



NEURODIVERSITY: AN INTRODUCTION FOR EMPLOYERS

Neurodiversity is a concept that views neurological differences among individuals as natural variations in the brain. If you are neurodivergent, it means that your brain is wired to think, learn, solve problems, and interact with others in a way that is different from neurotypical people.

New Zealand employers who embrace neurodiversity value and leverage the unique skills and perspectives neurodivergent kaimahi (employees) can bring to the table.

Neurodivergent people can face challenges in and out of their mahi (work), such as with attention or in their interactions with others. However, the differences in the ways neurodivergent people work are also very valuable to employers.

Being neurodivergent indicates that one's brain is wired to think, learn, solve problems, and interact with others in unique ways, including certain challenges.

The inclusion of neurodivergent professionals can **increase team productivity by 30% and boost morale** ¹

TYPES OF NEURODIVERGENCE

Neurodivergent people account for around 15-20% of the worldwide population and similar rates are seen in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Neurodiversity includes ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia.

While views vary, some argue these are a normal part of human diversity rather than “disorders”.

- ✓ **ADHD:** Challenges might include time management, attention, organisation, hyperactivity or impulsiveness. Strengths can include creative thinking, visual reasoning, hyperfocus, passion and courage.
- ✓ **Dyslexia:** Challenges are typically with reading and verbal comprehension skills. Strengths can include entrepreneurial thinking, creativity, and practical problem-solving.

- ✓ **Autism:** Challenges can include difficulty picking up on social cues or with communication, coping with more than one task at a time, or a need for routine. Strengths can include excellent memory, attention to detail, and innovative thinking.
- ✓ **Dyspraxia** commonly affects motor coordination and **dyscalculia** typically involves difficulty with understanding numbers and math concepts. Both are also associated with verbal strengths.

Be aware! The above are general trends. The experiences of neurodivergent people vary widely and it's important to avoid making assumptions about individuals.

SUPPORTING NEURODIVERGENT WORKERS

Understanding neurodiversity is crucial for businesses. It fosters inclusivity and recognises the unique skills of neurodivergent employees. This awareness enhances overall employee engagement, productivity, and reduces discrimination.

- ✓ **Promote Inclusion:** Provide neurodiversity resources, training, and activities, such as workshops run by MindMatters Clinic. Use neuroinclusive language.
- ✓ **Workplace Accommodations:** Provide flexible working arrangements, sensory-friendly settings, and access to supportive technologies.
- ✓ **Inclusive Recruitment:** Create neurodivergent-friendly job descriptions and interview processes.
- ✓ **Get Expert Support:** If you're facing challenges understanding how to best support a neurodivergent kaimahi (worker), consider involving an external professional such as a MindMatters Clinic expert.

1 Deloitte (2022) A rising tide lifts all boats: Creating a better work environment for all by embracing neurodiversity

Source acknowledgements for common challenges and strengths: Doyle (2020) Neurodiversity at work: a biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults

