How can you illuminate the power of belonging?

Belonging Barometer: An Asia-Pacific
perspective on belonging in the workplace

EY
Building a better
working world

Introduction

Belonging is a concept that we all experience on a daily basis, often without perceiving or thinking about it. It can be best understood as the feeling of acceptance, inclusion and connection as a member of a certain group or place, which in turn triggers a deep emotional response by providing us with a sense of comfort, security and support.

Belonging isn't just a desire; it is a fundamental need and an important part of what makes us human. The idea of belonging to a group that accepts and cares for us has been hardwired into our brains over the history of our evolution. In fact, recent MIT research has found that our craving for social interactions comes from the same region of our brain that craves food*.

If the recent COVID-19 global pandemic has taught us anything, it is that humans are social creatures and we do not cope well without strong connections with groups that are important to us. After being pushed into isolating and adopting 'social distancing' measures, we as individuals and societies have gained a renewed understanding and appreciation for the important roles that local communities and social groups play in our mental wellbeing and psychological safety.

Belonging in the workplace

As the sustainability agenda continues to gain momentum in businesses, research has also shown the critical role belonging plays in workplaces and how creating a strong sense of belonging can benefit both employees and organisations. However, much of this research has been conducted in North America and other parts of the world, with a nuanced perspective on the Asia-Pacific region missing from the conversation.

As part of our purpose to Build a Better Working World, EY organization looked into understanding the current state of belonging in workplaces across Asia-Pacific. The key objectives of our comprehensive research programme were twofold:

1. To unpack the role of belonging in Asia-Pacific workplaces and how it affects different cohorts as the shift in employees' expectations towards their employers persists

2. To provide insights that assist EY clients in developing DE&I strategies that positively impact both the employee experience and organisational outcomes, as they continue to make a bold commitment to to Environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) issues, anchored in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

About the research

To support EY clients in their development of DE&I strategies, EY Sweeney (EY professional research team) conducted 7,595 interviews with employees of large organisations (250+ employees) across the Asia-Pacific region between 30th March and 4th May 2022.

This report explores how belonging is understood and experienced among employees of large organisations across seven jurisdictions in Asia-Pacific. It also highlights the benefits of creating belonging in the workplace and offers practical actions leaders can take to create a stronger sense of it in benefitting both their employees and their organisation, as they focus on building long-term value beyond purely capitalist gains.
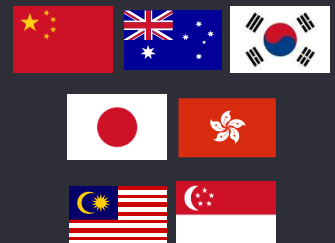
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*https://news.mit.edu/2020/hunger-social-cravings-neuroscience-1123

Diversity, Equity, Inclusiveness and Belonging

Belonging is often understood to be an undervalued element in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusiveness (DE&I) conversation. Prior to exploring the concept of belonging in detail, it is important to understand how belonging fits within the wider concept of DE&I. At its core, in order for people to feel like they belong to a place (in this case, the workplace), its environment needs to be inclusive. In fact, all four of these concepts – diversity, equity, inclusiveness and belonging – are connected and must be delivered together to create the best employee experience possible.

Diversity

Diversity is about differences. At EY, we think about differences broadly across a wide range of dimensions, such as nationality, language, education, gender and gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, generation, age, socioeconomic background, religious background, abilities and disabilities, as well as identity dimensions defined and constructed by some societies in ethnic, colour, cultural, or racial terms. We also recognise differences in working and thinking styles, experiences, career paths, technical skills, geography, service lines, sectors and function.

Equity

Equity is about recognising that everyone has different starting points and different needs. Based on their backgrounds and identities, everyone faces different levels of structural and systemic advantages and disadvantages that impact their access to resources, their perceptions and evaluations, as well as their sense of belonging in and outside the workplace.

> "
> Belonging is critical to unlocking the power of differences. Businesses can address the impact of inequities and injustice, and push for progress within their organisations and beyond while also celebrating and recognising uniqueness.
>
> **Holly McGhee**
> EY Asia-Pacific DE&I Leader

Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness isn't just about leveraging our diversity; it is about creating environments where everyone trusts and is trusted. For people to feel safe about bringing their perspectives and ideas forward, they first need to feel empowered and encouraged to bring the many aspects of who they are to the surface.
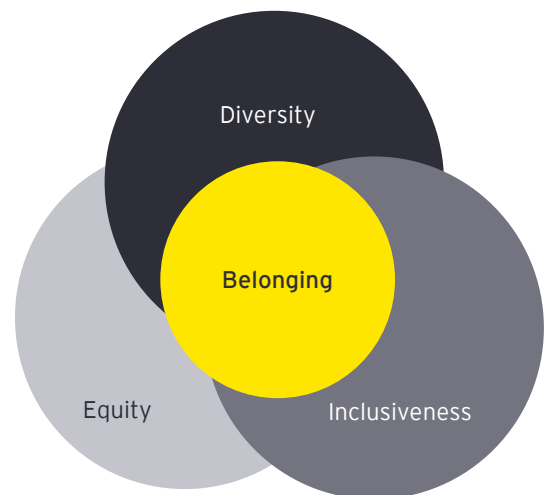
Belonging

When we feel a strong sense of belonging, we feel free to be ourselves and safe to offer different points of view or dissenting opinions. We also believe that our contributions matter and make us "insiders" – a trusted integral part of a team, network or community. To truly feel a sense of belonging, we must feel that we are united through common characteristics and experiences, even in a workplace. Belonging also has to do with the individual's intrinsic motivation; an internal drive that pushes them because they feel included and valued. They enjoy the work they do and find it valuable and interesting, giving them fulfillment. Conversely, the consequences of not feeling like we belong are equally profound. Research has shown that social exclusion is experienced in the same part of our brain as physical pain and can cause significant trauma.

Belonging at work: a key to an effective DE&I strategy

As many business leaders now know, DE&I is a powerful strategic concept. Effective DE&I strategies enable organisations to harness the power of differences and realise the full potential of all their employees. They encourage teamwork and foster truly innovative thinking that is critical in helping organisations deliver long-term value in today's global marketplace.

The importance of employee wellbeing

The global health crisis has brought topics and challenges relating to wellbeing at the workplace into sharp focus. In fact, there is significant and growing evidence demonstrating the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and 'social distancing' policies have had on employees' mental health. According to research by the University of Southern California, approximately three quarters of workers (73.6%) reported new mental health issues arising from the switch to working from home.

The pandemic has also shifted the responsibility of understanding and improving employee wellbeing from the individual to the business, making it something to be shared equally between both parties.

Mental wellbeing is finding its place on senior leaders' priority lists in many organisations across Asia-Pacific, as it is being increasingly recognised as a forward indicator of the organisation's risk and its future performance. As such, more and more leaders are prioritising mental wellbeing and health as a core part of their remit.

Driving wellbeing through belonging

Belonging is becoming a fundamental outcome of any effective DE&I strategy through its capacity to maximise employee wellbeing across mental and physical aspects. Harvard's 80-year longitudinal study on health and aging*

provides a very compelling reason to boost belonging. Among other things, It demonstrates that close relationships with family, friends and the community are what keep people happy throughout their lives, delaying mental and physical decline.

In a workplace context, experiments have shown that dynamics that limit belonging (i.e., exclusion) lower both individual (job) performance and team performance. However, they also found that the effects of exclusion (i.e., negative performance) can be reversed or even prevented if leadership and teams take the right action and build a sense of belonging in their organisation.

The cost of excluding belonging from the core of DE&I strategies

There is now significant evidence that demonstrates the important role that belonging can play in employee wellbeing, which in turn acts as the engine for organisational performance. The size of the opportunity lost by not having a workforce that feels like they belong is significant and could be viewed as an almost impossible task to calculate.

However, it is possible to calculate how much of an organisation's ongoing DE&I work is ineffective because belonging is not included.

Research published by the Harvard Business Review has indicated that U.S. businesses spend nearly 8 billion dollars each year on diversity and inclusion (D&I) training**. However, there is no evidence that this training actually leads to more diversity.

DE&I strategies are not effective unless they consider our need to feel included and that we belong.

https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/04/over-nearly-80-years-harvard-study-has-been-showing-how-to-live-a-healthy-and-happy-life/
https://hbr.org/2019/12/the-value-of-belonging-at-work#:~:text=U.S.%20businesses%20spend%20nearly%208,workplace%20belonging%20are%20eye%2Dcatching
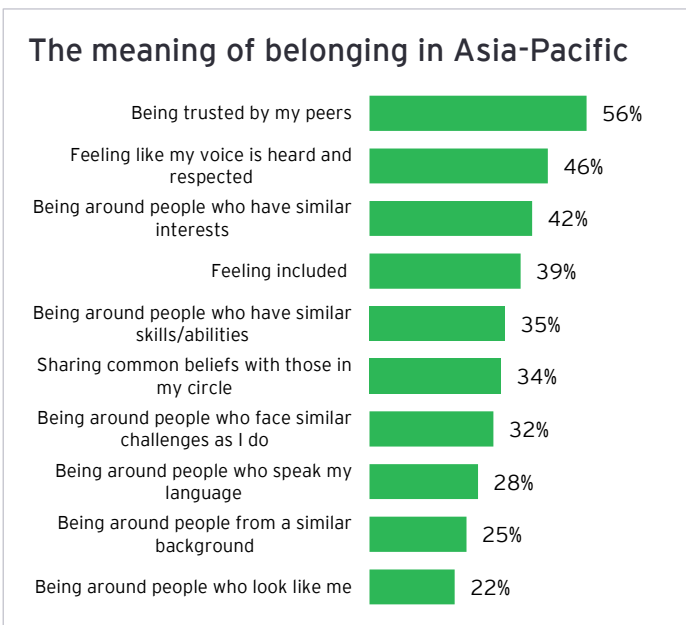.

Understanding workplace belonging in Asia-Pacific

Although published research and literature on the topic of belonging – in general and in the workplace – is growing, there has been comparatively little focus on the Asia-Pacific region.

Many global organisations today look at Asia-Pacific as one of the key areas of their operations and a source of future growth. While it seems logical that many of the research findings from other parts of the world apply here as well, diversity in the Asia-Pacific area is almost unparalleled. Its inherently rich cultural differences inevitably means that the discourse around DE&I as well as belonging needs to be nuanced and tailored for this part of the world.

As such, prior to unpacking the role of belonging in the workplace across Asia-Pacific and how it affects different cohorts across different jurisdictions, our research explored what belonging actually means for the people in Asia-Pacific in a general sense – independent of their environment.
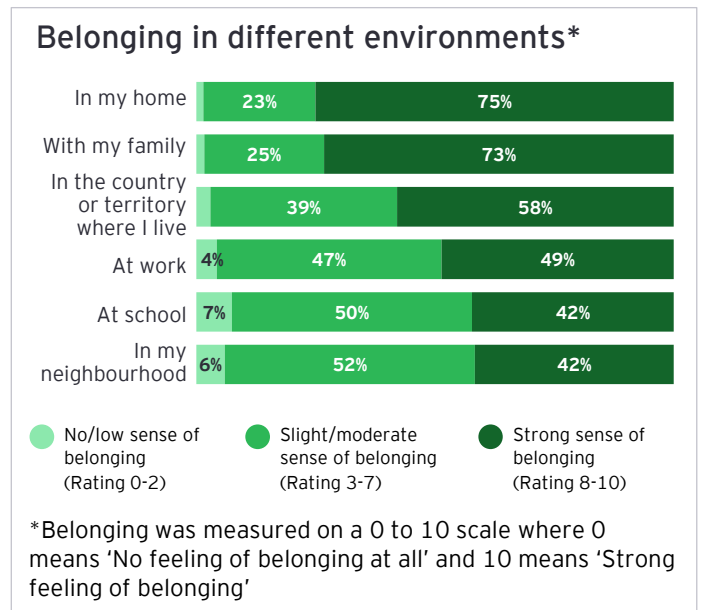
As shown below, trust, respect and a connection to others through similar or shared interests, skills and challenges define the feeling of belonging in Asia-Pacific – central themes that echo previous published research. Overall, there were also more similarities than differences in how belonging was defined between the different jurisdictions in our study, highlighting the fundamental expression of a human need that belonging forms.

The meaning of belonging in Asia-Pacific

Being trusted by my peers	56%
Feeling like my voice is heard and respected	46%
Being around people who have similar interests	42%
Feeling included	39%
Being around people who have similar skills/abilities	35%
Sharing common beliefs with those in my circle	34%
Being around people who face similar challenges as I do	32%
Being around people who speak my language	28%
Being around people from a similar background	25%
Being around people who look like me	22%

Understanding the belonging continuum

When looking to understand belonging in the workplace, it is important to understand how this fits within the wider context of different environments.

As the chart below shows, the strongest levels of belonging were experienced in familial environments, like the home and within families – in other words, environments that are generally considered loving and nurturing. A strong sense of belonging was also felt to the country or territory where they live, which in many cases would be strongly aligned to people's cultural identities.

Belonging in different environments*

	No/low sense of belonging (Rating 0-2)	Slight/moderate sense of belonging (Rating 3-7)	Strong sense of belonging (Rating 8-10)
In my home		23%	75%
With my family		25%	73%
In the country or territory where I live		39%	58%
At work	4%	47%	49%
At school	7%	50%	42%
In my neighbourhood	6%	52%	42%

● No/low sense of belonging (Rating 0-2) ● Slight/moderate sense of belonging (Rating 3-7) ● Strong sense of belonging (Rating 8-10)

*Belonging was measured on a 0 to 10 scale where 0 means 'No feeling of belonging at all' and 10 means 'Strong feeling of belonging'

Positively, the sense of belonging at work comes in fourth out of our environments measured – ahead of environments such as neighbourhoods or the schools they used to go to. This is likely the result of having comparatively less choice regarding those environments and less deep or lasting connections with them.

When we focus on the sense of belonging at the workplace, we observe that many employees from Asia-Pacific feel at least some sense of belonging (96%). This is comparable to what EY research has found in the U.S. for instance, where belonging in the workplace was found to be at 92% in 2019.

Importantly, our research found that many of the positive flow-on effects of belonging in the workplace require a strong sense of belonging – not just a moderate one. Although half of all employees (49%) feel a strong sense of belonging in their workplace, there are notable gaps compared with how people feel in other environments – for example, 75% feel a strong sense of belonging at home and 73% feel a strong sense of belonging with their family. This signals an opportunity for organisations in Asia-Pacific to improve in terms of further elevating feelings of belonging while at work.

As a strong sense of belonging produces significantly more pronounced benefits than a moderate sense of belonging, the remainder of this report focuses on the former across different jurisdictions and cohorts in Asia-Pacific.

Different levels of belonging

According to our research, levels of belonging within the workplace vary greatly across the Asia-Pacific region. Belonging at work is highest in mainland China (62%) and Australia (57%), with just under two-thirds of employees from these
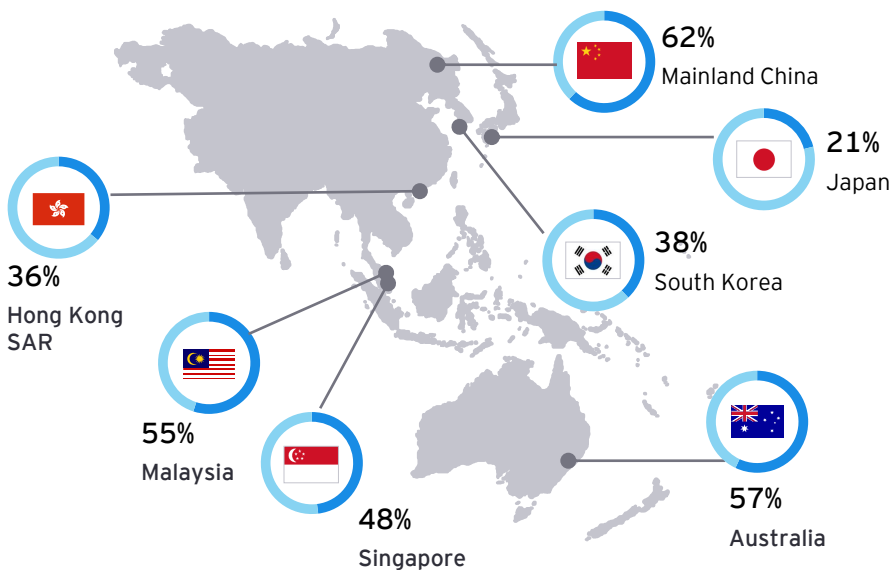
jurisdictions feeling a strong sense of belonging. In Malaysia and Singapore, close to half of the employees feel the same way (55% and 48% respectively), with the numbers dropping to around one-third of employees in South Korea and Hong Kong SAR to form the lower-end of the belonging scale. Interestingly, Japan showed the lowest level among the jurisdictions at 21%.

It is important to view workplace belonging across jurisdictions in a broader context with significant cultural factors at play. For instance, although Japan has always been generally regarded as a group-oriented society, the degree to which a strong sense of belonging is experienced appeared to be even lower across most environments/settings.

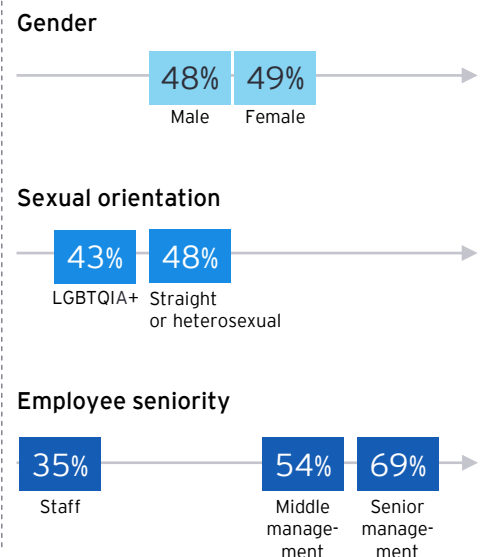## Personal factors influencing belonging

While existing global research outlines the dynamics that personal factors such as gender and sexual orientation can play on belonging, our research demonstrates that cultural differences in the Asia-Pacific region regarding such themes result in relatively low levels of differentiation across different cohorts.

Feelings of workplace belonging*…

62% Mainland China

21% Japan

38% South Korea

36% Hong Kong SAR

55% Malaysia

48% Singapore

57% Australia

*Strong sense of belonging (Rating 8-10)

Feelings of workplace belonging by…

Gender

48% Male   49% Female

Sexual orientation

43% LGBTQIA+   48% Straight or heterosexual

Employee seniority

35% Staff   54% Middle management   69% Senior management

Source: EY Belonging Barometer

Instead, within the context of developing and delivering DE&I strategies and action, organisations would do well to recognise and ensure that these measures are specifically aimed at uplifting the experience of more junior staff, with senior management – and to a lesser extent, middle management – already being in a strong position of belonging. While the length of tenure may well have an impact on an employee's sense of belonging, those in senior management positions are generally seen to be more involved in the business and thus more likely to feel that their voice is being heard, driving a sense of belonging in the organisation.

Four drivers of belonging in the workplace

To advance the discussion of belonging as a foundation for effective DE&I strategies, organisations need to understand the key drivers that they can leverage to build belonging. Although the relative importance and impact of each driver will vary according to the individual business, the sector in which it operates, as well as its geography and associated cultural nuances, the key pillars that drive the level of belonging experienced in the workplace as a whole are likely to remain.
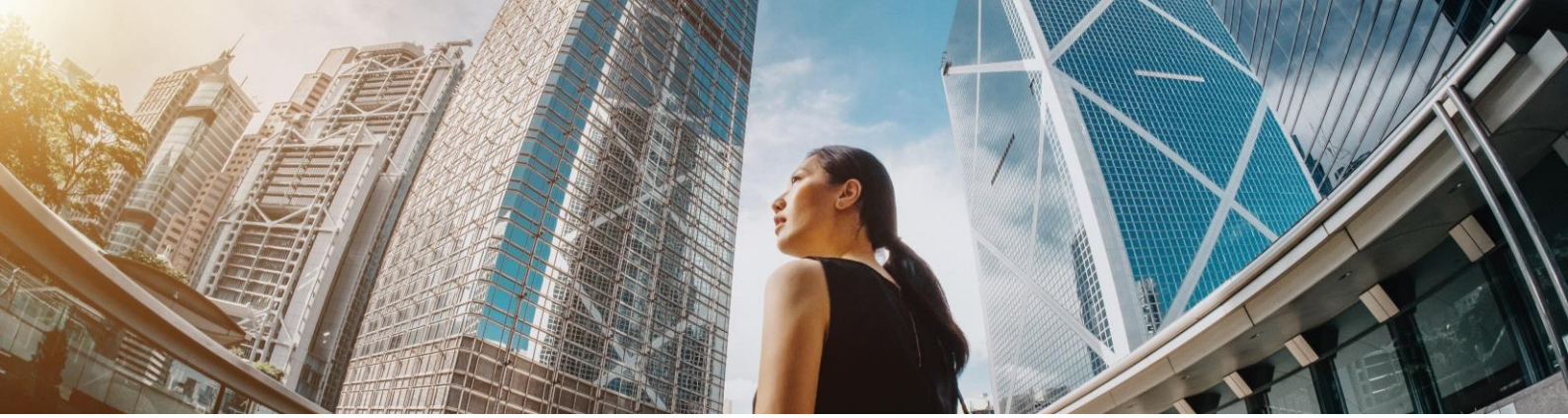
In any organisation, the leadership team has the ability to impact the following four pillars – directly or indirectly:

1. Leadership approach to DE&I: Organisations that both have effective DE&I strategies in place and are seen to deliver real impact for employees foster/achieve notably higher levels of belonging.

2. Organisational diversity: While it is recognised that diverse workforces deliver organisational benefits such as increased creativity and productivity, our research demonstrates the significant impact of diversity on belonging as well.

3. Employee seniority: An employee's position in the organisation's hierarchy plays an important role in determining their feeling of belonging. However, targeted initiatives can increase the sense of belonging at all levels.

4. Personal factors: Although the personal factors of employees such as gender and ethnicity can have an impact on belonging, the relationship between these factors and belonging tend to be of lower importance than the other three pillars – the key relationship being between organisational diversity and belonging.

The following page covers these pillars in greater detail.

Key drivers of belonging

Leadership approach to DE&I
Organisation's leadership approach to delivering a diverse and inclusive culture

Organisational diversity
Perception of a diverse workforce within the organisation

Belonging in the workplace

Personal factors
Personal demographics, ethnicity, sexual orientation and background

Employee Seniority
Seniority of an employee within the organisation

1. Leadership approach to DE&I

Across Asia-Pacific, there is a strong positive relationship between an organisation's leadership approach to DE&I and how strongly its employees feel that they belong in the organisation.

By looking at the levels of belonging experienced by employees in relation to the perceived strength of the DE&I approach shown by leadership, we can observe that those in organisations where leadership has a strong stance and takes strong action on DE&I are almost three times as likely to report a strong sense of belonging.

A strong connection between the leadership approach to DE&I and organisational diversity pillars exists, in that a key objective of a successful DE&I strategy should be to deliver a workforce that includes a diverse range of employees.

Organisation's leadership approach to DE&I and its impact on belonging (%)

	Current DE&I approach is weak	Current DE&I approach is strong
Do not feel a sense of belonging in their workplace	9	1
Feel a slight sense of belonging	67	35
Feel a strong sense of belonging in their workplace	23 ↓	64 ↑

2. Organisational diversity

Organisations that are able to achieve a diverse workforce that includes people who have different backgrounds, demographic profiles and attitudes are more likely to achieve a workforce that feels a strong sense of belonging and is more likely to stay with the organisation for longer.

Developing and delivering strategies aimed at effectively increasing organisational diversity not only assists in building robust and effective workplaces that are able to leverage different skills and points of view, but also helps in increasing feelings of belonging among the workforce.

Organisational diversity and its impact on belonging (%)

|	Not/somewhat diverse workforce	Very diverse
Do not feel a sense of belonging in their workplace	6	2
Feel a slight sense of belonging	57	35
Feel a strong sense of belonging in their workplace	36 ↓	63 ↑

3. Employee seniority

Employee seniority plays a role in the levels of belonging experienced by senior and middle management, as shown by the above average results (69% and 54% respectively, against the overall average of 49%), while among regular staff, only 35% experienced a strong sense of belonging. Within the context of developing and delivering DE&I strategies and action, organisations need to recognise and ensure that their measures are specifically aimed at uplifting the experience of more junior staff or those not in management positions. While the length of tenure may well impact an employee's sense of belonging, those in management positions are generally seen to be more involved in the business and thus more likely to feel that their voice is being heard, driving a sense of belonging in the organisation.

4. Personal factors

Although there appears to be little need to uplift feelings of belonging among any specific gender, there are opportunities to increase inclusion amongst the LGBTQIA+ workforce, as these groups currently experience lower levels of belonging.

Personal factors and their impact on belonging (%)

Gender

Male	48
Female	49

Sexual orientation

Straight or heterosexual	48
LGBTQIA+	43
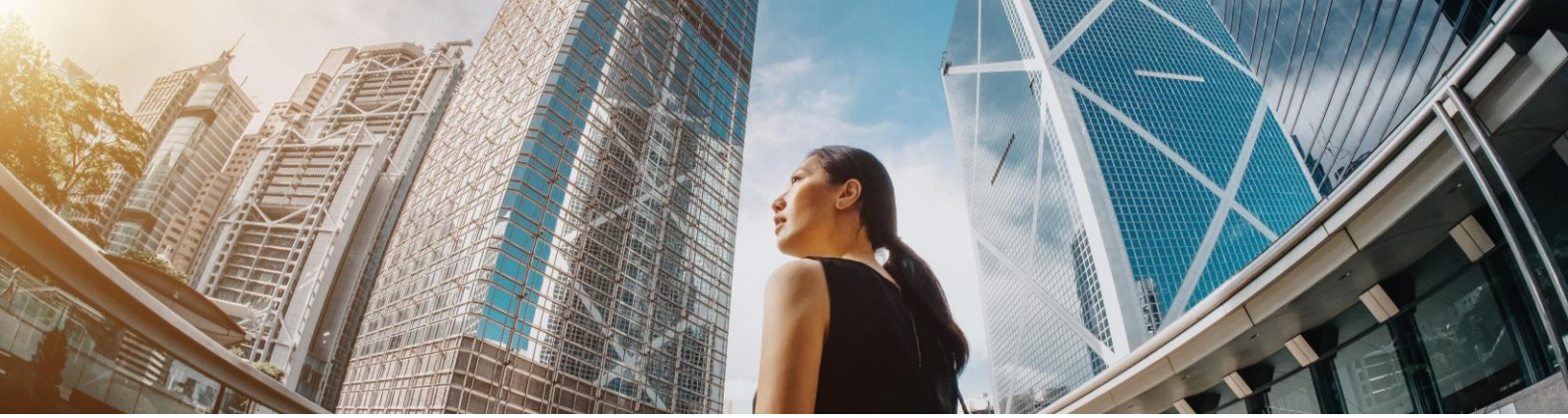
Exclusion as a key risk factor

Although our research explored the opportunities available for organisations to uplift feelings of belonging among their workforce, the alternative must also be addressed. That is, what are some of the risk factors present that may undo all of the good work that an effective DE&I strategy is looking to deliver?
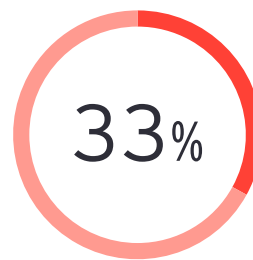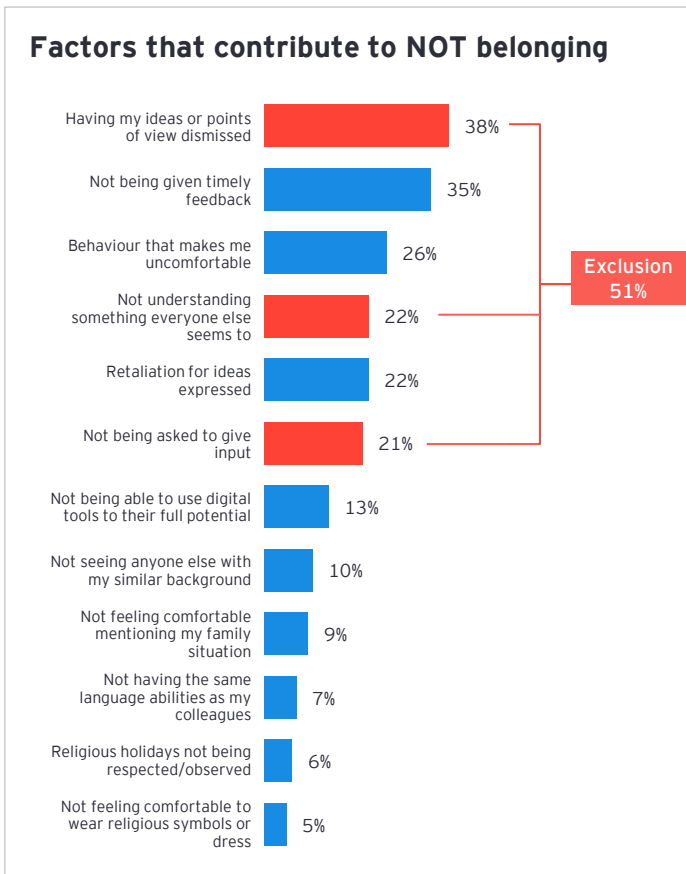
Employees across Asia-Pacific have identified exclusion as a key element that can make them feel like they do not belong, therefore making it a key risk factor that organisations need to navigate to maximise feelings of belonging among their workforce.

Specifically, dismissal of ideas and points of view as a form of exclusion is the key risk factor present across

Asia-Pacific, with over a third of employees suggesting that it would contribute to the feeling that they do not belong in their workplace.

> Exclusion is damaging because it physically hurts. Neural imaging research has indicated that the same neural pathways utilised when we experience physical pain may also be used when we experience pain associated with social separation or rejection.

With existing global research indicating that up to 71% of employees in certain markets have experienced exclusion even amid significant work being conducted to understand the negative impact that it can have on employees and organisations, this research has also identified that exclusion should be a concern for organisation leaders across Asia-Pacific. Specifically, one-third of employees from Asia-Pacific have felt excluded at their workplaces, with levels of exclusion experienced by key employee sub-groups at much higher levels.

Factors that contribute to NOT belonging

Factor	Percentage
Having my ideas or points of view dismissed	38%
Not being given timely feedback	35%
Behaviour that makes me uncomfortable	26%
Not understanding something everyone else seems to	22%
Retaliation for ideas expressed	22%
Not being asked to give input	21%
Not being able to use digital tools to their full potential	13%
Not seeing anyone else with my similar background	10%
Not feeling comfortable mentioning my family situation	9%
Not having the same language abilities as my colleagues	7%
Religious holidays not being respected/observed	6%
Not feeling comfortable to wear religious symbols or dress	5%

Exclusion 51%

**33%** of workers across Asia-Pacific have felt excluded at their workplaces

29% Straight or heterosexual

46% LGBTQIA+

58% People with disability

Exclusion experienced by the LGBTQIA+ community

Although diversity and inclusion have become more of a focus for organisations over the past decade, there is significant existing research that reveals and explores the challenges that specific groups such as LGBTQIA+ employees still face in the workplace.
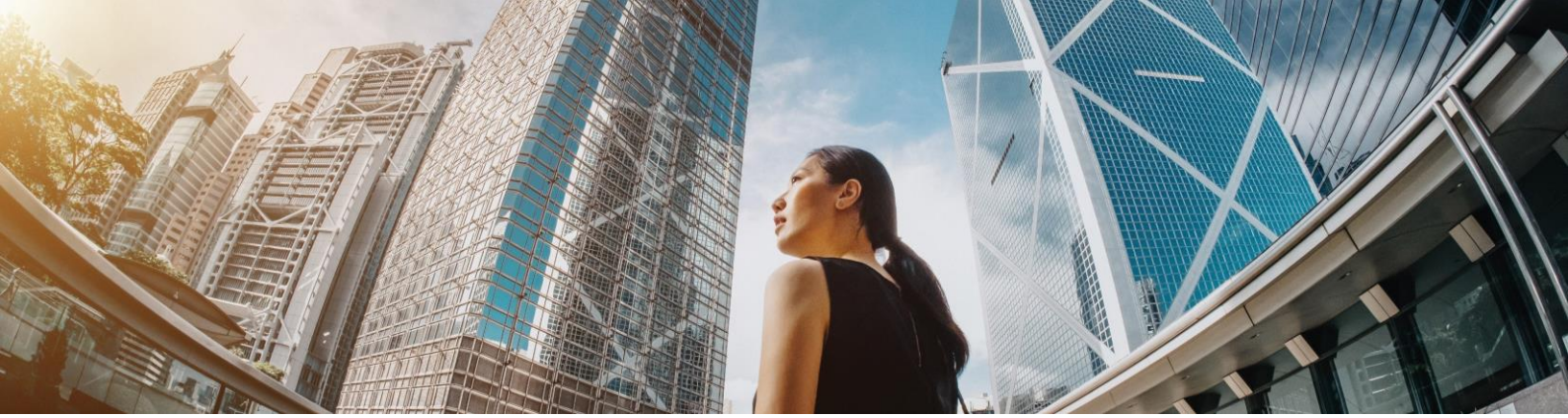
As explored in detail later on in this report, authenticity – or the concept of being comfortable to bring one's true self to work – is a key element that makes employees feel like they belong. For LGBTQIA+ employees, this concept of being free to be themselves at the workplace can often be a challenge, especially in light of the fact that many of them across Asia-Pacific have experienced cultural barriers to their sexuality in general society, in addition to feeling excluded in their workplace.

Disability and exclusion

Another group of employees who experience significant levels of exclusion in the workplace are those living with disabilities. Existing approaches to address exclusion experienced by those living with disabilities look to focus on addressing hard and soft barriers which unintentionally promote feelings of exclusion.

Hard barriers are those that are most visible and typically the subject for specific organisational strategies and actions to address, especially when they are related to minimising mobility challenges that could be experienced, such as ensuring easy access to all locations for those using wheelchairs. However, these barriers may not always be clearly evident. For example, the types of software chosen may unintentionally exclude a person with vision impairment.

Soft barriers can result in significant feelings of exclusion and are often the hardest to address as they refer to people's mindsets and assumptions towards those living with disabilities. For example, an employee may be

> " Creating an environment where employees feel like they belong is more important than ever. Insider and outsider dynamics in a team can generate feelings of exclusion. Managers should reflect on the dynamics in their own teams and consider the actions needed to create a sense of belonging for all.
>
> Michael Wong
> EY Asia-Pacific Talent Managing Partner

excluded from a specific work opportunity that involves considerable travel as a manager may assume that a person with a mobility disability would not want this opportunity.

The connection between exclusion and bullying

While many associate bullying with active behaviours such as verbal abuse, most employees – including LGBTQIA+ and those with disabilities – recognise exclusion as a form of bullying, with 62% suggesting that they classify bullying as exclusionary behaviour.
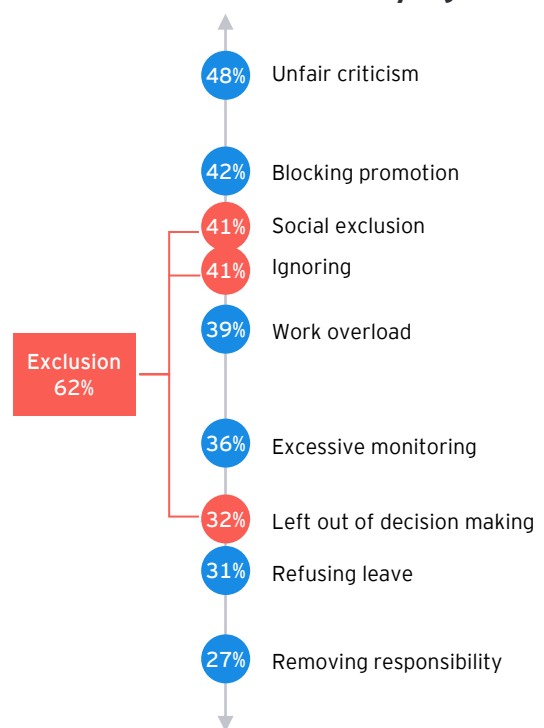
Beyond the mental and physical impact on bullied employees, there are significant costs to employers that do not actively look into reducing exclusion via bullying. These impacts can include loss of productivity, costs associated with a higher turnover, reputational damage and legal ramifications.

Behaviours classified as bullying

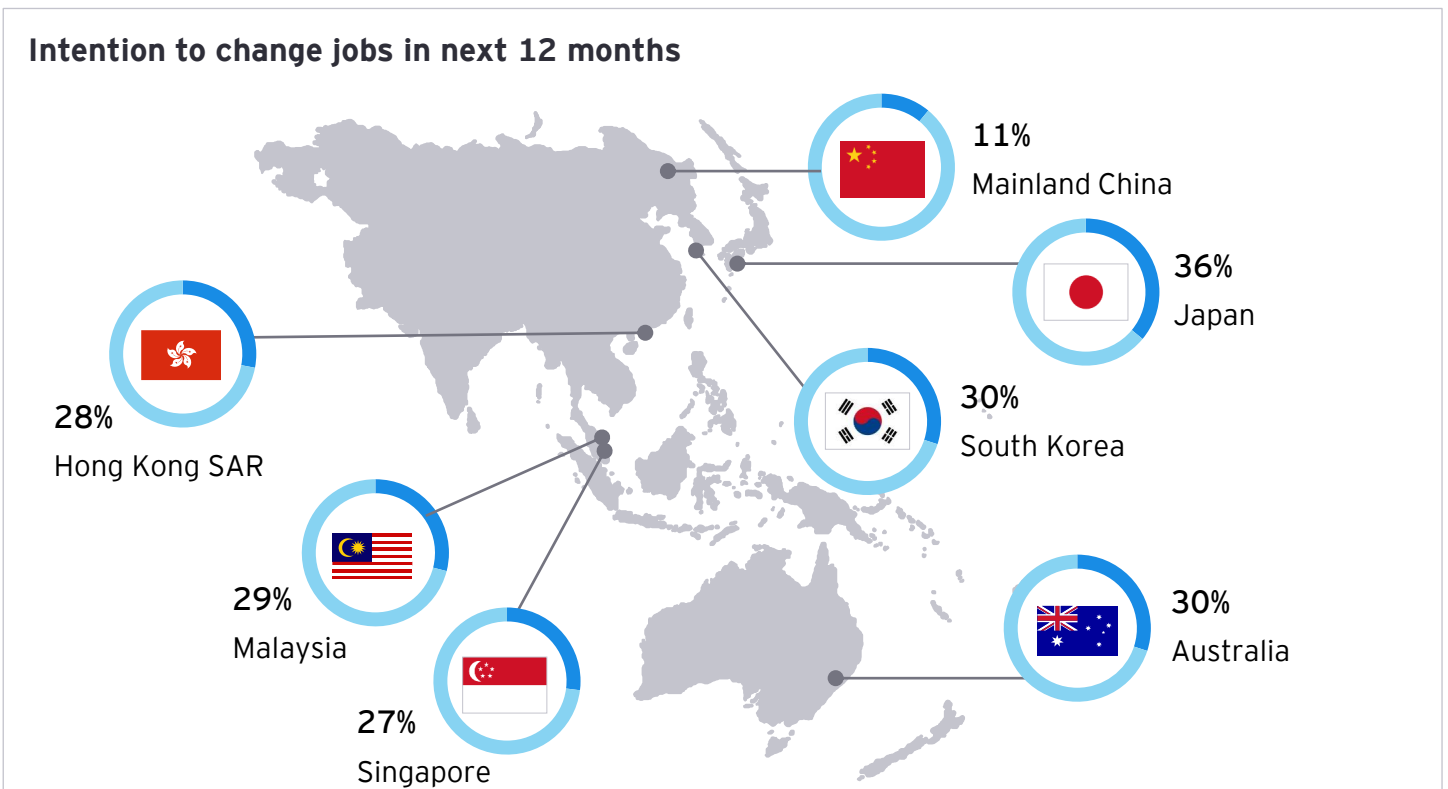|	
48%	Unfair criticism
42%	Blocking promotion
41%	Social exclusion
41%	Ignoring
39%	Work overload
36%	Excessive monitoring
32%	Left out of decision making
31%	Refusing leave
27%	Removing responsibility

Exclusion 62%

ROI: The organisational benefits of belonging

Although there has been considerably more focus on the duty of care organisations have to their employees' wellbeing and psychological safety, there is also a hard edge to the value of belonging and why leaders should seek to drive it within their organisations: it can play a very important role in helping them navigate the recent and ongoing challenges around securing the best talent in a post-pandemic world.

The challenge of staff engagement and retention

As organisations continue to work on maintaining staff engagement and maximising staff retention in the face of recent trends around 'quiet quitting' and 'the great resignation' (which may not be as notable in Asia-Pacific as compared to other regions), competition for talent is still fierce, with job-switching intentions presenting a notable risk for organisations.

In the Asia-Pacific region, around one-quarter of employees are planning to change jobs in the next 12 months. However, the results vary greatly across jurisdictions, ranging from a high of 36% in Japan to a low of 11% in mainland China. Given limited global mobility in certain areas, affected organisations will struggle to attract talent – which may hinder their growth – and/or experience significant upward pressure on wages, as high attrition rates in other markets continue to pose a threat.

25%

of workers are considering switching organisations next year

Intention to change jobs in next 12 months

11%
Mainland China

36%
Japan

30%
South Korea

28%
Hong Kong SAR

29%
Malaysia

30%
Australia

27%
Singapore

Belonging can drive staff engagement and retention

Our research provides very clear evidence on the financial benefits of belonging, in that those who feel like they strongly belong are three times as likely to have a positive working experience (i.e., are more engaged). They are also almost three times as likely to stay with their current employer. This uplift in engagement and retention can have a significant impact on the operational efficiency and financial outcomes of an organisation.

Workers who feel like they belong are

3x

more likely to stay

Having established that these challenges will persist across Asia-Pacific into the foreseeable future, our research demonstrates that effective DE&I strategies and initiatives that specifically aim at driving belonging in the workplace can have a notable impact on staff engagement and retention.

In fact, only 29% of the employees who do not feel a sense of belonging also indicated having a positive working experience at their organisation, as compared to 88% of those who feel a strong sense of belonging indicating the same.
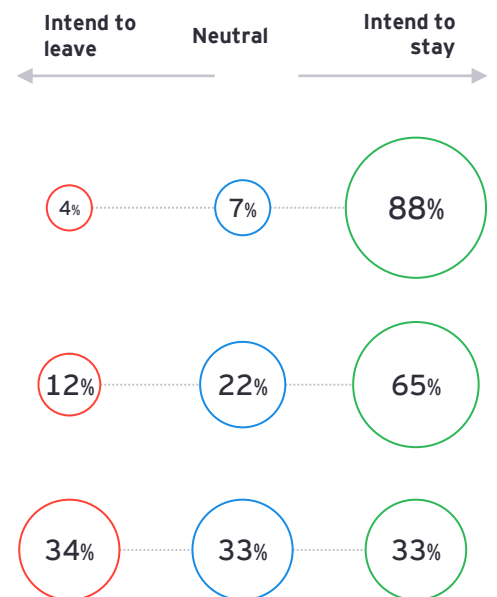
In light of the recent challenges to retain highly engaged employees, arguably the most important evidence as to the importance that belonging can play for high-performing organisations is through its impact on staff retention.

Ultimately, the results of our research reflects that among those who feel a strong sense of belonging in their workplace, 88% expect to be at their current organisation in the next 12 months, while only 33% of those who do not feel a sense of belonging share this same outlook.

Impact of belonging on working experience

Negative working experience	Neutral	Positive working experience
3%	9%	88%
10%	32%	58%
34%	37%	29%

Feel a strong sense of belonging in their workplace
(8-10 rating on 0-10 scale)

Feel a slight sense of belonging
(3-7 rating on 0-10 scale)

Do not feel a sense of belonging in their workplace
(0-2 rating on 0-10 scale)

Impact of belonging on staff retention

Intend to leave	Neutral	Intend to stay
4%	7%	88%
12%	22%	65%
34%	33%	33%

Having employees that feel a strong sense of belonging can drive substantial financial benefits for organisations across Asia-Pacific. Research conducted by the Harvard Business Review has demonstrated that a high sense of belonging is linked to a significant 56% increase in job performance, a 50% drop in turnover risk, and a 75% reduction in sick days. Based on a company size of 10,000 people, it could also result in annual savings of more than USD$52M.
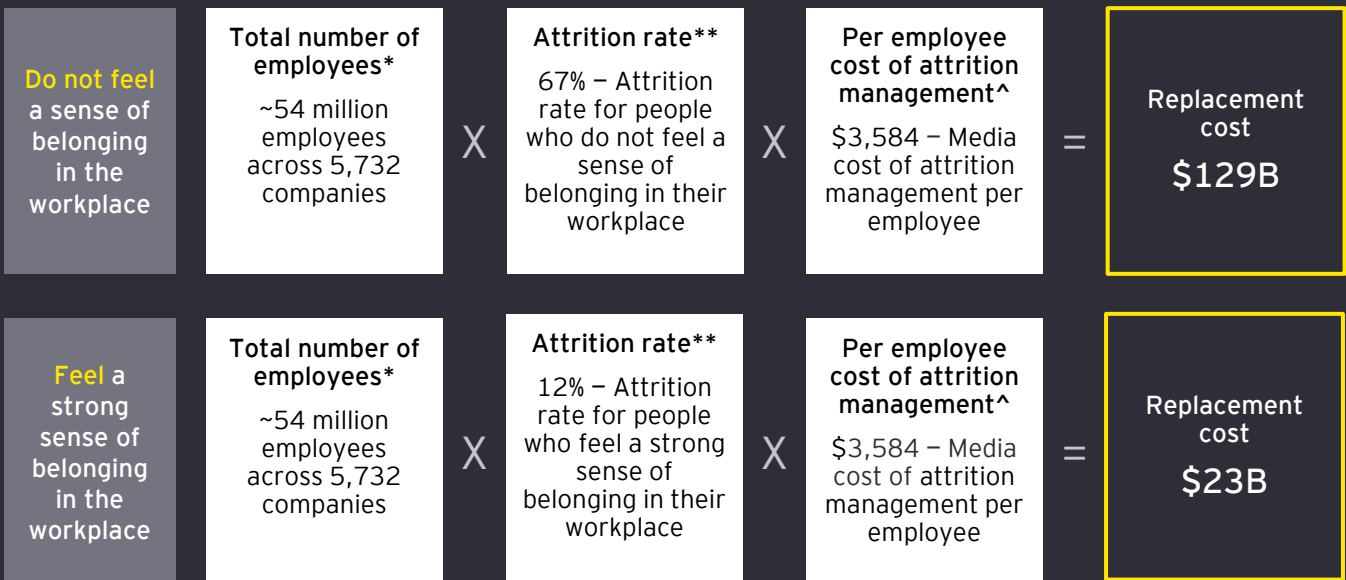
Belonging can provide USD$100B in savings across Asia-Pacific

As a result of this research, EY researchers have estimated that across Asia-Pacific, even when looking solely within the universe of publicly listed companies, improving their employees' sense of belonging at work can help organisations avoid more than USD$100B in attrition management costs.

$100B+

can be saved by increasing employees' sense of belonging

Calculating the USD$100B in savings available to organisations across Asia-Pacific

Do not feel a sense of belonging in the workplace	Total number of employees* ~54 million employees across 5,732 companies	X	Attrition rate** 67% – Attrition rate for people who do not feel a sense of belonging in their workplace	X	Per employee cost of attrition management^ $3,584 – Media cost of attrition management per employee	=	Replacement cost $129B
Feel a strong sense of belonging in the workplace	Total number of employees* ~54 million employees across 5,732 companies	X	Attrition rate** 12% – Attrition rate for people who feel a strong sense of belonging in their workplace	X	Per employee cost of attrition management^ $3,584 – Media cost of attrition management per employee	=	Replacement cost $23B

*Based on the universe of publicly listed companies with an employee count greater than 1,000, headquartered in Australia, mainland China, Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea

**Based on this research which demonstrates 12% of those who feel a sense of belonging in the workplace expecting to be at their current organisation in the next 12 months as compared to 67% among those who do not feel a sense of belonging in the workplace

^Based on APQC's Human Capital Management - Process Classification Framework that defines a total cost of $3,584 per employee considering employee recruitment and selection, HR resource planning and employee onboarding, as well as management and development

https://hbr.org/2019/12/the-value-of-belonging-at-work

Six actions for leaders to maximise the sense of belonging in their organisation

Given the overwhelming evidence about the impact that belonging can have on organisational growth and performance, delivering a workplace culture that enhances the sense that its employees belong should be a priority for every organisation.

Although our research highlights the significant challenges that organisations face in maintaining staff engagement and retention as well as building a sense of belonging among employees, it also unearthed key opportunities for them to create the right workplace culture that successfully incorporates belonging at the core of the organisation's DE&I strategy.

Based on our research findings, we recommend that organisations take the following six priority actions to uplift belonging among their employees:

1 Build a diverse workforce, with equitable and inclusive leaders

2 Promote a culture of trust, respect and authenticity

3 Leverage hybrid working

4 Implement systematic feedback, recognition and check-in initiatives

5 Address exclusion and bullying to minimise risk

6 Remove the optionality of DE&I

1 Build a diverse workforce, with equitable and inclusive leaders

When looking at the key drivers of belonging in the workplace, one element constantly appears in the forefront as both an effective lever as well as an emblem of an effective DE&I strategy – that being the diversity of the employee population.

Our research demonstrated the significant connection between workplace diversity and employee retention through the medium of workplace belonging.

While a diverse workplace can positively influence employee satisfaction and engagement which in turn can drive superior organisational outcomes, diversity also delivers a range of secondary benefits for organisations across Asia-Pacific. Specifically, it provides access to a greater range of talent that can also provide unique insights into customer needs, operational processes and organisational strategies. This combination of benefits that a diverse workforce affords can ultimately assist organisations across Asia-Pacific to be more successful, impactful and profitable.

Effective leadership can deliver positive outcomes

Although building a more diverse workforce takes time in many cases, effective DE&I strategies and action by those in leadership can immediately and significantly raise the feeling of belonging in an organisation.

Our analysis showed that even among workforces that are not perceived to be diverse, an effective DE&I strategy can provide a notable lift in the sense of belonging experienced by employees. Specifically, when a workforce is not seen to be diverse and its leaders' approach to DE&I is rated to be weaker, only around one-fifth (22%) of employees feel a strong sense of belonging.

However, under the same conditions, if those in leadership take a strong and effective approach to DE&I, the levels of belonging can more than double to 56%.

Going even further, if the organisation has strong fundamentals through a diverse workforce, the impact of leadership is even greater, with up to 70% in levels of belonging being achievable should strong DE&I strategies be delivered and recognised by the workforce.

> To create lasting impact for diversity, equity, and inclusion, tone from the top is essential. Long-term value is created through leaders who can authentically discuss DE&I-related matters whilst role modelling inclusive behaviour and sponsor robust organisational strategies.
>
> Eng Ping Yeo
> EY Asia-Pacific Tax Leader

Strong sense of belonging in the workforce under different conditions

		Perception of a diverse workforce	
		Not/somewhat diverse workforce	Very diverse workforce
Leadership approach to DE&I	Weaker current DE&I approach	22%	31%
	Strong current DE&I approach	56%	70%

2 Promote a culture of trust, respect and authenticity

While a strong DE&I strategy should be implemented in tandem with a diverse workforce so that the likelihood of success for that strategy can be maximised, it is vital that it includes specific initiatives that are going to deliver the impact and desired outcomes that employees value.

Our research identified three key emotional factors that contribute to a sense of belonging in the workplace. These factors – trust, respect and authenticity – need to be considered when initiatives are designed and rolled out across an organisation – not just from a DE&I perspective, but for all business-as-usual interactions and processes.

Trust: Employees associate belonging with the feeling that they are trusted by their peers. That is, they feel that they are a valuable part of the organisation, that their voice is important and that they are not being micro-managed.

Respect: As the foundation of any healthy and positive workplace, respect forms an integral component of belonging. This specifically relates to the diversity seen across the organisation, in that individuals should feel recognised and valued because they have different opinions, rights, values, beliefs, experiences and competences.

> "
> Where 'belonging' on the surface may be construed as a pressure to conform (i.e., East Asia), acknowledging and respecting 'uniqueness' is the single most important element in fostering a general sense of belonging. Openly discussing the 'uniqueness' of an individual sends the message that they are still respected regardless of their differences and allows people in a conformist society to feel okay about bringing their whole self to work.
>
> Moriaki Kida
> EY Japan Regional Managing Partner

Authenticity: As an important part of belonging, employees want to feel that they are empowered to be themselves. The concept of authenticity is also highly connected with trust. According to experts, trust is built when you are authentic, empathetic and perceived as competent. You can create the conditions for belonging when you are open, vulnerable and empathetic toward others.

Previous research has also found that when people interacted more effectively with others in an authentic way, it tended to mitigate loneliness and pave the way toward belonging.

Key factors contributing to a sense of belonging in the workplace

53%	48%	45%
Trust	Respect	Authenticity
"I feel that I am trusted"	"I feel that I am respected"	"I am able to be myself"

3 Leverage hybrid working

The repercussions of COVID-19 and the rise in remote and hybrid working had a significant impact on the wellbeing of the workforce while also triggering a fundamental shift in how organisations manage their employees.

For individuals, the impact of the pandemic cannot be underestimated. Considerable research has been undertaken since the start of the pandemic to track its impact, especially how it has affected wellbeing and mental health. In fact, based on research conducted by the World Health Organisation, it has triggered a 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide.
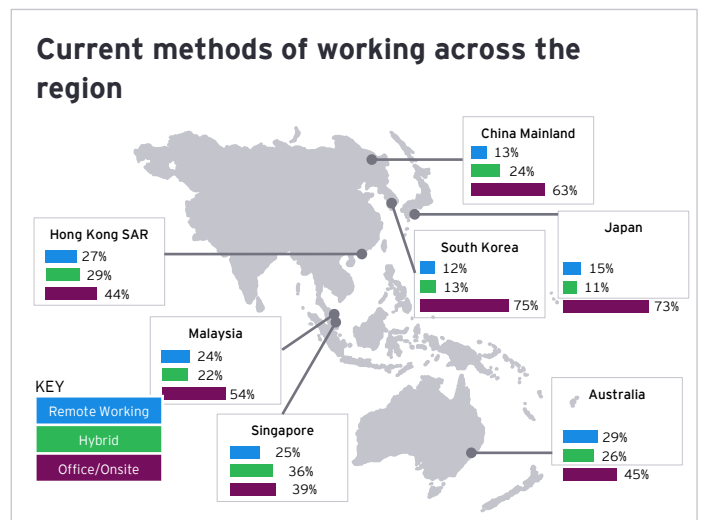
At the same time, remote and hybrid working has afforded organisations an opportunity to address the deteriorating mental wellbeing of their workforce. Research published in the Journal of Affective Disorders has found that people who worked from home full or part-time during the pandemic did not experience worse mental health, suggesting that remote and hybrid working can potentially have a positive influence on wellbeing.

Going further, our research uncovered that hybrid working can be a key lever when looking to drive a stronger sense of belonging in the workplace. Specifically, it supports the argument in favour of the positive benefits of hybrid working.

According to the results, employees working in a hybrid setting (i.e., 2-3 days at home most weeks) expressed both a more positive working experience (79%) as well as a greater sense of belonging (56%) than those who were remote (i.e., 4 or more days at home most weeks) or in the office/onsite (i.e., 3 or more days at home most weeks).

The effects of hybrid working on belonging appear particularly beneficial for staff. Based on our research, those not in management positions – the group who exhibited the lowest levels of belonging – were found to experience the greatest relative gain in belonging when working in a hybrid setting as compared to middle management and leadership.

It is also worth noting that unlike both middle management and leadership, staff feel a stronger sense of belonging with remote working rather than office/onsite working, supporting other research that a full return to the office may not resonate with the majority of employees.

Current methods of working across the region

China Mainland
- Remote Working: 13%
- Hybrid: 24%
- Office/Onsite: 63%

Hong Kong SAR
- Remote Working: 27%
- Hybrid: 29%
- Office/Onsite: 44%

South Korea
- Remote Working: 12%
- Hybrid: 13%
- Office/Onsite: 75%

Japan
- Remote Working: 15%
- Hybrid: 11%
- Office/Onsite: 73%

Malaysia
- Remote Working: 24%
- Hybrid: 22%
- Office/Onsite: 54%

Australia
- Remote Working: 29%
- Hybrid: 26%
- Office/Onsite: 45%

Singapore
- Remote Working: 25%
- Hybrid: 36%
- Office/Onsite: 39%

KEY
- Remote Working
- Hybrid
- Office/Onsite

Sense of belonging by work method

- 47% (Office/Onsite)
- 49% (Remote Working)
- 56% (Hybrid)

Sense of belonging by position

Leadership
- 63% (Remote Working)
- 71% (Office/Onsite)
- 73% (Hybrid)

Middle Management
- 48% (Remote Working)
- 55% (Office/Onsite)
- 55% (Hybrid)

Staff
- 33% (Office/Onsite)
- 38% (Remote Working)
- 43% (Hybrid)

KEY
- Remote Working
- Hybrid
- Office/Onsite

https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165032722005407

Although our research illustrates the potential benefits of hybrid working, it also highlights that the adoption of hybrid working has yet to become the most common working style in many parts of Asia-Pacific.

Only 11% of Japanese and 13% of Korean employees indicated they are currently have a hybrid working arrangement. Furthermore, even in the countries that have the highest adoption of hybrid working – Singapore and Hong Kong SAR (36% and 29% respectively) – office/onsite working still remains the most common working style.

Clearly, remote and hybrid working is not feasible in all organisations or across all organisational roles and our research did not delve into the details of such roles. However, looking at the differences across jurisdictions, the findings nonetheless suggest that there is an opportunity for many organisations across Asia-Pacific to maximise employee engagement through an increased adoption/enablement of hybrid working models.

4 Implement systematic feedback, recognition and check-in initiatives

To effectively build initiatives that deliver the belonging outcomes that employees desire, leaders in a regional capacity need to develop targeted approaches that consider how employees in different countries experience belonging and the activities that are most likely to effectively contribute to increasing their sense of it.

For example, employees from Australia and Singapore value a more personal and emotional approach via personal check-ins to help them feel like they belong. In fact, these check-ins stretch even further in Australia to encompass the element of authenticity, so that the employee is seen as a whole person beyond work and their contribution to the organisation. However, this method would not have the same impact across the other markets.

Conversely, in the case of Japan, South Korea, mainland China and Hong Kong SAR, we observe that employees value more objective-based activities, such as systems that provide opportunity for feedback to help developmental growth. Particularly in mainland China, Japan and South Korea, public recognition is also a key lever.

Activities contributing to a sense of belonging in the workplace

			Australia	China	Hong Kong SAR	Japan	Malaysia	Korea	Singapore
Feedback	Being given feedback that helps in development	45%	57%	**46%**	**42%**	**33%**	53%	**39%**	**44%**
	Being invited to give feedback to improve work environment	42%	54%	43%	40%	21%	**57%**	34%	43%
Recognition	Being publicly recognised for contributions	44%	46%	**50%**	**40%**	**37%**	47%	**45%**	37%
Check-In	Being checked-in by people about how they are doing at work	39%	**59%**	36%	37%	26%	45%	26%	**45%**
	Being checked-in about how they are doing personally	36%	**61%**	32%	25%	19%	44%	25%	43%

5 Address exclusion and bullying to minimise risk

With around one-third of employees across Asia-Pacific experiencing exclusion in the workplace, it is imperative that the theme is emphasised upon by leadership as a central part of any effective DE&I strategy.

In addition to supporting other global work that highlights the importance of addressing it in the workplace, our research underlines the fact that exclusion will cause employees to not feel like they belong, but also seen by many as a form of bullying.

According to the findings, there are a number of groups that should be prioritised in the conversation, including LGBTQIA+ employees, those living with disabilities and those with differences that are not apparent.

To eliminate the hard and soft barriers which allow for – or even promote – the exclusion of these groups, there is significant work to be completed by leaders across Asia-Pacific. By focusing on improving the sense of belonging felt by junior staff earlier in their career may also experience exponential advantage to the business as the employee grows.

Additionally, hybrid working and the increased use of digital channels for employee engagement can also play a role in improving feelings of exclusion by providing agile methods for management to check-in with employees. By reaching out and acknowledging their employees on a personal level, companies and leaders can significantly enhance the employee experience by making people feel valued and connected, therefore reducing feelings of exclusion and increasing belonging.

6 Remove the optionality of DE&I

According to our research, there is no one single activity or programme that can foster a sense of belonging in the workplace, as a single individual can have a wide variety of needs. Instead, organisations can make progress by focusing on changing their culture to promote inclusive behaviour and awareness on the differing needs of their employees.

To reap the benefits of employee engagement and commitment in the long run, a series of consistent behaviours and micro-moments – amplified by the right tone from leadership – can help an organisation create and sustain a sense of belonging over time.

This includes designing a programme of systemic interventions to remove the optionality for behaviour-driven activities so that improvements to workplace belonging can be facilitated.

Demonstrating the organisation's DE&I commitment through policy, strategy and talent expectations can also signal the material change it intends to realise, such as by defining a clear DE&I roadmap for teams and business units to align to – with enough flexibility given to each business unit to define the most appropriate interventions. No matter what is implemented, it is most important to apply the same level of rigour to it as is applied to other HR or change management programmes. Building in timelines, resources, stakeholder mapping and measurable outcomes can help here by creating focus and tracking progress.

Organisations can also review their policies and benefits through the lenses of different user needs or diversity demographics to uncover blind spots or built-in biases. Examples of the latter include defining marriage to be between a man and a woman only, recognising 'couples' as married ones only, and assuming that mothers would always be the primary caregiver in a parental leave policy.

To enable those in management to make the adjustments required, leadership behaviour needs to be measured and rewarded using inclusiveness/inclusive action as a metric. Providing the management team with consistent training, a common language and avenues for discussion can also enable expectations to be met and maintained.

Belonging in the workplace as an agent of change

The COVID-19 pandemic has arguably been the single largest catalyst to change the way we work since the rise of the internet almost 30 years ago. Beyond the obvious growing concerns around physical health and the ever-blurring lines between work, home and the community, it has made mental wellbeing a key focus in society and workplaces alike.

Our research shows the importance of DE&I in creating a sense of belonging in the workplace and the positive impact it has, not only on employee wellbeing, but also on organisational success. It also offers practical guidance on fostering a stronger sense of belonging in organisations across Asia-Pacific – a region typically missing from the wider conversation – as they place more emphasis on implementing effective DE&I strategies.

Doing so enables leaders of Asia-Pacific's largest organisations to embrace and act on their social responsibilities as part of the bigger, global push for sustainability. By taking a strong position on DE&I, they can – in time – effect broader change within their organisations while making a direct impact on the communities and environments in which they operate. In return, by feeling like they belong and are supported, employees would be more likely to support the organisation in delivering on its ESG commitments.

Today, the initiatives that create a stronger sense of belonging in your organisation may be on the smaller end, like regular check-ins and constructive feedback. More time-consuming action plans like building a diverse workforce may (yet to) be in the pipeline. Ultimately, it is not where you are but where you are headed in your belonging journey, as every step forward brings us one step closer towards building a better working world.
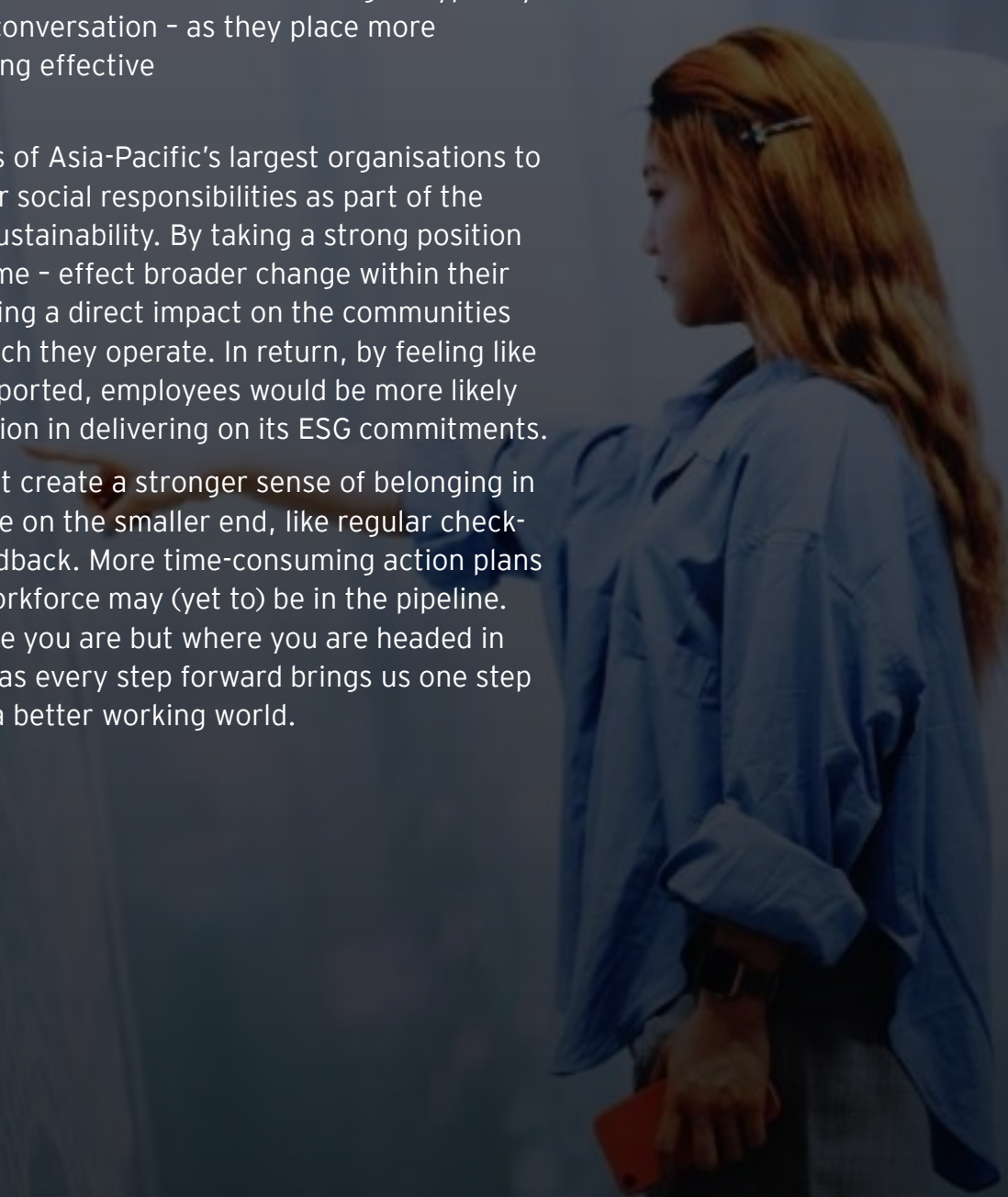
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Belonging Barometer
Asia-Pacific

Market Snapshots

Feeling of belonging across the workforce

57%
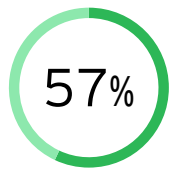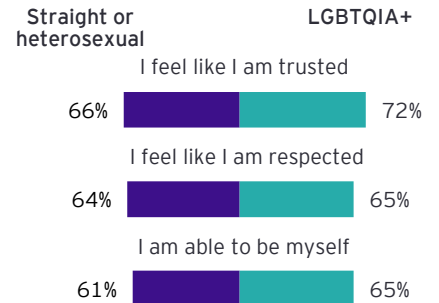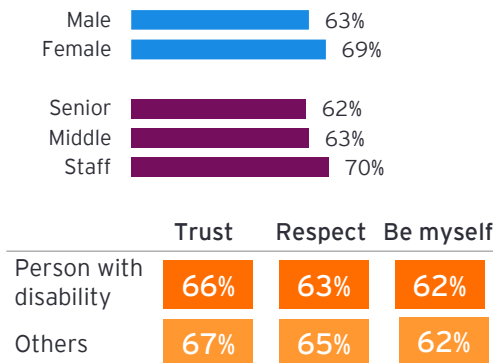
Asia-Pacific average: 49%

Top 3 industries
- Energy
- Financial services
- GPS

Top 3 factors that make the workforce feel belonging

1 I feel like I am trusted

2 I feel like I am respected

3 I am able to be myself

In Australia, the workforce is comfortable...

82% Taking leave from work to tend to family

72% Seeking support for family care

66% Discussing belonging or inclusion concerns with leaders

Trust is the most significant factor affecting belonging for...

Male	63%
Female	69%
Senior	62%
Middle	63%
Staff	70%

	Trust	Respect	Be myself
Person with disability	66%	63%	62%
Others	67%	65%	62%

	Straight or heterosexual	LGBTQIA+
I feel like I am trusted	66%	72%
I feel like I am respected	64%	65%
I am able to be myself	61%	65%

The workforce feels more belonging when...

Check-ins are done to find out how employees are doing personally and professionally.

Personal check-ins

Male	53%
Female	67%
Straight or heterosexual	61%
LGBTQIA+	62%

	Personal check-ins	Given feedback	Professional check-ins
Baby boomers	62%	50%	55%
Gen X	59%	50%	56%
Millennials	62%	63%	63%
Gen Z	61%	52%	56%
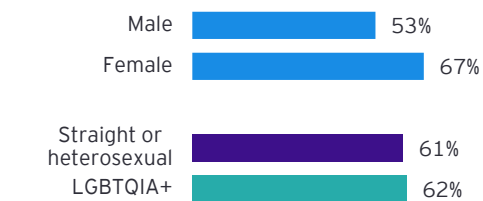
Senior Invited to give feedback to improve work environment

Middle Given feedback that helps them develop

Staff Checked-in on how they are doing personally and professionally

64% of people with disabilities feel belonging when **checked-in** on how they are doing personally

56% of the workforce with a different cultural background than most people in the organisation find that **personal check-ins** improve belonging

Impact of remote working on the feeling of belonging

31% Not noticed a significant change

29% Feel distant from colleagues

21% Feel a stronger sense of belonging to my workplace

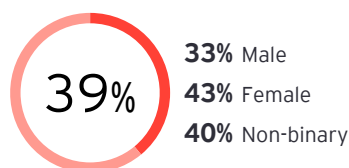**Actions that make the workforce feel belonging in a hybrid team**

		Male	Female
Equal opportunity to speak	51%	44%	51%
Casual check-ins from leaders	49%	39%	59%
Casual check-ins from co-workers	47%	44%	57%

Practices leading to bullying at the workplace

Unfair criticism is the most significant factor affecting belonging

Male	67%
Female	75%
Straight or heterosexual	80%
LGBTQIA+	71%

Employees feeling excluded at the workplace

39%

33% Male
43% Female
40% Non-binary

When excluded, the employees feel...
- Ignored
- Stressed
- Sad

Actions for leadership

Personal feedback

Personal check-ins

Professional check-ins

China Mainland

Feeling of belonging across the workforce

62%
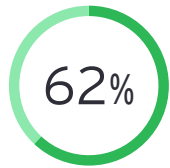
Asia-Pacific average: 49%

Top 3 industries
- TMT
- Professional services
- AM&M

Top 3 factors that make the workforce feel belonging

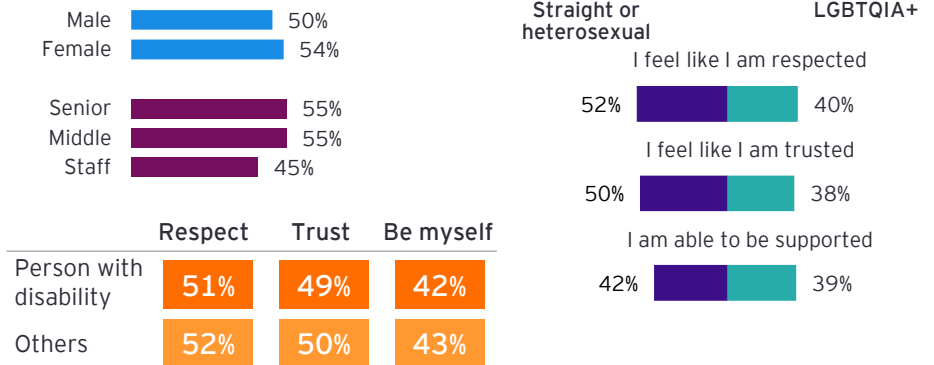**1** I feel like I am respected

2 I feel like I am trusted

3 I am supported to be successful professionally and personally

In China, the workforce is comfortable...

- **84%** Taking leave from work to tend to family
- **81%** Seeking support for family care
- **80%** Discussing belonging or inclusion concerns with leaders

Respect is the most significant factor affecting belonging for...

Male	50%
Female	54%
Senior	55%
Middle	55%
Staff	45%

	Respect	Trust	Be myself
Person with disability	51%	49%	42%
Others	52%	50%	43%

	Straight or heterosexual	LGBTQIA+
I feel like I am respected	52%	40%
I feel like I am trusted	50%	38%
I am able to be supported	42%	39%

The workforce feels more belonging when...

Employees are **publicly recognised** for their contributions.

Publicly recognised

Male	47%
Female	53%
Straight or heterosexual	51%
LGBTQIA+	35%

Senior	50%
Middle	52%
Staff	45%
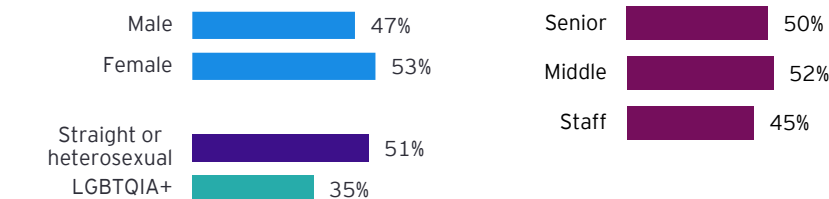
	Public recognition	Given feedback	Personal check-ins
Baby boomers	33%	33%	67%
Gen X	54%	47%	37%
Millennials	49%	46%	36%
Gen Z	57%	45%	39%

52% of people with disabilities feel belonging when they are **publicly recognised**

44% of the workforce with a different cultural background than most people in the organisation find that **public recognitions** improve belonging

Impact of remote working on the feeling of belonging

- **39%** Feel a stronger sense of belonging to my workplace
- **34%** Feel distant from colleagues
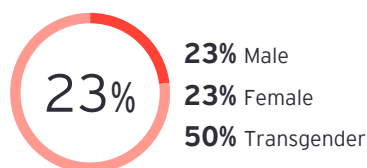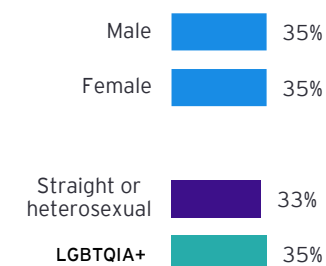- **30%** Creating a divide in my workplace

Actions that make the workforce feel belonging in a hybrid team

		Male	Female
Time for social interactions	46%	44%	49%
Time for experience sharing	44%	43%	46%
Equal opportunity to speak	42%	43%	42%

Practices leading to bullying at the workplace

Social exclusion is the most significant factor affecting belonging

Male	35%
Female	35%
Straight or heterosexual	33%
LGBTQIA+	35%

Employees feeling excluded at the workplace

23%

23% Male
23% Female
50% Transgender
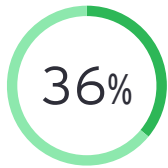
When excluded, the employees feel...
- Angry
- Stressed
- Lonely

Actions for leadership

Public recognition

Personal feedback

Respect suggestions

Hong Kong SAR

Feeling of belonging across the workforce

36%

Asia-Pacific average: 49%

Top 3 industries
- TMT
- Professional services
- AM&M

Top 3 factors that make the workforce feel belonging

1 I feel like I am respected
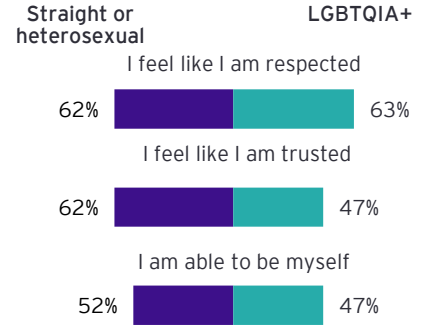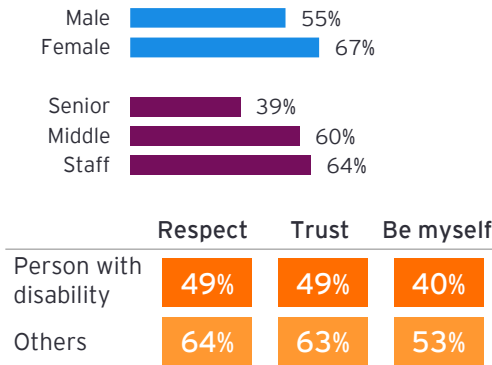
2 I feel like I am trusted

3 I am able to be myself

In Hong Kong SAR, the workforce is comfortable...

- **80%** Taking leave from work to tend to family
- **67%** Seeking support for family care
- **60%** Discussing belonging or inclusion concerns with leaders

Trust is the most significant factor affecting belonging for...

Male	55%
Female	67%

Senior	39%
Middle	60%
Staff	64%

	Respect	Trust	Be myself
Person with disability	49%	49%	40%
Others	64%	63%	53%

	Straight or heterosexual	LGBTQIA+
I feel like I am respected	62%	63%
I feel like I am trusted	62%	47%
I am able to be myself	52%	47%

The workforce feels more belonging when...

Employees are **given feedback** that helps them develop.

Given feedback

Male	39%
Female	45%

Straight or heterosexual	43%
LGBTQIA+	32%

Senior	45%
Middle	45%
Staff	29%
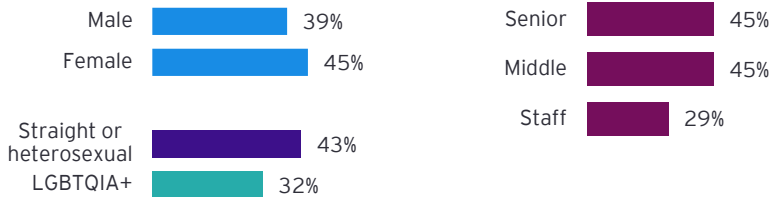
	Given feedback	Public recognition	Check-ins
Baby boomers	55%	64%	36%
Gen X	41%	43%	33%
Millennials	43%	40%	39%
Gen Z	35%	27%	46%

39% of people with disabilities feel belonging when **publicly recognised**

34% of the workforce with a different cultural background than most people in the organisation feel belonging when **given feedback**

Impact of remote working on the feeling of belonging

- **37%** Feel distant from colleagues
- **25%** Feel a stronger sense of belonging to my workplace
- **25%** Feel less comfortable voicing my opinions within my virtual workplace

**Actions that make the workforce feel belonging in a hybrid team**

		Male	Female
Casual check-ins from co-workers	44%	41%	47%
Collaboration on projects	43%	39%	46%
Equal opportunity to speak	40%	41%	40%

Practices leading to bullying at the workplace

Unfair criticism is the most significant factor affecting belonging

Male	44%
Female	62%

Straight or heterosexual	54%
LGBTQIA+	53%

Employees feeling excluded at the workplace

29%

27% Male
31% Female
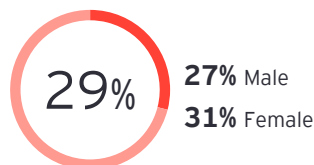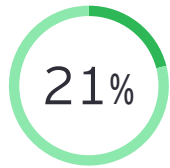
When excluded, the employees feel...
- Angry
- Ignored
- Stressed

Actions for leadership

Professional check-ins

Personal feedback

Respect suggestions

Japan

Feeling of belonging across the workforce

21%

Asia-Pacific average: 49%

Top 3 industries
- Professional services
- TMT
- Consumer

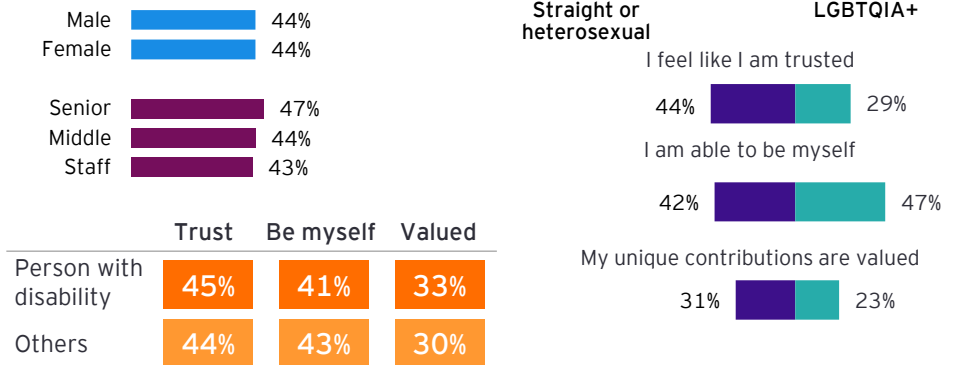**In Japan, the workforce is comfortable...**

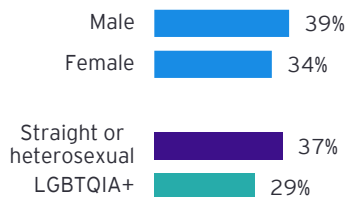|	
77%	Taking leave from work to tend to family
59%	Seeking support for family care
44%	Seeking support for my special needs

Top 3 factors that make the workforce feel belonging

1 I feel like I am trusted

2 I am able to be myself

3 I feel my unique contributions are valued

Trust is the most significant factor affecting belonging for...

Male	44%
Female	44%
Senior	47%
Middle	44%
Staff	43%

	Trust	Be myself	Valued
Person with disability	45%	41%	33%
Others	44%	43%	30%

	Straight or heterosexual	LGBTQIA+
I feel like I am trusted	44%	29%
I am able to be myself	42%	47%
My unique contributions are valued	31%	23%

The workforce feels more belonging when...

Employees are **publicly recognised** for their contributions.

Publicly recognised

Male	39%
Female	34%
Straight or heterosexual	37%
LGBTQIA+	29%

	Given feedback	Public recognition	Check-ins
Baby boomers	29%	44%	27%
Gen X	33%	39%	26%
Millennials	37%	34%	24%
Gen Z	28%	25%	31%

Senior Asked to lead a team of colleagues

Middle Publicly recognised for contributions

Staff Publicly recognised for contributions

41% of people with disabilities feel belonging when they are **publicly recognised**

32% of the workforce with a different cultural background than most people in the organisation feel belonging when they are **publicly recognised**

Impact of remote working on the feeling of belonging

40%	Not noticed a significant change
17%	Feel less comfortable voicing my opinions within my virtual workplace
15%	Feel distant from colleagues

**Actions that make the workforce feel belonging in a hybrid team**

		Male	Female
Equal opportunity to speak	25%	28%	20%
Collaboration on projects	23%	26%	15%
Time for social interactions	22%	21%	13%

Practices leading to bullying at the workplace

Ignoring is the most significant factor affecting belonging

Male	49%
Female	56%
Straight or heterosexual	52%
LGBTQIA+ +	47%

Employees feeling excluded at the workplace

34%

34% Male
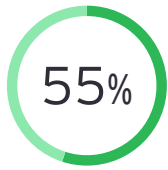**33%** Female
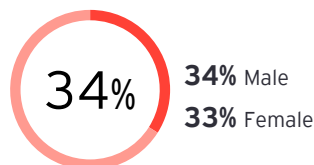
When excluded, the employees feel...
- Stressed
- Lonely
- Sad

Actions for leadership

Professional check-ins

Personal feedback

Public recognition

Malaysia

Feeling of belonging across the workforce

55%

Asia-Pacific average: 49%

Top 3 industries
- GPS
- Energy
- Consumer

Top 3 factors that make the workforce feel belonging

1 I feel like I am trusted

2 I feel like I am respected

3 I am able to be myself

In Malaysia, the workforce is comfortable...

- **82%** Taking leave from work to tend to family
- **74%** Requesting leave from work on days of religious observations
- **73%** Seeking support for family care

Trust is the most significant factor affecting belonging for...

Male	58%
Female	55%
Senior	54%
Middle	59%
Staff	55%
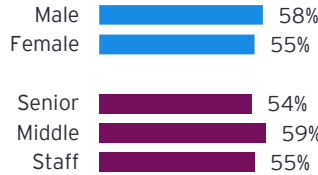
53% of the workforce with a different cultural background than most people in the organisation consider **trust** as the most significant factor

	Trust	Valued	Be myself
Person with disability	44%	40%	47%
Others	50%	54%	57%

The workforce feels more belonging when...

Employees are **invited to give suggestions** to improve the work environment.

Invited to give suggestions

Male	56%
Female	58%
Senior	60%
Middle	61%
Staff	54%
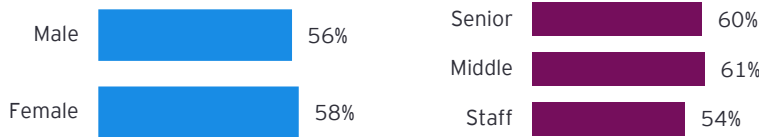
	Asked for suggestions	Given feedback	Public recognition
Baby boomers	62%	54%	92%
Gen X	46%	53%	57%
Millennials	49%	55%	58%
Gen Z	38%	43%	47%

64% of people with disabilities feel belonging when **given suggestions** to help them develop

63% of the workforce with a different cultural background than most people in the organisation feel belonging when being invited to **give suggestions** to improve the work environment

Impact of remote working on the feeling of belonging

- **40%** Feel distant from colleagues
- **37%** Feel a stronger sense of belonging to my workplace
- **35%** Creating a divide in my workplace

### Actions that make the workforce feel belonging in a hybrid team

		Male	Female
Equal opportunity to speak	48%	48%	49%
Modern technology	48%	47%	49%
Collaboration on projects	47%	46%	47%

Practices leading to bullying at the workplace

Ignoring is the most significant factor affecting belonging

Male	40%
Female	45%

Employees feeling excluded at the workplace

39%

36% Male
42% Female
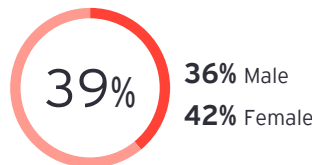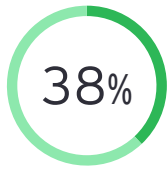
When excluded, the employees feel...
- Stressed
- Ignored
- Sad

Actions for leadership

- Public recognition
- Personal feedback
- Respect suggestions

Feeling of belonging across the workforce

38%

Asia-Pacific average: 49%

Top 3 industries
- HS&W
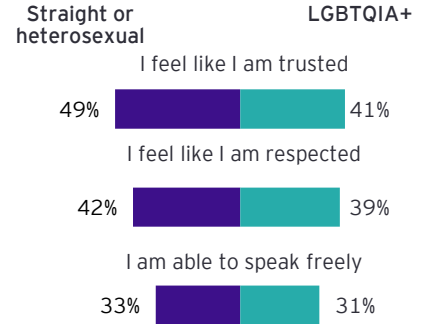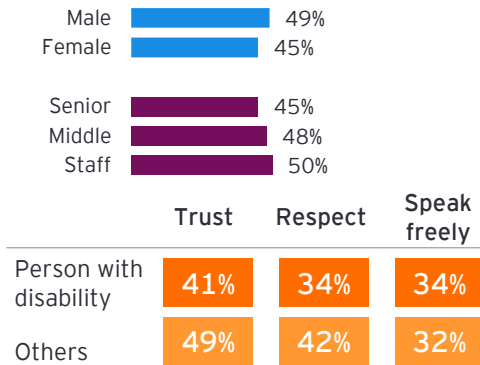- Professional services
- Consumer

Top 3 factors that make the workforce feel belonging

1 I feel like I am trusted

2 I feel like I am respected

3 I am able to speak freely and voice my opinion, even when it differs from others

Trust is the most significant factor affecting belonging for…

Male	49%
Female	45%
Senior	45%
Middle	48%
Staff	50%

	Trust	Respect	Speak freely
Person with disability	41%	34%	34%
Others	49%	42%	32%

Straight or heterosexual / LGBTQIA+

I feel like I am trusted
49% ▆▆ 41%

I feel like I am respected
42% ▆▆ 39%

I am able to speak freely
33% ▆▆ 31%

In Korea, the workforce is comfortable…

77% Taking leave from work to tend to family

65% Seeking support for family care

60% Seeking support for my special needs

The workforce feels more belonging when…

Employees are **publicly recognised** for their contributions.

Publicly recognised

Male	47%
Female	41%

Senior	42%
Middle	47%
Staff	45%

	Public recognition	Invited to discussions	Given feedback
Baby boomers	54%	49%	47%
Gen X	47%	30%	40%
Millennials	43%	38%	38%
Gen Z	24%	16%	8%

43% of people with disabilities feel belonging when they are **publicly recognised**

35% of the workforce with a different cultural background than most people in the organisation feel belonging when they are **publicly recognised**

34% of the LGBTQIA+ workforce feel increased belonging when they are **given feedback** that helps them develop

Impact of remote working on the feeling of belonging

35% Feel distant from colleagues

26% Feel less comfortable voicing my opinion within my virtual workplace

25% Feel a stronger sense of belonging to my workplace

**Actions that make the workforce feel belonging in a hybrid team**

		Male	Female
Casual check-ins	33%	38%	26%
Formal catch ups	32%	32%	31%
Given opportunity to speak	26%	25%	28%

Practices leading to bullying at the workplace

Ignoring is the most significant factor affecting belonging

Male	39%
Female	43%

Straight or heterosexual	41%
LGBTQIA+	32%

Employees feeling excluded at the workplace

32%

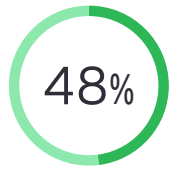**32%** Male
33% Female
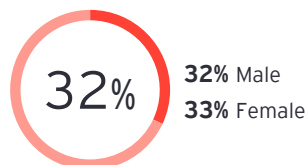
When excluded, the employees feel…
- Stressed
- Angry
- Lonely

Actions for leadership

Public recognition

Personal feedback

Respect suggestions

Feeling of belonging across the workforce

48%

Asia-Pacific average: 49%

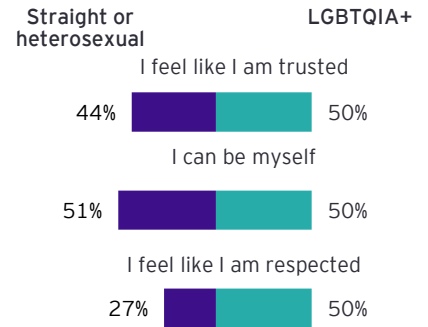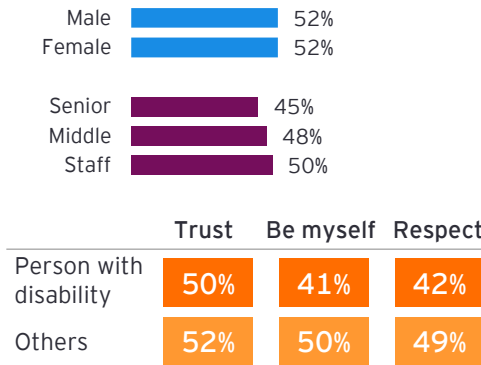**Top 3 industries**
‣ TMT
‣ Financial services
‣ Real estate

Top 3 factors that make the workforce feel belonging

1 I feel like I am trusted

2 I am able to be myself

3 I feel like I am respected

In Singapore, the workforce is comfortable...

79% Taking leave from work to tend to family

71% Seeking support for family care

65% Discussing belonging or inclusion concerns with leaders

Trust is the most significant factor affecting belonging for...

Male	52%
Female	52%
Senior	45%
Middle	48%
Staff	50%

	Trust	Be myself	Respect
Person with disability	50%	41%	42%
Others	52%	50%	49%

Straight or heterosexual   LGBTQIA+

I feel like I am trusted
44%   50%

I can be myself
51%   50%

I feel like I am respected
27%   50%

The workforce feels more belonging when...

Check-ins are done to find out how employees are doing personally and professionally.

Check-ins

Male	45%
Female	46%

	Personal check-ins	Professional check-ins	Invited to discussions
Baby boomers	46%	49%	56%
Gen X	39%	39%	44%
Millennials	43%	48%	41%
Gen Z	51%	48%	42%

Senior Invited to work environment improvement discussions

Middle Invited to work environment improvement discussions and check-ins

Staff Check-ins on how they are doing at work

43% of people with disabilities feel belonging when there are **professional check-ins**

35% of the workforce having a different cultural background than most people in the organisation feel belonging when **given feedback**

34% of the LGBTQIA+ workforce feel increased belonging when **asked to join meetings with senior leaders**

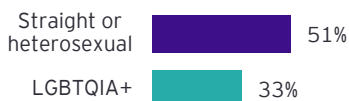## Impact of remote working on the feeling of belonging

35% Feel distant from colleagues

32% Feel a stronger sense of belonging to my workplace

30% Creating a divide in my workplace

**Actions that make the workforce feel belonging in a hybrid team**

		Male	Female
Given opportunity to speak	38%	39%	37%
Modern texhnology	38%	40%	35%
Casual check-ins	36%	37%	35%

Practices leading to bullying at the workplace

Unfair criticism is the most significant factor affecting belonging

Male	52%
Female	49%

Straight or heterosexual	51%
LGBTQIA+	33%

Employees feeling excluded at the workplace

39%

40% Male
38% Female
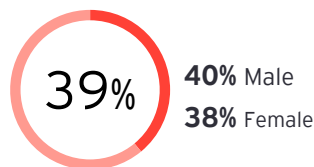
When excluded, the employees feel...
‣ Stressed
‣ Sad
‣ Lonely

Actions for leadership

Professional check-ins

Personal feedback

Respect suggestions

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