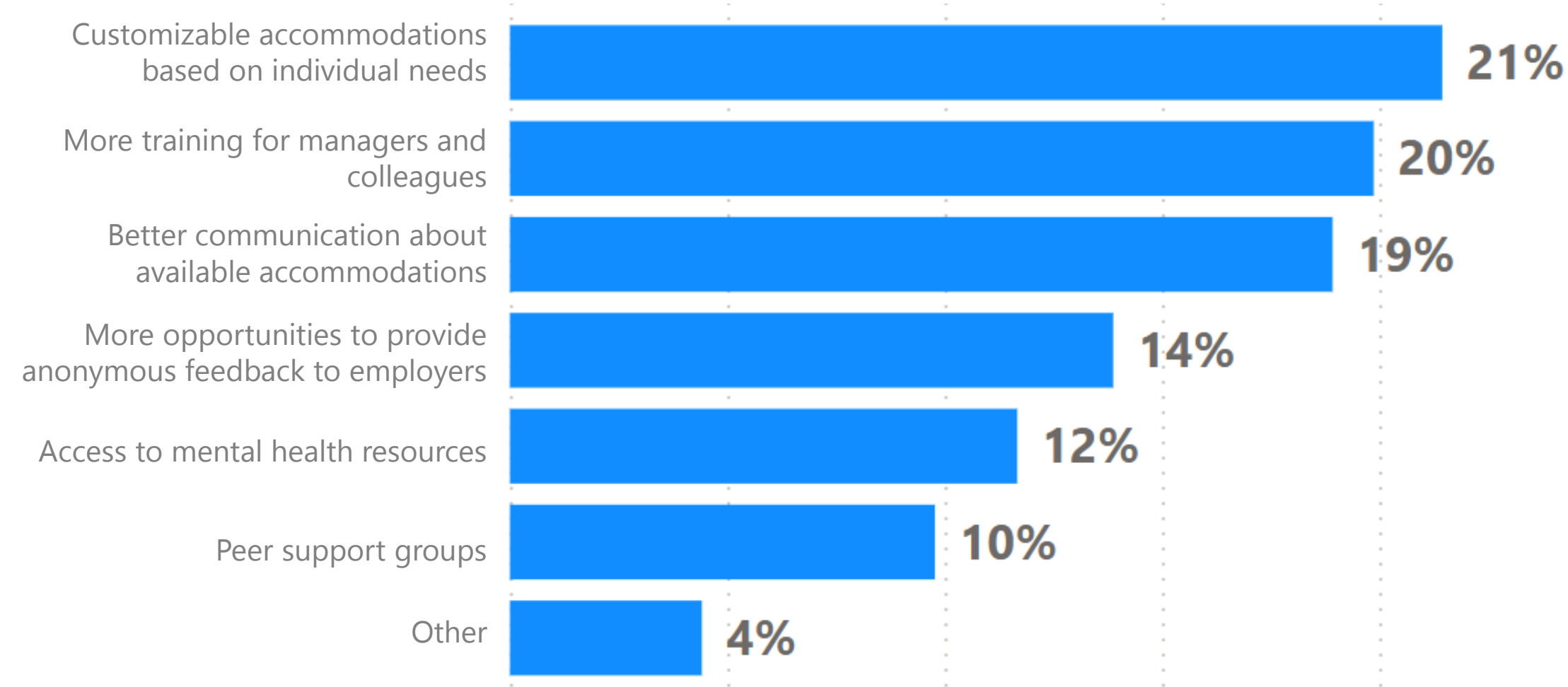
Other resources:

Access to mental health resources

Breaking the stigma in senior leadership

Create psychologically safe workplace cultures

Education and awareness

Be included, not set apart

Coaching for success in the workplace available to neurodivergent staff, especially for staff in leadership positions.

Additional comments or suggestions

Work environment

- Many participants shared that open office spaces are overstimulating and make it hard to focus.
- Others described how oral communication and indirect instructions often lead to confusion or anxiety.

Disclosure

- Several respondents said they choose not to disclose their neurodivergence, especially those in leadership or HR roles due to fear of being judged or stereotyped.
- Others expressed that disclosure often leads to being treated differently, not always positively.

Accommodations

- Participants described accommodation processes as rigid, slow, or inconsistent, especially in large organizations.
- Some felt they were constantly being redirected or had to "prove" their needs repeatedly.

Enablement

- Respondents highlighted the value of managers who act as coaches, those who listen, adapt, and focus on outcomes.
- Clear onboarding, written instructions, and structured training were also named as key success factors.

Training

- Many felt that trainings led only by neurotypical facilitators lacked relevance or missed important nuances.
- Co-created content with neurodivergent voices was seen as more impactful and authentic.
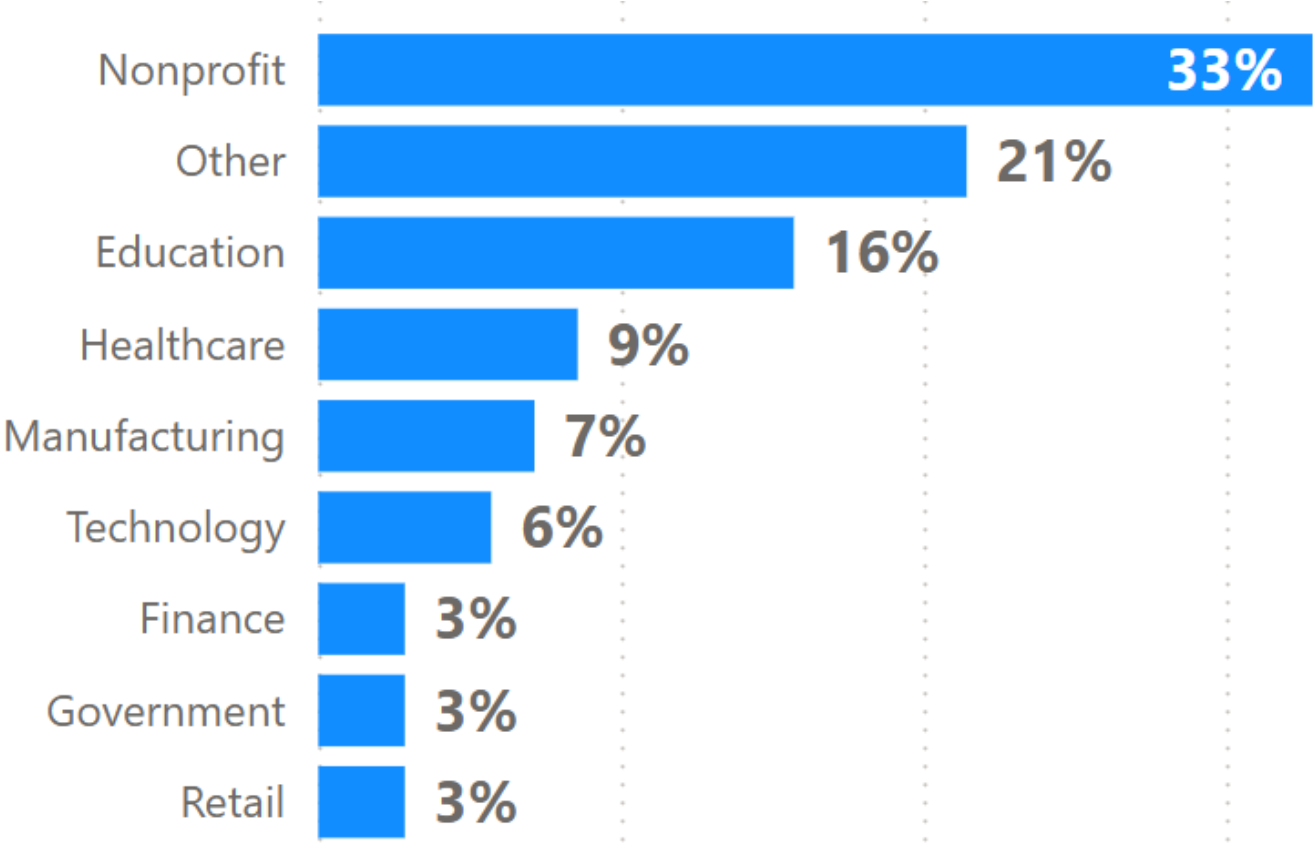
Equity

- Participants emphasized that inclusion isn't about special treatment, it's about recognizing and meeting different needs.
- Some reminded us that "we are all neurodiverse in some way," and that rigid expectations don't serve anyone well.

Demographic information

1. How many years of experience do you have in HR or management?

More than 10 years	54%
4-6 years	23%
1-3 years	9%
7-10 years	9%
Less than 1 year	6%
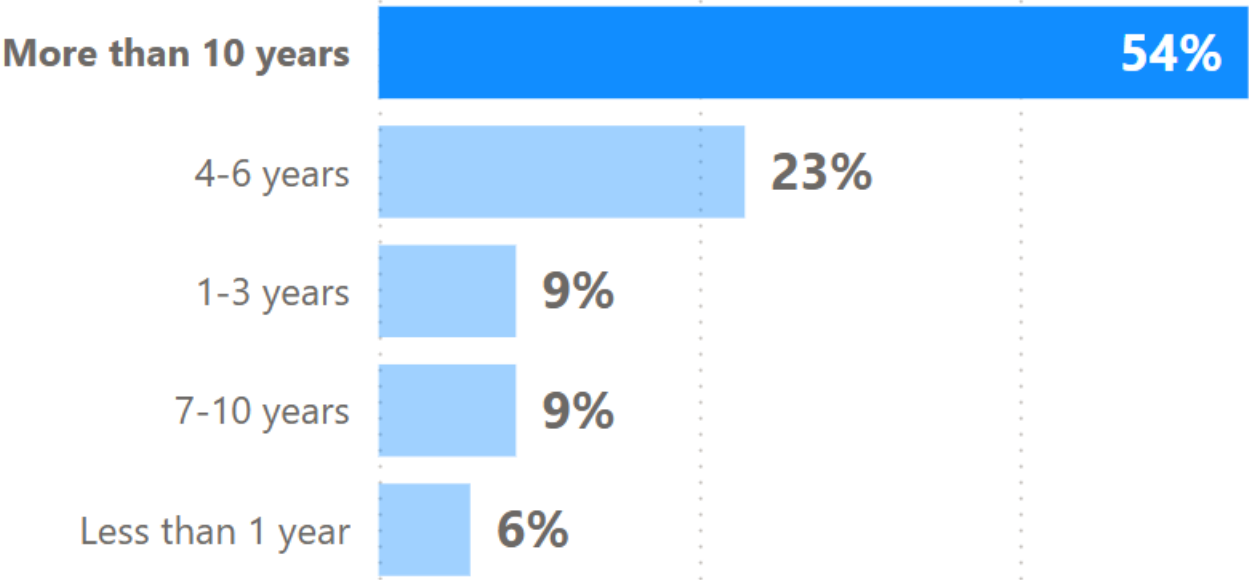
2. What industry do you work in?

Nonprofit	33%
Other	21%
Education	16%
Healthcare	9%
Manufacturing	7%
Technology	6%
Finance	3%
Government	3%
Retail	3%

3. What is the size of your organization?

Small (1-50 employees)	31%
Medium (51-200 employees)	29%
Large (201-500 employees)	20%
Very Large (501+ employees.	20%

Other industries (2):

Consulting	Legal	Industrial Distribution	Logistic
Construction	Environmental	Accounting	Independent

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Understanding of Neurodiversity

4. How familiar are you with the concept of neurodiversity?

Very familiar	40%
Moderately familiar	34%
Extremely familiar	17%
Slightly familiar	7%
Not familiar at all	1%
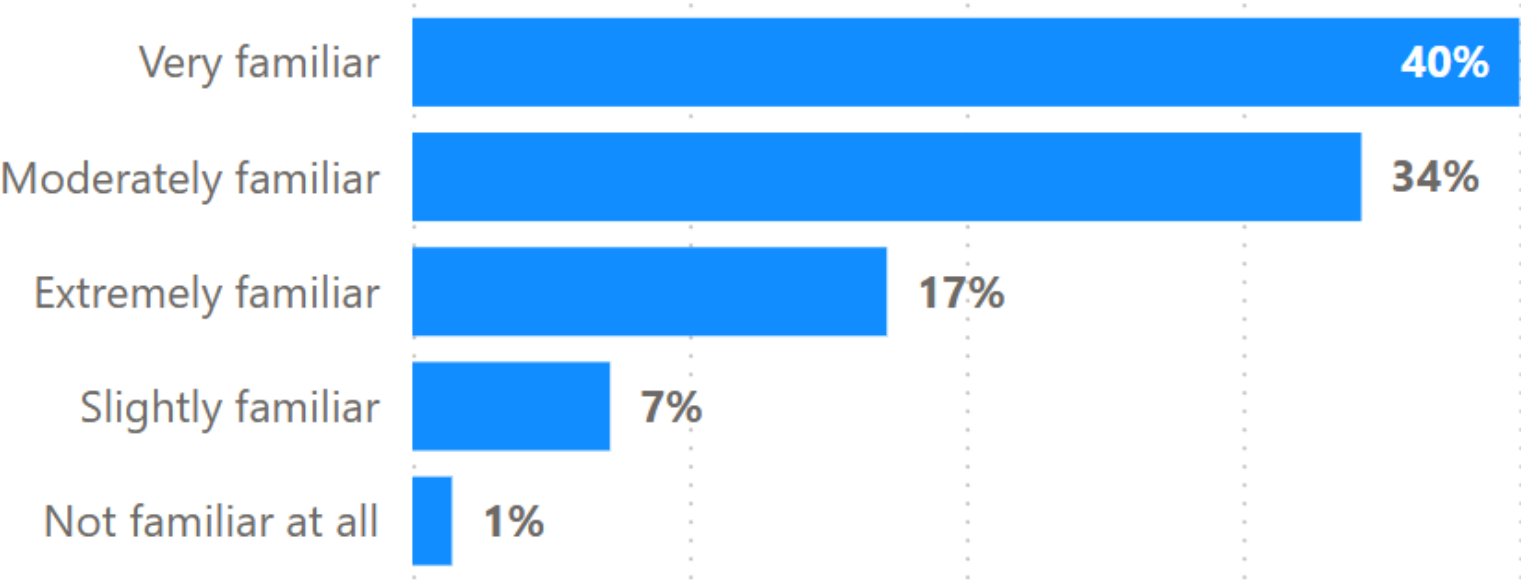
5. Have you received any training on neurodiversity in the workplace?

No	71%
Yes	29%
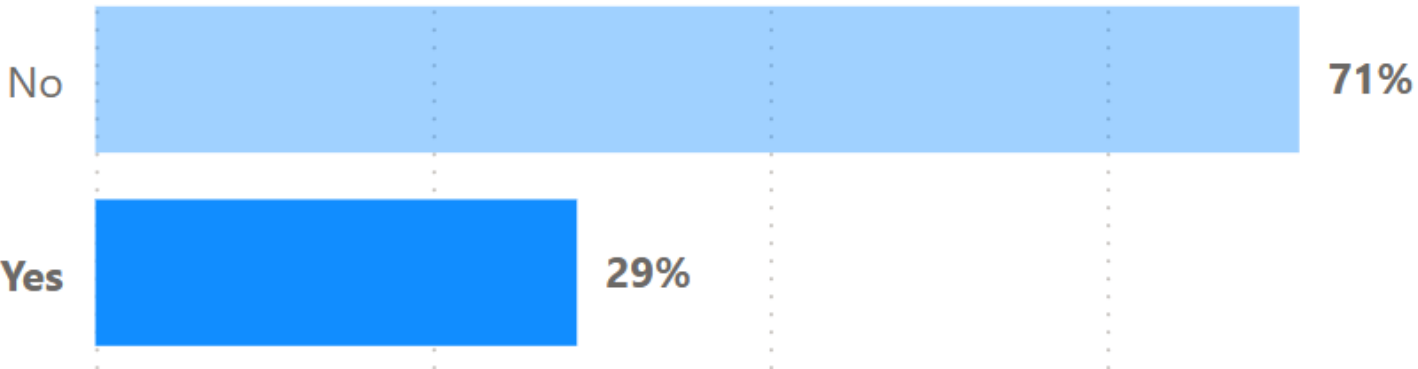
Type of training received (5):

Diversity and Inclusion   Neurodiversity in the workplace   Tourette's   Autism and Neurodiversity in the Workplace   Unconscious bias

Current Practices

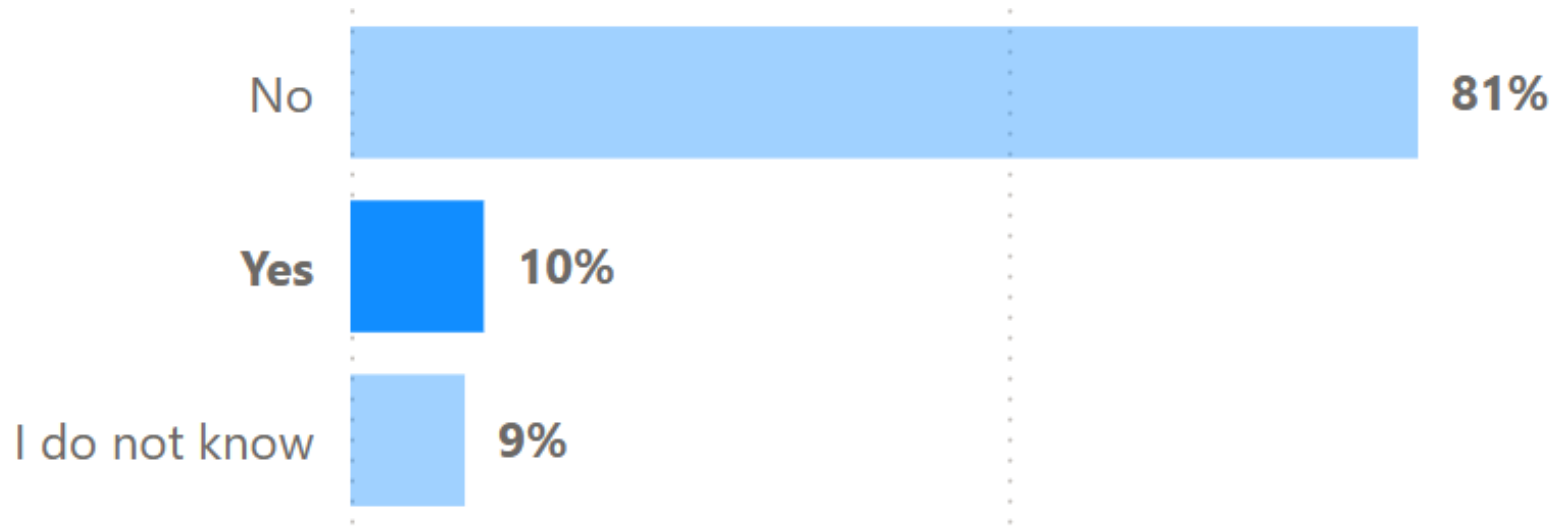**6. Does your organization have policies or programs specifically for hiring and supporting neurodivergent employees?**

No	81%
Yes	10%
I do not know	9%

7. How often do you encounter neurodivergent individuals in your hiring process?

I do not know	37%
Sometimes	34%
Often	13%
Rarely	7%
Always	6%
Never	3%
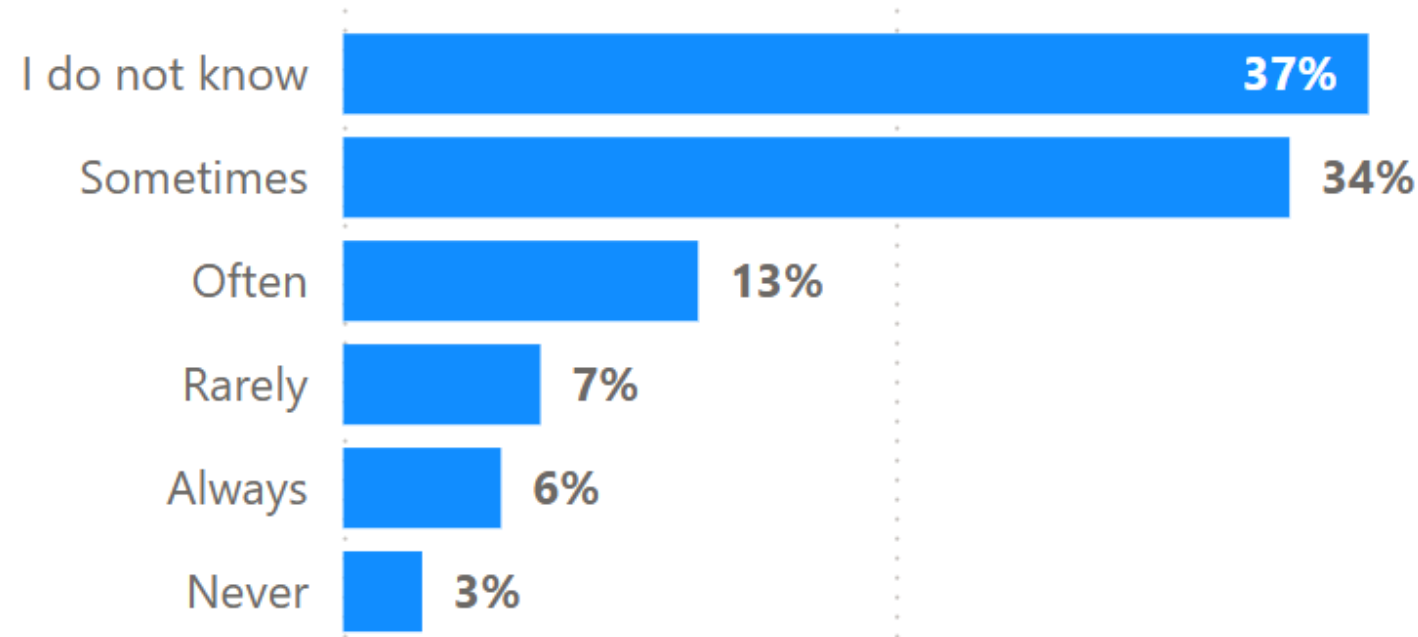
Types of polices or programs (6):

Employee resource groups

Diversity and Inclusion policy

Diversity hiring campaign

General DEIB

Accessibility policies

Current Practices

8. What accommodations, if any, does your organization provide for neurodivergent employees?

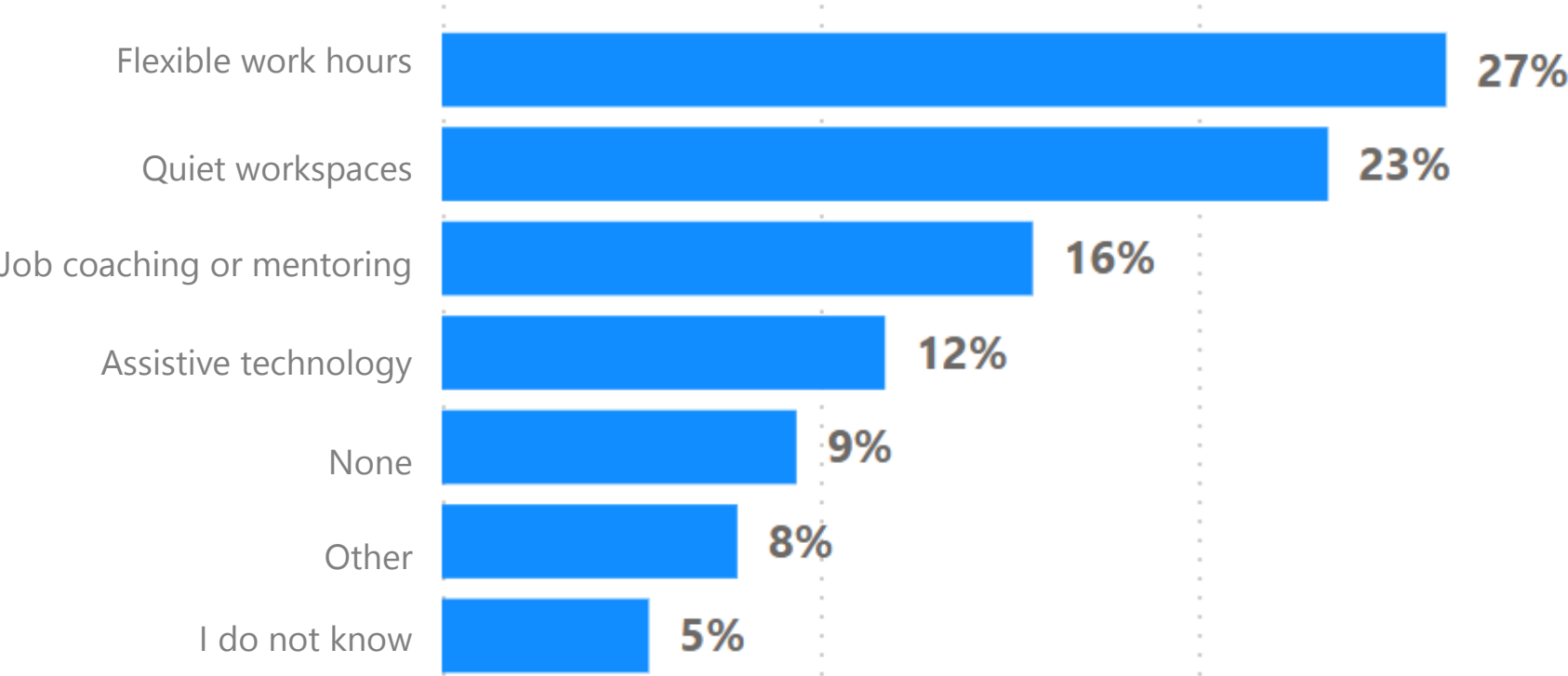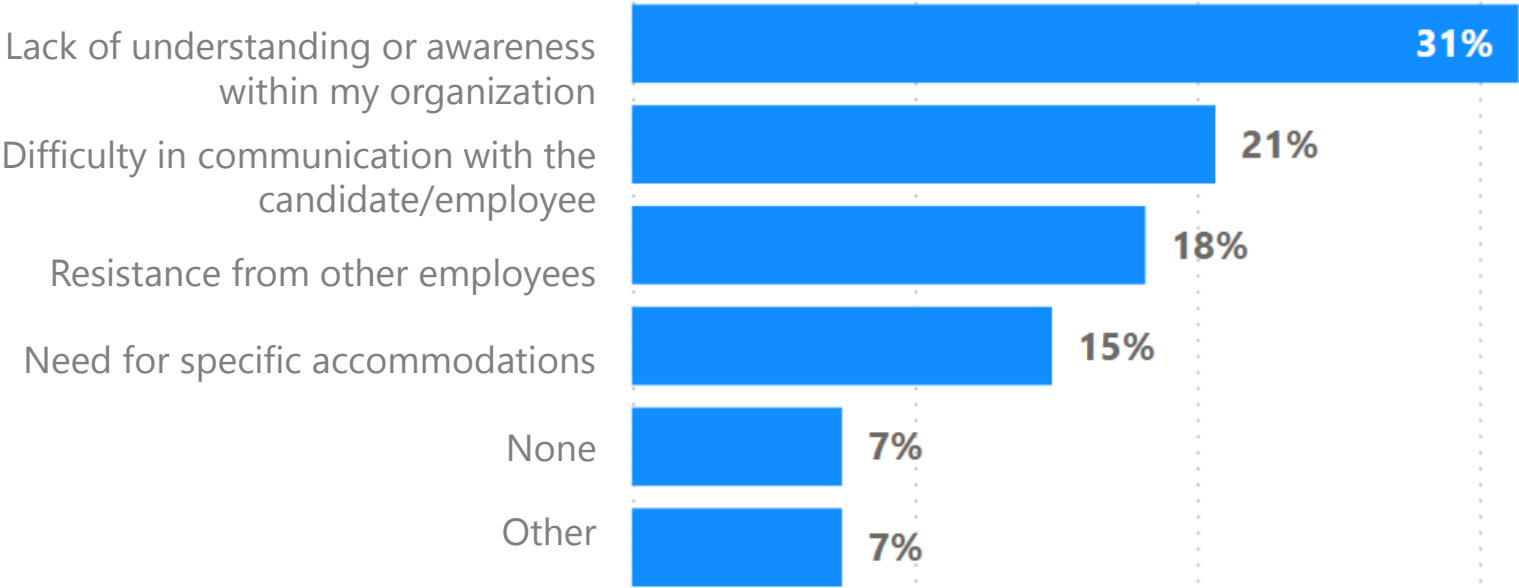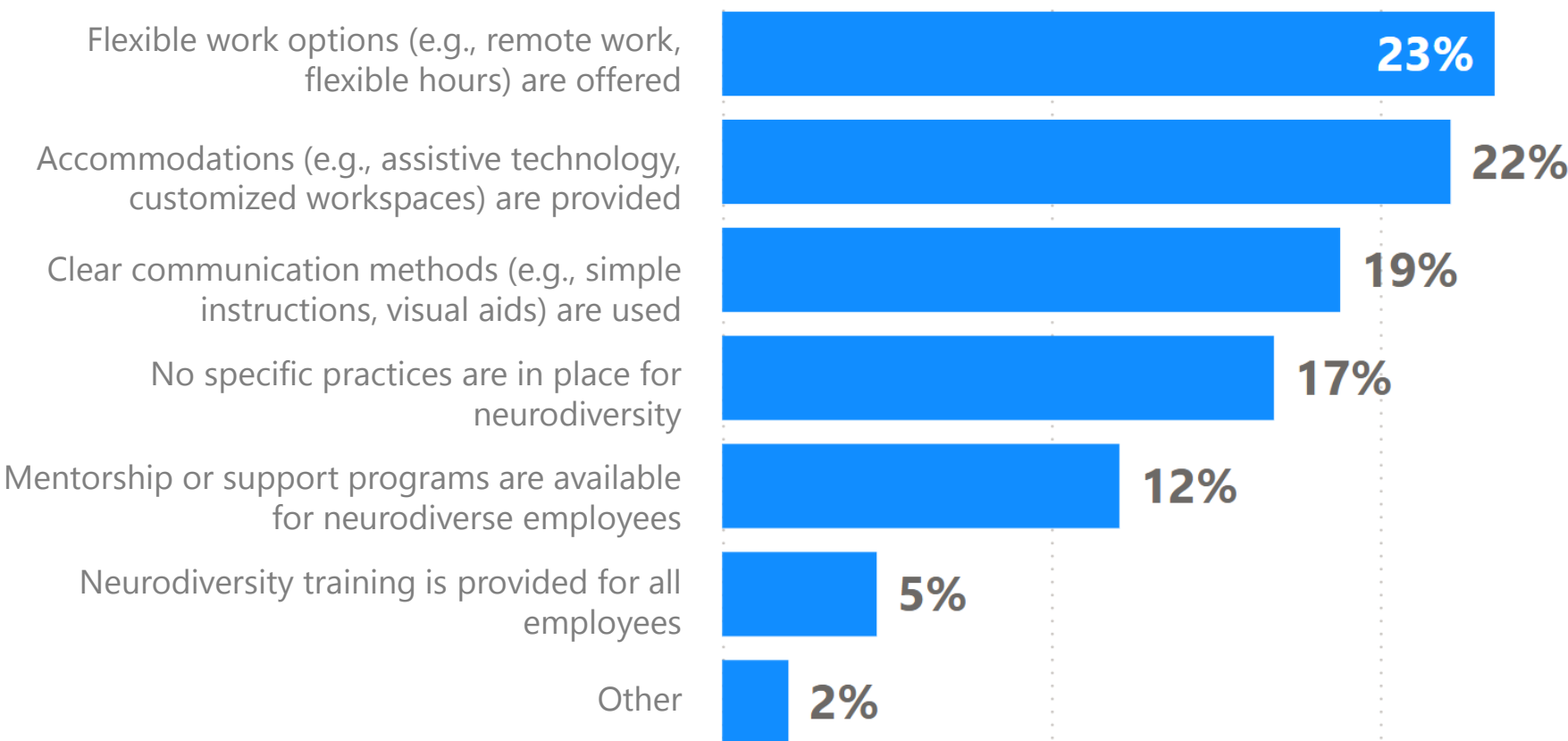|	
Flexible work hours	27%
Quiet workspaces	23%
Job coaching or mentoring	16%
Assistive technology	12%
None	9%
Other	8%
I do not know	5%

Other accommodation (8):

Home office   Remote work   Use of headphones   Flexible PTO policy   Tailor the training to the individual.

Try to accommodate schedule needs   All the policies apply to all the employees

Challenges and Barriers

9. What challenges have you faced when interacting with neurodivergent candidates and employees?

Challenge	%
Lack of understanding or awareness within my organization	31%
Difficulty in communication with the candidate/employee	21%
Resistance from other employees	18%
Need for specific accommodations	15%
None	7%
Other	7%

10. How do you address these challenges in your organization?

Option	%
Flexible work options (e.g., remote work, flexible hours) are offered	23%
Accommodations (e.g., assistive technology, customized workspaces) are provided	22%
Clear communication methods (e.g., simple instructions, visual aids) are used	19%
No specific practices are in place for neurodiversity	17%
Mentorship or support programs are available for neurodiverse employees	12%
Neurodiversity training is provided for all employees	5%
Other	2%

Other challenges (9):
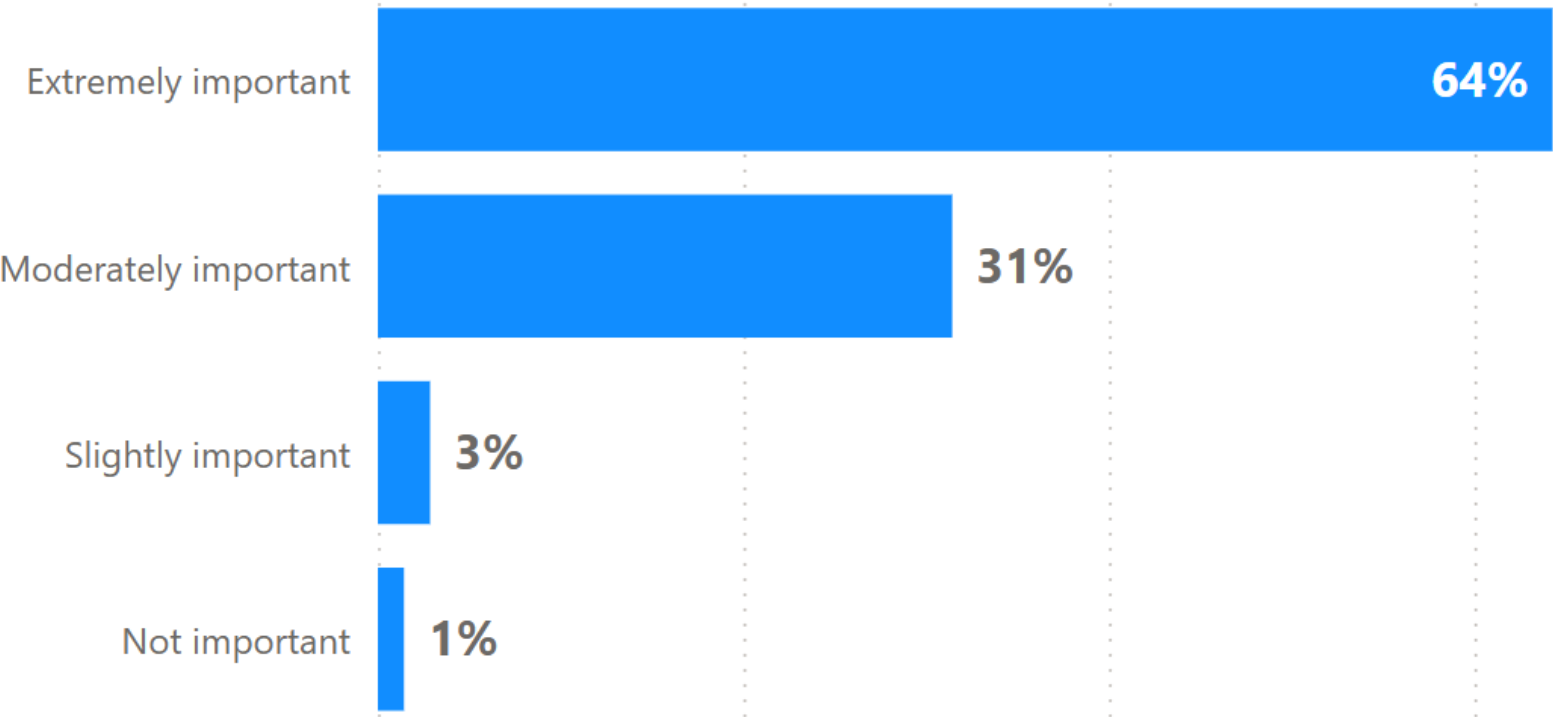
Don't share their diagnosis   Performance   Create accommodations   Expectations of additional benefits

Capacity to embed policies and communicate strategies   No way to identify this information, no clear strategies to support
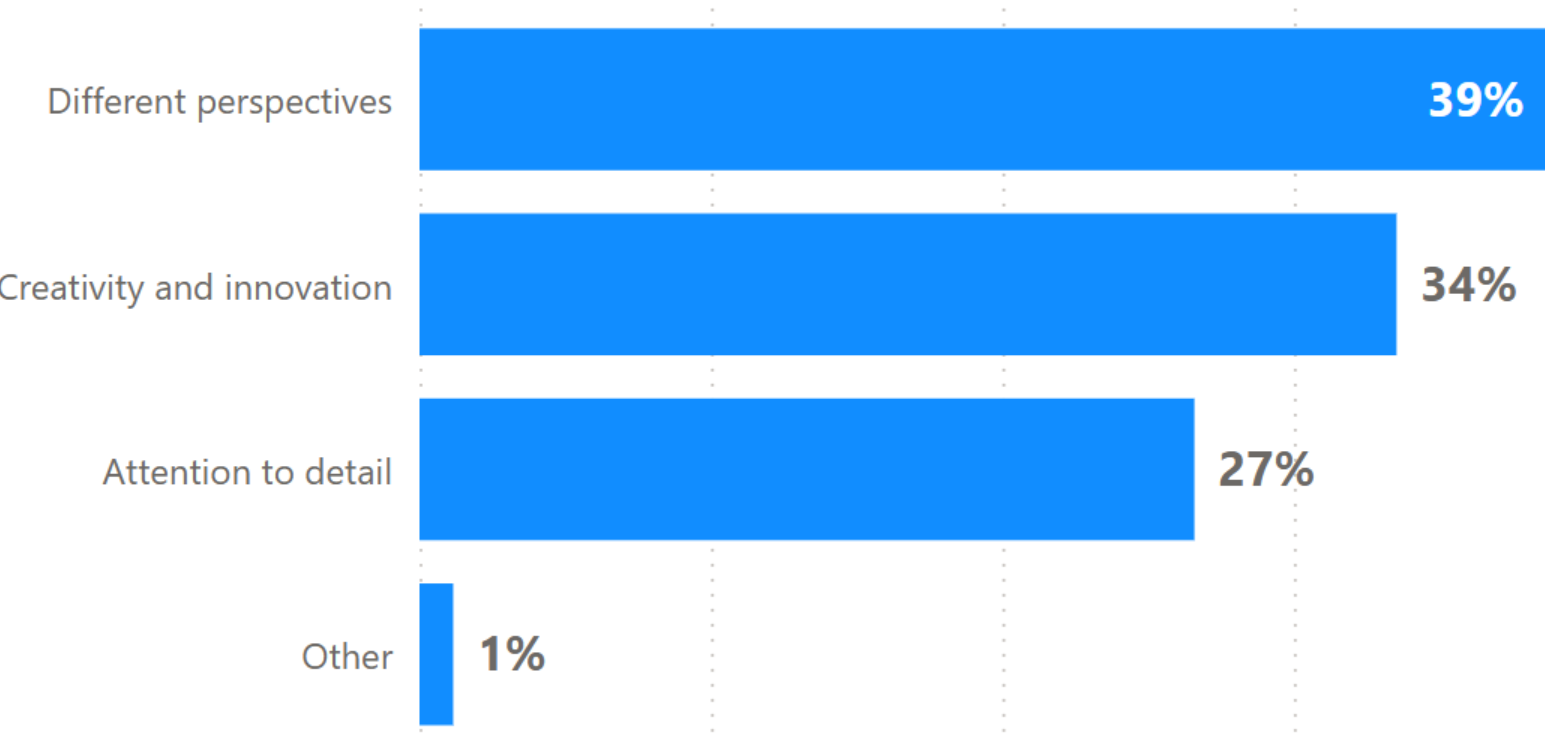
Other options (10):

Accommodations based on employees working style   Flexible work but not due to neurodiversity.

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Perceptions and Aptitudes

11. How important do you think it is to include neurodiversity in your organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives?

Extremely important	**64%**
Moderately important	**31%**
Slightly important	**3%**
Not important	**1%**

12. What benefits do you believe neurodivergent employees bring to the workplace?

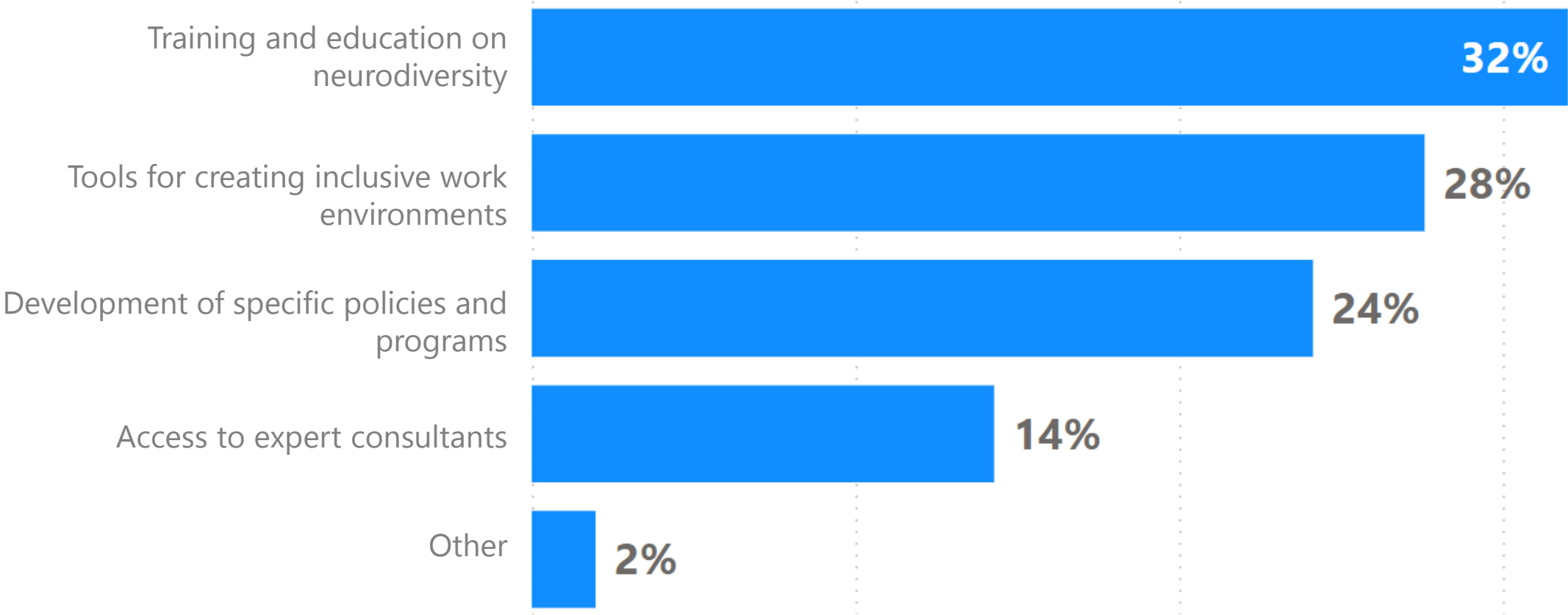|	
Different perspectives	**39%**
Creativity and innovation	**34%**
Attention to detail	**27%**
Other	**1%**

Other benefits (12):

High levels of productivity

Their life experiences, their worldview, aka the empathy and/or awareness of how we treat each other that they've gained from the challenges they've faced.

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Future Needs and Recommendations

13. What resources or support do you think would help you better support neurodivergent employees in your organization?

Training and education on neurodiversity	32%
Tools for creating inclusive work environments	28%
Development of specific policies and programs	24%
Access to expert consultants	14%
Other	2%

Other resources (13):

Leadership training for managers

Learning and communication practices in all programs/trainings/communication channels to be inclusive of all adult learning styles and neuro-types

Greater flexibility

Additional comments or suggestions

Representation

- Participants shared that neurodivergent individuals are also present in HR roles, offering a unique dual perspective.
- They emphasized that this lived experience can help shape more inclusive policies and practices from within the system.

Awareness

- Several respondents expressed that awareness and education around neurodivergent needs remain limited in many organizations.
- Others noted that HR professionals often lack the knowledge or confidence to provide effective support.

Resources

- Participants highlighted the value of practical tools, such as accommodation toolkits, to guide inclusive practices.
- Several expressed enthusiasm about implementing these resources in their own workplaces.

Balance

- A few respondents raised concerns about the potential misuse of accommodations.
- They emphasized the importance of balancing empathy with fairness and maintaining clear expectations.

Safety

- Several participants shared that psychological safety is essential for neurodivergent individuals to feel comfortable disclosing their needs.
- Others described how a lack of trust in the workplace discourages self-advocacy and openness.
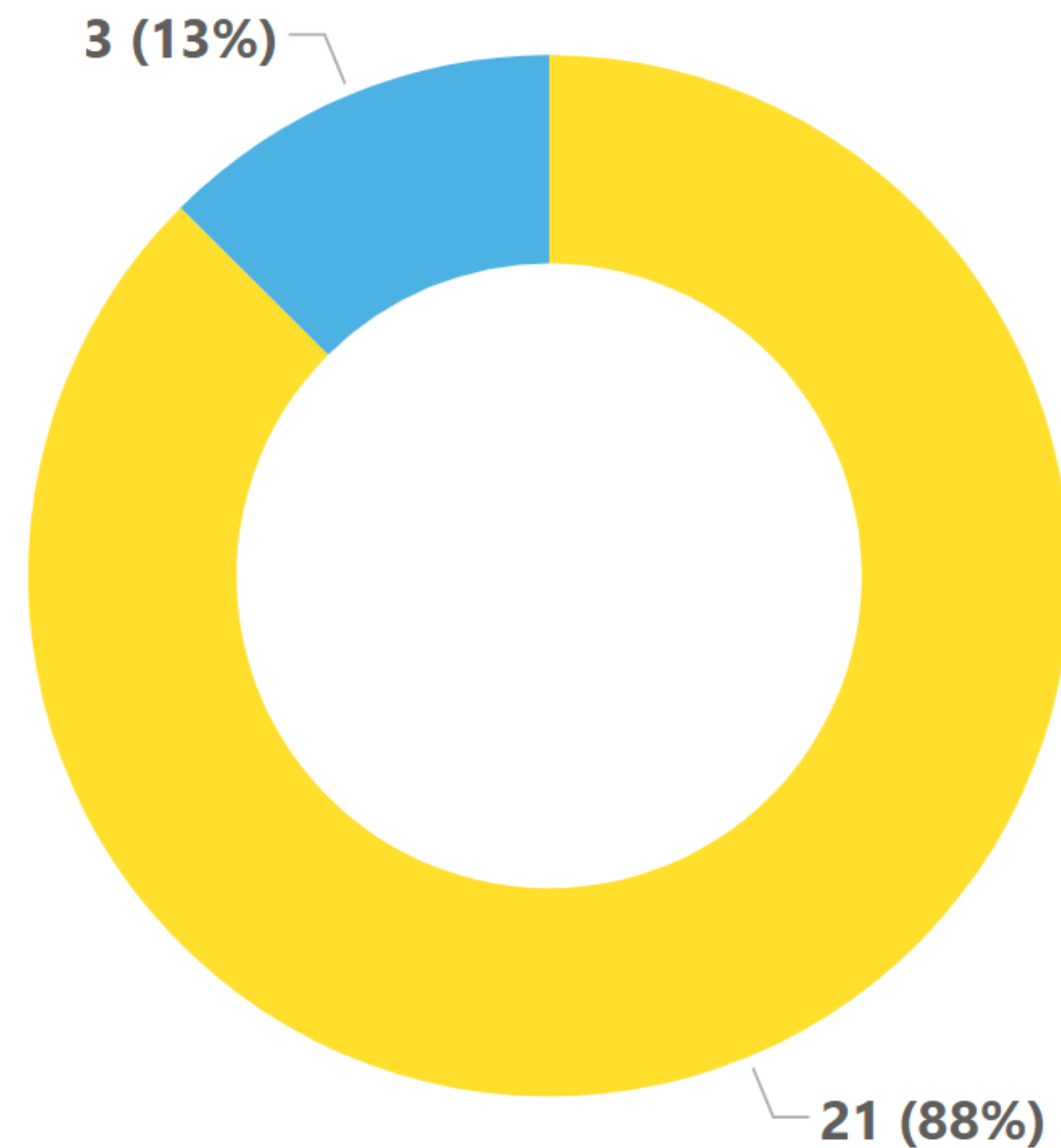
Design

- Participants described the need for sensory-friendly environments, including quiet workspaces and low-lit rooms.
- Others recommended accessible communication formats, such as closed captioning, soft color backgrounds, and language preferences, to support diverse needs.

Understanding of Neurodiversity

1. Can you describe your understanding of neurodiversity and why it might be important in the workplace?

1. Can you describe your understanding of neurodiversity and its importance in the workplace?

Without ND initiatives N=21

A Spectrum of Human Experience

- Neurodiversity reflects the natural variation in how people think, learn, and process information, not just clinical diagnoses.

Inclusion Requires Awareness & Adaptation

- Creating inclusive workplaces means adjusting communication, training, and environments to support all cognitive styles.

Strength in Difference

- Neurodivergent individuals bring unique insights that can fuel innovation and creative problem-solving.

From Stigma to Normalization

- As understanding grows, neurodiversity should be embraced as a normal and valuable part of human diversity.

With ND initiatives N=3

A Natural and Valuable Difference

- Neurodiversity isn't a deficit; it's a different way of thinking that enriches teams and organizations.

Inclusive Design Helps Everyone

- Workplaces that support neurodivergent employees often improve experiences for all staff.

Equity Through Adaptation

- True inclusion means recognizing and adapting to diverse cognitive needs.

A Strategic Advantage

- Embracing neurodiversity unlocks hidden talent and drives innovation across industries.

Understanding of Neurodiversity

2. Are there any efforts or discussions in your organization about exploring neurodiversity as a workplace initiative?

Without ND initiatives N=21

Recognition Is Growing

- Many organizations acknowledge the importance of neurodiversity, even if formal initiatives are still emerging.

Support Exists Within DEI

- Some companies have employee resource groups or informal supports as part of broader DEI efforts.

Efforts Are Often Fragmented

- Initiatives tend to be limited to specific departments or teams, lacking organization-wide coordination.

Cultural Integration Is Key

- Even without formal programs, there's a growing push to embed neurodiversity into workplace culture through awareness and accommodation.

2. Does your organization know how many neurodivergent employees it currently employs?

With ND initiatives N=3

Under-Recognized Internally

- Many organizations lack internal data on neurodivergent employees even those serving neurodivergent communities.

Disclosure Challenges

- Without a safe and supportive culture, employees may not feel comfortable disclosing neurodivergence.

Awareness Outpaces Infrastructure

- Interest in neurodiversity is growing, but formal systems for tracking and support are still limited.

Strategic Inclusion Opportunity

- Organizations see the value in neurodivergent talent and recognize the need for inclusive practices to fully leverage it.

Current Practices and Policies

3. Even if your organization does not have specific policies, are there general diversity and inclusion policies that could support neurodivergent employees?

Without ND initiatives N=21

Existing Frameworks

- Many organizations have general D&I policies such as respectful workplace, health and safety, and accommodations that can indirectly support neurodivergent staff.

Support Mechanisms

- Health and wellness programs, educational initiatives, and informal supports are often available and beneficial.

Gaps in Specific Support

- Most existing policies are not tailored to neurodivergent needs, leaving important areas unaddressed.

Potential for Expansion

- D&I committees and initiatives can evolve to include neurodiversity more explicitly in their strategies and actions.

3. What specific policies or programs does your organization have in place to support neurodivergent employees?

With ND initiatives N=3

Disclosure Remains a Barrier

- Without safe and stigma-free environments, employees may not feel comfortable disclosing neurodivergence, making it hard to track representation.

Inclusive Practices Are Emerging

- Recruitment and management approaches are evolving to better support neurodivergent individuals, often benefiting the broader workforce.

Support Systems Are Expanding

- Mental health resources, flexible work arrangements, and internal awareness programs are increasingly being implemented.

Neurodiversity as a Strategic Advantage

- Organizations are beginning to view neurodiversity not just as an inclusion goal, but as a driver of innovation and business success.

Current Practices and Policies

4. Are there any barriers or challenges that have prevented your organization from implementing neurodiversity initiatives?

4. What challenges have you encountered when trying to implement neurodiversity-inclusive practices?

Without ND initiatives N=21

Lack of Awareness and Education

- Many organizations struggle with limited understanding of neurodiversity, including persistent biases and a lack of training for leadership and staff.

Insufficient Resources

- Budget constraints, limited time, and lack of dedicated personnel often hinder the development and execution of neurodiversity programs.

Fear of Disclosure

- Without a safe and stigma-free environment, employees may avoid disclosing neurodivergence, making it harder to tailor support effectively.

Organizational Complexity

- Internal processes, remote work dynamics, and lack of structured planning can delay or complicate the rollout of ND initiatives.

With ND initiatives N=3

Overcoming Stigma and Misconceptions

- Shifting mindsets and breaking down stereotypes about neurodivergent individuals remains a significant barrier.

Tailoring the Message to the Audience

- Success depends on aligning neurodiversity efforts with the goals and language of different business units.

Balancing Inclusion with Operational Realities

- Not all roles allow for full flexibility, requiring creative solutions and realistic expectations.

Building Managerial Capacity

- Managers need targeted training and support to understand neurodiversity and implement inclusive practices effectively.

Human Resources Professionals Interview

Recruitment and Hiring

5. How might your organization attract or consider neurodivergent candidates in your current recruitment processes?

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Inclusive Recruitment Practices

- Design recruitment processes that focus on skills and qualifications, ensuring fairness and accessibility for all candidates.

Flexibility and Support

- Offer accommodations, clear communication, and flexible processes to support neurodivergent applicants throughout the hiring journey.

Education and Awareness

- Train recruiters and hiring managers on neurodiversity, and use inclusive language and practices in job postings and interviews.

Building Partnerships

- Collaborate with external organizations to reach neurodivergent talent and provide resources that guide and support applicants.

5. How does your organization approach the recruitment and hiring of neurodivergent individuals?

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Inclusive Recruitment is Good Business

- Practices that support neurodivergent applicants improve overall hiring quality, fairness, and organizational performance.

Respecting Individual Autonomy

- Candidates should never feel pressured to disclose neurodivergence. Inclusive practices should be standard, regardless of disclosure.

Reducing Barriers to Entry

- Simplifying job descriptions and focusing on essential skills helps attract a broader, more diverse talent pool.

Intentional but Subtle Inclusion

- Inclusion can be embedded through thoughtful language and tone, without explicitly labeling or singling out neurodivergent individuals.

Recruitment and Hiring

6. Are there steps your organization would consider taking to remove potential biases in hiring processes?

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Awareness and Education

- Training hiring managers on unconscious bias and neurodiversity is essential to foster more equitable decision-making.

Inclusive Hiring Practices

- Standardizing interviews, using structured scorecards, and masking identifying information can help reduce bias.

Flexibility and Support

- Offering accommodations and adapting processes ensures all candidates feel comfortable and have equal opportunity to succeed.

Intentional and Structured Efforts

- Embedding DEI values into hiring practices and ensuring diverse hiring panels promotes fairness and diversity of thought.

6. Can you describe any barriers or biases you have observed in the recruitment process that may affect neurodivergent candidates?

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Structural Bias in Recruitment

- Traditional hiring practices often rely on unexamined norms that unintentionally exclude neurodivergent candidates.

Misinterpretation of Traits

- Behaviors such as limited eye contact or slower verbal responses are frequently misjudged as poor fit or lack of competence.

Reducing Barriers to Entry

- Simplifying job descriptions and focusing on essential skills helps attract a broader, more diverse talent pool.

Intentional but Subtle Inclusion

- A lack of accommodations in recruitment processes can result in missing out on highly capable and valuable talent.

Human Resources Professionals Interview

Workplace Accommodations and Support

7. If a neurodivergent employee joined your organization, how would you approach identifying and meeting their needs?

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Open Communication

- Foster a safe environment that encourages honest conversations about needs and accommodations.

Personalized Support

- Offer tailored accommodations and flexible work environments based on individual preferences and requirements.

Continuous Engagement

- Conduct regular check-ins to reassess needs and provide ongoing support and advocacy.

Privacy and Confidentiality

- Respect employee privacy while ensuring appropriate support, especially in remote or hybrid work settings.

7. What types of accommodations or support does your organization provide to neurodivergent employees?

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Flexibility as a Key Support Strategy

- Allowing employees to choose when and how they work helps them perform at their best.

Universal Design Benefits All

- Practices like written instructions, flexible deadlines, and clear communication improve accessibility for everyone.

Respect for Role-Specific Needs

- Accommodations must be balanced with operational demands, especially in roles with client-facing or time-sensitive responsibilities.

Empowerment Through Autonomy

- Reducing micromanagement and trusting employees to manage their own workflow fosters productivity and confidence.

Workplace Accommodations and Support

8. What accommodations or support might you consider offering to ensure an inclusive environment?

8. Can you share any examples of accommodations that have been particularly effective in supporting neurodivergent employees?

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Personalized Support

- Offer tailored accommodations based on individual needs, while ensuring confidentiality and comfort in all discussions.

Flexible and Inclusive Environment

- Provide flexible work arrangements, quiet spaces, and specialized tools or equipment to support diverse working styles.

Education and Awareness

- Implement neurodiversity training and promote respectful language and inclusive behaviors across the organization.

Structured Support Systems

- Establish DEI committees, inclusion offices, and mental health resources to provide consistent and accessible support.

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Flexibility Empowers Everyone

- Allowing flexibility in how, when, and where work is done benefits neurodivergent employees and improves productivity for all.

Technology as an Enabler

- AI tools and assistive technologies enhance focus and reduce barriers, especially when integrated securely within organizational systems.

Inclusive Communication Practices

- Providing written materials, clear documentation, and structured communication supports diverse cognitive processing styles.

Culture of Respect and Understanding

- A respectful, low-pressure environment, free from micromanagement, fosters trust, comfort, and success for neurodivergent employees.

Training and Awareness

9. Has your organization provided any general training on diversity and inclusion that might also benefit neurodivergent employees?

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General DEI Efforts

- Many organizations offer general diversity and respectful workplace training, which can indirectly support neurodivergent employees.

Specific Neurodiversity Focus

- Some organizations are beginning to introduce training specifically focused on neurodiversity in the workplace.

Formal Support Structures

- Offices of inclusion, DEI committees, and awareness programs help reinforce inclusive practices and support neurodivergent staff.

Managerial Involvement

- Managers play a critical role in applying DEI principles, especially in interviews and team support, and are often included in leadership training.

9. What training or resources does your organization provide to managers and employees to raise awareness about neurodiversity?

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Comprehensive and Role-Specific Training

- Training is tailored to different roles, ensuring that both managers and general staff receive relevant and practical guidance.

Proactive Leadership Development

- Leaders are trained early and continuously to effectively support neurodivergent employees and foster inclusive teams.

Crisis Preparedness and Support

- Staff are equipped to respond appropriately to challenges related to neurodivergence in the workplace.

Cultural Competency in Neurodiversity

- Training includes cultural awareness, recognizing how neurodivergence intersects with identity and lived experience.

10 What would you need to feel prepared to raise awareness about neurodiversity in your workplace?

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Building Awareness Through Education

- Training, coaching, and accessible materials are essential. Education should combine foundational knowledge with practical strategies.

Leadership Engagement is Critical

- Support from senior leaders legitimizes neurodiversity efforts and drives cultural change across the organization.

Empowering Through Stories and Examples

- Sharing lived experiences and real-world examples fosters empathy and makes the case for inclusive practices more relatable.

Accessible and Actionable Resources

- Toolkits, checklists, and visual aids help employees take meaningful action with confidence and clarity.

10. How does your organization measure the impact of neurodiversity-inclusive practices?

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Challenges in Measurement and Evaluation

- Measuring success is complex due to the lack of standardized tools and the indirect nature of many outcomes.

Growing but Incomplete Awareness

- While awareness is increasing, many organizations are still in the early stages of tracking and evaluating neurodiversity efforts.

Data-Driven Inclusion Strategies

- Some organizations use recruitment data, workforce demographics, and leadership representation to estimate progress.

Need for Evolving Metrics

- There is a recognized need for better tools and evolving approaches to assess inclusion, belonging, and impact over time.

Future Needs and Recommendations

Measuring Impact and Continuous improvement

11. If you were to explore neurodiversity initiatives, what resources or support would be most helpful?

11. What metrics or indicators do you use to assess the success of these practices?

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Knowledge and Awareness Building

- Foundational education on neurodiversity is essential. Training should be accessible, engaging, and tailored to different roles.

Actionable Tools and Examples

- Ready-to-use materials like templates, checklists, and real-world case studies help turn awareness into practical action.

Support from Experts and Peers

- Guidance from professionals and peer organizations accelerates learning and builds confidence through shared experiences.

Effective Communication and Framing

- Messaging should be inclusive, strengths-based, and relatable. Campaigns should be ongoing and accessible to all staff.

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Informal and Indirect Measurement

- Many organizations rely on indirect indicators like employee satisfaction and feedback due to the complexity of measuring inclusion.

Retention as a Success Signal

- High retention rates are often viewed as evidence of a supportive and inclusive work environment.

Leadership Diversity as a Benchmark

- Representation of neurodivergent individuals in leadership roles is a meaningful, though underused, indicator of progress.

Need for Evolving Metrics

- There is growing recognition of the need for more intentional, data-driven tools to evaluate the impact of neurodiversity initiatives.

Future Needs and Recommendations

12. What advice or insights would you seek from other organizations that have implemented neurodiversity practices?

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Learning from Real-World Experience

- Case studies and testimonials, including both successes and challenges. Offer practical insights and help build confidence in implementation.

Strategic Implementation Matters

- Leadership buy-in and internal champions are essential to launch and sustain neurodiversity initiatives effectively.

Data Drives Advocacy

- Organizations value metrics that demonstrate impact, cost-effectiveness, and outcomes to support and scale their efforts.

Design for Inclusion Without Disclosure

- Universal design principles create more inclusive environments and reduce the need for individuals to self-identify.

12. What additional resources or support do you think would help your organization better support neurodivergent employees?

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Building a Culture of Trust and Empathy

- Support begins with shifting from a "one-size-fits-all" mindset to one that values individual needs and fosters psychological safety.

Education as a Foundation for Inclusion

- Ongoing, practical training equips teams to understand neurodiversity and respond with empathy and effectiveness.

Feedback-Driven Improvement

- Safe, structured channels for neurodivergent employees to share experiences lead to more inclusive and adaptive practices.

Visibility and Awareness

- Consistent communication about neurodiversity and DEI goals helps reduce stigma and normalize inclusive conversations.

Future Needs and Recommendations

13. What do you think are the biggest challenges or opportunities for supporting neurodiversity in your industry?

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Breaking Stigma and Building Understanding

- The greatest challenge is overcoming stigma and misinformation; the greatest opportunity lies in fostering empathy and awareness.

Creating Safe Spaces for Disclosure

- Fear of judgment often prevents disclosure. Inclusive practices should support all employees, regardless of whether they disclose.

Investing in Education and Training

- Ongoing, audience-specific training helps both neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals build mutual understanding and practical skills.

Leveraging Neurodiverse Talent

- Neurodivergent employees bring unique strengths that can drive innovation, creativity, and team performance when supported effectively.

13. What advice would you give to other HR professionals looking to implement ND-inclusive practices in their organizations?

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Education as a Catalyst for Inclusion

- Continuous learning through training, panels, and mentorship builds empathy and equips HR teams to support neurodivergent employees effectively.

Designing Systems That Respect ND Realities

- Build accommodations into systems by default. Recognize and support invisible disabilities without requiring disclosure.

Culture Over Compliance

- Make neurodiversity a core cultural value, not just a policy. Embed inclusion into every stage of the employee lifecycle.

Trust and Flexibility as Foundations

- Foster trust to encourage disclosure and support. Flexible, outcome-focused environments benefit everyone, especially neurodivergent staff.

Additional comments or suggestions

14. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your thoughts on this topic?

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Normalize and Celebrate Neurodiversity

- Shift the narrative from deficit to difference by highlighting the strengths, creativity, and unique contributions of neurodivergent individuals.

Design with Neurodivergent Voices

- Co-create policies and programs with neurodivergent employees to ensure authenticity, intersectionality, and real-world relevance.

Support Through Education and Empathy

- Equip leaders and teams with the tools to foster safe, respectful environments where disclosure is supported, not required.

Bridge the Gap Between Policy and Practice

- Ensure inclusive values are reflected in everyday actions. Address unconscious bias in hiring, feedback, and performance management.

14. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with neurodiversity in the workplace?

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Recognizing ND Talent as a Strategic Advantage

- Neurodivergent individuals bring unique perspectives and skills that can drive innovation, problem-solving, and performance. Inclusion is not just ethical, it's smart business.

Shifting from Fairness to Equity

- True inclusion means meeting people where they are. Equity requires understanding and addressing individual needs, not just applying the same rules to everyone

Cultural Change as a Path to Normalization

- Workplaces must evolve alongside society to become environments where neurodiversity is not only accepted but celebrated.

The Power of Personal Experience in Advocacy

- Personal connections to neurodivergence often inspire deeper empathy and more authentic, committed advocacy in the workplace.
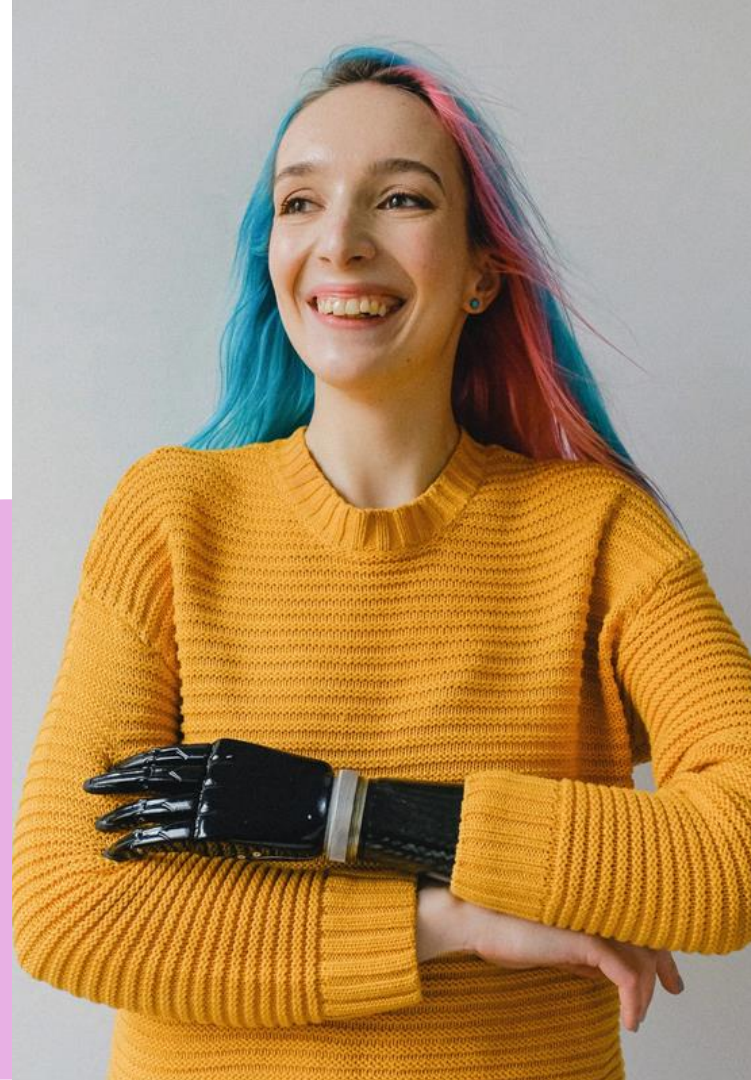
Recommendations

To build more neuroinclusive workplaces, organizations must translate awareness into meaningful action. While HR professionals recognize the value of neurodiversity, this commitment often fails to reach neurodivergent employees in practice. Our findings suggest that without targeted training, inclusive design, and accessible accommodations, organizations risk missing out on exceptional talent. Based on these insights, we have developed the ***Neurodiversity in the Workplace: Toolkit for HR Professionals***. This resource combines survey data from neurodivergent individuals and HR professionals, along with interviews with HR professionals, to highlight current challenges, share best practices, and offer actionable strategies for fostering more inclusive organizational cultures.

We recommend the following actions:

- **Implement neurodiversity training** for HR professionals and leadership to build practical skills and empathy.
- **Redesign standard processes,** such as recruitment, onboarding, and performance evaluations, to be more inclusive of diverse cognitive styles.
- **Ensure accommodations are accessible and individualized**, with clear communication and ongoing support.
- **Establish feedback loops** that empower neurodivergent employees to share their experiences and shape inclusive policies.
- **Embed neuroinclusion into organizational culture** through sustained commitment, not one-time initiatives.

By adopting these practices and using the Neurodiversity in the Workplace: Toolkit for HR Professionals as a guide, organizations can move from intention to impact- creating environments where neurodivergent individuals are not only included but thrive.

Thank you!

Bow Valley College

CPHR Alberta