

# WorldatWork®

## Total Rewards Association

### Trends in DEI Practices and Policies

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[Trends in DEI Practices and Policies](#) - shows that both management and employees see dramatic increase in DEI activities in the workplace. The study's findings support what many observers have been saying: The social movements of 2020 and 2021, such as Black Lives Matter, provided an "a-ha" moment to business leaders. Instituting workplace DEI initiatives went from sounding like a noble concept to being a top-priority action item.

Just look at the numbers. More than eight in 10 (83%) of the 656 responding organizations say they have been taking action on DEI initiatives in 2021, a 13 percentage-point increase from 2020. Of those 83%, 29% said they took their first action on DEI initiatives during the past 12 months. Nearly all (97%) of those DEI-active organizations have an established DEI strategy (56%) or are actively working on one (41%).

DEI was divided into 11 areas for one question, with respondents indicating a "high level" of increased activity in seven of those areas from 2020 to 2021.

One could be skeptical about those results. In the current social climate, leadership might be tempted to oversell an organization's DEI efforts.

But the study also surveyed employees, who have nothing to gain from a glowing report. And, they were lavish in the praise of their organization's efforts and the importance of DEI. Here are some of the key numbers from the survey of 303 full-time business professionals via the Schlesinger Group panel online:

- 85% believe their employer prioritizes DEI a good or great deal in the workplace.
- 74% feel that their employer is putting the right amount of effort into these initiatives.
- 64% of employees believe DEI is very or extremely important.
- 83% agree or strongly agree with the statement "I feel comfortable talking about my background and cultural experiences with my colleagues."
- 85% either agree or strongly agree that "I feel included and respected at my organization."

The overwhelming employee agreement with those last two statements is particularly significant. Two of the key goals — getting people to open up about their background and perspectives on diversity issues as well as establishing the feeling of belonging and respect — are apparently being met in many DEI programs.

“Such an endorsement by employees is very positive,” said Deirdre Macbeth, content director at WorldatWork. “It shows organizations are not just saying the right thing but actually doing the right thing.

“We are seeing organizations take action in a variety of areas to address workplace equity — policies toward inclusion, training programs in place, equitable career advancement and development opportunities, expanding benefits offerings (for a diverse workforce) and performance management with metrics for managers tied to DEI initiatives.”

More than half (57%) of organizations have metrics in place to measure DEI results, with another 36% saying their companies are considering or evaluating the use of DEI metrics. About nine in 10 of the organizations utilizing DEI metrics are tracking workforce representation (91%) and recruiting (89%). The most prioritized metric is inclusive policies statistics (63%).

Despite the growing DEI activity, organizations don’t plan on bringing on many dedicated DEI staff. The survey average for projected DEI hiring in the next year was 0.4 full-time and 0.3 part-time workers in HR, and 0.1 full-time and 0.2 part-time employers outside of HR. Half (52%) of all organizations rely on internal DEI committees to aid in DEI staffing and budget resources functions. Not surprisingly, staffing varies with organization size.

The survey showed that organizations are undertaking a wide range of DEI activities. The leading multiple-choice pick was HR policies, at 74%, followed by development/performance management (62%); compensation (45%); recognition (33%); benefits (29%); and recruiting (6%). Development/performance management is the area to have the most accelerate growth during the next 12 months.

“DEI often puts a lot of focus on diversity,” Macbeth observed. “The responses show there is a lot more of E (equity) and I (inclusion).”

## **About the Author**

*[Jim Fickess](#) is a writer and editor for WorldatWork, focusing on The Journal of Total Rewards. He has more than 40 years’ experience in publishing, mostly as a newspaper and news website journalist. Fickess has a master of mass communication degree from Arizona State University’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, where he has been a longtime adjunct professor.*

*WorldatWork is a leading global nonprofit organization for professionals engaged in the practice of total rewards. The Scottsdale, Ariz.-based organization provides education and certification; idea exchange; thought leadership; knowledge creation; information sharing; research; advocacy; and networking.*

