

## **Participant Information Sheet**

### **Project title**

“Neurodivergent workers and well-being: Socialization and meaningful relationships in the workplace”

### **Invitation paragraph**

Dear participant,

My name is Raysa Rocha, and I am a lecturer at Essex Business School, University of Essex. Along with my co-investigators, Dr Siddhartha Saxena, Heriot-Watt University, and Dr Louise Nash, University of Essex, I am currently conducting a research project entitled Neurodivergent workers and well-being: Socialization and meaningful relationships in the workplace.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

We are studying the role of acquaintances and distant connections, known as "weak ties," in the social networks of neurodivergent individuals across remote, hybrid, and on-site workplaces in the UK's technology sector. Developing a better understanding of this will help to identify challenges and opportunities associated with weak ties and their impact on job satisfaction, mental health, and career development for neurodivergent workers.

### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in this study because you were identified as a neurodivergent employee in the UK's technology sector. We identified potential participants like yourself through partnerships with neurodiversity-focused organizations, professional networks, and technology companies. Our goal is to include over 300 neurodivergent workers in the survey portion of our study, with individuals being invited to participate in follow-up interviews. Your experiences and insights are crucial to help us understand the unique challenges and opportunities neurodivergent workers face in forming professional connections and accessing career resources in various work settings (remote, hybrid, and onsite).

### **Do I have to take part?**

**Participation is entirely voluntary.** It's entirely up to you. If you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to provide consent. If you decide to participate in the study and then change your mind in the future, you can withdraw at any point, even after the data has been collected, by contacting the researchers using the details provided below. If publications or reports have already been disseminated, these cannot be withdrawn. However, these will only contain **anonymized or aggregated data**.

## What does taking part in the research involve?

The research will involve completing an online survey and potentially participating in a follow-up interview. The survey will take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete, covering topics related to your social connections at work, job satisfaction, and well-being. If you are selected for an interview, it will last approximately 30-60 minutes and can be conducted face-to-face, by phone, e-mail, or via video call (e.g., Zoom, MS Teams, or Google Meet), depending on your preference. Interviews will explore your experiences forming and maintaining social connections at work.

During the interview, I will take notes, and the interviews will also be recorded using an audio recorder. This is to make transcribing easier, and the audio recordings will be destroyed once transcribed. **Participation will be anonymous, and pseudonyms will be used when referring to individuals.**

Interviews can be adapted according to your specific needs; for example, if you would like to take a break at any time or prefer the interview over several sessions, please let me know.

## What information will be collected?

We will collect two main types of information from you:

1. Survey responses: You'll be asked to complete an online questionnaire about your work experiences, social connections at work, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. This survey will take about 10-20 minutes to complete.
2. Interview responses (for some participants): If you agree, you may be invited to participate in a follow-up interview. This would involve a 30-60 minutes conversation about your workplace experiences in more detail.

We will also collect some basic demographic information such as your age range, gender, and type of neurodivergence (e.g., autism, ADHD).

Initially, the information you provide will be linked to your name and contact details. However, we will remove all identifying information (like names and email addresses) from our data as soon as we've finished collecting it. We'll replace this with a unique code, **so your responses remain anonymous in our records and any published results.**

All information will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to it. When we report our findings, **we'll only use anonymous quotes and general trends** - nothing that could identify you personally. Remember, you can choose not to answer any questions you're not comfortable with, and you can withdraw from the study at any time.

## Will my information be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept securely and accessible only by the research team. Your responses will be anonymized, and any identifying details will be removed from publications or reports. Upon completion of the research project, the anonymized data will be deposited in the UK Data Archive at the University of Essex.

## What is the legal basis for using the data and who is the Data Controller?

The legal basis for processing your data in this research is your consent. By agreeing to participate in this study, you are giving us permission to collect and use your data for the purposes of this research. Your consent must be freely given, and you have the right to withdraw it at any time without any negative consequences.

The Data Controller for this research is the University of Essex. This means the University is responsible for deciding how your data is processed and keeping it secure. If you have any questions or concerns about how your data is being handled, you can contact the University's Information Assurance Manager at [dpo@essex.ac.uk](mailto:dpo@essex.ac.uk).

We will only use your data for the purposes of this research, as described in this information sheet. Your data will be kept confidential and secure and accessed only by research team members. Once the project is complete, we will anonymize all data so that individuals cannot be identified.

If you have any questions about data protection or your rights regarding your personal information, please don't hesitate to ask the research team or contact the University's Information Assurance Manager directly.

## What should I do if I want to take part?

If you'd like to participate in this study, please follow these steps:

1. Contact the research team: Email Dr Raysa Rocha at [raysa.rocha@essex.ac.uk](mailto:raysa.rocha@essex.ac.uk). Please state that you're interested in participating in the "Neurodivergent Workers and Well-being" study.
2. Provide your contact information: Include your name and preferred email address or phone number so we can reach you with further details.
3. Indicate your availability: Let us know general days/times when you might be available for the survey and potentially an interview.
4. Ask any questions: Feel free to include any questions you might have about the study in your email.

The deadline for expressing your interest is October 31, 2025. We encourage you to respond as soon as possible, as we'll be scheduling participants on a first-come, first-served basis.

After we receive your email, a member of our research team will contact you within 5 business days to provide you with the consent form and a link to the online survey. If you're selected for an interview, we'll work with you to schedule a convenient time.

Remember, expressing interest doesn't obligate you to participate. You can decide to withdraw at any point, even after starting the study.

If you have any trouble with this process or prefer to opt in via phone, please call Dr. Rocha at +44 7852 814 331.

## What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be published (e.g., conference proceedings and journal articles) and so in the public domain. We would like to remind that all results **will be anonymised and that you**

**will not be identifiable.** If you would like a copy, please let us know.

### **Who is funding the research?**

British Academy Leverhulme Small Research Grant award reference SRG24\241480, derived from the Academy's partnership with the Wellcome Trust.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

Ethics Sub Committee 2 at the University of Essex or the University of Essex Ethics Committee.

### **Concerns and Complaints**

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the study or you have a complaint, in the first instance please contact the principal investigator of the project, Dr Raysa Rocha, using the contact details below. If are still concerned, you think your complaint has not been addressed to your satisfaction or you feel that you cannot approach the principal investigator, please contact the departmental Director of Research in the department responsible for this project, Essex Business School Research Ethics Officer, Dr Casper Hoedemaekers ([choedem@essex.ac.uk](mailto:choedem@essex.ac.uk)). If you are still not satisfied, please contact the University of Essex Research Integrity Manager, Mantalena Sotiriadou (email: [ms21994@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ms21994@essex.ac.uk)). Please include the ERAMS reference which can be found at the foot of this page.

### **Name of the Researcher**

We would be very grateful for your participation in this study. If you need to contact us, please email [raysa.rocha@essex.ac.uk](mailto:raysa.rocha@essex.ac.uk). You can also write to us at Essex Business School, Office EBS2.64-C, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ.

You are welcome to ask questions at any point.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Raysa Rocha