AMA MEMBER SURVEY

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN D&I POLICY AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

AMA|GLOBAL™

American Management Association

What is the ultimate impact
on employee engagement and the bottom line?

The current attention organizations give diversity and inclusion (D&I) has a number of direct causes: Globalization has produced a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic workforce; in many countries, laws require organizations to achieve certain types of diversity; and researchers have begun to document the advantages of intellectual and cultural diversity in relation to key business needs, such as creativity, innovation, problem solving and strategy development.

In the past 20 years, many organizations' perceptions of D&I have evolved from trying to manage differences, i.e., diversity is a problem to be solved, to leveraging differences, i.e., diversity is an opportunity upon which to capitalize. **Many organizations have also broadened their understanding of diversity itself, moving from narrow definitions focused on social-identity differences to broader conceptions, which include cognitive and psychological dimensions.**

Within this evolving ecosystem of D&I policy and practice, in July 2019, AMA conducted a survey of its members. The results are based on 462 responses. The survey's 22 items asked respondents about their organization's formal policies related to D&I, as well as respondents' individual experiences and perceptions regarding their organization's actual achievement of diversity and de facto practice of inclusion.

Sixty-six percent of respondents identified as female, 30% as male, and 4% chose not to specify a gender. Fifty-six percent of respondents identified as white, 18% identified as Black/African-American, 8% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 6% identified as Asian, 1% identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, 3% identified as Other and 9% chose not to specify a race. Thirty-seven percent of respondents were 45-54 years old, 28% were 55-64 years old, 21% were 35-44 years old and 14% were under 35 years old. Respondents came from a broad spectrum of industries, ranging from biotechnology and law to mining and manufacturing. Forty percent of respondents identified as individual contributors; 39% as managers; 14% as directors; 4% as vice presidents; and 3% as executives.
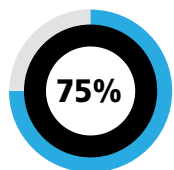
Key Finding #1

Participants perceive that their organizations recognize the business value of diversity and inclusion and attend to diversity and inclusion policies:
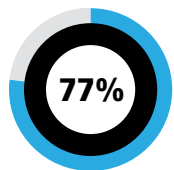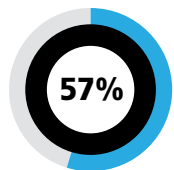
77% of respondents indicated that diversity and inclusion have a **direct impact on overall performance and their organization's bottom line.**
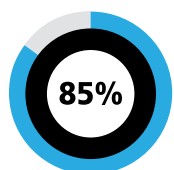
75% indicated that **individuals of all backgrounds feel welcomed in their organization.**
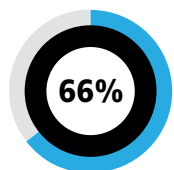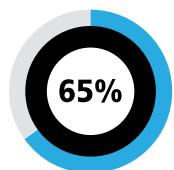
66% indicated that the **leaders of their organizations are themselves inclusive.**

57% confirmed that their organization has a **diversity and inclusion program.**

85% responded that the **goal of their organization's diversity and inclusion program is to attract and retain talent.**
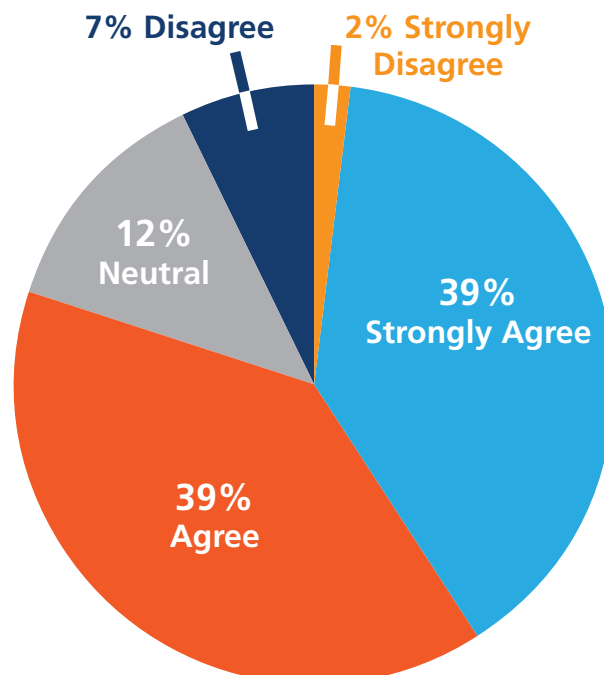
65% indicated that the **goal of their organization's program was to achieve business results.**

These participant responses suggest that D&I programs have, in many organizations, succeeded in creating climates in which people individually feel respected and valued. Likewise, responses suggest that D&I, rather than accidents of business strategies, such as globalization, are themselves deliberate strategies, undertaken to meet business goals.
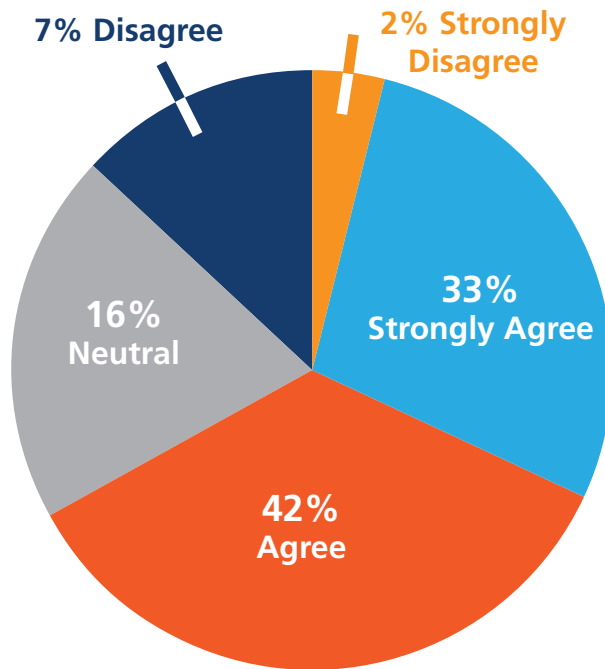
Diversity and inclusion is one of my organization's priorities.
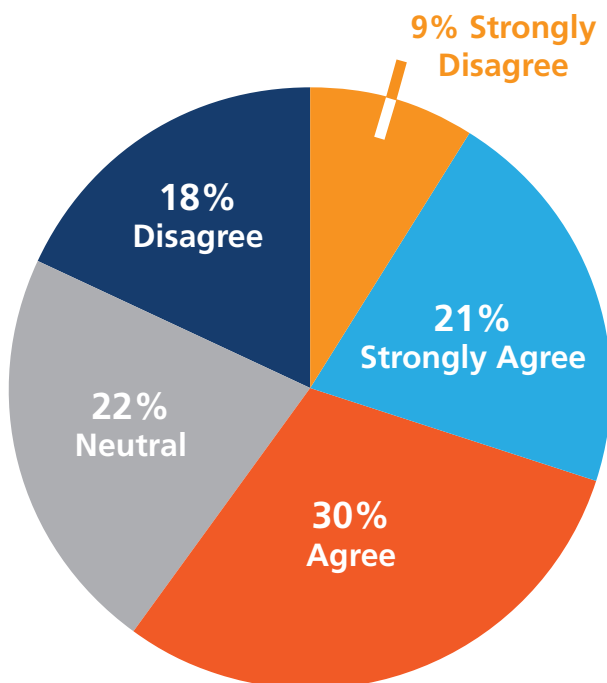
13% Disagree
4% Strongly Disagree
28% Strongly Agree
36% Agree
20% Neutral
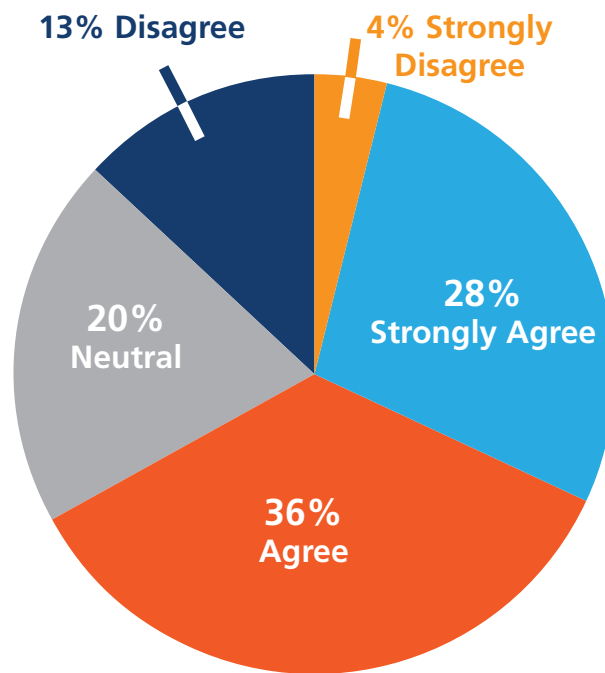
I am comfortable talking about my background and cultural experiences with my colleagues.

7% Disagree
2% Strongly Disagree
39% Strongly Agree
39% Agree
12% Neutral

I feel respected within my organization.

7% Disagree

2% Strongly Disagree

33% Strongly Agree

16% Neutral

42% Agree

My organization publicly communicates its D&I goals.

9% Strongly Disagree

18% Disagree

21% Strongly Agree

22% Neutral

30% Agree

People of all cultures and backgrounds are respected at my organization.

8% Disagree

3% Strongly Disagree

15% Neutral

35% Strongly Agree
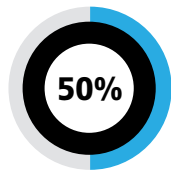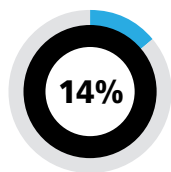
39% Agree
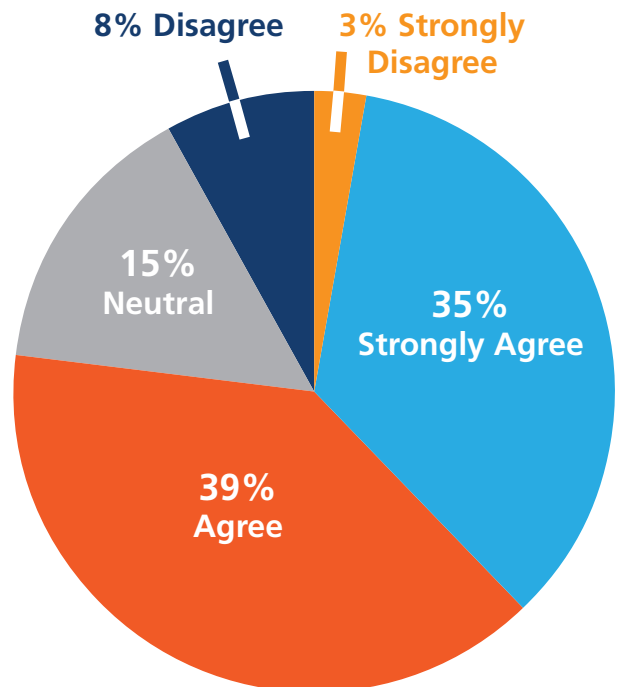
Key Finding #2

Perceptions of organizations' de facto practice of inclusion suggest pessimism and a potentially disengaged workforce:
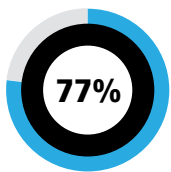
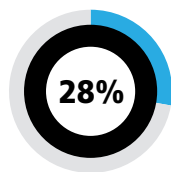**77%** believe **D&I directly impacts business.**

50% indicated that their organization **does not publicly communicate the goals of its D&I program.**

14% said that their organization **does not have inclusive hiring practices** and thus **does not achieve diversity in its workforce.**
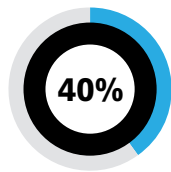
40% indicated that they were **not sure that their organization has inclusive hiring practices.**

28% agree that a **lack of inclusion prevents professional advancement in their organization.**
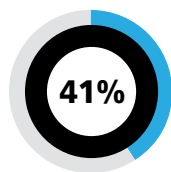
41% aren't sure that their organization had inclusive promotion processes.
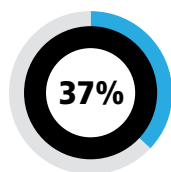
37% **One third of respondents feel inclusivity is not part of the promotion process for senior leadership positions,** while another 37% **were not sure** that their organization practiced inclusivity when selecting senior leaders.

On the one hand, a majority of respondents maintain that D&I programs exist to attract and retain talent, as well as to achieve business goals. On the other hand, a majority of respondents **do not see inclusion actually translating into professional advancement** (which is a primary means of attracting and retaining talent and achieving business goals). Consider the potential for disengagement when 70% of an organization's workforce is unsure or feels certain that paths to senior leadership are non-inclusive, and when 67% of that workforce is unsure or feels certain that their organization does not have an inclusive promotion process that results in diversity among job functions. **The de facto practice of inclusion may be undermining the day-to-day positive individual experiences that policies seem to have achieved.**

"Consider the potential for disengagement when 70% of an organization's workforce is unsure or feels certain that paths to senior leadership are non-inclusive, and when 67% of that workforce is unsure or feels certain that their organization does not have an inclusive promotion process that results in diversity among job functions."

Business Implications of Key Findings

Many respondents recognize that D&I directly impacts productivity and the bottom line, but believe that the reported practice of D&I does not occur in a way that would actually help the bottom line. D&I policies seem to **have succeeded in creating on overall climate of acceptance and affirmation of differences in many organizations.** In other words, on a day-to-day basis, employees may have positive feelings, such as being respected, valued, even appreciated and celebrated. Nonetheless, **actual hiring and promotion practices are not seen as inclusive**. These survey results imply that a majority of employees perceive they will hit the proverbial glass ceiling. Over the long term, such pessimism about the future can undermine motivation and engagement more than a day-to-day sense of acceptance fosters motivation and engagement.

Stated differently, the actual practice of D&I does not seem to align with the recognition that D&I helps an organization achieve its business goals and attract and retain talent. The de facto practice seems, in the long run, to do the opposite. **Perhaps diversity is no longer a problem to be managed, but this survey suggests its business potential has yet to be fully leveraged.**

The gap, implied by responses to this AMA survey, between what policies seem to have achieved regarding individual sentiment and a continued lack of inclusion in hiring and promotion, may in part be due to a lack of D&I training. Thirty-five percent of respondents indicated that their **organizations do not provide either internal or external D&I training.** In other words, more than a third of organizations surveyed are not using available tools to address this gap. Moreover, of the surveyed organizations that do provide D&I training, the majority use internal resources, focused on regulatory compliance. According to respondents, trainings offered do not focus on changing organizational culture or unmasking unconscious bias, both of which could be interventions to improve the de facto practice of inclusion.

Author

Haywood Spangler, PhD, MDiv, is the founder and principal of Work & Think, LLC.

Diversity and Inclusion Development Courses from AMA

Developing a Culture of Respect: How to Cultivate a Harassment-Free Organization

Implement standards to ensure you have a respectful and productive workplace.

www.amanet.org/8228

Finding Common Ground: How to Overcome Unconscious Bias

This one-day workshop will give you practical strategies that can help you and your colleagues avoid bias and leverage the power of a more positive, inclusive work environment.

www.amanet.org/8802

Leading in a Diverse and Inclusive Culture

Maximize individual, team and organizational potential through diversity and inclusion.

www.amanet.org/2925

Leadership Strategies for Creating a Respectful Workplace

Build and support a more positive and productive workplace climate.

www.amanet.org/2151

Diversity & Inclusion Certificate Program

This three-day program goes beyond other D&I courses, and helps you develop skills to become a champion of diversity and a leader of inclusive teams.

www.amanet.org/2965

Corporate Learning Solutions
Bring diversity and inclusion learning onsite to your location.
1-877-800-0264