



2021 RESEARCH REPORT

# The State of Employee Experience 2021

The pulse of the Singapore workforce  
one year into the pandemic



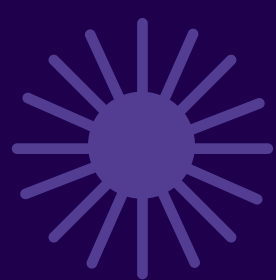
A REPORT BY:





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# Preamble:

One year on, it is time to reassess, reimagine, and recover



by **Peck Kem Low**

Chief HR Officer and Advisor, CHRO Office and Workforce Development, Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office, MSHRI, IHRP-MP

In the past year, Singaporeans and people all over the world have been dealing with the “crisis of a generation” – and showed exemplary resilience in the face of it. As the employee experience transformed rapidly to one where work from home was the norm, we quickly adapted to new models of productivity and communication. Through new ways of working, the workforce successfully fulfilled all obligations, sometimes at the cost of personal wellbeing.

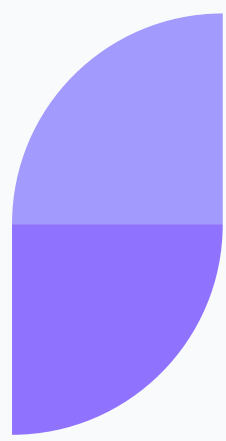
It is important to understand and accept the reality of what we have been through as a population and its lasting impact on the way forward. Remote work will no longer be an exception to the rule, Safe Management Measures and contact tracing protocols will be on par for the near future, and a strong focus on mental wellbeing is emerging as an important priority. All of this requires building upon a bedrock of trust where there are minimum boundaries to productivity and sensitivity to each other's needs.

Organisations have to build on the digital investments from the previous year to support hybrid working and the possibility of multiple variants of the virus coexisting with us for the foreseeable future. Regular communication to assuage doubts, monitoring of vulnerable groups like young millennials or working parents, and enhancing the employee and customer experience through the use of technology will be crucial for organisations.

As we embark on the remaining half of 2021 and learn how to live with an endemic COVID-19, agility will be more than just a buzzword. Agility allowed organisations to transform deeply entrenched, traditional work practices and meet the needs of the hour. Aided by digital technology on the one hand and a strategic focus on resilience, organisations will be able to pave the pathway to a thriving future. And at the core of this journey is our most precious asset: Our people.







# Introduction:

## The importance of closely tracking organisational resilience

The last year has been a demonstration of human beings' incredible resilience in the face of a crisis, and our ability to adapt. Since February of 2020, Singapore has witnessed six distinct waves of the coronavirus pandemic, starting with imported cases and early local clusters to the return of Singaporeans from overseas, spread among migrant workers, community clusters, and gradual control of variants. Now, one year after the circuit breaker in 2020, there has been a renewal of restrictions in a bid to preempt further cases. Throughout all of this, Singapore's workforce has remained resilient, adapting to a sudden switch to remote work, company mandates amid productivity concerns, and increasingly complex personal obligations.

EngageRocket, in partnership with the Institute for HR Professionals (IHRP), the Singapore HR Institute (SHRI) and ThriveHR Exchange, put together a national programme to better understand employee's challenges and help organisations reimagining workplace experience. Between March and June, more than 390,000 survey responses have been collected and analysed, from organisations across a large range of industries. This forms the largest consistent dataset available on the sentiment of the Singapore workforce through the pandemic.

As we mark the sobering anniversary of the first circuit breaker, it is vital to once again take stock of the pulse of Singapore's workforce and assess the long-term impacts of the myriad ways in which the pandemic has changed our lives. It is only after reassessment that we can try to reimagine and recover, implementing tactics that address emerging problems like a rise in disengagement, high burnout risk among vulnerable employee groups, and stress among caregivers.

In this report, we share our findings from three key impact areas – the state of employee resilience and its effects on mental wellbeing, how office, hybrid, and remote work influences different employee groups, and the action points necessary to ensure retention, productivity, and well-being. We also discuss why it is crucial to abandon one-size-fits-all models for employee engagement and wellbeing, and dive deeper into the mood and sentiment of each segment of the workforce.





1

# The long-term impact of COVID-19 on resilience and well-being

Workforce resilience is a key factor for organisational growth and success. In 2021, the numbers have shifted significantly from the previous year, with most employees showing signs of wear and tear. However, the majority are still confident about their organisation's future, and older employees, particularly, seem to be faring much better. Both in terms of resilience and well-being, the millennial working population requires keen attention from employers in 2021.

1A

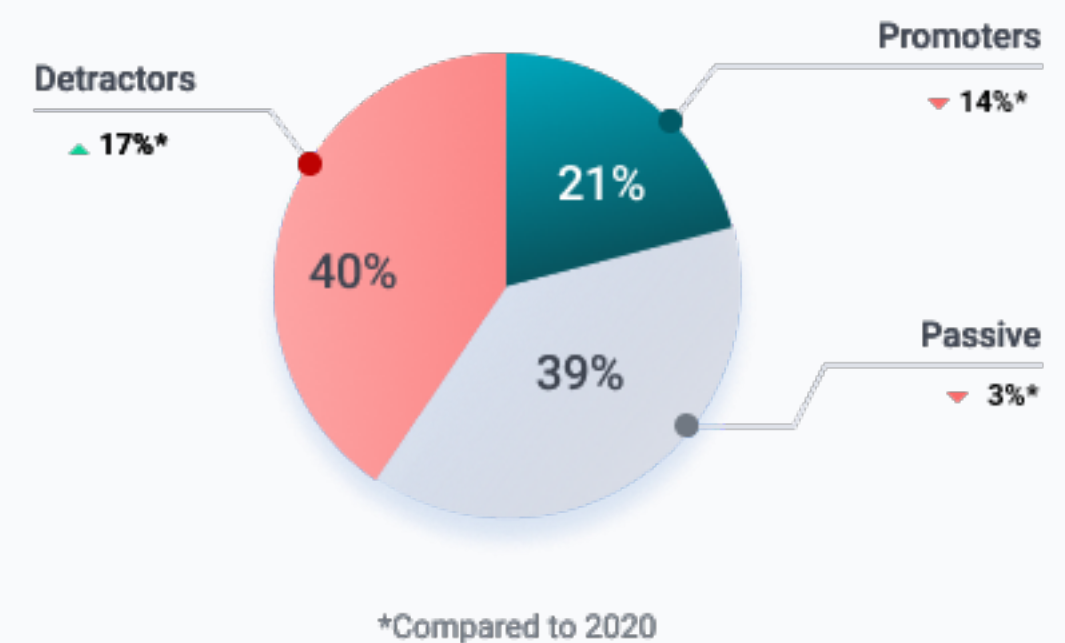
## Overall numbers are at a decline

Looking back at 2020, as per our Pulse of the Singapore Workforce survey, employees generally reported high levels of hope, confidence, and resilience. In 2021, overall engagement has reduced by 14% from last year.

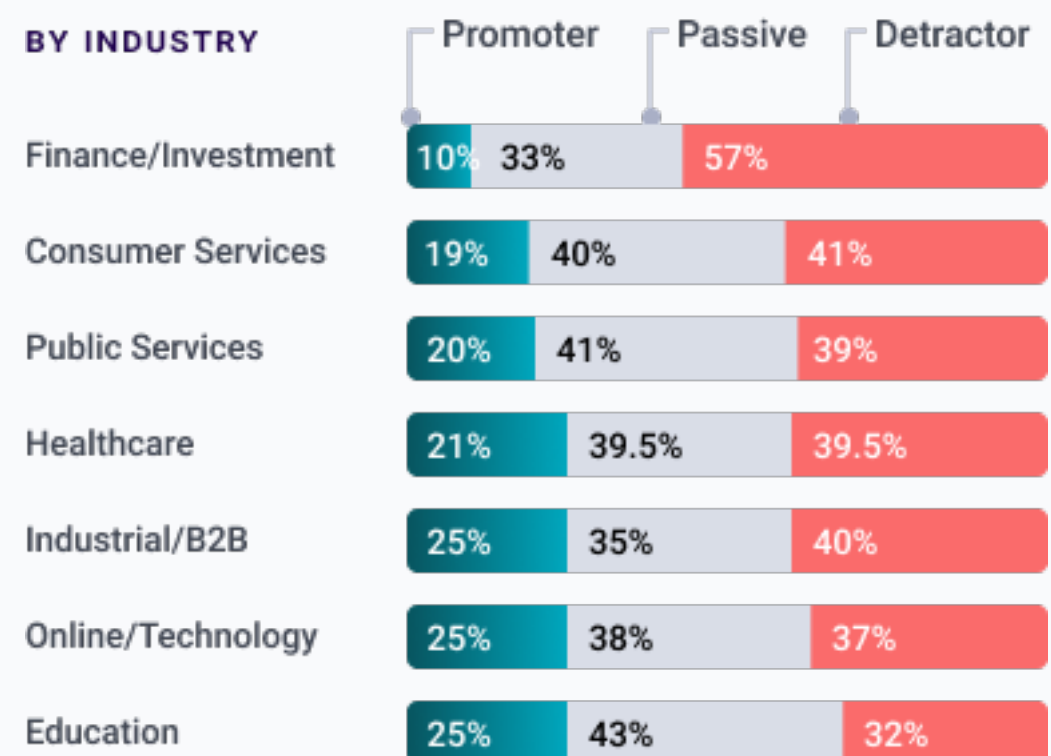
The Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS), which is a popular measure for employee loyalty and engagement, categorises the workforce into promoters, detractors, and those who are passive within organisations. Our study found that the overall number of promoters decreased by 14% and the number of detractors increased by 17%.

### SURVEY QN

How likely are you to recommend your company as a place to work friends or family?



### BY INDUSTRY



As many as 81% of employees had said last year they were confident about the future of the organisation, in 2021, this number has come down to 64%.

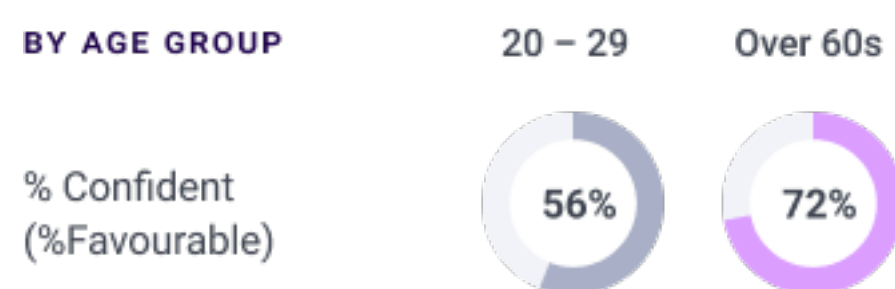
It is also helpful to consider these insights from the perspective of age demographics. In 2021, 56% of the Gen Z and young millennials (between ages 20 and 29) said they are confident about the organisation's future. For Boomers (those over 60 years of age), this number was a significantly higher 72%.

### SURVEY QN

I am confident of the future of my organisation.



### BY AGE GROUP

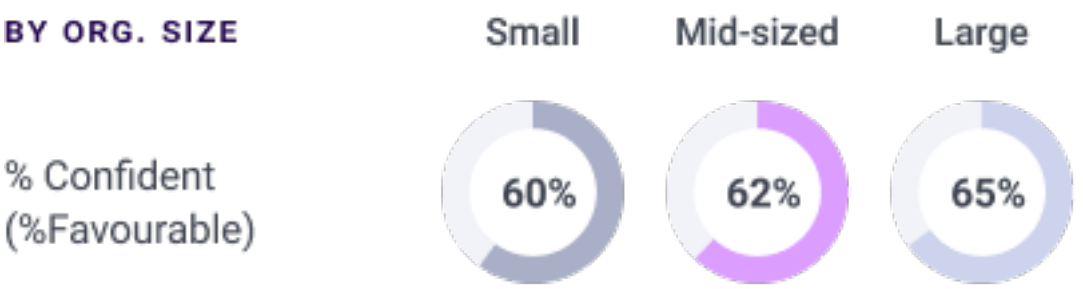




What is surprising is that this sense of resilience is almost the same across small, mid-sized and large organisations with 60%, 62%, and 65% of their employees feeling confident, respectively. In other words, larger, more established companies don't necessarily translate into greater job security and the hope of long-term success. SMBs are doing just as well, successfully using remote work and remote engagement strategies to keep their workforce motivated.

SURVEY QN

I am confident of the future of my organisation.



There are a few key takeaways for employers from these findings:

- 1 Employees are **more prone to feeling neutral** about their organisation's future than highly optimistic. Companies can employ **strategic communications** to promptly address this, as a genuine lack of confidence is still rare.
- 2 Large enterprises cannot take their market entrenchment and employer reputation for granted. Across every level, **strategic communications** are necessary to **strengthen culture and boost morale**.
- 3 Young professionals and working parents/caregivers form the most vulnerable population, with just 37% of caregivers feeling safe about taking risks at work.

1B

## Most of us are at the risk of burnout

As several experts predicted, the number of employees at risk of burnout increased significantly between 2020 and 2021. Last year, 53% said they were reacting "favorably" and stress levels were normal, all things considered. In 2021, this number has dipped by 9 percentage points, meaning more than half of all employees are at risk. Specifically, the share of the neutral or "coping" population has increased from 30% to 43%, indicating a feeling of stagnation that's now settling in one year into the pandemic.

Writing for The New York Times, Wharton organisational psychologist Adam Grant refers to this stagnation as "languishing," which is a middle space between complete burnout and being able to thrive. Acknowledging the problem is the first step to redressal, and companies would need to revisit their mental well-being programs to help lesser-risk populations as well as the 13% experiencing unfavorable levels of stress.

DATA INSIGHT

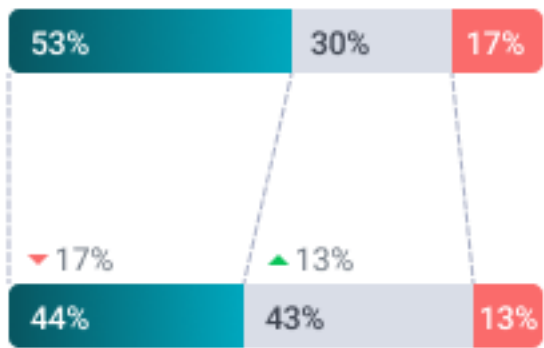
The "neutral"/coping population has increased by 13%

% Favourable score

Favourable	Neutral	Unfavourable
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2020  
All things considered, my stress levels are still normal.

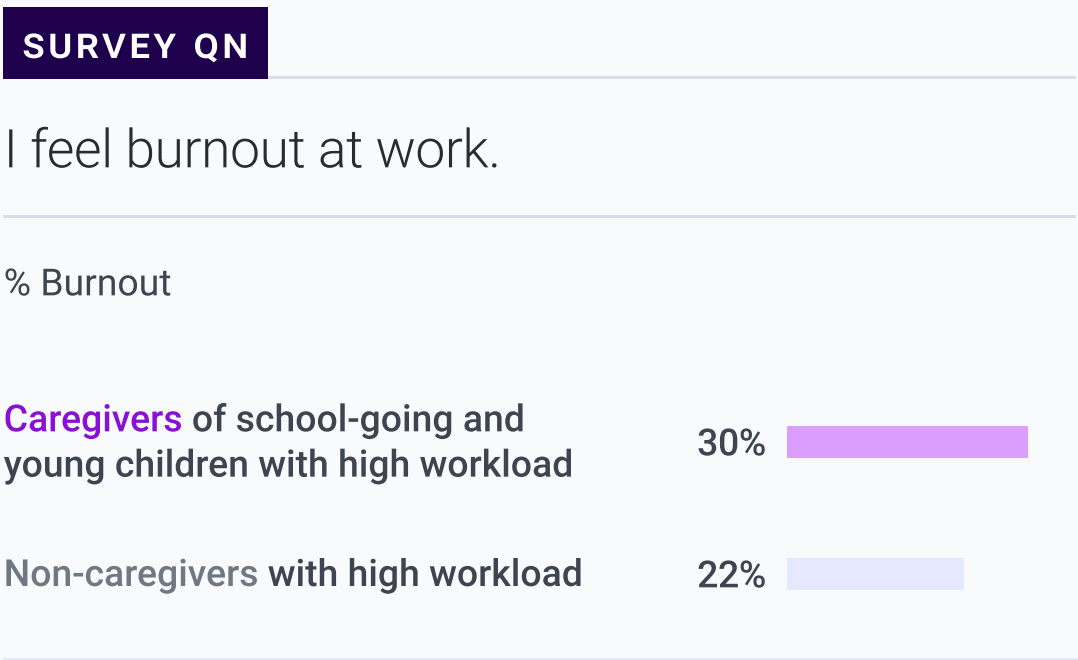
2021  
I am able to avoid burnout at work



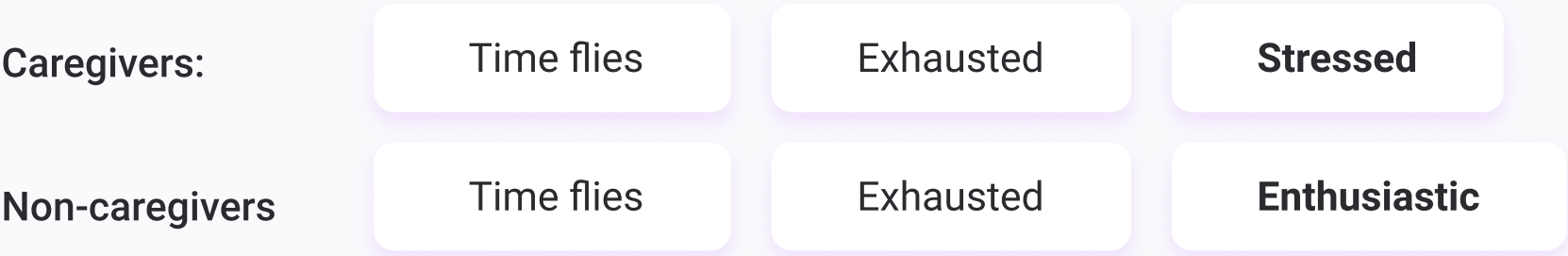


Once again, as in the case of resilience, caregivers make up the bottom percentile in terms of wellness.

14% overall caregivers declare being burnout, this number jumps at 30% for caregivers with school going children and high workloads.



A look at the top three feelings experienced by caregivers vs. non-caregivers highlights this divide –



These findings suggest the following key takeaways for employers:

- 1

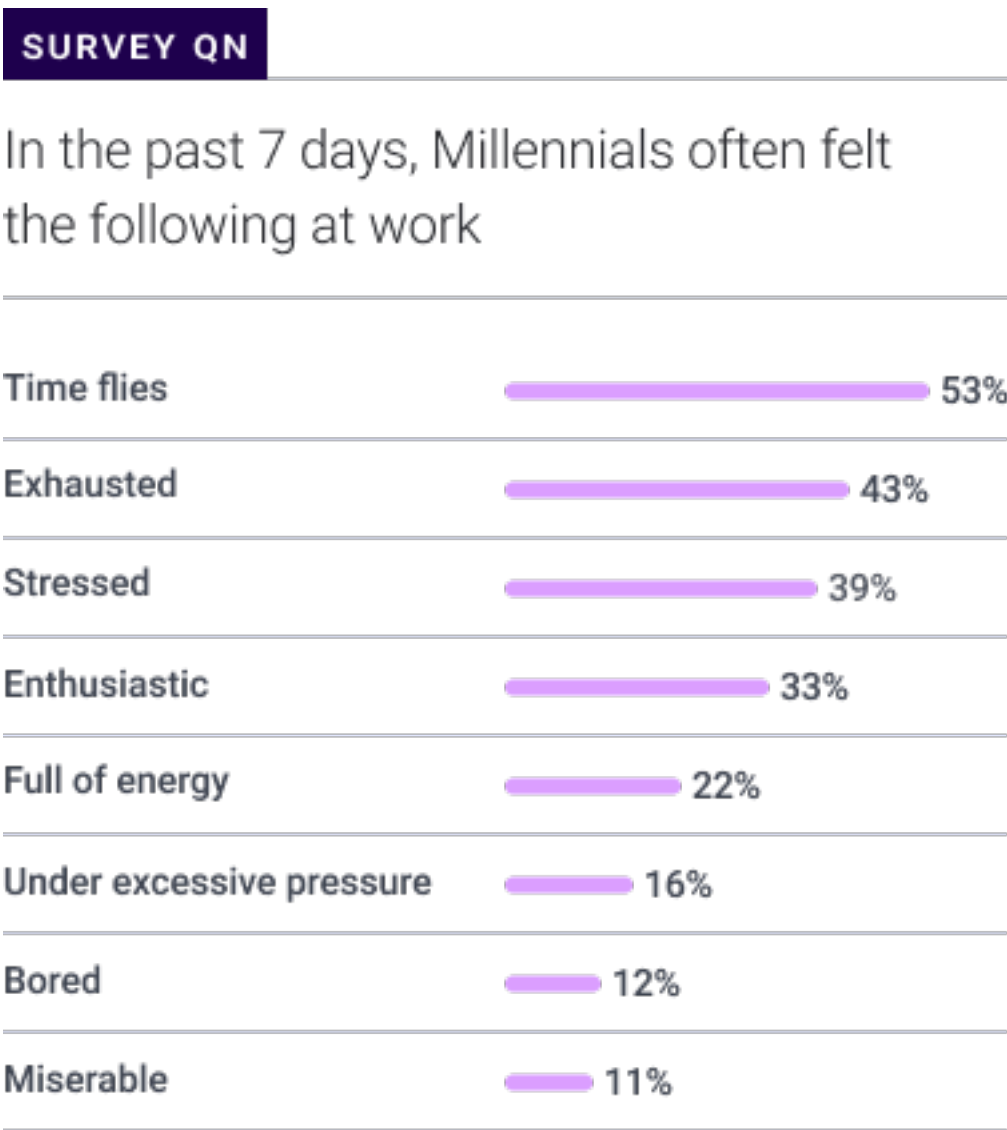
While the core at-risk population might have decreased slightly due to messaging around mental wellness and anti-burnout measures, **languishing employees have increased**. New strategies are needed to tackle this issue, along with new indices for measuring stress.
- 2

**Employees with dependents need to be treated as a target demographic for employee engagement**, and initiatives should also address the dependents they support.

1C

# The youngest demographics are struggling the most

When asked about the top feeling they experienced in the last seven days at work, millennial employees replied with “Time flies”, “Exhausted”, “Stressed”, and “Enthusiastic”. This paints a mixed picture – employee experience is complex for this demographic, and their workdays are marked by frequent highs and lows.



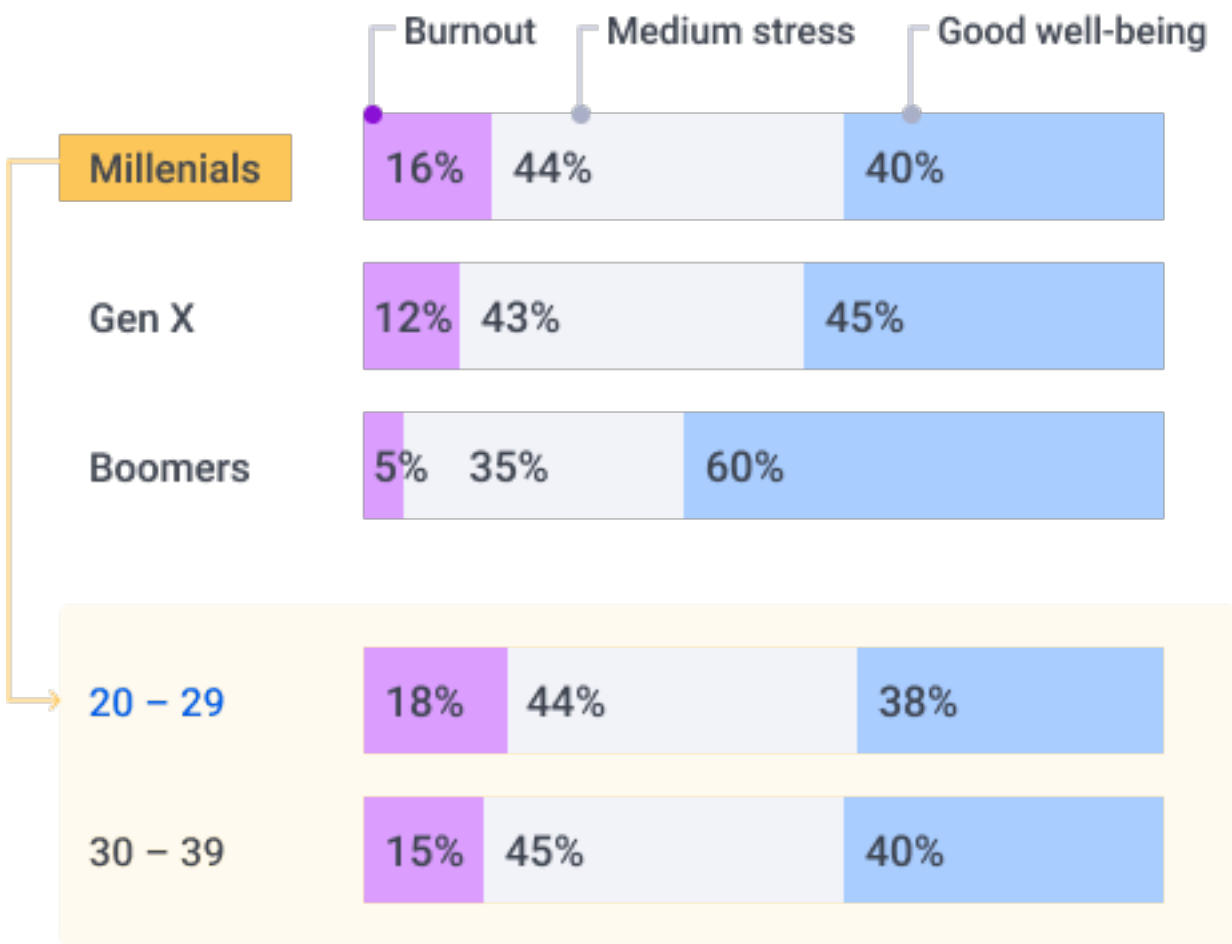


One of the fallouts of the negative aspects of work experience is the increased risk of burnout. 16% of millennials face burnout, compared to 12% of Gen X employees and just 5% of Boomers. The number of millennials reporting healthy levels of mental well-being is also significantly lower at 40% vs. 60% of Boomers.

What’s more, the younger one is within the millennial demographic, the higher the risk. Burnout among those between the ages of 20-29 is 3 percentage points more common than those aged 30-39. The former group is also 3 percentage points less likely to report “good well-being” levels. **This results in a significantly lower employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) among the 20-29 years-old workforce, making this an area that requires urgent attention from employers.**

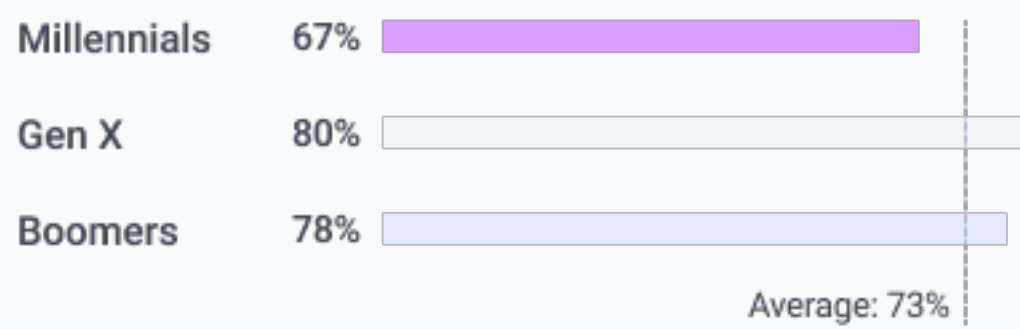
SURVEY QN

I am able to avoid burnout at work.



SURVEY QN

I see myself working at this organisation for the next 12 months.



The survey revealed an important insight into age-based loyalty trends. Young employees (Gen Z and millennials) are the most eager to switch employers, with just 67% looking to stay on in their current organisations for the next twelve months. In comparison, 80% of Gen X and 78% of Boomers plan on staying with their employer for the next year.

The key takeaways from these insights are clear:

- 1 Millennial well-being and resilience require more observation and astute measurement. **There is no one-size-fits-all solution to engaging with millennials in 2021.**
- 2 When asked about the organisational action they would prioritise, millennials answered with:  
(In order of priority)
  - a) Information on safety measures for returning to the workplace
  - b) Communication on job security and
  - c) Clarification of new processes
- 3 **There is a high possibility of disengagement in the 20-29 years age segment.** To check this, companies need to assess the specific drivers of motivation and morale for this group, and tailor communications accordingly.



# Expert insights



## Mayank Parekh

CEO, IHRP

“

These latest findings provide valuable insights how both new and experienced employees are coping in an increasingly virtual workspace, and its impact on work relationships and culture. It highlights the importance of new leadership skills in this environment for better collaboration and to deliver on team goals. Finally, NEXT provides organisations with a more holistic measure of overall health, well-being and resilience of their workforce that will better align their human capital interventions to employee performance and business outcomes.

”



## Alvin Goh

Executive Director, Singapore Human Resources Institute (SHRI)

“

Digitalisation is changing how we react to the pandemic and how it has been changing not only to the business but as well the human resource ecosystem. We as HR professionals need to help our employees experience the positive impact of these rapid changes. We should not boxed our employees in and limit their opportunities and curtail their ideas. Instead, as leaders, we should be open to new ideas and we have seen through the survey that over time, our employees are able to generate better working methods and be more focus on the task at hand, we just need to be patient.

On the flip side, we need to also be mindful about the mental health of our employees. Working from home on extended working hours over long periods of time can also bring about detrimental issues. Leaders must adopt an emphatic mindset and to lead with a human lens.”

”



## CheeTung Leong

CEO and co-founder, EngageRocket

“

Through the pandemic, we have been forced to rethink the working experience and what it means to be at work. More importantly, we have had to put theory into practice, and learn from the experience. What we have found about working and leading remote and hybrid teams, the impact on our ways of work, and even our personal well-being and mental health will impact the employee experience in profound ways over the next few years. I hope that HR and People leaders continue use this opportunity to iterate their employee experience strategies with relevant and timely data, and push the boundaries of innovation in the workplace

”



## Sonali Sharma

VP, Product & People Science, EngageRocket

“

The data overwhelmingly pronounces Digitisation as the key to unlocking success in the new normal. But where should organizations begin? We have uncovered that Millennials serve as a bridge between traditional workplace practices and the future of work. Millennials expect immediacy, personalization and an attention to their experience. Any organization that is able to address the needs of this large workplace cohort with investment in technology will pave the way for a digital future.

”



## Stephanie Nash

Chief People Officer, ChapmanV and Co-creator, Thrive HR Exchange

“

We can all agree that everyone globally has experienced a different version of the same thing. The Pandemic has uniquely affected us and the Future of Work is unpredictable so the levels of ambiguity will continue and therefore as does our need to develop resilience. This means that we need to try to practice self-care on a daily basis, even if only for a couple of minutes, we need to embrace digital technology as it is an enabler to sustainable change, and we will benefit from building resilience in ourselves and others by collaborating and connecting with our networks. If we take care of ourselves, we feel better and are therefore better equipped to take care of others: our family, our team, our organisation and our community.

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2

## The workforce has shown **remarkable adaptability** in the face of challenge and change

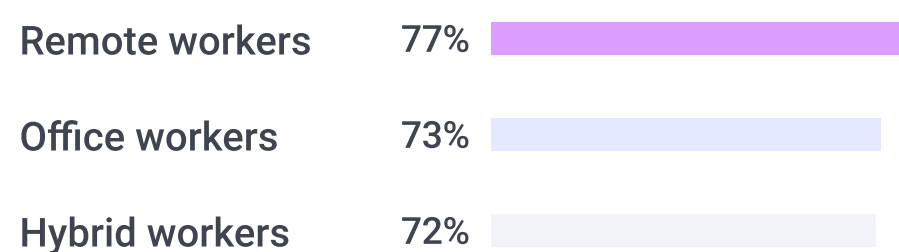
Last year, employers in Singapore and globally switched to work from home (WFH) almost overnight, bringing about a culture shift and a change in the average workplace paradigm. Even before the second phase of the pandemic and associated lockdowns in May 2021, 70% of the country's workforce were working remotely or in a hybrid model. But instead of interrupting productivity, employees showed remarkable adaptability and managed to maintain steady levels of success in a WFH environment. This year, the shift back to physical office spaces needs to be considered carefully, in terms of employee readiness, the tools they require, and engagement.

2A

### Remote workers are more productive than those working in the office or in a hybrid model

#### SURVEY QN

I feel I am productive at my job.



#### PRODUCTIVITY ACROSS AGE BANDS

	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	Above 60
Remote worker	72%	78%	75%	82%	89%
Office worker	64%	72%	79%	79%	81%
Hybrid worker	65%	72%	74%	80%	84%

With government regulations and restrictions constantly undergoing change, before the return to phase two, several companies have opted for hybrid work – where employees spend a designated number of hours in office and the rest working from home. But this can measurably hinder productivity. Hybrid workers are the least productive of all at 72%. Office workers are slightly more productive at 73%, while remote environments are the most conducive to productivity at over 77%.

Interestingly, in all three working models, there is a direct (not inverse) correlation between an employee's age and how productive they feel. Employees between 20-29 years of age feel the least productive and those above 60, are the most productive of all.

This could be because of engagement levels among non-managers vs. managers, as we discuss in a later section. Older professionals who are more likely to be managers are more engaged than non-managers, and this engagement could translate into higher productivity levels as well as the high possibility of disengagement in the 20-29 years age segment.

A surprising insight revealed by our survey is that employees feel more equipped to do their jobs at home than in the office.

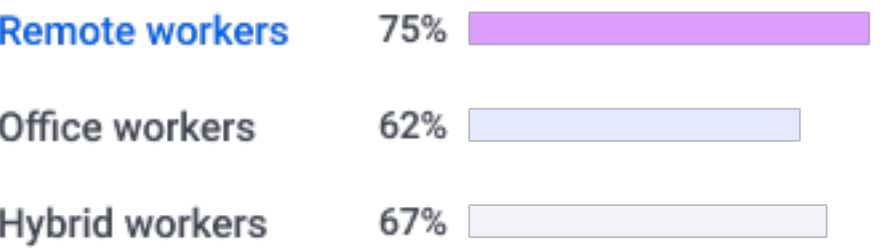
62% of office workers said they have the resources they need to do their job, including equipment, technology, and support services. **For remote employees, this number was a much higher 75%.** Hybrid and office workers also feel less equipped in terms of skill sets than remote employees.

Employers can glean the following key takeaways from these findings:

- 1 Companies will need to carefully determine the pace at which they want to transition back to a physical office. Given how well employees have adapted, their preferences should play a role in this decision.
- 2 Investment in workplace resources – including employee skills – is necessary to help the workforce reach their full potential. This also involves taking stock of each demographic’s productivity drivers.

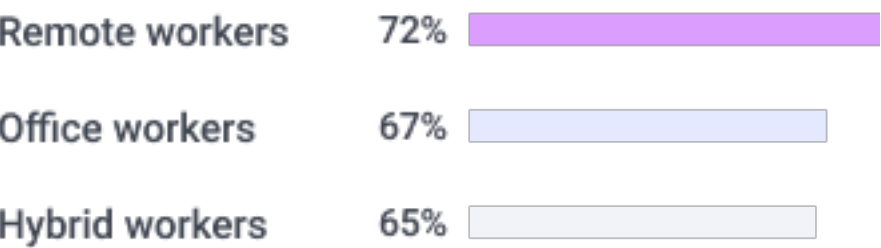
SURVEY QN

I have access to the resources (e.g. equipment, technology, support services, etc.) I need to do my job effectively.



SURVEY QN

I feel fully equipped with the skills to do well in my job now.



**Sylvia Koh**  
Chief People Officer, Group Human Resources, Crimson Logic, IHRP-SP

“The insights provide us with the realistic view of employees’ perspectives and will enable us to work towards more pointed strategies to help managers to render greater support, provide stretch, continually build trust and self-discipline, creating a ‘favourable smell of the place’ – with a more distributed, remote and less physically connected workforce.”

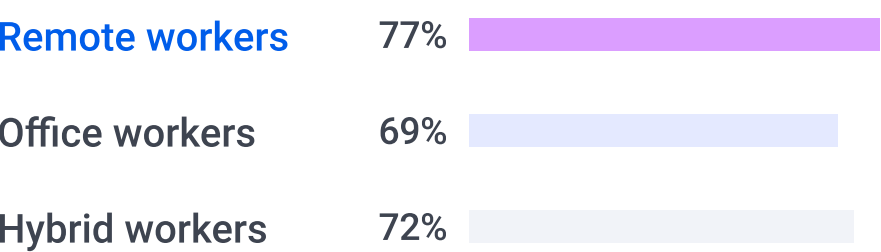
2B

Contrary to popular opinion, remote workers are more engaged, and committed

When asked if they want to stay on in their current organisation for the next 12 months, 77% of remote employees responded with a resounding yes. Office workers expect the shortest tenure in their current organisation, indicating that daily presence in a physical office space is not an indicator of loyalty.

SURVEY QN

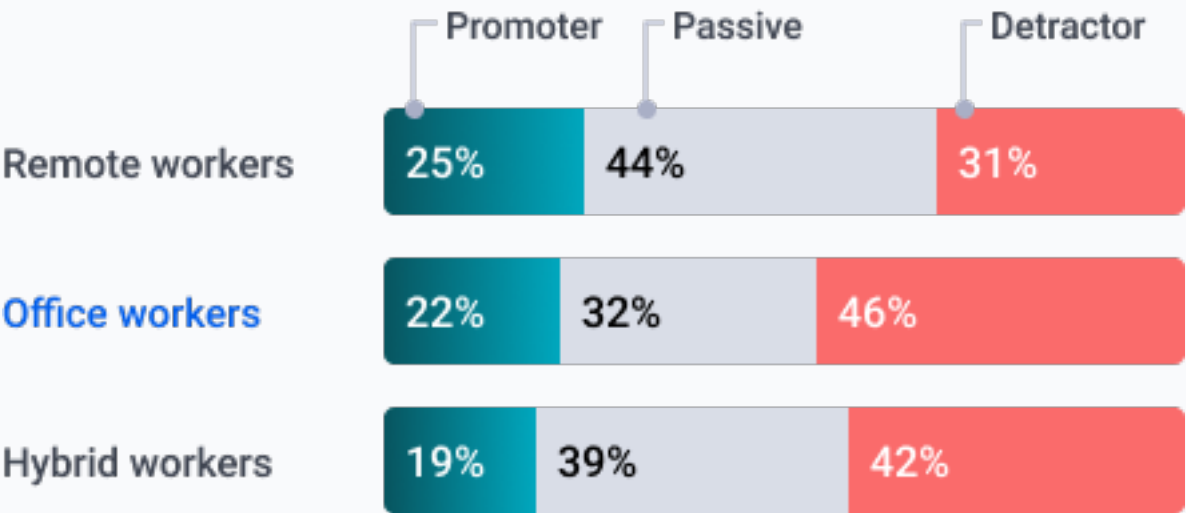
I see myself working at this organisation for the next 12 months.





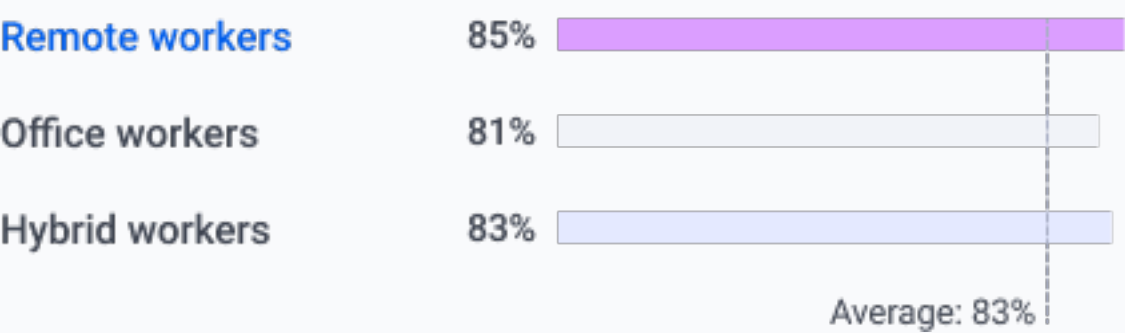
Similarly, **office workers reported a lower average eNPS compared to remote employees**, with 46% detractors compared to 31% among the remote workforce. For both indices – 12-month loyalty and eNPS – hybrid workers fared somewhere in the middle. Remote workers also display higher levels of resilience than other segments.

The survey revealed an important insight into age-based loyalty trends. Young employees (Gen Z and Millennials) are the most eager to switch employers, with just 67% looking to stay on in their current organisations for the next twelve months. In comparison, 78% of Gen X and 80% of Boomers plan on staying with their employer for the next year.



DRIVER

Resilience (% Favourable score)



Here are the takeaways these findings suggest for employers:

- 1 In 2021, **after a year of economic volatility, personal anxiety, and unpredictable change, employee loyalty could be at risk**. Office workers and the young employee segment require immediate attention to curb attrition risk.
- 2 Separate eNPS surveys must be conducted for remote, office, and hybrid workers, delving into the engagement drivers for each group and for age and caregiver demographics within each group.



# Managers work harder and are more engaged

This interesting finding tells us about the very nature of the relationship between work and engagement. According to our survey, managers work significantly harder than non-managers based on any given parameter. They have 1.3x more caregiving responsibilities, not to mention a 1.7x higher workload.

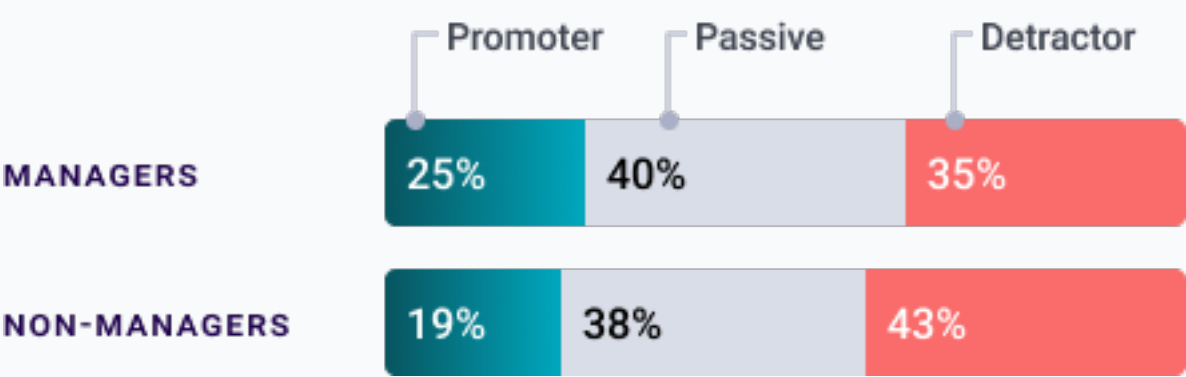
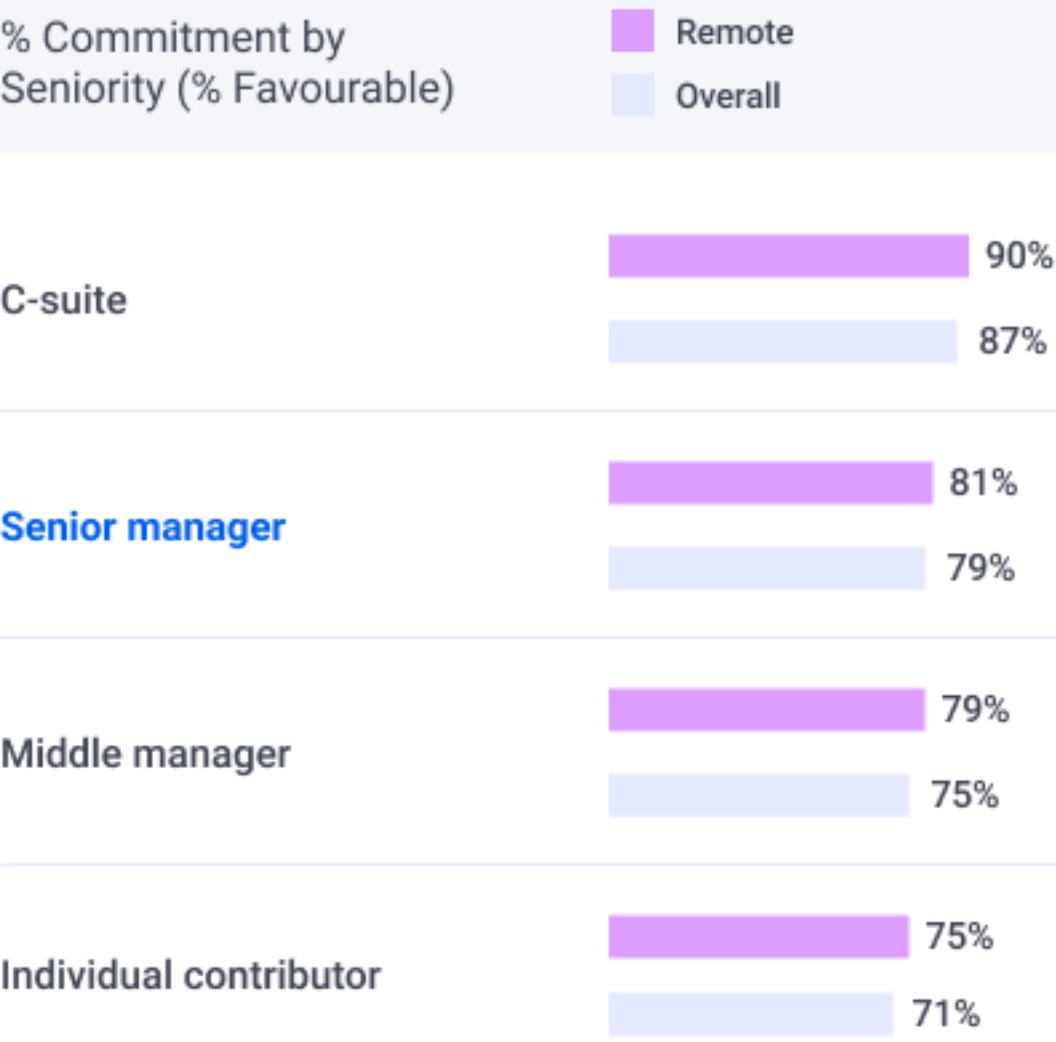
This hectic schedule could be adding to a sense of purpose, job satisfaction, and security, which is why **managers are almost 2.3x more engaged than employees in non-manager roles**. In terms of eNPS, 25% of managers are promoters of their organisation vs. 19% of non-managers. 35% are detractors vs. 43% among non-managers.

As we previously discussed, remote work continues to be correlated with productivity in managerial roles. Across middle management, senior ranks, and the C-Suite, remote managers are 2-4 percentage points more committed than the overall average (i.e. remote, hybrid, and office).

An important point to note is that while managers may themselves be largely satisfied, their team members have a less favorable outlook on manager performance in 2021 vs. 2020.

DATA INSIGHT

Senior managers working remotely report 81% commitment



The key takeaways one can derive from these findings are:

- 1 **More responsibility and leadership roles can aid engagement.** This learning should be applied when assigning non-manager roles as well.
- 2 Shifting managers onsite may not always be the best idea.
- 3 64% of employees said they received feedback from managers this year, compared to 69% in 2020. 71% said they received support compared to 77% in 2020. **This indicates the need for manager refresher training.**



# Digital transformation and long-term resilience will drive sustainable change

In many ways, 2021 will be a make-or-break year for people management and organisational success, as we come out of the first phase of the pandemic and address long-term issues. The dip in resilience and wellbeing is the first agenda item that calls for employers' attention. Technology must help to address productivity gaps, without compromising wellbeing. Finally, managers must be leveraged intelligently.

## Technology and communication will help retain talents

Low engagement is a predictor of attrition, and declining engagement levels from 2020 is a worrying sign. In the US, disengagement and attrition were directly linked to work flexibility, as 39% of employees would consider quitting if their employers did not provide a WFH option. Among millennials and Gen Z, this number is even higher at 49%<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, our study indicates that remote employees are more likely to be loyal, engaged, productive, and committed than their hybrid and office-going counterparts.

In 2021, employers must keep an eagle eye on attrition risk if they wish to avoid turnover costs in a complex labor market and potential damage to employer reputation. Some of the key indices to watch include:

- **Low eNPS scores** – Employees are likely to have a 50% increase in their eNPS score for every unit increase in intent to stay. Conversely, low eNPS is a surefire sign of potential attrition.
- **Resilience or confidence in the organisation's future** – Given that attitude precedes behavior, intent to stay is strongly correlated with actual turnover/retention. Not only is resilience the no.1 predictor of intent to stay, but it has also seen the most drastic decline since 2020.
- **Engagement among specific demographics** – In the US, millennials and Gen Z are most likely to quit due to the unavailability of remote work. Millennials and non-managers also have the lowest confidence in the future of their organisation (62%).



**Catherine Lim**

Head, Employee Engagement & Ethics Singapore Aero Engine Services Pte Ltd (SAESL)

“

Digital transformation has decimated barriers to connect and the need for data accessibility has become even more pronounced. With work happening anywhere possible, the focus on employee experience has far stretched beyond the physical walls!

”

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-06-01/return-to-office-employees-are-quitting-instead-of-giving-up-work-from-home>



Acting on these takeaways in 2021, employers need to:

- **Measure the right indicators** – those most strongly correlated with employee engagement, loyalty, and intent to stay.
- **Deploy highly proactive communication programs**, reassuring employees and building their confidence around the organisation's future plans, changing priorities, and mindset.
- **Discuss flexibility and assess employee's expectations** as increasing numbers in the workforce are expressing a preference for working from home, having the ability to do so as part of business-as-usual improves employee experience and engagement, and the ability to retain talent.
- Engage with young employees and those in non-manager roles, assigning tasks with a **clear purpose and maintaining transparency**.



# Organisations need a more mindful productivity mix

As several experts and analysts had predicted, the pre-pandemic WFH dream did not pan out as expected. Due to lack of preparation and multiplying home obligations, employees have found it extremely difficult to maintain a semblance of work-life balance when working remotely. And, **high workloads have exacerbated this challenge.**

Employees are certainly keeping up, as indicated by high productivity and engagement levels among remote workers. However, there is a toll on mental well-being to which employers must attend. Only 36% of employees with high workloads are able to avoid burnout, which means more than half are at risk. In contrast, 93% of those with lesser workloads can avoid burnout.

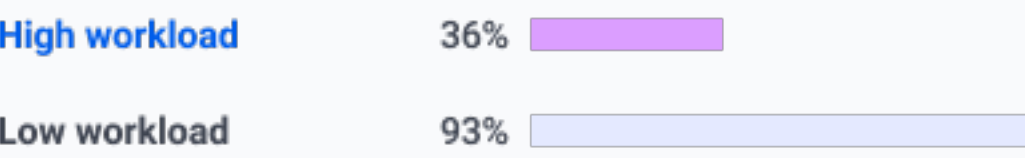
As employers try to reduce workloads in 2021, the focus will be on efficiency and helping employees get the job done faster, with minimal stress. The secret to achieving this is investments in upskilling, equipping employees with the competencies needed to reach their full potential. As discussed in Part 2, 67% of employees feel equipped with the skills to do their job well, leaving 1 in 3 employees in the lurch.

Digital (66%), communication (47%), leadership (40%), creativity and problem-solving (37%), are the top five in-demand skills among employees. These should serve as the baseline for upskilling investments.

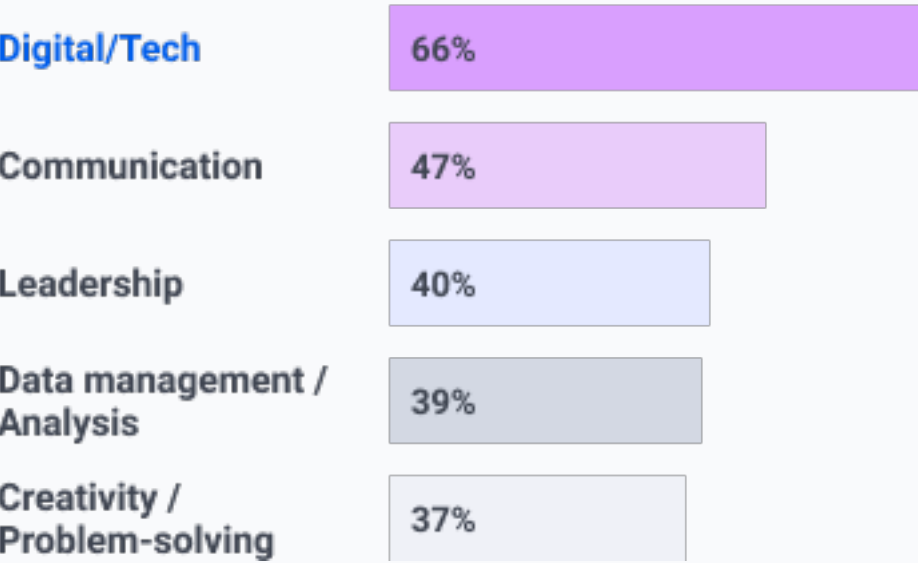
## SURVEY QN

I am able to avoid burnout at work.

% Well-being by workload



## TOP 5 SKILLS



The takeaways for employers include the following:

- 1 Productivity and engagement aren't predictors of good mental health. **As heavy workloads lead to 3X more burnout, employers need a new definition of productivity in 2021.**
- 2 While digital transformation can improve productivity, glitches during implementation have an adverse impact. **Our survey respondents specifically mentioned connectivity issues as a cause for frustration.**
- 3 When remote employees know what is expected of them they are much more likely to deliver results. **Clarity provides a clear direction and framework to help you and your remote employees to achieve your goals.**

## Unleash managers' capabilities to improve engagement and social connection



Manager performance is strongly correlated with employee engagement and well-being, and although managers are almost 2.3x more engaged than non-managers, our survey reveals that managers' support for employees has declined slightly since 2020.

64% of employees had a favorable opinion about manager feedback in 2021, which is less than 69% in 2020. 71% of employees had a favourable outlook on manager support in 2021 vs. 77% in 2020.

When asked about employee sentiment, on informal and social connections at work, there was a significant decline from 2020.

This indicates **an opportunity for managers to step in, listen to their employees, strengthen interpersonal bonds, and reestablish culture.**

Core to the success of hybrid work will be equipping managers throughout the organisation to make the transition effectively. Setting clear expectations around communications, availability, and performance become more important than before.

Protocols on checking in and mental well-being, as well as enhancing respect for off-hours must be taken into consideration. Chat and team call protocols (when to turn on video or not, to hold most meetings including remote team members virtually, etc) also need to be established upfront with the ability to evolve over time - no leader or HR professional can predefine these in full ahead of time.

% Favourable score

Favourable Neutral Unfavourable

### SURVEY QUESTION

My direct manager provides clear and regular feedback on how well I do my work.



### SURVEY QUESTION

My direct manager provides me with the support I need to complete my work.



### SURVEY QUESTION

There is someone at work that I can count on when I need help.



### SURVEY QUESTION

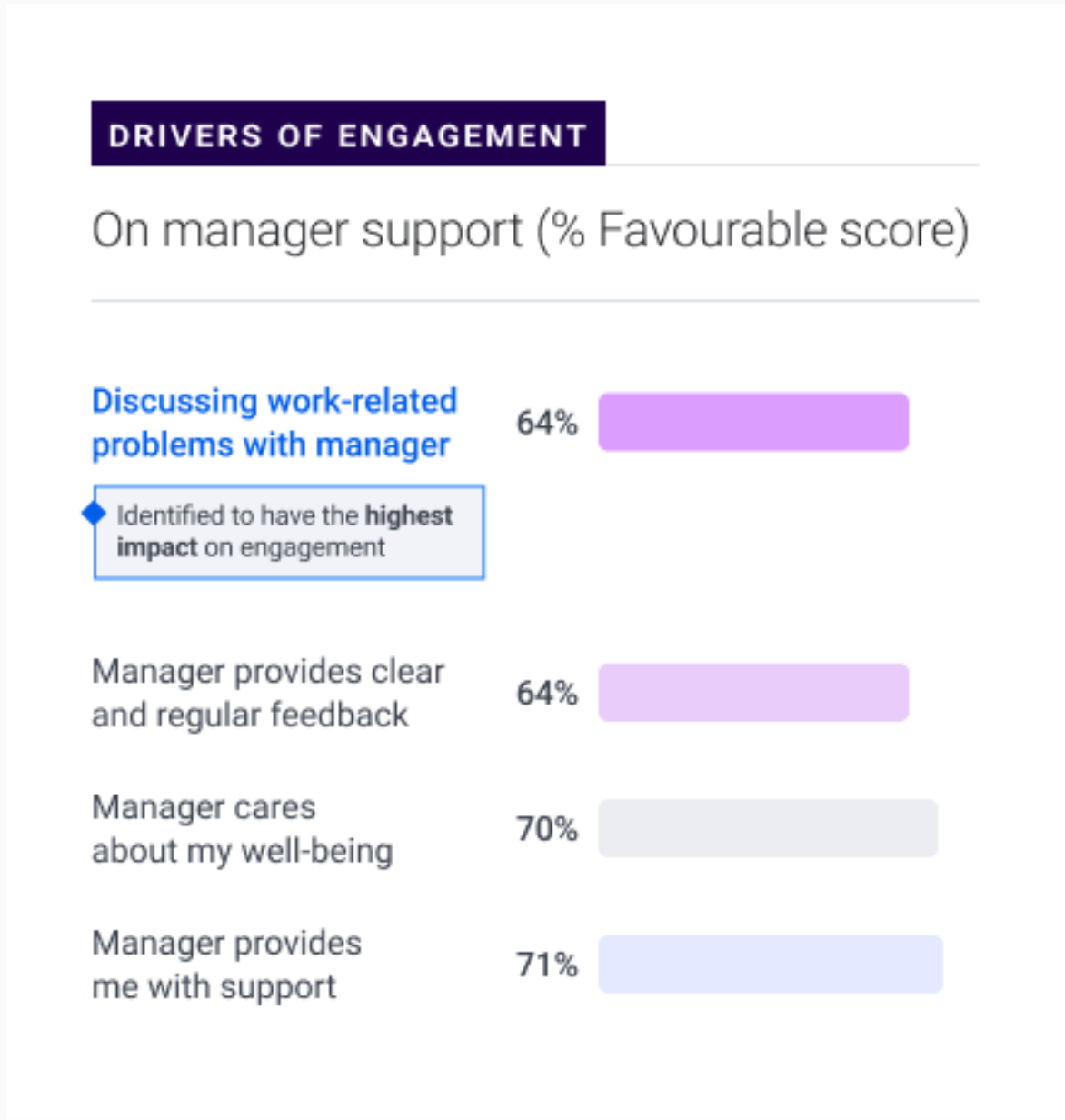
When working from home, I still feel sufficiently connected with my team members





Leaders have to build new skills to align and motivate hybrid teams. More frequent feedback – positive and constructive – check-ins with their teams, and ensuring that there are mechanisms and technologies in place to uncover people issues early will be some of the skills required to thrive in the new normal. Employers can equip managers with new tools, including continuous listening enablers that gather feedback on workplace experience across the employee lifecycle. Especially in a crisis, leaders must connect with employees in real-time. Running pulse surveys more frequently associated with continuous feedback proves to improve engagement consistently.

Our research found that managers can support employees in various ways – ask about well being and provide regular feedback etc but the most impactful way to influence engagement is to invest in quality of feedback and making employees feel supported in their work through candid conversations. Over the past 12 months "I have discussed work-related problems" with my manager is a key predictor of engagement.



Other studies have revealed a similar correlation between communication with managers and the level of engagement felt by employee teams. A Dale Carnegie research found that when an employee is not engaged with the organisation, the root cause 80% of times is a breakdown of relationship with the immediate manager<sup>2</sup>. There are two aspects to this problem – first, the lack of a secure, comfortable, and reassuring work environment will make employees less forthcoming about their issues. Second, remote work has made traditional modes of communication more problematic. Without watercooler chats or impromptu standups, it is necessary to revisit two-way feedback mechanisms between managers and team members.

To effectively unleash manager potential, employers must remember the following takeaways:

- 1 By using continuous feedback tools, managers can encourage more discussions and strengthen social connections to reduce the sense of isolation among teams.
- 2 By investing in manager training, companies can leverage the enormous potential existing within the organisation to push the needle on employee happiness. Managers should be trained to identify early signs of burnout to take action immediately.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2021/06/09/how-to-promote-team-trust-and-employee-engagement/>



# Conclusion

Our 2021 survey tells us exactly how much has changed in this last year. From a hopeful note, employees have transitioned into a more pragmatic outlook, keenly focused on increasing their productivity and outcomes. This has multiplied the feeling of languishing among the total workforce, even if explicit burnout remains less frequent. And, the months between the first circuit-breaker and June 2021 have affected different employee groups differently – very young employees, older millennials, Gen X and Boomers, caregivers, and managers have all had different experiences, shaped by their unique circumstances and responsibilities.

That's why in 2021, employers must revisit their definition of the “new normal” as a temporary, reactive reality, and begin to plan for the “now normal” and permanent change. Not only is remote work here to stay, and is often more conducive to productivity, but the very definition of post-pandemic offices is likely to change. In several sectors like banks, non-urgent healthcare, consumer essentials, and hospitality, a partial return to the physical workspace may be inevitable. Therefore, the office needs to be reimagined from the perspective of:

- How much do employees travel and what is the role of virtual communications?
- How can you reconfigure conference spaces and open layouts?
- Will flexibility be a criteria for talent acquisition and retention?
- What does the normalisation of WFH mean for corporate culture?

While technology will be a big part of answering these questions, gathering data and aiding execution, there also needs to be strategic support, aided by 2021-ready employee experience blueprints, new communication policies, and a refreshed approach by managers. Managers will have to develop new skills to promote social connections in a dynamic, almost fluid work environment, while organisations provide employees with the tools needed for sustained productivity and positive mental health.





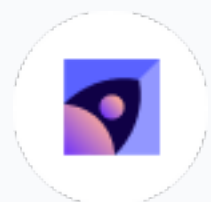


# Methodology

The report is based on a survey of 7,900+ respondents and 394,000 answers across 8 industries. The respondent pool covers every age demographic from 20 years of age to 60+ years. The four key groups – i.e., 20-29 years, 30-39 years, 40-49 years, and 50+ – have an equitable distribution of 18% to 33%.

As for tenure, most respondents have been with their company for 1-3 years or 5-10 years. There is also representation across the entire tenure spectrum, from new employees who have been with the company for less than 3 months, to those who have stayed with the same company for 20+ years.

Finally, and most importantly, we assessed the various aspects of work experience for remote, office, and hybrid models. Approximately half of our respondents are operating on a hybrid model, while 24.05% and 25.89% are remote and office-going respectively. For the purpose of this survey, remote workers are defined as respondents that operate out of a remote location for 16-20 days a month. Hybrid workers are defined as working from a remote location for 1-15 days, and onsite or from the office in the remaining duration. Office workers operate out of a physical office 100% of the time.



## About EngageRocket

EngageRocket is APAC's fastest-growing employee experience solution provider that helps leaders and organisations make better people decisions using real-time data. EngageRocket automates employee feedback and analytics to deliver powerful management insight that improves employee engagement and performance. The company has now analysed more than four million responses in several Asian languages across 14 countries and 20 industries. Learn more at [www.engagerocket.co](http://www.engagerocket.co)



## About the Institute for HR Professionals (IHRP)

The Institute for Human Resource Professionals (IHRP) is set up by the tripartite partners: the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) to professionalise and strengthen the HR practice in Singapore.

IHRP has the goal of setting the HR standards of excellence, developing HR as a strategic enabler of business and workforce transformation and fostering a vibrant HR services eco-system to drive innovation and change. Through the IHRP Certification and other national programmes, IHRP aims to enhance the competencies of HR professionals, as well as create developmental and professional pathways for them. This will professionalise and strengthen the HR practice in Singapore, allowing HR professionals to be key enablers in their organisations. Find out more at <https://www.ihrp.sg/about-ihrp/>



## About the Singapore Human Resources Institute (SHRI)

The Singapore Human Resources Institute (SHRI) is a leading, not-for-profit professional HR body, established in 1965. Serving HR practitioners, people managers, employers and business leaders from both public and private sector organisations across diverse industries in Singapore. As an independent voice driving Singapore's HR agenda on a national and global scale, SHRI is an intermediary for the HR fraternity and policy-makers. SHRI has been the trendsetter, championing benchmarks in standards of HR best practices by connecting HR professionals and business leaders locally and regionally through its signature events, member engagement activities, dialogues and networking sessions. Under the SHRI Group, SHRI Academy and SHRI Corporation aim to promote continuous learning, upgrading and professional development. Find out more at <https://shri.org.sg/about-us/shri/>



## About ThriveHR

Thrive HR Exchange is where global HR professionals and people leaders come together to co-create the future of work. Through global connections that foster the exchange of knowledge and fuel innovation, members find compassionate support, meaningful collaboration and best practice sharing. Thrive HR Exchange empowers the people leaders of today and tomorrow to become agents of change within their industries. Find out more at <https://www.thrivehrexchange.com/about>