




20 STATE OF
WORKPLACE
24 EMPATHY


The State of DEIB

**Belonging and Connectedness Plummet
Despite Employees Citing Greater
Awareness of Corporate DEIB Initiatives**



Table of Contents

The DEIB Disconnect: Greater Awareness of Corporate Diversity Efforts Isn't Translating into Workplace Belonging and Connectedness 3 

Feelings of Connectedness and Belonging Plummet While Mental Health Issues and Toxicity Climb 4 

2024 Wins and Woes of Corporate DEIB Programming 7 

DEIB Wins: 'A' for effort. Employees rate companies with DEIB initiatives highly 8 

Real progress falls short despite perceived increase in corporate DEIB programming efforts 9 

6 Strategies to Maximize Your DEIB Impact 11 

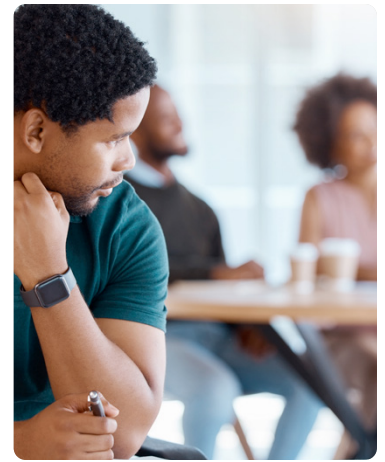
Putting Empathy into Action for Better DEIB Outcomes 12 



The DEIB Disconnect

Greater Awareness of Corporate Diversity Efforts Isn't Translating into Workplace Belonging and Connectedness

Our 2024 [State of Workplace Empathy](#) findings show feelings of belonging and connectedness have plummeted year-over-year (YOY) among the 3,100 employees, HR professionals, and CEOs surveyed in this year's report—despite reporting that corporate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) initiatives have largely become more visible.



Belonging and Connectedness Plummet Despite Greater Awareness for Corporate DEIB Efforts

	Employees	HR Professionals	CEOs
Due to DEIB efforts, I feel like I belong	↓ 65% -14 points YOY	↓ 78% -10 points YOY	↓ 88% -8 points YOY
Due to DEIB efforts, I feel connected to my peers	↓ 62% -17 points YOY	↓ 79% -5 points YOY	↓ 86% -10 points YOY
My company has DEIB initiatives	↑ 55% +12 points YOY	↑ 60% +5 points YOY	↑ 74% +13 points YOY
DEIB initiatives have become more visible at my company	↑ 68% +6 points YOY	↑ 81% +11 points YOY	= 86% no change

The data points are contradictory: Awareness for DEIB initiatives should lead to increased connectedness and belonging among employees, yet data shows the opposite trend—accompanied by steep declines in employees and CEOs who say they can be their authentic selves at work, -9 and -8 points respectively.

A sense of belonging, connectedness, and the ability for employees to bring their whole unique selves to work are essential building blocks for healthy workplace culture and mental wellbeing. But right now, HR leaders and DEIB teams have their work cut out. **The double-digit declines in belonging and connectedness coincide with a rise in mental health issues and perceived workplace toxicity:** 55% of CEOs (+24 points from 2023) and 50% of employees cite experiencing a mental health issue in the past year. Half of CEOs and 35% of employees likewise say their company culture is toxic.

It's clear the state of DEIB is on delicate footing, particularly in a highly charged social and political environment. **"It's incumbent upon leaders to develop strategies that promote measured DEIB effectiveness during this polarized and divided time when a sense of community and connection is sorely lacking. This is possible, even in a time of disinvestment,"** says Lisa Alvarado, Managing Director at [Holistic](#), a DEIB and People Experience consultancy.













Feelings of Connectedness and Belonging Plummet While Mental Health Issues and Toxicity Climb



When individuals feel appreciated, and better yet celebrated, for their unique selves, they're more likely to experience a sense of community and inclusion at work, undoubtedly contributing to mental wellbeing. On the other hand, experiencing feelings of isolation, inequality, exclusion, and disrespect can negatively impact mental health and fuel workplace toxicity. This year's data shows declining perceptions of belongingness, connectedness, and authentic selves coinciding with a rise in mental health issues and workplace toxicity among some groups.

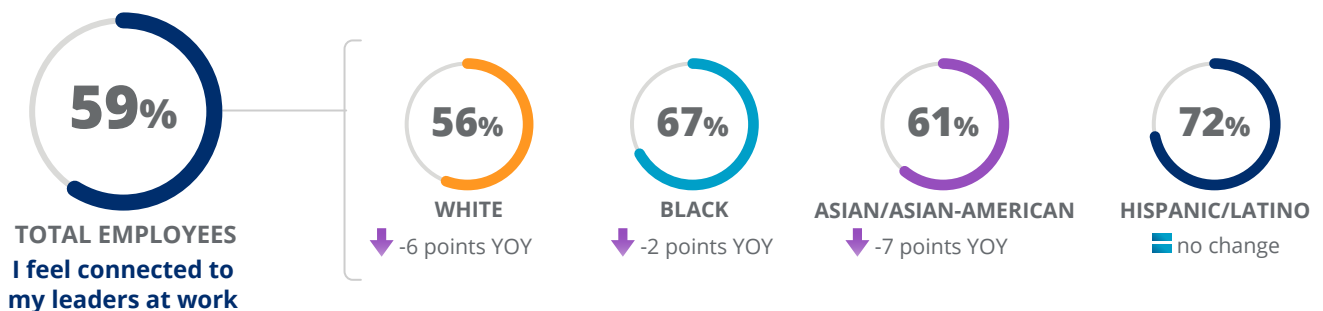
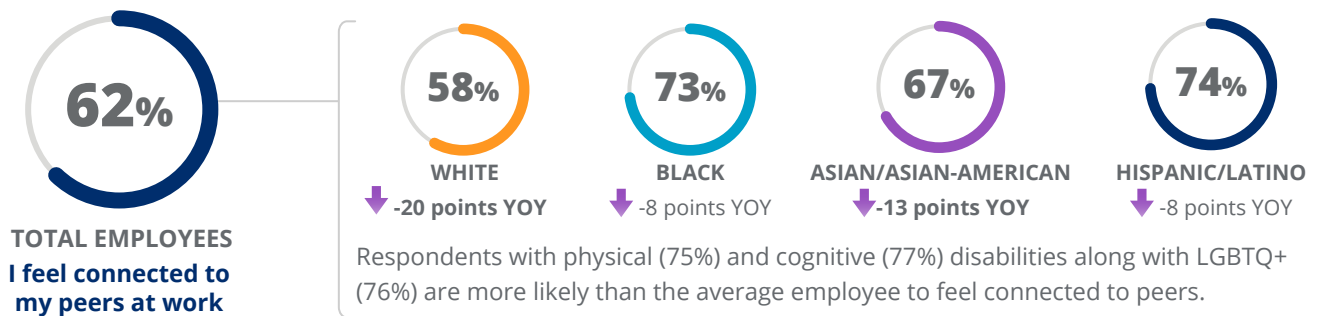
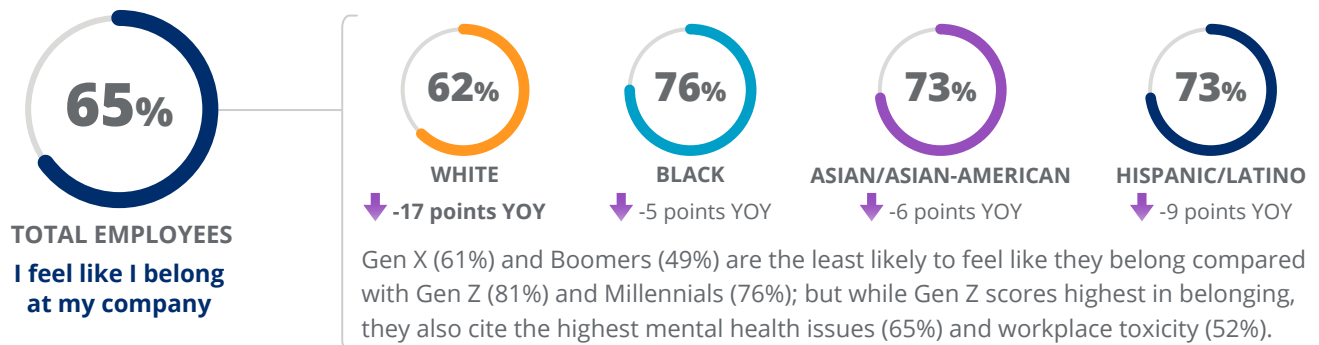
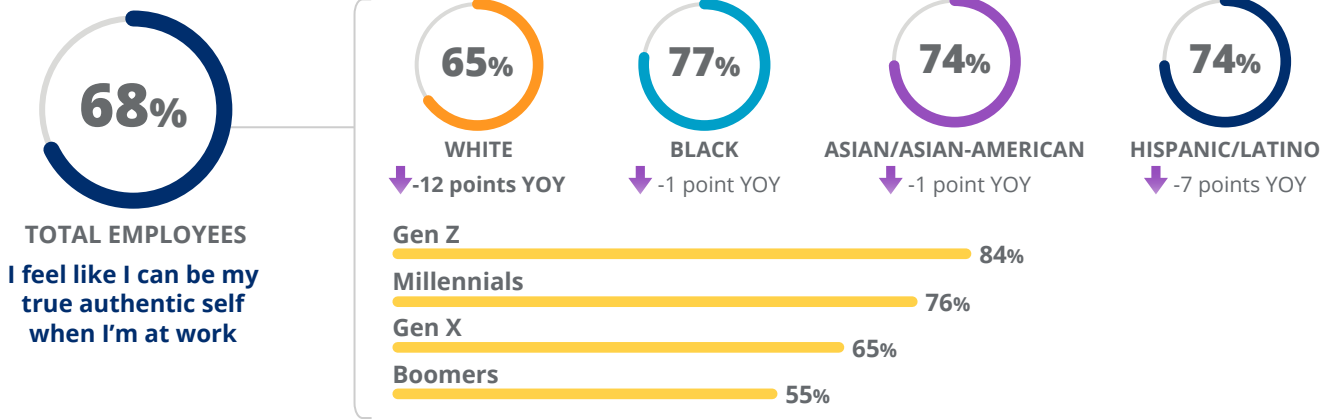
Mental Health Issues and Workplace Toxicity Have Spiked Among CEOs and Held Steady for Employees While Coinciding With Decreases or Below-Average Feelings of Belonging and Connectedness

	CEOs	Employees
I have experienced a mental health issue in the past year	 55% +24 points YOY	 50%
My company culture is toxic	 52% +10 points YOY	 35% +4 points YOY
I feel connected to my peers	 86% -10 points YOY	 62% -17 points YOY
I feel like I belong	 88% -8 points YOY	 65% -14 points YOY
I feel like I can be my true authentic self	 85% -8 points YOY	 68% -9 points YOY

Ethnicity Matters







Overall, Black and Hispanic/Latino employees are the most likely groups to feel DEIB initiatives contribute to a greater sense of belonging, connectedness, and authentic self. They are also the most likely to feel connected to their leaders at work. Age, however, may be the most significant factor in perceptions of authentic self, belonging, and connectedness.

Due to the DEIB initiatives at my company...



Industry Matters

Government employees are the least likely to cite that they can be their authentic selves (43%), that they belong (39%), feel connected to their peers (41%), and even fewer feel connected to their leaders (29%). That's a 47-point disparity compared with Financial Services employees, 76% of which say they feel connected to their leaders.

Due to DEIB initiatives at my company...	 Government	 Healthcare	 Hospitality	 Manufacturing	 Technology	 Financial Services
I feel like I can be my true authentic self when I'm at work	43% ↓ -39 points YOY	60% ↓ -15 points YOY	65% ↓ -27 points YOY	66% ↓ -9 points YOY	74% ↓ -14 points YOY	85% = no change
I feel like I belong at my company	39% ↓ -42 points YOY	56% ↓ -29 points YOY	71% ↓ -19 points YOY	63% ↓ -7 points YOY	78% ↓ -16 points YOY	80% ↓ -11 points YOY
I feel connected to my peers at work	41% ↓ -40 points YOY	54% ↓ -30 points YOY	41% ↓ -53 points YO	57% ↓ -23 points YOY	68% ↓ -27 points YOY	78% ↓ -13 points YOY
I feel connected to my leaders at work	29% ↓ -37 points YOY	50% ↓ -18 points YOY	53% ↓ -33 points YOY	51% ↓ -13 points YOY	67% ↓ -30 points YOY	76% ↓ -13 points YOY



Belonging has emerged as a key area of focus among companies from all industries, locations, and sizes. By centering efforts around this key area, organizations have been able to tie DEIB efforts directly to a critical business goal: retaining a highly energetic and successful workforce.

– Tom Alexander, Founder and CEO, Holistic, a DEIB and People Experience Consultancy

2024 Wins and Woes of Corporate DEIB Programming

While reports in the media show DEIB divestment among some high-profile companies, data points to these cases being outliers versus the norm. According to a recent survey by Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals, the vast majority of corporate social impact professionals in 125 major companies say DEIB commitments have either stayed the same (83%) or increased (13%). Yet despite increased awareness for corporate DEIB initiatives—and more credit being given to companies and leaders alike for their efforts—the majority of respondents still feel their companies should be doing more to foster DEIB. With many companies focused on efficiency and lean operations, leaders must ensure their DEIB dollars are strategically invested to produce measurable outcomes.


“


They talk a lot about [DEIB] within the company. I think it's something they focus a lot on. And I can see the changes within the last 5 years or so have been pretty strong.


– Employee interview,
2024 State of
Workplace Empathy

»»» Skip to page 10 for your go-to strategy.

Encouraging Wins on the DEIB Front:

 **87% of HR Professionals** (+10 points YOY) say it's easier to recruit a more diverse workforce in a hybrid or remote workplace.

 **83% of CEOs** say an equitable and inclusive culture is harder to maintain in a hybrid or remote workplace—while still high, this sentiment has dropped 10 points since 2022. This belief is lower among employees (60%) and HR professionals (70%).

 **85% (+10 points YOY) of HR Professionals** agree/strongly agree that compensation and benefits at their employer is equitable along with 78% of Women (+7 points YOY). Veterans (38%), Hispanic/Latino (38%), and LGBTQ+ (35%) employees are most likely to strongly agree.



DEIB Wins

'A' for effort. Employees rate companies with DEIB initiatives highly

Awareness for corporate DEIB efforts is on the rise...



DEIB initiatives have become more visible at my company:



CEOs
no change



HR PROFESSIONALS
+11 points YOY



EMPLOYEES
+6 points YOY

White



Black



Asian/Asian-American



Hispanic/Latino



And, there's significantly higher familiarity with DEIB terminology...

How familiar were you with the term DEIB before today?



CEOs
+26 points YOY



HR PROFESSIONALS
+28 points YOY



EMPLOYEES
+32 points YOY

Employees say they're somewhat/very familiar with the term DEIB; only 11% say they've never heard of DEIB (a 20-point drop from 2023).

With more credit being given to leaders and companies alike for their efforts...

Employees who believe DEIB initiatives are "very important" to the following audiences:

Myself



My Manager



My HR Representatives



My CEO



Overall, how would you rate your company in terms of their DEIB initiatives within the organization? (Good/Excellent shown)



CEOs
63% of CEOs say excellent



HR PROFESSIONALS
42% of HR say excellent



EMPLOYEES
31% of employees say excellent - a 32-point top-box gap with CEOs

CEOs are far more likely than employees to rate their company's DEIB efforts highly and say their company should be doing more on the DEIB front.



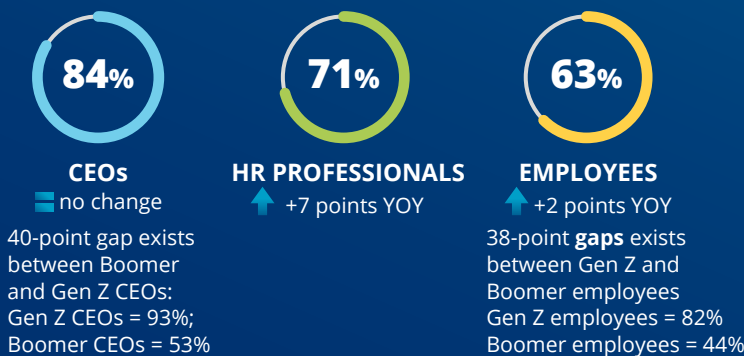
DEIB Woes

Real progress falls short despite perceived increase in corporate DEIB programming efforts

Fundamentally, all audiences believe companies and leaders alike should be doing more to foster DEIB...



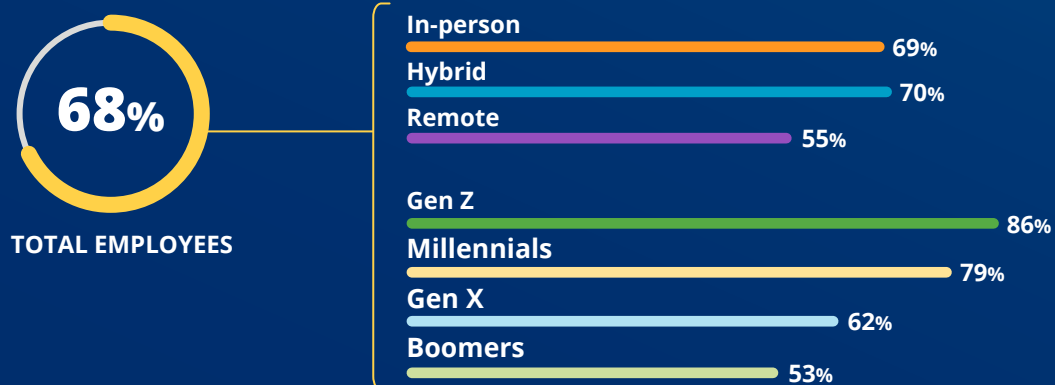
My company should do more to foster a diverse and inclusive environment:



Hybrid employees (69%), Gen Z (82%), and employees working in Technology (72%), Financial Services (72%), and Hospitality (76%) are most likely to feel their company should be doing more to foster a diverse and inclusive environment.

89% (+5 points YOY) of HR feel their company is inclusive of everyone and 91% of HR (+5 points YOY) feel everyone has an opportunity to grow, while these sentiments fell YOY among employees and CEOs.

If I ran my own company, I would place a higher importance on DEIB initiatives than the CEO currently at my company:



My company spends more time talking about DEIB initiatives than implementing DEIB initiatives:



Hispanic/Latino (76%), Black (75%), Male (74%), and Veteran (73%) respondents are the most likely to share this belief among total respondents.



DEIB Woes *(continued)*

DEIB programming initiatives are down across the board, potentially reflective of DEIB targeted cuts...

Perceived DEIB Programming for Under-Represented Employees is Down Across the Board

To the best of your knowledge, which of the following groups do your company's DEIB initiatives seek to address:

Employees say...	% Agreement	From 2023
Black	51%	↓ -8 points
Hispanic/Latino/a/x	43%	↓ -10 points
Asian/Asian-American	37%	↓ -8 points
LBGTQ+	41%	↓ -12 points
Non-Binary	27%	↓ -8 points

HR professionals say gender-specific programming is down:

↓ Women
-15 points YOY

↓ Men
-13 points YOY



DEIB should not be siloed into one person's or one group's responsibility. The most successful organizations understand DEIB is a collective, integrated effort. By focusing resources on the horizontal implementation of DEIB, accountability and unity can thrive across the board.

- Lisa Alvarado, Managing Director, Holistic, a DEIB and People Experience Consultancy



6 Strategies to Maximize Your DEIB Impact



In a dynamic and fast-changing landscape, it can be difficult for organizations to maintain a focus on DEIB goals, especially when internal and external pressures are creating challenges in setting up and implementing a viable program. Working with our clients, we've uncovered key strategies that can and should be implemented by organizations looking to foster sustainable DEIB strategies in their organizations.

– Tom Alexander, Founder and CEO, Holistic, a DEIB and People Experience Consultancy

Challenging economic conditions and shrinking budgets have HR and DEIB leaders wondering how to maximize and move their DEIB efforts forward despite limited resources. With the right focus, companies can sustain their DEIB efforts for meaningful employee and culture outcomes. Here's how:

1. Tie your efforts to broader business goals:

With renewed focus on efficient operations, streamlining, and reducing expenses, organizations are looking to ensure that any resources they are deploying are going directly to the health of the business and the bottom line. By crafting your DEIB goals as a subset of and/or complement to your broader business goals, you'll elevate the importance of DEIB organizationally. Success in DEIB should mean success in the business, and vice versa.

2. Prioritize belonging and inclusion as a starting place for efforts: As outlined in a number of places in this report, the prioritization of belonging- and inclusion-related initiatives is a deft strategy to promote the sustainability of DEIB efforts. Because these efforts are aimed directly at bringing people together, and because belonging has been proven to be a key element of employee retention, you'll find a wide and engaged audience for this focus.

3. Decentralize DEIB efforts throughout the organization: DEIB is not one person's job! Successful organizations have resisted the urge to hire one person or to create one division that is wholly responsible for these efforts, choosing instead to focus resources on horizontal implementation and building connective tissue throughout the organization.

4. Empower participants but provide direction:

One of the reasons so many DEIB efforts fail is because the guidelines for efforts are not well defined, so DEIB efforts from within organizations are frequently misaligned with organizational interest or intention. By setting broad parameters and focuses in DEIB (think: improve employee "soft skills" in support of a more inclusive workplace) the organization can empower its employees and its DEIB team to use their creativity and energy to great success, while enjoying freedom and autonomy in the pursuit of these efforts.

5. Training, professional development, and education are critical: In an increasingly remote or hybrid work world, and one in which employee retention is a huge and growing challenge, anything organizations can do to demonstrate their commitment to employee growth, development, and advancement is crucial. DEIB presents myriad opportunities for celebration, education, and professional development for employees, all while supporting broader business goals.

6. Communication is key: One of the changes in the way we work due to the pandemic, is the rise in importance of internal organizational communication. Team members have gotten used to hearing from leadership more often about more things. A key element of all DEIB strategies is internal communication. Help your employees understand not just the organization's focus, but how it connects to their role, and what they can do to contribute.

Putting Empathy into Action for Better DEIB Outcomes

78% of employees say DEIB fosters empathy in the workplace

While employees highly value empathy in the workplace, this year's data reveals a lack of empathy at both the individual and organizational levels: **+40-point gaps exist between the behaviors respondents rated as important and what they experienced at work.** But while data shows what's lacking, it also points to the solution which centers on supporting the **whole person and their community at work**, two areas that have a higher likelihood of promoting both DEIB efforts and organizational empathy.

See the top-rated behaviors that demonstrate empathy in the workplace



The Belief That DEIB Efforts Foster Empathy in the Workplace Is Higher Among Under-Represented Employees Than the Average Employee:

92%

LGBTQ+

88%

BLACK

86%

ASIAN/ASIAN-AMERICAN

86%

COGNITIVELY DISABLED

85%

PHYSICALLY DISABLED

84%

HISPANIC/LATINO





About the 2024 State of Workplace Empathy Study

Over the past nine years, Businessolver has studied the evolution of empathy in the workplace, hearing from collectively more than 20,000 employees, HR professionals, and CEOs about their views on a variety of workplace issues.

Our study examines the behaviors and benefits that make a workplace empathetic. In this study, empathy is defined as “the ability to understand and/or experience the feelings or perspectives of another.”

In March of 2024, a third-party firm fielded the online survey of more than 3,100 participants across six industries: financial services, government, healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, and government. To qualify for the survey, respondents needed to be 18 years or older, a U.S. resident, and be employed full-time or part-time within their respective organization with 100 or more employees.

Our survey included subgroups for gender, ethnicity, parent/non-parent status, veteran status, self-identified LGBTQ+, managers, work location status (remote, hybrid, in-person), and generations.

Small employers are defined as organizations that employ 100-999 employees. Large employers are defined as organizations that employ 1,000+ employees.

Unless otherwise noted, findings are cited throughout in “Top 2 Box” on 4- and 5-point scales (e.g. agree/strongly agree, important/extremely important).

Learn more about our findings, trends, and recommendations across nine years of data at Businessolver.com/empathy



20 STATE OF
WORKPLACE
24 EMPATHY