



The Definitive Series:
**Employee
Engagement**
Full Research Report

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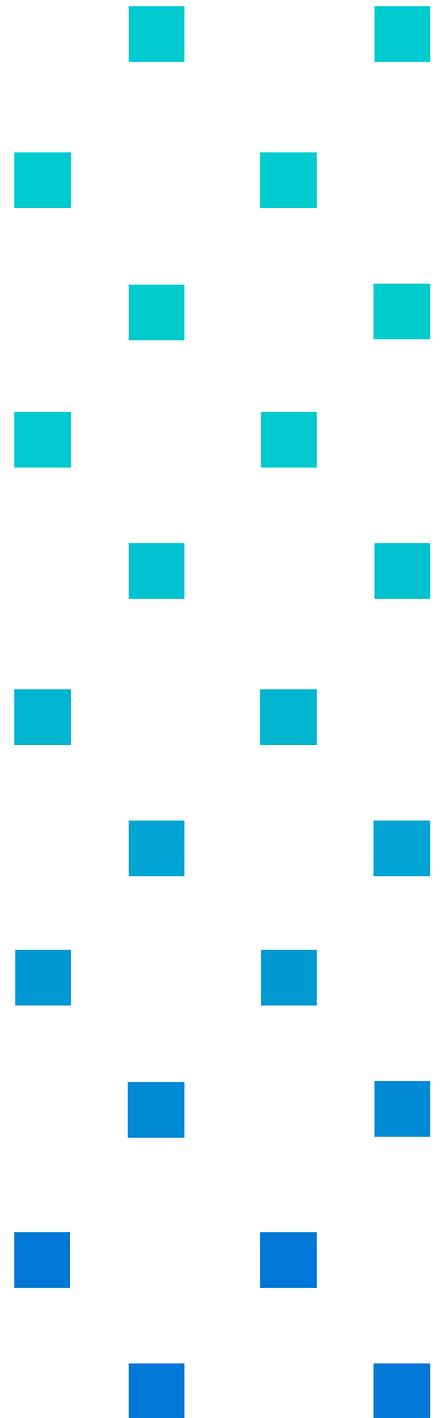
Introduction

It has always been important for organizations to be able to get the very best from their people. Today, however, the need for organizations to keep their people while keeping them productive has become paramount. Regardless of the country they work in or the organization, each employee will have to do more, and yet do so in ways that do not cause burnout and voluntarily departure from the organization. In other words, organizations are going to have to become experts at employee engagement.

In this report, we will describe what the research and practitioner communities have learned about employee engagement over the last three decades.

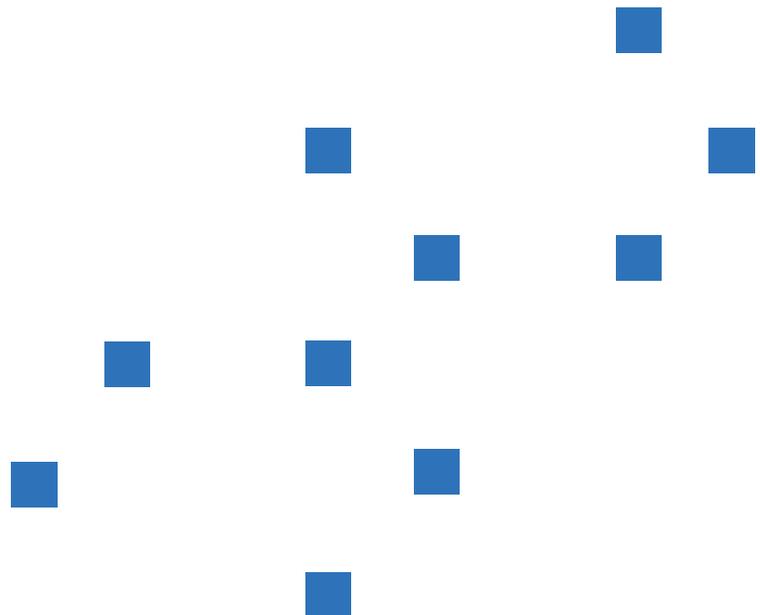
On the research side, a review of the academic literature reveals a large volume of methodologically sound papers. What we lack is a summary of the most definitive discoveries. The practitioner community has produced a similarly large number of “white papers.” However, the majority of these lack methodological rigor and objectivity, raising concerns about the credibility of their conclusions.

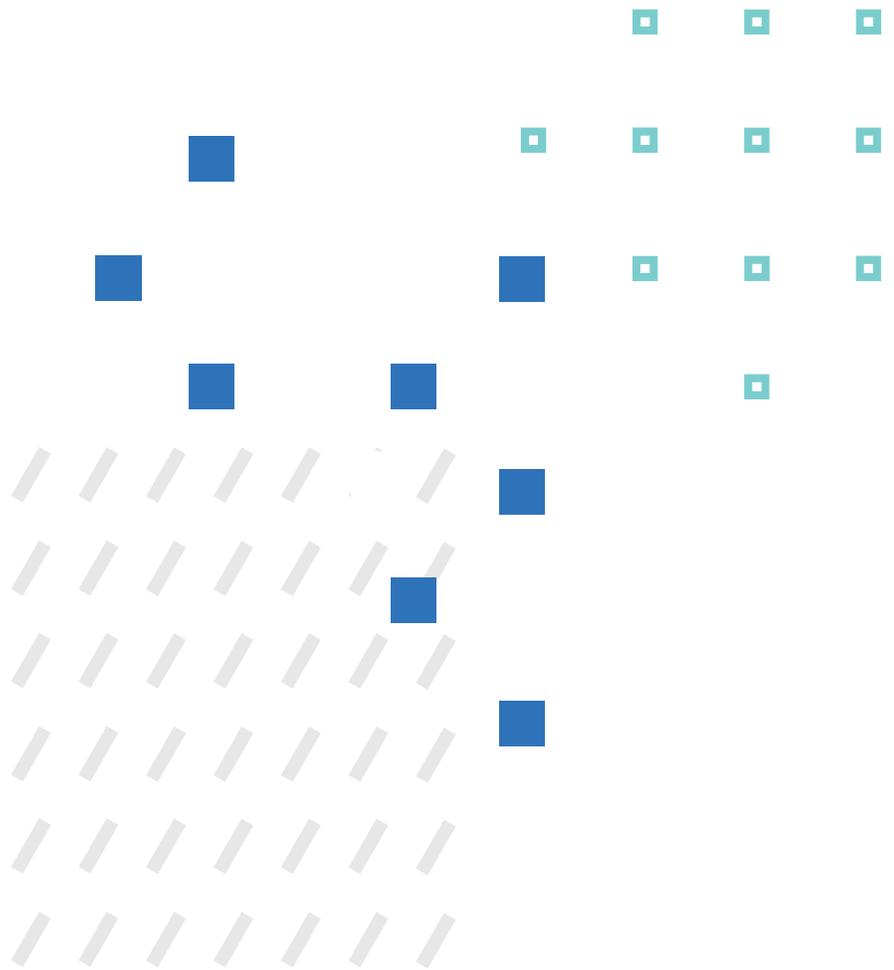
Our aim in this report is to summarize all available research from both the academic and practitioner communities so that organizations can build their engagement efforts on the foundation of the best possible intelligence.



We have organized these definitive discoveries as follows:

- 1** What is engagement? There are many competing definitions, and distinctions drawn as a result of those definitions. A common definition will serve all organizations.
- 2** When engagement is reliably measured, what do we know that it drives?
- 3** What are the most reliable and most valid questions to measure engagement?
- 4** Which aspects of work are unrelated to engagement?
- 5** Which aspects of work are highly related to engagement? Indeed, which aspects appear to actually drive engagement?





1. What is engagement?

A review of the literature reveals many competing definitions of “engagement.” Some equate this term with employee satisfaction. Others acknowledge that satisfaction is a part of engagement, but add concepts such as advocacy, expressed commitment to stay with the organization, and pride in the organization, then address these concepts with specific items in an engagement survey. Still others introduce more qualitative elements such as “discretionary effort” or “purpose and passion.” This lack of consistency has created confusion among both researchers and practitioners.

For the purposes of this research paper, we are using this definition of employee engagement: **the emotional state of mind that causes people to do their best work, sustainably.**

The simplest definition of engagement is the best. Engagement is the set of feelings individuals have toward themselves, their work, and their coworkers that causes them to do their best work, and to do so in such a way that they find fulfilling. This definition is based on the thesis that people’s feelings affect both their behavior today and their future behavior. Thus, the word “engagement” captures the twin concepts of “how does the person feel right now” and “how do these feelings affect the person’s ability to keep doing his or her best work in the future.”

The reason it is worth measuring and trying to increase engagement is that, if the organization can do things to increase engagement, then the employees are much more likely to give of their best today, and to stay with organization longer.

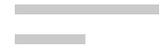
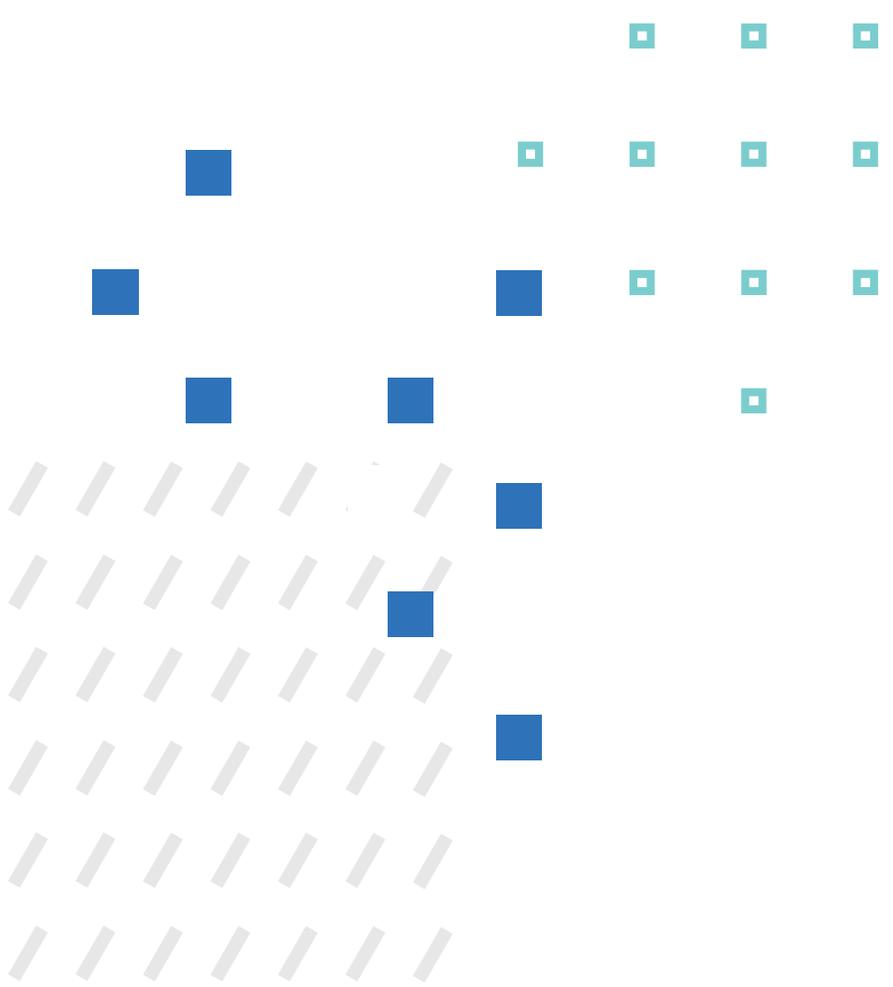
This leads to the next line of inquiry: what are the precise set of feelings that do, indeed, predict productivity today and retention into the future?

The best way to answer this question is to experiment with many different survey questions and then identify which specific questions correlate with reliable measures of both performance and retention. Those items with the strongest and most consistent correlations will provide the clearest signals for which feelings are most critical to a person’s engagement.

In the same vein, no matter how important a certain set of feelings is theorized to be, if it is not possible to prove that the measured presence of these feelings predicts performance/retention, then these feelings cannot be considered important elements of engagement.

Our definition of engagement — **the emotional state of mind that causes people to do their best work, sustainably** — provides us not only with a coherent thesis about what engagement is, but also shows us the means by which we can confirm or reject the core elements of engagement. And once the core elements have been identified, it also gives us the means to prove — or disprove — that increases in engagement lead to increases in performance and decreases in voluntary turnover.





2. Does engagement, when measured reliably, predict performance in the present, and retention in the future?

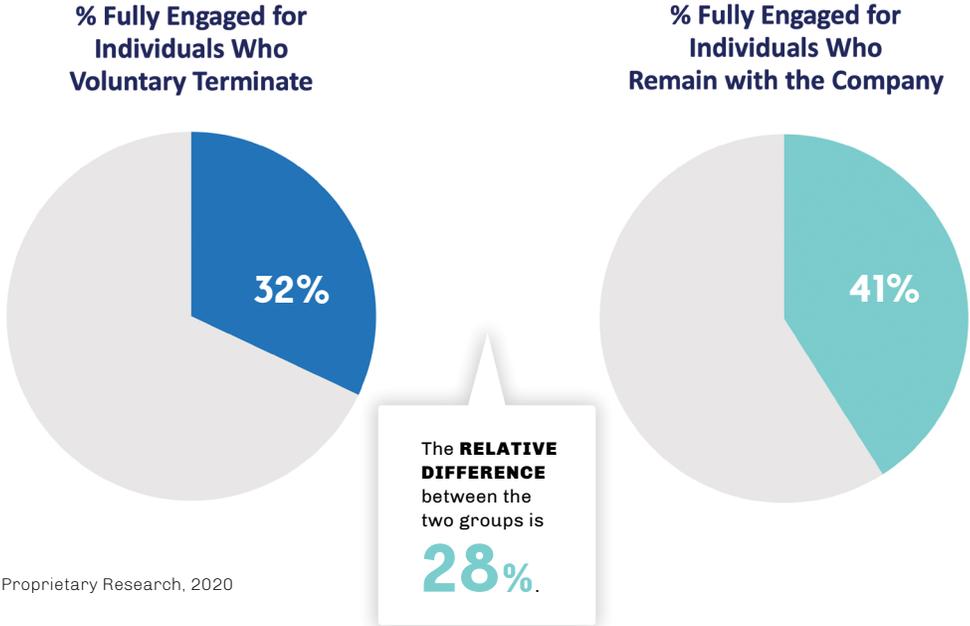
The short answer is yes. The seminal work on the relationship between engagement and performance/retention was conducted by Frank Schmidt, James K. Harter and Theodore L. Hayes and published in 2002 in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Their research focused on the measured engagement levels of thousands of business units, such as restaurants, bank branches, and sales regions, and the measured performance/retention of these business units. Although the findings from individual studies varied, Schmidt, Harter, and Hayes used meta-analytical techniques to estimate the strength of the correlative and causal links between engagement and performance/retention (2002). They found that there was a clear relationship between engagement and other important metrics at the business unit level (e.g., Customer Satisfaction-Loyalty, Profitability, Productivity, Accidents, and Turnover). The paper combines multiple studies, industries, and organizations to establish non-trivial relationships between engagement and business-unit metrics that matter for any organization.

In the intervening years, not only have their findings been replicated and reinforced, but the study of the link between engagement and performance/retention has progressed from the level of the business unit to the level of the individual employee. With advances in survey methodology, we are now able to examine which employees are engaged today, which ones become less or more engaged over time, and what behaviors — whether productive or not — these employees manifest in the future. In this way we can start to assess how a person’s feelings at time 1 predict his or her behavior at time 2.

Obviously, there is much work to be done in this area, but thus far, the research suggests the following links:

Those individuals who voluntarily terminate from an organization are much less likely to be fully engaged.

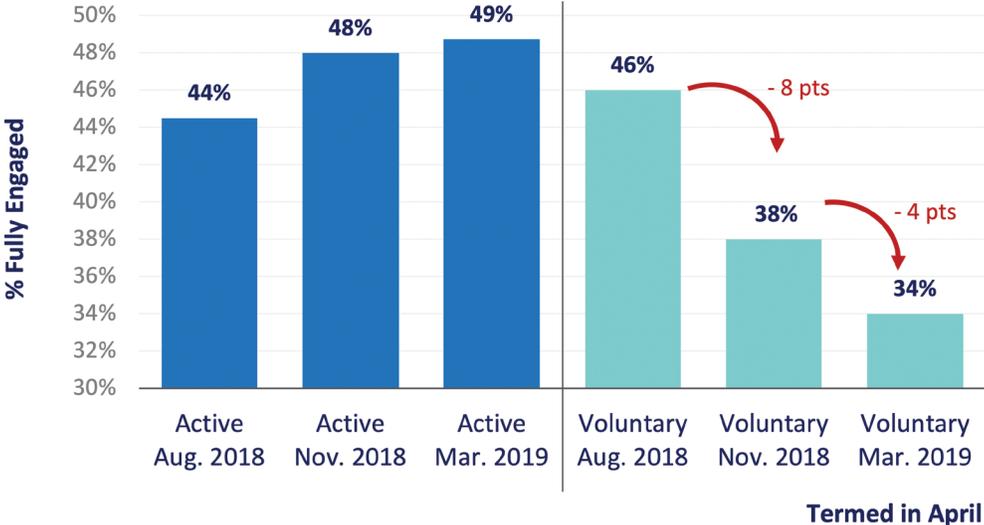
In this particular study, while 41% of those who chose to remain with the company were fully engaged, only 32% of those who voluntarily terminated were fully engaged. (As a note, % fully engaged is a proprietary binary metric derived from the eight engagement items).



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Those employees who gradually become less engaged over time are far more likely to wind up leaving the organization.

In this way, measured engagement at the individual level can serve as a predictor of which employees are becoming a flight risk, and corrective action to prevent this can be taken before the employee has voluntarily left the organization. The chart below reveals this pattern. At time 1, almost half of those who wound up leaving — “voluntary terms” — were fully engaged, which was very similar to the overall organization — “active.” Three months later, there was a 17% drop in engagement for the “voluntary terms” compared to a gain in engagement across the rest of the organization of 4%. Eight months on from Time 1, the relative drop in engagement was 29%, meaning that by this time active employees were twice as likely to be fully engaged as those who voluntarily terminated. At T1 + 9 months, the employees had then left the organization.

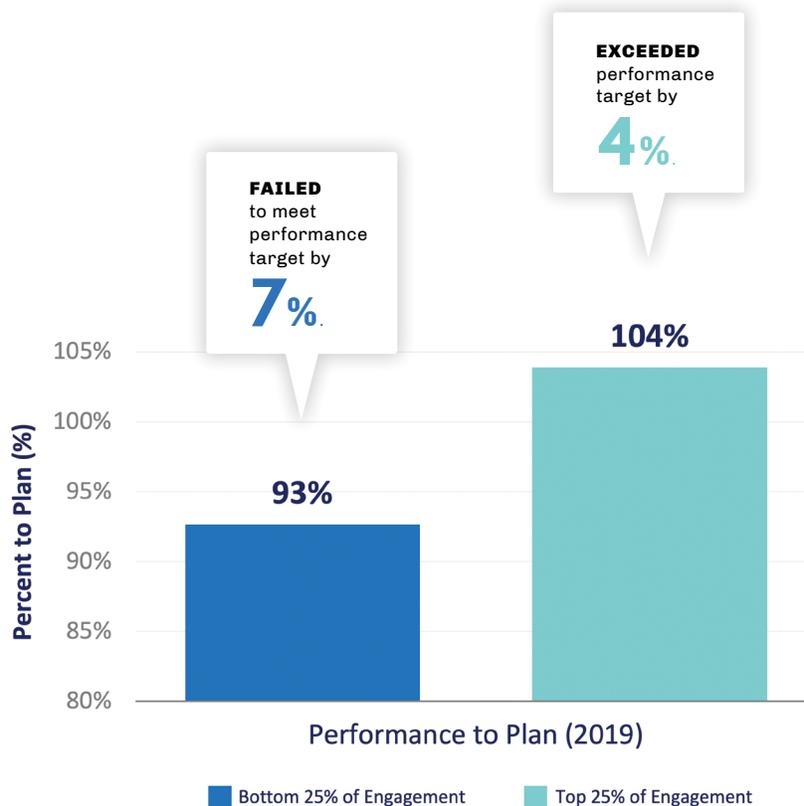


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Individuals who report higher levels of engagement wind up selling more.

Sales performance offers researchers a reliable measure of a particular person's performance — in direct contrast to performance ratings which are, in virtually all cases, unreliable measures of actual performance. Using sales-to-quota data, researchers are able to estimate the strength of the relationship between a person's reported level of engagement and subsequent sales performance. When these relationships are examined, they turn out to be significant.

For example, one such study at a large sales organization examined the relationship between percent-to-plan and engagement. Those in the bottom 25% of engagement on average failed to meet their performance target by 7%, whereas those in the top quartile of engagement exceeded their target by 4%.



ADP Proprietary Research, 2020

Putting a price tag on engagement for an organization is easier with hard metrics such as percent-to-plan. In this instance, 1% of plan is estimated, conservatively, to represent \$20,000 in revenue per salesperson. Thus, the difference in sales performance that can best be explained by differential levels of engagement is approximately \$220,000 per salesperson.

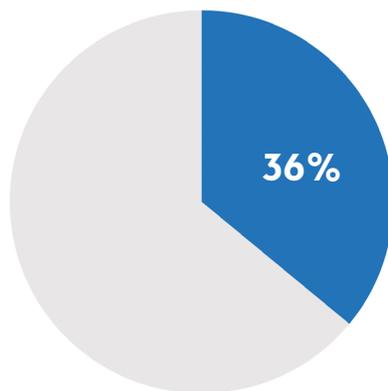
When companies do have a reliable measure of knowledge-worker performance, high performance and high engagement are strongly related.

In a recent study, managers were asked a set of four questions relating to the performance of each team member — these questions were designed in such a way to significantly increase the reliability of each manager's ratings data. This ratings data was not then relayed to each team member, nor communicated to them in any way.

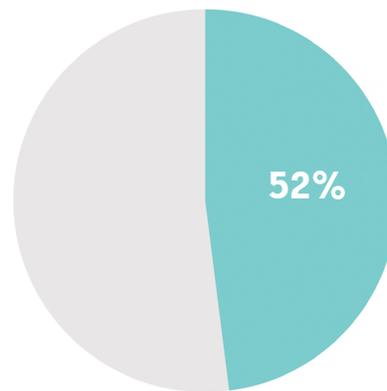
Subsequently, and independent of the ratings data, each team member was given an engagement survey. Analysis of these two independent data sets revealed that those rated highly by their managers were twice as likely to be fully engaged compared to those employees rated in the bottom quartile of performance. This pattern held true across all four quarters of the company's fiscal year.

More research is required in this area to learn more about the causal nature of these relationships. At present, what we can say for sure is that when managers have a reliable way to record their assessment of a person's performance, that assessment correlates closely to that person's level of engagement..

**% Fully Engaged for
Individuals in BOTTOM
Quartile of Performance**

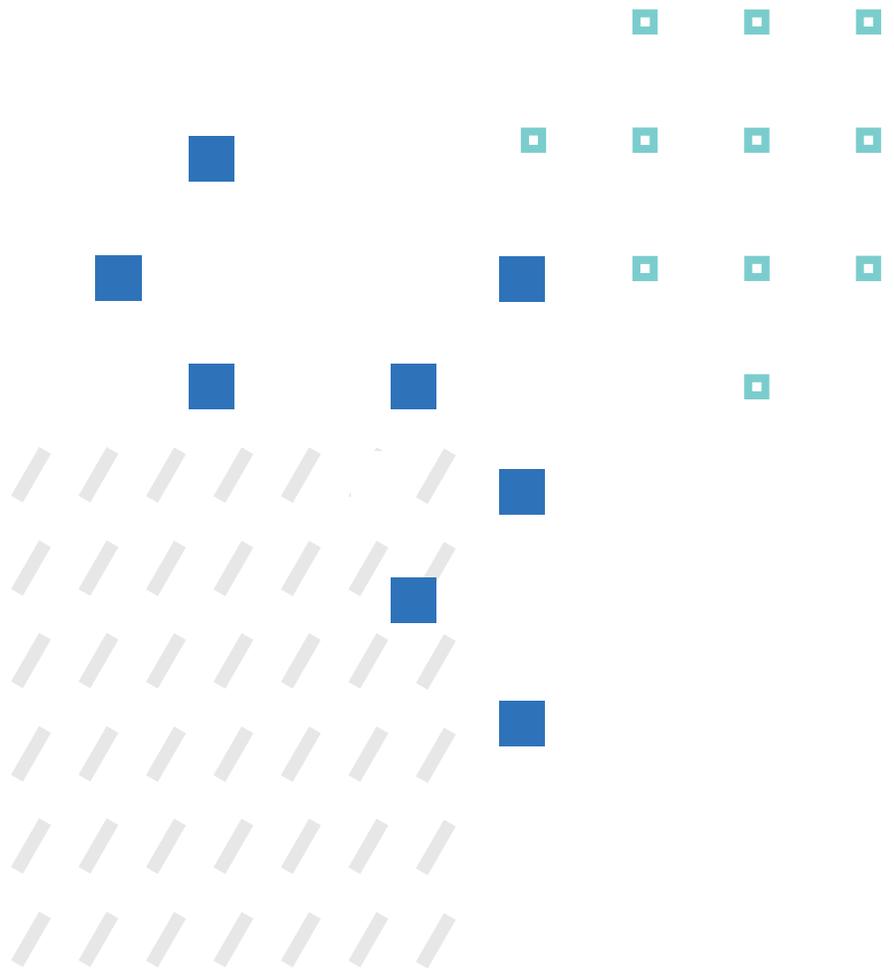


**% Fully Engaged for
Individuals in TOP
Quartile of Performance**



Those rated highly by their managers were **TWICE AS LIKELY** to be Fully Engaged.

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3. What sorts of questions are best at measuring engagement?

Using our definition of engagement — **the emotional state of mind that causes people to do their best work, sustainably** — researchers are now in a position to identify which sorts of questions are most effective at measuring it.

For the practitioner, this is tremendously important, since, if an engagement survey contains the wrong sort of questions, it is likely that the scores on the questions won't predict performance/retention. Put more simply, the scores on these questions won't matter. Many engagement surveys suffer from including ineffective questions, with the result that managers are being encouraged to increase their scores on questions that won't actually drive any real-world increases in performance/retention.

To the lay reader it may, at first, appear that any engagement question will show some sort of positive relationship to performance/retention. However, meta-analytic research results reveal that only questions with four specific characteristics measure feelings that actually predict performance/retention.

These four characteristics are:

1. One thought only

3. Contains an extreme

2. Me rating me

4. Common parlance language

1. One thought only:

The most effective questions ask about only one unique subject or construct. This simplifies the question and reduces the cognitive burden on the respondent.

Double-barreled questions that ask about multiple concepts or multiple groups of people fail to yield strong relationships to performance/retention. For example:

- **Multiple concepts** — *I am satisfied with my pay and work benefits.*
- **Multiple groups** — *I feel supported by my manager and my teammates.*

In contrast, ***I trust my team leader*** is much more likely to yield predictive relationships. The concept of trust is singular, and the item asks about one individual, the team leader.

2. Me rating me:

The most effective questions do **not** ask respondents to rate their company, manager, or colleagues. Over the last thirty years, researchers have discovered that human beings are not reliable raters of someone else's (or something else's) characteristics. First, because we are incapable of putting our own idiosyncrasies aside so as to deliver a stable and unbiased rating. And second, because, with our busy lives at work, we simply do not have enough interactions with other people to rate them on their qualities.

Instead, researchers have learned that human beings are reliable raters only of their own feelings and intentions. Given this, each survey question must ask respondents only about their feelings and intentions.

For example, ***My senior leaders care about the mission of the organization*** is an ineffective question because it asks the respondent to rate the qualities of other people — something humans cannot do. Whereas ***At work, I clearly understand what is expected of me*** is an effective question because it asks respondents to report only on their own feelings.

3. Contains an extreme.

The most effective questions contain wording that is either extremely positive or extremely negative, so that they evoke strong — almost visceral — responses. The extreme in the question allows for respondents to have strong feelings about the subject, which helps to produce range in responses and minimizes the tendency to acquiesce.

For example, ***I understand the mission of my company*** contains no extreme, and therefore is likely to produce data with limited range. Whereas ***I am really enthusiastic about the mission of my company*** is an effective question because it pushes the respondent to own the extreme self-descriptor "really enthusiastic."

4. Common parlance language.

The most effective questions use vernacular rather than corporate language. As above, the questions that succeed in tapping into something real and powerful are those that cut through the analytical "outer shell" that many employees wear at work, and instead speak directly to a person's heart and humanity. For example, ***My current role makes good use of my skill sets***, though it meets some of the other criteria, phrases the question using language only ever employed at work, such as "role" and "skill sets."

Whereas the question ***At work, I have a chance to do what I do best every day*** uses language that the person might reasonably expect to use in normal conversation.

Using these four criteria as our filter, the ADP Research Institute identified the following eight questions as the core for all ongoing engagement research. These are by no means the only examples of effective engagement items. They serve here as examples of how the criteria above can be used to edit an engagement survey down to those few questions that truly predict performance/retention.

HR practitioners and senior organization leaders will want to examine closely the questions contained in any engagement survey to ensure that they meet the four criteria. If any of the questions do not, then it is likely that the questions are not measuring anything meaningful, and thus any improvement on the survey questions will not matter — in the sense that increases in the survey scores will not lead to increases in performance/retention.

The Eight Engagement Pulse questions:

1. *I am really enthusiastic about the mission of the company. (Purpose)*
2. *At work, I clearly understand what is expected of me. (Purpose)*
3. *In my team, I am surrounded by people who share my values. (Excellence)*
4. *I have the chance to use my strengths every day at work. (Excellence)*
5. *My teammates have my back. (Support)*
6. *I know I will be recognized for excellent work. (Support)*
7. *I have great confidence in my company's future. (Future)*
8. *In my work, I am always challenged to grow. (Future)*

What drives engagement?

Since we now know that engagement, when measured reliably, reveals strong causal relationships to performance/retention, the next line of inquiry focuses on which aspects of the working experience create in people strong feelings of engagement. If organizations are able to pinpoint which aspects of work are the strongest drivers, then they will be in a better position to take action to improve or address them.

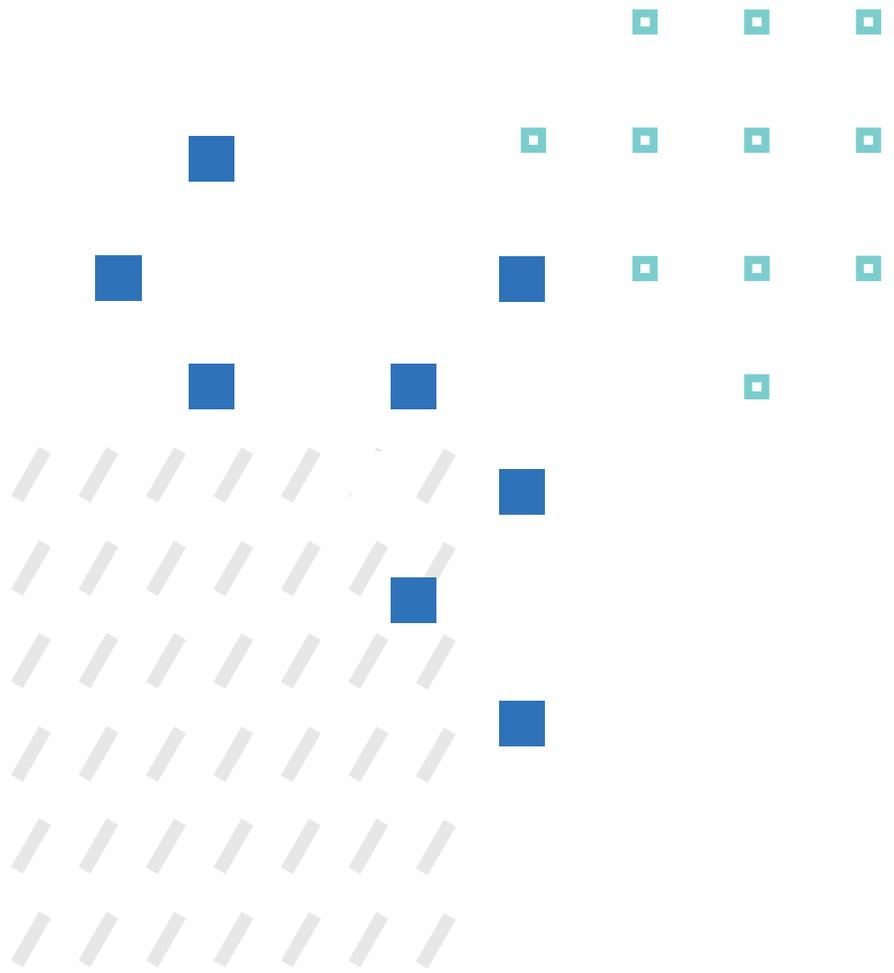
Over the last three decades, researchers have examined many aspects of work to delineate each one's relationship to engagement.

These have included:



Gender	Length of service	Level
Feeling of being on a team	Which team you're on	How engaged your leader is
Educational level	Trust in leader	Ethnicity
Industry	Time of year	Age

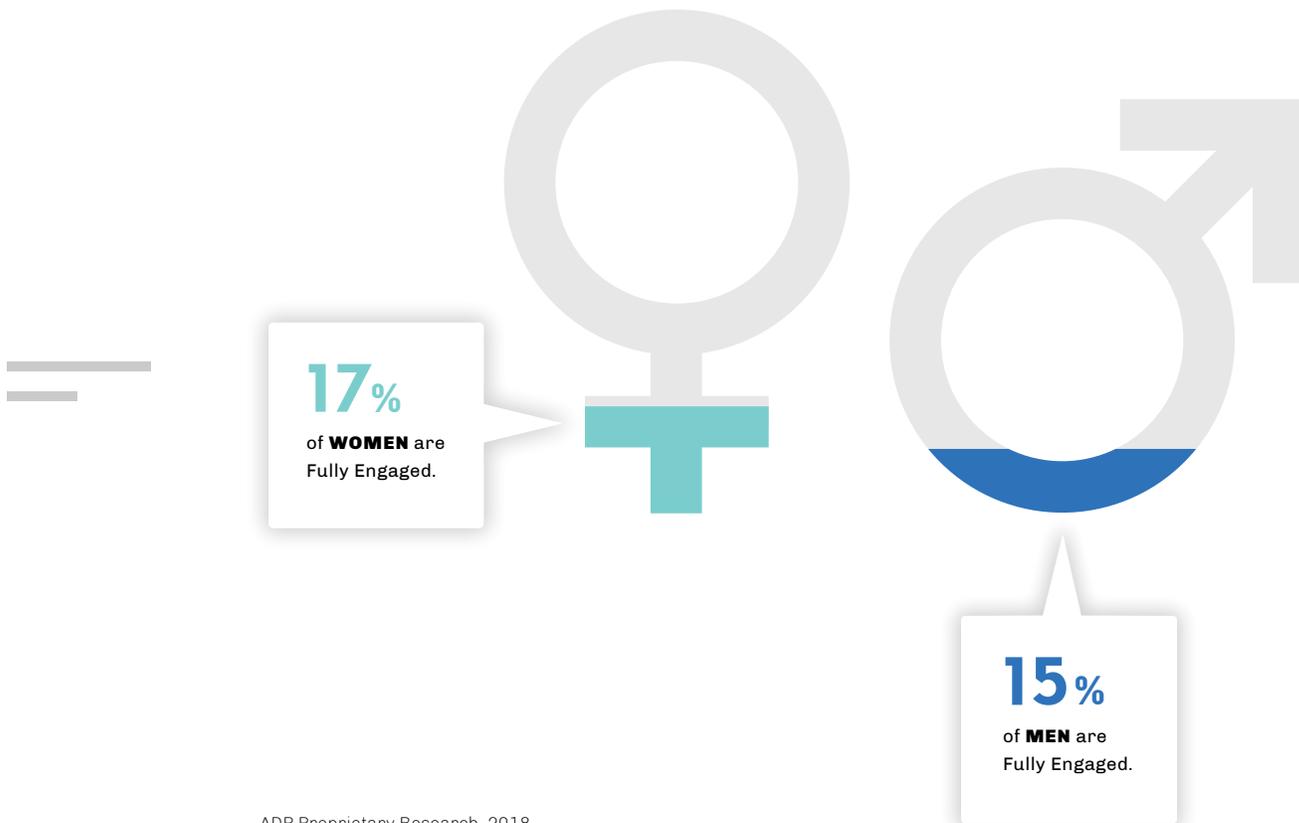
Below we will identify which of these are unrelated to engagement, and can, therefore, be de-prioritized. Then, we will identify which do indeed show strong relationships to engagement and, therefore, should serve as the focus for any organization's efforts to create a more engaged workforce.



4. Which aspects of work are unrelated to engagement?

Gender

In two different global studies that included 18,000 randomly selected working adults, we found little to no variance between the genders. Women report slightly higher levels of engagement, but the differences are negligible. Whatever is happening differently at work between the genders — and clearly, some things are experienced very differently by each gender, not the least of which being variable compensation and representation at the highest levels of organizations — these differences are not manifested in starkly different levels of engagement.



ADP Proprietary Research, 2018

Age

Despite all the attention currently being paid to the differences among the generations, when engagement is measured reliably, we find very little difference across generations. This does not imply that all generations expect the same thing from their work, but it does suggest (a) that the core aspects of an engaging work experience do not vary by generation, and (b) that most companies are equally effective (and equally ineffective) at providing these aspects to each generation (See related articles on Age).

16%

of **18-29 YEAR**
OLDS are Fully
Engaged.



15%

of **45-60 YEAR**
OLDS are Fully
Engaged.



17%

of **30-44 YEAR**
OLDS are Fully
Engaged.



18%

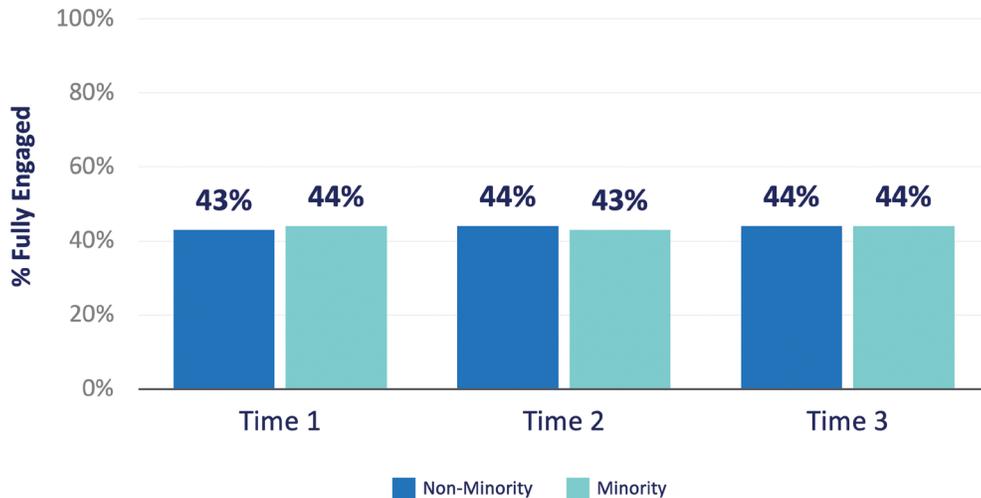
of **61+ YEAR**
OLDS are Fully
Engaged.

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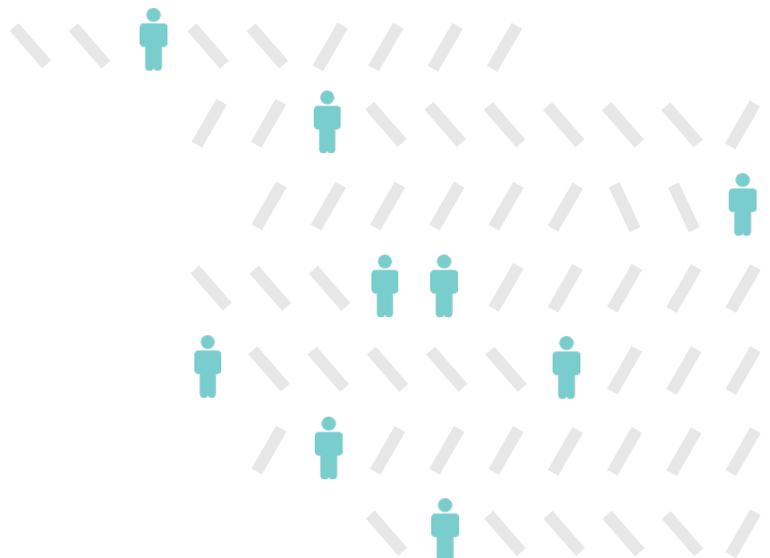
Ethnicity

Clearly, different ethnicities experience different sets of challenges at work, many of which reflect challenges experienced outside of the world of work. However, when it comes to reliable measures of engagement, researchers have not found statistically significant differences between minority and non-minority respondents. This does not imply that efforts to increase diversity and inclusion are not necessary — clearly, in many instances, they are. Instead, it implies that one's level of engagement is unrelated to one's ethnicity, and that all ethnicities are equally able to experience feelings of engagement (and disengagement) at work.

Below is a recent study within a large organization that is emblematic of the broader findings. Over three different time periods, we saw little to no differences between minority and non-minority respondents.



ADP Proprietary Research, 2020

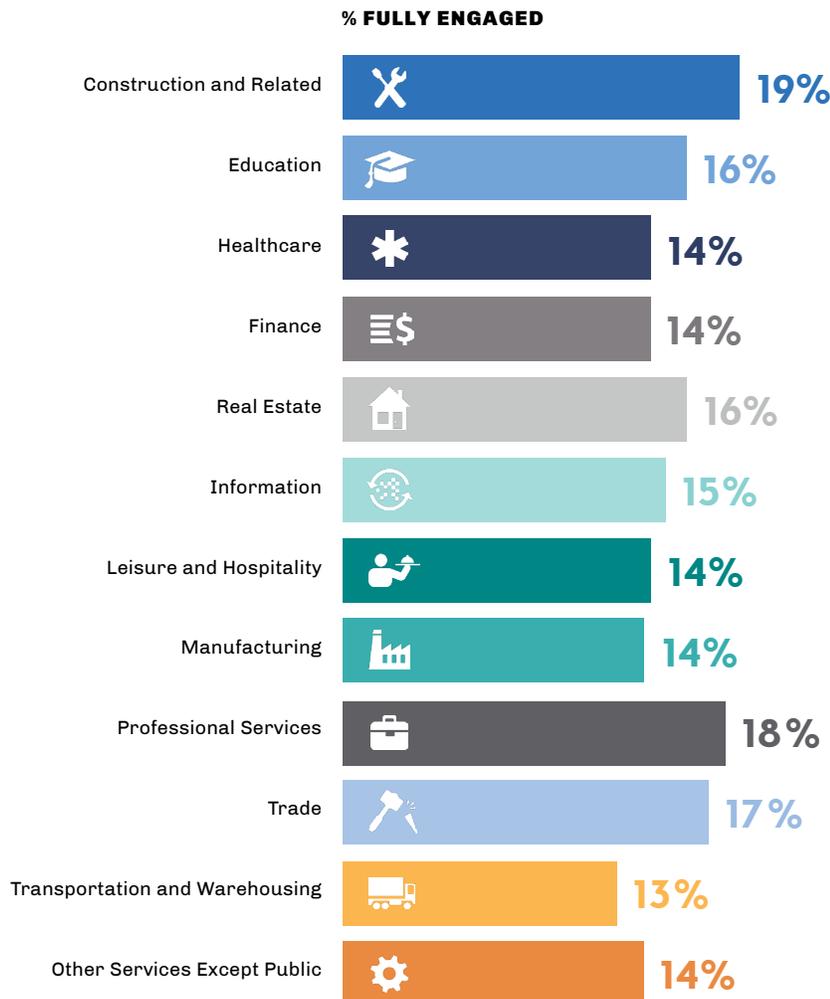


Industry

In the world of employee engagement, much is made of benchmarks, and in particular of benchmarks that compare a company in one industry sector with other companies of similar size in the same sector. For all these industry-specific benchmarks to be useful, researchers should have found, across many time periods and many studies, structurally different levels of engagement among different industries.

However, this is not the case. Researchers instead find more variance in engagement within a particular industry than between industries. These findings imply, first, that it is possible for any company in any industry to engage its employees. And second, that these industry-specific benchmarks are a distraction, a marketing play rather than a set of measures that mean anything in the real world.

As an example, in our latest Global Study of Engagement across nineteen countries, the differences between industries were unremarkable.



Education level

Various hypotheses have been suggested linking people's level of engagement with their level of education. Some have made the case that more highly educated employees would be harder to engage because their expectations of the workplace would be higher. Others have suggested that less educated employees would be more disengaged because, in general, less education means a greater likelihood of being involved in manual, manufacturing, or service work, and these sorts of roles are more difficult to make engaging.

The data suggests that neither hypothesis is robust. Across many different time periods and studies, researchers have found few linkages between level of engagement and level of education. What we do know is that engagement is not dependent on one's level of education alone. Below is an example of the kinds of relationships between engagement and education, from our latest global engagement research.

16%

of those with **SOME COLLEGE, NO DEGREE** are Fully Engaged.



14%

of those with **2-YEAR DEGREE** are Fully Engaged.



15%

of those with **4-YEAR DEGREE** are Fully Engaged.



19%

of those with **PROFESSIONAL OR ADVANCED DEGREE** are Fully Engaged.

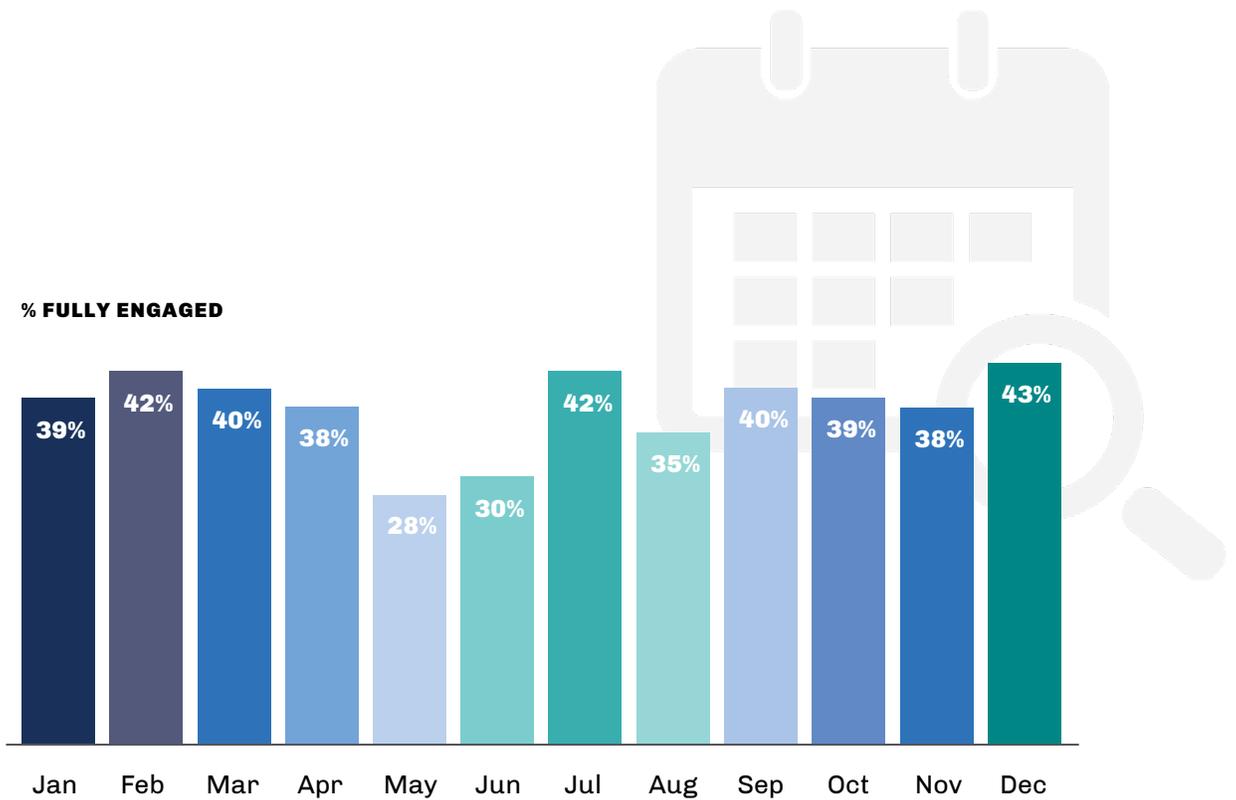


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Time of year

Though the populations of some high-latitude countries do appear to have negative emotional reactions to the long, dark winter months, researchers do not find these variations in seasonal mood reflected in engagement data. This could be because we have yet to gather large enough data sets to reveal the impact of seasonal affective disorder (SAD) on engagement levels, or it could mean that it is possible to create feelings of engagement no matter what the month (for more information on SAD see NIMH). Further study is required, though, at present, no strong relationships have been found.

Below is an example of the relationship between engagement and time of year. (We do see a dip in May and June. We are investigating to learn whether this is an artifact of our dataset, or part of a more stable pattern. Our current thinking is the former.)



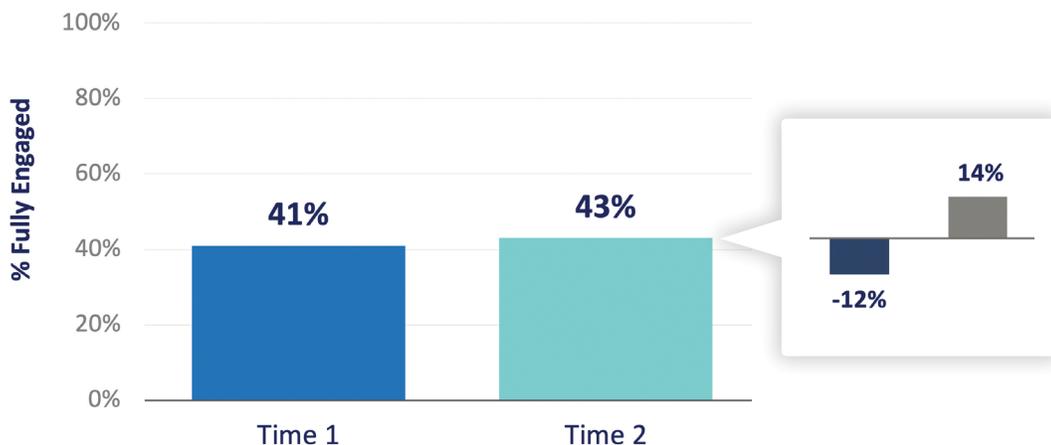
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However, one particular person's engagement *does* change over time.

Time of year may not affect engagement much, but this does not mean that time and engagement are unrelated. Instead, what we learn when we examine engagement at the level of the individual (rather than the level of the business unit or the organization) is that each particular person's feeling of engagement moves over time. Engagement — when properly defined and reliably measured — is a "state," something that will change within a person, rather than a "trait," something inherent to the person. Yes, it does appear that some people possess an inherently higher engagement "set point" than others — just as some people appear to have a higher happiness "set point" than others. However, when researchers examine each individual's reported level of engagement, we find that it is possible for any particular person's level to go up or down over time.

Even when an organization's overall level of engagement stays almost the same, still, within that aggregate, we find significant movement individual by individual. In the example below, this organization demonstrated a small 2% increase from Time 1 to Time 2. However, hidden within those aggregated numbers, 14% of the organization moved into the Fully Engaged category from Time 1 to Time 2, while a different 12% fell out of this category.

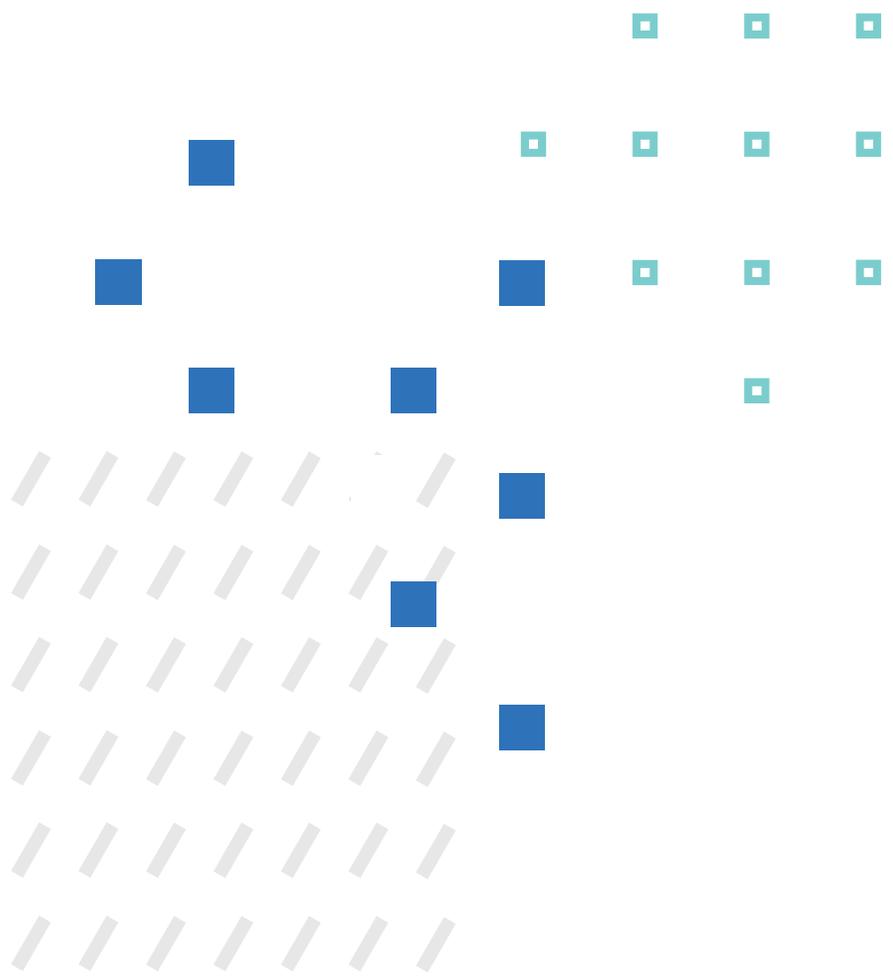
This tells us that, if an organization wants to increase the number of engaged workers, first, this is indeed possible — engagement *does* change over time — and second, that the organization must look *within* the aggregate levels of engagement to see what is truly going on, employee by employee.



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All of which leads to the final section of this report: if one person's feeling of engagement does indeed drive performance/retention, and if this person's level of engagement can indeed move up or down over time, what does the research reveal about which aspects of work connect most strongly to engagement?

More simply, what can an organization do to change how engaged each person feels at work?

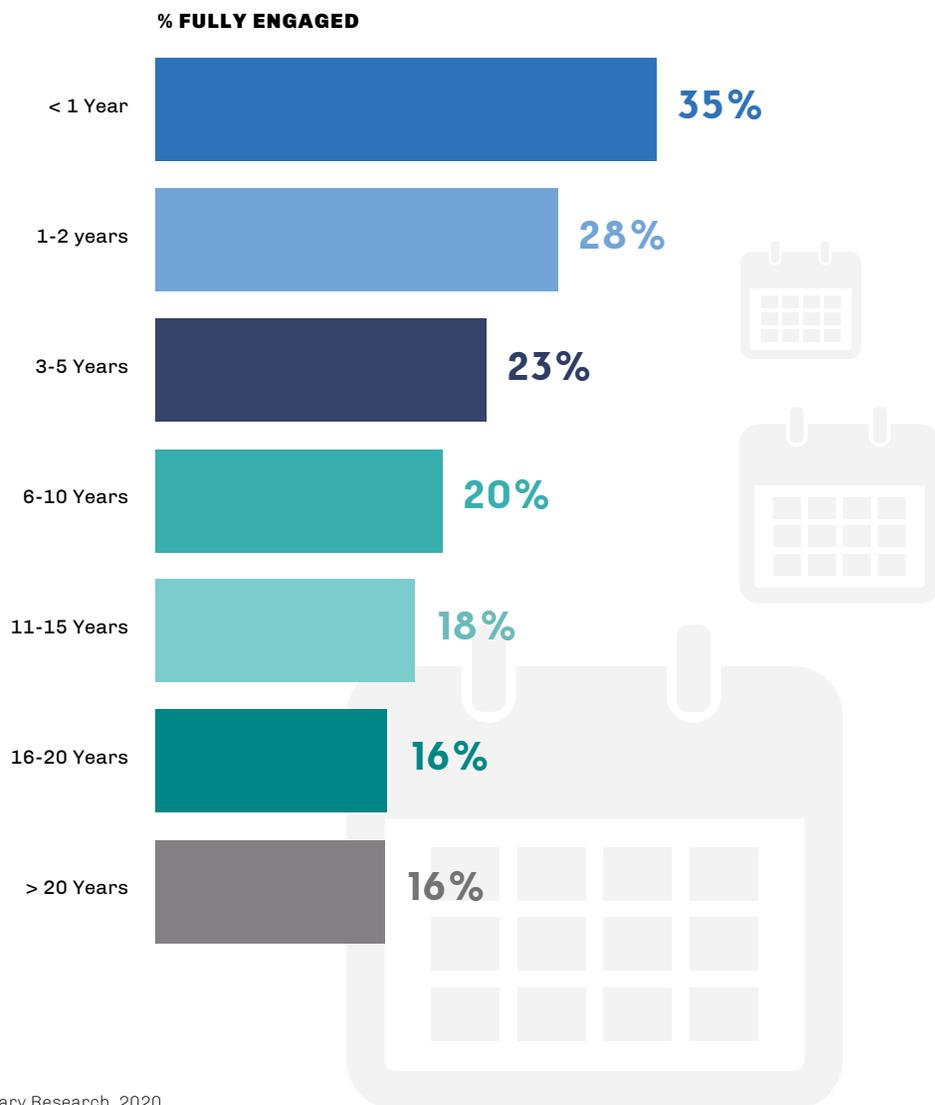


5. Which aspects of work are related to engagement?

Length of service

One of the most consistent drivers of employee engagement is length of service: specifically, if employees have been with the company one year or less, their level of engagement is much more likely to be high. Though this effect is strong and widespread, a review of the literature — both academic and practitioner — reveals that it is rarely discussed as a driver of engagement. As a result, most organizations misstate their overall level of engagement and misdiagnose what should be done to increase it.

The patterns of data vary across studies, but the chart below is emblematic:



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Initially, patterns of data such as this would seem to suggest that organizations are simply degrading their human capital, and that efforts to lift engagement are destined to fail over time. A closer study of the data, however, leads to a different explanation underlying this effect.

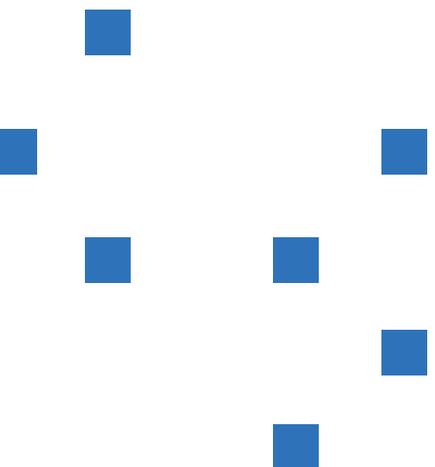
The high levels of engagement in the first year of service can best be explained by the **“honeymoon effect.”**

When employees first join an organization, they are predisposed to think positively about that organization simply because they joined it — if people rate their experience at work poorly when they themselves have recently chosen this work, then it makes them appear incoherent; to reduce this dissonance, they rate their experience more positively, thus confirming — to themselves — the coherence of their decision-making process.

Then, after the first year, the honeymoon is over and the person’s level of engagement resets at the “real” level. The organization can then use this new, reset level as the baseline for all future engagement measures.

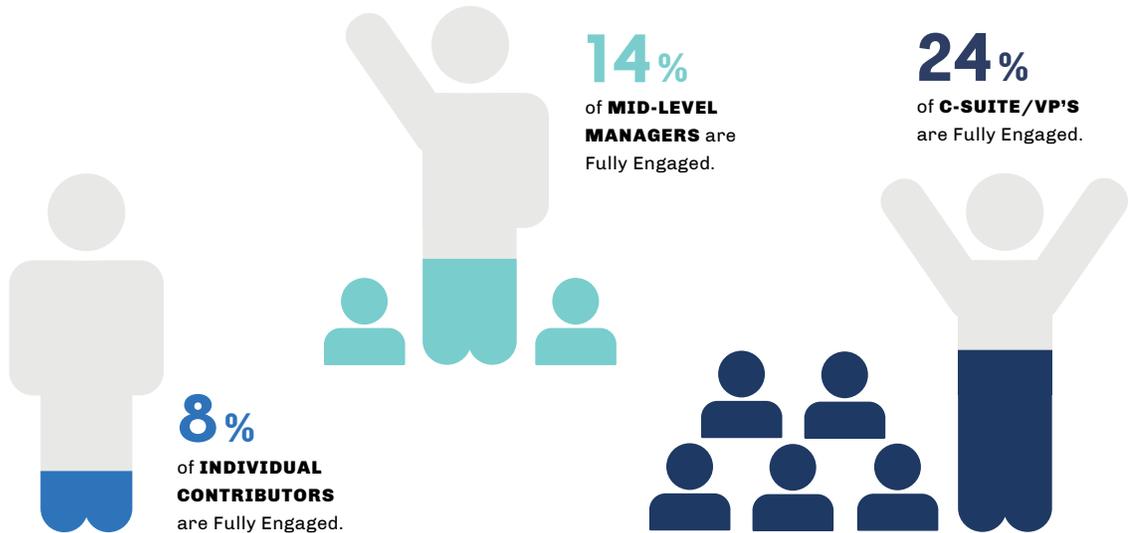
This tells us that when presenting engagement survey results, practitioners should remove all first-year engagement data. By including it, they unwittingly inflate the engagement levels of the organization and distort what is really happening with their employees. Further, by including it, they may actually be encouraging actions that are harmful to the organization. For example, those departments or divisions with low levels of retention will display higher levels of engagement since, with their inability to keep people, they will inevitably have a greater proportion of employees with less than one year’s length of service. Thus, counter-productively, the engagement survey results could wind up “rewarding” those departments that are failing to keep their people — the exact opposite of what the organization wants.

For leaders to understand accurately how well they are engaging their people over time, the “honeymooners” should always be removed from the data.



Level within the organization

Within our *Global Study of Engagement*, we saw striking differences between individual contributors and those at the highest levels of the organization. Other researchers have also found this pattern replicated in many other studies.



ADP Proprietary Research, 2018

This pattern and its causes are worth investigating. Three of the most significant implications include:

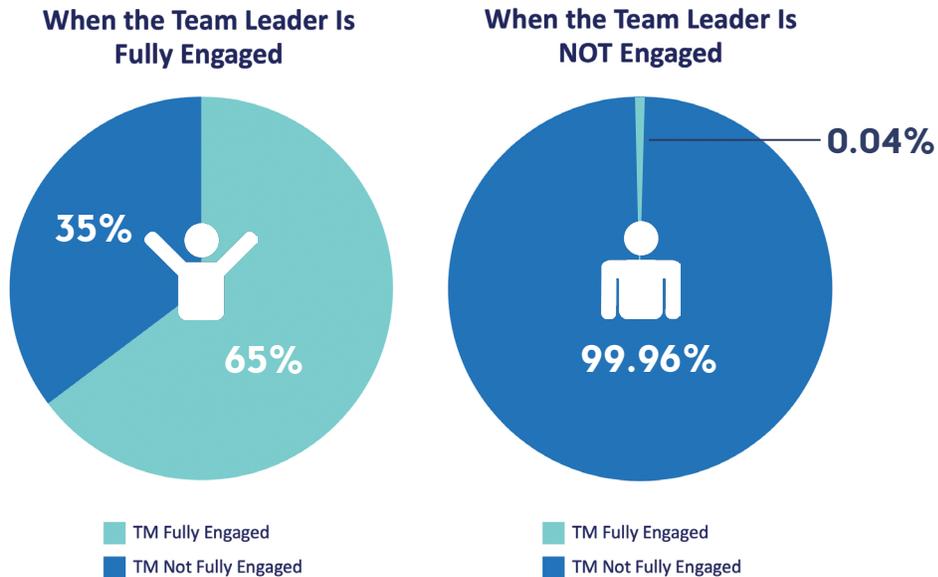
First, it will always be important for an organization to break out its engagement results by level. All organizations have many more individual contributors than managers, and these “frontline” employees are always the ones closest to the customer, product, citizen, patient, or student. Therefore, if an organization wants higher levels of performance, it must do everything it can to understand and address the engagement issues related to this largest and highest leverage employee population.

Second, senior leaders need to use survey results to remind themselves that their “view from the top” is not necessarily shared by all employees. More than likely they are aware of this, but nonetheless, breaking out engagement survey results by level and examining the patterns by level will be instructive.

Third, this pattern suggests that level matters to employees’ feelings of engagement. However, this does not necessarily imply that “level” equates to “managing people.” “Level” may mean simply a better title, increased prestige, and, perhaps, more compensation. Thus, the most forward-thinking organizations will be creative in how they use level to satisfy employees’ desire for title, prestige, and compensation, while not necessarily promoting them into management. Multiple career tracks and individual contributor “mastery” tracks are examples of this.

The team leader's engagement

Employees' level of engagement is integrally linked to their team leader's level of engagement. This strong effect is intuitive — leaders matter — but the strength of this effect is surprising. For example, below is data reflecting twelve quarters of engagement measurement with team member and team leader scores broken out:



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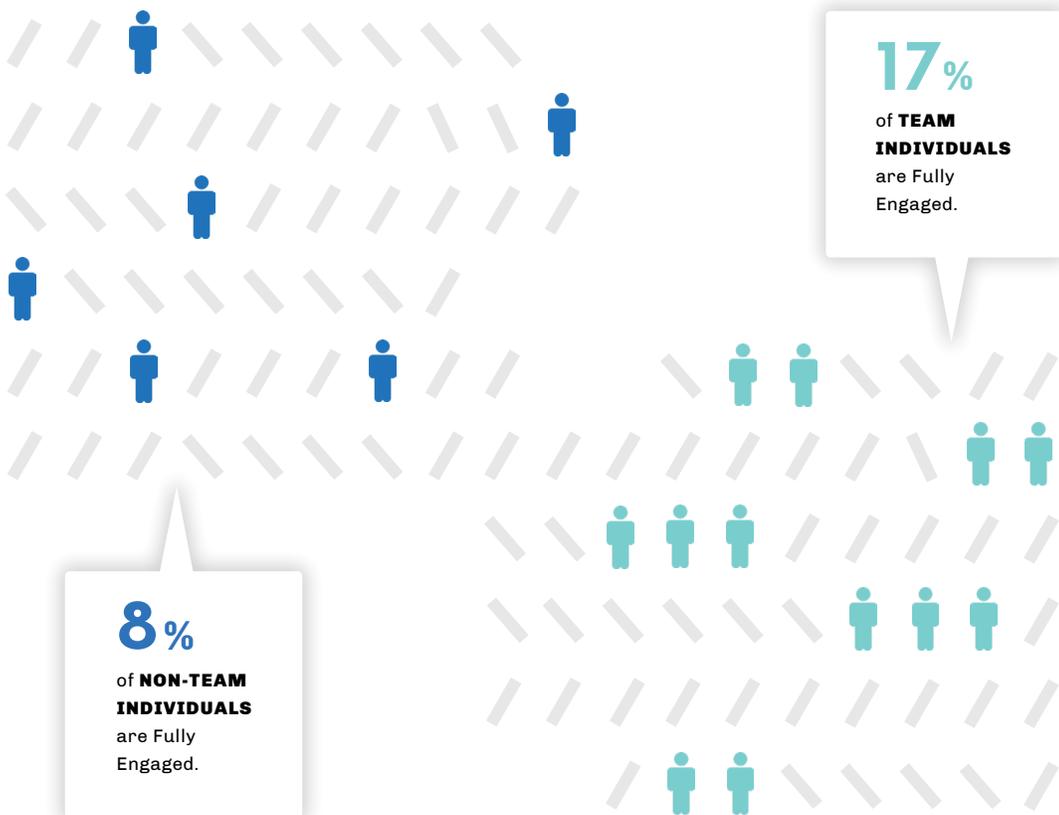
Decades of research with high-performing teams has revealed that employees' performance/retention are significantly affected by their direct supervisor — "people leave managers, not companies." This engagement data adds a new and important layer to this analysis: namely, that one of the most important things that team members "leave" when they "leave their manager" is the manager's attitude to the work and the organization. Managers can be catalysts for unleashing the talent of a person, or, as this data reveals, they can also be an amplifier and a reinforcer of all that is "wrong" with the organization. These negative messages have a significant effect on team members' own sense of who they are, and what their work is really like. Perception influences reality, and if the manager's perception is that work is disengaging, then it proves almost impossible for the employee to break free of this "reality" and craft one independently.

Findings such as this suggest, counter-intuitively, that if an organization wants to engage its front-line workforce, then it should focus its efforts not on the front-line workforce, but instead on the team leaders. So goes the engagement of the team leaders, so goes the engagement of the organization.

The feeling of being on a team

One little-documented but strong covariate of engagement is a person's feeling of being on a team. In our recent Global Study of Engagement, of all the factors we investigated, this feeling of being on a team displayed the most powerful relationships to engagement. This suggests that, for an organization to learn if a particular employee is engaged, the first thing they should learn is whether that employee feel connected to his or her team.

Here is the data from the study:



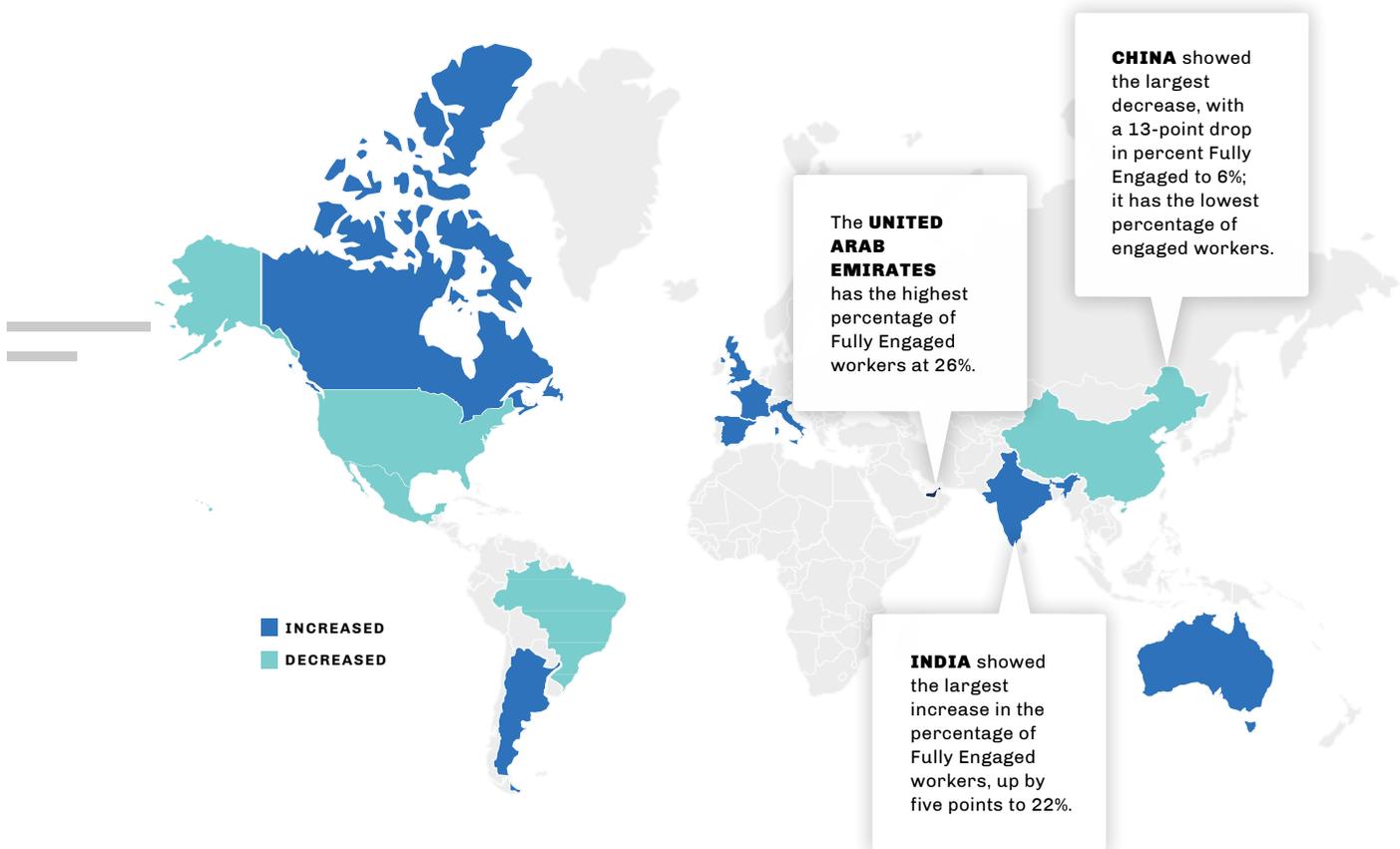
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Those who report belonging to a team are **2x** more likely to be fully engaged than those who don't. The same patterns hold across all industries and countries included in the study.

Those who report belonging to a team are two times more likely to be fully engaged than those who don't. The same patterns hold across all industries and countries included in the study.

These findings highlight an important prescription for organizations: fail to create in each employee a sense of being connected to the local team, or teams, and everything else the organization might be doing to engage its people — from communicating the mission and purpose of the organization, to increasing the employee's compensation, or offering new skills training — will be undermined.

This finding held true across all countries included in the study.



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Which particular team the employee is on

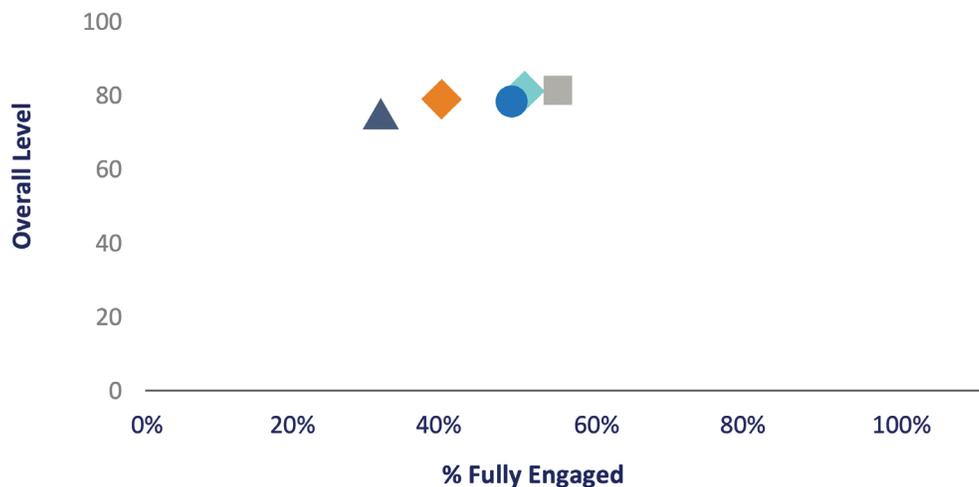
While the feeling of being on a team is a strong driver of engagement, the data also reveals that engagement varies significantly team by team. This finding runs counter to most engagement efforts, which: are launched by the larger organization; present results first in aggregated form to the most senior levels of the organization; use sampling methodologies that mask team variance; when results are finally cascaded down through the organization, follow the who-reports-to-who boxes on the organizational chart — thereby obscuring all the dynamic and cross-functional teams.

The charts below display examples of what this team-by-team variance looks like. The first chart shows the aggregated levels of engagement of five organizations. In the charts that follow, the aggregated results for each organization are pulled apart to reveal the engagement level of each of the teams contained within each organization. Each organization displays significant range in engagement team-by-team.

These five examples reveal what the larger database confirms: namely, there is greater variation inside one particular organization than between two different organizations. All generalizations about one organization's engagement level, and the distinct "culture" that created it, are therefore spurious.

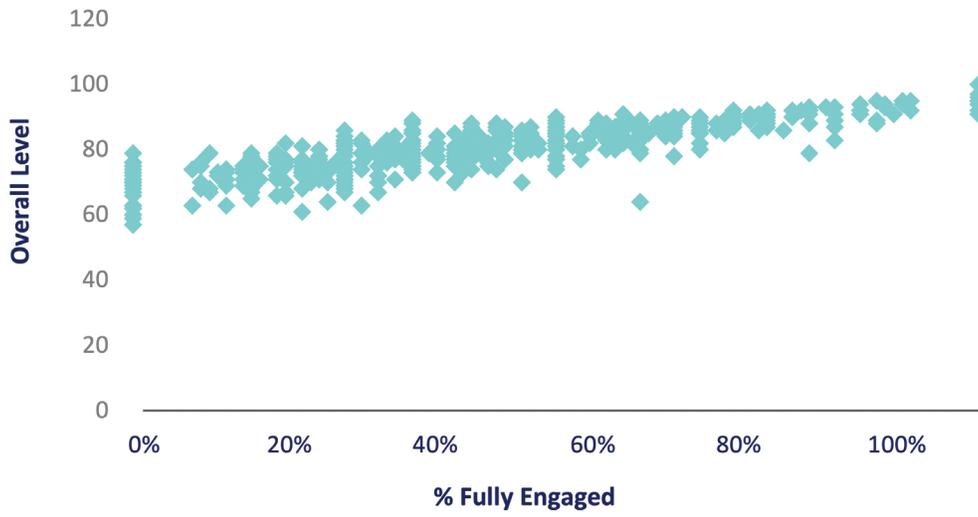
To drive engagement, an organization will be best served by focusing on where engagement is created, or destroyed: the team.

Aggregated engagement levels by organization



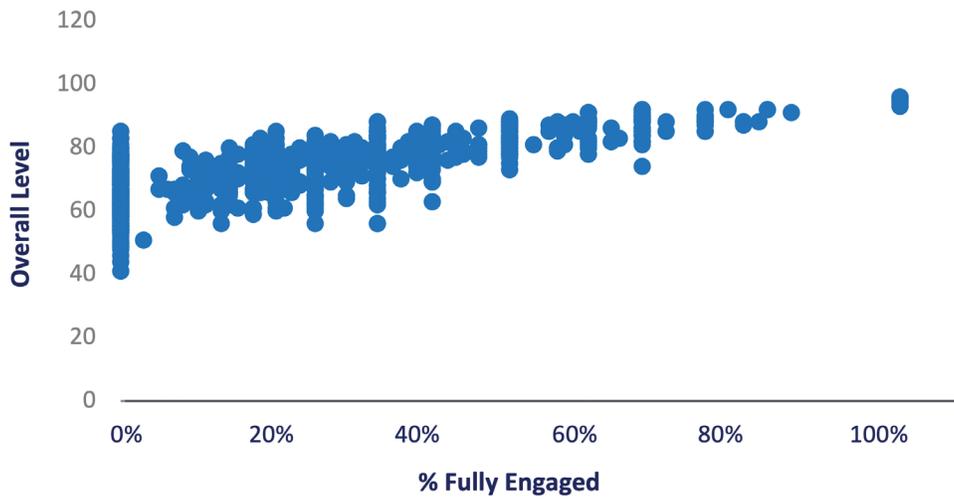
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Company 1



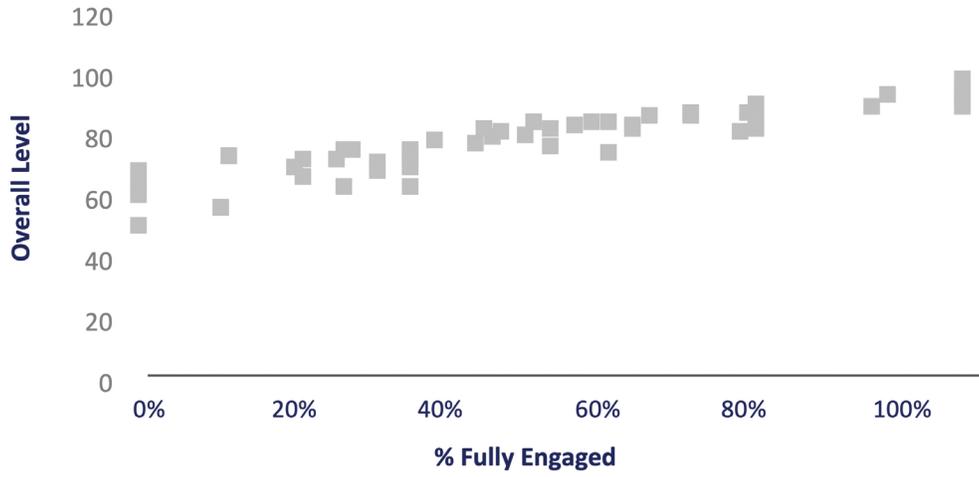
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Company 2



ADP Proprietary Research, 2020

Company 3



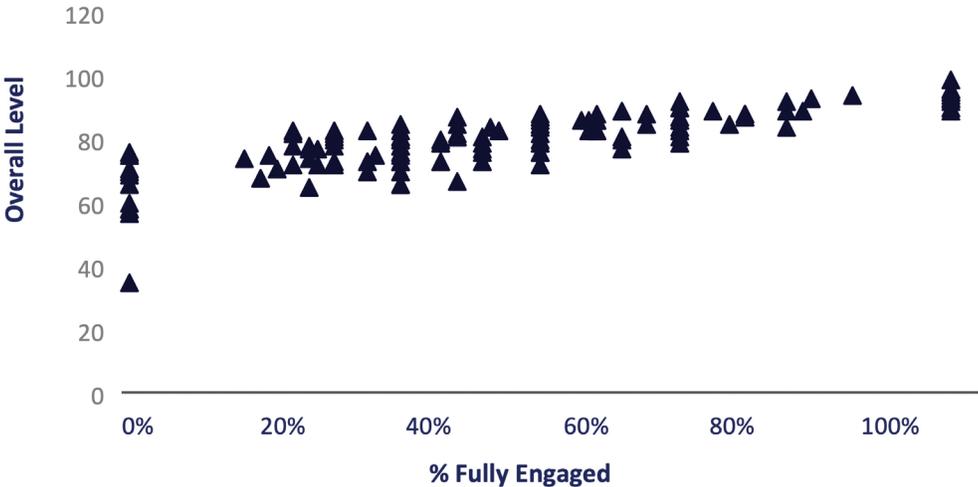
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Company 4



ADP Proprietary Research, 2020

Company 5



ADP Proprietary Research, 2020

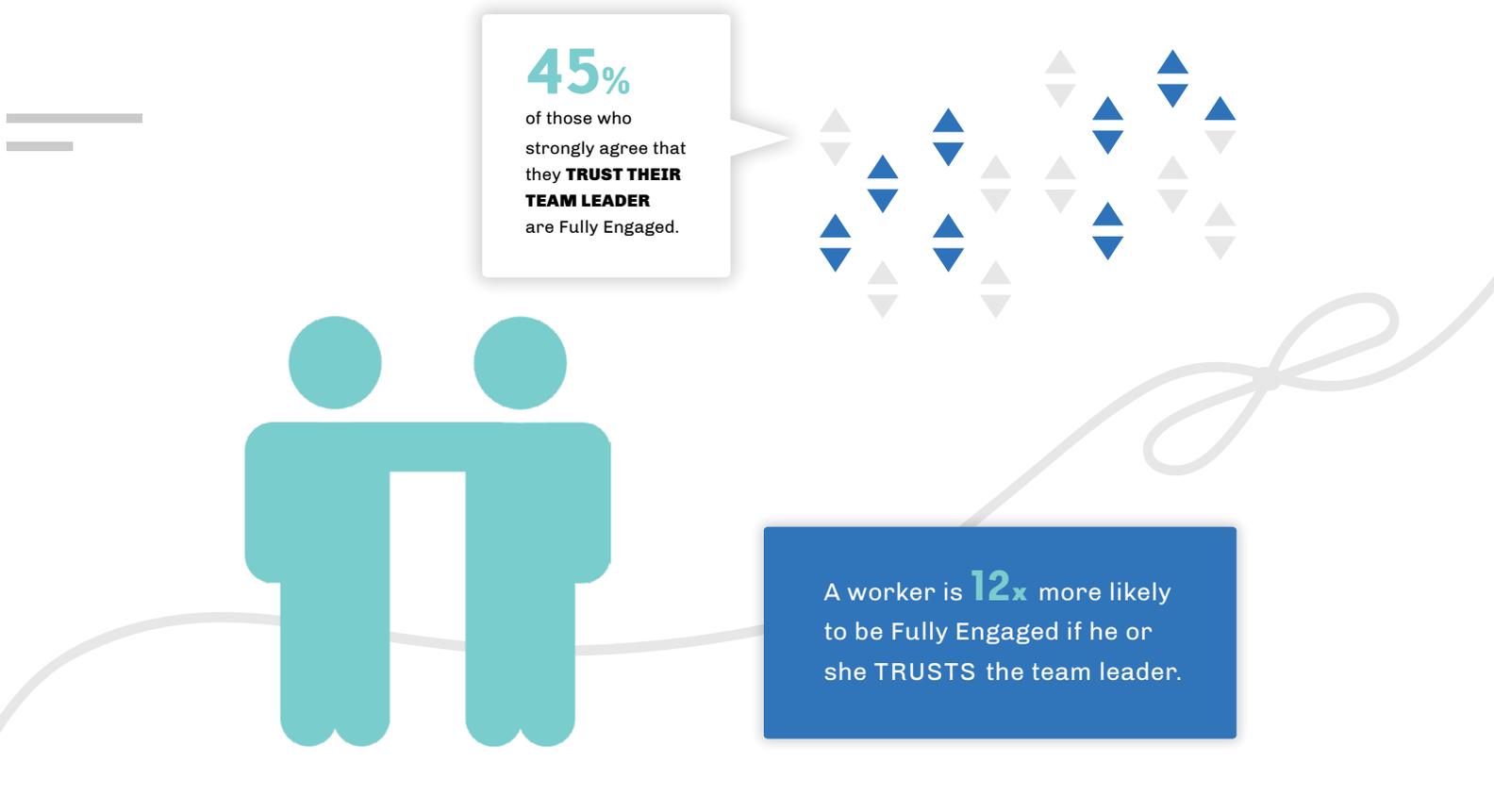


Trust

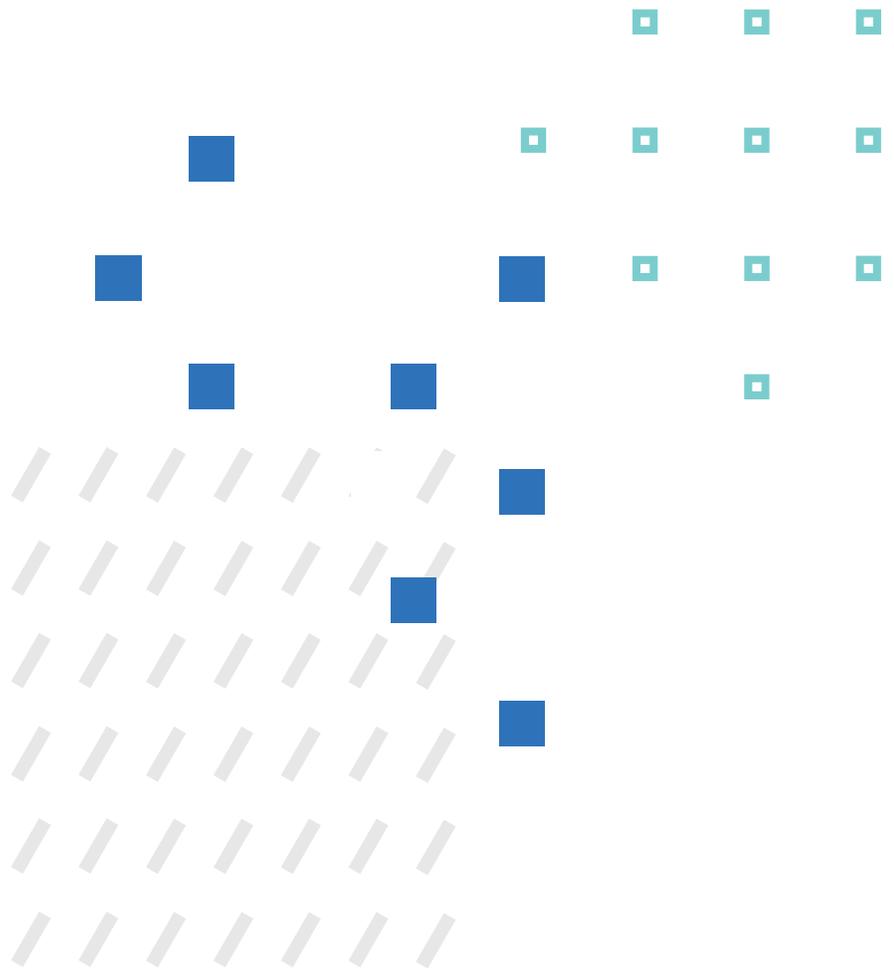
Finally, the data reveals that engagement co-varies to a significant degree with trust, particularly trust by the team members in their local team leader. In fact, when team members report that they fully trust their team leader, they are twelve times more likely to be fully engaged at work.

This effect is displayed only if the trust levels are extreme — if team members respond with anything from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (agree) to the item ***I trust my team leader***, there is little to no increase in engagement. It is only when team members have absolute trust in the team leader — answering 5 (strongly agree) to this same item — that we see jumps in engagement.

This suggests that for engagement efforts to be successful, they must deal explicitly with the team leader/team member relationship, and they must do so in such a way that facilitates the formation of deep trust. This is by no means easy, but it is here where significant and sustainable increases in engagement can be found.



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Conclusion: Summary of findings and implications

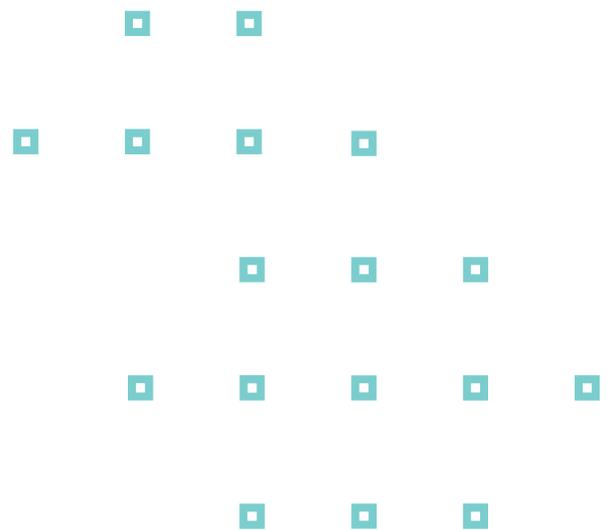
- 1** Engagement drives performance and retention.
- 2** Engagement varies most *within* an organization, team-by-team.
- 3** Engagement items that do not have the four crucial characteristics (one thought only; me rating me; contains an extreme; common parlance language) will have limited measurement value.
- 4** Organizations should not use sampling methodology to measure engagement – there is too much variance inside a particular organization for sampling to be helpful. It serves only to mask what is actually happening.
- 5** Efforts to engage the workforce should focus first *not* on the workforce, but on the team leaders of the workforce. Their level of engagement is paramount because it greatly influences engagement downstream.
- 6** All first-year engagement data should be removed from an organization's overall engagement scores.

7 Engagement will increase if an organization explicitly offers to its frontline employees many alternative paths to prestige.

8 Engagement should be reported at the level of the individual to reveal precisely the true nature of movement up or down with an organization. When reported at the aggregated organizational level, similar scores may well hide significant shifts up or down.

9 Engagement is a state that moves frequently, and this movement precedes changes in performance/retention. Therefore, if organizations want to increase performance/retention, they will need to measure engagement frequently, while not over-surveying the workforce.

10 Engagement is the responsibility of the team leader. Any effort that honors, enables, and reinforces this responsibility is more likely to succeed in building engagement.



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