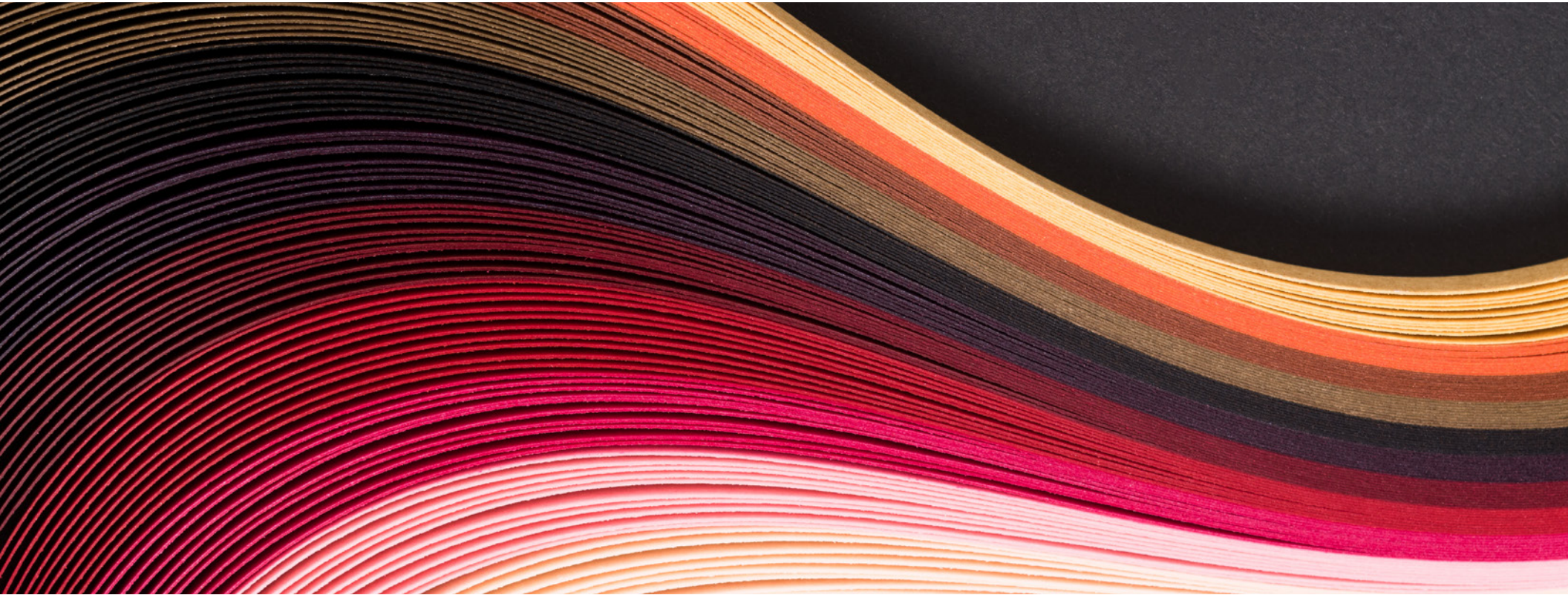


2021 PULSE REPORT

Organizational Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging





Ian Fanton

Senior Vice President and
Head of Corporate Learning
Harvard Business Publishing

While most organizations increased their action on diversity, inclusion, and belonging in 2020, we can't afford to back off our efforts to create truly inclusive and equitable cultures and workplaces.

Harvard Business Publishing has been working to address these issues alongside our clients. Our chief executive officer, David Wan, [committed publicly](#) in 2020 to specific actions through the CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion™. We have dedicated resources and evolved our strategy in line with the importance of this work. Our organization can—and should—be more diverse and inclusive. We need to make sure every employee feels they can be their true selves at work. We are challenging our thinking and systems and examining everything from the content and the authors we publish to the suppliers we partner with through the lens of diversity. Many new groups and teams have formed organically across Harvard Business Publishing, sparking honest conversations and progress.

In the fall of 2020, each of our business units surveyed its customers about diversity, inclusion, and belonging. Our findings reveal that leading organizations are getting more sophisticated in their approach. No longer a side initiative, actions to create more inclusive cultures are becoming more holistic, pervasive, strategic, and measurable.

But there is more to be done. Our research also reveals opportunities to close gaps between leadership intention and plans and the real-world perspectives and experiences of our people.

We look forward to continuing this journey together.

Ian

Executive Summary

Diversity, inclusion, and belonging (DIB) have become important and strategic business priorities. Organizations are placing increasing emphasis on embedding a more inclusive mindset and practices across all aspects of their businesses. Our survey highlights where organizations are focusing resources and attention and on employees' perceptions of where we can do better.



Where is your organization on this journey?

THIS REPORT WILL HELP ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS:

- 1 Benchmark your organization's progress** on diversity, inclusion, and belonging against that of other global companies.
- 2 Identify potential gaps** between the views and actions of your leadership and the perceptions of your employees around diversity and inclusion that may have a negative impact on your culture and performance.
- 3 Identify next-level actions** your organization can take to close those gaps.

TERMS IN THIS REPORT

In this survey and report, we use the words “diversity, inclusion, and belonging” or DIB. Here’s how we define them.

- **Diversity** refers to anything that sets one individual apart from another, including the full spectrum of human demographic differences as well as the different ideas, backgrounds, and opinions people bring as part of their identity.
- **Inclusion** represents the extent to which employees feel valued, respected, encouraged to fully participate, and able to be their authentic selves. Striving to create a more equitable organization is a critical factor within our definition of inclusion.
- **Belonging** refers to the experience of being treated and feeling like a full member of a larger community where you can thrive. You can have diversity of representation without inclusion and inclusion without creating an environment in which everyone feels they actually belong.

ABOUT THE SURVEYS

In October 2020, Harvard Business Publishing conducted surveys on several aspects of diversity, inclusion, and belonging:

- > Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning surveyed 386 learning and development and HR professionals globally at current clients and other leading global organizations.
- > We reached individual learners and managers through a survey delivered through our *Harvard ManageMentor*® online leadership development program. More than 800 learners participated in this survey.
- > The Harvard Business Review Group surveyed 532 hbr.org visitors.

Survey Highlights

The primary diversity, inclusion, and belonging objective for learners and for L&D and HR leaders is alignment with organizational values.

46%

of the *Harvard Business Review* survey respondents have faced obstacles in the workplace due to an aspect of their identity.

14%

of L&D and HR leaders report their organizations use business metrics to measure diversity, inclusion, and belonging.

Are You Keeping Pace?

Nearly all organizations report progress, but employee perception of action is lower

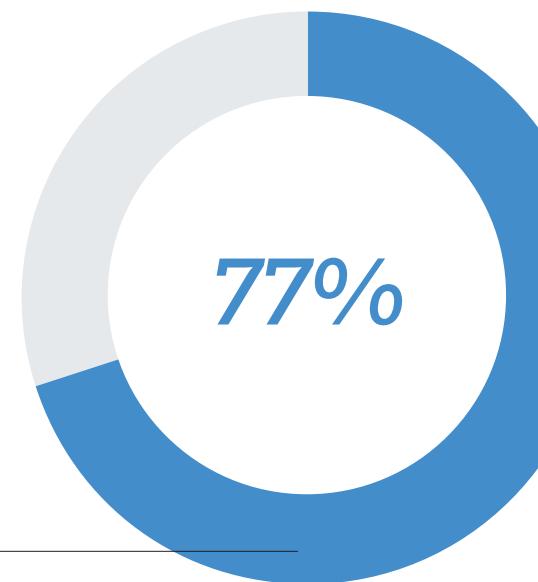
98% of L&D and HR leaders indicated their organization is taking some action on diversity, inclusion, and belonging (DIB).

- > Eight of 10 have conducted employee training to help reduce bias and increase inclusion.
- > 63% have created new programs or resource groups to support marginalized groups.
- > 42% have appointed a new role to lead diversity efforts, such as a chief diversity officer.

Yet, among *Harvard Business Review* readers surveyed, only 65% said their organization has had some focus on DIB in the past year.

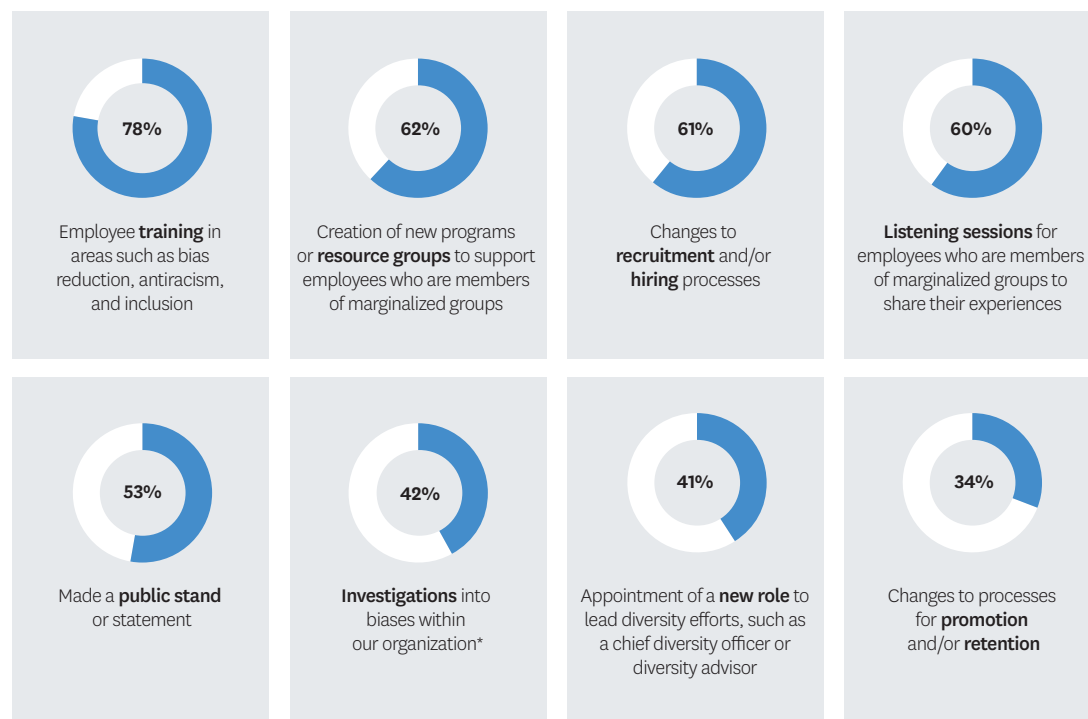


77% of L&D and HR leaders we surveyed say DIB is more important in their organizations than at this same time last year.



Nearly Every Leader Reports Organizational Action on Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

We asked L&D and HR leaders: What action is your organization taking around diversity, inclusion, and belonging?



*May include anonymous employee surveys or working with consultants to evaluate organizational culture

Source: Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning DIB Survey, Fall 2020

“The moral case for valuing difference and promoting justice calls for a deeper level of commitment. It requires transparency, patience, and a shift in mindset that takes sacrifice into account to yield better long-term results. Inclusive leaders value differences because they strengthen strategic alignment and moral integrity.”

Laura Morgan Roberts, Professor of Practice at the University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business and co-author of *Race, Work and Leadership: New Perspectives on the Black Experience* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2019). [↗](#)

Values are the primary driver for work on diversity, inclusion, and belonging

According to L&D and HR leaders, the primary organizational objective for diversity, inclusion, and belonging efforts is alignment with organizational values (53%), beating out talent recruitment and retention (18%), and achievement of business results (13%).

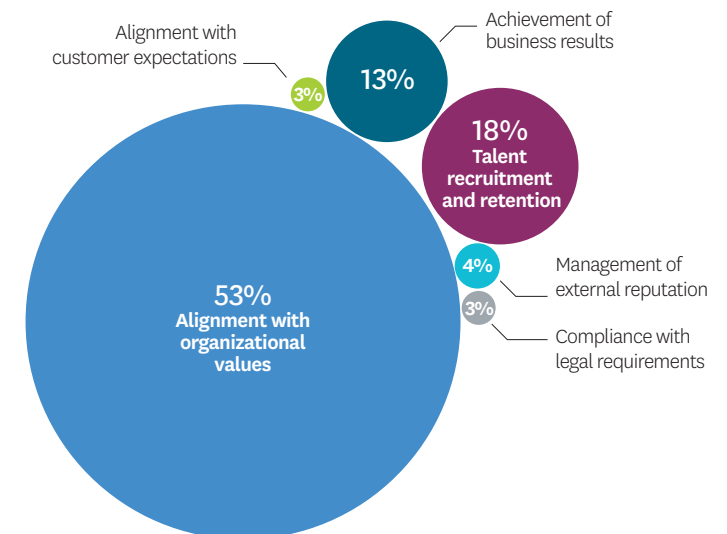
- > Learners surveyed rated alignment with organizational values as their top objective for diversity, inclusion, and belonging.
- > 52% of organizations have made a public stand or statement about diversity, inclusion, and belonging.

“I have learned that being a fast follower is not enough. This is a critical time and a necessary change that I need to proactively lead.”

Harvard Business Publishing Leader in 2020

Values, Not Compliance, Drive Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Efforts

We asked L&D and HR leaders: Which of these best describes your organization's primary objective with regard to diversity, inclusion, and belonging?



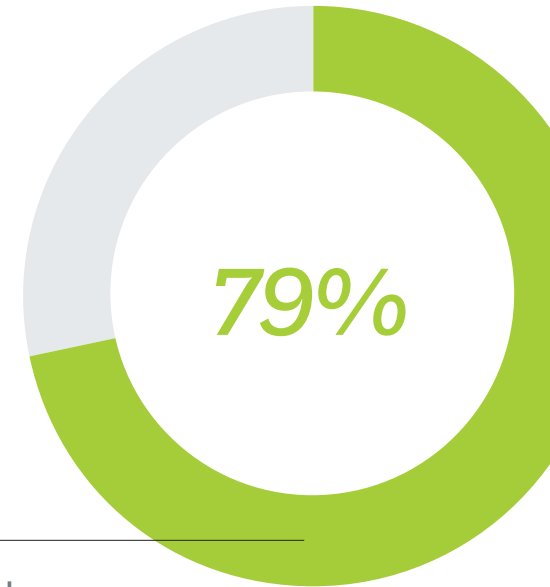
Source: Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning DIB Survey, Fall 2020

Definitions and priorities for addressing identity differ by region and by role

- > L&D and HR leaders globally reported that race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age, in that order, are the top aspects that their organizations are focused on for DIB efforts.
- > When we asked learners what they would like their organizations to focus on in DIB efforts, they also put gender at the top of the list, but age was slightly higher on the list than ethnicity and race.
- > While gender led in every region for L&D and HR leaders, age was next most important among Asia Pacific respondents and sexual orientation was second among respondents in Latin America.



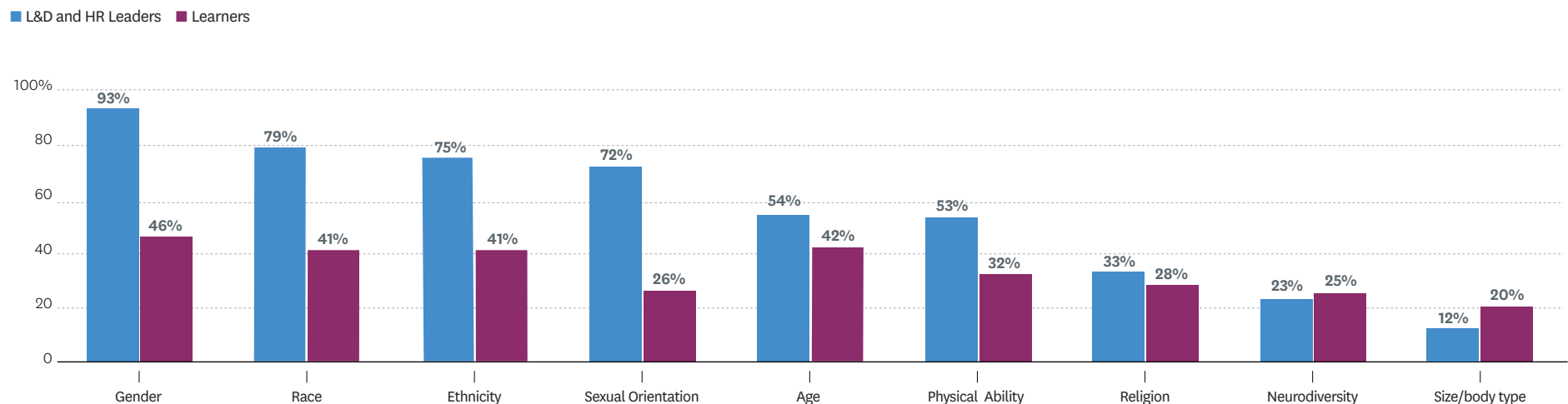
79% of L&D and HR leaders surveyed say race is the most important aspect of identity on which to focus diversity, inclusion, and belonging efforts.



Learners and L&D and HR leaders surveyed had a broad definition of identity. In addition to race and gender, participants called out aspects such as military service/veterans, socioeconomic status, nationality and cultural experience, length of tenure, and personality or social style.

Organizations' Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Efforts Don't Always Match Where Employees See Needs

We asked L&D and HR leaders what aspects of identity their efforts were focused on, and we asked learners which aspects they would like their organizations to focus on.



Organizations struggle to measure progress from diversity, inclusion, and belonging efforts

- > When asked how they are tracking progress with diversity, inclusion, and belonging efforts, 71% of L&D and HR leaders reported using employee experience/engagement surveys, followed by marking milestones of employee demographics.
- > Only 14% use business metrics such as revenue as a measure.
- > Respondents highlighted a need for practical key performance indicators as well as assessments of different diversity dimensions.
- > Some L&D and HR leaders want to assess the risk of *not* taking action.

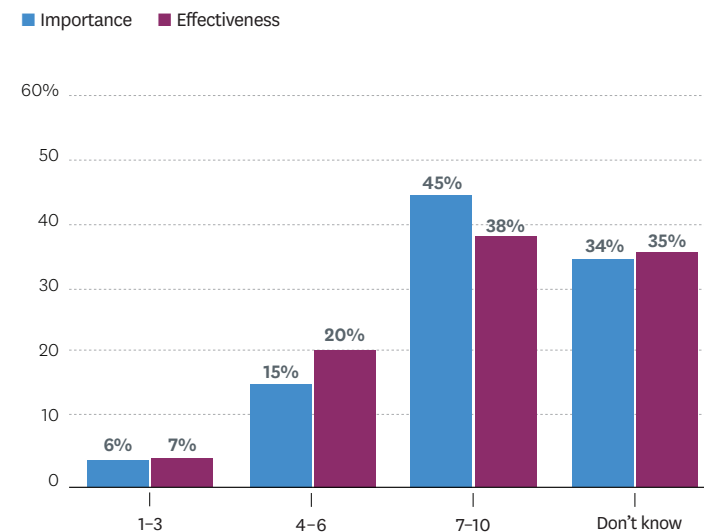
“We are setting behavioral standards that drive inclusion, setting enterprise level goals on parity, and seeking external recognition on progress...”

L&D/HR Leader Survey Respondent

Many Don't Know If DIB Leader Development Matters to Business Success

L&D and HR leaders rated the importance of DIB leadership development to the success of the business.

RATED ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 WHERE 1 = NOT IMPORTANT/EFFECTIVE AND 10 = CRITICALLY IMPORTANT/EFFECTIVE



Source: Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning DIB Survey, Fall 2020

Opportunities Ahead

Intention versus impact

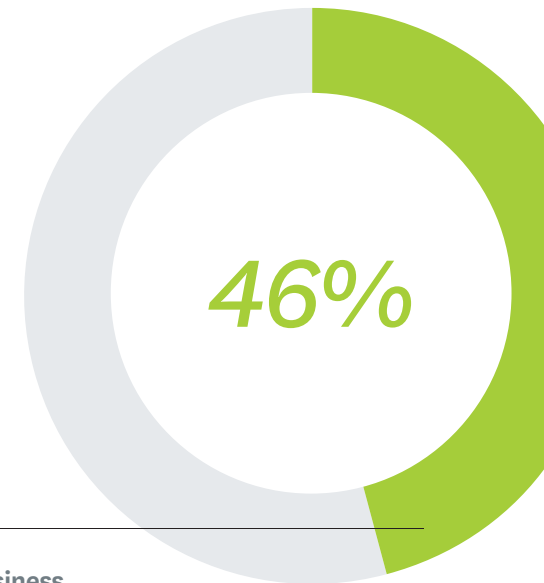
- > While the majority of respondents across our surveys recognize progress on DIB and report positive work experiences with their organizations and managers, many employees still face challenges at work related to identity.
- > There is an opportunity to engage more individuals in finding solutions. Just 52% of *Harvard ManageMentor* learner respondents said they were involved in some way in their organization's diversity, inclusion, and belonging efforts.
- > 90% of learners surveyed are already thinking or planning or doing when it comes to DIB efforts. For example, they have "begun to incorporate it into my development," they "have a specific plan," or they have already "made significant strides."

“When we developed a group of learning scenarios, we thought we were actively keeping diverse perspectives in mind. Yet when we checked our scenarios against a diversity rubric we created, we found they were too U.S.-centric. It was a good reminder that we all bring bias.”

Learning Content Developer, Harvard Business Publishing



46% of the Harvard Business Review Group survey respondents agreed that they have faced obstacles in the workplace due to an aspect of their identity.

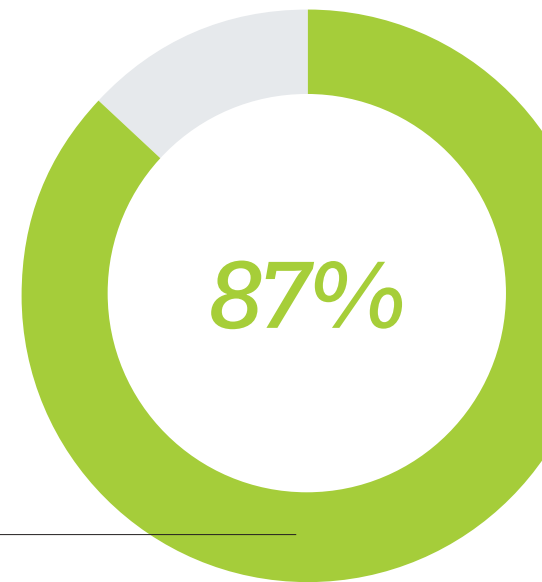


Leaders and learners want guidance on how to be more inclusive leaders

- > Diversity, inclusion, and belonging content was of high interest among topics presented to *Harvard Business Review* readers, ahead of other current events topics such as climate change and the 2020 election.
- > Across the board, the majority of learners and the L&D and HR leaders we surveyed were interested in learning about diversity and inclusion, as well as belonging, with leadership, communication, and culture out in front.
- > Learners surveyed want their organizations to consider development around diversity, inclusion, and belonging in the context of widely varied regional and cultural norms and expectations.

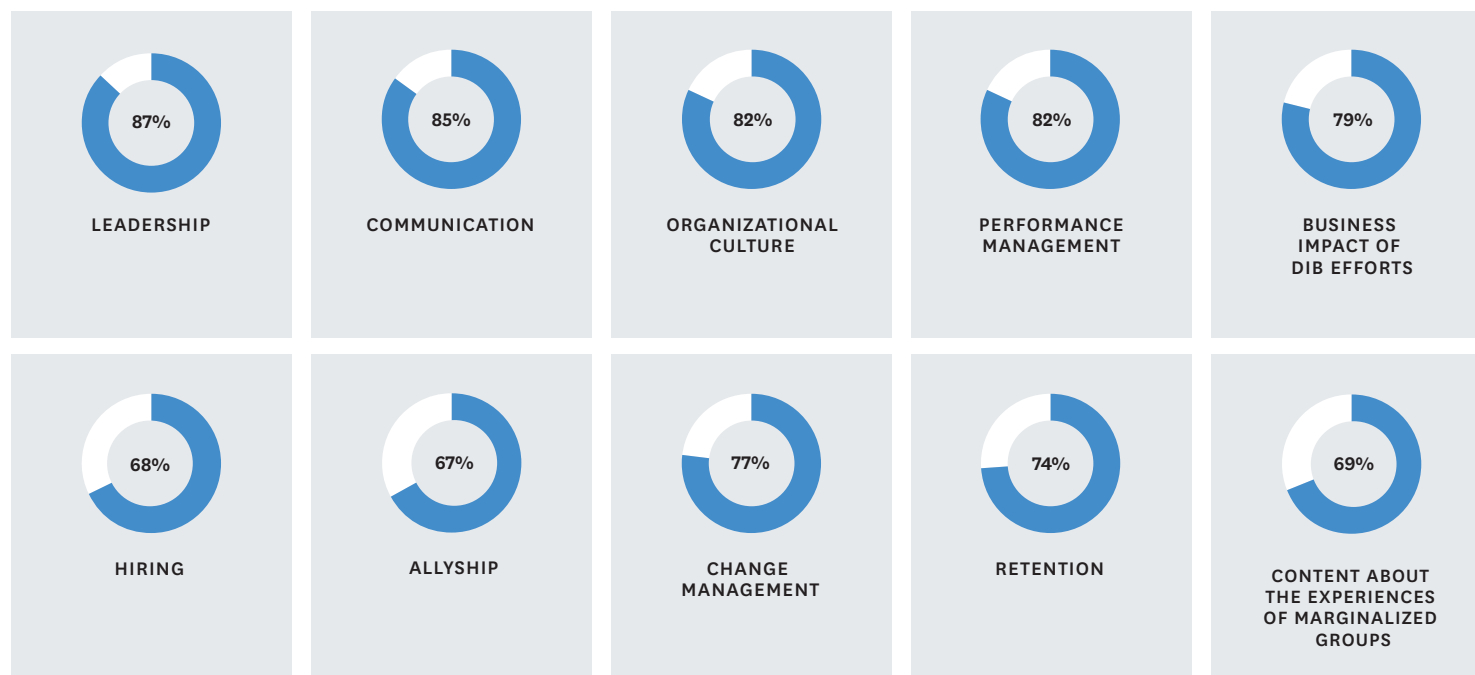


87% of Harvard ManageMentor learners surveyed want more guidance around leadership actions that support diversity, inclusion, and belonging.



Harvard ManageMentor® Learners Want to Learn About Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging in the Context of Leadership, Communication, and Culture

We asked learners: how interested are you in learning about each of the following aspects of DIB with respect to actions you can take?



“In the past, the discussions have been uncomfortable for those in leadership, but I think leadership is opening up now. They just need some help on the how.”

L&D and HR
Survey Respondent

*May include anonymous employee surveys or working with consultants to evaluate organizational culture

Source: Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning DIB Survey, Fall 2020

What Comes Next for Your Organization?

As organizations advance to more systemic and lasting changes required for inclusiveness, there are many paths they can take. Here are some steps for L&D leaders to consider around the priorities L&D and HR leaders raised in our study.

RELATED READING:

[Microsite on Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging ↗](#)

LEADERSHIP

Develop a more inclusive mindset among leaders at every level of the organizations

- Define a clear set of objectives for DIB efforts that encompass business and values leadership.
- Agree on the skills and behaviors your leaders at each level need to develop and model.
- Ensure diverse perspectives and scenarios across all development areas.

CULTURE

Address the bias in our systems and processes to build truly inclusive cultures

- Collectively define what diversity, inclusion, and belonging mean at your organization.
- Make it safe to challenge old systems and ways of working.
- Examine your processes across the business for diversity, from marketing to supplier networks.

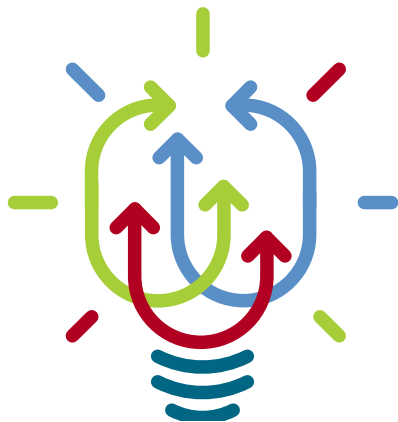
COMMUNICATION

Communicate authentically and transparently about progress and gaps

- Create transparency for all aspects of your DIB work.
- Build in leadership accountability and actions with visibility.
- Ensure the team communicating progress demonstrates diversity.

Get Inspired

Across our surveys, participants from learning leaders to frontline employees wrote in their ideas and hopes for future progress. Here are a few bold moves to consider for your organization.



Strive to be an employer of choice for BIPOC candidates. Create BIPOC internship or fellowship programs.

Tie executive compensation to DIB metrics.

Create opportunities to help others understand the perspectives and experiences of those in marginalized groups.

Build safeguards into your office culture that allow people to speak up and to create spaces to listen and reflect.


Leverage change management expertise to drive a more inclusive culture, with leadership engagement and ownership.

Provide clearer direction on how a leadership team should respond to racism, workplace harassment, and bullying—even in more subtle forms.

Set organizational behavioral standards and recognition processes that drive inclusion.

Ensure under-represented groups are prioritized for key development programs.

Seek external recognition on progress with DIB.



At Harvard Business Publishing, we are committed to embracing—and promoting—diversity and inclusion. We pledge to address systemic racism within our own organization by working together to create a safe environment where we foster and leverage diversity of thought to improve the practice of management and its impact in a changing world.

We understand this is an ongoing journey—for our organization and for our clients. We will continue our efforts to embed the mindsets and behaviors of diversity, inclusion, and belonging throughout our leadership development offerings. We want every leader to “find themselves” in the scenarios, examples, and stories woven into our programs. Harvard Business Publishing will also continue to work with our clients and other organizations to create the conditions for more equitable and inclusive workplaces.

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THIS REPORT:**

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ABOUT CORPORATE LEARNING

Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning partners with the world's biggest brands to co-create leadership development solutions that are designed for impact, speed, and scale. The company brings the most important timely and timeless ideas influencing business into flexible, engaging learning experiences that help organizations future-proof their talent and manage and lead in a complex, changing world. From highly focused executive leadership programs to enterprise-wide engagements for thousands of global employees to personalized on-demand learning, each experience leverages the depth and breadth of Harvard Business School, *Harvard Business Review* resources, and industry experts—enabling leaders to learn where, when, and how they need. Through deep partnership and continual innovation, solutions can evolve to address new business priorities and learner needs, resulting in stronger companies better prepared to lead and thrive—both today and in the future.

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ABOUT HARVARD BUSINESS PUBLISHING

Harvard Business Publishing was founded in 1994 as a not-for-profit, wholly owned subsidiary of Harvard University. Its mission is to improve the practice of management and its impact in a changing world. The company achieves its mission through its relationships with customers in three market groups: Higher Education, Corporate Learning, and Harvard Business Review Group. Through these platforms, Harvard Business Publishing is able to influence real-world change by maximizing the reach and impact of its essential offering—ideas.