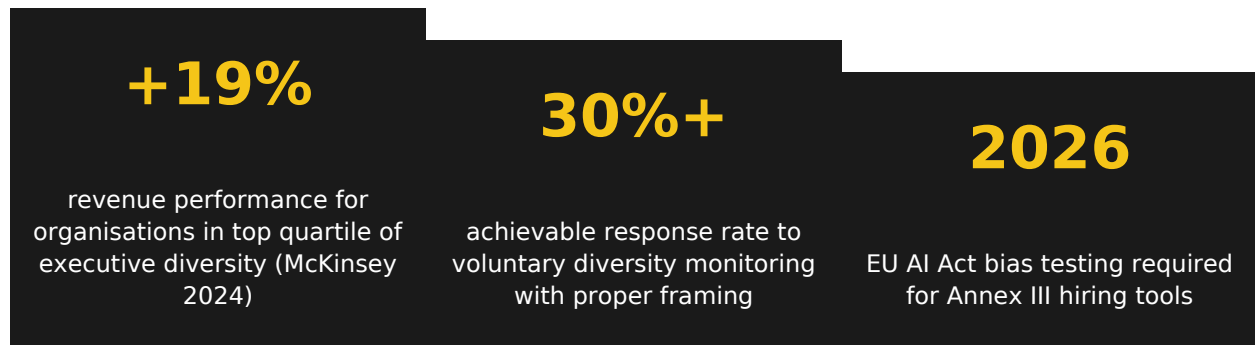


HR RESEARCH SERIES 2026 - REPORT R48 OF 10 (EXTENDED)

# Inclusive Hiring Practices 2026

How to design a hiring process that opens the funnel, removes bias and meets EU AI Act and CSRD requirements.

Inclusive hiring has shifted from a CSR initiative to a quality and compliance issue. The EU AI Act mandates bias testing for any AI used in hiring, CSRD requires public reporting of diversity outcomes, and the business performance link between inclusive teams and financial outcomes is now well established.



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This report frames inclusive hiring as a hiring quality discipline backed by data, with practical interventions, AI considerations, intersectionality and the internal business case for each stakeholder.

## Removing bias from job ads and screening

- **Skills-based job ads**, lead with skills required, not credentials or proxy markers.
- **Gendered language audit**, use tools to remove subtly exclusionary language.
- **Salary range publication**, levels the negotiation playing field for under-represented groups.
- **Structured screening**, criteria fixed in advance, applied consistently.
- **Blind initial screening**, remove name, photo and personal identifiers from first review.

## Structured interviews as inclusion lever

| Practice                              | Inclusion impact                            | Implementation                        |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Same questions, all candidates        | Removes manager improvisation bias          | Question bank per role                |
| Independent scoring before discussion | Anchors against vocal bias                  | Rubric per question                   |
| Diverse interview panels              | Multiple perspectives, signal to candidates | Train panellists, balance load        |
| Decision criteria documented          | Reviewable for fairness                     | Hiring decision template              |
| Calibration sessions                  | Reduces inter-rater drift                   | Quarterly review with hiring managers |

## AI in inclusive hiring

| AI feature              | Inclusion risk                 | Inclusion opportunity                            |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| CV screening AI         | May learn historical bias      | Consistent criteria at scale, fatigue-free       |
| Job ad language AI      | Generic tools may miss context | Purpose-built tools remove exclusionary language |
| Interview scheduling AI | Low risk                       | Removes scheduling-priority bias                 |
| Reference checking AI   | Language pattern bias risk     | Structured questions consistently applied        |

## Measuring inclusion in hiring

- **Voluntary diversity monitoring**, anonymous at application, 30%+ response rate target.
- **Funnel drop-off analysis**, where do groups drop out at higher rates than pool representation?
- **AI parity testing**, demographic groups screened at statistically equivalent rates (required by EU AI Act for Annex III).
- **Hiring manager outcome analysis**, do specific managers show lower selection rates for specific groups?
- **Offer and accept rates by group**, are declined offers concentrated in any demographic group?

## Making the internal case

| Stakeholder   | Most relevant argument                    | Key data                                       |
|---------------|---|--|
| CFO           | Lower CPH, larger pool, better quality    | CPH vs. quality-of-hire, pool size             |
| CEO           | Revenue performance link, reputation risk | McKinsey diversity-performance, brand examples |
| Line managers | Better team performance, legal protection | Team data, discrimination liability            |
| Board         | CSRD reporting, EU AI Act, ESG            | Reporting requirements, AI Act articles        |

## Intersectionality

**The intersectionality audit question: at which stage of your hiring funnel do specific demographic combinations show the greatest drop-off relative to their representation in the application pool? The combination that shows the largest unexplained drop-off is your highest-priority inclusive-hiring intervention target. Single-axis analysis routinely misses the largest disparities.**

## Forward outlook 2026-2030

EU AI Act Annex III mandates bias testing across protected characteristics in 2026, CSRD diversity disclosures create public accountability for large companies in 2027, skills-based hiring becomes majority practice in EU technology by 2028, and by 2030 organisations with 5+ years of structured inclusive hiring show measurably more diverse leadership pipelines.

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