

# 2019 Trends in Global Employee Engagement

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While employee engagement is at an all-time high, the broader experience points to growing pains for employees trying to get comfortable with new ways of working.

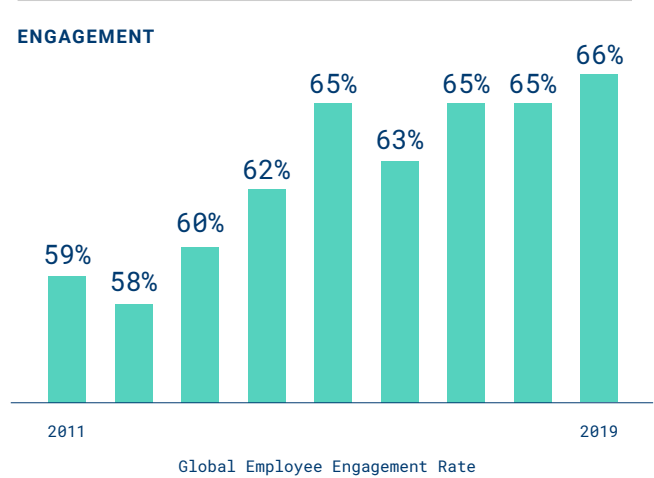
*By Ken Oehler and Christopher Adair*

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# Employee engagement is increasing

Economic growth and expansion have allowed more opportunity to invest in people despite continued competitive disruption. This investment is now paying off. **Two thirds of our clients' employees are engaged<sup>1</sup>** – higher than at any point in our time measuring engagement.

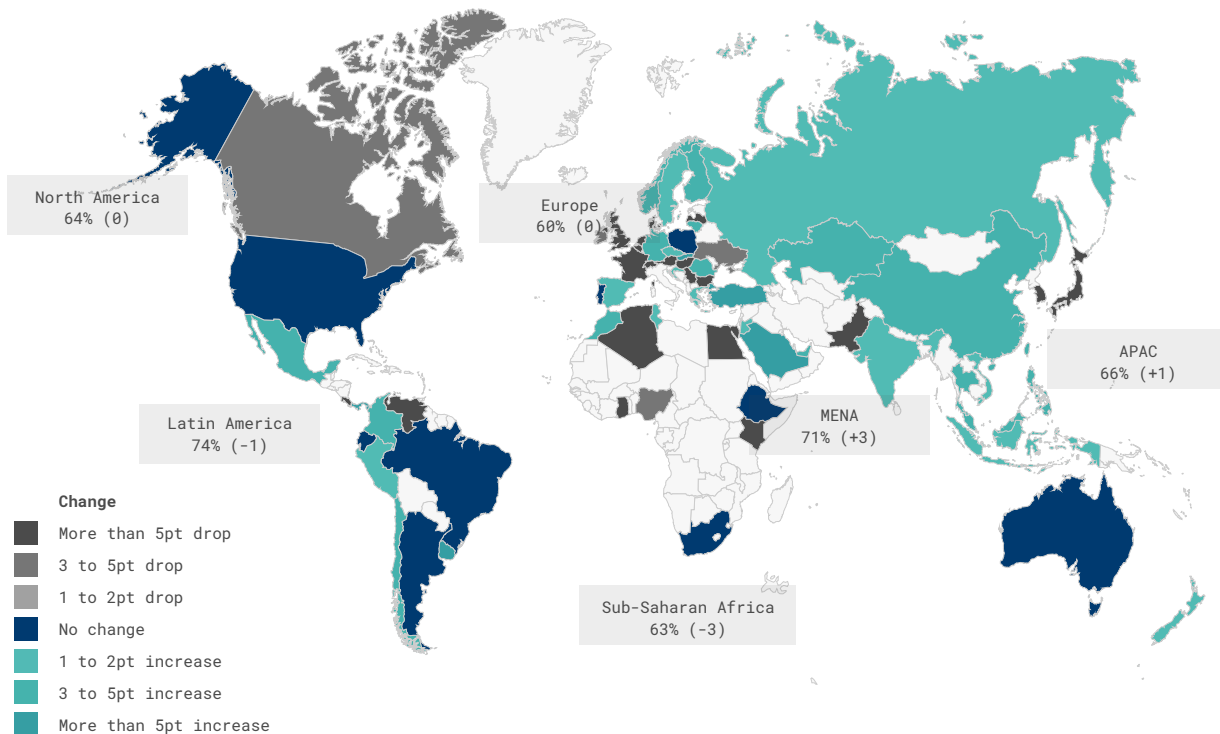
While a 1pt increase may not seem significant, the positive multi-year trend is important and shows that employees, now more than ever, are bringing their whole selves to work.



## Engagement by region

We continue to see regional – and country – level differences that inform the overall, global movement:

- North America: U.S. engagement has stayed flat for the last several years, while engagement in Canada has dropped 3pts in the last year.
- Latin America: Massive instability in Venezuela has contributed to a small drop for the region, while the largest markets of Brazil and Argentina have stayed consistent from the prior year.
- Europe: A drop of 2pts for the U.K. is a likely reflection of ongoing tensions around Brexit, but the region overall has stayed flat.
- APAC: Positive movement in the largest markets of China (+3pts) and India (+1pt) are the primary drivers for the positive movement for the region.



<sup>1</sup> - Results based on over 5 million employee responses across more than 4,100 organizations in 86 countries between 2018 and 2019.

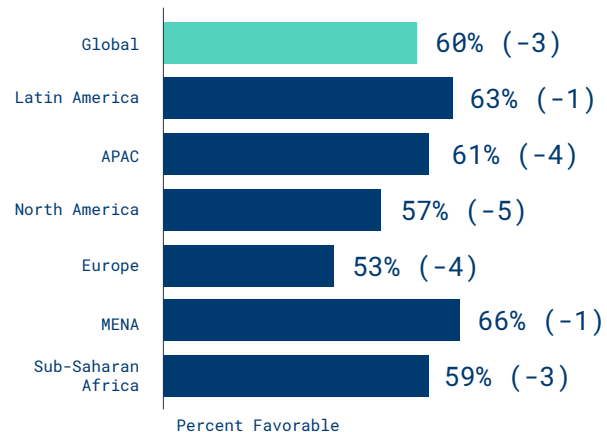
# Focus areas for driving employee engagement

## Be more agile

We have all heard about how organizations need to be more agile, yet we see agility scores are dropping globally. Does this mean that organizations are getting less agile?

Probably not. It is more likely that organizations are trying new tactics to unwind historical, linear thinking, and employees are in the middle of a potentially painful re-learning curve. It's one thing to read about agile principles – but it's an entirely different thing to implement and practice them in day-to-day work.

## ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY

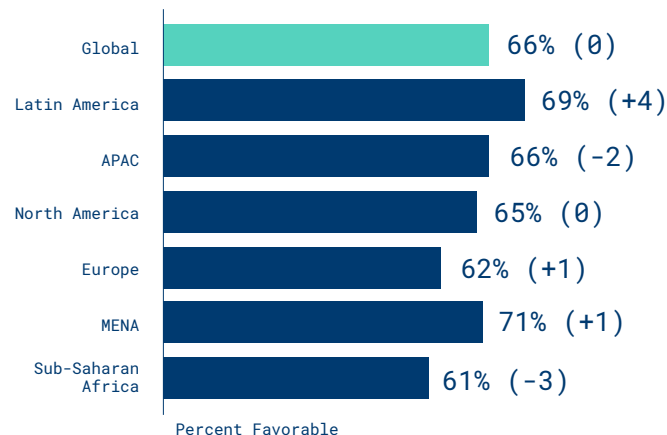


## Lead the way

Leaders' personal engagement influences the likelihood that your team will be engaged, but it's perhaps even more important to demonstrate engaging behaviors.

For example, a consistent top driver of engagement is senior leaders' ability to create excitement for the future of the organization. However, excitement for the future can't be entirely led by senior leaders. Frontline managers need to help inspire and coach their teams to engage in behaviors that align with cultural priorities.

## ENGAGING LEADERSHIP

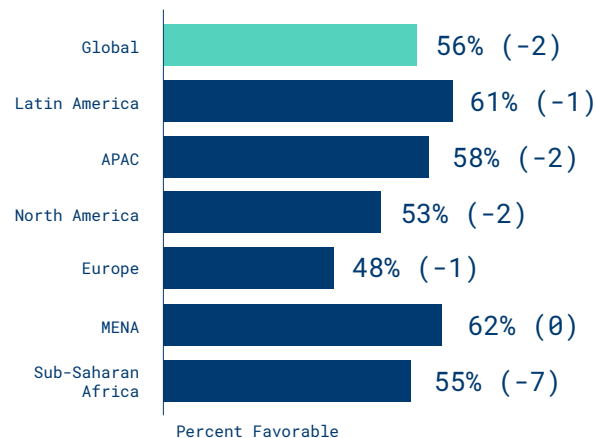


## Double down on talent focus

Our data tell us that the employee experience is getting more difficult at the beginning and end points of the employee lifecycle.

At the beginning, it is more difficult to attract the right people and have a mission that provides a meaningful direction. At the end, it's difficult to retain the people needed to achieve business goals. Some of this is due to tight labor markets that give employees freedom to consider other opportunities, but all three of these areas speak to a broader necessity to manage your value proposition and talent pipeline to attract and retain the talent that is critical to your future success.

## TALENT FOCUS



# Looking forward: trends to track

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Aside from the trends in employee feedback discussed, it's important to keep a pulse on current trends in the engagement and experience industry as changes continue to accelerate. We are asking less about "what is this?" and more about "what should I do about this?"

An alignment of leadership, culture, and engagement to business performance remains the key challenge facing organizations in general and HR professionals in particular.

## Keep an eye on these trends:

- **Employee experience is here, but what is the higher-level goal you are trying to achieve?** Beware of over-rotating on a fully bottom-up view without consideration of what the business needs to drive value. Balance is key.
- **Culture, engagement, and employee experience are converging.** Within the employee experience, culture is both a driver of employee engagement and an outcome of the collective, normative behaviors employees engage in. Understanding these intersections will illuminate hidden strengths and weaknesses.
- **HR will need to advance its own capability and capacity** in the areas of research and data analytics, design thinking and agile techniques to fully meet the demand for more frequent measurement in search of a better employee experience. With every process being "reimagined," HR professionals will need these additional skills to enable organizational success.
- **Technology and data techniques are overshadowing the real talent problem.** Techniques like machine learning and AI are advancing rapidly, but companies need to get more focused on defining business and talent problems, and ensure they have capacity to solve them rather than simply implementing technology and techniques in search of a problem.
- **Surveying more frequently will not increase employee engagement on its own.** More frequent surveys can inhibit action by providing more data without enabling actions to address the underlying problem. Think holistically about your approach to include strategy, measurement, delivery, and action.

## Organizations struggle to execute

After reading these points, you may be thinking "Of course – I already know these are important." However, as our Global Employee eXperience Research highlights, very few organizations are able to successfully execute on the employee experience they seek to deliver.

In fact, across more than 1,300 respondents in 43 countries, only one third of organizations have a good definition of what they mean by employee experience, and even fewer (28%) feel equipped to create a differentiated eX. Add the finding that over 70% say that measurement objectives have not progressed as quickly as planned, it illustrates that getting clear on strategy, governance, and objectives will be a requirement before realizing any success on accelerating employee engagement and the culture required for future success.

*We can help. Our consultants specialize in Culture & Engagement, Leadership Development and HR Advisory to help you and your organization deliver an employee experience that is not only engaging to your employees, but helps you achieve your cultural and strategic goals.*  
*Contact us to learn more: [contact@kincentric.com](mailto:contact@kincentric.com)*

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## About Kincentric

Kincentric, a Spencer Stuart company, approaches human capital differently — we help you identify what drives your people so they can drive your business. Formerly a part of Aon, our decades of expertise in culture and engagement, leadership assessment and development, and HR and talent advisory services enable us to help organizations change from the inside. And our global network of colleagues, our proven insights and our intuitive technologies give us new ways to help organizations unlock the power of people and teams — fostering change and accelerating success. For more information, please visit [kincentric.com](http://kincentric.com).

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