



DECODING INCLUSION

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# THE FUTURE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

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# SURVEY PURPOSE

There is a worrying pervasive narrative from certain parts of the media and government regarding the equity, diversity and inclusion agenda.

With promises to review the Equality Act 2010, a push for “anti-wokism” (whatever that means), ministers are now questioning the need for EDI practitioners, and accelerating efforts to suppress employee voice.

We at the **Grey Area** want to know how employees in the UK feel about the EDI agenda.

The survey took about 10 mins and was filled based on a focus group that had a detailed conversation with 20 participants from various professions. To respect and honour the privacy of those participating and in line with our commitment to ensure confidentiality at all times, we haven't disclosed the names of the participants.

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# OUR KEY FINDINGS

This report provides a nuanced understanding of respondents' perspectives on EDI efforts, organisational practices, perceived benefits, and the interpretation of related terms. The survey results emphasise the importance of maintaining and potentially increasing EDI efforts at the corporate and societal levels.

## **Question 1: Scaling Back on EDI Efforts**

The overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) believe that reducing efforts in EDI would be detrimental.

## **Question 2: Organisation's Efforts on EDI**

45% of respondents feel that their organisation needs to do more on the EDI agenda. 25% believe their organisation is doing enough. 30% provided other responses. Many respondents feel that their organisations must address EDI concerns more. The "other" responses indicated diverse perspectives or specific organisational challenges.

## **Question 3: EDI Practices in Organisations**

85% of organisations have an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I) Lead.

75% have Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) or Staff Networks.

55% have a formal ED&I strategy.

Most organisations have designated leadership roles and structured strategies in place for EDI, indicating a commitment to addressing diversity and inclusion within the workplace.

White Respondents

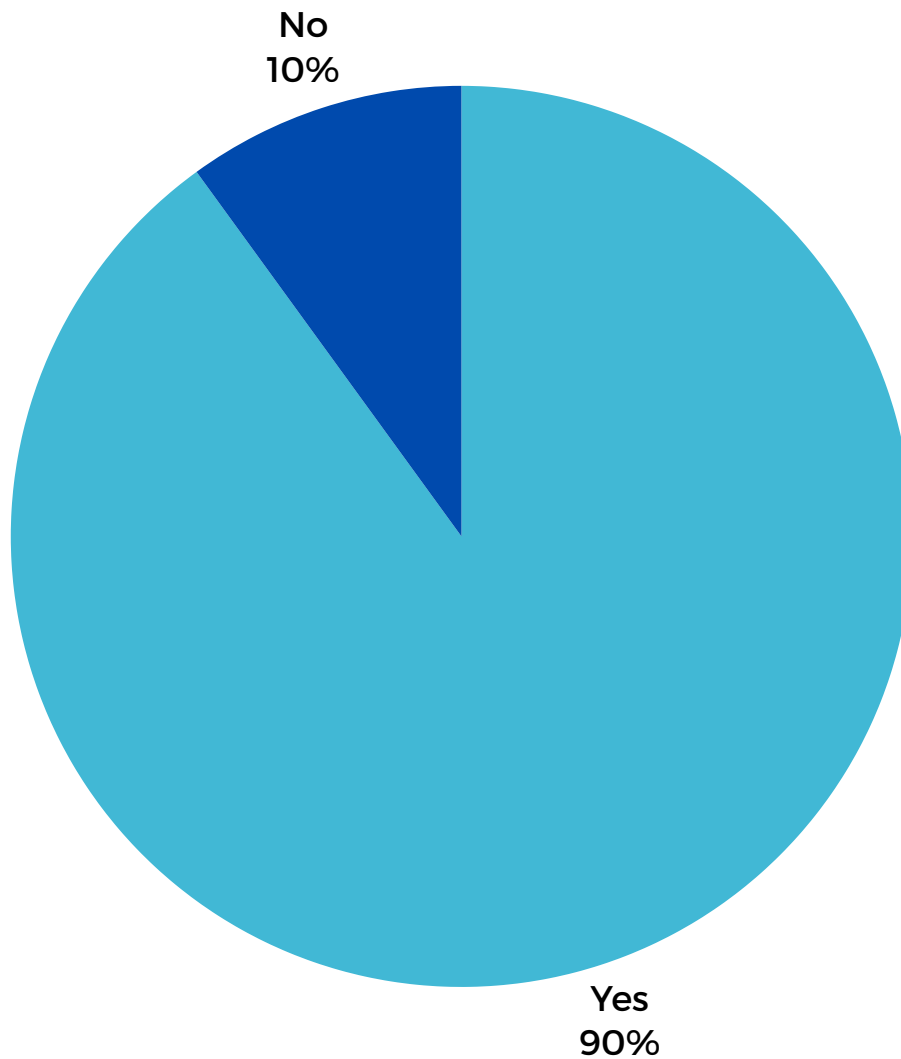
## **Question 4: Benefits of Spending Resources on EDI**

The majority agree that spending resources on EDI creates a more inclusive workplace and that it provides a voice to underrepresented/marginalised groups. The results strongly suggest a consensus among respondents regarding the positive impact of dedicating resources to EDI initiatives. There is unanimous agreement on providing a voice to underrepresented groups.

## **Question 5: Definition of "Woke"**

While a majority (75%) agree with the given definition of "Woke," a small percentage disagrees. Comments reveal diverse opinions on the appropriateness and usage of the term, with some expressing concerns about its negative connotations and hijacking by certain groups.

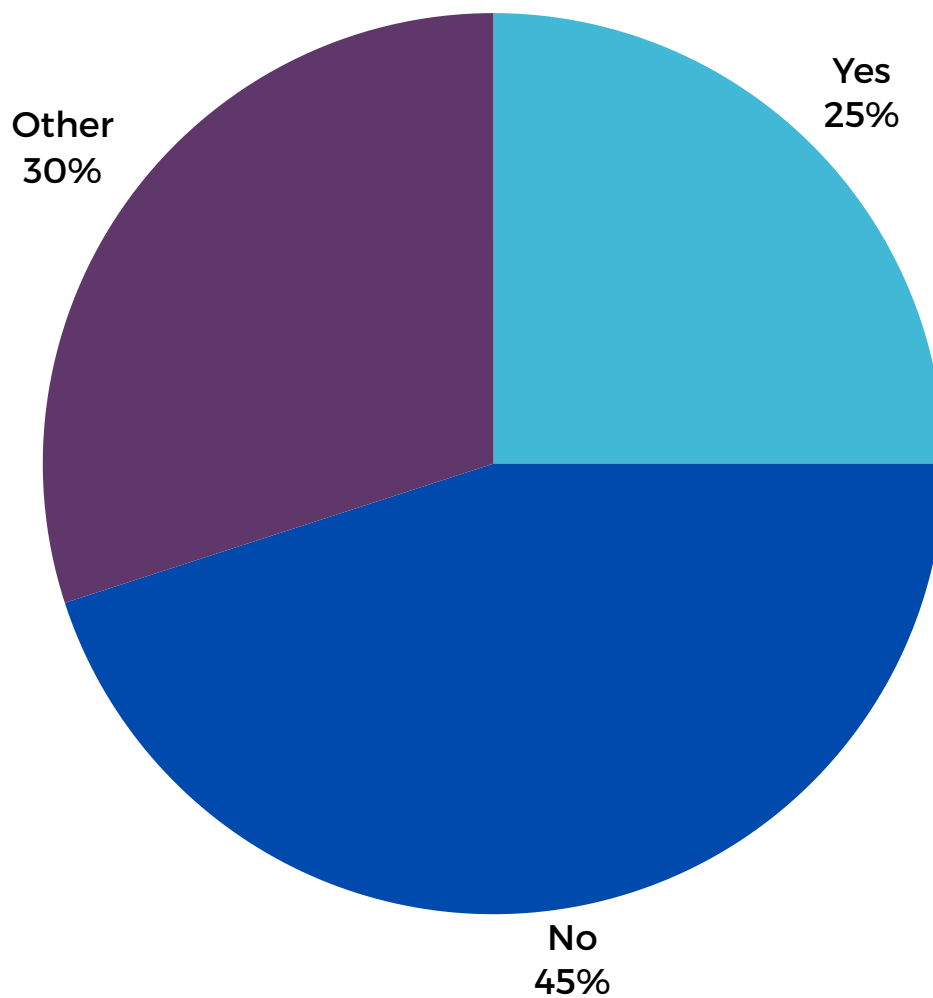
## 1. DO YOU AGREE THAT I'M ORGANISATIONS SHOULD SCALE BACK ON EDI EFFORTS?



## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Britain was the beacon on working towards inclusion for all marginalised groups.
- After seeing so much progress, scaling back now would be disastrous for our underrepresented communities. There is still so much more to do to create true inclusion in our organisations. The role is more important than ever.
- They put DEI practitioners under significant harm, often isolate them and position them with no real support in place.
- They pay lip service and nothing truly changes. I feel for those who truly want to make a change, they will keep EDI practitioners irrespective of government changes.
- Absolutely not! There is so much work to do and we have to keep driving this agenda.
- Since the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 we have been fighting against the Tories efforts to repeal parts of it. When they came into power when it was introduced they spoke then of rolling back on red tape. We must continue to ensure that organisation maintain a focus on EDI and equity.
- EDI is integral to creating a safer UK.
- We've been on a journey for many years. There needs to be a real will to make the changes necessary.
- Just we don't like what the data is telling us is not the reason to do away with EDI practitioners.
- In the NHS the impact of health inequalities is getting more attention than I have ever seen (in 20+ years). There is a great deal of evidence that EDI issues impact on people's life chances including health outcomes and experience and opportunities in work. There is still so much work to do.
- If anything I think they should be scaling up to counterbalance some horrible messaging that is coming through media channels at the moment.
- The UK is a leading country in EDI, but that has been due to hard work and clear focus, but we haven't yet resolved all the issues. Removing that focus and/or suggesting that to focus in these areas is 'woke-ism' and somehow negative will roll that back.

## 2. DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR ORGANISATION IS DOING SUFFICIENT ON THE EDI AGENDA?



## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Yes and no
- We are a disabled user-led training provider.
- We are doing well. We have a strong strategy, active support from senior leaders, good engagement, and high activity levels. But the agenda is vast, and there is still so much to tackle. We need more resources (both people and financial) to ensure we can do that.
- I left corporate once I saw how insidious the behaviours actually are behind the scenes.
- Only because I am driving it!
- I think all the organisations I have worked for could do better.
- There is a desire to improve EDI but the desire is there without investment and relies on those with passion. Those people are starting to suffer from burnout
- Not sufficient resources. Titles with no financial support to deliver programmes.
- I do think that my organisation is doing a lot, when I compare us to other organisations. We currently have a focus on anti-racism and I do appreciate that this is not the full picture of EDI. By taking an in-depth approach in one area I hope we will build our capability of tackling other issues, although that is not guaranteed. I initially put yes but when I looked at the list in Q3, I realised we could be doing a lot more!
- My organisation (NHS England) is doing a lot of really great work around EDI but I think there is more that could be done in terms of ensuring it filters down into changes in actions.
- Our DEI budget increased for the 2022/23 period and our programme is very active and fairly well-resourced. We need to do more to change structures.
- We are doing a lot in the organisation and the work isn't yet done, but I think there is commitment to it and that it is making a difference



# PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHTS

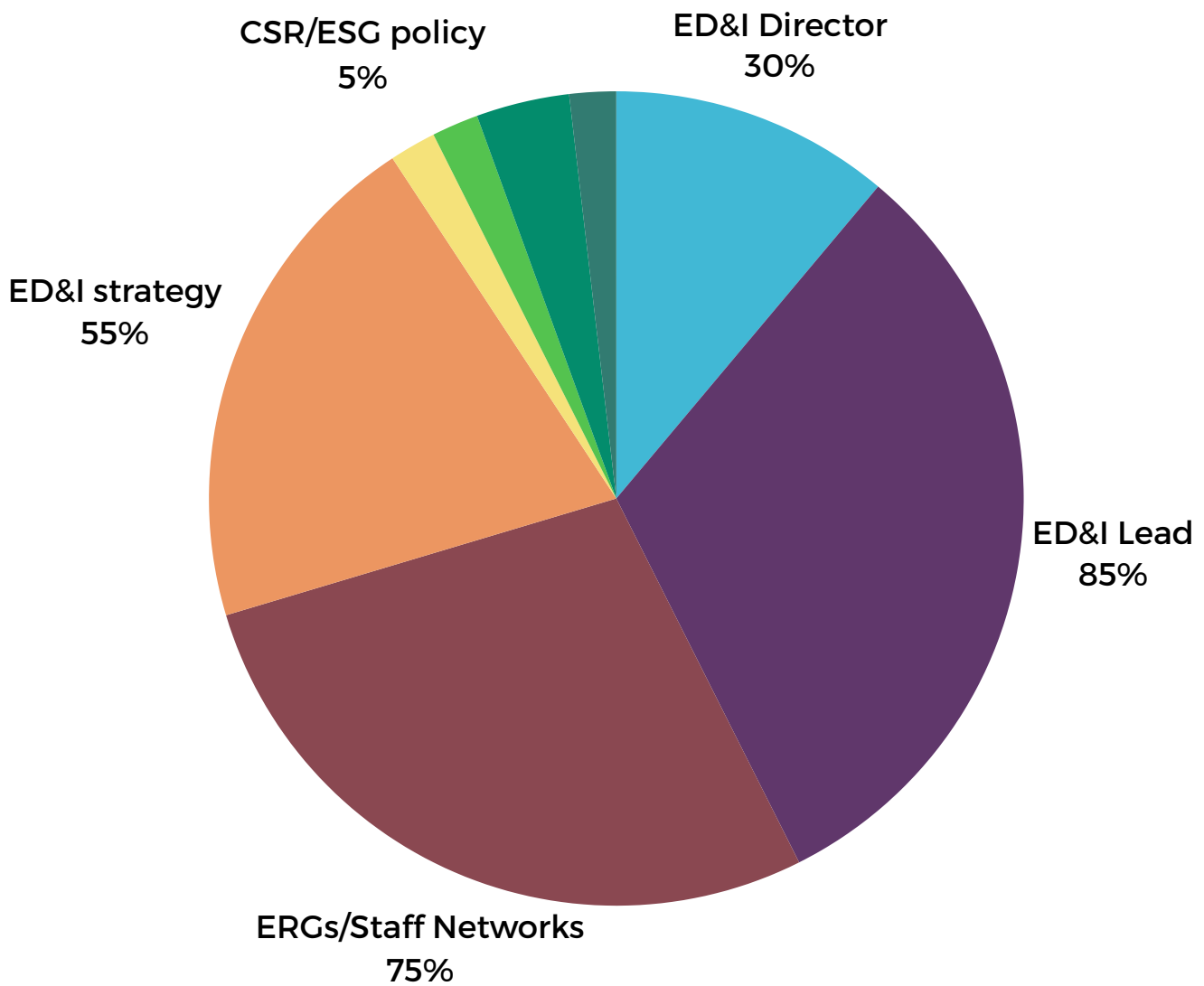
The background of the slide is a blurred office environment. In the upper portion, a man in a dark suit is leaning over a desk, looking at a computer screen. To his right, another person is partially visible. In the lower portion, a person's hands are seen typing on a laptop keyboard. The desk is white and has various office supplies like a keyboard, mouse, and a power strip. The overall lighting is bright, suggesting a windowed office space.

“We are doing well. We have a strong strategy, active support from senior leaders, good engagement, and high activity levels. But the agenda is vast, and there is still so much to tackle. We need more resources (both people and financial) to ensure we can do that.”

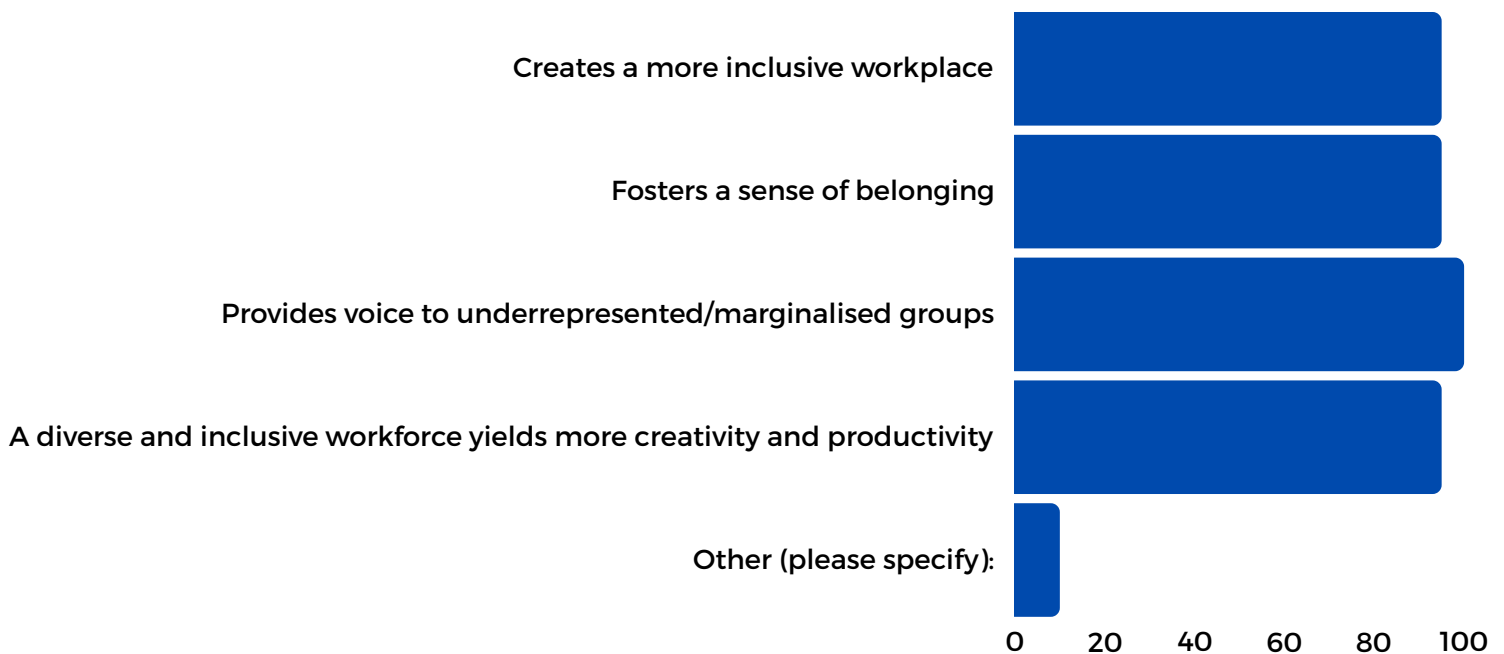
“They put DEI practitioners under significant harm, often isolate them and position them with no real support in place”.



**3. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE (TICK AS MANY THAT APPLY)**



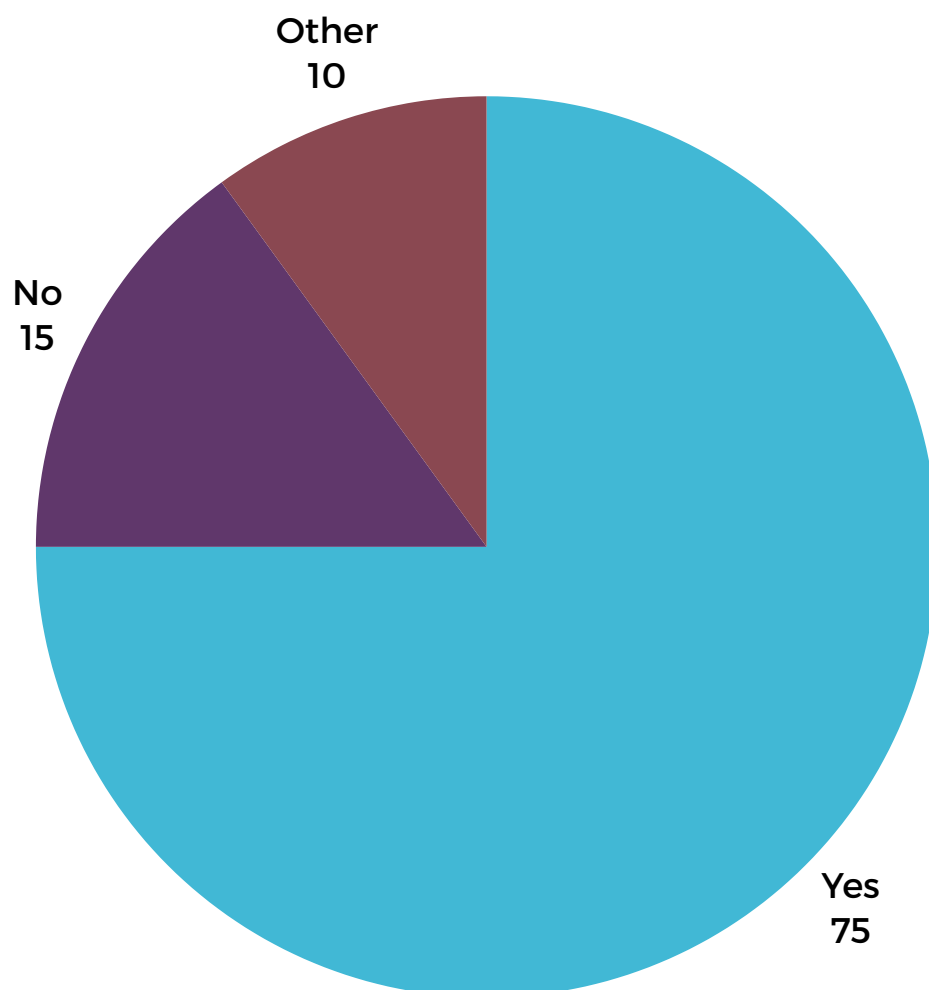
**4. SPENDING DEDICATED RESOURCES (TIME/MONEY) ON THE EDI AGENDA COULD LEAD TO THE FOLLOWING BENEFITS (TICK ALL THAT YOU AGREE WITH)**



## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Prevention of crime and harm
- In the public sector it can create connections and understanding of the needs of under-served people
- More revenue because customers see their own representation
- It creates a culture where people can be who they really are and means they can bring their whole selves to work.
- Staff experience is directly linked to patient outcomes.
- I agree that it could / can do this. We all know that there is a lot of difference between taking a 'tick-box' approach and a genuine authentic deep approach that builds trust.

**5. WOKE: OUR DEFINITION IS “BEING AWARE OR WELL INFORMED IN A POLITICAL OR CULTURAL SENSE, ESPECIALLY REGARDING ISSUES SURROUNDING MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES - IT DESCRIBES SOMEONE WHO HAS “WOKEN UP” TO ISSUES OF SOCIAL INJUSTICE.” DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS DEFINITION?**



## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- I do agree with this, and it is a shame that the right wing media has commandeered the term and used it for its own purposes. Sadly, I think we need to stop using the word now because in general usage it has negative connotations.
- It's much broader than that, that definition demonises under represented communities.
- Think the definition needs to be better promoted and used in positive not negative terms.
- Link it to Allyship and it sounds more positive.
- Don't think that this is an appropriate word to use.
- The term has been hijacked.
- I think it really jangles with UK/British English-language speakers as it is a term that originates from the US. Having said that the anti-woke brigade is only the latest iteration of 'political correctness' and people were very rude and undermining about this term right up until 'work' replaced it. I think that it is fear of the threat to power and status that is behind people's anger about woke.
- I don't disagree with the definition but because there are so many different definitions and people flex the meaning a lot I tend to try and avoid using the word if at all possible.

## CONCLUSION

Ensuring the continued prioritisation of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) agenda within UK organisations is imperative for sustained success. It is essential to recognise that investing in EDI initiatives and integrating them seamlessly into organisational processes is not a mere add-on but a fundamental and business-critical component.

EDI must not be perceived as a string of isolated initiatives, susceptible to being the first target when cost-cutting measures are required. Instead, it must be ingrained into the organisational DNA, acknowledged as an integral part of strategic planning, and safeguarded even during periods of financial constraint.

A diverse and inclusive workplace fosters a sense of belonging among employees. It helps companies adapt to different cultures, markets, and customer needs, making them more competitive on a global scale. Feeling valued and included positively impacts their overall well-being and engagement, leading to higher productivity and job satisfaction. A diverse and inclusive workforce with diverse leadership teams are more likely to make informed decisions considering various perspectives. Prioritising EDI in leadership roles helps create an inclusive decision-making process.

A compelling body of evidence underscores the tangible advantages of prioritising EDI:

## CONCLUSION

- Studies, including those by **McKinsey**, consistently reveal a positive correlation between diverse management teams and higher profits, with a 43% increase in profitability among companies embracing diversity. (Diversity wins: How inclusion matters 2020, McKinsey and Company)
- **Glassdoor's** findings emphasise that 76% of employees and job seekers consider diversity a crucial factor when evaluating job offers, highlighting the EDI's pivotal role in attracting and retaining top talent. (Diversity Hiring Survey 2020, Glassdoor)
- **Deloitte's** research underscores that an overwhelming 83% of millennials actively engage with their work when they perceive their company fosters a diverse and inclusive culture, emphasising the direct impact of EDI on employee engagement. (The Radical Transformation of Diversity and Inclusion The Millennial Influence, 2015, Deloitte University)
- **Gartner's** insights reveal that 75% of companies surpass their financial targets when prioritising inclusivity, reinforcing that EDI is not just a moral imperative but a strategic advantage. (Diversity and Inclusion Build High-Performance Teams, 2019, Gartner)
- **Entrepreneur's** research demonstrates that companies implementing gender equality practices witness heightened profitability and productivity, with an impressive 73% of such companies achieving superior financial performance. (<https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/73-percent-of-companies-with-gender-equality-practices/372660>)



## CONCLUSION

These statistics underscore that EDI is not merely a social responsibility but a proven driver of organisational success. By integrating EDI into the core fabric of operations, organisations benefit from improved financial performance, enhanced employee engagement, and a competitive edge in attracting and retaining top-tier talent. In light of these compelling outcomes, it is clear that EDI should be viewed as an integral and indispensable aspect of strategic business planning.

The Grey Area recommends conducting employee surveys to gauge opinions. The employee voice and feedback is a valuable resource that can provide concrete evidence and perspectives on the impact of EDI within the organisation. Gathering data on their awareness, attitudes, and opinions helps assess the effectiveness of existing initiatives and identify areas for improvement. By soliciting opinions, organisations can measure employee engagement with EDI efforts.

Positive feedback can indicate that employees recognise and appreciate the organisation's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Similarly, constructive feedback can provide insight into what or who is missing from the discussions, and workplace practices. The key is to provide opportunities for employees to share, leaders being prepared to listen and collectively taking action to foster a more inclusive workplace culture.

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