

▶ Diversity and inclusion in the workplace

June 2021

The ILO undertakes a global survey on diversity and inclusion

Introduction

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is undertaking one of its most extensive global studies on enterprise approaches to diversity and inclusion (D&I). This study is taking place during a period of significant disruption for many enterprises as the global pandemic, COVID-19, brings new ways of working and social inequalities into sharp focus. The survey results seek to create new understanding and insights on D&I **actions, scope, drivers and priorities** in order to better support companies going forward in creating powerful and impactful change¹.

Actions

Whilst small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a critical role in the global economy, to date, most studies and recommendations for good practice on D&I have been directed at large companies, mainly in Western and high-income economies. This study aims to fill this gap through an online survey of 10,000 respondents from more than 40 countries across the globe with a focus on lower to middle income countries spanning small, medium, large and multi-national companies across a range of sectors. It explores:

- What difference does company size, geography and sector make to D&I approaches and outcomes?
- What actions and approaches to D&I make the most positive impact?

Scope

The majority of global research on D&I focuses on gender rather than a range of employees from different demographic groups or considers its impact on multiple identity groups (e.g. gender and

¹ This survey has been developed following an in-depth review of existing studies and literature on the enablers and barriers to diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Please see [here](#) for a summary of the review.

age). This survey invites responses from employees, line managers and leaders from a range of backgrounds enabling insights to be drawn on:

- What groups do enterprises focus on and impact most and least in their D&I efforts?
- What factors create inclusion for different groups across different enterprise size, regions and sectors?

Drivers

Despite evidence showing correlations between greater D&I and improvements in company performance, the pace of change remains patchy and painfully slow. More progress is being achieved in relation to some diversity groups compared with others and many enterprises have yet to take the actions needed to reap the potential business benefits of D&I. This study considers:

- What effect do higher and lower levels of inclusion have on employees across different groups and companies as a whole?
- What motivates and drives companies to take actions on D&I that really make a difference?

Priorities

Research indicates that there is often a mismatch between the actions and approaches enterprise leaders think will make a difference to D&I and those that people in the groups targeted by the actions say are needed. Recommendations for good practice on D&I also mainly come from studies based on large enterprises in high income economies. This survey seeks to enable more tailored solutions by considering:

- What approaches and actions are most needed now across different enterprises, countries and sectors to promote and yield the benefits of D&I for employees and employers?

Next steps and survey results

Findings and results of the whole ILO study on D&I will be published towards the end of 2021. For more information, please contact the ILO Gender, Equality and Diversity and Inclusion branch at gedi@ilo.org or the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities at actemp@ilo.org.

Contact details

Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Branch (GEDI)

International Labour Organization

Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

E: actemp@ilo.org/
gedi@ilo.org