

85% of employees worldwide are not engaged or are actively disengaged in their job. Discover what organizations everywhere can do about it.



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"We change the world one client at a time through extraordinary analytics and advice on everything important facing humankind."

- JIM CLIFTON, CHAIRMAN AND CEO



TODAY'S WORKPLACES ARE EXPERIENCING CHANGES at unprecedented rates. The rise of digitization and automation, increased access to information, and the globalization of markets are among the trends challenging traditional approaches to work, company cultures, management and jobs. Organizations everywhere are looking for strategies and tactics to stay competitive and grow — and simply doing what they've done in the past will likely prove unsuccessful.

The State of the Global Workplace report is the latest publication from Gallup's workplace practice. Aimed at optimizing workplaces for economic and human development, our goal is to provide leaders and organizations with analytics, advice and data-driven solutions that reflect the attitudes and behaviors of employees around the world.

Gallup continually tracks employees' attitudes and perceptions with the conviction that employers in any society create conditions that either develop or deplete the stock of human capital on which that society's future depends. Organizations everywhere are looking for strategies and tactics to stay competitive and grow — and simply doing what they've done in the past will likely prove unsuccessful.

The *State of the Global Workplace* report presents a wealth of data about employees in 155 countries, assessing how effectively employers and countries around the world are cultivating the human capital in their workforces.

The full 215-page report expands on the concepts discussed in this executive summary. It covers a range of strategies for maximizing workplace productivity, reveals regional workforce metrics and features country-specific spotlight articles that offer insights from Gallup's workplace consultants who partner with leading organizations around the world.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE WORLD'S WORKFORCES

Almost a decade after the onset of the Great Recession, the world economy continues to struggle. The global gross domestic product has puttered along at under 3% growth since 2012, well below historical norms. Widespread joblessness — particularly among young people — has led to social and political strife in many areas. Since 2015, economic frustrations have likely contributed to a rise in nationalism and growing resentment toward immigrants, particularly in the U.S. and Europe.

The resulting social and political volatility is not just a government issue. These conditions dampen business development as skittish investors weigh increased risk. To achieve productivity gains while avoiding the instability that disrupts sustainable growth, governments and businesses alike need to place new focus on the resources and strategies they use to develop and empower their citizens and workforces. Broad-based strategies for human capital development give more individuals a stake in the success of their employer or their country, boosting their motivation and reducing the potential for conflict.

For governments, the goal is to expand the availability of high-quality jobs and the number of residents qualified to take them. Gallup's global surveys from 2014 through 2016 indicate that 32% of working-age adults across 155 countries are employed full time for an employer — an important measure of the availability of good jobs. The full *State of the Global Workplace* report includes Gallup's complete employment statistics by region and country.

Worldwide, the percentage of adults who work full time for an employer and are engaged at work — they are highly involved in and enthusiastic about their work and workplace — is just 15%. Though engagement levels vary considerably by country and region, in no country does the proportion of the employed residents who are engaged in their job exceed about four in 10.

The low percentages of engaged employees represent a barrier to creating highperforming cultures around the world. They imply a stunning amount of wasted potential, given that business units in the top quartile of Gallup's global employee engagement database are 17% more productive and 21% more profitable than those in the bottom quartile.

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AND

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Why are population-level employee engagement figures so low in most of the world? There are many potential reasons — but difficulty keeping up with the pace of social and technological change is a common underlying theme in Gallup's research and experience. In particular, organizations and institutions have often been slow to adapt to the transformative spread of information technology, the globalization of markets for products and labor, the rise of the gig economy, and younger workers' unique expectations.

Business and political leaders must recognize when traditional patterns in management practices, education or gender roles, for example, become roadblocks to workers' motivation and productivity, and when selectively disrupting tradition will help clear a path to greater prosperity and transformed company cultures. Employers who focus on replacing outdated management processes with ones that enhance workplace cultures and support engagement can drive their percentage of engaged workers much higher than average.

Improving Productivity by Working Toward a More Employee-Centered World

A few patterns in Gallup's global employee engagement data are consistent worldwide. For example, in virtually all regions, employee engagement levels tend to be lower in industries characterized by more routinized jobs, such as manufacturing and production. The conventional management mentality in these industries often puts process ahead of people, contrary to the employee-centered focus that promotes improved business performance.

However, some differences in employee engagement across global regions can't be attributed to macroeconomic factors like the prevalence of different job types. One of the most surprising differences is that the proportion of engaged employees in Western Europe — one of the world's most economically developed regions — is even lower than the global average. Only 10% of employed Western Europeans are engaged at work; by comparison, the figure among U.S. employees is more than three times as high at 33%. The contrast suggests that management practices are a key differentiator in U.S. companies' ongoing productivity edge over their European counterparts.

Businesses that orient performance management systems around basic human needs for psychological engagement, such as positive workplace relationships, frequent recognition, ongoing performance conversations and opportunities for personal development, get the most out of their employees. However, Gallup's global engagement analytics suggest that those conditions are less common in some cultural settings than in others. For example, a strong historical tradition of hierarchical leadership — such as in East Asia, where just 6% of employees are engaged at work - may contribute to company cultures that make it more difficult for managers to adopt a "coaching" mindset that places more emphasis on what employees need to reach their potential for productivity and other business outcomes.

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In some cases, however, the capacity for increased workforce productivity may depend on an organization's ability to overcome hurdles so they can adapt to changing circumstances. In Japan, for example, businesses face an urgent need to focus on people management to counter a culture of overwork that has led to increased rates of serious physical and mental health problems. Japanese businesses also need more employee-centered management practices if they are to tap into potential productivity gains from one of the country's most undervalued resources: working women.

Building Strengths-Based Workplaces to Unleash Employees' Potential

One of the most important ways in which command-and-control leadership can stifle productivity is by denying employees the flexibility to gravitate toward roles and responsibilities that play to their inherent abilities. Strategies that allow individuals to identify, develop and use their natural talents so they become strengths have the potential to dramatically improve workforce productivity.

Employees who use their strengths on the job are more likely than others to be intrinsically motivated by their work — simply because it feels less like work to them. At the workgroup level, team members who know each other's strengths relate more effectively to one another, boosting group cohesion. In a study of almost 50,000 business units in 45 countries, Gallup researchers discovered that workgroups that

received strengths interventions saw sales increase by 10% to 19% and profits by 14% to 29%, compared with control groups.

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increase in sales, compared with control groups

AND

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14%-29%

In many cases, making better use of employees' strengths will require businesses to grant workers greater input and autonomy to use their strengths. This approach often requires a profound shift in management perspective, as traditional manageremployee power dynamics give way to more personalized relationships through which managers position their team members for maximum impact according to their individual strengths.

The resulting sense of empowerment benefits both the employee and the organization. Employees who strongly agree that their opinions count at work are more likely to feel personally invested in their job. Gallup's global data suggest that without such opportunities, workers are more likely to doubt their ability to get ahead by working hard — a devastating blow to their motivation and productivity. Higher levels of autonomy also promote the development and implementation of new ideas as employees feel empowered to pursue entrepreneurial goals that benefit the organization — that is, to be "intrapreneurs."

Hiring Great Managers to Implement Positive Change

Workgroup managers are critical players in the effort to implement performance management systems that are performance-oriented, engagement-based and strengths-focused. Gallup's workplace analytics and experience show that unhappy employees often leave their job because of a poor relationship with a manager. Conversely, talented managers naturally help maximize productivity by building strong, positive relationships. They work to understand employees' sources of intrinsic motivation — the talents and goals that keep them focused and help them achieve.

That individualized approach helps great managers account for generational differences in employee expectations, such as a lack of tolerance among millennial employees — particularly in more economically developed regions — for workplaces they believe stunt their growth.

On the other hand, in China and other countries that have historically emphasized respect for elders, older workers may be put off by the idea that their manager should also act as their "coach," so managers may need to adopt a more deferential approach. Great managers understand these differing perspectives and develop flexible strategies for engaging each employee accordingly.

As the broad discrepancies in workforce productivity around the world demonstrate, maximizing the value of human capital is not an easy proposition. It's a goal that requires strategic efforts at various societal levels, from national populations to businesses and organizations to individual residents. It requires leaders to understand when past behaviors and traditions will no longer lead to future prosperity and success. When employers and public officials align to establish the conditions that promote productivity, resilience and self-determination in their workforces, they are far more likely to tap the economic energy they need for sustainable growth.

Business leaders play a pivotal role in this process. Among the best-managed companies in Gallup's database, as many as 70% of employees are engaged, demonstrating the vast potential for improvement on this measure — one that is associated with gains in productivity and other key business outcomes. Companies that prioritize employee engagement will be the ones that help their country achieve social stability and higher living standards. And the jobs they create will provide residents not

AS MANY AS

70%

of employees are engaged at work, among Gallup's best-performing companies.

only with financial security, but also with a sense of self-worth and optimism about the future.

Western Europe

10% of employees in Western Europe are engaged. WESTERN EUROPE IS ONE OF the most socially and economically developed regions in the world, but many of its countries have endured financial and political turmoil over the last decade. Debt crises in several nations have forced more solvent EU countries to bail out those on the verge of economic catastrophe, contributing to the current debate about the future of European integration.

> Employment data from the Gallup World Polls conducted from 2014 to 2016 indicate that northern countries in Western Europe tend to have higher rates

of residents working full time for an employer — a key metric in assessing the maturity and vitality of a country's labor market. The Scandinavian countries top the list particularly Sweden, where two-thirds of residents aged 23 to 65 (67%) work full time for an employer. This number falls below 40% in Spain (37%) and Italy (36%).

However, some challenges affecting the productivity of Western Europe's workforces are prevalent throughout the region — among them, low levels of employee engagement. Overall, just 10% of employed residents in Western Europe are engaged — that is, involved in and enthusiastic about their work. Among the region's 18 countries, this figure tops out at 17% in Norway, and it is well below 10% in France, Italy and Spain. By contrast, among the world's most highly engaged workforces, including the U.S., more than 30% of employees are engaged.

To meet changing expectations, particularly among younger workers, European firms must adopt management strategies that more effectively prioritize employee development, positivity and future orientation. For many, this represents a substantial cultural transformation. But in the absence of workplaces that fuel human capital development, businesses across the continent will continue to lack a sustainable foundation for addressing their productivity problems.

The full *State of the Global Workplace* report includes a detailed comparison of factors affecting labor productivity in Europe versus the U.S., as well as spotlight articles on workforce issues in Germany and the U.K.

of employees in Eastern Europe

are engaged.

Eastern Europe

EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES FACE AN urgent need to more effectively retain and develop the human capital in their workforces. Many countries in the region need to stem the flow of emigrants particularly young and well-educated residents — to the West. Overall, 24% of Eastern European residents and 41% of those aged 15 to 29 say they would like to move permanently to another country.

> At the heart of Eastern Europe's emigration problem is a lack of opportunity, coupled with the pervasive belief that hard work does not equate to advancement. Just

51% of Eastern Europeans agree that it is possible in their country to get ahead by working hard — easily the lowest regional proportion worldwide.

Management practices that fail to give employees a sense of personal progress may contribute to this sense of futility. Gallup's national surveys find that just 15% of Eastern Europe's employed residents are engaged at work. From Gallup's Q^{12®} employee engagement survey, the specific engagement indicator that Eastern European employees are least likely to rate positively is "There is someone at work who encourages my development." This finding points to a lack of focus on employees' future within their organization, which may lead them to envision a future elsewhere.

Post-Soviet Eurasia

18%

of residents in post-Soviet Eurasia say their government makes it easy to start a business. THE ECONOMIC PROGRESS EXPERIENCED IN much of the former Soviet Union in the 2000s was interrupted by the global recession, which sharply reduced the flow of investment capital, and by China's slowing growth, which led to falling energy prices. The economic turmoil in Russia and other former Soviet republics highlighted the need to lay a new, more reliable foundation for economic progress based largely on the development and optimization of human talent.

That's a daunting prospect, however, for populations accustomed to highly centralized planning and unaccustomed to taking the initiatives necessary for entrepreneurial growth. Gallup finds that residents in former Soviet countries are about twice as likely to say they would rather have a job working for the government than for a business (54% vs. 26%, respectively). The aversion to business ownership is reinforced by the perception that government regulations and endemic corruption create risky, unstable environments for entrepreneurs. Overall, just 18% of residents in post-Soviet Eurasia say their government makes it easy to start a business — one of the lowest figures among 11 global regions.

Post-Soviet countries have much work to do to create more favorable environments for business startups. The region's education systems can also play a role in reducing skepticism toward entrepreneurship by 1) placing greater emphasis on entrepreneurial training in secondary schools and universities and 2) making self-discovery and strengths development key curricular goals. In particular, identifying and developing young people with the greatest potential to turn new ideas into market opportunities would unleash new sources of economic energy among the former Soviet states.

Middle East/North Africa



of MENA residents say they would rather have a job working for the government than for a business. AMONG MANY ARAB COUNTRIES IN the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the public sector has traditionally been citizens' primary employer, but in recent years, alarmingly high levels of youth unemployment have led even the region's wealthiest countries to make private-sector job growth a priority. In most cases, this is not a simple proposition, particularly in light of Gallup's finding that 58% of MENA residents say they would rather have a job working for the government than for a business, while 27% say the opposite. By contrast, in economically developed regions such as the U.S./Canada, Western

Europe and Australia/New Zealand, most residents prefer private-sector employment.

The economic diversification that Arab countries need will require sustained efforts by government and business leaders to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through improved access to financing and business training, as well as education reforms to help close the current skills gap in many countries.

For their part, private-sector employers in the region can appeal to young people by emphasizing a strong sense of purpose in their organization and ongoing developmental opportunities for employees. Like millennial-age residents in other regions, many young Arabs are idealistic and future-oriented; private businesses that offer them chances to bring about positive change and to continually develop their own potential may be particularly likely to overcome the regional bias toward government jobs.

Sub-Saharan Africa



SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA REMAINS THE WORLD'S least

economically developed region, with a shortage of formal job opportunities and inadequate supports for business growth and human capital development. Overall, just 14% of adults aged 23 to 65 are employed full time for an employer, the lowest regional figure worldwide. Even among the relatively small proportion of residents in sub-Saharan Africa with a postsecondary education, just 34% say they work full time for an employer — a clear indication that the region's labor markets are failing to direct human resources to where they are needed most.

Even African countries that have made notable progress toward social stability and economic diversification in recent decades face an urgent need to equip more residents with the necessary skills and knowledge for maintaining that progress. In South Africa and Botswana, for example, residents are less likely to be self-employed with subsistence-level activities, but both countries face massive unemployment; currently, 20% of residents aged 23 to 65 in each say they are looking for work.

Targeted, high-quality education is among the most critical factors in empowering more Africans to contribute to economic progress in their country. Given limited resources, however, governments need ways to maximize the benefit of every hour that students spend in educational pursuits; for example, they should create strategies for bridging the gap between the worlds of education and work. In 2015, Gallup conducted a survey of 1,550 education experts from 149 countries in conjunction with the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE); the strongest consensus was on the need for more collaboration between schools and employers through programs such as co-op opportunities, internships and mentoring arrangements.

East Asia

57%

of engaged employees in East Asia strongly agree that they like what they do each day. IN MOST EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES, an extremely low proportion of employees is engaged at work, including 6% in Japan, 7% in South Korea, 6% in China, 5% in Hong Kong and 7% in Taiwan. The consistency in these results suggests that cultural norms in East Asia influence employee engagement throughout the region. Among the most pervasive of the norms is a collectivist mentality that individual needs and desires are considered secondary to organizational goals. In Japan and South Korea, this mindset has bred a culture of overwork that is, in many cases, proving harmful to employees' health and well-being. As

China's growth has slowed in recent years, this tendency toward overwork has begun to raise concerns in that country as well.

Lack of healthy work-life balance may be a factor in Gallup's finding that employed residents in East Asia are among the least likely worldwide to strongly agree that they like what they do each day. Among employees who are engaged at work, however, that figure skyrockets: 57% of engaged employees in the region strongly agree that they like what they do each day, compared with 16% of those who are not engaged and 10% of those who are actively disengaged. For a more detailed summary of the data from Japan and China, see the spotlight articles on these countries in the full *State of the Global Workplace* report.

Cultivating employee engagement requires management strategies that address the needs and contributions of individual employees, helping them remain highly productive and bonded to their organization while vastly improving the quality of their day-to-day life. Such strategies focus on helping employees maximize the quality of their time spent working — and may therefore help remove some of the pressure to work long hours that is detrimental to the well-being of so many East Asian workers.

Southeast Asia

22%

of working-age adults in Southeast Asia are employed full time for an employer. IN RECENT YEARS, SOUTHEAST ASIA has been one of the world's most economically dynamic regions. Rapid economic expansion among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has led some analysts to regard the regional bloc as a global growth engine, at least for the short term. However, rapid growth has brought widening disparities in living standards and economic opportunities to Southeast Asia, as some residents are better-positioned than others to take advantage of new technology and infrastructure improvements.

The close relationship between residents' education level and employment status reflects the disparities. Informal employment is common; just 39% of business owners in the region tell Gallup they have formally registered their business, with many of the remainder involved in subsistence-level activities such as small-scale farming. Regionally, just 22% of working-age adults say they are employed full time for an employer. However, this figure rises to 42% among those with at least four years of higher education.

Southeast Asia needs rapid expansion of its formal-sector economies to achieve growth in the number of good jobs. The growth will depend largely on how well existing businesses can harness the energy and enthusiasm seen in much of the region through people-centered management.

Gallup's findings on Southeast Asia also underscore the critical importance of widespread access to a high-quality education to help the region's large youth populations navigate and benefit from the rapid changes taking place in their countries. It's a positive sign that the region is also marked by unusually high levels of confidence in local schools. As in Africa, however, leaders in many Southeast Asian countries face the need to maximize limited education resources. One strategy for doing so is making self-discovery and strengths development key curricular goals so that students can identify areas in which they are most interested and in which they are most likely to contribute to the economic energy that the region is currently producing.

South Asia

28%

of working-age adults in South Asia are employed full time for an employer.

DESPITE PROGRESS TOWARD POVERTY REDUCTION

in much of the region as a whole, South Asia is still characterized by low levels of development and economies dominated by informal sectors. Just 37% of business owners in the region tell Gallup they have formally registered their business; many toil at subsistence-level family enterprises with little or no potential for job creation. Overall, 28% of South Asian residents aged 23 to 65 say they are employed full time for an employer.

As in the MENA region, economic productivity in South Asia is limited by cultural and religious norms that restrict women's workforce participation. Two-thirds of the region's women aged 23 to 65 (66%) are out of the workforce (i.e., not employed and not looking for a job), while just 14% are employed full time for an employer. The opportunity cost in terms of human capital is particularly high when it comes to well-educated women. Regionally, 48% of women aged 23 to 65 who have four or more years of education beyond high school are out of the workforce versus 21% of men with this level of education.

Given the prevalence of small family-run businesses in the region, South Asian societies have the potential to accelerate job creation by helping the most promising small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) develop and grow. Expanding access to financing and business training is essential. Gallup's research shows that implementing strategies for supporting innately talented entrepreneurs, including knowing which characteristics most highly correlate with business success, can also help SMEs flourish. Gallup covers the characteristics that lead to business success in our full *State of the Global Workplace* report.

Australia/New Zealand



EMPLOYEES IN AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND RATE their

overall life higher than employees do in any other global region. On a scale of zero to 10, with zero being the "worst possible life" and 10 being the "best possible life," the average rating among employees in Australia/New Zealand is 7.36. The only other region in which employees' average life rating tops seven is the U.S./Canada, at 7.14.

Despite employees' high overall life evaluations, Gallup finds that workers in the region have lackluster employee engagement scores: Just 14% are

engaged in their job, showing up every day with enthusiasm and the motivation to be highly productive.

Gallup's workplace studies highlight several strategies to help employers bring the zeal for life expressed by the region's residents into the workplace to boost productivity and economic gain. Strategies include giving employees more opportunities to do what they do best, recognizing that not everyone will make a good manager, and creating an employee value proposition that emphasizes work-life balance and overall well-being.

The last approach may be particularly important in a region where residents appear to enjoy their overall life more than they enjoy their job. However, especially for those who spend 30 or more hours each week on the job, having a great life outside of work isn't enough. Organizations need to ensure that they are creating a culture of well-being within the workplace and should adjust and highlight what they offer to help employees maintain high levels of well-being due to reasons beyond receiving a regular paycheck.

Latin America



of working-age adults in Latin America are employed full time for an employer. **IN LATIN AMERICA, MANY COUNTRIES** have struggled to rally since the end of the commodity boom in the 2000s. Good jobs are relatively scarce again in much of the region; Gallup finds that 32% of Latin American residents aged 23 to 65 say they are employed full time for an employer. By comparison, 56% of U.S./ Canada residents in that age range say the same. Access to high-quality education remains spotty in much of the region, and just 42% of Latin Americans tell Gallup they are satisfied with the availability of quality healthcare in their city or area, one of the lowest regional figures in the world.

With insufficient support for human capital development, social mobility is limited in most Latin American countries. The daily experiences of Latin American workers, which vary substantially by occupation, clearly reflect the resulting discrepancies in living standards. For example, 37% of construction and manufacturing workers in the region rate their life highly enough to be considered "thriving," versus 66% of professional workers.

In many cases, outdated management practices exacerbate the social divisions in Latin America. The authoritarian, top-down mentality has a firm hold on how organizations structure their workforces and how they treat their employees. The region's employers can help offset the problems associated with inequality through management strategies that promote growth and development for workers. Over time, development-focused management practices have the potential to reduce social tensions and inure the region's economies against volatile commodity cycles by establishing a more sustainable, human capital-based foundation for growth.

U.S./Canada



AT 31%, EMPLOYEES IN THE U.S./Canada are more likely to be engaged than are those in any other region, though there remains ample room for improvement. Comparatively, the U.S./Canada region is among the most economically developed in the world, with a high proportion of professional and knowledge-based jobs, which tend to have somewhat higher engagement levels than do other employment categories. Individualistic cultural tendencies in the two countries favor more egalitarian organizational structures that help emphasize the strengths and contributions of each employee.

American employees, in particular, are more likely than those in any other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country including Canada — to strongly agree that at work, they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day. This finding suggests that workplaces in the U.S. are more adept than those in many other developed nations when it comes to providing employees with opportunities to apply the best of their natural selves their strengths — in addition to their skills and knowledge. This strengths-focused, fundamental aspect of engagement is among the most important to employees who are considering whether to take a job with a different organization, and it is one of the main reasons they choose to leave their job.

As employers in the U.S./Canada focus on organic growth and competition for talent, they aim to engage employees who feel optimistic about their ability to find a new job and who are seeking better career and development opportunities. To retain their workforces, organizations in North America need to consider how they are creating a future that employees want to be a part of, and how they can help employees feel innovative, fulfilled and optimized.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Employers around the world now face a myriad of challenges associated with social, economic and technological developments. From São Paulo to Shenzhen, leaders are looking for solutions that will drive productivity, retain their most talented citizens and keep them competitive in the marketplace.

For more information about Gallup's research on the challenges and opportunities facing workplaces in 11 global regions, read our complete *State of the Global Workplace* report, which features:

- complete statistics on employment and workforce engagement based on Gallup surveys in 155 countries; these data provide the context for more in-depth discussions of key strategies that contribute to human capital development and workforce resiliency
- a full chapter on each global region, including input and advice from Gallup's workplace consultants around the globe
- spotlight articles on workplace issues in a number of countries, including the U.K., Germany, the United Arab Emirates, China, India, Japan and Singapore

Effective leaders know that as the world changes, their organization must adapt accordingly. The most important question they face now is how to rise to that challenge in ways that create prosperous citizens, organizations and countries.



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