



# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Report

A review of ED&I workplace trends in North America



# About us

Robert Walters Group is one of the world's leading professional recruitment consultancies, specializing in the placement of permanent, contract, and temporary positions across all seniority levels.

We operate under Robert Walters (senior permanent and interim management recruitment) and Resource Solutions (recruitment process outsourcing).

## Robert Walters recruits across:

- Accounting & Finance
- Banking & Financial Services
- Technology
- Legal, Risk, Compliance & Operations
- Supply Chain, Procurement & Logistics
- Design
- HR & Talent Acquisition

## We have offices across North America covering the following locations:

- New York
- California
- Austin
- Toronto

## ROBERT WALTERS

### Who is Robert Walters?

Robert Walters, a core brand of the Robert Walters Group, is a trusted partner for hiring managers worldwide. Our clients span from global corporations to SMEs and startups. We specialize in recruiting professionals for permanent, contract, and interim positions across the globe.

## RESOURCE SOLUTIONS

### Who are Resource Solutions?

A leading global provider of outsourced recruitment and consultancy solutions, Resource Solutions supports organizations to build, connect and optimize their workforce to face the challenges of tomorrow. We strive to make a positive social impact through solutions that champion untapped and underrepresented talent.

# 31

we recruit across 31 countries globally.

## The journey so far



### Coral Bamgboye

Head of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion  
at Robert Walters Group

The case for addressing diversity issues in the workplace has long been discussed and the evidence for the business case for it well known, however while progress at addressing some of the systemic barriers and organizational issues has resulted in improvements, and there have been marginal gains felt by some, the progress is still slow and not where it needs to be.

The impact of the past few years has had a disproportionate impact on minority, underrepresented and vulnerable groups and so now is the time to ensure that we don't take our eye off the ball. Organizations must keep their foot on the gas in continuing to hold equity, diversity & inclusion at the forefront of their focus and ensure that we don't go backwards in the journey for equality.

It is essential to ensure we remember that viewing the topic of demographic groups is complex and cannot be done so independently of the other aspects of identity. Intersectionality is becoming an increasingly important factor in how organizations are looking at their own ED&I strategies and the findings within this report support the benefits of why we need to ensure this is done, encouraging all groups in society to thrive.

As you navigate through this report, examining the career challenges that exist within the workplace through the various lenses, as myself and our leadership team are doing for our business, take the time to reflect on any of the recommendations and continue to challenge what more can be done to address the inequalities that still exist today.

We all have a role to play in moving the dial forward.

## 2023 ED&I report at a glance

### 50%

more women than men did not receive a salary increase following negotiations

### 35%

Baby Boomers are the least likely to receive a pay rise – 35% received no pay rise following negotiations

### 46%

of gay/lesbian professionals feel underpaid, 21% more than straight professionals

### 79%

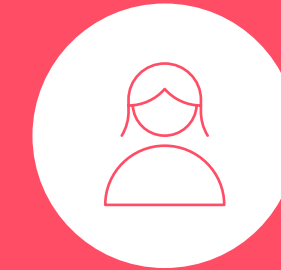
more white than black professionals earn over \$75k

### 42%

more professionals with sensory disabilities than non-disabled professionals rely on income support to make ends meet

### 1 in 5

working-class professionals have experienced discrimination surrounding their personal background in the workplace



## 75%

more Black women than white women or men note a lack of diversity within their organization as a key challenge to progression.

## 2023 ED&I report at a glance



### Shauna Cole

Founder of Hire Diverse  
[hirediverse.ca](https://hirediverse.ca)

Employers have much to gain by creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace. The benefits of diversity are no secret, ranging from direct impacts on the bottom line to fostering greater creativity throughout the organization. To realize these benefits, organizations must first attract diverse talent.

Organizations must recognize the often-invisible barriers that exist when using traditional recruitment approaches. Breaking down these barriers means organizations must make intentional and strategic efforts to reach underrepresented talent.

It's not enough to use the same job boards and outreach practices that have always been used. Instead, organizations should leverage resources like niche job boards that strive to attract diverse audiences specifically. This helps build the available talent pool and brings that diversity into the recruitment process, and company.

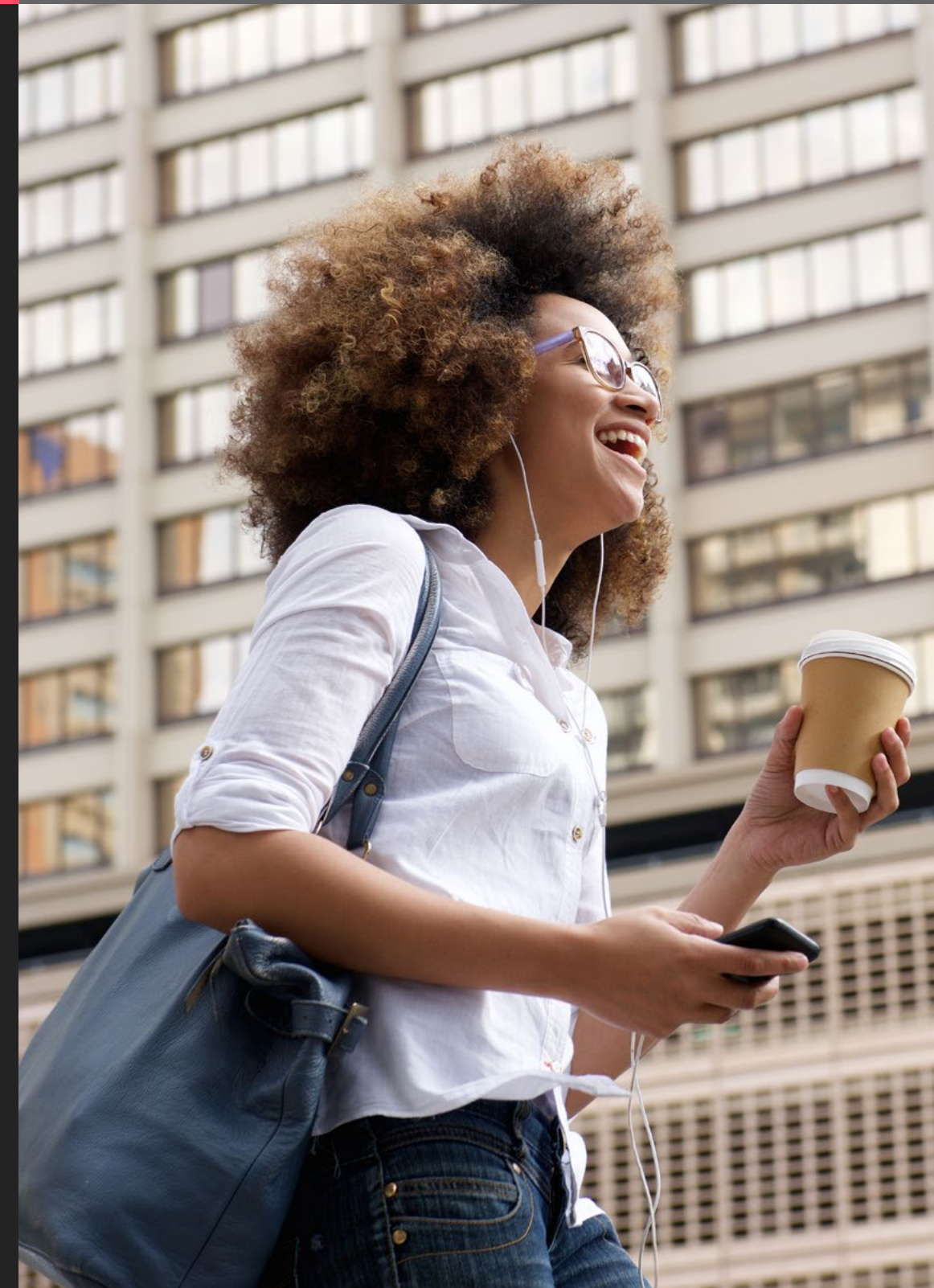
Organizations should also strive to build relationships with community groups that serve diverse audiences. The company will learn a great deal and gain insight into potential barriers, allowing them to improve and foster more inclusivity in their practices.

The end goal is to hire the best candidate. We must work to eliminate barriers so that all candidates are included in the process and receive fair consideration, regardless of their race, background, or where they are from.

HireDiverse

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# Methodology

In 2023, +6,000 professionals completed a Robert Walters survey to help us to understand the state of play of ED&I across North America. In partnership with Censuswide and Resource Solutions, Robert Walters devised a series of multiple choice and open-text questions.

By examining both quantitative and qualitative data, we have developed a comprehensive strategic report that provides valuable insights into:

- Career challenges and workplace experiences of different demographic groups.
- Strategic advice from leading ED&I organizations.
- Open ended responses from the survey representing the challenges faced.

Findings published in the report refer to the Robert Walters survey. Any external research is referenced and hyperlinked to its original source.



# A focus on gender



## A focus on gender

The importance of driving equality at the forefront of gender-centric conversations is not a new phenomenon, however the responses obtained through our ED&I survey highlight that we still have a way to go to achieve true workplace equality.

In this chapter we will address gender related disparities that persist across North America, uncovering where these issues are most prevalent and providing key recommendations on how employers can improve in various areas.

“Robert Walters aims to reinforce its commitment to lead conversations around corporate accountability and strategies targeted at equity, diversity and inclusion (ED&I). The prioritisation of ED&I dialogue has been accelerated through the efforts of business leaders, who are committing to holding themselves accountable to the customers and employees in the societies that they operate in.”



**Emilie Vignon,**  
Associate Director,  
Robert Walters California

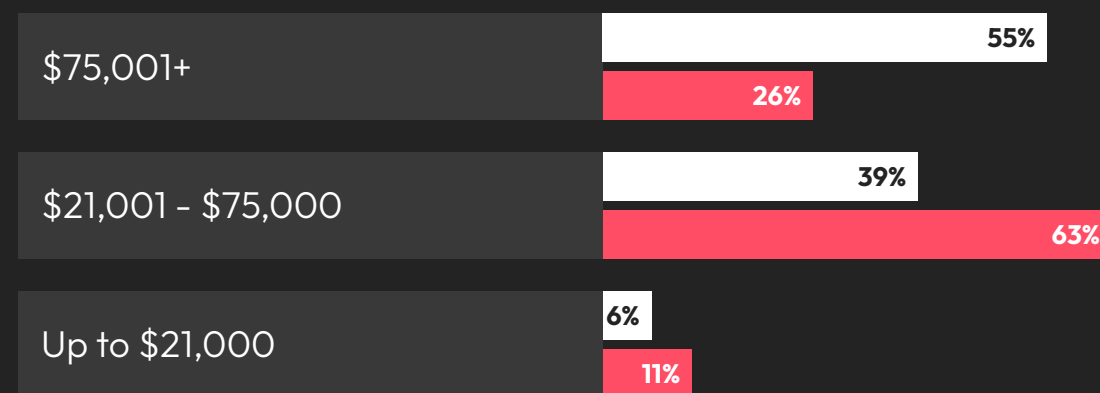
# Pay & salary negotiation

## Bridging the gap

Issues surrounding gender and pay remain an ongoing narrative and while certain legislations are in play across North America to help bridge the gap, findings suggest we still have a long way to go.

**72%** more men than women earn a salary of \$55k or more

### Total salary earnings (USD)

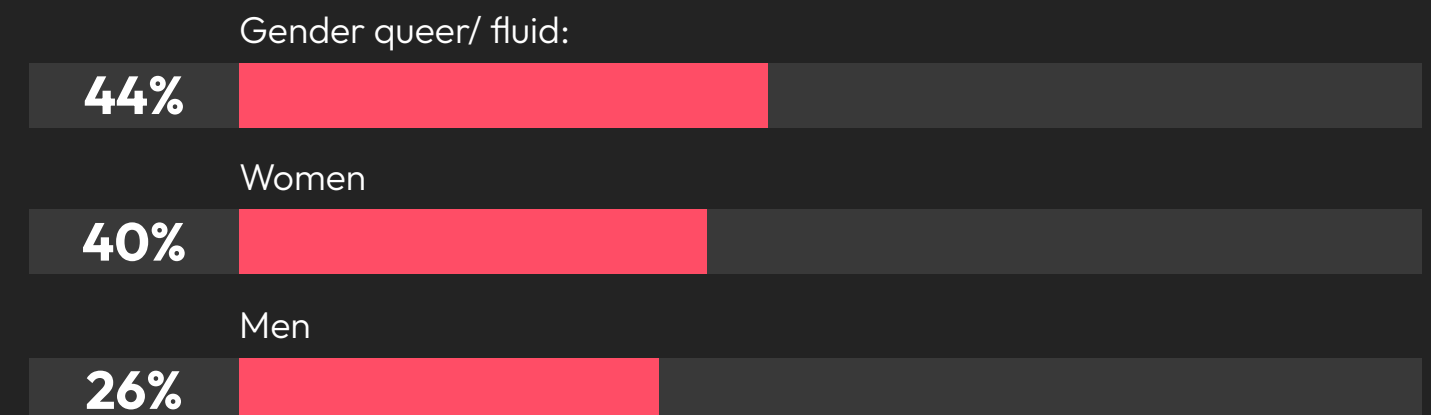


Men Women

Regardless of efforts to close the pay gap, 60% more women than men have not been offered a pay rise in the past 12 months. Combining this with the fact that 44% less women feel they can live comfortably with a good amount of disposable income, significantly more women, and other minority groups such as gender queer/ gender fluid professionals, are feeling underpaid - and underappreciated.

**18%** of women and gender queer/ fluid professionals rely on additional income outside of their job.

### % of professionals who feel underpaid



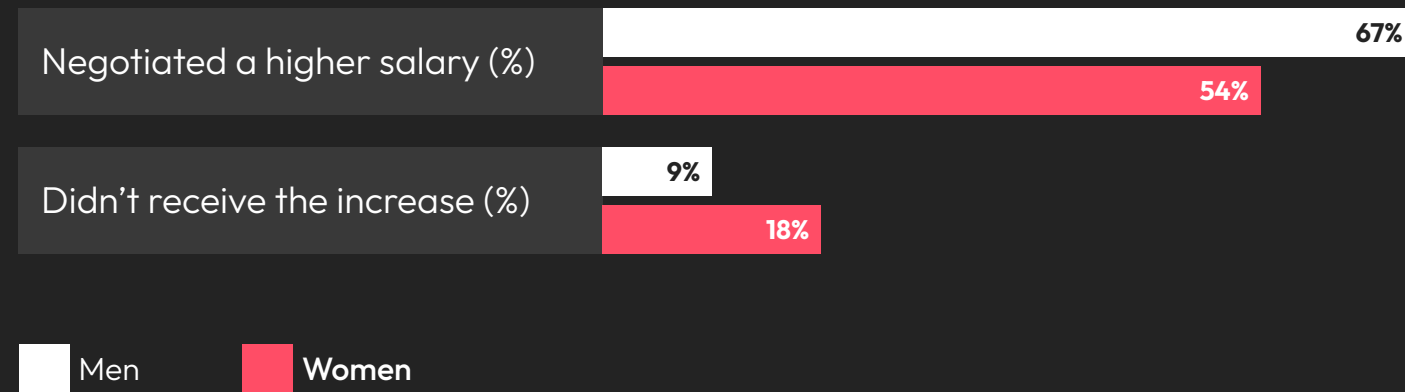
“Please pay women the same as men doing the same job.”

## Salary negotiation

Not only are women less likely to negotiate their salary, but they are also significantly less likely to be given a pay rise following conversations surrounding pay. Survey results revealed that 9% of men have received a 26-30% pay rise in the last 12 months – 125% more than women (4%).

**+19%** more men than women have attempted to negotiate a higher salary – twice as many women did not receive the increase they requested.

### Salary negotiation



A key barrier preventing women from negotiating pay is the feeling of embarrassment or lack confidence. Almost twice the number of women felt this way, with more than double the number of men than women reporting that they did not negotiate simply because there wasn't a need to.

This suggests that the communication and negotiation behaviours adopted by men, often described as more active and fact-driven, in comparison with women, who focus on rapport-based communication, may be a roadblock in the journey to achieving equal pay status.

**“I have not negotiated my salary because I fear the response.”**

# Progression & promotion

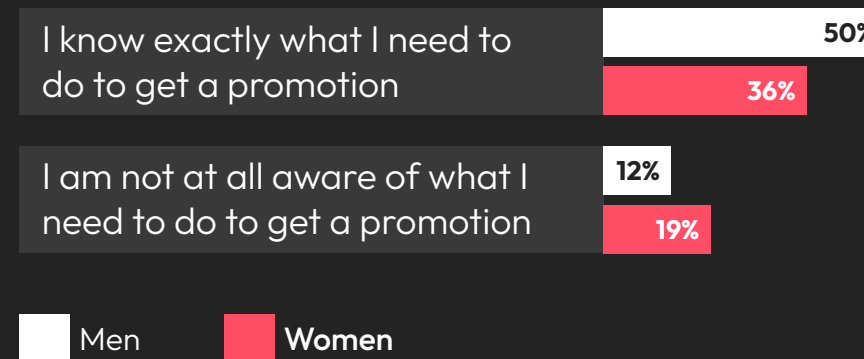
Women and certain minority groups also face major barriers when it comes to progressing to higher seniorities.

Over 1/2 of the women and 41% of non-binary professionals surveyed have not been offered a promotion within their current company.

For many, this burns down to the fact that they receive a lack of communication surrounding what they can do to aid their career progression; half of the men surveyed knew exactly what to do to get promoted and have specific targets and resources in place to get them there.

**“Women need more opportunities and fairer competition for promotions.”**

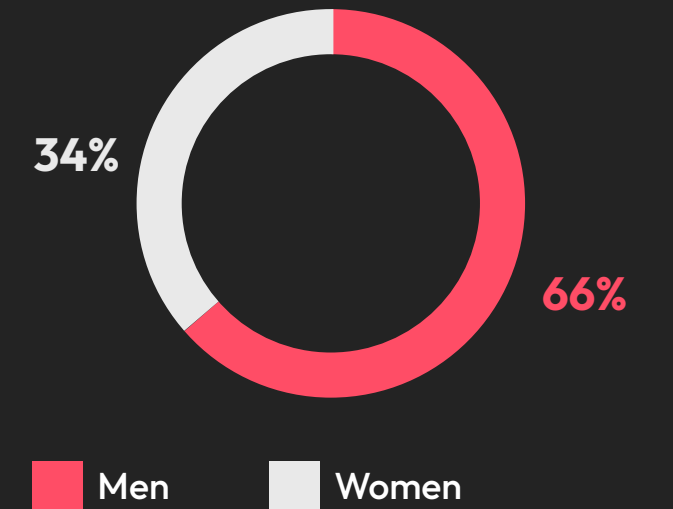
## Does your employer provide clear steps to promotion?



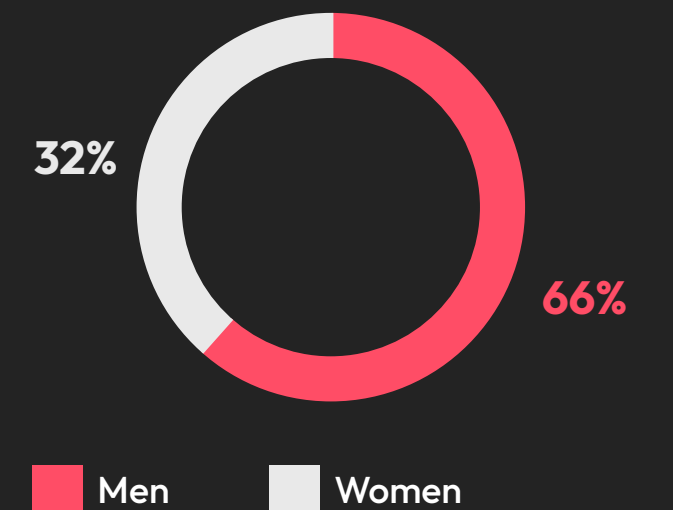
Almost 1/4 of women and non-binary professionals (23%) reported that their main challenge to progression was a lack of opportunities being available, whereas men reported that balancing work and personal commitments was the key challenge.

**“To make me feel more included my organization needs to hire more female management, the company is male driven.”**

## Seniority: director level



## Seniority: executive level



# Benefits and employer value propositions

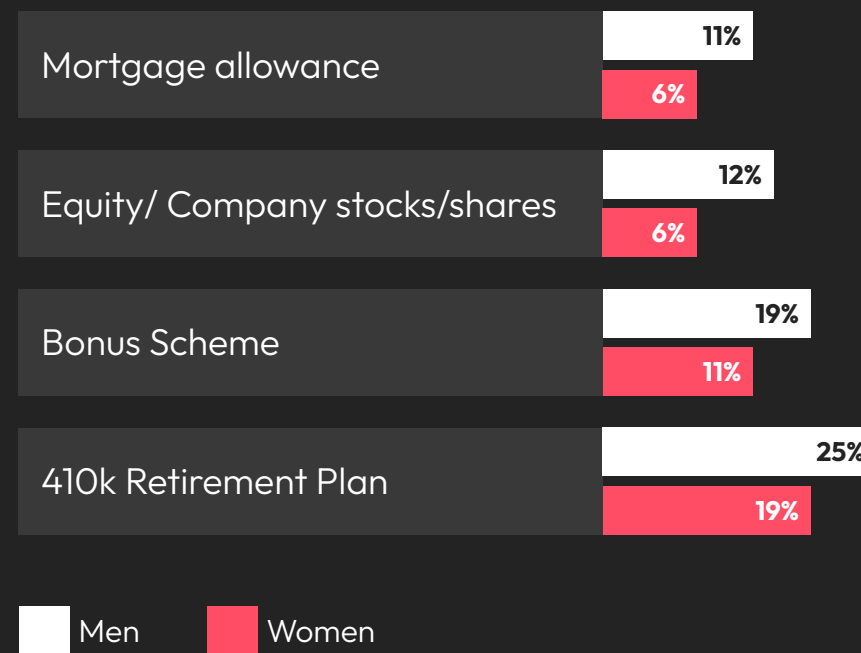
One of the most controversial conclusions of the survey is based on findings that men are found to have been provided with access to more benefits and employee value-adds in the last 18 months.

Twice as many men than women have been provided with company stocks/ shares.

Men also received 20% more monetary incentives including retirement contributions and bonus schemes. In short, men are not only receiving higher salaries, with increased confidence to negotiate these further, but they also save more money through employee benefits. This is particularly interesting when we learn that 4% more women rely on additional income.

**40%** of men receive \$151k or more in equity, in addition to their base salary, compared to 25% of women.

## Monetary employee benefits



“I would like to be offered more support and resources in the workplace, along with a fairer pay.”

Softer benefits, such as a sociable culture or the option to work remotely, were far more equal across the board, however this only emphasises that we are far from where we need to be when the topic of money and gender equality is concerned.

**35%** more men than women received bonuses that were in line with their expectations. Over half of gender queer/ fluid professionals said their bonus was not in line with expectations.

## The road to an inclusive workplace

Findings from the survey have addressed how organizations need to maximize efforts when it comes to evaluating and improving internal ED&I initiatives.

**19%** more men than women believe that their employer meets their expectations.

With employees displaying concerns around pay, lack of training and overall benefits, it has never been more vital to review strategies and ensure businesses across North America are paving the way for a more inclusive working culture.

While we take this survey data as encouragement to do more, it is important to address where gaps are closing, for example 56% of women have received a pay rise of between 1-15% in the last year. Within our annual reports over the coming years, we hope to look back on these figures and see continued improvement as we work to create equal working cultures for all.

### An aim to make workplaces safer environments for all

**44%**

of gender queer/ fluid professionals do not believe their organisation takes active steps to be demographically representative.

**39%**

do not feel their workplace is a safe environment.

“I would like my employer to be more accepting of different people.”

**67%**

more women than men do not feel their workplace is a safe environment for all employees.

**36%**

say that the way they dress affects how they are treated by management.

“Women need to be treated equally, without gender discrimination”.

## Key recommendations: gender

### Female Executive Search

Although the evidence is clear that greater gender equality at the top leads to better business results, the reality is that women remain vastly underrepresented in the C-suite. However, attitudes are shifting, and companies are hiring more women into senior roles, recognizing their immense capabilities and value.

Improving executive gender balance requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the underlying causes of gender inequality in the workplace.

Here are some recommendations that can help improve executive gender balance:

- **Address unconscious bias:** Unconscious bias can prevent qualified women being considered for executive positions. Companies should develop training programs to help employees recognize and address unconscious biases.
- **Promote gender diversity at all levels:** This includes ensuring that women have equal access to opportunities for career advancement and leadership development.
- **Recruit from diverse pools:** Employers should actively seek out diverse candidates for their job openings, by partnering with organizations that serve underrepresented groups or using job boards that focus on diversity.
- **Create a supportive culture:** A supportive culture is essential for promoting diversity. Companies should create a culture that values D&I, and that provides support for employees who are balancing work and family responsibilities.
- **Implement flexible work arrangements:** Many women face barriers to career advancement due to caregiving responsibilities. Companies should implement flexible work arrangements that allow women to balance work and family.
- **Set diversity goals and hold leaders accountable:** This can include setting targets for the representation of women in executive positions and tying executive compensation to achieving diversity goals.



- **Provide mentoring and sponsorship:** Women often face a lack of mentorship and sponsorship, which can impede their career advancement. Companies should provide mentoring and sponsorship programs that connect women with senior executives who can provide guidance and support.
- **Provide training:** Employers should provide training to all employees on topics such as unconscious bias and cultural awareness. This can help to raise awareness of issues related to ED&I and provide employees with the tools they need to address these issues.
- **Employee resource groups:** Employee resource groups can be a powerful tool for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. Employers should encourage the formation of these groups and provide them with the resources they need to be successful.
- **Conduct pay equity audits:** Pay equity is essential for promoting gender diversity in executive positions. Companies should conduct pay equity audits to ensure that women are being paid fairly and equitably for their work.
- **Measure progress and adjust strategies:** This can be done by collecting feedback from employees, tracking diversity metrics, and conducting regular assessments.

## A more successful business landscape

Improving executive gender balance is essential for promoting gender ED&I. By implementing these recommendations, employers can make significant progress in their ED&I initiatives and create a more inclusive workplace for all employees.

At Female Executive Search, we have placed women in C-level and board positions globally. There have also been strides made in regulations around the world, with quotas being brought in for Board and Management level positions. Of course, there's still work to be done.

“It is becoming obvious that women are not only capable of taking on senior roles but are thriving in them. It’s time for us to take the necessary steps to bridge the gender diversity gap and create a more equitable and successful business landscape with a balance of world’s top female and male leaders.”



### France Dequilbec

Managing Director of  
Female Executive Search

[www.female-executive-search.com](http://www.female-executive-search.com)



# A focus on LGBTQ+ identities



## A focus on LGBTQ+ identities

Closing the gap when it comes to the experiences and equity of diverse groups in the workplace is essential to cultivating a vibrant work culture that thrives on a wealth of diverse perspectives.

This chapter aims to shed light on the persistent disparities affecting the LGBTQ+ community across North America. Through careful analysis, we will identify the areas where these challenges are most prevalent and present crucial recommendations for employers to enhance their practices in diverse areas.

“The 2023 ED&I report emphasizes the diverse experiences of LGBTQ+ colleagues at work and the need for improved psychological safety, inclusion, and transparency. It calls for changes such as bias audits in recruitment, manager training, and increased focus on learning and data analysis. The chapter acknowledges both challenges and opportunities for meaningful change, offering hope for progress in next year’s survey results.”

**Tom Lakin**  
Global Practice Director, Resource Solutions, Robert Walters Group

<sup>1</sup>Ilga | <sup>2</sup>Movement Advancement Project | <sup>3</sup>Cornell University

### State of LGBTQ+ people in U.S., Canada, and beyond

# 64

There are 64 countries that have laws that criminalize being gay/lesbian.<sup>1</sup>

# 650

As of April 2023, lawmakers in 46 states in the U.S. have introduced more than 650 anti-LGBTQ bills.<sup>2</sup>

# 95%

Out of 300 peer-reviewed studies assessing the link between anti-LGBT discrimination and well-being, 286 studies (95%) found that discrimination is associated with mental and physical health harms for LGBT people.<sup>3</sup>

# Pay & salary negotiation

## Bridging the gap

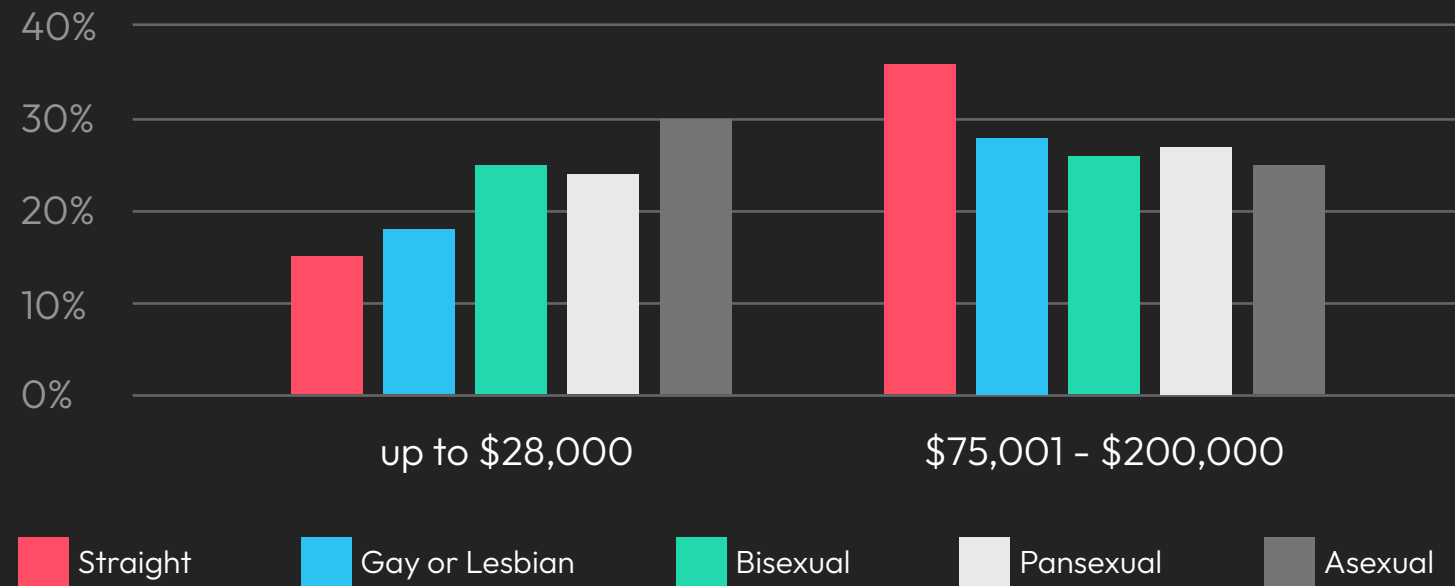
Salary disparities serve as a glaring indication of the prevailing inequity within workplace environments; survey responses from LGBTQ+ professionals identify that there is a significant need for improvement in this area.

Regardless of efforts to close the pay gap for minority groups and women in the workplace, straight men are found to be the least likely group of professionals on a salary of up to \$21k. However, when the topic of sexuality comes into play, we see disparities across male professionals, 41% of straight men earning over \$100k compared with 36% of gay men. Nevertheless, women of minority groups are found to be treated less fairly when it comes to salary, a recurring theme across our reports.

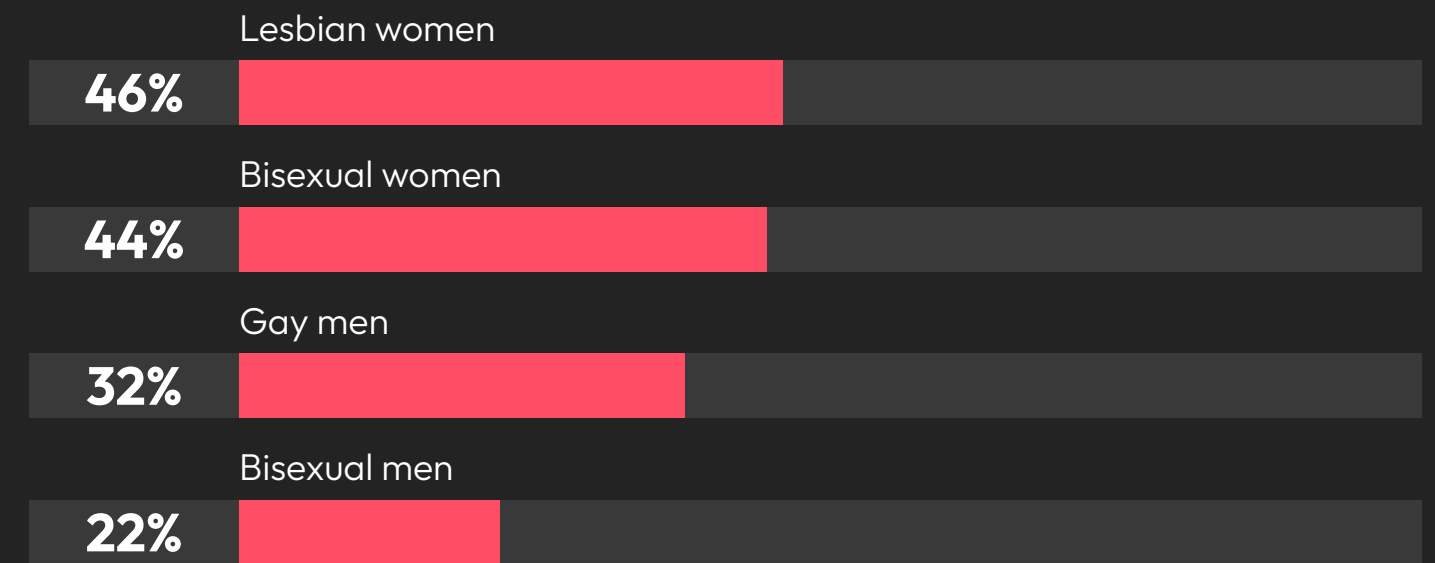
**69%** of straight men earn \$55k or more, in comparison to 35% of lesbian women.

**13%** of lesbian women earn over \$100,001, in comparison to 36% of gay men.

## Salaries



## % of professionals who feel underpaid



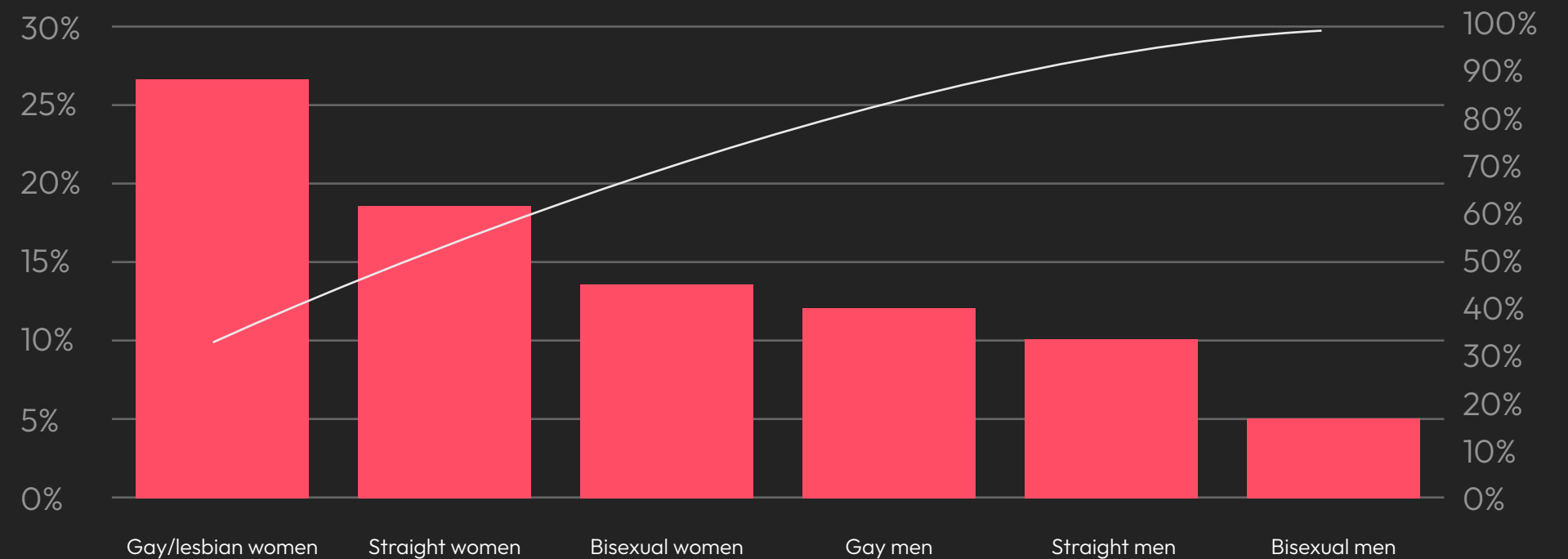
## Salary negotiation

When negotiating salary, 44% of gay/ lesbian professionals either received less than 50% of their proposed increase or no increase at all.

While 15% of lesbian women said they had not requested a salary increase because they did not believe their employer would give them one, only 5% felt they did not deserve the raise.

Upon examining the results through a gender lens, it becomes evident that the same pressing concerns surrounding the gender pay gap persist.

**% professionals who did not receive the negotiated pay increase**



Gay/ lesbian employees were found to be the least successful when negotiating salary – indicating why 38% of these professionals feel underpaid. In fact, 17% of gay/ lesbian professionals reported that they did not attempt to negotiate their salary because they did not believe their employer would give them a pay rise.

In comparison, 1/4 of straight professionals did not negotiate a higher salary simply because they did not feel there was a need to. It's interesting to note that while bisexual employees were the most likely to receive a pay increase following negotiation across the LGBTQ+ community, over a 1/4 live pay cheque to pay cheque with no disposable income.

# Barriers to progression

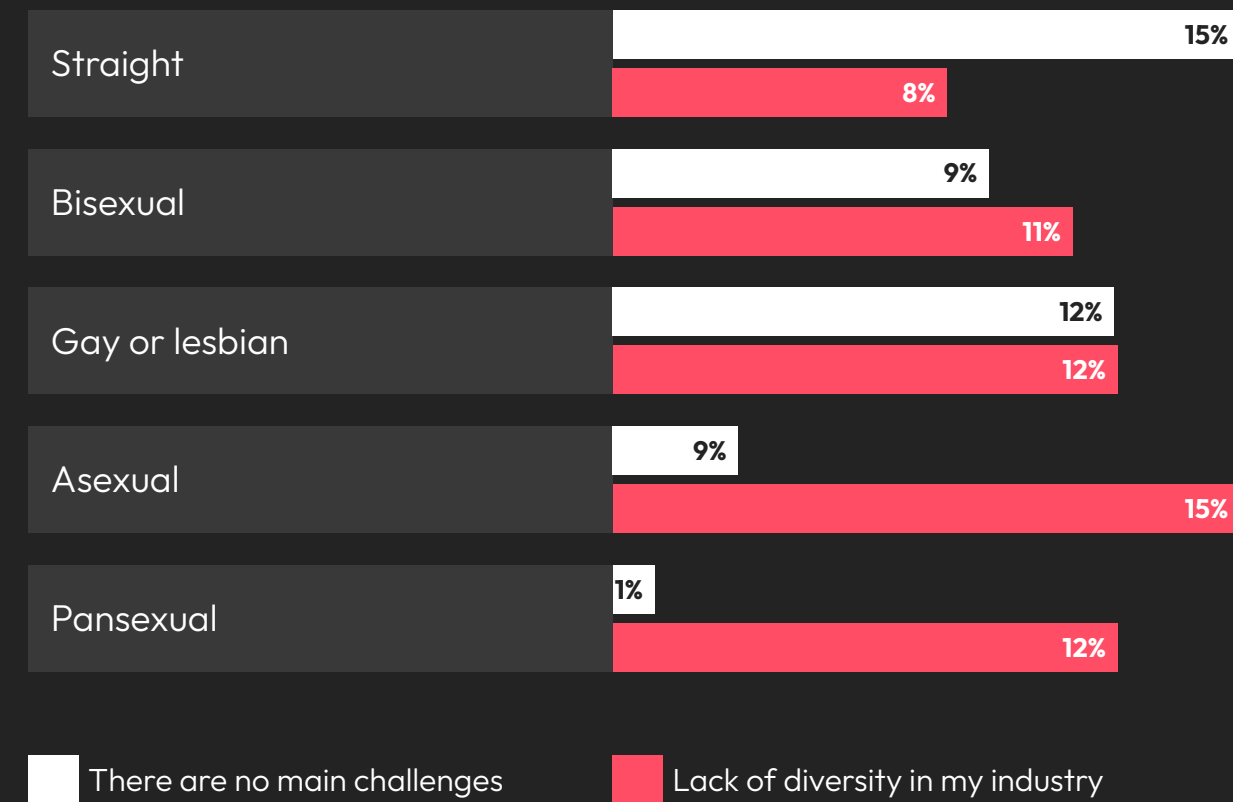
Addressing progression challenges, 1 in 5 lesbian women felt they had a lack of resources within their role, compared with 14% of straight women - 32% of pansexual women also felt this way. Additionally, 5% more lesbian than straight women felt unsuited to their company culture. In fact, 15% of all straight employees reported that they do not experience any main challenges - the highest of any group.

While a lack of resources is the top barrier for lesbian women, just 14% of gay men felt the same way - a lack of opportunities was the main challenge for this group of professionals. We are also seeing a contrast in results when comparing trans men and women, with 59% of trans women having not been offered a promotion at their current company, compared to 33% of trans men.

A lack of relationship or rapport with senior leaders was a key challenge amongst pansexual and asexual employees, with 1 in 5 stating they feel this way.

**1/4** of gay men find a lack of opportunities available at work to be the main challenge when looking to progress their career.

## Challenges to progression in the workplace



1 in 5 gay Black men experience a lack of diversity in their industry as a major career progression barrier.

# Benefits and employer value propositions

15% of gay Black men are dissatisfied with their employer’s alignment with their career expectations. This contrasts with just 6% of straight white men.

## My employer does not meet my career expectations



**12%**

of gay/ lesbian professionals do not feel their employer meets their expectations – the highest of any demographic group.

“I want my employer to provide better training programs to advance my career without a significant financial burden.”

## Lack of training for pansexual employees

Just 3% of pansexual employees have started receiving training subsidies during the past 18 months, the lowest of any demographic group – 23% also identified that a lack of training or development offered was a key challenge in the workplace when it came to progressing.

**40%**

more pansexual professionals value training subsidies as a top benefit compared to straight professionals. This is particularly evident amongst pansexual women who experience this 10% more than straight women.

“It would be nice if more money was put into our training and tools that we need to do our jobs more easily.”

– open ended response from pansexual employee.

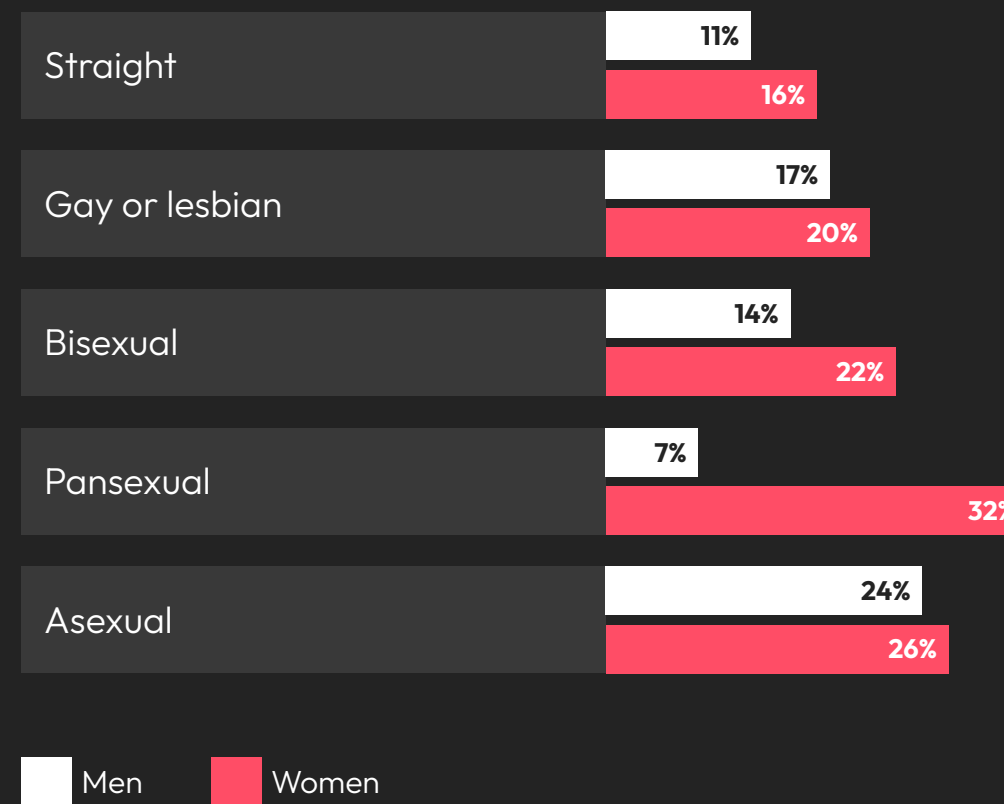
# The road to an inclusive workplace

Overall findings amongst the LGBTQ+ community have found that many minority groups do not find their organization to be demographically representative. In fact, twice the number of pansexual and asexual employees feel this way when compared to straight employees.

It's also evident that gender disparities are prevalent when breaking down results by intersectionality. An increase in gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual women than men have experienced discrimination surrounding personal demographic or background in the workplace.

**36%** of bisexual Black women have experienced discrimination surrounding personal demographic or background in the workplace.

**% employees who have experienced discrimination surrounding personal demographic or background in the workplace**



As employees express concerns regarding compensation, inadequate training opportunities, and overall benefits, the importance of reviewing strategies has never been more vital. Businesses across North America must proactively pave the way towards creating a more inclusive working culture, where these concerns are addressed and overcome.

## An aim to make workplaces safer environments for all

To create truly inclusive and thriving working cultures, we must ensure that workplaces become defenders of safety, where ED&I are not mere ideals, but solid realities. By fortifying our commitment to fairness and embracing the richness of diverse perspectives, we lay the groundwork for growth, innovation, and collective success.

# 26%

of pansexual women do not believe that no matter who they are, they can be successful in their organization.

“I feel like we could be more open about LGBTQ+ inclusion and representation.”

# 24%

of asexual employees have experienced discrimination surrounding their personal demographic or background at work.

“My organization needs to offer more respect and inclusion.”

# 59%

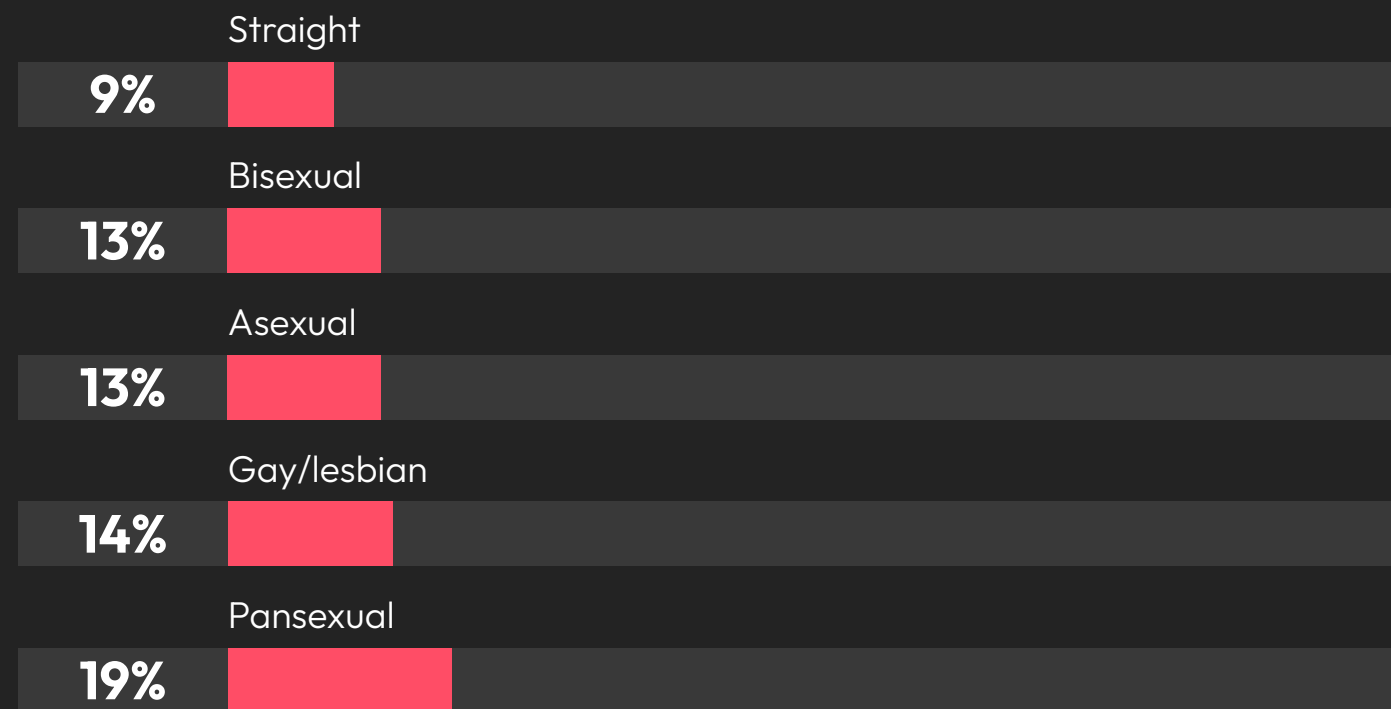
of transgender professionals said that their hobbies and interests impact their relationship with management.

“My employer should be more accepting of who I am and stop judging and discriminating against me.”



## An aim to make workplaces safer environments for all

“My organization does not celebrate or embrace peoples’ differences”



“It would make me feel more included if my employer celebrated Pride rather than ignore it and pretend it doesn’t exist.”



## Key recommendations: LGBTQ+ Hummingbird Humanity

### Developing your plan

Hummingbird Humanity builds bridges of trust in historically exclusionary spaces in services of their mission: amplify voices of the unheard. Hummingbird believes that our shared humanity is the most impactful pathway to expanding awareness and understanding, particularly around how we experience the workplace differently through our own lived experience. This evolved perspective is foundational in the work to achieve meaningful change towards a more inclusive workplace.

Borrowing from our proven methodologies, we advise companies to prioritize understanding their employees' needs, experiences, and perspectives as a critical starting point to building a DEI plan. This approach, which fosters engagement and community and elevates the voice of your employees, will also help guide and inform your efforts to make the best use of time, resources, and energy.

### Assess

Consider diverse identities when assessing employees' experiences. For example, a gay white man's experience will be very different in the workplace to a gay Black man's experience. When evaluating LGBTQ+ inclusion in your workplace, consider multiple perspectives:

- DEI: What is the current LGBTQ+ visible employee population? Do they have the support they need to progress in their career? Are they and their families included in benefits and policies?
- Social impact: What is your company doing to improve the experience of the LGBTQ+ community? How are you investing in the next generation of LGBTQ+ talent in your area?
- Well-being: What are your current strategies to ensure the physical, mental, and financial well-being of your LGBTQ+ employees?

### Strategize

The insights you've gathered are vital for your roadmap. Prioritize LGBTQ+ inclusion training in the first year and establish an employee resource group in subsequent years. Take immediate action by supporting employees in regions with anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. To address LGBTQ+ representation in leadership, pilot a mentorship program for high-performing LGBTQ+ employees.

Hummingbird **Humanity**  
an LGBTQ+ owned business

## Key recommendations: LGBTQ+ Hummingbird Humanity

### Implement

As you move forward with your roadmap, involve senior leaders and key stakeholders to set an example of inclusive leadership. Maintain feedback loops to ensure continuous LGBTQ+ input throughout the journey. Remember, developing an inclusive workplace culture is a long-term effort. Reflect on your progress, celebrate your achievements, and remain committed to further improvements.

### The 4 Lenses of Representation

Promote inclusivity by expanding your perspective on underrepresented groups and fostering an inclusive culture that values all employees and identities. To achieve genuine representation for any group, and demonstrate an authentic commitment to DEI, organizations should take a holistic approach that reaches every aspect of their workplace ecosystem.

## THE FOUR LENSES



- **People:** Attract, hire, develop, and retain diverse talent. Value diversity in recruiting and hiring. Career and succession planning. Diverse leadership pipeline.
- **Culture:** Create an engaging global workplace for all employees. Intentional, inclusive culture where everyone can thrive. Benefits meeting the needs of underrepresented experiences. Celebrating differences.
- **Customers:** Target solutions for key customer segments. Diverse new products and services. Collaboration and innovation. Representation in content.
- **Community:** Giving back to the community. Social impact programs that support marginalized communities. Volunteerism. Philanthropy. Supplier diversity.

This 4 Lenses of Representation model is a helpful tool for developing your strategic roadmap to foster LGBTQ+ inclusion. To learn more, download our [Representation Matters paper](#).

## Key recommendations: LGBTQ+ Hummingbird Humanity

### Data-driven Recommendations

The data shows we have a long road ahead to implementing steps towards LGBTQ+ inclusion. Folks are still hesitant about being open and out at work, due to their previous and current experiences of discrimination in the workplace. We do see a shift with younger generations and their visibility in the workplace. Millennials and Gen-Z are self-identifying in larger numbers than previous generations who had to remain closeted for safety and job security. This is also highlighted by the disparity in LGBTQ+ access to mentorship and sponsorship opportunities.

Additionally, the results emphasize the need for an intersectional lens, as data continues to prove that those who hold multiple marginalized identities face compounding obstacles and bias.



## Key recommendations: LGBTQ+ Hummingbird Humanity

### Increase visibility of all LGBTQ+ identities

- Highlight positive stories – Signalling to individuals that they are valued while educating others.
- Celebrate LGBTQ+ days of observance<sup>4</sup>
- Gender-neutral language – Instead of “same-sex” benefits say “domestic partner benefits”—parental leave instead of maternity and paternity.
- Education – Connect with resources such as the LGBTQ+ Workplace Education Center<sup>5</sup> which provides free and paid guides and webinars to inclusion.

### Address the intersection of historically excluded identities

- Recruitment – Broaden the diverse talent pool through intentional community and network outreach. Adopt anonymous resume screening to reduce bias.
- Feedback – Provide constructive feedback for professional development.
- Representation – Bring visibility to the intersection of your employees by engaging in conversation and connecting various communities. E.g.
  - Juneteenth (June 19th) + Pride month
  - Women’s History Month + Trans Day of Visibility (March 31st)
  - Native American Heritage Month + Two-spirit Identities



## Key recommendations: LGBTQ+ Hummingbird Humanity

### Evolve with the increased LGBTQ+ visibility in Gen-Z

- Effective Equal Employment Opportunity Commission statement - Publicly commit to DEI by including sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression in your non-discrimination policy.
- Social Impact - The next generation wants to work for a company that believes in improving the world. Invest in supporting LGBTQ+ organizations.
- LGBTQ+ outreach - e.g., Intentionally post on LGBTQ+ job boards, attend LGBTQ+ career fairs, and connect with LGBTQ+ university groups.
- Education - Gen-Z tend to be up-to-date with terminology and inclusive practices. Earlier generations must be supported to create a culture of understanding.

### Supporting LGBTQ+ employees

- Mentoring and sponsorship - LGBTQ+ professionals lack mentorship and sponsorship, hindering career growth. Offer programs connecting them with senior executives for career guidance.
- Professional development - Actively support historically excluded groups with opportunities like training, education, and growth events.
- Network and community engagement - Link LGBTQ+ staff with field-specific groups (e.g., OutinTech) and collaborate with employee resource groups for LGBTQ+ programming.
- Stretch assignments - Provide LGBTQ+ employees with opportunities to build skills and engage with key stakeholders and senior leaders.

<sup>4</sup>GLAAD Community Calendar | <sup>5</sup>LGBTQ+ Workplace Education Center



## Key recommendations: LGBTQ+ Hummingbird Humanity

### Additional LGBTQ+ guiding principles:

- Include LGBTQ+ Voices - When developing inclusion strategies, prioritize employee voices.
- Ask first - Ask how to refer to individuals, especially in the community, as certain terms may be seen as derogatory by some and reclaimed by others. E.g., ask someone if they prefer to be referred to as “queer” (as younger generations do) or if they find the term offensive.
- Don’t enforce pronouns - While using correct pronouns is key, mandating pronoun inclusion in signatures can be challenging for those who are still figuring out their journey.
- Signal LGBTQ+ inclusion - Some companies wait for LGBTQ+ employees to be open at work before making changes. The reality is, LGBTQ+ employees are already present in your organization. Your policies and messaging signal whether it’s safe to reveal their identity. Don’t wait for LGBTQ+ visibility; create an environment where everyone can be themselves.
- Self-learning - Usually the responsibility of educating others falls on those groups facing discrimination. Be proactive in educating yourself and inviting others to take it upon themselves to inform themselves on the community.<sup>6</sup>
- Inclusive language - Our language is one of the first signals an individual receives to gauge the safety and openness of a workplace. Read our inclusive language guide.
- LGBTQ+ employee turnover is significantly lower in diverse, supportive organizations, with retention up to 50% higher. A welcoming, safe environment is a key factor, with 25% of LGBTQ+ individuals staying in their jobs due to the feeling of safety and inclusion.<sup>8</sup>
- Inclusivity benefits companies and communities, increasing profits and reducing LGBTQ+ suicides significantly. This win-win is crucial for persuading executive leadership to prioritize inclusion through investments, policy changes, and other actions. Companies that offer equal benefits to all employees, regardless of sexual orientation, are likely to gain the loyalty of 88% of LGBTQ+ consumers.<sup>9</sup>

### Good For Humanity, Good for Business

Hummingbird Humanity believes in prioritizing people for greater success. Investing in inclusivity is a proven path to positive returns, not just an ideology.

- Companies with inclusion policies see a 6.5% stock performance boost, and strong partnerships with community organizations and employee groups. Diverse teams solve problems faster and are more financially successful, outperforming competitors.<sup>7</sup>

Explore diverse perspectives, educational materials, and actionable tools to foster understanding, inclusivity and allyship: [Hummingbird Humanity LGBTQ+ Insights](#)

<sup>6</sup>HH LGBTQ+ 101 Guide | <sup>7</sup>US Chamber Co | <sup>8</sup>Employee Benefit Network | <sup>9</sup>LinkedIn

# A focus on disability



## A focus on disability

Efforts in ‘closing the disability gap’ are moving at snail’s pace. While our research demonstrates notable progression in addressing other areas of workplace-based inequality, dialogue that prioritises disability is often swept under the rug.

The World Economic Forum reports that just 4% of global businesses prioritize disability inclusivity, despite 90% expressing a commitment to diversity.<sup>10</sup>

One of the recurring challenges is the inconsistent definition of disability in society. As of 2011, it was reported that over one billion people (comprising 15% of the world’s population) reported experiencing a form of disability. While we recognize the role a range of non-discrimination legislation and policies that have been implemented at macro-level across governments and health care providers play, this year’s findings suggests that those efforts are inadequate for challenges disabled professionals face in the workplace.

### Mental Health

This survey has defined mental health related difficulties as a disability. According to the World Health Organization, around 450 million people currently struggle with mental illness, making it the leading cause of disability worldwide.<sup>11</sup> Mental illness prevents nearly 500,000 employed Canadians from attending work each week and it is estimated that more than one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness (57.8 million in 2021).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>HR Brew, July 2022 | <sup>11</sup>The Crisis is Real, camh |

<sup>12</sup>Mental Illness, National Institute of Mental Health



## A focus on disability

### Supporting invisible disabilities

#### The legal definition

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities<sup>13</sup>. This does not adequately represent those suffering with several disabilities or other complex challenges that individuals face. As a result, there is no umbrella definition of disability, which increases the complexities associated with raising awareness for businesses that would like to develop effective disability inclusion strategies.

#### Hidden from society

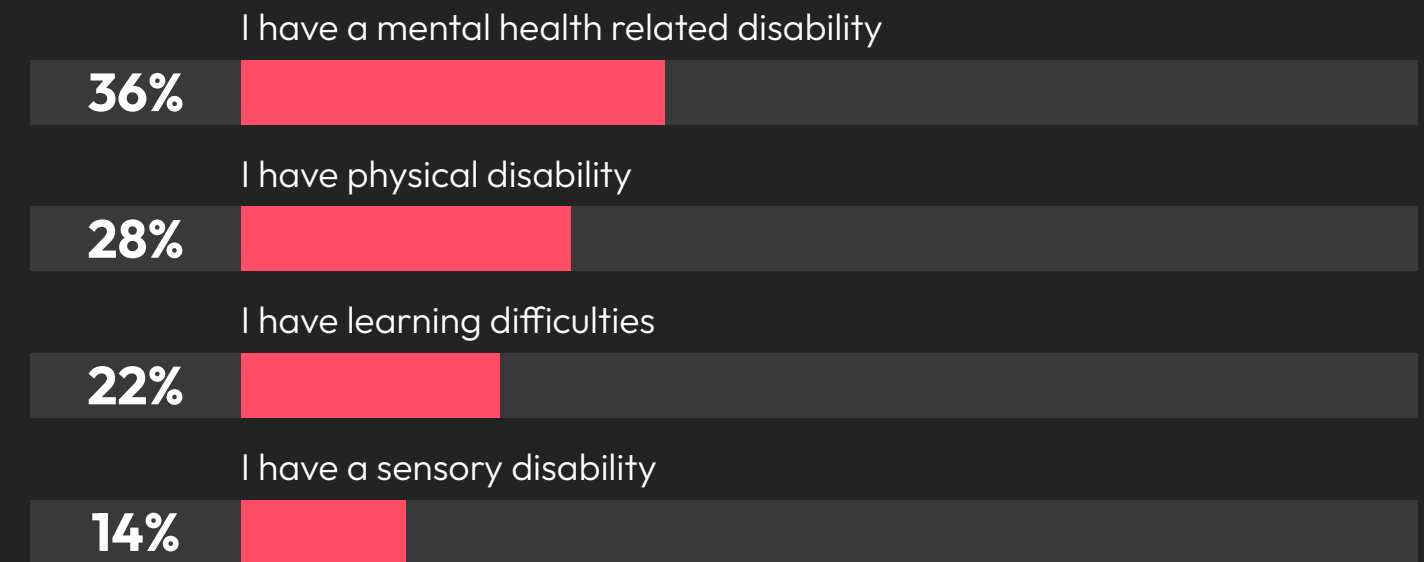
Many employees choose to under-report or hide their disabilities for a range of personal or societal reasons. This is a large contributor towards the rise of ‘invisible disability’<sup>14</sup>, which refers to hidden or unseen disabilities that affect an individual’s daily life but are not readily apparent to others. These include but are not limited to mental health and neurological disorders, autoimmune illnesses, and learning disabilities.

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Mental health related disabilities were the most reported across North America.

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### 2023 ED&I survey respondents



<sup>13</sup>How to manage the rise of the disability agenda, People Management, 2021 |

<sup>14</sup>Understanding invisible disabilities in the workplace, BetterUp, 2022

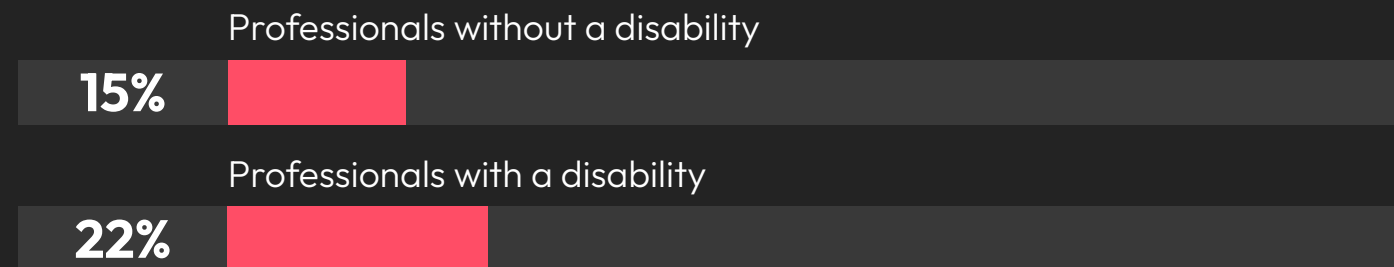
# Pay & salary negotiation

## The salary gap

Pay gaps among disabled professionals have been identified as an area with significant room for improvement.

**60%** more professionals with a learning disability earn a salary of up to \$28k. 21% more professionals without a disability earn over \$75k, when compared with those who have mental health related disabilities.

## Professionals earning a salary of up to \$28,000



**21%** more professionals without a disability earn over \$75k, when compared with those who have mental health related disabilities.

## Breaking down the intersectional data

Across professionals with learning disabilities, women face considerable salary challenges. More than twice the number of women with learning difficulties are earning salaries up to \$28k when compared to men. Furthermore, only 17% of women with a learning disability earn over \$100k, whereas 44% of men with a learning disability earn this level of compensation.

**39%** of men with a mental health related disability earn over 100k, compared with 11% of women with a mental health related disability.

In addition to gender disparities, the survey highlights the influence of socioeconomic background on salary negotiation confidence for professionals with mental health disabilities.

**36%** of professionals from semi-skilled households with mental health disabilities lack confidence in salary negotiations, compared to just 15% from higher managerial households.

# Cost of living

39% more non-disabled professionals, when compared with those with sensory, physical, or mental health-related disabilities, reported being able to live comfortably with a substantial amount of disposable income.

Professionals with sensory disabilities face a significant reliance on additional income support - 42% more individuals in this group require it when compared to non-disabled professionals.

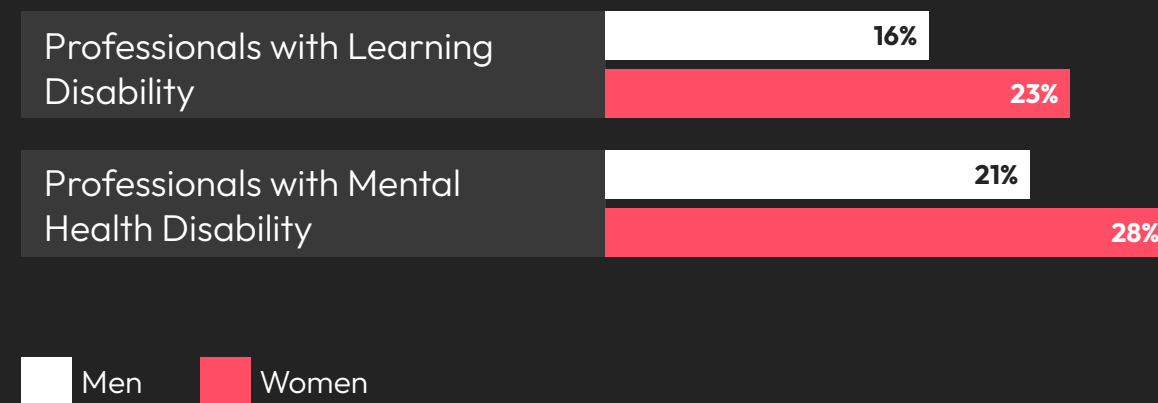
## Additional income support

Professionals with mental health-related disabilities were 47% more likely to live paycheck to paycheck without any disposable income, as opposed to their non-disabled counterparts. An analysis of this data by gender reveals notable differences in the number of professionals with learning and mental health related disabilities lacking disposable income:

**33%** more women than men with a mental health related disability live paycheck to paycheck with no additional income.

**44%** more women than men with a learning disability live paycheck to paycheck with no additional income.

### Professionals living paycheck to paycheck



# Development & progression

Employees with learning, sensory and mental health disabilities reportedly experience significant challenges when it comes to promotion opportunities and overall seniority levels.

Professionals without a disability encounter fewer obstacles in career progression, with 17% facing no challenges. In contrast, professionals with learning disabilities (3%) and sensory or mental health related disabilities (6%) experience significantly more difficulties.

Lack of self-confidence was a significant challenge reported by professionals with mental health-related or learning disabilities, affecting nearly 1/4 of them.

“Organizations must stop discriminating against people with learning disabilities and mental health issues and treat them with respect like everyone else. Having these issues does not mean that we are stupid or incompetent - we deserve to be respected like everyone else.”

## Seniority levels

There's a clear correlation between professionals with and without a disability and their seniority: professionals with mental health disabilities are 69% more likely to be in entry level roles than executive/board level roles and just 6% of professionals with learning difficulties are in leadership/executive roles.

1/4 of professionals with a mental health related disability are not at all aware of what they need to do to get a promotion.

1 in 5 professionals with learning disabilities feel they are given a lack of resources or time to go 'over and above' in their role.

1/4 of professionals with a mental health related disability are not at all aware of what they need to do to get a promotion.

“I want my employer to provide more support when we need it. As someone who has a learning disability it's very hard for me to work under such hard conditions. Knowing that someone will help me a little bit more will make me feel better.

Please stop judging me for performance standards of those without disabilities.”

## Development & progression

### Promotion opportunities

With many disabled professionals reporting that they do not feel supported enough in their role, it is unsurprising that the data surrounding job promotions correlates with this.

**1/4**

of professionals with learning or sensory disabilities have not been offered a promotion at their current company, compared with 44% of professionals who do not have a disability.

Again, when we break down the intersectional data across men and women, this is even more prominent, with 40% of women with a learning disability having not received a promotion at their current company, compared with 12% of men with a learning disability.

“I want my organization to recognize that despite being disabled, my education and work ethic are nearly unmatched in my workplace, yet others are favoured. I’d like equitable opportunities to advance and not be passed over.”

These findings remain evident across professionals with mental health related disabilities, particularly when addressing pay satisfaction across seniorities. Almost half (47%) of entry-level professionals with a mental health related disability feel underpaid.

“My employer should provide avenues for growth instead of trying to make things less stressful. Treat me like I am valued and have the same potential as other high performers by giving opportunities and responsibilities that I can achieve even if they may be more difficult for me.”



# Benefits and employer value propositions

The survey revealed significant workplace dissatisfaction among professionals with physical disabilities; 9% strongly disagreed that their employer meets their expectations. The results also identified a clear gender disparity within this group:

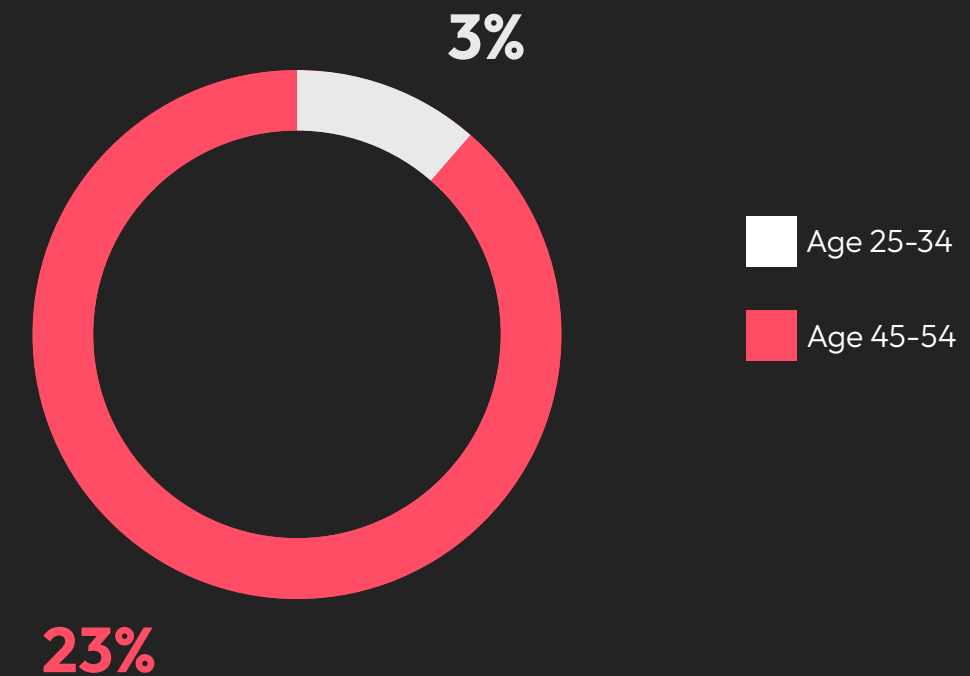
**67%** more women with a physical disability feel underpaid compared to men.

This difference raises concerns about pay equity and suggests that women with physical disabilities may face additional challenges biases in the workplace.

**“For me to feel more included, my employer should not make my physical disability an issue.”**

Additionally, professionals with a physical disability in senior or team lead positions are the least likely to feel that their workplace meets their expectations, more than one in five (23%) physically disabled professionals aged between 45-54 feel this way. This suggests that seniority does not necessarily translate into better workplace experiences. Participants in this age group express that becoming disabled has been a significant challenge to progressing in their careers and feel that their disability has rendered them less competitive.

**% people with a physical disability that do not feel their workplace meets expectations**



# The road to an inclusive workplace

The survey results revealed that almost double the number of individuals with a learning disability (14%) believe their organization has not taken active steps to be demographically representative, in comparison to professionals without disabilities (8%). Additionally, 16% of professionals with a learning disability feel that their organization does not celebrate and embrace differences, compared to 8% of professionals without disabilities. 29% more women with a learning disability feel this way.

**“For me to feel more included at work, my organization could have more compassion for people with learning disabilities.”**

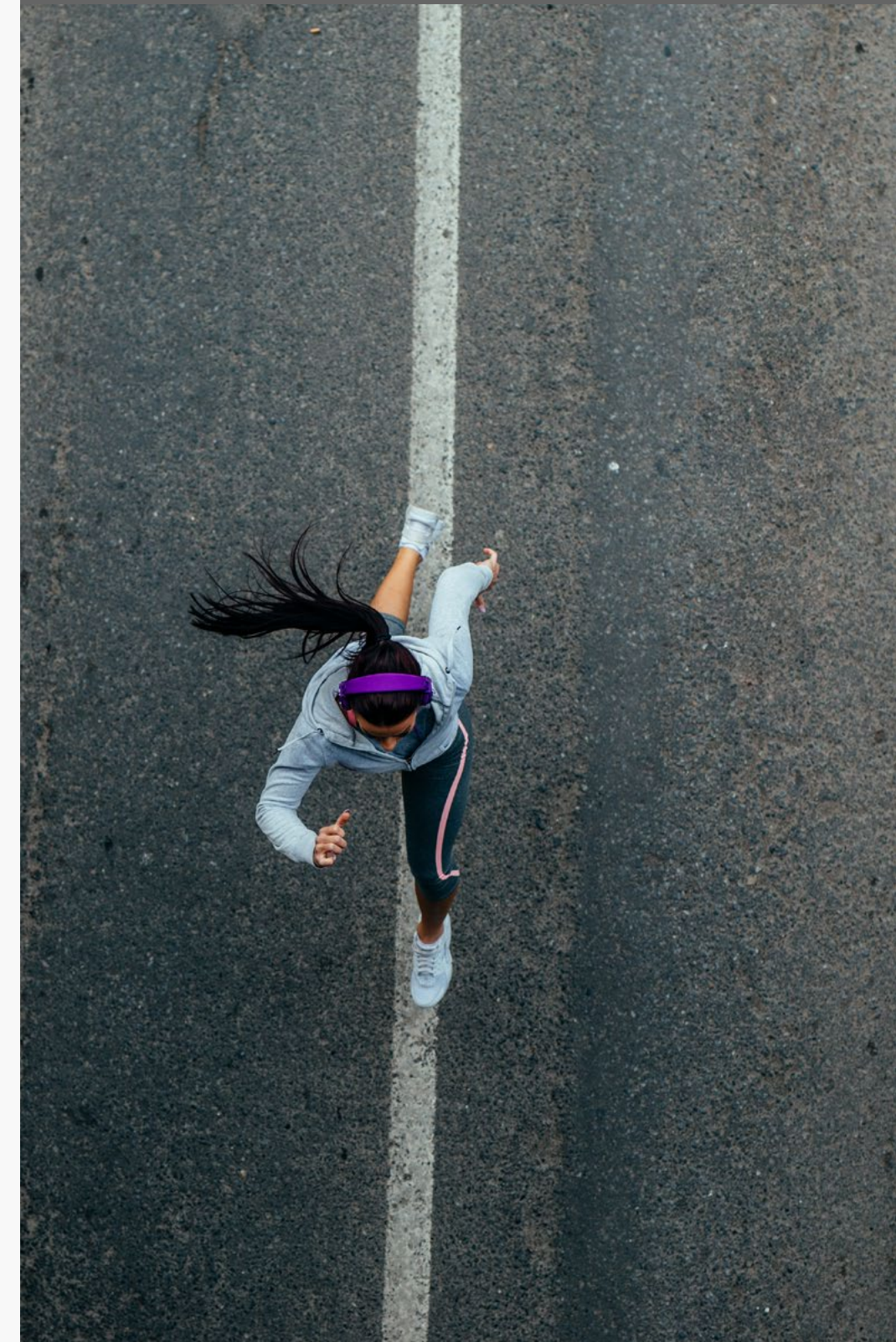
Regarding professionals with mental health related disabilities, 16% do not feel that their managers take the time to understand their personal circumstances, such as family, cultural background, health, or disability. This is 37% higher compared to professionals without disabilities. Furthermore, the analysis highlights that double the number of women, as opposed to men, with mental health-related disabilities share this sentiment.

**Almost twice the number of professionals with mental health related disabilities do not perceive their workplace as a safe environment for all employees, when compared to non-disabled professionals.**

## Improved understanding required surrounding mental health

18% of professionals with mental health related disabilities feel that their disability is not effectively understood by their managers. Moreover, 21% of these professionals do not feel comfortable discussing their disability with their managers and colleagues. In contrast, only 8% of professionals with sensory disabilities experience similar challenges in discussing their disabilities openly. This indicates a need for improved understanding and communication regarding mental health disabilities in the workplace.

**“Please understand that my mental disability cannot be just turned on and off.”**





# Key recommendations: Ready, Willing & Able

Ready, Willing and Able is focused on building more inclusive workplaces and the fuller inclusion of individuals on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability in the labour market. Although the experiences of individuals with disabilities in the workplace vary, the persisting inequities and barriers highlight the need for greater inclusivity.

To initiate change, organizations must shift their attitudes towards disability, recognizing its strength rather than viewing it as a weakness. The following recommendations outline actions that businesses can take to enhance inclusivity. Research shows that actively recruiting, accommodating, supporting, and retaining employees with disabilities cultivates a flexible and supportive workplace culture, benefiting all employees and the business's overall performance.

## The Foundations

### 1. Build and foster a culture of inclusion

Creating a culture of inclusion means taking real actions across the entire employment lifecycle. Start by promoting clear communication and transparency in all aspects of your firm/organization. Address unwritten rules or norms in the workplace; these are likely creating barriers and unintentionally excluding individuals with disabilities from full participation and opportunity. Consider implementing a mentorship program that employees can use to navigate the often complex formal and informal systems that exist in every workplace.

**“Demonstrate that your workplace is a safe space to disclose a disability, if someone feels comfortable doing so, and normalize requests for accommodations.”**

### 2. Implement disability inclusion metrics, as part of your ED&I goals and strategies

Develop and track disability inclusion metrics to measure your progress in creating an inclusive workplace. Set targets related to the representation of employees with disabilities at different levels within the organization. Regularly review and analyse requests for accommodations at the various stages of the employment cycle. Use those metrics to identify areas for improvement and celebrate successes. Conduct employee surveys to gauge the experiences of employees with disabilities and gather feedback on inclusivity initiatives.

**READY  
WILLING  
& ABLE**

## Key recommendations: Ready, Willing & Able

“Remember that the accommodations an individual employee may require can change over time, so create mechanisms to revisit accommodations regularly.”

### 3. Flexibility in recruitment and interview processes

For larger organizations, establish Employee Resource Groups focused on disability inclusion. These voluntary, employee-led groups provide a supportive network for individuals with disabilities and allies. ERGs can offer insights and suggestions, contribute to shaping inclusive policies and practices, and organize events to raise awareness. Encourage participation from employees with and without disabilities to foster a sense of belonging and promote collaboration.



# Key recommendations: Ready, Willing & Able

## Accommodations

### 1. Understand the value of having a culture of accommodations

Evidence shows that providing accommodations for an employee often has business and morale benefits well beyond the specific application of that accommodation. For instance, using visuals or pictures to accommodate those with low literacy or disabilities can also benefit individuals working in a non-native language or those who process visual information faster than written instructions. Similarly, flexible scheduling as an accommodation has shown positive effects. Inclusive workplace design benefits all employees, fostering a normalized process for requesting accommodations.

### 2. Familiarize yourself with the duty to accommodate

As an employer, it is important to understand and comply with the duty to accommodate. This means making reasonable adjustments to accommodate employees with disabilities. Familiarize yourself with local laws and regulations, train managers, and HR personnel on how to identify and implement appropriate accommodations.

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“Remember, accommodating workplaces are workplaces that thrive, with the typical accommodation costing a business from nothing to \$500 dollars, while increasing productivity.”

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### 3. Provide reasonable accommodations proactively

Offer opportunities to request accommodations at every stage of the employment life cycle. And make sure systems are in place for employees to do this. Get feedback from and regularly check with employees to ensure their needs are being met and adjust as necessary. An inclusive employer anticipates, where possible, potential barriers and addresses them before they become obstacles to productivity and inclusion. This demonstrates your commitment to creating an inclusive environment where employees feel supported and valued.



# Key recommendations: Ready, Willing & Able

## Retention

### 1. Equal opportunity for career development

Review and remove barriers and biases in promotion processes. Provide clear pathways and expectations for training and competencies needed for role changes and advancement. Make career advancement for people with disabilities an E&DI goal and hold the organization accountable for successful outcomes.

### 2. Continuously educate and train employees about ED&I

Provide continuous education and training on disability and inclusion topics. Offer workshops, webinars, and online resources like [theinclusiveworkplace.ca](https://theinclusiveworkplace.ca). Cover areas such as effective communication, fostering inclusivity, and accommodating individual needs. Encourage knowledge sharing and create a culture of learning and support.

### 3. Ensure that there are equitable opportunities for employees with disabilities

Retain employees by providing growth opportunities. Offer accessible and equitable professional development programs, including inclusive training, mentorship, and job shadowing which will enable individuals to explore and expand their horizons.

### 4. Conduct regular accessibility audits

Regularly assess workplace accessibility by conducting audits and remove barriers identified through these audits. Make your office space inclusive for individuals with diverse disabilities, considering wheelchair accessibility, signage, sensory elements, and assistive technologies. Similarly, evaluate technology, websites, and communication channels for equal access. With a significant portion of the population self-identifying as having disabilities, accessibility audits ensure alignment with employees, prospective talent, and customers.

For more information on these recommendations, as well as free resources and training to help you create an inclusive workplace visit: [theinclusiveworkplace.ca](https://theinclusiveworkplace.ca)



# A focus on age



## A focus on age

As the working world continues to evolve, the far-reaching implications of the global pandemic and cost-of-living crisis continue to unfold and societal, financial, and work-related concerns are affecting each generation differently.

Even before the pandemic, one of the critical areas of concern for human resources was combating the challenges presented by managing an multigenerational workforce.

This report aims to highlight important ED&I considerations for businesses that are currently transitioning from the benefits of having multiple generations in the workforce and understanding what the new landscape will look like - for each of these generations.

Age and its relationship with ED&I as a topic is driving change in the workplace and adjusting various gender related stereotypes.

**It is critical to adopt the traditional approach of segmenting our insights by age groups into the following demographic profiles, particularly in a time when the differences between the workforce are so prevalent<sup>15</sup>:**

Generations	Born	Current Ages
Gen Z	1997 – 2012	11 – 26
Millennials	1981 – 1996	27 – 42
Gen X	1965 – 1980	43 – 58
Boomers	1955 – 1964	59 – 68

<sup>15</sup>Age Range by Generation, Beresford Research

# Pay & salary negotiation

Findings from the survey shed light on how each generation approaches negotiations and how this impacts their earning potential and overall job satisfaction.

Millennials emerged as the highest earners among all age groups, with 34% earning over \$100k - only 11% of Gen Z professionals are in the same salary bracket. This unsurprisingly coincides with the fact that millennials were found to be the most successful at negotiating their salaries, with 32% receiving 75-100% of the proposed increase.

**9%** of millennials reported no increase following salary negotiations, the lowest figure among all groups.

Gen Z professionals on the other hand face challenges and are the most likely to earn up to \$21k and the least likely to earn over \$100k. This gap might stem from the fact that they are more often found in more junior positions, despite feeling deserving of higher pay and acknowledging their importance to the business.

## Gen Z professionals:

“They disrespect and bully me because I am younger, and my pay does not reflect my skillsets.”

“I really do not understand why I am being paid less than others in the company.”



## Pay & salary negotiation

### Negotiating salary

Salary negotiation gaps are particularly evident among Boomers, with over 50% admitting they have never attempted to negotiate their salary. This contrasts sharply with Gen Z professionals, of whom 35% have negotiated their pay. The Boomers' reluctance to negotiate might be attributed to their confidence in their established positions and the belief that they do not require further negotiations.

Boomers were found to be the least likely to receive a pay rise in the last 12 months: 35% received no pay increase at all.

Gen Z professionals were three times more likely to receive a pay raise.

### Gen X professional:

**“I want my organization to pay me the salary I deserve.”**

Gen X professionals, on the other hand, face their own challenges in salary negotiations. Only 22% of them received 75-100% of their proposed salary increase, leading 40% of Gen X professionals to express feelings of being underpaid for their impactful contributions to the organization.





# Progression & promotion

Gen Z and Millennials stand out as the most likely to be offered promotions, with an impressive 65% reporting such opportunities. In contrast, half of Gen X professionals are yet to receive a promotion, raising questions about the recognition of their expertise.

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“With 30 years’ experience in this company, I feel undervalued and wish my insights were appreciated more.”

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“I aspire for a promotion that aligns with my wealth of experience.”

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While Gen Z professionals show enthusiasm for promotions, they seek more active engagement with senior leaders and decision-makers. A significant 18% of Gen Z professionals feel a lack of rapport or relationship in the workplace, 57% higher than that of Boomers.

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“I wish my workplace would show off my accomplishments more and not only what my older colleagues achieve.”

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“I am overlooked based on my age, race, and gender. Even when I do produce effective ideas to become a more efficient company, credit is given to my manager.”

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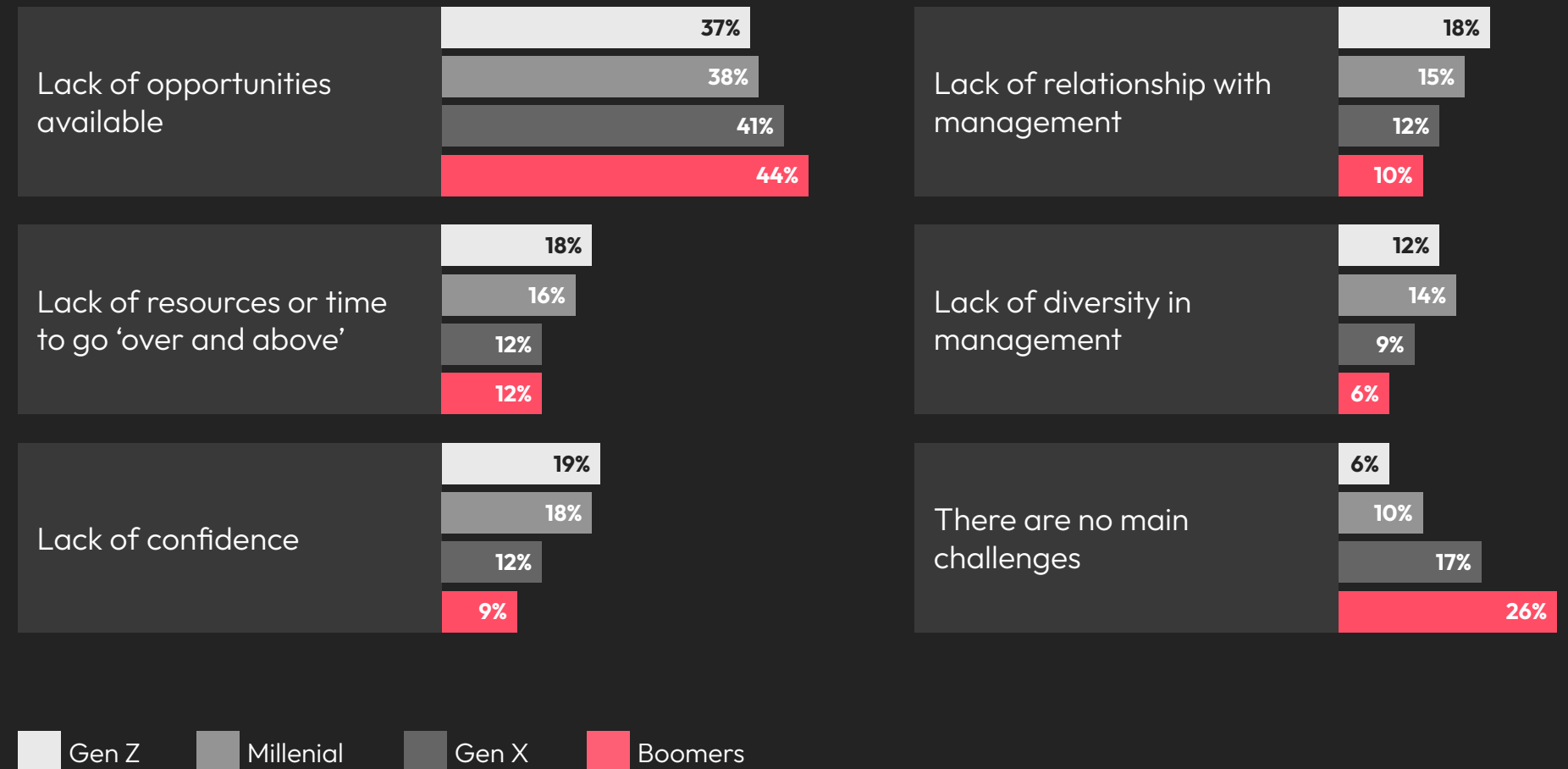
# Progression & promotion

## Challenges to progression

A key challenge for Boomers remove is more around uncertainty on how to get promoted, with 42% either only somewhat aware or not aware at all of what they need to do to receive one.

Furthermore, 44% of Boomers reported that a lack of opportunities was their main challenge to progressing, 17% more than Gen Z professionals. However, it is worth also noting that 26% of Boomers stated that they faced no main challenges, compared to just 6% of Gen Z professionals.

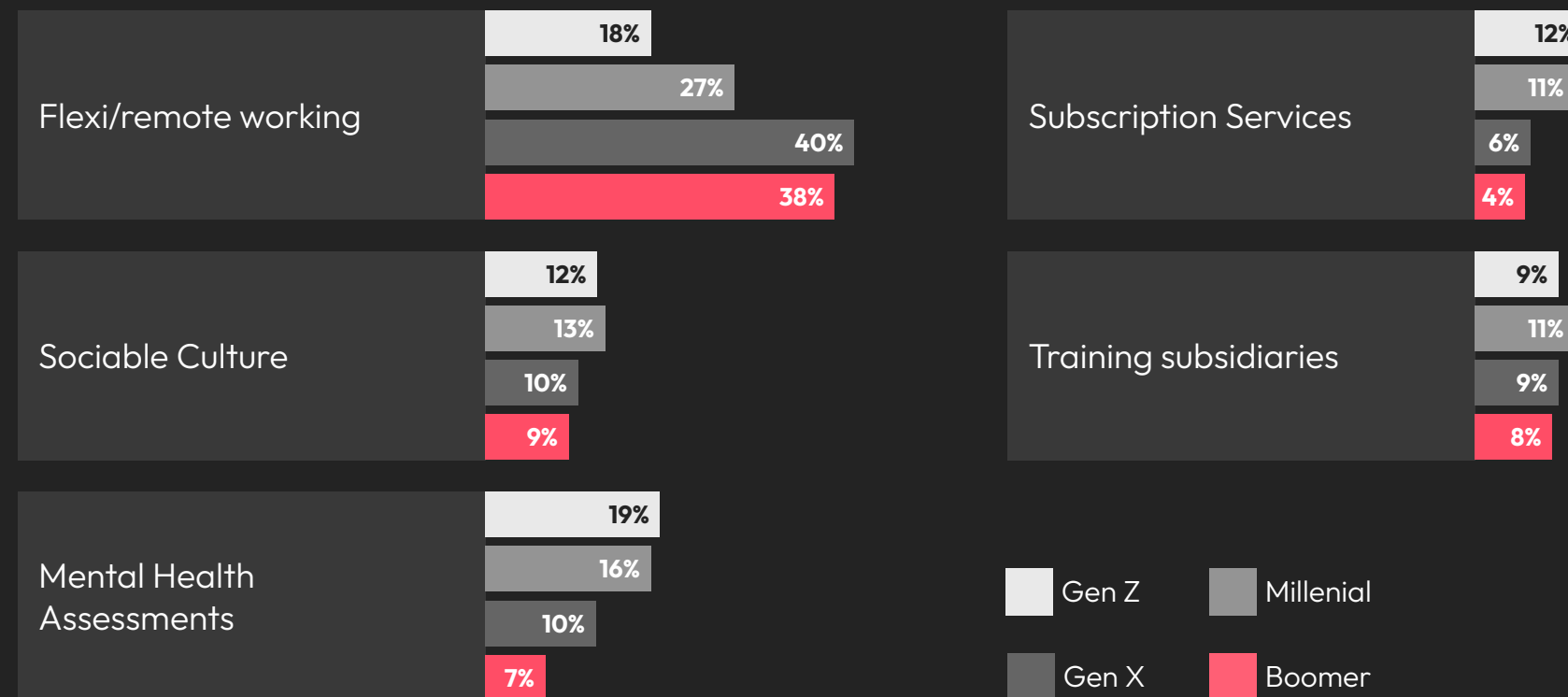
### Challenges to progression



# Benefits and employer value proposition

The analysis of the types of benefits which are preferred by each age group highlights the importance of tailoring benefits to meet the diverse needs and expectations of each generation.

## Most valued company benefits



## Embracing Flexibility: Gen X and Boomers lead the way

48% more Gen X and Boomers than Gen Z and Millennials emphasize the importance of flexible and remote working benefits, valuing the freedom to balance work and life responsibilities.

### “I want my employer to:”:

“Offer more flexibility. Most of my job could be completed at my home office which would save me 2 hours a day of travelling/expenses.”

“Offer flexible working style so that I can balance my working hours.”

## Benefits and employer value proposition

### Sociable work cultures: Gen Z and Millennials seek connection

29% more Gen Z professionals and Millennials than Gen X and Boomers recognize the significance of sociable work cultures. For these younger generations, creating meaningful connections and collaborative environments are key elements in their ideal workplace.

**“My employer should”:**

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“Encourage social relationships within coworkers and should make the workplace feel like home.”

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“Host more company social events, so we can get to know one another.”

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“Provide more opportunities to go to the office to socialize with the others who works there.”

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### Mental Health: Gen Z and Millennials prioritize assessments

A focus on mental well-being is gaining prominence, with Gen Z and Millennials being more likely to prioritize mental health assessments as part of workplace concerns. Recognizing the significance of employee wellness is becoming integral to creating a nurturing work environment.

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“I want my organization to acknowledge the ways in which the excessive and perpetually increasing demands of the role are contributing to worsening mental health for many.”

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“Leaders in this workplace could learn to understand that you do not have to push down your feelings and emotions - you do not have to treat mental health as taboo or wrong.”

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### Subscription services in demand: Gen Z and Millennials opt for rewards

The preferences of Gen Z and Millennials lean towards modern benefits, including subscription services like Netflix. These rewards add a touch of personalization and convenience to their overall work experience.

### Training subsidiaries across all generations

Training subsidiaries are a common desire shared fairly across all generations. The commitment to continuous learning and growth is a shared value, going beyond age boundaries.

## The road to an inclusive workplace

Survey responses have highlighted how it is crucial to recognize the generational differences that shape employees' experiences and perspectives.

Gen Z professionals demonstrate distinctive concerns in relation to discrimination and workplace trust. 17% have experienced discrimination based on their personal demographic or background, the highest percentage among all age groups. Additionally, 16% of Gen Z do not believe everyone, irrespective of their identity, can be successful in their organization, a sentiment 37% more prevalent than that of Boomers.

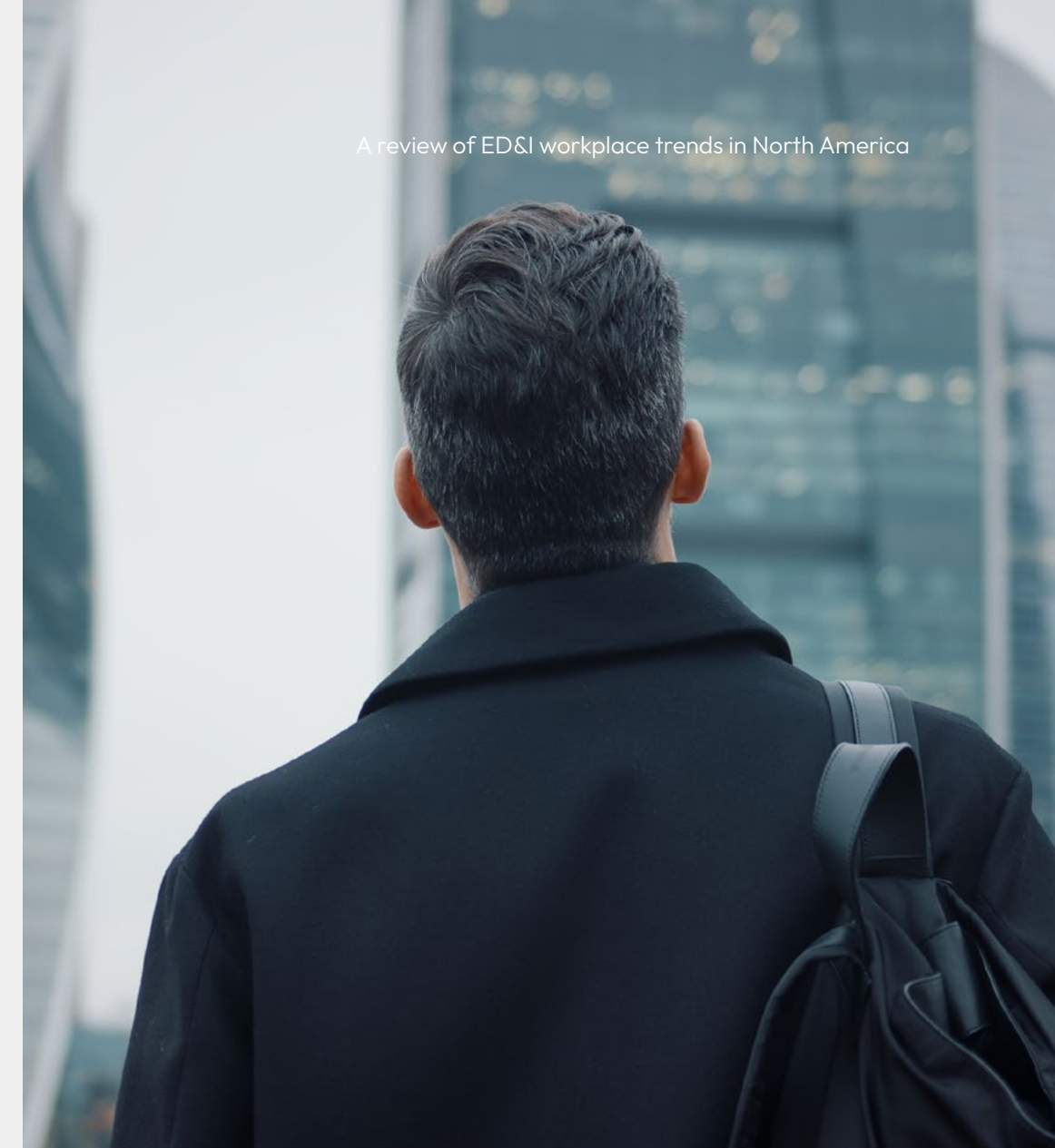
**18%** of Gen Z professionals do not trust their organization's leaders to stand up for what is right, 57% more than Boomers.

A significant challenge in creating an inclusive workplace for Gen Z professionals lies in ensuring that managers understand and support their personal circumstances. 1 in 5 Gen Z professionals feel that their managers fail to understand their unique needs. Moreover, workplace dress code holds greater significance for Gen Z and Millennials, with 48% of them believing that how they dress directly influences how they are treated by management.

### ED&I Influence

Younger professionals were found to be more vocal about the importance of ED&I in the workplace. Almost double the number of Gen Z and Millennials view ED&I as a key issue when compared with Gen X and Boomers. This shifting perspective indicates a growing awareness and appreciation of workplaces that value diversity for a more united and progressive working world.

Additionally, the lack of diversity in management positions is perceived as a significant challenge to career progression, with double the number of Gen Z professionals expressing concern when compared to Boomers.



**63%**

The data also reveals that 63% of Gen Z and Millennial professionals would consider leaving their roles if they or others in their organization experience discrimination.

## Persistent gender disparities

It is important to also understand how different age generations experience and perceive gender disparities. Boomer women were found to experience the most workplace challenges:

**160%** more Boomer men earn over \$100k, when compared with women in the same age group.

Moreover, 20% more Boomer men have received a pay increase in the last 12 months, when compared with Boomer women, despite more women requesting higher salaries (55% vs. 43%). The data also highlights that 41% of Boomer women feel underpaid, a higher proportion than Gen Z and Millennial women (37%) and Boomer men (29%).

**50%** less Boomer women than men believe their opinions are valued in the workplace.

While Millennials are still earning slightly more than Gen Z, the data shows a promising progression in terms of the number of women receiving promotions. However, it is evident that considerable work remains to bridge the gender pay gaps across all generations.

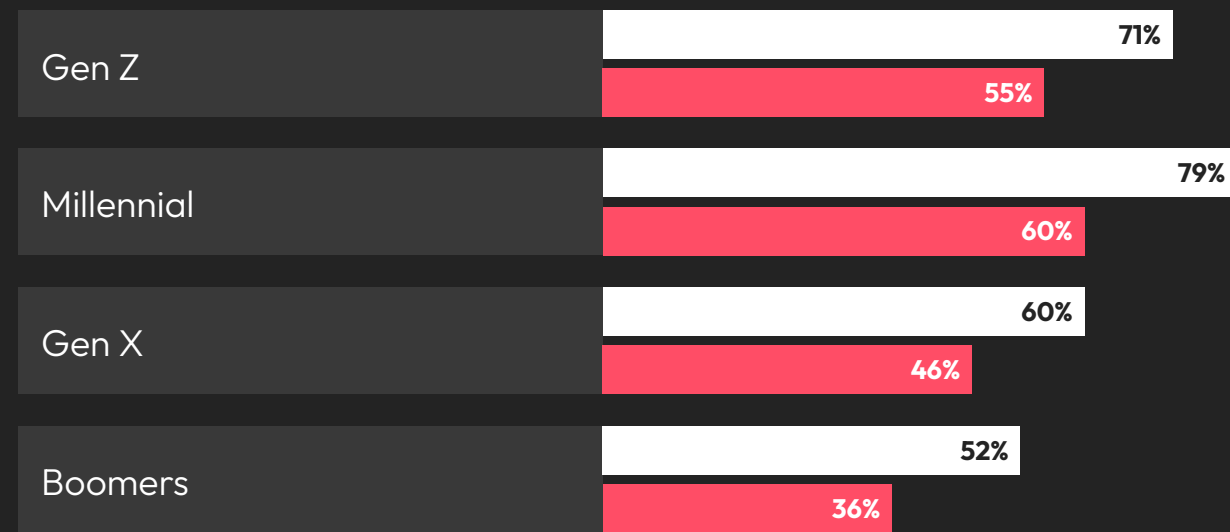
More than double the number of Gen Z men than women earn over \$100k.

Additionally, 18% of Gen Z women, compared to 13% of Gen Z men, do not believe that everyone, regardless of their identity, can be successful in their organization, highlighting the need for greater inclusivity and equal opportunities for all.



## Persistent gender disparities

% responders who received a promotion in the last 12 months



Men Women

“Employers should promote/reward based solely on performance and not gender or relation to management.”

“Women need more promotions and to be treated more equal.”



# A focus on race and ethnicity



## A focus on race and ethnicity

“In previous discussions, Robert Walters has stressed the critical role of movements like #BlackLivesMatter in elevating conversations about racial and ethnic disparities. As we introduce this report in a world adapting to the “new normal” and heightened awareness of evolving social justice concerns, we explore the roles of race and ethnicity in shaping ED&I dialogues within workplaces.

Our observations from the past year highlight a pressing need for progress in key areas. Salary negotiations continue to reflect inequalities and equitable career development opportunities remain a core focus to knock-down barriers facing underrepresented groups.

This report aims to provide valuable insights while also inspiring actions to advance ED&I efforts”.



### Dayna McGill

VP of D&I at Resource Solutions,  
Robert Walters Group

### Ethnicity and Race

Race is a socially defined concept sometimes used to designate a portion, or “subdivision,” of the human population with common physical characteristics, ancestry, or language. The term is also loosely applied to geographic, cultural, religious, or national groups. Self-reported race frequently varies owing to changing social contexts and an individual’s possible identification with more than one race. Ethnicity is social categorization based on an individual’s membership in or identification with a particular cultural or ethnic group.

Adapted from the [APA Dictionary of Psychology](#)<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup>American Psychological Association, Race and Ethnicity

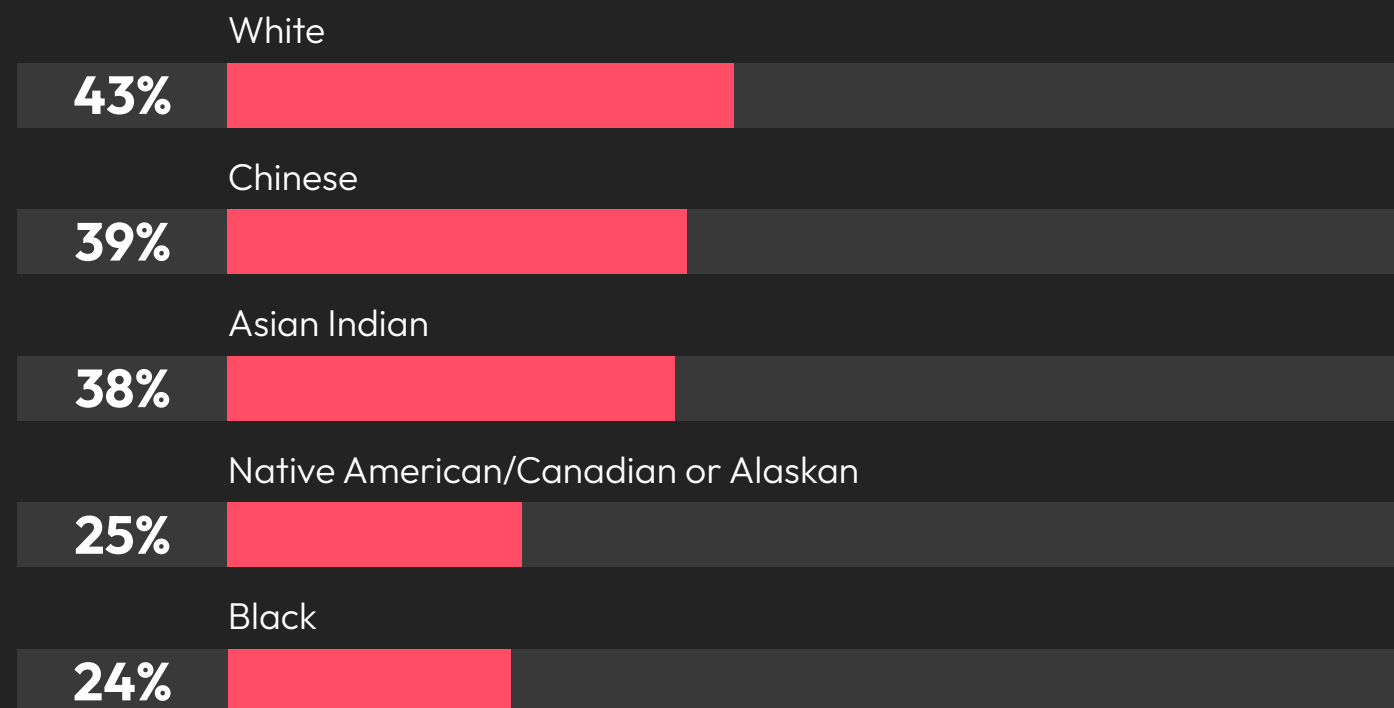
# Pay & salary negotiation

## Racial disparities amongst black professionals:

2 in 5 white professionals earn more than \$75k per year, surpassing Black professionals by a substantial 79%.

Digging deeper into entry-level salaries, we find an interesting pattern. The number of Black professionals earning entry-level salaries of up to \$21k is double that of white professionals.

### % of professionals earning over \$75k



## Gender related concerns

An even more pronounced gap emerges when looking at gender breakdowns. Less than ¼ of Black women earn over \$75k, revealing a significant contrast to their white counterparts. In contrast, just 5% of white males earn up to \$21k, while 15% of Black women are in this lower income bracket.

Looking at salary negotiations, while there's just an 8% difference in the number of negotiations attempts between white and Black professionals, the outcomes differ greatly:

**17%** more Black professionals report not receiving a salary increase after negotiations.

This gap is even more pronounced among Black women, with 67% more Black women than white men experiencing no salary increase, despite 60% of them having engaged in negotiations.

**“I wish my organization wouldn't treat people unfairly because of their race or gender.”**

## Pay & salary negotiation

### Salary negotiation among professionals of Indian descent

While the salary gap looks slightly more positive when comparing white professionals with those of Indian descent, survey results highlighted that half of these professionals feel underpaid, 56% more than their white counterparts.

Interestingly, 1/4 of white professionals chose not to negotiate salaries simply because they did not feel they needed one - 136% more than professionals of Indian descent. Additionally, 22% of professionals of Indian descent avoided salary negotiations because they were unsure how to, indicating potential leadership and career guidance issues.

#### Notable gender disparities were also evident:

**80% more women of Indian descent than men reported a lack of salary increases in the past 12 months.**

### Exploring ethnic differences in compensation

2 in 5 professionals who are not of Hispanic or Latiné origin earn salaries exceeding \$75k, while just 23% of Puerto Rican professionals are in this salary bracket - a 78% difference. Looking at salary negotiations, over ¼ of Cuban professionals chose not to negotiate their salaries because they believed their employer wouldn't provide one. This was 80% more than professionals who are not of Hispanic or Latiné origin and suggests this may be due to an overall perspective on the effectiveness of salary negotiations within the Cuban community.

Hispanic women also face significant gender disparities: Hispanic managers who are women are much less likely to earn +\$55k (49% vs 74%). This may reflect the difficulties surrounding when negotiating salaries, as 36% of them did not get a pay rise after doing so in a legal role - 17% more than non-Hispanic women in the same role. Hispanic women who are directors also rely on additional income streams more than their non-Hispanic counterparts (22% vs 10% for women and 8% for men). This may also explain why 17% of Hispanic women do not feel their employer meets their work expectations, compared to only 4% of non-Hispanic women directors.

Survey results also revealed that Hispanic women have less opportunities for career advancement than non-Hispanic women - 65% have not received a promotion at their current company, while working in entry level or executive positions.

### Salary challenges for indigenous communities

Although racialized professionals have been found to be more likely than their non-racialized, non-Indigenous counterparts to earn a bachelor's degree or higher, they are less likely to find jobs that offer the same compensation in the years following graduation. Findings in the survey support this, with professionals from certain demographic groups, including indigenous communities, being 173% less likely to earn a salary of \$100k when compared with white professionals. Certain benefits available also saw big gaps, with 60% more white professionals having access to training subsidiaries.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Statistics Canada, *Racialized Canadians less likely to find good jobs, 2023*

# Cost of living

When analyzing the financial circumstances of professionals, as well as monetary based workplace benefits, we shed light on further inequalities across both race and ethnicity.

**15%** more professionals that are not of Hispanic or Latiné origin live comfortably with ample disposable income compared to Mexican and Puerto Rican professionals.

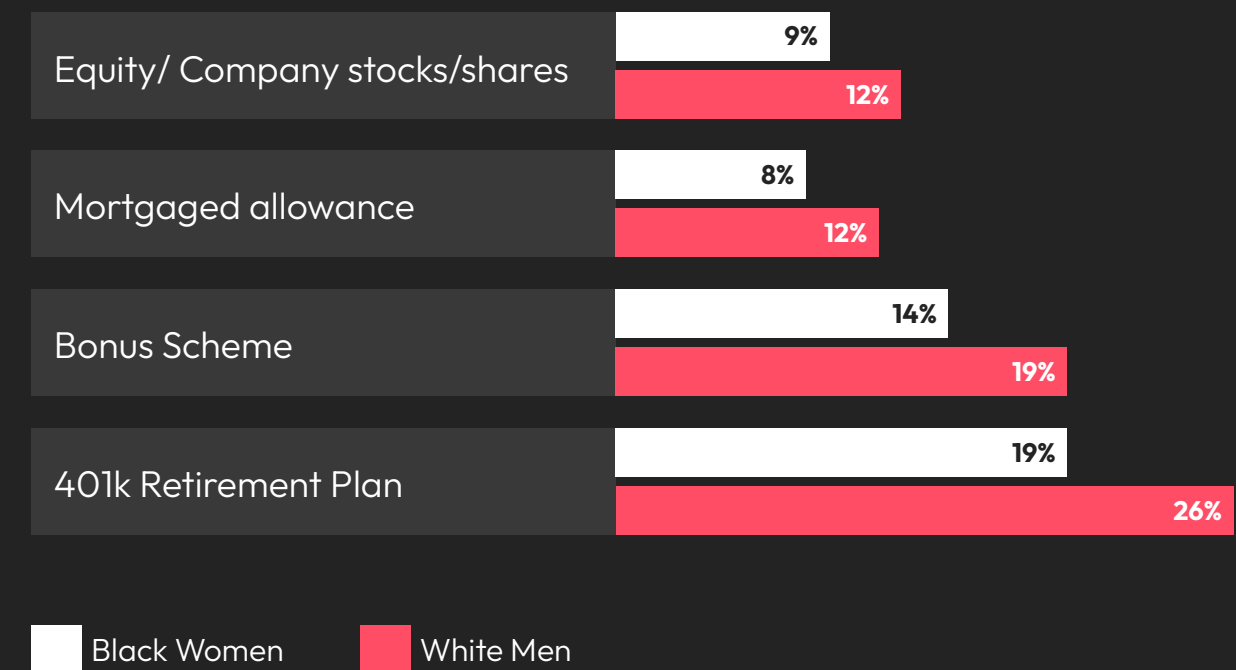
## Financial challenges for Black professionals:

7% more Black than white professionals' live paycheck to paycheck without disposable income or rely on additional sources of financial support. This is even more pronounced among Black men, with 60% more Black than white men reporting these challenges – 14% more than white women.

While Black women were found to grapple more with the cost of living, white men are significantly more likely to receive monetary incentives and workplace benefits, suggesting large variations in the types of financial support provided across different demographic groups.

**50%** more white men than Black women received mortgaged allowances in the last 12 months.

## Workplace Monetary Benefits



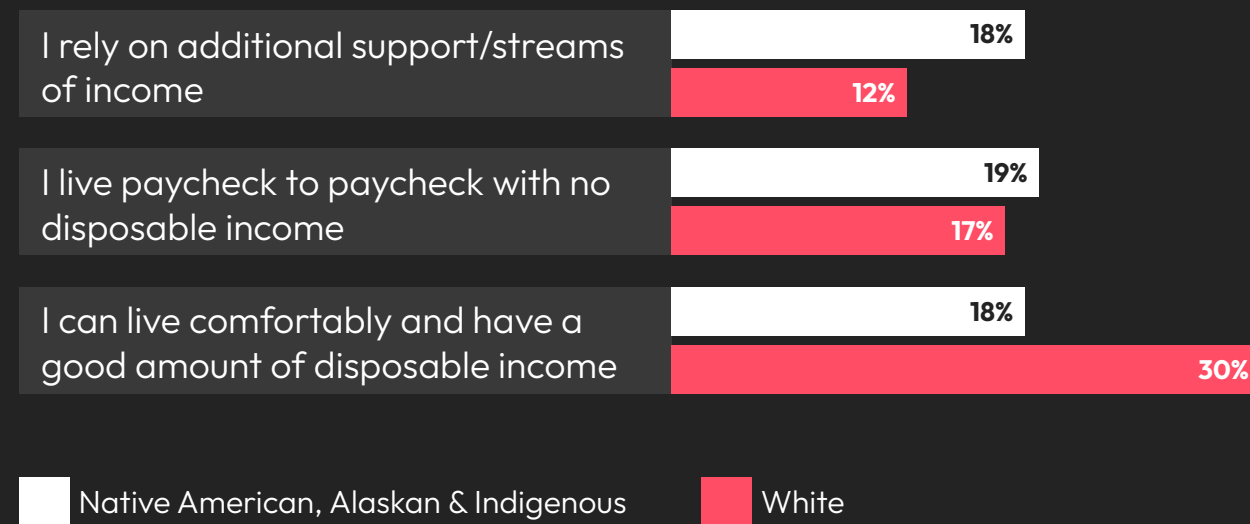
## Cost of living

### Financial challenges for Native American, Alaskan and Indigenous professionals

67% more white than Native American, Alaskan and Indigenous professionals reported the ability to live comfortably with a substantial amount of disposable income for savings and unrestricted spending.

**50%** more Native American, Alaskan and Indigenous professionals rely on additional support or alternative income streams to get by.

### Cost of living comparison



# Development and promotion

## Progression challenges for black professionals

1 in 5 white professionals occupy director or board level positions, compared with just 14% of Black professionals.

“Stop hiring all white senior leadership with one token diverse hire to save face.”

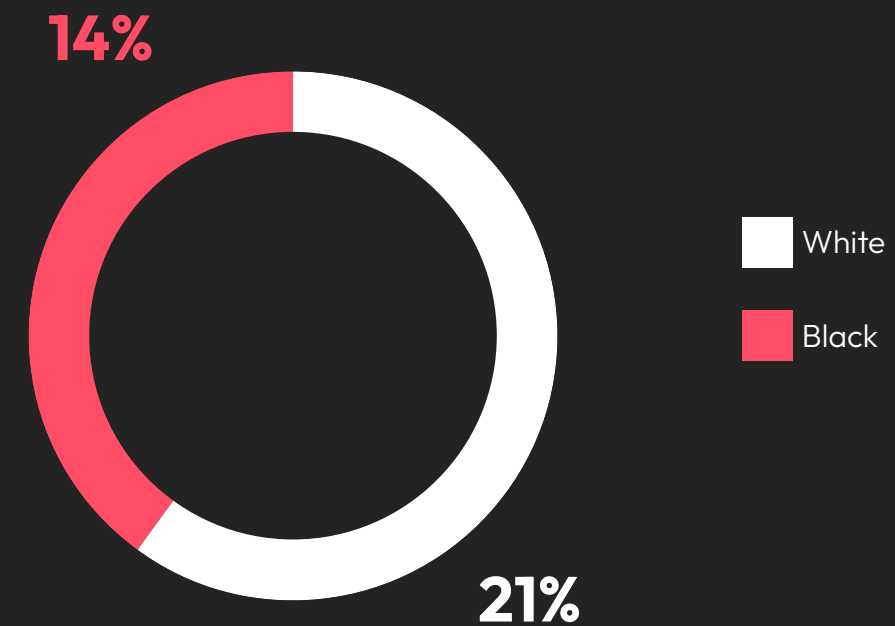
Looking further into promotion challenges faced by Black professionals, particularly Black women, we uncover several key findings:

- 42% of Black women have not received a promotion during their time in their company – this is 31% more than white men.
- 1 in 5 Black women are either unsure of the steps required for promotion or need more support to improve their understanding of the promotion process.
- The most common challenge for Black women surrounding career progression is a perceived lack of opportunities - twice as many Black women as Black men express this concern.

**16%** more white men than Black women have been provided with a clear understanding of what is needed to secure a promotion by their employer.

“I would like to see more females of ethnic minorities in Senior Management positions.”

% professionals at director or board level



## Development and promotion

“My organization has a culture of old white men making decisions. Things have been changing, but very slowly.”

### Promotion challenges for Chinese professionals

Over half of Chinese professionals (56%), as opposed to other Asian professionals, report not having received a promotion during their time at their current company, despite a relatively low percentage (13%) being unaware of what they need to do to secure one.

**1/4** of Chinese professionals believe that their main hurdle is a lack of advancement opportunities available.

11% more white women than Chinese women were offered a promotion, highlighting differences in promotion rates between these groups.

### Promotion challenges for Native American, Alaskan and Indigenous professionals:

Among Native American, Alaskan and Indigenous professionals, 1/4 express a complete lack of awareness when it comes to the steps required to get a promotion. Almost 1/4 (24%) of these professionals believe that they have not progressed due to a lack of opportunities within their organizations.

A notable 20% attribute their lack of progress to a lack of rapport or relationships with management, senior leaders, and decision-makers. This sentiment is particularly pronounced among this group, with 43% more professionals feeling this way when compared to white professionals.

A lack of Indigenous role models, particularly in the banking and finance sectors, also acts as a significant barrier to employment and progression. Recent research found that 82.9% of the surveyed employers have an employment equity committee, but only 34.3% have an Indigenous representative on their committee<sup>3</sup>. Findings in our survey emphasize this; 73% more professionals from demographic groups which include indigenous communities do not trust their organizations leaders to stand up for what is right, when compared to white professionals.

<sup>3</sup>FDM Group, Employment Barriers for Indigenous People 2023



# Company culture – creating an inclusive workplace

## Representation and discrimination:

63% more Black professionals than white professionals believe that their organization has not taken active steps to be demographically representative. Furthermore, 11% more white professionals than Black professionals believe that their organization celebrates and embraces peoples’ differences.

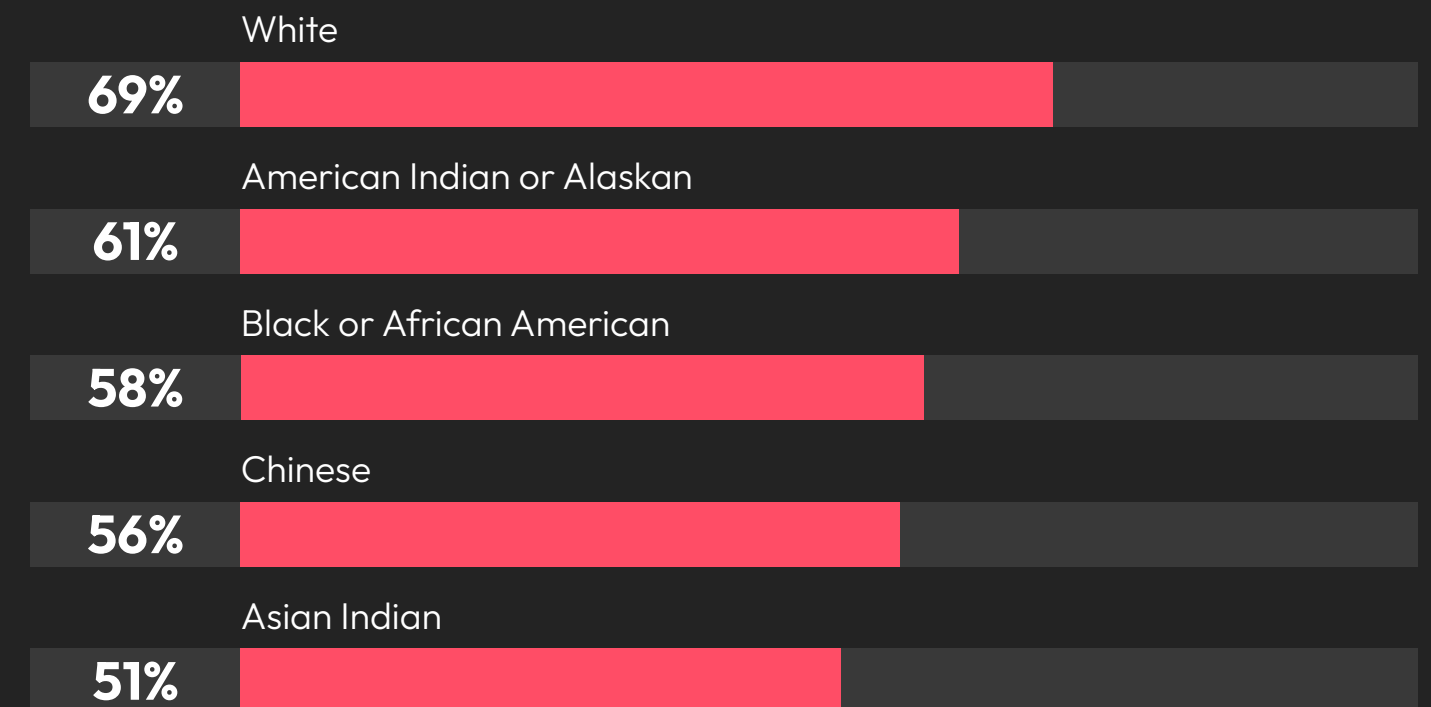
- 1 in 5 Native American, Alaskan and Indigenous professionals have experienced discrimination surrounding their personal demographic or background in the workplace.
- 24% more white men, when compared with Native American, Alaskan and Indigenous women, have never felt discriminated against in this way in the workplace.

**69%**

of white professionals have never experienced discrimination surrounding their personal demographic or background in the workplace, the highest of any group.

“My organization should work better at creating a safe space where people of all races feel safe.”

## I have never experienced discrimination surrounding my personal demographic or background in the workplace





## Company culture – creating an inclusive workplace

### A lack of celebration of differences

1 in 5 Asian women do not believe their organization celebrates people's differences. This lack of workplace celebration has also been noted across multiple demographic groups:

“I wish my organization would...”

“Celebrate black History month.”

“Celebrate more diversity.”

“Not leave Asians out when celebrating diversity. Senior leadership create days to celebrate Cinco De Mayo, but there are never any celebrations of Asian culture.”

69% of white professionals have never experienced discrimination surrounding their personal demographic in workplace. On the other hand, 22% of Native American, Alaskan and Indigenous professionals have experienced such discrimination. Furthermore, 24% more white men than Native American, Alaskan and Indigenous women have never felt discriminated against in this way in the workplace.

### Retaining your workforce

Survey results identified that discrimination in the workplace and showcasing discriminative work cultures has a negative effect on retention for certain groups:

**38%** Black or Native American/Canadian or Alaskan professionals are 38% more likely to consider leaving their role than white professionals if they were to experience or witness others experiencing discrimination.

71% of white professionals believe that everyone, no matter who they are, can be successful in their organization. This is 17% more than Black professionals and 22% more than Asian professionals. ¼ of Native American, Alaskan and Indigenous professionals do not believe their organization has initiatives that help them feel part of a connected community of colleagues.

In light of these findings, organizations must do more to improve their awareness and understanding of different cultures, perspectives, and experiences, which allow for more diverse and rewarding workplaces.



# Key recommendations: race and ethnicity

## Kim Crowder Consulting

### Measure

What gets measured gets treasured. In any workplace, using data to influence decision-making can be powerful. Making significant business decisions means using the data available as evidence of progress—and robust business decisions include the ability to retain team members and create work environments that keep team members in the long run.

In a study from the Pew Research Center, 63% of respondents cited low pay as a key reason they left a job in 2021. In 2022, 54 percent of Gen Z employees in the United States said they would leave a job due to an unsatisfactory salary.

Organizations that create standards around metrics such as promotion rates, equal pay, and turnover rates based on the backgrounds and identities of team members have a competitive advantage over other organizations, especially when that information is applied to build more equitable workplaces. The ability to tell that data story compellingly to internal team members, potential employees, and customers is a win that can propel any brand to stand out in the market.

### Collect Data with Transparency

It is not enough to know the data. The ability to interpret data is powerful and imperative to build healthier workplace environments. Organizations that gather data and analyze that data alongside unbiased external partners increase believability and trust with team members, particularly when that data is presented with integrity, which means sharing those not-so-flattering metrics and putting in place a strategy and a clear plan to make improvements over time.

Also, be willing to dig into the data to find any areas of misleading information. For example, if a team member from a historically ignored background is making more money than everyone in a specific department, is it because they have been at the organization longer than others, though they have yet to receive promotions at the same rate as other colleagues? These are questions that a strong consulting partner can both support in recognizing and resolving.

Lastly, let your employees control what data they share, and organizations must be transparent about how that data is used. That includes allowing team members to opt into what they reveal in workplaces and allowing them to omit and add at any time.

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Based on a study published in Harvard Business Review, 90% of employees surveyed are willing to let their employers collect and use data about them and their work, but only if it benefits the employee in some way.

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**Kim  
Crowder**  
CONSULTING

## Key recommendations

### Kim Crowder Consulting



**Kim Crowder**  
CEO & President,  
Kim Crowder Consulting

[kimcrowderconsulting.com](http://kimcrowderconsulting.com)



#### Make It an Organization-Wide Commitment

Every leader, business unit, and department should be informed and committed to building an organization-wide equity. The best way to do this is by creating clear accountability and welcoming all team members, no matter their level of employment, to join. The most straightforward and active way to do this is by providing clear direction on what the goals are for the organization overall and then inviting others to share their observations and solutions. Team members who are heard and witness change based on the common themes that would best support equity will stay engaged and feel empowered along this journey based on their employment level.

This engagement from employees will allow workplaces to uncover areas that may be of issue and those that are already going well. Also, it creates the opportunity to be inclusive around problem-solving within departments and teams.

Empower leaders across the organization with clear strategies that they can implement immediately and those goals that are more long-term. Unless issues are directly tied to discriminatory practices for a particular leader, do not focus on individual leaders. Assigning a project management office/project focused on change management, engagement at every stage of improvement, and success measurement is the most effective way to promote and sustain change over time, according to [a study by McKinsey & Company](#).

## Key recommendations

### Kim Crowder Consulting

#### Make Changes Systemic and Tell Everyone

Provide the support needed so changes are evidence-based and systemic, including areas such as unbiased hiring practices, guidelines for how job performance reviews are handled, and requirements regarding how promotions are decided. Actively offer training for leaders at every level, and then support the uppermost leaders in building a clear vision and communicating that vision, progress, and future goals over and over throughout the organization and beyond. And just when you think you have shared enough, do it again and differently.

Show progress visually through creating videos, graphics, telling stories, and writing, including making the information accessible to internal and external audiences. Make websites a hub for sharing details and progress and educate people leaders so that they may carry these stories forward daily and in action.

Now, more than ever, employees expect more from their workplaces and leaders. Those organizations that show genuine commitment to equity can become both a beacon and a rarity, including attracting and keeping top talent, creating products and services that are innovative and elite, avoiding media crises due to culturally insensitive internal practices, and staying relevant for years to come.



# A focus on socioeconomic equality



## A focus on socioeconomic equality

Over the years, we have recognized the importance of promoting and delivering ED&I initiatives in the workplace. This year, we are exploring socioeconomic inclusion, due to the role that socioeconomic privileges and disadvantages play in career progression across North America.

### Does the past determine the future?

Historically, it has been widely recognized that an individual's background could hinder their access to progression – it is this pattern of behaviour we wish to address across North American business leaders.

Considering the post-pandemic working environment, this report uses data to identify that some individuals are found to be more disadvantaged than others. We do not only observe the lack of new opportunities, or discrepancies in salaries for lower socioeconomic employees, but we also identify the lack of opportunities, training and resources that enable them to qualify for promotions or career progression. There is a sobering juxtaposition, against those with access to opportunities and resources, and those who don't.

<sup>18</sup>EasyLlama, [Socioeconomic Status in the Workplace](#)

### Socioeconomic status in the workplace

Socioeconomic status (SES) in the workplace refers to the social and economic position of an individual or group. SES can influence access to resources, opportunities, and privileges, and it can also shape an individual's experiences, perspectives, and behaviors. In the context of the workplace, SES can impact factors such as access to education and training, job opportunities and advancement, and compensation and benefits.<sup>18</sup>

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**“Stop prioritizing nepotism. Bridge the divide between the classes: rich, poor, middle class by acknowledging the rules and values of each class. A person who grew up in poverty that now holds a college degree is still at a disadvantage in a material driven environment.”**

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# Pay & salary negotiation

The data presents a comprehensive analysis of pay satisfaction and salary negotiation trends across different socioeconomic classes.

**“We need less nepotism and equal treatment of all employees.”**

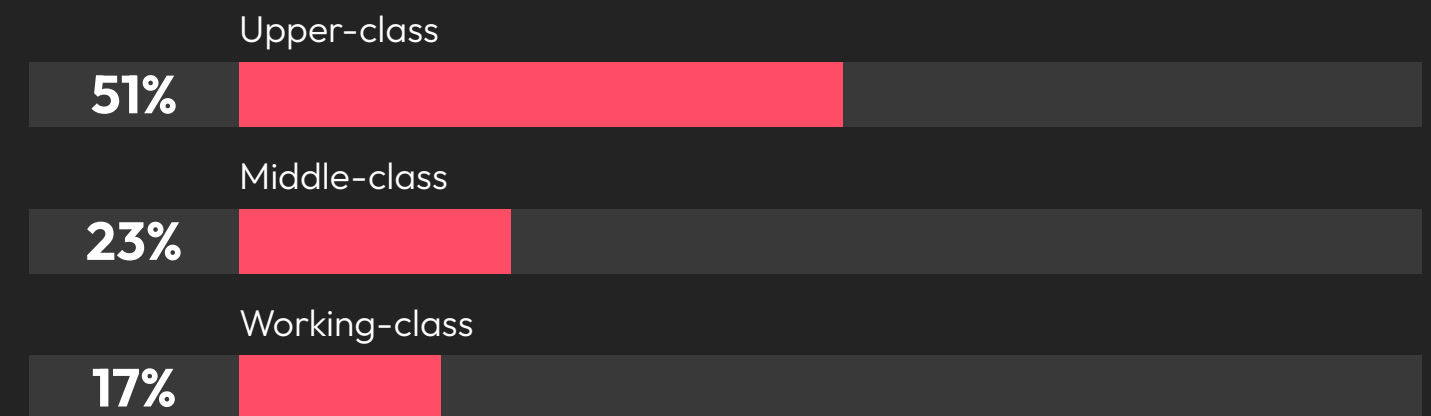
Upper-class professionals have the highest mean income, averaging at \$90,186.48, while working-class professionals earn the least with a mean income of \$46,819.65. This disparity extends to the likelihood of earning above \$75k, with upper and middle-class individuals more likely to reach this threshold compared to their working-class counterparts.

In terms of income distribution, most individuals earning up to \$21k are from the working-class, accounting for 21% of this income bracket - just 9% of upper-class professionals fall within this range. The “\$200,001+” income bracket is predominantly occupied by upper-class professionals (8%) while middle and working-class individuals are least represented in this salary bracket.

A substantial 44% of working-class professionals feel underpaid compared to only 27% of upper-class professionals.

Interestingly we are not seeing these disparities improving overtime, with these trends persisting among younger professionals entering the workforce. 16% of upper-class professionals aged 18-24 earn over \$100k, while only 6% of working-class professionals in the same age group earn within this salary bracket.

## % professionals earning over \$75,000



## Pay & salary negotiation

### Pay rises

Over 1/4 of working-class professionals have not received a pay increase in the last 12 months, despite nearly half (47%) attempting to negotiate their salary. The primary reason for not negotiating was a belief that their employer would not offer a pay rise (17%), followed by uncertainty about how to negotiate (16%). This contrasts with upper and middle-class professionals, who primarily did not negotiate because they did not feel the need to.

In contrast, 81% of upper-class professionals received a pay rise within the past 12 months. The data suggests that socioeconomic status influences the distribution of pay increases, with working-class professionals experiencing the smallest average pay rises and upper-class professionals experiencing the largest.

**33%** of upper-class professionals received 75-100% of their negotiated salary increase, compared to just 23% of middle or working-class professionals.

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“There’s too much nepotism in this organization.”

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Again, as we examine whether these trends are changing as new generations enter the workforce, we see these trends persist among Gen Z professionals. 17% of working-class Gen Z professionals have not had a pay rise in the last 12 months, compared to 9% of upper-class professionals. Furthermore, while only 7% of upper-class Gen Z professionals did not receive an increase after negotiating a rise, this figure jumps to 20% for working-class Gen Z professionals.

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“Stop the office politics and put more qualified employees in higher paying positions.”

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## Pay & salary negotiation

### Gender disparities

Working-class women are the most likely to not have had a pay rise in the last 12 months (29%), compared to 14% of upper-class men.

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Over half of working-class women have not attempted to negotiate a higher salary in their career, even though 58% do not feel their current pay accurately reflects their work – this is compared with less than a quarter (24%) of upper-class men.

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Among those who did attempt to negotiate their salary, almost a quarter did not receive any increase – the highest of any group.

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**“I want more open communication/ feedback around my role. My manager is always too busy to talk yet he makes time for the male coworkers.”**

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# Cost of living

Upper-class professionals are the most likely to feel they can live comfortably with a good amount of disposable income (35%). In contrast, working-class professionals are the least likely to feel they can live comfortably with disposable income for savings or purchases (20%) and rely the most on additional support/streams of income (16%).

Overall, upper-class professionals feel more financially secure and have more disposable income, while working-class professionals tend to rely on additional support more or live paycheck to paycheck.

Working-class women face particular challenges with the current cost of living, with 45% living paycheck to paycheck or relying on additional support. This is substantially more than working-class (30%) and upper-class men (22%).

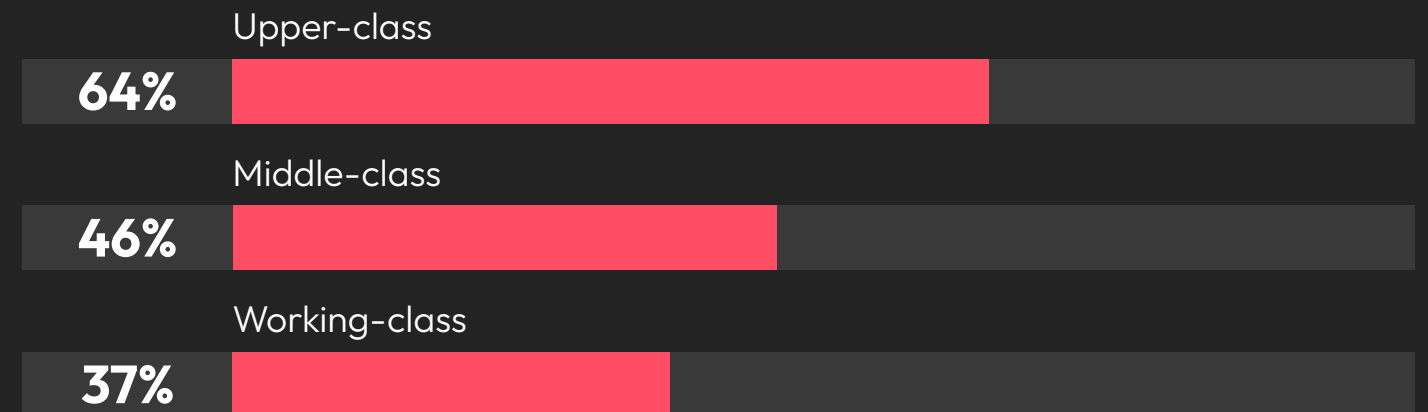
In terms of age, 28% of working-class professionals over the age of 45 live paycheck to paycheck, compared to 17% of upper-class professionals in the same age bracket.

## Bonuses failing to meet expectations

64% of upper-class professionals received bonuses that met their expectations, and almost half of middle-class employees felt the same (46%). In contrast, working-class employees have the lowest percentage of respondents who received a bonus in line with their expectations (37%).

“Be more fair - stop treating some employees better than others.”

## % of professionals whose bonus met their expectations



## Development and promotion

The likelihood of being offered a promotion varies significantly by social class. The survey found that upper-class professionals had the highest chance of receiving one, with 65% of them reportedly being promoted in the past year. This is compared to just 38% of working-class - almost half the amount. Middle-class employees fell in between, with 47% of them reporting that they had been offered a promotion.

**“Stop promoting nepotism and promoting less qualified professionals to supervisor positions and acknowledge the cash value of my work.”**

Upper-class employees also have clearer understanding of the steps to promotion, provided by their current employer - 51% know exactly what they need to do to get one and have specific targets/resources to help them get there. This is 70% more than working-class employees.

**“My employer could do more in terms of training support and growth in the workplace.”**

Working-class respondents express the challenge of lack of training or development offered more frequently (17%) compared to upper-class (14%). Just 6% of working-class professionals have received training subsidiaries in the past 18 months, 33% less than upper-class.

**1/4** of working-class professionals are not at all aware of what they need to do to get promoted.



## Development and promotion

### Age and career progression

Gen X professionals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face significant disparities compared to higher classes. For instance, 78% have never been offered a job during their time at their currently company, while over half (51%) of upper-class Gen X professionals have received one.

**“Stop using nepotism and hiring best friends. Hire people that can do the job.”**

**“Make more of an effort to make opportunities available to folks like me who didn’t necessarily have the privilege of learning some things in their youth.”**

Looking at Gen Z professionals, while there are slight improvements in some areas, the main disparities persist. 55% of Gen Z professionals from lower socioeconomic groups have not had a promotion in their current company, compared with 33% of upper-class Gen Z professionals.

**“I wish my employer would stop playing favorites and repeatedly promoting the same people.”**



## Employer value proposition and ethnicity

There is a significant gap in career satisfaction and employer value proposition between different classes and ethnicities of employees. Upper-class employees are the most satisfied with their career progression and feel that their employer meets their expectations. 79% of upper-class employees agree with this statement, compared to 66% of working-class employees, who are the least satisfied group.

**25%** more Black than white working-class professionals do not feel their employer meets their expectations.

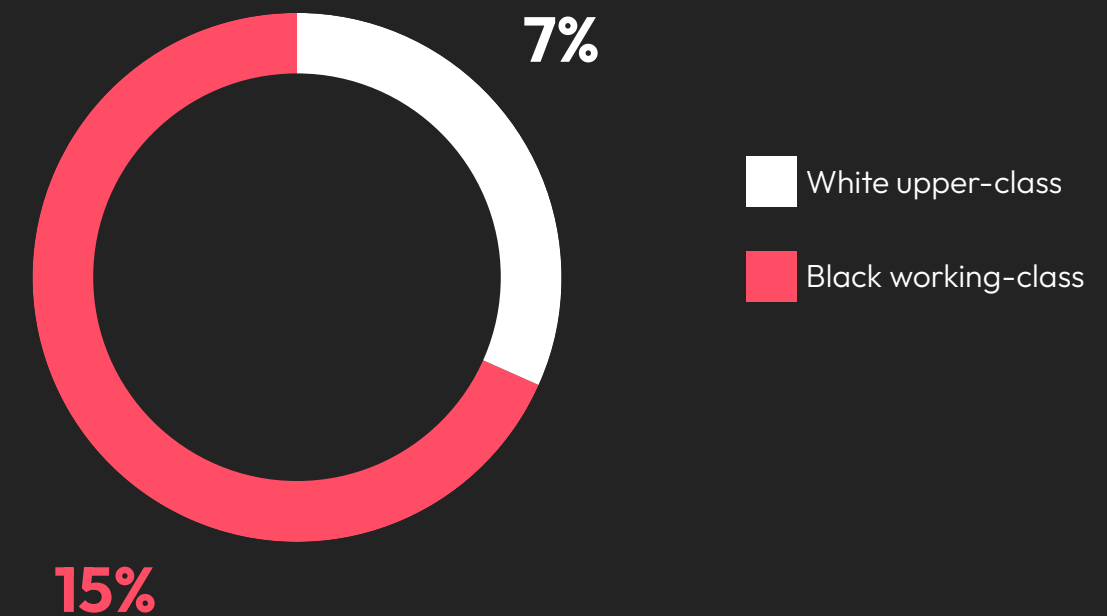
Black working-class employees face the most challenges and barriers in their career development and workplace inclusion. They are more likely to feel that their employer does not meet their expectations, does not have initiatives that create a sense of community, and does not facilitate strong connections with colleagues from different backgrounds.

**“My employer needs to think about how management treats staff, and how they separate some from others.”**

Survey results also highlighted that more than double the number of Black than white working-class professionals have not made strong connections with colleagues from different ethnic backgrounds (10% vs 23%). These findings highlight a racial disparity in career satisfaction and employer value proposition, especially among working-class employees.

**26%** of Black working-class professionals do not feel like their organization has initiatives that make them feel part of a connected community of colleagues, compared to 16% of white working-class professionals.

### % professionals whose employer does not meet their career expectations



**“Leave out the favoritism in the workplace.”**

# Creating an inclusive workplace

Almost 1 in 5 (18%) working-class professionals believe their organizations have not made sufficient efforts to ensure demographic representation - contrasting with just 7% of upper-class professionals.

The survey data further reveals a racial divide within the working class itself, with over ¼ of Black working-class professionals expressing dissatisfaction with their organization's efforts towards demographic representation, compared to 16% of their white counterparts.

Discrimination based on personal demographics or background is another area of concern, with 1 in five working-class professionals reporting they've experienced this in their workplace. This figure is higher than the reported rates among upper-class (13%) and middle-class (16%) professionals.

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**Over 1/4 of Black working-class professionals have experienced discrimination in the workplace.**

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## Creating an inclusive workplace

The data also raises questions about potential class favoritism in management practices, with 1 in 5 working-class professionals feel that their managers do not try to understand their personal circumstances, suggesting a possible bias towards upper-class employees.

“In this role, nepotism is rampant. Be present and stop favoritism.”

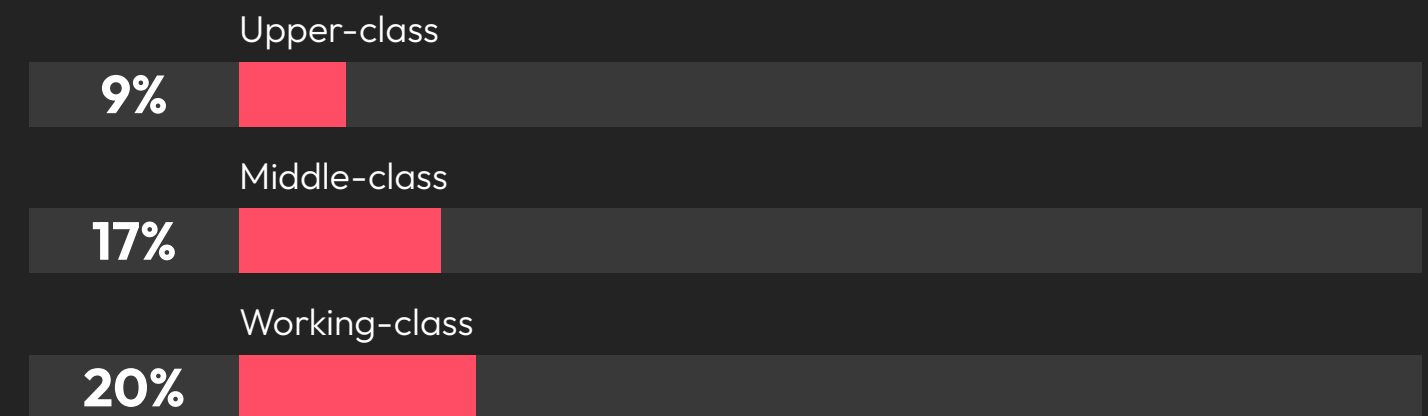
### My organization celebrates peoples’ differences:



### I believe everyone, no matter who they are, can be successful in my organization:



### % of professionals who do not feel their manager takes time to understand their personal circumstances



## Key recommendations

### Cara Collective

For 30+ years, Cara Collective has moved people with employment barriers – 90% of whom are Black or Latiné – into 13,800+ jobs at retention rates 20 points higher than the national average. From our expertise working with thousands of job seekers and employers, we see tremendous opportunity for employers to enhance their ability to hire and retain talent and achieve better business results by investing in employment pathways for their frontline workforce.

In the U.S., today, the single biggest predictor of your long-term success is the zip code in which you reside. Millions of Americans have ambitions to change the socioeconomic status they were born into -- especially those who want to advance their careers out of frontline roles -- yet many do not see a pathway to get there. It starts with the way jobs are designed; for example, 79 million Americans are impacted by the criminal justice system and often excluded from the workforce. In addition, college degrees are used by many employers as a proxy for skills, instead of attempting to measure those skills directly.

When employers require a four-year degree, they exclude 50% of the U.S. workforce or 70 million workers, including 61% of Black and 55% of Latiné workers. Requiring a four-year degree is also more expensive for employers, resulting in approximately 11% to 30% higher payroll costs for similar performance on average to those without degrees.

Once frontline employees are on the job, they face other barriers when trying to move out of low-wage work. Our research -- done in partnership with McKinsey & Co. -- shows that 70% of frontline employees making \$22 an hour or less have applied for advancement opportunities, yet only 25% have received a promotion.

# 65%

of frontline workers are unaware of how to advance in their careers – and the number is even higher among women, younger employees, and those without a high school degree.

Despite these odds, individuals who have been involved with the criminal justice system are most likely to apply for advancement opportunities and successfully be promoted, as well as more likely to invest in upskilling outside of the workplace, demonstrating their drive and continued success over time.





# Key recommendations

## Cara Collective

There is a significant untapped pool of talent that employers can leverage to enhance their workforce and drive better business results. If you're an employer interested in increasing socioeconomic diversity in your workplace, here's what you can do:

- **Broaden recruitment efforts to include individuals that may not be connected to traditional channels:**
  - Partner with local workforce development organizations that have a track record of cultivating disinvested talent into roles where they stay and grow.
  - Reassess job descriptions to remove unnecessary barriers and qualifications, consulting with organizations serving these populations to avoid unintentional exclusions.
  - Make job applications mobile friendly for people with limited computer access.

- **Increase the number of candidates who can advance in your hiring process:**

- Support frontline applicants by partnering with local agencies for training and coaching. These specialized agencies prevent candidates from falling through the cracks and offer cost-effective or free resources for employers.
- Use a competency- or skills-based approach to assess candidates to ensure you capture those who may have gained experience outside of the workplace.
- Ensure your hiring process eliminates opportunities for implicit bias, such as using the same set of questions for every candidate.

- **Retention**

- Create structured onboarding processes to equip frontline employees for success in their role, including on-the-job training and 30-60-90-day check-ins to understand what employees need to be successful.
- Develop team cultures that create a shared sense of belonging and an environment where all members of the team can thrive – including for those in frontline roles.
- Partner with workforce development organizations that can support frontline employees on areas that could impact stability (e.g., transportation, childcare, housing).

## Key recommendations

### Cara Collective

- **Advancement**

- Communicate career pathways for frontline employees more clearly in every stage of the employee's career journey, starting with the job description.
- Invest in career-advancing skill building and professional development for frontline employees.
- Provide frontline managers with information, resources, ongoing training, and incentives to support diverse team members.
- Collect frontline employee feedback for enhancing advancement opportunities.
- Recognize and invest in motivated workers who are eager to advance and grow.

By investing in their frontline employees, employers can create a more diverse and inclusive workforce, improve socioeconomic mobility for their staff, and strengthen their businesses and communities. Learn more about how to change your workplace practices employees:

[learn@caraplus.org](mailto:learn@caraplus.org)  
[View our research](#)



# Concluding comments

## Concluding comments

### North America at Robert Walters Group



**Chris Eldridge**  
CEO  
Robert Walters North America

In this inaugural time of Robert Walters North America's extensive research into ED&I in the workplace, our survey results highlight a pressing need for sustained efforts to achieve true workplace equality.

Every demographic group examined in this research holds a pivotal role in our North American workforce. Failing to fully understand their unique needs not only impacts a company's financial performance but also the way in which we operate as a society.

While we've diligently examined individual demographic aspects, such as gender, LGBTQ+, disability, age, race and ethnicity and socio-economic background, we cannot overlook the crucial issue of intersectionality. For instance, we may have regulations addressing gender pay gaps, but what about the more extensive disparities faced by working-class women? Arguably this is a cohort which is much more exposed to day-to-day discrimination, yet we don't have hard policies in place to tackle this.

Age presents its own distinctive challenge, as discrimination transcends generational boundaries, stemming from a lack of understanding of each age group's specific needs and perspectives.

In what is considered the most significant candidate shortage ever experienced collectively across the globe – now more than ever employers should read this report and consider ways to open their talent pool to more diverse audiences and improve their inclusivity for retention if not anything else.

It remains an undeniable fact that businesses possess immense potential to become formidable advocates for inclusivity.

# About the authors



## Robert Walters

Robert Walters is a specialist recruitment agency operating in 31 countries. We believe in the power of a diverse global workforce that champions the right for people to be their true, authentic selves.

Helping organisations build more diverse teams and professionals have successful careers is part of our purpose to power people and organisations to fulfil their unique potential.

For more information around delivering diverse candidate pools, creating an inclusive recruitment process, or kick-starting an EDI initiative, please get in touch so we can provide information about our internal services, or direct you towards one of our partners.

**US:** [www.robertwalters.us](http://www.robertwalters.us)

**Canada:** [www.robert-walters.ca](http://www.robert-walters.ca)

## RS Consultancy Diverse Hiring

RS Consultancy is a recognised global leader in diverse hiring consultancy and minimising bias in recruitment. Our diverse hiring practitioners focus on actioning meaningful change by deploying data-led and research-based audits and interventions to help clients achieve their diverse hiring goals.

Our Recruitment Inclusivity Audit is the leading solution used by over 20 of the world's largest employers as well as high-growth scaling organisations to minimise bias in hiring. Analysing 257 data points in an end-to-end recruitment journey, our Audit assesses for bias through 8 diversity lenses: gender, ethnicity, LGBTQ+, disability and neurodiversity, age, faith, socio economic and veterans.

**Find out more about our [Audit & diverse hiring consultancy](#)**

**Contact our diverse [Hiring Practice Director](#)**

## About the authors



### Female Executive Search

Female Executive Search is powered by CEO Worldwide, specialists in international executive recruitment, who place executives in senior roles throughout the world. We are dedicated to promoting the value of women in leadership roles and connecting businesses with our community of highly experienced female candidates.

Learn more at: [Female-executive-search.com](https://female-executive-search.com)



### Hummingbird Humanity

Hummingbird Humanity is an LGBTQ+ owned and NGLCC diversity supplier certified business. We believe in amplifying voices of the unheard and building bridges of trust through shared humanity as foundational to developing inclusive workplace cultures.

We provide a range of comprehensive services for workplace culture, employee experience, and DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion). We collaborate with you to tailor our approach in ways that meet the unique needs of your organization, helping you create an environment where everyone thrives and brings their best selves to work every day.

Learn more at: [HummingbirdHumanity.com](https://HummingbirdHumanity.com)



### Ready, Willing & Able

Ready, Willing and Able (RWA) is a national initiative of Inclusion Canada ([www.inclusioncanada.ca](http://www.inclusioncanada.ca)), the Autism Alliance of Canada ([www.autismalliance.ca](http://www.autismalliance.ca)) and their member organizations. Funded by the Government of Canada, RWA is present in every province and territory of Canada, and active in 30 primary communities across the country. RWA is designed to increase the labour force participation of people with an intellectual disability or on the autism spectrum.

Learn more at: [theinclusiveworkplace.ca](https://theinclusiveworkplace.ca) | [readywillingable.ca](https://readywillingable.ca) | [pretsdisponiblesetcapables.ca](https://pretsdisponiblesetcapables.ca) | [lemilieudetravailinclusif.ca](https://lemilieudetravailinclusif.ca)

## About the authors



### Kim Crowder Consulting

As a boutique studio, Kim and her team work across industries serving U.S. and international markets, from retailers to insurers to governmental agencies and the social sector. From Adobe to Good Catch Foods to Target, the American Library Association, Receipt-Bank, HarperCollins Publishers, and on, Kim and her team provide leaders and companies actionable tools to move initiatives forward long term.

Kim's mission is to provide transformative, customized solutions, cultivate equitable workplaces, and harness the power of diverse input to foster innovation, inclusion, and forward-thinking within organizations and industries overall.

Find out more: [kimcrowderconsulting.com](http://kimcrowderconsulting.com)



### Cara Collective

For 30+ years, Cara Collective has moved people with employment barriers – 90% of whom are Black or Latinx – into 14,500+ jobs at retention rates 20 points higher than the national average. Leveraging our expertise working with thousands of job seekers and employers, our team of consultants specializes in strategy, change management, and measurement to help employers better hire, cultivate, and grow diverse, untapped talent.

Find out more: [caraplus.org](http://caraplus.org)



# Robert Walters & Resource Solutions - D&I Audit

# Robert Walters & Resource Solutions - D&I Audit

## End-to-end Inclusivity Audit

Your hiring process has likely evolved over time, with new processes, content and technology added and removed. While this process may deliver a functional talent acquisition service and experience, bias is likely to be threaded through each stage of your process. Our research indicates that bias is introduced before candidates even visit your careers page and continues through selection, assessment, interviewing and onboarding.

Our end-to-end inclusivity audit is the most advanced diverse hiring audit available, analysing the impact of recruitment content and processes across eight different lenses:

- Gender
- LGBTQ+
- Socio economic
- Age
- Faith
- Disability and neurodiversity
- Ethnicity
- Veterans

Unlike many diversity initiatives, our fully remote Inclusivity Audit focuses on actionable, meaningful change, ensuring clients are provided with an immediate 'to do' list to help achieve diversity objectives and goals:



[Get your inclusivity audit](#)

100

Blending academic research and best-in-class case studies from over 100 sources

257

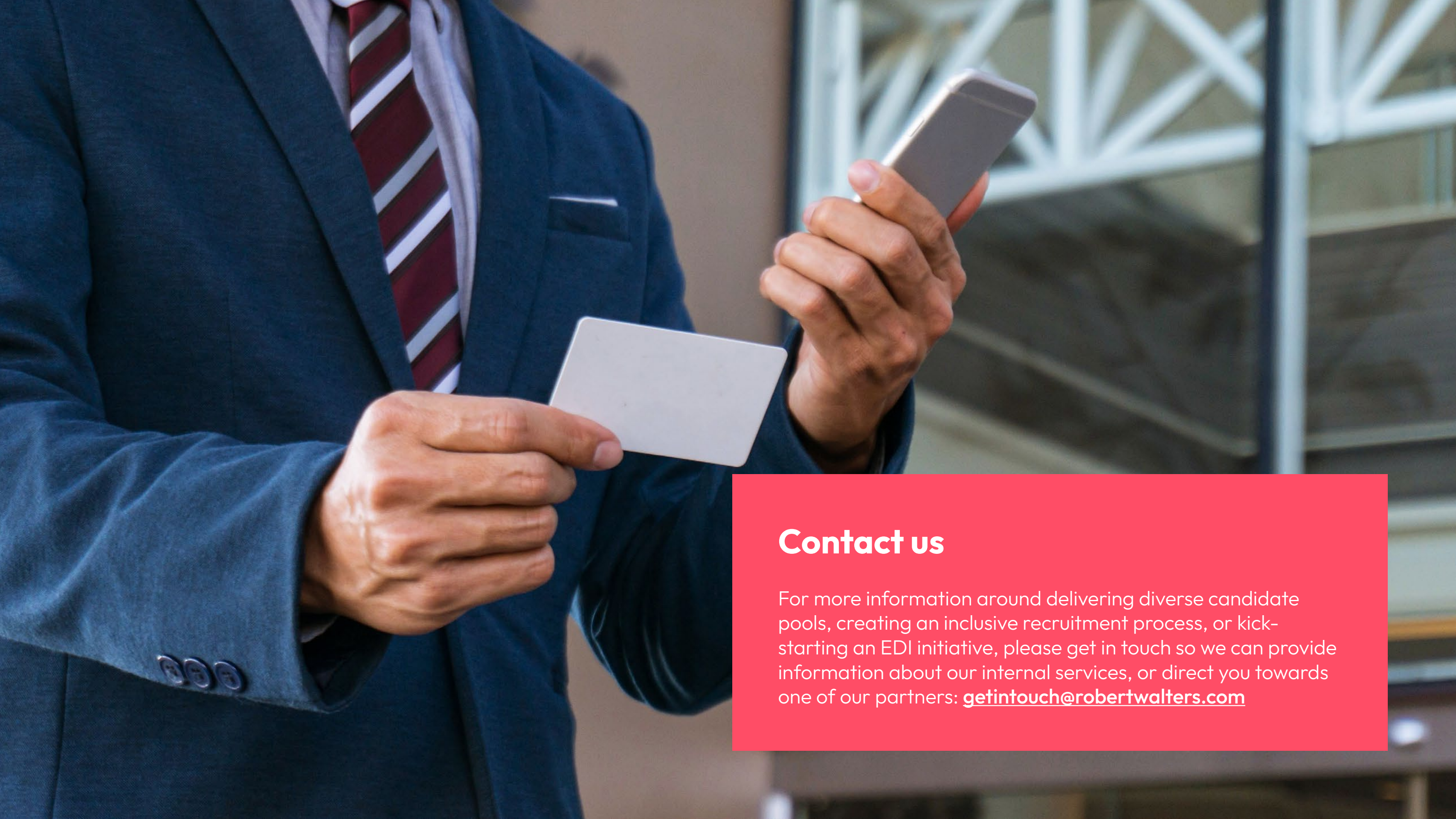
Analysing 257 data points

44

Producing a minimum of 44 recommendations for quickly actioning meaningful change

30

Key findings playback within 30 working days



## Contact us

For more information around delivering diverse candidate pools, creating an inclusive recruitment process, or kick-starting an EDI initiative, please get in touch so we can provide information about our internal services, or direct you towards one of our partners: [getintouch@robertwalters.com](mailto:getintouch@robertwalters.com)



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