

CIPD

Working with

uptimize

Survey report  
February 2024

# Neuroinclusion at work report 2024

The CIPD has been championing better work and working lives for over 100 years. It helps organisations thrive by focusing on their people, supporting our economies and societies. It's the professional body for HR, L&D, OD and all people professionals – experts in people, work and change. With over 160,000 members globally – and a growing community using its research, insights and learning – it gives trusted advice and offers independent thought leadership. It's a leading voice in the call for good work that creates value for everyone.

Survey report

# Neuroinclusion at work report 2024

## Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Background to the research	4
3	Organisation strategy and culture	5
4	The working experience of employees	9
5	Senior leaders' and managers' roles in creating a neuroinclusive organisation	12
6	Support employers provide for employees	15
7	Impact of the organisation's neuroinclusion activity	17
8	Conclusion: Seven guiding principles for creating a neuroinclusive workplace	21

## Acknowledgements

This report was written by Ed Thompson, CEO, Uptimize and Dr Jill Miller (PhD), Senior Policy Adviser, CIPD.

We are very grateful to YouGov Plc for their suggestions on survey design, for conducting the survey and analysing the data.

## Publication information

Please cite this report as: Thompson, E. and Miller, J. (2024) *Neuroinclusion at work*. Survey report. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

# 1

## Introduction

### **What is neurodiversity and what is a neuroinclusive workplace?**

Neurodiversity is the natural variation in human brain functioning. The term neurodiversity refers to the infinite range of differences in individual human brain function and behavioural traits.

The term 'neurodiversity at work' is also being used to represent a fast-growing category of organisational equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) that seeks to embrace and value all types of information processing, learning and communication styles. A neuroinclusive workplace is one which consciously and actively includes all types of information processing, learning and communication styles.

While all brains are different, some people with broadly similar ways of thinking, communicating and processing information can have a sense of shared identity and experience – for example, an identity as autistic, dyslexic, dyspraxic or as an ADHDer. For many, the spark to such an identity comes through receiving a specific medical diagnosis or diagnoses. People who possess one or more such identities often identify and are referred to as 'neurodivergent'. You may hear someone who does not identify as neurodivergent referred to as 'neurotypical' (though in reality neurotypicality is highly contextual, and there is no one 'normal' brain).

What's included under the umbrella of 'neurodivergence' is debated, but what's clear is that we need to do more to consider different thinking styles at work to be able to unleash individual and collective potential.

### **Neuroinclusion is crucial for the future of work**

The reality of neurodiversity means that every interaction at work takes place between people with different brains – yet, typically, very few organisations are thinking about neurodiversity or neuroinclusion. This represents a significant missed opportunity for organisations looking to address their key talent priorities at the same time as addressing inequalities at work faced by neurodivergent people.

A lack of awareness and understanding of neurodiversity means it has rarely been considered in the design of workplace processes, management practices, environments or in the way work is organised. Typical norms and ways of working may therefore suit some but not others, and may be particularly challenging for the perhaps as many as up to 20% of people who identify as neurodivergent in some way. Neurodivergent people may find themselves marginalised by organisation cultures, processes and technology that don't consider their thinking styles.

Our survey reveals that although 83% of employers say the wellbeing of their people is a critical priority, and 70% say EDI is a critical priority for their organisation, just 60% say that neuroinclusion is a focus for their organisation. Furthermore, just over half (53%) of employees surveyed say their organisation has an open and supportive climate where employees are able to talk about neurodiversity.

Everyone should feel included, valued and that they belong at work, and have equality of opportunity both in the labour market to get into work and in terms of

in-work progression. Many of the design elements of neuroinclusive workplaces, management approaches and job design can benefit the whole workforce, enabling people to achieve their potential at work, supporting an inclusive culture and contributing to effective teams.

There is a strong business case for action here, relating to talent and underuse of skills, but also pursuing equality of outcomes for all is simply the right thing to do. Facing skills shortages, organisations need to think more inclusively about how they recruit and retain talented people. Focusing on neuroinclusion is already giving organisations leading in this area an advantage – hiring people they wouldn't have hired, making better managers, boosting comfort at work, and supporting retention. In addition, the business case for EDI has highlighted the importance of 'diversity of thought'. When we're talking about neurodiversity, we're talking about the fact that people literally think differently. And to realise the benefits of diversity of thought, a neuroinclusive workplace is essential alongside action to ensure equality of opportunity and outcomes for all types of thinkers.

Furthermore, people entering the labour market are increasingly looking to work for a socially responsible organisation. There is a growing expectation for employers to be flexible and supportive and to have a culture where people feel valued and can do their best work.

### **How this report will help you and your organisation**

This report discusses the findings from an employer and an employee survey to examine the importance of having a neuroinclusive workplace. We consider the extent to which employers are considering neuroinclusion and the impact of their work on organisation outcomes. In the employee survey, as well as examining the working experiences of respondents overall, we consider the experiences of neurodivergent and of neurotypical people separately, in order to explore and understand the often hidden neurodivergent experience at work.

We look at what employers are currently doing in this area as well as offer insight from employees themselves about their working experiences. We highlight the lack of employer attention to neurodiversity and the impact of this on employee wellbeing, performance and retention, as well as the positive benefits for the organisation of efforts to create a neuroinclusive workplace.

The findings provide a clear rationale for neuroinclusion to be a key part of an organisation's EDI efforts as well as its wellbeing approach. At the end of this report, we provide seven key principles for creating a neuroinclusive organisation.

The CIPD, and neurodiversity training company Uptimize, have together produced a [practical guide](#) for employers to help create neuroinclusive and fair workplaces with equality of opportunity and outcomes, where different styles of thinking, learning and communication are valued and utilised, with clear benefits for the organisation as well as the individual.

## 2

# Background to the research

This survey report, exploring the extent to which UK organisations are valuing neurodiversity and creating neuroinclusive workplaces and the impact of that for organisations and individuals, is based on findings from two surveys.

Both surveys were conducted by YouGov Plc. Fieldwork was undertaken between 24 October and 6 November 2023 and was carried out online.

## Employer survey

1,003 senior managers with decision-making influence were surveyed. The figures have been weighted and are representative of UK business by size, sector and industry. Respondents come from organisations of all sizes and work within a wide range of industries. Overall, 738 are based in the private sector, 191 in the public sector and 74 in the voluntary sector. SMEs refer to organisations with fewer than 250 employees.

## Employee survey

We surveyed 1,047 employed adults. In terms of what sector respondents work in, 784 work in the private sector, 187 in the public sector, and 76 in the voluntary/third sector.

Overall, 790 people identify as neurodivergent and 248 as neurotypical (see Table 1 for further detail on the neurodivergent identities people told us they hold).

**Table 1: The following is a list of neurodivergent identities. Which, if any, do you hold? Please select all that apply. (%)**

ADHDe	26
Autistic	32
Dyslexic	31
Dyscalculic	10
Another neurodivergent identity not listed above	4
None	24
Prefer not to say	1

Base: 1,047 employed adults.

As well as examining the impact of the employee experience overall, in this report we also compare the work experiences of neurodivergent employees with the work experiences of neurotypicals. We've taken this approach to demonstrate the importance of employer action to create more inclusive workplaces where neurodivergent employees can perform at their best at work. For example, the employee survey findings highlight the potential impact of ignoring neuroinclusion on the performance, employee wellbeing and retention of neurodivergent employees.

For the purposes of the survey, we have combined responses from people with different neurodivergent identities. However, we recognise that identities are distinct and commonly associated with different strengths and challenges at work. Furthermore, even people with the same neurodivergent identity will have different experiences and needs in the workplace. In addition, people may hold more than one neurodivergent identity. It's essential that employer action recognises an individual's preferences and needs and responds appropriately.

*Note on figures:* All figures in graphs have been rounded to the nearest percentage point. Due to rounding, percentages may not always total 100.

## 3

# Organisation strategy and culture

This section of the survey report looks at whether neuroinclusion is a focus for UK organisations and examines the extent to which organisation cultures are neuroinclusive.

### **Is neuroinclusion an area of focus for your organisation?**

Sixty per cent of employers we surveyed say that neuroinclusion is a focus for their business (Table 2). For a third of businesses (33%), it's in their EDI strategy or action plan, and just under a fifth (19%) say that although it's not specifically called out in their EDI strategy or action plan, it is part of their work to improve EDI in their organisation. A further 8% say it's an area of focus for their business, but not specifically within EDI.

It's significantly more likely to be a focus in public and voluntary sector organisations than in the private sector (60% overall; 55% private sector; 76% public sector; 72% voluntary sector). The public sector is most likely to include neuroinclusion in their EDI strategy or action plan.

Small businesses (2–249 employees) were least likely to say neuroinclusion is an area of focus for their business (45% compared with 65% of organisations with 250–999 employees and 75% of those with 1,000+ employees).

Almost a third (32%) of organisations say neuroinclusion is not a focus for them.

**Table 2: Is neuroinclusion an area of focus for your organisation? (%)**

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary/ third sector
Yes, it's in our EDI strategy or action plan	33	28	55	37
Yes, it's part of our work to improve EDI but not called out in our strategy/action plan	19	19	18	21
Yes, it's an area of focus for our business, but not specifically within EDI	8	8	3	15
No, it's not an area of focus for our organisation, but there is a plan for it to be	6	5	8	11
No, it's not an area of focus for our organisation, and there is no plan for it to be	26	31	11	13
Don't know	8	9	5	4

Base: all employers (total: n=1,003; private: n=738; public: n=191; third/voluntary: n=74).

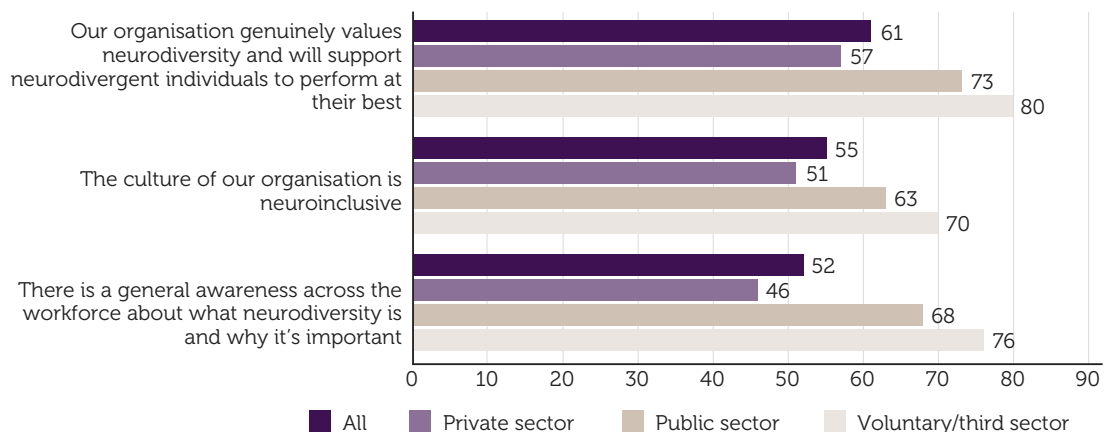
**Organisation culture and awareness**

Sixty-one per cent of employers surveyed say their organisation genuinely values neurodiversity and will support neurodivergent individuals to perform at their best (Figure 1). Those in the voluntary sector were most likely to agree with this statement (80%), followed by 73% of public sector organisations and a much lower 57% of private sector employers.

Just over half (55%) of employers surveyed say the culture of their organisation is neuroinclusive. Those in the voluntary and public sectors are significantly more likely than those in the private sector to say their culture is neuroinclusive (70% and 63% versus 51% respectively).

And only just over half (52%) of employers say there is a general awareness across the workforce about what neurodiversity is and why it's important. However, once again, voluntary and public sector employers were significantly more likely than those in the private sector to say this is the case (76% and 68% versus 46% respectively).

**Figure 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (% organisations agreeing)**



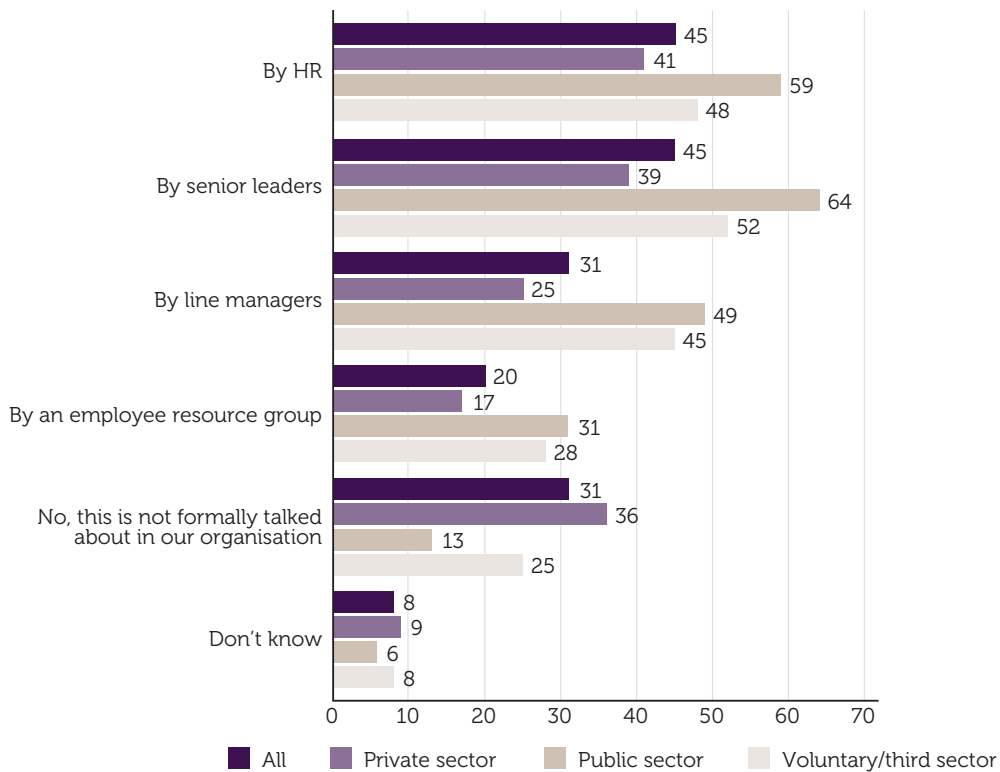
Base: all employers (total: n=1,003; private: n=738; public: n=191; third/voluntary: n=74).



**Is neurodiversity formally talked about in your organisation?**

In just under a third (31%) of organisations, neurodiversity isn't formally talked about by HR, senior leaders, line managers or an employee resource group (Figure 2). In less than half of organisations (45%), it's talked about by HR and the same percentage by senior leaders. In just under a third (31%) of organisations, neurodiversity is talked about by line managers.

**Figure 2: To the best of your knowledge, is neurodiversity formally talked about in your organisation by any of the following groups? (Please select all that apply) (%)**



Base: all employers (total: n=1,003; private: n=738; public: n=191; third/voluntary: n=74).

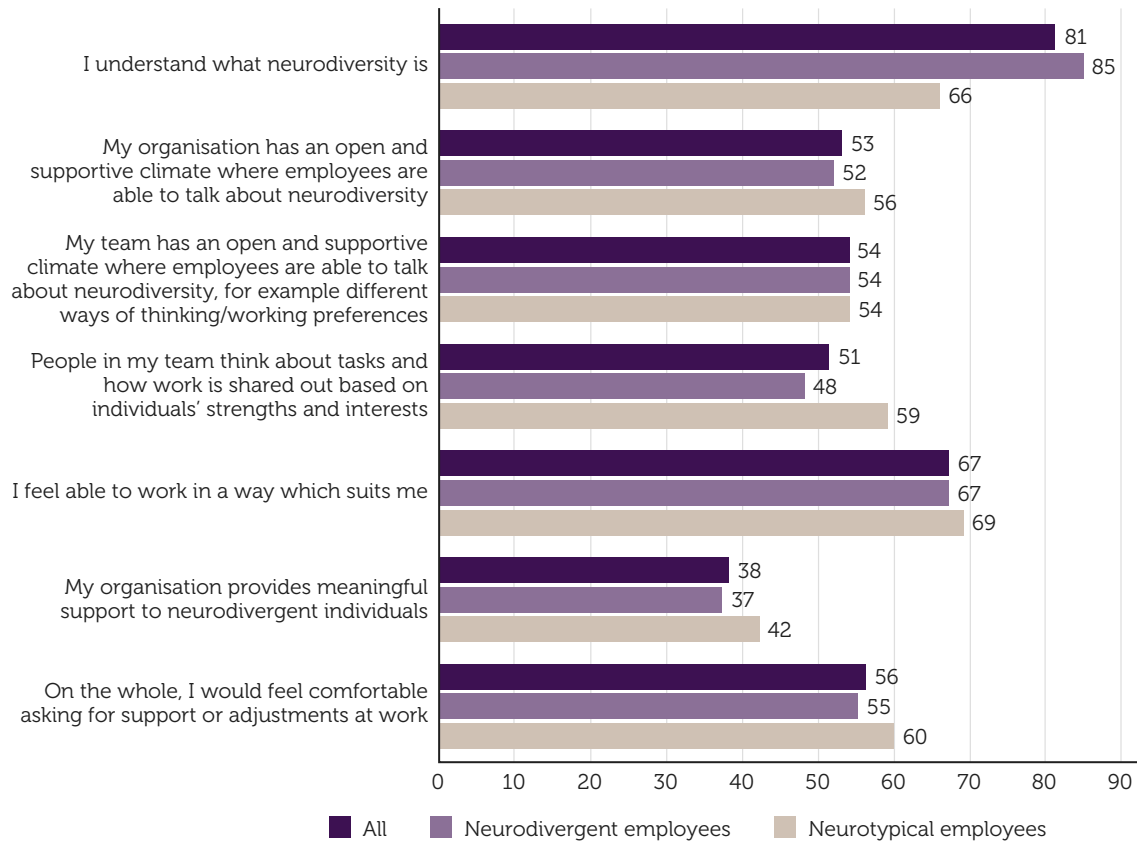
**The employee perspective**

The majority of employees surveyed said they understand what neurodiversity is (Figure 3), although neurodivergent employees are significantly more likely to say they do than neurotypical employees, suggesting a need for broad education and awareness within organisations.

Just over half of people surveyed feel their organisation (53%) or their team (54%) has an open and supportive climate where employees are able to talk about neurodiversity.

Just 38% say their organisation provides meaningful support to neurodivergent individuals. And only just over half say they would feel comfortable asking for support or adjustments at work.

**Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (%)**



Base: all employees (total: n=1,047; neurodivergent employees: n=790; neurotypical employees: n=248).

**Have you told your manager or HR about your neurodivergence?**

Around three in 10 neurodivergent employees haven't told their line manager or HR about their neurodivergence (31%) (Table 3). We asked why this was (Table 4), and 44% said it's a private matter that they don't want to share, while 37% said they are concerned about people making assumptions based on stereotypes. Around a third (34%) said they feel there's too much stigma and 29% said they are concerned about the possible impact on their career.

Men were significantly more likely than women to say it's a private matter they don't want to share (56% versus 28%).

**Table 3: Have you told your manager or HR about your neurodivergence? (%)**

Just line manager	27
Just HR	5
Both line manager and HR	38
Neither HR nor line manager	31

Base: all neurodivergent employees (total: n=790).

**Table 4: Which, if any, of the following are reasons why you haven't told your manager or HR about your neurodivergence? (Please select all that apply) (%)**

It's a private matter that I don't want to share	44
I am concerned about people making assumptions based on stereotypes	37
I don't feel a need to tell my manager or HR	36
I feel there's too much stigma	34
I am concerned about the possible impact on my career	29
I don't think my organisation would be understanding or offer support	18
I don't think my manager would be understanding or offer support	16
I am concerned about prying questions	14
I don't feel I've had the right opportunity yet	13
No specific reason	5
Other	15
Don't know	0

Base: neurodivergent employees who haven't told their manager or HR about their neurodivergence (total: n=242).

## 4

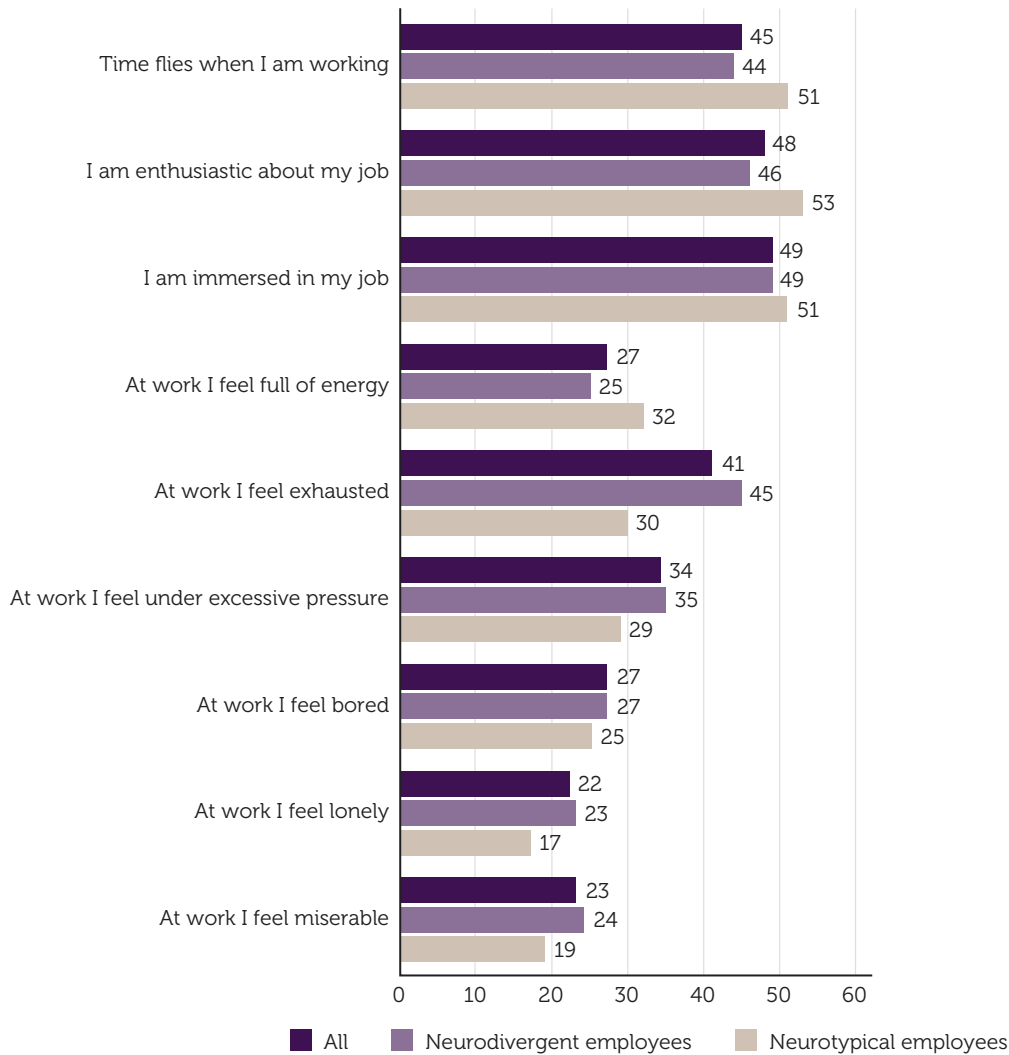
# The working experience of employees

We presented employees with a number of statements concerning how people may feel about their job. For each statement, we asked how often, if at all, they feel this way. Response options were: always, often, at least sometimes, rarely, never. Figure 4 shows the percentage of people who said they always or often feel this way in relation to the statements.

Employees identifying as neurodivergent were less likely than those identifying as neurotypical to say time flies when they are working (44% versus 51%) and that at work they feel full of energy (25% versus 32%).

Employees identifying as neurodivergent were more likely than those identifying as neurotypical to say that at work they feel exhausted (45% versus 30%). And more likely to say at work they feel lonely (23% versus 17% of employees identifying as neurotypical).

**Figure 4: The following statements concern how you feel about your job. For each statement please indicate how often you feel this way (% answering 'always' or 'often')**



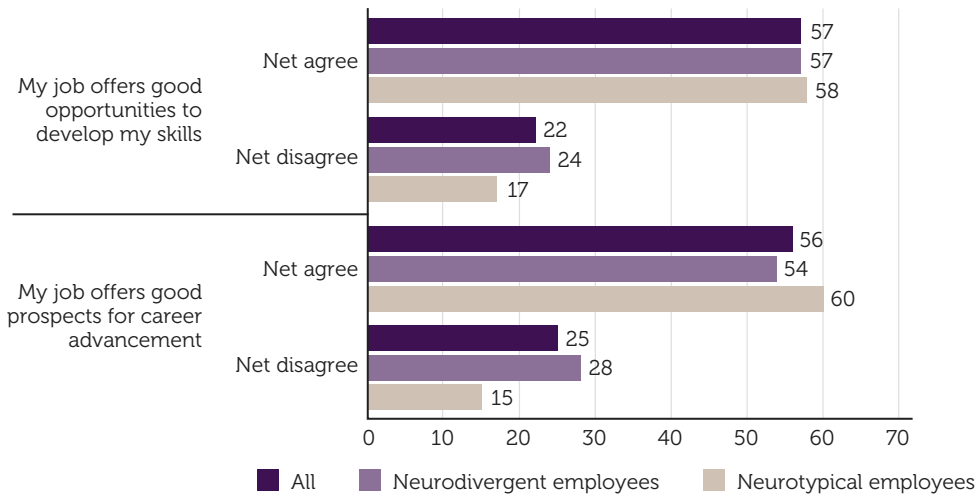
Base: all employees (total: n=1,047; neurodivergent employees: n=790; neurotypical employees: n=248).  
 Response options were: always, often, sometimes, rarely, never.

**Career progression**

Just over half of employees surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that their job offers good opportunities to develop their skills (57%) and their job offers good prospects for career advancement (56%). There were no significant differences in net agree responses between those holding a neurodivergent identity and neurotypical employees.

However, as can be seen in Figure 5, significantly more neurodivergent employees disagreed with both the statements than those identifying as neurotypical.

**Figure 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your job? (%)**



Base: all employees (total: n=1,047; neurodivergent employees: n=790; neurotypical employees: n=248).

**Harassment or discrimination at work**

A fifth of neurodivergent employees we surveyed told us they have experienced harassment or discrimination at work because of their neurodivergence (Figure 6).

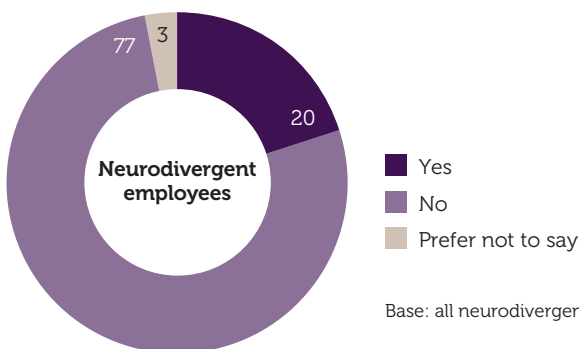
Employees who have experienced harassment and bullying because of their neurodivergence were also more likely to report a negative impact (compared with the percentage of those reporting a positive impact or no impact) from their experiences at work in relation to neurodivergence on:

- mental wellbeing (29%)
- their ability to perform well in their job (32%)
- their intention to stay with their employer (36%)
- likelihood they’d recommend their employer to a friend (34%).

Table 5 shows that those who have experienced harassment and bullying because of their neurodivergence were also significantly more likely to say they felt unsupported at work by:

- their employer (38%)
- their line manager (37%)
- their colleagues (38%).

**Figure 6: Have you experienced harassment or discrimination at work because of your neurodivergence? (%)**



Base: all neurodivergent employees (total: n=790).

**Table 5: Feelings of support at work (%)**

Have you experienced harassment or discrimination at work because of your neurodivergence? (n=790)	To what extent do you feel supported or unsupported at work to perform at your best by the following?					
	Employer		Manager		Colleagues	
	Supported (n=386)	Unsupported (n=136)	Supported (n=447)	Unsupported (n=106)	Supported (n=450)	Unsupported (n=76)
Yes	17	38	18	37	18	38
No	82	54	81	56	80	53

Q: Have you experienced harassment or discrimination at work because of your neurodivergence?  
 To what extent do you feel supported or unsupported at work to perform at your best by the following?  
 Base all neurodivergent employees (total: n=790).



# 5 Senior leaders' and managers' roles in creating a neuroinclusive organisation

## Senior leaders

Just over half (56%) of the senior managers with decision-making influence who completed the survey told us that, in their organisation, senior leaders appreciate the value of neurodiversity and the importance of having a neuroinclusive organisation. Once again, the picture is more positive in voluntary organisations than in the private sector (Table 6).

**Table 6: Senior leaders' role in creating a neuroinclusive organisation (% agree)**

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary/ third sector
Senior leaders appreciate the value of neurodiversity and the importance of having a neuroinclusive organisation	56	52	67	71
Leaders show commitment to neurodiversity inclusion through their actions and behaviour	53	49	63	68

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about senior leaders and managers at your organisation? Please base your responses on your own involvement or wider observations (% agree).  
 Base: all employers (total: n=1,003; private: n=738; public: n=191; third/voluntary: n=74).

## HR

Just 56% of employers agreed or strongly agreed that employees with HR responsibilities feel capable and confident to support neurodivergent individuals at work.

Interestingly, those who agreed with this statement were more likely to report a positive impact (as opposed to a negative impact or no impact) of their neuroinclusion activities on various organisation outcomes.

Of the 56% who agreed or strongly agreed, the following high percentage of respondents reported a positive impact of the organisation's neuroinclusion work on each of these outcomes:

- understanding across your workforce of neurodiversity and its importance (87%)
- employees' level of comfort in talking about neurodiversity (85%)
- appreciation of different thinking styles within the organisation (82%)
- the culture of the organisation (84%)
- recruitment of neurodivergent employees (88%)
- employee engagement (86%)
- employee wellbeing (83%)
- employee retention (89%)
- fostering creativity and innovation (85%)
- quality of people management (86%)
- employee performance (90%)
- customer service (88%).

These findings strongly suggest that HR upskilling in neuroinclusion can have positive benefits for the organisation.

### Managers

Similarly, employers told us that only around half (51%) of managers appreciate the value of neurodiversity and the importance of having a neuroinclusive organisation. Less than half (46%) said managers feel capable and confident to support neurodivergent individuals at work.

More positively, 73% said that managers are encouraged to get to know people in the team as individuals, what they're good at, what they enjoy doing and what they find challenging. However, whether they have the capacity to do this well is a question to ask, given that line manager roles are designed to give adequate emphasis to good people management in just 28% of organisations (26% private sector employers; 32% public sector employers; 40% voluntary sector) (Table 8).

**Table 7: Managers' role in creating a neuroinclusive organisation (% agree)**

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary/ third sector
Managers appreciate the value of neurodiversity and the importance of having a neuroinclusive organisation	51	47	58	73
Managers feel capable and confident to support neurodivergent individuals at work	46	44	48	66
Managers are encouraged to get to know people in the team as individuals, what they're good at, what they enjoy doing and what they find challenging	73	71	78	88

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about senior leaders and managers at your organisation? Please base your responses on your involvement or wider observations (% agree).

Base: all employers (total: n=1,003; private: n=738; public: n=191; third/voluntary: n=74).

We asked about any specific training employers provide for line managers relating to neurodiversity (Table 8). A low 28% said line manager roles are designed to give adequate emphasis to good people management. We know from other research that to be able to manage their team effectively, create an inclusive culture and develop trusting relationships, managers need to be given the time to do this.

Only just over a quarter (27%) say there is training for line managers in what neurodiversity is and its value to the business. Less than a quarter (24%) say there's training on how to support neurodivergent team members and even fewer (18%) say there's training for line managers in how to respond when a job applicant or employee tells them they are neurodivergent.

Furthermore, in just 15% of organisations, managers receive interviewer training relating to neurodiversity/neuroinclusion. Neurodiversity training and awareness for those conducting interviews can help improve equality of opportunity in getting a job and ensure people aren't unfairly disadvantaged in an interview.

Overall, 39% of survey respondents said their organisation hasn't taken any action specific to line managers to create a neuroinclusive organisation.

**Table 8: Thinking specifically about managers, which of the following actions, if any, has your organisation taken to create a neuroinclusive organisation. Please select all that apply (%)**

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary/ third sector
Line manager roles are designed to give adequate emphasis to good people management	28	26	32	40
Training for line managers in what neurodiversity is and its value to the business	27	24	38	34
Training or guidance for line managers on how to manage a neurodiverse team	23	22	28	26
Training or guidance for line managers on how to support neurodivergent team members	24	23	29	27
Training for line managers in how to respond when a job applicant or employee tells them they are neurodivergent	18	17	22	14
Interviewer training for line managers relating to neurodiversity/neuroinclusion	15	14	18	16
Other	0	0	1	1
Not applicable – my organisation hasn't taken any action specific to line managers	39	43	26	29
Don't know	9	9	13	4

Base: all employers (total: n=1,003; private: n=738; public: n=191; third/voluntary: n=74).



**The employee perspective**

The survey findings in Table 9 suggest that many managers are not managing people in a neuroinclusive way. Just over half (54%) of employees said their manager welcomes different styles of thinking, processing information, learning and communication. And 46% said their manager supports neurodivergent individuals at work effectively and that their manager designs and allocates work based on individuals’ strengths and interests.

**Table 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your manager (% agree)**

	All	Neurodivergent employees	Neurotypical employees
My manager supports neurodivergent individuals at work effectively	46	46	42
My manager welcomes different styles of thinking, processing information, learning and communication	54	54	53
My manager designs and allocates work based on individuals’ strengths and interests	46	44	50

Base: all employees (total: n=1,047; neurodivergent employees: n=790; neurotypical employees: n=248).

6

# Support employers provide for employees

Seventy per cent of employers we surveyed provide at least one method of support we asked about (Table 10). But almost a quarter (23%) told us their organisation doesn’t do anything to create a neuroinclusive organisation.

The most common form of support provided is flexible working (for example, flexibility in working hours and where you work), provided by 45% of employers, followed by ensuring clear access to reasonable adjustments, for example, role adjustments or adaptations to the working environment (39%). However, despite being the most common actions employers have taken, the percentage doing them is low.

Three in 10 (30%) employers have carried out education and awareness-raising about neurodiversity and common neurodivergent identities for all staff within the past two years. Just 19% of employers say they have reviewed formal people management policies to make them neuroinclusive.

**Table 10: What action, if any, has your organisation taken to create a neuroinclusive organisation? (Please select all that apply) (%)**

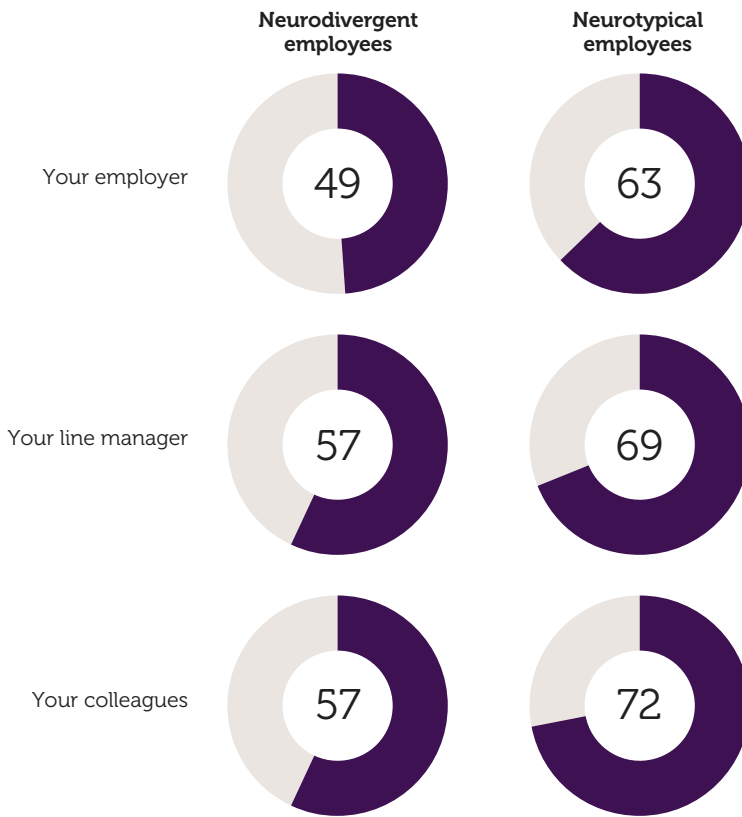
	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary/ third sector
Flexible working (for example, flexibility in working hours and where you work)	45	42	52	64
Ensuring clear access to reasonable adjustments (for example, role adjustments, adaptations to the working environment)	39	32	59	53
Education and awareness-raising about neurodiversity and common neurodivergent identities for all staff within the past two years	30	24	48	46
Occupational health support available for neurodivergent employees	30	23	57	33
Publishing an EDI statement on our organisation's website which mentions neurodiversity	26	22	43	27
Employee resource group that works with the organisation to improve EDI with respect to neurodiversity	23	20	36	21
Signposting to expert external organisations on neurodiversity	21	17	34	28
Reviewed formal people management policies to make them neuroinclusive	19	17	22	25
External support workers and coaches for neurodivergent employees	12	12	13	17
Other	1	1	1	–
Not applicable – my organisation doesn't do anything in this respect	23	28	8	9
Don't know	7	7	5	4

Base: all employers (total: n=1,003; private: n=738; public: n=191; third/voluntary: n=74).

**The employee perspective**

Figure 7 shows there's a significant difference between the percentage of neurodivergent employees and the percentage of neurotypical employees who feel supported at work to perform at their best.

Figure 7: Employees who feel supported at work by the following (%)



Q: To what extent do you feel supported or unsupported at work to perform at your best by the following?  
 Base: all employees (total: n=1,047; neurodivergent employees: n=790; neurotypical employees: n=248).

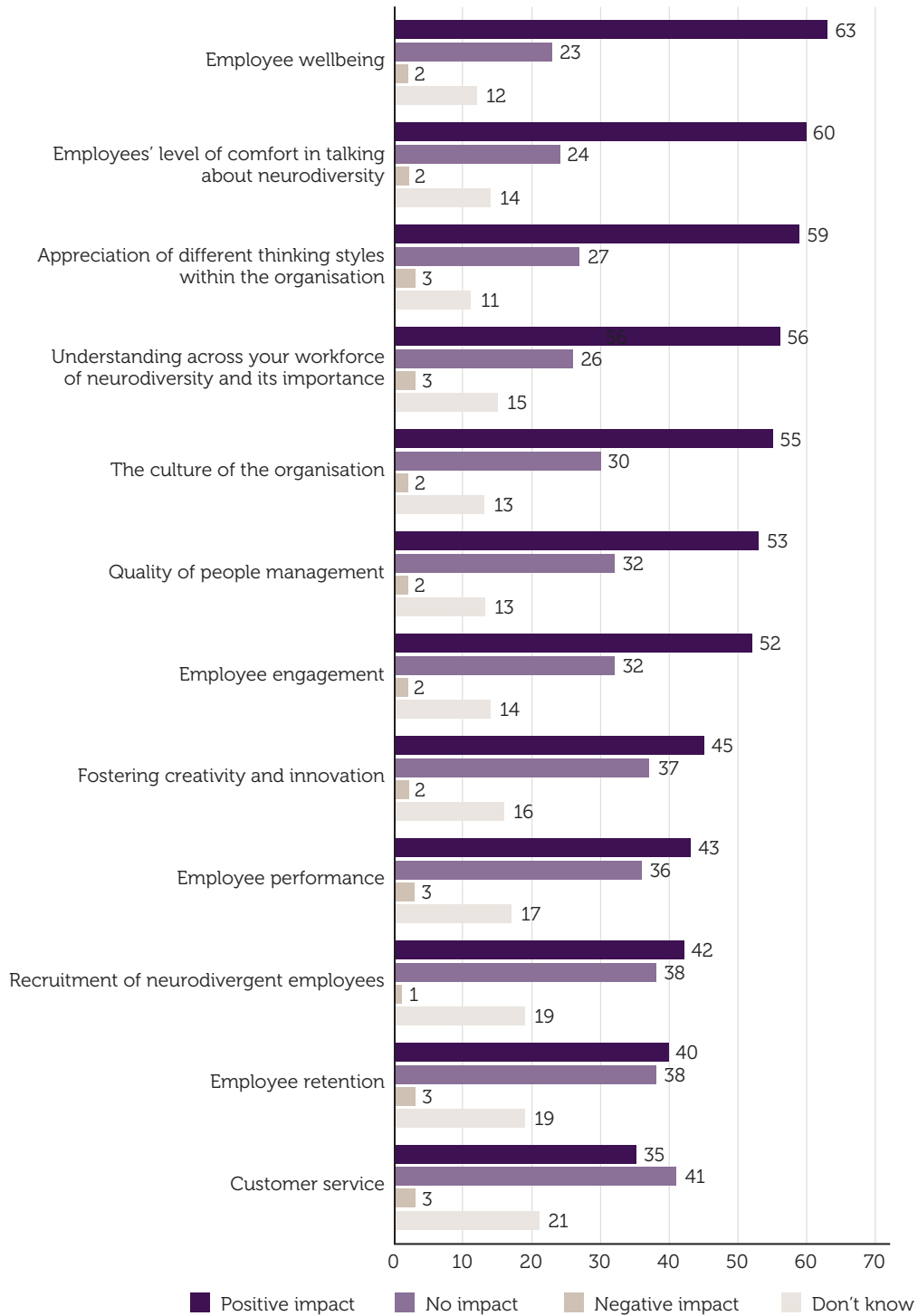
7

# Impact of the organisation’s neuroinclusion activity

Of all employers taking some action to create a neuroinclusive organisation, 63% say they’ve seen a positive impact of doing so on employee wellbeing (Figure 8). Similarly, 60% say they’ve seen a positive impact on employees’ level of comfort in talking about neurodiversity, and 59% a positive impact on the level of appreciation of different thinking styles within the organisation.

Although we don’t know what each organisation is doing, and they’re likely to be operating in different contexts, with different cultures and at different stages of the journey towards neuroinclusion at work, it’s interesting that just over half have seen a positive impact on the culture of the organisation (55%) and a similar percentage have seen a positive impact on the quality of people management (53%).

**Figure 8: In your view, has your organisation's work on neuroinclusion had a positive or negative impact on any of the following? (%)**



Base: all employers taking some action to create a neuroinclusive organisation (total: n=723).

In addition to asking for general views on the impact of the organisation’s work on neuroinclusion, we also asked about the impact of specific practices on organisation-level outcomes (Table 11) and people management-related outcomes (Table 12). The practices reported to have the most positive impact on those outcomes are:

- flexible working (for example, flexibility in working hours and where you work)
- ensuring clear access to reasonable adjustments (for example, role adjustments, adaptations to the working environment)
- education and awareness-raising about neurodiversity and common neurodivergent identities for all staff within the past two years.

**Table 11: Employers reporting a positive impact of organisation-level neuroinclusion activities by outcomes (%)**

	Understanding across your workforce of neurodiversity and its importance (n=406)	Employees’ level of comfort in talking about neurodiversity (n=433)	Appreciation of different thinking styles within the organisation (n=426)	The culture of the organisation (n=395)	Customer service (n=250)
Education and awareness-raising about neurodiversity and common neurodivergent identities for all staff within the past two years	58	55	54	53	56
Publishing an EDI statement on our organisation’s website which mentions neurodiversity	46	44	44	42	44
Ensuring clear access to reasonable adjustments (for example, role adjustments, adaptations to the working environment)	61	59	58	60	58
Flexible working (for example, flexibility in working hours and where you work)	65	64	64	64	62
Employee resource group that works with the organisation to improve EDI with respect to neurodiversity	38	38	36	35	39
Signposting to expert external organisations on neurodiversity	37	37	35	36	36
Reviewed formal people management policies to make them neuroinclusive	35	32	32	32	36

Q: What action, if any, has your organisation taken to create a neuroinclusive organisation? Please select all that apply.

Base: all employees reporting positive outcome (bases shown in table).

**Table 12: Employers reporting a positive impact of organisation-level neuroinclusion activities by people management outcomes (%)**

	Recruitment of neurodivergent employees (n=297)	Employee engagement (n=375)	Employee wellbeing (n=451)	Employee retention (n=289)	Fostering creativity and innovation (n=323)	Quality of people management (n=379)	Employee performance (n=311)
Education and awareness-raising about neurodiversity and common neurodivergent identities for all staff within the past two years	53	54	50	54	51	54	52
Publishing an EDI statement on our organisation's website which mentions neurodiversity	48	41	40	41	45	44	42
Ensuring clear access to reasonable adjustments (for example, role adjustments, adaptations to the working environment)	61	59	60	60	60	58	57
Flexible working (for example, flexibility in working hours and where you work)	63	62	67	65	66	62	65
Employee resource group that works with the organisation to improve EDI with respect to neurodiversity	37	34	36	35	39	36	37
Signposting to expert external organisations on neurodiversity	38	37	35	34	37	34	34
Reviewed formal people management policies to make them neuroinclusive	37	32	33	33	35	34	33

Q: What action, if any, has your organisation taken to create a neuroinclusive organisation? Please select all that apply.

Base: all employees reporting positive outcome (bases shown in table).

### The employee perspective

We asked all neurodivergent employees to tell us about any impact their experience at work in relation to their neurodivergence has had on them, their work and their view of their employer (Table 13).

A third (33%) say their experience at work in relation to their neurodivergence has had a negative impact on their mental wellbeing. And around a fifth say it has had a negative impact on their ability to perform well in their job (21%), their intention to stay with their employer (19%) and the likelihood they'd recommend their employer to a friend (19%).

**Table 13: To what extent, if at all, has your experience at work in relation to your neurodivergence had a positive or negative impact on the following? (%)**

	Positive impact	Negative impact
Your mental wellbeing	41	33
Your ability to perform well in your job	52	21
Your intention to stay with your employer	52	19
The likelihood you'd recommend your employer to a friend	49	19

Base: all employees who identify as neurodivergent (n=790).

8

# Conclusion: Seven guiding principles for creating a neuroinclusive workplace

We hope our report has given you ideas of what you could do in your organisation. For more information, please see our accompanying [guide](#) to help you act on it.

Like other aspects of EDI, neuroinclusion can seem complicated and overwhelming, with some preferring not to do anything rather than 'getting it wrong'. However, our survey findings show the need to take urgent action to make organisations neuroinclusive and tackle inequalities faced by neurodivergent people.

A third (33%) say their experience at work in relation to their neurodivergence has had a negative impact on their mental wellbeing. Around a fifth say it has had a negative impact on their ability to perform well in their job (21%), their intention to stay with their employer (19%) and the likelihood they'd recommend their employer to a friend (19%).

However, just over three-fifths (63%) of employers who've taken some action to create a neuroinclusive organisation say they've seen a positive impact of doing so on employee wellbeing. Furthermore, just over half (55%) have seen a positive impact on the culture of the organisation and a similar percentage have seen a positive impact on the quality of people management.

Our findings also show the importance of workplace support for neurodivergent people. Neurodivergent employees who feel supported at work by their employer are more likely to report their experiences at work (in relation to their neurodivergence) positively impact their mental wellbeing, compared to those who feel unsupported (63% vs 9%). Those who feel supported at work were also more likely to say their experience at work in relation to their neurodivergence has had a positive impact on their ability to perform well in their job, their intention to stay with their employer and the likelihood they'd recommend their employer to a friend.

Although the detail of the approach you take to making your organisation neuroinclusive will be dependent on your context and culture, we have drawn on our survey findings and key points in the [guide](#) to offer seven guiding principles to help you.

***Principle 1: Understand where you are now and commit to a long-term plan of action***

Recognise that regardless of your organisation's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, there may be some way to go to be truly neuroinclusive. Although 70% of employers say EDI is a critical priority for their organisation, just 55% say the culture of their organisation is neuroinclusive.

Remember, your organisation is by definition neurodiverse – everybody has a unique brain – so this is not just about hiring new talent; it's also about being inclusive of all the different thinkers you already have, regardless of how many have felt comfortable enough to disclose as neurodivergent.

An essential first step is to understand where your organisation is now in terms of neuroinclusion, create and commit to a plan of action, and then act on it. The important thing is to demonstrate your lasting commitment to progress.

Interestingly, our survey found that in those organisations where HR is seen to feel capable and confident to support neurodivergent individuals at work, employers reported positive impacts of their neuroinclusion activities on various organisation outcomes (see [page 17](#)). Therefore, HR upskilling in this area is important to deliver on neuroinclusion and improve outcomes.

***Principle 2: Focus on creating an open and supportive culture where people feel comfortable talking about neurodiversity***

Progress on any aspect of EDI requires people to feel comfortable talking about it. Raising awareness among all staff of neurodiversity and the importance of a neuroinclusive workplace can help to build understanding and consideration of others' working styles and preferences.

Our surveys suggest that awareness is lacking in many organisations – and addressing this must be the starting point from which to build a neuroinclusive culture. We also found that neurodiversity is talked about by managers in only 31% of organisations, and in less than half of organisations (45%) it's talked about by HR. Furthermore, just three in 10 (30%) employers have provided education and awareness-raising about neurodiversity and common neurodivergent identities for all staff within the past two years.

We need to start talking about neurodiversity, based on an understanding of what it means and its benefits for teams and organisations.

People will more readily ask for support or adjustments at work, to be able to perform at their best, if they feel psychologically safe to do so and that people won't judge or make inaccurate assumptions. However, the survey found that around three in 10 (31%) neurodivergent employees haven't told their line manager or HR about their neurodivergence. We asked why this was and, while 44% said it's a private matter that they didn't want to share, almost two-fifths (37%) said they are concerned about people making assumptions based on stereotypes, around a third (34%) said they feel there's too much stigma, and 29% said they are concerned about the possible impact on their career.



***Principle 3: Proactively consider neurodiversity in all people management interactions***

The majority of workplaces have not been designed with neurodiversity in mind. That includes people management approaches, including policies, and it's now time to change that.

Everyone's brains work differently – attention to neurodiversity benefits everybody. Don't wait for people to disclose – many may not want to.

People managers need to consider neurodiversity in the way they manage their team on a daily basis. Everyday interactions shape our working experience. People should feel included, that they're treated with dignity and respect, and that their contribution is valued. However, of those managers surveyed, only around half (51%) agreed that managers in their organisation appreciate the value of neurodiversity and the importance of having a neuroinclusive organisation. Less than half (46%) said managers feel capable and confident to support neurodivergent individuals at work.

Neuroinclusive management also involves a willingness to be highly person-centric in management style and manager assistance offered. An increased understanding of neurodiversity leads to something of a perspective shift in management. It has become clear that managing in a way that considers neurodiversity is likely to benefit the whole team.

Yet there appears to be a mismatch here, as, although 73% of employers report that their organisation encourages managers to get to know people in their team as individuals, what they enjoy doing and what they find challenging, only 46% of employees say their manager designs and allocates work based on individuals' strengths and interests.

Perhaps it could be in part due to a lack of manager training on neuroinclusion. Only just over a quarter (27%) of employers say their organisation offers training for line managers in what neurodiversity is and its value to the business. Less than a quarter (24%) say there's training on how to support neurodivergent team members and even fewer (18%) say there's training for line managers in how to respond when a job applicant or employee tells them they are neurodivergent.

It's essential that great attention is paid to ensuring a high level of psychological safety where ideas are welcomed from everybody, and people feel able to speak up (for example to ask for adjustments or call out where something isn't inclusive) without fear of negative consequences.

It's also important to critically review all people management policies and processes to make them neuroinclusive, from hiring to training and development and the way people progress in the organisation. Ensuring equality of opportunity and outcomes is vital. Formal policies and processes shape and help set the tone of the informal interactions. However, in reality, there is a long way to go in this respect as only 19% of employers say that their organisation has reviewed formal people management policies to make them neuroinclusive.

**Principle 4: Allow individual employees to be masters of their own journey**

The survey results showed a significant difference between the percentage of neurodivergent employees and the percentage of neurotypical employees who feel supported at work to perform at their best. Furthermore, just 38% of employees surveyed feel their organisation provides meaningful support to neurodivergent individuals.

Be guided by an individual in terms of what they need to perform at their best at work. Even people with the same 'type' of neurodivergence will be very different in the way they experience it, the way they prefer to work and their needs.

Don't make assumptions about what someone needs or what would benefit them at work. Allow people to advocate for what they know they need to be successful at work. Be guided by what they tell you and don't question it or compare them with others.

Invite requests for workplace adjustments from everyone to 'normalise' the conversation. Some people won't know they may be neurodivergent or may not want to share aspects of their identity at work. In addition, people can benefit from workplace adjustments for many reasons.

This appears to be an area requiring significant improvement in many organisations, as just under two-fifths (39%) of employees say their organisation ensures clear access to reasonable adjustments (for example, role adjustments or adaptations to the working environment). However, those who do this rated the practice highly in terms of its positive impact on the organisation-level and people management-related outcomes that we asked about in the survey (see [pages 19–20](#)).

**Principle 5: Embrace flexible working to enable everybody to thrive**

Flexible working benefits the organisation as well as individuals. Even minor changes can make a big difference, and some degree of flexibility is possible, even in front-line roles.

Flexible working (for example, flexibility in working hours and where you work) was the practice found to have the most positive impact on the organisation-level and people management-related outcomes that we asked about in the survey (see [pages 19–20](#)). However, although providing flexible working was the most common form of action taken to create a neuroinclusive organisation, just 45% of employers say their organisation provides it.

However, it's important to recognise that everybody works differently. Be sensitive to the fact that what works for you or others in the team may not work for everyone.

Wherever possible, focus on outcomes more than how and where people work.

**Principle 6: Practise ongoing attention to wellbeing**

Sadly, a third of neurodivergent employees surveyed said their experience at work in relation to their neurodivergence has had a negative impact on their mental wellbeing. Over two-fifths (45%) say they feel exhausted at work always or often (compared with 30% of neurotypical employees).

The most neuroinclusive organisations are constantly thinking about wellbeing, treating it as a neverending journey towards excellence. In fact, the majority (63%) of employers taking action to create a neuroinclusive organisation say this action has had a positive impact on employee wellbeing.

The people management aspect of a manager's role should be given due time and priority. Managers should regularly check in with their team and with individuals, giving people the opportunity to raise any issues and ask for support at work if they want to. This is a missing link in many organisations, with just 28% of employers saying line manager roles are designed to give adequate emphasis to good people management.

Uncover and take action on the main causes of ill health (physical and mental) in your organisation, as well as respond to individual needs and circumstances. HR should carefully monitor wellbeing sentiment and take swift action to support people and address issues based on this.

***Principle 7: Empower neurodivergent voices***

Your own neurodivergent staff are often well placed to inform you of how the organisation can be more neuroinclusive. Invite participation, but don't expect it. In addition, don't assume existing channels of two-way communication are, or feel, accessible to everyone.

For example, just over half of employees feel their organisation has an open and supportive climate where employees are able to talk about neurodiversity. And a fifth of neurodivergent employees we surveyed told us they have experienced harassment or discrimination at work because of their neurodivergence.

If you have a disability or neurodiversity-focused internal employee network, consult them on your strategy and approach, and invite members to take a leadership role in your neuroinclusion efforts. Be sure to recognise their contribution. However, remember not to over-rely on or over-burden colleagues, for example, with educating the organisation. They have a day job, and organisations need to take the lead on improving EDI. Also, don't assume someone wants to be involved just because they identify as neurodivergent or have family or friends who do.

We hope this survey report and our [practical guide](#) will help you to drive positive change towards equality for all kinds of thinkers in your organisation. You may also find our thought leadership [article](#) on this topic useful in engaging others across your organisation to understand why neuroinclusion is so important for the future of work and the potential business benefits of action.

# CIPD

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development  
151 The Broadway London SW19 1JQ United Kingdom  
T +44 (0)20 8612 6200 F +44 (0)20 8612 6201  
E [cipd@cipd.co.uk](mailto:cipd@cipd.co.uk) W [cipd.org](http://cipd.org)

Incorporated by Royal Charter (RC000758)  
Registered as a charity in England and Wales (1079797)  
Scotland (SC045154) and Ireland (20100827)

Issued: February 2024 Reference: 8545 © CIPD 2024

