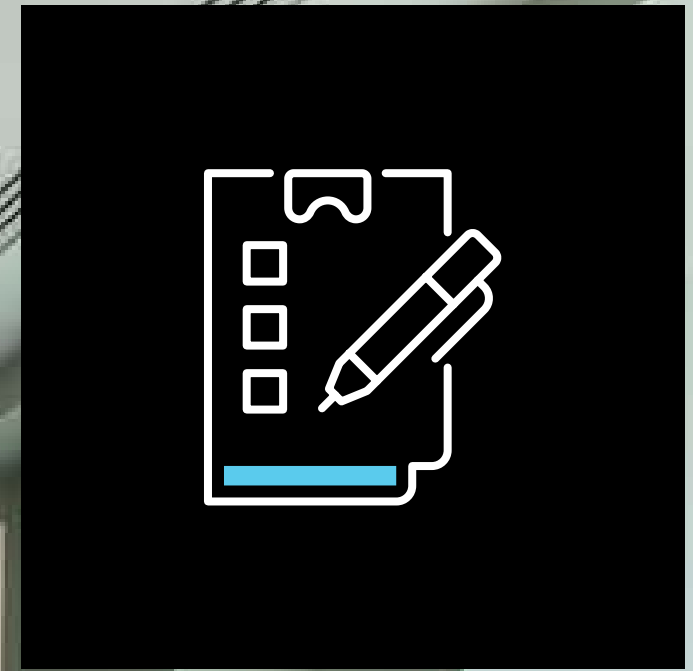


Morgan Lovell



Survey:

Designing workplaces where people belong

April 2023



**Designing workplaces
where people belong**
Creating workspaces
that consider diversity,
equity and inclusion
fosters happier and more
productive employees.

Hybrid working is not the only factor that needs to be considered when designing today's working environments. Research from [Gartner*](https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/diversity-and-inclusion-build-high-performance-teams) and [McKinsey**](https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters) shows that designing a workplace that reflects the broadest range of our society makes for a happy, healthy, and more productive workforce. And the business case for diversity is getting stronger every day.

That's why Morgan Lovell surveyed 500 employees about diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). We wanted to find out whether DEI was on their radar, how they thought their organisation could improve DEI and what impact it had on them at work.

* <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/diversity-and-inclusion-build-high-performance-teams>

** <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>



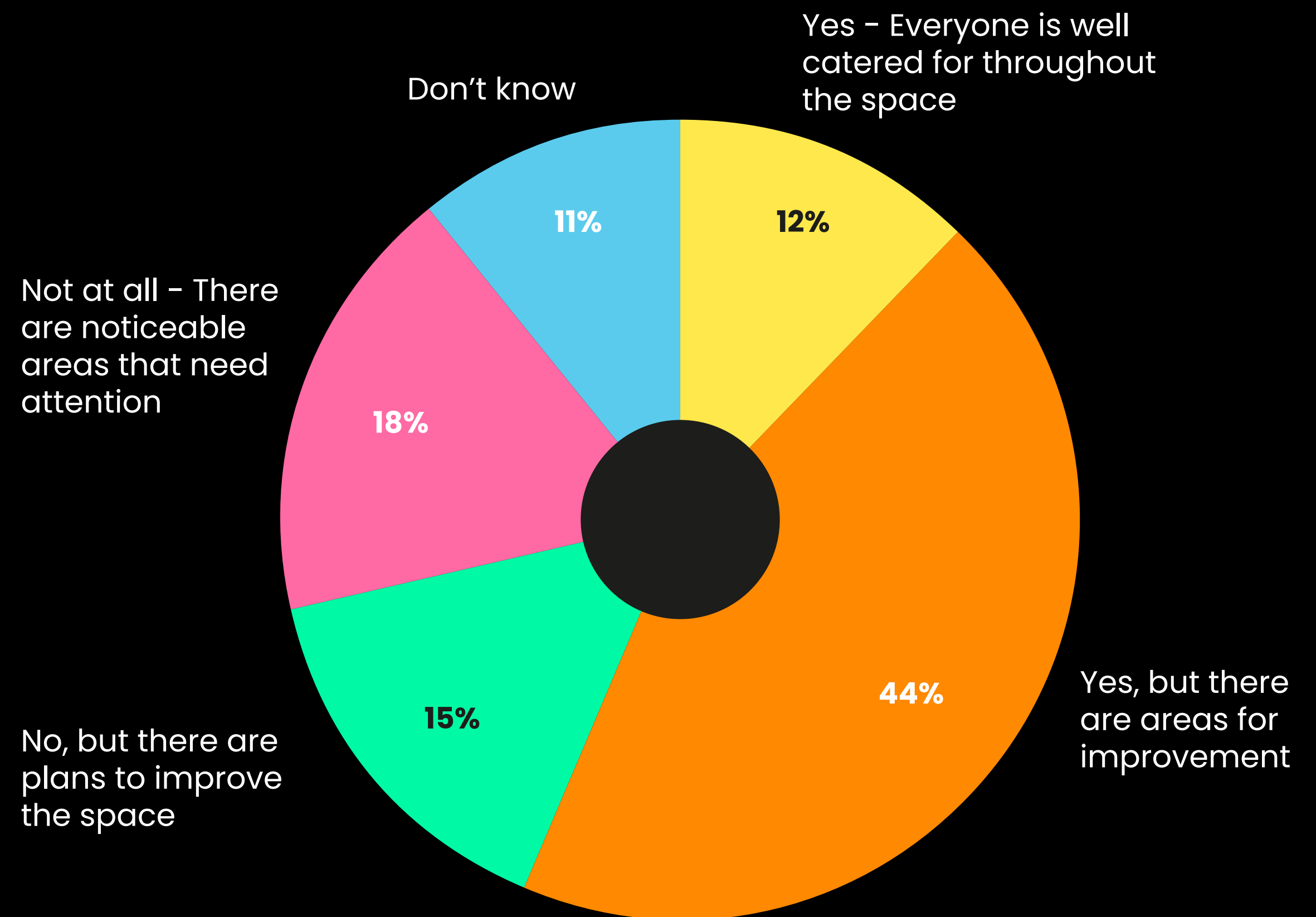
Are today's workplaces a good example of DEI?

Our research found that employees' awareness of DEI in their place of work is high, with nearly 90% commenting positively or negatively on it in their workplace.

The largest group of respondents (44%) indicated that while their workplace was a good example of DEI, there was room for improvement. Sadly, 18% said their office did not reflect DEI at all.

Positively, 12% felt that everyone was well catered for, recognising that some employers are starting to shift perspective and consider DEI in their workplace design.

Do you think your workplace is an example of DEI?
(choose only one)



The benefits of designing for DEI

Research shows that considering DEI reaps rewards for employers by increasing employee happiness and retention. Almost 80% of the people we surveyed said that considerate DEI has a positive impact on them.

The benefits ranged from boosting team morale and culture (37%) to fostering a sense of belonging (31%), feeling personally valued (27%) and bringing together new ideas and perspectives (26%). Moreover, 28% of our respondents said a DEI-focused workplace would make them want to continue working at their company.

Clearly, DEI designed into the fabric of a workplace helps to create a working culture that helps everyone feel that they belong.

In terms of DEI, how does your physical workspace impact you?
(choose any that apply)

It makes me feel personally valued at work



It helps bring together new ideas and perspectives



It boosts team morale and culture



It gives me a sense of belonging



It makes me want to continue working here



It's a place I would choose to work from



If it improved, I would prefer to work from the office



I don't feel it impacts me

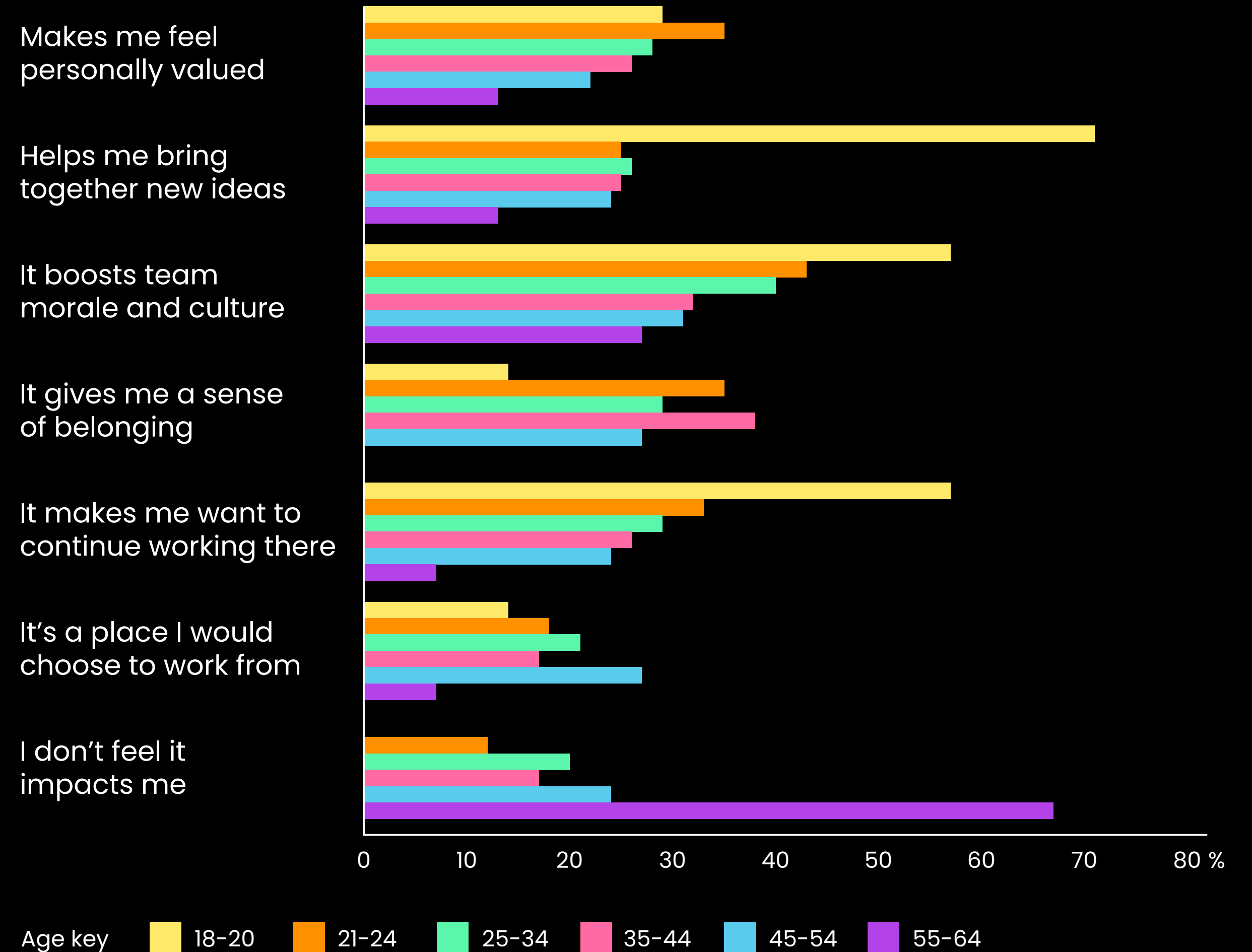


DEI attracts younger talent

In our survey, the age group on which DEI appeared to have the biggest impact was 18–20-year-olds, with 71% of this demographic saying that more inclusivity helped to bring together new ideas and perspectives, and 57% saying that it boosted team morale and made them want to continue working in their position. This indicates that DEI could play an important role in attracting and retaining the top graduate talent to your organisation – the workforce of the future.

Our stats revealed a generation gap in this area, because an overwhelming 67% of 55–64-year-olds said that DEI does not have an impact on them in the workplace. This could suggest that more experienced employees have become accustomed to focusing on individual tasks in their roles, whereas entry-level employees work more productively by learning from others and working collaboratively.

In terms of DEI, how does your physical workspace impact you?
(choose any that apply)



Put people at the centre of workplace design

This graph outlines key ways in which employers can improve the inclusivity of office design, as identified by our respondents. Top of their list is flexible office space at 48%, followed by better communication about how these spaces can be used at 39%.

How can your organisation improve DEI in your workplace? (choose any that apply)

Offer greater considerations around gender identity



Provide more choice of flexible spaces to work in/from



Better furniture or layout would make the space easier to use



Better communication around how spaces can be used



More accessibility features for wheelchair users or people who use mobility aids



More features for people with hearing or visual impairment



More consideration for neurodiverse individuals

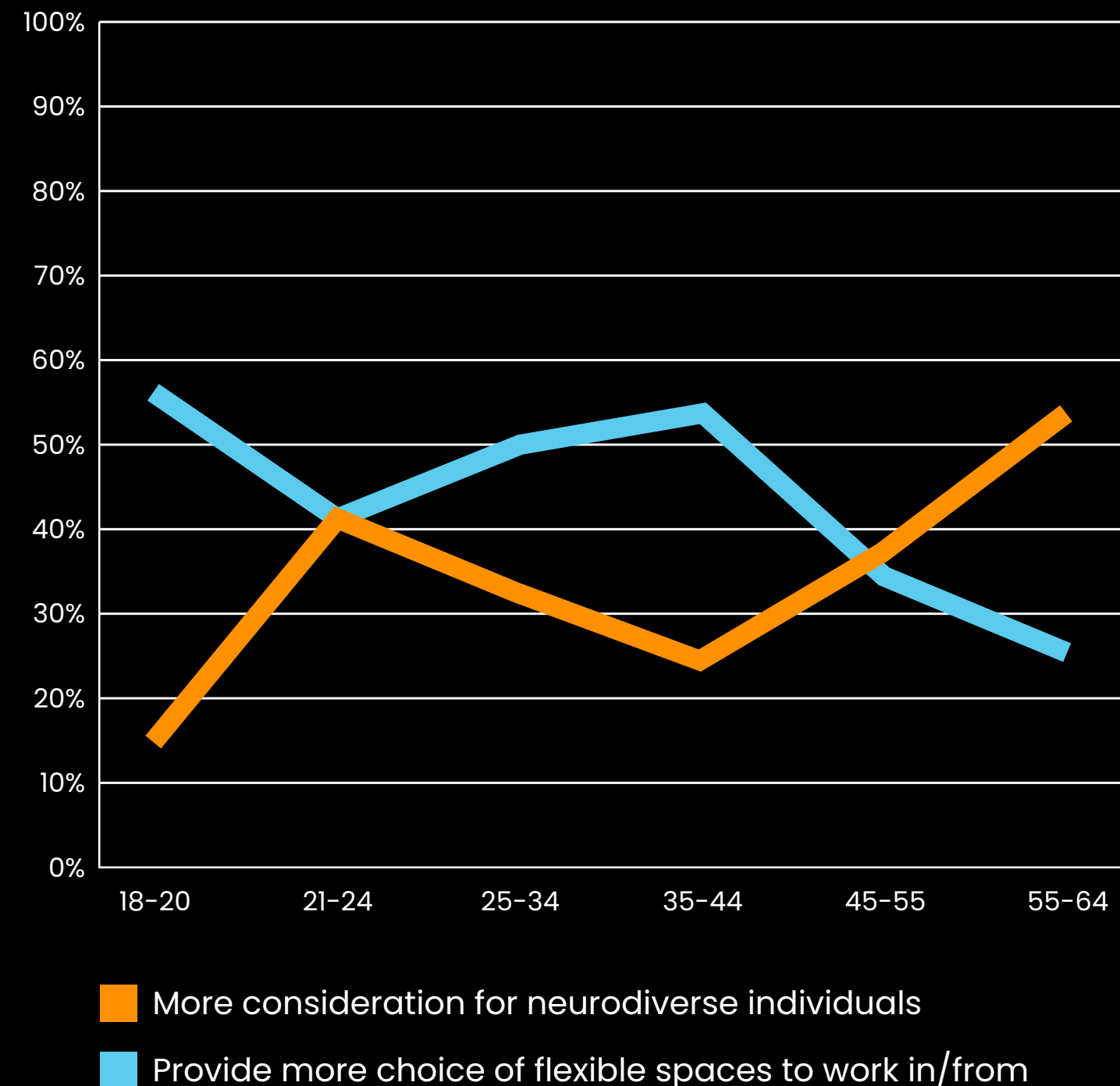


Clearly, choice and flexibility are fundamental to DEI at work. So it's worth considering how flexible your workspaces are and assessing how well you are communicating their use to employees. Creating a team that focuses on DEI and talks to individuals about their needs can help clarify the nuances of a DEI strategy and roots workplace design in evidence. The evidence could be used to decide what sort of neighbourhoods are required to cater for everyone's needs, preferences or activities. Do people need more quiet zones, medical facilities or games areas?

One approach could be to invite employees with specific needs on site to test the features of the new environment and give feedback on how it could work best. For example, the visually impaired could be invited on site to test the use of Braille in signage before they use the space on a daily basis.



Is there a link between designing more diverse workspaces and supporting the needs of neurodivergent employees?



Diverse workspaces for greater inclusion

We know that employees want to see a greater range of flexible workspaces to choose from – 48% of our respondents told us so. This desire was particularly prevalent in the younger generations. Our results indicated 57% of 18–20-year-olds thought it would improve DEI, compared with only 27% of 55–64-year-olds.

And designing more diverse workspaces is an effective way of supporting the needs of neurodivergent employees, who are more responsive to their environment. For example, they tend to work better in quieter spaces with muted colours.

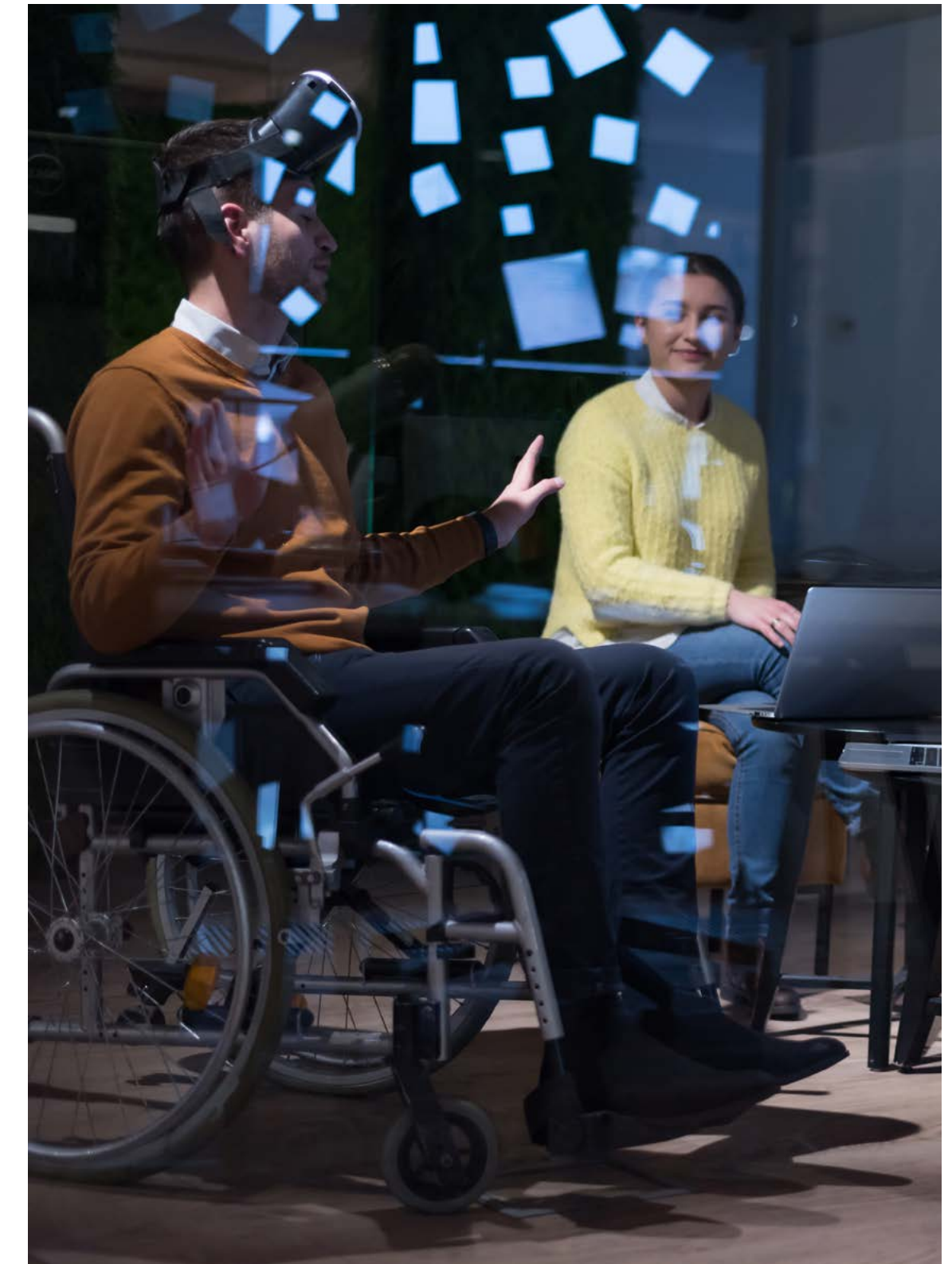
In our survey, the belief that catering for neurodiverse individuals would improve DEI in the workplace crossed all demographics. The older demographic was top, with 55% of 55–64-year-olds believing that more consideration should be given to neurodiverse individuals. However, the younger generations were not too far behind with 41% of 21–24-year-olds, 38% of 45–54-year-olds and 32% of 25–34-year-olds concerned about this issue. It's a universal consideration.



Future-proofing design

Considering how environments cater for the employees of the future is an important strategy for future-proofing workplace design.

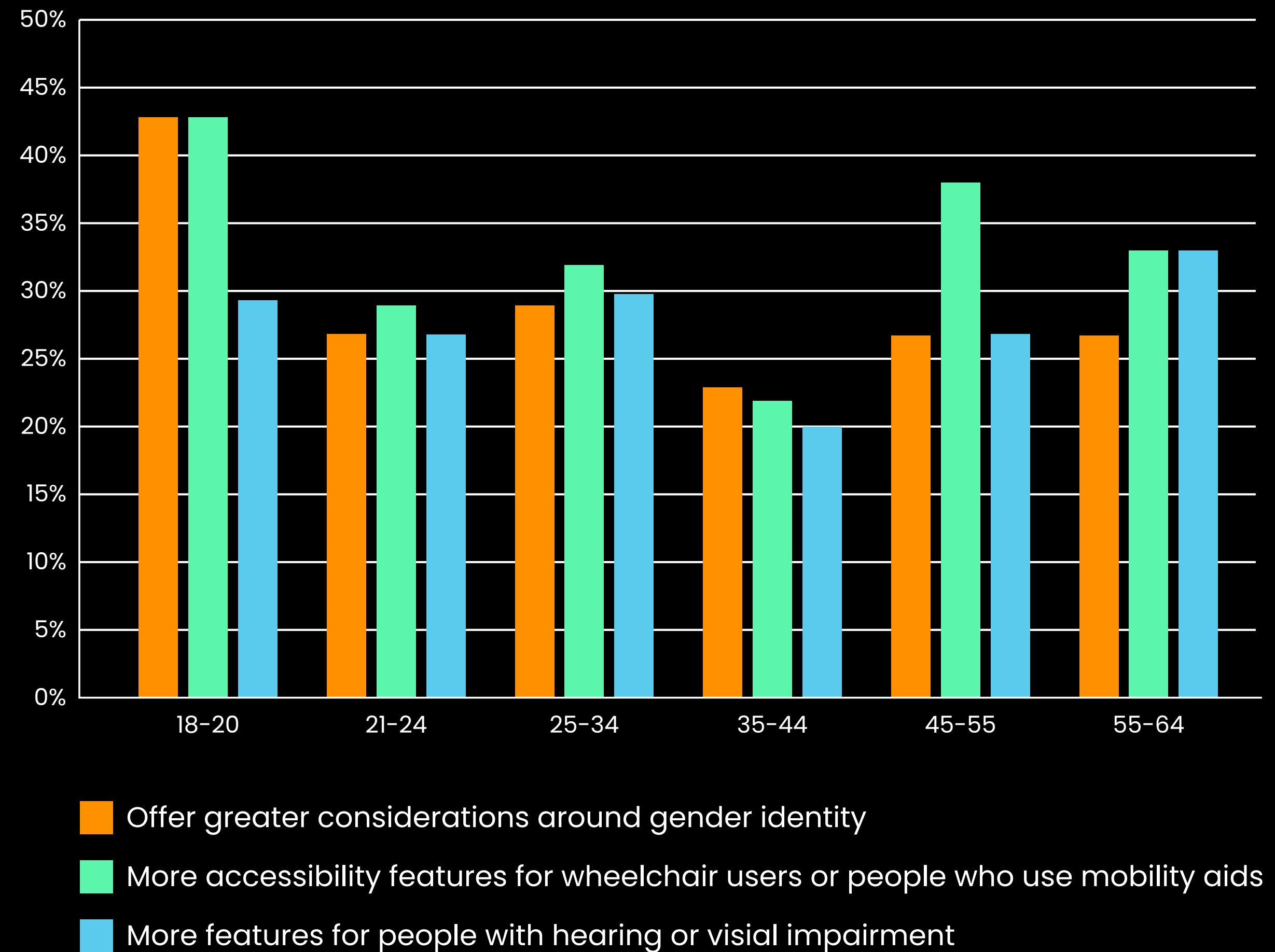
Our survey indicated a high awareness of issues around gender identity in the employees of the future: the 18-20-year-olds. Consideration of gender at work was important for 43% of this age group, compared with 26% of 55-64-year-olds. So, as your workforce evolves, considering how gender identity is reflected in the workplace environment will become increasingly important for attracting and retaining new talent.



Will your workforce requirements change as they mature with the company? Employees might develop degenerative conditions or have life-changing events throughout their lives, for example. How does the environment cater for those with sight and hearing impairments? How accessible is your environment for people using wheelchairs?

What are the changing demographics of the workforce in terms of ethnicity? Most modern organisations comprise multi-faith workforces. Workplace design can cater for different cultures and perspectives by dedicating spaces to the practice of religious or cultural customs, such as multi-faith rooms.

Three key areas identified that could help future-proof for a more inclusive future.





Designing workplaces where people belong

By considering the impact of DEI in workplace design, every company has the opportunity to improve employee engagement, satisfaction, and productivity.

DEI in workplace design can also improve employee retention rates, as employees who feel included and valued are more likely to stay with the company for a longer period. Moreover, it can attract

diverse talent, which can lead to a competitive advantage in the market.

Overall, DEI in workplace design is important as it can create a more positive and inclusive work environment, leading to happier and more productive employees, a more diverse workforce, and improved business outcomes.

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