THE INSTITUTE OF LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Neurodiversity at work
Research Summary

Our research: why now?

It is estimated that around 1 in 7 people (more than 15% of people in the UK) have neurodivergent conditions, meaning that the brain functions, learns and processes information differently; this includes Attention Deficit Disorders, Autism, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia (ACAS, 2019). Although often characterised by a set of "deficits" which are used to identify ways they differ from the majority of the neurotypical population, neurodivergents often have unique attributes and there is a strong business case for employing people from neurominorities for their creativity, problem solving skills and other capabilities (Bawley & George, 2016, CIPD, 2018; Faragher, 2018; GMB, 2018; Silberman, 2015).

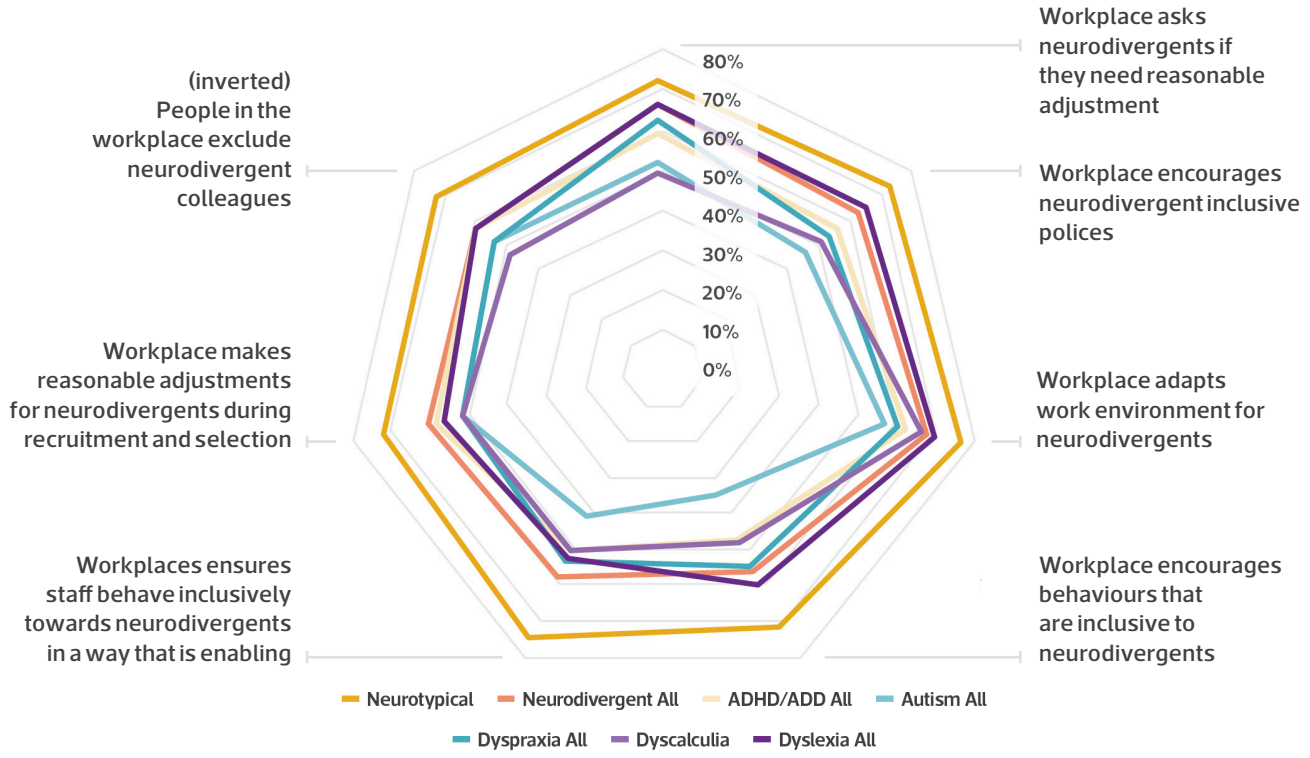
Despite the opportunities presented by employing neurodivergents, false stereotypes persist which limit opportunities available to both neurodivergents and to organisations who are not accessing this untapped talent. Furthermore, many neurodivergents report mental health issues arising as a result of active discrimination, exclusion and bullying due to their differences, or as a result of the efforts of hiding their differences (ACAS, 2019; CIPD,2018; GMB,2018)

Highlights

The Institute of Leadership & Management found that neurominorities have far worse experiences in the workplace than their neurotypical colleagues believe they do; with autistics, dyscalculics and people with ADHD reporting the worst experiences. Half of all leaders and managers reported that they would not employ someone who had one or more neurodivergent condition with many providing statements making assumptions of incapability, the need for additional supervision and other negative and false stereotypes.

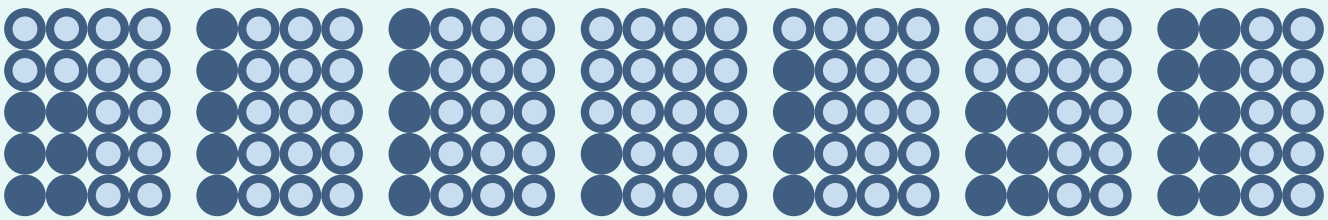
	Descriptions of neurodivergent conditions based on clinical definitions	Potential business benefits of neurominorities
ADHD/ADD	**Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder/ attention deficit disorder (ADHD/ADD)** A condition that includes traits such as inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsiveness.	Intense energy & completing urgent tasks Multitasking/task switching Good memory and observational skills Visible enthusiasm Creative problem solvers Perseverance Working under pressure
Autism	**Autism (including Asperger's, pathological demand avoidance and autistic spectrum condition)** A condition that presents as non-typical traits and behaviours that affect how individuals experience the world. Individuals may communicate differently, have difficulty understanding non-autistic people, have sensory hypersensitivities, take longer to understand certain forms of information, undertake repetitive behaviours, or become anxious in unfamiliar situations.	Intense/hyper focus Observational skills Determination Creativity, and imaginative thinking (problem solvers) Analytical & critical thinking Values driven; integrity & honesty Ability to work unsupervised Visual skills
Dyscalculia	**Dyscalculia** A condition that affects the ability to acquire arithmetical skills. Dyscalculic individuals may have difficulty understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers, and have problems learning number facts and procedures.	Problem solving Often good at strategic thinking Intuitive ability Practical ability Creativity
Dyslexia	**Dyslexia** A condition that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling, a dyslexic may experience other challenges with tasks such as sequencing, processing information and working memory.	Creative thinking & problem solving Good at storytelling Strong visual thinkers Ability to think in 3D Good at maths & mechanical thinking Strong verbal skills
Dyspraxia	**Dyspraxia** A condition affecting physical coordination, which causes a person to perform less well than expected in daily activities for his or her age, and appear to move clumsily.	Creative Often good at strategic thinking Holistic thinkers High levels of literacy
Tourette's	**Tourette's Syndrome** A condition that causes a person to make involuntary sounds and movements called tics (less than 10% of people with Tourette's syndrome have "coprolalia" a form of Tourette's that results in involuntary swearing and comments).	Often have enhanced memory Enhanced language skills Process language faster than general population Enhanced self control Find it easy to pick up new skills

People who have neurodivergent conditions have worse experiences than their neurotypical peers perceive



50% of people would not employ someone from one of the neurominorities

There is a high level of bias against employing people from neurominorities; ranging from 2 in every 20 saying they would not employ a dyslexic person, to over 6 in 20 saying they would not employ someone who has Tourette's Syndrome.



ADHD/ADD: 6 in 20 (almost 1 in 3)

Autism: 5 in 20 (1 in 4)

Dyscalculia: 5 in 20 (1 in 4)

Dyslexia: 2 in 20 (1 in 10)

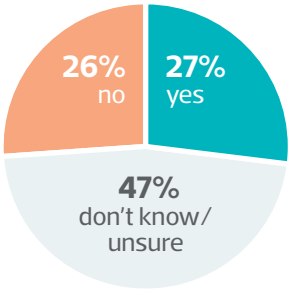
Dyspraxia: 4 in 20 (1 in 5)

Tourette's: Over 6 in 20 (almost 1 in 3)

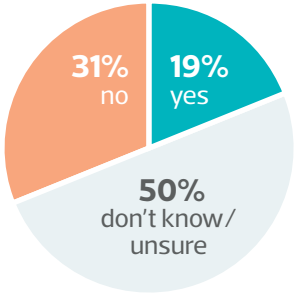
Some form of neurodivergence: 10 in 20 (1 in 2)

Most organisations do not include neurodiversity within policy and procedures, or provide training on inclusion

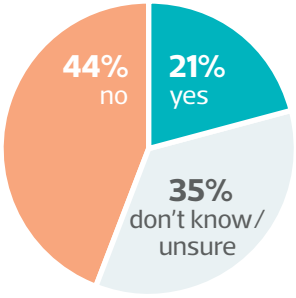
Named in inclusion polices & procedures:



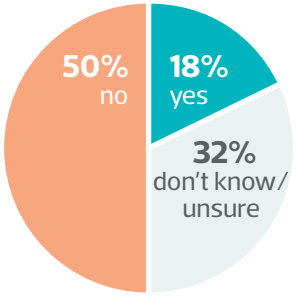
Named in bullying & harassment policies & procedures:



Training available for leaders & managers:



Training available for all staff:



- Neurominorities report that they are routinely excluded from the workplace, although their neurotypical counterparts mostly seem unaware of this.

- A high level of bias exists towards neurominorities, with many stating they would be unwilling to employ neurominorities and some reporting active discrimination.

"[It's] not a priority in my workplace, as with disabilities in general my employer actively discriminated against such employees; according to a former line manager 'disabled employees are a burden and drain on the rest of the staff that can't afford to be carried" (Neurotypical male, manager, education sector).

"I am Dyslexic and Dyscalculic and have felt isolated, ignored and disregarded by my company in regards to my disability. I tried to explain my disabilities to my line manager who said she had no knowledge of the disability and did not understand it in anyway and could not help me. I asked for awareness training to make colleagues aware of learning disabilities and she said this wasn't anything the business had any plans to do" (Dyslexic and dyscalculic female, manager, public sector).

Yet many reported positive experiences of neurodivergent colleagues such as, "I have recruited my friend's daughter, who is a diagnosed ADHD – she is a pleasure to work with and creates an air of enthusiasm in the team – why wouldn't you want to employ someone like that?" (Neurotypical female, public sector).

Recommendations

- Provide unconscious bias and inclusion training for all staff
- Review your organisation's policies and procedures on inclusion, bullying and harassment
- Ask neurodivergent staff if they would find any reasonable adjustments more enabling
- Open channels of communication for neurodivergent staff to report negative experiences in the workplace, and address their responses
- Be open to the opportunities presented by employing neurodivergent staff
- Provide training for managers to ensure they are aware of the range of reasonable adjustments that can be made to support neurodivergent staff

Methodology

During 2019 The Institute undertook an online survey, with 1156 respondents (including 959 neurotypical and 197 neurodivergent respondents). We asked a series of closed question, including yes/no questions and Likert item questions, as well asking for free text responses to share personal experiences and perceptions. Data was analysed by neurotype, gender, sector, industry and age. Research was undertaken inline with Market Research Society (MRS) Code of conduct.

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