

HR.com's Future of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging 2024



Revive the commitment to
DEIB through better strategic
alignment



JUNE 2024

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Executive Summary

The champions and supporters of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives are battling along two critical fronts today.

Along one front is the struggle to improve DEIB practices and strategies. Our new HR Research Institute (HRRRI) report reveals that only 28% of today's organizations have reached an advanced level of DEIB program maturity. This underscores the urgent need for reforms to foster greater diversity and inclusion in today's workplaces.

Along another front, however, are the U.S. "culture wars" that have sparked debates about the value and motivations of DEIB. In 2020, at the peak of social justice movements, it was hard to imagine a time when sentiments surrounding DEIB would reverse. Yet, a few short years later, we are faced with the loss of [DEIB roles](#), [declines](#) in the hiring of chief diversity officers, and [government legislation](#) that targets DEIB spending.

While these trends suggest a decline in the popularity of DEIB initiatives, many C-suite executives have [reiterated their commitment](#) to fostering diversity as well as a sense of belonging in the workplace. This report delves deeply into today's initiatives in order to gauge their overall popularity and sophistication. In addition, we try to determine which practices are most closely linked to success. We begin with a summary of many of the main findings of our new study.

About the Survey

HR.com's "Future of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging 2024" survey ran from February to April 2024. We gathered responses from 268 HR professionals in virtually every industry vertical. Respondents are located all over the world, but most of them reside in North America, especially the United States.

The participants represent a broad cross-section of employers by number of employees, ranging from small businesses with fewer than 100 employees to enterprises with 20,000+ employees. Almost three-fifths of responses were from mid-sized or large organizations.

Defining DEIB

For the purpose of this study, we define diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives as those relating to the presence of underrepresented groups (e.g., in terms of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and more) in organizations, how valued and welcomed historically underrepresented groups feel in those organizations, and the degree to which these groups enjoy equal opportunities, including but not limited to equitable pay.

Our Major Research Findings

Major Finding **1**

Most organizations lack DEIB maturity, and their initiatives are not effective enough.

- Among respondents rating themselves on the HRRRI DEIB maturity model:
 - ▶ only 28% claim to be at the expert or advanced stages
 - ▶ two-fifths say they are at the beginning (26%) or undeveloped (13%) stages
- When it comes to DEIB initiatives:
 - ▶ two-fifths believe that their organizations are effective in recruitment and onboarding
 - ▶ a scant one-fifth says the same about the overall effectiveness of DEIB and the effectiveness of DEIB in leadership development
- There is little equity at senior leadership levels yet; 30% say women represent 20% or less of the top leadership in their organization, and 65% say the same about ethnic/racial minorities in top leadership positions.
- Despite this, just a third of organizations have a mandate to increase diversity in leadership roles.

Major Finding **2**

HR is primarily responsible for DEIB in about half of organizations.

- In over half of organizations, the primary responsibility for DEIB issues, programs, and/or policies falls on HR in some way:
 - ▶ CHRO (chief HR officer) (18%)
 - ▶ HR department as a whole (18%)
 - ▶ specific team or person within the HR department (16%)
- In just over a quarter of organizations, the responsibility falls on the DEIB department (18%) or Chief of DEIB (11%). However, about a quarter of organizations do not have a DEIB department, function, or representative.

Major Finding **3**

Organizations aim to build a culture of trust through DEIB initiatives but are hampered by a lack of time and leadership support.

- Apart from increasing workforce diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, the top three primary goals of DEIB initiatives are to:
 - ▶ build a culture of trust (70%)
 - ▶ remove bias (61%)
 - ▶ be able to retain the right talent (60%)
- The top three barriers to increasing the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives are:
 - ▶ lack of budget (45%)
 - ▶ insufficient prioritization at top leadership levels (42%)
 - ▶ lack of understanding of the potential benefits of DEIB (34%)
- One-fifth of respondents also say political and/or social backlash against DEIB ideas acts as a barrier to the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives.

Major Finding **4**

Organizations increasingly rely on basic workforce data to measure the current state of DEIB.

- Almost nine in 10 organizations measure DEIB in some way.
- The most common characteristics of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce that organizations consider and track are:
 - ▶ race/ethnicity (71%)
 - ▶ age (57%)
 - ▶ disabilities (55%)
 - ▶ gender identity (49%)
- The most commonly used metrics to measure the current state of DEIB are:
 - ▶ employee surveys (52%)
 - ▶ workforce data (46%)

Major Finding **5**

Many organizations could do considerably better in their DEIB-related L&D.

- About two-fifths (42%) offer DEIB-related L&D programs to all employees. Among organizations that offer such programs, the most common DEIB-related L&D initiatives are:
 - ▶ unconscious bias training (61%)
 - ▶ inclusion awareness training (54%)
 - ▶ conversations training (48%)
- One-fifth of organizations have no DEIB-related L&D programs.

Major Finding **6**

Relatively few organizations leverage specific DEIB initiatives to a high or very high degree, but many offer certain benefits that can incentivize equity-deserving groups.

- Few organizations use specific DEIB initiatives to a high or very high degree. The most commonly cited ones are:
 - ▶ support employee resource groups (ERGs) (39%)
 - ▶ consistently communicate the importance of DEIB throughout the organization (33%)
- Over two-fifths of respondents say:
 - ▶ DEIB initiatives enhance mission, vision, and values (47%)
 - ▶ their organization is more diverse and inclusive than two years ago (44%)
 - ▶ pay is equitable (43%)
- More than half of organizations offer the following benefits/work arrangements to make it easier for diverse employees to work there:
 - ▶ paid time off (83%)
 - ▶ remote work options (70%)
 - ▶ flexible work options (67%)
 - ▶ paid parental leave (59%)

Major
Finding **7**

Compared to organizations with less mature DEIB functions (DEIB laggards), ones with more mature DEIB functions (DEIB leaders) are significantly more likely to:

- rate the effectiveness of their DEIB initiatives as eight or above on a 10-point scale
- use all DEIB-related metrics to a higher extent
- offer DEIB-related L&D to all employees
- offer all DEIB-related initiatives to a higher extent
- say that DEIB initiatives enhance organizational performance, enhance mission, vision, and values, and play a role in strategic planning
- have one or more leadership development initiatives for improving DEIB in leadership

Please note that the findings and recommendations contained in this report are informational only. Nothing in this report should be construed as constituting legal opinions or advice. Please consult an attorney if you have questions about the legal requirements, rules, or regulations associated with any content discussed in this report.

DEIB Today and Over the Years



Finding: DEIB in the vast majority of organizations lacks maturity and is at the intermediate level at best

Has the increased focus on DEIB over the past years helped improve the maturity of the function? Just 7% say DEIB in their organization is at the expert level, where it is an integral part of the culture and intrinsically linked to the strategic goals of the organization. One-fifth (21%) of organizations say they are at the advanced stage, where they have a strategic framework and utilize metrics.

More than a third place themselves at the intermediate stage, which means they have some DEIB initiatives but lack strategic importance, and there is no measurement of success. Two-fifths say DEIB in their organization is at the undeveloped or beginning stage, which means DEIB in these organizations is mostly about compliance and rarely has any strategic linkages.



HR Research Institute's DEIB Maturity Model

HRRI's DEIB maturity model defines the five stages of DEIB maturity as follows:

Expert

7%

DEIB is embedded in our culture and is prioritized by our CEO and board members. Senior leadership oversees DEIB initiatives. We use DEIB-related analytics to address recruiting, retention, succession planning, development, and other talent-related issues. In part, managers' performance is evaluated based on DEIB objectives. DEIB initiatives are strategic and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals.

Advanced

21%

We have a strategic framework that has multiple pillars aligned with the organizational goals. Our DEIB efforts include metrics and setting annual goals for improvement, and we closely follow DEIB at leadership levels.

Intermediate

34%

We have deployed several different DEIB initiatives piecemeal. It is viewed as moderately important, but we do not spend a lot of time measuring success.

Beginning

26%

We strive to maintain compliance. We have made a few efforts at DEIB and are thinking about how DEIB helps to position our organization in the marketplace.

Undeveloped

13%

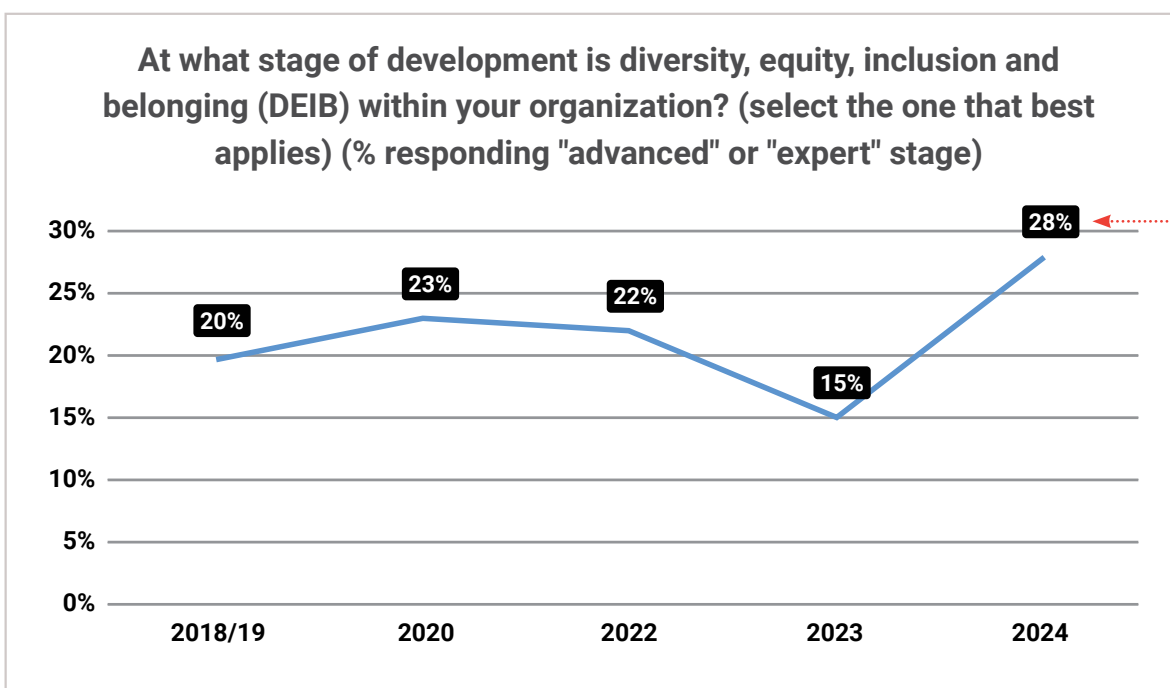
Little or nothing has been done to increase DEIB or integrate DEIB goals with organizational goals. To the extent that there is a focus, it is on compliance only.

Editor's note: The numbers in the chart do not add up to 100% due to rounding off of the individual numbers.



Finding: The good news is that this year we saw a sharp uptick in the percentage of organizations with more mature DEIB models

From 2023, we saw a sharp increase in the percentage of organizations that rank their DEIB functions as either advanced or expert. We can't explain this uptick, especially at a time when DEIB initiatives have come under greater criticism based on political affiliations. However, some [recent research](#) reveals an improvement in organizations' investments in DEIB. These investments go into a wide variety of initiatives, from systemic change to local-level mentorship for managers. Perhaps these investments and initiatives have resulted in an improvement in the maturity level of DEIB.



Editor's note: Although we conducted research in 2021 on this topic, the study included responses from an external survey panel of respondents in addition to the HR.com panel of respondents, so we decided not to include the data here.



There is a sharp improvement in DEIB maturity over the past year

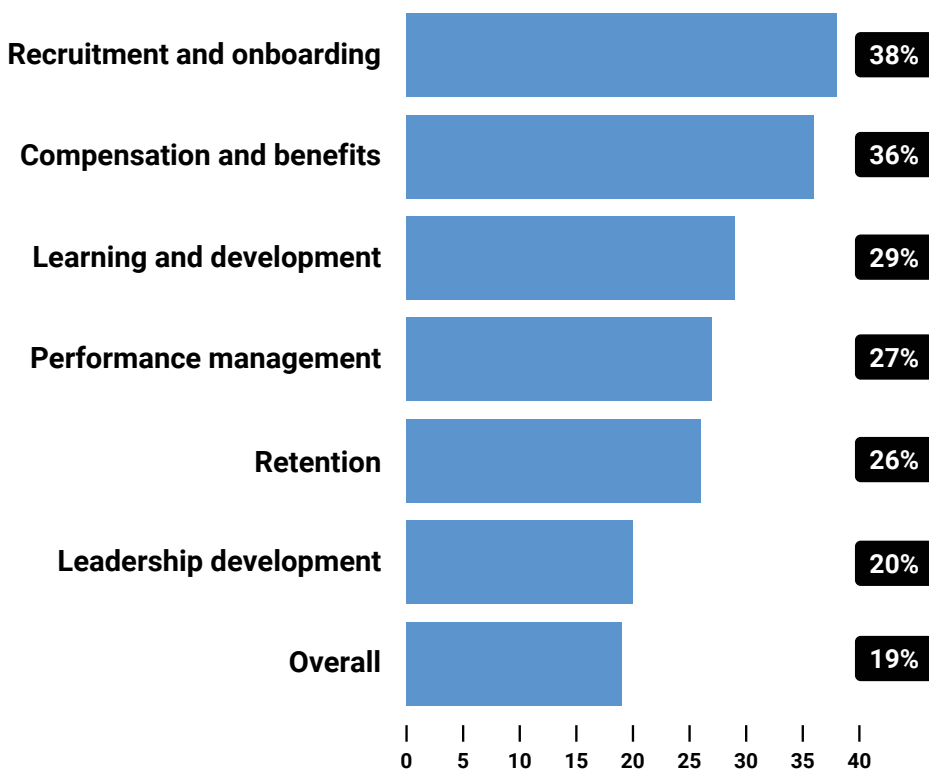


Finding: A handful of organizations rate their DEIB initiatives as highly effective

We asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives in various areas of their organizations on a 10-point scale from perfectly effective (10) to extremely ineffective (1). DEIB has the most effectiveness (rated eight or above) in recruitment and onboarding (38%), and compensation and benefits (36%).

While improving diversity in hiring and focusing on equitable pay is commendable, we believe that a truly inclusive workplace is achieved only when DEIB is embedded in all aspects of the employee lifecycle. This requires improvements in incorporating DEIB in performance management (27%), retention (26%), and leadership development (20%).

How effective are your organization's DEIB initiatives in the following areas? (please provide your best estimate) (% responding 8,9, or 10 (perfectly effective))



Just one-fifth say the overall effectiveness of DEIB in their organization is high

Editor's Note: In the original data, 8% to 13% of respondents stated that they "don't know" to the questions. We removed those responses and recalculated; so this only shows percentages for those who felt they had enough knowledge to answer the question.

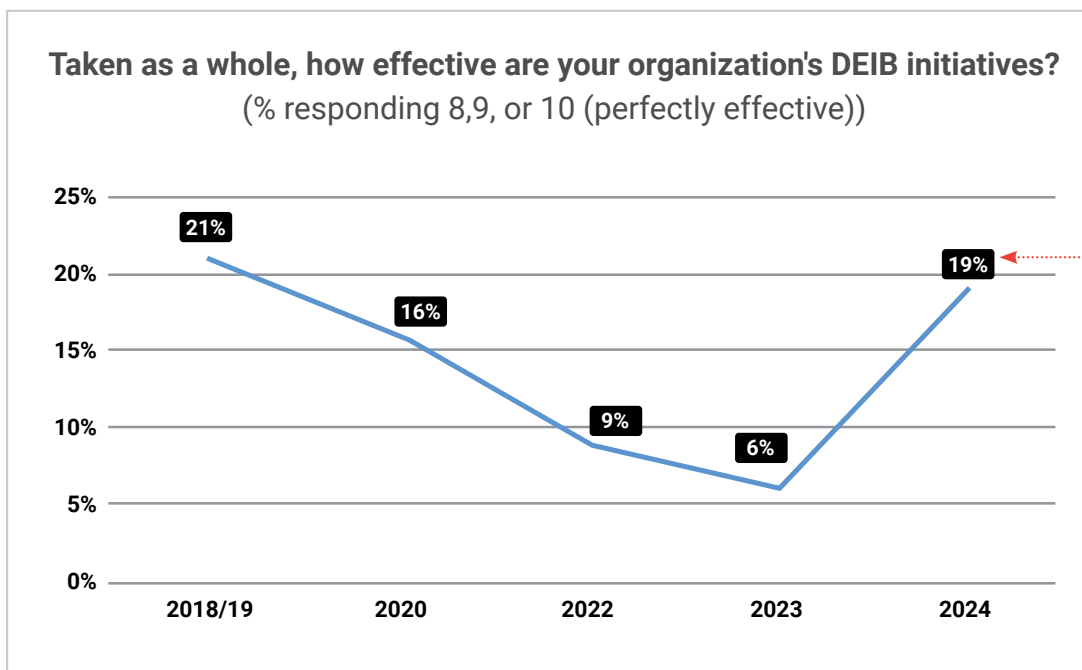


Finding: Although we saw a sharp spike in the percentage of organizations that say their overall DEIB approach is highly effective, it remains a small minority of overall respondents

The overall effectiveness of DEIB over the past years has seen some highs (21% in 2018/19) and lows (just 6% in 2023). The last year, however, has seen a relatively sharp improvement, with about one-fifth saying the overall effectiveness of DEIB is high.

We can't adequately explain these fluctuations. They might be, at least in part, the result of DEIB receiving mixed support in terms of top leadership support across the years. Another possible explanation is that, in the face of increased criticism stemming from the U.S. "culture war" debates, there's been increased pressure on DEIB programs to improve their quality and effectiveness. However, other sources also report success in DEIB goals, such as [Intel reaching its diverse supplier goal](#) ahead of their projected schedule, and a rise in the diversity of [U.S. corporate boards](#) over the last 5 years, and the doubling of loans to [black-owned businesses](#) in the U.S. over the past few years.

Of course, we can't rule out that this is mostly statistical noise, but these are certainly trends we will keep a close eye on in the future.



Editor's note: Although we conducted research in 2021 on this topic, the study included responses from an external survey panel of respondents in addition to the HR.com panel of respondents, so we decided not to include the data here.



The overall effectiveness of DEIB has improved over three times over the past year

DEIB cohort classification

For this report, we conducted various analyses to gain insights into which practices are most widely used by organizations with higher levels of maturity in their DEIB function. Specifically, we analyzed responses and segmented the data into two groups:

- **DEIB leaders:** those respondents who answered the question, "At what stage of development is diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) within your organization?" as "advanced" or "expert."
- **DEIB laggards:** those who answered "undeveloped," "beginning," or "intermediate" to the same question.

Of course, correlation is not the same as causation. While we cannot state that any particular practice will definitely lead to success, we do see intriguing relationships that may, if used judiciously, result in greater success.

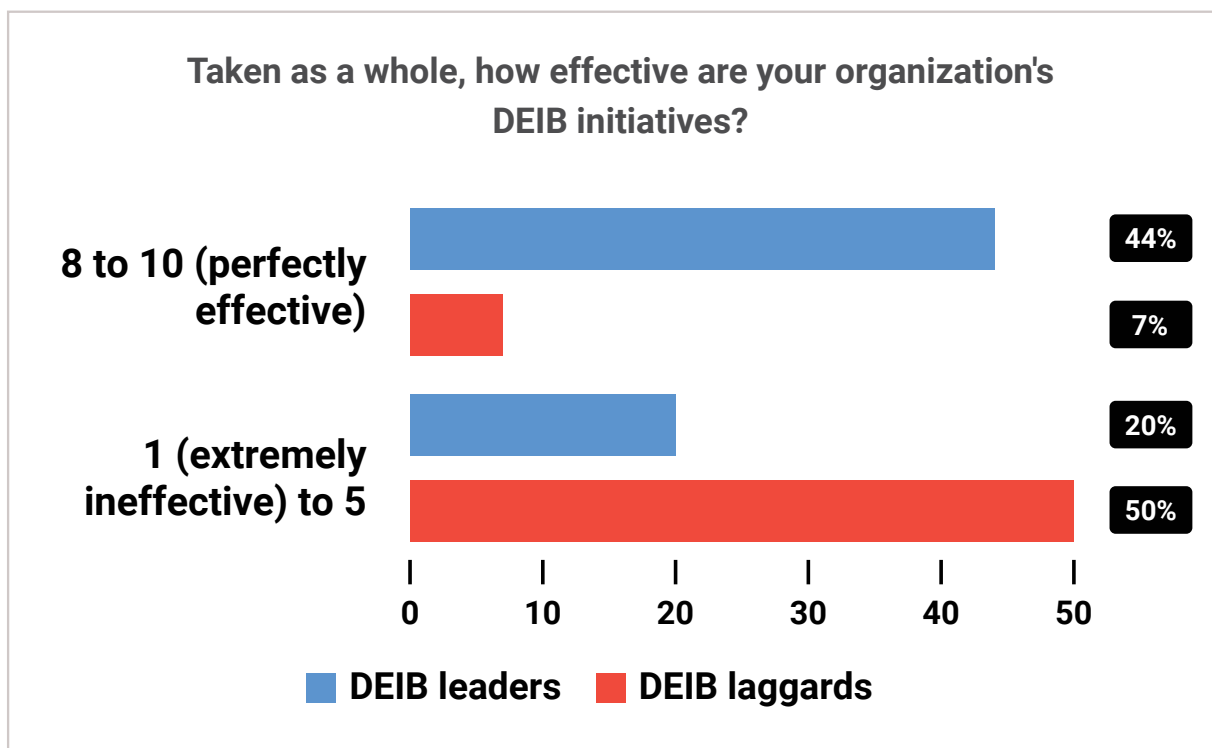


Finding: DEIB leaders are over six times more likely than laggards to say their DEIB initiatives are effective

Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that DEIB leaders are significantly more likely than the laggards to say that their DEIB initiatives are 8 or above on a 10-point scale of effectiveness.








The maturity of DEIB in leader organizations results in more effective DEIB initiatives overall. On a scale of one to ten—where one is extremely ineffective and ten is perfectly effective—44% of DEI leaders say their DEIB initiatives can be rated an eight or above, whereas just 7% of DEI laggards say the same. In contrast, 50% of laggards say their initiatives are a five or below on the same scale, while just 20% of DEI leaders say the same.





HRRI Strategic Suggestions

Based on the data, the following are some suggestions for improvements with regards to DEIB:

- 
 Align organizational culture and values with DEIB to ensure maximum integration of DEIB with strategic direction.
- 
 Ensure top leadership is on board with DEIB to gain support in the form of budget, visibility, time, and other resources.
- 
 Partner with the organization's legal team so that all parts of DEIB initiatives (such as language used) meet legal compliance.
- 
 Bring in influential organizational stakeholders to become DEIB champions to improve the visibility of initiatives.
- 
 Focus on the leadership development of equity-deserving groups. This could involve more focused coaching and mentoring, improving the visibility of underrepresented employees.
- 
 Implement targeted training and development programs for current and emerging leaders on topics like inclusive leadership, unconscious bias, and cultural competence. Strengthening leadership in this area could have a ripple effect on improving DEIB across all other areas.
- 
 Improve the retention of diverse groups of employees through more inclusive retention strategies such as mentorship programs, career development opportunities, and supportive workplace policies.

DEIB at Leadership Levels



Finding: One-third of organizations say women represent less than 20% of top leadership in their organization

A straightforward estimate of the effectiveness of DEIB in organizations is to check the representation of various groups at all levels of the organization.

While women and other underrepresented groups are often better represented at the lower levels, this trend rarely continues to the top of organizations. Our report indicates that women represent less than 20% of top leadership in almost a third of organizations, and another quarter say women represent just 21% to 40% of top leadership.

Just one-fifth of organizations are women-dominant at the leadership levels, with women representing 61% or more of top leaders. While this raises questions about the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives in organizations, we must also remember that change takes time, and years of underrepresentation would take significant time to remedy.

There is, of course, an extensive literature on why women are not better represented in top leadership positions, but there's little doubt that issues such as [bias](#) and a lack of [role models](#) play a role.

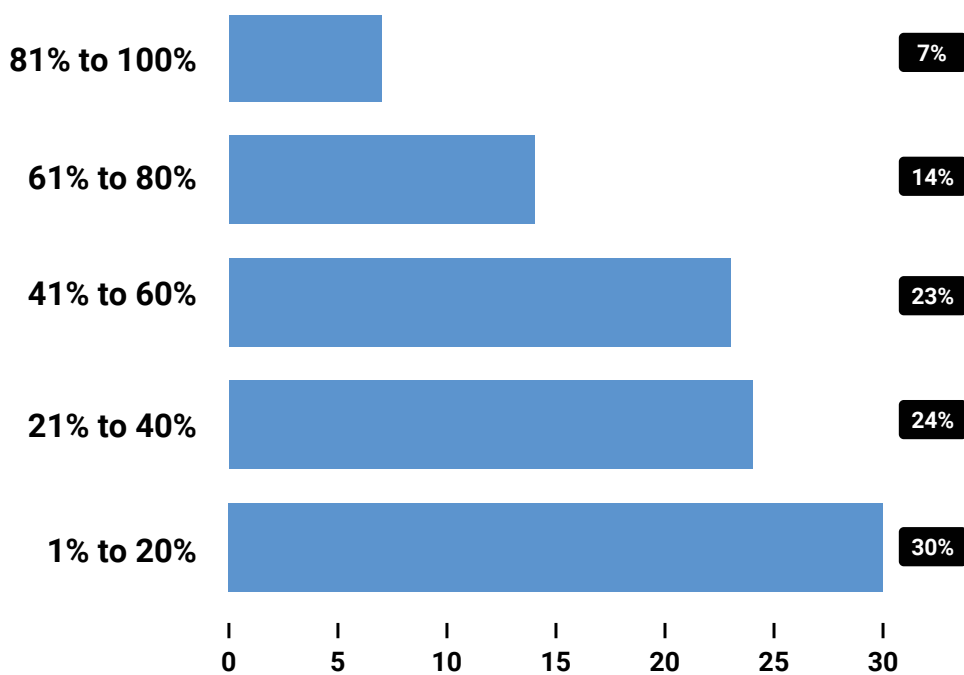
For the purpose of this report, large organizations have 1,000 or more employees, mid-sized organizations have 100 to 999 employees, and small organizations have 99 or fewer employees.

Differences based on organizational size

Small organizations are more likely to have women leaders, with one-third saying more than 60% of their top leaders are women, compared to just a quarter each of mid-sized and large organizations.

About what percentage of your organization's top leaders identify as women?

Note: this would include C-suite, senior managers, directors, VPs, etc. It would not include mid-level managers.



Editor's Note: In the original data, 6% of respondents stated that they "don't know" to the questions. We removed those responses and recalculated; so this only shows percentages for those that answered the question.



One-fifth say women make up 61% or more of their top leadership



Finding: Two-thirds say less than 20% of their top leaders are ethnic/racial minorities

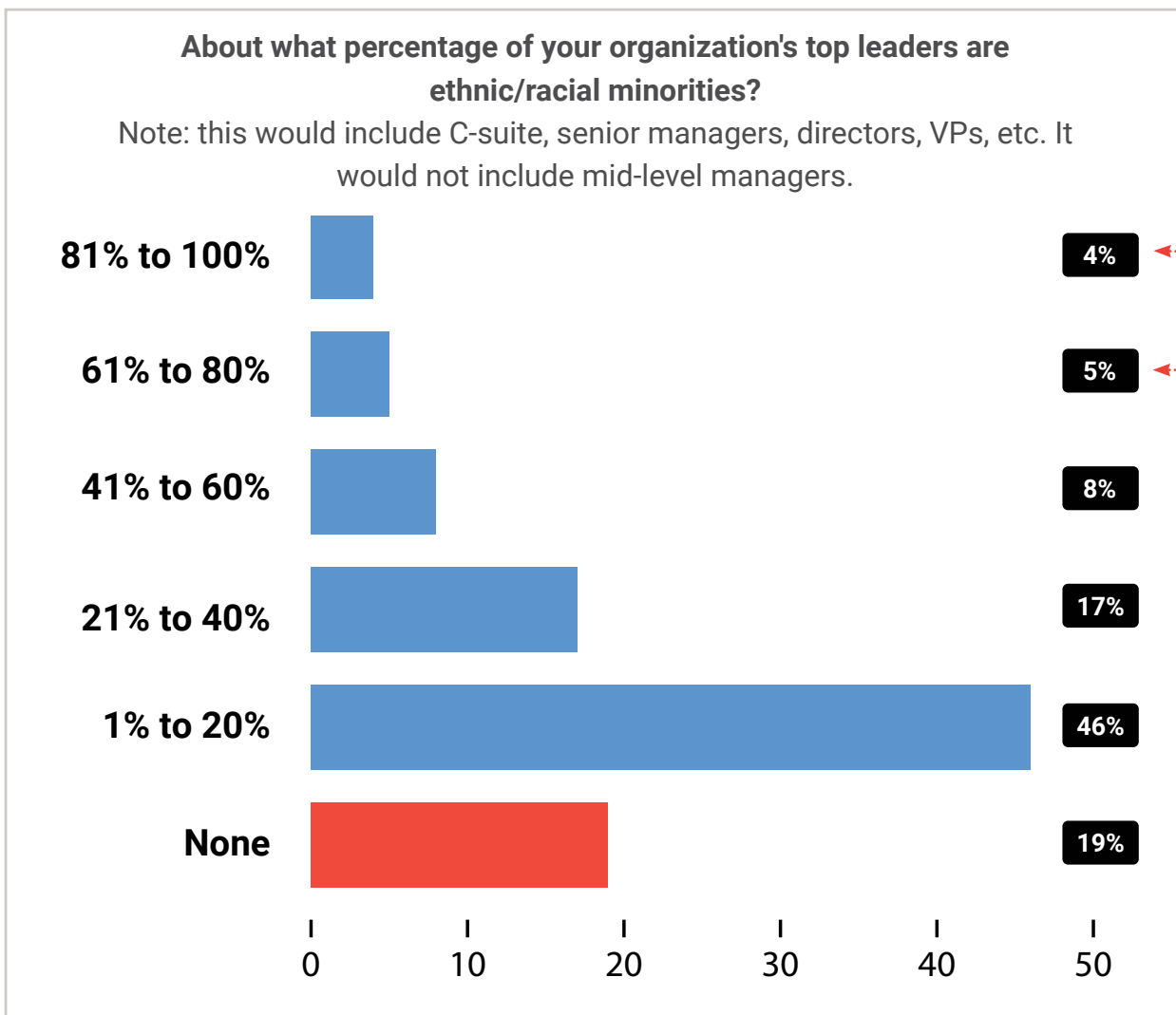
This study indicates that there is a dismal proportion of racial/ethnic minorities in top leadership positions. A large majority (66%) say not even 21% of their top leaders are ethnic/racial minorities. However, racial and ethnic minorities make up about 41% of the [U.S. population](#). This showcases the large gaps in the representation of ethnic/racial minorities in top leadership.

People belonging to ethnic/racial minorities can face a myriad of challenges at work. From microaggressions to unrealistic performance benchmarks, equity-deserving groups often have to jump through hoops to get the recognition they deserve. Why does this matter to organizations? Research shows that leaders from these minorities inspire employees from minority groups to aim for higher positions. They enable them to feel psychologically empowered and more confident at work, which in turn helps organizations achieve better [results](#).



When it comes to hiring, if you have only one diverse candidate in a pool of applicants, it is already too late. Organizations must work on diversifying the slate of candidates by posting jobs and recruiting from diverse places.”

~ **Emily Chase-Sosnoff**, Partner, Ford Harrison LLP



Editor's Note: In the original data, 8% of respondents stated that they "don't know" to the questions. We removed those responses and recalculated; so this only shows percentages for those that answered the question.



Under one in ten say ethnic/racial minorities make up 61% or more of their top leadership

DEIB Responsibility



Finding: HR is primarily responsible for DEIB in about half of organizations

HR plays quite a pivotal role in DEIB in many organizations. In over half of organizations, the Chief HR Officer (18%), a specific person within the HR department (16%), or the HR department as a whole (18%) is primarily responsible for DEIB issues, programs, and policies. However, in over a quarter of organizations, the responsibility falls on the DEIB function, either the Chief of DEIB (11%) or the DEIB department (18%).

It is interesting to note that while HR takes up the responsibility of DEIB, one must question if the average HR professional has the expertise to do DEIB work. DEIB [requires a skillset](#) that may be missing from other HR functions, and organizations may be operating with reduced capabilities by failing to have a DEIB department and/or head of DEIB.

Responsibility across the years

HR has assumed the mantle of responsibility when it comes to DEIB across the years. In 2018-19, 36% of respondents said HR held the primary responsibility for DEIB, compared to 52% in 2024.

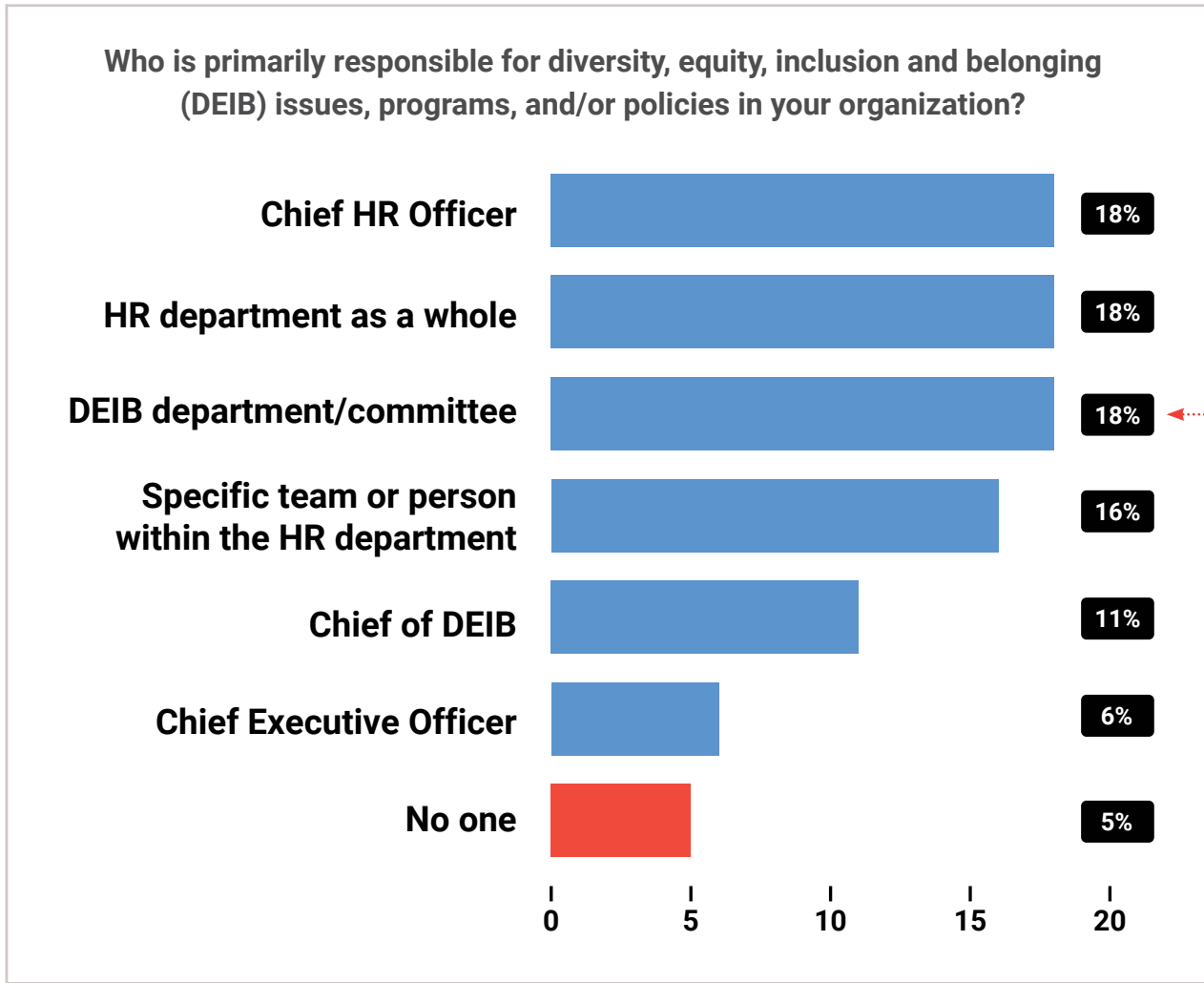
Differences based on organizational size

Large organizations are more likely to hold the Chief of DEIB as responsible for DEIB when compared to mid-sized and smaller organizations, who are more likely to place the responsibility on the HR department as a whole.



One of the best practices is to have a dedicated DEIB resource. Organizations that lack a dedicated “DEIB person” may have leaders who are not intentional or fully committed to DEIB.”

~ **Lenna Turner**, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Salary.com



About a fifth of organizations have a DEIB department/committee



Finding: Over a quarter of organizations do not have a DEIB department, function, or representative

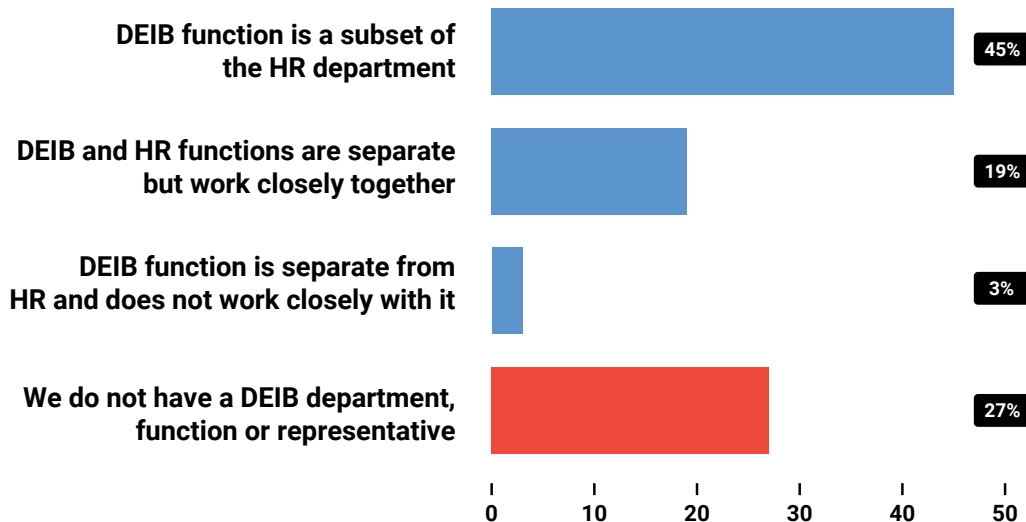
Differences based on organizational size

Over a third of small and mid-size organizations do not have a DEIB department (36%) compared to just 12% of large organizations.

We asked respondents about the connection between HR and DEIB function, and just over a quarter say there is no DEIB department, function, or representative in their organization. Even when there are DEIB functions, they are almost always a subset of the HR department (45%) or work closely with HR (19%). In only 3% of cases, DEIB is separate from HR and yet, fails to work closely with it.

Which best describes the connection between the HR department and the DEIB function within your organization?

Note: The DEIB function might include a team or just an individual in charge of DEIB

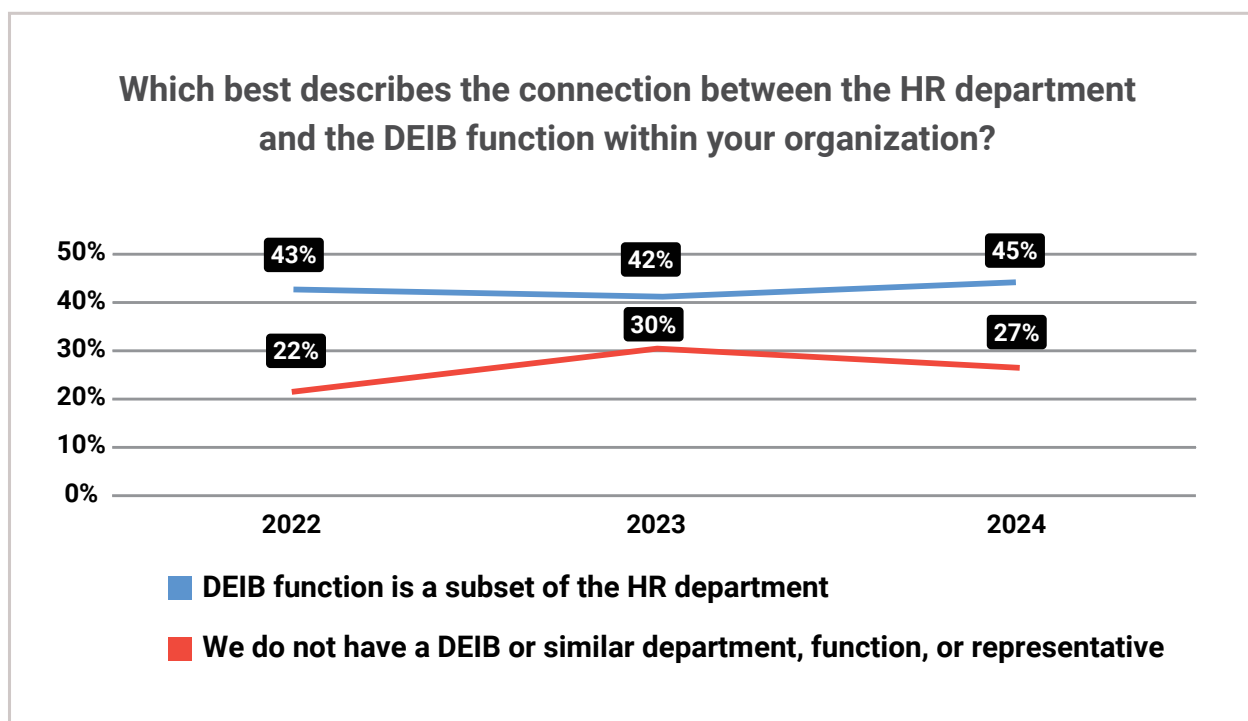


Editor's note: In the original data, 7% of respondents replied either "don't know" or "other-write in" to the question. We have not represented them in this chart.



Finding: Prevalence of DEIB teams/ individuals across the years

Across the last two years, about a quarter to under a third of organizations report not having DEIB or similar department, function or representative. Further, about two-fifths of organizations report DEIB as a subset of the HR department.





HRRI Strategic Suggestions

Based on the data, the following are some suggestions for improvements with regards to DEIB:

- ✓ Consider increasing accountability for DEIB by putting a person or group of individuals in charge of DEIB.
- ✓ Ensure DEIB representatives have open communication with top leadership so both parties are aware of roadblocks and challenges surrounding the issue.
- ✓ Improve the reputation of and trust in HR through initiatives that allow employees to share sensitive information candidly.

Design and Implementation of DEIB initiatives

DEIB initiatives are a critical component of an organization’s DEIB strategy. However, many organizations view their DEIB initiatives as ineffective. What goals drive these initiatives, and what prevents them from being effective?



Finding: Seven in ten organizations aim to build a culture of trust through DEIB initiatives

Apart from increasing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, organizations aim to achieve several goals through DEIB initiatives. Roughly two-thirds of organizations aim to:

- build a culture of trust (70%)
- remove bias (61%)
- retain the right talent (60%)



Aside from increasing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, what are the primary goals of your DEIB initiatives? (select all that apply)



One in ten organizations has no DEIB goals



Finding: Insufficient prioritization at top leadership levels is the top barrier to the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives

Differences based on organizational size

Large and midsize organizations are most likely to cite insufficient prioritization at the top leadership as a barrier to the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives. Smaller organizations cite a lack of budget as the most influential barrier.

DEIB initiatives are impeded by a lack of tangible support from organizations. Forty-five percent say a lack of budget is a barrier to increasing the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives. This is likely related to the other most cited barriers, which are insufficient prioritization at top leadership levels (42%), and a lack of understanding of the potential benefits of DEIB (34%).

Metrics can help get leadership support by demonstrating how crucial DEIB is to business success. However, a third report insufficient metrics tied to DEIB. Without buy-in from top management, DEIB initiatives lack strategic focus and required support. This results in barriers such as lack of time (34%) and inadequate training (31%).



The DEIB budget varies each year as we strategically spend on partnerships with gender, generational, race-based, and veterans organizations that offer us diverse talent for hiring, and career development programs for retention purposes.”

~ **Margot Goodson**, VP, Head of North America Diversity & Inclusion, SAP.

What are the barriers to increasing the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives in your organization? (select all that apply)



Editor's Note: In the original data 5% of respondents stated that they "don't know" to the question. We removed those responses and recalculated; so this only shows percentages for those that answered the question.



One-fifth of respondents say political and/or social backlash against DEIB ideas acts as a barrier to effectiveness of DEIB initiatives

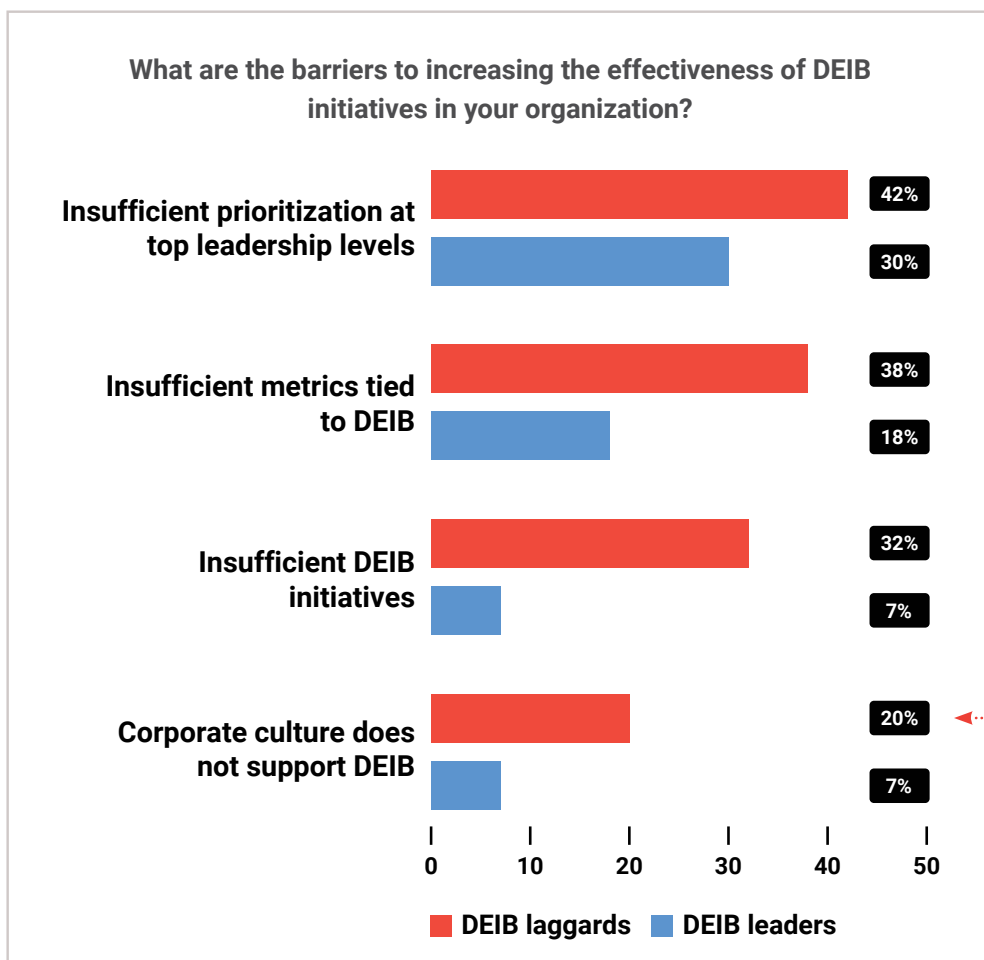


Finding: Over two-fifths of DEIB laggards say the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives in their organizations is hampered by insufficient prioritization at top leadership levels

Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that DEIB laggards are significantly more likely than leaders to say that listed barriers impede the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives.

Compared to DEIB leaders, a much higher proportion of DEIB laggards cite barriers to the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives. The biggest differences are in the areas of DEIB initiatives and a lack of DEIB metrics. The latter, of course, could be linked to the attitudes and support of top leadership. This finding further illustrates the need to make DEIB a strategic priority of top leadership.



DEIB laggards are three times more likely to say their corporate culture does not support DEIB



HRRI Strategic Suggestions

Based on the data, following are some suggestions for improvements with regards to DEIB:

- ✓ Match external messaging surrounding DEIB with internal culture. Token DEIB initiatives will only lead to a loss of trust among employees and burnout among DEIB employees.
- ✓ Collect data and listen to employees to build self-awareness on the organization's present status with regards to DEIB.
- ✓ Work on making organizational culture more agile, ready to change, and focused on innovation. These attributes create a more open culture that fosters DEIB.

Is DEIB Today All Talk and No Action?

What practices do organizations engage in while trying to improve DEIB? Practices that help foster DEIB include having specific initiatives that improve DEIB, tying the strategy of the organization to DEIB, building a culture where all people can thrive, and promoting and incentivizing DEIB work. We delve deeper into the extent to which organizations today engage in practices that help support DEIB.



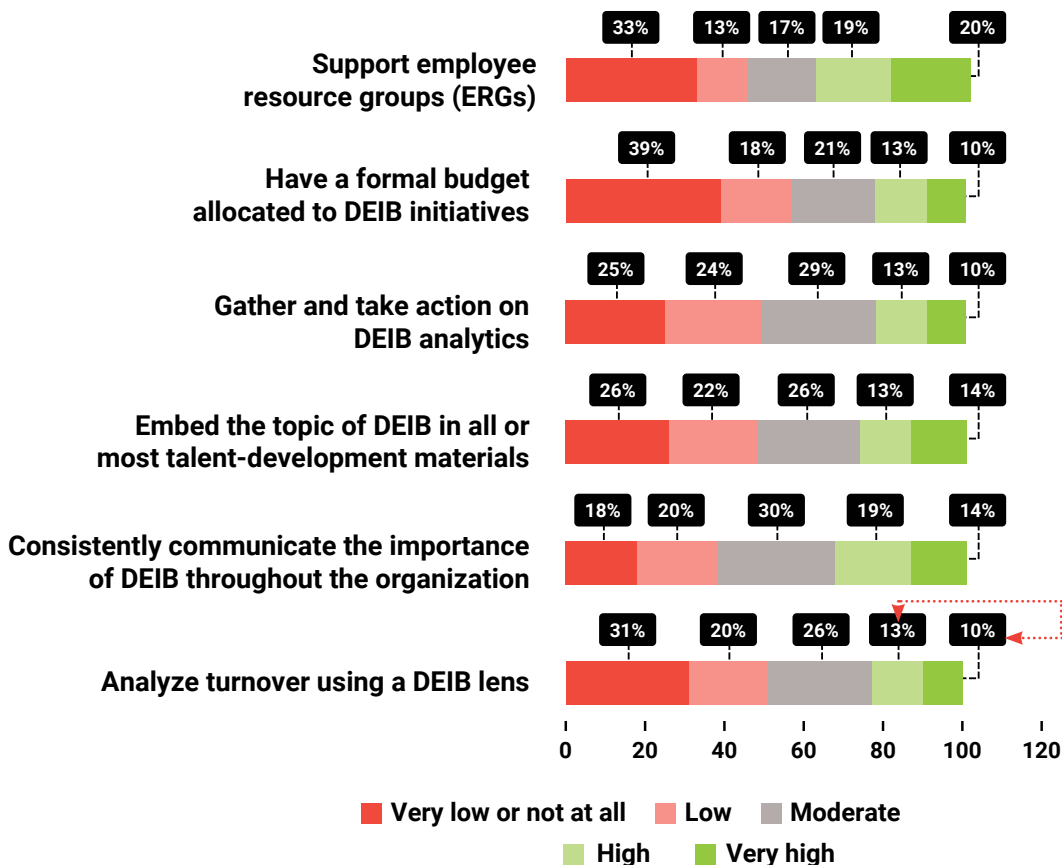
Finding: Just over a third of organizations consistently communicate the importance of DEIB throughout the organization

We asked respondents to rate the degree to which organizations engage in specific initiatives to support DEIB. We found that few engage in these initiatives to a high or very high degree. Our results indicate that a majority of organizations engage in these initiatives to a low or very low degree.

Organizations are, to a high or very high degree, most likely to consistently communicate the importance of DEIB throughout the organization (33%) and support employee resources groups (39%). They are considerably less likely to gather and take action on DEIB analytics (23%).

DEIB-related initiatives are complex to implement and involve multiple stakeholders. While these may act as barriers, we believe organizations should try better to implement these initiatives. The key to improving the focus on these initiatives is to view DEIB as a strategically important initiative. This leads us to the next finding on how DEIB is viewed within organizations.

To what degree does your organization use the following initiatives?



Editor's Note: In the original data, 3% to 7% of respondents stated that they "don't know" to the questions. We removed those responses and recalculated; so this only shows percentages for those that answered the question.



Under a quarter analyze turnover using a DEIB lens

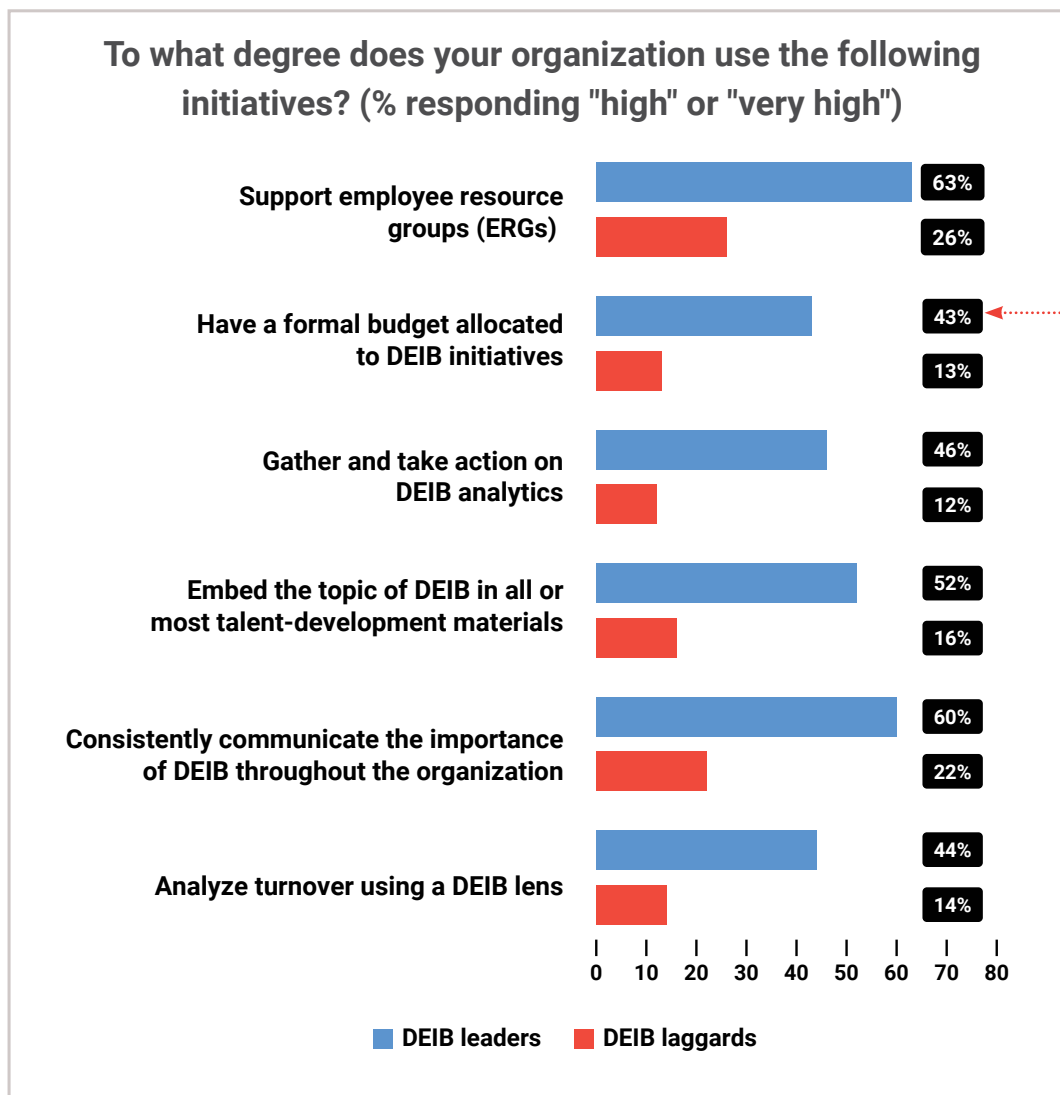


Finding: DEIB leaders are nearly four times more likely than DEIB laggards to take action on DEIB analytics

DEIB leader organizations leverage initiatives to improve the effectiveness of the function to a much greater extent than do laggards. They are more inclined to support the DEIB function, whether by formalizing budget allocations or actively engaging with DEIB analytics.

Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that DEIB leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to use the listed initiatives to a high or very degree.



Two-fifths of DEIB leaders have a formal budget allocated to the DEIB initiative.



Finding: Just a quarter of organizations believe DEIB initiatives enhance organizational performance

We asked respondents about the degree to which they agree with several statements about the role of DEIB in their organization, outcomes of DEIB initiatives, and how strategically integrated DEIB is with the running of the organization.

Results indicate that just under half (47%) believe DEIB initiatives enhance the mission, vision, and values of their organization. A little over two-fifths say their organization is more diverse and inclusive than two years ago (44%), and that pay is equitable (43%). When it comes to strategic alignment, DEIB fares even worse, with just over a quarter saying DEIB plays a role in strategic planning (27%) and DEIB initiatives enhance organizational performance (25%).

Unless organizations view DEIB as strategically important and make it a corporate priority, DEIB initiatives are unlikely to receive the necessary resources, time, or attention they require to succeed. DEIB initiatives cannot be run as a standalone system for mere compliance purposes. We believe it needs to be ingrained into the very fabric of the corporate culture and made an integral part of all organizational operations. This requires a significant shift in the way things are typically run today.

**Which of the following are true in your organization?
(select all that apply)**



Only a third believe workforce in their organization reflects the demographics of the marketplace



Finding: DEIB leaders are over three times more likely than laggards to say DEIB initiatives enhance organizational performance

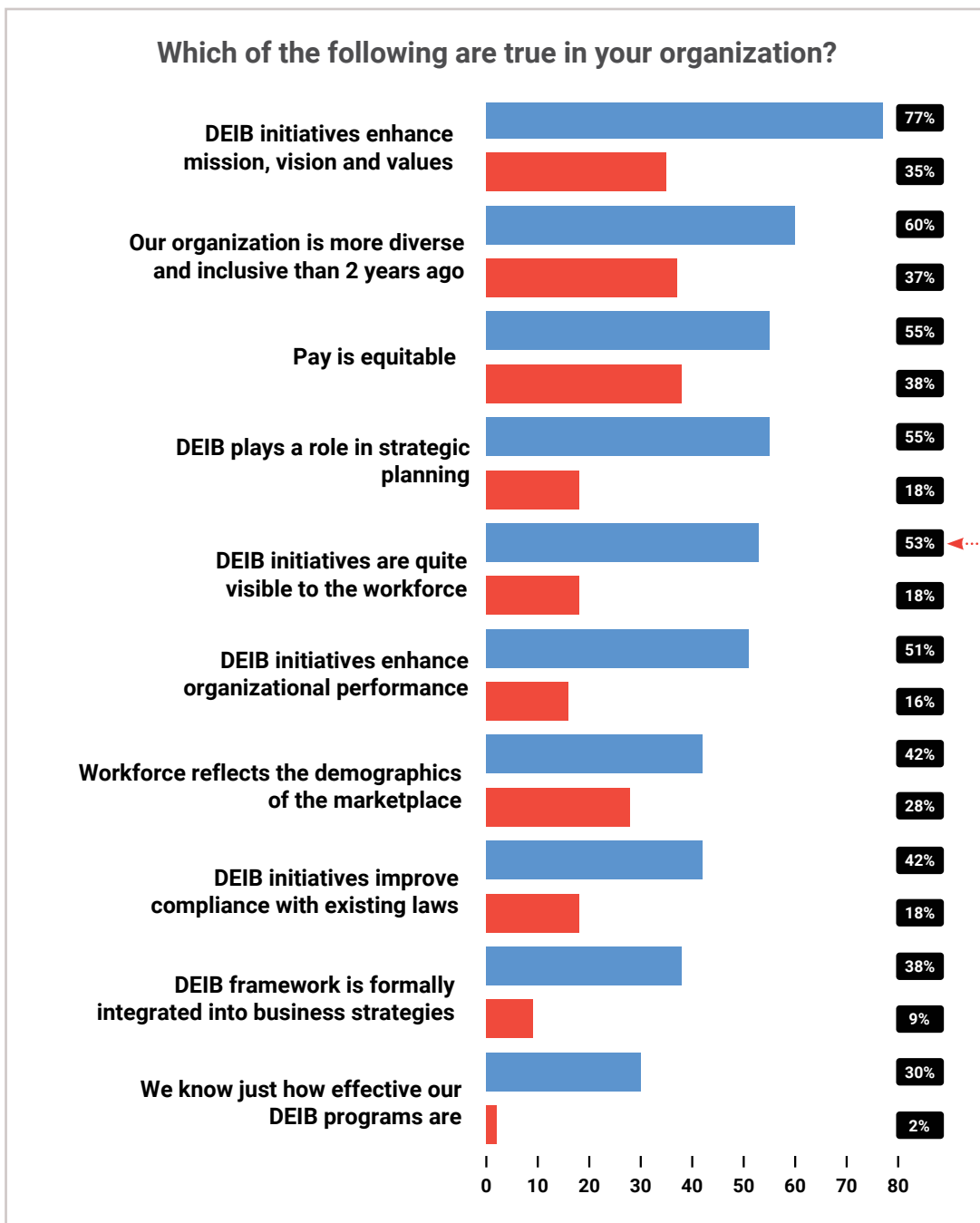
Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that DEIB leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to agree to the listed statements.

Overall, DEIB leader organizations are more likely to report better DEIB-related outcomes. They are over twice as likely to say DEIB initiatives enhance mission, vision, and values (77% vs. 35%) and more likely to say their DEIB initiatives enhance organizational performance (51% vs. 16%).

The success of DEIB initiatives in leader organizations can also be attributed to the fact that DEIB is more likely to play a role in strategic planning (55% vs. 18%) and that their DEIB framework is more likely to be formally integrated into business strategies (38% vs. 9%).





DEIB leaders are almost three times more likely than laggards to say DEIB initiatives are quite visible to the workforce



Finding: Just one-third of organizations have a mandate to increase diversity in leadership roles

To further investigate specific actions that organizations have undertaken to make DEIB a strategic priority, we asked respondents if the listed statements are true. Results show that while there is some effort to improve representation at the top levels, managers are seldom encouraged in any way to try to reach DEIB goals.

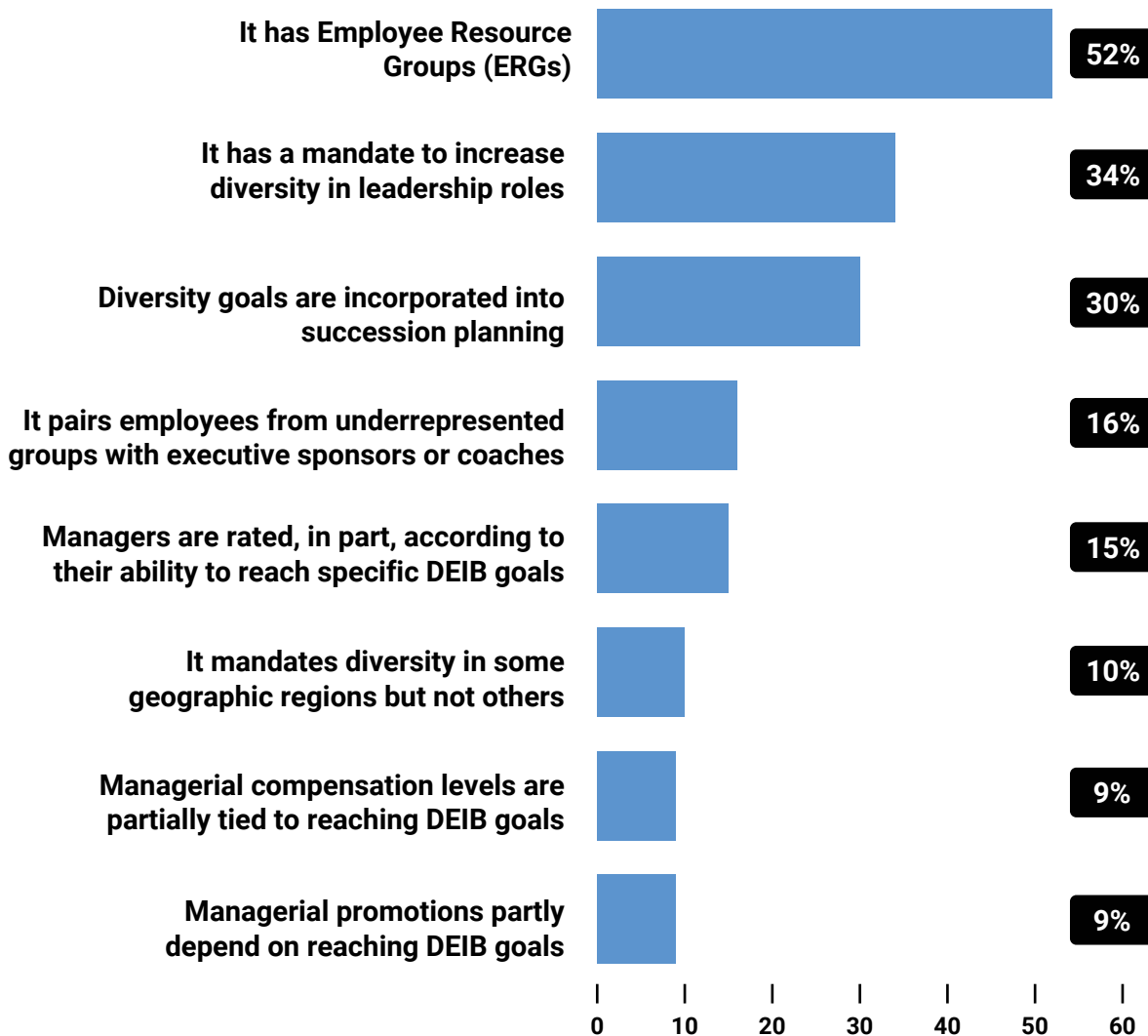
Over half (52%) of organizations report having employee resource groups (ERGs). However, only a third (34%) of organizations have a mandate to increase diversity in leadership roles, and under a third say diversity goals are incorporated into succession planning. Further, just over one-tenth (15%) rate their managers on their ability to reach specific DEIB goals, and one-tenth tie managerial compensation and promotions to their ability to reach DEIB goals.

The lack of initiatives to build leadership capacity among underrepresented groups of employees may reduce the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives, as identified earlier in the report. While recruiting diverse groups of employees is important, we believe more should be done to retain and grow such employees.

Longitudinal finding

Our various research reports indicate that, from 2018 to the present, just a quarter to one-third of organizations have had any kind of mandate to increase diversity in leadership roles.

Which of the following is true or false for your organization?
(% responding "true")



Editor's Note: In the original data, 8% to 17% of respondents stated that they "don't know" to the question. We removed those responses and recalculated; so this only shows percentages for those that answered the question.



Under a fifth (16%) say their organization pairs employees from underrepresented groups with executive sponsors or coaches



Finding: DEIB leader organizations are twice as likely to have mandates to increase diversity in leadership roles

The greater proportion of women and minorities in top leadership positions in DEIB leader organizations is not by chance. DEIB leaders are more than twice as likely as laggards to have a mandate to increase diversity in leadership roles (44% vs. 23%) and to pair employees from underrepresented groups with executive sponsors or coaches (25% vs. 10%). However, the biggest difference is in the incorporation of diversity goals into succession planning (46% vs. 18%).

Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that DEIB leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to say all listed DEIB related statements are true in their organizations.





Finding: Most organizations offer paid time off to make it easier for diverse employees to work there

Organizations face challenges in integrating DEIB within their corporate culture and making it a strategic priority. Despite this hardship, an encouraging number of organizations offer a variety of benefits that may make it easier for diverse employees to work there.

Most organizations offer paid time off (PTO) (83%) and remote work options (70%). These benefits are likely to help caregivers, who are, in a majority of cases, [women](#). Remote work options can open up the candidate pool; this can include candidates with disabilities who may not be able to commute to an on-site location. Relatedly, about 67% of organizations offer flexible work options, and 59% offer paid parental leave.

Benefits/work arrangements to support a diverse workforce across the years

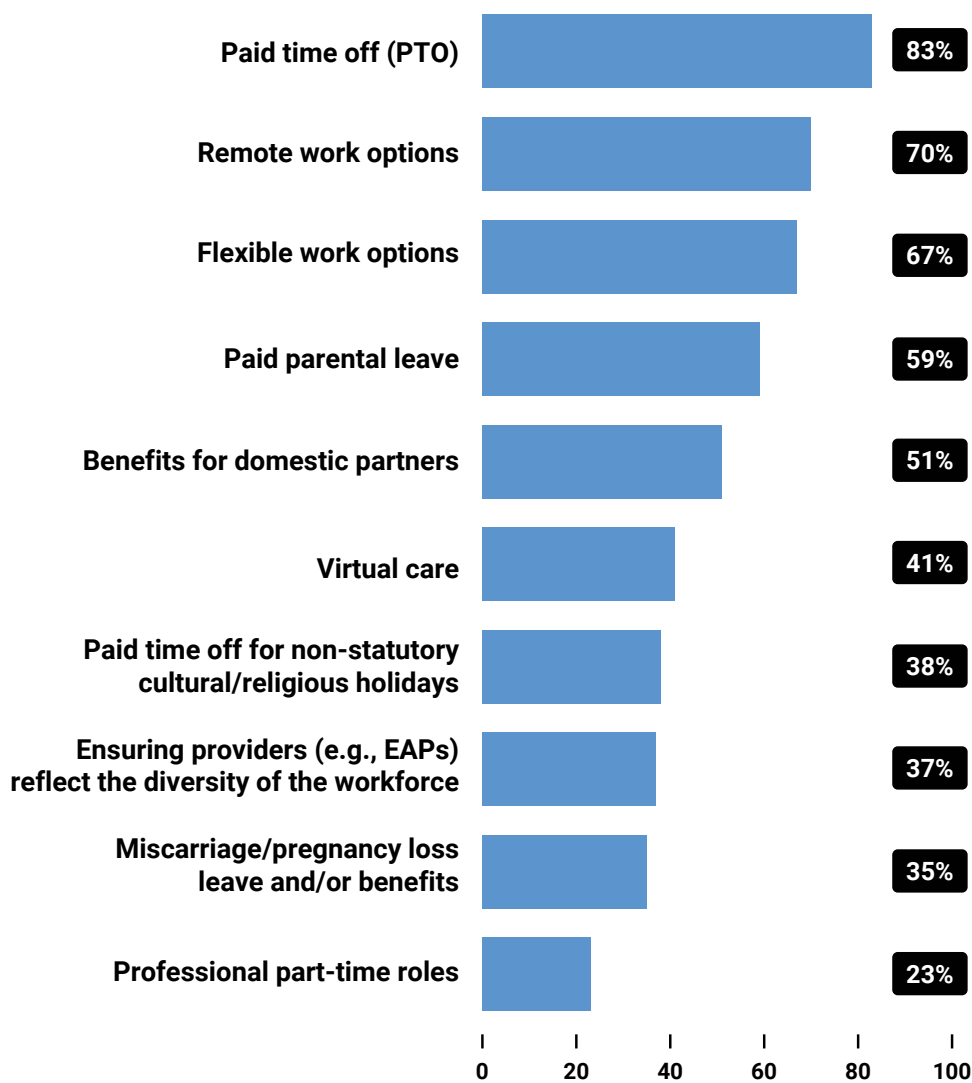
Paid time off remains among the top options offered by organizations to support a diverse workforce, a trend we've seen from 2018 to the present. Similarly, remote work has been among the top two options since 2022.



Collecting information from employee self-disclosure surveys can give us information to explore benefit options that better suit our diverse employees."

~ **Lenna Turner**, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Salary.com

What benefits or work arrangements does your organization have that make it easier for diverse employees to work there? (select all that apply)



Half of organizations offer benefits for domestic partners

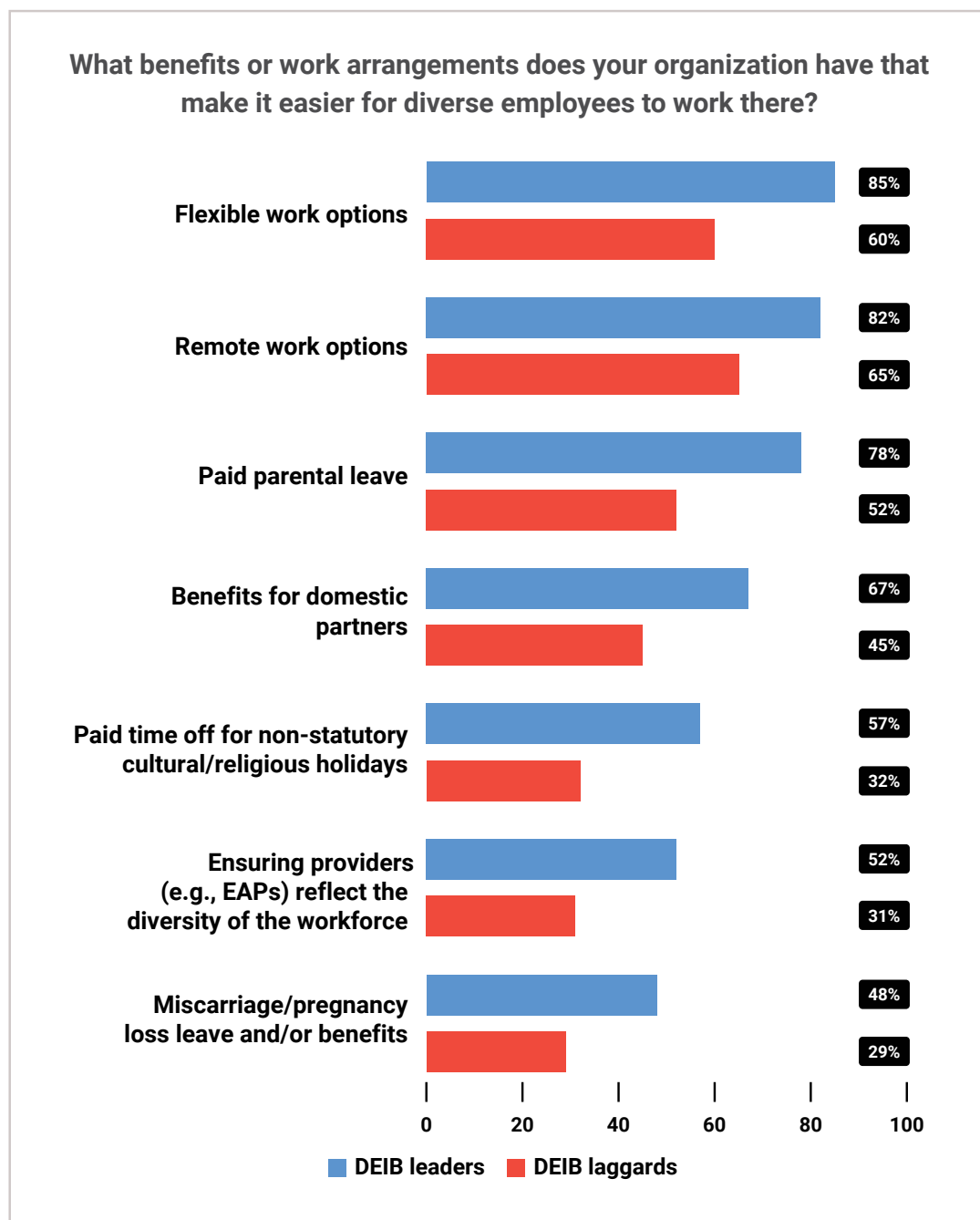


Finding: Most DEIB leaders offer flexible work options

More than half of DEIB leaders offer six different benefits that can be used to help accommodate a more diverse workforce. In contrast, only three benefits are offered by over half of the laggards (flexible work options, remote work options, and paid parental leave).

Results of Chi-square Test







A chi-square test of independence shows that DEIB leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to offer listed benefits, which makes it easier for diverse employees to work there.





HRRI Strategic Suggestions

Based on the data, the following are some suggestions for improvements with regards to DEIB:

-  Use data from demographic/inclusion surveys to provide empirical evidence of the business sense of improving DEIB in organizations.
-  Train DEIB representatives to have difficult conversations in an effective and productive manner. This will help them deal with “naysayers” who may be averse to complying with DEIB initiatives.
-  Move beyond DEIB in recruitment to foster a culture where diverse employees can thrive and grow. Focus on succession planning, coaching/mentoring and leadership development of diverse employees to make more sustainable progress in DEIB.
-  DEIB leaders focus on various practices that help them create an inclusive culture at work, including supporting ERGs, offering benefits such as flexible work, etc. This demonstrates a commitment to the DEIB cause and helps retain equity-deserving groups.
-  DEIB leaders also demonstrate their commitment to DEIB by allocating formal budgets for DEIB initiatives, and by aligning DEIB with the strategic direction of the firm. This ensures that all stakeholders view DEIB not only as a “nice to have” initiative but as a business imperative.
-  Lastly, the use of analytics in DEIB, such as analyzing turnover using a DEIB lens, helps DEIB leaders gather useful information on benchmarking their practices and making suitable improvements. This, no doubt, contributes to the improved strategic relevance of DEIB in such organizations.

How Well Are Organizations Measuring DEIB?

Metrics help demonstrate the effectiveness of DEIB initiatives and allow organizations to benchmark progress toward DEIB goals. However, a lack of metrics is cited as a major barrier to the effectiveness of initiatives. What approaches are organizations taking to measure DEIB?



Finding: Seven in ten organizations consider and track race/ethnicity while measuring a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce

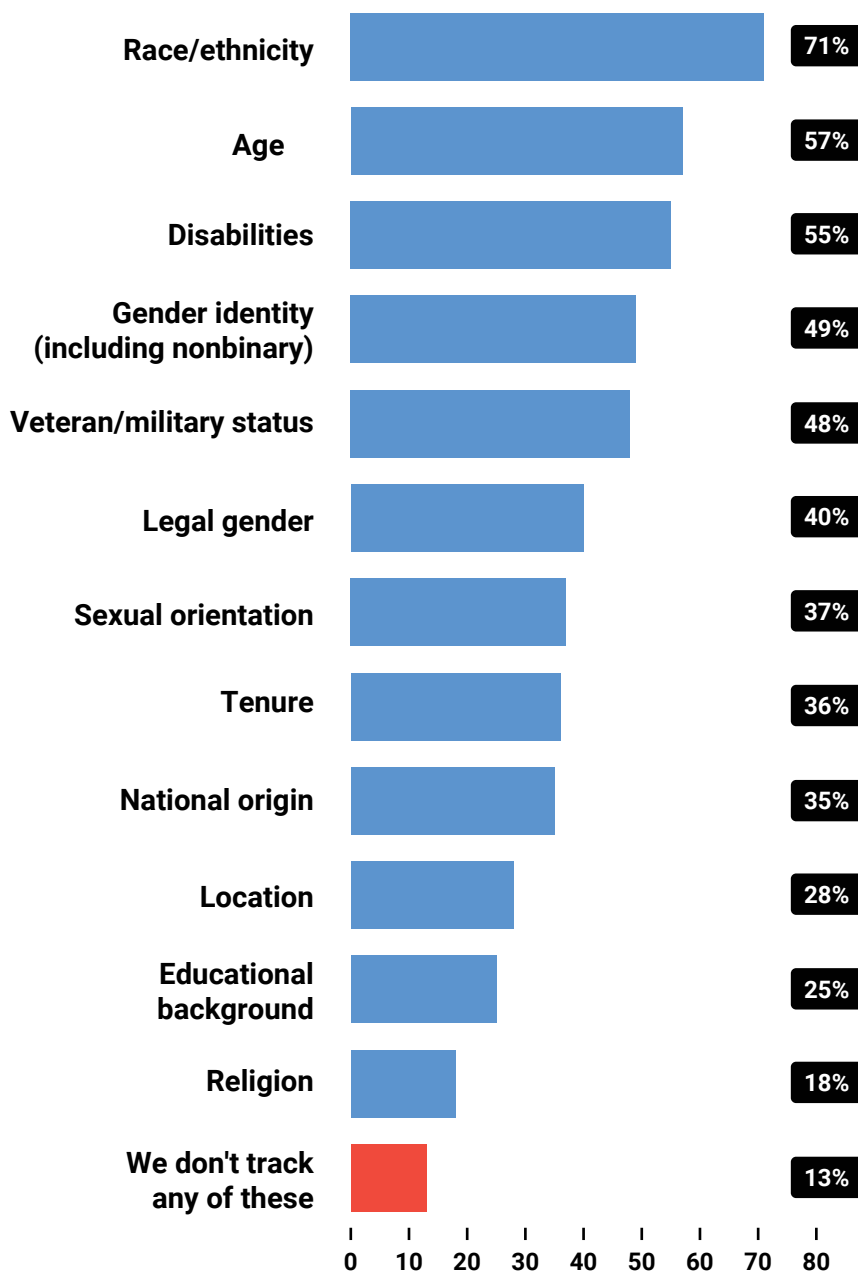
Diversity can take on many forms. Most organizations consider and track race/ethnicity (71%), age (57%), disabilities (55%), and gender identity (49%). Over two-fifths also consider and track veteran/military status (48%) and legal gender (40%). Over one in ten organizations don't track any of these.

Tracking and measuring some characteristics may be complicated by legalities and rely on self-disclosure by employees. Culture can play a role. In a supportive culture, employees are more likely to feel free to be themselves without fear of retribution.

Differences based on organizational size

Small organizations are more likely to not track any of the listed characteristics (23%) when compared to mid-size (14%) and large organizations (7%).

Which of the following employee characteristics does your organization monitor as part of its DEIB initiatives? (select all that apply)



Editor's Note: In the original data 7% of respondents stated that they "don't know" to the questions. We removed those responses and recalculated; so this only shows percentages for those that answered the question.



Over one in ten organizations do not track any of the listed employee characteristics



Finding: Over half of organizations rely on employee surveys to measure the current state of DEIB

A small majority of organizations measure the current state of DEIB with employee surveys (52%). Over two-fifths rely on workforce data (46%), pay equity data (42%), and employee retention data (42%). However, 18% of organizations do not engage in measurement at all.

This leads us to question how they would comply with laws surrounding DEIB without basic measurement. Under the [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#), employers who have at least 100 employees and federal contractors who have at least 50 employees are required to complete and submit an EEO-1 Report (a government form that requests information about employees' job categories, ethnicity, race, and gender) to EEOC and the U.S. Department of Labor every year.

While basic workforce data helps ascertain representation, it is just a starting point for DEIB. Successful DEIB in organizations gives all employees the opportunity to be successful and happy at the workplace. This often requires measurements of recruiting outcomes (37%), diversity within leadership ranks (36%), and diversity among teams and/or departments (36%).

Differences based on organizational size

Organizations rely on different metrics based on their size. Large organizations rely on employee surveys (59%) and workforce data (55%), while mid-size organizations rely on pay equity data, employee retention, and consistency in job titles for similar roles (42%), and smaller organizations use employee surveys (49%) to measure the current state of DEIB and the effectiveness of related initiatives in the organization.

Further, while a third of respondents from small organizations say they don't measure the state of DEIB or effectiveness of initiatives, 16% of mid-size organizations and 9% of respondents from large organizations say the same.

**What metrics does your organization use to measure the current state of DEIB and the effectiveness of related initiatives in your organization?
(select all that apply)**



Editor's Note: In the original data, 5% of respondents stated that they "don't know" to the questions. We removed those responses and recalculated, so this only shows percentages for those that answered the question.



Just one-fifth measure diversity in succession planning



Finding: DEIB leaders are more likely than laggards to use a variety of DEIB metrics to measure their current state of DEIB

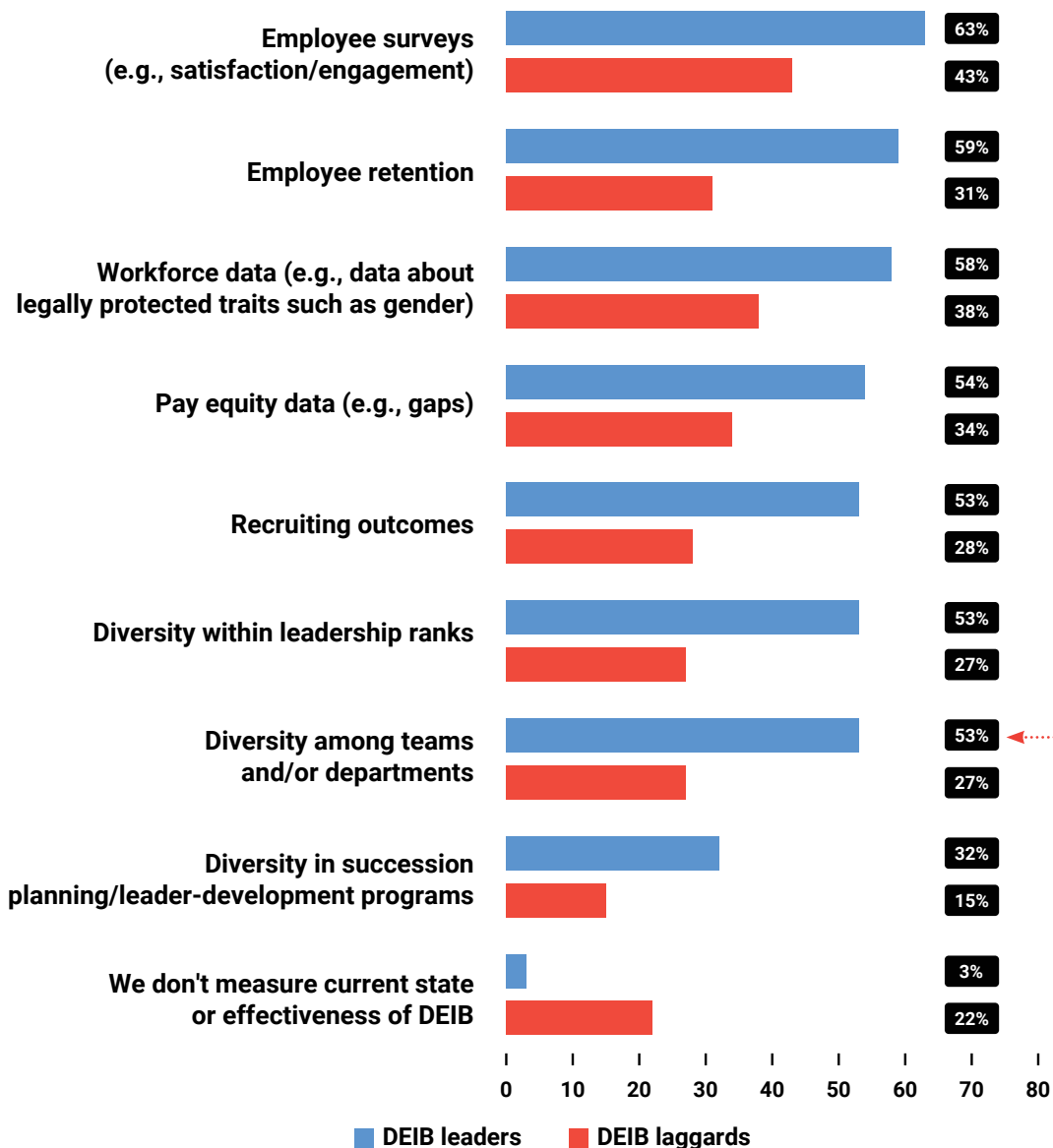
Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that DEIB leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to use all listed DEIB related metrics.

The success of DEIB initiatives in leader organizations can be attributed, at least in part, to better utilization of DEIB metrics. This allows them to comprehensively measure, benchmark, and improve their DEIB initiatives. It also allows them to demonstrate the outcomes of DEIB initiatives in measurable terms, which improves their credibility and can lead to greater leadership buy-in. About three-fifths of DEIB leaders measure the current state of DEIB using employee surveys (63%), employee retention (59%), and workforce data (58%). However, just two-fifths or less of the laggards use these methods.



What metrics does your organization use to measure the current state of DEIB in your organization?









DEIB leaders are twice as likely to measure diversity among teams and/or departments than are laggards



HRRI Strategic Suggestions

Based on our data, following are some suggestions for the measurement and tracking of DEIB initiatives and outcomes:

-  Gather required data based on reporting requirements of laws. For instance, the [EEOC website](#) provides information on the workforce demographic data to be submitted by employers with 100 or more employees, such as details by job category and by sex, race, or ethnicity. This helps comply with federal non-discrimination laws.
-  Make sure your HR team is trained on the legalities and requirements of this data collection.
-  Inform your employees about the data collection process. Clarify that the collection of gender and race information is a legal requirement and ensure the confidentiality of the data.
-  Utilize self-identification as a primary method, where employees are given the option to identify their gender and race on forms or electronic systems. This method is generally preferred for its accuracy and respect for employees' self-identification.
-  Leverage technology and use HR management software that complies with legal requirements and can efficiently manage and store the collected data. Ensure that the software can generate reports suitable for submission.
-  Regularly update your data to capture any changes in employee demographics. This is crucial for maintaining compliance and ensuring accuracy in your reporting.

DEIB Training and Its Components

DEIB learning programs are a crucial aspect of improving DEIB in organizations. They help educate employees at all levels about the importance of DEIB, unconscious biases, and sentiments that they may hold, and the effect of these behaviors on equity-deserving employees. However, recent changes in legislation surrounding the issue can complicate the delivery of such training to all stakeholders.



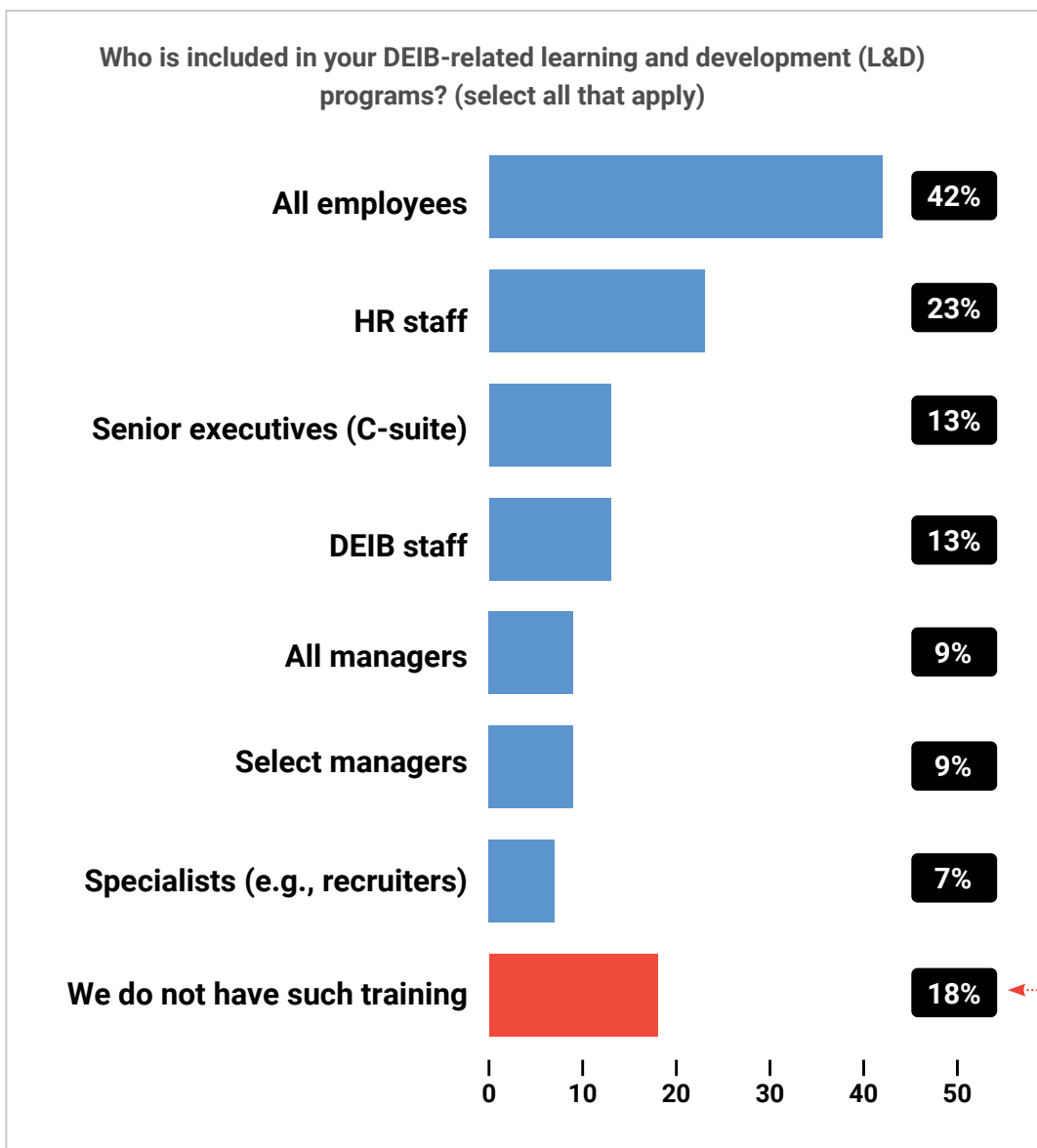
Finding: Forty-two percent of organizations have DEIB-related L&D programs for all employees

Considering the importance of DEIB-related L&D programs, one would expect that organizations would extend these programs to all employees. However, with [recent changes in legislation](#), such as some states prohibiting state-funded employers from requiring employees to take part in trainings dealing with particular diversity issues (e.g., sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, systematic racism, implicit bias, privilege, and critical race theory), the challenges to providing such training increase. Results show that 42% of organizations conduct DEIB L&D programs for all employees. However, about one-fifth (18%) have no such training at all. Under a quarter (23%) offer DEIB L&D programs for HR staff, and about one-tenth or fewer offer these programs to all managers and specialists.

Should DEIB training initiatives be mandatory for employees? This is part of an [ongoing debate](#). On one side of the argument is research suggesting that when employees are forced to attend these types of trainings, it may spur resistance and a backlash. On the other hand, the data from such research is seldom disaggregated in such a way that it evaluates perceptions based on marginalized identities. More research in these areas is warranted.

Proportion of organizations offering DEIB training to all employees across the years

The proportion of respondents who say their organization offers DEIB training to all employees has been declining year on year over the past five years - 2018/2019 (67%), 2020 (50%), 2022 (40%), 2023 (38%). There has been a slight rise in 2024, with 42% of respondents saying their organization offers DEIB training to all employees.



One-fifth do not have any DEIB-related L&D programs

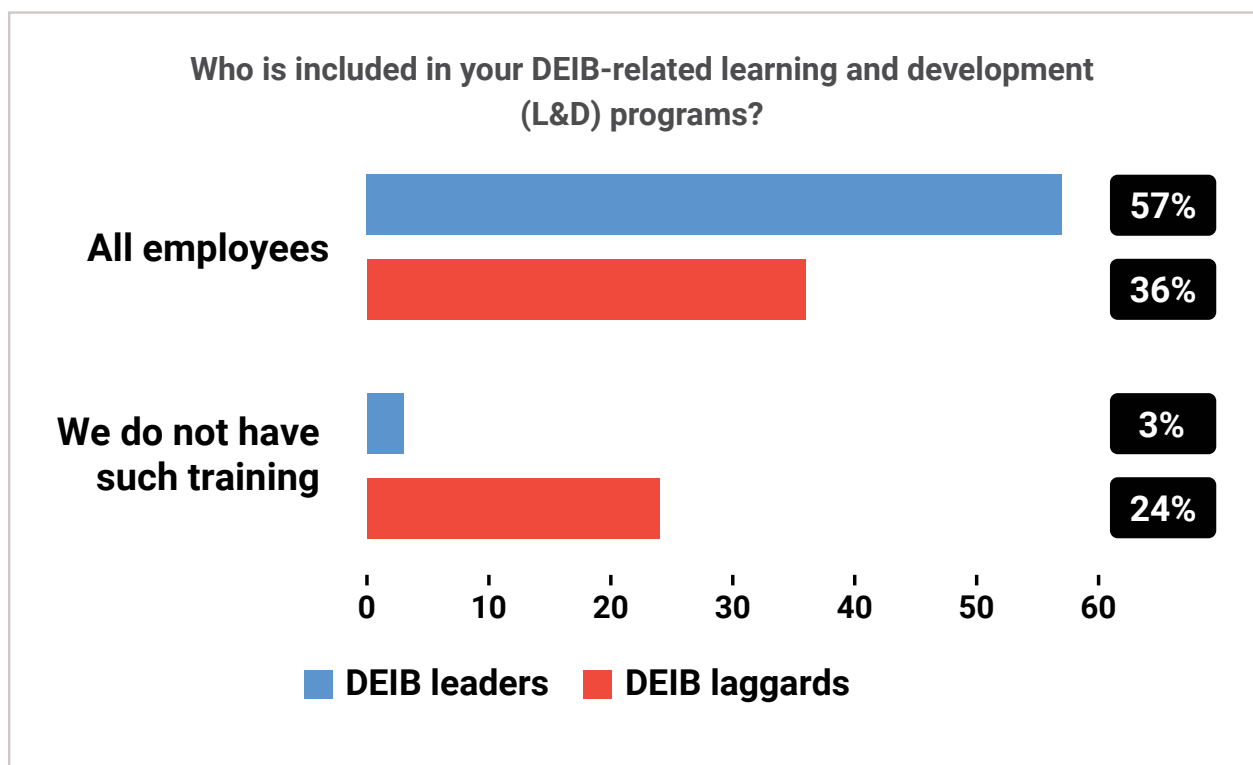


Finding: DEIB leaders are significantly more likely than DEIB laggards to offer DEIB-related L&D to all employees

DEIB-related L&D has utility for employees at all levels. While three-fifths (57%) of DEIB leaders offer such training to all employees, just one-third (36%) of laggards do the same. In fact, in a quarter of DEIB laggards, there is no such DEIB-related L&D program.

Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that DEIB leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to say all employees are included in DEIB L&D programs, and laggards are significantly more likely than leaders to say they have no such training.





Finding: Unconscious bias training is the most popular component of DEIB L&D programs

Among organizations that offer DEIB-related L&D programs, the most widely provided is unconscious bias training (61%). This, in addition to the second popular component—inclusion awareness training (54%)—helps employees understand their own biases and attitudes they may hold regarding DEIB. This may also help employees self-introspect to shed light on behaviors they may be engaging in that could make others feel excluded or discriminated against.





Over one-third offer microaggression training

HRRI Strategic Insight

Due to changing legislation surrounding DEIB training at the workplace, always work with the legal team in your organization to ensure the content of training offered and materials used meets legal compliance. This also helps the legal team remain prepared for any potential backlash that could be envisaged as a result of such training.



Key Takeaways

Below are some recommendations for organizations to improve their DEIB.

Key Takeaway 1

Integrate DEIB into the strategic framework of the organization. Try to ensure that top management realizes the importance of DEIB and functions as champions of such initiatives. This will help secure support for DEIB in the form of budget, training, time, etc. Additionally, businesses should integrate DEIB into their strategies to create more opportunities for improvement and ensure that the demographics of employees and customers reflect broader societal diversity. Consider making a key person or team accountable for DEIB to prevent the dilution of responsibilities surrounding the issue. Further, a commitment to issues such as pay equity not only improves recruitment of diverse hires but also increases chances of retention.

Key Takeaway 2

Look at DEIB as a journey and not a destination. Very often, organizations want to feel assured that they have done their best to check the DEIB box. To do that, they often tend to incorporate it into policies, procedures, and systems and then consider the job done. However, the reality is that undoing years of discrimination and giving all employees a sense of belonging is rarely a short-term endeavor. It takes time to change mindsets, convince top leaders of the business utility of DEIB, and bring about a cultural shift.

Key Takeaway 3

Consider getting expert help with DEIB initiatives. Our findings show that many organizations look to HR professionals to take on DEIB responsibilities. This can be less effective since DEIB is a sensitive issue that requires comprehensive knowledge, lived experiences, and expertise that a trained DEIB professional brings. In some cases, the process must begin with a full-scale audit of the organization at all levels to benchmark DEIB. If internal employees feel that top leadership is unwilling to face harsh truths, they may conduct a superficial audit that is unlikely to reveal useful information. An external consultant who is free from the political ramifications of the results of the audit may be a more suitable choice. This could also be handled by an autonomous DEIB committee made up of representatives from all levels of the organization.

Key Takeaway **4**

Hold critical and vulnerable conversations around DEIB. This may require extensive training for managers and other DEIB professionals who hold these conversations to employ active listening, and empathy and make employees feel safe to share their often emotional stories. In most cases, anonymity must be guaranteed to help respondents share candidly without fear of repercussions. Following up with respondents on how their stories are being used to improve DEIB and how important their participation is in catalyzing change within the organization is critical. Finally, the information collected through these conversations must inform decisions and actions toward remedying identified gaps in DEIB. Organizations that miss following up on conversations with action will risk making participants feel unheard and may reduce their participation in the future.

In light of today’s polarized and overheated political climate, it makes sense to train DEIB personnel to hold difficult conversations with employees and leaders who may not be on board with DEIB initiatives. This requires teaching DEIB personnel about emotional management so that they reduce their feelings of angst while talking about contentious issues and maintain dignity and authenticity. Additionally, matching organizational values with DEIB creates a culture of inclusion that leaves little space for disrespect while allowing for open conversations. Be sure not to approach DEIB with the intention to penalize mistakes and create a fear of “getting canceled.” A culture of learning and curiosity surrounding DEIB issues allows for greater understanding. When backed by data, such discussions become more meaningful and less polarized.

Key Takeaway **5**

Utilize DEIB-related data and metrics. Consistent and holistic measurement of DEIB allows organizations to determine where they stand and also measure improvements they make on this baseline. An analysis of both formal and informal processes, procedures, and behaviors in the organization is required for an effective current state assessment. Another way to gather useful information could be through ERGs based on race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Leaders of these ERGs could regularly meet with the organization’s leadership to provide feedback on employee sentiments and concerns.

Key Takeaway **6**

Build inclusive leadership. Leadership buy-in is critical to any initiative. Top leaders who act as sponsors for DEIB initiatives help increase credibility, remove roadblocks, and increase exposure across the organization. Holding leadership responsible for at least some part of DEIB removes the burden from the shoulders of the very people who may be struggling for greater equity and inclusivity. Organizations need to recognize that employees who involve themselves in DEIB work have to balance professional responsibilities and accountabilities while undertaking difficult and often emotional work. Leaders who support and encourage these employees are critical to DEIB’s success.

Key Takeaway 7

Allow employees to bring their authentic selves to work. “Code-switching” is a behavioral adjustment for minorities to successfully navigate interracial interactions. This occurs in spaces where minorities must adjust their behaviors to fit into “appropriate” behaviors at work. A recent study reveals that 61% of all employees [minimize identities](#) that make them “different” in some way. Employees cannot check their identities at the door when they enter the workplace. Rethink policies around appropriate dress codes and behavior at work. Studies show that minorities often face greater pressure to conform to white ideals of [professionalism](#). Do you have policies around appearances and behaviors because they impact the work being done, or is it because that is the way things have always been done? If a policy or rule doesn’t have a bona fide occupational reason, consider scrapping it. Customer or leadership preferences are [not necessarily a valid justification](#) for prohibiting a particular hairstyle or appearance preference. Allowing employees to be authentic also requires the work culture to be free from microaggressions. This may require extensive training to educate people about making people feel “othered” and dehumanized.

Key Takeaway 8

Focus on visibility for underrepresented groups. One method to improve visibility for minorities at work is coaching and sponsorship. This allows underrepresented groups access to resources and training that they have historically lacked and helps bring them to a level playing field. This could be one of the first steps to improving representation at the leadership level. An incubator program to support the career growth of minorities and women would also be a great addition. Further, employees involved in DEIB work need to be recognized and rewarded for their efforts. This brings visibility to their work outside of their normal job duties. Allow people involved in ERGs and other DEIB-related work to add their work around DEIB to their performance review. It helps them feel recognized and improves support from supervisors.

Key Takeaway 9

Be accountable and focus on specific actions. Rather than issuing vague statements about their good intentions regarding DEIB, organizations should focus on specific actions that help improve equity. Explore more modern pathways for sourcing a diverse applicant pool (such as all-women coding camps), creating inclusive job descriptions, training recruiters to look beyond candidates’ academic credentials, communicating clear career paths for minorities and women, and providing managers with training and tools to encourage employees to be their full selves at work. Accountability could be achieved through a regular newsletter with representation numbers and other highlights relating to DEIB that could be made available publicly.



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