



2019 INTERNATIONAL EMPLOYEE SURVEY REPORT



The Future of Work is Human

FINDINGS FROM THE WORKHUMAN®
ANALYTICS & RESEARCH INSTITUTE SURVEY

workhuman*

Humans in the future of work

Is society headed toward a dystopian future where humans are slowly phased out while robots start controlling our communities, governments, and companies? Potentially – if you buy into science fiction. Even most mainstream media coverage of the “future of work” is focused on fear around AI taking our jobs and the looming skills gap – vaguely theorized from the perspective of analysts and influencers.

Despite this fear mongering, humans are very much at the heart of the future of work. Technology may take over the more menial tasks, but that’s opening up even more opportunities for companies to leverage the previously untapped creativity and innovation of people – to prioritize humanity and emotional intelligence at work. For humans to thrive, companies need to double down on programs and human applications that enhance trust, appreciation, respect, gratitude, autonomy, and equity.

This survey report is designed for anyone invested in humanity at work – giving people leaders and executives a glimpse at the future of work, as told from the perspectives of the humans in our organizations. More than 3,500 full-time workers across the United States, Canada, Ireland, and the United Kingdom were asked what motivates them to do their best work and what fosters the emotional connections binding them to their teams, their managers, and their employers.

Across industries and geographies, insights from this report can be used to improve engagement, recruitment, retention, and performance management for humans in the future of work – with the end goal of creating work cultures that are mutually beneficial to businesses and the people driving them.

4



For the fourth year in a row, the number of companies conducting annual or semiannual reviews has fallen.



More than half of workers say annual reviews do not improve their performance.



1 in 5

21% of survey respondents said they are currently looking for a new job.



5x

Workers who check in with their manager at least weekly, as opposed to never, are five times less likely to be disengaged.

4x

Employees who have a sense of meaning and purpose are more than four times as likely to love their jobs.




More than half of all workers say their last work anniversary was not even acknowledged.

1 in 4

26% of workers have felt discriminated against over the course of their career.

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A woman wearing a white hard hat and a high-visibility safety vest is smiling warmly. Her arms are crossed, and she has a confident, happy expression. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting, possibly a construction site, with a blue color overlay across the entire image.

More than pay or free food
or a fun team, workers are
looking for **meaningful work at
organizations where they feel
recognized and respected.**



Portrait of a job seeker's market

Are you worried about flight risks in your organization and competitors poaching your top talent? Overall, about 1 in 5 (21%) of this year's survey respondents said they are currently looking for a new job. And that doesn't include people who might passively entertain a call from a recruiter or click on a job ad online.

So who in your organization is more likely to be tempted to leave? Despite the strength of the U.S. economy, survey data indicates workers in Ireland, Canada, and the U.K. are actually more likely to be searching the market for new opportunities. About 1 in 4 workers in those regions are on the job hunt, as shown in Figure 1.

Data also indicates that answers to the question, "Are you currently looking for a new job?" vary by industry (see Figure 2). Respondents in information technology are the most likely to be looking for a new job (34%), followed by workers in telecommunications, consumer goods and services, and biotech.



ACTION ITEM

Check for flight risks in your IT department and reprioritize which perks you invest in.

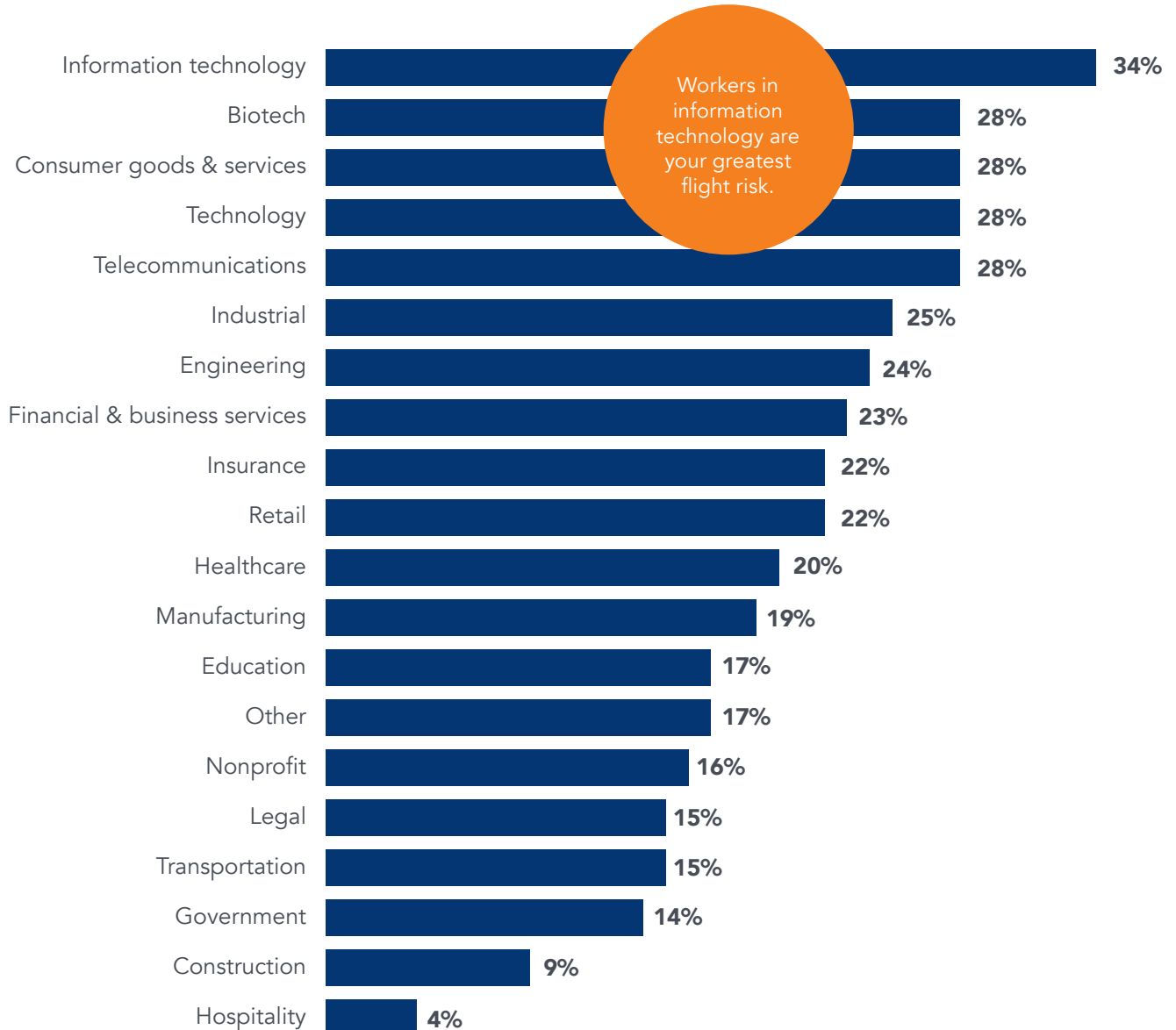
Workers outside of U.S. more likely to be on the job hunt

Figure 1: Percent of workers looking for a new job, by country



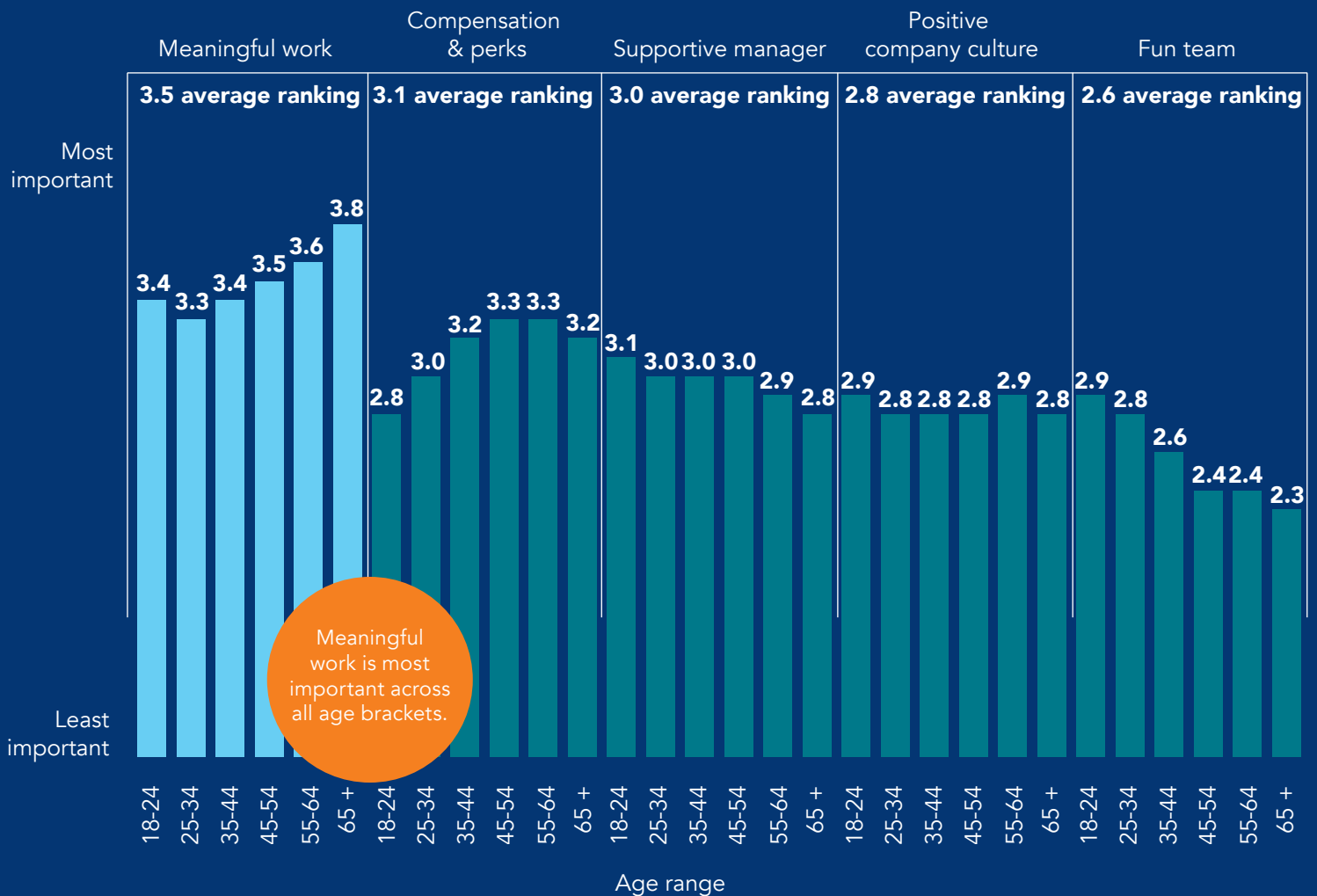
Which industry's workers should you be most concerned about?

Figure 2: Percent of workers looking for a new job, by industry



Factors most important to employees' careers

Figure 3: Average ranking (scale of 1-5 with 5 as most important and 1 as least important)

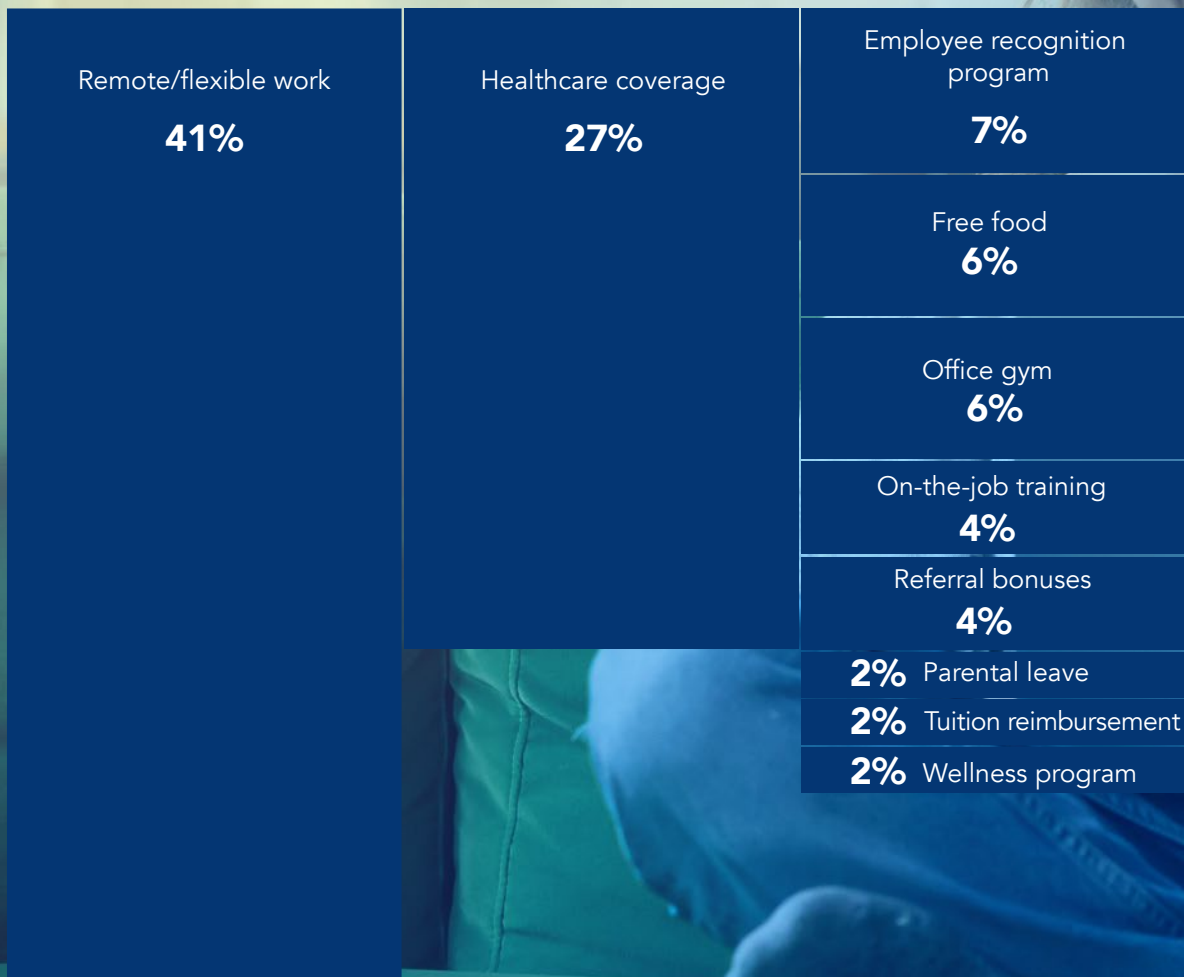


If so many workers are actively seeking new opportunities, what are they looking for, exactly? Each year we ask workers what is most important in their career. For the third year in a row, workers across all age groups rank meaningful work as most important – beating out all other options, including positive company culture, compensation and perks, a supportive manager, and a fun team (see Figure 3). Meaningful work is about shared purpose – connecting the day-to-day tasks to a greater company mission that’s fully aligned with one’s personal values.

Interestingly, younger employees (ages 18-24) are more likely to rank a supportive manager as the second most important aspect of their career, while workers 35 and older are more likely to say compensation and perks follow meaningful work. When accounting for a person’s position in the organization, the data suggests that the higher up a person goes in their organization, the more important meaningful work becomes on average.

Which workplace perk is most important to you?

Figure 4: Percent who rated the perk as most important



What about perks? Which perks matter more for younger workers? What about older workers? Surprisingly – across all ages, industries, and regions – the top perk is remote/flexible work (41%), followed by healthcare coverage (27%). Figure 4 shows these perks rank much higher than on-site perks, such as free food, office gym, and on-the-job training.

Perks are nice, but freedom is better. What's your company's stance on remote/flexible work?



Emotional investment as a means to retention

If the future of work is human, it's in your organization's best interest to appeal to your employees' emotional connection to their work and the company's mission. And one of the best indicators of that emotional investment is the answer to the question, "Would you recommend working at your organization to a friend or colleague?"

Figure 5 shows workers are more than 2x as likely to recommend a friend when they agree that the work at their organization has meaning and purpose, and are nearly 3x as likely to recommend a friend when their personal values align with their company's mission/values.

It turns out that meaningful work and mission/values alignment are also associated with more employees loving their jobs. Employees who have a sense of meaning and purpose are more than 4x as likely to love their jobs.

With any level of emotional investment in the workplace – especially when up against time constraints, market pressure, and lofty goals – stress is bound to show up in individuals and teams. But it's often how that stress is handled across a company's culture that determines success or failure. For example, studies indicate gratitude can be a key to building resilience and buffering against stress.

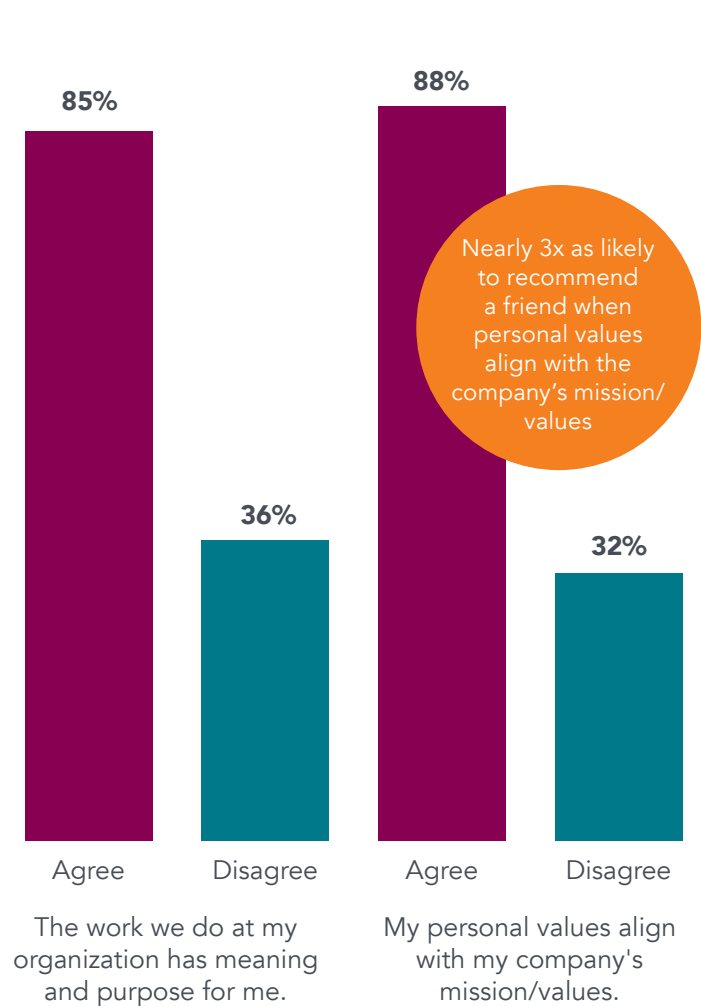


ACTION ITEM

Make your mission and values clear and actionable, and build a layer of goodwill across your culture with human applications, such as Social Recognition®.

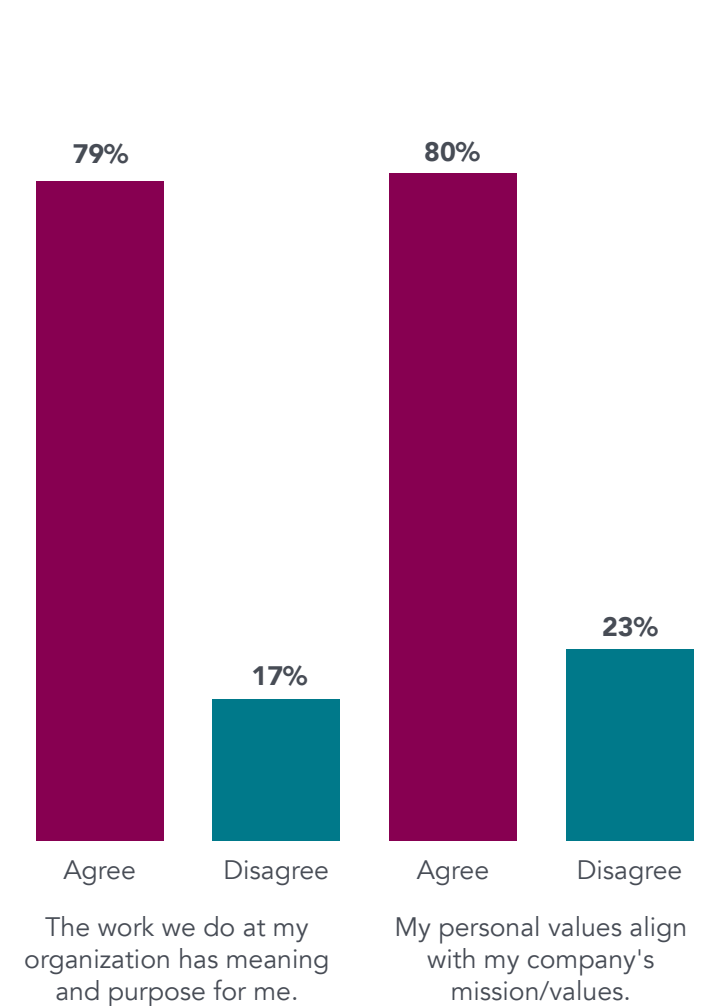
Workers more likely to make referrals with meaningful work and values alignment

Figure 5: Percent who respond "Yes" to "Would you recommend working here to a friend or colleague?"



Meaningful work and values alignment keys to loving work

Figure 6: Percent who respond "Yes" to "Do you love your job?"





Recent, frequent recognition is associated with higher gratitude levels and **lower stress levels.**

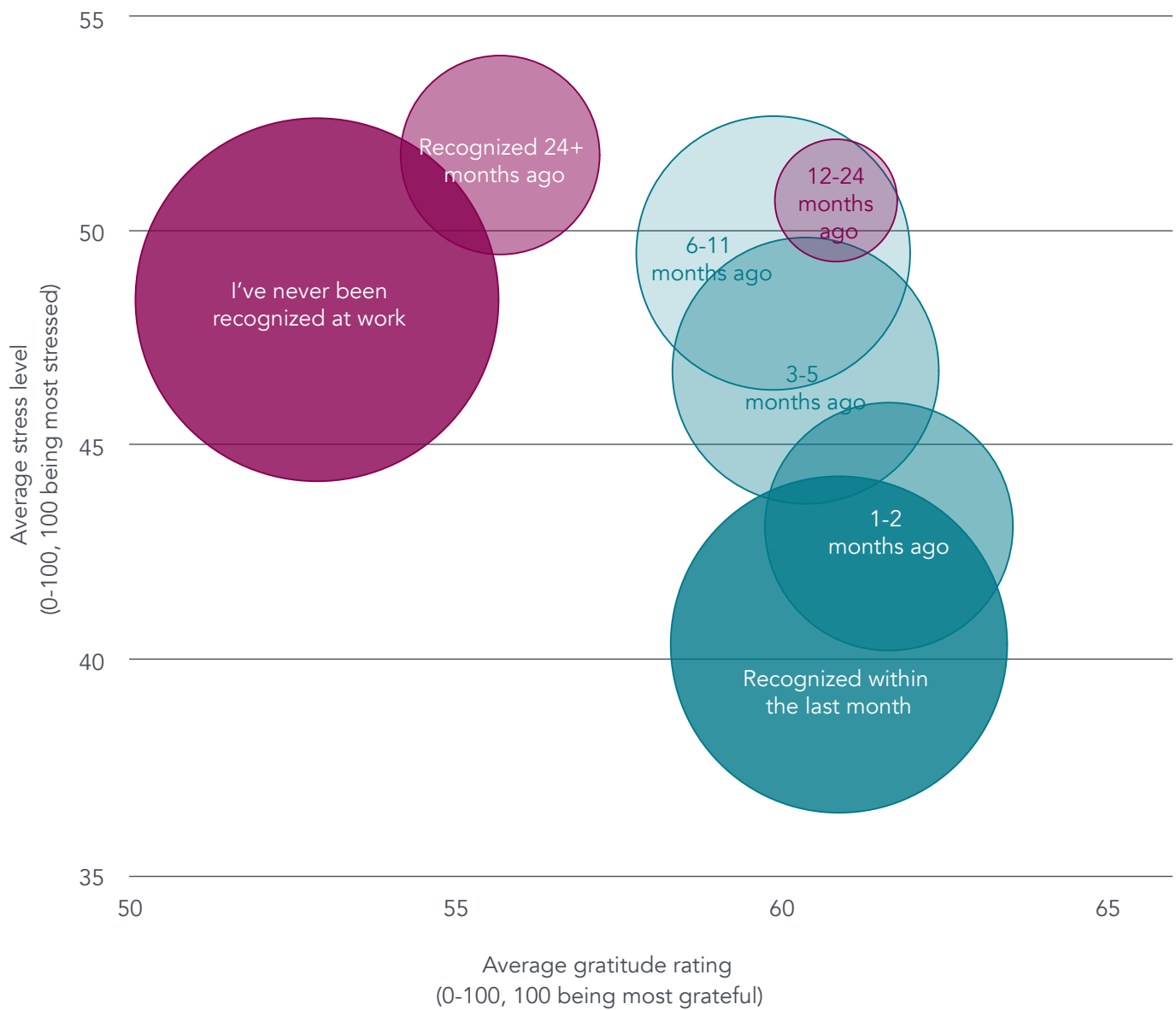
Respondents were asked to assess both their stress level and gratitude level at work on a sliding scale from 0 to 100, with 0 being least stressed/grateful and 100 being most stressed/grateful. They also indicated how recently they were recognized for their contributions at work, if ever.

In Figure 7, each bubble represents a group of respondents based on the last time they were recognized at work. The size of the bubble is proportional to the number of respondents in each group. Clearly, more recent, frequent recognition is associated with higher gratitude levels and lower stress levels.

Trust is another form of relational currency that can be leveraged during times of change and uncertainty at work. Data indicates frequent recognition can help here as well. Workers recognized in the last month at companies that have been through a merger or acquisition in the last year are nearly 2x as likely to trust in their company's leadership team, compared to those who have never been recognized for their work (82% vs. 46%).

Frequent recognition builds gratitude and buffers against stress

Figure 7: Average stress levels relative to feelings of gratitude and recognition frequency





Informal check-ins key to trust, respect, and engagement

Traditional performance management continues to erode. For the fourth year in a row of this survey, the number of companies conducting annual or semiannual reviews has fallen. In 2016, 82% of workers surveyed said their company used an annual review. That number dropped to 65% in 2017, 58% in 2018, and just 54% this year.

Reducing the amount of time and energy spent on these formal meetings and assessments is a positive trend for bringing more humanity into the future of work. It's also a trend that's in line with growing frustration from employees. More than half of workers (53%) say performance reviews are not indicative of all the work they do and 55% say they do not improve performance.

At the same time, companies are realizing that the competence of front-line and middle management can have a huge impact on employees' day-to-day motivation, engagement, and enthusiasm. Consider the fact that, especially in hierarchical organizations, a person's manager may be their only line of sight into broader company goals and initiatives.

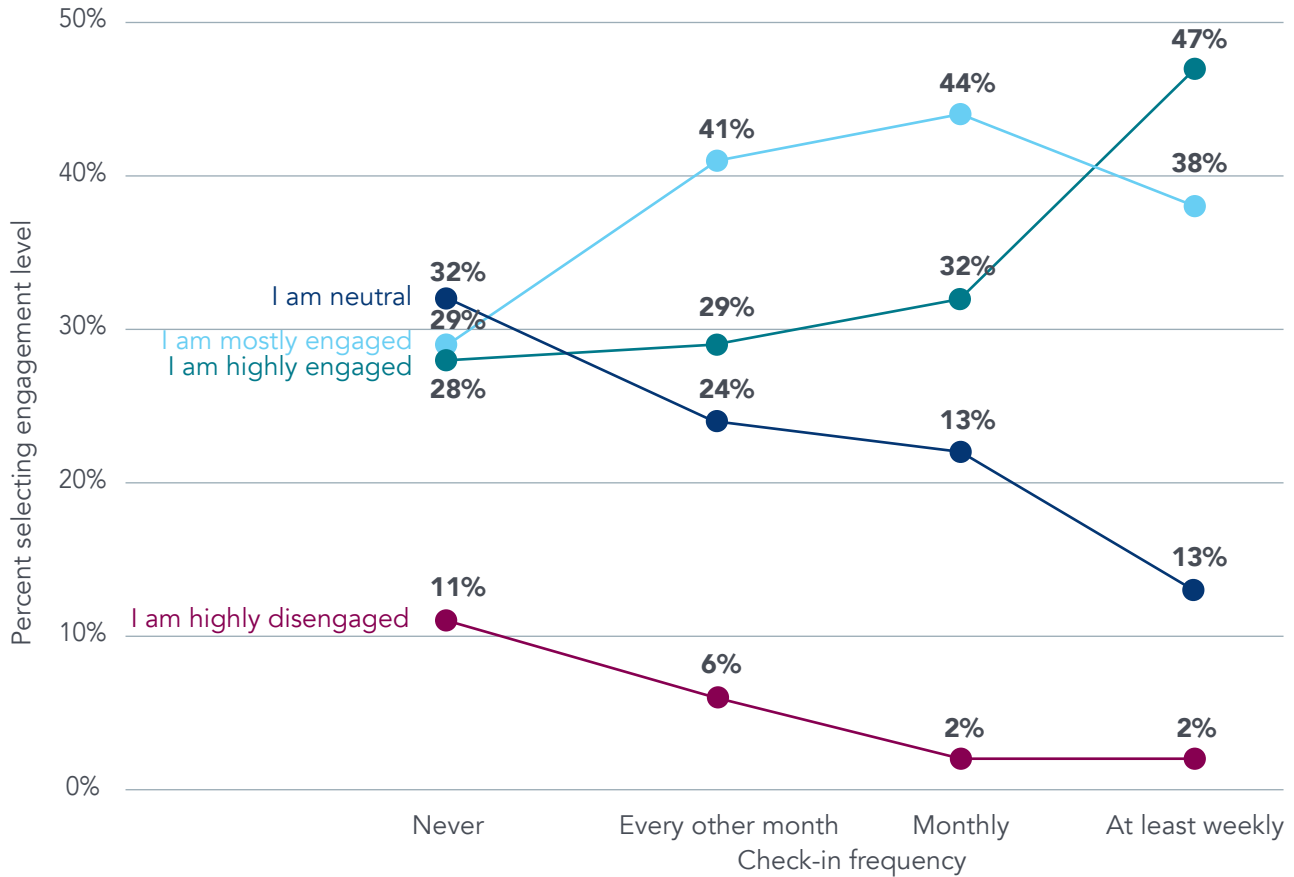


ACTION ITEM

Prioritize ongoing communication in the flow of work by leveraging human applications, such as Conversations[®]. Stop activities like annual performance assessments, which do not add business value or contribute to a positive employee experience.

More check-ins lead to more engagement

Figure 8: Percent of people selecting engagement level, by check-in cadence



Could more frequent communication be the key to managerial competence and effectiveness? As evidenced in Figure 8, the data certainly suggests a strong relationship between more frequent manager-employee check-ins and higher levels of trust, respect, and engagement.

Workers who check in with their manager at least weekly as opposed to never are:

- More than 2x as likely to trust their manager
- Nearly 2x as likely to respect their manager
- 5x less likely to be disengaged
- Nearly 2x as likely to believe they can grow in the organization

From an employee's perspective, what could managers be doing differently? Workers were asked to choose one thing they wish their manager did more of out of the following options:

- **Show more appreciation (31%)**
- Focus more on my career growth (19%)
- Give me more independence (15%)
- Focus more on my learning and development (14%)
- Have more frequent 1:1s and check-ins (8%)
- Other (11%)



Untapped potential of celebrating career milestones

Acknowledging and commemorating milestones is an inherent part of the human experience. When was the last time you ignored your wedding anniversary or your child's birthday? It's natural to use these annual milestones as a point of self-reflection and pride.

Why should the human experience be any different in the workplace? Yet it is. More than half of all workers surveyed (51%) say their last work anniversary was not even acknowledged. When the data is filtered by workers who have been at their company for more than eight years, that number ticks up to 53%.

But even for those workers whose employers acknowledge their years of commitment to the organization, service anniversaries are a huge missed opportunity. Respondents were asked, "Did your last service anniversary make you feel a renewed commitment to your company?" A majority – 64% – said "No." Another 53% of workers said their anniversary experience made them feel nothing at all.



ACTION ITEM

Reimagine the service anniversary experience to happen earlier and more frequently in your employees' careers. Make it a community celebration through human applications such as Life Events[®] and Service Milestones[®], which focus on shared memories.



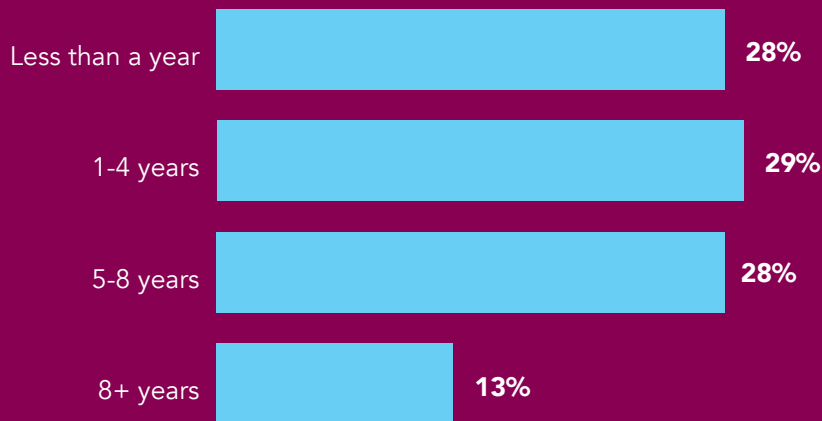
So what do people want from their anniversary experience?

In order of preference, respondents want:

1. **Shared memories and congratulations** from co-workers and managers
2. **Private congratulations** from my manager
3. **Public congratulations** from my manager
4. Being the **guest of honor** at an event

The shorter the tenure, the greater the flight risk

Figure 9: Percent looking for a new job



Creating a meaningful and social service milestone is one area companies could use to buffer against flight risks mentioned at the beginning of this report. Figure 9 shows employees who have been at their company eight years or less are more likely to be looking for a new job.

Looking at the data from a slightly different angle, workers were asked how willing they are to leave their company for one with a more human work culture – one that fosters recognition and appreciation while empowering individuals, strengthening relationships, and providing clear purpose aligned with achievable goals.

Newer hires more likely to leave for a human workplace

Figure 10: Percent who'd leave their company for one with a more positive culture



As shown in Figure 10, those same employees with eight or fewer years at their company are much more willing to leave for a human workplace.

Making great hires is a huge accomplishment for your recruiting team, especially in a job seeker's market. But that doesn't mean the work is over. Deliver on your employer brand promise by showing continued appreciation and recognition for workers choosing your company to stay with for the long haul.



New findings on gender inequity

A future where there is greater gender parity in the workplace is a journey. To get there, we have to understand the current state and how ingrained HR, talent management, and reward practices may be contributing to inequity.

In alignment with other research in this area, this year's survey finds that women are more likely to be in individual contributor/other roles, while men are more likely to be in senior/middle management roles.

In fact, Figure 11 shows men are 2x as likely to be in a senior management or executive role as women.

When accounting for men and women in similar roles in the organization, do they have different experiences? Data suggests they do. Figure 12 shows more than half of women in middle and front-line management positions say a manager has taken credit for their work.

Women in senior and middle management are also more likely (about 1 in 3) to have experienced some form of discrimination in the workplace, as shown in Figure 12.

Given the responsibilities many women take on at home, it's also not surprising that survey data indicates women in senior management or executive roles are more likely to say they do not have a good work/life balance compared to men (23% vs. 14%).



ACTION ITEM:

Bring more voices into the mix when it comes to recruitment, succession planning, and rewards to mitigate unconscious and conscious bias.

Gender inequity in the workplace

Figure 11: Percent at position in organization

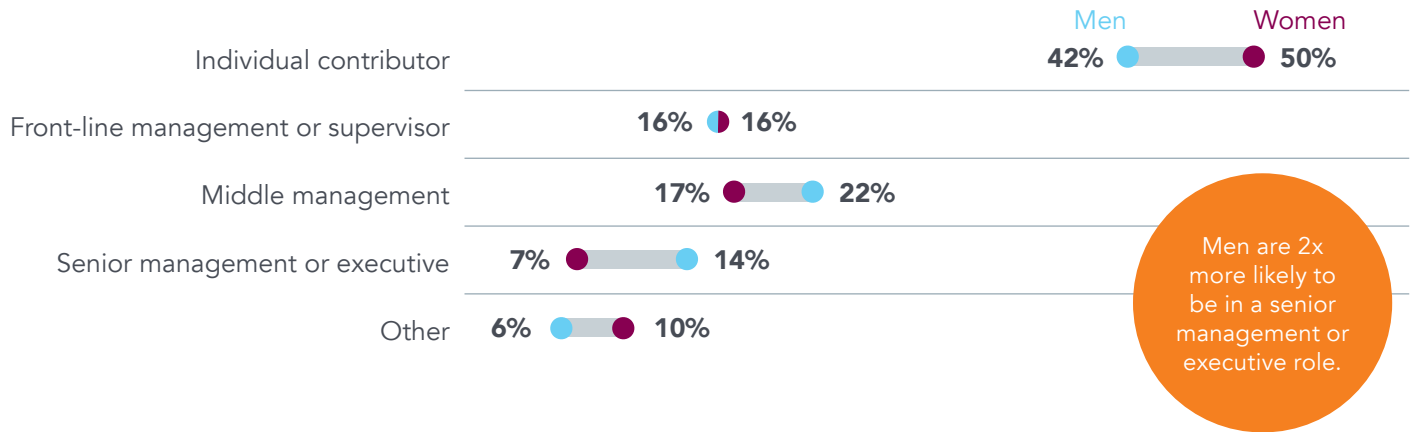
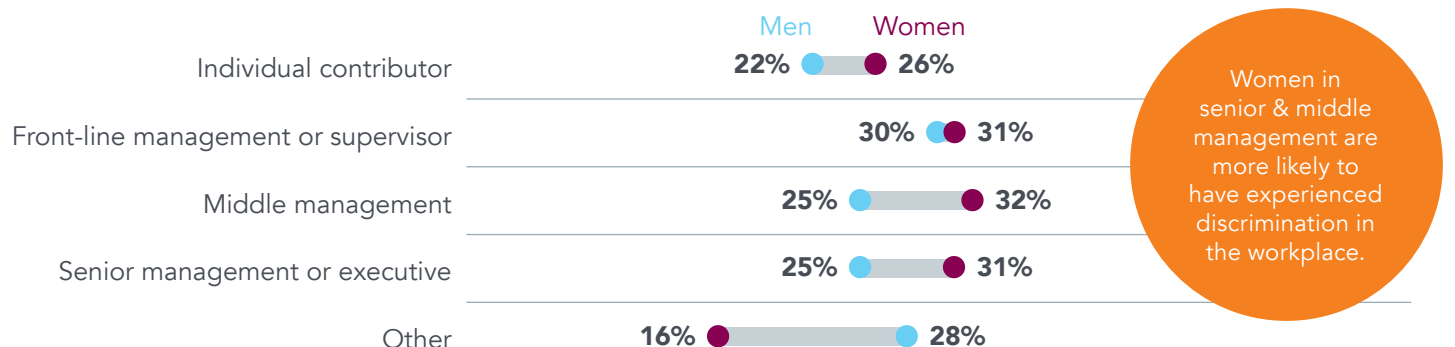


Figure 12: Percent that say a manager has taken credit for work

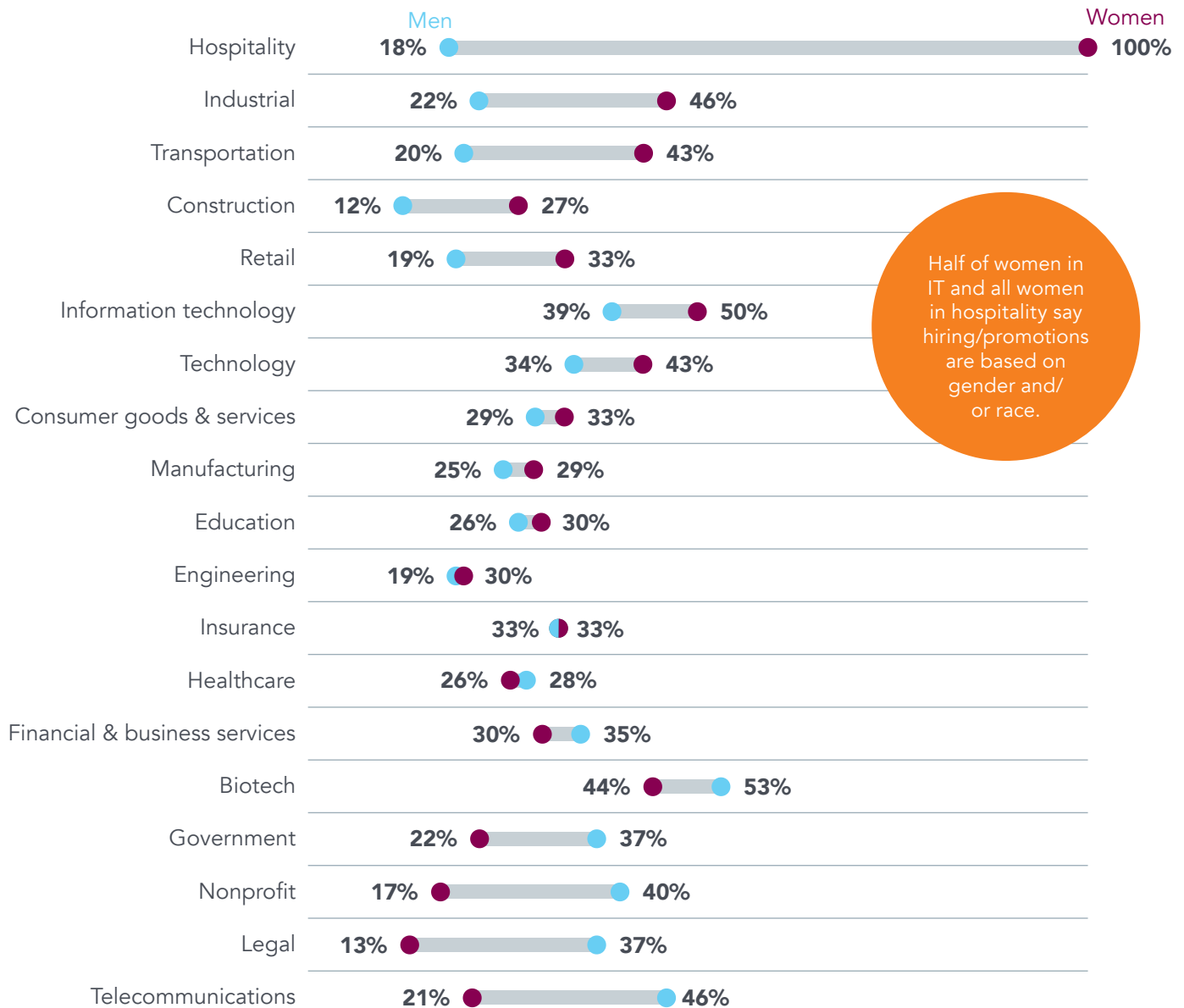


Figure 13: Percent who say they have faced discrimination at work



Discrimination across industries

Figure 14: Percent who feel hiring or promotion decisions are based on gender and/or race at their company

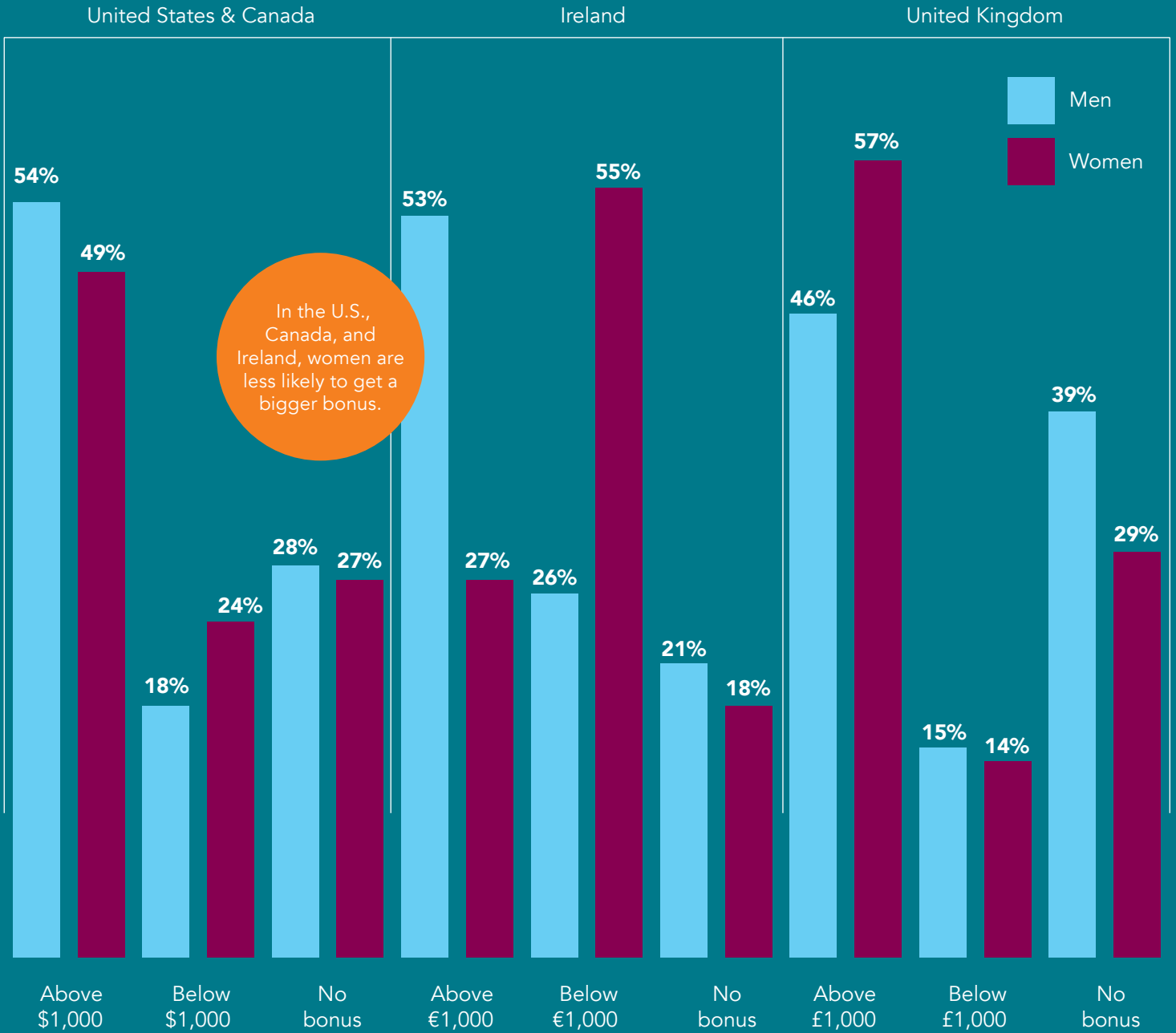


It appears the industry in which you work can also impact work experience by gender. Respondents were asked, "Do you feel that hiring and promotion decisions are based on gender and/or race at your company?" Figure 14 shows half of women in information technology agree with this statement, along with nearly half in biotech and industrial, and 100% in hospitality.

Gender inequities continue to play out when it comes to pay as well. With the exception of the United Kingdom, women surveyed in senior management or executive positions are less likely to receive a larger bonus and more likely to receive a smaller bonus than men (Figure 15).

Bonus payments vary by gender

Figure 15: Annual bonuses for senior management or executives





Connections that support belonging

Clearly, equity in the future of work will address more than just gender differences. Overall, this year's survey found 1 in 4 workers (26%) have felt discriminated over the course of their career. Respondents were asked the main reason they feel discriminated against, out of the following options: **age (52%)**, gender identity (30%), race (29%), political views (20%), sexual orientation (9%).

More than half of all workers chose age as the top factor driving discrimination. While this may not be the type of discrimination that makes headlines, companies should take note that it's the one most commonly felt by the average worker.

It's also important to note that discrimination is not the top reason people don't feel safe at work, either. Respondents were asked to choose the top reason, from the following options: **toxic work culture (40%)**, physical risks (19%), race or gender discrimination (7%), other (37%).

Toxic work culture was the top choice. Further, one could argue that the opposite of a toxic work culture is a civil work culture – one where people practice kindness and respect. Respondents were asked to rate how civil their work culture is on a scale of 0 to 100. Looking at the relationship between gratitude and civility in Figure 16 suggests that doubling down on gratitude at work has the potential to drive greater civility and decrease toxicity.



ACTION ITEM

To increase belonging, take employee recognition out of a hierarchical structure and empower everyone in your organization to call out good work from their peers.

Civility and gratitude go hand in hand

Figure 16: Average civility rating (scale of 0–100) by levels of gratitude



When everyone can recognize good work, belonging increases

Figure 17: Percent of employees who feel like they belong at their company based on who can give recognition



We know frequent recognition can drive greater gratitude, and it turns out recognition that can be given by everyone is also associated with higher levels of belonging across the board (Figure 17). Rather than trickling down the organization, putting recognition in everyone's hands builds connections and crowdsources appreciation.

Doubling down on gratitude has the potential to drive greater civility and decrease toxicity.





Conclusion

Findings from this year's employee survey give HR and business leaders a clear path forward in building a future workplace that's fit for humans. More than pay, free food, or a fun team, workers are looking for meaningful work at organizations where they feel recognized and respected.

The one thing they would change about their work culture? **More appreciation.**

The one thing they wish their managers did more often? **Show more appreciation.**

The future is bright for organizations that leverage human applications to build up gratitude, empower employees to drive their own development, and take an unapologetic stance toward greater equity for all.



About the survey

This survey was directed by the Workhuman Analytics & Research Institute on June 1-17, 2019. This is the 11th deployment of the employee survey since its launch in spring 2011. The respondent sampling of the survey was conducted by independent market research firm Dynata. The final sample of the survey was composed of 3,573 randomly selected fully employed persons in the U.S., U.K., Canada, and Ireland (age 18 or older). The survey has a margin of error of +/- 1.6 percentage points at a 95% level of confidence.

Survey demographics:



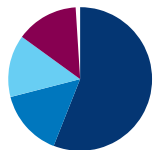
Gender

female (51%), male (48%)



Industries

healthcare (14%), consumer goods & services (9%), financial & business services (9%), technology (8%)



Geographies

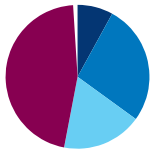
United States (56%), United Kingdom (15%), Canada (14%), Ireland (14%)

Ages



**18-24 (9%), 25-34 (19%),
35-44 (20%), 45-54 (21%),
55-64 (20%), 65 and over (10%)**

Company tenure



**less than a year (8%),
1-4 years (27%),
5-8 years (18%),
more than 8 years (46%)**

Roles in the organization



**individual contributor (45%),
front-line manager or supervisor
(16%), middle manager (19%),
senior manager or executive (10%)**

Note: Totals may not equal 100 due to respondents choosing "other" or no response



About Workhuman and the Workhuman Analytics & Research Institute

Workhuman® helps forward-thinking companies energize their cultures, unlock their employees' passion and potential, and unite their workforce around a shared purpose. With the world's fastest-growing social recognition and continuous performance management platform, our mission is to lead the movement to celebrate the power of humanity in the workplace through gratitude and peer-to-peer recognition. Workhuman® Cloud, a suite of human applications, uncovers provocative workplace data and human insights, delivering tangible results powered by our core belief – the more motivated and valued employees are, the more they can perform the best work of their lives. Workhuman (formerly known as Globoforce) was founded in 1999 and is co-headquartered in Framingham, Mass., and Dublin, Ireland.

The Workhuman Analytics & Research Institute is dedicated to the understanding and application of global workplace practices that create more engaged, productive, and ultimately more human work cultures. In collaboration with leaders in the human resources industry and global research experts, the Workhuman Analytics & Research Institute publishes original research on current trends that affect and influence the employee experience, culture management, and leadership.





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