



HRO Today Research Flash Report Organizations Still Struggling to Serve Underrepresented Groups

HRO Today Flash Reports are a series of ongoing research initiatives that address today's topics of interest in the HR community. These are focused briefs that can be used to support business decisions and discussions among industry practitioners and thought leaders.

This report examines the underrepresented groups that organizations direct recruiting initiatives towards, and how they have succeeded with these efforts from recruiting to retention.

This study was sponsored by Orion Talent.



Table of Contents

Methodology	3
Background	3
Key Findings	4
Detailed Findings	5
Recruitment Initiatives by Group	5
Rating of Success of Recruiting Efforts	6
Most Effective Initiatives for Recruiting Underrepresented Groups	7
Recruiting Success for Underrepresented Groups vs. Broader Recruiting	9
Rating of Retention Efforts	10
How Retention Metrics Compare to Broader Metrics	12
Direction of Underrepresented Group Recruiting Effort Over Three Years	13
Notes	14
About <i>HRO Today</i> and Orion Talent	15

Methodology

Between June 20 and July 13, 2023, a series of emails were sent to subscribers of *HRO Today* magazine and *HRO Today* newsletters, inviting them to take part in an online study. Respondents were at manager-level or above within their human resources departments. They were also screened to ensure that they were familiar with their organization's efforts to recruit, hire, promote, and retain underrepresented groups through Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programming, recruiting, and hiring strategies, and creating DEI roles. The total number of usable surveys was 61, and all respondents were from North America.

The sponsor was not revealed to study participants.

Background

As a response to increased pressure by stakeholders to better address how they focus recruiting and retention efforts on underrepresented groups, organizations are responding to the demands being placed upon them through a series of initiatives. The commitment to how these groups are addressed is evolving in the form of increased awareness and dialogue, workplace initiatives, education, and accountability and measurement. This report looks at which groups are being addressed, how they are best being approached, and what the future holds for programs directed toward underrepresented groups.

Key Findings

There were seven key findings produced by this research:

- 1. Race/ethnicity and women are the two underrepresented groups that most often have recruitment initiatives directed towards them,** both selected by about three-quarters (75%) of respondents. Just over one-half of respondents have recruitment initiatives directed towards people with disabilities, military veterans and LGBTQIA+.
- 2. Among those with a recruitment initiative directed towards the groups examined, recruitment for women is considered successful most often, with nearly two-thirds (63%) indicating their success was either “Excellent” or “Very Good.”**
 - More than one-half (59%) have programs directed towards people with disabilities, yet only 16% note their success as “Excellent” or “Very Good.” This suggests there is a substantial opportunity to improve those programs that most organizations already find imperative.
- 3. The three most effective initiatives in recruiting underrepresented groups are:**
 - Creating work experience programs, such as internships, co-ops, apprenticeships, and fellowships, as 41% indicated it was a top three initiative.
 - Posting on job boards for underrepresented demographics.
 - Conducting unconscious bias training.
- 4. Just over one-half (55%) of those that track their recruiting success with underrepresented groups consider it to be comparable with broader company-wide recruiting benchmarks.** However, over one-quarter (28%) do not track their success in these programs.
- 5. Programs aimed at women clearly have the highest retention,** as over two-thirds (68%) consider their retention efforts as either “Excellent” or “Very Good.” To keep workers—particularly women—engaged at work in 2023 and create workplaces where they can thrive, there are several steps employers can take. However, the rating of retention efforts by race/ethnicity was low, with just over one-third (37%) considering them successful, and only 13% of that total selecting “Excellent.”
- 6. Just over two-thirds (68%) of those that track their retention success for underrepresented groups with broader company-wide recruiting benchmarks considered it to be comparable.** However over one-quarter (27%) do not measure their retention success with these groups.
- 7. Looking forward, organizations will increase efforts to recruit underrepresented groups.** Overall, nearly three-quarters (71%) felt their efforts would increase, with very few (2%) anticipating a decline. Focusing on underrepresented groups will continue to increase in importance for organizations for the foreseeable future.

Detailed Findings

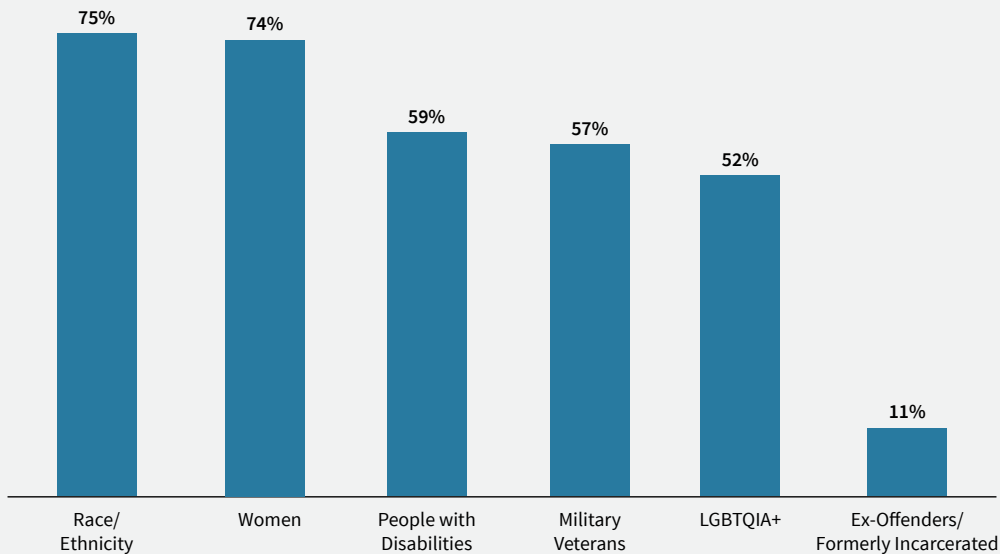
Recruitment Initiatives by Group

Study respondents were asked to select the groups that their company has specific recruitment activities directed towards. Such recruitment initiatives exist most often for Race/Ethnicity and Women, both selected by about three-quarters (75% and 74%, respectively) of respondents.

Benefits of successful recruiting initiatives that promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) include bringing in varied perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. This also sends a message that the organization values and respects diversity, and that everyone has equal opportunities for growth and advancement. Further, in some regions or industries, there are legal requirements or regulations that promote diversity and equal opportunities. Organizations may adopt recruiting initiatives directed toward race or ethnicity to comply with these regulations and demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility. Lastly, demonstrating a commitment to diversity and inclusion can help attract top talent from diverse backgrounds who may be more inclined to work for an organization that embraces diversity, be it diverse race or gender.

Just over one-half of respondents have recruitment initiatives directed towards people with disabilities, military veterans and LGBTQIA+. Recruiting initiatives directed towards these groups can result in some of the same positive benefits that efforts directed towards race or gender can provide.

**For which of the following groups does your company promote recruitment initiatives?
Please select all that apply.**



Rating of Success of Recruiting Efforts

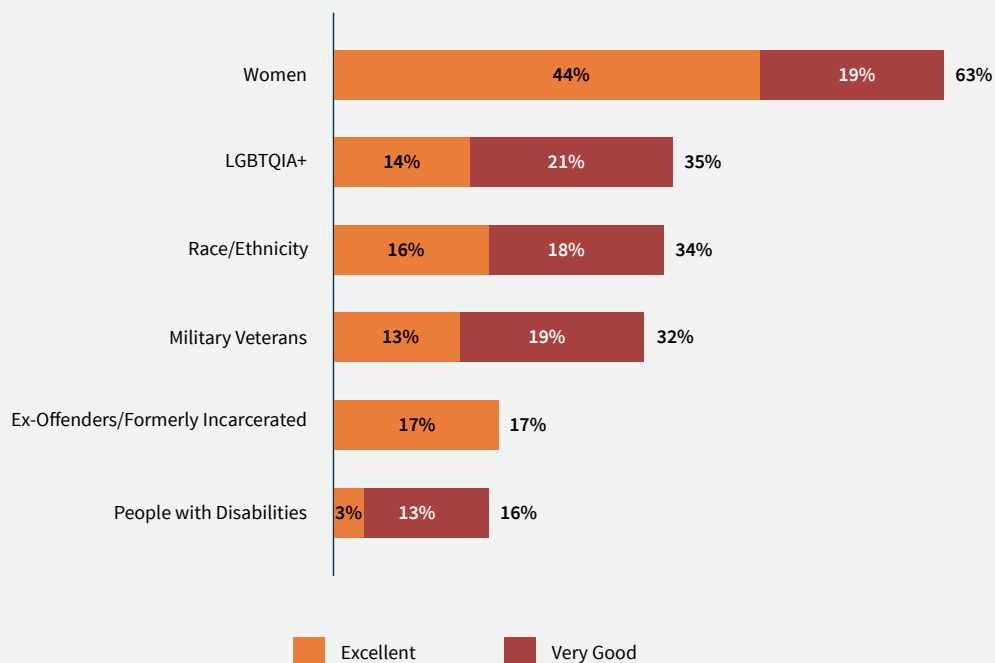
Those respondents that indicated previously that they had recruiting efforts directed at a particular group were asked to rate the success of their efforts for each one. Only those groups indicated previously as having their own unique initiatives were shown.

Overall, recruitment for Women was considered the most successful, with nearly two-thirds (63%) indicating their success was either “Excellent” or “Very Good.” In fact, of the 63%, 44% of respondents indicated “Excellent.”

Recruiting success for other groups is much more modest, with just over one-third assigning a score of either “Excellent” or “Very Good” for three of the groups: LGBTQIA+, Race/Ethnicity and Military Veterans.

Only 16% of those with recruiting efforts directed towards people with disabilities considered their success as “Excellent” or “Very Good.” However, as previously shown, more than one-half (59%) have programs directed towards this segment. There is opportunity for much greater success with programs used to recruit this group given its importance.

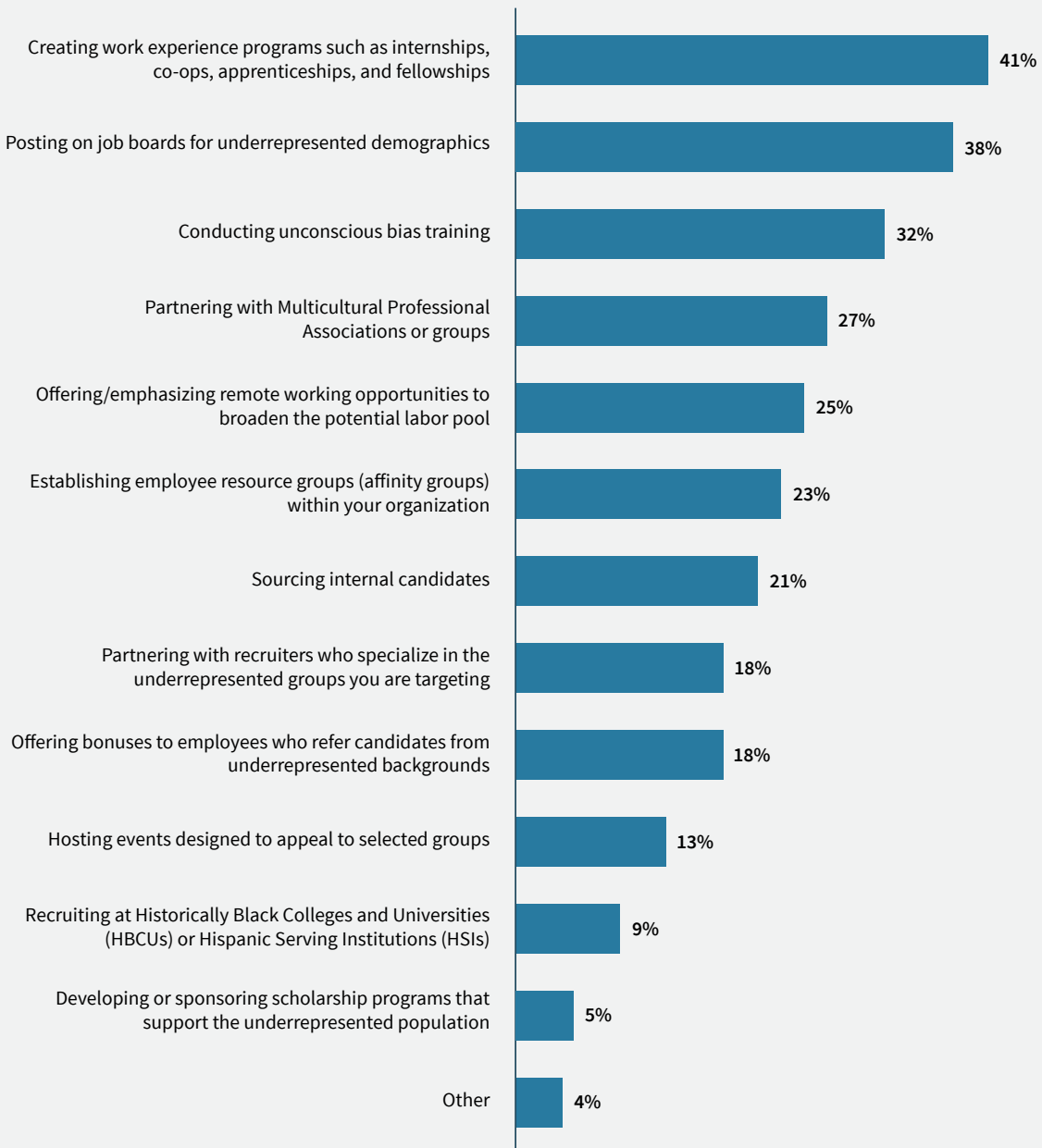
How would you rate the success of your recruiting efforts for each of the groups noted previously?



Most Effective Initiatives for Recruiting Underrepresented Groups

Respondents were asked to select the three most effective initiatives in recruiting underrepresented groups. The most frequently selected was creating work experience programs, such as internships, co-ops, apprenticeships, and fellowships, as 41% indicated it was a top three initiative.

What types of initiatives do you find the most effective in recruiting underrepresented groups? Please select the top three most effective.



Most Effective Initiatives for Recruiting Underrepresented Groups

(continued)

When segmenting the data by those who focus recruiting efforts on any of the areas examined, the most effective efforts generally follow the same pattern for each segment. However, there are a few exceptions. Nearly one-half (46%) of those that have programs directed at women find posting on job boards for underrepresented demographics, conducting unconscious bias training and creating work experience programs are the most effective initiatives, higher than those without programs directed towards women. Those that target race/ethnicity are more likely to find conducting unconscious bias training among the most effective, 44% vs. 32%, and also partnering with Multicultural Professional Associations or groups more effective, 36% vs. overall at 27%. Those who promoted to LGBTQIA+ are more likely to find sourcing internal candidates effective, 31% vs. overall 21%. Those with programs aimed at the military are likely to find offering/emphasizing remote working opportunities to broaden the potential labor pool effective, 34% vs. overall 25%.

Most Effective Initiatives for Recruiting Underrepresented Groups Selected Initiatives by Segment

	Total	Race/ Ethnicity	Women	LGBTQIA+	Military
Creating work experience programs such as internships, co-ops, apprenticeships, and fellowships	41%	37%	45%	38%	39%
Posting on job boards for underrepresented demographics	38%	41%	45%	38%	42%
Conducting unconscious bias training	32%	44%	45%	48%	39%
Partnering with Multicultural Professional Associations or groups	27%	34%	25%	31%	33%
Offering/emphasizing remote working opportunities to broaden the potential labor pool	25%	32%	33%	28%	34%
Sourcing internal candidates	21%	20%	23%	31%	27%

Recruiting Success for Underrepresented Groups vs. Broader Recruiting

Study participants were asked to compare their recruiting success for underrepresented groups with broader company-wide recruiting benchmarks. Overall, just over one-half (55%) of those that track their success considered it to be comparable. But interestingly, over one-quarter (28%) do not track their success in these programs. To justify the added expense and hours needed to successfully conduct these efforts, benchmarks must be put in place that can compare the effectiveness of recruiting these groups before and after the program's implementation.

How does your recruiting success for underrepresented groups compare to broader company-wide recruiting benchmarks?



Rating of Retention Efforts

Respondents were asked to rate their retention efforts for six different underrepresented groups on a scale of 1-5, where 1 was poor and 5 was excellent. There was a “Does not track” option and those responses have been eliminated from the percentages shown. Only those groups indicated previously as having their own unique initiatives were shown.

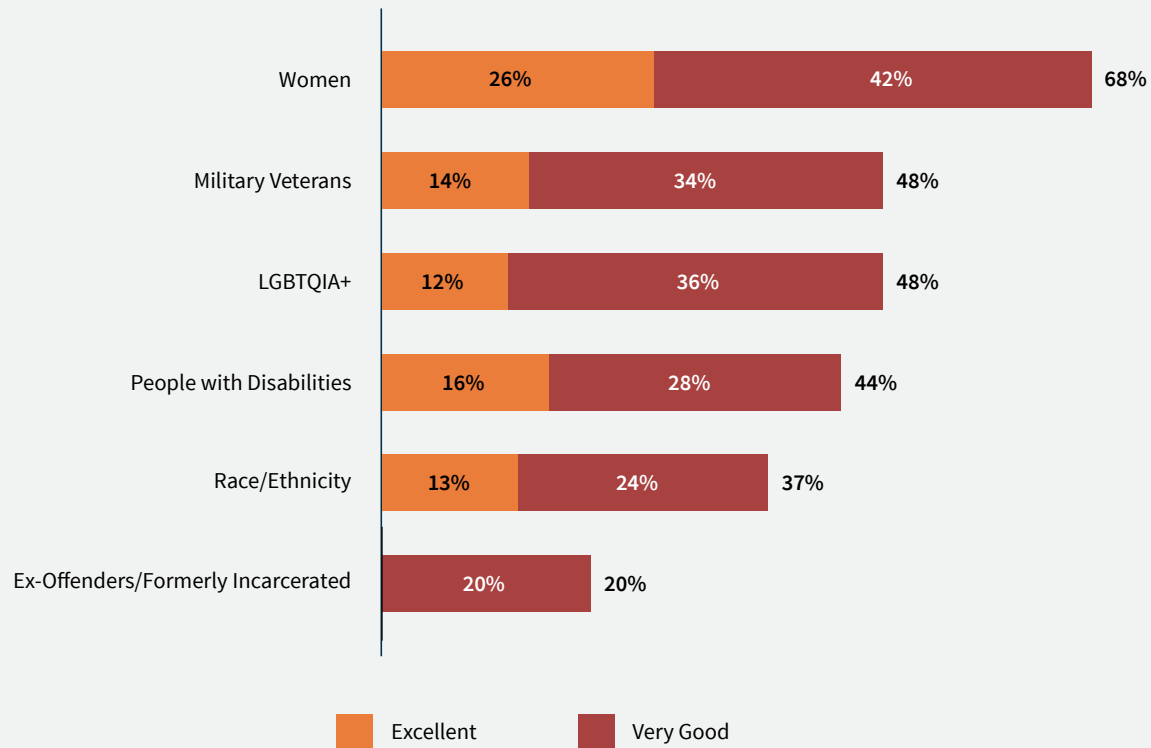
Programs aimed at women clearly have the highest retention, as over two-thirds (68%) consider their retention efforts as either “Excellent” or “Very Good.” To keep workers—particularly women—engaged at work in 2023 and create workplaces where they can thrive, there are several steps employers can take. Flexibility at work is key for women, who are often balancing caregiving responsibilities, childcare obligations, and other time commitments outside of work. Offering a wider range of options like flexible scheduling, permanent remote work options and even part-time work can make a big difference in attracting and retaining women.¹

Those retention efforts focused on race/ethnicity were considered effective by only 37%. Women of color in particular are leaving the workforce at even higher levels due to limited flexibility, lack of opportunities for upward mobility, and dismal work-life balances.²

Relying on race-based programs can lead to tokenism, where individuals from underrepresented groups may be included primarily for appearances rather than a genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion. Focusing solely on race may provide short-term benefits in terms of diversity numbers, but it might not address the underlying systemic issues or create a genuinely inclusive work environment in the long run.³

Rating of Retention Efforts (continued)

How would you rate your retention efforts for each of these groups?



Ex-Offenders/Formerly Incarcerated and people with disabilities are the two initiatives least likely to be tracked, 29% and 22%, respectively.

Initiatives Not Tracked

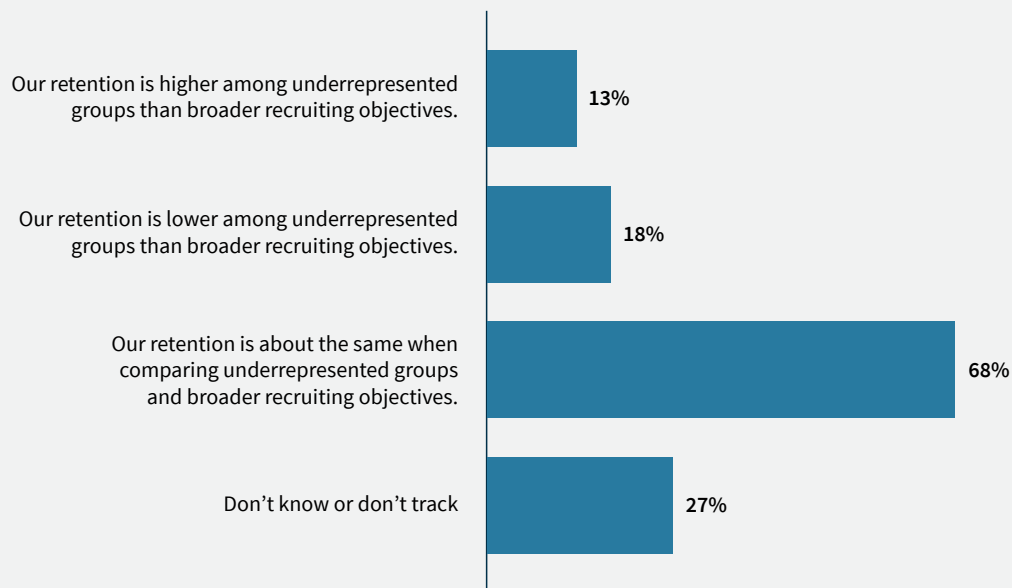
Ex-Offenders/Formerly Incarcerated	29%
People with Disabilities	22%
LGBTQIA+	11%
Military Veterans	6%
Race/Ethnicity	3%
Women	3%

How Retention Metrics Compare to Broader Metrics

Respondents were asked to compare their retention success for underrepresented groups with broader company-wide recruiting benchmarks. Overall, just over two-thirds (68%) of those that track their success considered it to be comparable. But interestingly, over one-quarter (27%) do not track their success in these programs.

Aside from the goals of programs directed toward underrepresented groups, tracking retention specific to these groups is the only way to achieve continuous improvement. Regularly tracking retention metrics allows companies to evaluate the effectiveness of their underrepresented groups' retention strategies over time and enables them to make data-driven decisions and constantly advance their efforts.

How do your retention metrics for these groups compare to broader company-wide retention benchmarks?

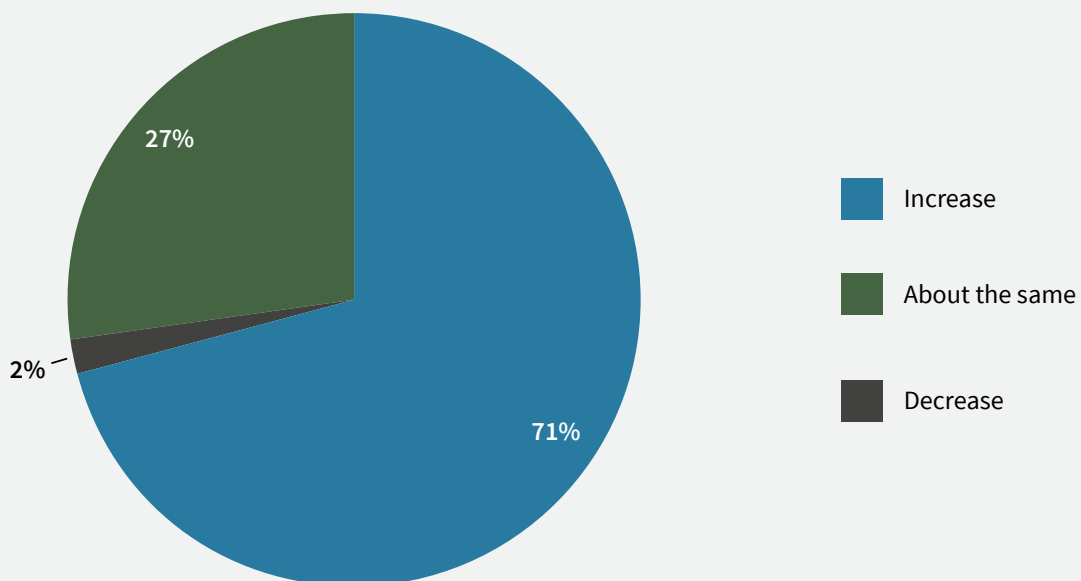


Direction of Underrepresented Group Recruiting Effort Over Three Years

Study participants were asked how to forecast the direction their organization's focus to recruit underrepresented groups will change over the next three years. Overall, nearly three-quarters (71%) felt their efforts would increase, with very few (2%) feeling they would decrease.

In the U.S., there is more emphasis on diversity initiatives in organizations than ever before. As the U.S. population becomes more diverse, the voice of underrepresented groups will only become louder. Organizations must create an environment where all can thrive, and that ultimately will create greater success for everyone.

How do you feel your organization's efforts to recruit underrepresented groups will change over the next three years?



Notes

1. Laurie Chamberlin. "Creating Workplaces That Invite and Retain Women In 2023," *Forbes*, January 25, 2023.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2023/01/25/creating-workplaces-that-invite-and-retain-women-in-2023/?sh=3168998429ec>
2. Chamberlain, "Creating Workplaces that Invite and Retain Women in 2023."
3. Hirsch, Arlene S. "Beyond the Numbers: Creating a Truly Diverse Organization," *SHRM*, January 21, 2022.
<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/beyond-the-numbers-creating-a-truly-diverse-organization.aspx>



About *HRO Today*

HRO Today magazine and newsletters are read by more than 140,000 HR executives and leaders worldwide and cover the latest industry trends in HR outsourcing, services, shared services, and operations. *HRO Today* magazine is the publication of choice for the most senior executives facing the strategic decisions about operational excellence. *HRO Today* magazine and www.hrotoday.com offer the best content choices for the HR leaders seeking online information in the form of newsletters, webinar series, and online video content. *HRO Today* is a product of SharedXpertise.



About Orion Talent

Headquartered in Cary, North Carolina, Orion Talent helps companies fill one to 100,000 roles with the right people and the right solution, powered by a diversity-rich network of highly sought-after candidates. Orion's design-led solutions include RPO, Military Hiring, HirePurpose® Diversity Sourcing & Talent Attraction, and HireSkills® Workforce Planning & Development. For more information, visit www.oriontalent.com.