

# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY REPORT

## A REVIEW OF GENERATIONAL WORKPLACE TRENDS IN NORTH AMERICA

A Robert Walters Group Company

ROBERT WALTERS



# About us

Robert Walters Group is one of the world's leading professional recruitment consultancies, specialising in the placement of permanent, contract, and temporary positions across all levels of seniority.

We operate under Robert Walters (senior permanent and interim management recruitment) and Resource Solutions (recruitment process outsourcing).



# 31

we recruit across 31 countries globally.

## Robert Walters recruits across:

- Accounting & Finance
- Banking & Financial Services
- Technology
- Legal, Risk, Compliance & Operations
- Supply Chain, Procurement & Logistics
- Design
- Human Resources & Talent

## We have offices across North America covering the following locations:

- New York
- California
- Austin
- Toronto

ROBERT WALTERS

## Who is Robert Walters?

Robert Walters is one of the world's leading professional recruitment businesses and the core brand of the Robert Walters Group. Hiring managers world-wide rely on us to find their best specialist professionals and our clients range from the largest corporations world-wide from SMEs (Small to Medium Enterprise) to start-ups. We recruit people for permanent, contract and interim roles across the world.

RESOURCE SOLUTIONS

## Who are Resource Solutions?

A leading global provider of outsourced recruitment and consultancy solutions, Resource Solutions supports organisations to build, connect and optimise their workforce to face the challenges of tomorrow. We strive to make a positive social impact through solutions that champion untapped and underrepresented talent.



# The journey so far



The individual and intersectional issues surrounding different age groups in the workplace is one of the most under-researched areas within the ED&I space.

Age-related challenges are unique in that they evolve and change over time. For example, less than 15 years ago we saw much fewer younger workers seek employment based on the purpose or values of an organization, fast forward to today and that is one of the leading factors driving decisions in young professionals. Retirement deadlines have also become more flexible, with older professionals keen to keep their options open.

For too long we have stuck to the notion that the only issues impacting age groups is linear – where age equals experience, and this in turn equates to progression. But in a world where we are seeing professionals in their mid-30s fast track to CEO, CTO and CFO level – and those with 20+ years of experience declined new opportunities because of misconceptions around skills – there has clearly been an unrecognized shift in the workplace which has risk of causing alienation. Many employers fear that a tailored approach requires time and resource, but more than anything it requires understanding. Companies must work hard to drop age-related misconceptions and allow workers to thrive and grow outside of their ‘age limit.’

As a recruitment business we recognize the importance of the role we can play in ensuring that talent for all cross sections of society is given the opportunity to reach their potential, and we stand with other organisations on this similar journey to addressing the inequalities that still exist in the workplace.

**Coral Bamgboye - Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion  
at Robert Walters**

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## Over 1/2

Over half of Baby Boomers have never attempted to negotiate their salary

## 40%

Many Gen X professionals (40%) express feeling underpaid for the work they do

## 35%

Baby Boomers are the least likely to receive a pay rise - 35% received no pay rise at all

## 48%

48% more Gen X and Boomers emphasize the importance of flexible benefits

## 34%

34% of millennials earn over \$100k, compared to just 11% of Gen Z professionals

## 1 in 5

1 in 5 Gen Z professionals feel misunderstood by their managers in terms of their personal circumstances



Almost double the number of Gen Z and Millennial professionals value equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace when compared to Gen X and Baby Boomers.





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# Methodology

In 2023, 6,000+ professionals completed a Robert Walters survey to help us to understand the state of play of ED&I across North America.

In partnership with **Censuswide**, Robert Walters devised a series of multiple choice and open-text questions.

Analysing both quantitative and qualitative data through the lens of the various age groups, we have created a strategic report that includes insights into:

- Career challenges and workplace experiences of different demographic groups.
- Strategic advice and action points from our ED&I research partner, for businesses looking to address these challenges.
- Open ended responses from the survey representing the challenges faced through the lens of the defined demographic groups.

Findings published in the report refer to the Robert Walters survey. Any external research is referenced and hyperlinked to its original source.

## Find out more about our research partners:

- **Censuswide** - Censuswide is an international market research consultancy headquartered in Clerkenwell, London
- **Resource Solutions** - A leading global provider of outsourced recruitment and consultancy solutions.



# An introduction to age



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Even before the pandemic, one of the critical areas of concern for human resources was combating the challenges presented by managing an increasingly multigenerational workforce.

Age and its relationship with ED&I as a topic is driving change in the workplace and adjusting various gender related stereotypes.



Born between 1997 to 2012 (ages 11 to 26)



Born between 1981 to 1996 (ages 27 to 42)



Born between 1965 to 1980 (ages 43 to 58)



Born between 1955 to 1964 (ages 59 to 68)

7



# Pay & salary negotiation



# Pay & salary negotiation

Findings from the survey shed light on how each generation approaches negotiations and how this impacts their earning potential and overall job satisfaction.

Millennials emerged as the highest earners among all age groups, with a staggering 34% earning over \$100k. In contrast, only 11% of Gen Z professionals are in the same salary bracket. This unsurprisingly coincides with the fact that millennials were found to be the most successful at negotiating their salaries, with 32% receiving 75-100% of the proposed increase.

**9%** of millennials reported no increase following salary negotiations, the lowest figure among all groups.

Gen Z professionals on the other hand face challenges and are the most likely to earn up to \$21k and the least likely to earn over \$100k. This gap might stem from the fact that they are more often found in more junior positions, despite feeling deserving of higher pay and acknowledging their importance to the business.

“

They disrespect and bully me because I am younger, and my pay does not reflect my skillsets.

I really do not understand why I am being paid less than others in the company.

”







Negotiating salary

The salary negotiation gaps are particularly evident among Boomers, with over 50% admitting they have never attempted to negotiate their salary. This contrasts sharply with Gen Z professionals, of whom 35% have proactively taken the initiative to negotiate their pay. The Boomers' reluctance to negotiate might be attributed to their confidence in their established positions and the belief that they do not require further negotiations.



Boomers were found to be the least likely to receive one in the last 12 months: 35% received no pay increase at all.



Gen Z professionals were three times more likely to receive a pay raise.

Gen X professionals, on the other hand, face their own challenges in salary negotiations. Only 22% of them received 75-100% of their proposed salary increase, leading 40% of Gen X professionals to express feelings of being underpaid for their impactful contributions to the organization.

I want my organization to pay me the salary I deserve.



## Progression & promotion



## Progression & promotion

Gen Z and Millennials stand out as the most likely to be offered promotions, with an impressive 65% reporting such opportunities. In contrast, half of Gen X professionals have yet to receive a promotion, raising questions about the recognition of their expertise.

“

With 30 years' experience in this company, I feel undervalued and wish my insights were appreciated more.

I aspire for a promotion that aligns with my wealth of experience.

”

While Gen Z professionals show enthusiasm for promotions, they seek more active engagement with senior leaders and decision-makers. A significant 18% of Gen Z professionals feel a lack of rapport or relationship in the workplace, 57% higher than that of Boomers.



“

I wish my workplace would show off my accomplishments more and not only what my older colleagues achieve.

My employer should treat everyone the same way, no matter their age/seniority.

I am overlooked based on my age, race, and gender. Even when I do produce effective ideas to become a more efficient company, credit is given to my manager.

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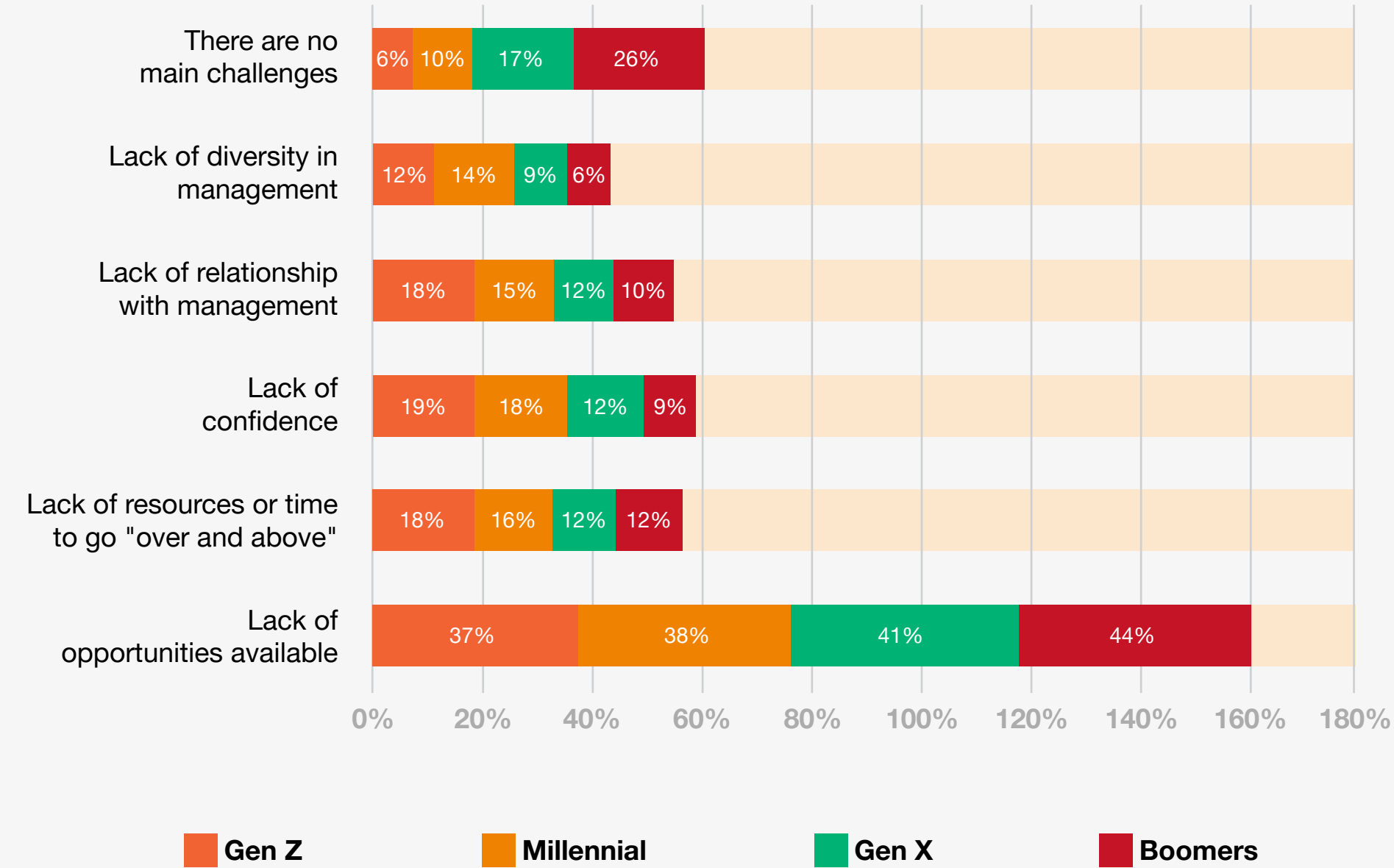
Challenges to progression

A key challenge for Boomers however is more around uncertainty on how to get promoted, with 42% either only somewhat aware or not aware at all of what they need to do to receive one.

Furthermore, 44% of Boomers reported that a lack of opportunities was their main challenge to progressing, 17% more than Gen Z professionals. However, it is worth also noting that 26% of Boomers stated that they faced no main challenges, compared to just 6% of Gen Z professionals.

“Older employees are not given as many opportunities for advancement.”

Workplace challenges experienced by each generation





## Benefits and employer value proposition



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## Most valued company benefits



48% more Gen X and Boomers than Gen Z and Millennials emphasize the importance of flexible and remote working benefits, valuing the freedom to balance work and life responsibilities.

“



**Sociable work cultures: Gen Z and Millennials seek connection**

29% more Gen Z professionals and Millennials than Gen X and Boomers recognize the significance of sociable work cultures. For these younger generations, creating meaningful connections and collaborative environments are key elements in their ideal workplace.

“Encourage social relationships within coworkers and should make the workplace feel like home.

Host more company social events, so we can get to know one another.

Provide more opportunities to go to the office to socialize with the others who works there.

”

**Mental Health: Gen Z and Millennials prioritize assessments**

A focus on mental well-being is gaining prominence, with Gen Z and Millennials being more likely to prioritize mental health assessments as part of workplace

concerns. Recognizing the significance of employee wellness is becoming integral to creating a nurturing work environment.

**Subscription services in demand: Gen Z and Millennials opt for rewards**

The preferences of Gen Z and Millennials lean towards modern benefits, including subscription services like Netflix. These rewards add a touch of personalization and convenience to their overall work experience.

**Training subsidiaries across all generations**

Training subsidiaries are a common desire shared fairly across all generations. The commitment to continuous learning and growth is a shared value, going beyond age boundaries.

“I want my organization to acknowledge the ways in which the excessive and perpetually increasing demands of the role are contributing to worsening mental health for many employees.

Leaders in this workplace could learn and understand that you do not have to push down your feelings and emotions - you do not have to treat mental health as taboo or wrong.

”



# The road to an inclusive workplace



# The road to an inclusive workplace

Survey responses have highlighted how it is crucial to recognize the generational differences that shape employees' experiences and perspectives.

Gen Z professionals demonstrated distinctive concerns in relation to discrimination and workplace trust. 17% have experienced discrimination based on their personal demographic or background, the highest percentage among all age groups. Additionally, 16% of Gen Z do not believe everyone, irrespective of their identity, can be successful in their organization, a sentiment 37% more prevalent than that of Boomers.

18%

of Gen Z professionals do not trust their organization's leaders to stand up for what is right, 57% more than Boomers.

A significant challenge in creating an inclusive workplace for Gen Z professionals lies in ensuring that managers understand and support their personal circumstances. 1 in 5 Gen Z professionals feel that their managers fail to understand their unique needs. Moreover, workplace dress code holds greater significance for Gen Z and Millennials, with 48% of them believing that how they dress directly influences how they are treated by management.

## ED&I Influence

Younger professionals were found to be more vocal about the importance of ED&I in the workplace. Almost double the number of Gen Z and Millennials view ED&I as a key issue when compared with Gen X and Boomers. This shifting perspective indicates a growing awareness and appreciation of workplaces that value diversity for a more united and progressive working world.

Additionally, the lack of diversity in management positions is perceived as a significant challenge to career progression, with double the number of Gen Z professionals expressing concern when compared to Boomers.



63%



The data also reveals that 63% of Gen Z and Millennial professionals would consider leaving their roles if they or others in their organization experience discrimination.





## Persistent gender disparities



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**160%** more Boomer men earn over \$100k, when compared with women in the same age group.

**50%** less Boomer women than men believe their opinions are valued in the workplace.

**\$100k** More than double the number of Gen Z men than women earn over \$100k.

Additionally, 18% of Gen Z women, compared to 13% of Gen Z men, do not believe that everyone, regardless of their identity, can be successful in their organization, highlighting the need for greater inclusivity and equal opportunities for all.

A horizontal stacked bar chart comparing the percentage of people who have ever been in a romantic relationship across four generations: Gen Z, Millennial, Gen X, and Boomers. The chart is divided into two categories: Women (represented by orange bars) and Men (represented by green bars). The x-axis shows percentages from 0% to 90% in 10% increments. The data is as follows:

Generation	Women (%)	Men (%)
Gen Z	55%	71%
Millennial	60%	79%
Gen X	46%	60%
Boomers	36%	52%





# Key recommendations

## Resource Solutions



# Key recommendations

## RESOURCE SOLUTIONS

The fascinating insights provided by the survey highlight that, as is so often the case, there are more similarities between the different age groups than differences. Irrespective of age, employees want to be valued, given flexibility, feel rewarded and be treated with dignity and respect. Where age and generation does begin to play a factor is how these different elements of careers are prioritised.

The age-related differences in workplace and career priorities need to be understood by both HR and talent acquisition leaders – it should shape and inform how all aspects of talent attraction and employee engagement. The days of a one-size-fits all linear career with aspirations of a corner office and job for life are long gone, yet many organisations have yet to adapt their attraction and engagement narrative.

Here, Tom Lakin, Global Practice Director at Resource Solutions shares recommendations for age-inclusive talent acquisition:

### Ensure all employer brand content is age-inclusive

As part of our recruitment inclusivity Audit, our team of Diverse Hiring experts meticulously evaluate numerous employer careers web pages each year. Almost without exception, certain age groups are not featured in any video content or imagery. This is significant as careers websites and social channels help candidates visualise what a workplace is like and helps them understand if there will be other people like them.



Strikingly, even within the technology sector, employees beyond the age of 40 are rarely showcased, inadvertently signalling a workplace tailored predominantly for younger professionals.







If you are concerned about bias in your hiring process, consider auditing your process for barriers and bias.

### Avoid using generative AI for job descriptions

Generative AI technology, such as Chat GPT, can be an effective way of automating tasks such as the writing of job descriptions. However, age bias is prevalent in such technology. Research suggests that age bias is one of the most common types of bias in generative AI. If using Chat GPT, ensure that copywriters or Diversity & Inclusion practitioners are involved in the copy sign-off process.

### Offer flexible working

Whilst Gen Z may be considered to be the most vocal in demanding more flexible working patterns and locations, our research strongly indicates that it is actually Boomers and Gen x for whom flexible working is the highest priority. Ensure that you clearly define your flexible working proposition and avoid vague statements of intent – talent want to know exactly how, when and where they can work. This content should be detailed in both careers' pages and job adverts.

### Consult your employee on benefits

In an ideal world, employee benefits would be unlimited and meticulously customized to cater to each individual's needs. However, the practical reality for most organisations is that this is not feasible.



As our research shows, the perceived importance of different employee benefits correlates relatively closely with age.

It is therefore imperative to broaden the scope of decision-making beyond senior HR leadership alone, and actively involve employees of all age groups in the consultation process.



The background of the slide features a series of light gray, wavy, vertical lines that resemble a stylized DNA helix or a series of connected loops. Small black dots are scattered along these lines, particularly concentrated in the upper right quadrant. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, with a focus on geometric and organic forms.

## Concluding comments

Adam Woolley, Associate Director,  
Robert Walters New York





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The age report comes at a pivotal time where the employment rate of older workers is at peak levels due to labour shortages, which brings about new challenges around age management and the impact of a multi-generational workforce.

Age diversity is an important piece of an inclusive and effective workplace. Since the average workplace now includes members of at least four generations, companies that embrace all ages are more likely to succeed and this is down to a variety of factors.

Firstly, age-diversity can improve performance and creative thinking - mixed-age work teams are proven to be more effective in complex decision-making tasks, than same generation teams. The fact is that each generation brings its own unique skillsets to your business. For example, while younger employees may have a tighter grasp on technology, older workers may have strong interpersonal skills. Combining these talents in an age diverse workplace strengthens your company.

Age diversity contributes positively to employee turnover rates, especially among over 55s, who demonstrate higher levels of loyalty, resulting in a retention of skilled

and experienced employees within the organization. This creates valuable mentoring opportunities, enabling older workers to share their wealth of experience with younger colleagues while the younger employees can impart knowledge of modern technology and industry-related skills. By creating a work culture that values continuous learning and skill-building, employees of all ages can engage in a dynamic exchange of knowledge.

The fact is that age diversity is often overlooked while employers focus on ethnicity and gender discrimination in the workplace more. This report allows us to consider the experiences of different age groups in the workplace – highlighting the nuances around confidence, barriers to progression, and inclusivity with professionals who are often a mere few years apart in age.

In our role as recruiters, we remain committed to providing valuable ED&I insight and advice to our clients. Just like every other employer across North America, we too are on a journey to getting ED&I right.

**Adam Woolley - Associate Director,  
Robert Walters New York**

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# About the authors

## ROBERT WALTERS

Robert Walters is a specialist recruitment agency operating in 31 countries. We believe in the power of a diverse global workforce that champions the right for people to be their true, authentic selves.

Helping organisations build more diverse teams and professionals have successful careers is part of our purpose to power people and organisations to fulfil their unique potential.

US: [www.robertwalters.us](http://www.robertwalters.us)

Canada: [www.robert-walters.ca](http://www.robert-walters.ca)

## RESOURCE SOLUTIONS

RS Consultancy is a recognised global leader in diverse hiring consultancy and minimising bias in recruitment. Our diverse hiring practitioners focus on actioning meaningful change by deploying data-led and research-based audits and interventions to help clients achieve their diverse hiring goals.

Our Recruitment Inclusivity Audit is the leading solution used by over 20 of the world's largest employers as well as high-growth scaling organisations to minimise bias in hiring. Analysing 257 data points in an end-to-end recruitment journey, our Audit assesses for bias through 8 diversity lenses: gender, ethnicity, LGBTQ+, disability and neurodiversity, age, faith, socio economic and veterans.

Find out more about our audit & diverse hiring consultancy: [Diverse Hiring](#)

Contact our diverse Hiring Practice Director: [in Tom Lakin](#)



The background of the slide features a series of parallel, wavy lines that create a sense of depth and movement. These lines are composed of small, dark dots connected by thin lines, giving the impression of a stylized, abstract landscape or perhaps a representation of data flow. The overall color palette is light and airy, with the orange text box providing a strong contrast.

# Robert Walters & Resource Solutions D&I Audit



# End-to-end Inclusivity Audit

Your hiring process has evolved over time, with new processes, content and technology added and removed. Whilst this process may deliver a functional talent acquisition service and experience, bias is likely to be threaded through each stage of your process. Our research indicates that bias is introduced before candidates even visit your careers page and continues through selection, assessment, interviewing and onboarding.

Our end-to-end inclusivity audit is the most advanced diverse hiring audit available, analysing the impact of recruitment content and processes across eight different lenses:

- Gender
- LGBTQ+
- Socio economic
- Age
- Faith
- Disability and neurodiversity
- Ethnicity
- Veterans



# 100



257

## Analysing 257 data points



44



30

## Key findings playback within 30 working days

## Get your inclusivity audit



## Contact us

For more information around delivering diverse candidate pools, creating an inclusive recruitment process, or kick-starting an ED&I initiative, please get in touch so we can provide information about our internal services, or direct you towards one of our partners:  
**[contact@robertwalters.com](mailto:contact@robertwalters.com)**





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