

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term that refers to ‘the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population’.

- **Neurotypical** refers to those who think, learn and behave in ways that are considered to be the norm by society.
- **Neurodivergent** refers to ‘any structured, consistent way that brains work differently for a group of people than they do for the majority of others’.

In other words, a neurodivergent individual processes, learns and/or behaves differently from what is considered to be neurotypical. Examples of diagnostic labels used for neurodivergence include **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**, **Autism**, **Dyspraxia**, **Dyslexia**, **Dyscalculia**, **Dysgraphia**, **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** and **Tourettes**.

Neurodivergence is highly individual and there are many different ways that it may manifest - social skills, executive function and sensory issues are some common areas. In Australia, an estimated 30 to 40% of the population are neurodiverse - and yet according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 34% of these individuals remain unemployed.¹

DEIB strategies to consider

- If working in an office, offer accommodations such as noise cancelling headphones, break out ‘quiet’ rooms or the option to work from home as needed.
- Ensure all communications and expectations are clear and direct, attempt to provide a logical order to processes and minimise surprises by providing information in advance.
- Be aware of exclusionary criteria in job advertisements and employee expectations - there are more ways to provide value beyond ‘normal’ social behavioural norms.
- Provide flexibility for employees to work autonomously or deviate from ‘how everyone else does it’ to achieve required outputs.

Benefits of neurodivergence in the workplace

- Research shows those with autism work up to 48% faster with fewer errors, and are 92% more productive than their neurotypical counterparts and neurodiverse teams 30% more productive than others.²
- Rich skills such as strong visual acuity, attention to detail and a superior ability to focus.
- Neurodivergent employees often bring novel ideas or perspectives to teams leading to increased innovation and creative problem solving.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018). Disability, Ageing and Cares, Australia; Disability Support Guide Australia (2023). I think I might be Neurodivergent.

² JP Morgan Chase Australia (2016). Autism at work; Harvard Business Review (2017). Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage