The Employee Experience Gap

The insights you need to take action

Global Employee Experience Report
April 2025

What's really going on in your workplace?

We're obsessed with understanding people's attitudes to work. What does a great experience really look like? How are employers measuring up? We're fascinated by how Managers are feeling, what the role of senior leadership is in engagement, and how we should all be communicating in these tumultuous, changing times. If you are too, then this report is for you.

Let's start with some shared language.

We define Employee Experience (EX) as the everyday, lived experience of employees in an organization.

It encompasses every moment, big and small, from when somebody starts a job to when they leave that organization. It allows us to look beyond one hopeful annual moment captured by an engagement survey, into the ups and downs throughout an employee's lifecycle at a company.

There seems to be a new workforce trend every week—The Great Gloom, The Great Resignation 2.0, The Great Detachment, The Great Flattening (more on these later)—and frankly, it's hard to keep up (even for EX nerds like us). We wanted to hear what really matters to people and capture the voice of those living, working and experiencing employment in the real world today. So we set out to discover what they think, feel, and need from their employers— going through thousands of open questions and conducting follow-up interviews to explore employees' views.

We spoke to leaders who are already making great progress in EX. We asked them how they're dealing with these challenges, where they're making real impact and what advice they'd offer to companies who are starting to think about EX.

Employee Experience is a multi-faceted topic, requiring many stakeholders to come together. For the organizations who don't have EX teams in place, or the EX teams taking their first steps, this can feel overwhelming. And we'd like that to change.

This multi-market report is the first in a series designed to help companies of all sizes take practical, intentional steps to improve Employee Experience, for the wellbeing and productivity of their people, and the ultimate success of their business.

**We hope you enjoy reading it.
From all the team at Havas People.**

Executive summary

Among this year's key findings...

1.
Job satisfaction doesn't equal loyalty
73% of people are satisfied with their job and almost two thirds (**64%**) say they feel valued and appreciated. However, nearly half (**45%**) say they'll look for a new job in the next year.

2.
People prioritize personal needs
In today's complex, challenging world, people look first at what they need to survive and thrive: competitive pay, recognition, work-life balance and honest communication, over collective ideals like purpose.

3.
A hierarchy of recognition
Recognition efforts aren't reaching everyone equally. **84%** of C-Suite executives feel valued, compared to only **53%** of entry-level employees and **45%** of individual contributors. And that's not sustainable for engagement or retention.

4.
Moments that matter most
Starting with salary and benefit negotiations, the top five moments that matter most to employees are opportunities to demonstrate genuine care and investment in your people.

5.
Beware the Experience Gaps
Reality does not meet expectations for our respondents in three key areas:
- When and where we work
- Physical and mental wellbeing
- Effective management that's supportive

6.
It's time for transparency
Employees are increasingly demanding transparency—and direct approaches to communication—from employers and leaders. They want a clearer explanation of strategies, goals and decisions. They want to understand what AI means for them.

7.
First-Year Blues
No longer the "Honeymoon Period," First-Year employees are significantly less satisfied than those who've been with their companies for longer (only **58%** of First-Years say they're satisfied compared to **74%** of those with longer tenure). How can you create onboarding that makes a difference?

8.
Change reframed
We're getting more resilient—with nearly **two-thirds** reporting that they're feeling optimistic about organizational change. But success depends on great communication. Our respondents give us their top tips for getting it right.

9.
The Murky Middle
How clear are those engagement scores, really? We found that those who score neutral are just as unsatisfied with their jobs as the actively disengaged— and in many cases, more so. Uncovering their challenges could make the vital difference to engagement and retention.

10.
Reasons to quit
Sometimes there's just a better fit elsewhere. But a lack of career advancement comes in a close second when people choose to quit. In fact, **68%** say it's very or extremely important in their decision to stay or go. Here we find out what people need from employers to move them forward.

Contents

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Methodology

To cut through the noise and understand what really matters to employees, we went straight to the source. Our approach combined large-scale survey data with in-depth human insights, giving us a comprehensive view of Employee Experience today.

Here's how we did it:

The EX Reality check

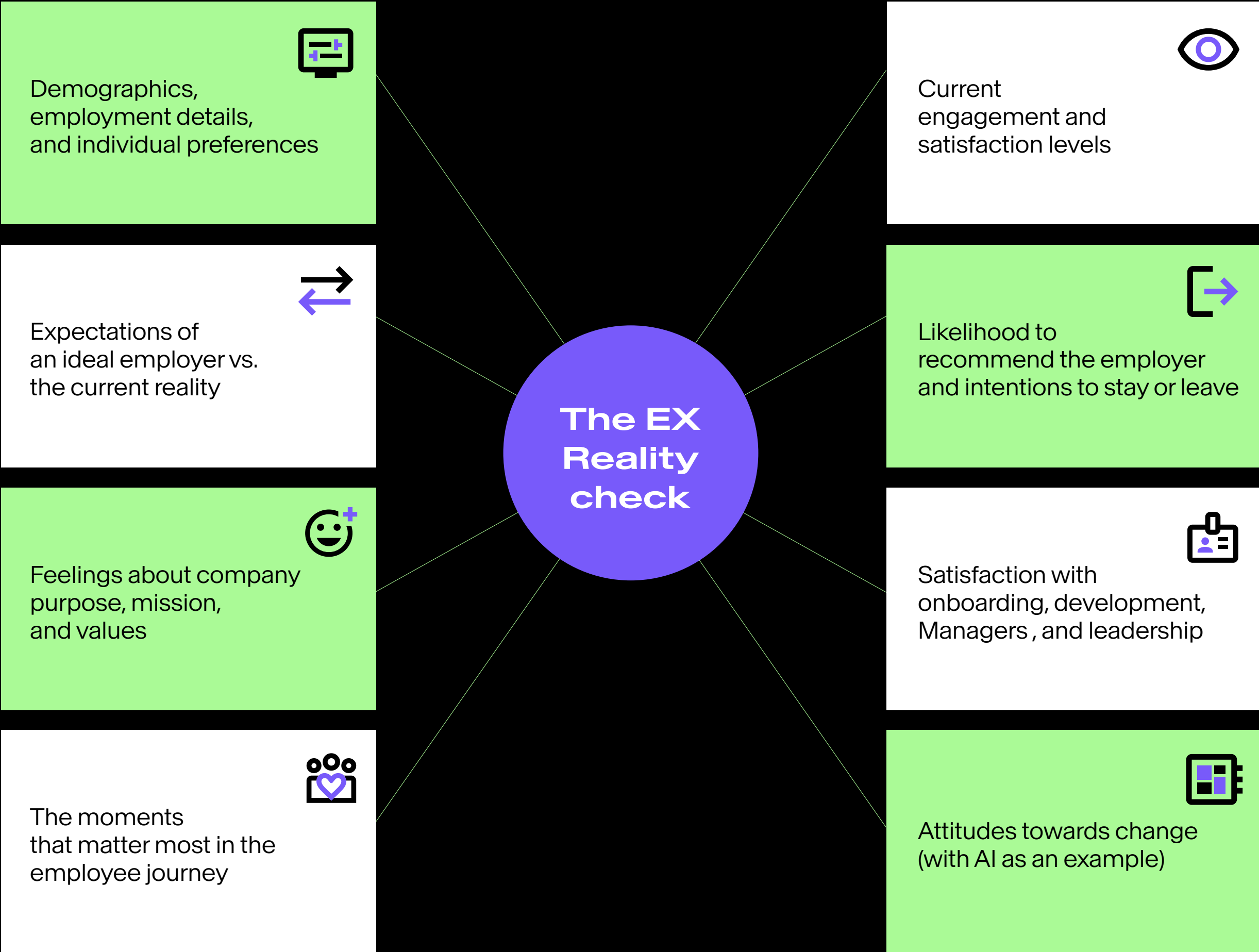**From October 11th to November 18th 2024, we surveyed**

5,614

employees across key markets and industries via an online survey

Markets:
US, UK, India, Singapore, Australia

Industries:
Pharma, Financial Services, FMCG, Technology, Engineering

The survey, designed to take around 20 minutes to complete, explored a range of topics:

Demographics, employment details, and individual preferences

Expectations of an ideal employer vs. the current reality

Feelings about company purpose, mission, and values

The moments that matter most in the employee journey

The EX Reality check

Current engagement and satisfaction levels

Likelihood to recommend the employer and intentions to stay or leave

Satisfaction with onboarding, development, Managers , and leadership

Attitudes towards change (with AI as an example)

Methodology

AI-Powered Exploration
Our survey included 58 questions, with some using innovative AI-driven "probing" techniques to dig deeper into the open-ended responses. This allowed us to gather around **38,000 employee quotes** and uncover nuances and richer insights that traditional surveys often miss. It's AI assisting us to be more human.

EX Leaders' Perspectives
We also spoke with company leaders who have a commitment to prioritizing Employee Experience. These 30-60 minute conversations focused on:

- Their organization's EX successes and challenges

- Their plans and priorities for the next 18 months

- Deep dives into topics relevant to their specific roles and responsibilities

The Human Story: Employee Deep-Dive Interviews
Numbers tell a story, but people bring it to life.
We conducted 29 in-depth online interviews with survey respondents who agreed to be re-contacted. These 30-minute conversations allowed us to explore key themes in detail:

- What does a great experience at work actually look and feel like?

- What makes Managers and senior leaders effective (or not)?

- How do people want to be communicated with?

- What triggers the "should I stay or should I go?" moment, and what influences that decision to leave?

Sources for any of the additional research that we've referred to can be found on page **66**.

Section 1

State of Play

State of Play

How are we all doing?

Since the pandemic, more companies have started focussing on their people. When circumstances demanded it, many employers doubled down on flexibility and upped their efforts in wellbeing. Leaders started to recognize the importance of visibility and empathetic communication.

Lots of companies have made efforts to define and better communicate their purpose—in the best cases, showing the impact an employee can make in their everyday work. Countless others questioned the way work is designed in their organizations from the raging debates behind hybrid, to changing the landscape around inclusion and belonging.

Five years on, it seems that some of this effort is paying off. On the surface at least.

Our research found:

73%
of people are satisfied with their job

64%
say they feel valued and appreciated

92%
say that their company has a clear purpose

So—job done then?

People are engaged; they're happy; we're on the right track? Well, yes. And sadly no. While we're seeing a level of optimism from our participants, things aren't clear cut. Some results can't be taken at face value.

73% of people say they're satisfied with their job but nearly half of our sample (45%) will look for another job in the next 12 months.

Let's let that sink in for a moment.
Nearly half of your workforce could be looking for another job in the very near future.
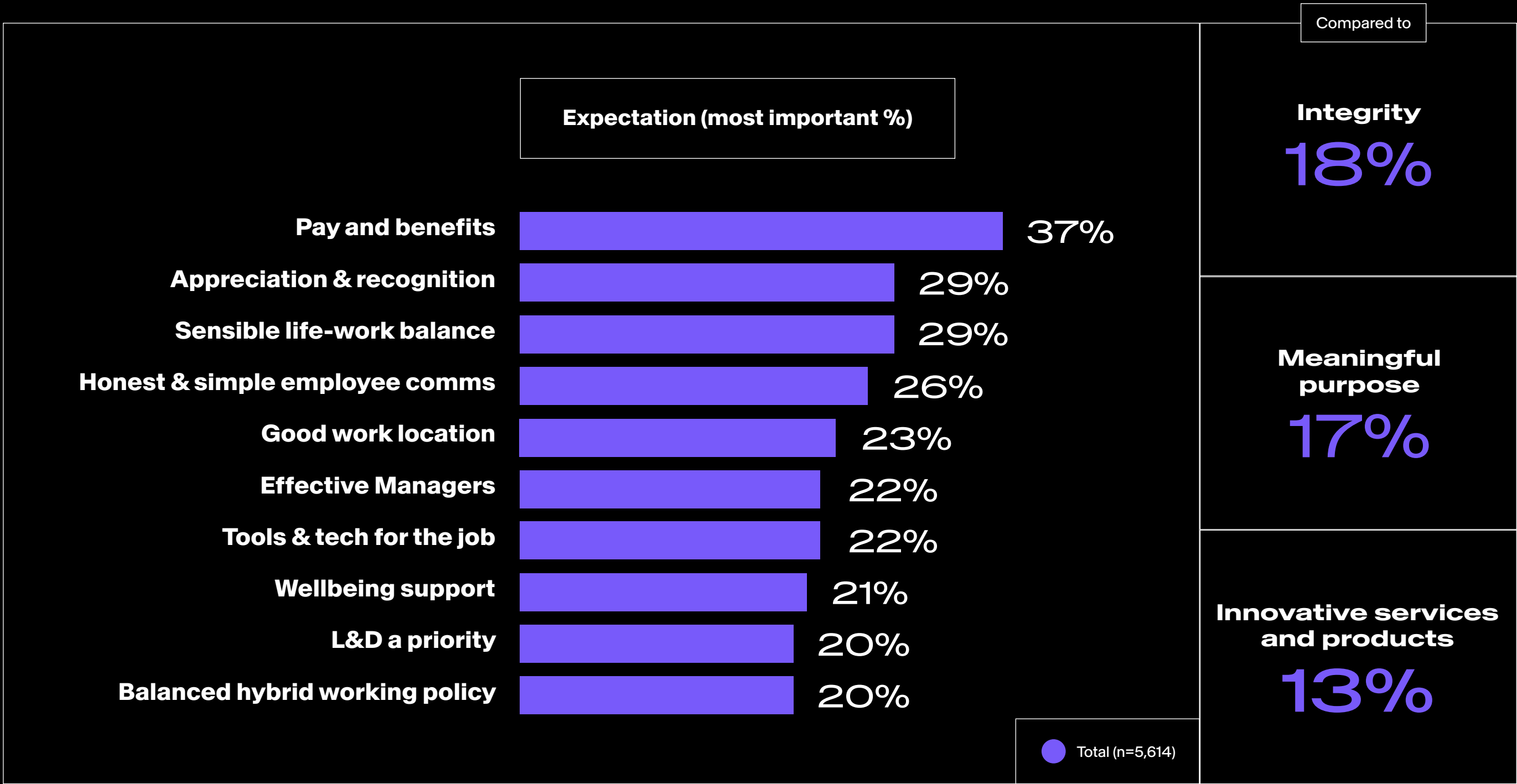
We see our research findings as a wake-up call, but a positive one. Employers have the opportunity to make a big difference to their employees' experiences and, by extension, their engagement and the ever-important bottom line.

Let's take a deeper look into our findings.

So, what do people really want from their employers?

Our methodology was designed to find this out. Rather than simply asking, "What do you want from an employer?" we asked, "What's *most* important to you from an ideal employer?" and we forced our participants to make trade-offs. Why? Because if you ask people what they want, they'll say "everything!". That's just human nature.

Compared to

Expectation (most important %)	
Pay and benefits	37%
Appreciation & recognition	29%
Sensible life-work balance	29%
Honest & simple employee comms	26%
Good work location	23%
Effective Managers	22%
Tools & tech for the job	22%
Wellbeing support	21%
L&D a priority	20%
Balanced hybrid working policy	20%

Total (n=5,614)

Integrity
18%

Meaningful purpose
17%

Innovative services and products
13%

Prioritizing the personal
It's a tough world out there. Cost of living crises; global health challenges; geopolitical uncertainty; climate anxiety; wealth polarity; they're all vying for our constant attention while simultaneously making us feel just how little control we have. For years, purpose was a key consideration when people chose their ideal employer. But today, it's no surprise that employees are prioritizing their own needs, such as competitive pay, being appreciated and recognized for their efforts, work location, a balance that works for their lifestyle, and being communicated with in an honest and simple way.

The most desired employer attributes are those that enhance individuals' day-to-day experiences.
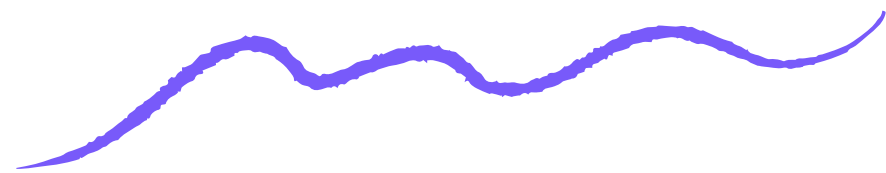
State of Play

People want to know they're personally equipped to thrive, not just survive. You'll be forgiven for thinking that this is a selfish outlook, but that's not the full picture. Essential "collective" ideals (integrity, a meaningful purpose, great culture, company values that align with your own, the importance of DEI) have not gone away, despite what the news might tell you.

But companies do need to be honest with themselves. Lofty company purposes or values without substance do not fool employees. Homogeneous cultures that demand "culture fit" rather than "culture add" do not create engagement. Employees do want the collective benefits, but they also want to know how they enhance their individual EX, every day.

Spotlight:
The Power
of Recognition

While we expected to see pay and benefits hit the top spot, an influential runner-up has emerged: appreciation and recognition. This isn't about inflating egos. It's an essential human need. Employees in companies of all sizes have no desire to be "just another number"; they want their individual contributions to be respected and valued. One of the EX Leaders in Australia put it like this:

> **"**
> Recognition is such an important part of the human experience. It's fundamental to want to be seen.

This isn't just feel-good fluff. Companies of all sizes and sectors are waking up to the transformative power of recognition and the business case backs it up.

A recent report by Canva shows that feeling appreciated can actually increase output.

87%
of employees said that "feeling appreciated at work increases motivation".

84%
noted increased productivity.

"Appreciation and recognition are key drivers that correlate directly with all of our big outcome measures – engagement, intention to stay, inclusivity, wellbeing at work."

EX Leader, UK

Enhancing recognition efforts at an organizational level is important, but companies need to dig deeper than simply rolling out long-service awards. They're pieces of the puzzle, but today's workforce wants regular affirmation that their efforts matter. A simple "thank you" works wonders, but forward-thinking organizations are weaving recognition into the fabric of their EX and creating a whole culture of recognition.
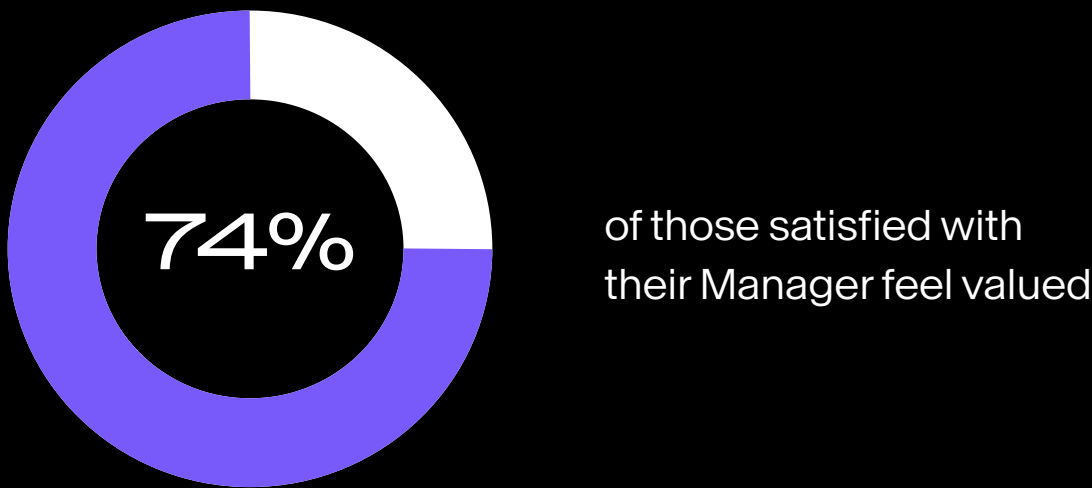
The Recognition Reality Check

While nearly **64%** of employees told us they feel valued, when we look closer, we see some worrying disparities.
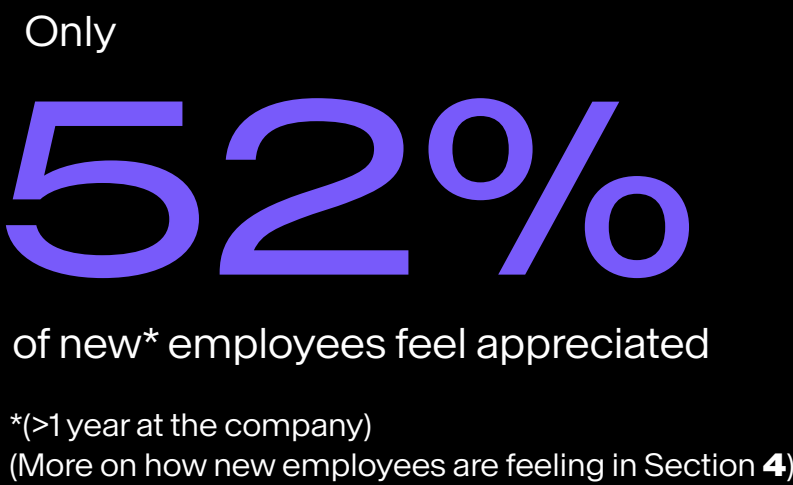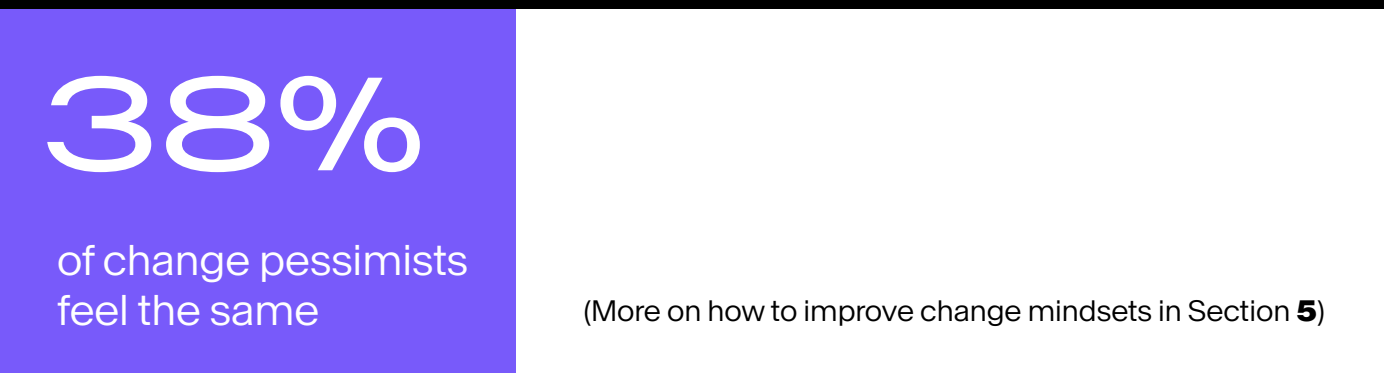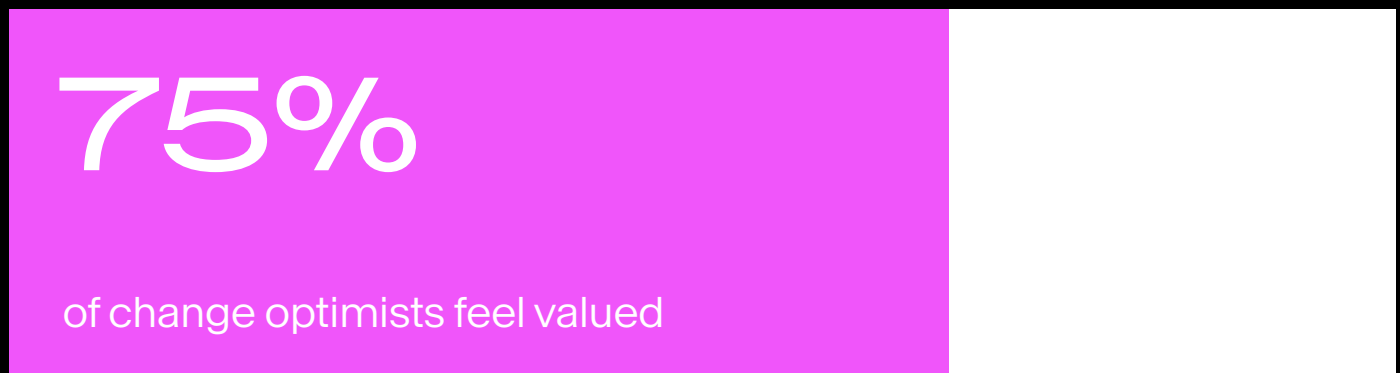
A hierarchy of appreciation

84%
C-Suite executives feel most valued

79-81%
Directors and VPs close behind

53%
of entry level employees feel valued

45%
of individual contributors feel appreciated

The Manager Effect

74%
of those satisfied with their Manager feel valued

17%
of those dissatisfied with their Manager feel appreciated

(We'll talk more about the huge impact Managers bring to EX in Section **2**)

Who's feeling the love?

Technology leads with
70%
feeling valued

FMCG struggles, with
23%
feeling taken for granted

Only
52%
of new* employees feel appreciated

*(>1 year at the company)
(More on how new employees are feeling in Section **4**)

What happens when you feel positive about change?

75%
of change optimists feel valued

38%
of change pessimists feel the same

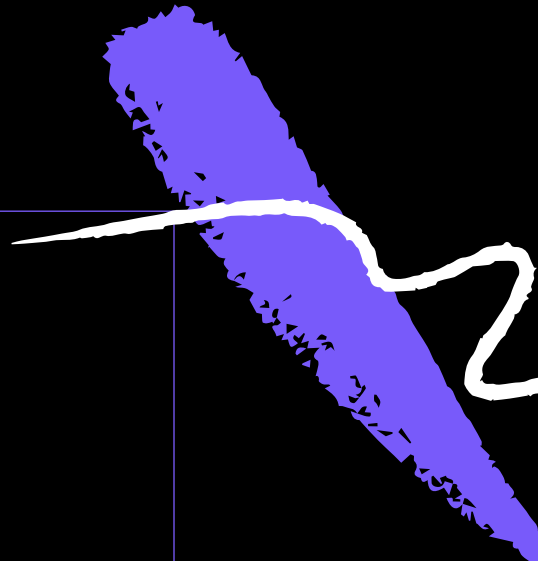(More on how to improve change mindsets in Section **5**)

How does recognition show up?

For many employees right now, it's inconsistent. Recognition efforts are most certainly not reaching everyone equally. For every individual feeling seen, there's another feeling invisible. And that's not sustainable for engagement and retention.

What can employers do?
We can never underestimate the transformative power of recognition. However, this does come with a sizeable challenge. With employees prioritizing their personal needs—and recognition inequality at play—there's no one-size-fits-all approach.

Of course, recognition isn't just about patting people on the back. Employers need to build systems, processes, and cultures where appreciation and recognition are the norm, not the exception. Start by keeping things simple and recognizing the power of a thank you. Create tools, templates, and training to make this easy for your people. And, don't forget your leaders, who should role model appreciation and enable it to filter down. Huge benefits in engagement, retention, and performance will certainly follow.

"I'd probably say about 70% of the time, I don't feel recognised. First of all, people not saying 'thank you', through to your pay, your bonus, your promotion. Recognition is not clear."

Employee, UK

Employee, India

"There's a lot of favoritism... some people get recognition for silly things that they did, whereas the people who've done good quality work on time... well, nobody even remembers anything that they did."

Moments that matter

A moment that matters is a significant touchpoint in an employee's journey. It could be at any point, and multiple moments will matter to people in their time at an organization. We found that the most important moments right now mirror the personal priorities we identified on page 12.
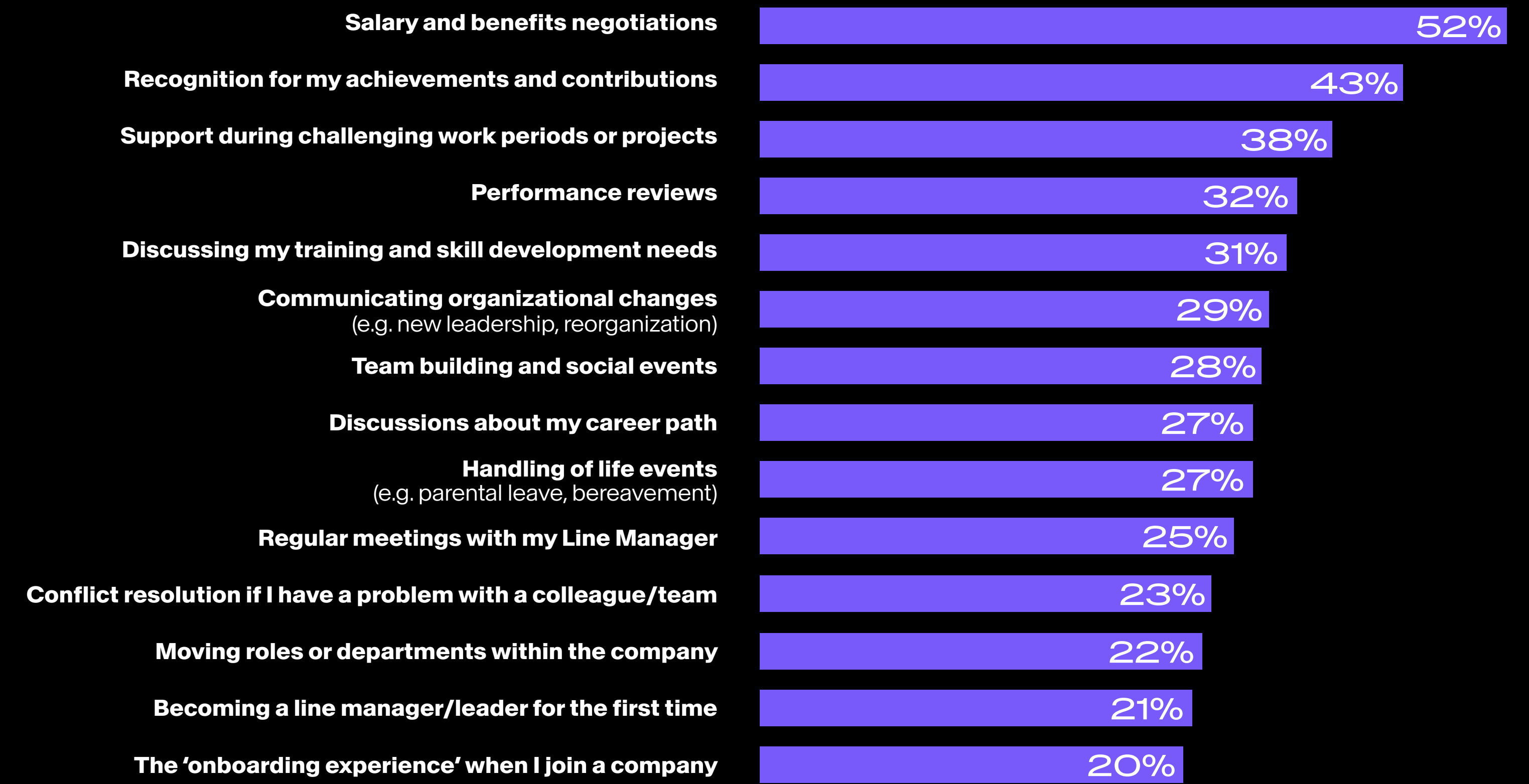
Let's look at the top five. These, sometimes vulnerable, points in time aren't just administrative tick-boxes in this graph. They're opportunities for employers to demonstrate genuine care and investment in their people. They answer fundamental and very human questions: **Am I valued? Recognized? Performing well? How can I grow? What does change mean for me?**

Handled correctly, they can drive a real emotional connection. Here we see "Salary and benefits negotiations" emerge as a defining moment.

As one progressive leader in India says:
"For us, the single most important moment of the employee experience is the job offer and initial remuneration negotiations. Get that right and a much more positive experience follows."

Outside of our top five, we still see the importance of more "collective" moments as well as areas that develop over the longer term of a career. Big career experiences like moving roles or departments, becoming a Manager/leader for the first time, ongoing developmental discussions about career paths, and the support needed during seismic life events (like becoming a parent, being bereaved, or becoming a carer), as well as professional conflict support.

Moments that matter most: Where are the opportunities to make a big imact?

Moment	%
Salary and benefits negotiations	52%
Recognition for my achievements and contributions	43%
Support during challenging work periods or projects	38%
Performance reviews	32%
Discussing my training and skill development needs	31%
Communicating organizational changes (e.g. new leadership, reorganization)	29%
Team building and social events	28%
Discussions about my career path	27%
Handling of life events (e.g. parental leave, bereavement)	27%
Regular meetings with my Line Manager	25%
Conflict resolution if I have a problem with a colleague/team	23%
Moving roles or departments within the company	22%
Becoming a line manager/leader for the first time	21%
The 'onboarding experience' when I join a company	20%

Onboarding as a singular initiative (and for the majority, not a recent one) is deemed the least important moment for our respondents. But as we'll see later in **Section 4**, its impact on new joiners and on general engagement cannot be underestimated.

Organizations with great EX are making every effort to listen and understand which moments are most important to their workforce. They're looking at what they can improve or create quickly for impact, as well as addressing what's important but requires more resources and planning.

By designing intentionally and communicating honestly in these vital moments, companies can create stronger connections, boost engagement, and ultimately drive both individual and company success.

"We've looked at our insights and key moments and identified the quick wins and the longer, slow-burn work that we know is really important. So we think: 'How can we drive that forward in a meaningful way for our teams?'"

EX Leader, Australia

Section 2

The Experience Gap

Introducing the Experience Gap

The Experience Gap is the difference between an employee's expectations of their ideal employer and their current daily reality.

We've seen what people want most from their ideal employer, and the moments that matter most. But how are employers living up to these expectations? The research reveals a nuanced picture. There's good news, but it does come with a hefty side order of "room for improvement". Put another way, real opportunities for employers to make their mark.

The Experience Gap

This graph maps what respondents want from an "ideal" employer against what they're experiencing from their current employer. The biggest differences between expectation and reality can be seen in the bottom right quadrant. We call these our Experience Gaps, and we'll go into more detail on the following pages.

What I'm experiencing in my current employer

5.42 — Diverse workforce / Integrity
Tools & tech for the job
Appealing work culture
Clear performance review process / Clear career paths
5.32 — Innovative services/products / L&D a priority / Pay & benefits
Appreciation & recognition
Honest & simple employee comms
Smart people that inspire
5.22 — Meaningful purpose
Performing well: but lower priority / **Doing OK, but room to improve**
Good onboarding process
Effective Managers
Good work location / Sensible life-work balance
5.12 —
Inspiring senior leadership
Wellbeing support
5.02 —
4.92 — Balanced hybrid working policy
Areas to watch / **An urgent experience gap**

-0.30 -0.20 -0.10 0.00 0.10 0.20 0.30

What I want from my ideal employer

Let's start with the positives

In the top right quadrant, it's encouraging to see that about half of our respondents feel their employers are doing relatively well* on several of the areas they care about most:

51% believe their company offers competitive pay and benefits.

51% feel convinced that their employer appreciates and recognizes their efforts.

49% say their company does communicate honestly and simply.

52% feel equipped with the tools and tech that enable them to do their job well.

51% feel their employer truly makes learning and development a priority.

We asked respondents to score their current employer on a scale of 1-7, with 7 being the highest score. The highest scoring attribute was "Acts with integrity" at 5.4

Now for the negatives

For every satisfied employee, there's another who's thinking: "We can do better". Even our highest scores barely cross the **52%** threshold. In other words, for nearly half of our respondents, employers are not exceeding, or are actively falling short of expectations. And when we dig deeper, some areas are in dire need of attention:

43% say their employer truly enables and encourages a sensible life-work balance—the third most important factor for employees.

40% feel their company offers a clear and balanced hybrid working policy.

39% feel they have inspiring senior leadership. While this isn't in the top priorities for many when *choosing* their employer, nearly **70%** say it's "very" or "extremely important" in their decision to stay.

The key areas to do better

While we're seeing some progression, there's still a significant Experience Gap between what employees want and what they're getting. Here are the top three areas to shine a major spotlight on:

When and where we work

Physical and mental wellbeing

Having effective Managers that are supportive

We're still not getting the balance right

The biggest Experience Gaps we're seeing are:

My employer enables and encourages a sensible work-life balance.

My employer has a work location that is well-designed, equipped and safe.

What's more, with only **40%** satisfied with their hybrid working policy—and this topic continuing to grab the headlines—it's an important one to watch.

Work-life balance and **work location** are topics that are inextricably linked. Hybrid working is also interconnected with work-life balance—allowing many workers to save commuting time, integrate work with their personal lives, fulfill caregiving responsibilities, and find time and opportunities to improve their wellbeing. If workplaces are well-designed and well-equipped, employees can often see the social and collaborative value of coming into a work location. However, a trend of reducing floor space to cut costs has led to overcrowded, noisy, and distracting workplaces. Hybrid working remains a complex topic and a source of raging debate at the time of writing.

Of course, there is a significant group of workers who don't have the luxury of hybrid working. Perhaps they work in a manufacturing environment, a lab, or a shopfloor environment. So how do organizations improve their employee experience? It starts with safety: a non-negotiable for their workplace confidence, with post-pandemic employees even more conscious of well-designed and safe environments.

Work-life balance:
An ongoing challenge

Work-life balance is consistently ranked as one of the most important attributes for employees, yet only **44%** of respondents say their employer almost or fully delivers on this expectation. The data shows clear disparities across demographics and work arrangements:

By Tenure:

Employees with less than **1 year** at their company are less satisfied (**35%**) compared to those with over 1 year (**44%**).
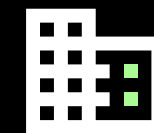
By Industry:

Satisfaction with work-life balance:
- FMCG **35%**
- Engineering **38%**
- Pharma **43%**
- Financial Services **46%**
- Technology **48%**

By Country:

Satisfaction with work-life balance:
- Singapore **32%**
- UK **39%**
- Australia **45%**
- US **52%**
- India **53%**

By Work Location:

On-site workers report the lowest satisfaction (**32%**) compared to those fully in-office or remote, both at **47%**.

By Shift Pattern:

Shift workers are less satisfied (**36%**) than those working standard daytime hours (**45%**).

By Seniority:

Satisfaction with work-life balance:
- Entry-level employees **37%**
- Individual contributors **32%**
- Directors **50%**
- Senior Managers **52%**
- C-Suite Executives **60%**

Good workplace environments: Are employers meeting expectations?

A good work environment extends beyond the traditional office to include remote setups, co-working spaces, and on-site facilities. Yet only **43%** of employees believe their employer delivers on providing a good workplace. The breakdown reveals similar patterns of disparity:

By Tenure:

Only **33%** of employees with less than **1 year** at their company feel their workplace environment expectations are met, compared to **44%** of those with longer tenure.
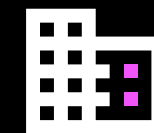
By Industry:

Satisfaction with workplace environment:

- FMCG **36%**
- Engineering **40%**
- Pharma **46%**
- Financial Services **46%**
- Technology **46%**
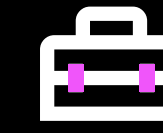
By Country:

Satisfaction with workplace environment:

- Singapore **32%**
- UK **41%**
- Australia **44%**
- India **48%**
- US **55%**

By Work Location:

Office workers report higher satisfaction (**47%**) than on-site workers (**36%**) or those working remotely/from home (**43%**).

By Shift Pattern:

Standard daytime workers report higher satisfaction with their workplace (**44%**) compared to shift workers (**38%**).

By Seniority:

Satisfaction with workplace environment increases with seniority, from:

- Entry-level employees **34%**
- Individual contributors **32%**
- Senior Managers **49%**
- Directors **50%**
- C-Suite Executives **61%**
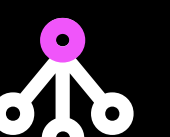
Hybrid working:
The debate continues

A recent report from KPMG shows a growing belief among business leaders that physical presence is essential for fostering collaboration, learning, onboarding new hires, innovation, and maintaining a strong organizational culture. 83% of CEOs expect to see a full return to the office within three years. For employees who have, in the last four years, prioritized flexibility of experience and balance in their choice of employment, this is a tough pill to swallow and they argue the bigger, productivity picture:

> **Providing a better working environment by giving freedom in my working hours can help boost productivity and creativity.**
>
> Employee, India

Return to Office (RTO) advocates need to convince employees it's worth the cost and time to come into a potentially smaller, noisier environment. How can they create environments that engage and excite employees? Hybrid advocates need to create convincing plans for building and maintaining culture and enabling junior and entry entry-level employees to learn through working with more experienced colleagues.

So how can employers tackle this multi-faceted EX challenge? Employee listening is key. As one of our leaders tells us:

> **When we brought people back for three days, it was a very difficult period. We identified the things we could impact through an EX survey, and then worked with leadership to improve them. So, making the offices better, putting in canteens, creating working hours flexibility. We couldn't solve all the problems, but employees felt listened to.**
>
> EX Leader, India

Whether your people are in the office or remote — or somewhere in between — there's an important thing to note. It's not as simple as **"going back to the way we used to do things."** New thinking, innovation, and intentional design are key — and making it visible through great communication is essential.

> **There are some things we need to address because our people are working remotely. They need the opportunity to engage with each other and decide what the right connection level is. So, we're innovating: creating a portfolio of options and making them visible to our people.**
>
> EX Leader, US

The data paints a clear picture: work-life balance and good workplace environments are pivotal to employee satisfaction, yet many organizations fall short of meeting expectations in these areas. Employees want flexibility, balance, and access to environments that support both productivity and wellbeing.

Experience gaps are risky business

Where employees' expectations don't live up to the experience they get, there's a risk of a talent exodus. A recent report found high-performing employees report a **16%** lower intent to stay in the face of solely on-site work requirements and **67%** of recruiters recently reported increases of new job hunters after enforced RTO mandates. We also see global concern about the impact of full RTO on ethnically diverse, neurodivergent and disabled workers as well as those with caregiving responsibilities (especially women). While we're yet to see conclusive results of RTO mandates on these groups, it's something to monitor.

What can employers do?

The location and flexibility of work are foundational to employee satisfaction, yet many organizations are struggling to strike the right balance. In some cases there may be conflict between the needs of the employees and needs of the business. There is clearly work to do. It starts with listening to your employees as you create your RTO and workplace strategies. Importantly, this should include improving your working environment to encourage those with a WFH preference if your intent is to ask them to come into the office more.

Look at where your employees' pain points are and explore ways to improve them. Are you working with teams who can make an impact on the work environment? And do you really understand the impact of these interconnected elements on your people's wellbeing?

Physical and mental wellbeing

With global investment expected to hit $94.6 billion by 2026, why is wellbeing not looking healthier?

Wellbeing is the next clear experience gap identified by our respondents. With many leaders reporting increased focus and enormous investment, we have to question why.

Unfortunately, the data tells a bleak story.
Mental health is still declining. Our data tells us that nearly 1 in 5 dread Mondays (or their first day of the working week). **39%** either don't feel that their company values their wellbeing or cannot be sure (a problem in itself!). Another recent report shows only **22%** of people feel that they're thriving at work, and nearly **60%** feel stressed most of the time.

Across the five markets we surveyed, employers are clearly falling short on providing physical and mental wellbeing support. Only 43% of employees think their employer almost or fully meets expectations. But when we break that down, there's even more to this story.
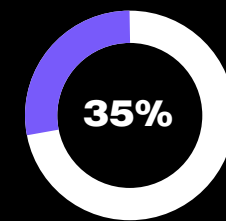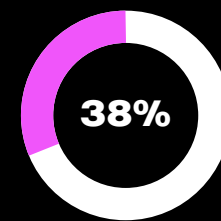
Gender Gap:
Women prioritize wellbeing support more (**24%** vs **19%** men), yet both genders rate employers performance equally (**43%**).
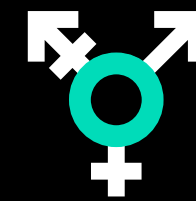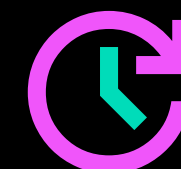
Industry Divide:
Engineering (**38%**) and FMCG (**35%**) lag behind Pharma (**47%**), Technology or Financial Services (both **46%**) in satisfaction with wellbeing efforts.

38%   35%   46%   47%
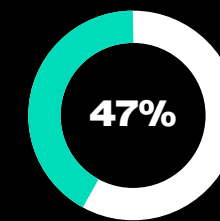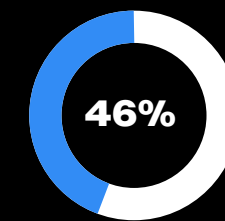
Shift Work Challenges:
Shift workers (**36%**) feel less supported than traditional "9-5" employees (**44%**).
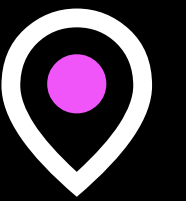
New Employee Blues:
Those with less than a year's tenure are far less satisfied (**27%** vs. **44%** for longer-tenured employees).

Location Matters:
Singapore (**30%**) and UK (**39%**) employees are less impressed with their employers' efforts than those in Australia (**42%**), the US (**48%**), and India (**56%**).
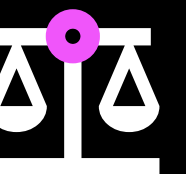
On-Site Struggles:
Those working on-site (**34%**) feel less supported than office workers (**47%**).

Reasons To Leave:
1 in 4 people said poor work-life balance was a reason they left their last job, with **20%** saying that burnout from excessive workload was a key contributing factor.

But the leaders we spoke to get it

They understand that employees expect a duty of care from their employer.

They see the importance of getting wellbeing right. And don't underestimate the impact it can have on their people — and by extension, their reputation as an employer.

"An employee's relationship with their employer has shifted. Post-pandemic and then, with the cost of living crisis, employers have stepped in. Our wellbeing offer has moved from a nice-to-have, to an essential."

EX Leader, UK

EX Leader, Australia

"After a sense of belonging, the next most important element to our employees' experience is believing our organization is looking after you through health, including mental health, and wellbeing."

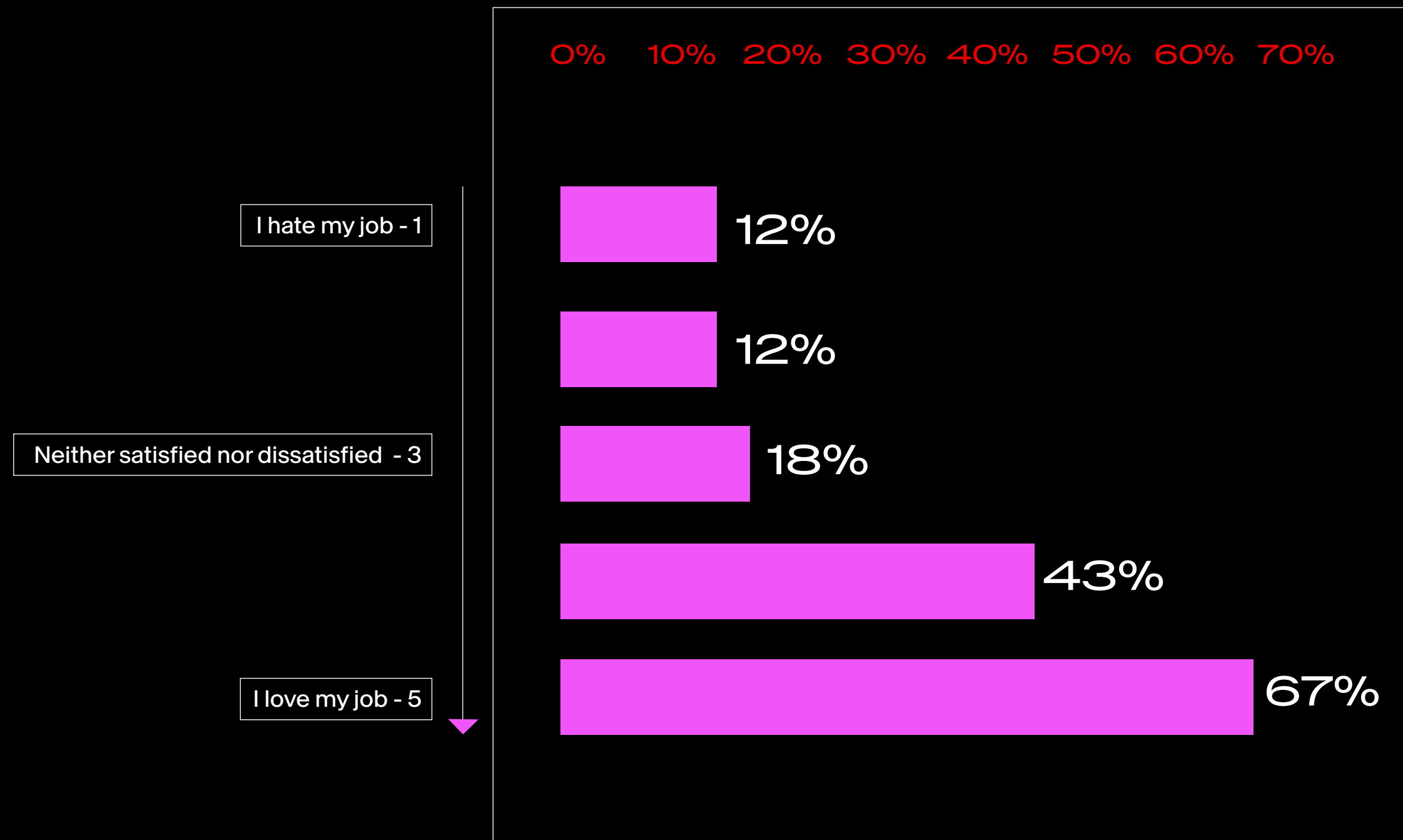# One-and-done initiatives don't go far enough

We see a clear link between wellbeing and job satisfaction. Put simply, people who are happy about their role give their employer a higher wellbeing support score. So alongside specific wellbeing initiatives, interventions that increase job satisfaction (such as providing meaningful work, empowering autonomy, giving clear performance feedback and relevant L&D opportunities) should correlate with improved feelings of wellbeing in your business.

A Harvard Business Review article goes even further — saying corporate wellbeing needs to evolve from wellbeing apps, chatbots, and stress management initiatives to:

> **Systemic interventions that respond to employee needs with organizational changes that address workload management and provide mental health development training for leaders.**

Employees who are more satisfied with wellbeing support are more likely to report loving their job

Category	Percentage
I hate my job - 1	12%
	12%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied - 3	18%
	43%
I love my job - 5	67%

What can employers do?

The bottom line is wellbeing requires constant adaptation, communication and a holistic approach that goes beyond apps and into the very structure of work itself. But before you get into the intentional design of wellbeing programs, a simple first step is to look at what you do well, ensure your people know about it and can access it. How do you flex and personalize your wellbeing portfolio to suit different audiences' needs? And, how do you make sure your communication efforts around wellbeing are not lost in the noise of every day?

Great Managers have been known as the cornerstone of employee engagement for years. But what does "great" look like today? Our research shows a significant gap between expectation and reality.

Gallup tells us Managers are responsible for a staggering **70%** of the variance in team engagement scores. In simple terms, the team with the better Manager significantly more engaged and productive employees. It seems companies in the past were seduced by these well publicized benefits – as the number of Manager roles grew by **23%** between **2005 and 2020** alone. As one of our EX Leaders put it:

"

We know that Managers are our golden ticket to engagement.

EX Leader, Europe

But did companies go too far?
Fast forward to today and we're witnessing "The Great Flattening" as major corporations like UPS, CitiGroup, Salesforce, Google, and Meta reduce management layers, aiming for improved efficiency and reduced bureaucracy. There are shimmers of hope for Managers — with companies like Walmart doubling down on their commitment to hiring and rewarding great Managers. But these examples are few and far between.

In 2025, the headlines paint a grim picture for Managers. Confidence among this group has plummeted to historic lows with uncertainty about their roles at an all-time high. The pressure is immense — balancing demands from above and below. Recent reports tell us **75%** of Millennial Managers feel overwhelmed or burned out and half are leaving their roles.

52% of Gen-Z don't want middle management positions (according to another recent study) and this disillusionment is giving rise to a new "Conscious Unbossing." As organizations grapple with flattening hierarchies and redefining expectations of Managers and leadership, expect this phrase to dominate workplace discussions in the coming months.

But while the popularity and confidence in the Manager role has plummeted, the need for great Managers still stands.

Our survey shows that

having effective Managers that are supportive

is a critical gap between employees' expectations and the realities they face. Left unaddressed, this imbalance will have a big impact on retention decisions. A huge **74%** of respondents say their relationship with Managers is very or extremely important in their decision to stay at or leave a company.

Expectations are sky-high and Managers have to keep up

Our respondents prioritized three key areas for improvement.

Improve Communication

Employees crave clear, consistent, and respectful communication. In fact, **38%** of our sample said that "Conversations with my Manager" were their preferred way to stay up-to-date at work. They want regular one-on-ones, active listening, and transparency in decision-making to build trust. As one person put it:

> **Being a good communicator, a positive-thinking role model, and having a clear vision for goals, along with giving confidence, can make a Manager better.**
>
> Employee, UK

An EX Leader gave us a practical solution to enable better communication:

> **We send out a little comms pack every month to Managers, with information for them to cascade down. That works best for us.**
>
> EX Leader, Europe

Support & Guide

Employees value Managers who are consistently available, provide timely feedback, help solve problems and offer personalized mentorship. One respondent summed it up:

> **My Manager could improve by being more proactive in sharing ideas and guidance, and continuing to provide support and warmth. These all help to create a positive work environment.**
>
> Employee, US

Companies that value and understand the impact of their Managers, provide real help.

> **Our Managers need to be agile to deal with an ever-evolving business, we support them in that.**
>
> EX Leader, US

Listen & Understand

There's a clear call for Managers to demonstrate emotional intelligence, providing support and empathy. This means actively listening, being approachable, and understanding both personal and work-related challenges. As one employee tells us:

> **Fostering a good, friendly relationship involves creating an environment where employees feel comfortable communicating openly with their Manager and experience no worries.**
>
> Employee, India

Putting empathy at the heart of your business can help. As one leader describes it:

> **Care is a crucial part of our business model and our employer offer, it's in our DNA and a major focus for us.**
>
> EX Leader, Europe

With pressure mounting, what do Managers need from their companies to become better and more effective?

Much of it focuses on communication, starting with clearer comms from their senior leaders.

What do you need from your company to become a better Manager?

More transparent communication from senior management	42%
Clearer communication of strategy & purpose from senior leadership	40%
More regular feedback and performance evaluation	39%
Opportunities for mentorship and coaching	37%
Access to leadership training and development programs	36%
Better training for my own Manager so they can better coach me	36%
More information/training on how to build an inspiring culture	35%
Greater autonomy in decision-making	34%

So, what's
the takeaway?

The message is clear. In 2025, effective management is as much about emotional intelligence and communication as it is about technical skills. Organizations that invest in developing these soft skills in their Managers are more likely to see significant returns in employee engagement and retention.

The role of senior leadership cannot be underestimated. They have a responsibility to empower their management teams with transparency and a clearer communication of the strategy.

What can employers do?

Now is not the time to reduce commitment to developing the Managers you have. As companies navigate "The Great Flattening" and reduce management layers, they'll need to balance efficiency with the crucial role that Managers play in employee engagement, retention and productivity. Leaders and HR teams need to make sure Managers have the support to thrive.

So, what does the role of Manager look like in your company and is everyone clear on expectations? How are you measuring and improving Manager effectiveness across your organization? What support are you giving your Managers to communicate with their teams? How are you making management roles more appealing to a younger audience?

Section 3

Time for Transparency

Throughout our research, one theme has come up repeatedly. Transparency.

Whether we're talking about communication styles, how change is managed or how senior leadership engage with employees; transparency is an essential expectation from employees today. Our results reveal that:

69%

of people see effective senior leadership as very or extremely important in their decision to stay at a company.

Yet, with a recent survey telling us that **68%** of people believe business leaders purposely mislead them, **it's no surprise that transparency ranks high on our audience's wish list.**
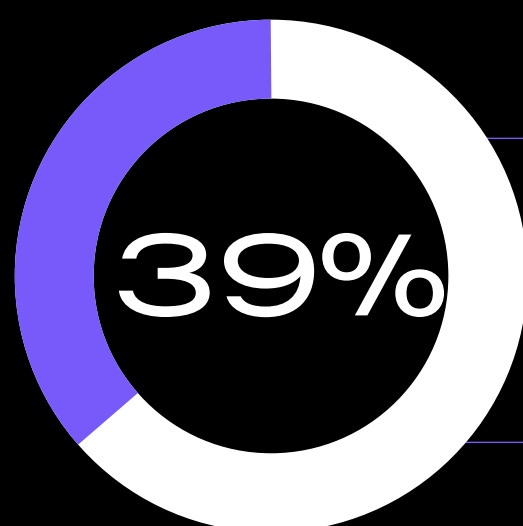
Here's what employees want from senior leaders:
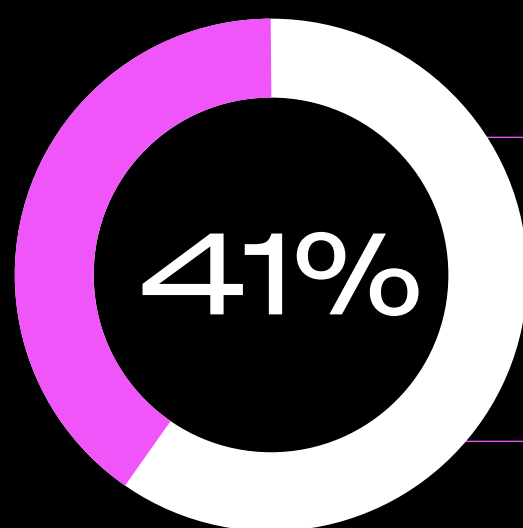
41% want a transparent and direct approach to employee communication.
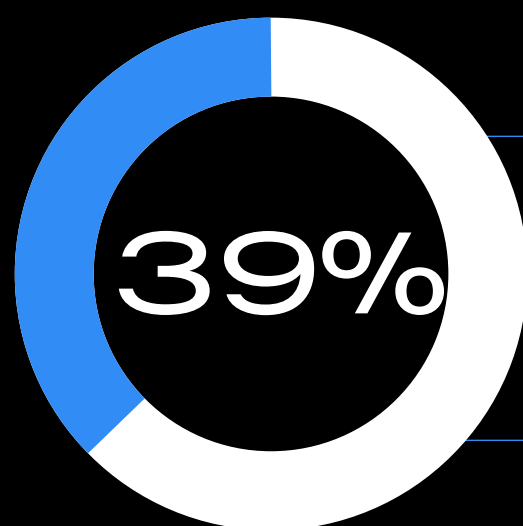
39% want clear explanations of strategic goals, changes, and decisions.

39% want visibility and approachability from leadership.

Employees want honesty. They want leaders who tell it like it is – no spin, no sugarcoating, just clarity.

"

Have meetings, talk about it, what's going to happen, say how you feel, not keep it secret. Then it's like management is with us and we're all involved in it together. It's not them and us.

Employee, UK

"

Look, in a bad leader, the lack of transparency is there. Poor communication is the first thing.

Employee, India

Leading with transparency

The leaders we spoke to recognize the value of transparency in difficult times.

> **"**
>
> **We just went through a reduction of our employee numbers. The level of thought and care that went into managing that process was amazing. Our communications were as transparent as possible. We said, 'You know what? This is painful, we get that.' But by being transparent, it allowed everyone to say, 'This hurts, this stings, but we're all going to work through this together.' And that speaks volumes about the culture we're creating.**

EX Leader, US

Transparency isn't just about honesty—it's about building trust and creating a culture where employees feel valued, included and informed about the direction of the company.

As one leader put it:

> **"**
>
> **The top driver we look at is leaders communicating a vision and purpose that motivates our team members. Our people love hearing from them. They have a lot of visibility, and it has a really lasting impact on our people— debunking that typical saying about 'just being a number'.**

EX Leader, Australia

Transparency about AI

The rise of AI is sparking curiosity—and concern—among employees. They told us that they want clarity on how AI will be implemented, its purpose, and its benefits. Open discussions addressing their hopes and fears are essential to making AI integration feel supportive rather than threatening. Employees want more guidance and reassurance.

Even if you can't give the full answer right now, employees are asking for practical direction—meetings, instructions, courses—to help them understand AI's role in their work and feel confident in its implementation.

> **"**
>
> **I want more information on how to use it and clarity that it won't be taking over the job that we do as employees.**

Employee, UK

What can employers do?

Transparency can help build trust, foster engagement, and create a culture where employees feel respected and valued. In times of uncertainty—whether navigating organizational change or introducing new technologies like AI—it's super important for leaders to communicate openly and honestly. Without it, mistrust can grow and engagement can falter.

Don't rely on complex strategy documents and expect your people to understand where your business is going. Engagement and buy in begins with clear and simple communication about what you mean, why they should care and what you expect. How can you support your leaders to communicate the "Why" behind the decisions? How visible and approachable are they? And, how are you addressing emerging topics like AI with your people? Are you being clear about what this means to them?

When we prioritize transparency in leadership communications, we naturally create stronger connections with our workforce. As we've seen, Managers can really help with transparent and effective communication, if equipped properly. The results speak for themselves. Employees feel informed, valued, and ready to navigate change together.

Section 4

First-Year Blues

First-Year Blues

First impressions. The importance of a good start.

There are some major opportunities to improve and enhance EX, right across the employee lifecycle. In this section, we'll discuss first impressions and onboarding.

> **"**
>
> **An employee's level of engagement is largely impacted by their initial experience on the job.**

Nobel Prize-winning Economist,
Daniel Kahneman

The first year of employment is a decisive period that can shape an employee's entire journey with an organization. Our research reveals some surprising insights about this crucial group and the challenges they face.
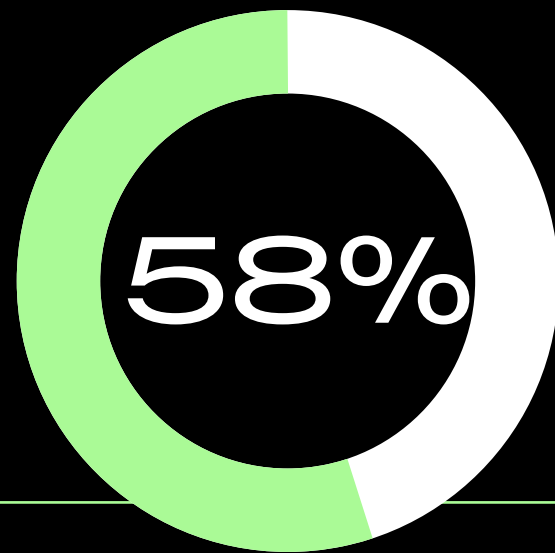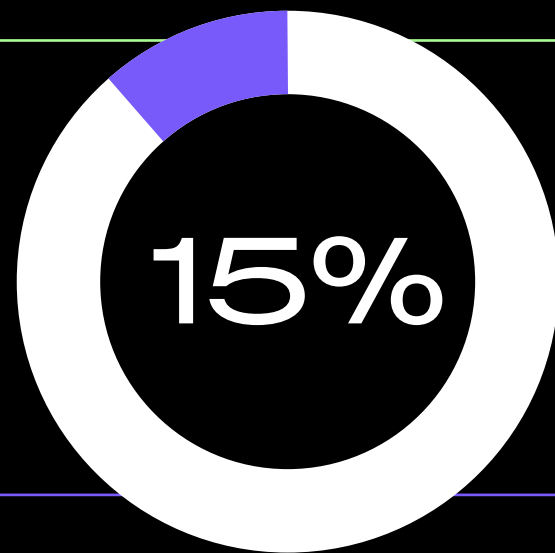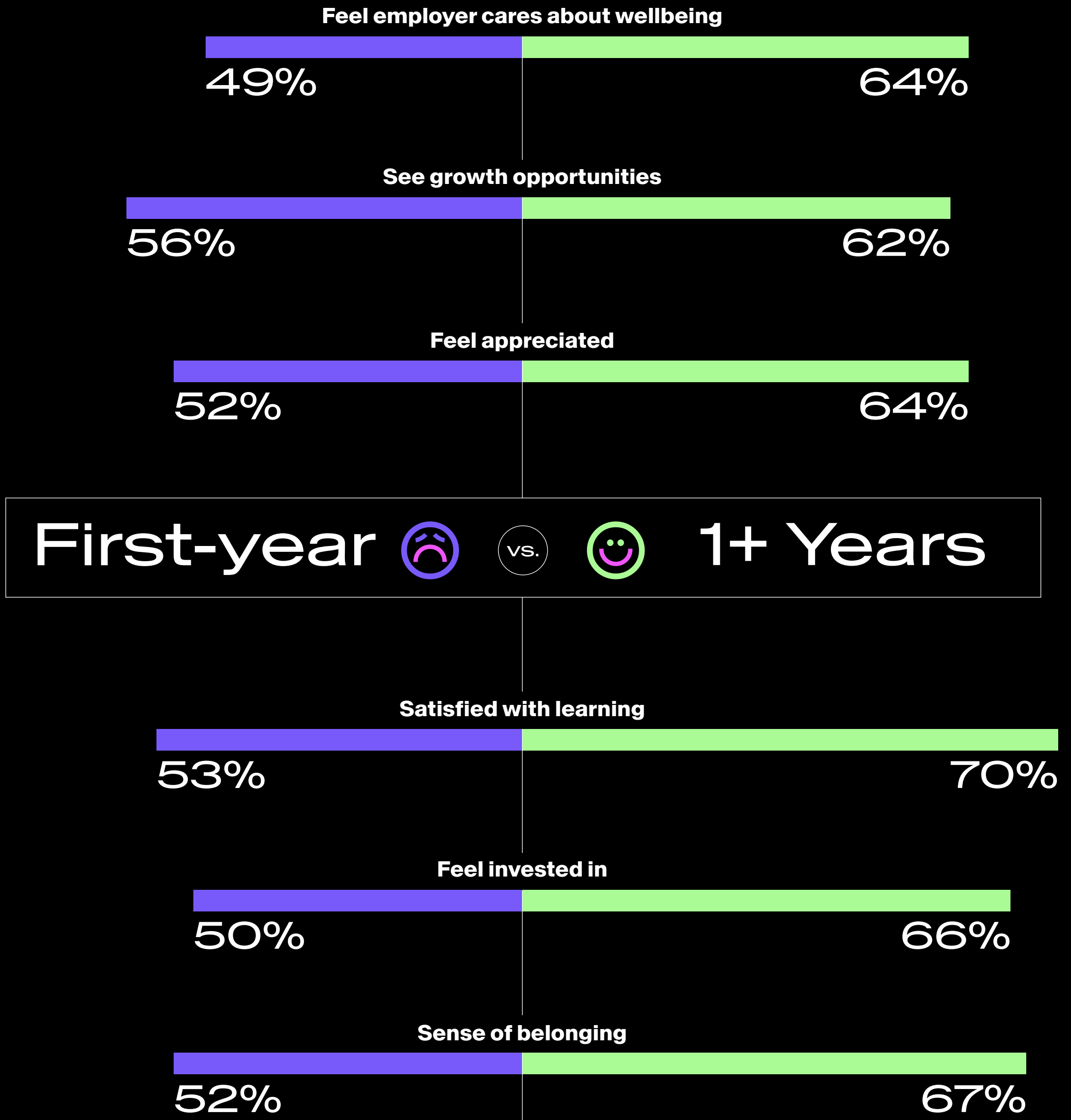
First-Year Blues

The First-Year

Employees in their first year are not as happy as you might expect. Our findings show that, quite often, they're significantly less satisfied than their more tenured colleagues.

58%

of first-year employees are satisfied or highly satisfied, compared to **74%** of those with longer tenure.

15%

of first-year employees report being dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied, more than double the **7%** of longer-tenured employees.

Feel employer cares about wellbeing

49% 64%

See growth opportunities

56% 62%

Feel appreciated

52% 64%

First-year vs. 1+ Years

Satisfied with learning

53% 70%
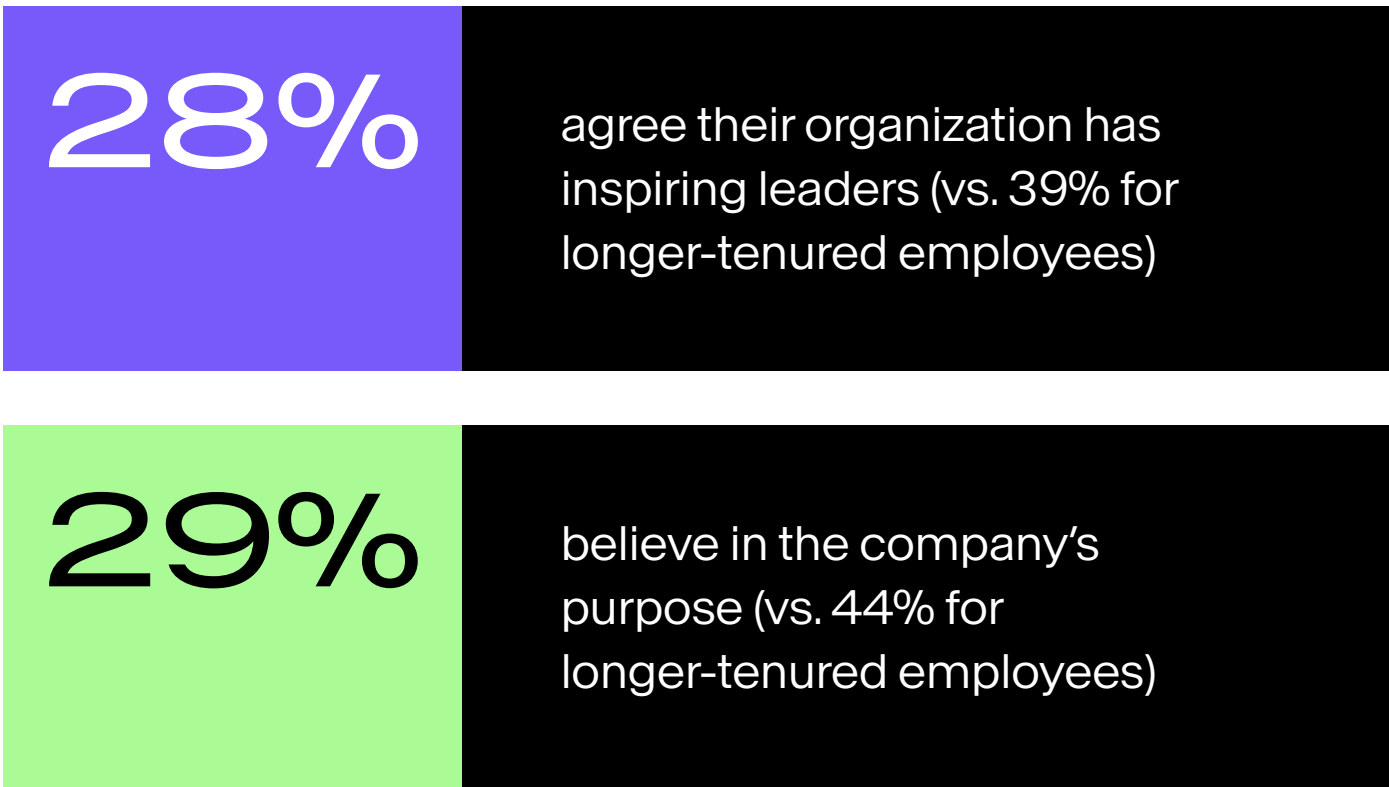
Feel invested in

50% 66%

Sense of belonging

52% 67%

First-Year Blues

We see big opportunities for employers to engage employees earlier to create that emotional connection. Better communication about wellbeing, recognition programs that meet their individual preferences; personalized learning journeys; fostering great relationships with leaders and their Managers can all feed into an improved experience in those crucial first 12 months.
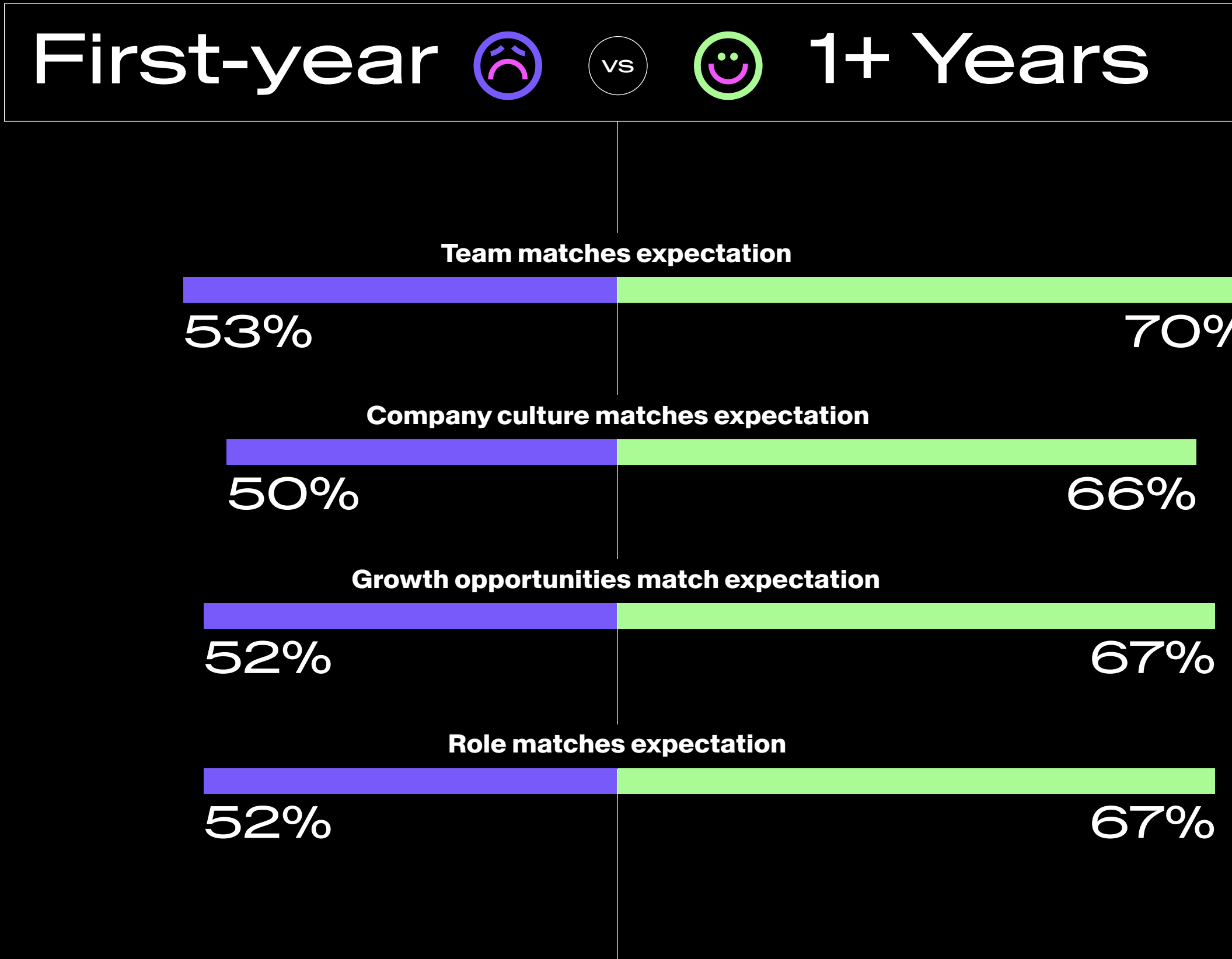
A disconnect with the "Why?"
It's a common thread that first-year employees are struggling to connect with leadership and organizational purpose:

28% agree their organization has inspiring leaders (vs. 39% for longer-tenured employees)

29% believe in the company's purpose (vs. 44% for longer-tenured employees)

Leaders need to think of ways to connect with new joiners much sooner in their career journey. How can they bring the organization's strategy and vision to life in a meaningful way, quicker?

So how do you match up?
If you've got an authentic EVP and Employer Brand in play you will be, like many employers, making some serious in-roads into matching reality to expectations. But keep your eye on that demoralized first-year cohort. We see a significant mismatch between promises made and reality encountered, particularly in the culture offered and the opportunity to grow. That doesn't just impact job satisfaction but also the eNPS score—a measure of whether someone will recommend you as a good place to work. What's more, the commitment to stay is closely linked to that promise.

First-year vs 1+ Years

Team matches expectation
53% 70%

Company culture matches expectation
50% 66%

Growth opportunities match expectation
52% 67%

Role matches expectation
52% 67%

What can employers do?

The first step is to ensure that your EVP, your Employer Brand and your EX all match up.

Success is about striking the right balance between honesty and aspiration, particularly in your recruitment comms. A new joiner survey is a great way to check how you're performing against promises, so you can identify any gaps. If you do feel there's a mismatch, think about ways to close those expectation gaps. This needs honesty and collaboration across an organization between people who have the biggest impact on EX and those who are showcasing this to future talent. Once they're through the door, this will also help you to engage with your first-year employees, so they feel more valued and appreciated. And we know that this will have a big impact on engagement and retention during their first 12 months.

First-Year Blues

The onboarding opportunity

Onboarding is often just about policies, compliance training, checklists, and numerous documents that make no sense in your first days at the organization. We want to talk about the entire onboarding experience—one that should set new employees up for success. This should start at pre-boarding stage to ensure that the all-too-common time lag between an offer being sent and accepted does not affect an employee's view of their experience in the first crucial weeks and months. Formal training, team introductions, buddy systems, regular catch-ups (and much more) can start to build that essential emotional connection.

29%
of respondents didn't experience any formal onboarding process.

91%
of employees in India received formal onboarding.

53%
compared to just 53% in Australia.

Employers might be tempted to deprioritize onboarding. After all, it only ranked 11th out of 20 in terms of importance for an ideal employer. But here's where it gets interesting:

First-year employees are less satisfied overall about many parts of their experience. Only

✳ **34%**

believe that their employer is living up to their ideal onboarding experience

Gen-Z respondents are significantly less satisfied with their onboarding

✳ **44%**

compared to

✳ **62%**

of their older counterparts.

And, if further proof is needed, Gallup found that employees who receive onboarding are better prepared and **50%** more likely to stay.

Onboarding should be effective and inspirational in equal measure. It allows you to turn the promises made in your employer marketing into a daily reality. You can follow through on the candidate experience and provide that warm welcome that new people crave. You can reveal what's coming, what it means, who's with you, and why you won't get this anywhere else.

Onboarding really can bolster motivation and engagement in that vital first year, making your new hire feel welcomed, prepared and excited to be with you. Many of the EX Leaders we spoke to echoed its importance:

> "
> **Getting the employee experience right starts at the job offer. Agreeing the package and looking at career goals means we're setting our people up for success in the first few weeks.**

Ex Leader, India

And recent reports show the impact it can have: companies that extend onboarding beyond the first **90 days** see a **29%** improvement in retention.

What can employers do?

Let's consider what new hires really want to elevate their onboarding experience. Here are the top 8 recommendations from our employee respondents:

1. Clear role expectations and understanding
"Something a little more personalized to me and my new role was missing." Employee, US

2. Understanding the roles in my team and how best to work with them
"More detail on the role I am to play in the wider team would have been helpful." Employee, Singapore

3. Company product/service knowledge
"I guess what could have been improved, is seeing leaders from various functions talk about what they do and their deliverables." Employee, Singapore

4. Alignment with purpose, mission and values
"For me it was a leader sharing their experiences and also providing guidance on the bigger picture."
Employee, Singapore

5. Getting to know the team as people, not just colleagues
"When you start with a new company, it's nerve-wracking enough. It would have been good to sit with the team informally, have a coffee, get to know people."
Employee, UK

6.Cross-team relationship building
"I think it'll be good if you can actually go to a different department and know how they contribute to the company."
Employee, Singapore

7. Smooth IT setup and tool access
"It was very frustrating not having the right access and passwords on the first morning." Employee, India

Companies that use these guidelines will undoubtedly improve engagement and retention of their new hires. Consideration of pre-boarding, building emotional connections and bonds between teams, and ensuring role expectations being communicated clearly — all have a role to play.

Section 5

Change Reframed

Change Reframed

As well as that first year, another huge opportunity for employers is how they communicate and manage organizational change.

In 2025, change isn't just constant. It's accelerating. From climate challenges to AI disruptions, geopolitical tensions to economic uncertainties, the world seems to be in a state of perpetual flux. Yet, amidst this backdrop of "poly-crisis", a surprising trend is emerging.

Organizational change is often thought of as a negative force. However, rather than succumbing to the doom and gloom as we might expect, people are demonstrating remarkable resilience and adaptability. As one leader notes:

> **" We seem to be having more change year after year. But that's the reality of life... Everything has changed. So I think it is really important that we become a lot more comfortable with it.**

Havas' 2024 Meaningful Brands™ study reveals a mindset shift. People are seeking agency and looking to effect change, in their personal lives and the broader world. They're not just weathering the storm, they're actively charting their course through it.

What does this mean for employers and employees?
A typical organization will have undertaken five major firmwide changes in the past three years, with **75%** expecting to multiply these initiatives in the next three. Yet only **34%** of change initiatives are a clear success, according to Gartner.

Reports tell us that nearly two-thirds of employees (globally) say they'd experienced more change during 2024 than in the previous 12 months. Employers need to think carefully about how to keep their people engaged when the pace of change shows no signs of slowing down. As one leader puts it:

> **" Yes, some change is tough. It's hard. It takes us a while to bounce back from.**
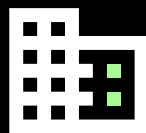
A good news story is emerging

But we also need to consider how this optimism varies between different sectors, audience groups and markets:

64%

of employees feel optimistic about organizational change.

Country differences:

India (**79%**) is the most optimistic about change, while Singapore (**54%**) and the UK (**58%**) are less so

Industry variations:

- Only **53%** of employees in FMCG are optimistic about organizational change
- Pharma **60%**
- Engineering **60%**
- Financial Services **65%**
- Technology employees are the most positive with **69%** feeling optimistic about organizational change

Seniority gap:

- Only **34%** of Entry-level employees feel optimistic about organizational change
- **39%** of Individual contributors feel positive
- Whereas **80%** of VPs report optimism
- C-Suite executives are highest of all with **86%** feeling positive about organizational change

Managerial impact:

Those managing people are more optimistic (**69%**) than those who don't (**38%**)
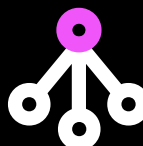
Again, tenure matters:

Employees with 1+ years' experience at a company are more optimistic (**64%**) than those who have been there less than 1 year (**51%**)

Age factor:

Satisfaction increases with seniority, from:
- Entry-level employees **34%**
- Individual contributors **32%**
- Senior Managers **49%**
- Directors **50%**
- C-Suite executives **61%**

Change as a positive force

78%

of those who have experienced organizational changes report a positive impact. This is great news, but we should recognize that the sentiment varies wildly across different levels of the company. C-Suite, likely due to their involvement in initiating the changes, shows the highest positivity at **90%**. In contrast, individual contributors report the lowest impact of change at **60%** suggesting a concerning disconnect from the change process.

This disparity also extends to Managerial roles. Managers, interestingly show greater positivity (**82%**) about the impact of change compared to non-Managers (**62%**). We could be seeing the effects here of companies getting better at involving Managers in change.

As EX Leaders in Europe and the US told us:

"One of the change principles we use with Managers is to tell them first and let them tell you what's wrong with the idea before launching it to your employees. Because trust me, they'll tell you everything—the good, the bad, and the ugly."

"We want Managers to feel empowered. That they're part of defining change. When you make your people Managers part of your journey, they will own it, and they will be better advocates for it."

So why does change still feel hard in my organization?

Don't worry, you're not alone

The positive sentiments we're describing are not being experienced universally. Our EX Leader interviews prove that many are still feeling really challenged in this area:

> **"**
> **We're not preparing people enough for change. People can't keep up with it. So I haven't seen that positivity of change in our results yet. Maybe that's our company.**
>
> Ex Leader, UK

But there are clear opportunities to improve. Let's hear from those employees who are living through change every day. They revealed a number of common threads that are very much worth considering.

Timing is everything

What are the major pitfalls in organizational change comms? Poor timing. And a very common symptom of that: inadequate planning. Employees are, quite naturally, very frustrated:

> **"**
> **Usually, we're told about the change after it's done. By that time people are already assuming what's going on.**
>
> Employee, UK

Lack of planning causes many issues, from last-minute announcements to unnecessary misunderstandings. In turn that creates confusion and anxiety for employees when they're trying to adapt to changes. As one employee poignantly notes:

> **"**
> **I feel really demoralised, and not at all valued, when I see things in the press rather than hearing them directly from the company.**
>
> Employee, Australia

A lack of transparency creates distrust

There's that watchword again, transparency. The negative impact of over-zealous secrecy can be huge. Employees feel that changes are made with no notice or explanation. The sense of secrecy pervades the organization and people feel distant to the change. And certainly not included in it. The impact on employee morale and lack of openness can have far-reaching consequences for building trust. As one employee put it:

> **"**
> **It feels as though senior management hides things from staff, leading to a culture of distrust and uncertainty.**
>
> Employee, Singapore

Who do people trust most to keep them up-to-date about change?
The chart below underscores the need to keep your Managers informed and inspired to tell the change story effectively. Another interesting nuance emerged: Entry-level employees are much less likely to trust senior leadership to keep them up-to-date (**8%**). This means senior leaders need to ensure they're connecting with people across the whole organization – not just with their immediate reports.

24%

41%

14%

21%

☐ My Manager

☐ Team/department head

☐ Senior leadership

☐ Colleagues
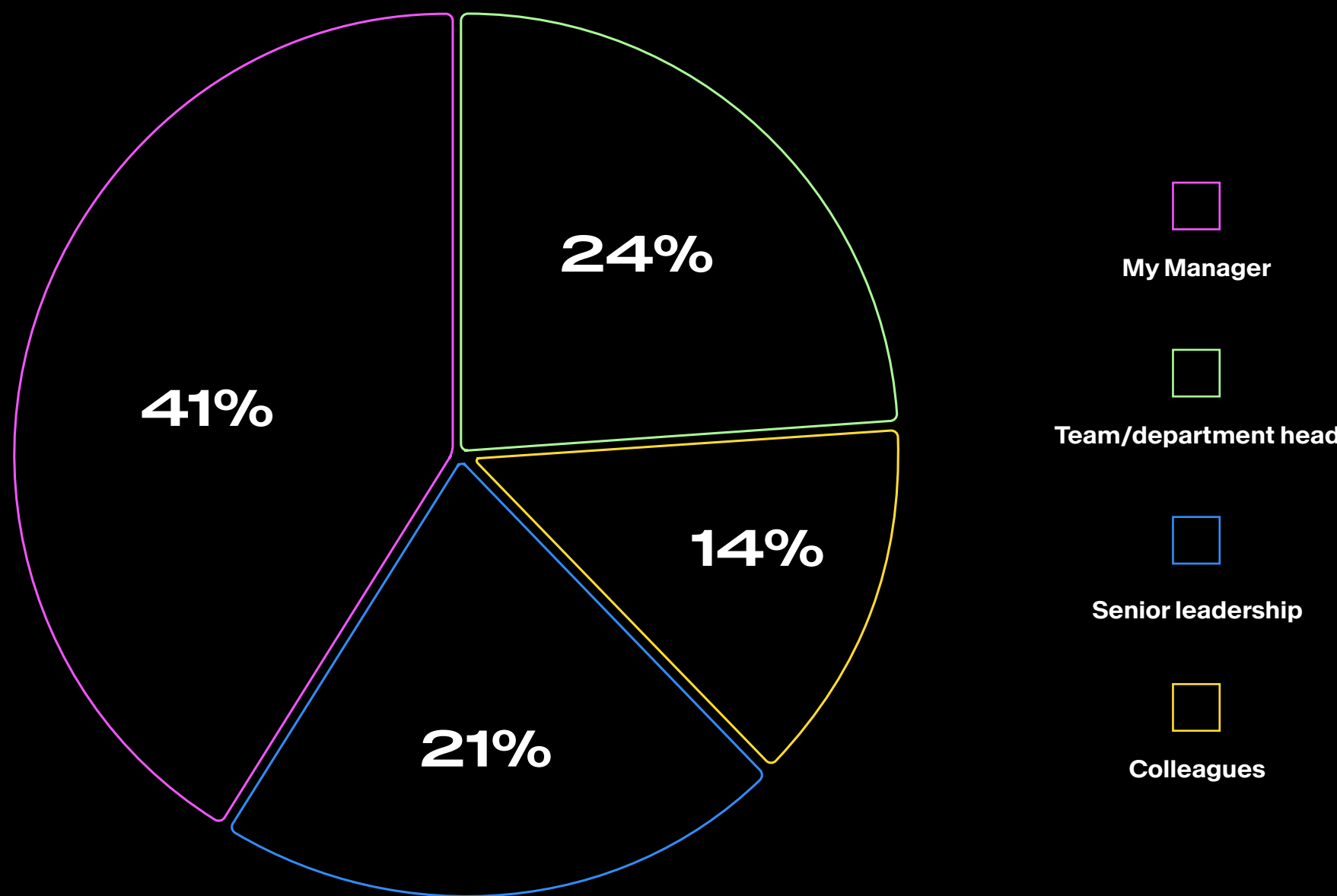
Without communication, gossip runs wild
In the absence of clear, official communication, employees turn to each other. Casual gossip and unhelpful rumors create an environment where misinformation spreads rapidly:

"

Information about people leaving is generally heard through the grapevine, which is really bad. No-one knows directly, they just hear it from someone else.

Employee, Singapore

Perhaps most concerning is when critical information, such as job security, reaches employees through unofficial channels:

"

When employees were at risk of losing their jobs, they learned about it from colleagues before being informed by Managers.

Employee, UK

This lack of direct communication undermines trust and leaves employees feeling devalued and uninformed. If communication isn't addressed, employers find it difficult to keep control over the change narrative. Inaccurate information spreads and employees end up feeling anxious and uncertain.

What can employers do?

Let's hear from our employee respondents.
They gave us 8 top tips for getting change right.

1. Clarify objectives
"There's a lack of clear strategy or objectives.
It creates uncertainty for employees."
Employee, India

2. Offer context and rationale
"It's difficult to get on board when we're given no reasons
or context for the changes that are being made."
Employee, Australia

3. Speak human, not jargon
"There's so much jargon that I skip over
important information."
Employee, UK

4. Invite involvement and real dialogue
"They only share at the last moment. So there's
no time for reaction, or to offer suggestions on
how to get this change to a better state."
Employee, Singapore

5. Leaders must connect
"The lower ranks feel too disjointed from upper
management. We just feel like numbers and not people."
Employee, UK

6. Empower Managers
"Managers should be more open—they hoard information."
Employee, UK

7. Be specific, accurate and avoid spin
"The things they say about the change are vague or
inconsistent, so we have no idea what's happening and why."
Employee, Singapore

8. Widen your channels and use them consistently
"There's no face-to-face communication, everything's
done by email. They can be too easily missed"
Employee, Australia

Section 6

The Murky Middle

While we've uncovered some big opportunities for employers to improve and enhance EX: on the whole we've seen fairly positive levels of engagement. There's a sense of optimism about change, and employees largely feel valued and satisfied in their roles.

But what about those neutral scorers?

Allow us to introduce: The Murky Middle
(A group you can't afford to ignore)

In research like this, it's not unusual to see a spread of satisfaction with experience and engagement levels. The highly engaged top scorers and the vocally disengaged bottom scorers both offer valuable insights. But what about the 1 person in 5 who sits in the middle? Those stoic neutral scorers who don't seem to be jumping for joy nor stamping their feet?

We decided to take a closer look at this supposedly neutral "Murky Middle".

The Murky Middle

What we found was eye-opening

This group is often **just as unsatisfied with their jobs** as those who are actively disengaged—in many cases, **even more so**. For example, take those who are "unsure" whether the company cares about their wellbeing. Turns out they're as likely to be "not very satisfied" with their job as those who feel strongly that their employer doesn't care.

And in other areas (such as feeling invested in the company's success, being satisfied with career progression to name two) the neutral scorers are even less likely to be satisfied in their job than those outright giving their employer negative scores.

What's behind the mask?
It's worth exploring. Neutral employees aren't necessarily just sitting on the fence. They seem to be masking a deeper disconnect that's just as concerning as open dissatisfaction.

Some reports refer to "Mildly Disengaged" workers, who report below average commitment and performance levels, and are neither satisfied nor actively disengaged. **This cohort can be disruptive for an organization** in less obvious ways. Bringing down morale through a detached attitude, role modeling lower productivity rates and often remaining stagnant in their development, slowing down growth.

This revelation challenges us to rethink how we interpret employee feedback.

I feel a sense of belonging

I feel invested in the company's success
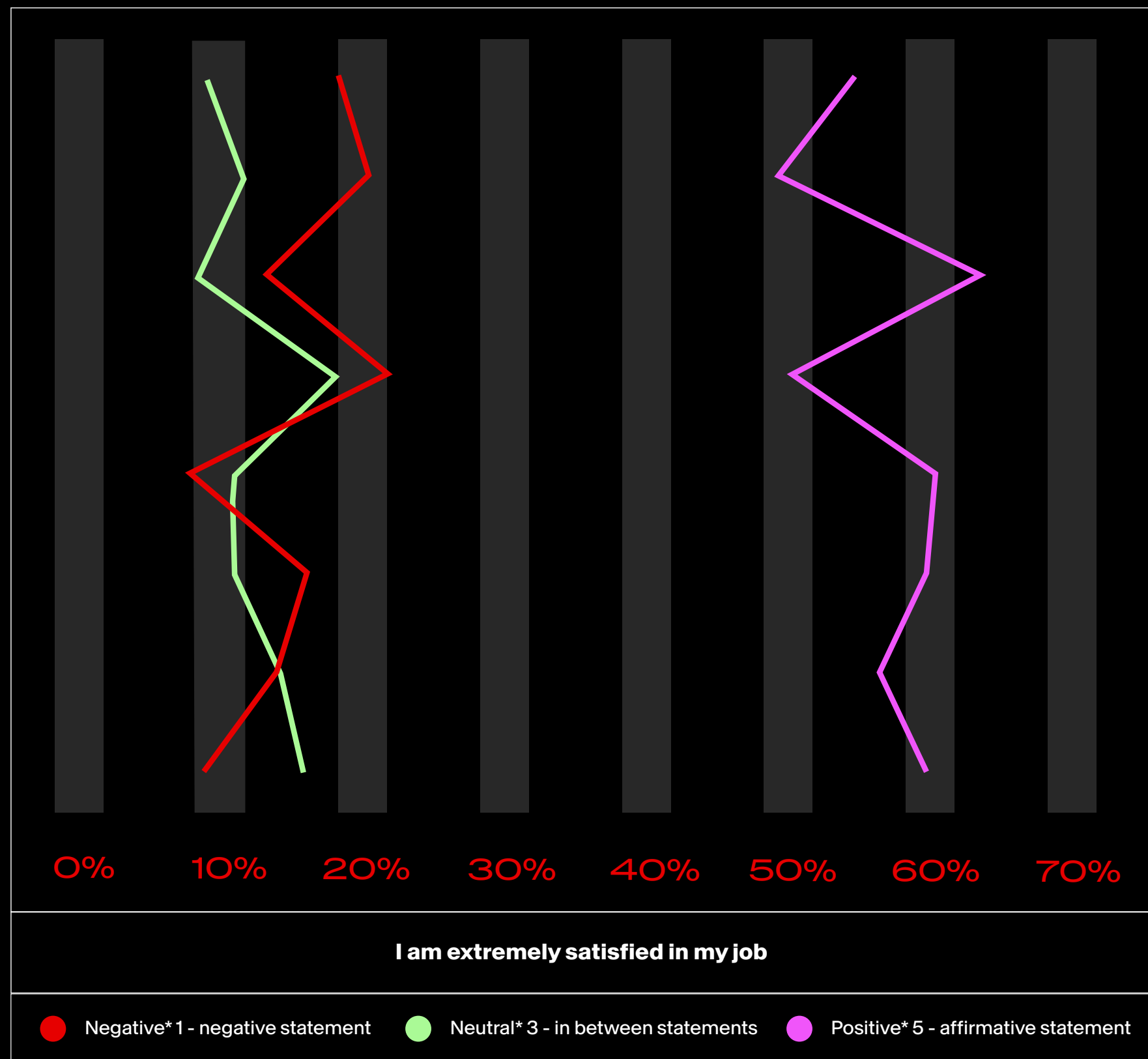
I feel satisfied with my career progression

I seek opportunties to grow in my role

I feel appreciated

I feel my skills/talents are utilized

I feel the company cares about my wellbeing

I look forward to the start of the week

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%

I am extremely satisfied in my job

● Negative* 1 - negative statement   ● Neutral* 3 - in between statements   ● Positive* 5 - affirmative statement

What can employers do?

It's not just about addressing the loudest or angriest voices or celebrating the most enthusiastic. The real opportunity—and potential risk—might lie with those quiet, seemingly neutral employees. This group is too important to be ignored.

So for employers, the key to truly understanding and improving employee experience lies in digging deeper. What different listening tools can you use to identify and understand your neutral audience? How are you enabling Managers to have candid career conversations and address concerns quickly? Try and map audience pain points and intentionally design EX around them. These critical actions will help you to understand your audience on a deeper level and know where (and how) to make the biggest difference, quickly.

Section 7

Reasons to Quit

Why people quit
(And how we can avoid it)

General disengagement is just one reason people leave an organization – but there are many more. We wanted to get specific, so we asked:

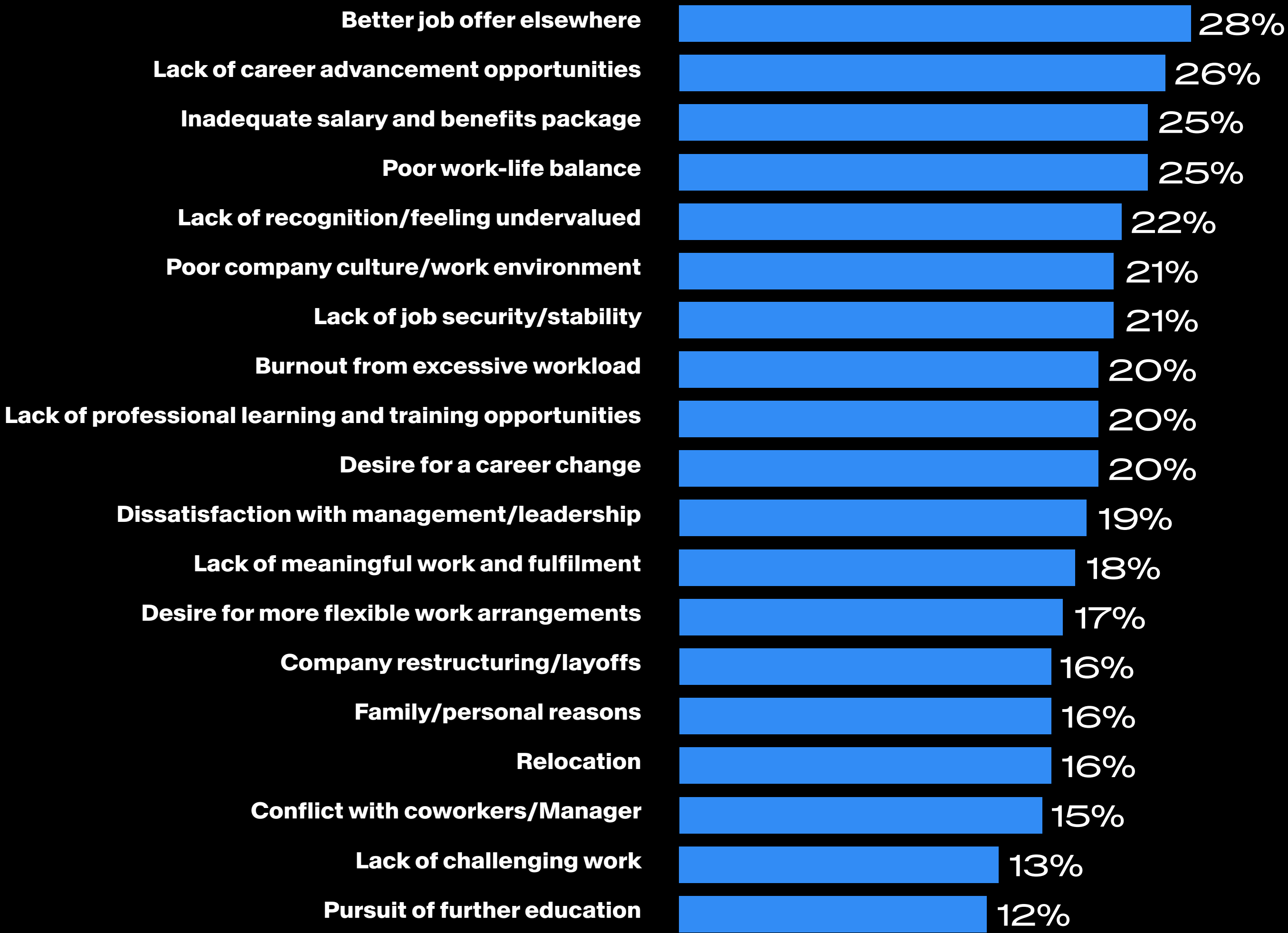**"What are the main reasons you left your last job?"**

It's a varied picture, but with some key patterns. Many of the reasons for people quitting a job directly link with the employer attributes and moments that employees have told us are most important. It's not rocket science. Get these experiences right for people, and they will stay longer, be more satisfied and perform better.

Top of the list is a "'better' job offer elsewhere". Sometimes, because of the nature of the role, the structure of the company or the ambitions of the individual, a regrettable exit of someone very good, simply can't be avoided.

As one employee in Singapore told us, "**I've progressed in my career and so I look for a better position, you know, higher paying job, a step up in position which is not possible in my company at that time.**"

The role of great EX comms in this situation is to help the person leave with the most positive impression of the company. Ideally, there's the opportunity to stay in touch via alumni networks in case there's a right time to 'boomerang' back.

What are the main reasons you left your last job?

Reason	%
Better job offer elsewhere	28%
Lack of career advancement opportunities	26%
Inadequate salary and benefits package	25%
Poor work-life balance	25%
Lack of recognition/feeling undervalued	22%
Poor company culture/work environment	21%
Lack of job security/stability	21%
Burnout from excessive workload	20%
Lack of professional learning and training opportunities	20%
Desire for a career change	20%
Dissatisfaction with management/leadership	19%
Lack of meaningful work and fulfilment	18%
Desire for more flexible work arrangements	17%
Company restructuring/layoffs	16%
Family/personal reasons	16%
Relocation	16%
Conflict with coworkers/Manager	15%
Lack of challenging work	13%
Pursuit of further education	12%

Reasons to Quit

Spotlight: Career advancement

**Let's talk about the lack of career advancement.
(It's the second most popular reason to quit a job.)**
And it's a sentiment that's echoed elsewhere in the research, with

68%

saying having great career development opportunities is "**very or extremely important**" in a decision to stay at an organization.

However, the variety of career advancement opportunities is not always clear to people.

66%

of our sample say, "**The only way to progress in my company is to take on Managerial responsibility**". With that in mind, let's look at the top five areas that employees told us they need for improved career advancement.

Career advancement: Five ways to get better

1. Frequent, practical training programs

Employees want regular, structured learning opportunities that enhance their skills and job performance. They're calling for practical workshops and on-the-job training, especially when it comes to emerging technologies like AI. Flexibility is key, with a strong preference for options like external certifications, targeted training sessions, and accessible resources.

2. Clear and accessible career pathways

Employees are asking for transparency around career progression. They want clarity on promotion criteria, defined milestones, and structured guidance to navigate their growth within the organization. Our respondents told us they wanted personalized development plans, regular feedback, and open discussions about transitions to other roles or departments.

3. Constructive feedback and performance reviews

We saw earlier that performance reviews are fourth in the list of moments that matter most to employees. And there's a clear link to career advancement. But the formal moment is not everything. Employees value regular, structured feedback that helps them grow in their roles. They're asking for more frequent one-to-one meetings with Managers to discuss progress, set clear objectives, and receive actionable insights. Feedback should be constructive, transparent (that word again), and directly tied to their career aspirations.

4. Mentorship & Coaching

Introducing informal and formal mentorship within your organization is a great way to help employees learn and progress in their career. Employees told us they'd value real connections with their more experienced colleagues so they can provide guidance, advice, and industry insights. Suggestions included one-to-one sessions, the opportunity to job shadow and tailored coaching from Managers and mentors. And, it works both ways: reverse mentoring (where junior employees mentor seniors) can really help both individuals grow.

5. Support for Continued Education

While internal opportunities are valued, employees want organizations to invest in their long-term career growth by supporting external education opportunities like certifications or professional qualifications. This doesn't just help to build skills. Employees see it as an investment in their future, which makes them even more likely to stay. Flexible learning options—such as online courses or study leave—are essential, along with funding or sponsorship for relevant programs.

"

I think it's a mixture of learning and career opportunities. I ask myself, 'Am I learning in this role every day? Do I feel like I'm developing new skills every day?' I think if the answer is 'No' then I need to do something where I'm able to say 'Yes'.

Employee, UK

"

They should give me a proper career path, so I know what I'm heading towards and what I need to do next to get a better position.

Employee, India

"

I think they should routinely check up on my progress and advise me frequently.

Employee, UK

"

I'd like to see senior staff mentoring more junior staff and sharing experience and advice.

Employee, UK

"

Provide more skill training including AI courses.

Employee, India

Advice from EX Leaders

Advice from EX Leaders

The final words from our EX Leaders

We'd like to thank everyone who took the time to talk to us. They had some great advice to share with industry peers who are looking at Employee Experience in this ever-changing world of work. **Here are their top 10 recommendations:**

1. Clarify EX ownership
Where EX "sits" varies hugely across different organizations. Starting the conversation to clarify who's involved, who's done what and to develop some shared language will save you time and energy later. As one leader suggests: **"Let's define that first and then we can build off the back of it and create a road map."**

2. Link EX to business outcomes
Position yourself as a business influencer. Great EX is not a fluffy nice-to-have. **"Part of our role is to storytell and sell... we have to make sure that EX links to great business outcomes." "Let's bring it back to real business outcomes and then we bring in our CEOs."**

3. Define and build strong EX design principles
Create foundational principles that help you define what incredible EX will deliver for your company and employees. You might use your values, your purpose or your EVP as anchor points to create some consistency and provide guidance. **"Employee experience is about defining what we want to be. Is it about elevating experiences? Is it about giving us a competitive advantage?"**

4. Embrace Systems Thinking
Companies doing EX well understand interconnected systems, create flexible roadmaps and prioritize outcomes through a test-and-learn approach. **"One of the things that I value most in my team is an ability to see things in systems, not silos. There are so many moments and they're all interconnected."**

5. Listen to your people; build on your data sets
As one leader explains, **"It's about bringing in and combining relevant data... how do we layer that with our financials, what our customers are saying, what our people are saying?"** Another emphasizes real-time feedback: **"We want to make sure that we're getting not just point-in-time retrospective feedback; we want to have real-time feedback so we can see the gaps in our employee journey."**

Advice from EX Leaders

6. Prioritize communication
Varied communication is critical to EX. And, make sure it's not just one way
"be agile, try new things, challenge the status quo and encourage people to speak up and share ideas"

7. Focus on Manager effectiveness
Managers remain crucial—to engagement, retention, and change. As one leader declared:
"We know that Managers make the difference to our people's engagement "
Invest in upskilling, particularly in communication, appreciation, and change.

8. Recognize the power of appreciation
Recognition drives engagement. **"Appreciation and recognition are key drivers that correlate directly with all of those big outcome measures—engagement, intention to stay, inclusivity, wellbeing at work."**
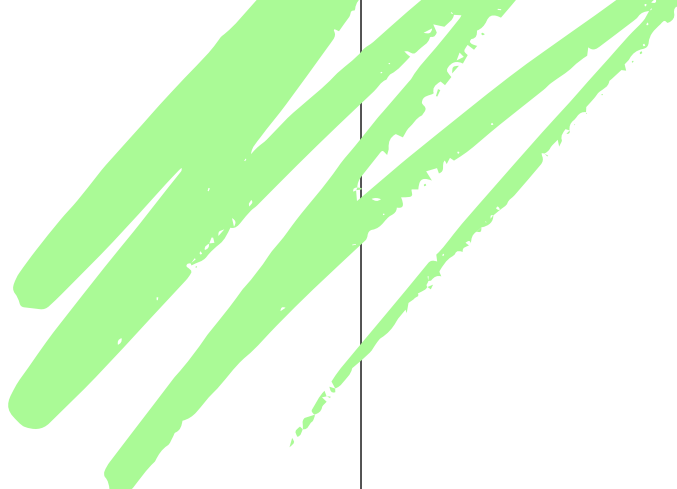
9. Design experiences intentionally
Be specific about your approach to work models. One company decided: **"they are remote, that's what they were promised—instead of shoehorning hybrid working practices or office-based experiences to our remote workforce, we're specifically designing for the remote experience."**
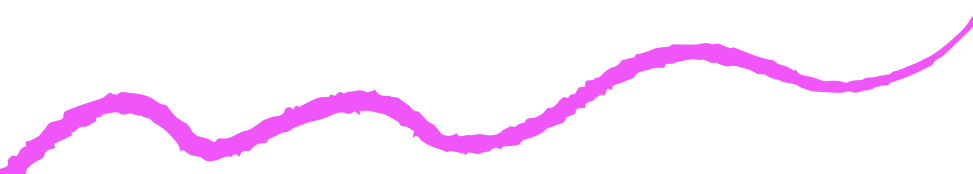
10. Prepare for constant change
This work never stops. So, embrace agility and keep improving. As one leader advises:
"Everything has changed. So I think it's really important that we become a lot more comfortable with it."

Thanks for reading our report. We hope it gives you some interesting insights about the hidden truths behind Employee Experience today.

This report is just part of our ongoing commitment to this incredibly important area for businesses around the world. Our goal is to continue to provide organizations of all sizes with practical, data-driven insights that they can use to create meaningful improvements in their employees' experiences and how they communicate and engage.

Because when employees thrive, businesses thrive too.

If you're interested in taking the next steps in enhancing employee experience, please get in touch with one of our EX consultants for a friendly conversation.

We hope to speak to you soon.
Becs Reffell & Tim Lotherington

To organise a chat about any of the topics in this report, please get in touch with **hello@havaspeople.com**

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The team behind the report

We are hugely thankful to the EX Leaders who gave up their time to speak to us and everyone in our wider Havas People team who made this report possible including:

Dhanisha Bhikhabhai
Beth Clements
Alison Morrison
Kath Davies

And huge thanks to **Peekator**.

Peekator is an end-to-end survey platform that prioritizes panel data quality, smart AI workflows and allows us to get even deeper insights using conversational AI technology. This helps with the heavy lifting while also providing rich and trustworthy data.

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Meaningful insights.
Big impact.

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If you would like to know more about how we can help you with your talent challenges in the ever-changing world of work, **please get in contact with Lisa Wiedemann, Global Business Development Director at hello@havaspeople.com**

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Appendix

Ideal employer Methodology (**see page 5** for commentary):
Using a method called MaxDiff (Maximum Difference Scaling),
we presented respondents with eight sets of five items each and
asked them to choose which was the most and least important to
them. This approach forced people to make trade-offs, helping us
uncover what truly matters most, rather than ending up with a list
where everything seems equally important. In short, MaxDiff gave
us a clearer picture of employees' real priorities by cutting through
the noise of "everything matters." It's all about getting to the heart of
what people value most in an ideal employer.

Experience gap methodology (**see page 6** for commentary):
Methodology reminder: Here we asked people to rate their employers
on the same items asked before in terms of expectations and relative
importance of expectations (MaxDiff). We asked them to give their
employer a score on a scale from 1 - 7, with 7 being the best i.e. the
employer fully living up to expectations of an ideal employer.

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