

Achievers

The Great Resignation continues as employees seek growth, balance, and support

*2022 Engagement and Retention Report
from Achievers Workforce Institute*



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Introduction

This is truly an unprecedented time in global history to be leading an organization or heading up a people function. Between the ongoing pandemic, the Great Resignation, a worsening labor shortage, and a workforce on the edge of burnout, the magnitude of the need to provide employees with support and safe passage through the turmoil around them is of epic proportion. It can feel nearly impossible to know where to invest, and where to prioritize limited time and resources.

This is hero's work and not for the faint of heart.

This report, the Achievers Workforce Institute's fifth annual Engagement and Retention Report, is laser focused on providing you with the data, tools, and recommended actions you need to determine your best steps forward to effectively navigate this moment in time and move the needle on retention and engagement.

So, what did we learn about these critical factors in this new workplace era? Above all, this culmination of crises has clearly inspired people to think about the bigger picture and the deeper value and meaning of work.



On the flip side, our research shows that employees who are explicitly not planning to job hunt this year are those who feel valued and supported by their employers.



Dr. Natalie Baumgartner
Chief Workforce Scientist



What can employers do to win the hearts and minds of their people? When queried, the number-one ask of employees was for more direct recognition from their manager. Developing a culture of recognition, by aiming for the best practice of providing at least one monthly recognition per employee, can unquestionably help to enhance feelings of inclusion and value.

While the experience of being valued tops the list in 2022, last year's finding regarding a dire need for a healthier blend of work and personal life was maintained with work-life balance still sitting top of mind for employees. For those that have it, it is the number-one reason for staying in a role. For those who don't, it nears the top of list for leaving. And balance is hard won these days with labor shortages leading to 41% of respondents working longer hours and holding greater responsibility at work.

When we look further, beyond a desire for being valued and managing a balanced life, 41% of employees report that they also lack workplace support for achieving their personal and professional goals. Previous Achievers Workforce Institute research has highlighted the importance of support — organization, manager, and collegial — in driving employee wellbeing, which is a key area of focus for HR today. Business leaders must ensure they are providing holistic and comprehensive support for employees — regardless of role or level, to ensure they feel cared for, well resourced, and able to receive help when needed.

And help is needed for everyone. No one is immune to the profound impact the state of the world is having on the wellbeing and productivity of people around the globe. As we all navigate these new waters, with a pandemic, labor shortage, and increased turnover surrounding us, it's vital to stay connected to humanity in the workplace. We simply cannot continuously ask more of employees and expect them to perform at high levels under mounting pressure. We must pause, take stock, and remind ourselves — and our people — about the importance of connection. All organizations, and each of us, must invest in the development of a culture of belonging, built on the pillars of being welcomed, known, included, supported, and connected. I challenge all HR and business leaders to embrace these crucial truths in their day-to-day actions to provide employees with the deep sense of belonging at work that we all crave; that we each deserve.

Without a doubt, organizations that infuse a sense of belonging in their employee body benefit from a positive impact on business results, including increased productivity and retention. However, even more importantly, this focus on connection and belonging has a positive impact on employees' lives, their wellbeing, and their levels of stress. Together we have the opportunity to create a world where work extends beyond an eight-hour obligation to a safe and comfortable place where every employee can experience true belonging and thrive — the ripple effects of which will reach far beyond business results, right into their homes and personal lives.

This report will give you the insights and tools you need to start building a culture of belonging inside your organization to not only improve performance and retention, but to also empower a workforce of people to feel truly welcomed, known, included, supported, and connected — to belong, and feel it every day.

Key findings

1. Two-thirds of employees have one foot out the door

Intention to job hunt remains at an all-time high with 66% saying they might job hunt in 2022, just below the 69% who planned to look in 2021, indicating that the Great Resignation is extending into the foreseeable future.

2. Culture is suffering due to lack of communication and connection

Half of employees say culture has deteriorated during the pandemic, placing blame on a lack of communication, employee input, and meaningful connection. There are clear ways for employers to address this issue, if they're willing to put in the effort and resources.

3. Employees who feel valued and supported will stay in their job

Work-life balance is reported as the number-one reason to stay in a role, followed by recognition and manager relationships. People stay because they feel meaningfully supported and valued. Creating this type of culture is a protective factor in the midst of ongoing crisis.

4. Employees are looking for career growth as the main pull factor

When it comes to what pulls employees toward new jobs, career progression is the number-one reason cited for job hunting. People are re-evaluating what they want and need from their job and are looking for roles that better fulfil and challenge them.

5. Labor shortages cost employees time and effort without additional reward

A whopping 41% of employees say labor shortages are impacting their jobs with the most common costs being taking on extra work without additional compensation or promotion and longer work hours. Employers must maintain a key eye on burnout risk and offer critical support to employees.

6. Employers still struggle to take action on feedback

Fewer than one in five employers is consistently taking action on feedback. Achievers Workforce Institute research shows that inaction drives disengagement with employees feeling unheard and unvalued.



Career progression is the #1 pull factor attracting employees to new jobs

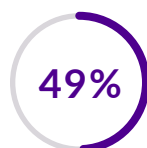
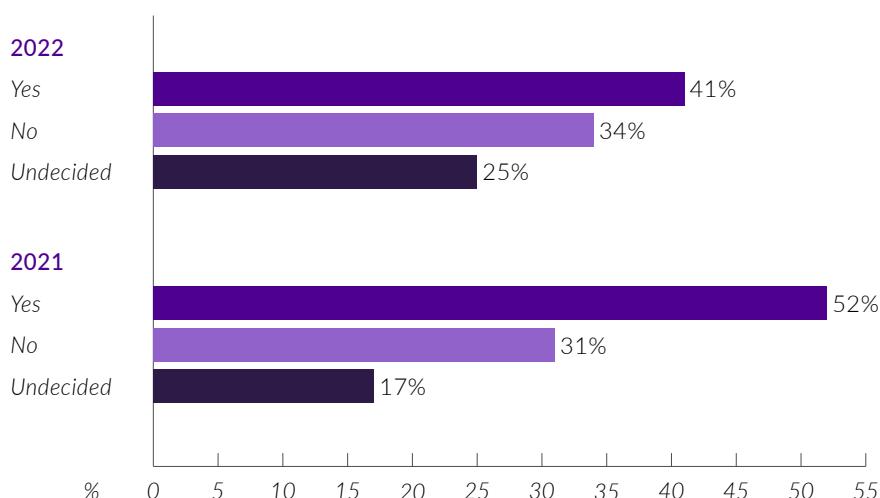


of respondents are considering a job hunt in 2022

According to our survey of 5,500 employees, two-thirds have one foot out the door. This is statistically comparable to the 69% who said the same in 2021.

With such low levels of job commitment, employers could face a second year of significant turnover, further challenging them during an already demanding year. Business results are likely to suffer during a second year of high turnover, stress, and burnout.

Do you plan to look for a new job in the next year?



of employees looked for a new job during the pandemic

With 49% of employees saying they job hunted during the pandemic, the Great Resignation has a significant hold on employers worldwide. This aligns closely with those who said they would job hunt in last year's survey, demonstrating the accuracy of this data and high follow-through on intention to job hunt.

#1 reason for job hunting is career progression

When it comes to the biggest pull factors for employees, career progression tops the list. Identifying opportunities for promotion and growth is top of mind for those who plan to job hunt in 2022. This was the number-one rationale given by job seekers, by a significant amount, indicating that employees are set on taking the driver's seat when it comes to their career.

Communication and connection are to blame for culture suffering during the pandemic



48%

of respondents say company culture has deteriorated since the start of the pandemic

With half of employees saying company culture has deteriorated, it is vital that employers invest time and resources into ensuring they intentionally develop and maintain a culture that supports a powerful employee experience. The top reasons given for deteriorating culture are lack of communication, lack of employee input, and failure to connect with remote employees. Employers that are not committed to communication, feedback, and connection will struggle to engage and retain employees in 2022 and beyond.



20%

Just 20% of employees are highly engaged

Engagement, which is highly correlated with retention, remains low with only 20% reporting they are very engaged. This is on par with last year when 21% said the same.

When asked how employers can increase engagement, the number-one answer provided by employees was to improve company culture. Certainly, the path to a stronger company culture differs for every organization and requires significant employee input. However, the need to develop a culture strategy is universal and only 52% of companies in this study have even asked employees what they wish to see improved in their company culture. Without accessing ongoing employee input, the path to improved culture remains unclear and HR leaders are at risk of investing in initiatives that are not meaningful to the employees they intend to serve.



52%

of employees say they stay in a job because they feel valued and supported

More than half of employees who are committed to their roles say that commitment is driven by feeling meaningfully supported or valued. Employers who create a culture of support and inclusion will secure higher rates of talent retention. Communication, employee input, and connection are all key to creating that culture. By investing in two-way communication, acting on employee input, and encouraging connection at all levels, employers can ensure employees feel the support and sense of inclusion they're seeking.

Inclusion, support, and connection are high-risk factors for belonging

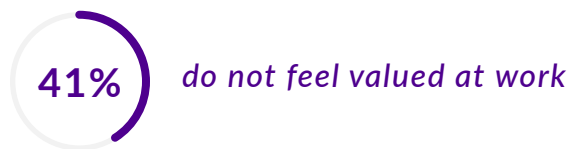
AWI established through the 2021 Culture Report that belonging is a strong factor in driving employee retention. The Institute defines belonging as an experience of connection, security, and community — it's about feeling at home in one's place, without reservation. So, data showing that less than a quarter (23%) of employees feel a sense of belonging is deeply concerning. When asked which pillars of belonging their employers did support, nearly three quarters said they felt welcomed and known in the workplace. However, just over half said that they felt included or valued, supported, and connected at work.

There is a clear need to improve the sense of belonging at work, and the data indicates specific actions HR leaders can take to build a culture of belonging.



1.

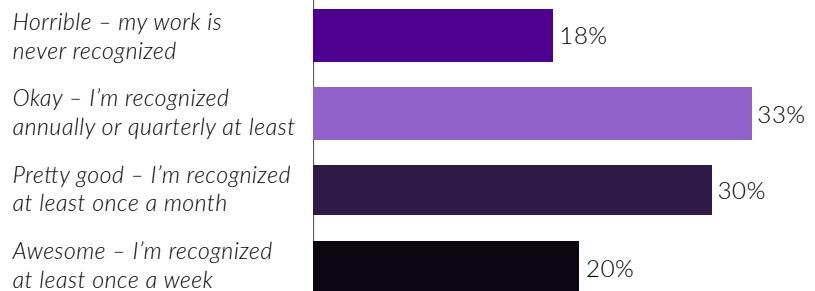
LEVERAGE RECOGNITION TO DRIVE FEELING INCLUDED AND VALUED



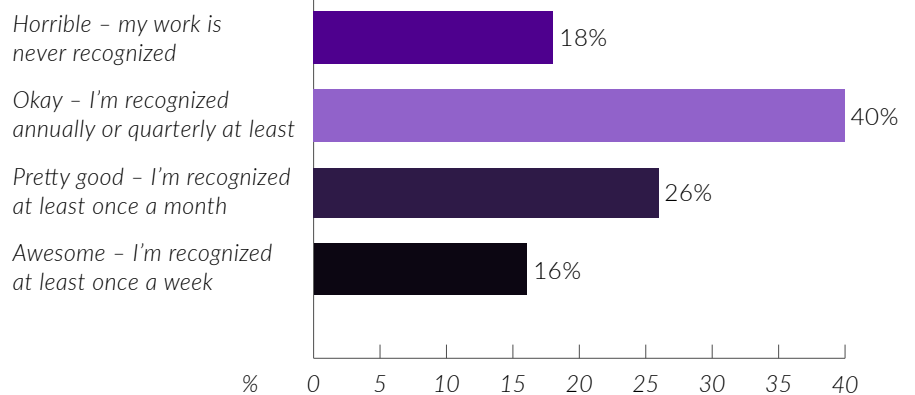
According to AWI research, the number-one way to drive feeling valued is through direct recognition from a manager. This makes it clear that recognition should top the list of HR priorities for 2022.

How good is your manager/company at recognizing your work?

2022



2021



The AWI Empowering Employee Wellbeing in the New World of Work report shows that employers with a recognition software solution outperform their competitors on both recognition and wellbeing. Investing in a recognition tool is a good way to get up to speed quickly if this is an area where your organization is falling behind.

2.

FOCUS ON THE
THREE FACTORS
OF SUPPORT
TO ENSURE
EMPLOYEES HAVE
THE RESOURCES
THEY NEED TO
SUCCEED



Just 59% say they are supported at work in achieving their personal and professional development goals

The AWI Empowering Employee Wellbeing in the New World of Work report identified three factors of support that are crucial to employee success:

Organizational support

From benefits to company-wide programs, success in this pillar requires both investment and communication. Ensure employees are aware of the programs and resources available and use feedback surveys to find out what offerings will have the biggest impact.

Manager support

The four factors for manager empowerment are contact, recognition, professional development, and coaching. Offer consistent training to people leaders to ensure employees get the best possible manager support.

Colleague support

Creating a culture of support, where employees feel comfortable asking for help, is crucial. Break down silos with employee connection tools and offer recognition for helping others to reinforce that behavior.

Ensure you are meeting all three areas of support to ensure employees experience a consistent level of care and resources.

At a time when child and elder care is especially fraught as the pandemic has been closing schools and limiting available support, it is important to highlight a shortcoming in many organizations. Only 55% of employees say their company supports them in meeting their caregiving obligations. This leaves almost half (45%) feeling unsupported in their personal life requirements.



3. INVEST IN RESOURCES TO CONNECT EMPLOYEES IN-PERSON AND REMOTELY



feel less connected with their company or colleagues since the start of the pandemic

Of those companies that shifted to remote work during the pandemic, 71% will maintain at least some remote-work component in their future work plans. This means that the need to develop ways to ensure connection for remote employees must be a critical and long-term priority for all HR and people leaders.

Within the world of connection, manager and peer connection are both of great importance. Manager one-to-one meetings should happen at least every two weeks, with a focus on providing specific support to employees where and when they most need help. Facilitating peer connection can be more challenging, which is why tools exist to match employees with their peers to build cross-functional relationships. Ensure recognitions are being given for people who go above and beyond to build internal connections. Encourage teams to hold their own social gatherings, whether in person or remote, once a month to help build relationships outside of task collaboration.



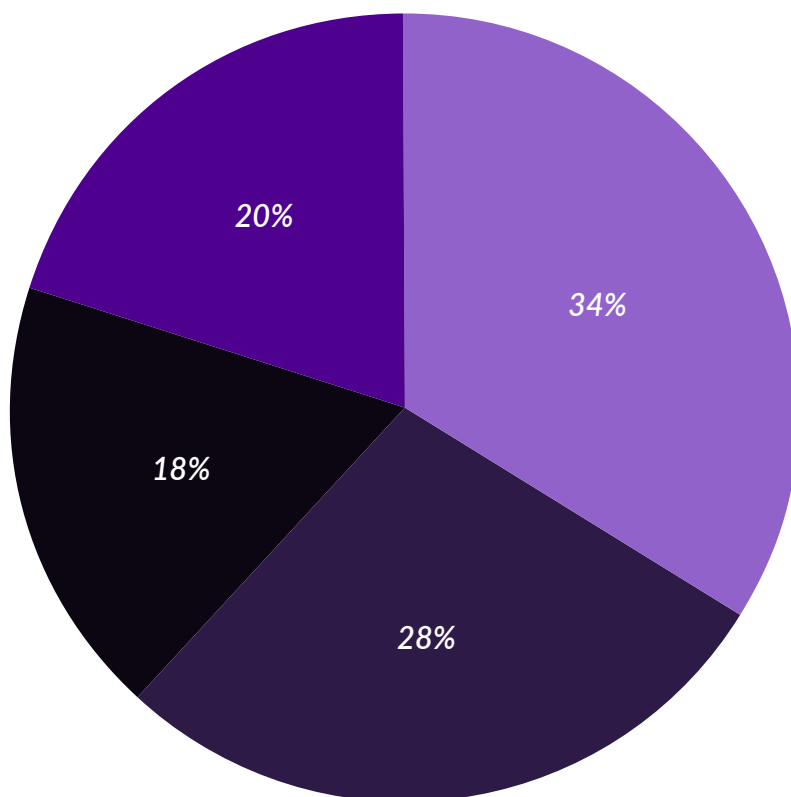
Making feedback central: ask, answer, act



Just 18% of employees say their company consistently acts on feedback

Feedback is one of the most essential tools available to drive high-impact action in the workplace. You must ask about what people need and how they feel, and then acknowledge it and, very importantly, take action on it to solve problems and build trust inside your organization.

How good is your manager/company at acting on feedback you give?



- (20%) Horrible – they never do anything with our feedback
- (34%) Okay – they talk about feedback and make a few changes based on it
- (28%) Pretty good – they generally address our feedback
- (18%) Awesome – they always acknowledge our feedback and take action to improve

This is a clear area of improvement for employers, who are falling behind employee expectations.

One example of this employee-employer disconnect is that 72% of respondents say being paid market value and/or rewarded frequently would strengthen their sense of belonging, but just 52% say their company has prioritized this. A challenge we have seen in the past is that employers choose not to ask about compensation because of a concern that if they don't take action on the survey results, they may make employees feel ignored and invisible. Start the conversation and be clear about what you can do to address the issue today, and in the future.

Achievers Workforce Institute has determined a three-step cycle for gathering and responding to feedback that is simple to apply and can help organizations meet their employees' needs.

1. Ask

Regularly gather feedback through a variety of methods, from pulse surveys and ad hoc survey tools to Q&A sessions and feedback panels.

2. Answer

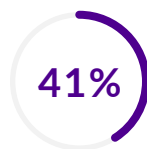
Employees want to feel heard. Before you start using the information gathered, reflect back to employees the key things you heard and how that data is going to be used. Not every piece of feedback can be acted upon, but it can all be addressed to show you're listening.

3. Act

Wherever possible, identify team-level micro-actions that will have an immediate impact on your employee base. Other feedback may require larger scale, slower actions at an organizational level, but when you can take action at the frontline your employees will see and feel that effect directly.



Employees are struggling under conditions driven by labor shortages



have felt the impact of the labor shortage

For those employees struggling with the labor shortage, 70% have had to take on more responsibilities without extra pay or promotion and 69% have had to work longer hours. This additional burden contributes to issues around work-life balance and support, which we know are powerful retention factors.

Employers must be conscious and conscientious about employee workloads. Many employees don't mind putting in extra hours or effort for a short-term project or when there is a brief period of being understaffed. However, the pandemic is causing ongoing labor issues that will certainly exacerbate stress and burnout if left unattended.

People are doing more but don't feel seen, recognized, or rewarded for their efforts.

What can employers do about this?

1. Acknowledge

Ensure employees know that you're aware of their workloads and are working to alleviate the burden.

2. Assist

Take steps to offer support, resources, and assistance where possible. This could mean bringing in temporary staff, adjusting deadlines, or changing job responsibilities. The longer you leave an employee under-resourced the more you push them toward burnout.

3. Recognize

Recognition can go a long way toward ensuring employees feel seen and valued. Make sure your recognitions follow the AWI best practices: timely, specific, public, and values-aligned.

4. Compensate

Employees today are doing more than a year or two ago, often with the same job title and pay. In the short term they may be willing to adapt and address the organization's needs, but in the long term this could be a push factor driving them to look for a new role that more appropriately compensates the work they are actually delivering.

Recognition and feedback: the consistent human needs

A question that the Achievers Workforce Institute often receives from our community of business leaders is around the global trends in recognition and feedback. Are these truly universal needs, or is there a North American filter affecting our belief of how important these factors are to employees?

In the next section we will break out country trends and, while there is some variety, overall, you will see that needs of the global employee population are more similar than different.

There is a consistent global trend that recognition and feedback matter deeply. These are the foundation of your employee experience and should be a focus for every country in which you operate.

We asked respondents around the world to agree or disagree with the statement: "When I'm recognized for a specific action, I'm more likely to take that action again in the future." We found that those in every country surveyed were in agreement. Recognition is a universally beneficial business practice.

HR and business leaders who are committed to improving the employee experience and increasing retention in 2022 must invest in tools and resources to drive recognition and feedback in their organization.

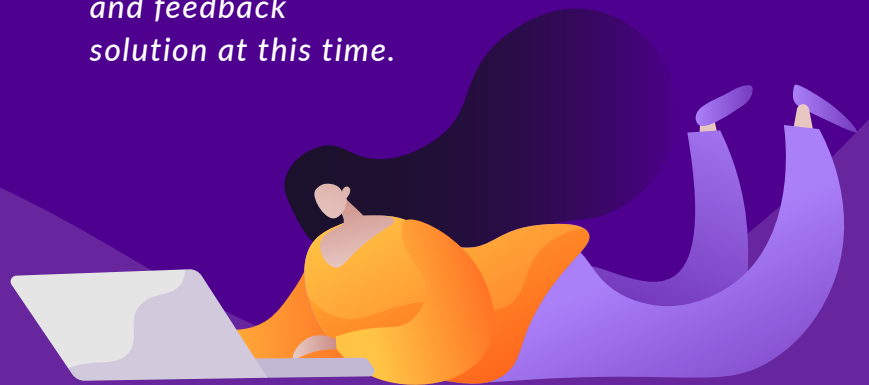


Creating a culture that attracts and retains

As business leaders continue to face workforce challenges from the Great Resignation to labor shortages, attracting and retaining top talent is business critical. As we saw in this report, support and inclusion are two crucial ingredients for retention. Recognition and feedback are two tools to improve these areas and employers cannot underestimate the value of implementing a recognition program and feedback solution at this time.

Also key to retention is having a strong culture of belonging, built on a foundation of communication, employee input, and connection. When every employee feels welcomed, known, included, supported, and connected, they are more likely to stay in their roles and to do the best work of their lives.

Employers cannot underestimate the value of implementing a recognition program and feedback solution at this time.

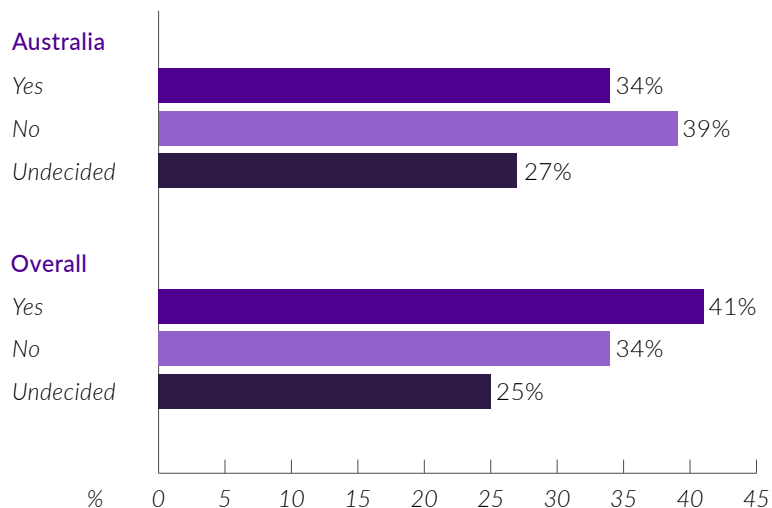


APPENDIX: COUNTRY TRENDS

Australia



Do you plan to look for a new job in 2022?



#1 reason for leaving a job:

Career progression

#1 reason for staying in a role:

Work/life balance

job hunted during the pandemic

(Average: 49%)

20%

*I am very
engaged*

(Average: 20%)

21%

*I feel a strong sense
of belonging*

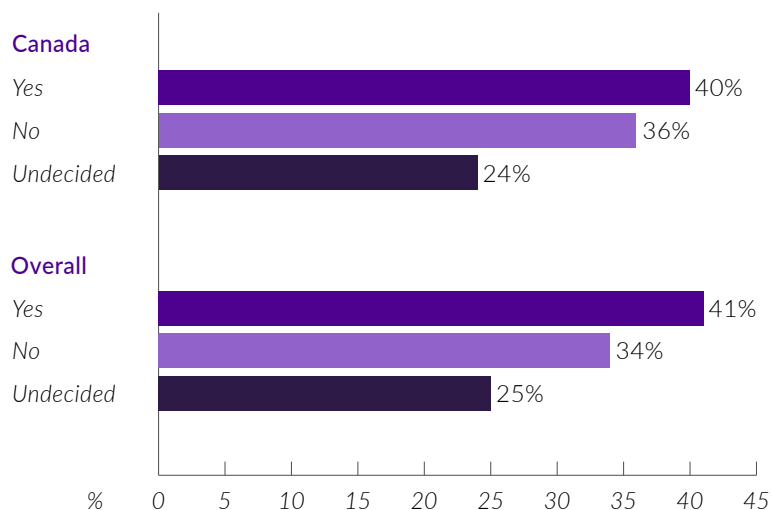
(Average: 23%)

APPENDIX: COUNTRY TRENDS

Canada



Do you plan to look for a new job in 2022?



#1 reason for leaving a job:

Career progression

#1 reason for staying in a role:

Work/life balance



job hunted during the pandemic

(Average: 49%)



I am very engaged

(Average: 20%)



I feel a strong sense of belonging

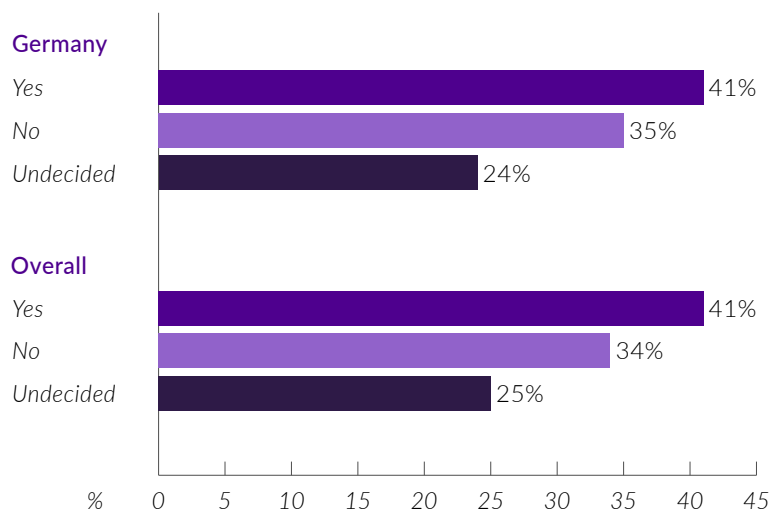
(Average: 23%)

APPENDIX: COUNTRY TRENDS

Germany



Do you plan to look for a new job in 2022?



#1 reason for leaving a job:

Career progression



#1 reason for staying in a role:

Work/life balance

job hunted during the pandemic

(Average: 49%)



I am very engaged

(Average: 20%)



I feel a strong sense of belonging

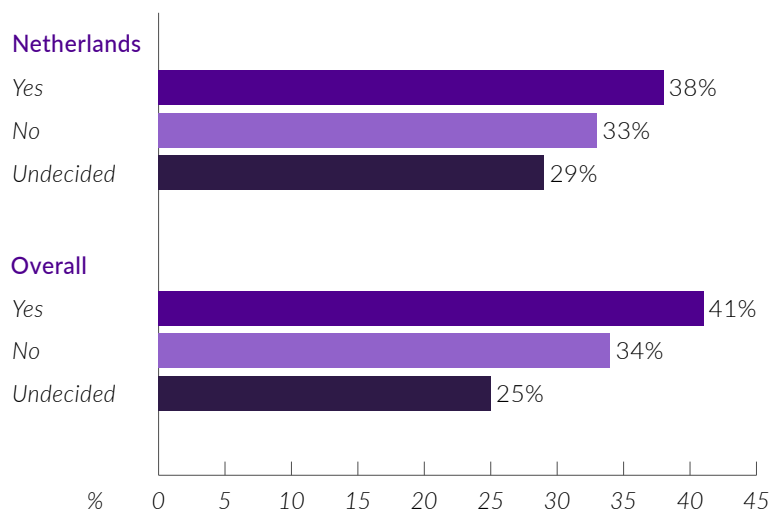
(Average: 23%)

APPENDIX: COUNTRY TRENDS

Netherlands



Do you plan to look for a new job in 2022?



#1 reason for leaving a job:

Career progression

#1 reason for staying in a role:

I am recognized for my work

50%

job hunted during the pandemic

(Average: 49%)

22%

I am very engaged

(Average: 20%)

21%

I feel a strong sense of belonging

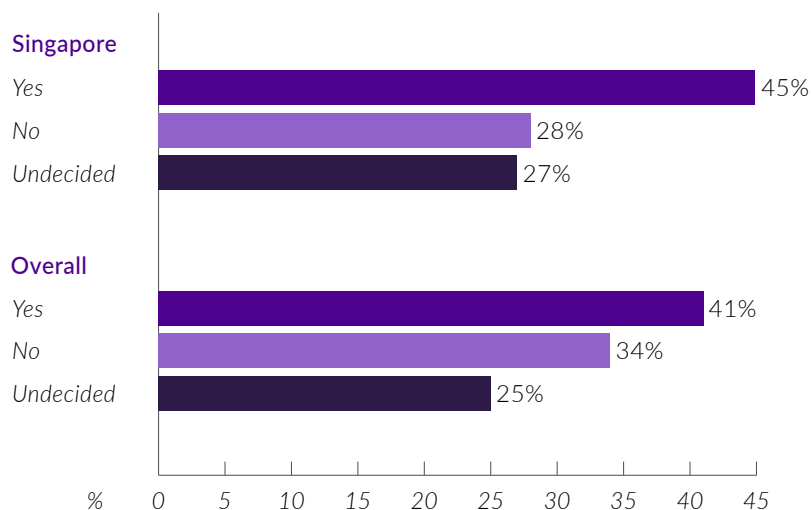
(Average: 23%)

APPENDIX: COUNTRY TRENDS

Singapore



Do you plan to look for a new job in 2022?



#1 reason for leaving a job:

Career progression

#1 reason for staying in a role:

I am recognized for my work



job hunted during the pandemic

(Average: 49%)



I am very engaged

(Average: 20%)



I feel a strong sense of belonging

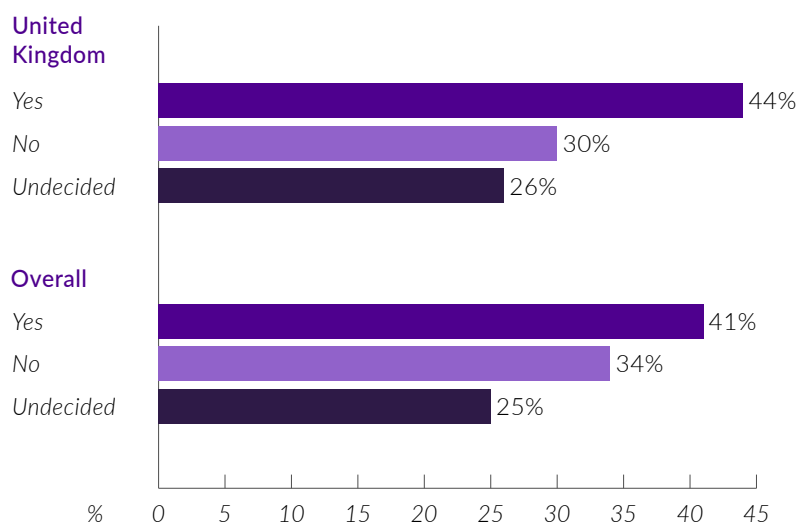
(Average: 23%)

APPENDIX: COUNTRY TRENDS

United Kingdom



Do you plan to look for a new job in 2022?



#1 reason for leaving a job:

Career progression

#1 reason for staying in a role:

Work/life balance



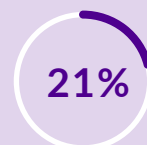
job hunted during the pandemic

(Average: 49%)



I am very engaged

(Average: 20%)

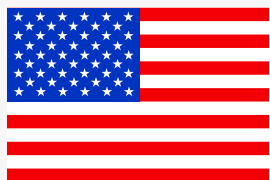


I feel a strong sense of belonging

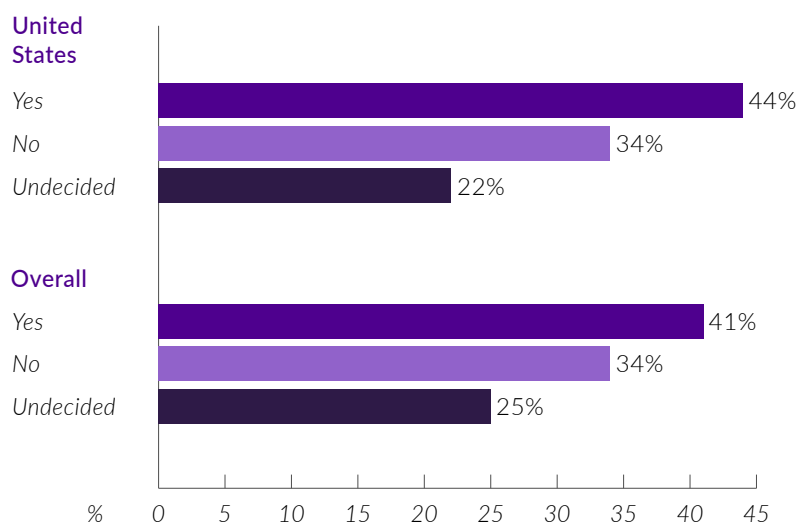
(Average: 23%)

APPENDIX: COUNTRY TRENDS

United States



Do you plan to look for a new job in 2022?



#1 reason for leaving a job:

Career progression



#1 reason for staying in a role:

Work/life balance

job hunted during the pandemic

(Average: 49%)



I am very engaged

(Average: 20%)



I feel a strong sense of belonging

(Average: 23%)

About the Report

5,500 respondents were surveyed in December 2021 and January 2022:



500

Australia



1,000

Canada



1,000

Germany



500

Netherlands



500

Singapore



1,000

United Kingdom



1,000

United States

About Achievers

Great culture is the ultimate driver of organizational success. Achievers' employee voice and recognition solutions bring your organization's values and strategy to life by activating employee participation and accelerating a culture of performance.

Achievers leverages the science behind behavior change, so your people and your organization can experience sustainable, data-driven business results anywhere in the world. Integrated insights fuel smarter solutions that deliver just-in-time nudges to the entire organization and an industry-best customer success and support team guides you on every step of the journey. [Contact us today.](#)

Global offices

Canada

99 Atlantic Ave, Suite 700
Toronto, ON M6K 3J8
Canada
Phone: 1 888 622 3343

UK/EMEA

2 New Bailey, 4 Stanley Street
Manchester, M3 5JL
United Kingdom
Phone: +44 344 3815061

Australia & Singapore

Level 2, 534 Church St,
Richmond, Victoria, 3121
Australia
Phone: +61 3 9107 4418

Achievers

Toronto - Pleasanton - London - Melbourne
experts@achievers.com | www.achievers.com

