



Inclusive Leadership in 2025

What Executive Leaders Are Reporting
Findings from DHR Global's 2025 Executive Survey



Inclusive Leadership in 2025

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Introduction

In July 2025, DHR Global surveyed more than 200 executive leaders across public, private, private equity–backed companies, and nonprofit organizations to better understand how organizations are approaching inclusive leadership, culture, and accountability.

The findings offer a clear-eyed look at what companies are doing today, how those efforts are evolving, and where leadership priorities lie.

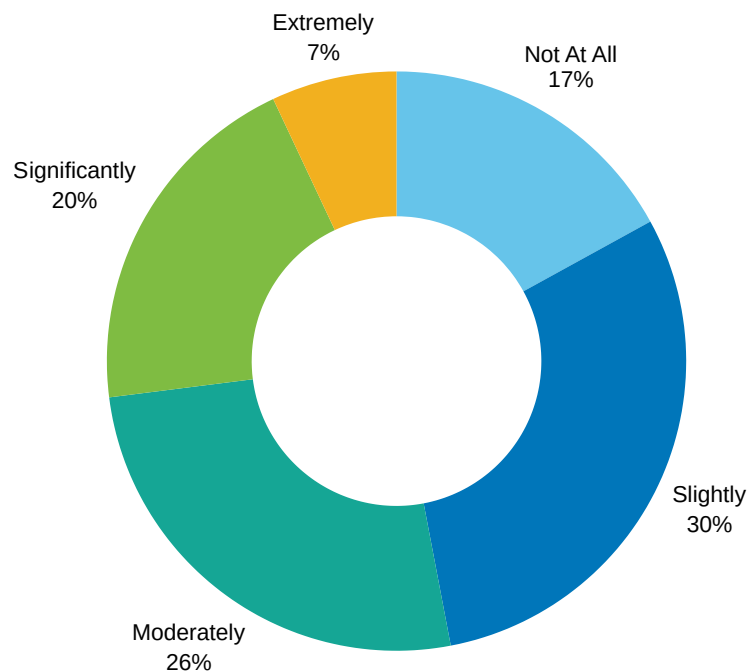


Most Organizations Are Maintaining or Adjusting, Not Eliminating Inclusion Efforts

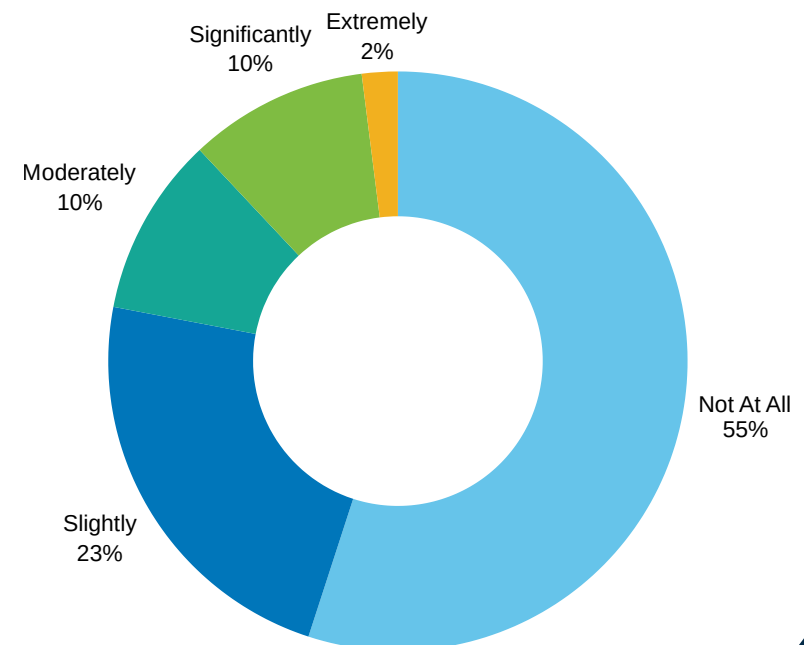
Q: In the past 6 months, to what extent has your organization adjusted its DEI-related initiatives?

In total, **17%** of respondents indicated that their company had significantly or extremely scaled back or eliminated efforts related to inclusion, belonging, or equity. The majority reported maintaining or evolving their strategies, with significant variation between public and private companies.

Public companies:



Private companies (including PE-backed):



Language Is Changing

*Q: Has your organization adopted new terminology to describe DEI work?
If so, which of the following are currently in use?*

41% of companies reported changes in internal language used to describe this work.

New terminology includes phrases such as “inclusive culture,” “belonging,” “leadership accountability,” and “employee experience.”

While detailed breakdowns of language shifts by organization type weren’t captured quantitatively, open-ended responses show that public companies are more likely to reframe their efforts using terms like “inclusive culture,” “belonging,” or “values alignment.”

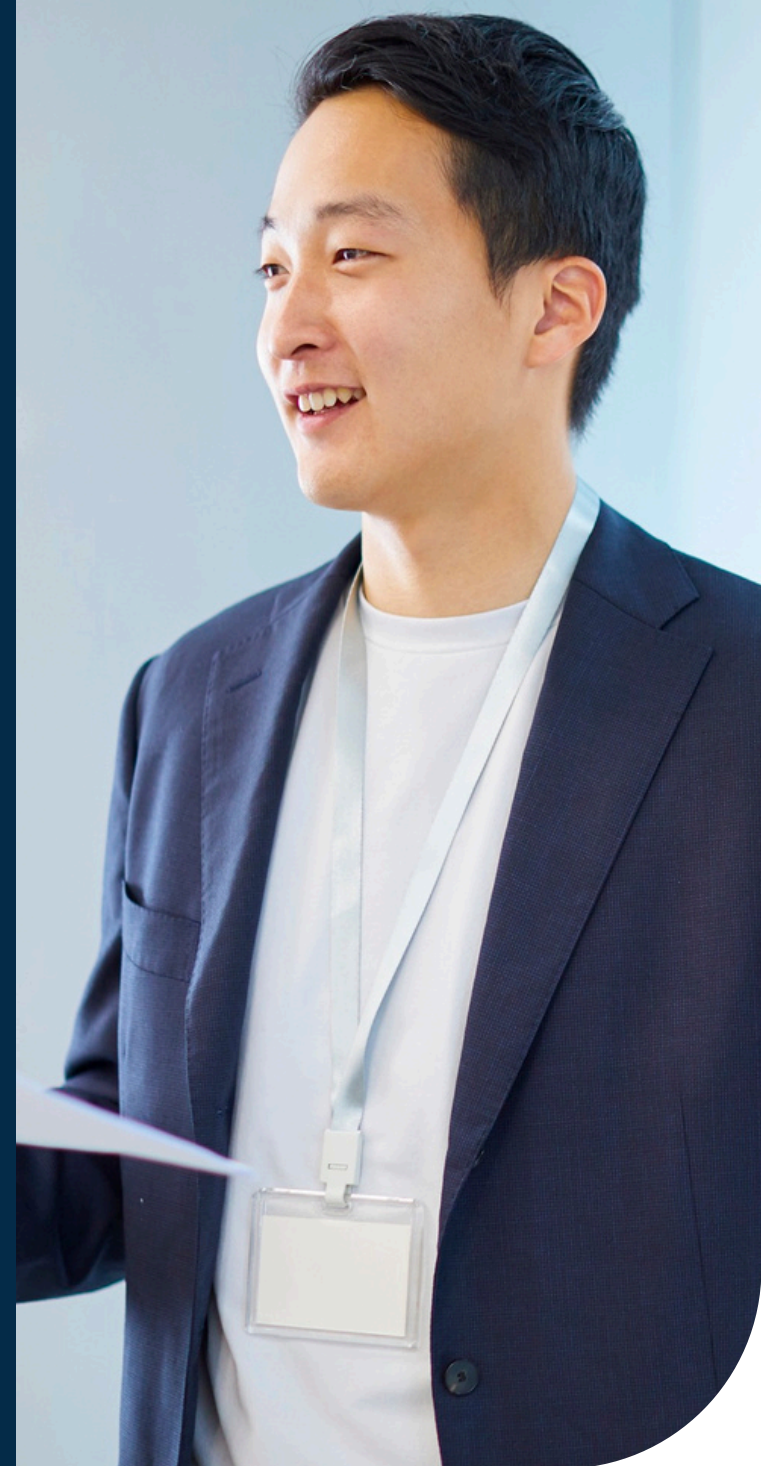


INCLUSIVE CULTURE
VALUES ALIGNMENT
BELONGING
LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY
EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Dedicated Leadership Remains Limited

Private companies were less likely to have eliminated roles, but more likely to have never had a dedicated inclusion leader in place to begin with. Public companies were more likely to have eliminated such roles recently, particularly where teams had been consolidated or reframed under broader HR or culture leadership.

- **56%** of organizations *do not* currently have a senior leader responsible for inclusion or equity, and have never had one.
- **11%** reported having eliminated the role.
- Only 33% currently have someone in that leadership position.



Leadership Diversity Is Holding Steady

Q: Compared to 6 months ago, how would you describe the diversity of your senior leadership team?

Public companies reported more variability, with **68%** saying senior leadership diversity is "about the same," and the rest split between "more diverse" and "less diverse." Private companies were more likely to report stability, with over **80%** saying leadership diversity has not changed in the last six months.



76%

No Change



13%

Less Diverse



9%

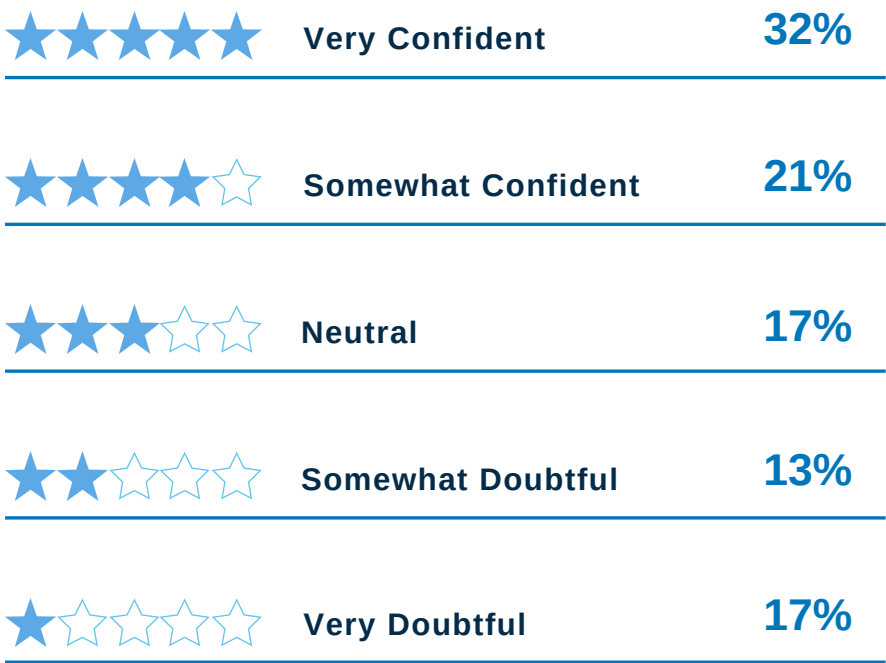
More Diverse

These responses suggest general stability in leadership representation.

Confidence in Future Investment Is Strong

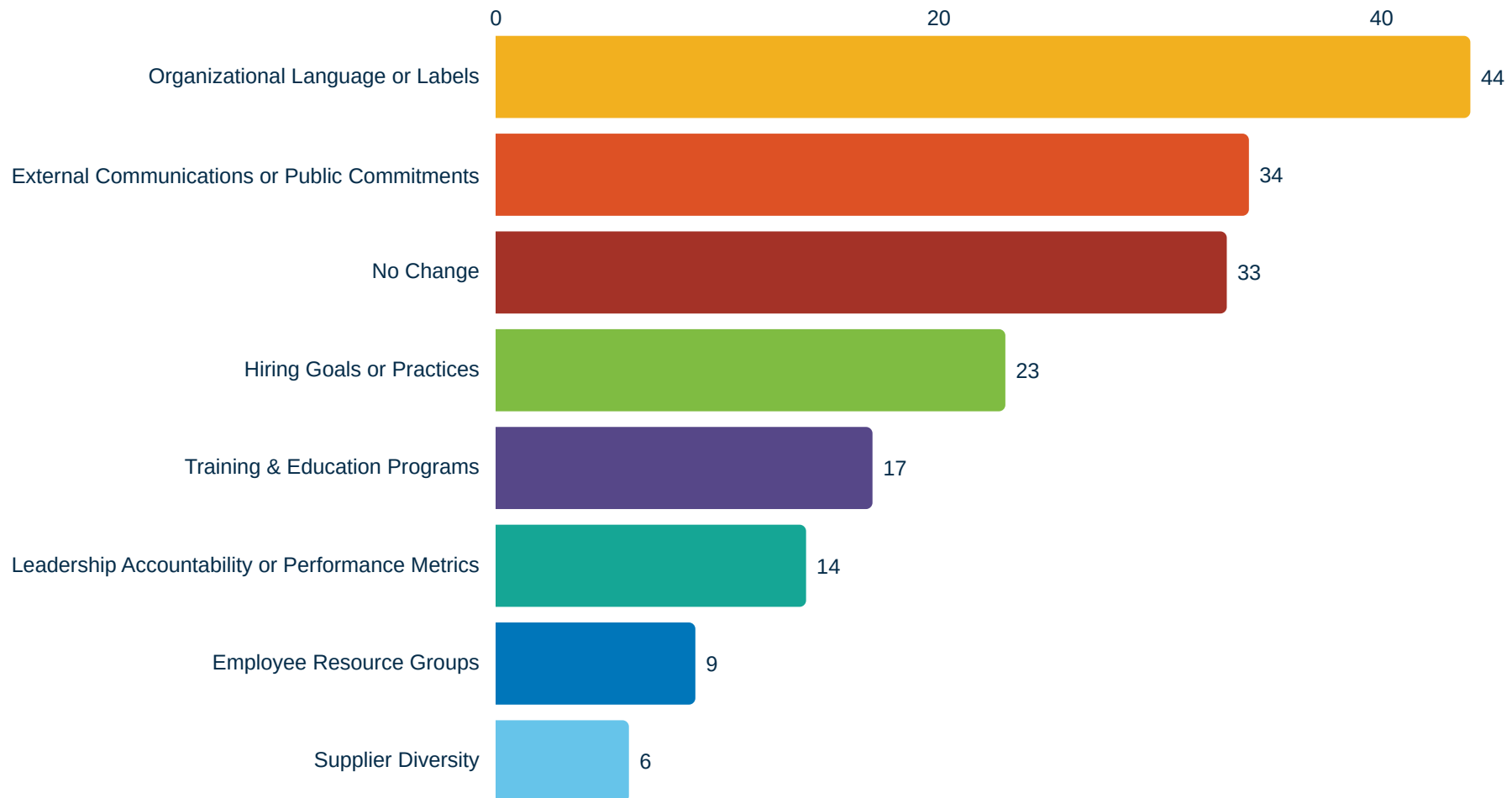
Across all segments, **more than 50% of leaders** expressed confidence that their organization would maintain or increase investment in inclusive practices over the next 12 months. Confidence was slightly higher among private company leaders, particularly those in closely held or PE-backed firms, who emphasized the business case and culture fit as drivers for sustained investment.

Q: How confident are you that your organization will maintain or increase DEI investment over the next 12 months?



Where DEI Is Shifting

Q: Which areas of DEI work have been most impacted in your organization in the past 6 months? (Select up to 3)



What Organizations Are Doing Differently

In addition to multiple-choice responses, qualitative insights from the survey point to several evolving practices among companies that are continuing to invest in inclusive culture and leadership:

Reframing Goals

Several organizations are aligning inclusion-related efforts with broader culture, engagement, or ESG strategies.

Distributing Ownership

Rather than housing responsibility in a centralized role, many organizations are embedding accountability for culture and inclusion into line leadership across functions.

Expanding Leadership Competencies

Respondents noted that inclusive leadership is being incorporated into talent assessment, succession planning, and executive development.

Using Broader Metrics

Companies are expanding beyond diversity headcounts to include engagement scores, retention data, promotion rates, and employee feedback in their measurement frameworks.

Conclusion

Looking Ahead

At DHR Global, we work with organizations to build inclusive, high-performing leadership teams. If you're navigating your own shift in culture or leadership expectations, we're here to help.



Methodology

This report is based on a survey conducted by DHR Global in June and July 2025. Responses were collected from over 200 executive leaders across public, private, and private equity-backed companies representing a wide range of industries. The goal of the survey was to better understand how organizations are structuring and sustaining their approaches to inclusive leadership, culture, and performance in a changing environment.



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