



2025 DEI Benchmarking Study:

How Organizations are Evolving in the Face of a Changing Landscape





With President Trump’s executive orders around diversity, equity, and inclusion (“DEI”), continued activist campaigns, and headlines about companies “retreating” from DEI while promising to continue efforts to foster inclusion, many leaders are left asking, “how are things actually changing?”

The landscape is evolving quickly, and we wanted to go beyond the headlines to see what companies are actually doing when it comes to programs related to hiring, talent management, and workplace culture. For an unfiltered look, we surveyed senior leaders from 443 organizations across industries and company sizes in March 2025. Their responses capture the unique moment we’re in, and shed light around how companies are attempting to thread a very difficult needle. **While some traditional DEI practices are being reevaluated or scaled back, most companies are not abandoning their efforts to build representative teams, design fairer processes, or build cultures that work for everyone. Instead, they’re evolving their work to make these efforts more sustainable and resilient.**

In the below benchmarking report, we share exactly what’s changing, what’s enduring, and what forward-looking companies are prioritizing.

The Decline of Highly-Visible, Highly-Scrutinized Efforts

While overall we find most companies are evolving their efforts instead of abandoning them, there are several initiatives that a majority of companies are moving away from altogether. Unsurprisingly, many are stepping back from the most visible, and most highly-scrutinized efforts—the kinds of efforts that have become “DEI” lightning rods, particularly for those unfamiliar with the work. For example:

Goal Setting

In 2020, after the murder of George Floyd, many organizations pledged to build more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces. As a part of those promises, they often set representation goals—e.g., “we will increase representation of Black employees by 10% over the next five years”—to show they were taking their pledges seriously. Now that those goals have, often unfairly, come under attack, we’re seeing companies distance themselves from representation metrics, which is particularly pronounced in companies with more than 10,000 employees:



38% 50%

38% of companies that had representation goals already have or intend to stop setting such goals. This number jumps to 50% for companies with 10,000+ employees. While that means 50% of such companies are keeping these goals, at least for now, how they communicate about such goals is changing dramatically.

35% 63%

35% of all companies have stopped or will stop setting supplier diversity goals. This number jumps to 63% for companies with 10,000+ employees, which are more likely to set these goals in the first place.

77% 91%

77% of companies with representation goals will stop sharing their goals internally. This number jumps to 91% for companies with 10,000+ employees.

92%

92% of companies with representation goals will stop sharing their goals externally.

In our view, while it's critical for organizations to understand workforce representation, setting representation goals isn't a prerequisite for building more representative teams. In fact, representation is often the most lagging indicator of how fair and inclusive a company is. Companies can consider using other types of data in ways that are both lower-risk and that allow them to more effectively understand and improve [their talent efforts](#).

Language

The term "DEI" has become a polarizing, often misunderstood acronym, so it is perhaps unsurprising to see that **39% of companies are changing how they refer to their efforts.** Open-ended comments show that there is a shift away from words that have been demonized by the administration (like diversity) or are more susceptible to misinterpretation (like equity), and organizations are placing a greater emphasis on their principles, values, and specific initiatives when describing their programs.



Team Structure

A notable number of companies also shared the current landscape is having an impact on their organizational structure: **32% report changes in which internal teams are involved in their efforts.** In many cases, legal, communications, or policy/public affairs teams are playing a larger role in shaping strategy.

Programs for Underrepresented Talent

Finally, our data show that some companies are pausing programs for underrepresented groups. Again, this change is most common in larger companies:

- 25% of all organizations are pausing internship programs for under-represented groups. This number jumps to 44% for companies with 10,000+ employees.
- 22% of all organizations are pausing career development programs. This number jumps to 38% for companies with 10,000+ employees.

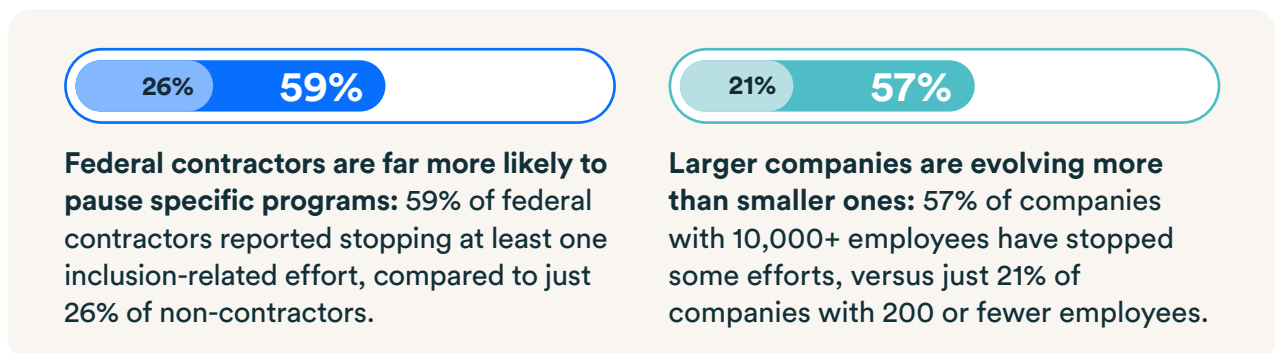
It's important to note that the vast majority of these responses were collected before the EEOC published guidance on its view of the legality of these programs in late March. With this guidance, [we believe companies seeking to reduce risk can continue these programs if they are available to all employees regardless of their background.](#)

Participation in External Rankings

One area we expected to see larger pullback given the climate is in participation in external partnerships and rankings with inclusion-focused organizations. **Our data shows 18% of companies have stopped or intend to stop their participation in inclusion-focused rankings or benchmarks, while 82% will continue.**

The Strongest Predictors of Pullback: Size & Federal Contractor Status

While no organization is immune to the shifting landscape, our analysis shows that some companies are more likely to evolve their efforts than others:



This isn't particularly surprising given the administration's targeting of federal contractors, and the higher risk of litigation for large companies.



What's Not Changing: Continuing the Work That Drives the Most Impact

While companies are moving away from some of their more high-visibility and symbolic efforts, the vast majority are evolving in ways that continue to prioritize the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Across sectors, internal motivation and commitment remains strong. And, fortunately, the programs that research shows tend to be most effective also remain extremely popular.

Executive Commitment and Budget

Amidst all of the noise, executives remain committed to their company's efforts. 85% of companies report that their executive teams are just as committed—or even more—to building a representative workforce and fostering an inclusive culture than they were a year ago.

Financial commitment also remains strong: 58% of organizations report no change in funding for these efforts in 2025. 23% are increasing funding, and only 19% are decreasing funding.



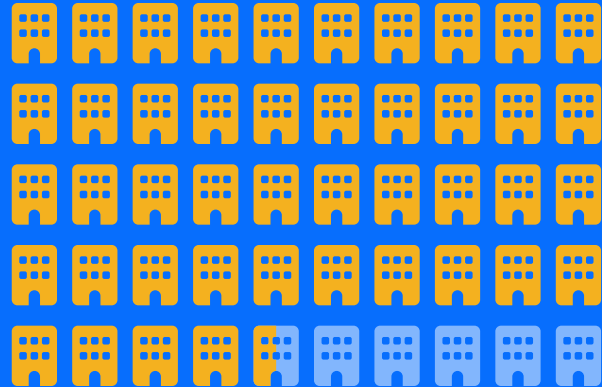


Embedded Best Practices

A wealth of research indicates that the most effective way to build representative teams, fair practices, and inclusive cultures is to embed these principles into organizational processes and workflows, rather than have them operate as a separate initiative, orthogonal to how the business runs.

89%

of companies say their efforts are similarly or even more embedded in talent processes than they were a year ago



Our data show that in 2025, a growing number of companies are taking this approach—**89% of companies say their efforts are similarly or even more embedded in talent processes than they were a year ago**. In addition:

- 90% are providing manager enablement like training.
- 90% are investing in efforts to create more fair decision-making processes (e.g., adding structure to hiring processes, implementing bias-mitigation strategies in performance management, promotions, etc.).
- 91% are prioritizing casting a wide net for diverse talent (e.g., sourcing from schools or locations with greater diversity, participating in events that will grow awareness of the organization among different demographics, etc.).
- 84% are continuing to invest in inclusion-focused training, though within our own learning platform, we can see the specific types of training organizations are using most are evolving.

Finally, **86% of companies say they won't stop collecting employee or applicant demographic data**. Having access to this data is critical for companies that want to understand how employee sentiment, hiring, promotions, and more might vary by demographic groups. When companies can glean these insights, it empowers them to identify and close gaps that are impacting some groups more than others, ultimately allowing them to create better systems and cultures for everyone.



Inclusion Signals and Key Benefits for Underrepresented Groups

Companies aren't just embedding best practices into their systems—they're also sending powerful, visible signals that inclusion still matters. A large majority—90%—are continuing to support employee resource groups (ERGs).* Nearly as many—85%—are continuing to recognize heritage and identity-related dates like Black History Month, Women's History Month, and Pride.

These visible signals matter, but just as important are the structural supports that help employees from underrepresented backgrounds thrive. One of the most impactful ways companies create equitable workplaces is through benefits—concrete, everyday resources that meet the needs of a diverse and evolving workforce. These offerings have never been only symbolic; they are strategic, designed to help companies attract and retain a broader talent pool: parents, veterans, people of all genders, and employees with disabilities.

Those priorities remain strong. The vast majority of companies continue to provide the following key benefits:

 **97%**

are maintaining career training, hiring initiatives, or similar support for veterans.



 **94%**

are offering benefits for employees with disabilities that go beyond what's legally required.



 **96%**

are continuing to offer transgender-inclusive healthcare benefits.



 **95%**

are providing wellness-oriented benefits like mental health support.



 **96%**

are maintaining parental leave benefits.



*Given recent EEOC guidance, we recommend making these groups open to all employees.



Evolving Toward Cultures for Everyone

Across industries and company sizes, this data tells a clear story: while some high-visibility efforts are being reevaluated, the core work of building inclusive, high-performing workplaces is very much alive.

Companies are doubling down on what drives impact by embedding inclusion into key talent practices, supporting employee wellbeing through meaningful benefits, and investing in the training and tools that help people contribute to inclusive cultures. These are the practices that don't just check a box—they shape how employees experience work every day, and they lay the foundation for cultures where everyone can thrive.

As we look ahead, we encourage organizations to continue investing in the efforts that are moving the needle, and to broaden their perspective. Instead of focusing on “DEI” as a set of standalone initiatives, forward-thinking companies are asking a bigger question: What kind of culture are we creating?

The opportunity now is to build [cultures that work for everyone](#)—cultures that reflect today's workforce, unlock performance, and position companies to succeed in a rapidly changing world.





This benchmarking data is just the beginning. If you want to see exactly how your company compares to this data as well as other data and insights from more than 2,000 companies check out Paradigm's [Culture for Everyone Platform](#). It can show you exactly how your organization stacks these efforts—and many others—by company size and industry. Alongside those benchmarks and real-time trends, the AI-powered platform helps you gain insight, take action, and enable people.

**If you're ready to build a culture for everyone,
[contact Paradigm today.](#)**

