Belonging Barometer 3.0

Global insights into what matters most, today

As of 2023

EY
Building a better
working world

Latest study by EY of globally employed adults from various organizations around the world finds more workers feel that they belong at their workplaces, yet more than half are still uncomfortable sharing all aspects of their identities while on the job; and three-quarters have felt excluded at work. For organizations that enable flexibility, respondents feel a boosted sense of belonging within the workplace. Two-thirds of workers across generations currently prioritize Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness (DE&I) in choosing a company over one that does not, and it's of even greater importance to Gen Z and Millennials.

These findings indicate a belonging disconnect in the workplace. For leaders looking to maximize engagement, wellbeing and productivity, checking in with colleagues remains paramount. Amidst today's political and economic backdrop, DE&I is a key workplace expectation across all generations and remains an imperative for a longer-term growth strategy.

Key findings

A belonging disconnect is emerging in the workplace.

Almost half (41%) of workers say that work is where they feel the greatest sense of belonging, second only to home (62%).

Global workers feel the **greatest sense** of belonging with the following communities:

62% in their home

41% at their work

31% in their neighborhood
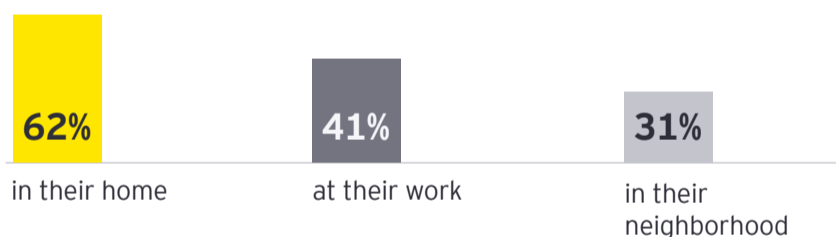
However, over half of global workers (56%) feel that they can't share, or are reluctant to share, dimensions of their identity while at work for fear of it holding them back. This number is even higher for LGBTQ+ workers (77%).

56%
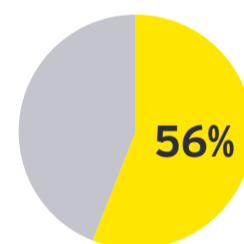
Top 3 dimensions that respondents feel the **least comfortable** sharing at work – family's socioeconomic status, religion and political party.

In today's market, checking in matters most, and making even small efforts with team members can make all the difference.
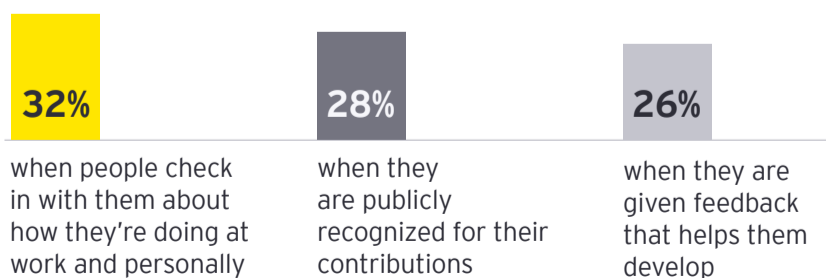
Three in four respondents (75%) report having felt excluded in their workplace.

75%
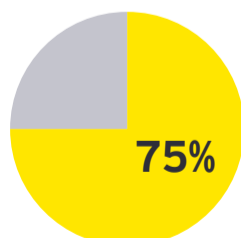
Top reasons why respondents feel or would feel **most excluded** in their workplace – when they are not recognized (publicly or privately) for their accomplishments, when there is a meeting with peers and they're not included and not being invited to after-hours work events (e.g., drinks, networking, birthday party).

Checking in about how someone is doing at work and personally is the top contributor to building a sense of belonging at work.

Activities that **most contribute** to workers' sense of belonging in the workplace:

32% when people check in with them about how they're doing at work and personally

28% when they are publicly recognized for their contributions

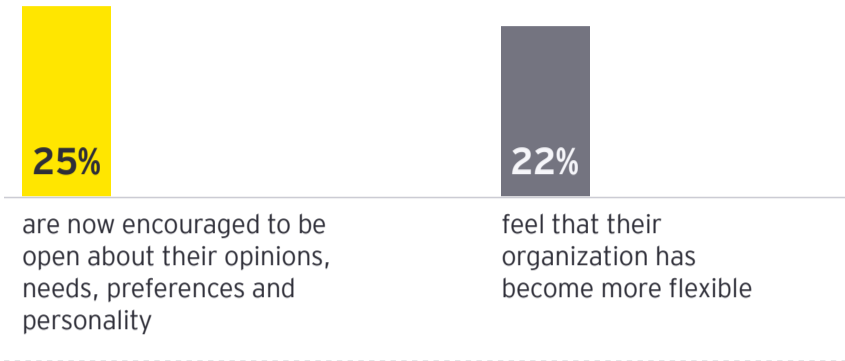**26%** when they are given feedback that helps them develop

Methodology

The EY study includes a combined sample size of more than 5,000 globally employed adults (18-64 years of age) in the following countries: US, UK, Germany, Singapore and India. The survey was conducted in May 2023. Generations are generally defined as: Gen Z (age 18-26), Millennials (age 27-42), Gen X (age 43-58) and baby boomers (age 59-64). The study was conducted and analyzed by Big Village (formerly ENGINE), a consultative research collaborator, along with Prosek Partners.

Enabling flexibility increases workers' sense of belonging.

More than half (64%) of respondents say their sense of belonging at work has increased due to shifts in hybrid working.
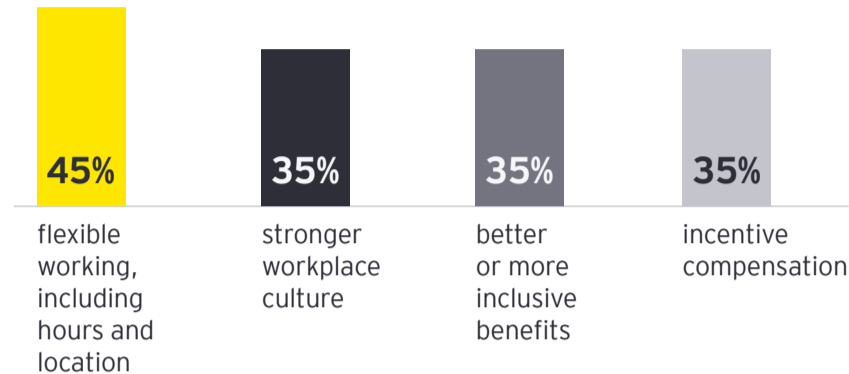
Workers indicate feeling a greater sense of belonging due to:

25%
are now encouraged to be open about their opinions, needs, preferences and personality

22%
feel that their organization has become more flexible

Only 12% reported feeling a decreased sense of belonging due to shifts in hybrid working. Top reasons for a decrease include – unsure about their job security, not free to share their opinions or true self and increase in remote working vs. in-person teaming.

Almost half (45%) of respondents shared that flexible working is the top motivator for instilling DE&I within their own teams, revealing an important indicator about the lasting impact of the pandemic, and an important call-out for those managing people and leading teams.

Top ranking motivators, cited by workers, for instilling DE&I on team(s) include:

45%
flexible working, including hours and location

35%
stronger workplace culture

35%
better or more inclusive benefits

35%
incentive compensation

Equitable pay may be the fastest route to addressing inequity; confidence in upward mobility may be wavering.

Almost half (40%) of respondents point to equitable pay as the top contributor to a sense of equity in their workplace.

The following aspects **most contribute** to making workers feel that there is equity in their workplace:

40%
equitable pay

34%
equitable performance evaluation

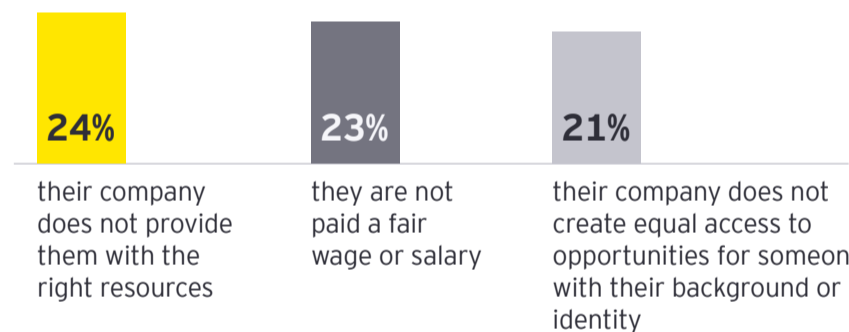**30%**
equitable staffing or work assignments
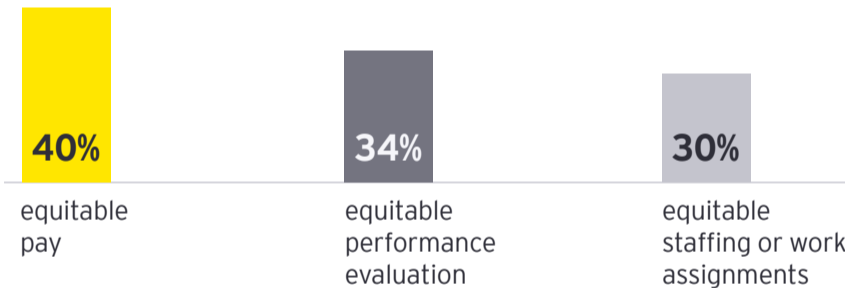
6% say they do not feel that there is inequity in their workplace.

Two-thirds (66%) of workers still feel that there are barriers to advancement within their company.

Most commonly perceived barriers to advancement within companies include:

24%
their company does not provide them with the right resources

23%
they are not paid a fair wage or salary

21%
their company does not create equal access to opportunities for someone with their background or identity

34% say they do not face any significant barriers to advancement.

The future talent pool depends on organizations prioritizing DE&I.

Workers are more likely to choose a company that prioritizes DE&I in their job search, with 63% of respondents saying they would choose a company that prioritizes DE&I over one that does not.

Overall, **74%** of respondents say their company's prioritization of DE&I factors into their choice to join or work there.

26%

74%
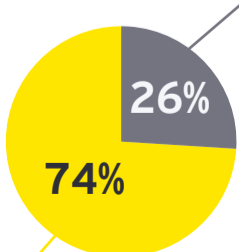
Only **26%** of respondents say a company's prioritization of DE&I would not factor into their choice to join or work there.

While it's clear that DE&I is critical for workers across generations, responses indicate that it's of greatest importance to younger, "purpose-driven" generations like Gen Z and Millennials, who are actively choosing to work at firms which prioritize DE&I.

Gen Z	**73%**
Millennial	**68%**
Gen X	**53%**
Baby Boomers	**46%**