

Stuttgart, 2025 September 23rd

**Cegos, international leader in L&D,
publishes the 2025 edition of its international barometer
“Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations”**

**2 out of 3 employees report having experienced discrimination
during their professional life,
with physical appearance and age topping the list**

**8 out of 10 HR Directors affirm that their company intends
to continue or even accelerate its efforts regarding Diversity & Inclusion**

Cegos, global leader in Learning and Development, publishes a new edition of its international barometer: “Diversity and Inclusion within Organizations.”

Diversity and inclusion are two key drivers that Cegos supports through training programs delivered worldwide, helping organizations foster cohesion, collective performance, and overall attractiveness.

Conducted in April and May 2025 across 10 countries in Europe, Latin America, and Asia, this study sheds light on how both employees and HR professionals perceive, expect, and implement diversity and inclusion practices.

With this study, Cegos gives a voice to employees as well as HR Directors and Managers, in order to better understand their real-life experiences of diversity, their level of support for existing Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) policies within their organizations, and the levers they consider most critical to making further progress.

This second edition of the barometer reveals a growing awareness of D&I issues and stronger engagement on many fronts... but it also highlights the persistent presence of various forms of discrimination in the workplace. The study further uncovers a gap between organizations’ stated intentions and the day-to-day practices perceived and experienced by employees in terms of diversity and inclusion.

Lastly, the results show that the support and training provided to managers to help them lead diverse teams and foster inclusion—such as developing awareness of their own biases and building listening, empathy, and openness skills—remain insufficient and fragmented.

Methodology: Online survey conducted in April and May 2025 across 10 countries in Europe (France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Portugal, United Kingdom), Asia (Singapore), and Latin America (Brazil, Mexico, Chile), with responses from 5,537 employees and 438 HR Directors or Managers, all working in private companies or public organizations with more than 50 employees.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Diversity and inclusion are now widely recognized concepts within organizations:**
 - 94% of employees say they are familiar with the concepts of diversity and inclusion.
- **Yet discrimination remains widespread:**
 - 84% of employees and 98% of HR professionals report having witnessed discrimination in the workplace.
 - 2 out of 3 employees state that they have personally experienced discrimination during their career.
 - The main forms of discrimination observed by employees globally relate to physical appearance (53%), age (48%), racism (45%), and socio-economic status (42%).
- **These forms of discrimination negatively impact the workplace climate:**
 - 1 in 3 employees believes that discrimination harms the working atmosphere.
 - 9 out of 10 HR professionals share this view and specifically highlight the damaging effects of:
 - sexist comments (53%),
 - racist behavior (47%),
 - and the importance placed on physical appearance (45%).
- **HR professionals are driving strong momentum for Diversity and Inclusion, relying on a wide range of actions within organizations:**
 - 81% of HR professionals say they want to continue or accelerate their D&I policy.
 - When asked about the measures implemented in their workplace, employees mention:
 - dedicated D&I communication (48%),
 - integration of D&I topics into onboarding processes (47%),
 - and visible involvement of leadership on these issues (46%).
 - A culture of allyship — i.e., the voluntary commitment of privileged individuals to actively support marginalized or discriminated groups—is starting to emerge, though it remains limited (40% among employees, 41% among HR professionals).
- **The engagement and training of managers to manage diversity and foster inclusion remain incomplete:**
 - Only 42% of employees believe their managers truly act as allies against discrimination.
 - Just 59% of managers have received training on unconscious biases that can lead to discrimination.
 - Employees and HR professionals alike identify key skills that still need to be developed among managers:
 - listening (45%),
 - empathy and compassion (42%),
 - tolerance (37%),
 - and openness to others (35%).
- **The resolution of diversity-related conflicts still relies heavily on HR teams:**
 - 45% of HR professionals report being on the front line when it comes to resolving such conflicts.
 - Only 25% say that managers are actively involved in addressing these issues.

I. Discrimination: a widespread and persistent phenomenon within organizations

Widespread discrimination... and in some cases, on the rise

The first major finding revealed by this 2025 edition: the persistence—or even the rise—of discrimination in the workplace.

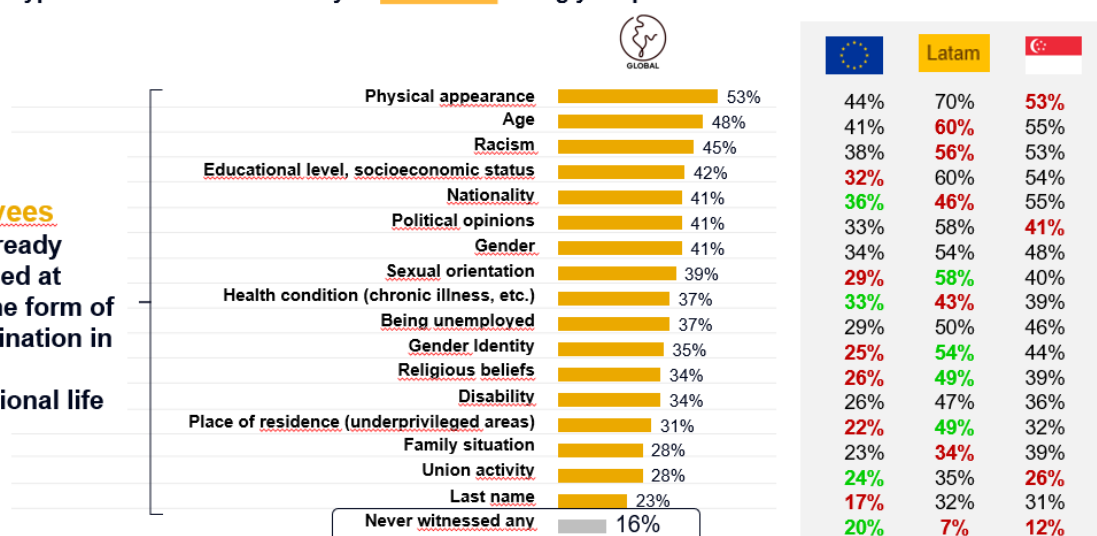
84% of employees surveyed internationally report having witnessed at least one form of discrimination during their career. The most frequently cited grounds include physical appearance (53%), age (48%), racism (45%), and educational or socio-economic background (42%). These perceptions are shared across all geographic regions, with particularly high levels reported in Latin America and Singapore.

These results underscore the magnitude of a multifaceted phenomenon, present in nearly all organizations, which remains a significant barrier to genuine inclusion.



What types of discrimination have you **witnessed** during your professional life?

84% of employees have already witnessed at least one form of discrimination in their professional life



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Isabelle Drouet de la Thibauderie, HR Offer and Expertise Manager at Cegos, explains:

"The findings of this barometer confirm that discrimination is no longer limited to visible or 'traditional' criteria such as age, gender, or ethnicity. It now extends to more subtle dimensions, such as social background, place of residence, or level of education. This clearly shows how deeply stereotypes continue to shape workplace behavior—sometimes unconsciously. For organizations, these results are a wake-up call: they highlight the urgent need to strengthen anti-discrimination measures, raise awareness, and equip managers with the right tools to foster truly inclusive environments."

Discrimination experienced in the daily work lives of many employees

Discrimination is not just something employees observe in others: it is also something they experience themselves: **two out of three employees (66% globally)** report having personally been victims of at least one form of discrimination over the course of their career.

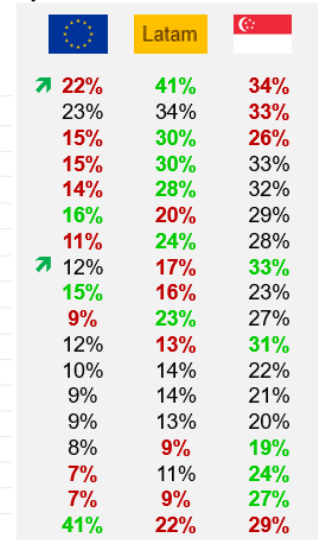
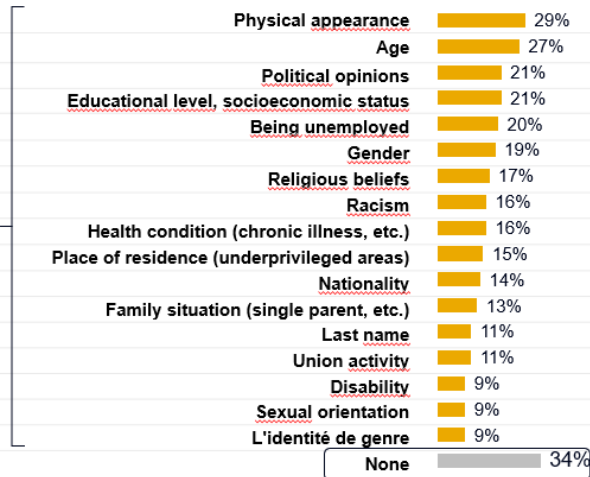
The most frequently cited reasons for discrimination include **physical appearance** (29%), **age** (27%), and **socio-economic status or political opinion** (21%). These figures reflect a widespread and multifaceted phenomenon, present across all regions covered by the study.



What types of discrimination have you personally been a victim of during your professional life?



66% of employees have already been victims of at least one form of discrimination in their professional life.



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Isabelle Drouet de la Thibauderie, HR Offer and Expertise Manager at Cegos, comments:

"The study shows that discrimination based on physical appearance and age continues to be the most prevalent in professional environments. In this respect, the physical ideals and standards promoted in society—likely amplified by social media—seem to naturally spill over into the workplace. Other, less-publicized criteria such as political opinion or social background continue to fuel a more subtle, yet equally real, sense of exclusion. Interestingly, issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity—though highly publicized and widely discussed in recent years—are cited less frequently by employees, possibly due to recent awareness and inclusion initiatives introduced within organizations."

HR Professionals increasingly aware of workplace discrimination

Among Human Resources professionals, awareness of workplace discrimination has grown significantly over the past three years.

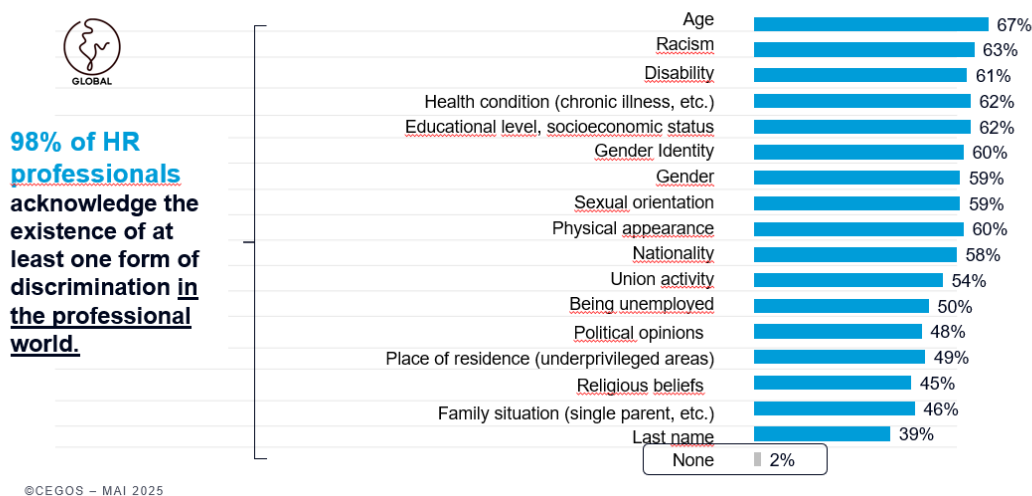
Today, 98% of HR Directors and Managers surveyed acknowledge the existence of discrimination in the professional world, a near-unanimous consensus.

When asked about the most common forms of discrimination observed in the workplace, HR professionals most frequently cite:

1. Age (67%)
2. Racism (63%)
3. Health conditions or chronic illness (62%)
4. Socio-economic background (62%)
5. Disability (61%)



In your opinion, what are the most common forms of discrimination encountered in the professional world? (Within companies / organizations in general)



56% of HR Professionals acknowledge the presence of at least one form of discrimination within their own organization

When asked about discriminatory practices commonly encountered in their own workplace, 56% of HR Directors surveyed internationally identified at least one form of discrimination.

Globally, the most frequently cited forms concern health conditions (20%), age (20%), and union membership (19%), followed by socio-economic background and political opinion (18% each). These findings reflect a growing awareness of issues that go beyond gender or ethnicity alone.

Isabelle Drouet de la Thibauderie, HR Offer and Expertise Manager at Cegos, adds:

"The fact that more than half of HR professionals recognize the persistence of discrimination within their own organization is highly significant. It shows that awareness is growing and that these issues are no longer being ignored or downplayed. The next step is to move from shared acknowledgment to concrete, structured action. Organizations must begin addressing more subtle forms of discrimination—those related to social status, place of residence, or health conditions—which are clearly on the rise in 2025."

Recruitment, onboarding, promotion: key moments where discrimination occurs

At the international level, both employees and HR professionals agree that discrimination most often occurs at three critical stages: team integration (according to 23% of employees and 26% of HR professionals), recruitment (22% of employees and 34% of HR), and promotion (21% of employees and 29% of HR). These pivotal moments tend to concentrate most tensions, often due to persistent stereotypes or under-structured managerial practices.

Discrimination is also reported during access to managerial roles (17% of employees and 23% of HR professionals) and during salary increases (17% of employees and 18% of HR professionals).

When asked who plays the most active role in combating discrimination within companies, 40% of HR professionals view themselves as the primary drivers of inclusion within their organization. However, only 17% of employees share this perception.

Discriminatory behaviors increasingly weigh on workplace atmosphere

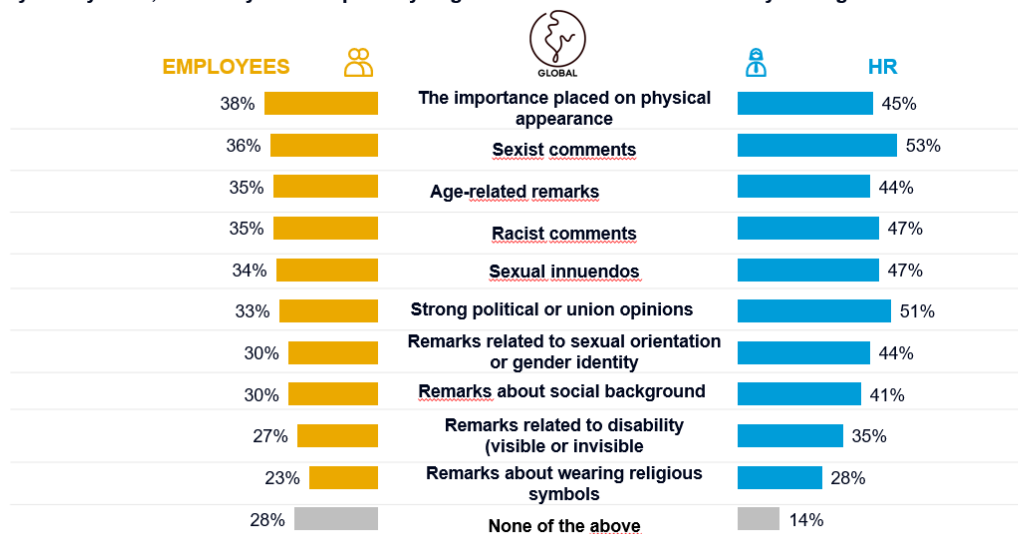
Discriminatory behaviors—whether overt or more subtle—continue to significantly undermine the social climate within organizations.

Globally, both employees and HR professionals agree on the types of behaviors that degrade the workplace environment: excessive focus on physical appearance (38% of employees, 45% of HR), sexist remarks (36% of employees), age-related comments (35% of employees, 44% of HR), and racist remarks (35% of employees).

HR professionals appear particularly attuned to these issues: over half cite sexist comments (53%) as a factor, and nearly half mention racism (47%).

Notably, 51% of HR professionals worldwide consider strongly expressed political or union-related beliefs to be a source of collective tension — making it one of the top stress factors according to them — whereas only 33% of employees identify it as such.

In your day-to-day work, what do you think partially degrades the work environment in your organization?



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Isabelle Drouet de la Thibauderie, HR Offer and Expertise Manager at Cegos, explains:

"These findings confirm that everyday discrimination and microaggressions are truly toxic to workplace atmosphere and team cohesion. What also stands out is that HR professionals—because they are on the front lines and often directly involved in conflict situations—now perceive the impact of these behaviors more acutely than in the past. Increasingly aware and vigilant, especially regarding sexism and the stigmatization of beliefs, HR teams play a crucial role in conflict resolution. They must also be better equipped to support all stakeholders in fulfilling this responsibility."

II - Diversity and Inclusion: ideas and policies are gaining ground and organizations stay the course

Diversity and Inclusion: concepts now widely understood and viewed positively

The 2025 barometer reveals that the concepts of diversity and inclusion are now widely disseminated and generally well understood.

Globally, 94% of employees (90% in France) say they are familiar with the concept of diversity, and 7 out of 10 state they have a clear understanding of what it entails. The notion of inclusion appears to be even more widely grasped: 94% of employees are familiar with it (86% in France), and 76% claim to understand it in depth—an

all-time high that reflects the growing emphasis placed on these issues in both managerial and institutional discourse.

As awareness of diversity and inclusion grows, so does recognition of the legitimacy of corporate D&I policies. At the international level, 78% of employees believe that a diversity and inclusion policy has a positive impact on their organization, and 81% of HR professionals share this view. This level of support is especially strong in Latin America (85%) and remains high across all surveyed regions.

D&I: a strategic lever for innovation, engagement, and competitiveness according to HR Professionals...

For HR professionals, diversity and inclusion policies offer a combination of strategic and social benefits. Globally, these policies are primarily seen as a way to build more diverse and creative teams (according to 59% of HR professionals) and to enhance the company's social engagement (43%). The ability to reflect the diversity of society (39%) and to strengthen team cohesion around shared values (37%) further reinforces this positive outlook.

... And a key employer selection criterion for employees

The 2025 barometer also shows that attention to diversity and inclusion has become a decisive factor in attracting and retaining talent.

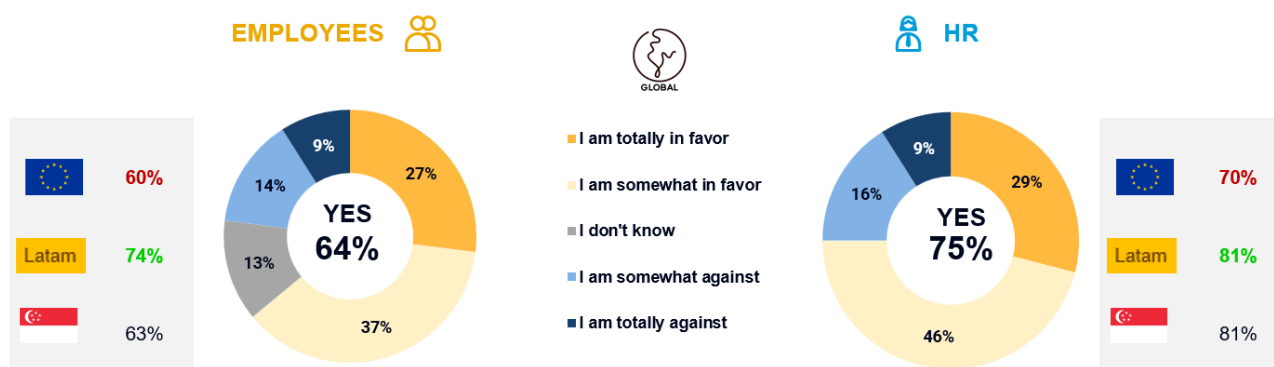
Internationally, nearly 8 out of 10 employees (79%) state that these issues would influence their choice of a future employer — one third of whom say it would be one of their main criteria. Sensitivity to these topics is especially high in Latin America (84%) and Singapore (81%).

Quota policies: a growingly legitimate lever

Another key takeaway from the study is the growing support for quota policies aimed at promoting the access and advancement of specific groups (women, older employees, people with disabilities, etc.).

Globally, 64% of employees and 75% of HR professionals say they are in favor of such measures. In Latin America and Singapore, support even exceeds 80%, reflecting a strong consensus on their relevance and usefulness.

What is your opinion on quota policies that prioritize certain categories of employees (women, seniors, people with disabilities, etc.)?



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Isabelle Drouet de la Thibauderie, HR Offer and Expertise Manager at Cegos, explains:

"The fact that 75% of HR professionals now support quota policies shows that rising awareness is coupled with a genuine willingness to act. It's a strong signal: legal frameworks and general principles are no longer enough

to meet expectations around diversity and inclusion. Companies are being encouraged to go further—to take concrete steps toward ensuring fair access to opportunities, including through more proactive measures."

Diversity and Inclusion: individual commitment remains uneven and fragile...

While diversity and inclusion (D&I) policies are now better known and generally seen as positive, individual engagement remains more mixed. Globally, 6 out of 10 HR professionals and 1 in 2 employees identify themselves as advocates or promoters of D&I within their organization.

These figures reflect both a solid base of support and significant room for growth in rallying teams around these values.

... But organizations stay the course

The barometer results show that, despite international controversies—such as those recently seen in the United States—the momentum behind diversity and inclusion policies remains strong. Although one in four HR professionals worldwide (24%) say such developments have led their organization to slow down or reassess some initiatives, the dominant trend is one of commitment: 33% plan to accelerate their diversity policies, and 48% intend to maintain them as they are.

Isabelle Drouet de la Thibauderie, HR Offer and Expertise Manager at Cegos, adds:

"What clearly emerges is that the momentum behind diversity and inclusion policies has largely broken free from contextual influences. Even though some international debates exist, the majority of companies now consider these topics to be strategic. The fact that nearly one in two HR professionals worldwide plans to accelerate their initiatives is a strong signal: organizations are ready to go beyond mere compliance and turn D&I into a concrete driver of cultural transformation and employee engagement."

III - Embedding diversity and inclusion into everyday practices and workplace culture

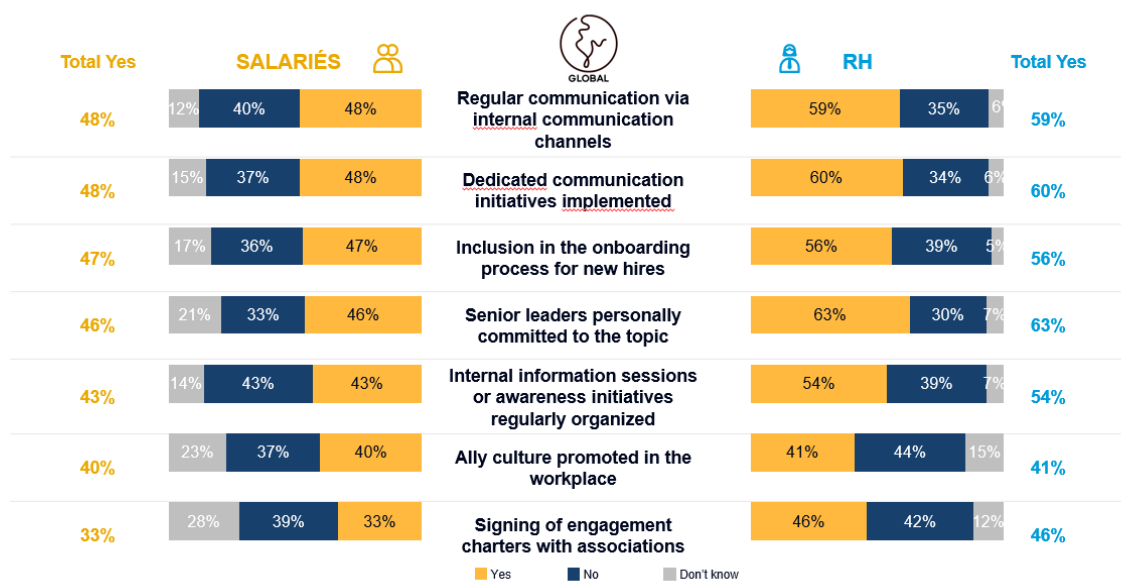
Awareness-raising practices are becoming more widespread and diverse

The 2025 barometer shows that communication and awareness initiatives now form a foundational pillar of diversity and inclusion policies. Globally, nearly 6 out of 10 organizations have implemented regular communication on D&I topics, and over half incorporate these issues into their onboarding processes for new hires.

These initiatives go hand in hand with more visible leadership engagement: 63% of HR professionals report that their senior leaders are personally involved in D&I efforts, underlining the importance of exemplary leadership in lending credibility to such initiatives.

There is also a growing emphasis on more structured approaches: 41% of HR professionals say they are promoting a culture of allyship within their organization, and 46% report having signed official D&I commitment charters.

Has your organization implemented any of the following diversity & inclusion awareness actions?



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Catherine Jacquet, Bespoke Learning Project Director at Cegos, comments:

"We are seeing a significant shift in how companies approach diversity and inclusion. Today, it's no longer just about raising awareness or delivering institutional messages — it's about actively involving employees as visible advocates and allies. This culture of 'allyship' encourages everyone to take a stand as an ally, meaning to actively support marginalized groups, take action, and promote inclusive behaviors on a daily basis. This move toward individual engagement remains more tentative in France, likely because it requires overcoming certain cultural barriers and reshaping collective perceptions of the role each person can play."

Recruitment processes increasingly structured to promote fairness

The barometer reveals that nearly all companies have initiated efforts to make their recruitment processes more equitable. Globally, nearly 8 out of 10 organizations now apply identical selection criteria to all candidates and claim to enforce non-discrimination throughout the entire recruitment journey—from sourcing to onboarding.

These efforts go hand in hand with more professionalized practices: 76% of HR professionals report using the most objective assessment methods possible, and 74% provide anti-discrimination training to their managers.

Multiple challenges in the operational implementation of diversity

While diversity and inclusion policies are advancing, their practical implementation continues to face numerous challenges. At the international level, several issues stand out as key areas of vulnerability:

- 67% of HR professionals say they struggle with the management of older employees;
- 60% report difficulties in ensuring equal treatment between men and women;
- 60% have trouble recruiting individuals from different social backgrounds.

These figures confirm that inclusion has a direct impact on recruitment, management, and retention practices.

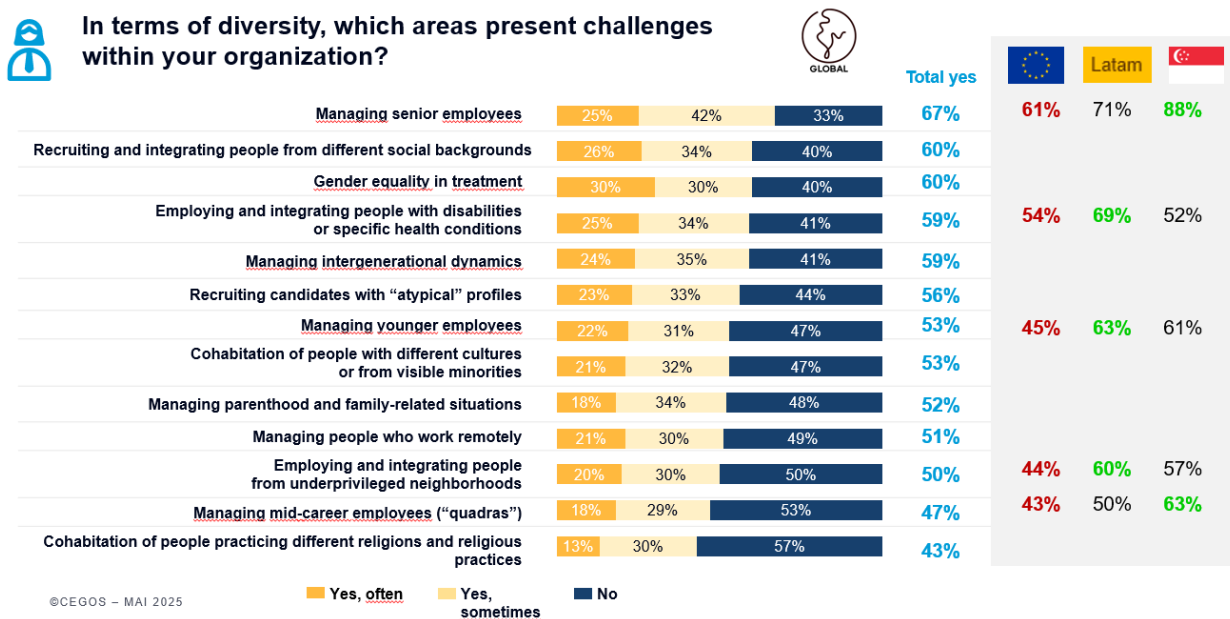
HR professionals also cite challenges in hiring and integrating people with disabilities or specific health conditions (59%), managing intergenerational teams (59%), and recruiting “non-traditional” profiles (56%).

In more than half of the organizations surveyed, other key concerns include:

- the coexistence of different ethnic cultures or visible minorities (53%),
- managing younger employees (53%),

- and work–life balance issues (52%).

Even remote team management remains a challenge for 51% of HR respondents.



Catherine Jacquet, Bespoke Learning Project Director at Cegos, analyzes:

"The challenges raised by HR professionals clearly reflect the scale and complexity of the societal changes underway: the aging workforce, growing expectations around fairness, new aspirations from younger generations, and rising political and social tensions... All of these dynamics are putting pressure on human resources practices within organizations.

Diversity is no longer just about statements of intent or displaying quantitative targets—it requires a shift in perspective and a continuous effort to adapt internal policies. This is essential for the credibility and resilience of D&I strategies."

Clear levers identified to advance Inclusion and Diversity

At the international level, both employees and HR professionals agree on the key priorities for strengthening inclusion. The top lever, cited by 38% of employees and 39% of HR professionals, is the implementation of a zero-tolerance policy toward discrimination and harassment. This is followed by the importance of exemplary leadership, with leadership teams expected to embody and promote these values at the highest level (mentioned by 34% of employees and 40% of HR professionals).

The third most cited lever is the development of a shared culture grounded in inclusive values, highlighted by 32% of employees and 37% of HR professionals. These three dimensions are seen as the foundational pillars of credible and unifying commitment.

Other levers were mentioned less frequently: Promoting employee ambassadors on these topics (24% of employees, 28% of HR), Conducting workplace quality-of-life surveys to gauge employee perceptions (23% and 26%, respectively), or having a dedicated D&I function (17% of employees, 18% of HR).

Finally, the use of performance indicators to track progress was the least cited lever—mentioned by only 10% of employees and 11% of HR professionals—indicating that objective measurement of progress remains a weak spot.

IV - Empowering managers as true allies of diversity and inclusion

Managers are increasingly supported to handle sensitive Diversity and Inclusion issues

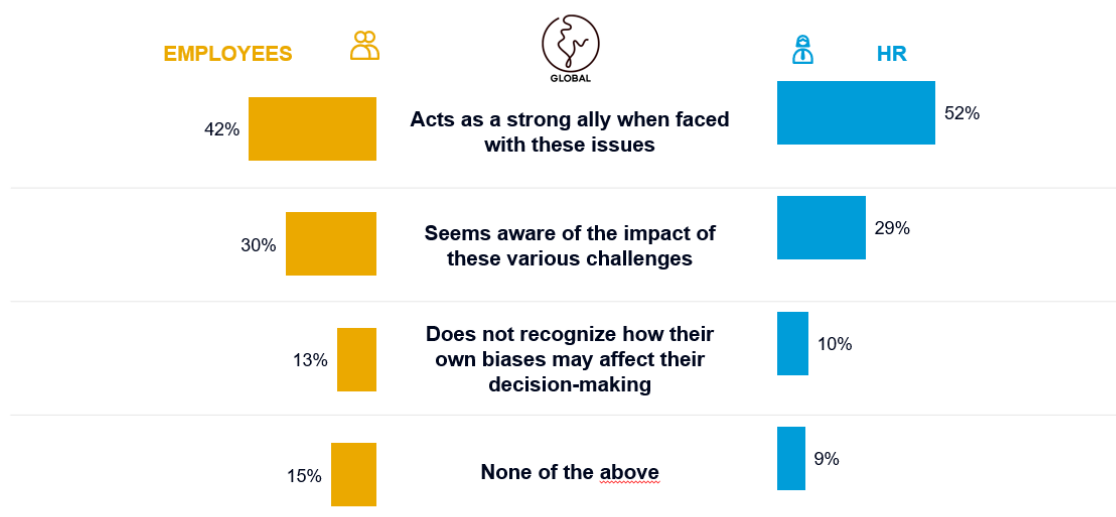
At the international level, 86% of managers say they feel supported and equipped (including 35% who feel “fully supported”) by their organization when it comes to managing sensitive situations related to diversity. This high score reflects the growing availability of information, training programs, and HR support on these topics. Perceptions are fairly consistent across regions, although Latin America stands out with an even higher support rate (91%), while Europe shows a slightly lower figure (82%).

Managers: still imperfect allies of inclusion

Overall, the study reveals that fewer than half of managers (42%) are seen by employees as strong allies—those who are capable of taking concrete action when faced with sensitive diversity and inclusion situations. HR professionals are somewhat more optimistic: 52% believe that managers adopt an active and exemplary stance in promoting diversity and inclusion within their teams.

Meanwhile, 30% of employees feel that their manager is aware of the importance of these issues but does not necessarily act on them—highlighting the challenge of turning intention into visible and concrete behavior. Finally, 13% of employees believe that their manager does not recognize their own perceptual biases.

Regarding diversity and inclusion, how is your direct manager (N+1) perceived?



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These findings highlight the need to strengthen the day-to-day support provided to managers: while awareness of inclusion and diversity issues is now well established, its concrete translation into daily behaviors is progressing more slowly.

Catherine Jacquet, Bespoke Project Director at Cego, explains:

"Being aware of inclusion and diversity issues is no longer enough. Today, employees expect their managers to be engaged allies—people who act, support, and take a stand. But meeting that expectation requires a true managerial paradigm shift."

"This is not about goodwill or kind words — it's about taking a clear, deliberate, and visible position in favor of equity and inclusion. The results show that this shift has not yet been fully achieved, and the challenge for organizations now lies in embedding the management and promotion of diversity and inclusion as a skill part of the managerial role."

Managing diversity-related conflicts: a responsibility still centered on HR

Overall, the 2025 barometer confirms that resolving diversity-related conflicts remains primarily the responsibility of Human Resources.

When asked about this, 45% of HR professionals report that they are the first point of contact in such situations. Managers come second (25%), followed by internal mediators (21%) and diversity-focused entities (13%). Nearly 1 in 10 HR professionals say that these conflicts are not resolved and continue over time. This landscape illustrates the ongoing difficulty for organizations in establishing more structured and shared conflict-resolution mechanisms.

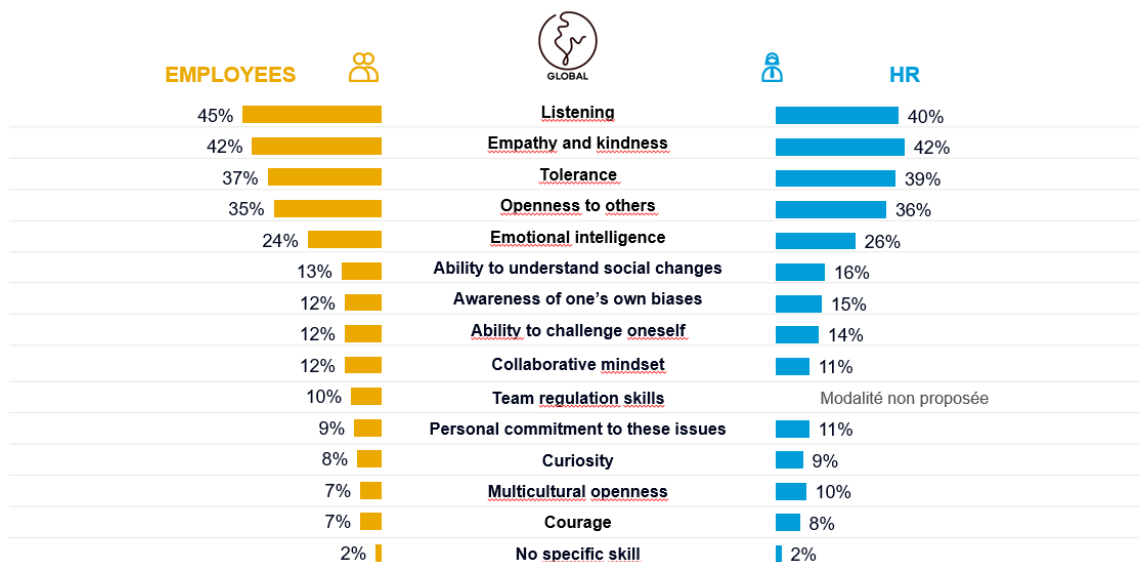
Inclusive Managers: between awareness and skills development

While most organizations now report providing training to managers on inclusion-related topics, this effort remains incomplete: only 59% of managers have received training on the impact of unconscious bias on their behavior.

Yet awareness of cognitive bias is the first prerequisite for developing inclusive management.

When asked which skills managers should strengthen to better foster inclusion, both employees and HR professionals highlight a shared set of core *soft skills*: Listening (mentioned by 45% of employees and 40% of HR), Empathy and kindness (42% of employees and 40% of HR), Empathy and kindness (42% of employees and 40% of HR), Tolerance (37% of employees and 39% of HR), and openness to others (35% and 36%, respectively).

In your opinion, what are the key skills a manager should develop to be more inclusive?



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Isabelle Drouet de la Thibauderie, HR Offer and Expertise Manager at Cegos, concludes:

"The findings of this barometer clearly show that inclusive management cannot simply be declared. Beyond tools and frameworks, it requires actively cultivating attitudes and visible behaviors that inspire trust and embody a culture of inclusion on a daily basis.

To truly embed inclusion in workplace culture, it is essential to strengthen the support provided to both managers and HR teams. These actors are on the front lines: they set the tone, embody values, and translate organizational commitments into concrete practices.

But for this to happen, they need to be trained, equipped, and supported. Building skills around D&I is not a 'nice to have'—it's a strategic lever for shifting behaviors, improving workplace relationships, and creating environments that are genuinely open to all."

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About the Cegos Group - www.cegos.com

Founded in 1926, the Cegos Group is a worldwide leader in learning and development. The Group now runs its own operations in 12 European, Asian and Latin American countries. It is also active in over 50 countries through its network of partners and distributors, all of whom are leading training providers and top-tier technology experts. With 1,500 employees and more than 3,000 partner consultants, the Group trains 250,000 people around the globe every year and generates a turnover of €250 million. To accomplish its mission – *To train individuals and to support organizations to meet their development challenges* - Cegos deploys a global offering, including ready to use and tailored training, Managed Training Services and international training projects. Its "blended learning" approach aims to provide the most suitable and competitive learner experience, by combining multiple learning formats (classroom training, e-learning modules, videoconferences, webcasts, e-training programs and more, including more than 3 000 digital contents available in up to 30 languages).

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