

# EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN 2021 ALL TALK & NO ACTION?

Hays Ireland Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Report 2021



Each year campaigns such as Black History Month, International Women's Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, Pride, Purple Light Up and a host of others offer organisations an opportunity to demonstrate their support and prompt discussion. But is all this talk enough to prompt real change?

We investigate if conversations about equity, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) are leading to action and making a real difference to people's working lives. Our research looks at both the positive impacts greater ED&I brings, and at the real work organisations still need to do to tackle inequality and improve equity.

We share our expert practical advice and insights on what both employers and employees can do to move beyond discussion and raising awareness, to achieving actual, meaningful action delivering real progress across all aspects of ED&I.

This latest edition of our annual ED&I report is based on a survey completed by almost 420 Irish professionals who provided their views on progress and policies in the workplace.

## Equity vs Equality

In this year's report we are changing the language we use and promoting equity over equality, this is because of the prevailing attitude that equity, rather than equality, creates a better working environment for all. Here's why:

Equality assumes that everybody should have the same access to assistance and support, which make their lives and experiences better, while equity acknowledges that everybody's needs are different, and some may need more support than others to thrive as equal.

When we discuss equity in this report, it refers to the efforts made to ensure the same outcome for everyone, regardless of individual requirements. Equity is the precursor to equality, and must be embraced first before true equality in the workplace can be achieved.

### Methodology

This report is based on a survey carried out between 15th July–5th August 2021. Almost 420 employers and employees from across Ireland completed the survey, from a range of key demographics, industries and sectors.



# WELCOME

ED&I is a key issue for employers and employees alike as evidenced by the widespread support for ED&I campaigns and the increasing frequency of conversations about ED&I related issues. But while all this discussion is absolutely vital, we wanted to understand if this talk is being translated into real action that will genuinely improve equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

It is now well recognised that failing to attract, cultivate and sustain a diverse workforce has a detrimental impact. Well over half of our respondents stated that a lack of diverse talent has a negative impact on their organisation. What's more, professionals understand that greater ED&I can positively impact company culture, staff morale, the reputation of the company, drive innovation and help to recruit the best talent.

Yet despite a greater appreciation of the benefits ED&I can bring, for many it still isn't receiving the attention it warrants. Our research found that less than half of employees believe their employer took action to improve ED&I. Given that many employers are faced with skills shortages and over half of professionals say they will only consider applying to an organisation with a public commitment to ED&I, it is clear that awareness alone isn't enough and more needs to be done.

Some of these actions will require access to greater data and access to resources, others can be put in place more easily. For example, the introduction of training to provide an understanding of unconscious bias is a start in breaking down barriers that may come into play in the workplace and in the recruitment process. Communication is also key, as employees may not always be aware of the support and resources available to them and how to get involved. Employee feedback is of course invaluable, and employers need to open up communication across their teams so that they truly foster an environment that allows for progress.

In this report, we explore employee and employer perceptions of ED&I and share our recommendations on how you can take meaningful action. We also share the experiences and advice from a range of organisations who are proactively improving ED&I. It is my hope that this report not only helps you to gain a better understanding of current sentiment on ED&I but that it gives you the tools and guidance to take real, actionable steps to support your recruitment and retention strategies and improve ED&I in the workplace.

**Maureen Lynch**  
Director at Hays Ireland



# PROFESSIONALS SAY ACTION TOWARDS ED&I ISN'T HAPPENING

## Lots of talk, less action

The benefits of greater ED&I in the workplace are clear. However, while 70% of professionals say their employer actively talks about the importance of ED&I in the workplace, only 57% think that their employer combines discussion with noticeable action. Without action, discussion of equity, diversity and inclusion becomes largely hollow, and may even highlight an organisation's lack of effort to improve ED&I.

Not all organisations are the same however. Private sector employers are leading the way in terms of perceived action taking place across their organisation, with 60% of professionals agreeing their employer is taking action on ED&I in comparison to 50% of professionals in the public sector.

Professionals working in large organisations (with more than 250 employees) are also more likely to think that their employer not only talks about the importance of ED&I, but also ensures action happens (63%). Conversely, 53% of SMEs (organisations with fewer than 250 employees) believe their employer takes action off the back of ED&I discussion. Given that smaller companies seem to be lagging behind some corporate entities suggests that real, noticeable action on ED&I requires resources that smaller companies cannot always commit. Larger companies are also subject to greater scrutiny, included but not limited to things like Gender Pay Gap reporting, and therefore must take action to improve equity and equality by law, whereas smaller companies do not.

### % who agree their organisation not only talks about the importance of ED&I, but also ensures action happens



Employers were more confident (68%) that their ED&I dialogue translated into real action than employees (48%), but overall, only 57% believed that real action was taking place.



### Translate talk into action

...by recognising the many potential benefits of improving ED&I, including impacting company culture, attracting and retaining the best talent and bringing diverse ways of thinking to complex problems, and make improving ED&I a priority.

<sup>1</sup> Under 250 employees <sup>2</sup> Over 250 employees

## CASE STUDY

**HAYS** Recruiting experts worldwide

## COLLECT DATA AND MONITOR TO IMPROVE

In January 2020 we only had diversity metrics from 27% of our UK & Ireland workforce, which was a big challenge for us. We knew that diversity data would drive transparency and help us to better identify, understand and overcome the barriers that some employees face in the workplace.

We made diversity data collection a strategic ED&I priority and developed an action plan to drive better engagement, which included a national campaign, creating a video, reviewing our diversity questions and our survey access. We launched the national campaign during National Inclusion Week in September 2020 to educate and raise awareness about why diversity data was so important. The message was concise - we wanted the data to make sure the culture we were shaping in Hays would help us achieve inclusion for everyone.

The video featured members of the senior leadership team, our Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and members from Parents@Hays and Hays Pride Networks to explain the importance of employee diversity data, what it would be used for and why, and some reassurance around confidentiality. We also reviewed our diversity questions to ensure they were as inclusive as possible and looked at ways to make the survey access and data collection more user-friendly by working with our IT team to automatically take employees to the diversity data page when logging on.

Our first national campaign in 2020 was really successful with 64% of our population submitting their diversity data, so we committed to run the same campaign twice a year. As a result, we gained data insights about our people at Hays to help us to see what we look like. These insights have helped us progress our ED&I journey in the following ways:

- Our second national campaign in April 2021 saw 74% of our population submitting diversity data
- We have used our data to compile an internal ethnicity pay gap report
- We have set ourselves aspirational targets for gender, ethnicity and disability using our diversity data as one of the reference data points
- We have started work on a transgender policy as our data revealed 1% of our population identify as transgender
- We have another campaign arranged for October 2021, with an aspirational target of 100% of our population to submit diversity data by June 2023

**Paul Marriott**  
Chair of Hays Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee, UK&I

*Hays is the leading global specialist recruitment group. We are the experts in recruiting qualified, professional and skilled people across a wide range of specialised industries and professions. We operate across the private and public sectors, dealing in permanent positions, contract roles and temporary assignments.*

## Communication about progress is key

It is vital organisations communicate to their employees about any ED&I improvements that are being made. Just over a quarter (26%) of professionals say their employer does not share the progress they are making towards improving ED&I within their organisation, and only 20% say they are communicated to very regularly about this topic.

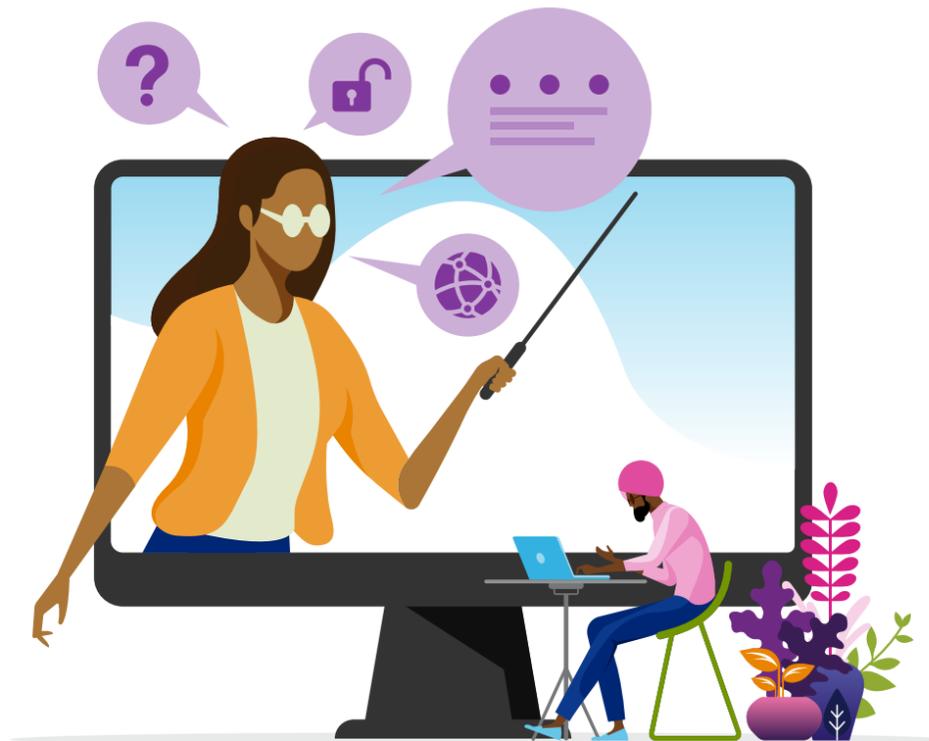
Communication appears to be taking place more regularly within public sector organisations, with two thirds (66%) of professionals agreeing their employer provides them with updates on their organisation's progress towards improving ED&I. This contrasts with professionals in the private sector where only 61% agree.

Employers within large organisations (over 250 employees) are also more likely to communicate their commitment and progress towards improving ED&I to their employees (75%) compared to those in SME organisations (51%).



### Translate talk into action

...consider your internal communications plan make sure it clearly sets out what you are trying to achieve, and why improvements in ED&I will benefit everyone.



## CASE STUDY



# ACTION BUILT ON A GRASSROOTS, EMPLOYEE-LED APPROACH

DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion was established in June 2018 and operates as a central hub for research, advice and the exchange of knowledge. They help organisations with all aspects of their diversity and inclusion journeys and culture by providing access to the very latest academic research and insights.

Achieving cultural change is a challenge for many organisations. A 'grassroots', employee-led approach is the most effective way to successfully translate conversations about ED&I into action, and setting up ED&I committees and Employee Resource Groups allows employees to lead ED&I with the support of their leaders.

There is a clear disconnect between employee and employer views on how much progress has been made towards greater equality in the workplace. The Hays Equity, Diversity & Inclusion research highlights a cultural disconnect; 79% of employers believe everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed at their organisation, yet only 55% of employees agree. To tackle this, start from the top by building the case for CEO and leaders on the strategic importance of ED&I, reiterating this by looking at the success of leaders in the ED&I sphere.

In Ireland, An Post and the ESB are two companies paving the way for ED&I. An Post reported a 3.71% gap in their first Gender Pay Gap report in 2019, reducing this to 1.41% as of December 2020 as part of their public commitment to closing their gender pay gap. ESB has established programmes for parents that are designed to allow individuals to navigate the transition from maternity and paternity leave. They have also developed programmes to help parents establish and maintain a good balance between their working and family lives.

To effectively communicate ED&I changes in your organisation:

- Ensure existing channels of communications are utilised and consistent
- Use internal communications to update employees on your company's commitment to ED&I
- Collect the data from your activity as your ED&I strategy evolves and use this to identify areas for improvement and new opportunities

**Sandra Healy**  
Founder of DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion

[An Post 2019 report details](#)

[An Post 2020 report details](#)

[Accenture's Culture of Equality in the Workplace research 2020](#)

[ESB Helping ESB employees manage the successful parenting transition](#)

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES NOT BEING FELT BY EVERYONE

## Half do not believe there will ever be equal opportunities for all

Currently, 66% of professionals agree that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed in their organisation, however, a further quarter (25%) do not believe this is the case.

When asked when they believe people from all backgrounds will have an equal opportunity to succeed in their organisation, just over half (55%) of professionals do not believe this will ever be the case. Just over a quarter (28%) believe there will be equal opportunities in five years or beyond, whilst only 17% believe this will happen within the next five years. The lack of optimism in this regard, particularly from those who need to see improvements the most, shows an acute lack of faith in leadership to really deliver equity to the people who need it. Employers and employees alike need to challenge this pace of change and take action to accelerate progress. Discussion is important, but for real impact, employers need to get behind more ED&I initiatives, and employees need to feel confident that they can safely highlight to their leaders where actual improvements can be made as everyone deserves equal opportunity to succeed at work.

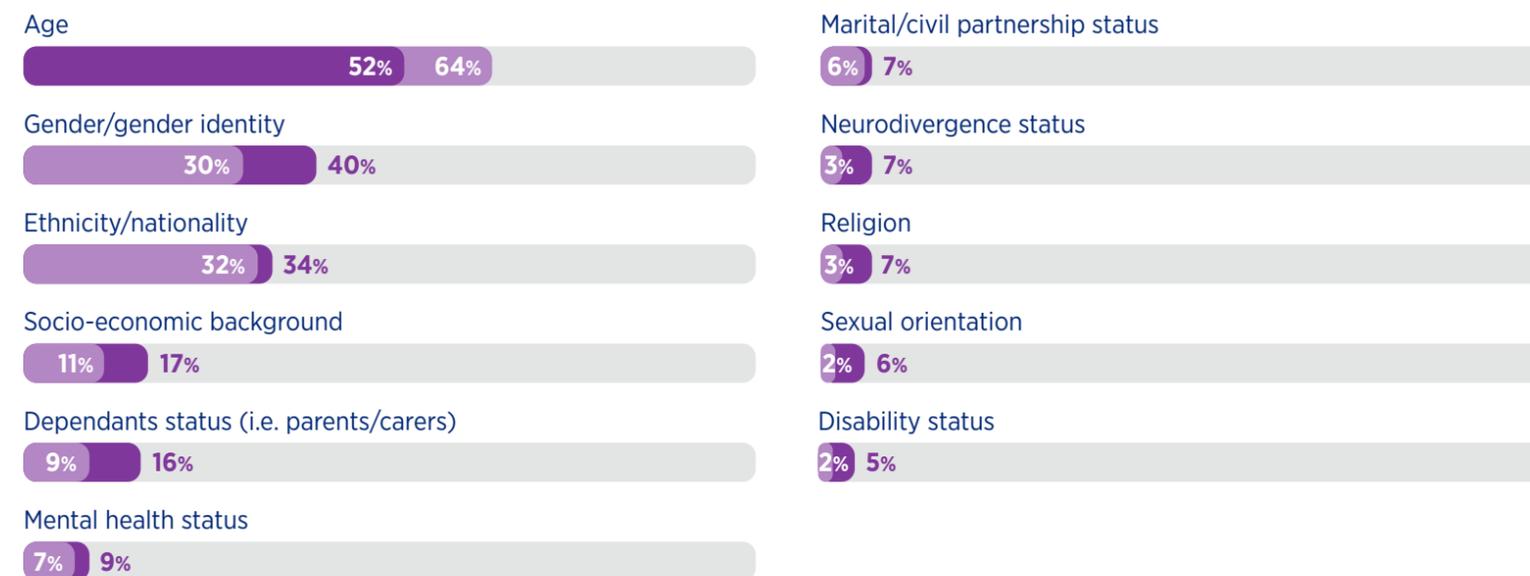
## Pressing need to address the perceived barriers to career progression

Over half (51%) of professionals say there have been occasions where they have felt their chances for career progression have been limited because of their background or an identifying factor such as their age (52%), their gender or gender identity (39%) or their ethnicity or nationality (28%).

Similarly, 42% say they believe their chances of being selected for a job have been limited because of their background or an identifying factor. Age remains the leading factor professionals feel has led to their chances of securing a job being lowered (52%), followed by their gender or gender identity (40%, an increase from 30% last year) and their ethnicity or nationality (34%).

## Factors that professionals feel led to their chances of being selected for a job being lowered

2021 2020



Comparing the figures for 2020 and 2021 there have been some improvements. For example, 52% of professionals cited age as a factor they felt led to their chances of being selected for a job being lowered, compared to 64% in 2020. What is noticeable across all categories, however, is how little progress has been made despite greater awareness. This presents an opportunity for employers to not only improve equity for their employees, but also outshine the competition and attract more skilled workers to their organisation.

## Mixed confidence in translating ED&I policies into action

56% of professionals say they feel confident that their organisation can translate ED&I policies into action going forward, while a further 28% do not feel confident that this is possible.



### Translate talk into action

...consider developing an ED&I statement of intent and making it public. This can help give your employees confidence that you are committed to promoting equity and tackling inequalities.

# ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES TO ED&I

Employers anticipate that when trying to make improvements towards ED&I there are obstacles they may have to overcome. The biggest challenge that employers expect when trying to turn talk about ED&I into action is employee engagement (46%). The action not being considered a business priority is also seen as a possible challenge (43%), as well overcoming resistance to change (39%), or not enough resources being attributed to ED&I initiatives.

## Challenges that employers anticipate when trying to turn talk into action



When it comes to the actions professionals would like their organisation to take to improve ED&I, 50% want to see more training for managers and 45% would like training for employees. 38% would like their organisation to review its recruitment policies, and 37% believe investing in benefits which support wellbeing would help improve ED&I. 45% of employers expect to encounter resistance to change is a significant challenge, and one that must be met with widespread communication of the benefits of ED&I and more importantly, the ethical responsibility of everybody to make it happen – even if they do not directly benefit themselves.

## Top actions professionals would like their organisation to undertake to improve ED&I



# EMPLOYERS NEED TO STEP UP THEIR EFFORTS TO RECRUIT DIVERSE TALENT

## Professionals want their organisation to hire more diverse candidates

Just 12% of professionals believe their organisation's workforce demographic is a fair reflection of today's society and only 60% of professionals believe there are sufficient efforts across their organisation to recruit diverse talent. Without fair representation in a workforce, employers risk creating an atmosphere of affinity bias, where employers, for reasons of cultural fit, will unconsciously hire others that look and sound similar to others on their team, creating an echo chamber and limiting the effectiveness of ED&I efforts.

The demographic groups that professionals feel their organisation would benefit from attracting, hiring and retaining more of include those from different ethnic backgrounds (43%), those with disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds (35%), those who have a disability (35%), women (33%) and those who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community (27%).



### Translate talk into action

...collecting demographic diversity data from current employees and job applicants is vital to ensuring the success of ED&I initiatives. What gets measured, can be improved.



## CASE STUDY

# Honeywell

## IMPROVING DIVERSITY IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

At Honeywell, ED&I is at the heart of everything we do. As a technology business, our engineers are solving some of the world's most complex problems, so diverse ideas and teams are imperative. A focus area for Honeywell was improving diversity and in turn seeing the business return due to diversity of thought and ideas.

Honeywell communicated its mission globally and partnered this with offering tailored unconscious bias training to all employees. Internally, we began to create safe spaces for diverse groups including the Honeywell Women Employee Network, and the Honeywell All Abilities Network amongst others, LGBTQ etc. along with now regularly holding internal webinars to address ED&I. Similarly, we began to elevate our commitment to diversity in the external market by hosting webinars and sharing talent spotlights on internal ED&I success stories with the rest of the world. In parallel, we invested in a gender decoder for our advert writing, allowing us to eliminate masculine language and keep our adverts gender neutral. We also began to build diverse talent pools through our CRM platform, and now regularly engage with diverse future talent.

At Honeywell, we are all about commitment, in fact it's one of our behaviours. Everyone within Honeywell has shown commitment to our ED&I mission.

**Colin Wolfsbauer**  
Senior Director Talent Acquisition and Diversity at Honeywell

*Honeywell is a Fortune 100 company that invents and manufactures technologies to address tough challenges linked to global macrotrends such as security, safety, and energy with approximately 110,000 employees worldwide.*

## Positive action is helping to secure diverse talent

Nearly half (48%) of professionals agree that their organisation is proactively taking action to attract and hire more diverse talent. Of these, the majority (82%) believe this action is working to enable their organisation to find and secure diverse talent.

The most common approaches being taken to attract and hire a diverse range of talent include offering flexible working arrangements (49%), offering remote working roles to access diverse talent in other geographical locations (37%) and attending conferences and networking events frequented by organisations that cater to underrepresented groups and specialist communities (31%). Over a quarter (27%) say they analyse job application data to understand which advertising channels produce a diverse mix of applicants.

### Top approaches organisations are taking to attract diverse candidates from a variety of backgrounds

Offer flexible working arrangements

49%

Offer remote roles to access talent in wider set of locations

37%

Attend conferences and networking events frequented by organisations that cater to underrepresented groups/specialist communities

31%

Work with professional associations that support underrepresented groups/specialist communities

28%

Analyse job application data to discern which advertising channels produce a diverse mix of applicants

27%



#### Translate talk into action

...different underrepresented groups or communities, such as the neurodiverse, will need different types of support to improve their representation in the workplace. Working with a professional organisation who has specialist knowledge can help you make the right adjustments.

## Conclusion

Discussion and awareness of ED&I is widespread, and employers have actively embraced movements like Pride and International Women's Day. However, our research found only half of these same employers are taking action to make real, notable improvements in their own organisation.

This is not enough. Discussion is good, but without action its little more than lip service. Many organisations are making incredible strides towards greater ED&I, and consequently will attract a greater range of new skilled staff, will be more appealing to jobseekers and will be more likely to retain their best workers. Organisations falling behind the trend will find it increasingly difficult to find the workers they need in the years to come, jeopardising innovation, creativity and the ability to compete in the modern market.

## CASE STUDY



# DURING LOCKDOWN BUSINESSES DIDN'T STOP WORK AND NOR DID WE

When the first lockdown happened, the need to support neurodiversity in the workplace didn't stop. We had to meet the needs of a fast-changing environment and adapt to a new normal. There were emotional and wellbeing, practical, and environmental issues for all our staff, associates, and clients alike, so we immediately flipped into virtual delivery.

In 24 hours, we created a series of new materials to aid all our remote teams. We ran training for our coaches to work on virtual platforms, increased our corporate subscription for Zoom, and held daily drop-in sessions to help everyone get used to working in this new way.

As many businesses start to ease back into the office, we've been asking ourselves what did we learn, and what can we take forward? We have completed a full analysis of over 5,000 coaching sessions from May 2019 to Feb 2020 and compared the data from the same period one year later. We found that not only did virtual coaching work just as well, but in most instances, it was more effective. Overall, we found that the performance improvement rates improved by 11% vs the previous year. In some categories, clients showed an improvement score of up to 75%.

After receiving qualitative commentary from our clients, we discovered that the virtual experience gave them more control. 66% highlighted the great relationship and rapport they had with their coach - even through virtual delivery. Only 4% said they missed having face to face sessions. The main themes were:

- **Environment** - virtual environments gave the client more control over the space they chose to receive their coaching in
- **Session length** - clients are able to more easily adapt the length of the session to meet their learning requirements, for example, they could split longer three-hour sessions into two ninety-minute sessions
- **Frequency of session** - clients were able to select a higher frequency of sessions or a lower frequency of sessions according to the way they preferred to learn best
- **Flexibility** - clients were able to schedule their sessions with either longer or shorter gaps between them more easily, and so were able to adapt the coaching sessions to meet their individual processing and reflection needs

Moving forward we will continue to provide virtual coaching, as well as face to face options to enable all of our neurodivergent clients to be able to work at their best, more of the time.

**Jacqui Wallis**  
Commercial Director of CIC at Genius Within

*Genius Within CIC is a social enterprise established to help neurominorities unlock their talents. They advise governments on policy and provide consultancy to businesses, driving systemic change that allows all employees to thrive, providing in-work support in the form of coaching, training and assessments.*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Below we outline some steps employers and professionals can take to help ensure ED&I is prioritised and they cultivate a workplace culture where all staff feel valued, welcome, integrated, and included.

## Employer recommendations – how to move the dial on ED&I

### Get a better understanding with data

Unless you understand the diversity within your business and the sentiment of your employees it will be difficult to know what action you need to take. Identifying gaps in your workforce by collecting demographic diversity data from current employees and job applicants is vital to ensuring the success of ED&I initiatives that support access to and progression in a way that is fair and inclusive to all.

### Communicate your progress

Developing your communication plan is a critical step in implementing and managing an ED&I strategy. Without a robust plan in place, senior leaders may not give their support. If managers who are tasked with the implementation and execution of ED&I efforts don't understand what is expected of them, they can disengage, and if employees do not know what the long-term objectives are, they too can get frustrated and feel that ED&I is not a priority.

### Expand and promote your flexible working opportunities

For some groups of people, the ability to work flexibly is critical and offering flexible working can help employers attract a more diverse range of candidates. Make sure you advertise the flexible and remote working options available at your organisation consistently across the entire jobseeker journey to engage with top talent and avoid missing out on professionals who could bring valuable skills and perspectives to your organisation.

### Support your team with training

Over half of professionals say they will only consider applying to an organisation that has a public commitment to ED&I. Ensuring you've mapped out ED&I policies in your recruitment strategy will provide better clarity to jobseekers on the commitment your organisation has to equity, diversity and inclusion. Having this type of recruitment process in place gives you a chance of attracting a more diverse pool of candidates.

### Get expert help when you need it

Implementing change isn't always easy, as our research found there may be obstacles you need to overcome. Getting support and advice from ED&I experts can help you navigate potential challenges and make changes that really make a difference. Whether that's workplace adjustments that support the inclusion of underrepresented groups or working with a recruitment partner who can ensure your job adverts are seen by a broad range of jobseekers.

## Personal recommendations – how to be an agent for change

### Share your data

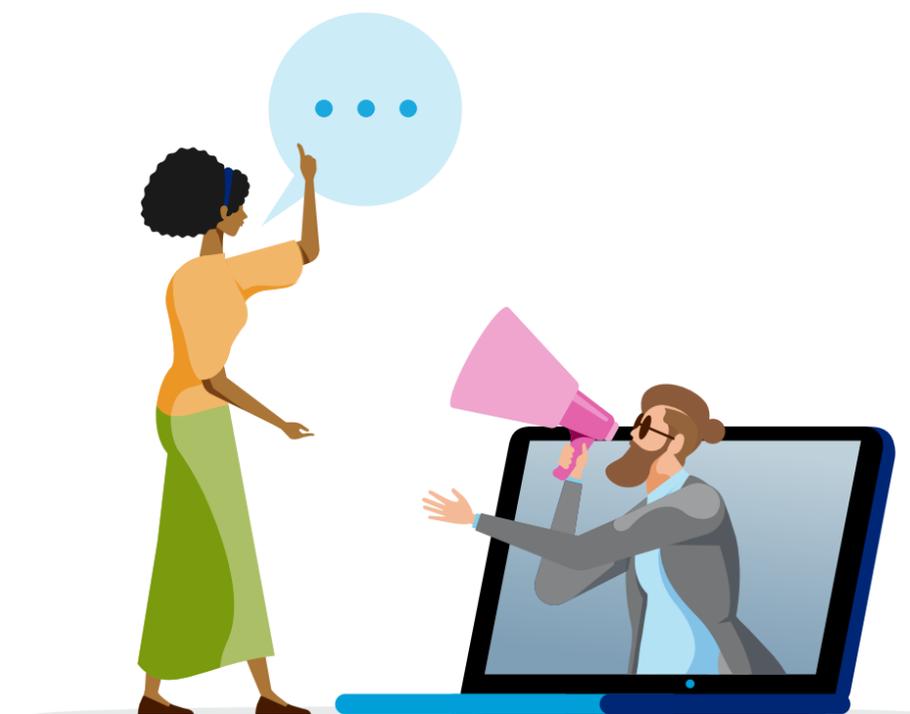
When looking for your next role, if you feel comfortable doing so, share your personal data during the job application stage if the option is given. This information is vital to the organisation in improving their efforts to recruit a more diverse workforce. When an organisation has opted to include this in their recruitment process, it suggests they are making efforts towards improving equity, diversity and inclusion in their workplace and they see the benefits of hiring a diverse workforce.

### Speak up and get involved

Use your voice by sharing your opinion and any suggestions you think could benefit your organisation's effort to improve their ED&I policies. Your employer will appreciate you taking the time to think about ED&I outside of your normal job responsibilities and showing initiative. You may also have an idea that your organisation never even considered or share ED&I knowledge that your employer was not familiar with. If ED&I is an area you are particularly interested in, let your line manager know – it could be a great opportunity for you to make an impact on your organisation's ED&I policies.

### Question attitudes towards ED&I during your job search

When job hunting, consider what visible commitment to ED&I potential employers have made. Most professionals believe a more equal, diverse and inclusive workplace has a positive impact on everything from company culture, staff morale, innovation, company reputation and recruitment of the best talent. Applying to organisations that are committed to ED&I could help ensure a more enjoyable working life, at a place where equal opportunities are prevalent.



# ABOUT US

Whether you are looking at what's next for your career or have an immediate gap to fill, as market leader we remain committed to working together with you. Our recruiting experts offer invaluable advice and insights, combined with unrivalled services and access to the top employers and talent. As your lifelong career partner, we'll support your skills development and help you to navigate the new era of work.

We're committed to ensuring a diverse workforce which is representative of the communities and organisations we serve, and an inclusive workplace in which all our people can thrive no matter their background.

## Our expertise

Hays makes finding the best talent easier and quicker, and reduces the risks involved in hiring. Our expertise lies in being able to source skilled professionals, our unparalleled ability to engage with an extensive network of talent, and our capability to match this to our clients' specific requirements. Working across 14 different industries and professions in Ireland, we recruit for permanent and temporary roles for organisations of all sizes in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors.

Competition for skills is high in many of the industries we recruit for and the recruitment industry is evolving at a rapid rate. The traditional recruitment model has been transformed into a new model where art and science combine to help establish deep relationships in candidate communities through the power of digital technology, data science and personalised communications at scale.

At Hays, we have developed and are deploying a new and improved model, one which we call Find & Engage. This takes the best recruitment practices and candidate relationships our consultants have developed over many years, and combines them with new technology and data science techniques available today to ensure we find the best candidates for any given role.

This approach puts the relationship back at the heart of recruitment, but uses digital technology, machine learning and data science to operate at scale.

## Additional services

We provide a suite of services to further support your talent management strategies. These include:

- [Hays Thrive – our free online training portal](#)
- [Assessment and development](#)
- [Employer branding](#)
- [Executive services](#)
- [Fully managed temporary recruitment](#)
- [Outsourced permanent recruitment](#)
- [Salary benchmarking](#)

**For further information on how we can help with your recruitment needs, contact your local Hays office. To find your nearest office, visit [hays.ie/contact-us](https://hays.ie/contact-us)**

## Recruiting across 13+ skilled and technical areas

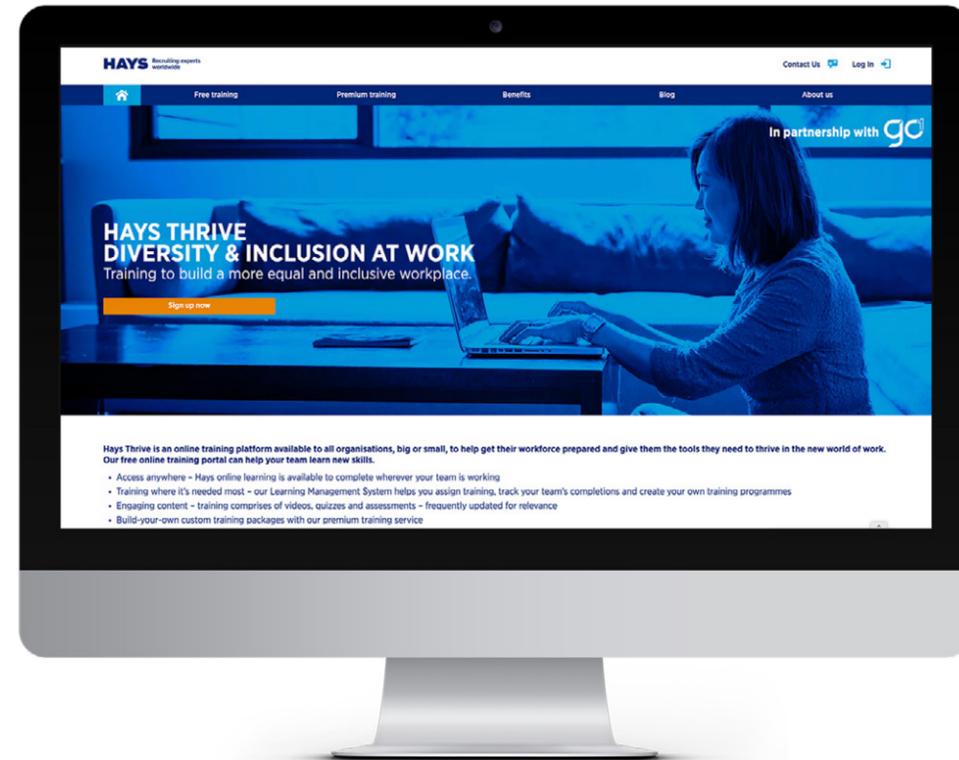
- Accountancy & Finance
- Banking & Financial Services
- Construction & Property
- Engineering
- Executive
- Human Resources
- Insurance
- Legal
- Office Support
- Personal and Executive Assistants
- Procurement & Supply Chain
- Social Care
- Technology

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