

# DEI Deep Dive: APAC's Path Forward

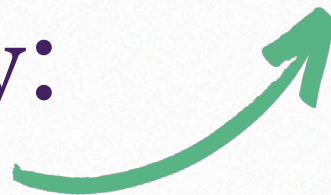
TDC  
GLOBAL

May 2024





# Executive summary: research overview



## **Background**

What is the future of diversity, equity & inclusion (DEI)? Is DEI still relevant -if so, how? What can we expect in the world of DEI across APAC in 2024 & beyond? Amid growing debate, politicisation & backlash, particularly from US-headquartered companies, the future trajectory of DEI has come into question. TDC Global has embarked on research to uncover these answers & chart a path forward.

## **Objectives**

- Investigate unique DEI challenges & insights within mid to large organisations across Australia, Japan, Singapore, & Hong Kong.
- Uncover DEI trends set to shape 2024 & beyond, including level of investment & core activities.
- Examine the key contributors to effective DEI implementation, aligned with employee expectations.

## **About TDC Global**

TDC Global is a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) consultancy that enables organisations to succeed by integrating DEI. We equip our partners to attract, retain & advance top talent through leveraging generational, cultural & gender diversity.



# Executive summary: methodology & findings

## Methodology and scope

Method	Self-administered online survey, multilingual
Sample	Full-time employees in companies with 50+ staff globally, with local branches of 20+ employees
Size	Input from 451 DEI Managers & 964 employees from Australia, Japan, Singapore & Hong Kong

## Findings overview

- **DEI maturity across regions:** DEI progress varies widely; Australia leads, while Hong Kong & Japan are in early stages.
- **Investment expected to increase:** <5% of respondents anticipate DEI investment will decrease, with the remainder expecting it to increase or remain the same.
- **Employee vs. management disconnect:** Employees less aware of their company's DEI status compared to managers, highlighting communication opportunities.
- **Key drivers:** Compliance, talent acquisition/retention & industry trends are major DEI influencers, with societal issues as the primary barrier.
- **DEI interventions:** DEI efforts most effective for employee/customer relations, with training being the most highly valued service.

# Table of contents

	PAGE
<b>Section 1:</b> Is DEI still relevant? .....	<b>05</b>
<b>Section 2:</b> DEI outlook for 2024 and beyond .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Section 3:</b> Key considerations for effective DEI impact .....	<b>16</b>
Conclusion .....	<b>19</b>
Japan state of DEI .....	<b>20</b>



# 01

SECTION

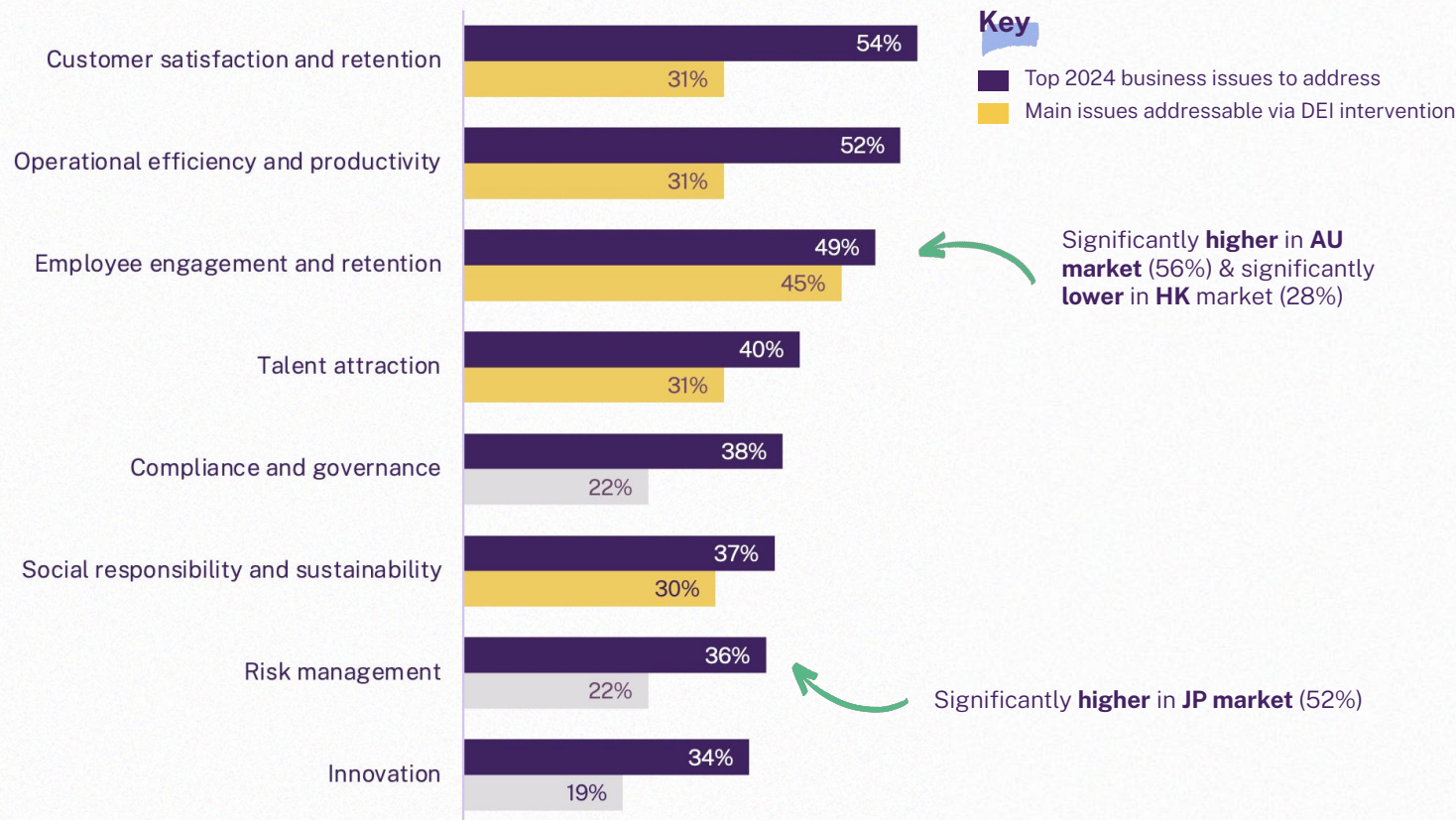
## Is DEI still relevant?



# Top 2024 business priorities & DEI intervention impact

Thinking about your organisation's strategic directions, what are the critical business issue(s) you want to address in 2024?

Which of these business issue(s) do you believe a DEI-related intervention could help address?



## Summary

- In 2024, the **focal business challenges** are customer satisfaction & retention, operational efficiency & productivity, & employee engagement & retention.
- DEI interventions** are perceived as most beneficial for these top priorities, with a significant impact on employee & customer related issues.

## Insights

- DEI is a strategic lever:** Demonstrating potential gains through employee engagement, customer loyalty & efficiency.
- Return on investment:** ROI can be correlated with these areas to communicate the business case for DEI & secure additional budget.
- Market demand:** Consumer expectations increasingly preference brands that prioritise DEI; resulting in market share gains.

# Importance of DEI in commercial business management

How important is DEI in commercial business management?

01 SECTION

Overall importance\*

90%

87%

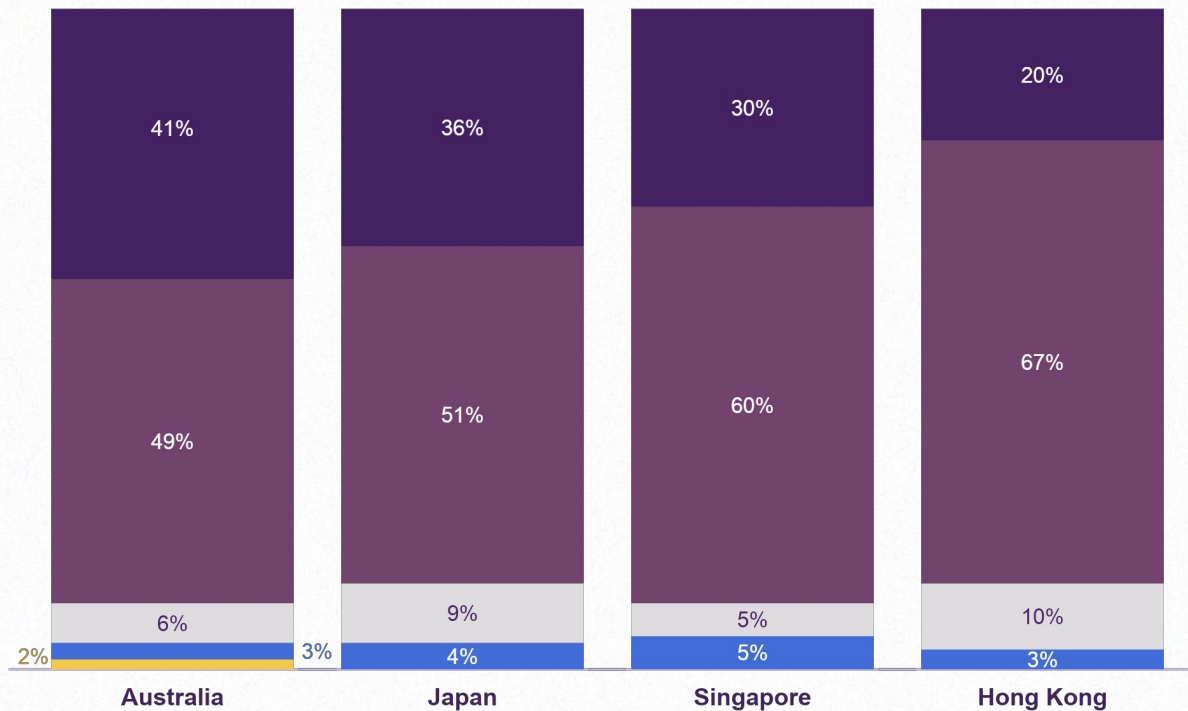
90%

87%

## Key

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Neither nor
- Somewhat unimportant
- Not important at all

\*Net importance = the % of those who deem DEI to be important minus the % of those who deem it unimportant or neither nor. This calculation is designed to minimise the impact of polarised opinions



## Summary

- High valuation of DEI importance with 85%+ recognition across regions.
- Highest overall importance in Australia & Singapore, while lower in Japan & Hong Kong.

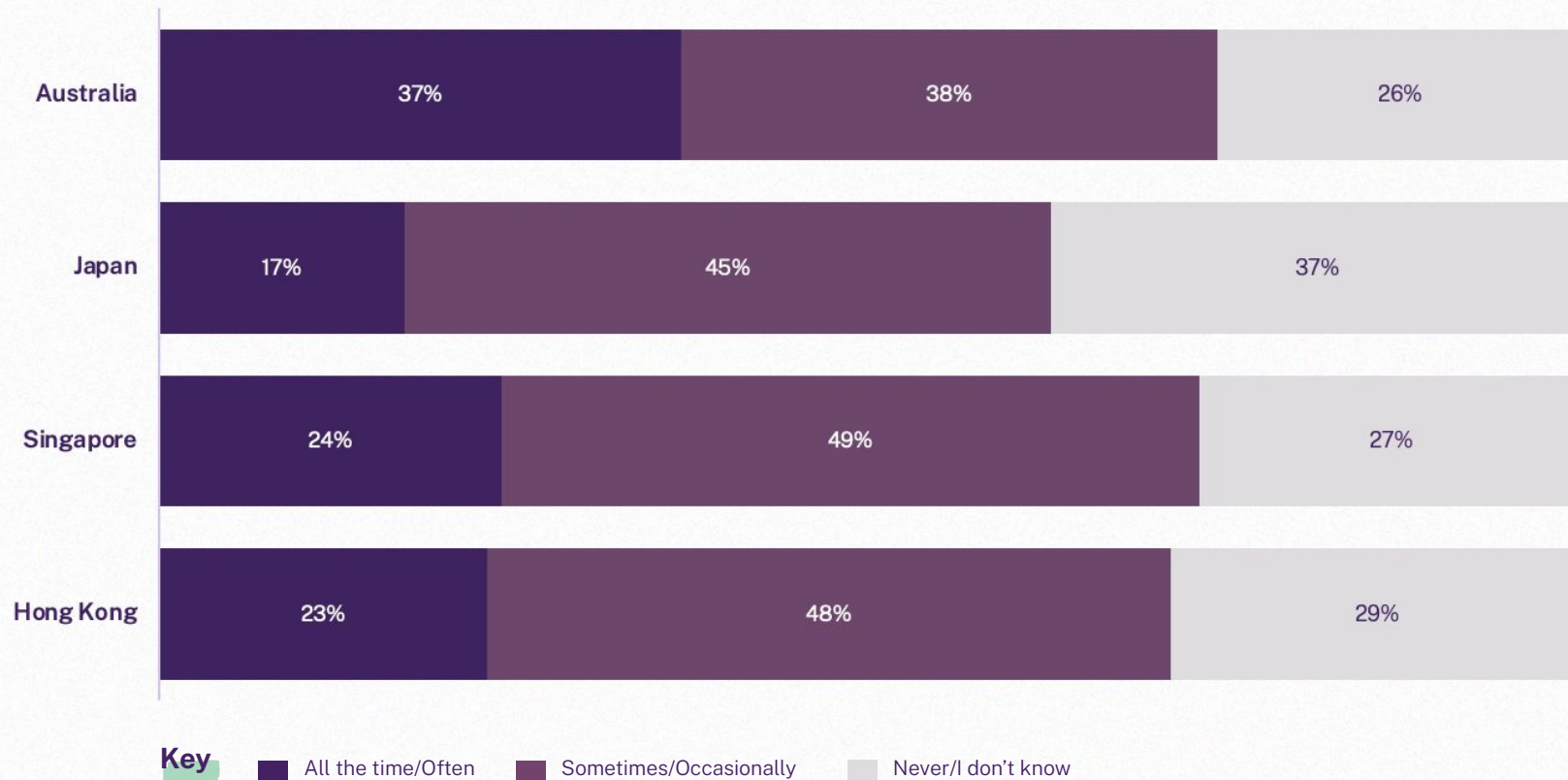
## Insights

- DEI's perceived value remains strong, solidifying its necessity into the future.
- Age disparity noted: 55+ age group sees less importance (81%) compared to under 35s (93%).

# Frequency of hearing DEI conversations

At your workplace, how often do you hear DEI-related conversations?

01 SECTION



## Summary

- Countries further on DEI maturity scale experience more dialogue.
- Majority (70%+) encounter DEI talks, with 28% hearing them often or constantly.

## Insights

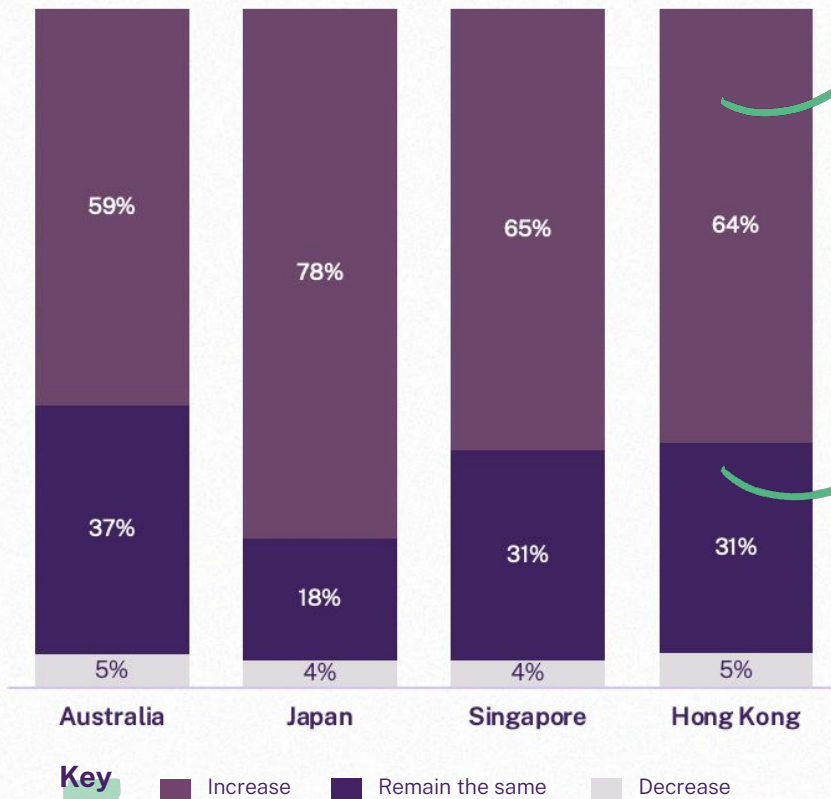
- Regular DEI dialogue enhances its organisational impact; being a challenge in Japan, where only 17% hear about DEI frequently.
- Yet in Australia, talk doesn't always correlate to action & meaningful impact; being perceived as lip service.
- Younger demographic (under 44) engages more in DEI conversations than older groups.



# Future trends in DEI investment & influencing factors

How do you expect DEI-related investment to change at your organisation in the next one to two years?

## 01 SECTION



Reasons why investment will increase	%
Industry/sector trends	24%
Part of the strategic focus/objectives	19%
Profitable/beneficial/helpful	8%
Talent acquisition and retention needs	7%

Reasons why investment will remain the same	%
Budget constraints, needs extra funding	23%
Lack of leadership accountability/commitment	21%
Other priorities need addressing first	14%
Part of the strategic focus/objectives	6%

### Summary

- 61% expect investment increase, with the highest in Japan & lowest in Australia.
- Primary motivator for increasing investment is industry standards & for maintaining is budget.

### Insights

- Despite budget being a key barrier, the unanimous trend shows a steady or increased investment, highlighting a commitment to DEI.
- Organisations looking to reduce DEI investment may be at a competitive disadvantage with <5% expecting a decrease.

# 02

SECTION

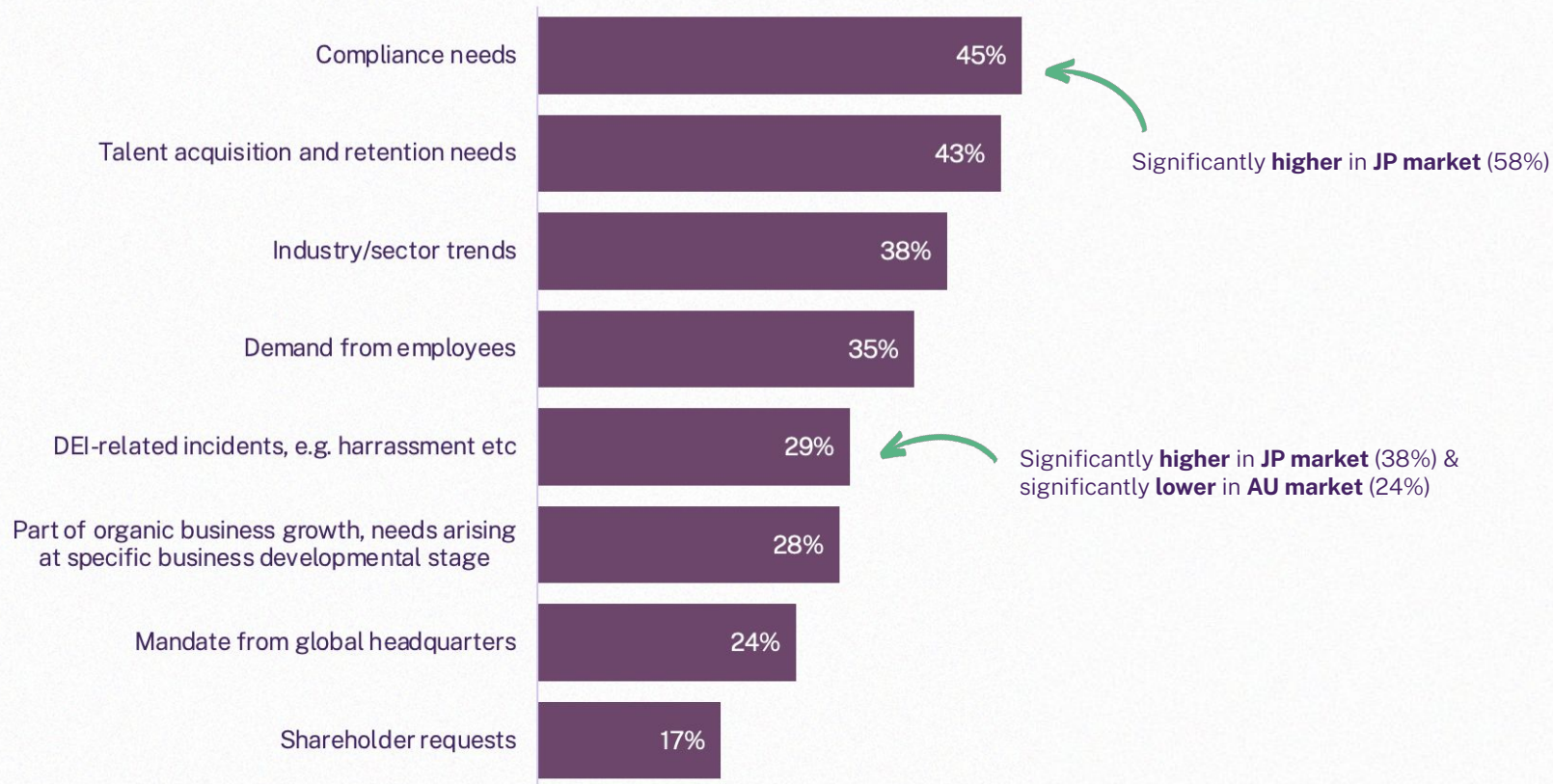
## DEI outlook for 2024 and beyond



# Factors driving DEI in APAC workplaces

What has been driving the DEI-related strategies, policies and/or conversations at your workplace?

## 02 SECTION



### Summary

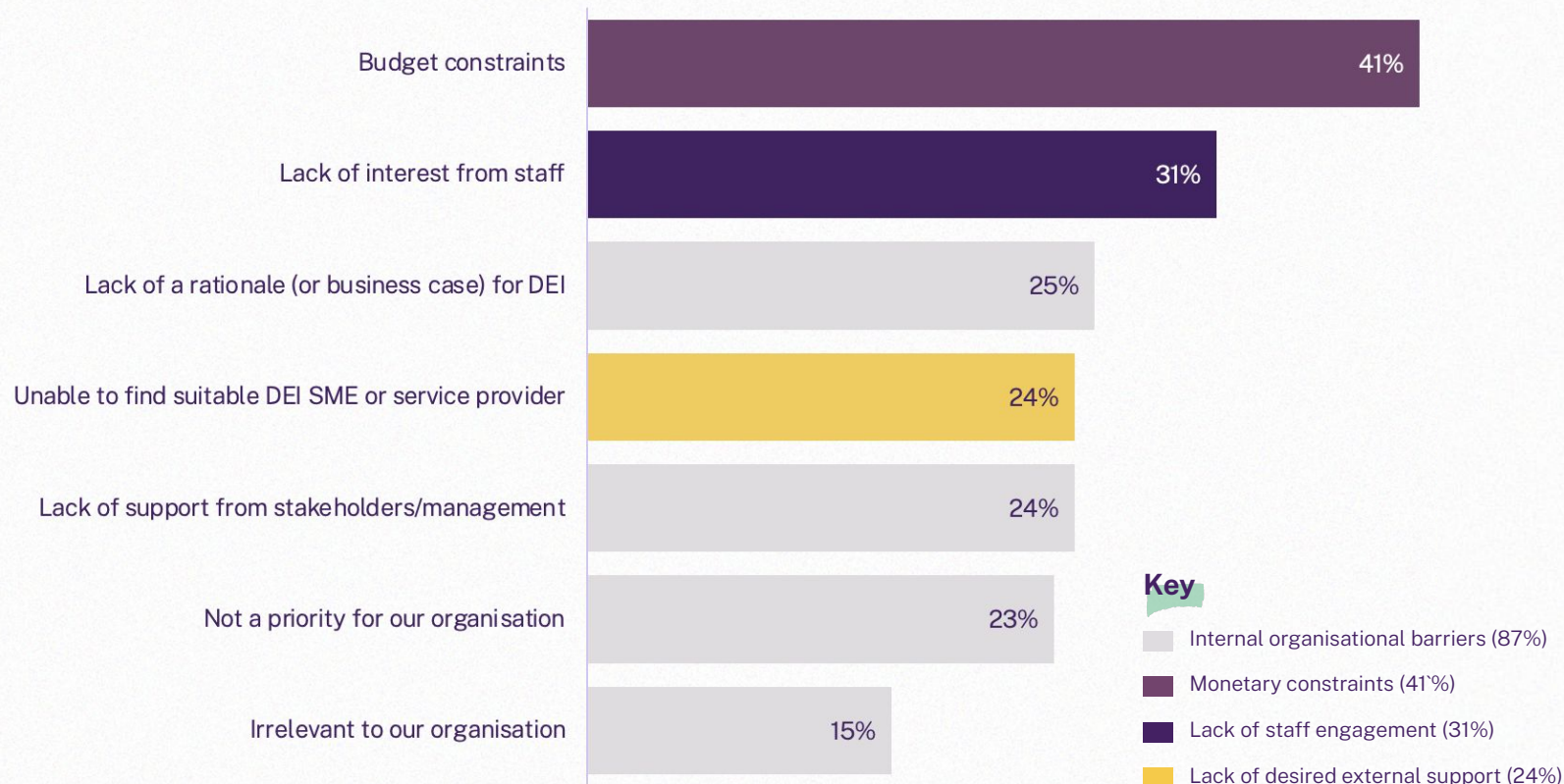
- Compliance (45%), talent retention (43%), & sector trends (38%) are the top motivators.
- Shareholder influence noted in Singapore (28%), but least common overall (17%).

### Insights

- Policy changes & regulatory demands have accelerated DEI progress yet may not fully reflect deep organisational conviction.
- In Japan, a high compliance motivation (58%) suggests a focus on surface-level efforts. A shift towards societal attitude changes is crucial for long-lasting DEI impact.

# Internal barriers to DEI implementation

Why wouldn't you consider these DEI-related support for your organisation? [asked of those who wouldn't consider key DEI related support measures]



## Summary

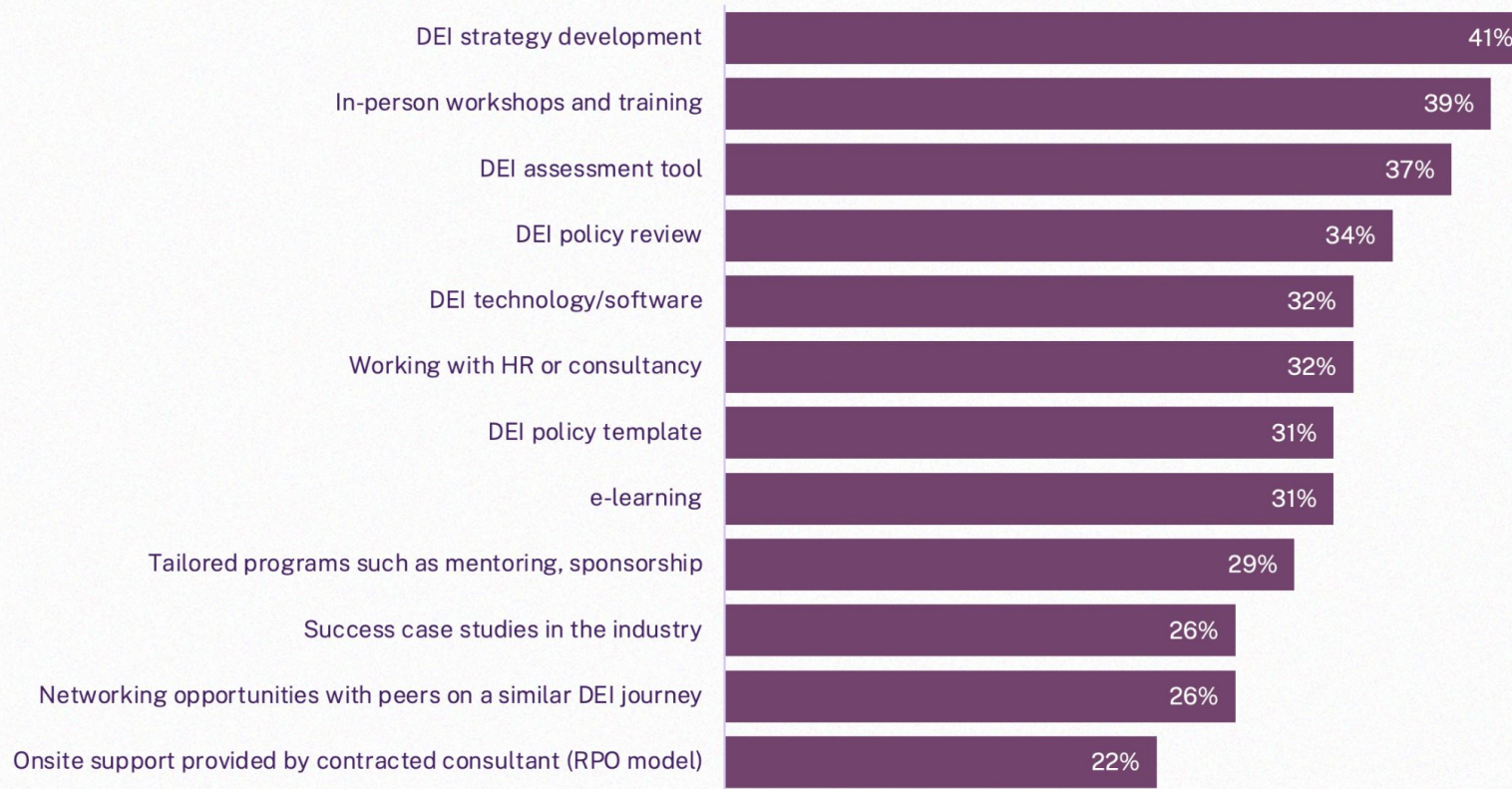
- **Top barrier:** Budget constraints (41%).
- **Staff engagement:** 31% cite lack of staff interest.
- **Organisational hurdles:** 87% internal barriers, with relevance and rationale issues.

## Insights

- Economic pressures underscore the need for strategic, cost-effective DEI approaches, particularly in Australia.
- DEI needs deeper integration into company strategy & enhanced measurement of effectiveness.

# Preferred DEI support measures by DEI managers

If time and budget were not an issue, which of the following DEI-related support would you consider for your organisation?



## Summary

- **Top picks:** Strategy development (41%), in-person training (39%), & DEI tools (37%).

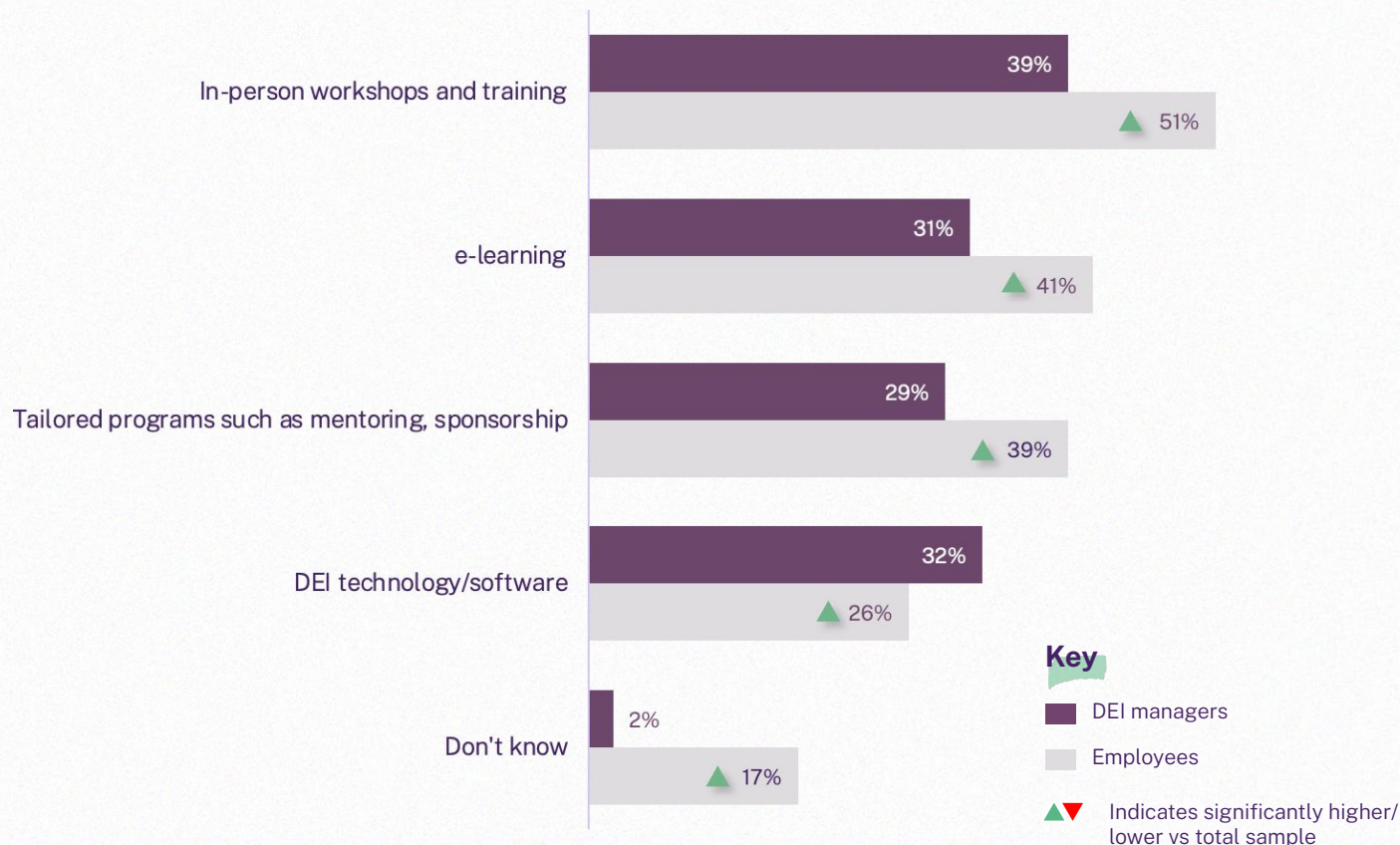
## Insights

- In-person training is favoured overall, yet there is a generational shift towards e-learning, especially in Japan & among the younger demographic.
- Balancing diverse learning preferences is key to advancing organisational culture uniformly.

# DEI-related workplace support deemed most helpful

[DEI Managers] If time/budget were not an issue, which DEI-related support would you consider for your workplace?

[Employees] If time/budget were not an issue, which DEI-related support would you find helpful for your workplace?



## Summary

- In-person training leads (managers 39%, employees 51%).
- e-learning is a strong alternative (managers 31%, employees 41%).
- Tailored programs like mentoring also valued (managers 29%, employees 39%).

## Insights

- Both managers & employees prioritise interactive DEI training, with a higher preference for in-person.
- Employees rate all options more helpful than DEI managers besides technology/software, indicating that they perceive training to be higher value than managers do.

# Top 2024 DEI priorities across regions & roles

In your opinion, which areas of DEI should your workplace be focusing on in 2024 and beyond?

Rank	Japan	Singapore	Australia	Hong Kong
Wellbeing and mental health	6	1	1	3
Anti-discrimination and bullying	3	3	2	2
Diverse talent recruitment	1	4	4	1
Inclusive ways of working	2	2	3	4
DEI transparency & accountability	4	9	5	6
Diverse team building & collab	7	7	6	5

Rank	DEI managers	Employees
Wellbeing and mental health	3	1
Anti-discrimination and bullying	6	2
Diverse talent recruitment	1	4
Inclusive ways of working	4	3
DEI transparency & accountability	2	5
Diverse team building & collab	5	7

## Summary

- **Common priorities:** Wellbeing & mental health, anti-discrimination & diverse talent recruitment are universal DEI focuses.
- **Regional nuances:** Japan & Hong Kong emphasise diverse talent recruitment while Australia & Singapore prioritise wellbeing
- **Manager vs employee perspectives:** Both agree on top priorities, with employees placing extra emphasis on mental health & anti-bullying measures.

## Insights

- Aligning DEI efforts with top-ranked areas ensures cross-cohort & cross-regional benefits, acknowledging that employee engagement is boosted by wellbeing & anti-discrimination actions.

# 03

SECTION

## Key considerations for effective DEI impact





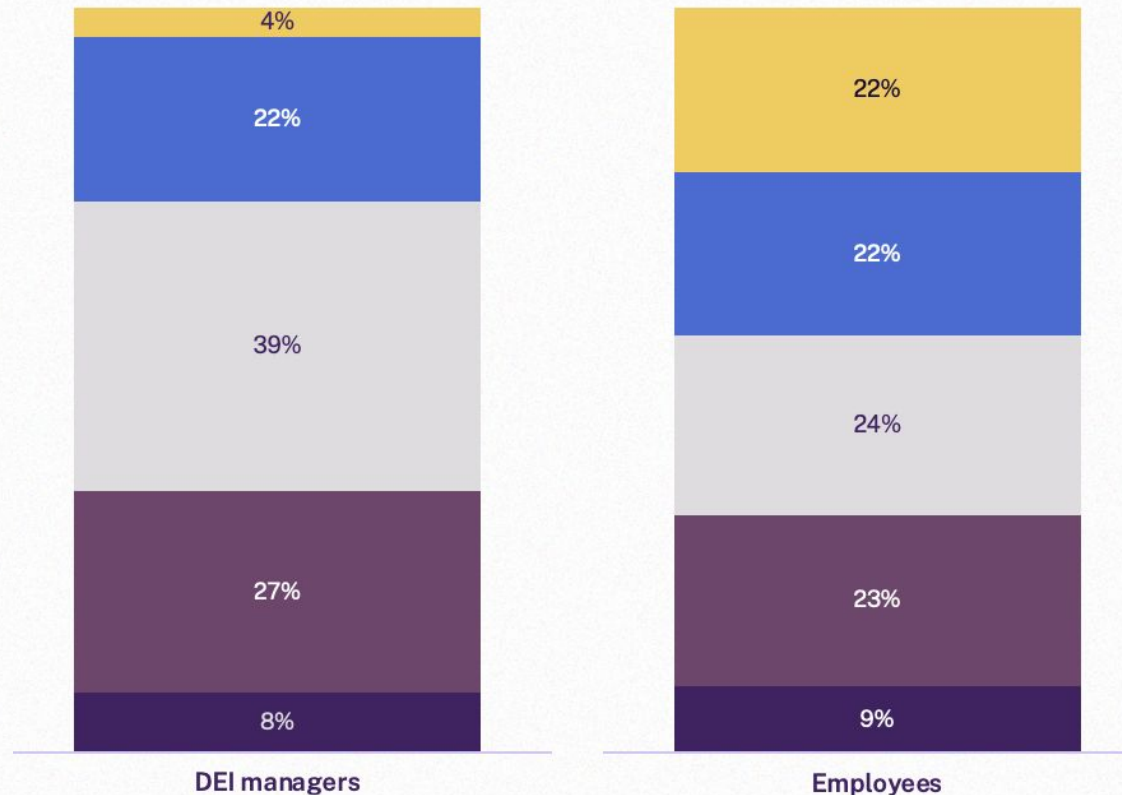
# Perception of DEI journey state among managers vs employees

At what stage of the DEI journey do you think your workplace is?

## Key

- Mastering, scaling & winning
- Making progress
- On the journey
- Getting started
- Uninitiated

\* Additional detail on these stages can be found [here](#)



## Summary

- Managers perceive greater DEI advancement than employees, indicating potential gaps in awareness or communication.
- 39% of DEI Managers feel they are 'on the journey', compared to 22% of employees who see themselves as 'uninitiated'.

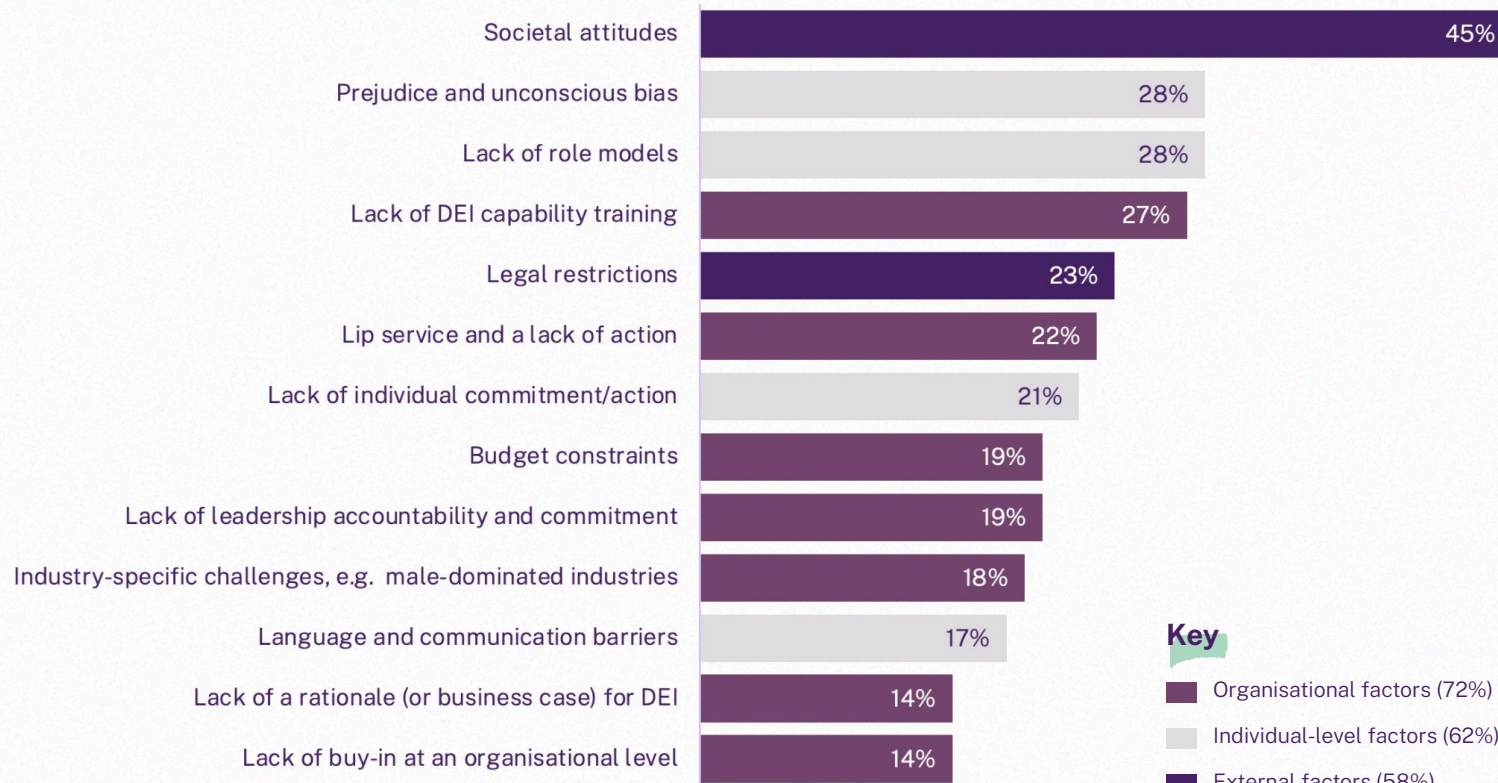
## Insights

- Compliance-driven DEI may not translate to improvement on the day-to-day experience of employees, underscoring a need for leadership conviction & genuine commitment to drive progress.

# Local challenges faced when implementing DEI

What specific local challenges does your organisation face when implementing DEI in your country?

## 03 SECTION



## Summary

- **Top barriers:** Societal attitudes (45%), bias (28%) & role model scarcity (28%).
- **organisational challenge:** DEI training deficiency (27%).

## Insights

- Societal attitudes are a significant barrier, indicating that mindset shifts are pivotal to unlocking true, lasting progress
- Progress hinges on deep cultural shifts via:
  - a. Engaging stakeholders meaningfully on the DEI journey.
  - b. Creating experiences that fundamentally alter perspectives.

# Conclusion

- DEI remains crucial both commercially - as a key driver to solving business challenges - and from a personnel standpoint.
- Commitment to DEI is set to persist through 2024 & beyond, with investment & efforts expected to predominantly increase across APAC.
- Businesses must proactively ensure that their financial & strategic investments in DEI align with industry trends to maintain a competitive edge & unlock the gains that DEI can bring.



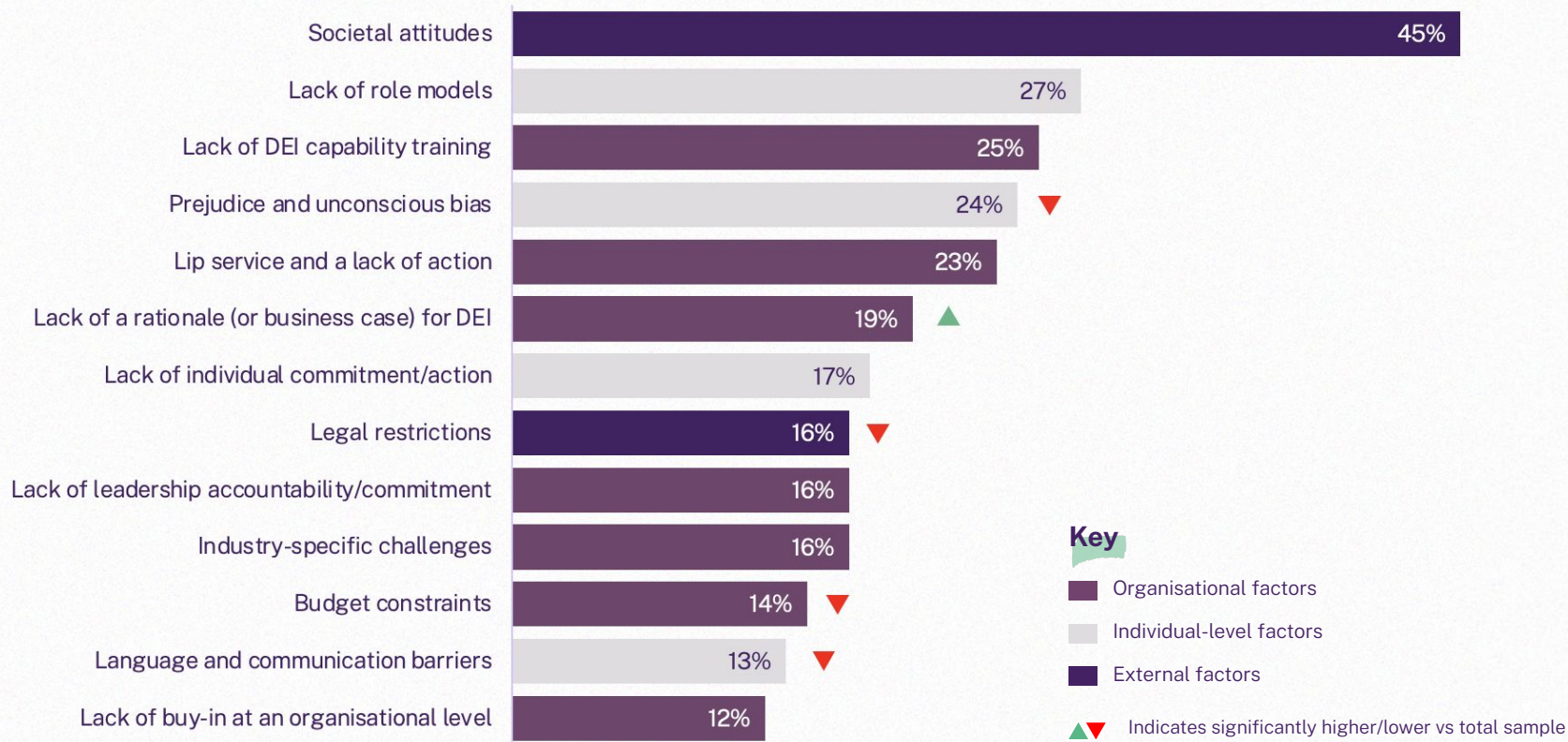


# Japan state of DEI



# Local challenges faced when implementing DEI

What specific local challenges does your organisation face when implementing DEI in your country?



## Summary

- Societal attitudes (45%) & lack of role models (27%) top the list as main challenges.
- Top 2 challenges are associated with sentiment & mindset rather than practical executional obstacles.

## Insights

- With sentiment as the main hurdle, Japan must pivot from compliance to cultural mindset changes for tangible DEI advances.
- Communicating the value in the business case for DEI will support in shifting attitudes.

# Perception of DEI journey state among managers vs employees

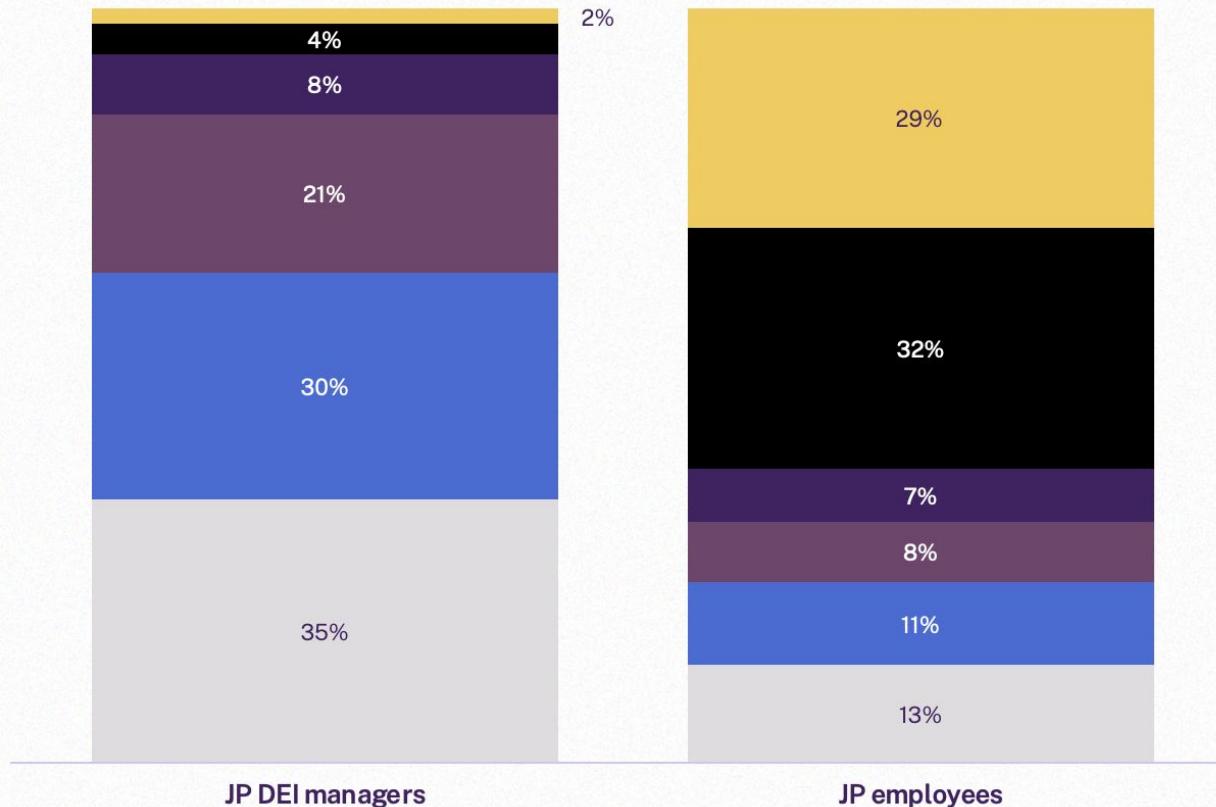
At what stage of the DEI journey do you think your workplace is?



## Key

- Mastering, scaling & winning
- Making progress
- On the journey
- Getting started
- Uninitiated
- Don't know

\* Additional detail on these stages can be found [here](#)



## Summary

- **DEI managers:** See progression (8% 'Mastering') more than employees (7%).
- **Employees:** Notable 29% employees feel 'Uninitiated', versus 2% managers.

## Insights

- Perception of DEI progress differs between roles, suggesting a disconnect.
- Infrequent DEI discussions & potential lack of localized messaging may hinder true embedding of DEI initiatives in Japan, despite managerial optimism.

# Japan Takeaways



- Japan is at the earliest stage of their DEI journey across the region, with almost half of employees thinking that their workplace is uninitiated or getting started & only 17% acknowledging DEI conversations are happening often or all the time.
- DEI efforts are predominantly surface level, with 58% identified compliance needs as the primary factor driving DEI in Japan. Along with DEI related incidents & workplace harassment being the biggest driving factor of DEI adoption according to 38% of the Japanese participants.
- Yet there is a positive future outlook, with the highest level of expected increased investment across the region at 78% & a growing business case, with 85% believing that DEI is important in commercial business management.
- There is a disconnect between employees & DEI manager sentiment, indicating that there is a need for enhanced & consistent communication pertaining to DEI efforts & progress.
- Japan is proving to have the greatest opportunity to unlock the benefits that DEI brings. Yet to fully leverage this opportunity, organisations need to shift from surface level, tick-the-box initiatives, to embedded, long-term efforts that root DEI in the organisations' strategy.



**TDC**  
GLOBAL

**Connect**  
**with us**



[info@tdcglobal.com.au](mailto:info@tdcglobal.com.au)  
[tdcglobal.com.au](https://tdcglobal.com.au)



tdcglobal\_



tdcglobalen



tdcglobal