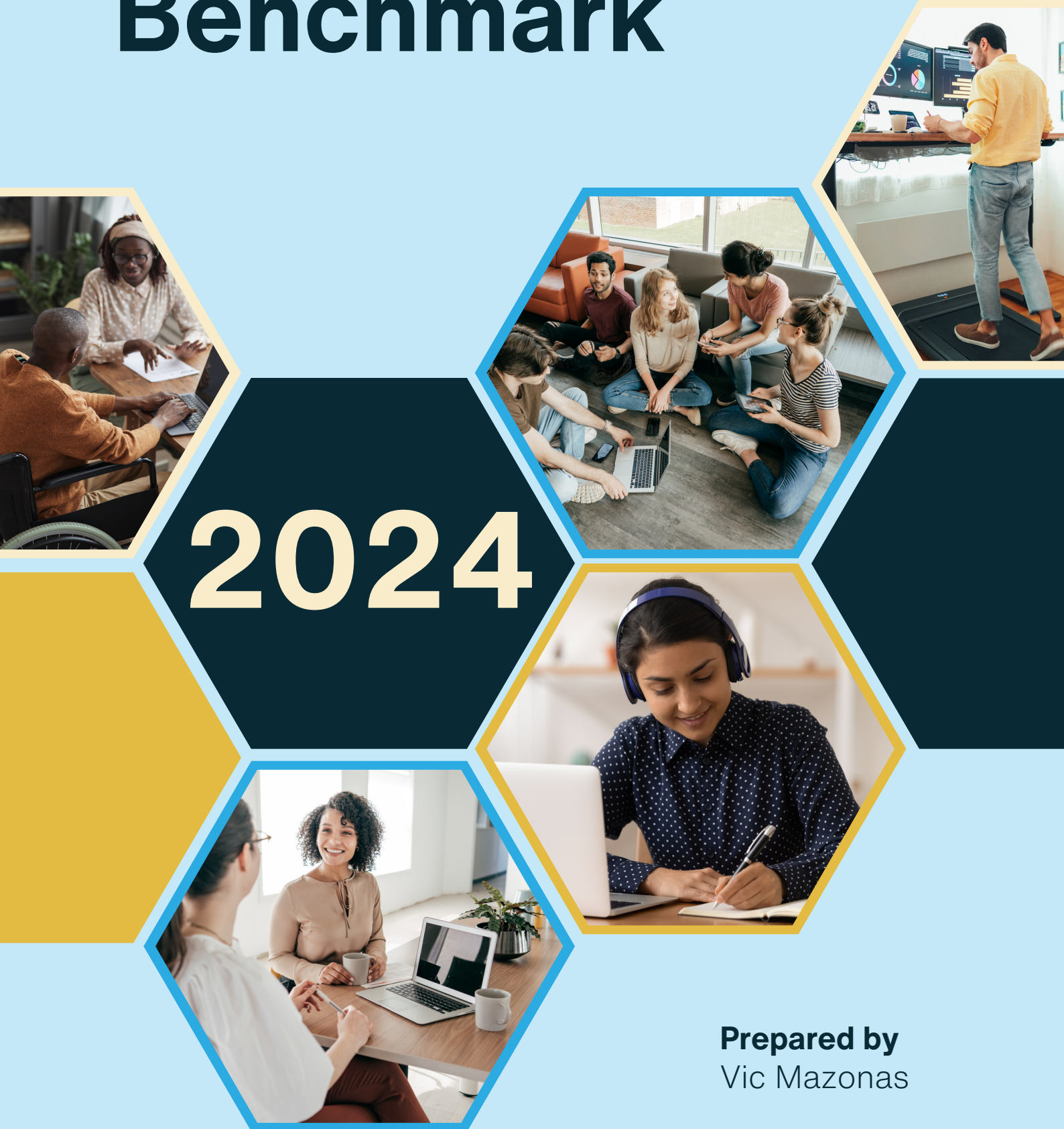


Public Benchmark

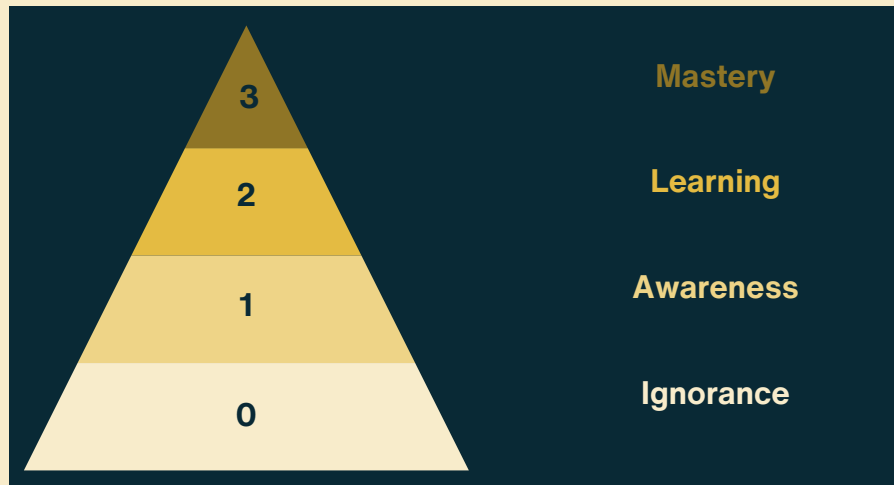


2024

Prepared by
Vic Mazonas

About the Benchmark

The GAIN benchmark scores companies using the four stages of competence, reviewing member companies across 6 areas of business. This follows the principle that learning a new skill or topic requires moving through a series of stages, starting with a lack of awareness of the topic and eventually landing at mastery of it.



Score 0: Ignorance (Wrong Intuition)

At this stage the learner is ignorant of the topic and likely to have wrong intuition about it. They “do not know what they don’t know”

Score 1: Awareness (Wrong Analysis)

This is a stage of growing awareness. At this stage, the learner is aware of the importance of the topic, but don’t yet have sufficient knowledge.

Score 2: Learning (Right Analysis)

This stage is associated with learning. By now, the learner is beginning to grasp the topic and, with resources and guidance, can make good decisions.

Score 3: Mastery (Right Intuition)

Mastery of the topic has been attained. The knowledge has become embedded into the learner’s way of thinking, and skills associated with it are automatic.

The Public Benchmark

The public version of the GAIN benchmark report was released in early 2024, compiling data gathered in benchmarks completed during 2023. You can view the report detailing this benchmark data using the provided QR code.

Individual companies receive personalised company-specific benchmark reports that provide a comparison, where relevant, against the public benchmark data, as well as against their own previous scores.



Glossary

Affinity Bias

The tendency for individuals to see more positive traits in people they find similar to themselves. One of several types of bias that can impact hiring decisions.

Double Empathy Problem

The tendency for individuals to find it easier to understand the perspectives of similar individuals. Studies have shown, for example, that the communication challenges typically attributed to autistic individuals are more prevalent in communication between an autistic individual and an allistic (non-autistic) individual, and less prevalent both between two allistic individuals or two autistic individuals, indicating the “problem” is not caused by autistic communication.

Dunning-Kruger Effect

The Dunning-Kruger effect is when people think they are smarter and more skilled than they actually are. Those who lack certain abilities often can't see that they aren't as capable as they believe. Because they don't understand their own limitations, they tend to overrate what they can do.

Neurodiversity

The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population. The understanding that every person has a unique set of skills and talents, and a unique set of support needs. The idea that there is no such thing as a "normal" mind or a correct way to experience the world. It is simply that some people find the default way we've built the world more comfortable than others.

Neurodivergent (ND)

The term for when someone's brain processes, learns and/or behaves differently from what is considered “typical”. Examples include autism, ADHD, dyslexia, tourettes, OCD and many more.

Neurotypical (NT)

An individual who thinks, perceives and behaves in ways that are considered the norm by the general population

One Page Profiles (OPP)

A document, usually a single page or one double-sided page, which offers a simple introduction to an individual in a professional context. These will usually include a photo, name and title, pronouns, and details such as accessibility needs, communication style preferences and other information to make communication easier.

2023 Results

Each company that participated in the GAIN benchmark in 2023 received a company-specific report of the specific strengths, challenges and recommended actions their data presented. The public report for that data issued in Q1 2024 outlined where repeating trends were observed. Those trends included:



WORK ENVIRONMENT

BASELINE GOOD FLEXIBILITY

- Some need to address specific “fit for purpose” issues, such as “quiet spaces” that lacked proper screens, laptop docking stations and adjustable desks, making them unsuitable for more than short bursts of use.
- Anxiety expressed by some employees about how use of alternate spaces in the office would be perceived.

GAIN recommended reviewing work environments to ensure alternate spaces were fit for purpose, addressing company culture issues that create barriers to employee willingness to use these, and an overall focus on flexibility for employees.



COMPANY CULTURE

DIFFERENCES IN NEURODIVERGENT (ND) VS NEUROTYPICAL (NT) EXPERIENCE

- Neurodivergent employees expressed less safety around the prospect of disclosure than neurotypical employees, although still overall high at 61-89% “safe” or “very safe”
- Neurodivergent employees were more likely to have experienced bullying (20% vs 7%), and more likely to have considered leaving a role due to bullying (32% vs 20%).

GAIN recommended seeking ambassadors within the company to lead on cultural transformation through setting examples, and to work on building more routes to share experiences and stories.



LINE MANAGER & HR KNOWLEDGE

DUNNING KRUGER EFFECT NOTED

- Evidence of “Dunning-Kruger” effect, with most line managers, HR and ERG representatives self-scoring their knowledge higher than their responses indicated,
- A consistent contingent of around 8% of line managers having overall negative attitudes towards neurodiversity in the workplace.
- Around 33% of line managers expressing negative feelings towards at least some workplace adjustment scenarios presented.
- Line managers specifically expressed a desire for more support with both training and in implementation of inclusion initiatives.

GAIN recommended investing in line manager and HR training events, resources and guidance, and suggested seeking out the most highly engaged line managers to encourage more take-up by the negative-leaning minority.

2023 Results

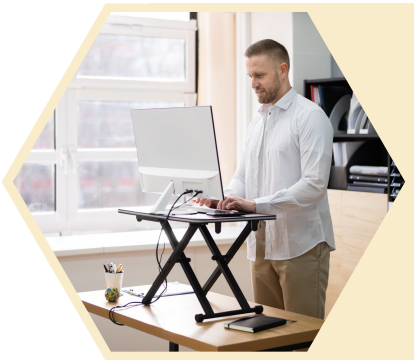


LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

PERCEIVED LACK OF ROLE MODELS

- Leadership was overall perceived as generally well-invested in DEI as a concept, but lacked visibility in examples of active participation.
- A lack of visible senior role models was noted as an indicator of less inclusion in a company.
- ERG representatives were aware of senior leader DEI activities, but employees and line managers were not.

GAIN recommended pursuing opportunities for leaders - both senior leaders and managers at mid-level with positive attitudes - to act in an ambassadorial way, promoting DEI generally and neurodiversity specifically.



ADJUSTMENT PROCESSES

GOOD INTENT, INCONSISTENT APPROACH

- Employee experience was highly dependent on the individual line manager or HR representative handling their adjustment request.
- Companies lacked resources to ensure consistent approach - notable lack of adjustment passports or accessible processes.
- Overall very low employee awareness of resources available when requesting an adjustment.
- Key barriers reported included
 - slow adjustment approval processes
 - a lack of clear ownership
 - excessive reliance on doctor's notes

GAIN recommended investing in adjustment passport systems, simplified processes and an educational campaign on 3 fronts: educate employees on what resources exist and how to access them. Educate line managers to help them feel empowered to make independent decisions to approve adjustments more freely. Educate HR teams on inclusive approaches.



RECRUITMENT AND VACANCIES

SPECIFIC CHANGES NEEDED

- Vacancies often lacked core information such as salary bands, when salary transparency is a key step in inclusive hiring.
- Job postings were inconsistent and varied widely in accessibility and relevance, with specific issues on length, clarity and use of outdated boilerplate.
- Adjustments appeared widely inaccessible prior to an offer being made, cutting neurodivergent people out of the running early on.
- Line managers and HR lacked training on inclusive recruitment,

GAIN recommended standardising vacancies and training HR and hiring managers on these, as well as releasing wider training on inclusive recruitment practices and neuroinclusive ways to adjust interviews etc. We also recommended more salary, benefits and adjustments transparency.

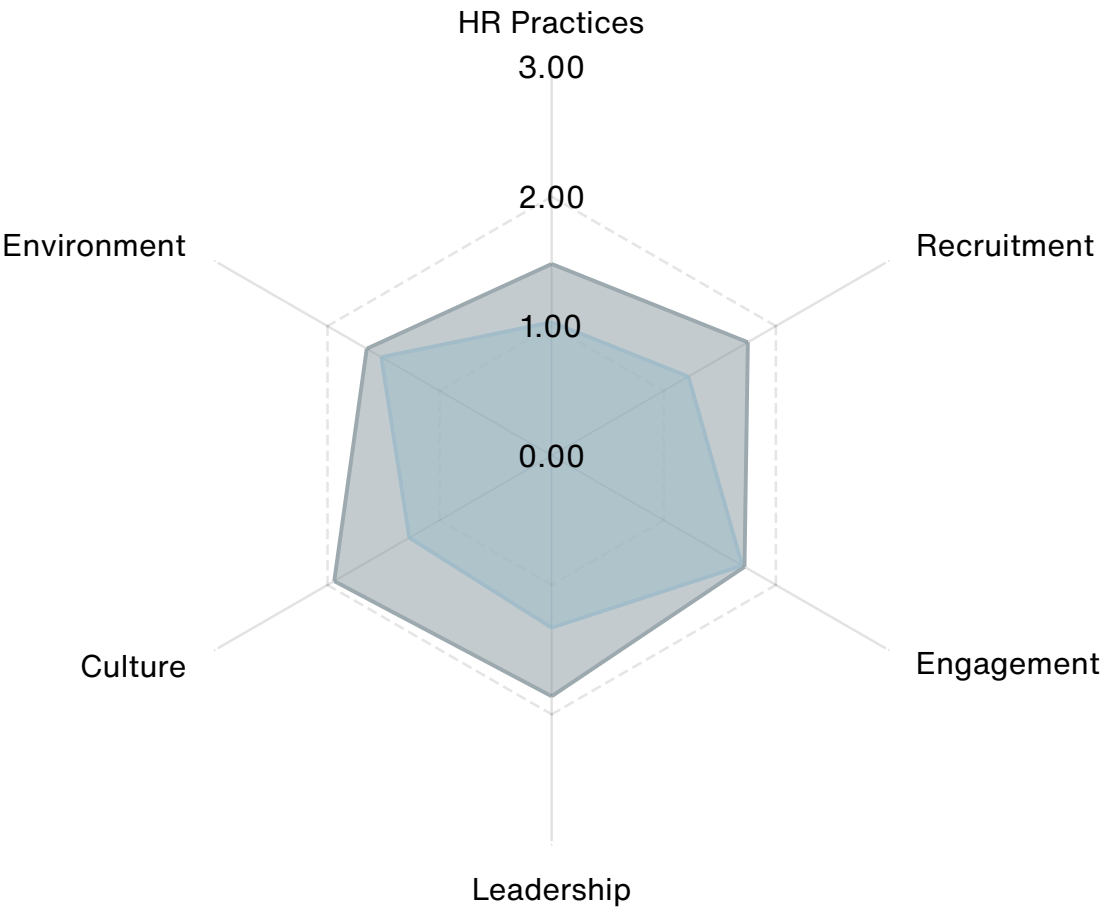
2024 Scores

The public benchmark data for 2024 comprised responses from a total of 651 individuals, of whom 184 were line managers, 88 work in HR and 46 were ERG representatives. These responses included both new benchmarks and benchmarks from companies entering their second year. The 2024 pool of data is notably smaller than in 2023. More of the companies participating in 2024 were smaller themselves, which had an impact, but we also noted reductions in engagement across some larger participating companies, which was accounted for in company-specific scores and reports. All but one company still reached or exceeded our recommended engagement rate overall.

We are able to provide two points of comparison: A comparison of all benchmark scores from 2023 against all in 2024, and a comparison of all Year 1 benchmark scores against all Year 2 benchmark scores. Below is the overall 2024 score, with a breakdown comparison against the overall 2023 score. The year 1 and year 2 comparison is provided overleaf.

Score: 1.73

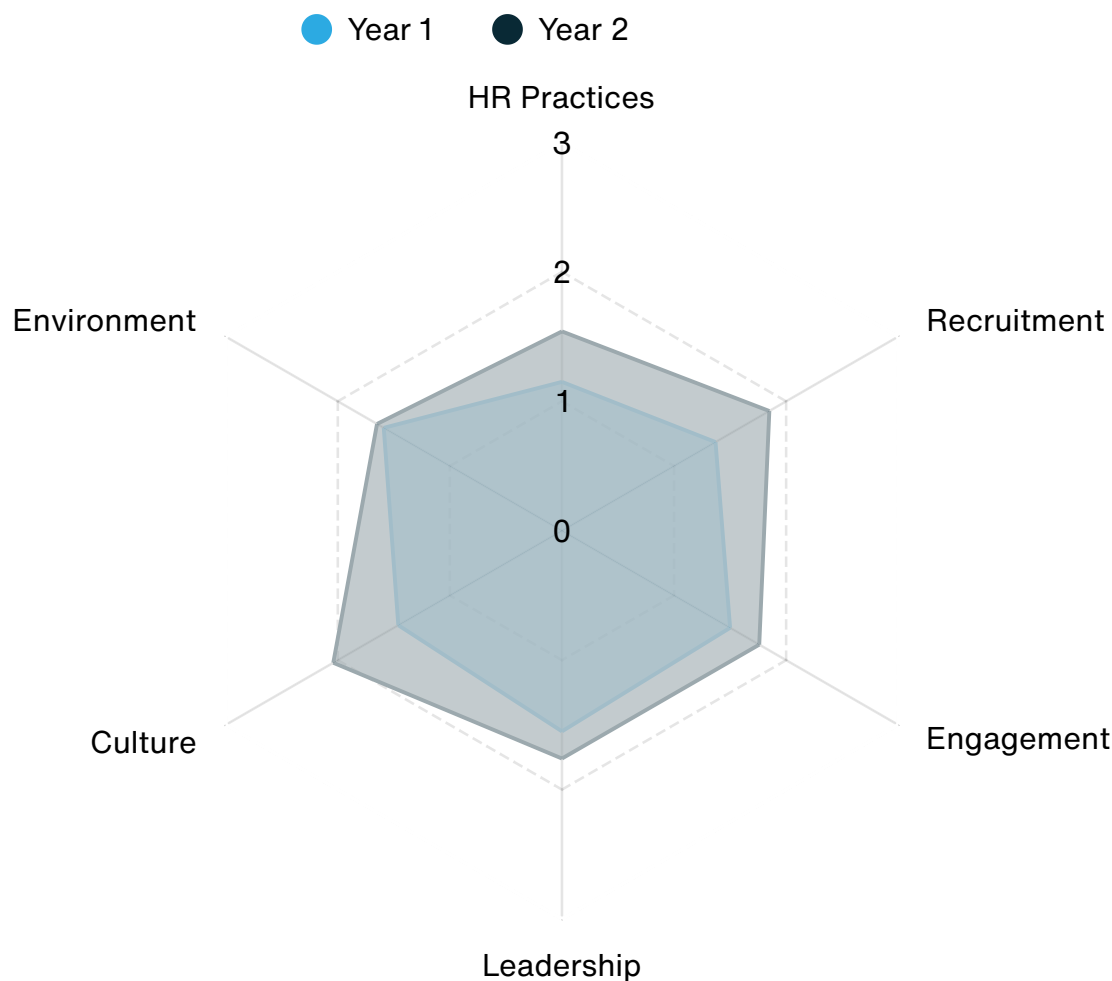
● All 2023 ● All 2024



	Culture	Engagement	Environment	HR Practices	Recruitment	Leadership
2024	1.94	1.72	1.65	1.48	1.75	1.86
2023	1.27	1.70	1.52	1.03	1.22	1.33

Above: Average score of all 2024 benchmarks compared to all 2023 benchmarks

2024 Scores



	Culture	Engagement	Environment	HR Practices	Recruitment	Leadership
Year 2 Benchmarks	2.04	1.76	1.65	1.54	1.85	1.76
Year 1 Benchmarks	1.46	1.50	1.59	1.15	1.37	1.55

Above: Average score of all second-year benchmarks compared to all first-year benchmarks

What this Means

Benchmark scores for all participants in 2024 are better than those in 2023, indicating that the industry as a whole is maturing and learning. Collaborative approaches, such as the learning shared at our monthly roundtables as well as activities taken independently of GAIN, do appear to be having a positive impact on the industry as a whole. Separately, the impact of GAIN membership and benchmark activity year-on-year also shows clear evidence of progress.

GAIN members in their second year benchmark reported spending the year focusing on one or more key recommendations made by GAIN in their company-specific benchmark reports, with some companies able to list over half a dozen separate and sizeable changes made internally. The impact of that work can clearly be seen in the scores. Many of those in their first benchmark had been GAIN members for some time before pursuing benchmarking, and benefited from collaborative sharing and recommendations made in regular corporate member round table sessions.

2024 Top Trends



COMPANY CULTURE

BIG IMPACT AND BIG WINS FOR ALL

All companies invested in activities designed to impact overall culture. For some, this meant a focus on story-sharing events for employees, to encourage broader understanding between individuals. For others, leaders, managers and other employees were given training and workshops around allyship and owning personal impact on company culture. Many took the opportunity to promote GAIN events and resources to their employees, to request GAIN support in running internal educational events as well as running their own independent projects, sharing articles written by neurodivergent colleagues, and more. Company culture became a stand-out transformational area, with noted improvements in employee perception of company inclusivity and an average culture score over 2 among companies in the second year of their benchmark.



LINE MANAGER APPROACHES

SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS

The Dunning-Kruger effect measured in 2023 was largely eliminated in 2024. In some cases, line managers showed a temporary dip in confidence compared to knowledge, consistent with entering the next stage of awareness, while in others line managers maintained confidence alongside greater awareness. The “minority of negative managers”

observed in 2023 was almost entirely eliminated, with any negative scores related to specific adjustment or recruitment scenarios being more indicative of other pressures within the company, such as return-to-office mandates. Line managers showed specific improvements in their knowledge when it came to assessing employee performance in a neuroinclusive way.



IMPROVED RECRUITMENT

YEAR 2 BENCHMARKS ESPECIALLY POSITIVE

Companies overall have worked to improve recruitment processes and experiences, with significant improvements seen among GAIN members in year 2 of their benchmark. Companies invested in HR and hiring manager training, made significant improvements to company websites to showcase company values, inclusivity, and to promote

their willingness to provide adjustments to candidates. We also saw improvements to vacancies written to help address the confidence gap, make core information on actual skills more accessible. Line managers also showed specific, significant improvements in their knowledge of how to assess candidates in neuroinclusive ways, with some specific areas that can still be improved.

2024 Top Trends



RETURN TO OFFICE

TOP-DOWN MANDATES IMPACTING SCORES

Companies overall showed notable improvements in key aspects of the working environment, such as investing in fit-for-purpose alternate spaces, reviewing the impact of foot traffic on open plan spaces and sensory-mapping of offices. However, scores did not improve significantly overall.

Employee scores indicated that poorly-designed desk-booking or open-plan processes created barriers for employees who needed specific types of work environment, and a push to return to the office created pressure on limited desk availability, especially where offices had downsized and not accounted for this in RTO mandates, leading to an aversion to “wasting” a booked desk by then utilising a quiet room or other alternate space.

Return to office mandates also impacted scores related to HR processes, workplace adjustments and line manager scores. Both line managers and HR representatives expressed a sense of being limited in their ability to approve remote-working adjustment requests, while employees were much more likely to request such adjustments.



RECRUITMENT BARRIERS

ACCESSIBILITY STILL AN ISSUE

We noted that HR teams still indicated significant gaps in the accessibility of adjustments at recruitment stage, with much more available after an offer had been made. Some companies continued to show a trend towards some knowledge and attitude gaps among HR representatives, although this has improved for others.

Salary transparency remains a specific barrier, as does anxiety expressed by some HR and line managers around the prospect of offering adjustments such as providing interview questions in advance, sharing One Page Profiles, or considering alternate interview or recruitment processes.



PARTICIPATION RATES

LOWER OVERALL BENCHMARK RESPONSE RATES

All but one participating company met or exceeded the GAIN recommended minimum participation rate for an accurate report. However, overall fewer individuals responded to member surveys in 2024 than in 2023.

Part of this is due to the size of companies surveyed - some larger members deferred their second benchmark

for a year in order to allow more time to pursue specific goals and changes internally, and GAIN surveyed some of our smallest members for the first time. However, we saw some overall reductions in employee participation across several companies. We understand that no participating company shared their company-specific published report with employees after the 2023 benchmarks, and suspect this may play a part in the outcome. We also saw more instances where the timing of benchmarks was not able to be coordinated to follow an internal company neurodiversity event promoting the benchmark, which in the past did help encourage individuals to get involved. We are reviewing the benchmark process and will work with members in 2025 to improve reporting.

Company Culture

EMPLOYEE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

We know from both our ongoing annual benchmark reports and individual member surveys that there remains a difference in overall psychological safety expressed by neurotypical and neurodivergent employees. We also know that this perception of safety is influenced by multiple factors including, but not limited to:

- The presence of visible neurodivergent role models in a company
- The presence and level of engagement of neurodiversity ERGs in the company
- Whether the individual had prior experiences of workplace mistreatment
- Whether the individual is currently open about their identity in the workplace or not
- The management approach and skills of the individual's manager

As such, psychological safety questions measure the results of multiple streams of influence, and we generally need to explore context in the individual company to make recommendations for specific action.

Employees Perception of Safety in Disclosure Yr 1

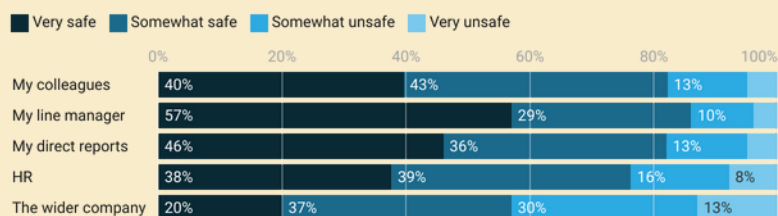


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2023/24 • Created with Datawrapper

Employees Perception of Safety in Disclosure Yr 2

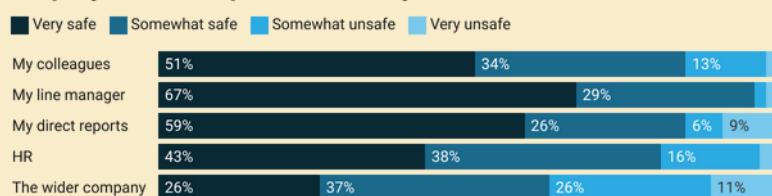


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

We asked employees how safe they would feel disclosing a new neurodivergent condition to different groups within the workplace. When comparing the responses of neurodivergent individuals in all year 1 benchmarks to those in year 2, a measurable improvement in overall reported safety can be seen. Particular improvements can be seen comparing how safe individuals feel with the prospect of disclosing to their line manager or their colleagues.

Proportion of employees who left, or considered leaving, as a result of workplace bullying and mistreatment

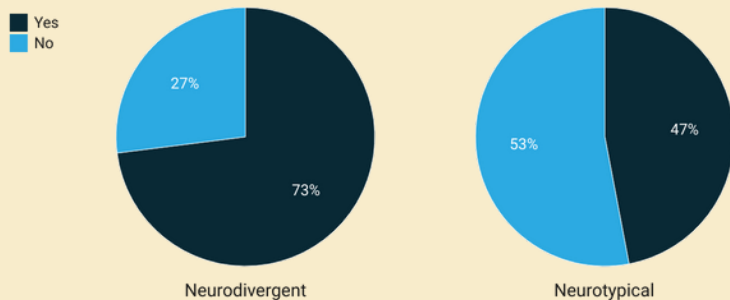


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

Proportion of employees who raised a complaint about bullying in the workplace

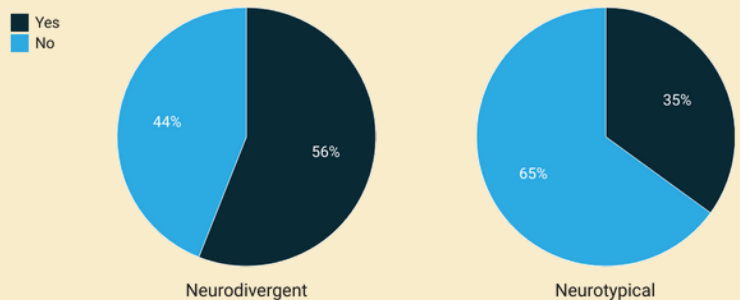


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

There remains a significant difference in how neurodivergent and neurotypical employees at companies will deal with experiences of workplace bullying, harassment and mistreatment. Overall, when asking only individuals who have direct prior experiences with bullying at work, neurodivergent employees are both more likely to have raised a complaint about past bullying and more likely to have left, or considered leaving, the workplace due to it. Neurodivergent employees, regardless of whether they had been bullied before, also expressed overall lower rates of psychological safety with the prospect of raising a complaint about bullying in the future.

Line Managers

ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS

In 2023, it was more common for GAIN member companies who undertook the benchmark to do so without having previously engaged in many neurodiversity-related internal projects. Overall attitudes trended towards inclusion, but a notable minority of line managers showed consistently negative attitudes to neurodivergent individuals and/or to offering even simple adjustments to accommodate a common support need in example scenarios.

At the same time, we noted a tendency towards overconfidence. Line managers rated themselves more knowledgeable on the topic of neurodiversity than their assessed results indicated, in some cases self-scoring themselves over 2 levels above their true position on the 4 stages of competence. 2024 results showed significant and very positive improvements.

Line Manager Support for Workplace Adjustments

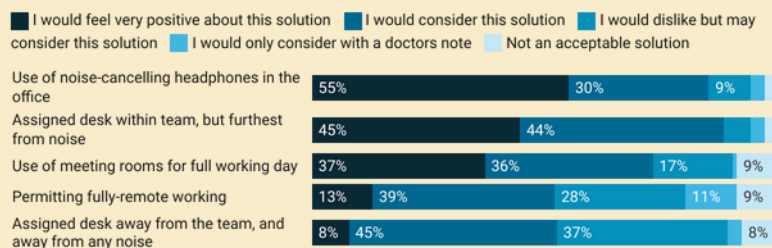


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN 2024 Public Benchmark • Created with Datawrapper

Line managers in 2024 overwhelmingly expressed positive feelings around offering a range of adjustments in example scenarios, and showed a strong willingness to make independent decisions without putting employees through stressful occupational health processes or asking for large amounts of documentation.

While we do still see around 5-9% of responses expressing concern about some adjustments, the consistently-negative minority was all but eliminated. Instead, relative differences in approach indicated that specific adjustment solutions were limited by top-down expectations in the company, or reflected the needs of specific teams. For example, sales teams that handled calls were less able to accept an adjustment related to noise-cancelling headphones, and some companies had introduced return-to-office mandates which limited line managers' ability to offer remote-working as a solution.

DUNNING-KRUGER EFFECT

One other significant change we noted among line managers in year 2 of their benchmark was a dramatic shift in their self-assessed scores. Rather than over-estimating their knowledge, line managers in companies taking their second benchmark were much more accurate in self-assessments, with some companies indicating confidence in ability was lower than measured knowledge.

This is a known step in the Dunning-Kruger effect where individuals temporarily lose confidence on the journey of learning. We recommend interactive workshops designed to encourage managers to take ownership of how they approach key scenarios.

Line Managers

UNDERLYING BELIEFS

Another questions asked of line managers was designed to indicate underlying attitudes amongst managers and their teams, by asking how they felt employees would respond to a colleague disclosing a neurodivergent condition.

Among year 2 companies, negative underlying attitudes as expressed by this question were either entirely or almost-entirely eliminated, demonstrating specific measurable improvements on those company-specific benchmark outcomes. Year 1 companies showed overall positive-leaning attitudes with evidence to indicate that some awareness-raising events and additional line manager training would be beneficial.

Line Manager's Judgement of Team Attitudes Towards Neurodivergent Colleagues Yr 1

■ My team would want to make changes to help their co-worker before
■ My team would think the same of them as before
■ My team would ignore this information
■ My team would think somewhat less of them
■ My team would be concerned about their ability to perform their role

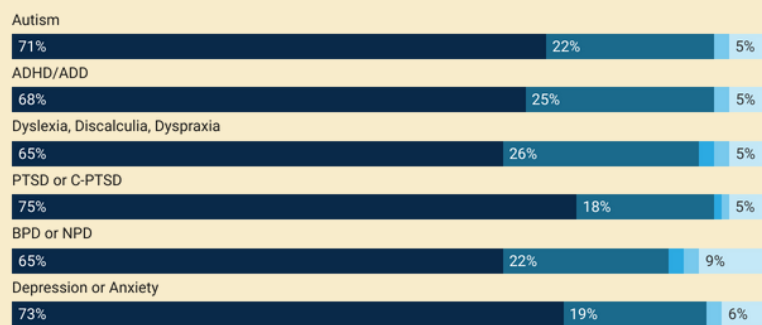


Chart: GAIN Together • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2023/24 • Created with Datawrapper

Line Manager's Judgement of Team Attitudes Towards Neurodivergent Colleagues Yr 2

■ My team would want to make changes to help their co-worker before
■ My team would think the same of them as before
■ My team would ignore this information
■ My team would think somewhat less of them
■ My team would be concerned about their ability to perform their role

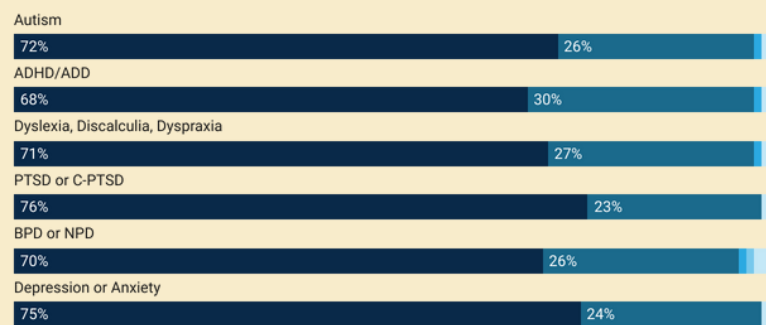


Chart: GAIN Together • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Line Managers Perception of Employee Behaviours Yr 2

A ranking of example behaviours in order of perceived relative importance

■ First ■ Second ■ Third ■ Top 5 ■ Lower

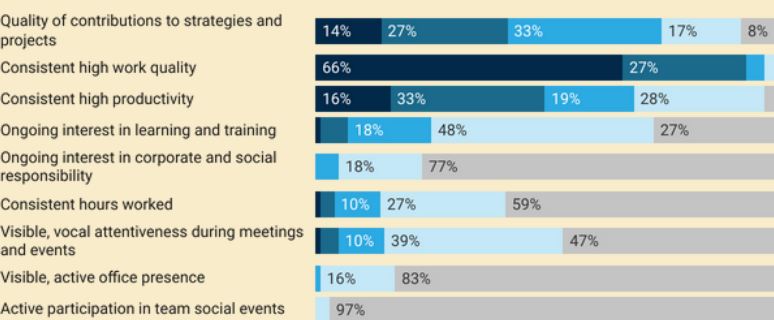


Chart: GAIN Together • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

negative performance reviews due to their neurodivergent traits being perceived negatively. For example, being told they are not a team player because they aren't visibly social in the office, or vocal during meetings.

Overall, line managers showed good results, with most prioritising true performance. We saw this particularly among year 2 companies who had pursued line manager resources and training, and story-sharing events, during the year following their first benchmark. Some companies continue to show a need to embed learning in this area, as overall 28% of line managers rated visible attentiveness in meetings in their top 3 performance measures, and around 9% ranked visible, active office presence in their top 3. GAIN are expanding our workshop offerings through 2025 to support this.

We also asked line managers how they assess employee performance, and asked them to rate the relative importance of different aspects of employee behaviour.

Note, all of these aspects of behaviour can be valid for reviewing employee performance in certain contexts, but there are some that should not be ranked as the most important compared to the rest. Respondents to the GAIN annual individual member survey 2024 highlighted why this matters - many anecdotal comments indicated that neurodivergent people face higher rates of workplace disciplinary action and

Recruitment

MEASURABLE CHANGE WITH KEY AREAS TO IMPROVE

The GAIN benchmark process includes a review of randomised samples from the careers section of members' websites, including a review both of the overall main landing pages and a selection of current open vacancies. We also include key questions directed at managers and HR employees to help build a picture of the approach used by member companies, the resources available, and the overall knowledge level of decision-makers involved in recruiting talent.

In 2023, we noted a broad range of approaches used by our members, with the recruitment score being low overall but also one of those that showed the most variation between company-specific scores. It was the only benchmark area which received scores under level 1 for any participating company, and there were few overall trends in how members approached recruitment.

Since then, GAIN has run educational events and workshops on neuroinclusive recruitment, both membership-wide in our annual Spring/Summer workshop series and one-on-one for qualifying member companies. Other members pursued independent educational content and resources through GAIN service providers or other organisations. We have also brought our members together in regular round-tables, and have seen many of the more engaged companies actively promoting and sharing their own research, projects and improvements with our community.

Some of the most significant improvements we have seen through benchmarking have been to websites and job adverts. Most members reviewed in 2024 had well-designed vacancy templates which showed improvements such as:

- Elimination of unnecessary qualification requirements, with some companies eliminating qualifications altogether except where absolutely vital
- Overall reductions in word-count, with bullet point summaries replacing large text blocks
- Differentiation between sections of the job advert
- Removal of boiler-plate and outdated job descriptions
- Reduction in "aspirational" candidate requirements focusing instead on true essentials
- Job descriptions rewritten to capture a "typical working week"
- Clarity on reporting lines and relationships between the role and connected colleagues and teams, including details about specific managers
- Explicit statements calling-in candidates from marginalised backgrounds
- Explicit statements inviting candidates to discuss adjustment needs with HR

We also noted that careers landing pages on websites were much more dynamic, accessible and practical, emphasising a desire to attract a diverse range of candidates, to foster inclusive and welcoming workplaces, and to offer flexibility in working.

The improvements seen were not universal, and in some cases we could see where recruiting managers had been taught the new expectations but had not yet mastered them, resulting in some job adverts that were less accessible than others. However, this is a training and confidence matter and therefore something companies can continue to improve.

Recruitment

LINE MANAGER AND HR TRAINING

Line Managers Perception of Candidate Behaviours

A ranking of example behaviours in order of perceived relative importance

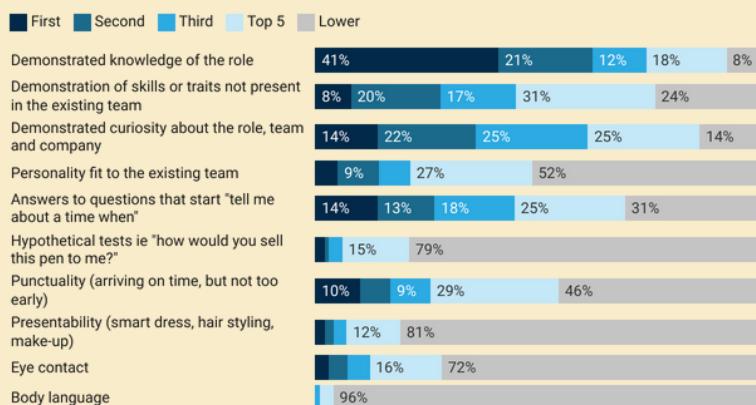


Chart: GAIN Together • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

We ask line managers how they rank aspects of candidate performance when assessing interviews, similarly to our question exploring employee performance assessments. The overall training line managers received has had an impact on their approach here, and we can see that overall most managers have good intentions. However, there is a training gap when it comes to the question of how to apply neuroinclusion to candidate assessment. Line managers rank things like punctuality, eye contact and presentability in their top 3 criteria too frequently, and do not understand that some questioning styles are particularly challenging for neurodivergent candidates.

Line Manager Support for Adjusted Recruitment

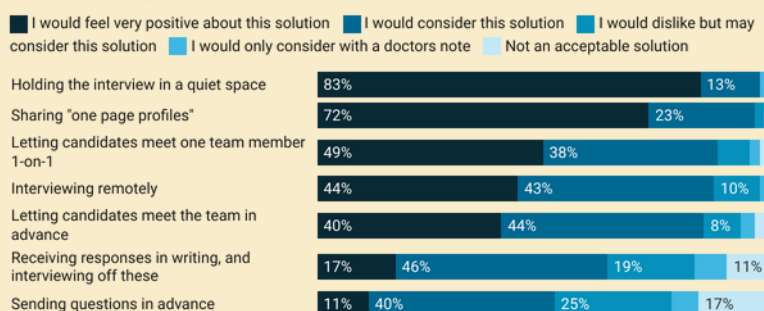


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN 2024 Public Benchmark • Created with Datawrapper

It was particularly interesting to see differences in how line managers and HR approached the prospect of adjustments at recruitment stage. Overall, Line managers expressed less favourable views around adjustments to interviewing, with particularly low opinions of adjustments to the way questions are given to candidates, such as sending questions in advance. Discussions with members following publication of their unique benchmark report revealed that many hiring managers feel nervous about changing their current interview processes, borne from a concern that adjustments may result in candidates being unfairly advantaged. A common example is the fear that offering questions in advance to some candidates, but not others, will provide some individuals a "leg up" on the process.

This is an area where further training is needed to help embed an understanding of how to adjust interviews, and to provide reassurance that a universal design-based approach will not unfairly advantage or disadvantage candidates. GAIN is committed to doing more of this and we have developed additional workshops and webinars for our members which we will continue to release through 2025.

Recruitment

LINE MANAGER AND HR TRAINING

One potential barrier to change in this area is that both line managers and HR teams expressed low awareness that their company had any inclusive recruitment training or resources available, compared to the awareness expressed towards other neurodiversity training, events and resources.

We did see that both HR and line managers expressed moderate-to-high engagement with recruitment training when they were aware of it. As such, we believe a focus on producing, running and enthusiastically promoting such resources will be effective.

Awareness of Inclusive Recruitment Training



Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

Employee Engagement with Inclusive Recruitment Training



Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

In 2023, one common reason GAIN members received lower recruitment scores was due to a lack of understanding about adjustments by HR teams, and this has persisted in 2024.

HR teams throughout continued to list very limited ranges of adjustments available prior to an offer being made to a candidate, and were less aware of resources that could be offered to candidates. Instead, the expectation seemed to be that they would be happy to receive - and then consider - adjustment requests sent by candidates on a one-on-one basis.

This seems to align with findings by Zurich's OnePoll survey in 2024, which found that only 17% of neurodivergent adults were offered adjustments unprompted when applying for a role. Given that the Zurich study also found that job offers were frequently rescinded and candidates laughed at when disclosing neurodivergence, it is important to train HR to understand why candidates are likely to feel unsafe disclosing their needs without first seeing evidence that it will be received well.

Part of GAIN's strategy through to 2027 is to build a collaborative hub for our members. Through 2024, we began launching working groups consisting of individuals from multiple GAIN member companies to discuss, design and build resources such as neurodiversity policies and "tipsheets" on specific topics. We are continuing this through 2025 with additional working groups, hackathons and other projects. A series of resources, projects and guidance around inclusive recruitment may be particularly beneficial, especially if we can help our broader membership learn from the improvements that some have successfully tested and embedded.

Zurich: Excluded from the job market - almost half forced to hide their neurodiversity

Working Environment

DIFFERENCES IN FLEXIBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

We asked employees whether they primarily worked remotely or from the office, and explored their reasons for this, and differences in experiences at different working locations. 75% of employees across all 2024 benchmarks advised that they primarily work remotely, with 25% working primarily from the office. Of those who worked remotely, 85% advised it was their personal choice and 11% advised it had been arranged as part of an agreed adjustment.

Reasons given for Primary Working Location

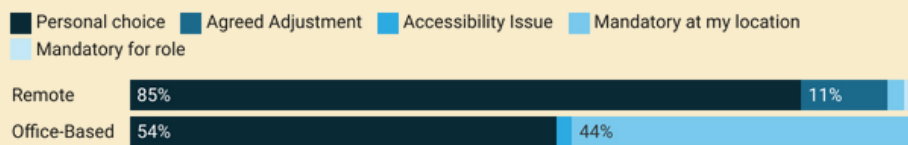


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

In contrast, only 54% of those who worked from the office stated it was their personal choice, and 44% advised it was mandatory. A small percentage worked from the office due to needing specific equipment that was not practical for their home environment.

Customisability of Workspace for Employees

Comparing office-based workers with those who primarily work remotely

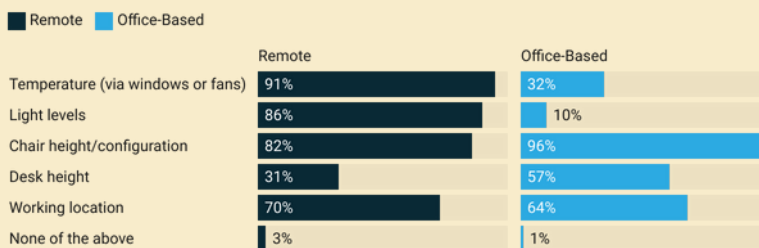


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

Flexibility of Working Environment

Comparing office-based workers with those who primarily work remotely

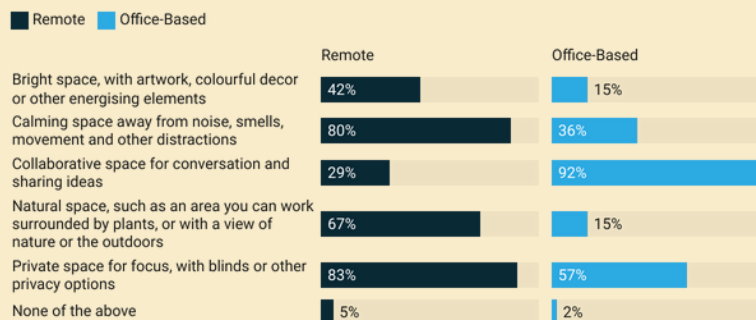


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

Office-based workers were more likely to have control over chair configuration and desk height, while remote workers had more flexibility overall, being able to configure many aspects such as lighting, temperature, desk location etc according to preference. When it came to the accessibility of different types of environment, such as the choice to work in a bright, energising space or a calming, quiet space, remote workers again had significantly more freedom of choice to work in spaces that best suited their needs.

The only type of working space that was less accessible for remote-workers was collaborative spaces. This means that office-based working is likely to be much more beneficial for leaders, decision-makers and those who engage in collaborative meetings, workshops and design or team planning activities on a daily basis, than for employees whose role requires focus, calling clients, or solo work.

Adjustment Processes

POSITIVE CHANGES IMPACTED BY RETURN TO OFFICE

Where companies had pursued return-to-office mandates, employee adjustment request rates increased with remote working, changes to working hours and changes to in-office working location being the top requested adjustments. This coincided with lower overall willingness by line managers and HR to approve such requests, and specific expressions of tension around this made by managers and HR.

Employee Satisfaction with Adjustments

Adjustments Related to Remote Working

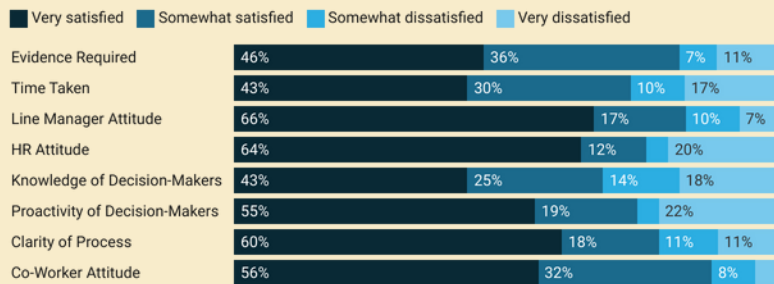


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

Employee Satisfaction with Adjustments

Adjustments Not Related to Remote Working

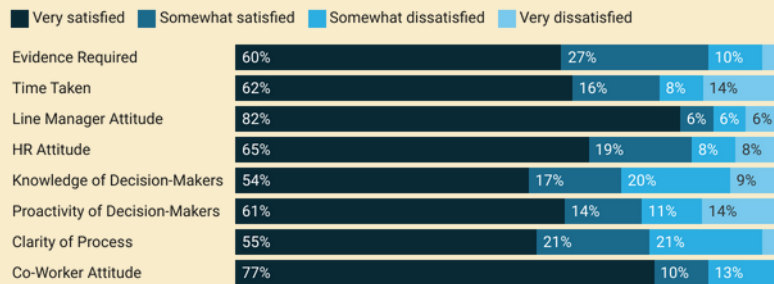


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

The 2023 public benchmark outline recommendations that members pursue improvements to their adjustment processes, including:

- developing adjustment passports
- simplifying adjustment processes
- improving resourcing for employees seeking adjustments
- reducing reliance on occupational health and on formal documentation

Companies with the resources to do so pursued a variety of changes in this area, although in some cases the changes were made relatively recently and therefore had not been embedded long enough to directly impact benchmark scores.

Adjustment approval rates overall appeared roughly the same as in 2023, with approximately 85% of reported adjustments having been fully or partially met. However, satisfaction rates were notably lower among employees whose adjustments related to remote working than those who requested any other adjustment, regardless of whether the adjustment was eventually granted.

The largest differences were seen in:

- amount of evidence employees were required to give to justify the request
- time taken to process the adjustment
- line manager attitudes to the adjustment
- co-worker attitudes to the adjustment

A common cause of anxiety around adjustments - both from employees requesting them and managers tasked with approval and implementation - is that a granted adjustment will be perceived as unfair or special treatment. It appears that where return-to-office mandates exist, line managers feel less able to approve these without additional evidence and other employees respond less favourably to seeing a colleague's adjustment being granted.

Working Environment

IMPACT OF RETURN TO OFFICE MANDATES

Where a return-to-office mandate has been issued, there are ways to make the transition easier on employees and to reduce the impact of the change on productivity, focus time, commute stress and other factors. After lockdown, many companies took the opportunity to down-size to smaller offices, or undertake refits of their existing spaces, reducing the number of desks and the size and number of meeting rooms and other spaces.

Many offices are now operating on a hybrid basis, and some return-to-office mandates are specifying minimum numbers of days per week or month in the office. As a result, employees are being asked to travel to the office more often without having increased the availability of desk spaces. We asked all employees how desks are assigned on the occasions they attend the office.

Assignment of Desks in Nearest Office

Comparing responses from office-based workers to those who work remotely

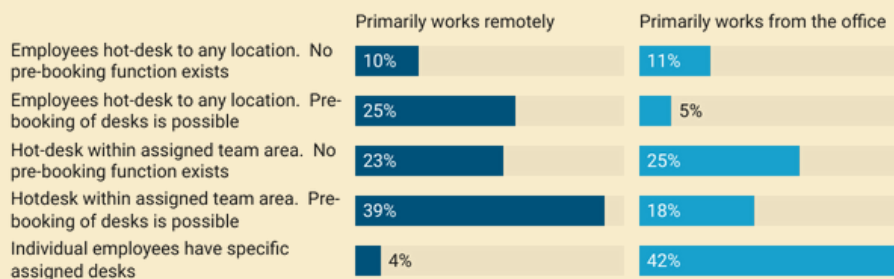


Chart: GAINtogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

The most common arrangements overall were:

- Hot-desking within an assigned team area, with a pre-booking function (33%)
- Hot-desking within an assigned team area, no pre-booking function (23%)
- Hot-desking to any location, with a pre-booking function (20%)

Very few employees who primarily work remotely reported having access to an assigned desk on the occasion they visited the office, but it was by far the most common arrangement among employees who primarily work from the office. This seems logical, as the provision of an assigned desk affords employees more control over their working space, may mitigate or compensate for some of the numerous downsides to office-working for the average employee and may be an effective incentive to increase employee willingness to return to the office.

We understand that some roles require office-based working, and many companies have expressed that specific business needs are driving top-down mandates to encourage more employees to work from the office. While remote working is very popular, with 100% of respondents to the GAIN individual member survey in 2024 recording it as important, very important or non-negotiable when applying for a role, there are some individuals for whom office-based working is more suitable, or simply unavoidable for their role.

We noted an additional source of tension. Employees expressed increased anxiety around the prospect of utilising the alternative spaces when working in the office. Individual comments indicated that reduced availability of desks, and hotdesk booking pressures, all made employees feel guilt over using a limited resource (standard desk allocation) by utilising focus rooms and other alternate spaces.

Employee Engagement

NO OVERALL IMPROVEMENT, BUT PROGRESS IN INDIVIDUAL COMPANIES

GAIN members in year 2 of their benchmark undertook a variety of projects through 2023/2024, dependent on the specific recommendations made in their company-specific reports. However, every company pursued an engagement campaign of some sort, whether this formed the primary focus for their work that year or was just one part of a larger campaign of projects and activities.

Some of the companies in year 2 saw significant growth overall in their engagement score, with one in particular starting close to a score of 1 in 2023, now set to potentially achieve level 2 in engagement by end 2025. However, companies taking their first benchmark in 2024 had lower engagement scores, and some companies experienced significant decreases in employee participation of the benchmark, which necessitated caution when measuring engagement in particular. The aggregate result is that, in spite of significant progress by individual year 2 companies, overall scores across the wider membership have not changed materially.

To summarise the specific trends that contributed to this result:

- Companies in Year 1 of the benchmark saw their highest engagement scores from HR and ERG employees, with employee engagement scoring the lowest
- Companies in Year 2 of the benchmark saw the highest engagement scores from line managers and HR, with employee engagement scores increasing moderately, but saw significantly lower engagement from ERG representatives
- Companies which did not publicise or share their year 1 benchmark results with employees saw significantly lower participation rates in year 2
- Companies which did not precede their benchmark with a neurodiversity-related event that announced the benchmark saw lower participation rates
- ERG representatives overall either have low awareness of any monitoring of employee engagement with the work they do, or are not measuring engagement at all
- ERG representatives had very mixed views of overall engagement of other employees, with scores varying significantly from one company to the next and evidence of a confidence gap around delivering on commitments
- Ensuring survey engagement among ERG representatives was a challenge for some companies

ERG representatives play a crucial part in delivering the objectives laid out in our benchmark and in company inclusivity goals in general, and in most cases undertake this work voluntarily alongside their day-to-day work. Maintaining motivation among this group is vital, as is recognising the effort involved in balancing this. We recommend that companies start building engagement metrics and success measures into ERG projects, and ensuring that any positive movement is highlighted and celebrated.

Employee voice is a vital part of creating motivated workplaces, and the same is true when it comes to participation in surveys and avoiding survey burnout. We recommend that all member companies consider publicising at least partial data around their benchmarks, including celebrating successes and sharing the plans they develop as a result, to help employees feel as though their participation in both the benchmark and neurodiversity initiatives in general is worthwhile.

Employee Engagement

EVENT PROMOTION CHANNELS TO BE REVIEWED

A review of benchmark survey results in 2024 indicates that engagement with neurodiversity events and initiatives is likely impacted by differences in overall awareness of such resources.

Employee Awareness of Neurodiversity Events

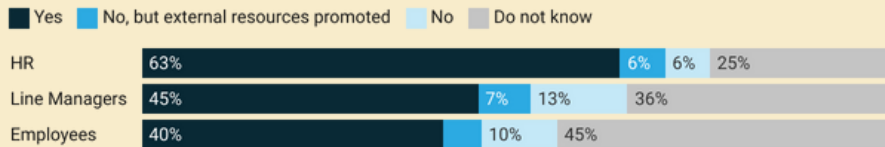


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

Employee Engagement with Neurodiversity Events

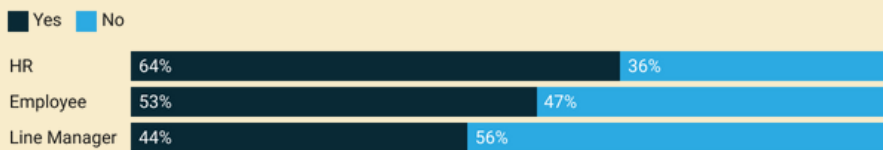


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

While employees overall showed slightly lower engagement with neurodiversity-related events and initiatives than line managers and HR, their engagement rates were still reasonable with over 50% of employees who knew of such resources reporting having utilised them.

However, both line managers and employees were significantly less likely to be aware of either events or resources than HR representatives.

With hybrid working as the new normal, employees are less likely to have specific assigned desks, and overall less likely to attend the office in any given week. As such, some methods of advertising events and resources are likely to be less effective, such as:

- Printed posters displayed in canteens, social spaces or on desks
- Word of mouth promotion in conversation with colleagues
- Advertising at regular office socials
- Utilising office socials as avenues to promote neurodiversity themes

At the same time, many offices with active ERGs avoid using all-employee communication channels to promote events out of concern that employees may become overwhelmed by excessive communication. This means that in some cases, only the employees who actively seek out and subscribe to alerts from an ERG will know an event is taking place.

GAIN recommends that companies explore new ways to promote events and initiatives. Where senior leaders are highly engaged, they should be utilised to communicate and share news of events with managers, and managers in turn should be encouraged to use any existing all-hands meetings to ensure employee awareness of the resources their teams may want to explore.

Leadership Impact

AWARENESS GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED

Employee Perception of Leadership Engagement with Neurodiversity

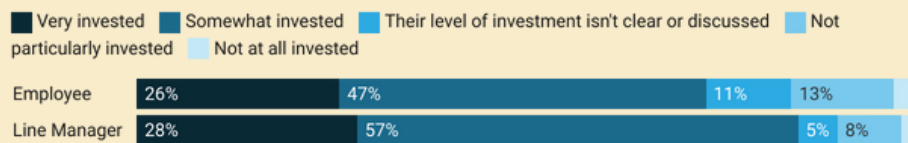


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

Both employees and line managers expressed reasonably high rates of perception that senior leadership cared about neurodiversity in the workplace, and expressed similar beliefs that engaging in DEI in the workplace would have a positive impact on how leadership viewed them as individuals. However, employees were significantly less likely to be aware of any specific activities that senior leaders in the company had engaged in, such as:

- speaking at events
- leading on or sponsoring specific initiatives
- speaking openly about personal experiences with neurodiversity

Employee Awareness of Leadership Engagement

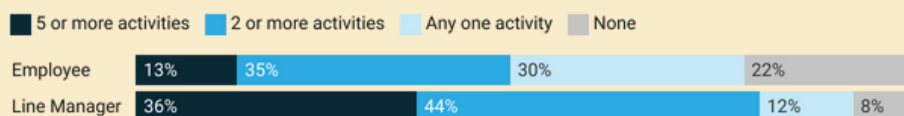


Chart: GAINTogether • Source: GAIN Public Benchmark 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

The GAIN Individual Member Survey 2024 showed that employees who could identify neurodivergent role models in positions of seniority, from senior leaders to middle managers, were significantly more likely to express feelings of psychological safety, perceived the workplace as more inclusive, and were less likely to plan to leave the industry. The awareness gap of employees compared to line managers is worth addressing, and we recommend specifically utilising the relatively high awareness of line managers for this where possible, while creating new avenues for awareness where necessary.

All the data GAIN gathers in benchmarks and surveys indicates that managers are the keystone of psychological safety and inclusion in the workplace. Where the manager is well informed and trained, adjustment and disclosure outcomes are improved. Where the manager has a positive and caring attitude to neurodiversity, psychological safety increases. Where managers engage on neurodiversity, employees follow.

Managers who stand out in a company as being particularly skilled in this area should be encouraged to take an ambassadorial approach, opening avenues of communication between their teams and leaders. We recommend investing in drop-in sessions and round-tables to enable employees to engage directly with leaders, and giving the stand-out managers opportunities to show leadership through speaking both with their peers in management and to employees outside their own teams about neurodiversity. We will also encourage managers to run neurodiversity training and empathy-mapping activities with their teams, to both embed confidence and learning in managers and create space for active engagement and conversation with employees.

What Next?

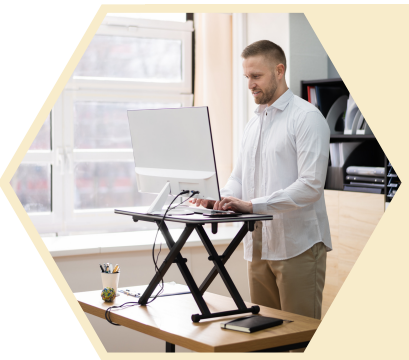
Based on the 2024 benchmark results, our 2024 individual member survey report, and data collected from other research, we recommend companies invest resources in the following areas:



WORKING ENVIRONMENT

- Review desk allocation methods - consider offering allocated desks where a majority return-to-office is required. Where hot-desking is necessary, ensure desk booking functions allow advance pre-booking and review office norms to ensure employees still feel able to utilise other office spaces.
- Consider team function, day-to-day workload and business needs in balance. Rather than an all-office mandate, consider prioritising by team role and purpose.
- Check in with remote-working employees. If budgets for adjustable chairs and desks are available, ensure employees know how to access these.

GAIN is pursuing relationships with potential service provider partners able to perform detailed office layout reviews with a neuroinclusive and universal design framework. Details will be available soon.



WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS

- Continue to develop and monitor adjustment passports, at-will access routes and adjustment approval processes for accessibility and take-up. Monitor request rates and the most requested adjustments - can changes be made to the workplace to build these in as standard?
- Train managers and HR. Ensure they understand that utilising more formal processes as a means of discouraging requests that go against office-wide mandates is inappropriate, decreases employee wellbeing and may conflict with the Equalities Act. Where the request reflects a need related to disability or neurodivergence, the Act prevails, regardless of company policies.

GAIN service provider partners who offer adjustment passports and employee needs profiling include Diversity & Ability, Do-It Solutions and Cognassist. GAIN service provider partners who offer neurodiversity-specialised occupational health support include Krysalis OT.



ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION

- If pursuing benchmarking - whether through GAIN or a third party - utilise resources to promote the benchmark before, during and after. GAIN members at Foundation Plus and Industry Transformer level are entitled to multiple internal events, and can use this allowance towards a pre-benchmark promotional event, or a post-benchmark event announcing results and planned activities.
- Review how events, training and resources are promoted to employees in a hybrid work environment. Can employees and managers be encouraged to act as ambassadors to share learning and announcements? What method of sharing is the most accessible for employees?

What Next?



RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

- Pursue training of managers and HR through GAIN or our service provider partners. Consider training specifically to include;
 - adjustments and accessibility of interview practices
 - modifications to questioning styles and techniques
 - affinity bias and the double empathy problem
 - neuroinclusive candidate assessment
- Salary transparency remains a top priority for candidates, and is beneficial for ensuring confidence in the fairness of recruitment decisions. Consider including at least salary band ranges for roles in job adverts

GAIN runs industry-wide educational workshops throughout the year including workshops focused on recruitment, and corporate members each have an additional annual entitlement to internal events run by GAIN. Other resources for recruitment training and resourcing can be obtained from GAIN service provider partners including [Diversita](#), [ENNA CIC](#), [Rangam Consultants](#), [AS Mentoring](#) and [Auticon](#).



LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

- Promote the activities of leaders who engage in neurodiversity-related initiatives using channels that employees of all levels can access
- Encourage neurodivergent leaders and managers to act as ambassadors and be visible role models to employees
- Set aside time for drop-in sessions, round-tables and all-employee town halls where employees can speak directly with leaders, specifically focusing on agendas that promote neuroinclusion



BENCHMARKING AND MONITORING

- For Foundation Plus and Industry Transformer members, consider booking your benchmark with GAIN for 2025, in order to receive detailed feedback on the strengths and road-blocks unique to your company, especially to help uncover specific recommendations to improve employee psychological safety
- Consider developing monitoring processes internally to measure key gaps such as neurodivergent salary gaps, the impact of diversity on productivity, and other metrics. GAIN will include consideration of such measures in benchmarks going forward.
- Liaise with GAIN and the wider community at round-tables to discuss research and data-gathering that could be run with support from GAIN and others.



A ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

- To replicate the success of companies in their second year of benchmarking, pursue transformation in sustainable ways that build from core activities
 - Prioritise culture and employee wellbeing early, with story-sharing and awareness-raising activities
 - Develop internal communities through ERGs and GAIN membership to encourage reciprocal communication
 - Engage leaders and managers to act as ambassadors and role models for neurodiversity
 - Train managers and HR, and look for quick-win policy change possibilities to simplify adjustment processes



Many of the recommendations made in this report focus on activities that GAIN can readily support you with, or which we feel confident you could pursue independently either with some guidance from GAIN or through collaborative work with our other members.

Some of the recommendations we have made would be best supported by a third party organisation. Where these more complex or specialised activities are concerned, we are happy to help advise about organisations we know who may be able to assist, although you are of course free to work with any organisation you feel comfortable engaging.

The benchmark pilot was developed by GAIN in 2022 with feedback from Krysalis OT, an occupational therapy provider specialising in neurodiverse employees, and Diversity & Ability, an inclusion and diversity specialist with experience in creating inclusive cultures. The benchmark has since been further developed as a result of data gathered from completed benchmark surveys and other surveys produced by GAIN, and relaunches in 2025 with a more comprehensive design.

The benchmark reviews the aims of a member company seeking to develop a more neuroinclusive work environment and hire neurodiverse candidates, and provides a roadmap towards meeting their goals in a strategic and evidence-based way.

Through a continuous loop of planning, feedback, relationship management and reassessment, we can give companies robust advice and a sense of ownership and accountability over their neuroinclusivity goals, as well as showcasing a history of improvement and an honest review of what is and isn't working.

GAIN