NEURODIVERSITY IN BUSINESS

THE NEURODIVERSITY CHARITY

Birkbeck UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

# 2024 Neurodiversity in Business and work report

## The perspective of workers, colleagues and employers

**Professor Almuth McDowall CPsychol**

## Professor Almuth McDowall CPsychol

Almuth is Professor of Organisational Psychology at Birkbeck University of London. Her research is concerned with diversity including neurodiversity, wellbeing at work, coaching and professional competence. She co-directs the Centre for Neurodiversity Research at Work with Dr Nancy Doyle, with whom she has also co-authored the bestselling book Neurodiversity Coaching. Her mission is to help businesses make their people happy, and her vision is for a world of work where everyone can thrive and do their best work. Almuth has published widely in the academic and practitioner press and is a regular keynote speaker at industry and academic events.

**Dr Nancy Doyle CPsychol**

## Dr Nancy Doyle CPsychol

Nancy is a neurodivergent Occupational Psychologist who has practised in the field of disability inclusion for over twenty years. Nancy developed her specialism working with neurodivergent people in the early 2000s and helped bring our awareness to the mainstream with her BBC documentary series 'Employable Me' in 2016 and 2017. Her PhD focused on the use of coaching as a disability adjustment. She is widely published in academic, practitioner, and business press for her work. Nancy is the founder of the non- profit business consultancy Genius Within CIC and co-Director of the Centre for Neurodiversity Research at Work at Birkbeck, University of London.

**Aishwarya Srinivasan**

## Aishwarya Srinivasan

Aishwarya is a PhD student in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Birkbeck, University of London, and is a recipient of the T Ritchie Rodger PhD scholarship. Their PhD is focused on the career experiences and narratives of ADHDers, with a focus on early careers. Their research interests include neurodivergent identity narratives, inclusive careers, coaching, and mental health and systemic support in the workplace. Aishwarya's previous work includes conducting mental health research in cultural contexts for educational, tech, and social justice organisations. Their coaching practice has focused on working with neurodivergent and LGBTQ+ individuals looking for workplace and career support.

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# Endorsement

**Andrew Boff**
Chair of the London Assembly

Diversity of thought, cultures and backgrounds have long given business and organisations a competitive edge. As Chair of the London Assembly and author of the report, The Full Spectrum: Making London Autism Friendly, I see the opportunity in doing more to harness the thinking and talent of neurodiverse individuals to make the workplace fairer, more inclusive and more prosperous for everyone.

Neurodiverse people have so much to offer, from innovative thinking to creative approaches, but we need to make sure we have the right conditions, environments and workplaces to enable them to thrive.

The Neurodiversity in Business and Work Report, created in partnership by Birkbeck University and NiB highlights the need for:

- Improved capture of ND strengths and weaknesses
- Better capture of wellbeing and engagement
- Knowledge and support – subtle slights and microaggressions
- Conflicts and resolution – psychological safety

This is striking evidence that we must foster workplaces that truly embrace neuroinclusion into their core strategies.

I am delighted to endorse this research as the insights from this study will guide the next generation of inclusion initiatives and help create a more supportive environment for neurodivergent individuals.

**- Andrew Boff, Chair of the London Assembly**

# Foreword

Neurodiversity in Business has around 1000 of the world's leading organisations as corporate members. We partner with them to develop, improve and share industry good practice which promotes neuroinclusion in the workplace. Our industry forum is a collaborative space where members build on each other's successes, encourage neuroinclusive cultures and ensure fair access to opportunities for neurodivergent workers.

For the second consecutive year, we are proud to partner with **Birkbeck, University of London,** on the **Neurodiversity in Business and Work 2024 report.** This year's study builds on the foundation laid by the 2023 report, deepening our understanding and shedding new light on the evolving landscape of neurodiversity in business.

The increased participation from last year has provided us with richer insights into the diverse experiences of neurodivergent workers and their incredible strengths, such as empathy, critical thinking, and resilience. However, there is still much work to be done. The quality of support, including workplace adjustments, employee training, and psychological safety, remains inadequate. These gaps highlight the urgent need for ongoing efforts to improve our support systems. The insights from this study will guide the next generation of inclusion initiatives, helping to bridge these gaps and create a more supportive environment for neurodivergent individuals.

We must foster workplaces that truly embrace neuroinclusion by embedding wellbeing and inclusion into their core strategies. But let's not stop there or even start there. This is not just a corporate issue—it's a human one. Meaningful change requires the collective effort of employers, workers, communities, and society as a whole. We all benefit from a world that celebrates the diversity of human thought. Empathy is the key to getting us there.

Together, we can create a future where neurodivergent individuals are not just included but valued and celebrated for their unique contributions.

**- Dan Harris**

# Acknowledgements

This co-created research was commissioned by the **NiB charity in 2023,** who in turn was sponsored by **Rolls Royce** and **Sage.** NiB gratefully acknowledge this support.

The Birkbeck research team would like to thank **all volunteer community members** who gave their time to shape, promote and publish this research.

We thank all **our participants.** There are several academic papers to come out of this research; your voice will be heard.

Finally, a huge thank you goes to **Aishwarya,** our researcher supporting the write up of this report. We are immensely grateful for their commitment.

# Executive summary

The neurodiversity movement affirms that humans are naturally diverse. People who identify as neurodivergent including Autistic people, dyslexic people, or other neurotypes (such as ADHD, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and tic disorders) bring distinct strengths to business

Organisations are increasingly focused on facilitating neuroinclusion at work yet lack a comprehensive evidence base for policy and practice. Specific programmes are focused solely on Autism, as was a recent UK government review,[1] to the exclusion of other neurotypes and disabilities. Our 2023 Neurodiversity in Business (NiB) research documented that co-occurrence of conditions is the norm, not the exception, and that neurodiversity needs an expansive not piecemeal approach.

This research collaboration between **Birkbeck's Centre for Neurodiversity Research at Work** and **NiB** provides a broad overview of neurodiversity at work paired with detailed analysis of psychological and social complexities. We aim to support the development of neuroinclusion practice, by reflecting on what is currently working well, and where there is room for improvement.

A neurodiverse team of work psychologists conducted the research through co-creation with NiB members and community stakeholders. The **2024 research** included **1436 neurodivergent people** with representation from all neurotypes. We compared our neurodivergent sample's experiences with **123 neurotypical** colleagues and **132 employer representatives**, as well as against our 2023 benchmark findings from 990 neurodivergent workers and 127 employer representatives.

Our main findings are outlined below.

# 2024 Neurodiversity in Business key findings

1. **Wellbeing at risk:** Wellbeing is low for all participants, particularly so for neurodivergent people. There is a decrease from 2023, detailed data points to the likely influence of sleep and mental health conditions. We recommend specialist wellbeing interventions and note high levels of sensory distractions which may be contributing to a sense of overwhelm.

2. **Neurodivergent challenges and strengths are perceived differently:** Neurotypical colleagues are having consistently better experiences at work, for example, psychological safety and career satisfaction. They do not fully recognise the cognitive, sensory or relationship challenges experienced by their neurodivergent peers, many of whom are accustomed to masking. Employers and colleagues alike need to consider the burden of masking cognitive difficulties and the resilience this requires. Issues such as time management are perceived to be greater challenges by neurotypicals than neurodivergent people, suggesting that there is a need to have more open conversations around expectations.

3. **Differing views on the quality of neurodiversity support:** Neurodivergent people report that line managers' support is strong, but other measures such as training, conflict management and organisational climate more generally are worsening. Barriers to implementing adjustments remain high, and perceptions of unfairness have worsened. This increases pressure on line managers as team cohesion weakens.

4. **Psychological safety is affecting performance:** There was a drop from 2023 in perceived psychological safety, which relates to the ability to take risks and raise potential issues. This is understandable given the diverging opinions on fairness and other aspects. Concurrently, neurodivergent strengths that depend on risk taking, such as innovation entrepreneurialism, and creativity are reported as lower. Career satisfaction for neurodivergent workers is also lower.

# Recommendations

For policy, we recommend holistic neuroinclusion which is comprehensive not condition specific. Further, we recommend thinking about neurodiversity in design, rather than as a response when problems have surfaced. Many of the stresses and strains reported here could be addressed by a strategic HR focus on job redesign and specialist career pathways, as well as evidence-informed wellbeing initiatives.

**Recommendations for organisational practice are set out below.**

## Wellbeing

**a)** Increase focus on primary, preventative intervention by considering working conditions – for example:

- How is hybrid and remote working set up and supported?
- Are support grassroots activities such as employee resource groups (ERGs) supported with sponsorship and budget?
- Are expectations, outputs and outcomes clear for all roles?

**b)** Ensure secondary response interventions are neuroinclusive:

- Ensure that activities support ND challenges reported here, such as prevention of sensory overwhelm.
- Ensure all staff involved in wellbeing are appropriately ND trained, as generalist wellbeing may not appreciate the demands of cognitive differences and sensory overwhelm.
- Upskill and support line managers as first line responders; including training to support listening and managing expectations.

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## Conflict resolution

**a)** Consider the infrastructure around how diversity, adjustments and wellbeing services are allocated and regular review of any inequities in outcomes or provision.

**b)** Build mutual trust and understanding between neurodivergent workers and colleagues.

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### Neuroinclusion

**a)** Primary interventions to facilitate neuroinclusion: regular review of job design and work environments, paired with effective neurodiversity training.

**b)** Ongoing activities to support neuroinclusion: setting clear expectations, role modelling and supporting psychological safety, and barrier-free process to instigate reasonable adjustments.

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### Talent management

Signpost ambition and clear expectations for specialist career pathways with transparent leadership opportunities to contribute to strategy without necessary expectation to line manage.

# Recap of 2023 NiB Report Research Findings

In 2023, we undertook a supply and demand analysis to compare and contrast the perspectives of 127 employers and 990 neurodivergent workers. Our analysis documented the following.

## The Neurodivergent Worker

- Employers and neurodivergent workers converged on neurodivergent strengths particularly regarding creativity, focus and innovation as well as authenticity.
- Employers and neurodivergent workers also converge on challenges, including concentration, self-organisation and self-care.
- About two-thirds of neurodivergent participants identified with more than one condition demonstrating the likelihood of co-occurrence.
- Wellbeing levels were very low, and particularly so for cisgender women and non-binary people.

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## The Work Environment

- Adjustments make a difference to intention to stay: 50% of participants who have tailored adjustments say that they would stay in their organisations, whereas 33% of participants who had no adjustments would definitely leave.
- What is offered as support or adjustment (for example general wellbeing coaching) is not necessarily rated as effective (focused strategy coaching is more useful).
- Line managers are the 'go to' source of support.

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## Organisational Culture and Context

Career satisfaction (i.e. the individual belief that one can advance, be developed and be promoted at work) and psychological safety are critical for retention.

- A significant proportion of people would not disclose their neurodivergence to employers, yet employers say lack of disclosure is a barrier to adjustments.
- Neurodivergent workers and employers use different sources to inform themselves and need to be discerning about quality of evidence.

We recommended increased focus on specialist neurodivergent career paths, enhanced activity to support wellbeing and psychological safety, upskilling and support for line managers and ensuring that adjustments are tailored as a necessary baseline for retention.

# 2024 Research Aims and Objectives

It was our aim to build on last year's research and expand in areas of interest and crucial business concerns. As last year, we undertook a gap analysis to document convergence and divergence of experience where data was comparable.

This year, we included the colleagues of neurodivergent workers as participants, because we wanted to know if the low levels of wellbeing in last year's data were neurodivergent worker specific, or a shared experience in a post-pandemic world of work, compounded by the cost of living crisis. We also expanded on last year's research with a new focus on relationships at work. We asked new questions about conflict and experience of subtle slights, which are negative encounters at work including micro aggressions.[2]

We augmented and extended the list of neurodivergent strengths and challenges using the qualitative data from 2023 as well as drawing on current research. Neurodivergent workers, colleagues and employers were asked to rate whether they agreed items were strengths or challenges for neurodivergent people.

**Our research questions were:**

**a)** To what extent have experiences of wellbeing, support, retention and career satisfaction changed or stayed the same?

**b)** How does the work experience of neurodivergent workers, their neurotypical colleagues and employers compare?

**c)** What is the experience of conflict and its resolution and subtle slights?

**d)** What are neurodivergent strengths and challenges at work?

This report is a snapshot of the most pressing findings, and we hope that employers, workers and policy makers across many sectors will engage with the data presented here.

# Research and Survey Development

To co-create a robust approach to collecting this data, academics and practitioners worked together to agree on:

- The questions we asked and in what format and which sequence – many of the measures (i.e. lists of questions) used in academic research are not specific enough for a neurodiversity context, so we had to check relevance very carefully. We also wrote some of our own questions but asked others to double and triple-check these.
- The content of the survey against the community priorities identified by NiB stakeholders.
- Which items and sections from 2023 to keep, amend or drop, for example we agreed to ask fewer questions about reasonable adjustments this year as a 12-month period is short to measure progress.
- Wording and language for instructions and framing – was this clear and acceptable?
- Usability and design concerns; how we laid out the questions in the questionnaire.

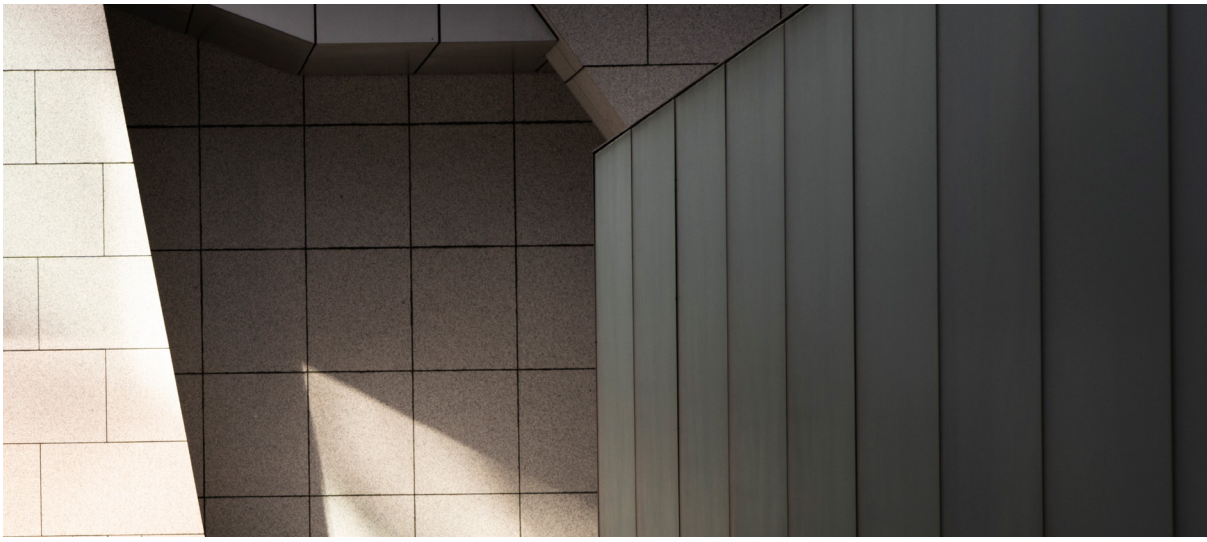
Building on our 2023 approach, we developed a draft survey containing closed and open questions and obtained ethical approval from Birkbeck. To capture different perspectives, the survey had three branches: one for employers, one for neurodivergent workers and one for neurotypical colleagues. We then piloted the survey with seven pilot participants online who were a mixture of employers, people with lived experience of neurodivergence and specialists in survey design. We also held an information session for the community.

The survey was distributed via social media such as LinkedIn and X, with specific invites to under-represented groups via relevant online communities and charities.

Our target sample was people employed in organisations (rather than self-employed people) and employers and colleagues with an interest in neuroinclusion. We recognise the limitations of a word-based online survey, which is easier to access for some groups than others.

The survey opened in December 2023 and closed in mid-March 2024 to maximise responses. People took on average 14 minutes to complete the survey, which indicates that most people experienced it as straightforward and accessible. We collected data anonymously, and individual results were not shared outside the research team, which includes the three named authors of this report and an additional student research assistant.

In April, the preliminary results of the survey were announced at the NiB Conference; then in May and June of 2024, business representatives from NiB membership were invited to an early release of the survey results and a discussion of their impact. The implications for policy and practice were debated with this group to add nuance and practical value to the report.



# The Data: Key Findings

In the next sections, we outline who took part, followed by detailed reporting on all three participant groups and three-way comparisons. Some of the data is technical, such as means and comparisons, but we have used graphical illustrations to simplify complex data. We used different scales – these are sets of questions and have explained what the scoring format is and the average values in the text. The last sections on 'good practice' translate more advanced statistical analysis into digestible format – they tell us what is important in the data. We illustrate the data with quotations from the open questions. If you read last year's report in detail you might note that we changed reporting benchmarks for comparison with this year's data. Last year, some rating benchmarks started at '0' which we changed to '1'.

## Who took part?

Responses were in three categories: **neurodivergent workers, neurotypical colleagues** and **employers** (with a **mix of neurodivergent and neurotypical)**.

- Responses from professional, administrative and service sector workers exceeded the UK averages.

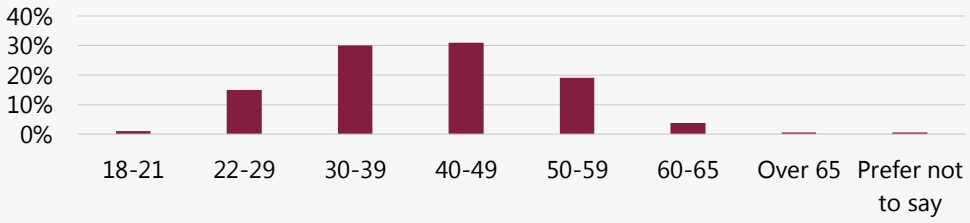
- People identifying as women were overrepresented but beyond that the sample was broadly intersectionally representative of the UK.

The sample overrepresented ADHD and autistic people. However, we adjusted the reported ND strengths and challenges to reflect the whole sample through statistical techniques to provide a balanced view.

## Neurodivergent workers

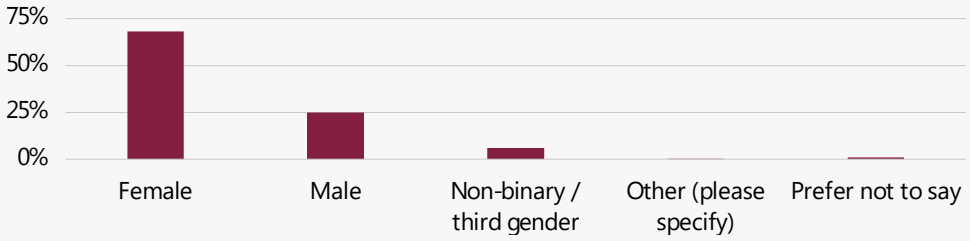
In total, 1,436 neurodivergent workers took part in the study. Their ages ranged from 18 to over 65, the average response was in the 30-39 range (Figure 1).

*Figure 1: Age range of neurodivergent workers*




Sixty-eight per cent of the sample identified as cisgender women and 25% as cisgender men who were underrepresented, compared to the diagnosis rates of neurodivergent people.  identified as non-binary, which is higher than the UK population. Six people (less than 1%) identified as other, and 11 people preferred not to say (Figure 2).

*Figure 2: Employee gender ID*



Regarding race and ethnicity, the sample was broadly in line with UK population norms. LGBTQ+ is typically overrepresented in neurodivergent samples.

## Work context

The majority of responses were from people in full-time employment (77%). Thirteen per cent were part-time workers, 4% were full-time self-employed, and 5% were part-time self-employed. The majority worked in a hybrid set-up (51%) with 28% working entirely remotely, 13% entirely in an office and only 8% in alternative settings such as manufacturing, healthcare or construction.

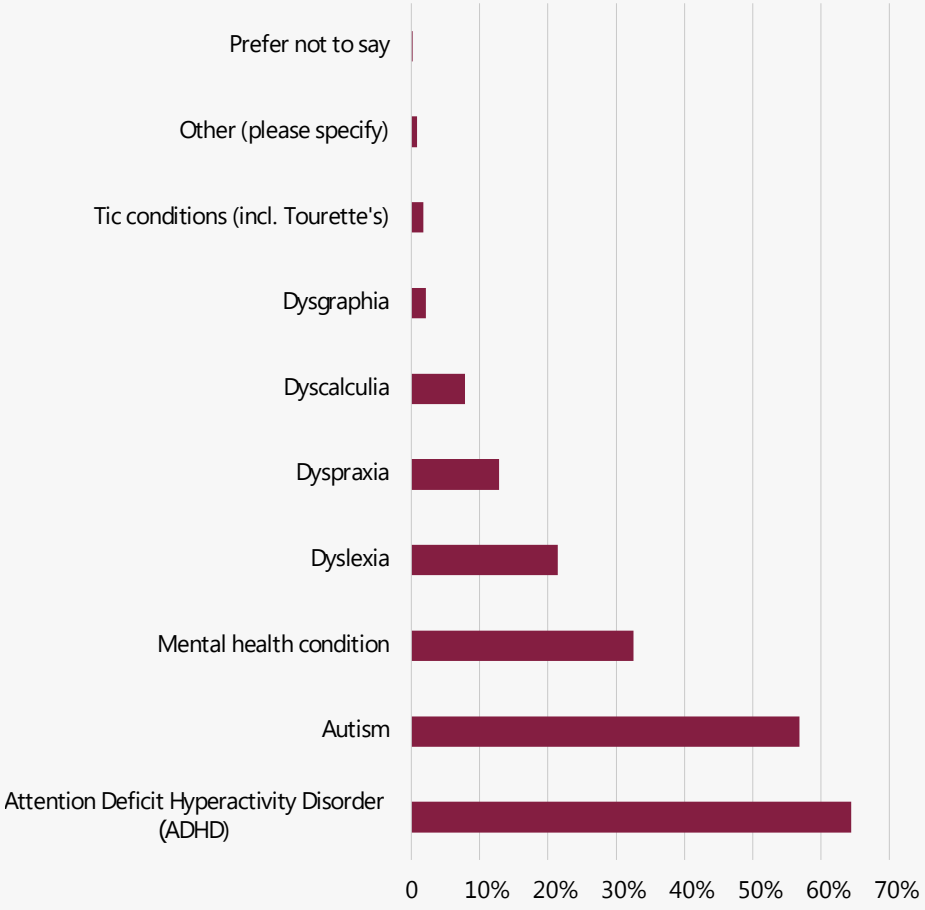
People were employed mainly in a service sector style role such as accounting and finance (10%), coaching, education, or training (12%), professional services (8%) and computing (8%). There were only 2% in construction, 1% in retail, and 1% in transport or logistics. The sample is not representative of the UK population[3].

The majority of neurodivergent workers had been in their current role for two years or less (54%)[4]; 23% for between three and five years and 13% for between six and ten years. Only 11% had been with their employer for eleven years or more compared to the UK average of 30% of workers remaining with their employer for ten years or more. Thirty-four per cent of participants had line management responsibilities, while 66% did not.

## Self-reported neurotypes

The average number of neurodivergent conditions identified by participants was two. Three were self-reported by 19% and 4 by 6%. Only 2.3% reported 5 or more neurodivergent conditions. Neurotypes are presented with high levels of co-occurrence in Figure 3.

*Figure 3: Neurotypes reported by neurodivergent workers*



## Neurotypical Colleagues

Overall, 123 colleagues took part in the study, identifying as not neurodivergent. On average, they were approximately 10 years older compared to the neurodivergent sample, with the most frequent age range between 40-49 years old.

Colleague responses were even more weighted towards cisgender women (80%) than men (20%) with no non-binary or other responses in the sample than for neurodivergent workers. Race and ethnicity were representative of the UK population.

Eighty per cent of the participants were full-time employed, 15% were part-time and 4% reported being self-employed. Fewer colleagues than neurodivergent workers were working entirely remotely (14% compared with 28%), and more were in a hybrid set-up (64%). Similar numbers were in an office full-time (16% compared with 13%).

Tenure was longer for neurotypical colleagues with 57% reporting being with their employer for over two years (compared to 30% of neurodivergent workers), however, this still falls short of the UK average (70%). Line management responsibilities were held by 61% of colleague participants, compared to 24% of neurodivergent workers.

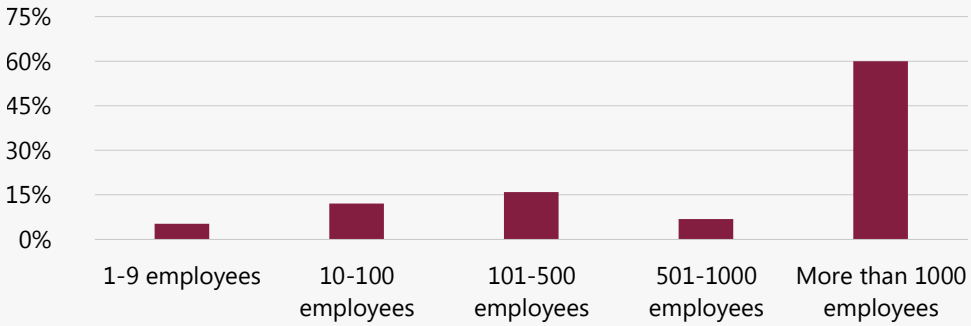
Office-based roles formed the majority of responses with 11% from banking or finance, 10% from computing, and 12% from coaching education or training. A significant number was from health and social care (18%). Non-office-based roles were underrepresented, with less than 1% from retail colleagues and 2.4% from construction.

## Employers

In total, 132 employers completed the survey, most in the 40-49 range, which was older than that of neurodivergent workers or colleagues. Responses were weighted towards cisgender women (76%) compared to men (23%) with no responses indicating non-binary identification and only two people preferring not to say. The sample had UK population race and ethnicity representation.

Most represented large employers, 40% were members of NiB and 26% did not know if their business was a NiB member.

*Figure 4: Employer sizes*




The employers also included neurodivergent representation, with 48 people (36.4%) identifying as neurodivergent. Of these, 29 people were ADHD, 16 autistic, 13 dyslexic, 9 reported a mental health condition, 5 were dyscalculic, 4 were dyspraxic and 1 was dysgraphic. Ten were 'other' and 7 'preferred not to say'. Again, there was co-occurrence as many reported more than 1 diagnosis.

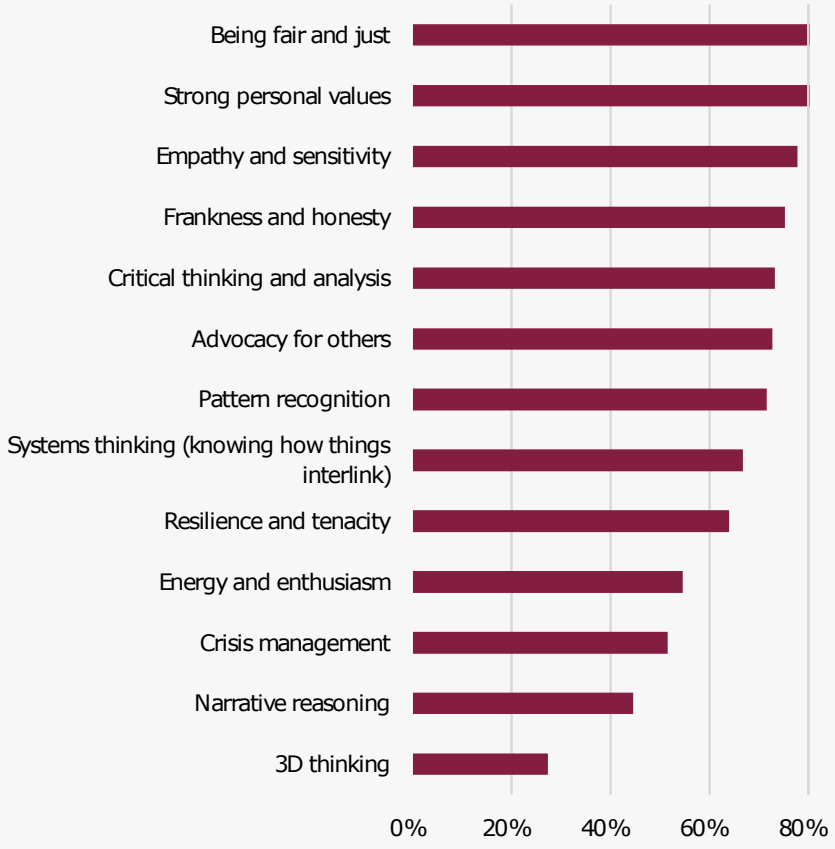
The data showed strong representation from office-based sectors, with 12% from accounting and finance, and 8% each from law and defence, and health and social care. There was little representation from non-office-based sectors such as manufacturing, construction, transport and logistics (2.3% or fewer), as shown in Figure 4.

# Comparison from 2023 to 2024

## Comparative neurodivergent strengths and challenges

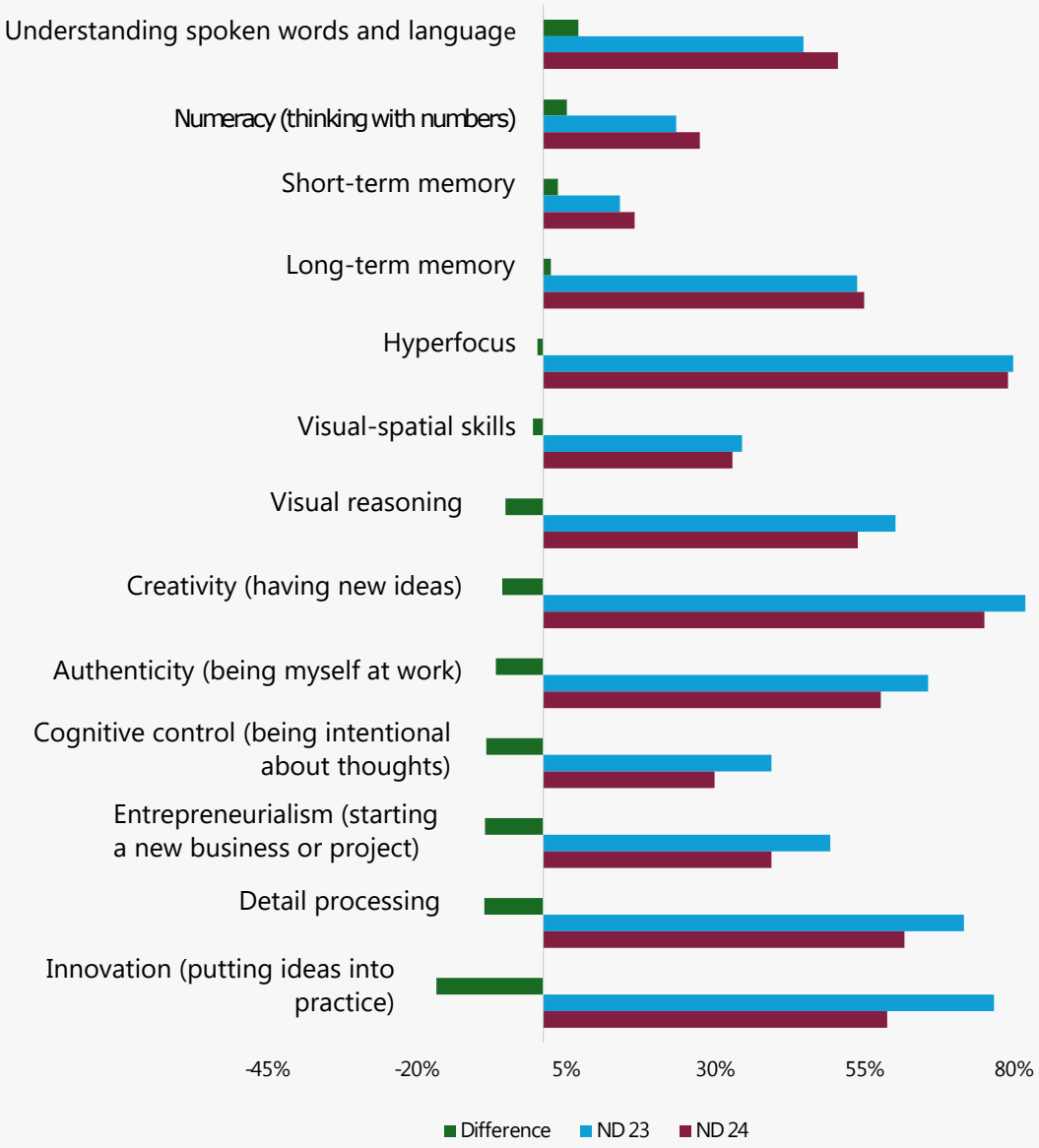
In 2023 the survey, we listed a full range of neurodivergent strengths as they are typically reported in academic research and in cognitive assessments which are used to document conditions. For this year, we augmented this list by undertaking a full analysis of the additional strengths neurodivergent workers had reported as 'other' in 2023 as shown in Figure 5.

*Figure 5: Additional neurodivergent strengths in 2024*



We compared the percentage of neurodivergent workers reporting neurodivergent strengths and challenges between 2023 and 2024 data, as shown in Figures 6 and 8.

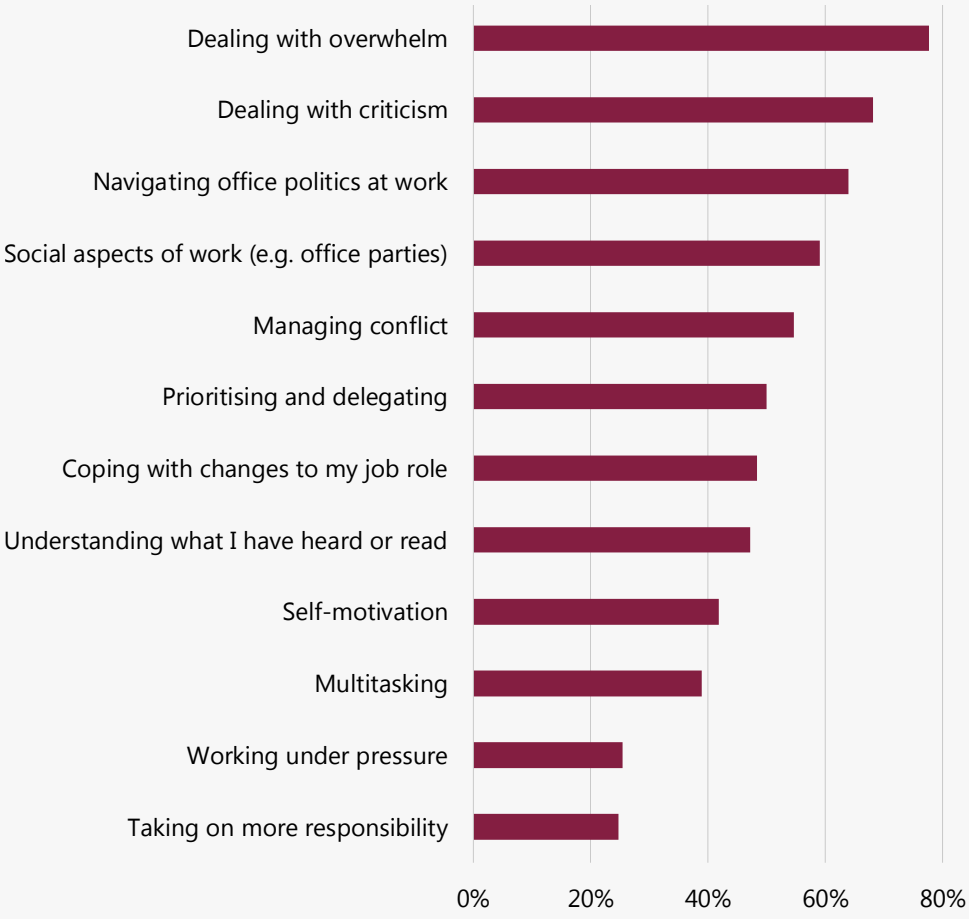
*Figure 6: Neurodivergent strengths comparison 2023 to 2024*



There was a qualitative difference observed between different types of neurodivergent strengths. Whereas the cognitive skills showed little difference (e.g., memory, numeracy), skills which required suppression of distractions (detail processing, cognitive control) showed a decrease. Skills which require taking risks at work have reduced considerably in the past year (innovation= -18%; entrepreneurialism= -10%).

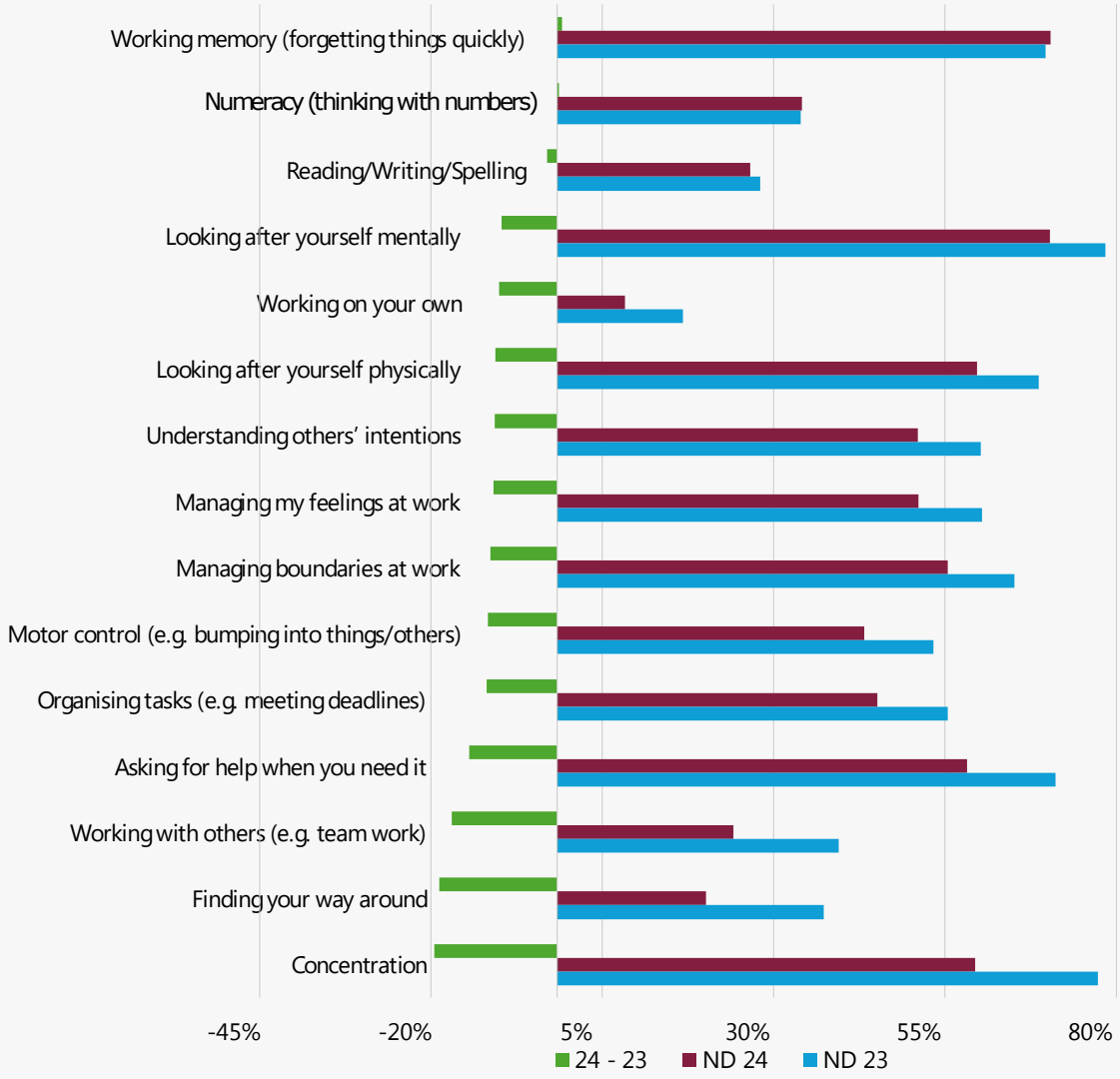
Regarding neurodivergent strengths, we augmented the list presented to participants by analysing last year's data as shown in Figure 6.

*Figure 7: Additional neurodivergent challenges in 2024*



Interestingly, the majority of neurodivergent challenges had decreased in prevalence from 2023. For example, concentration difficulties dropped from 79% reporting as a challenge in 2023 to 61% in 2024. However, this might be due to the newly added challenges identified as dominating by neurodivergent workers. For example, 78% reported difficulty dealing with overwhelm, 68% dealing with criticism and 64% dealing with office politics at work (Figure 7).

*Figure 8: Neurodivergent challenges comparison 2023 to 2024*



## Manager and company support

We asked neurodivergent workers and their employers about the levels of support for neurodivergent people in their companies in 2023 and 2024, using a scale ranging from 1 (no support) to 5 (a lot of support).

### Support from colleagues

As shown in Figure 9, neurodivergent workers reported a decrease in the support they receive from colleagues, with the average rating decreasing from 4.34 to 3.38. Employers, on the other hand, rated the support provided by neurotypical colleagues to neurodivergent workers slightly higher (Figure 10), but also noted a decrease, from an average of 4.83 to 4.09.

*Figure 9: Support from colleagues comparison 2023 to 2024*


*Figure 10: Support from employer comparison 2023 to 2024*

## Support from line managers

Neurodivergent workers also rated the support they received from managers as shown in Figure 11. The average rating dropped from 4.61 in 2023 to 3.66 in 2024.

*Figure 11: Support from managers for NT workers 2023 to 2024*

## Neurodivergent worker experience

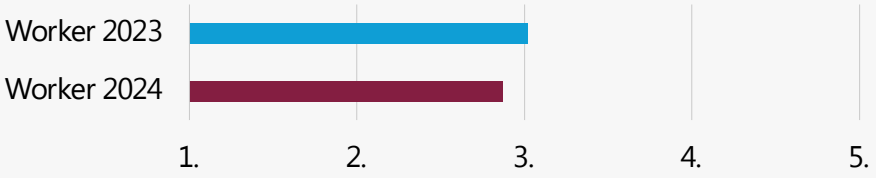
We investigated the experience of neurodivergent workers' wellbeing, career satisfaction and psychological safety, using a 5-point scale with 1 being a negative result and 5 being positive.

We further asked about neurodivergent workers' intention to leave their employer in the next 12 months. Intention is typically a good predictor of behaviour, so this aspect captures a key metric for businesses regarding staff retention. Turnover intention was measured on a 5-point scale with 1 meaning unlikely to leave and 5 meaning very likely to leave.

### Wellbeing

We measured wellbeing with 5 widely used questions about mood, activity and sleep (Figure 12). We observed a decrease in wellbeing, with the average rating dropping from 3.02 to 2.87.

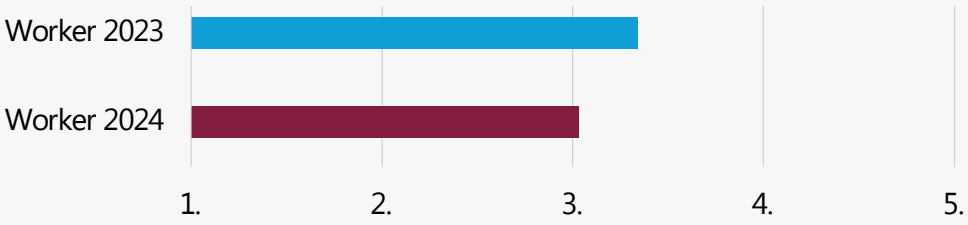
*Figure 12: Wellbeing comparison 2023 - 2024*




### Career Satisfaction

Career satisfaction, which included questions about feeling valued in one's current role and the potential for progression within the organisation, declined from 2023 to 2024, with the average rating decreasing from 3.34 to 3.03 (Figure 13).

*Figure 13: Career satisfaction comparison*

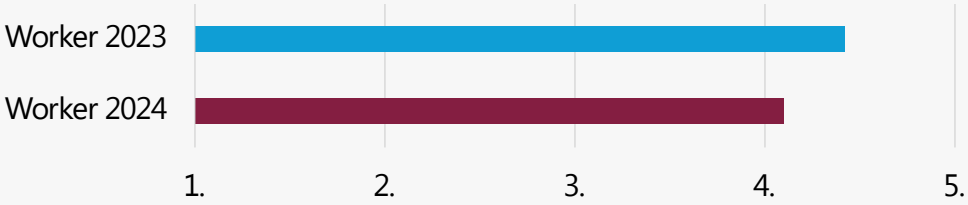



## Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is a belief (individual and for teams) about the extent to which it is safe to take risks, learn from mistakes and be authentic.

Psychological safety decreased for workers between 2023 and 2024, from an average of 4.42 to 4.1 (Figure 14).

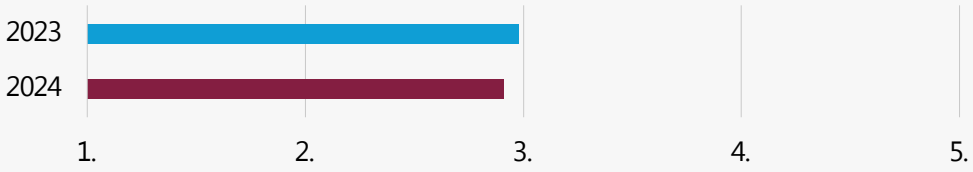
*Figure 14: Psychological Safety Comparison 2023 - 2024*



## Turnover intentions

Turnover intentions decreased very slightly from 2.98 to 2.91 (Figure 15), meaning that fewer staff intend to leave in the next 12 months, but we note that such intentions are affected by labour market conditions.

*Figure 15: Turnover intentions for ND workers 2023 to 2024*

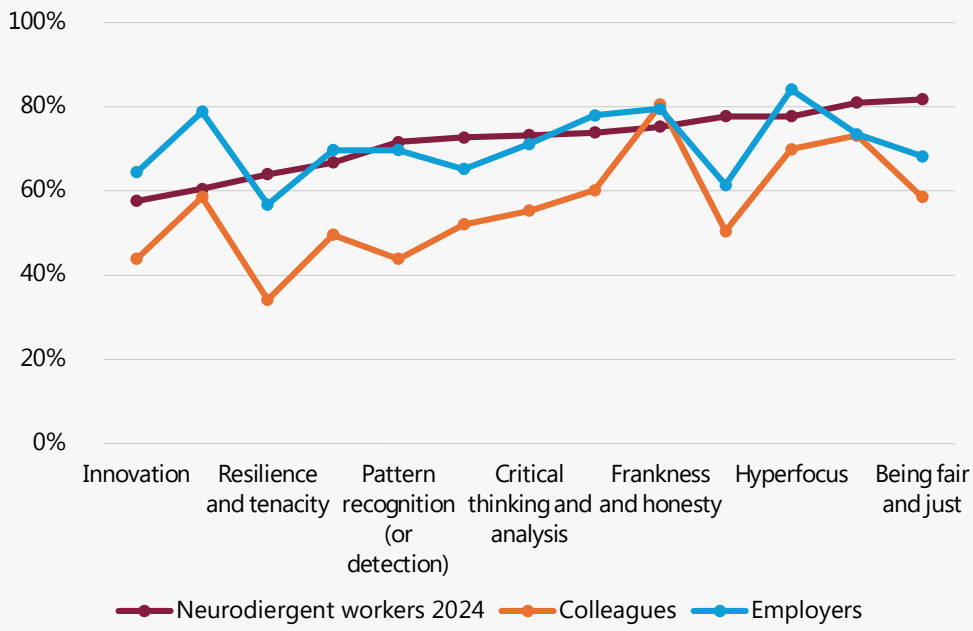


# Three-way comparison: Neurodivergent workers, employers and colleagues

## Neurodivergent Strengths at Work

We compared how neurodivergent workers rated their strengths and how in comparison they were rated by employers and colleagues (Figure 16). Neurodivergent workers rated themselves consistently higher than colleagues. We first report on the strengths rated highest by neurodivergent workers, then those scored lower for ease of comparison.

*Figure 16: 3-way comparison for ND workers high scoring on strengths*

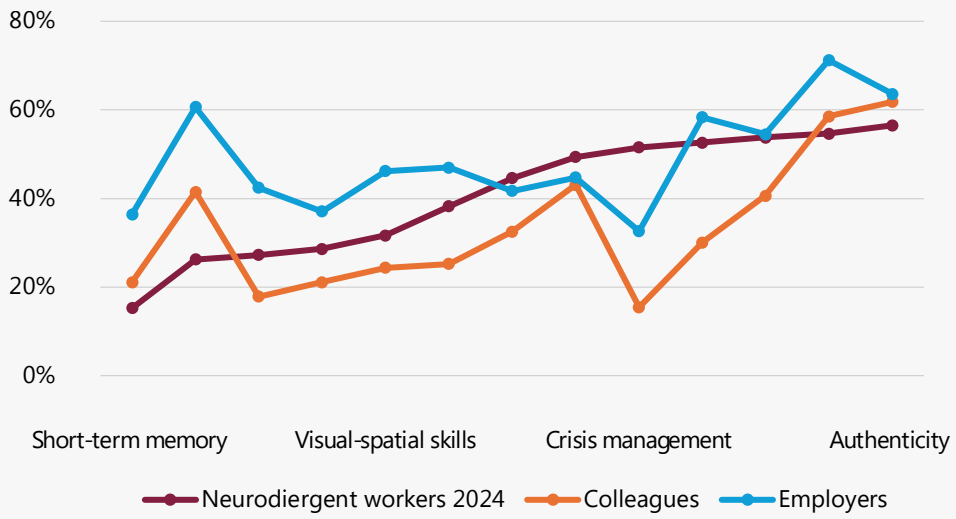


Many neurodivergent agreed on respective ND strengths (see Figure 16), but their colleagues did not observe the same, with 2 exceptions where more colleagues observed a strength more so than workers (detail processing, frankness and honesty). In all other occasions, colleagues observed the strengths as less highly rated.

Notably, there were large differences in relational and emotional aspects, such as resilience/tenacity (64% worker vs 34% colleague) empathy/sensitivity (78% vs 50%) and advocacy for others (73% vs 52%).

*Differences between the neurodivergent workers and their employers were more tempered, however some large disparities were observed. Employers rated detail processing as a strength more frequently than neurodivergent workers (79% vs 61%), whereas employers less frequently rated empathy/sensitivity (61% vs 78%) and being fair and just (68% vs 82%) as strengths compared to neurodivergent workers.*

*Figure 17: 3-way comparison for ND workers low-scoring on strengths*




For two neurodivergent strengths, neurodivergent workers rated themselves lower than colleagues and employers: short-term memory, 15%, 21%, 36% respectively and numeracy, 26%, 41% and 61% respectively (Figure 17).

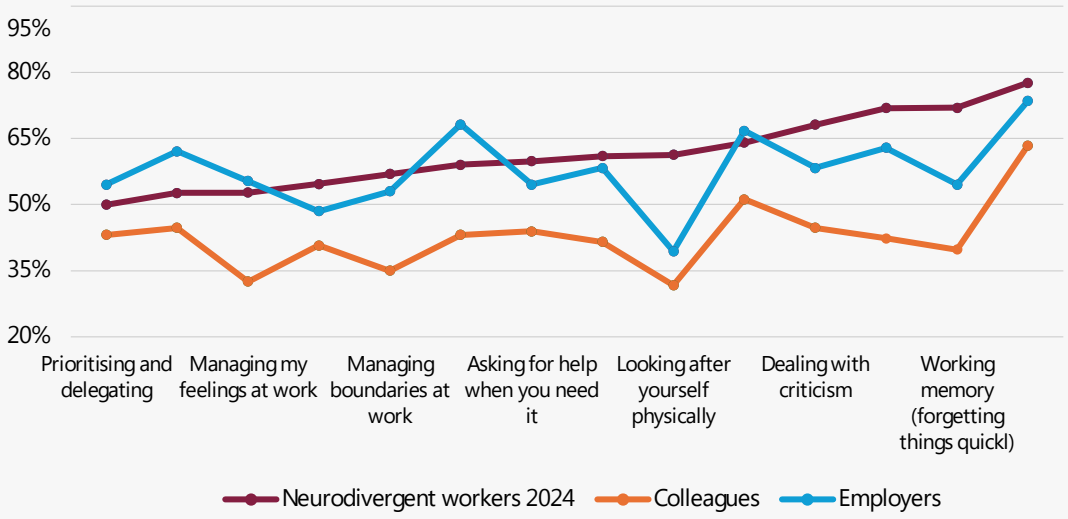
There were 6 neurodivergent strengths where all three groups disagreed, with employers rating higher than neurodivergent workers, but their colleagues rating lower. These strengths included 3D thinking, cognitive control, visual-spatial skills, entrepreneurialism, visual reasoning and energy /enthusiasm.

There were a few areas of agreement such as verbal comprehension and authenticity. However, in crisis management, more neurodivergent workers rated their strengths highly compared to employers and colleagues (52%, 33% and 15%, respectively).

## Neurodivergent challenges at work

We compared the number of neurodivergent workers reporting ND specific challenges to the numbers of employers and neurotypical colleagues observing these in others. We first report where ND workers rated challenges highly (so big challenges; Figure 18) then lower rated challenges (Figure 19).

*Figure 18: 3-way comparison of ND workers high-scoring on challenges*




Where large numbers of neurodivergent workers reported neurodivergent challenges (Figure 18), a clear pattern demonstrates that their colleagues did not agree. For example, where 77% of neurodivergent workers expressed difficulty with overwhelm, only 63% of colleagues observed the same. For working memory difficulties (forgetting things quickly, not being able to think of several things at once) the split was 71% to 39% respectively; for looking after oneself mentally it was 71% to 42% and for looking after oneself physically it was 61% to 31%. This data suggests that neurotypical colleagues are not aware of the struggles experienced by their neurodivergent colleagues; particularly for issues which may not translate into visible behaviours when neurodivergent workers are camouflaging (endeavouring

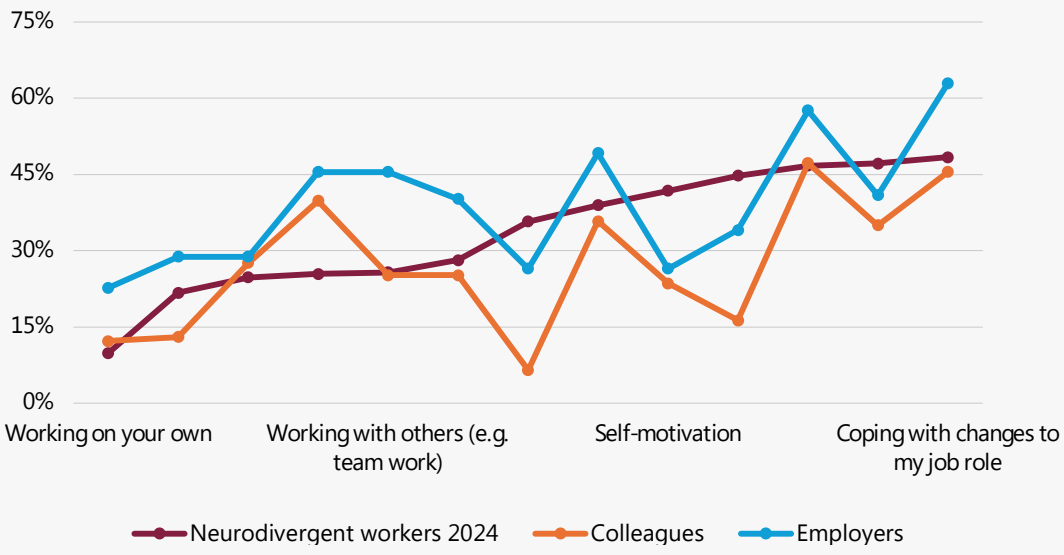
to fit into neurotypical norms) or masking (suppressing visible neurodivergent behaviours).

The disparity between neurodivergent workers and their employers was less stark, with a few notable exceptions. More employers observed understanding other's intentions as a neurodivergent challenge than neurodivergent workers (62% vs 52% respectively), similarly the social aspects of work (68% vs 59%). Conversely, fewer employers observed ND challenges in looking after themselves physically than neurodivergent workers (39% vs 61%).

As shown in Figure 19, a low number of neurodivergent workers rated themselves as having difficulty working on their own (9%) or taking on responsibility (25%). Similar numbers were reported by colleagues and employers.

However, some neurodivergent challenges elicited differences in perception. For example, more neurodivergent workers cited numeracy (35%), self-motivation (41%) and motor control (45%) as challenges than their employer and colleagues, who expressed much less awareness of these aspects as neurodivergent struggles.

*Figure 19: 3-way comparison for ND workers low scoring on ND challenges*

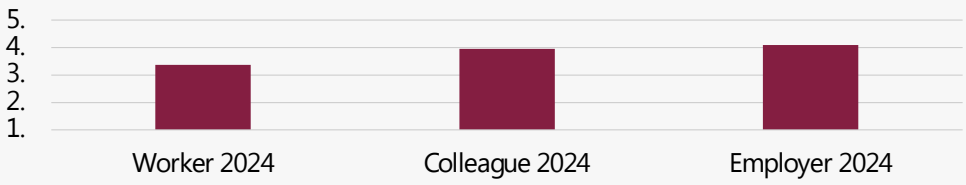


## Manager and company support

We compared the 2024 ratings between neurodivergent workers and neurotypical colleagues to assess the perceived support from colleagues and employers. Six indicates high levels of support and 1 equals no support.

Considering support from colleagues (Figure 20), there were significant differences in the perspectives between neurodivergent workers, neurotypical colleagues and employers. The neurodivergent workers rated support from fellow staff members at 3.38, their colleagues at 3.95 and employers at 4.09. This means that neurodivergent workers perceive less support than is intended from their colleagues and employers.

*Figure 20: 3-way comparison for support from colleagues*

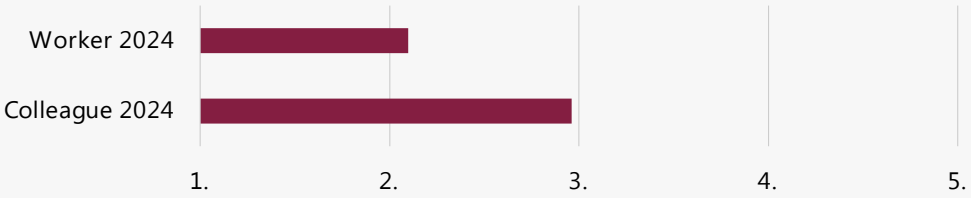



Similarly, colleagues perceived that managers were providing a higher level of support than the neurodivergent workers experienced, with average scores of 4.13 and 3.66 respectively (Figure 21).

*Figure 21: 2-way comparison for support from line manager*

We asked neurodivergent workers and neurotypical colleagues about the quality of training provided, shown in Figure 22 (where 1 was no training provided and 5 indicated a high quality of training provided).

*Figure 22: 2-way comparison for training*




We asked about how conflict was managed in the respective organisations for all 3 groups. Some questions used a 5-point scale to rate the extent of effectiveness/ comfort/fairness with 1 indicating a positive score and five indicating a negative score (Figure 23). Other questions were about awareness of services such as mediation within the business (1 indicates yes, they are aware; 2 indicates that they do not know; 3 indicates that they are not aware of any such service) (Figure 24).

There were stark differences between the employers and neurotypical colleagues compared to neurodivergent workers who were more likely to not know about specific supports such as designated mediation services. They were also more likely to feel that conflict management was handled ineffectively or unfairly

*Figure 23: Workplace conflicts - 1 = good; 5=not good*

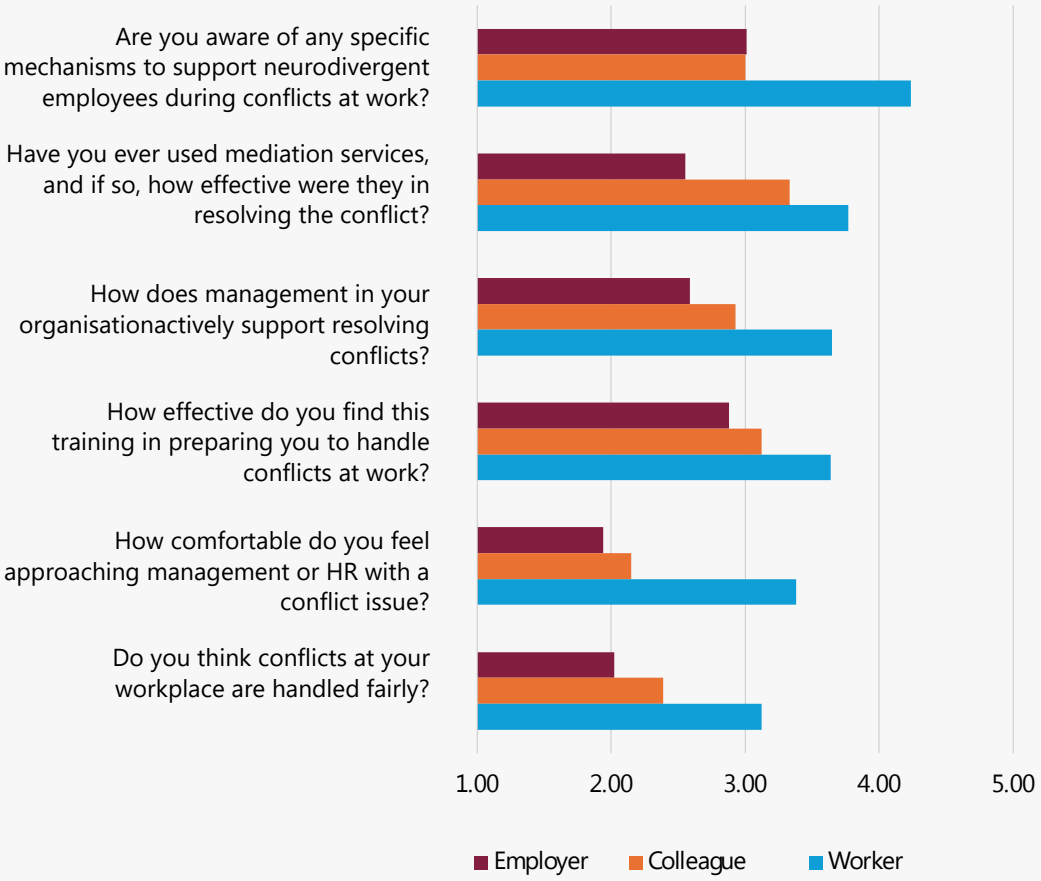
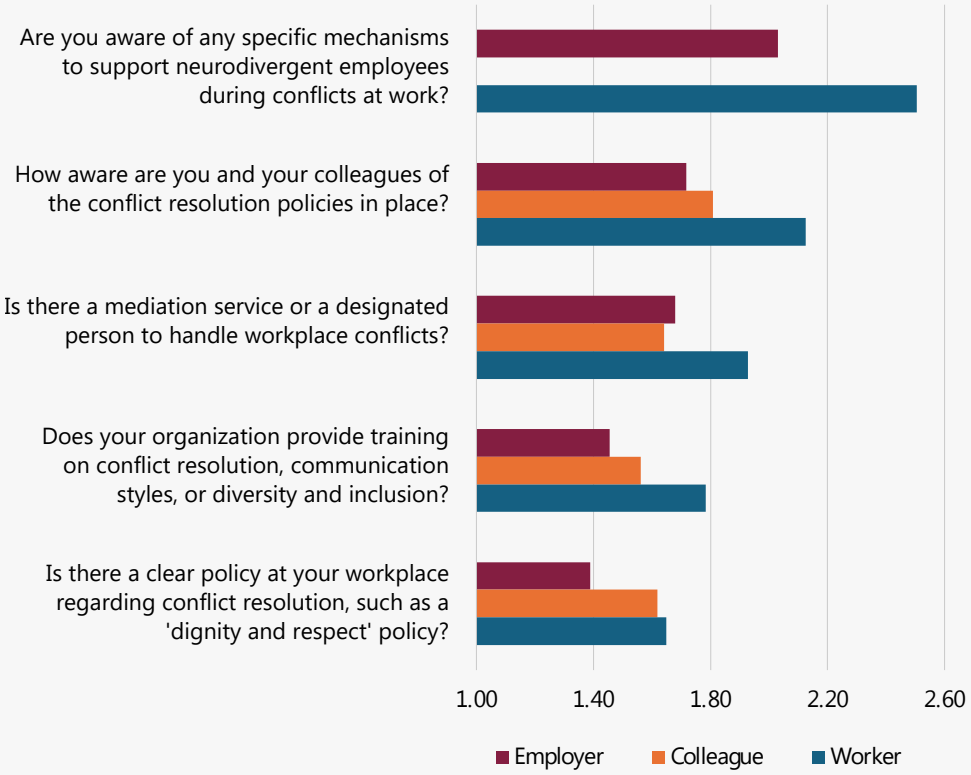


*Figure 24: Workplace conflicts 2 - 1= yes; 2= don't know; 3= no*



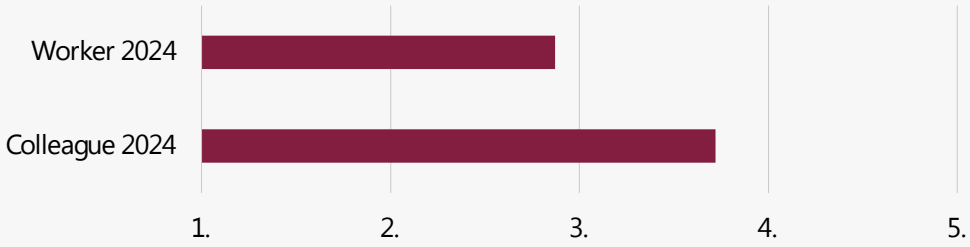
# Neurodivergent worker experience

Given concerningly low levels of wellbeing in 2023, we compared the experience of neurodivergent workers to colleagues and asked about psychological safety in all 3 groups.

## Wellbeing

We found a statistically significant difference between the 2 groups with colleagues reporting much higher levels of wellbeing (average 3.72) compared to neurodivergent workers (average 2.87), as shown in Figure 25. The difference was particularly stark for the question "I woke up feeling fresh and rested", which had an average score of just 2.28 for neurodivergent workers and 3.27 for colleagues – which is likely to reflect that sleep conditions often co-occur with neurodivergence. Also, the question "I have felt cheerful and in good spirits was an average of 3.2 for neurodivergent workers and 4.1 for neurotypical colleagues. This data is in line with clinical research which signposts frequent co-occurrence of mental health and sleep conditions with neurodivergent conditions.

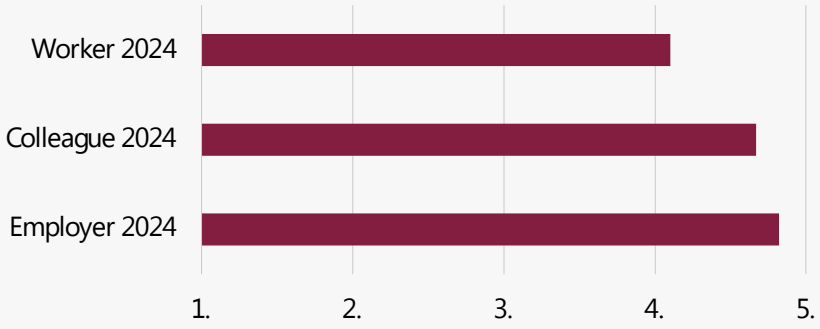
*Figure 25: 2-way comparison of wellbeing*



## Psychological safety

Psychological safety was highest for employers (average 4.82), then colleagues (average 4.67). Neurodivergent workers reported significantly lower scores (average 4.1), as shown in Figure 26.

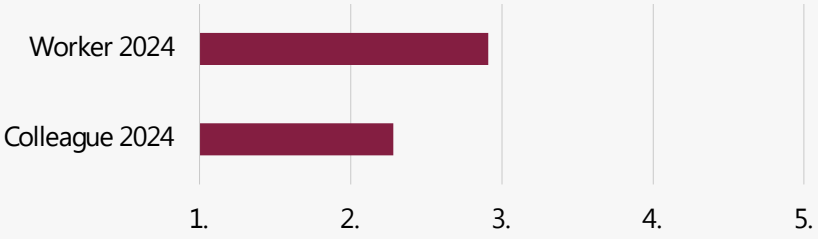
*Figure 26: 3-way comparison of psychological safety*



## Turnover intentions

We compared the turnover intentions of neurodivergent workers to that of their colleagues, shown in Figure 27. In this scale, a low number represents unlikely to leave, and a high number means people are more likely to leave. The neurodivergent workers scored an average of 2.91 compared to the neurotypical colleagues, who were less likely to leave at 2.28.

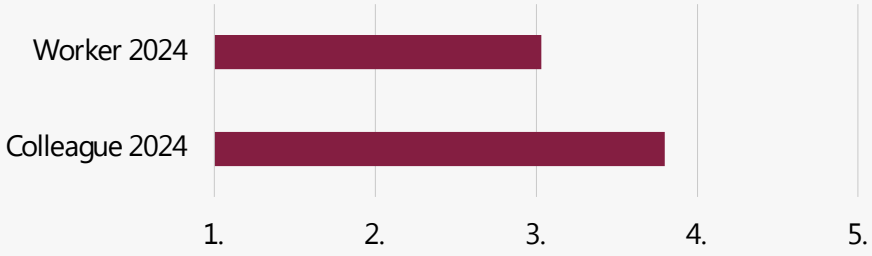
*Figure 27: 2-way comparison of turnover*




## Career Satisfaction

Comparing neurodivergent workers with colleagues on career satisfaction (Figure 28), we observed that colleagues were generally more satisfied with their careers in their current role (average score 3.8) compared to neurodivergent workers (3.03).

*Figure 28: 2-way comparison of career satisfaction*



# Insights from neurodivergent workers

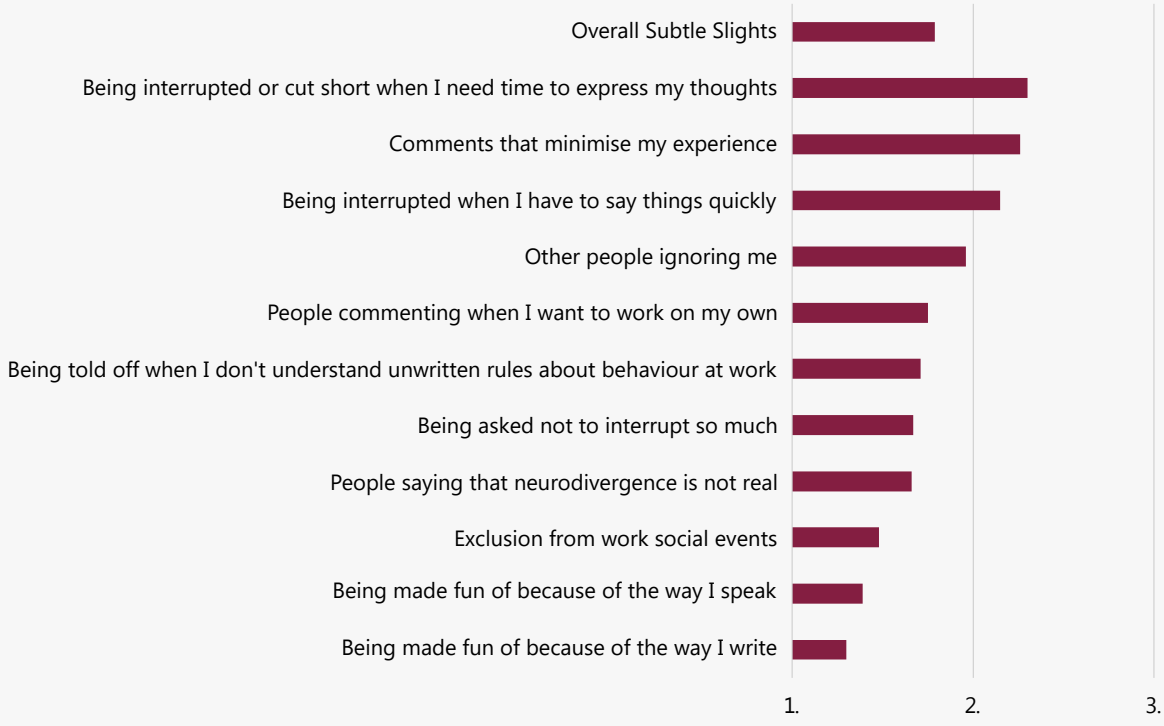
### The immediate work environment

In 2023, neurodivergent workers reported that their greatest barrier to disclosure was their fear of discrimination and stigma from colleagues. For the 2024 survey, we asked more specific questions regarding stigma and belonging.

## Subtle slights

We asked about subtle slights which are ambiguous negative interactions which include microaggressions, incivilities and everyday discrimination. We drafted specific items for the purpose of this survey with a 4-point scale where participants indicated the frequency of which they experienced each item (1 meaning never and 4 meaning very often).

*Figure 29: ND workers, experience of subtle slights*

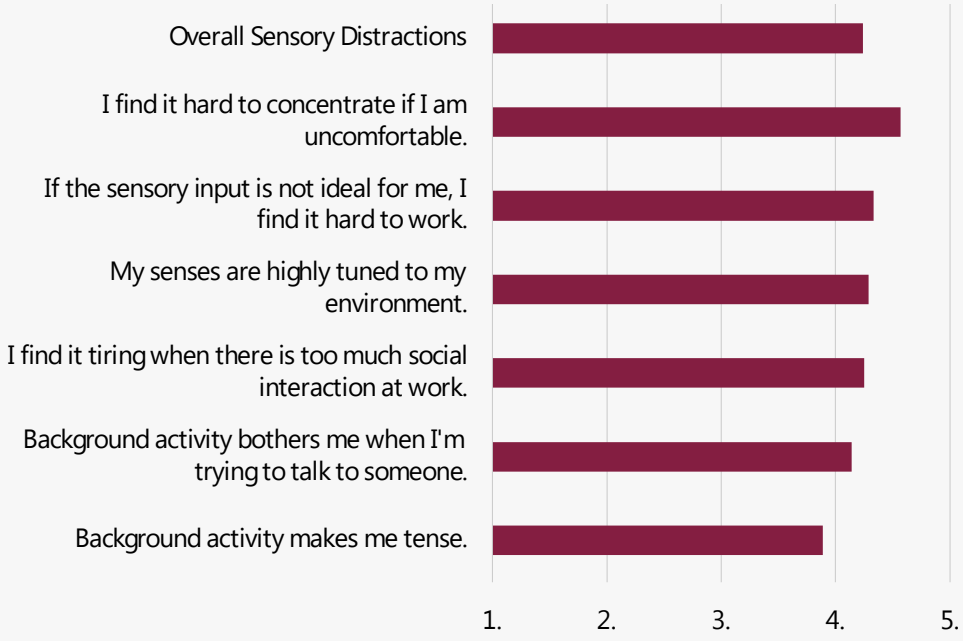


As shown in Figure 29 it was more common to be interrupted and to receive comments that minimised neurodivergent experience, and least common to be made fun of for writing style or speech. While overall the frequencies were not high, this is still a cause for concern – a subtle slight can do harm even if it happens once.

## The Work Environment

We asked about sensory distractions because neurodivergent workers are more likely to hear, see, feel, taste and smell more intensely on a rating scale from 1 (least sensory distractions) to 5 (the most). Our results showed that neurodivergent workers are experiencing high levels of sensory distraction at work, as shown in Figure 30.

*Figure 30: Neurodivergent worker, sensory distractions*



## Creating the basis for evidence-informed practice

Neurodivergent workers are struggling more at work than their colleagues. They are increasingly unwell at work, believe that they are psychologically unsafe and are exposed to conflict and subtle slights. While there is much written about reasonable adjustments, our 2023 report indicated that these were less important than relationships and purpose at work for retention.

To understand good practice, we chose three key outcomes **– wellbeing, turnover intentions and career satisfaction.** We used a hierarchical regression analysis (an advanced technique which tells us about the strength and direction of relationships) to see which focus areas had the most impact on each outcome. The numbers represent the proportion of the impact each aspect has on the outcome, and the colours are coded in a clockwise direction.

---

## Wellbeing

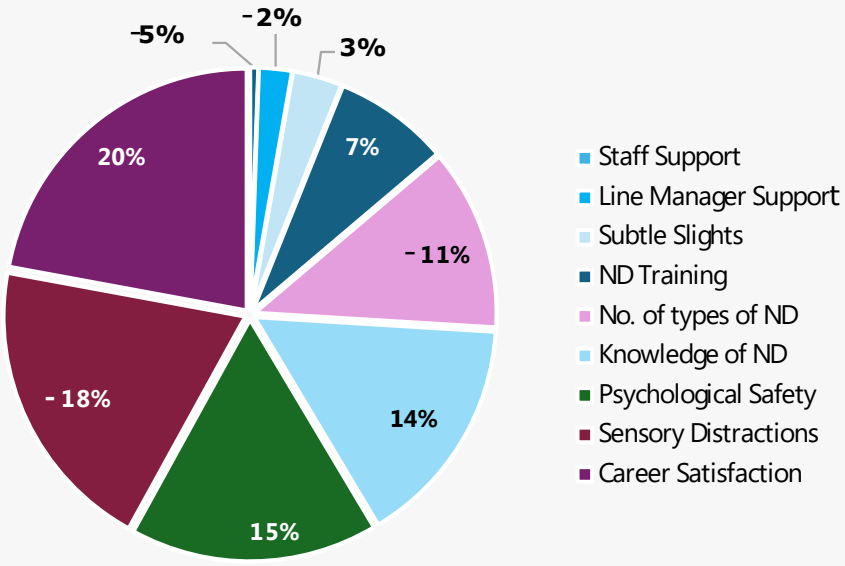
Figure 31 shows that support from colleagues and line managers as well as subtle slights have the least impact on wellbeing. The quality of neurodiversity training is effective, as it improves, so does wellbeing. General knowledge about neurodiversity in the business, improved psychological safety and career satisfaction improves wellbeing. The number of ND conditions neurodivergent workers report have a negative impact on wellbeing. Sensory distractions have a very significant negative effect on wellbeing.

These results suggest that good practice should start with continuously updating knowledge of ND conditions and putting this into practice, including a specific understanding of how neurodivergent workers react to their environment and what would help them do their best work, such as provision of quiet spaces or remote and hybrid working. Knowledge needs to be updated locally and bound into a climate of psychological safety, with open acknowledgement and encouragement of different working styles.

*Figure 31: Influences on wellbeing*

*Each segment represents how this topic influenced the overall value for wellbeing / turnover intention / career satisfaction.*

*A higher number represents a stronger relationship. A minus sign indicates a negative relationship, where as the main score rises, the segment score decreases.*



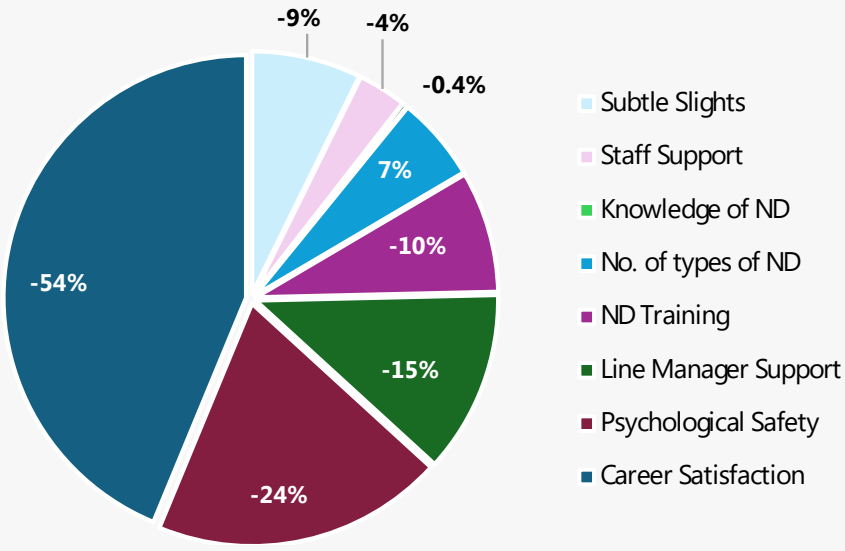
## Turnover intentions

By understanding what makes a neurodivergent worker likely to leave, we can learn what we need to do to make them stay. Results strongly suggest that career satisfaction is the best predictor of turnover intentions (as in 2023), meaning that people need to feel valued in their roles and think there are opportunities for advancement. Psychological safety is key and line manager support is a significant factor. The quality of neurodiversity training in the organisation also made a difference. The remaining aspects were not significant influences on the intention to turnover (Figure 32).

*Figure 32: Influences on turnover intention*

*Each segment represents how this topic influenced the overall value for wellbeing / turnover intention / career satisfaction.*

*A higher number represents a stronger relationship. A minus sign indicates a negative relationship, where as the main score rises, the segment score decreases.*



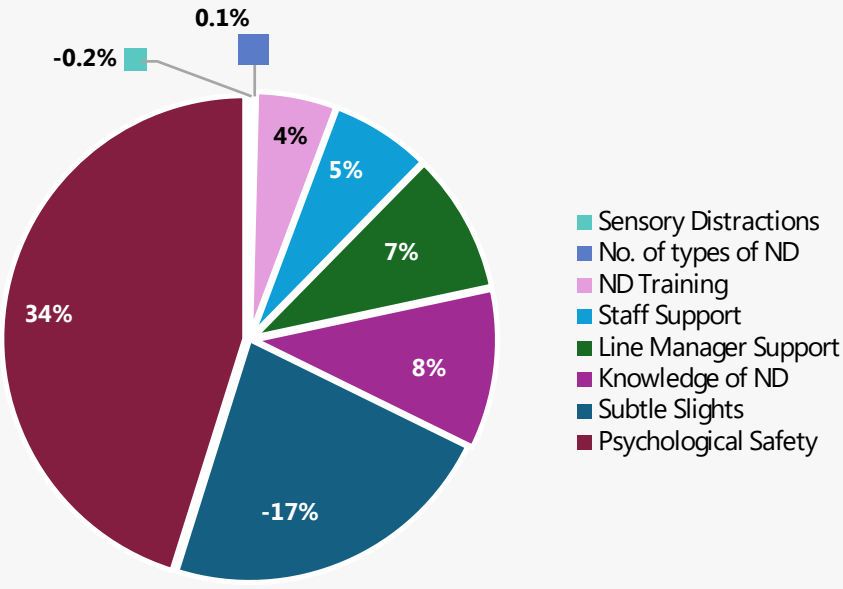
## Career satisfaction

Given the importance of career satisfaction for wellbeing and turnover intention, we considered which aspects have the highest impact. As shown in Figure 33, psychological safety, low numbers of subtle slights, company knowledge of neurodiversity and line manager support have the highest impact on career satisfaction. This means that the organisational climate is very important for people to self-actualise specialised ND talent.

*Figure 33: Influences on career satisfaction*

*Each segment represents how this topic influenced the overall value for wellbeing / turnover intention / career satisfaction.*

*A higher number represents a stronger relationship. A minus sign indicates a negative relationship, where as the main score rises, the segment score decreases.*



# Key insights from employers

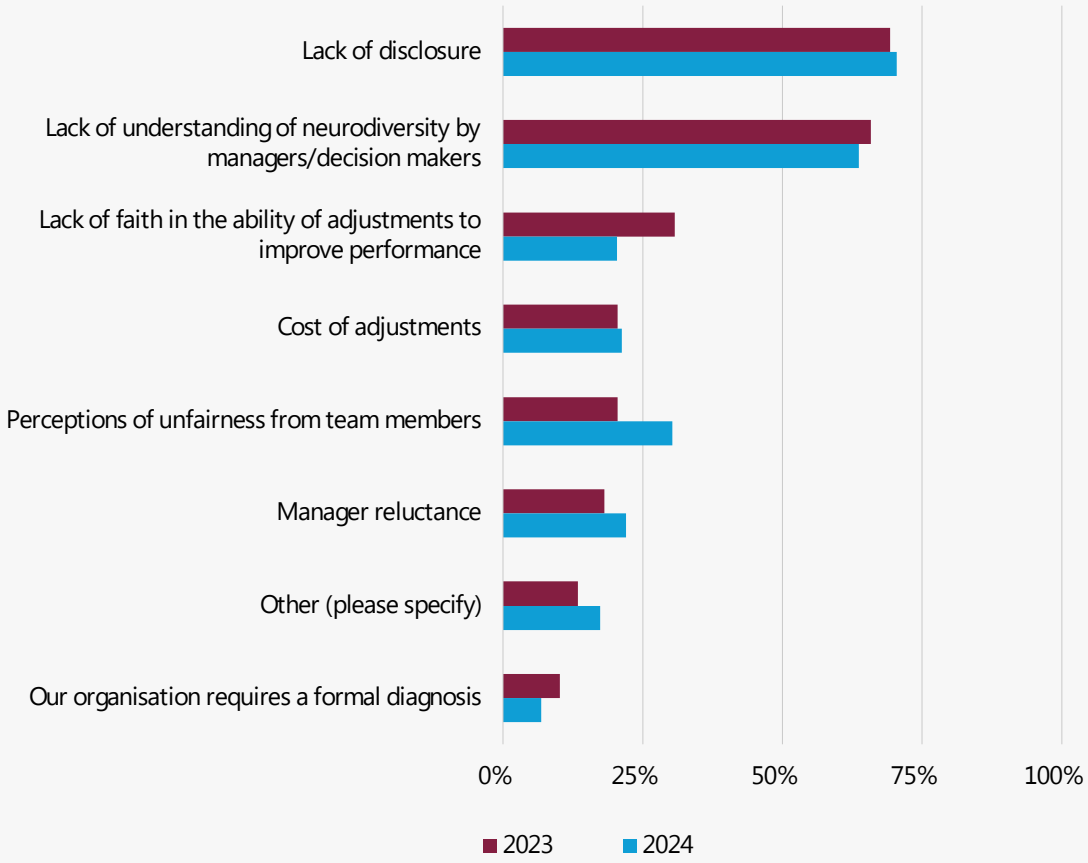
## Employee turnover

Some employers (77) commented on their organisation's turnover. Fifty one per cent indicated that it was between 0-10% and 39% indicated that it was between 11-20%, which is low for the UK[5]. Only 18 employers tracked neurodivergent turnover separately, but of those, 83% (15 people) indicated that neurodivergent workers were 0-10%, 11% (2) indicated 11-20% and 1 person indicated 21-30%. This suggests that neurodivergent workers are less likely to turnover than their colleagues, despite having higher intentions to turnover.

## Implementing adjustments

Employers indicated the barriers they faced in implementing adjustments, in both the 2023 and 2024 surveys. The lack of disclosure from workers remained high in 2024. There was an increase in the employer's faith in the ability of adjustments to make a difference (the number reporting this fell from 31% to 21%) however there was also an increase in perceptions of unfairness from colleagues (increased from 21% to 30%). The numbers reporting manager reluctance as a barrier has also increased slightly from 2023 to 2024 from 18% to 22%.

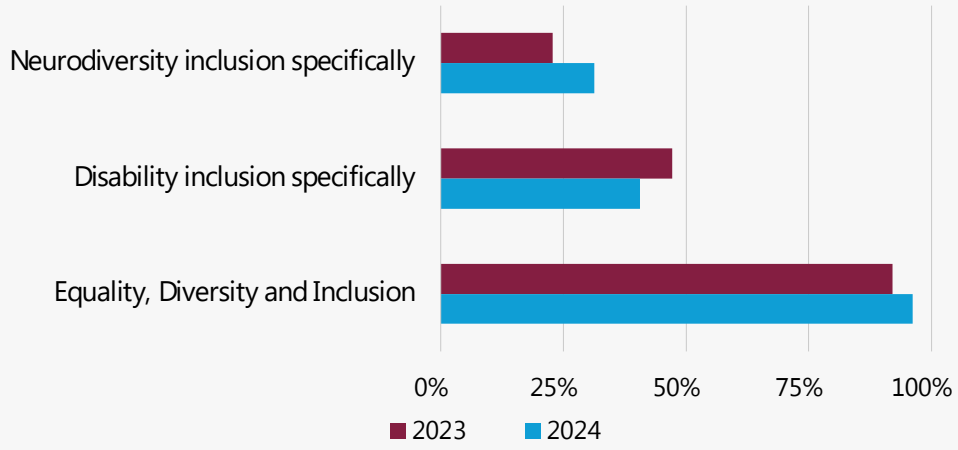
*Figure 34: barriers to implementing adjustments 2023 to 2024*



## Equality Diversity and Inclusion and Neurodiversity Policies

Comparing the 2023 to 2024 data, we see a slight increase in the number of organisations with explicit policies in Equality Diversity and Inclusion (92% to 96%) and a moderate increase in the number holding neurodiversity policies (23% to 31%). However, we worryingly observed a decrease in the number reporting that their organisation has a disability policy (47% to 41%). Whilst this could simply be due to different participants in different years, we need to guard against neurodiversity representation overshadowing other disabling conditions such as sensory or mobility impairments.

*Figure 35: Presence of employer policies*



## Different perspectives between employers and neurodivergent workers

The difference between employer perceptions of strengths and challenges was interesting, since we observed very little of this in 2023, with both groups aligned. The main differences were around empathy/sensitivity and being fair/just, which were new strengths added this year. Employers were also not as aware of the challenges neurodivergent workers experience in self-care (both physical and mental) and the difficulties posed by poor working memory.

Employers consistently rated themselves higher in knowledge and support, psychological safety and conflict management.

## Good practice

Determining good practice for employers, based on these results, focuses our attention on differences in experience. Employers need to be more aware of working memory challenges and what this might represent in terms of productivity and stress, as well as social and relational aspects of work, such as perceptions of fairness and handling conflict need considerable attention. If neurodivergent workers are masking and camouflaging, it seems feasible that employers think that they are doing a lot to support neurodivergent people, whilst the workers themselves do not see the benefit.

# Different perspectives between colleagues and neurodivergent workers

## Strengths and challenges

The key differences between colleagues and neurodivergent workers from the strengths perspective relate to social and emotional skills, many of which were added this year by the neurodivergent workers from the 2023 survey. There is a clear difference in perceptions of crisis management, resilience and tenacity, empathy and sensitivity and being fair and just, where neurodivergent workers frequently see these as strengths whereas their colleagues do not.

Such differences can be understood by also seeing differences in the perception of challenges, where colleagues do not see the difficulties experienced by neurodivergent workers in managing cognitive functions such as motor control, numeracy, concentration and working memory. They are also less likely to see the challenges in managing social interactions, self-care boundaries and understanding intentions. Without understanding the impact of cognitive differences, it is less likely that they will understand the resilience and tenacity needed to manage day-to-day work.

## Workplace experience

Neurotypical colleagues consistently reported more positive workplace experiences than workers, with improved wellbeing, career satisfaction and psychological safety compared to their neurodivergent peers.

## Conflict resolution

Neurotypical colleagues were more reassured and had more faith in the fairness of conflict resolution than neurodivergent workers. This is due to people not feeling understood, a lack of effective processes, a lack of knowledge of who to turn to, and trust in the provision of objective processes and services. One respondent outlined that the purported organisational climate does not reflect neuroinclusive reality:

> *"Currently any deviation from organisational norms is not acceptable. We talk a lot about diversity but in more aspects than neurodiversity diversity is undermined by an assumed normative culture I find very challenging. Difference is not approached with curiosity."*

Another respondent concurred:

> *"Hard to say. It's a pretty vicious and competitive place. "Assume positive intentions" is often gaslighting in practice."*

We asked people 'what works' and the data documented varied experiences. This signposts a need for genuine shifts in inclusive cultures and better training as indicated by neurodivergent workers:

> *"Train managers and role model ND in all roles"*

People also commented on the need to genuinely and purposefully involve neurodivergent workers in the creation and delivery of relevant initiatives:

> *"Work with us to understand what is useful for us."*

## Good practice

Based on the data, organisations need to consider the quality of training provision and how this enhances understanding between neurotypical and neurodivergent co-workers. The disparities in strengths and weaknesses are in two main categories: that colleagues do not understand the full extent of cognitive challenges faced by neurodivergent people and that they are therefore struggling to appreciate the resilience and adjustments needed to cope. From the other perspective, the lack of self-awareness for neurodivergent people about the impact of their cognitive challenges on peers and managers needs careful handling. Self-awareness should be promoted, but without leading to shame or self-consciousness. Without a baseline of an honest appraisal of what is, and what is not, working well the two groups remain at odds. This mismatch in experience and understanding is leading to difficulties in managing crises and the social and relationship elements of work. Training should be recalibrated to focus on building understanding and empathy between the two groups.

Further, the lack of agreement as to what fair and effective conflict resolution represents is a matter of concern. Neurodivergent people are less likely to engage in and/or have faith in formal reporting and assistance processes, which is an accessibility barrier. To achieve good practice in managing relationships between neurodivergent and neurotypical co-workers, employers will need to consider how to adapt mediation and conflict handling at work:

> *"Honest conversation about working styles, agreement for my manager to check work before it is released to public, honest conversation about boundaries"*

Neurodivergent workers reported that good practice starts with good conversations, effective relationships, improved understanding of boundaries and expectations:

> *"Understanding our neurodivergent strengths and then clear instructions and deadlines as well as empathy"*

Participants also underlined the value of flexible working as an enabler:

> *"Remote work, little pressure to visit the office and a flexible work pattern make all the difference to me"*

# Summary of key findings

## 1. Wellbeing is at risk

Levels of wellbeing were low across both employee groups, but particularly so for neurodivergent people with a decrease from 2023. Detailed data points to the likely influence of co-occurring sleep and mental health conditions, signposting a need for specialist-informed wellbeing interventions.

We note high levels of sensory distractions experienced by neurodivergent workers and the effect this is likely to have on concentration, memory and managing emotions and relationships.

---

## 2. Neurodivergent challenges and strengths are perceived differently

Neurotypical colleagues are having consistently better experiences at work, and do not recognise to the same extent the cognitive, sensory or relationship challenges experienced by neurodivergent workers. One reason is that challenges, for example, with processing information or dealing with overwhelm may not be immediately visible to others, particularly when neurodivergent workers are masking and camouflaging.

Another likely reason is the 'Double Empathy Problem', where neurodivergent people (particularly autistic and ADHD) are characterised as having less empathy. However, research tells us that neurodivergent people understand each other well and communicate well, that the same goes for neurotypical people, but interactions are of lower quality between the groups[6]. These signposts need to facilitate mutual understanding.

## 3. Psychological safety is affecting performance

We noted a decline in perceived psychological safety paired with the reduction in neurodivergent people reporting environment-dependent neurodivergent strengths such as innovation entrepreneurialism, and creativity, as well as lower levels of career satisfaction among neurodivergent workers.

From a business needs perspective, psychological safety is the cornerstone of safe, risk-managed practice, worker and team performance. Prioritising psychological safety requires a focus on organisational climate, communication and relationships.

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## 4. We need increased focus on a genuinely inclusive climate

Our findings show that neurodivergent workers and their colleagues have differing perceptions of policies, practices and actual experiences. This finding signposts a need for holistic talent management and inclusion where neuroinclusion is 'built in by design', and affirmed in day-to-day practice.

# Recommendations for policy

## 1. Prioritising holistic neuroinclusion

For two consecutive years, we established that neurodivergent workers are more likely to report more than one neurotype, sometimes with conflicting strengths and struggles. This means that programmes focused on one neurotype alone *(e.g., ADHD coaching, or Autism at Work)* will not meet the needs of all recipients. Policy needs to affirm that all neurotypes deserve good work and promote the value of neurodivergent strengths across all neurotypes. Services need to be organisationally structured but person-centred, aligned to organisational context, and responsive.

To start, we recommend emphasizing employer responsibility for flexibility in process, environment and equipment to meet a range of human neurotypes. This includes recognizing that neurodivergent inclusion expands the definition of 'normal'—from individuals who struggle with literacy to those who are hyperlexic, for example, or from those who find detail processing challenging to those who excel at it, or from individuals who think in detail only to those who think in overviews only. This approach, known as Universal Design, is more likely to be effective in creating a baseline of inclusion than singling out specific neurotypes. Adjustments thus need to be tailored to individual needs, and where necessary linked to a workplace needs assessment.

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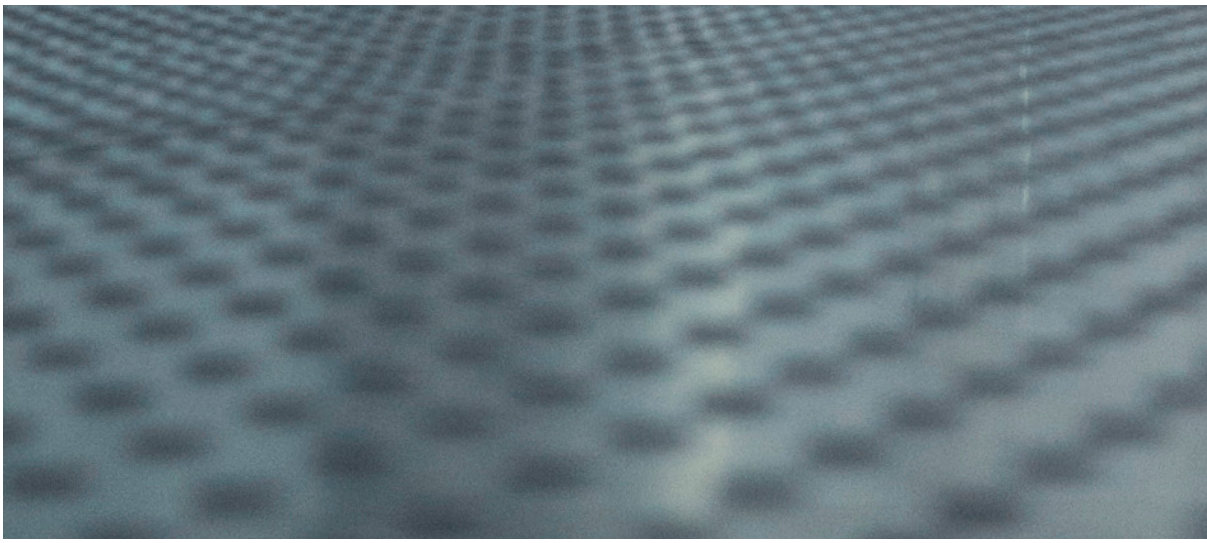
## 2. Neuroinclusion as a strategic HR focus

A lot of businesses are reliant on employee reference groups and the talents of key line managers and HR professionals to support neuroinclusion work. A more equitable approach is to expand the range of 'normal' working conditions and practices to include specialists (neurodivergent) as well as generalist thinkers.

A root and branch review of environments, job design, recruitment and human resources practice can be daunting but is cost-effective overall by reducing turnover and supporting precious talents, as well as mitigating against litigation. As well as being preventative and cost-efficient, holistic approaches also mitigate the need for individuals to disclose. Disclosure risks stigma and subtle slights, leading to relationship difficulties and perceptions of unfair favour from their co-workers.

## 3. Evidence-informed wellbeing initiatives

Wellbeing initiatives are typically grouped into primary (preventative), secondary (supporting the individual) and tertiary (corrective, once people have experienced difficulty). The provision of adjustments following disclosure one at a time is a tertiary practice for supporting neurodivergent people and, as our data from 2024 show, is not having the desired effect. To support the wellbeing of neurodivergent people we need more primary, preventative action. For example, auditing the design of all work environments to consider sensory distractions and implementing a range of preferences would be a good place to start. Wellbeing initiatives should be ND informed given that prevalence rates are 15-20% in work populations, for example they should consider executive functions difficulties as a source of stress, rather than assuming all stress is emotive or relational. As a secondary measure, improving the training and support given to line managers and proactive conflict management activity will support practice and reduce the need for tertiary, corrective action.



## Recommendations for talent management, inclusion, and wellbeing practice in organisations

Our data signposts the following recommendations for organisational practice.

### Wellbeing

a) Increase focus on primary, preventative intervention by considering working conditions – for example:

- How is hybrid and remote working set up and supported? For example, remote and hybrid working are helpful in reducing sensory overwhelm but can lead to isolation and poor work-life boundaries. Managers need to be upskilled in managing hybrid and remote working.

- Are support grassroots activities such as employee resource groups (ERGs) supported with sponsorship and budget? ERGs are an invaluable resource for the co-production of activities and interventions. Any duties should be formally recognised and appropriately sponsored through strategic collaboration as well as operational and budgetary support.

- Are expectations, outputs and outcomes clear for all roles? Many managers fear clear conversations around performance and many objectives are assumed rather than explicit. This makes it harder for neurodivergent people to adhere to 'unwritten rules' and more likely to feel aggrieved when challenged.

b) Ensure secondary response interventions are neuro-inclusive

- Ensure that activities support neurodivergent challenges reported here, such as the prevention of sensory overwhelm.

- Ensure all staff involved in wellbeing are appropriately neurodiversity trained, as generalist wellbeing may not appreciate the demands of cognitive differences and sensory overwhelm.

- Upskill and support line managers as first-line responders; including training to support listening and managing expectations.

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### Conflict resolution

a) Consider the infrastructure around how diversity, adjustments and wellbeing services are allocated.

b) How are all Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives operating together, is there any sense of competition for resources or do they support one another?

c) Is wellbeing reviewed intersectionally to highlight where hidden inequities might be having an impact and contributing to a sense of unfairness?

d) How are adjustments managed in the business and are they discussed in relation to improving performance and growth?

e) Build mutual trust and understanding between ND workers and colleagues.

f) Signpost and train in conversational techniques to ensure people know how to resolve misunderstandings before they occur.

g) Instigate/Review policies for conflict management and resolution from the neurodivergent viewpoint.

h) Consider when and how to bring in specialist support before relationships rupture.

## Neuroinclusion

a) Primary interventions to facilitate neuroinclusion

- Review of the employee lifecycle from job design, recruitment and hiring through to performance management, wellbeing, and outplacement, to consider hidden barriers.
- Review of the virtual and real working environment regarding sensory needs – bearing in mind a wide range of preferences.
- Neurodiversity training designed with reference to lived experience and professional expertise, given the different experiences of the ND and neurotypical groups.

b) Ongoing activities to support neuroinclusion:

- Set clear expectations for positive and affirmative communication, and role model from the top.
- Role model and support psychological safety throughout the organisation. This includes leadership role modelling, humility and admitting mistakes.
- Ensure a clear and barrier-free process to instigate reasonable adjustments.

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## Talent management

a) Signpost ambition and clear expectations:

- Communicate clear performance expectations, adjustments do not mean compromising standards or using line manager/team resource to compensate for difficulties on an ongoing basis.

• Performance expectations include interpersonal relationships, supported to accommodate any mismatch between communication styles and norms.

b) Devise specialist talent pathways:

- Transparent pathways combined with transparent conversations about task allocation ensure perceptions of fairness within teams.
- Leadership pathways that allow ND people to lead and contribute to strategy without taking line management responsibilities.

# Implications for future research

## 1. Conflict resolution and psychological safety

Research into neurodiversity at work has focused on adjustments, hiring, and the experience of bias, and not enough on relationships at work. Good starting points are differing communication styles of neurodivergent versus neurotypical people and how we can address double empathy issues. Research needs to focus on intervention and process evaluation with a preventative and primary perspective to support positive social exchange and mutual respect and understanding. We also need to consider the impact of subtle slights – even if they do not happen often, they can be very damaging.

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## 2. Wellbeing

Wellbeing was low across all groups – so organisational provision does not meet demand. We need more solid research on primary interventions. These are about neuroinclusion by job design, and how to foster genuinely inclusive climates.

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## 3. Career progression and talent management

Neurodivergent people getting into work is still an issue, but even less is known about the career trajectories of successful neurodivergent people and the barriers they have had to climb. A fruitful approach would be case studies at organisational, team and individual level to determine conditions for success and make these explicit so that learning can be shared.

## Conclusion

Our conclusion is that neuroinclusion needs to focus on the following five priorities:

**a)** Ensuring neuroinclusive climate through positive role modelling, better aligned training, clearly communicated policies.

**b)** A strategic and operational triad of EDI, wellbeing, and relationships/ mediation/ conflict resolution.

**c)** Support for specialist roles and career pathways across all levels and departments.

**d)** Invest in the skills of line managers to listen, deliver adjustments, and manage resources fairly.

**e)** Focus on double empathy and relationships to foster understanding and build psychological safety.

# Founder and chairperson, Neurodiversity in Business

**Dan Harris**
Founder and
Chairperson, NiB

Dan Harris is the founder and chairperson of the Neurodiversity in Business (NiB) charity. NIB has been set up to transform the employment prospects of the 15% to 20% of the population who are neurodivergent.

As a neurodivergent leader and advocate, Dan is passionate about raising awareness and understanding of the strengths and challenges of neurodiversity, and empowering neurodivergent individuals to thrive in their careers.

# Appendix one

We know that language matters and have agreed the following terms for clarity:

- **Camouflaging:** a form of assimilation with neurotypical norms, behaviours might also include working extra to make up for neurodivergent challenges.
- **Cisgender women** or **cisgender men** rather than female or male in line with recommendations for academic practice to identify people whose gender aligns with the sex observed at birth1.
- **Colleagues** refers to the group of neurotypical participants who worked with at least one neurodivergent person.
- **Condition** rather than disorder and co-occurrence rather than co-morbidity to mitigate against overly deficit-focused language.
- **Double empathy:** a phenomenon where neurodivergent people communicate well with each other, and neurotypical people communicate well with other neurotypical people, but where there is less effective communication and understanding between these groups.

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- **Employers** refers to people who have answered on behalf of their organisation, typically in senior management or human resources.
- **Identity first language,** such as **ADHD-er** or **autistic people** which people told us that this is what they prefer.
- **Masking** describes hiding or suppressing visible neurodivergent behaviours or traits at work
- **Neuroinclusion** refers to an organisational approach and climate where different neurotypes are proactively considered, accommodated for and their talent harnessed as part of a comprehensive diversity strategy.
- **Neurodivergent (ND)** refers to individuals with one or more of the typically included neurotypes / conditions. See figure 3 on page 22.

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- **Neurodivergent (ND) worker** describes participants who are employees or self-employed contractors who are neurodivergent. We use mainly neurodivergent in this report but use ND for brevity for example in some figure headings.
- **Neurodiversity** refers to the breadth of human cognitive, emotional, and behavioural functioning.

- **Neuroinclusion:** a proactive approaching to ensuring good work across all neurotypes
- **Neurominority/ies** or **neurotype** name groups of people with specific conditions or groups of conditions. For example, dyslexia is considered a neurotype. We refer to, for example, dyslexic neurotypes in the report rather than dyslexic people, because many of our participants have more than one neurotype.
- **Neuronormativity / neuronormative** describes a way of thinking and behaving (individually or collectively) where norms and practices are aligned to a neurotypical norm rather than considering a range of neurotypes.
- **Neurotypical (NT)** to describe people who responded as colleagues who do not identify as having a neurodivergent condition. We use neurotypical in this report, unless we had to abbreviate to NT for example for figures.

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- **Participants** describes people who responded.
- **Sample** are the groups of people who responded because in research you gather a sample of a population (so all people who matched our criteria for inclusion).

# Appendix two

## Appendix two: List of Figures and Data Tables

**Figure 1: Age range of neurodivergent workers - Pg. 20**

| Age range | 2024 % |
|---|---|
| 18-21 | 1% |
| 22-29 | 14.8% |
| 30-39 | 30.3% |
| 40-49 | 30.5% |
| 50-59 | 18.6% |
| 60-65 | 3.9% |
| Over 65 | 0.5% |
| Prefer not to say | 0.5% |

**Figure 2: Employee gender ID - Pg. 20**

| Employee gender ID | 2024 % |
|---|---|
| Female | 67.6% |
| Male | 25.4% |
| Non-binary | 5.8% |
| Other (please specify) | 0.4% |
| Prefer not to say | 0.8% |
| Missing | 0.1% |

**Figure 3: Neurotypes reported by ND workers - Pg. 22**

| Neurotypes | 2024 % |
|---|---|
| ADHD | 64.4% |
| Autism | 56.8% |
| Mental Health condition | 32.5% |
| Dyslexia | 21.4% |
| Dyspraxia | 12.9% |
| Dyscalculia | 7.9% |
| Dysgraphia | 2.1% |
| Tic conditions (incl. Tourette's) | 1.7% |
| Other (please specify) | 0.8% |

| | |
|---|---|
| Prefer not to say | 0.2% |

**Figure 4: Employer sizes - Pg. 24**

| Employer sizes | 2024 % |
|---|---|
| 1-9 employees | 5% |
| 10-100 employees | 12% |
| 100-500 employees | 16% |
| 501-1000 employees | 6% |
| More than 1000 employees | 60% |

**Figure 5: Additional strengths in 2024 - Pg. 25**

| Additional neurodivergent strengths | 2024 % |
|---|---|
| 3D thinking | 27% |
| Narrative reasoning | 44% |
| Crisis management | 51% |
| Energy and enthusiasm | 54% |
| Resilience and tenacity | 64% |
| Systems thinking (knowing how things interlink) | 66% |
| Pattern recognition | 71% |
| Advocacy for others | 72% |
| Critical thinking and analysis | 73% |
| Frankness and honesty | 75% |
| Empathy and sensitivity | 77% |
| Strong personal values | 81% |
| Being fair and just | 81% |

**Figure 6: Neurodivergent strengths comparison 2023-2024 - Pg. 26**

| Neurodivergent strengths | 2023 % | 2024 % | Difference % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Understanding spoken words and language | 43% | 49% | 5% |
| Numeracy (thinking with numbers) | 22% | 26% | 3% |
| Short-term memory | 12% | 15% | 2% |
| Long-term memory | 52% | 53% | 1% |
| Hyperfocus | %78 | %77 | -0.9% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Visual spatial skills | %33 | 31% | -1% |
| Visual reasoning | 59% | %52 | -6% |
| Creativity (having new ideas) | 80% | 73% | -6% |
| Cognitive control (being intentional about thoughts) | 38% | 28% | -9% |
| Entrepreneurialism (starting a new business project) | 48% | 38% | -9% |
| Detail processing | 70% | %60 | -9% |
| Innovation (putting ideas into practice | 75% | %57 | -17% |

**Figure 7: Additional neurodivergent challenges added in 2024 - Pg. 27**

| **Additional neurodivergent challenges** | **2024 %** |
|---|---|
| Taking on more responsibility | 24% |
| Working under pressure | 25% |
| Multitasking | 38% |
| Self-motivation | 41% |
| Understanding what I have heard or read | 47% |
| Coping with changes to my job role | 48% |
| Prioritising and delegating | 49% |
| Managing conflict | 54% |
| Social aspects of work (e.g. office parties) | 59% |
| Navigating office politics at work | 64% |
| Dealing with criticism | 68% |
| Dealing with overwhelm | 77% |

**Figure 8: Neurodivergent challenges comparison 2023-2024 - Pg. 28**

| **Challenges** | **2023 %** | **2024 %** | **Difference %** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Working memory (forgetting things quickly) | 71% | 71% | 1% |
| Numeracy (thinking with numbers) | 35% | 35% | 0% |
| Reading/Writing/Spelling | 30% | 28% | -1% |
| Looking after yourself mentally | 80% | 71% | -8% |
| Working on our own | 18% | 9% | -8% |
| Looking after yourself physically | 70% | 61% | -9% |
| Understanding others intentions | 62% | 52% | -9% |
| Managing my feelings at work | 62% | 52% | -9% |

| Challenges | 2023 % | 2024 % | Difference % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Managing boundaries at work | 66% | 56% | -9% |
| Motor control (e.g. bumping into things / others) | 54% | 44% | -10% |
| Organising tasks (e.g. meeting deadlines | 57% | 46% | -10% |
| Asking for help when you need it | 72% | 59% | -12% |
| Working with others (e.g. team work) | 41% | 25% | -15% |
| Finding your way around | 38% | 21% | -17% |
| Concentration | 78% | 60% | -17% |

**Figure 9: Support from colleagues comparison 2023-2024 - Pg. 29**
*Using a scale ranging from 1 (no support) to 5 (a lot of support).*

| | |
|---|---|
| **2023** | 4.34 |
| **2024** | 3.38 |

**Figure 10: Support from employers comparison 2023-2024 - Pg. 29**
*Using a scale ranging from 1 (no support) to 5 (a lot of support).*

| | |
|---|---|
| **2023** | 4.09 |
| **2024** | 4.83 |

**Figure 11: Support from managers comparison 2023-2024 - Pg. 30**
*Using a scale ranging from 1 (no support) to 5 (a lot of support).*

| | |
|---|---|
| **2023** | 4.61 |
| **2024** | 3.66 |

**Figure 12: Wellbeing comparison 2023-2024 - Pg. 31**
*Using a 5-point scale with 1 being a negative result and 5 being positive.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Worker 2023** | 3.02 |
| **Worker 2024** | 2.87 |

**Figure 13: Career satisfaction comparison 2023-2024 - Pg. 32**
*Using a 5-point scale with 1 being a negative result and 5 being positive.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Worker 2023** | 3.34 |
| **Worker 2024** | 3.03 |

**Figure 14: Psychological safety comparison 2023-2024 - Pg. 32**
*Using a 5-point scale with 1 being a negative result and 5 being positive.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Worker 2023** | 3.02 |
| **Worker 2024** | 2.87 |

**Figure 15: Turnover intentions for ND workers comparison 2023-2024 - Pg. 33**
*Using a 5-point scale with 1 being a negative result and 5 being positive.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Worker 2023** | 2.91 |
| **Worker 2024** | 2.98 |

**Figure 16: 3-way comparison for ND workers high-scoring on strengths - Pg. 34**

| Strengths | Neurodivergent workers | Colleagues | Employers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Innovation | 57% | 43% | 64% |
| Detail processing | 60% | 58% | 78% |
| Resilience and tenacity | 64% | 34% | 34% |
| Pattern recognition (or detection) | 71% | 43% | 69% |
| Advocacy | 72% | 52% | 65% |
| Critical thinking and analysis | 73% | 55% | 71% |
| Creativity | 73% | 60% | 78% |
| Frankness and honesty | 75% | 80% | 79% |
| Empathy and sensitivity | 77% | 50% | 61% |
| Hyperfocus | 77% | 69% | 84% |
| Strong personal values | 81% | 73% | 73% |
| Being fair and just | 81% | 58% | 58% |

**Figure 17: 3-way comparison for ND workers low-scoring on strengths - Pg. 35**

| Strengths | Neurodivergent workers | Colleagues | Employers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Short-term memory | 15% | 21% | 36% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Numeracy | 26% | 41% | 60% |
| 3D thinking | 27% | 17% | 42% |
| Cognitive control | 28% | 21% | 37% |
| Visual-spatial skills | 0.31 | 0.24 | 0.46 |
| Entrepreneurialism | 0.38 | 0.25 | 0.47 |
| Narrative reasoning | 44% | 32% | 41% |
| Verbal comprehension | 49% | 43% | 44% |
| Crisis management | 51% | 15% | 32% |
| Visual reasoning | 52% | 30% | 58% |
| Long-term memory | 53% | 40% | 54% |
| Energy and enthusiasm | 54% | 58% | 71% |
| Authenticity | 56% | 61% | 63% |

**Figure 18: 3-way comparison for ND workers high-scoring on challenges - Pg. 37**

| **Challenges** | **Neurodivergent workers** | **Colleagues** | **Employers** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prioritising and delegating | 49% | 43% | 54% |
| Understanding others' intentions | 52% | 44% | 62% |
| Managing my feelings at work | 52% | 32% | 55% |
| Managing my feelings at work | 54% | 40% | 48% |
| Managing boundaries at work | 56% | 35% | 53% |
| Social aspects of work | 59% | 43% | 68% |
| Asking for help when you need it | 59% | 43% | 54% |
| Concentration | 60% | 41% | 58% |
| Looking after yourself physically | 61% | 31% | 39% |
| Navigating office politics at work | 64% | 51% | 66% |
| Dealing with criticism | 68% | 44% | 58% |
| Looking after yourself mentally | 71% | 42% | 62% |
| Working memory (forgetting things quickly) | 71% | 39% | 54% |
| Dealing with overwhelm | 77% | 63% | 73% |

**Figure 19: 3-way comparison for ND workers low-scoring on challenges - Pg. 38**

| Challenges | Neurodivergent workers | Colleagues | Employers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Working on your own | 9% | 12% | 22% |
| Finding your way around | 21% | 13% | 28% |
| Working under pressure | 25% | 39% | 45% |
| Working with others (e.g. teamwork) | 25% | 25% | 45% |
| Reading/Writing/Spelling | 28% | 25% | 40% |
| Numeracy (thinking with numbers) | 35% | 6% | 26% |
| Multitasking | 38% | 35% | 49% |
| Self-motivation | 41% | 23% | 26% |
| Coping with changes to my job role | 44% | 16% | 34% |

**Figure 20: 3-way comparison of support from colleagues - Pg. 39**
*Using a 1-6 scale, where 6 indicates high levels of support and 1 equals no support.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Employee 2024** | 4.09 |
| **Colleague 2024** | 3.95 |
| **Worker 2024** | 3.38 |

**Figure 21: 2-way comparison of support from line managers - Pg. 39**
*Using a 1-6 scale, where 6 indicates high levels of support and 1 equals no support.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Worker 2024** | 2.98 |
| **Colleague 2024** | 2.91 |

**Figure 22: 2-way comparison of training - Pg. 40**
*Using a 1-5 scale, where 1 was no training provided and 5 indicated a high quality of training provided.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Colleague 2024** | 2.96 |
| **Worker 2024** | 2.1 |

**Figure 23: Workplace conflicts (1) - Pg. 41**

*Using a 1-5 scale, where workplace conflicts: 1= good; 5=not good*

| Workplace conflicts | Employee | Colleague | Worker |
|---|---|---|---|
| How effective are conflict resolution processes in your organisation at catering for the needs of neurodivergent individuals? | 3.01 | 3 | 4.23 |
| Have you ever used mediation services, and if so, how effective were they in resolving the conflict? | 2.55 | 3.33 | 3.77 |
| How does management in your organisation actively support resolving conflicts? | 2.58 | 2.92 | 3.64 |
| How effective do you find this training in preparing you to handle conflicts at work? | 2.87 | 3.12 | 3.63 |
| How comfortable do you feel approaching management or HR with a conflict issue? | 1.93 | 2.14 | 3.38 |
| Do you think conflicts at your workplace are handled fairly? | 2.02 | 2.38 | 3.12 |

**Figure 24: Workplace conflicts (2) - Pg. 42**

*Using a 1-5 scale, where Workplace conflicts: 1= good; 5=not good*

| Workplace conflicts | Employee | Colleague | Worker |
|---|---|---|---|
| Are you aware of any specific mechanisms to support neurodivergent employees during conflicts at work? | 2.03 | | 2.50 |
| How aware are you and your colleagues of the conflict resolution policies in place? | 1.71 | 1.80 | 2.12 |
| Is there a mediation service or a designated person to handle workplace conflicts? | 1.67 | 1.64 | 1.92 |
| Does your organisation provide training on conflict resolution, communications styles, or diversity and inclusion? | 1.45 | 1.56 | 1.78 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Is there a clear policy at your workplace regarding conflict resolution, such as a 'dignity and respect' policy? | 1.38 | 1.61 | 1.64 |

**Figure 25: 2-way comparison of wellbeing - Pg. 43**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Colleague** | 3.72 |
| **Worker 2024** | 2.87 |

**Figure 26: 3-way comparison of psychological safety - Pg. 44**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Worker 2023** | 3.02 |
| **Worker 2024** | 2.87 |
| **Worker 2024** | 4.1 |

**Figure 27: 2-way comparison of turnover - Pg. 45**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Colleague** | 2.91 |
| **Worker 2024** | 2.28 |

**Figure 28: 2-way comparison of career satisfaction - Pg. 45**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Colleague** | 3.8 |
| **Worker 2024** | 3.03 |

**Figure 29: ND workers: experience of subtle slights - Pg. 46**
*Using a 4-point scale where 1 meaning never and 4 meaning very often.*

| **Experience of subtle slights** | **4-point scale** |
|---|---|
| Overall subtle slights | 1.79 |
| Being interrupted or cut short when I need time to … | 2.3 |
| Comments that minimise my experience | 2.26 |
| Being interrupted when I have to say things quickly. | 2.15 |
| Other people ignoring me. | 1.96 |
| People commenting when I want to work on my own | 1.75 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Being asked not to interrupt so much | 1.71 |
| People saying that neurodivergence is not real | 1.67 |
| Exclusion from work social events | 1.66 |
| Being made fun of because of the way I speak | 1.39 |
| Being made fun of because of the way I write | 1.3 |

**Figure 30: Neurodivergent sensory distractions - Pg. 47**

*Using rating scale from 1 (least sensory distractions) to 4 (the most)*

| **Sensory distractions** | **4-point scale** |
|---|---|
| Overall sensory distractions | 4.24 |
| I find it hard to concentrate if I am uncomfortable | 4.57 |
| If the sensory input is not ideal for me, I find it hard to work. | 4.33 |
| My senses are highly tuned to my environment. | 4.29 |
| I find it tiring when there is too much social interaction at work | 4.25 |
| Background activity bothers me when I'm trying to talk to someone | 4.14 |
| Background activity makes me tense. | 3.89 |

**Figure 31: Influences on wellbeing - Pg. 49**

| **Influences on wellbeing** | **%** |
|---|---|
| Staff support | -1% |
| Line manager support | -2% |
| Subtle slights | -3% |
| ND training | 7% |
| Number of types of ND | -11% |
| Knowledge of ND | 14% |
| Psychological safety | 15% |
| Sensory distractions | -18% |
| Career satisfaction | 20% |

**Figure 32: Influences on turnover intention - Pg. 50**

| Influences on turnover intention | % |
|---|---|
| Subtle slights | -9% |
| Staff support | -4% |
| Knowledge of ND | 0% |
| Number of types of ND | 7% |
| ND training | -10% |
| Line management support | -15% |
| Psychological safety | -24% |
| Career satisfaction | -54% |

**Figure 33: Influences on career satisfaction - Pg. 51**

| Influences on career satisfaction | % |
|---|---|
| Sensory distractions | -0.2% |
| Number of types of ND | 0.1% |
| ND training | 4.0% |
| Staff support | 5.0% |
| Line manager support | 7.0% |
| Knowledge of ND | 8.0% |
| Subtle slights | -17.0% |
| Psychological safety | 34.0% |

**Figure 34: Barriers to implementing adjustments 2023-2024 - Pg. 53**

| Barriers | 2023% | 2024% |
|---|---|---|
| Lack of disclosure | 69% | 70% |
| Lack of understanding of neurodiversity by managers/ decision makers | 65% | 63% |
| Lack of faith in the ability of adjustments to improve performance | 30% | 20% |
| Cost of adjustments | 20% | 21% |
| Perceptions of unfairness from team members | 20% | 30% |
| Manager reluctance | 18% | 21% |
| Other (please specify) | 13% | 17% |
| Our organisation requires a diagnosis | 10% | 6% |

**Figure 35: Presence of employer policies - Pg. 54**

| Policies in place at their organisation | 2023% | 2024% |
|---|---|---|
| Neurodiversity inclusion specifically | 22% | 31% |
| Disability inclusion specifically | 47% | 40% |
| Equality, diversity and inclusion | 92% | 96% |

# References

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2. Smith, I. A., & Griffiths, A. (2022). Microaggressions, everyday discrimination, workplace incivilities, and other subtle slights at work: A meta-synthesis. *Human Resource Development Review*, *21*(3), 275-299.

3. In the UK, over 10% work in retail, wholesale and motor vehicle repaid and 5% work in transport and logistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/employmentbyindustryemp13

4. Compared to UK average where 70% have a tenure of over two years https://community.cipd.co.uk/cipd-blogs/b/cipd_voice_on/posts/why-staff-turnover-data-matters

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