

Building a dynamic workforce through neurodiversity



In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, the demand for creative and unconventional solutions is at an all-time high. Embracing neurodiversity—recognizing varied neurological conditions and ways of processing the world—can be a game-changer for your organization. Neurodivergent employees bring unique strengths that drive innovation and provide a competitive edge. Hiring neurodiverse talent is a strategic move for any business looking to thrive in the era of AI and beyond.

Workforce of the future

Neurodiverse individuals bring enhanced creativity and unique skills that are increasingly valuable as AI becomes integral across industries. Skills such as pattern matching for data interpretation and spatial thinking for innovative problem-solving, provide fresh perspectives and drive business success.

Traditional estimates of the neurodiverse population, based on diagnoses, range from 5-20%, or approximately 1 in 7. However, newer surveys are changing this view. Gen Z (born

1997-2012) now makes up 30% of the workforce, with over half (53%) identifying as definitely or somewhat neurodiverse. Additionally, 80% of Gen Z prefers to apply to companies that support neurodivergent employees.

Organizations that fail to support neurodivergent candidates and employees will miss out on top talent and innovation. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z has experienced environments that embrace their unique talents and expect employers to adapt.



1 in 7

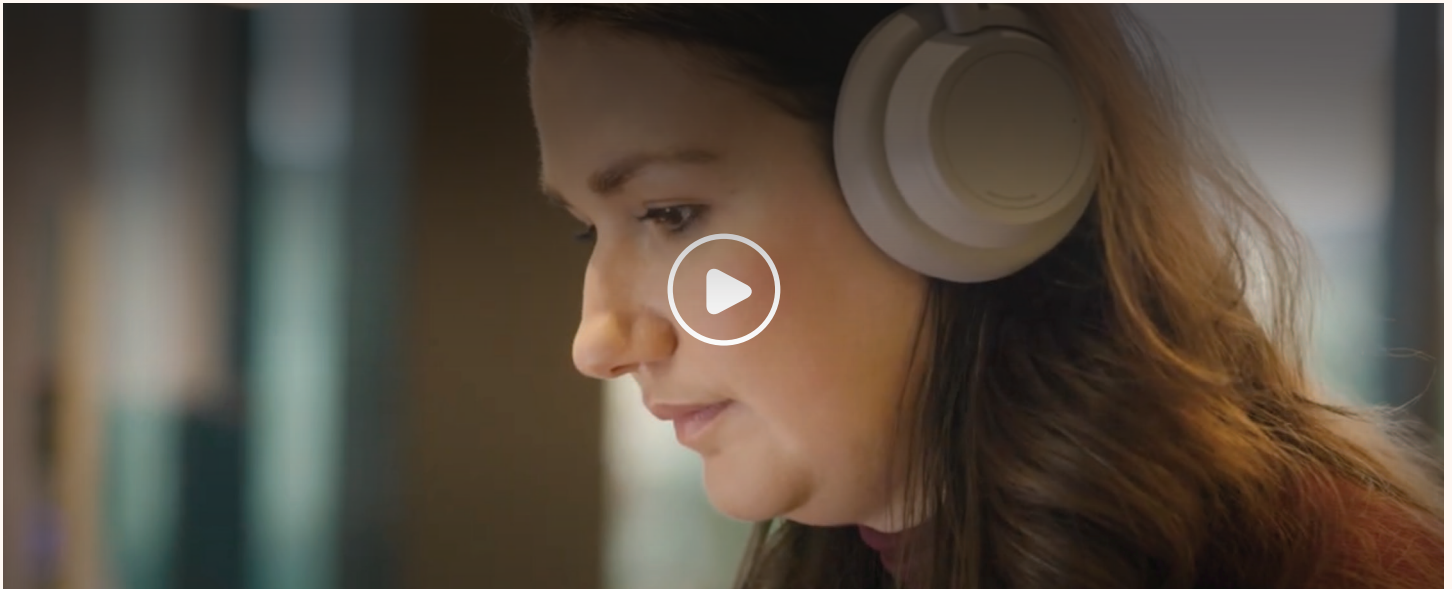
people are neurodivergent

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Neurodiversity

(but not limited to) autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and Tourette syndrome.



Neurodiversity Program

Neuroinclusion at Microsoft

Creating systems and strategies that support everyone

Over the past 10 years, we have integrated essential practices into our organizational culture to create a sustainable and impactful approach to neuroinclusion. Our framework aims to reduce friction, foster understanding of neurodiversity, and enhance engagement and support for neurodivergent candidates and employees.

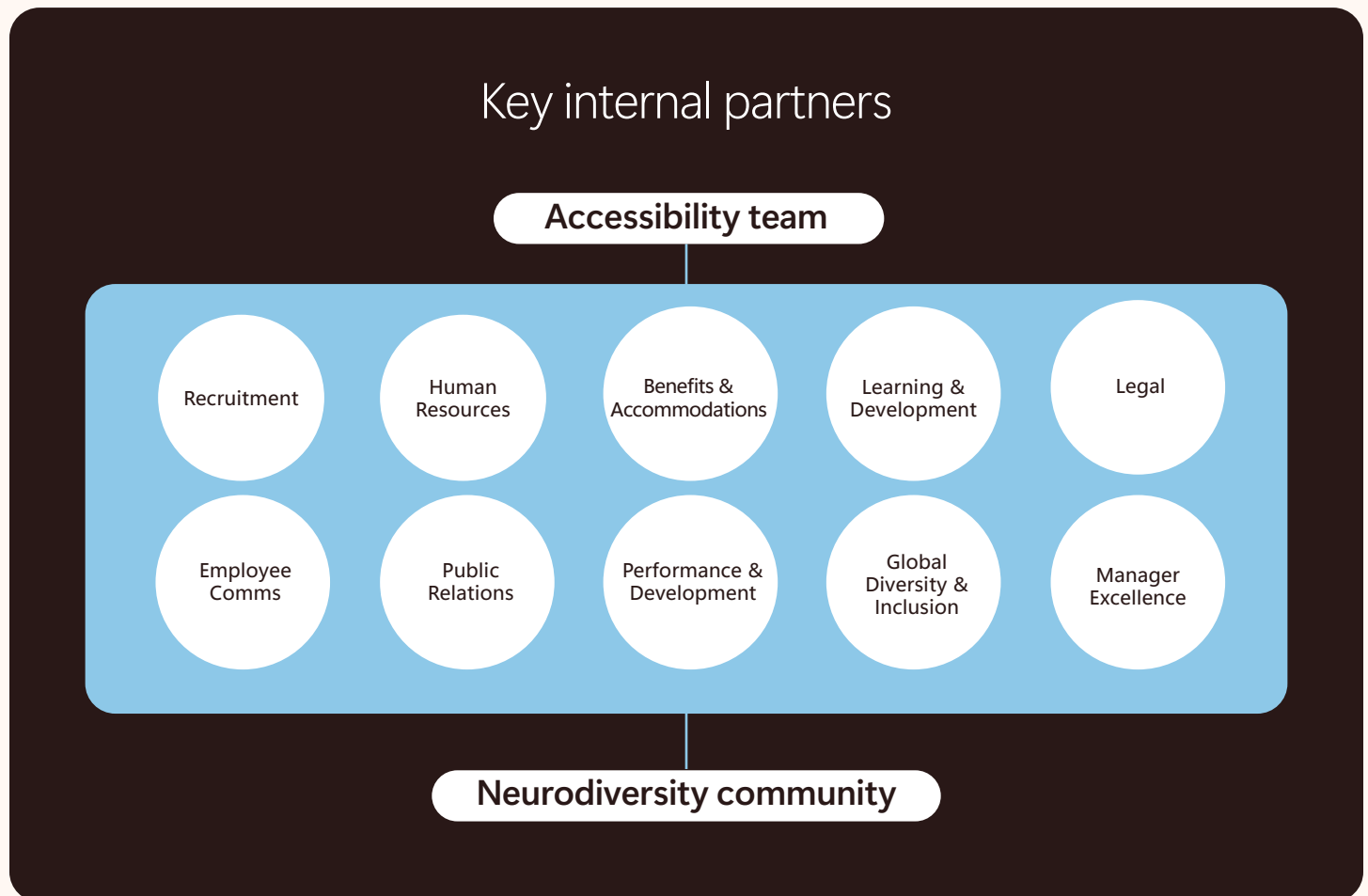
These adjustments are simple and end up

optimizing your workforce and creating an environment where everyone can perform at their best. Small changes can lead to significant improvements in performance and morale, proving that thoughtful design adds value across the entire business.

In the following pages, we present initiatives that evolved from key learnings from the Neurodiversity Program, and are now implemented company-wide. These strategies are designed to be easily adopted by any employer.

Toolkit

- > Attract top talent
- > Prepare Managers
- > Keep top talent
- > Cultivate a Dynamic Workplace



Attract top talent

Traditional hiring processes often overlook neurodivergent talent. Standardized methods, such as conventional interviews, lack of transparency, and insufficient support for different communication styles and ways of thinking often fail to accommodate diverse perspectives. As a result, highly qualified candidates may be overlooked simply because the process does not align with their strengths.

By rethinking these processes and incorporating more flexible, clear approaches, organizations create an environment that not only attracts top neurodivergent talent but also supports all candidates in performing their best. This approach reduces the anxiety and uncertainty associated with the application process, ensuring a smoother and more positive experience for everyone.



What our candidates are saying:

“This experience was incredibly valuable. I truly appreciated having a clear understanding of the expectations going into the interview, which made the process much less intimidating. The mock interview was particularly helpful in reducing my anxiety and building my confidence. During my session, we focused on a coding question, which was excellent preparation. Thank you for the opportunity!”



Attract top talent

Best Practices

Enhance transparency:

Clearly outline the steps of the hiring process, including timelines and what candidates can expect at each stage.

Simplify communication:

Use clear, concise language in job postings, on your careers pages, and during the application process.

Accommodations:

Make it easy to find information on how to request accommodations on your website. It's helpful to provide clear, concise instructions for how to request accommodations, along with examples of common accommodations that candidates have requested.

Train your teams:

Train your hiring teams to support different communication styles and ways of thinking. This includes understanding neurodiversity and being prepared to offer appropriate accommodations.

> Initiatives

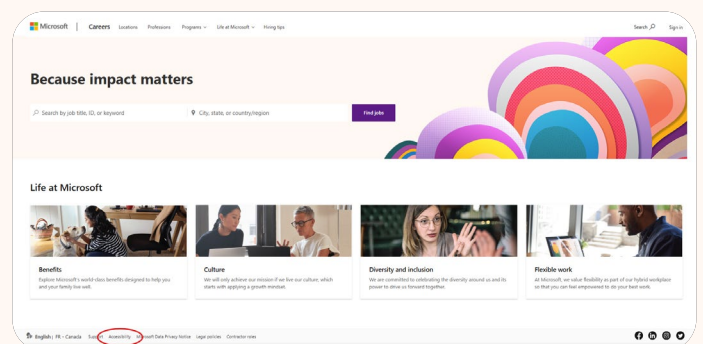
Informational webinars for candidates

The recruiting team hosts monthly webinars for candidates worldwide. These webinars cover the hiring process, how to request accommodations, application tips, and an overview of the neurodiversity program. Participants also hear firsthand experiences from members of the disability and neurodiversity employee resource group (ERG) about working at Microsoft as a person with a disability.



Career site enhancements

We have enhanced our careers site to provide greater clarity and transparency for candidates. It includes detailed information on available resources, a clear process for requesting accommodations with examples, and insights into our hiring practices.



Attract top talent

Dedicated accommodations team for candidates

Having a trained and dedicated team ensures a consistent experience for candidates. Candidates fill out an online form and work one-on-one with the team to determine appropriate accommodations. There's no need to disclose a disability to receive support.



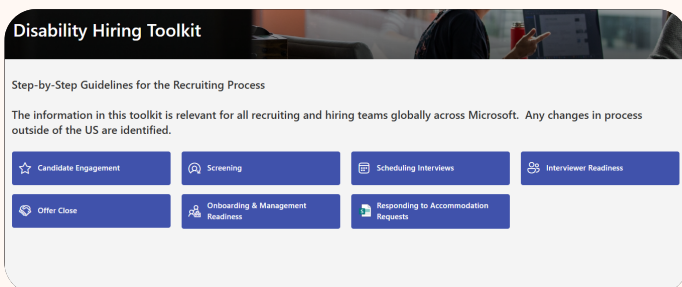
Recruiters learning path & badge

When onboarding at Microsoft, all recruiters complete a required learning path and receive a shareable badge upon completion. This equips HR professionals with the knowledge and skills to confidently support neurodivergent candidates and candidates with disabilities.



Disability Hiring Toolkit & guides

Designed as immediate reference tools for our recruiting team, these resources provide step-by-step guidance for effectively recruiting, interviewing, and onboarding candidates with disabilities and neurodivergent candidates. Specialized guides by disability type offer valuable information on creating an accessible environment, identifying accommodations, providing collaboration tips, and supporting candidates and new hires.



Attract top talent

What our partners are saying:



“Collaboration with the program and engagement with its participants (both candidates and hiring teams) has greatly contributed to our ability to expand from a few standard procedures to a diverse range of accommodations that can be rapidly implemented on a global scale.”

Candidate Accommodations Team



“Through the Neurodiversity Program, we have created broad awareness about the recruiting process barriers, identified how to remove them, and leveraged the program to pave the way for more thoughtful recruiting activities.”

Global Talent Acquisition (Recruiting)

Prepare managers

Managers who are well-informed about neurodiversity can effectively advocate for their neurodivergent team members, ensuring their unique needs and strengths are recognized and supported. Additionally, managers must understand the different cognitive styles, communication preferences, and potential barriers that neurodivergent employees may face; while also recognizing the many strengths they bring to the organization. In the following initiatives, we explore various methods to support managers' learning and readiness in ways that suit their unique situations.

> Initiatives

Manager's Disability Readiness Toolkit

This customizable resource utilizes Cornell University's Just-in-Time Toolkit, tailored specifically for Microsoft. Each tool addresses workplace topics managers may encounter and is designed to be used in about ten minutes.

The toolkit answers questions like, "An employee just told me about a disability—what do I do now?" and "What is my role as a manager in the accommodations process?"



Quick guides

These one-page quick guides are concise, easy-to-read documents designed to provide essential information or guidance on a specific topic.

Manager Strategies for Providing Clear and Actionable Feedback

Try these tips to find a system that works for both you and the employee:

Ask how they prefer to receive feedback



Timing (in the moment, at next 1:1)



Written, chat, email



Verbal, 1:1's

Plan a structured approach to give feedback



Start, Stop, Continue: Clarify what you want the employee to start, stop and continue.



Provide feedback using the employee's communication preferences. Ask first, if you don't know these preferences.



Leverage Perspectives and feedback from others to inform your message.

Provide direct feedback with empathy and care



Share any relevant context, specific details and examples.



Explain the severity or degree of impact of any issue.



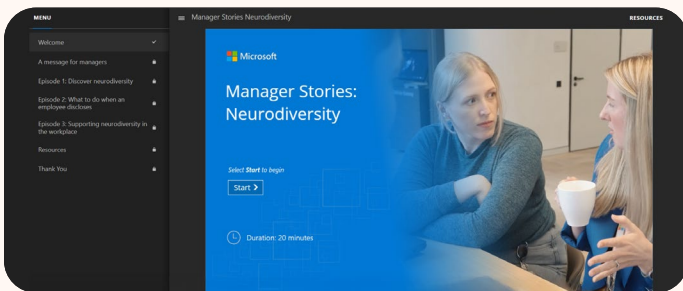
Encourage employees to ask questions and clarify where more understanding is needed to ensure alignment.

Each guide provides key points, step-by-step instructions, tips, and visuals to help managers quickly understand and apply the information.

Prepare managers

On-Demand learning videos

Our “Manager Stories: Neurodiversity” video series was developed with leaders and advisors from the neurodiversity community. Based on feedback from over 1,000 neurodivergent employee surveys, it follows an employee’s decision to disclose their neurodivergence to their manager. The series demonstrates how managers can respond supportively, create psychological safety, and build trust.



Manager coaching sessions:

These small group coaching sessions are specifically designed to offer guidance to managers who oversee neurodivergent employees. Managers can ask questions and get guidance, training, and tools from a workplace job coach & member of the accessibility team.



What our partners are saying:

“The HR Consulting (HRC) team leverages neurodiversity resources to coach both managers and individual contributors. These resources are also used by the HRC team to deepen our understanding of the subject matter, enabling us to better support our customers.

Additionally, our team develops learning content for managers, and the insights gained from the neurodiversity program have significantly enhanced our training and readiness support for all managers. We deeply value the insights from this program, which have been seamlessly integrated into the materials we now share with all managers.”

Human Resources

Keep top talent

To retain top neurodivergent talent, it's crucial to offer reasonable accommodations such as flexible work hours, remote or hybrid options, quiet spaces, noise-canceling headphones, adjustable lighting, and movement breaks. Consistent support, including workplace job coaching or executive function coaching, is also essential. These measures support neurodivergent employees to perform at their best.



> Initiatives

Workplace job coaching

We offer workplace job coaching through our dedicated coaching partner. This ensures consistent support for managers and employees, catered to the needs of the employee, such as communicating more effectively, asking for help, and task prioritization. Workplace job coaching must be requested through the accommodations process.

Workplace Coaching Overview

The How Skills in partnership with Microsoft

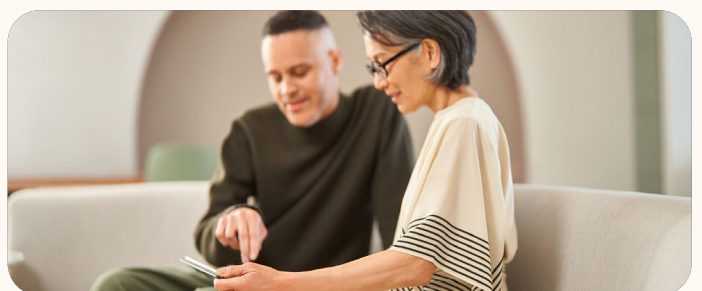
Do you struggle with any of these common support areas?



Workplace Coaching can help employees during their onboarding improve in these areas.

Executive function coaching

As an alternative to workplace job coaching, we've found some employees benefit from one-on-one consultations with a neurodiversity expert in executive functioning. This benefit is offered free to employees through our partnership with the benefits team as part of our employee assistance program.



Keep top talent

What our partners are saying:



“The workplace accommodation team provides reasonable accommodations to support employees in their jobs and we value the long-standing partnership with the neurodiversity program to create a seamless transition for employees from onboarding to ongoing workplace accommodations.”

Candidate Accommodations Team



“The expanded neurodiversity support programs have allowed us to understand more about Microsoft employees and their needs. Through insights and lessons learned, we have been able to enhance our support for employees and managers.

This program has been instrumental in developing comprehensive learning content, ensuring that our managers are well-prepared and equipped to foster an inclusive and supportive work environment.”

Global Benefits

Cultivate a dynamic workplace

There is a need for more allyship, awareness, and understanding of neurodiversity; 68% of U.S. employees admitted to having limited or no knowledge of neurodiversity, conditions, and symptoms. Attitudes toward neurodiversity from colleagues play a crucial role in shaping the experiences and opportunities available to neurodivergent employees.

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> Initiatives:

Neurodiversity learning sessions

Available for all employees, with time-zone friendly sessions offered twice a month. Instructor-led learning enhances engagement and promotes awareness and understanding of neurodiversity.

Neurodiversity & Inclusive Best Practices Learning Session

Are you curious about neurodiversity and how diverse minds contribute to innovation and creativity? Want to learn how to create a neuroinclusive work environment so neurodivergent employees can fully leverage their innovative and creative thinking? If so, our neurodiversity sessions are designed for you!

Attend a learning session

Sign up for a 1-hour session

Neurodiversity resources

We created a go-to site to make it easy to find content specific to Microsoft, including internal resources, trainings, communities, and more. By making support resources readily available to all employees and managers, we create an environment where everyone is aware of and can utilize these resources effectively.

Neurodiversity Resources

Great minds don't always think alike

And we believe those differences make us stronger. Learn how embracing our different talents can empower all of us to achieve more.

This page is meant to provide a one-stop shop for guidance and neurodiversity resources for all Microsoft full-time employees (FTEs). We've curated a list of benefits and resources available, because when you're in search of information, it should be easy to find.



Jump to allyship and learning

> Represent neurodiversity

Jump to neurodiverse communities

> Join Microsoft's neurodiverse communities

Jump to benefits and support

> Accommodations

Cultivate a dynamic workplace

Neurodiversity celebration Week

Each year, we observe Neurodiversity Celebration Week to raise awareness and reinforce that we need people with all kinds of expertise to empower everyone on the planet to achieve more.



Global company-wide communication campaigns

Year-round communications help all employees understand the importance of learning about neurodiversity. This approach also helps us enhance awareness and utilization of disability and neurodiversity resources.



What our partners are saying:

“The neurodiversity hiring program has provided us with invaluable insights into how the neurodiverse community perceives the world and the types of resources that enable their success.

These insights empower us to share more inclusive stories that connect employees and managers with programs that support their whole selves, both in and out of the office.”

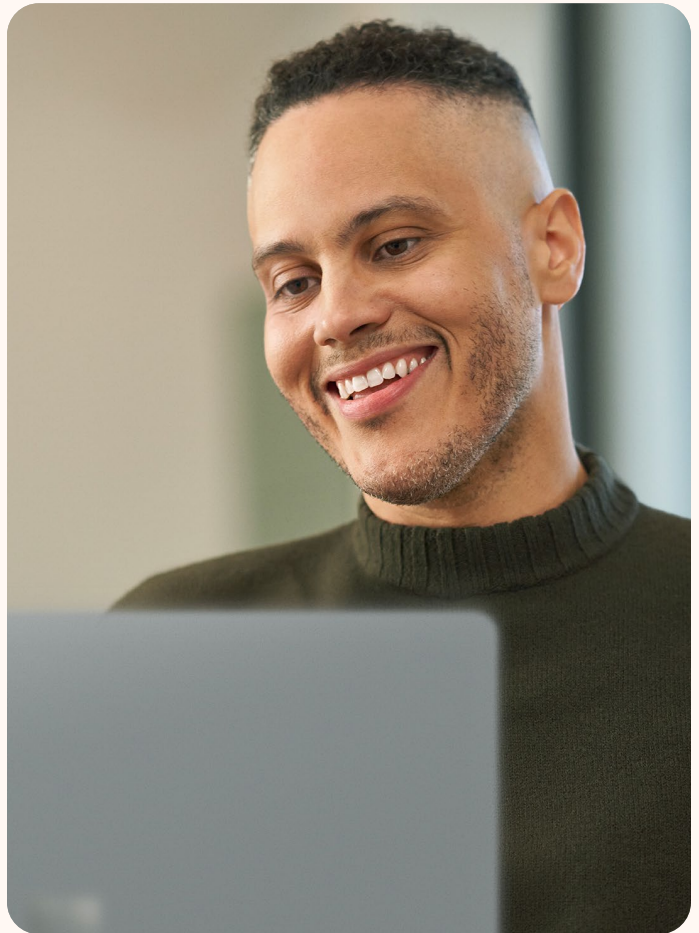
Global Employee Communications



The time to start is today

After over a decade of building out the Neurodiversity Program and implementing learnings into company-wide processes, we know attracting and retaining top neurodiverse talent is part of how we build a dynamic workforce at Microsoft.

We urge employers to embrace the unique strengths that neurodivergent individuals bring by implementing some of the practices outlined in this resource. By doing so, you can unlock a vast talent pool, drive innovation, and create a more productive workplace for all employees in this era of AI and beyond.



For additional support or questions, please email
accessibility@microsoft.com

Sources

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2. [Neurodiversity and innovation | Deloitte Insights](#)
3. Gen Z expected to be 30% of workforce in 2025: [Gen-Z In The Workforce: Challenging Or Change-Makers? \(forbes.com\)](#)
4. More than half of Gen Z identify as 'definitely' (22%) or 'somewhat' (31%) neurodiverse: [Gen Z Is The Most Entrepreneurial And Neurodiverse Generation In The Workforce—This Is How Employers Can Create Space For Them - Essence | Essence](#)
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7. [Data and Statistics on ADHD | Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder \(ADHD\) | CDC](#)
8. [Dyslexia Statistics & Facts](#)
9. [Majority of US workers say they lack awareness of workplace neurodiversity](#)