

Achievers

The Tech-Enabled Employee Experience

2022 Culture Report from Achievers Workforce Institute



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Executive summary

It may be stating the obvious to report that the world of work has changed, but the reality is that business leaders are still coming to terms with this new era of employee needs and expectations. After two years of relentless challenge, culminating in an unprecedented wave of resignations, it's no surprise that many leaders wish to return to a pre-pandemic "normal" — a state that no longer exists.

The world of work has shifted, and organizations must adapt to survive and thrive.

More than half of HR leaders say the C-suite doesn't recognize that the ways in which businesses must now attract and retain talent has irrevocably changed.

This means more than half of companies are woefully unprepared to make the required changes to their talent strategy to thrive in this new world of work. The number-one reason for leaving a job during the pandemic is work flexibility — organizations that refuse to adapt will continue to lose employees seeking better balance and freedom.

Without a doubt, the top measure of a successful employee experience in this new world is a strong sense of belonging. It is the North Star — the Holy Grail — for HR and business leaders. This truth is underpinned by the fact that a strong sense of belonging drives three times the level of employee engagement, commitment, productivity, and virtually anything else on the HR agenda. Strategically fostering a deep experience of belonging builds business performance. However, building a culture of belonging is difficult in a world where senior leaders are wary of change, change that has already arrived.

The leaders that will successfully guide their organizations into this new era at work must be willing to understand and address the topics that are most important to today's employee. Decisions regarding whether to support flexible work styles are top of mind — companies where senior leaders are open to flexible work options are less likely to report challenges with attraction and retention.

Of those employees who have the option to work remotely, 85% want to be remote or hybrid.

The employee experience must evolve to support this new world of work, and change-resistance in leadership only further burdens and slows the pace of essential evolution. Organizations that focus on belonging as the core of their employee experience will be able to respond proactively to change. There will always be change that challenges individuals, teams, and organizations, however, if belonging is core to people programs, an organization will be better positioned to weather all storms. Almost half of HR leaders say they don't have the support they need from the C-suite to implement policies to attract, engage, and retain top talent, resulting in a more extended, more painful transition to a way of working that is becoming non-negotiable.

Executive summary

(continued)

What is causing this disconnect?

Senior leaders agree on the necessity of providing an experience of belonging and connection for their employees, but they are at a loss as to how to fulfill that need with a dispersed workforce; how to bring people together when they wish to remain physically independent. How do we drive belonging when employees now work from anywhere?

Achievers Workforce Institute (AWI) has identified **four key areas** for technological investment to digitize belonging inside every type of organization.

Those areas are:

1. Network

Employees at organizations with digital connection tools outperform the average in factors such as engagement, belonging, trust, and productivity.

2. Recognition

Recognition drives every belonging pillar (of being welcomed, known, included, supported, and connected) and is crucial for making employees feel seen and valued. Employees with a recognition platform are more likely to say they feel meaningfully recognized.

3. Wellness

Burnout is a serious issue facing the workforce, but employees whose organizations provide wellness tools are less likely to struggle with feeling overwhelmed and depleted due to burnout.

4. Feedback

Gathering and acting on feedback drives strong business outcomes with three times more engagement, belonging, trust, commitment, and virtually anything else on the HR agenda.

Business leaders must come to terms with what HR professionals already know: if organizations want to attract, engage, and retain top talent, they must adapt to the new world of work. These trends may seem new and uncertain, but with data to guide decision-making, every organization can transition smoothly into this new world of work.

As we evolve, around the globe, to working more flexibly, every company must develop the strategy and tactics, including investing in the right technology, to drive the critical element of connection and belonging that employees want and organizations need.



Dr. Natalie Baumgartner
Chief Workforce Scientist



Key findings

- 1. *Belonging drives three times more*** productivity, engagement, and job commitment, making it the North Star for organizations and HR. However, the world of work has evolved, so leaders must find new ways to foster a strong sense of belonging inside their companies.
- 2. *Business leaders are wary of evolving*** to the new way of working, with 56% of HR leaders saying the C-suite doesn't recognize that attraction and retention has changed. In addition, 45% of HR leaders say they don't have the C-suite support necessary to implement the initiatives needed to attract and retain.
- 3. *While 85% of "online" employees*** (those whose jobs can be done on a computer from anywhere) want to work remotely or hybrid, two-thirds say company leaders would prefer they were on-site, indicating a disconnect between employee needs and organizational policies.
- 4. *Almost half of remote workers worry*** about missing out on career opportunities and important events. In the new world of work, organizations must find remote-first ways to connect with employees and to help them feel seen, included, and valued.
- 5. *Technology is a powerful, scalable solution*** that can do wonders for connecting a dispersed workforce. From network tools to recognition and wellbeing, organizations that invest in the right technology see better business outcomes.

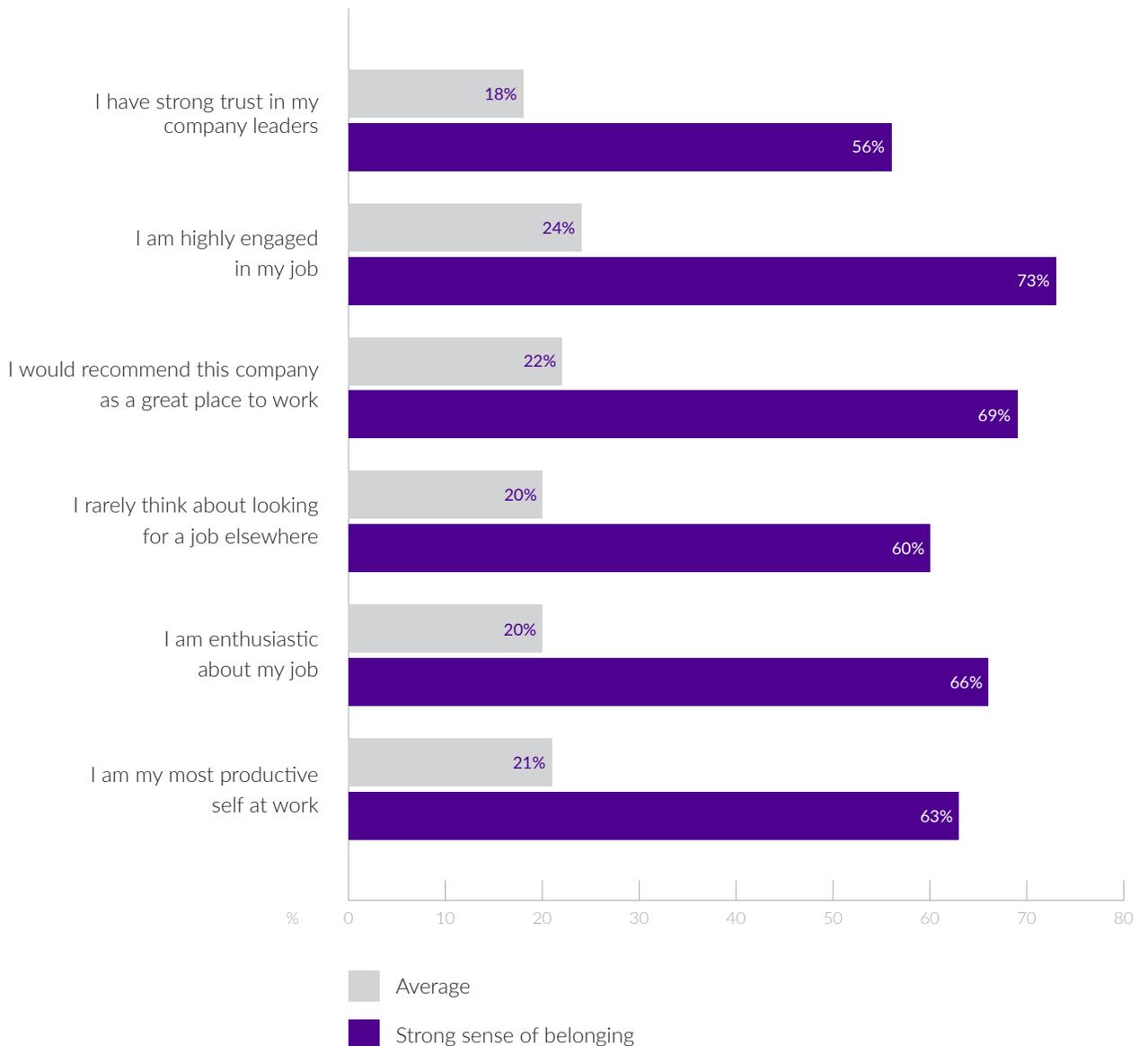
Belonging: THE NORTH STAR

What is belonging?

The Achievers Workforce Institute defines belonging as an experience of connection, security, and community – it’s about feeling at home in one’s place, without reservation. Belonging is the outcome of an organizational commitment to creating an environment that is diverse, inclusive, and engaging.

The impact of belonging

Belonging drives three times more trust, engagement, advocacy, commitment, enthusiasm, and productivity.



Belonging:

THE NORTH STAR

(continued)

The pillars of belonging

Though belonging is a much-desired organizational quality, it can seem difficult to strategically and tactically foster. To guide organizations in the effective establishment of a culture of belonging, Achievers Workforce Institute has identified five contributing pillars, each backed by both academic research and best-in-class business practices.

To possess a sense of belonging at work, employees must feel:

Welcomed: introduced to, and incorporated within, the organizational culture and community

Known: understood, motivated, and celebrated as an individual

Included: valued and accepted without reservation

Supported: consistently and meaningfully nurtured and developed

Connected: empowered to develop and maintain relationships across a diverse population



Belonging:

THE NORTH STAR

(continued)

How must organizations adapt to drive belonging in the new world of work?

Welcome: the belonging gap

Being warmly welcomed may seem like the simplest of the belonging pillars, but AWI's research shows it is often the most overlooked.

Respondents from marginalized groups such as racialized or LGBTQ+ employees are more likely to rate a warm welcome as critical for their feelings of belonging.

In addition, for those who already feel a strong sense of belonging, being warmly welcomed is the #1 way to help them experience an even deeper sense of belonging.

What does a warm welcome entail?

Firstly, welcoming is not simply a one-off action when someone new starts at an organization. While that's a vital stage for setting the scene for belonging, employees should feel welcomed when they join at every transition – when they join the company but also when they join a new team, a new project, at social events, and in their everyday interactions.

Next, consider how to combine a warm welcome with other pillars such as including and getting to know a new hire. What makes your new employee or new team member uniquely suited to the organization, group, or role? Welcoming is making it clear that the enthusiasm about this joining individual has to do with them as a unique human being.

Finally, developing formalized onboarding processes for new starters, both at the company and team levels, is a powerful tool in the process of making employees feel welcomed. Consistency is key when it comes to ensuring everyone feels a warm welcome, and it doesn't end after 30, 60, or 90 days. Employees at every level must feel comfortable entering every room, participating in every discussion, and contributing to solving every issue.



Coming to terms with the new world of work

Employees want flexibility:



want to work remote or hybrid

#1

reason for leaving a job is better work flexibility

... but feel stymied by company policy and preferences



say company leaders prefer they work at least partly on-site

More than half (56%) of HR leaders are struggling to engage and retain employees, but almost as many (45%) say they don't have the C-suite support they need to effectively implement policies to attract, engage, and retain top talent.

56% of HR executives say their company leaders don't fully appreciate that the world of work has changed

At the precise moment that we are experiencing record-high resignation, and bracing for a recession, employees are telling us what they need — flexibility. It's time for leaders to understand what flexibility means and to put the conditions in place for employees to stay and do the best work of their lives.

As HR leaders look to gain buy-in for this transformation, it's important to identify the potential concerns executives are voicing around shifting to a flexible or even fully remote work structure.

A top priority of organizational leaders is to ensure employees are engaged, connected, and collaborating but many feel unsure about how to achieve this without regular in-person interaction. Yet most employees, the very people who wish to feel engaged, connected, and collaborative, are clearly communicating that they simply do not need to be in the office to achieve this type of employee experience.

The key to fostering a rich experience of connection at work without a traditional structure is the implementation of thoughtful processes and technology that builds an experience of trust and belonging.

Building trust in the new world of work

Trust is critical to a successful organization and, yet, only



of employees today report that they have strong trust in their company leaders.

In his 2017 Harvard Business Review article [The Neuroscience of Trust](#), Claremont Graduate University Professor Paul Zak explains that compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies report:

74% less stress

106% more energy at work

50% higher productivity

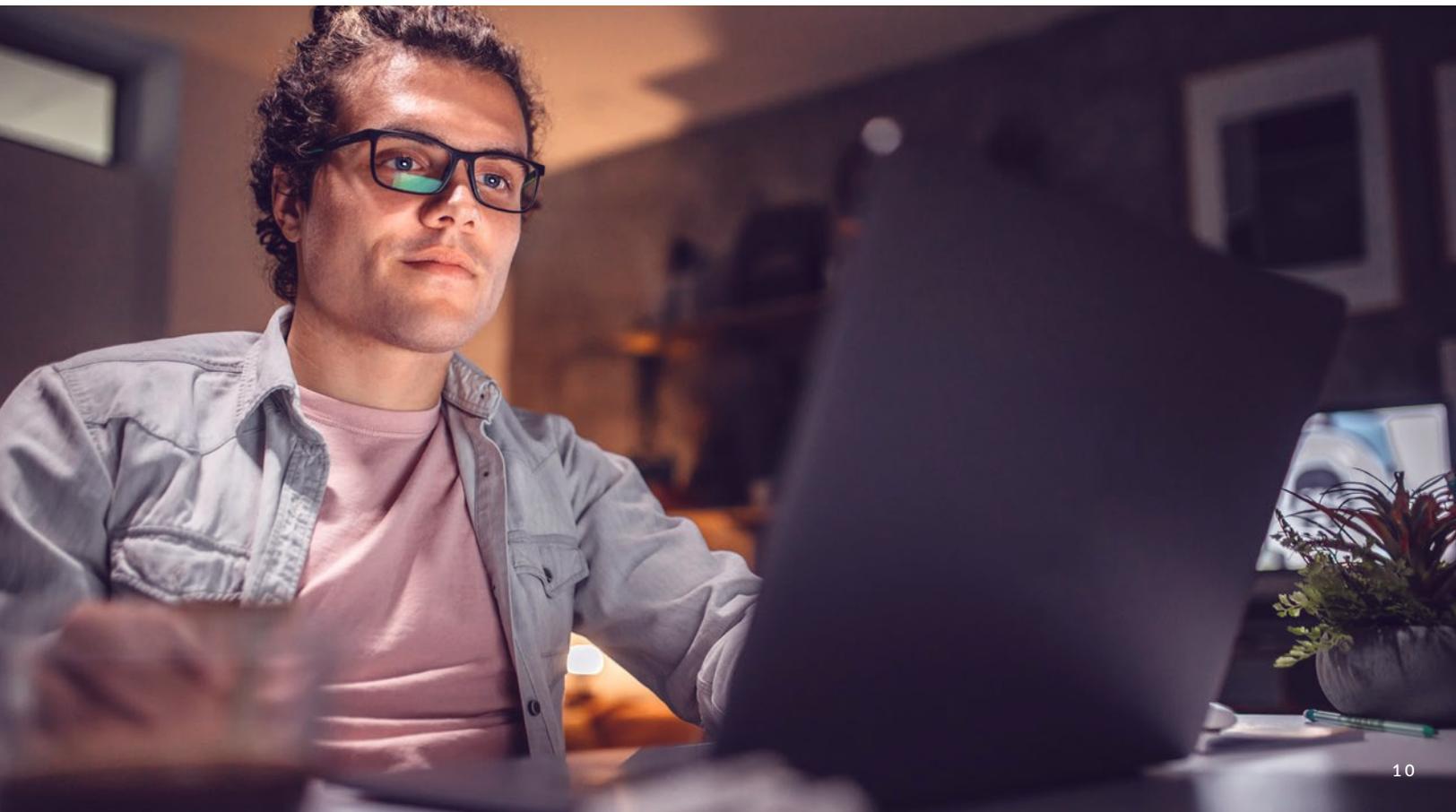
13% fewer sick days

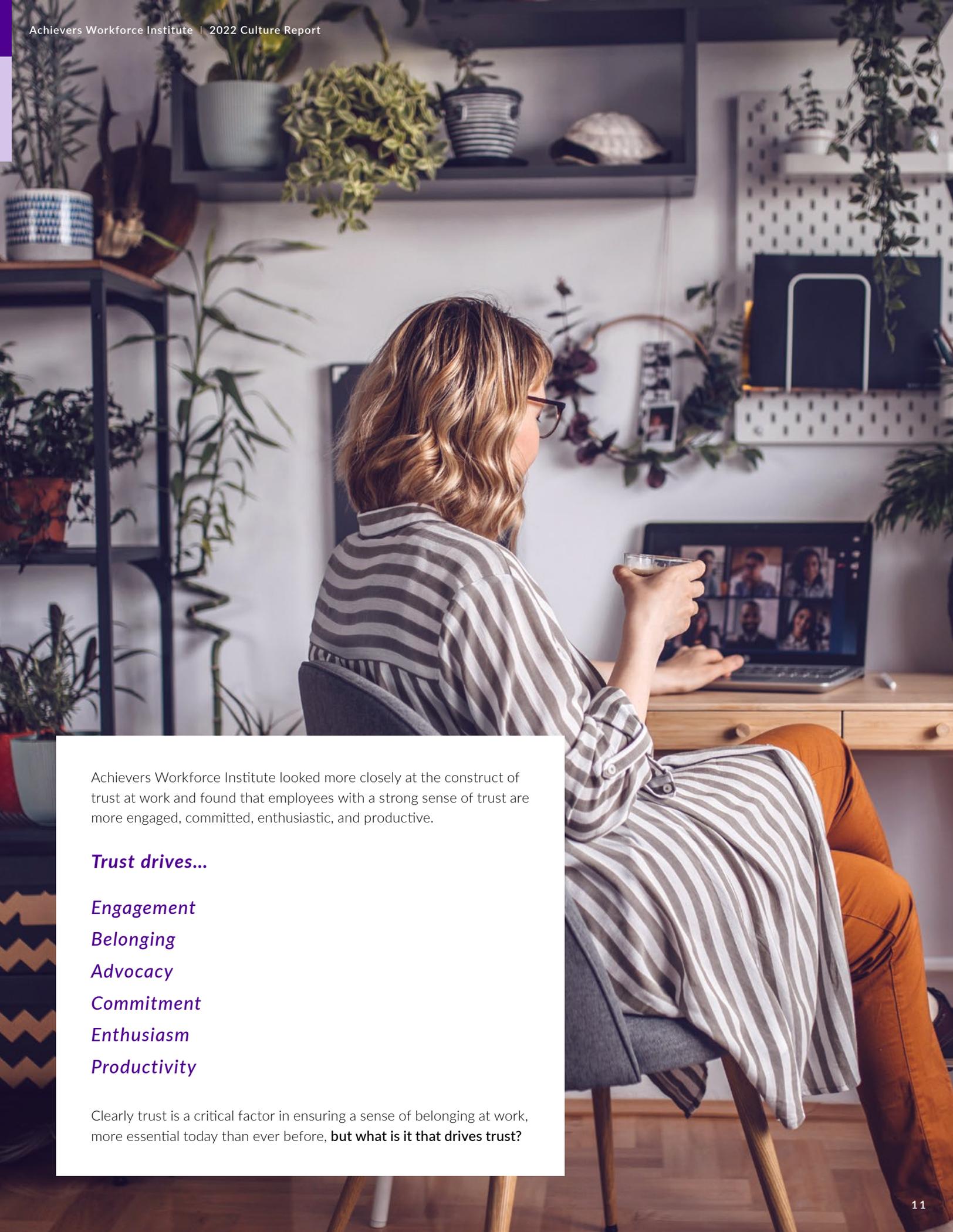
76% more engagement

29% more satisfaction with their lives

40% less burnout.

It's a long list and demonstrates the power of a high-trust environment.





Achievers Workforce Institute looked more closely at the construct of trust at work and found that employees with a strong sense of trust are more engaged, committed, enthusiastic, and productive.

Trust drives...

Engagement

Belonging

Advocacy

Commitment

Enthusiasm

Productivity

Clearly trust is a critical factor in ensuring a sense of belonging at work, more essential today than ever before, **but what is it that drives trust?**

Building trust in the new world of work

(continued)

When AWI compares a wide variety of factors to the extent to which employees trust their leaders today, it becomes clear that three elements stand out: feedback, recognition, and work flexibility.

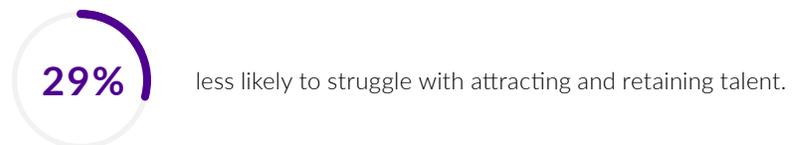
The top trust drivers are taking action on feedback, meaningful recognition, and satisfaction with remote/hybrid work options.

Strongly connected with trust in leaders:

- 1.** Takes action on feedback
- 2.** Meaningfully recognized
- 3.** Happy with remote/hybrid options

Note the strong link between being happy with remote/hybrid options and trust in company leaders. Trust is a two-way street and those who feel their leaders are requiring them to be in person to monitor their work behavior are far more likely to report a lack of trust, resulting in a diminished level of productivity, engagement, and commitment.

The benefit of being willing to support remote work is clear. When leaders are open to this way of working, organizations are:



Before fully buying in, leaders may seek to understand the truth about remote workers. AWI research indicates that most fears that leaders have about employees working remotely are unfounded.

Remote worker trends

The pandemic proved that remote work is possible for a large proportion of the working population, and that it's considered desirable by a significant number of workers.



38% of employees who can work remotely would prefer to be fully remote.

This group is



44% more likely to have changed jobs since the pandemic started, and are



48% more likely to say they moved for better work flexibility.

Their reports around productivity are equivalent to those of non-remote workers and they are 21% more likely to be highly engaged. Remote workers are also more likely to report a strong trust in leadership, a strong sense of belonging, and to say they would recommend their company to others.

However, almost half



46% worry about missing out on career opportunities due to being remote, and



44% say they are concerned about missing out on important work events.

This shows the importance of connecting these employees regardless of where they are based. To do this successfully, employers must embrace available technology to drive connection and belonging in their dispersed workforce

Digitization of belonging

Belonging is the single most powerful measuring stick for a positive employee experience. It is the end game for HR leaders — every project, process, and technology ought to be focused on supporting the pillars, the essential building blocks, of belonging. However, creating an experience of belonging for employees in a new flexible workplace structure with a dispersed workforce requires a shift in perspective, focus, and tactics. Key is the implementation of technology to help foster a sense of belonging and connection for employees, regardless of where they are working from.

Achievers Workforce Institute has identified four key areas for HR to focus on to deliver an experience of belonging in a hybrid or fully remote work paradigm.

1. Network

Enabling employees to connect and build relationships is crucial for creating strong teams and organizational networks. Employees rate connection tools as the technology that would most help them feel a stronger sense of belonging at work. In addition, employees who report their organization offers connection tools outperform in key areas.

Specifically, employees who have access to connection tools at work report:

- +34% *belonging*
- +28% *engagement*
- +39% *trust*
- +33% *advocacy*
- +31% *enthusiasm*
- +23% *productivity*

[Read more about employee connections](#)

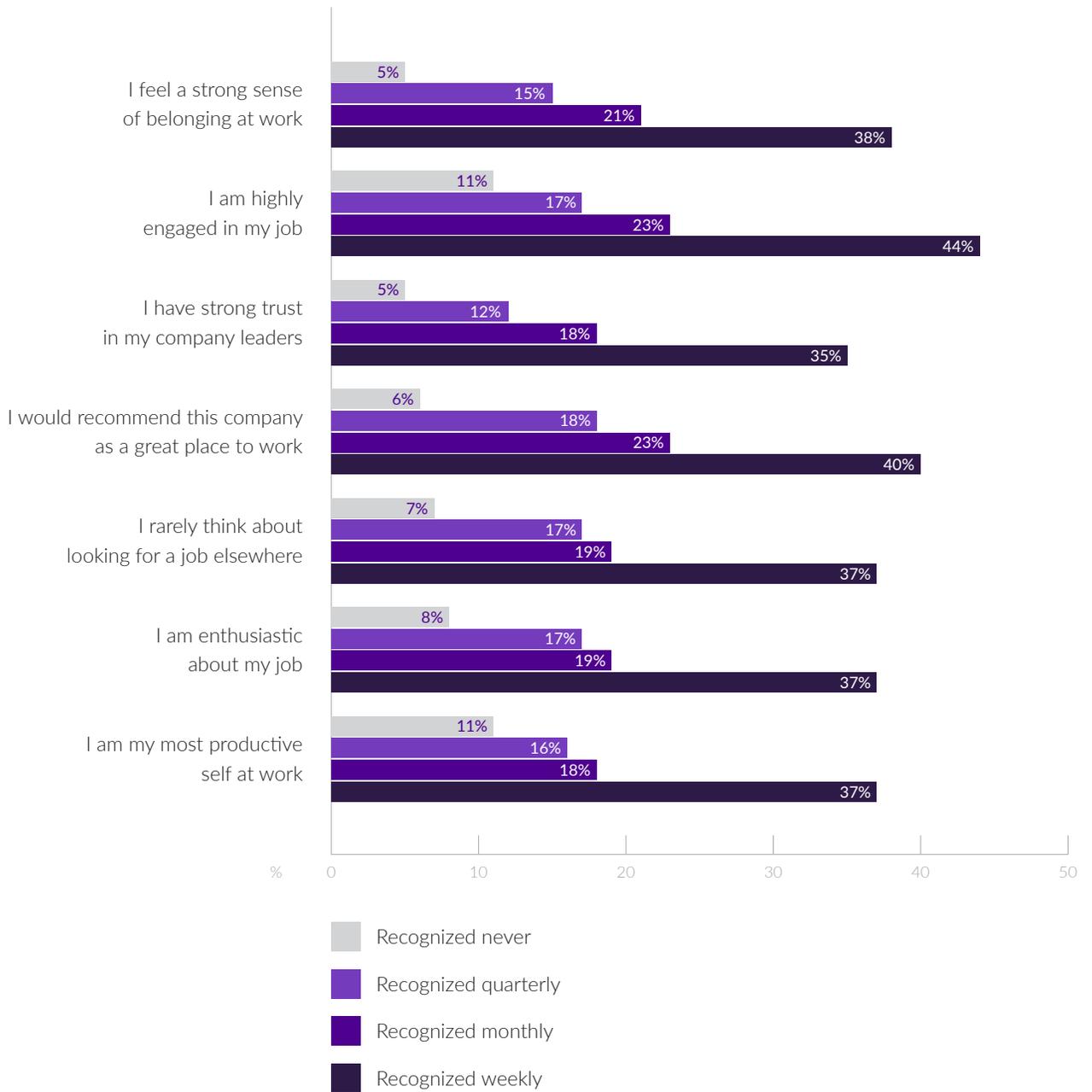


Digitization of belonging

(continued)

2. Recognition

Recognition is a powerful driver of every single pillar of belonging and also fosters greater trust and engagement at work. Employees whose organization offers a recognition platform are more likely to say they feel recognized, and are more likely to be recognized at least monthly. However, only half of employees report having this type of technology available to them.



[Learn more about recognition](#)

Digitization of belonging

(continued)

Recognition to engage the offline worker

What do these recognition data points mean for organizations where more employees are offline – are recognition platforms less desired or impactful in those settings?

In fact, offline employees rate recognition platforms at the same level of importance when it comes to driving a sense of connection and belonging, relative to online workers.

That said, offline workers are



less likely to say they feel meaningfully recognized at work and are twice as likely as online workers to say they are never recognized.

The possible culprit?

Offline workers are



less likely to say their organization uses a recognition platform.

It's clear that being regularly and meaningfully recognized is a top ask of offline workers. Key to empowering them to make use of a recognition platform is to make it easy for them to adopt the technology. Look for a platform with a consumer-grade mobile app so every employee can recognize and be recognized where they are already spending their time.

Recognition is a powerful driver of commitment, engagement, and productivity for every worker. By empowering offline workers with a recognition tool, employers harness recognition to improve outcomes for every individual and team.

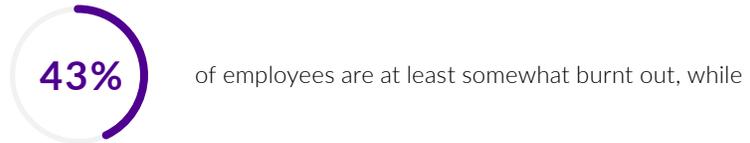


Digitization of belonging

(continued)

3. Wellbeing

Burnout has become a workplace epidemic around the globe. According to AWI research,



Burnout is a combination of exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of purpose at work. This burden results in employees feeling worn out both physically and mentally, unable to bring their best to work. Burnout often causes employees to take long leaves of absence in an attempt to recover and is a key driver of turnover, as they seek new roles that they hope will reinvigorate their passion and drive.

The good news is that wellbeing support tools are a powerful protective factor in preventing extreme burnout.

Employees with wellbeing tools are 26% less likely to experience extreme burnout

With the potential dire consequences of extreme burnout, including low productivity, high absenteeism, and increased turnover, HR leaders are inspired to identify any tool to add to their HR toolbox that can combat this pervasive challenge.

[Read more on employee wellbeing](#)

Digitization of belonging

(continued)

4. Feedback

At their core, every employee wants to feel heard, valued, and understood at work. These fundamental needs are reflected in the belonging pillars of feeling known and included. So how do business leaders ensure this experience for their employees at work?

Feedback is key. The first step is to gather feedback in a range of ways to ensure employees are able to communicate their needs in a manner that is comfortable to them. Some will prefer a conversation with their manager, while others will want to provide anonymous feedback through a chatbot or survey.

However, simply collecting feedback is not enough.

Taking action on feedback is critical.

In fact, employees who report that their company regularly takes action on feedback are three times more likely to be engaged, committed, enthusiastic, and productive.

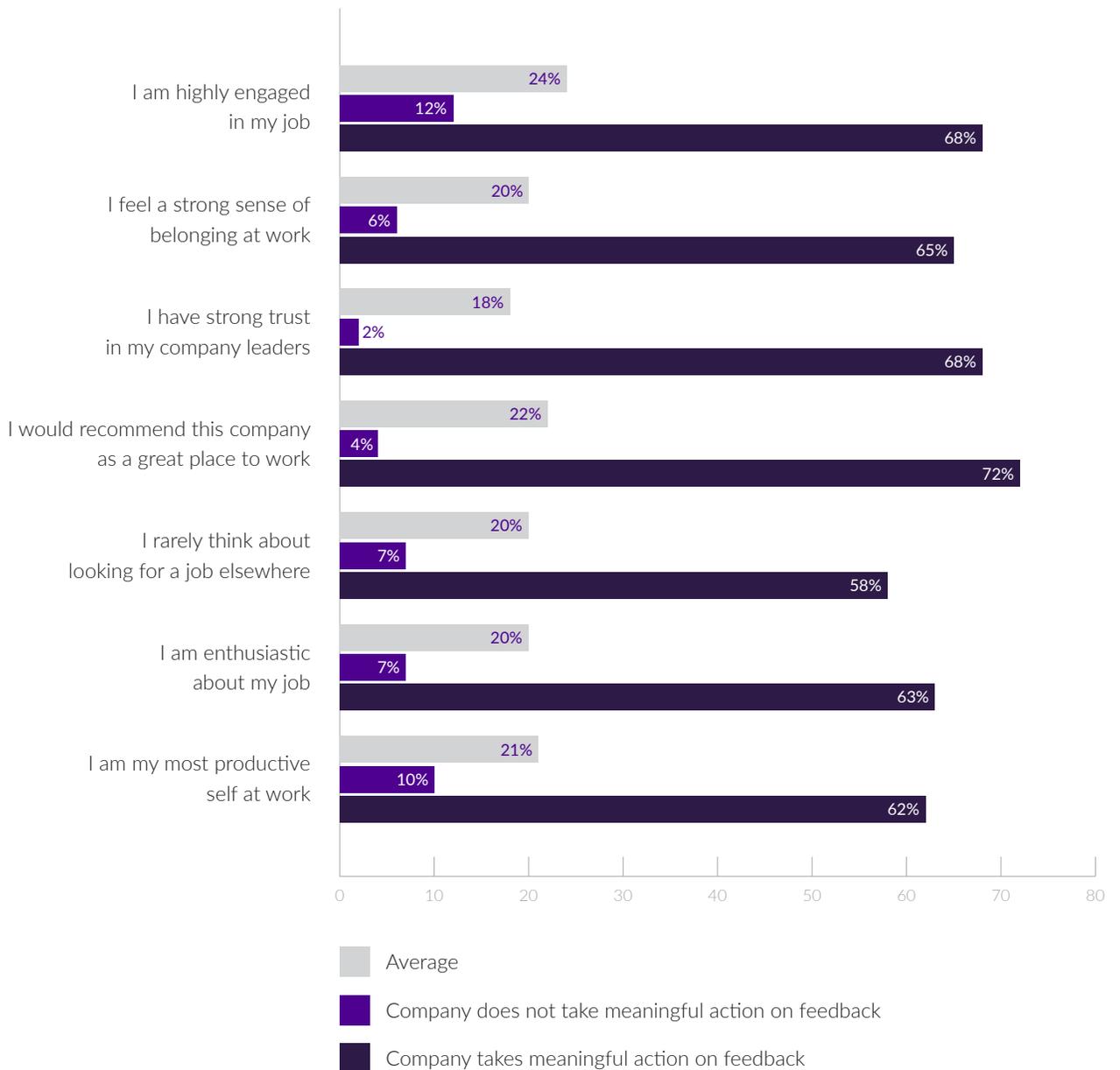


Digitization of belonging

(continued)

Feedback proves to be one of the most powerful actions an employer can take to drive key outcomes. Those companies that do not take action on feedback see incredibly low rates of engagement, belonging, commitment, and productivity. An organization struggling to increase engagement scores and other key metrics should look at how they collect, assess, and act on employee feedback.

[Learn more about feedback](#)



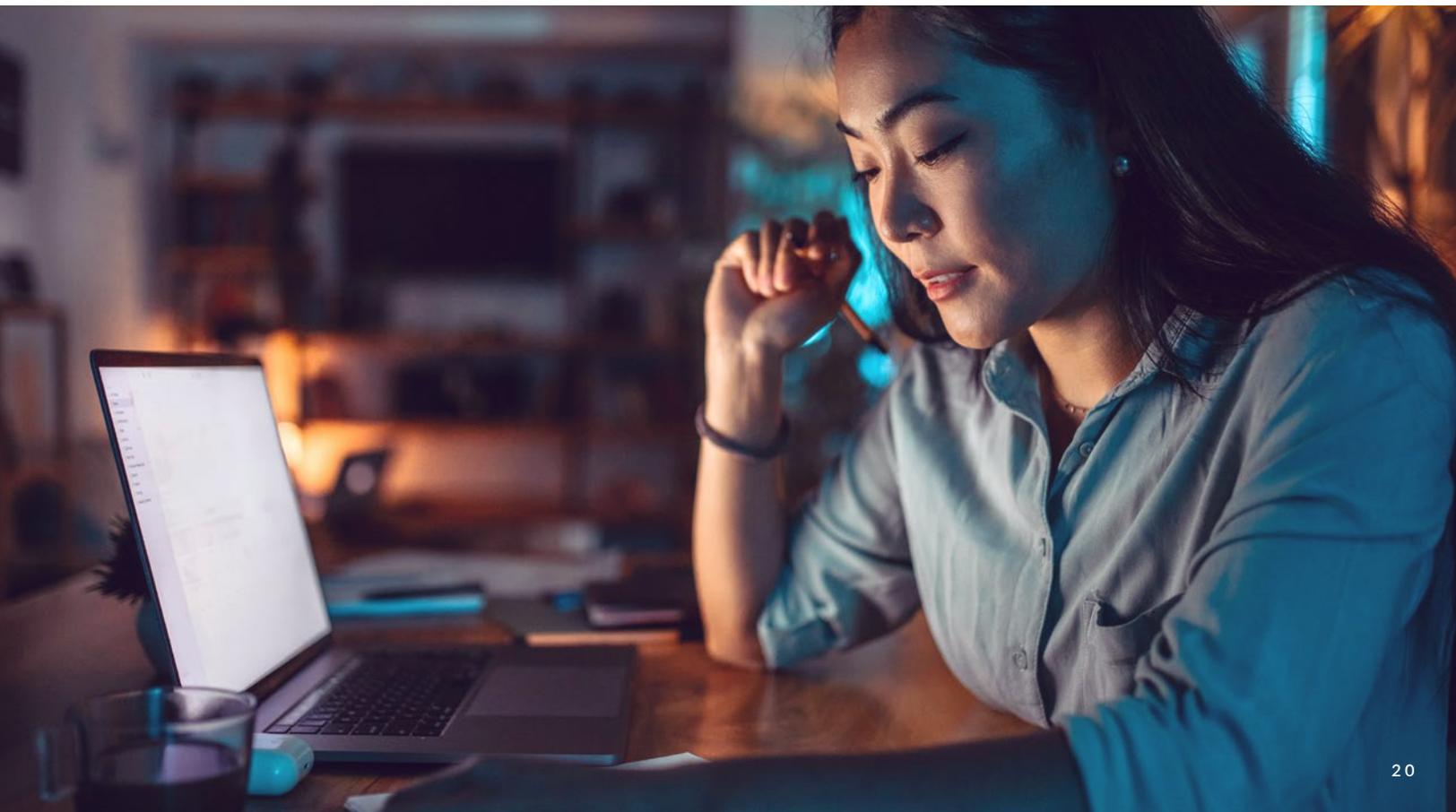
Adapt and thrive

Without a doubt, the world of work has changed, and it's become clear now that it isn't going back. The "new normal" of work is rooted in a flexible hybrid or remote structure, which requires a strategic shift by HR and business leaders as they develop ways to foster a culture of belonging in the evolved workplace.

Investing in the four key areas identified — network, recognition, wellbeing, and feedback — will provide employees with the support and resources they need to experience a rich sense of connection and belonging, regardless of where they're working from.

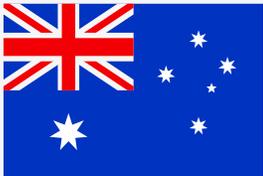
Technology is a powerful asset in scaling these programs and driving connection. A small organization may be able to drive belonging through manager initiatives and ad hoc efforts, but large or growing organizations need tools to support their belonging initiatives.

Organizations that innovate to engage and connect their remote and hybrid workforces will be positioned to thrive in this new world of work. Ensuring a consistent employee experience regardless of working style requires implementation of the right systems and processes. HR and business leaders must invest in initiatives that will bring their employees together, fostering a sense of belonging and connection no matter where they are in the world.



GLOBAL TRENDS:

Australia



HR insights:



of **Australian** HR leaders are struggling to attract and retain employees in the new world of work
Avg. 56%

Employee insights:

	How would you prefer to work?	How do you currently work?
Fully remote	33%	28%
Hybrid (partially onsite, partially remote)	53%	47%
Full time onsite	14%	25%



My company has the tools and technology to make my remote working experience a positive one
Avg. 51%

Which of the following tools does your company provide?	Avg.	AU
Communication tools (Slack, Teams, etc.)	52%	53%
Employee listening tools (surveys, chatbot, etc.)	32%	33%
Recognition platform	29%	28%
Employee resource groups	26%	26%
Employee connection tools (coffee chats, mentorship, etc.)	29%	32%
Wellbeing support tools	27%	30%

	Avg.	AU
I feel meaningfully recognized at work	18%	17%
My company regularly seeks my feedback on important issues	14%	12%
My company takes meaningful action on employee feedback	14%	13%
I have strong trust in my company leaders	18%	16%
I am highly engaged in my job	24%	21%
I feel a strong sense of belonging at work	20%	17%

Did you choose to change jobs since the start of the pandemic?



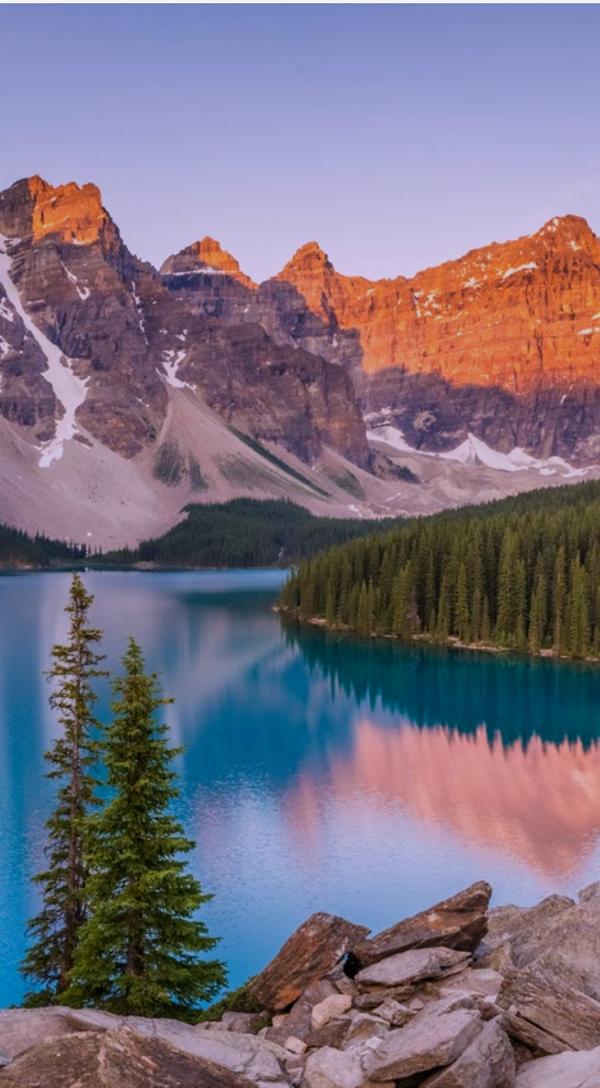
Yes
Avg. 32%



No
Avg. 68%

#1 reason for leaving: career progression

GLOBAL TRENDS: Canada



HR insights:



of **Canadian** HR leaders are struggling to attract and retain employees in the new world of work
Avg. 56%

Employee insights:

	How would you prefer to work?	How do you currently work?
Fully remote	46%	38%
Hybrid (partially onsite, partially remote)	43%	40%
Full time onsite	11%	21%



My company has the tools and technology to make my remote working experience a positive one
Avg. 51%

Which of the following tools does your company provide?	Avg.	CA
Communication tools (Slack, Teams, etc.)	52%	45%
Employee listening tools (surveys, chatbot, etc.)	32%	37%
Recognition platform	29%	44%
Employee resource groups	26%	31%
Employee connection tools (coffee chats, mentorship, etc.)	29%	39%
Wellbeing support tools	27%	29%

	Avg.	CA
I feel meaningfully recognized at work	18%	16%
My company regularly seeks my feedback on important issues	14%	15%
My company takes meaningful action on employee feedback	14%	12%
I have strong trust in my company leaders	18%	17%
I am highly engaged in my job	24%	23%
I feel a strong sense of belonging at work	20%	18%

Did you choose to change jobs since the start of the pandemic?



Yes
Avg. 32%



No
Avg. 68%

#1 reason for leaving: better work flexibility

GLOBAL TRENDS: Singapore



HR insights:



of **Singapore's** HR leaders are struggling to attract and retain employees in the new world of work
Avg. 56%

Employee insights:

	How would you prefer to work?	How do you currently work?
Fully remote	27%	21%
Hybrid (partially onsite, partially remote)	57%	53%
Full time onsite	16%	26%



My company has the tools and technology to make my remote working experience a positive one
Avg. 51%

Which of the following tools does your company provide?	Avg.	SG
Communication tools (Slack, Teams, etc.)	52%	57%
Employee listening tools (surveys, chatbot, etc.)	32%	39%
Recognition platform	29%	37%
Employee resource groups	26%	29%
Employee connection tools (coffee chats, mentorship, etc.)	29%	34%
Wellbeing support tools	27%	23%

	Avg.	SG
I feel meaningfully recognized at work	18%	21%
My company regularly seeks my feedback on important issues	14%	14%
My company takes meaningful action on employee feedback	14%	19%
I have strong trust in my company leaders	18%	20%
I am highly engaged in my job	24%	21%
I feel a strong sense of belonging at work	20%	22%

Did you choose to change jobs since the start of the pandemic?



Yes
Avg. 32%

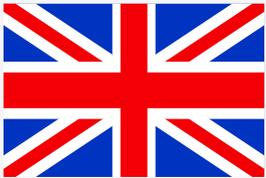


No
Avg. 68%

#1 reason for leaving: better work flexibility

GLOBAL TRENDS:

UK



HR insights:



of UK HR leaders are struggling to attract and retain employees in the new world of work
Avg. 56%

Employee insights:

	How would you prefer to work?	How do you currently work?
Fully remote	33%	27%
Hybrid (partially onsite, partially remote)	54%	50%
Full time onsite	12%	23%



My company has the tools and technology to make my remote working experience a positive one
Avg. 51%

Which of the following tools does your company provide?	Avg.	UK
Communication tools (Slack, Teams, etc.)	52%	55%
Employee listening tools (surveys, chatbot, etc.)	32%	29%
Recognition platform	29%	28%
Employee resource groups	26%	23%
Employee connection tools (coffee chats, mentorship, etc.)	29%	27%
Wellbeing support tools	27%	32%

	Avg.	UK
I feel meaningfully recognized at work	18%	14%
My company regularly seeks my feedback on important issues	14%	12%
My company takes meaningful action on employee feedback	14%	11%
I have strong trust in my company leaders	18%	13%
I am highly engaged in my job	24%	21%
I feel a strong sense of belonging at work	20%	18%

Did you choose to change jobs since the start of the pandemic?



Yes
Avg. 32%



No
Avg. 68%

#1 reason for leaving: better work flexibility

GLOBAL TRENDS: USA



HR insights:



of US HR leaders are struggling to attract and retain employees in the new world of work
Avg. 56%

Employee insights:

	How would you prefer to work?	How do you currently work?
Fully remote	47%	43%
Hybrid (partially onsite, partially remote)	34%	34%
Full time onsite	19%	23%



My company has the tools and technology to make my remote working experience a positive one
Avg. 51%

Which of the following tools does your company provide?	Avg.	USA
Communication tools (Slack, Teams, etc.)	52%	46%
Employee listening tools (surveys, chatbot, etc.)	32%	33%
Recognition platform	29%	28%
Employee resource groups	26%	28%
Employee connection tools (coffee chats, mentorship, etc.)	29%	26%
Wellbeing support tools	27%	21%

	Avg.	USA
I feel meaningfully recognized at work	18%	22%
My company regularly seeks my feedback on important issues	14%	18%
My company takes meaningful action on employee feedback	14%	18%
I have strong trust in my company leaders	18%	22%
I am highly engaged in my job	24%	31%
I feel a strong sense of belonging at work	20%	24%

Did you choose to change jobs since the start of the pandemic?



Yes
Avg. 32%



No
Avg. 68%

#1 reason for leaving: better work flexibility

About the report

This Achievers Workforce Institute research is based on a survey of 3,705 employed respondents and 1,386 HR leaders conducted in May 2022.



AUSTRALIA

527

Employed respondents

110

HR leaders



CANADA

531

Employed respondents

168

HR leaders



SINGAPORE

512

Employed respondents

105

HR leaders



UK

1059

Employed respondents

531

HR leaders



US

1076

Employed respondents

472

HR leaders

About Achievers

Achievers partners with hundreds of organizations around the world to elevate their engagement and retention strategies through our employee voice, recognition, and connection solutions.

[Contact us today](#) to learn how we help organizations like yours enhance employee experience.

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