



# The State of Inclusion in Dutch Tech: Uncovering the DEI Perception Gap

Research conducted by Diverse  
Leaders in Tech in collaboration  
with Motivaction

# Foreword

What matters should be measured, because what gets measured can be managed. This is a well known business mantra, but when it comes to the business of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), it is clear that the tech industry needs to make it matter even more.

Over the past years Techleap has made it a priority to collect 'hard' diversity data. With this data we set out to gain insight into what our ecosystem needs to progress on DEI. If there is one thing we have learned, it is that collecting hard data is hard.

We can name many reasons as to why it is a challenge, but the one that stands out the most, is that the majority of Dutch tech companies do not practice data-driven DEI.

It is this realization that triggered us to conduct the very first 'Inclusion in Dutch Tech Survey'.

What do we learn if we tap into the hearts and minds of tech talent? How important is DEI to them really? Do leaders and employees actually understand what is needed to make progress? Is there a willingness to change and include? Because ultimately inclusion - making a conscious effort to create a space where everyone feels they belong - is the goal. Diversity will then be an outcome.

I invite you to explore the key findings of this 'soft' data research - and take a look in the mirror. Because apparently it matters who you are. Different identities prove to have different experiences. The DEI perception gap in Dutch Tech is real and recognizing this is a big step towards bridging it. A step I hope all of us, regardless of our identities, are willing to take.

Ingrid Tappin

Director Diverse Leaders in Tech  
powered by Techleap



## SUMMARY

# How Do Tech Employees Really Feel About DEI?



Our survey tells us that people believe DEI matters for the industry, but there is a noticeable lack of urgency to push for change. Most employees notice that their companies and the tech industry, in general, are talking about DEI, but when it comes to making real changes, some groups resist, especially when it gets close to home.

Some workers worry that if there's too much diversity and inclusion, it might hurt their own chances to move ahead in their careers. Surprisingly, one out of three workers in the survey said they would rather not work with someone who wears a hijab, showing that biases might be a problem in the industry.

There are also workers who think that the focus on DEI is exaggerated. Some don't believe that proven strategies, like setting goals and making people accountable, will really work. Interestingly, women, young workers, and those with a non-Western background think DEI is more important and urgent.

Even though many workers say DEI is relevant, most of them don't think the tech industry will actually take serious steps to make more progress in the near future. This doubt is shared by those who see DEI as crucial.



To sum it up, our survey shows that there's a big difference in how workers experience the tech industry in the Netherlands. Some think it's inclusive enough, while others believe there's a real need for change.

### DEFINITIONS:

In our survey, we adopt a broad definition of diversity, referring to the people in an organization and their personal characteristics. In this context we explore this on the basis that they are diverse in terms of gender identity, ethnicity, age, ability, sexual identity, beliefs and other diversity levels in society.

For inclusion, we refer to the practices or policies that facilitate equal participation of all individuals in opportunities, activities, experiences, and resources.

Regarding equity, we emphasize the recognition that systemic interventions are necessary to ensure compensation for individuals who have been historically and socially excluded.

### IN SUMMARY:

**Diversity:** Encompasses all the ways in which people differ.

**Inclusion:** Occurs when a variety of people have power, a voice, and decision-making authority.

**Equity:** Involves fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all individuals, with outcomes not predicted by one's identity.

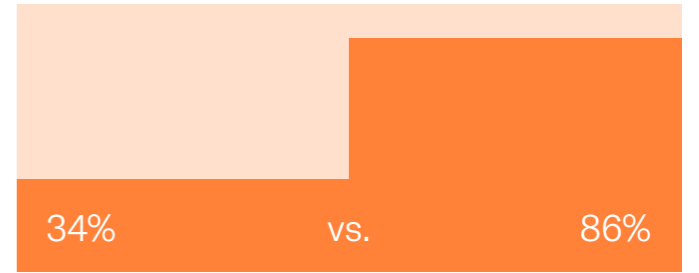


# 1. Do tech employees feel DEI is relevant?

DEI is viewed positively within the Dutch tech sector. The industry is recognising the importance of fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, reflecting a promising shift towards acknowledging the value that DEI brings to tech.



Less than half are aware of the business benefits of DEI.



of male respondents don't believe a diverse workforce is important for business

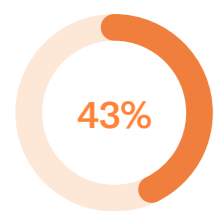
of female respondents who do.

## Only 49% believe that having a diverse leadership team is crucial for business success.

There is a noticeable contrast in the perceived importance of diverse role models for Generation Y and Z, as opposed to older generations.



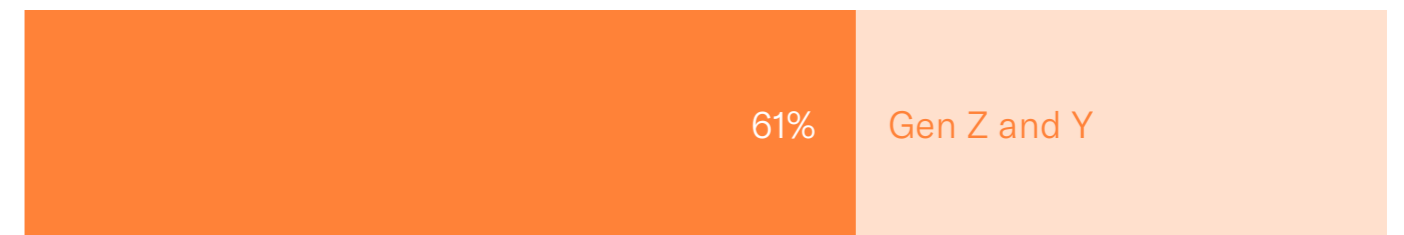
Despite the overall positive outlook, the importance of DEI isn't felt as strongly by all groups:



43% of individuals think that the significance of a diverse workforce is being exaggerated.



More men (47%) are sceptical about the importance of a diverse workplace than women (24%).



61% Gen Y and Z prioritise diverse leadership, compared to 39% of those over the age of 44.



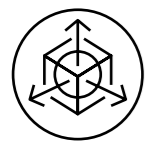
### Unlocking Business Success: The Power of Diversity and Inclusion

DEI is not just about doing the right thing, it is also the smart thing to do from a business point of view. Numerous studies confirm there is direct causality between DEI and company performance, and almost all of them have come to the same conclusion. Put simply: DEI is good for business.

When compared with their peers, organizations that are truly diverse and inclusive are:

**70%** more likely to capture new markets

Chief Executive for Corporate Purpose - CECP (2018)



**75%** more likely to see ideas become productized.

Center for Talent Innovation (2013)

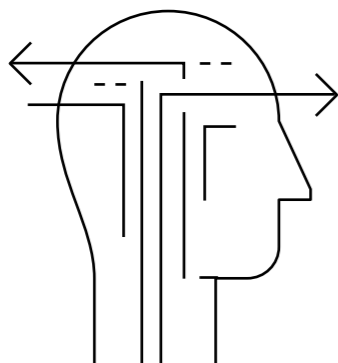


**19%** more likely to see higher innovation revenue.

The Boston Consulting Group (2018)

**87%** more likely to make better decisions.

Korn Ferry Research (2019)



## 2. How do tech employees think we measure up in DEI?

When we unveil the diverse DEI viewpoints within the sector, we're able to see differences in how certain groups experience their workforce. Additionally the sense of urgency for change varies depending on one's identity.

**71%** are satisfied with the approach of their organization to handling inequality.

**27%** state 'discrimination is a huge problem' in the Dutch tech sector.

Notably, employees with diverse migration backgrounds—whether Western or Non-Western—are the ones bringing attention to this issue.

35% of them perceive discrimination as a significant issue, only 13% of those identifying as Dutch share the same opinion.



**1 in 3** of the respondents admit being hesitant to work with a colleague wearing a hijab.



Employees with a non-Western migration background:

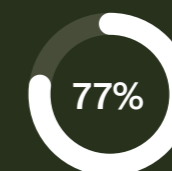
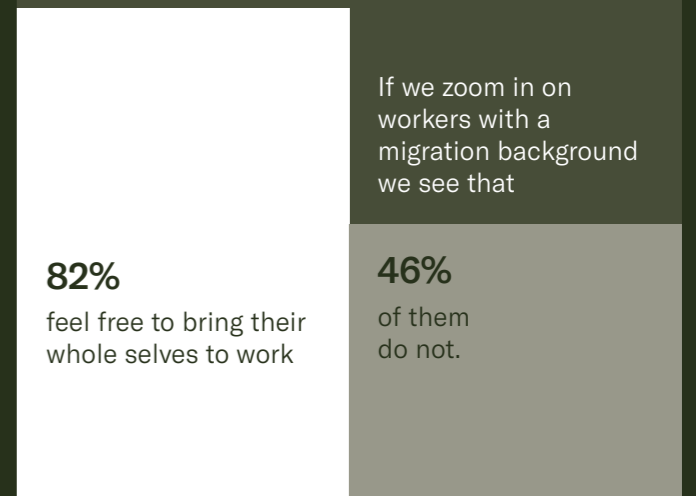
1. Express reluctance to voice their opinions due to safety concerns;
2. Experience a lack of recognition from peers;
3. Feel less belonging.



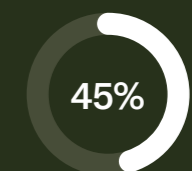
The majority of respondents view their organization as safe and inclusive. A closer examination around gender and ethnicity reveals contradictions and bias.



**1 in 4** women reported inappropriate behaviour to a counsellor within the past year.



**77%** believe their company offers equal opportunities for all.



**45%** of respondents with a non-Western background state not to receive equal treatment.





### The Importance of DEI in Unlocking Team Performance

Extensive research shows us that the number one differentiator between high-performing and low-performing teams is psychological safety.

An important part of psychological safety is valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Employees feeling able to be their whole selves at work means they can exhibit their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, background, family status, and any other part of their identity without judgment.

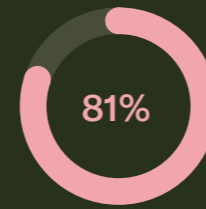
Neuroscientific studies have helped us understand that when DEI is not an integral part of a company's culture, it shuts down people's ability to think clearly, causing them to lose perspective, interest and ultimately makes it impossible for them to perform at their best.

SOURCES:

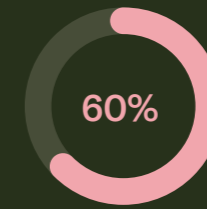
**Google's Project Aristotle**  
Psychological Safety the Critical Factor to Team Performance

**The Fearless Organization - Amy Edmondson**  
Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation & Growth

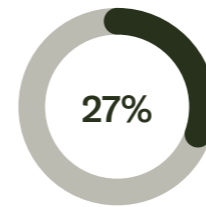
**Cultures of Inclusion - NeuroLeadership Institute**  
NLI Perspectives



81% don't know of any DEI initiatives within the broader Dutch tech ecosystem.

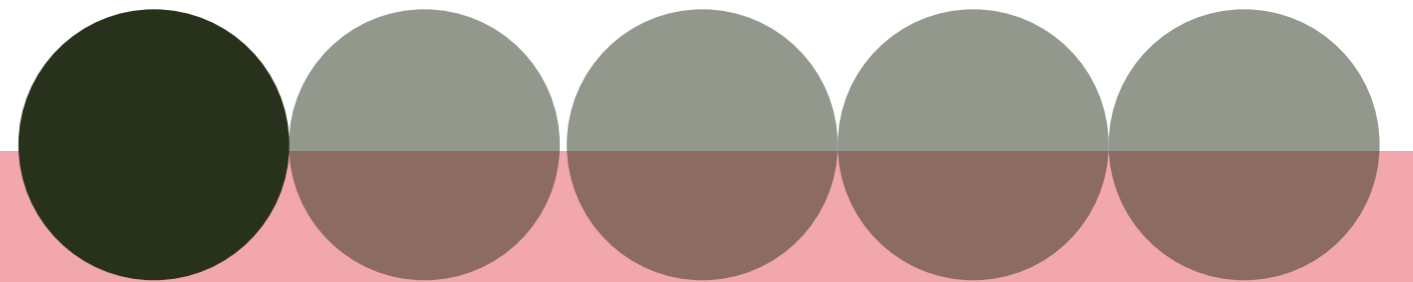


Close to 60% of respondents are unconvinced that additional investments are necessary to ensure more diversity in the organization.

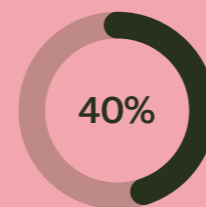


Merely 27% support the use of quotas to boost the representation of under-represented groups in the workforce.

Generation Y and Z seem to be aware that a greater diversity of role models is essential for attracting and retaining talent in the sector.



1 in 5 encounter obstacles to actively contribute to a diverse workforce, due to company culture or internal resistance within the organization.



Confidence that the sector will take actionable steps and make impactful DEI progress in the short term is low, even among the group that do consider it important (40%).

65% are unable to point out specific DEI actions being taken within their own organization.

65%

# 3.

## Do tech employees understand how to crack the code in progressing DEI?

Most employees seem to be unaware of effective DEI practices and initiatives. This lack of knowledge could be a crucial factor in hindering the overall progress in fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.



## Diverse Leaders in Tech: Changing the Face of Technology

What all of the data cited above shows is that DEI is hard, intricate, sensitive, political, and deeply personal. It is precisely because of these complexities that strong leadership is needed.

Diverse Leaders in Tech is on a mission to set the standard for DEI Excellence in European Tech. Powered by Techleap and in collaboration with our ecosystem partners we aim to equip diverse leaders and outspoken allies with the community and tools they need to bring DEI to life in their organizations.

Through impactful events, a curated network of experts and our DEI in Tech Benchmark platform, we cater to tech leaders who have a desire to leverage DEI as a true business enabler.

For more information about our membership and flagship events, please visit [www.diverseleadersintech.com](http://www.diverseleadersintech.com)

The facts and figures in this publication come from a survey (N=1000) conducted by Diverse Leaders in Tech in collaboration with Motivaction (2023).



You can read the results of the full research here (Dutch).





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**motivaction**  
insights and strategy

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