The Neurodiversity in SAP Report
2024

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What this report will cover

Introduction

This is the second of five equity, diversity and inclusion focused reports that bluewaveSELECT will be sharing over the coming months.

We're covering five core areas of ED&I in SAP, including women, LGBTQIA+, disability, race and ethnicity and neurodiversity.

We're bringing external voices from each community to contribute, as well as data from reputable sources, to make them as informative and useful as possible.
Our goal is to highlight what progress has been made and raise awareness of the issues impacting these groups. We'll also provide practical solutions to employers to increase the diversity of the pool of people in their SAP talent pipeline.

A note on using the right language

Equity, diversity and inclusion is a sensitive topic for many of us. We've worked with a diverse group of people to cover this topic with kindness and consideration, trying our very best to avoid clumsy language or approaches.

If there's one thing we've learned from our conversations with these individuals, the most important thing we can do is try. It would be far worse for us to sit back and do nothing. We hope we've done a good job but we're okay with getting it wrong if it means we (and others) learn from that process.

If you have any comments or feedback on the content of this report, please contact Vincent Dunlop (bluewaveSELECT Co-Founder).

Email: vin@bluewaveselect.com
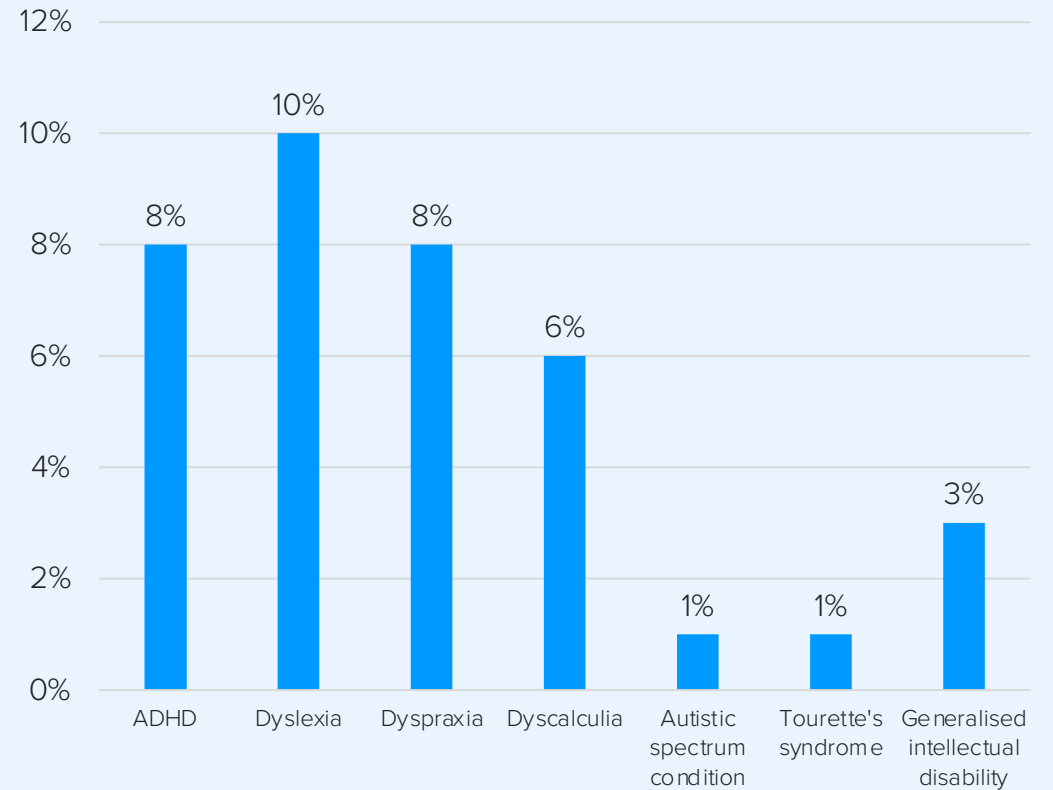
What is neurodiversity?

Between **15-20%** of the global population is estimated to be neurodivergent.

Neurodivergent is the current accepted term to describe individuals whose brains work in a different way, compared with the general population. Because of this, they may act and respond to situations differently and approach the world's problems - and its solutions - from unconventional angles.
It can be compared to terms such as race, culture, class and gender.

Although 'neurodivergent' isn't a medical term, there are a number of clinical diagnoses that fall under this umbrella. And there's a lot of overlap with these conditions, with individuals often having more than one.

For a complete glossary of terms: *#ChangeTheFace*

% of clinical diagnoses of neurodiversity in the UK

Category	Percentage
ADHD	8%
Dyslexia	10%
Dyspraxia	8%
Dyscalculia	6%
Autistic spectrum condition	1%
Tourette's syndrome	1%
Generalised intellectual disability	3%

The impact neurodiversity has within society

> " A person is not necessarily disabled by their neurodiversity, but by society's failure to adequately accommodate their needs.
>
> (*Source: The Brain Charity*). "

Many aspects of society are based on the assumption that there is one form of 'the human mind' and accordingly, many systems (education, employment, health and social services, social relationships) have been built up premised on being neurotypical. So, building a society that is accessible for neurodiverse people is not only beneficial for everyone, but fair.

Neurodiversity in tech: *the statistics*

While there is a lack of data relating specifically to SAP, in 2023 the largest global study on neurodiversity in the tech sector was undertaken.

The results are based on a global survey of **over 2000 responses**, alongside focus groups and an analysis of existing neurodiversity literature.
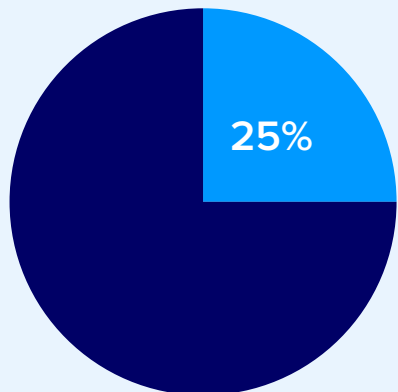
The data gives us a good picture of how neurodivergent tech workers are affected by their working conditions.

1) How impacted do neurodivergent individuals working in the tech sector feel by their conditions?

50%
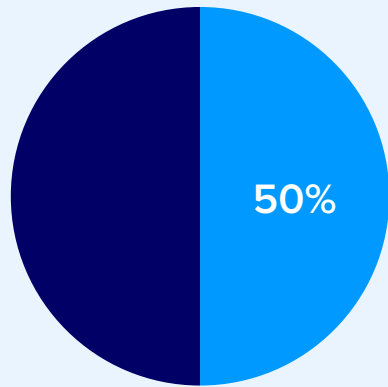
Close to **50%** of *neurodivergent* employees in the tech sector feel impacted by their neurodivergent conditions on *most days.*

25%

Close to **25%** feel impacted *every* day.

2) Are neurodivergent individuals working in the tech sector likely to disclose their conditions? If not, why?

55% Said they were neurodivergent, but did not share which condition they were experiencing because they **lacked a formal diagnosis.**

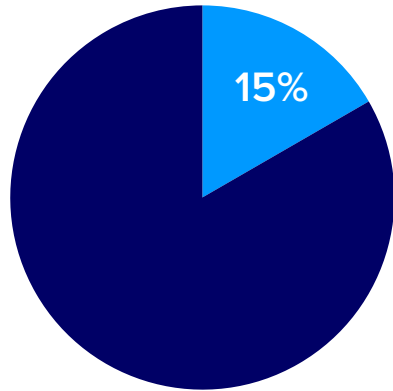**53%** Didn't share this information because they **didn't see the value in disclosing it.**

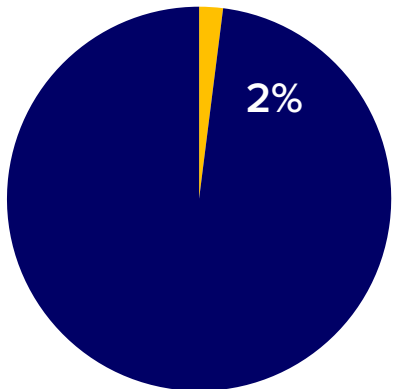**27%** Said they **feared the stigma** associated with neurodiversity.

24% Said they **feared reduced career opportunities.**

3) How do neurodivergent individuals working in the tech sector rate their mental health, compared with neurotypical individuals?

15%

15% of *neurodivergent* individuals rated their mental health as poor or very poor.

2%

2% of *neurotypical* individuals rated their mental health as poor or very poor.

4) How likely are neurodivergent individuals working in the tech sector to ask for reasonable adjustments or support?

9% of *neurodivergent* employees **requested reasonable adjustments** at work.

9%

**91%** of *neurodivergent* employees **didn't ask for any adjustments.**

91%

Why they didn't ask for adjustments:

⇌ **61%** did not think they needed any

⇌ **32%** were worried about how it would look

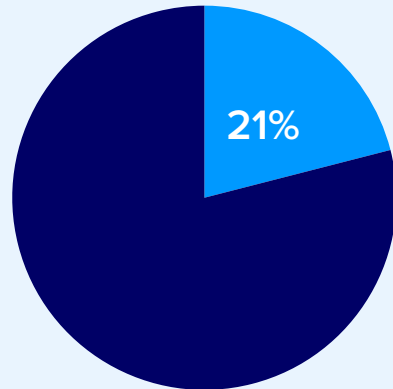⇌ **29%** did not know what to ask for

SAP Partner

5) How the hiring process impacts neurodivergent individuals in the tech sector

On all measures, neurodivergent employees found the hiring process **more challenging** than neurotypical employees.

39%

21%
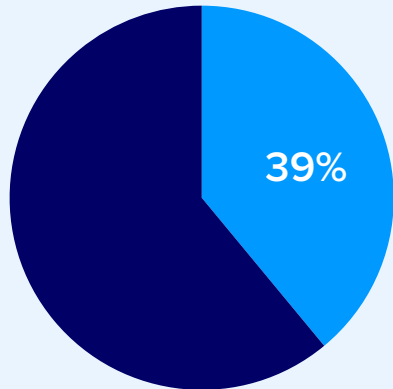
39% found salary-related discussions challenging.

21% found face-to-face interviews challenging.

6) How likely is it that neurodivergent individuals working in the tech sector will be promoted?
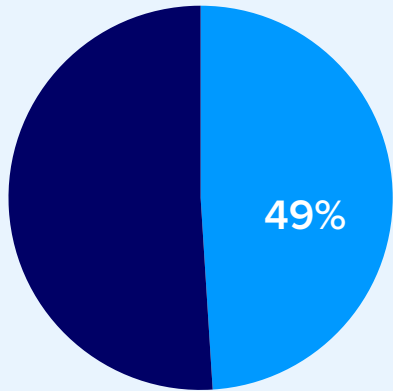
42% of *neurodivergent* respondents **had been promoted.**

42%

56% of *neurotypical* respondents **had been promoted.**

56%

SAP Partner

7) How affected are neurodivergent individuals in the tech sector by their colleagues and work environment?

49% of *neurodivergent* employees felt overwhelmed by distractions in the office.
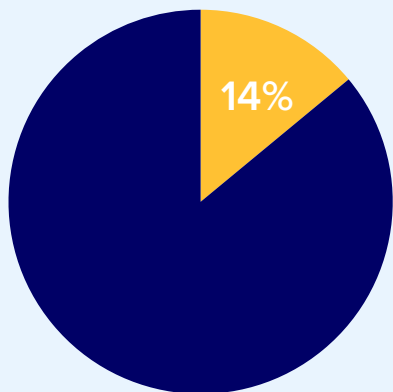
14% of *neurotypical* employees felt overwhelmed by distractions in the office.

How neurodivergent individuals felt due to their work environment and colleagues.

Category	Value
Felt unable to mentally prepare fully for meetings	30%
Did not feel valued	25%
Felt excluded	18%
Felt judged	19%
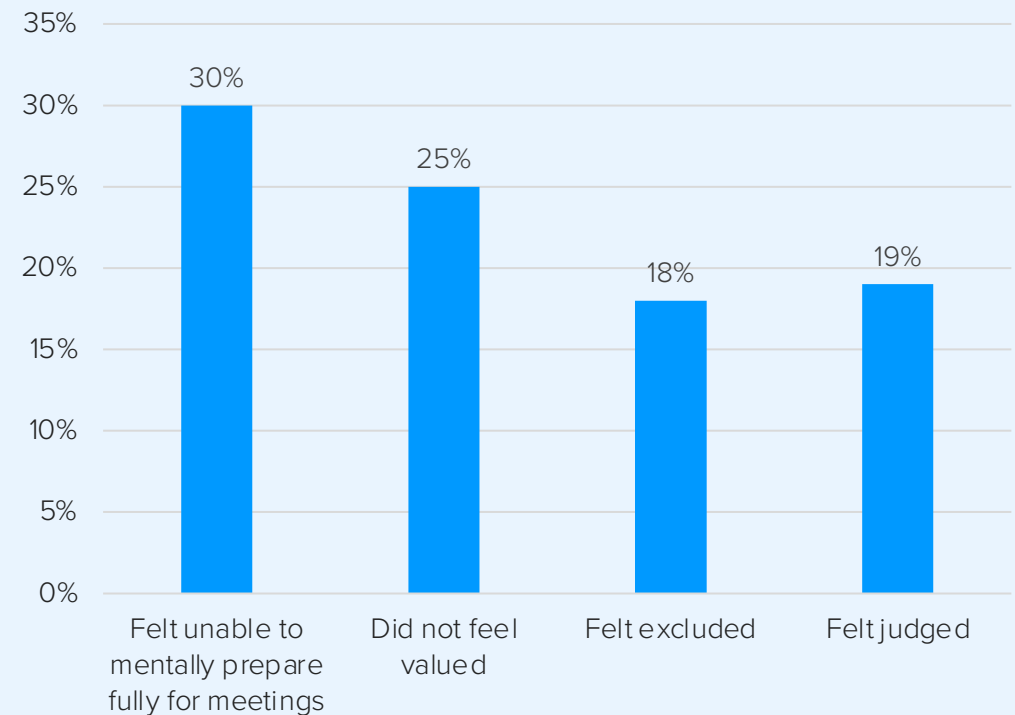
8) What are the biggest day-to-day challenges for neurodivergent individuals working in the tech sector?

Bar chart showing:
- Managing workload: 46%
- Looking after their well-being: 44%
- Having long meetings without breaks: 43%
- Time management: 38%
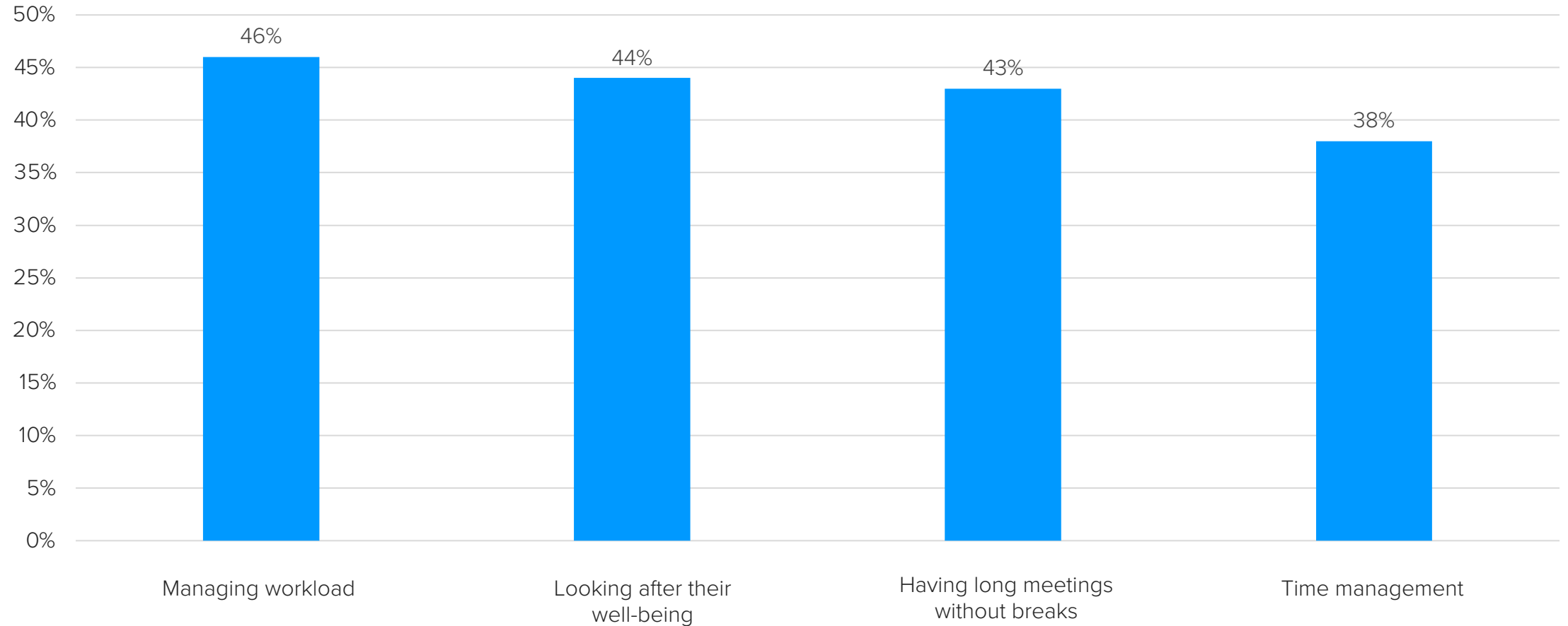
9) Do neurodivergent individuals working in the tech sector feel they have allyship among their colleagues?

Neurodivergent respondents said:

64% Wanted more effort and allyship from their neurotypical colleagues to understand neurodiversity.

46% Said they wanted to have 'unwritten rules' in the office explained to them.

44% Wished that their colleagues would recognise when to leave them alone.

Neurotypical respondents said:

78% Said there was a need for more awareness training.

53% Wished for better knowledge of how to accommodate their neurodivergent colleagues.

44% Said senior leadership role-modelling of inclusive behaviours was required.

Why now is the time for employers to improve their approach to neurodiversity

Your neurodiverse workforce is increasing at a rapid rate:

53%

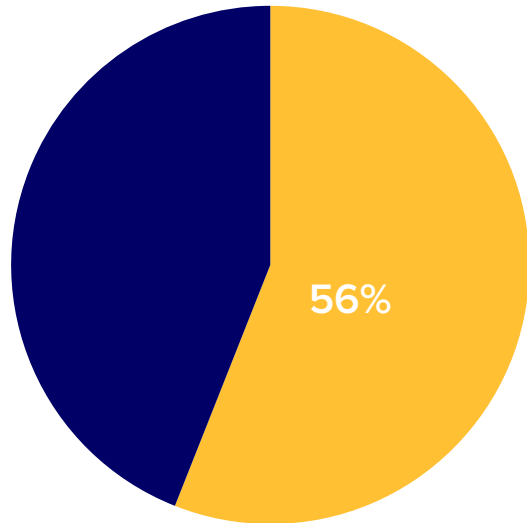**53%** of Gen Z now identify as *neurodiverse*.

38%

Gen Z and millennials make up **38%** of the current workforce.

58%

In the next 5 years, this is predicted to rise to **58%** - the majority of the workforce.

Meanwhile, the remainder of your workforce has limited knowledge of neurodiversity

56%

56% of *neurotypical* individuals in the tech sector admitted to having "limited or no knowledge about neurodiversity, its conditions, and symptoms".

Your clients want neurodiversity too

Based on the stats on page 13, it's not hard to see how your customer base may also become increasingly neurodiverse over the coming years.

"Our clients ask us about building diverse and inclusive teams every day – and they demand it, which I love. They don't want a homogeneous group of people trying to solve their problems. They come to us because we have many different perspectives from around the world."

Karyn Twaronite
Global Vice Chair of DEI, EY

Return on investment

Later in the report, we'll share global data on how organisations leading the way on neurodiversity have commercially benefited from their inclusion programmes.

> " The talk is always about return on investment. So, tap into our skill sets because we're really good - and we will return on that investment. "
>
> **Mark Hessen**
> Senior DevNetOps Engineer
> USA Autism at Work Team Member

It's the right thing to do

80% of people on the autism spectrum are unemployed.

"SAP's Autism at Work programme has given me a level of confidence and the belief that the integration of individuals on the spectrum is possible."

Brian Duran
Technology Legal Compliance Analyst, Canada Autism at Work Team Member

"Employment at SAP for me means financial stability and more independence."

Lenka Havrdová
HR Service Associate,
Czech Republic Autism at Work Team Member

However

Whether it's the speed of change, the fear of 'getting it wrong', multiple priorities or lack of infrastructure, role models and training, many employers are struggling to adapt. The coming pages will share success stories as well as simple, practical interventions you can make to move the dial on neurodiversity.

Autism at Work Programme

SAP was the first global tech organisation to intentionally hire those on the autism spectrum.

Today, through the Autism at Work programme, SAP has over **215 colleagues on the autism spectrum across 16 countries** and all board areas.

Since 2013, SAP has been working with organisations that support those on the autism spectrum to source qualified candidates. Once an individual is hired the programme ensures they receive the right support, training, coaching and mentorship to succeed.

SUCCESS STORIES

Autism at Work Programme

"When neurodiverse perspectives are missing from the workforce, there is a lost opportunity for innovation and creativity."

One of SAP's autistic employees devised a solution that reduced the processing time for mass invoices from several days to 20 minutes.

90% SAP boasts a 90 percent retention rate of people with autism once they're hired - equal to their overall retention rate across all employees.

"We have a team of 15 and one of them happens to be on the autism spectrum - that individual is literally our single line of defence of our backend system on the database."

Manju Bansal

VP & Global Program Head
SAP Startup Focus

SUCCESS STORIES

23 Neurodiverse Centres of Excellence

Since launching their first in 2016, EY now operates **23 Neurodiverse Centres of Excellence (NCoE) globally**, designed to support workers with cognitive differences. The employees within these NCoEs are provided with an environment that enables them to perform effectively and work across all areas of tech, including AI, blockchain and data analytics.

1.2-1.4x increase in productivity, quality and timeliness of output in teams that include neurodivergent team members.

92% retention rate for neurodivergent employees.

3.5M hours saved with neurodivergent employees.

Autism at Work Programme

JPMorganChase

Following SAP's success, JPMorganChase's Autism at Work programme found that, with careful job matching, new employees on the autism spectrum can be **90% to 140%** more productive than employees who had been there **5-10 years**.

SUCCESS STORIES

Strengths and skills-matching

> "The needs within IT often match the strengths neurodiverse people have, such as attention to detail, pattern recognition, accuracy and precision"
>
> *(Source: ToolingU)*

All people have strengths and things they struggle with. But for neurodiverse people, those struggles can be more disabling. So, while they can bring innovative thought, high quality output and efficiencies, their struggles need to be appropriately managed.

Businesses who run full steam ahead into proactively hiring neurodiverse individuals without the right infrastructure, support and training, may do more harm than good.
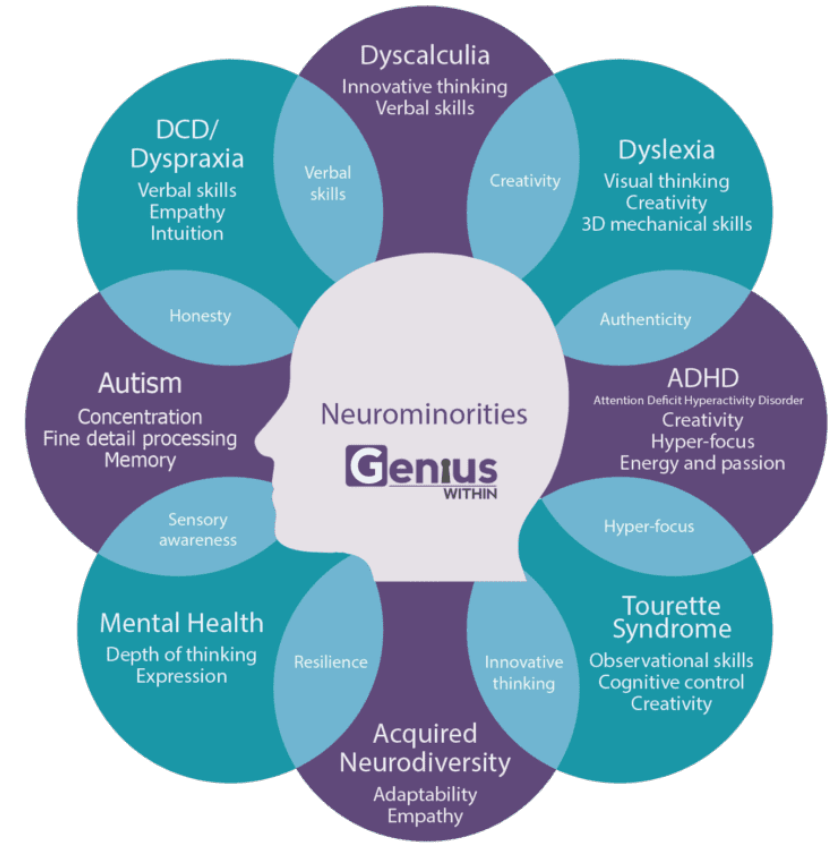
While this is quite a simplistic view, this diagram demonstrates some of the strengths that neurodiverse individuals possess.

Practical interventions you can make right now to increase neurodiversity in your organisation

Lindsey Rowe

SAP's Head of Purpose Programmes & Sustainability

We asked Lindsey Rowe what steps businesses can take to increase neurodiversity in their organisations.

Here's what she had to say:

1) Help your team understand one another

The key to creating an environment that doesn't marginalise neurodivergent individuals is to help your existing team understand one another.

This may seem straightforward, but through fear of 'getting it wrong', this is an area that many employers are falling short on.

This isn't about uncovering specific neurodivergences or giving people labels - it's about individuals having the opportunity to share what does or doesn't work for them when it comes to getting their job done. An understanding that every brain is unique. And being able to share that freely with other team members without an associated stigma.

Can you create a public space where individuals can be open about what they struggle with, what enables them to do their best work, how they prefer to communicate and when they're available?

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2) Education

On a practical level, businesses of course need to make sure that hiring managers are able to identify and navigate neurodivergence. And importantly, they need to create a line manager-team member relationship where neurodivergent individuals feel they can disclose their conditions and ask for reasonable adjustments.

But raising awareness across the entire workforce is key. Levelling up your entire team and then making this education part of your onboarding process will create a foundation of awareness.

By doing this, you are sending a message to any new starters with neurodivergent conditions that they are in a safe environment. Furthermore, promoting this as part of your employer brand can attract neurodivergent people to your organisation.

These first two points alone can make neurodivergent individuals feel safe enough to disclose. And that increases diversity tenfold. Which brings us onto the next point - understanding where you're currently at.

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3) Understanding your existing workforce

We often hear 'we really need to increase the number of neurodiverse people in our organisation'. But what's your baseline? Have you actually checked?

You probably have a number of neurodiverse people already in your organisation - stop looking outward and focus inward first.

Report sources

1) #ChangeTheFace - https://www.change-the-face.com/

2) ToolingU-SME - https://learn.toolingu.com/

3) NeuroKnowHow - http://neuroknowhow.com/

4) The Brain Charity - https://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/

5) ADHD aware - https://adhdaware.org.uk/

6) text help - https://www.texthelp.com/

7) BBC - https://www.bbc.co.uk/

8) Genius Within - https://geniuswithin.org/

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