



UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF NEURODIVERGENT EMPLOYEES IN THE INVESTMENT AND SAVINGS INDUSTRY

NEURODIVERSITY EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESULTS 2023

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UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF NEURODIVERGENT EMPLOYEES IN THE INVESTMENT AND SAVINGS INDUSTRY

During the summer, the Diversity Project conducted our second annual survey of neurodivergent individuals working in the investment and savings industry. Our objective is to better understand their experiences, provide useful insight to those individuals on how those experiences compare with others, and help improve the understanding of our member firms and the industry overall. This coincides with the objectives of our workstream which are:

- To raise awareness of neurodiversity;
- To support the business case for employing neurodivergent individuals;
- To create a safe space for neurodivergent individuals to talk and share their experiences; and
- To support employers to become more neurodiverse.

This year, we received almost 300 responses, more than double the amount in our inaugural survey in 2022. While still a relatively small sample size, the higher number of responses this year provides valuable insight into the views and experiences of neurodiverse employees.

This report provides the key takeaways, the full findings and guidance to firms looking at becoming more neuroinclusive.



THE RESPONDENTS



Ninety per cent of respondents work in savings and investments or other financial services (74 per cent were based in UK, 15 per cent in North America, and the rest in Europe and Asia).

Fifty-six per cent of the responses came from women, 38 per cent from men, and five per cent from individuals who identified as trans or non-binary.

Just less than one third of replies each came from those in their 20s, 30s and 40s, with a much smaller number in their 50s and 60s.

Amongst our respondents, many associated with more than one condition (average 1.6 per person). The most common are ADHD (55 per cent); autism/autism spectrum (52 per cent); dyslexia (24 per cent); dyspraxia (ten per cent); Asperger's (nine per cent); and other answers been given by 18 per cent (including OCD, ADD, dyscalculia, anxiety and depression).

Overall, 74 per cent of our respondents have received a formal diagnosis.

Which named conditions do you associate with?

ADHD	55%
Autism/Autism spectrum	52%
Dyslexia	24%
Dyspraxia	10%
Asperger's	9%
Other	18%

The responses exceed 100% as some neurodivergent individuals associate with more than one condition

DISCLOSURE, RECRUITMENT AND DISABILITY



of those asked have disclosed their neurodiversity to their employer

Of those who have disclosed, two thirds described either a mildly or very supportive response, with a quarter receiving a neutral response. Disappointingly, ten per cent received an unhelpful response from their employers.

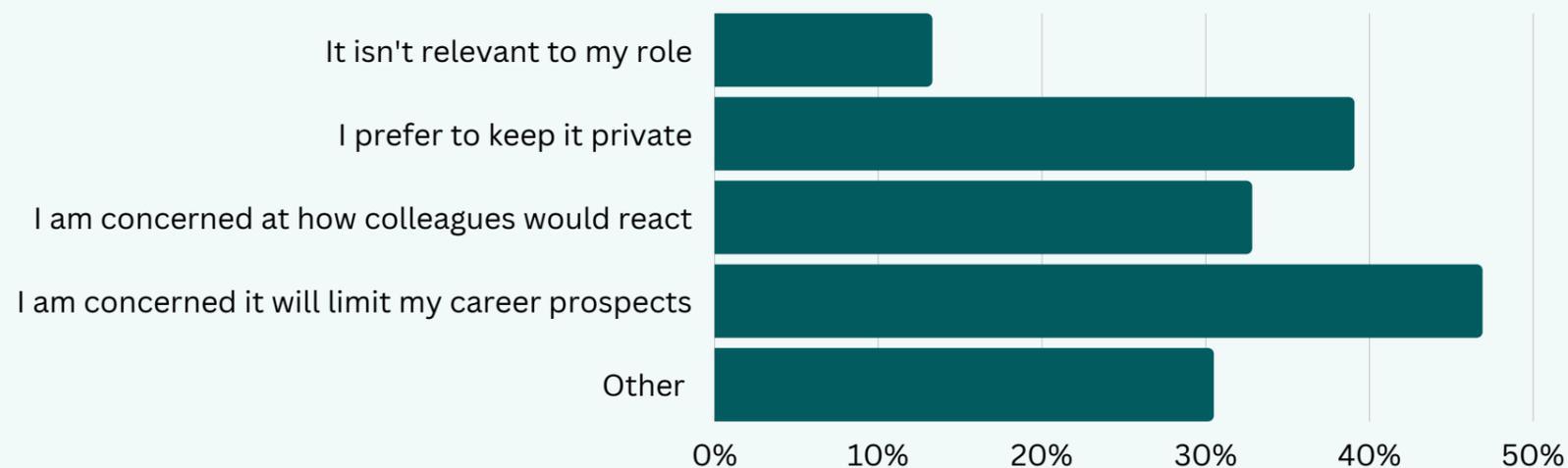
For those who have not disclosed, the main reasons include: concern about it limiting career prospects (47 per cent), preferring to keep it private (39 per cent); and concern about colleagues' potential reaction (33 per cent).

The majority of respondents (55 per cent) said their neurodivergence had caused difficulties finding employment in the past.

Some of the main reasons include difficulties with the application or interview process, communication within the job and also during the hiring process, organisation and time management, and feeling like job opportunities are missed due to struggles with networking.



of those surveyed consider neurodiversity a disability



Key themes of how neurodivergence benefits respondent's roles:

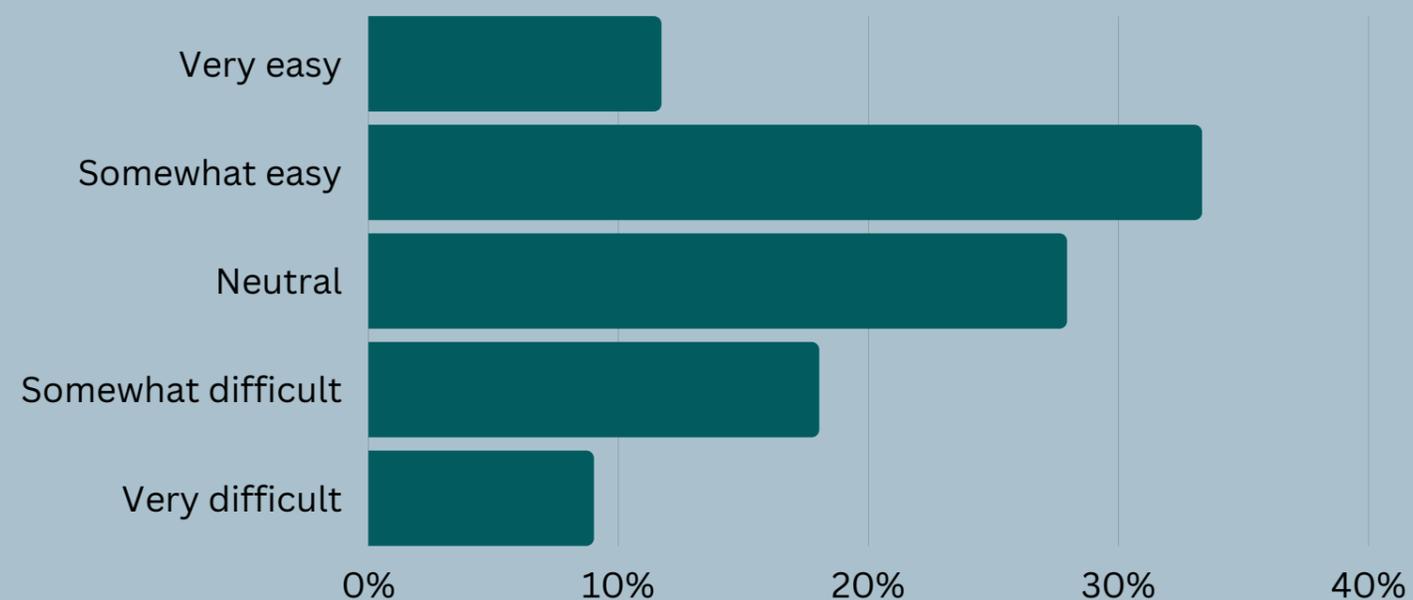
- The ability to think outside the box/problem solving
- Hyper-focus/intense focus on things of interest
- Increased empathy and understanding (helps with both client relationships and work relationships)
- Attention to detail
- Creativity
- The ability to notice patterns and connections between things that others may not
- Being able to work on multiple projects at once and switch between tasks.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

One third of our respondents have asked for reasonable adjustments at work. Some of the main adjustments requested include:

- Physical changes to working space (e.g. bright lights removed from above cubicle, or a cubicle put around desk)
- More time to record/write notes
- Flexible working hours/working from home
- Noise-cancelling headphones
- Clear feedback/instructions/expectations (written if possible)
- Assistive technology/software (e.g. audio transcription software or software to help with organisation)
- A fixed/permanent desk

However, only half of the requests for adjustments were approved. Even where approval was given, a third of respondents stated adjustments were difficult to achieve.



Around half of employers were described as supportive or very supportive, 40 per cent “neutral”, and five per cent unsupportive. Similar responses were given for the supportiveness of work colleagues.

WHAT CHANGES OUR RESPONDENTS WANT TO SEE



When asked what “one change” the industry might make to be more supportive of neurodivergent colleagues, we received a wide range of responses, including:

- Increased awareness and education
- More emphasis on the positives of employing neurodiverse employees
- Manager training
- Greater flexibility with hybrid/remote working
- Quiet working spaces/workplaces designed with neurodiversity in mind
- Cultural change
- Open communication about individuals’ experiences and needs
- Clear communication
- Greater focus on performance rather than ‘qualities’ like networking
- Changes to recruitment process (interviews, job adverts, more neurodivergent interviewers),
- Improved access to specialist software
- Addressing incorrect stereotypes
- Encouragement and support for people to disclose

We also received responses relating to issues of intersectionality, for example between neurodiversity and gender or race or sexuality.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR EMPLOYERS

Neurodiversity is complex, with many aspects often unique to an individual, requiring care and attention from colleagues and employers. Employers should especially note only just over half of the respondents had disclosed their neurodiversity. Companies almost certainly employ far more neurodiverse employees than they realise. With half of our respondents not considering their neurodivergence as a disability, questions asking candidates if they are disabled are unlikely to “capture” those that need adjustments and support.

Employers can also do more to recognise the benefits, the unique skills and ways of thinking of neurodiverse individuals can bring to the workplace – and consider how these can be best realised. One option to do this would be to make the process of asking for, and then receiving, reasonable adjustments easier and more inclusive than it is currently. Employers, D&I teams, line managers and all those who work in the industry can also read the suggestions of neurodiverse people who work in this industry about what could make their working lives better, and think about what they can do to make these things happen in their own organisation.



KEY NEXT STEPS FOR THE DIVERSITY PROJECT TEAM



The main points stand that out for us within the Diversity Project Team:

- Clearly our respondents want change, and we will look to support them by sharing these findings and encouraging all firms to think hard and work hard to make improvements in this area. We will be providing resources for employers to support this goal, including providing blogs, case studies and articles, and by showcasing the good work that firms have already started;
- In particular we will be encouraging all organisations to think about how they can make the process of requesting and receiving reasonable adjustments much simpler, more effective, less stressful, and more inclusive for all;
- We also aim to highlight the intersection between neurodiversity and other DP workstreams, especially concerning issues to do with Mental health and Disabilities;
- And finally, whilst 300 responses is a big increase on last year, we know there are many more neurodiverse colleagues out there, so we will renew our efforts to encourage more of them to share their stories where they feel they can, and to provide us with more feedback next year, when we hold our third survey.



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