

The background image shows a modern office environment with people working at desks, a staircase, and large windows. The text is overlaid on this image.

Don't Just Employ, EMPOWER: Build a Better Workplace for Those with ADHD

Employees with ADHD are navigating their careers with intention, but a lack of adequate support. To cultivate an inclusive and thriving work environment, companies must transcend conventional approaches and provide better guidance for managers, and more comprehensive support for employees. These insights emerge from the new ADHD in the Workplace Study conducted by Akili and Wakefield Research, shedding light on the need and opportunity for ADHD accommodations at work to maximize the potential of a neurodiverse workforce.

Information was collected from US employed adults¹: 500 US employed adults with ADHD and 500 US managers (with or without ADHD), to understand the everyday challenges and experiences of those with ADHD at work. The survey covered the impact of impairment, disclosure to employers, experiences of stigma, manager misconceptions, treatment options, and more.

The research revealed that employees with ADHD face compounding challenges at work that can sidetrack career goals and take a toll on mental health.

- 87% of employees with ADHD report experiencing a negative impact of ADHD on their career.
- 97% feel they would be capable of accomplishing more if they could better manage their symptoms.
- 95% feel limited by the number of treatment options available to them.

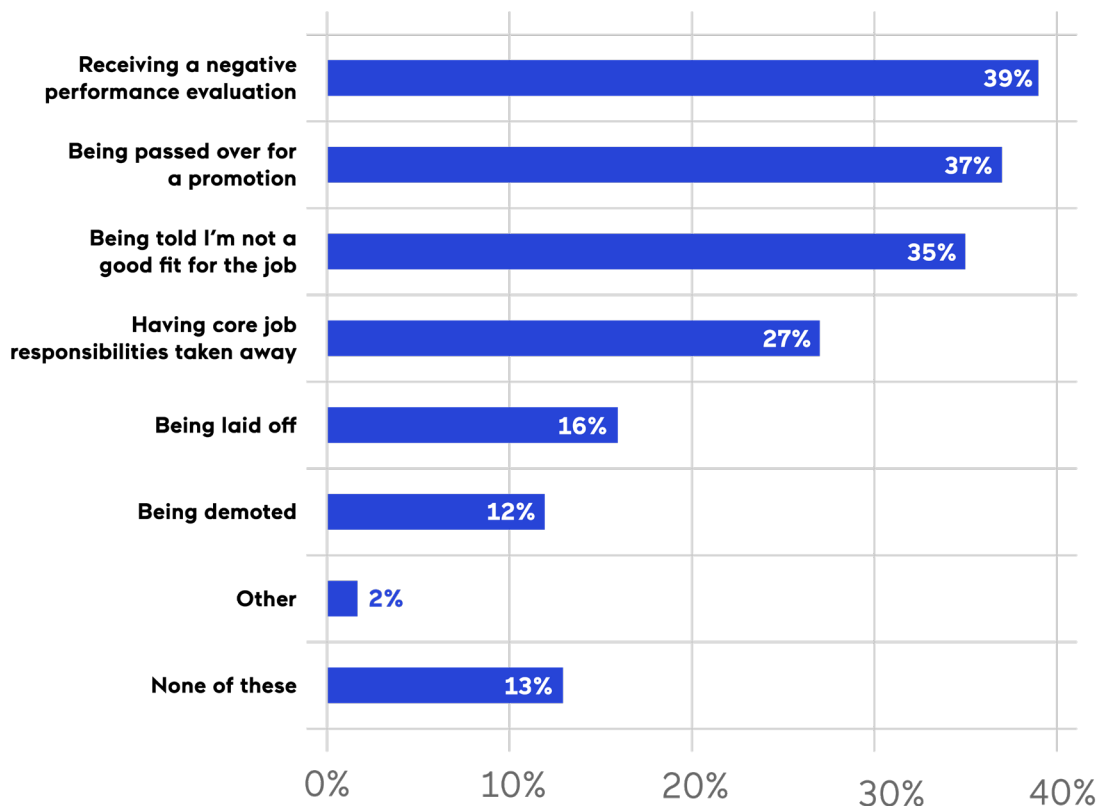
Employees with ADHD are seeking a more nuanced understanding and awareness from their supervisors of their strengths and needs for additional support, but managers feel unequipped to fully provide that support. Namely, 81% of managers report that they don't feel completely prepared to appropriately address employee needs if an employee discloses an ADHD diagnosis.

The Impact of Misconceptions about ADHD in the Workplace

In today’s workplace, misconceptions about ADHD abound.

- 92% of employees believe that their colleagues hold misconceptions about ADHD, the most common of which is “people with ADHD just need to try harder”
- 75% of employees with ADHD report experiencing increased micromanagement by supervisors relative to their peers
- 56% believe their condition has specifically led them to being demoted, overlooked for promotions, or their job responsibilities being taken away
 - This figure jumps to 65% for parents with ADHD, highlighting the varied challenges of those with multiple home and work responsibilities

Do you think your ADHD has ever contributed to any of the following?



QUICK FACTS

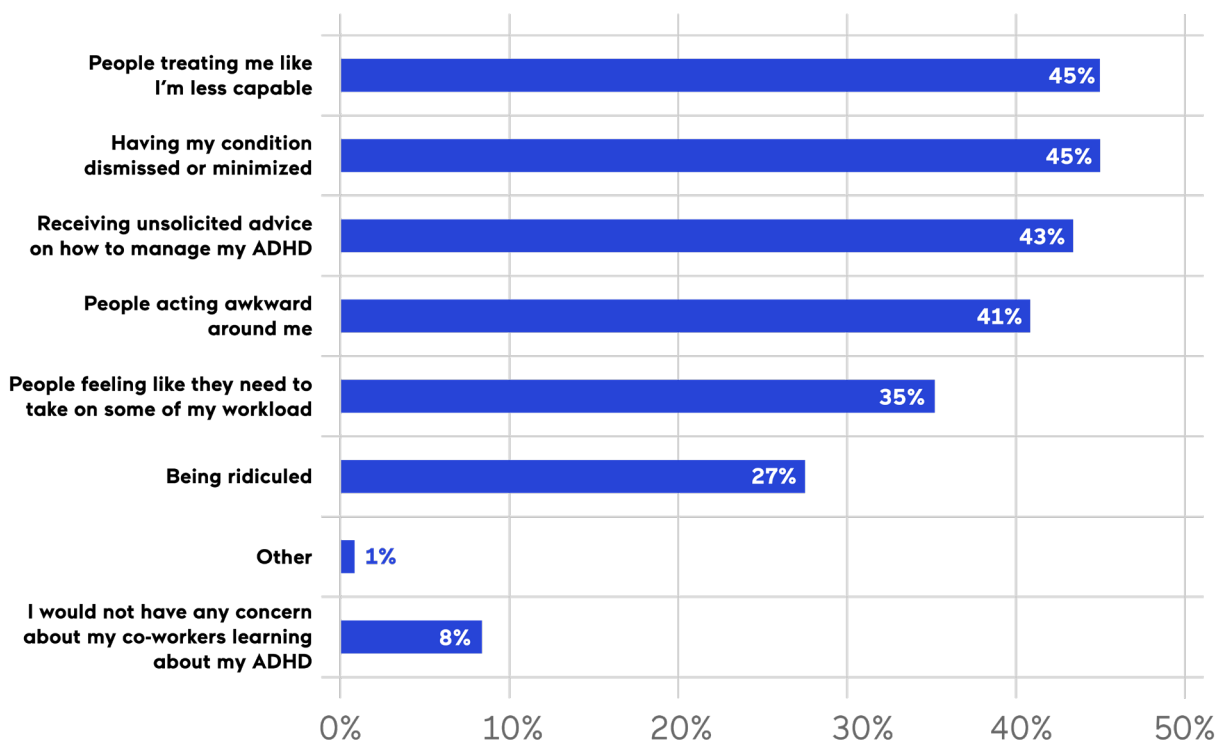
56% reported that ADHD has to contributed specifically to a demotion, not being promoted, or having job responsibilities taken away

87% reported that ADHD has contributed to at least one of the career barriers listed above

Previous studies have also shown that despite the common misconception that ADHD is “overtreated” the opposite is in fact true. In the US, only 13% of workers with ADHD are receiving professional treatment.

The misconceptions are self-reinforcing in that they lead to decreased communication about ADHD in the workplace. 92% of employees with ADHD have concerns about coworkers learning about their diagnosis, with primary concerns being “people treating me like I’m less capable” and about “having my condition dismissed or minimized.” Furthermore, there is a significant gender disparity in these perceptions: 50% of women, compared to 40% of men, fear their ADHD diagnosis will be dismissed or minimized. While these fears of being devalued were the primary concerns, they were closely followed by concerns about receiving unsolicited advice on how to manage ADHD. There is a clear need for improved education and communication surrounding ADHD.

What concerns would you have about your coworkers learning about your ADHD?



QUICK FACTS

50% of women reported concerns about their diagnoses being dismissed or minimized, while **40% of men** reported the same.

92% reported having concerns about co-workers learning about their ADHD



ADHD 101 | Dispelling Misconceptions

According to the Akili survey, 74% of managers and 92% of employees said that misconceptions existed in their workplace about ADHD. Test your knowledge about ADHD using the True or False quiz below by guessing whether each statement is true or false, and then reading on to find out if you were correct.

.....

“People with ADHD just need to try harder”

“ADHD means that you can’t sit still”

“ADHD is just an excuse for laziness”

“People with ADHD are just looking to take stimulants”

“People who claim to have ADHD are just looking for special treatment”

.....

Actually, all of these are FALSE, but common misconceptions about ADHD. We all have biases, the important thing is noticing if any of these thoughts come up, and addressing them when they are voiced by a coworker to help correct these misconceptions.

Beyond Misconceptions: The Daily Realities of ADHD in the Workplace

While misconceptions about ADHD serve to hinder employees with ADHD, the genuine challenges posed by ADHD symptoms also impact daily work experiences.

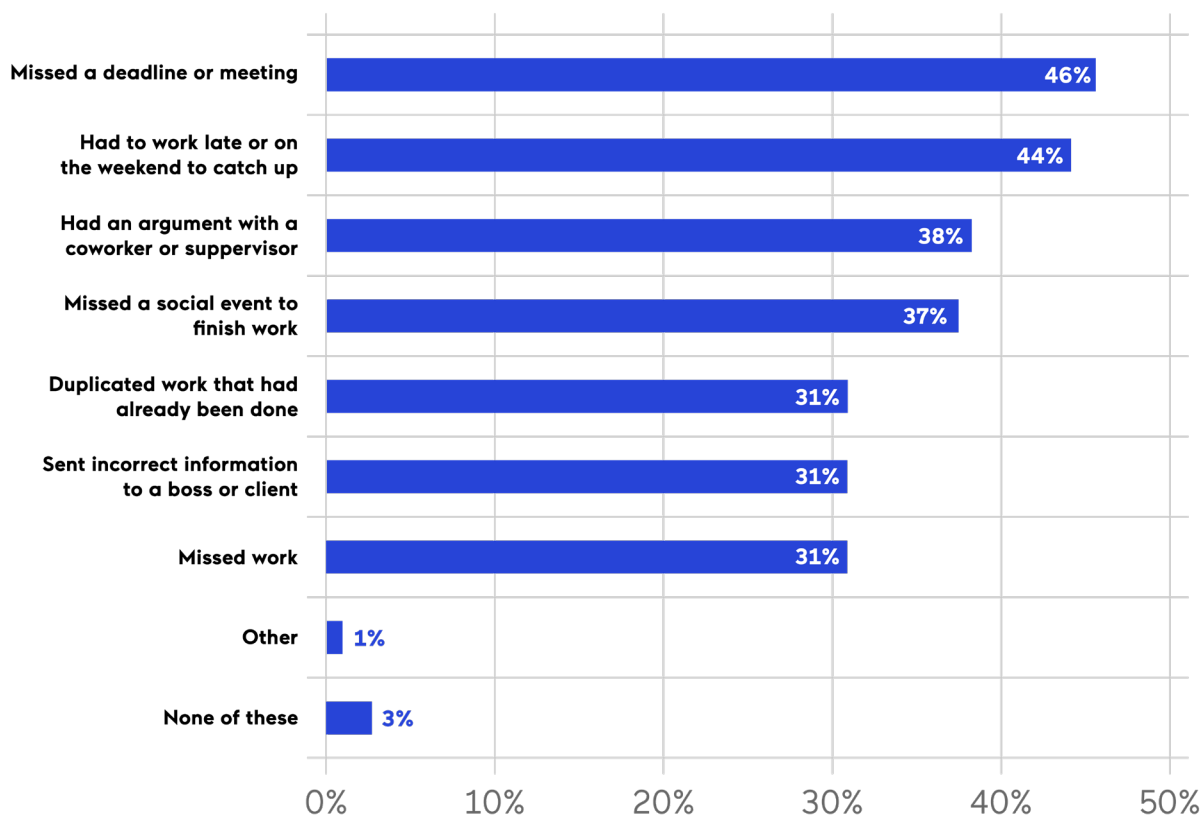
- Nearly 2 in 3 (65%) of employees with ADHD say that accomplishing day-to-day work tasks while managing ADHD symptoms poses a moderate to significant challenge
- 54% say they’re getting by, but would need more support to reach their full potential
- 19% say they are barely getting by and really need additional support.

The most prevalent symptoms include being easily distracted or sidetracked, with 59% of employees with ADHD citing this as a primary concern, followed by 56% who report a lack of focus and engagement at work. These struggles are not limited to challenges with focusing attention, as 32% of employees report difficulty building relationships with colleagues. Gender nuances emerge in this context as well. Overall women reported more symptoms on average than men (4.6 symptoms vs. 4.0 symptoms).

ADHD takes a toll on employees in multiple ways, and 88% of employees with ADHD report that the stimulant shortage has further impacted their work. The vast majority of employees with ADHD (90%) describe errors, conflicts, or extra hours at work as a result of challenges managing their ADHD.

Nearly half (46%) have missed a deadline or meeting. In addition, employees have duplicated work that had already been done (31%), sent incorrect information to a boss or client (31%) or missed work altogether (31%) as a result of challenges managing their ADHD. This is consistent with previous research finding that employees with ADHD may lose an average of 29 days of productivity per year in the US as compared to their colleagues without ADHD.

Have challenges managing your ADHD at work ever resulted in any of the following?



QUICK FACTS

97% reported that ADHD resulted in at least one of the above career challenges.

62% reported that ADHD resulted in a challenge related to a loss of personal time.

Furthermore, unmanaged ADHD symptoms can also be a reinforcing cycle, as 44% of employees with ADHD report that challenges managing their symptoms have caused them to feel unmotivated. Additionally 71% have reported it has led to them feeling anxious and 40% have reported it has led to them feeling depressed, further adding to the burden of the disorder.



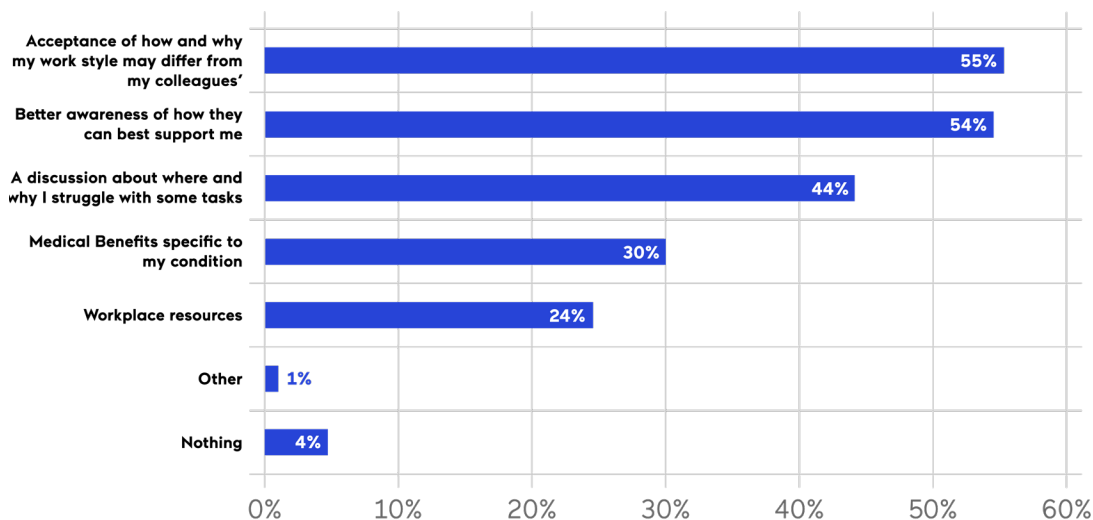
On the other hand, nearly all employees with ADHD (98%) recognize that there are positive aspects of their ADHD that have helped them at work including increased creativity (51%), ability to think outside the box (49%), and higher levels of empathy (46%). Tapping into these strengths can be a powerful way to enhance workplace satisfaction, engagement and outcomes.

For managers, there appears to be a high level of familiarity with ADHD in general, with 83% of managers reporting that they are very or extremely familiar with ADHD. Of the managers surveyed, 21% report personally having ADHD. While this could be due to selection bias, it may also be that there are high levels of people with ADHD in management positions relative to the overall prevalence. Additionally, 74% of managers know someone at a current or previous job with ADHD and 37% directly supervised someone that they believed or confirmed had an ADHD diagnosis. While these numbers are encouraging, awareness is not the same as understanding how best to help. In fact, 59% of managers report that they don't feel completely prepared to appropriately respond if an employee tells them that they have ADHD. This gap between awareness and preparation underscores the need for more comprehensive training and education for managers.

The Value of Support

For employees diagnosed with ADHD, understanding and support from their employers and direct supervisors often take precedence over other workplace factors. 93% of employees with ADHD rate having a supervisor who knows how to support and work with them as more valuable than any office perk. When telling a supervisor about their ADHD, employees are looking for both practical support from supervisors on their working styles as well as additional workplace resources. For example, 55% of employees hope to gain acceptance of how their work style may differ from that of their colleagues and 24% are hoping for workplace resources.

What, if anything, do you hope would result from telling your supervisor about your ADHD?



QUICK FACTS

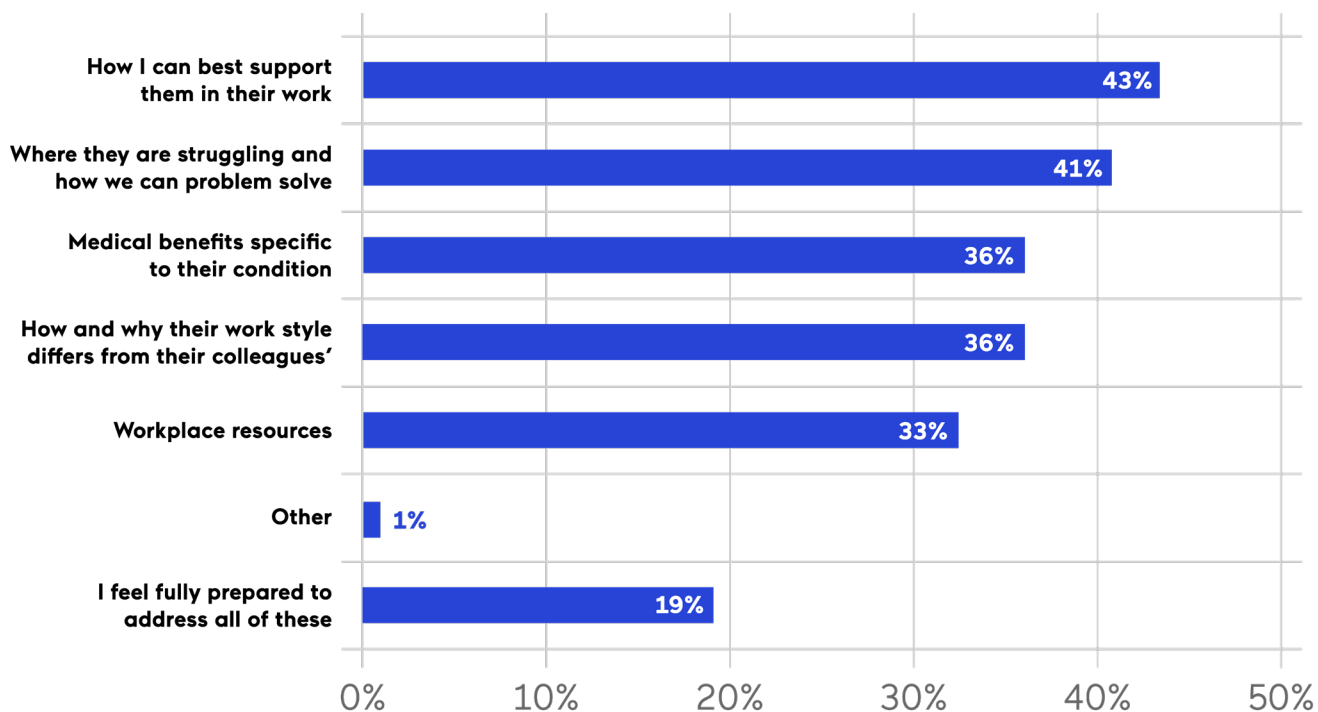
96% of employees hope that telling their supervisor about their ADHD will result in **some benefit—in the form of resources, support or understanding.**



The need for resources can also be seen in the fact that 95% of employees with ADHD feel limited by the number of treatment options available to them, and 97% indicate that they would be capable of accomplishing more if they could better manage their symptoms.

Despite this clearly expressed need from employees there is a disconnect from managers. 40% of managers believe it's preferable for an employee with ADHD to not mention their diagnosis. This may stem from the manager's own lack of confidence in supporting these employees. 43% of managers indicate that they do not feel adequately prepared to support these employees in their work and 41% feel unprepared to help problem-solve where they are struggling, with 36% feeling unprepared to support with medical benefits, and 33% feeling unprepared to support with workplace resources.

Which of these, if any, do you not feel fully prepared to address if an employee were to disclose to you today that they have ADHD?



The lack of training and resources has a direct impact on companies' abilities to retain talent. For nearly half of employees with ADHD (45%), the challenges they experience in managing their symptoms at their current job have caused them to search for a new one or to consider doing so with nearly 1 in 10 (9%) already looking for a new position. This is especially true for younger generations – 62% of Gen Z and 57% of Millennials reported looking for, or planning to look for, a new job specifically because of challenges related to their ADHD (compared to 45% of Gen X and 26% of Boomers).

Recommendations

Employees | For employees, there is a clearly expressed need for both acceptance of one's own unique working style and additional tools and resources. Acceptance can start with a recognition of one's own strengths and thinking about ways to shape your work tasks to fit your own learning style. This could involve identifying tasks that are energizing and that you are able to focus on and brainstorm ways to incorporate more of them into your day or intersperse them between more boring tasks. It may also involve tasks that involve higher stress, pressure or mental challenge (this can be a superpower!), novel or varied tasks, hands-on work, and/or topics of personal interest. As a next step, it can be helpful to develop a system of organization that complements your cognitive style, and to build your attentional control by engaging in specific cognitive activities designed to target and strengthen mental processes needed for attention.

The next set of strategies is based on communicating a need for support from others. When talking with a coworker or supervisor about having ADHD, think about your goal in telling them. Is it so others will better understand? For support? Figuring out how to better work together? Knowing the purpose will help guide the conversation. Based on your goal, share relevant information, whether it's basic info or misconceptions about ADHD or more personally relevant experiences and strengths. Then you can discuss strategies and/or ask for support. The other person will likely ask questions, to think about how you'd like to respond. Ultimately, deciding whether or not to talk with coworkers or a supervisor about having ADHD is a personal decision. Guidance from a mental health professional or coach can be helpful in weighing the considerations and preparing for a conversation.

Managers | Managers can help by creating an environment of psychological safety, where employees feel comfortable talking about their ADHD diagnosis and how they can best be supported. These conversations should not be forced on employees, but instead made clear that they are welcome without putting anyone on the spot. Furthermore, studies have shown that individuals with ADHD may find workplace accommodations to be helpful including reduction of auditory distractions, and managers who provide organization advice, clear delegation of tasks and clearly defined roles, or extra reminders about due dates. It's important to remember that not all individuals want these accommodations, however. The most important thing is not to make assumptions and instead to talk to the individual in order to understand their particular needs.



Companies | In order to retain talent, minimize losses to productivity and create an environment where employees feel engaged and have the opportunity to thrive, there is a deep need for additional resources and training. Employers can provide educational materials about ADHD for all of their employees and can provide manager-specific trainings on topics such as “How to Create and Environment of Psychological Safety,” “How to Become Aware of (and Address) Our Own Biases” and “How to Provide Resources and Support for Employees with ADHD.” They can recognize the strengths of employees with ADHD diagnoses and support these employees in reaching their potential for the benefit of these employees and the company. Employers should also check benefits to make sure they are not arbitrarily excluding coverage for adults with ADHD, and consider additional benefits and resources in order to enable employees to work at their best.

With increased awareness of the gaps in supporting employees with ADHD in the workplace comes the urgent need to address these gaps through education, training and resources so as to unlock the potential of a neurodiverse workforce.

To learn more about a new kind of treatment option available for adults with ADHD, visit EndeavorOTC’s Website at www.endeavorotc.com

.....

¹ Method

The Akili Employee Survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com) among 500 US currently employed US adults (49% female; 50% male; 1% non-binary) who have been diagnosed with ADHD, between August 28th and September 6th, 2023, using an email invitation and an online survey. Participants were required to have been diagnosed with ADHD by a professional.

The Akili Managers Survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com) among 500 US Managers (40% female; 60% male), between August 28th and September 6th, 2023, using an email invitation and an online survey. Participants were recruited from across the U.S.

All participants provided written informed consent. Participants were compensated at fair market value. All data collected were de-identified, and only aggregate data were analyzed and presented.