



2017 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT TRENDS

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AUTHORS

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MARKETING CONTENT SPECIALIST

Christina's job is to communicate every bit of QW knowledge in a way that clients find both helpful and enjoyable. Lucky enough to have past engagement-focused employers, she loves making those same experiences accessible for all companies. Thanks to her dad, she has a broad knowledge of 1960s Westerns and furniture building; she is appreciative that her mom gave her life's more important skills.



Dan Harris

WORKPLACE INSIGHTS ANALYST

Dan Harris is responsible for analyzing organizational data and articulating employees' perceptions in ways that facilitate meaningful change. He has years of experience with all phases of research, ranging from data collection and logistics to advanced analysis and consulting. Dan has a Master's Degree in Industrial-Organizational Psychology and is currently a Doctoral candidate for I-O Psychology at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.



CONTENTS

05 INTRODUCTION

09 OVERALL TRENDS

18 ORGANIZATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

30 PROFESSIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

40 PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

54 METHODOLOGY



INTRO

WELCOME TO QUANTUM WORKPLACE'S 7TH ANNUAL EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT TRENDS REPORT!

Based on the employee surveys we collect for nearly 50 Best Places to Work contests annually, this comprehensive report is the one and only of its kind that examines employee engagement and culture trends at America's top workplaces. This year's study aggregates employee survey responses from more than half a million employees from more than 8,700 organizations across America.

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

Top-performing organizations know that employee engagement drives business outcomes. Engaged employees are more productive, more profitable, more customer-focused, and more likely to stay. Our research continues to support this year after year.



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THE CHALLENGES THAT LIE AHEAD

1

**THE ENGAGEMENT
GAP BETWEEN HOURLY
AND SALARIED
EMPLOYEES GROWS**

2

**LOW ENGAGEMENT
THREATENS RETENTION**

3

**FAILED CHANGE
MANAGEMENT PUTS
ENGAGEMENT AT RISK**

Organizations need to be aware of these coming threats to have any hope of combating them. This report examines year-over-year trends in employee engagement to determine where executives, managers, and front-line employees can have the biggest impact.

WE'LL EXAMINE:

1. Overall Trends
2. Organizational Demographic Analysis
3. Personal Demographic Analysis
4. Professional Demographic Analysis

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NAVIGATING THE REPORT

Throughout the report, we look at engagement by grouping employees into four engagement levels based on their survey responses. Employees grouped within these four engagement levels exhibit the characteristics listed below.

Engaged

AVERAGE SCORE: 5–6

Highly favorable
Preach organization love
Plan to stay
Pursue extra effort

Contributing

AVERAGE SCORE: 4–4.9

Moderately favorable
Hold back
Opportunity for increased performance

Disengaged

AVERAGE SCORE: 3–3.9

Indifferent
Lack motivation
At-risk for turnover

Hostile

AVERAGE SCORE: 1–2.9

Negative
Lack commitment
Impact others' productivity

OVERALL TRENDS

In this section, we'll give you the view from the top. We'll look at the survey data in aggregate, examine year-over-year trends, and highlight biggest declines and improvements.

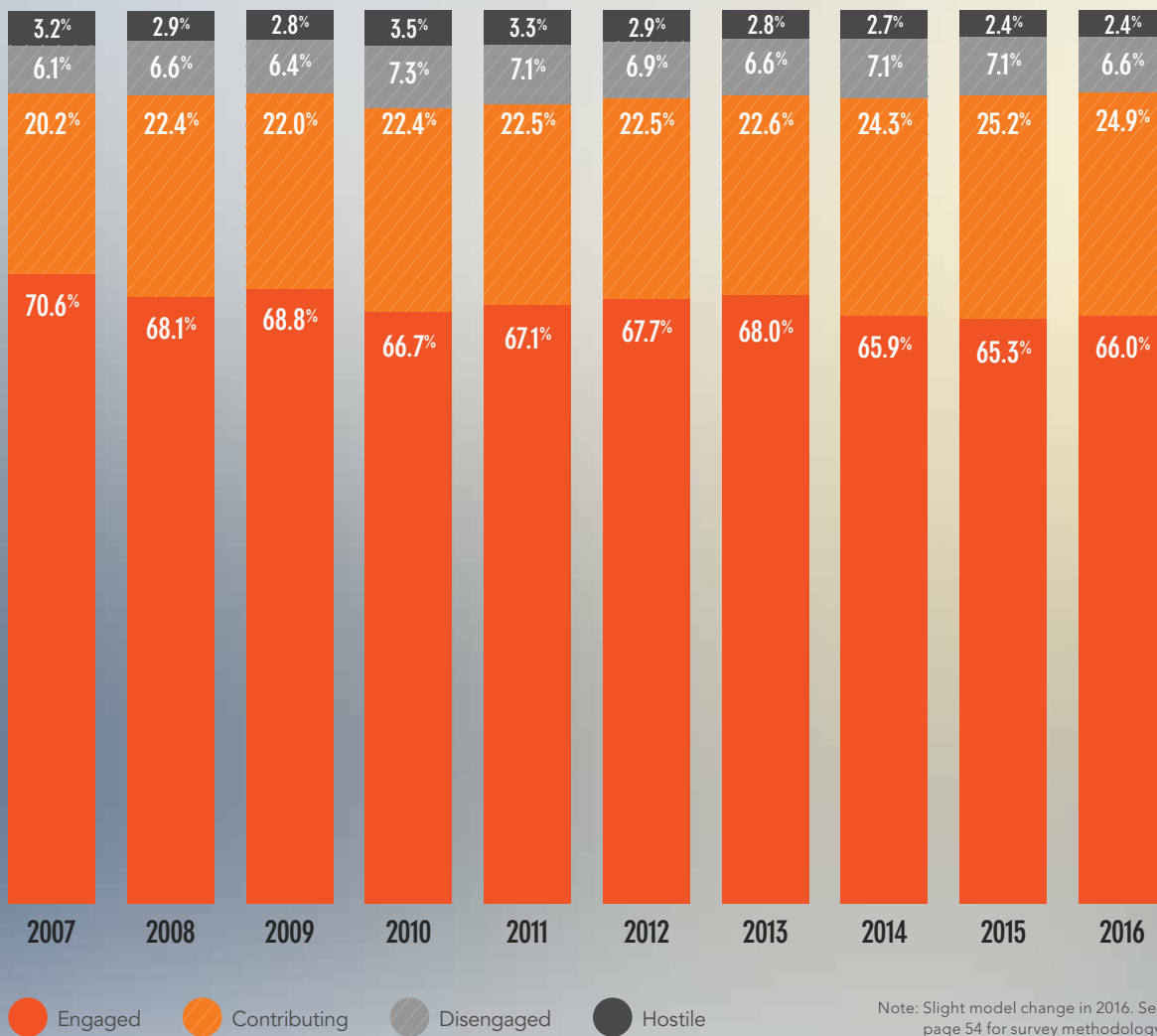


OVERALL EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Slight Increase in Employee Engagement

Employee engagement increased .7 percent from 2015 to 2016, effectively recouping the loss of 2015.

ENGAGEMENT PROFILE BY YEAR



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EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ITEMS

Where Do Organizations Excel? Where Do They Fall Short?

5 ITEMS WITH THE HIGHEST FAVORABILITY

1

I believe this organization will be successful in the future.

2

Everyone here is treated fairly regardless of race, gender, age, ethnic background, disability, sexual orientation, or other differences.

3

I am proud to work here.

4

The people I work with most closely are committed to producing top quality work.

5

I find my job interesting and challenging.

5 ITEMS WITH THE LOWEST FAVORABILITY

1

When the organization makes changes, I understand why.

2

I am paid fairly.

3

I see professional growth and career development opportunities for myself in this organization.

4

If I contribute to the organization's success, I know I will be recognized.

5

It would take a lot to get me to leave this organization.

Which Items Have Improved? Which Have Declined?

5 MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS

I am paid fairly.

4.99%

The benefits offered here meet my and my family's needs.

3.91%

If I contribute to the organization's success, I know I will be recognized.

2.35%

I trust our senior leaders to lead the company to future success.

2.16%

Goals and accountabilities are clear to everyone on my team.

2.15%

4 MOST SIGNIFICANT DECLINES

2.24%

My immediate coworkers consistently go the extra mile to achieve great results.

2.06%

It would take a lot to get me to leave this organization.

0.44%

I see professional growth and career development opportunities for myself in this organization.

0.19%

I know I can depend on the other members of my team.

Only four survey items declined in favorability this year.

Where are Employees Unsure?

Employees are uncertain about the following survey items, meaning they responded neither favorably nor unfavorably (a three or four on the six-point scale). These items point to a lack of certainty around organizational knowledge and communication and an unmet desire to feel valued.

AREAS EMPLOYEES LACK CONFIDENCE

(items with more than 20% uncertainty)

When the organization makes changes, I understand why.	26.94%
I am paid fairly.	24.25%
If I contribute to the organization's success, I know I will be recognized.	21.86%
I see professional growth and career development opportunities for myself in this organization.	21.70%

Only three survey items had an increase in uncertainty this year:

- It would take a lot to get me to leave this organization. 2.04% ↑
- My immediate coworkers consistently go the extra mile to achieve great results. 2.03% ↑
- I see professional growth and career development opportunities for myself in this organization. 0.44% ↑

These items also saw an almost identical decrease in favorability.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DRIVERS

Engagement is Driven by Feelings of Support and Belief in Future Success

All items on the survey had a positive correlation with employee engagement. However, some had a greater correlation than others. Items with a correlation of .75 or higher were considered significant drivers of engagement.

TOP DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT

(with a correlation value of at least .75)

My job allows me to utilize my strengths.

I trust our senior leaders to lead the company to future success.

The senior leaders of the organization value people as their most important resource.

If I contribute to the organization's success, I know I will be recognized.



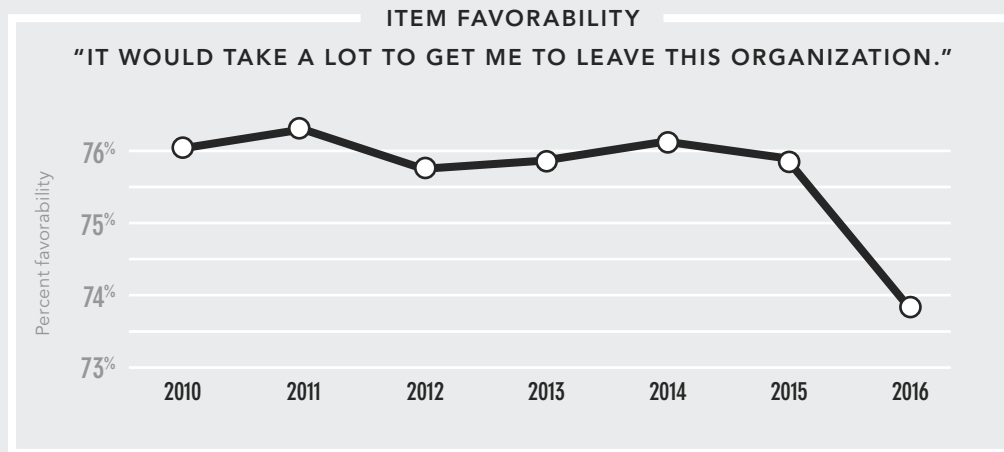
My opinions seem to count at work.

I believe this organization will be successful in the future.

Retention Struggle Expected for 2017

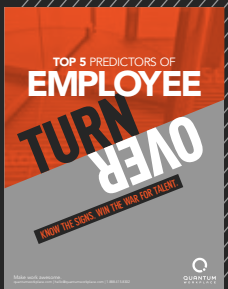
Examining the item “It would take a lot to get me to leave this organization,” we see that it had the second largest favorability decline and ranks in the bottom five for total favorability.

This indicates that retention will be a struggle in 2017, particularly for organizations that don’t pay attention to team dynamics and career development.



In fact, a recent study by Quantum Workplace found that the item, “It would take a lot to get me to leave this organization,” was a top predictor of an employee exit. Only 47.4 percent of exited employees said that it would take a lot to get them to leave the organization, while 62.5 percent of retained employees said the same.

Download



Meet the coming retention crisis head-on. [Download](#) this ebook to uncover:

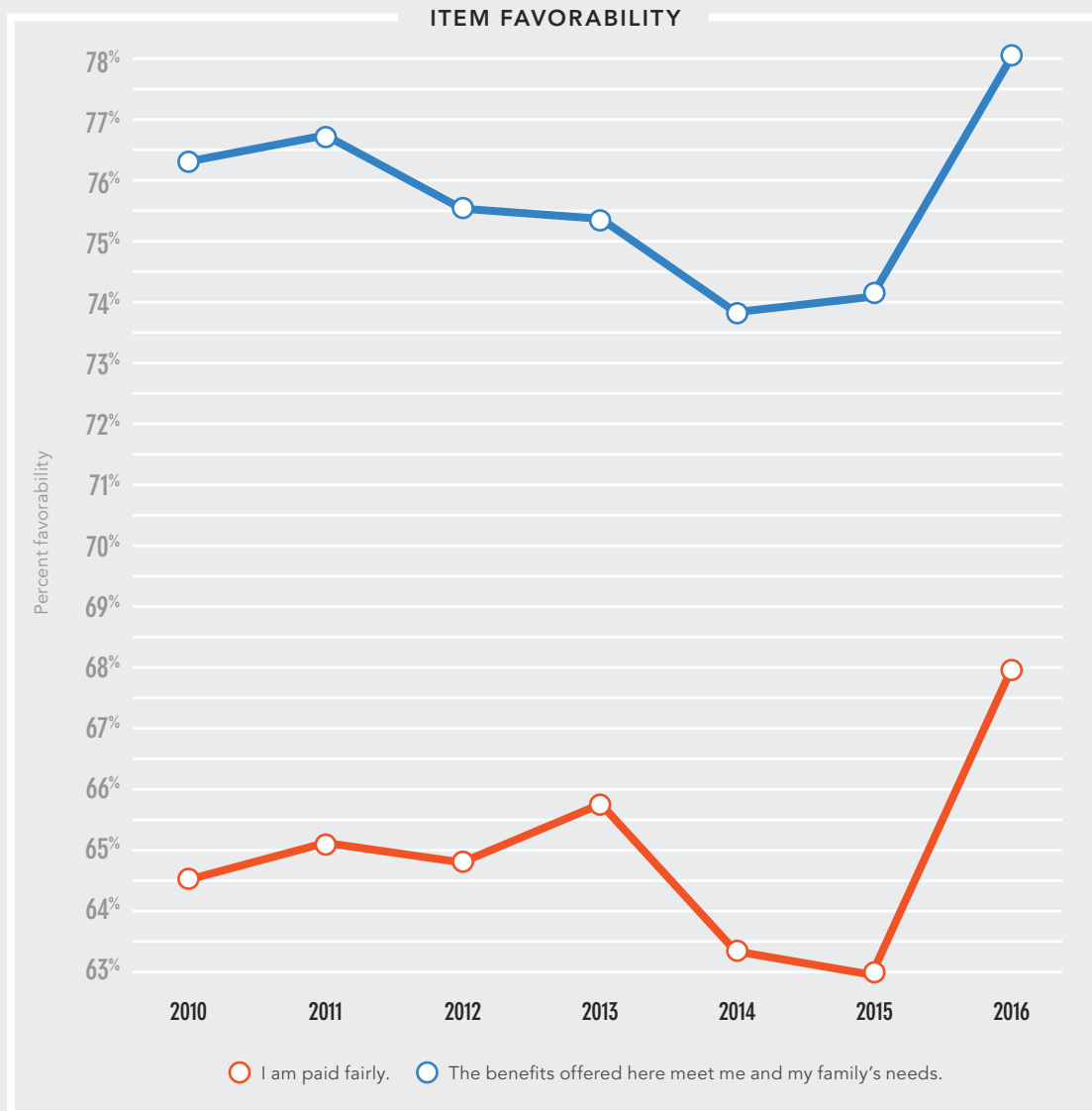
- The top 5 employee turnover predictors
- Important differences between exited and retained employees
- Strategies for increasing employee retention
- What you can do to win the war for talent

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Employers are Paying Better & Providing Better Benefits, but Employees are Still Unsatisfied

The almost 5 percent increase in the item "I am paid fairly" coupled with another huge jump regarding benefits are a great indication of the work that employers have been doing over the past year. Employers are buckling down and incentivizing employees with better pay and perks than in years past. Despite the jump in "I am paid fairly," this item maintains its consistently low ranking, the second lowest favorability of the 30 items.

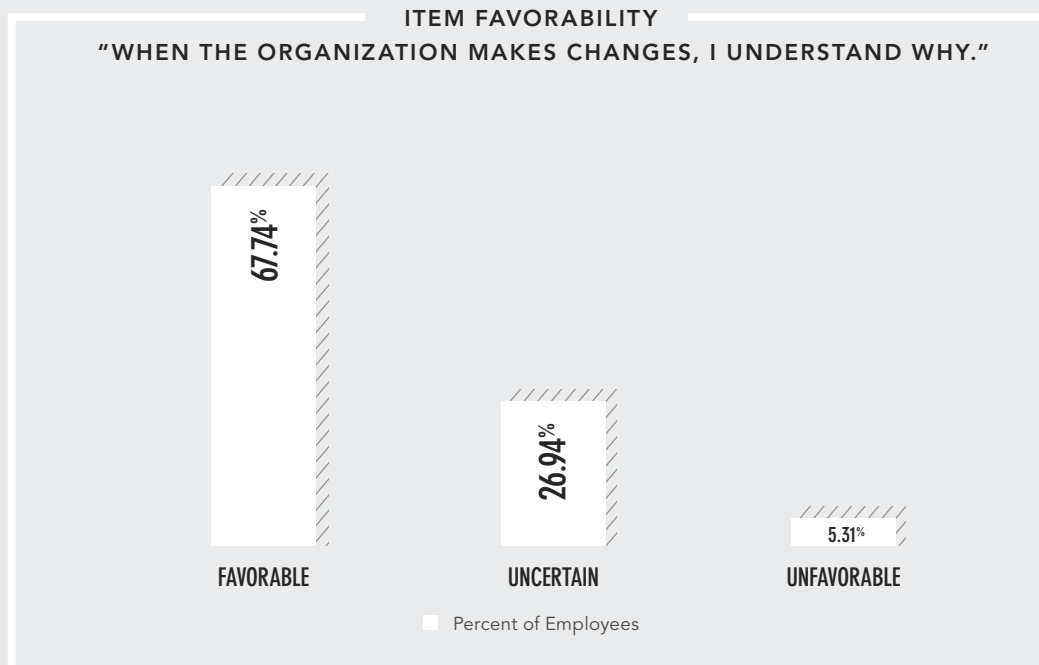


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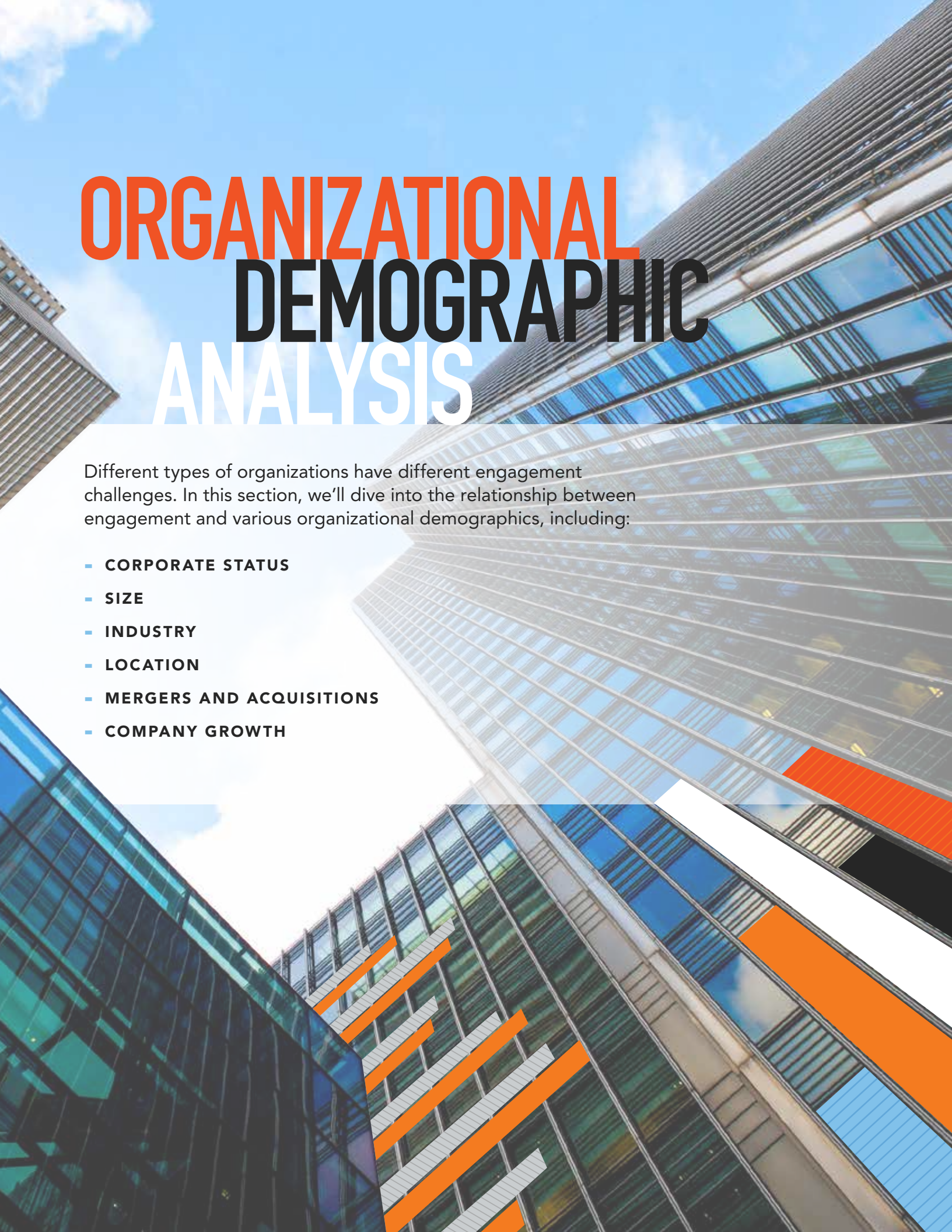
Employees Uncertain About Organizational Change, but Employers Still Have Time to Communicate

The item, “When the organization makes changes, I understand why,” was ranked last in favorability in 2016. However, the news isn’t all bad. This item also has a high uncertainty – the highest uncertainty of all items. This means that while employees don’t feel great about how change is communicated, employers still have a chance to change employee opinion. Employees who feel unfavorable toward an item are likely to remain feeling negatively; those who feel uncertain, though, have yet to decide how they feel. These uncertain employees are more open to being convinced either way.



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ORGANIZATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Different types of organizations have different engagement challenges. In this section, we'll dive into the relationship between engagement and various organizational demographics, including:

- **CORPORATE STATUS**
- **SIZE**
- **INDUSTRY**
- **LOCATION**
- **MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS**
- **COMPANY GROWTH**

Nonprofits: An Industry in Trouble

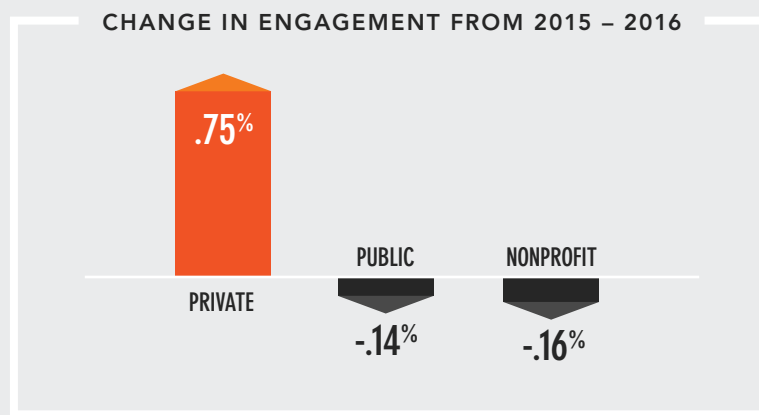


After an unprecedented 4.54 percent drop in engagement in 2015, the nonprofit sector has remained at a low level of engagement. Nonprofits have not been able to overcome their engagement barriers.

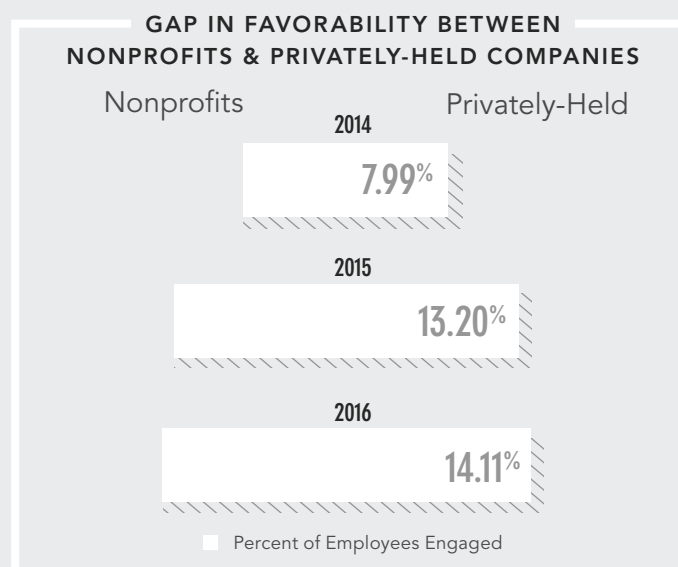
In fact, out of 30 items, nonprofits were outscored in every item except "I find my job interesting and challenging."

Gap Between Nonprofits and Private Companies Grows, but the Rate Slows

Previous years have shown that nonprofits have low engagement scores – especially when compared to privately-owned companies. In 2016, nonprofit employee engagement dropped by .16 percent, while employee engagement at private companies increased by almost 1 percent.



Analysis shows, however, that the engagement gap between nonprofits and privately-held companies is increasing. From 2014 to 2015, the gap in engagement between employees of nonprofits and privately-held companies increased by 5.27 percentage points. From 2015 to 2016, that gap had widened by only .91 percentage points.

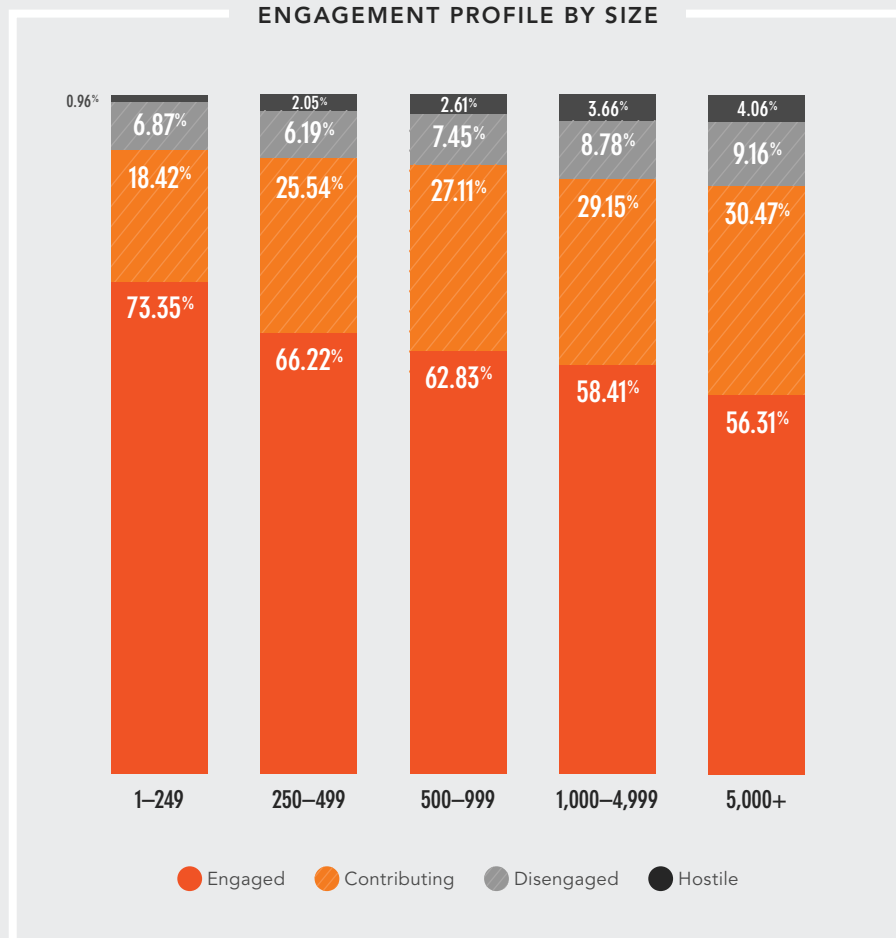


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SIZE

As Company Size Increases, Employee Engagement Decreases



↑ **LARGEST INCREASE IN ENGAGEMENT:**
1-249 employees, increase of 1.35%

↓ **LARGEST DECREASE IN ENGAGEMENT:**
1000-4999 employees, decrease of 1.62%

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INDUSTRY TRENDS

Logistics Jumps, Management Falls

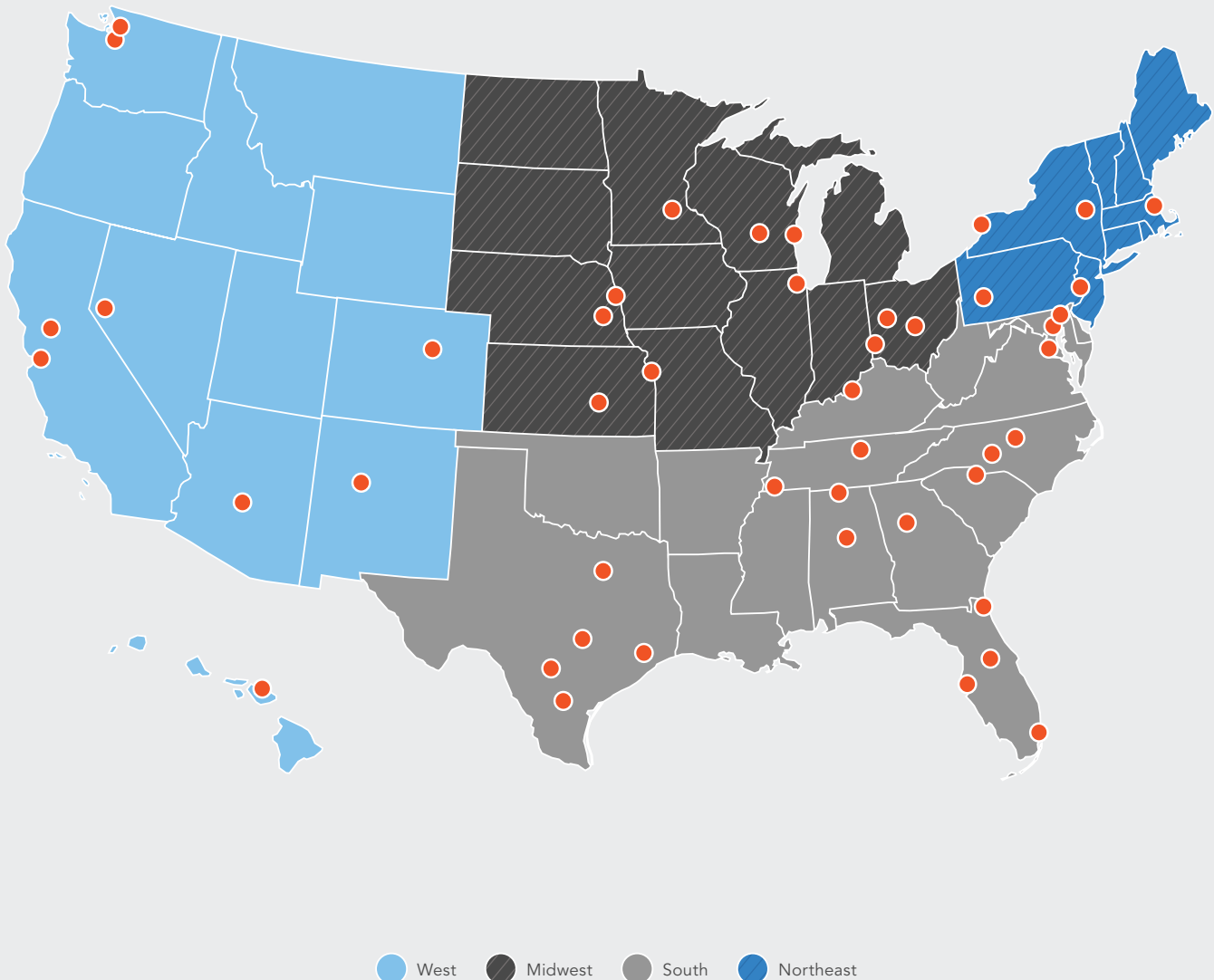
The chart below lists the 17 industries analyzed in rank order by engagement level. On the left, you'll see rank order and change in rank from 2015 to 2016. On the right, you'll see the percent of employees engaged in the industry and the change in engagement from 2015.

INDUSTRY TRENDS

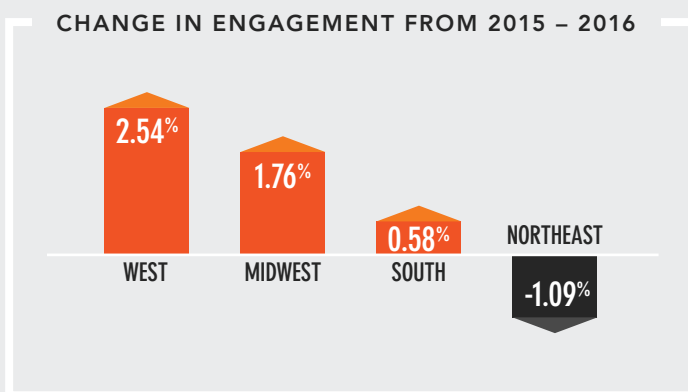
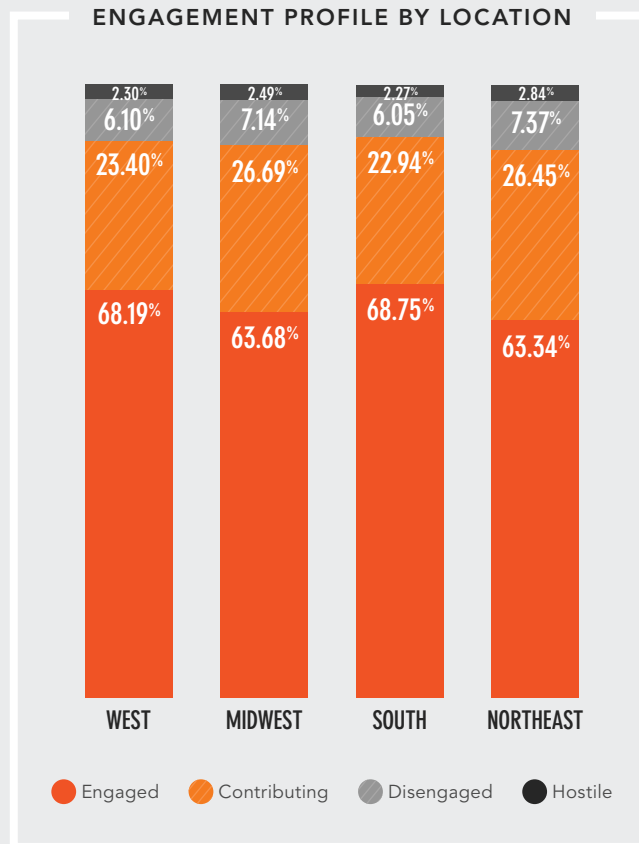
RANK	YOY CHANGE IN RANK	INDUSTRY	PERCENT ENGAGED	YOY CHANGE IN % ENGAGED
1	▲ +6	Logistics	76.82%	▼ -4.07%
2	▲ +1	Construction	72.69%	▼ -0.5%
3	▲ +2	Professional Services	72.24%	▲ +1.1%
4	▼ -2	Real Estate	71.99%	▼ -2.07%
5	▼ -1	Technology	71.65%	▲ +1.17%
6	■ No change	Accommodation & Food Services	68.31%	▼ -0.87%
7	▲ +1	Other Services	68.29%	▲ +1.47%
8	▼ -7	Management of Enterprises	65.91%	▼ -13.82%
9	■ No change	Retail	65.19%	▼ -1.15%
10	■ No change	Finance & Insurance	64.83%	▲ +0.46%
11	▲ +2	Education	60.13%	▼ -0.59%
12	▲ +2	Arts and Entertainment	60.05%	▲ +0.22%
13	▼ -2	Wholesale Trade	58.18%	▼ -3.05%
14	▼ -2	Manufacturing	57.90%	▼ -2.86%
15	▲ +2	Healthcare	56.92%	▲ +0.14%
16	▼ -1	Utilities	52.35%	▼ -6.82%
17	▼ -1	Government	51.11%	▼ -5.90%

Engagement Across the United States

The next sections will cover geographic trends, based off of the data collected from Best Places to Work contests. Forty-seven cities participated in a Best Places to Work program in 2016.



Northeast Declines in Employee Engagement, Falls to Least Engaged Among the Regions



The Northeast region was the only region to see a reduction in favorability in the following items:

- My job allows me to utilize my strengths.
- The senior leaders of this organization demonstrate integrity.
- I believe this organization will be successful in the future.



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Chicago is America's Most Engaged City

1	Chicago	77.27%
2	Austin	75.68%
3	Huntsville	74.59%
4	Miami-Dade	73.32%
5	Sacramento	73.21%
6	Atlanta	73.00%
7	Washington, D.C.	72.49%
8	Charlotte	71.71%
9	Nashville	71.30%
10	Denver	70.83%

RECENT MERGER

Employees Who Have Recently Experienced a Merger are Less Engaged

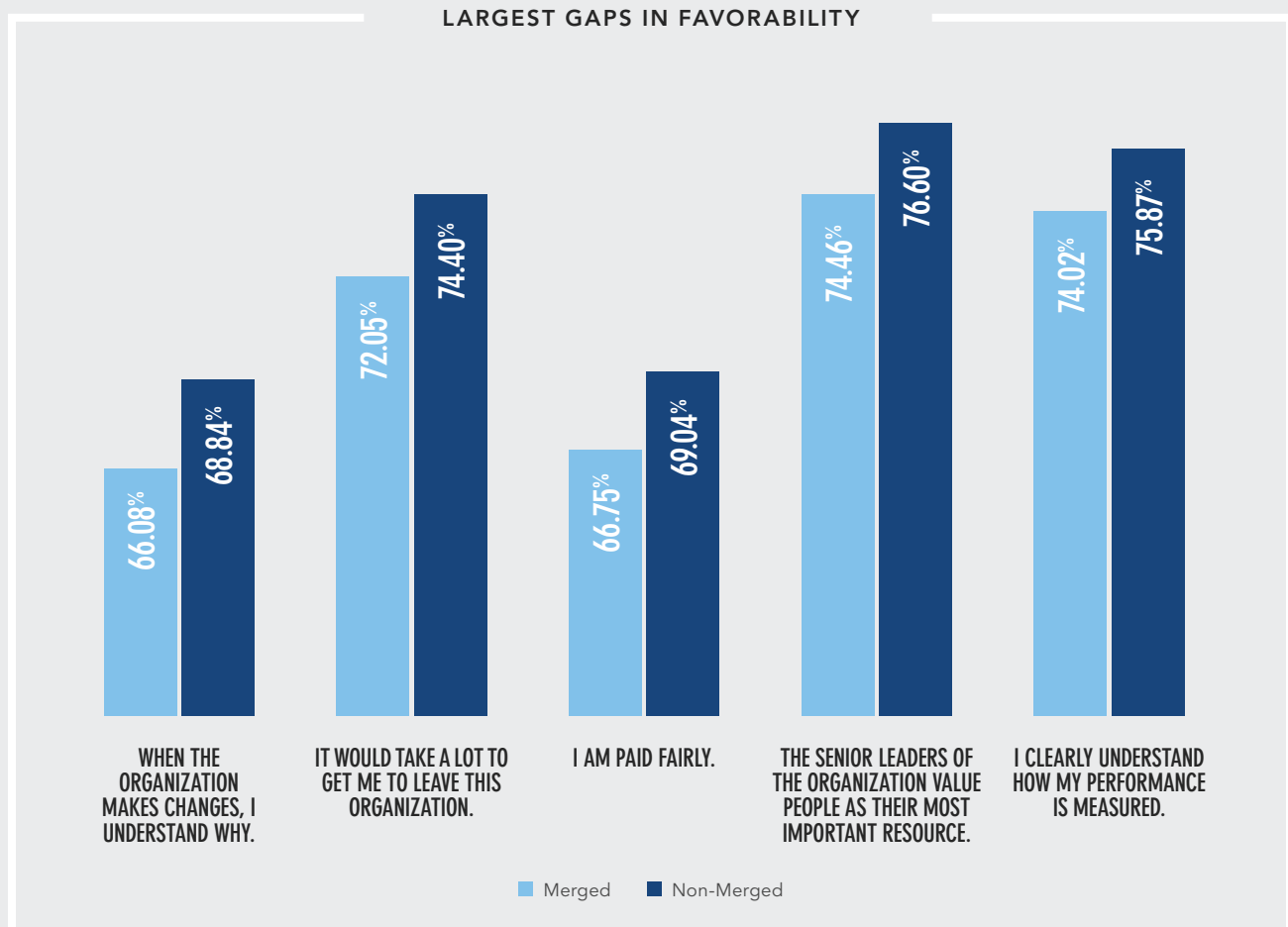


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Employees Who Have Recently Experienced a Merger Need Clarity and Communication

Items with the largest difference in favorability among merged and non-merged employees:



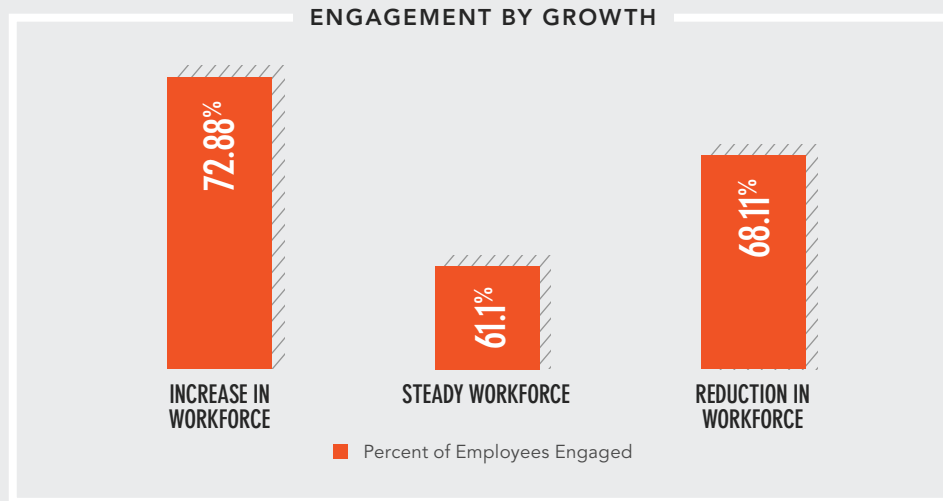
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COMPANY GROWTH

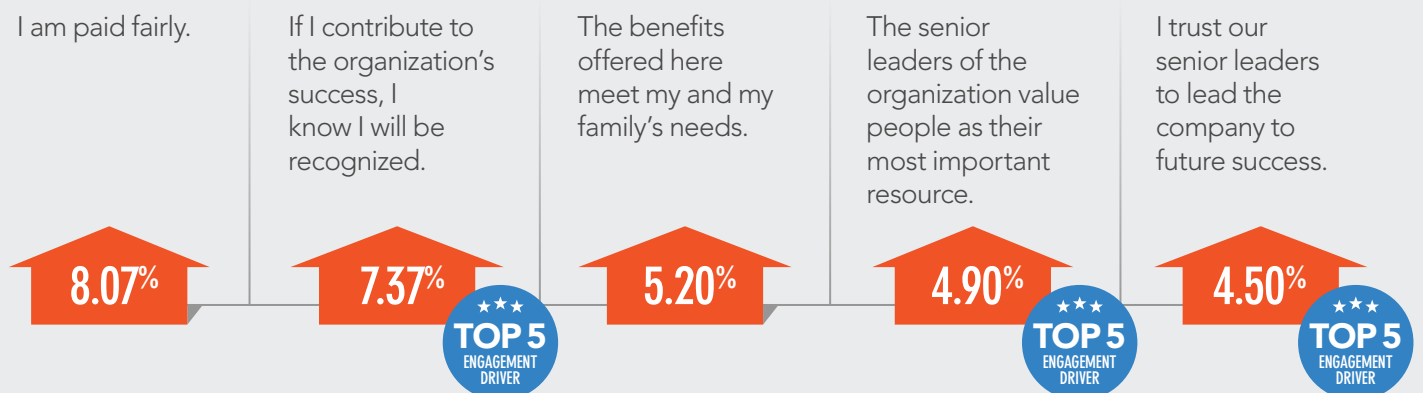
Companies that Have Hired Have More Engaged Employees

This a reflection of a known tendency: newer employees tend to have higher engagement.



Companies that Have Hired Made Huge Gains in Drivers

Most increased survey items among companies that have hired in the last 12 months:



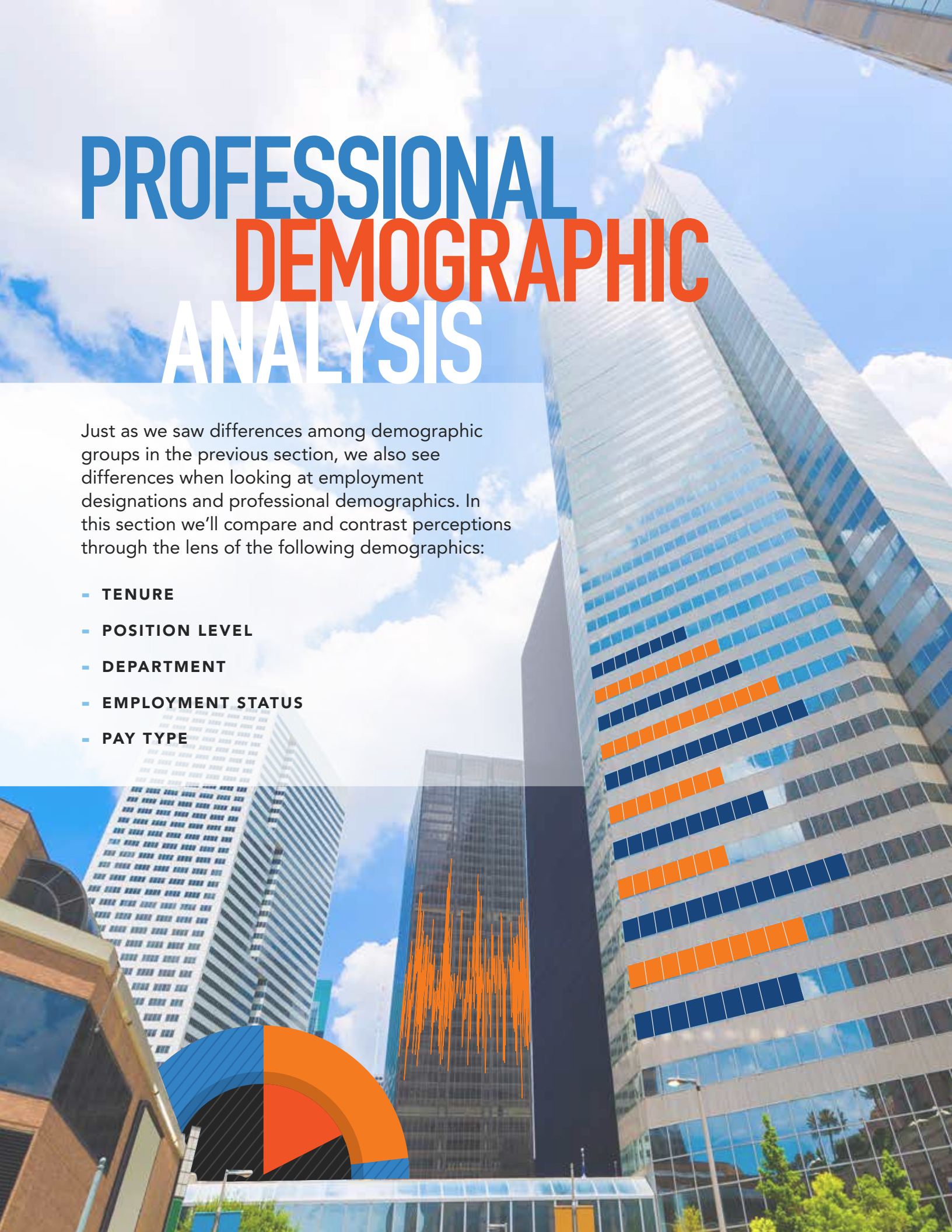
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PROFESSIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Just as we saw differences among demographic groups in the previous section, we also see differences when looking at employment designations and professional demographics. In this section we'll compare and contrast perceptions through the lens of the following demographics:

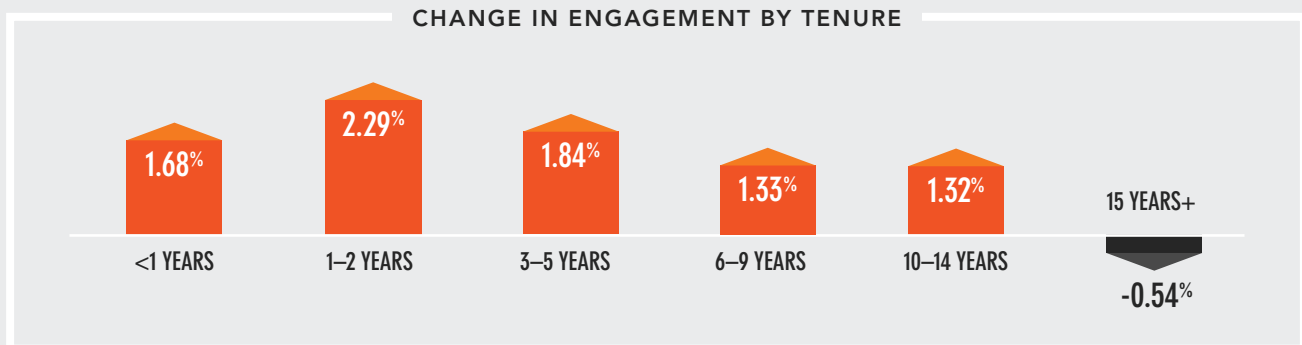
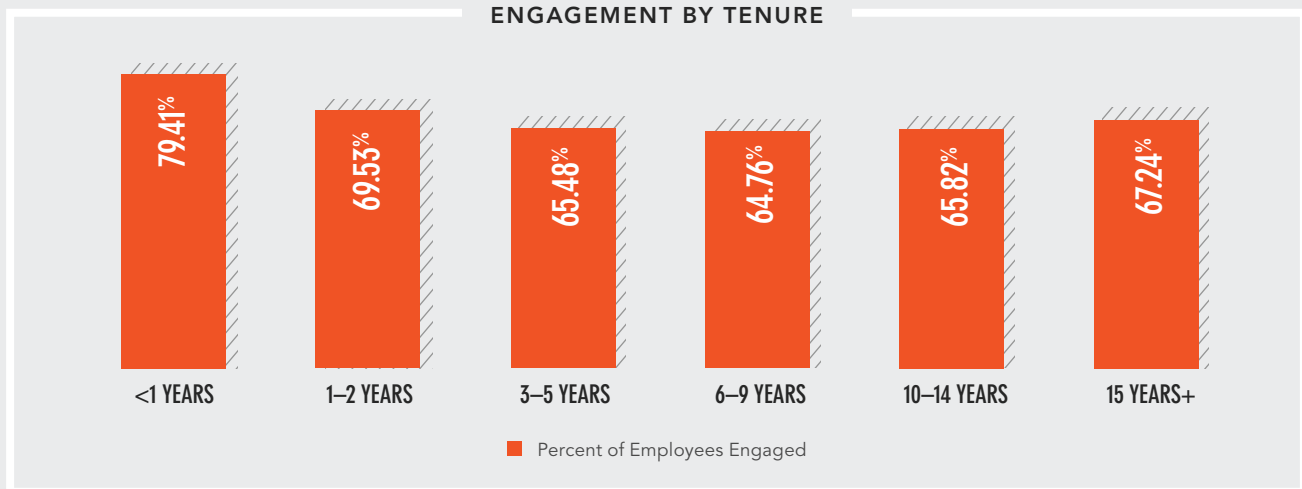
- **TENURE**
- **POSITION LEVEL**
- **DEPARTMENT**
- **EMPLOYMENT STATUS**
- **PAY TYPE**



TENURE

New Employees Remain Most Engaged

While employees who have been employed 1-2 years with an organization saw a substantial increase in engagement, those with a 15+ year tenure saw the only decline.

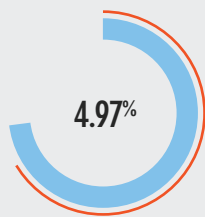


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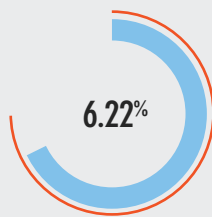
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Biggest Changes in Tenured Engagement Stem from Huge Differences in Item Favorability

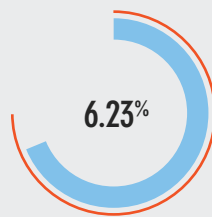
BIGGEST GAPS IN ITEM FAVORABILITY BETWEEN 1-2 YEARS & 15 YEAR TENURE



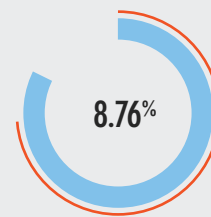
I am paid fairly.



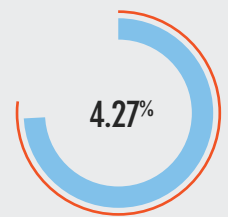
I see professional growth and career development opportunities for myself in this organization.



If I contribute to the organization's success, I know I will be recognized.



It would take a lot to get me to leave this organization.

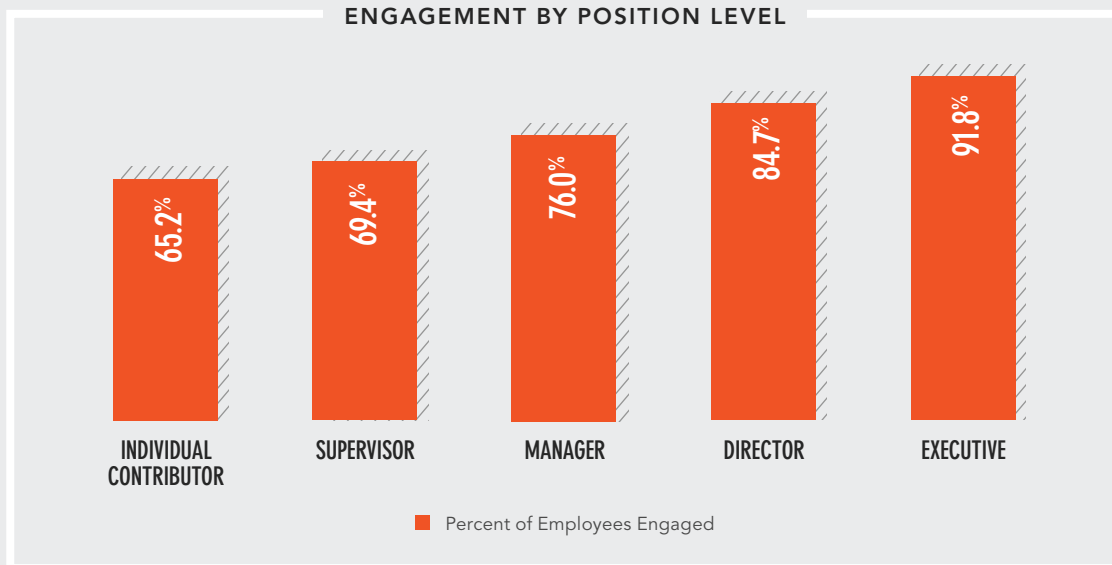


The senior leaders of the organization value people as their most important resource.

● 1-2 Years ● 15+ Years

POSITION LEVEL

Engagement Continues to Increase with Rank

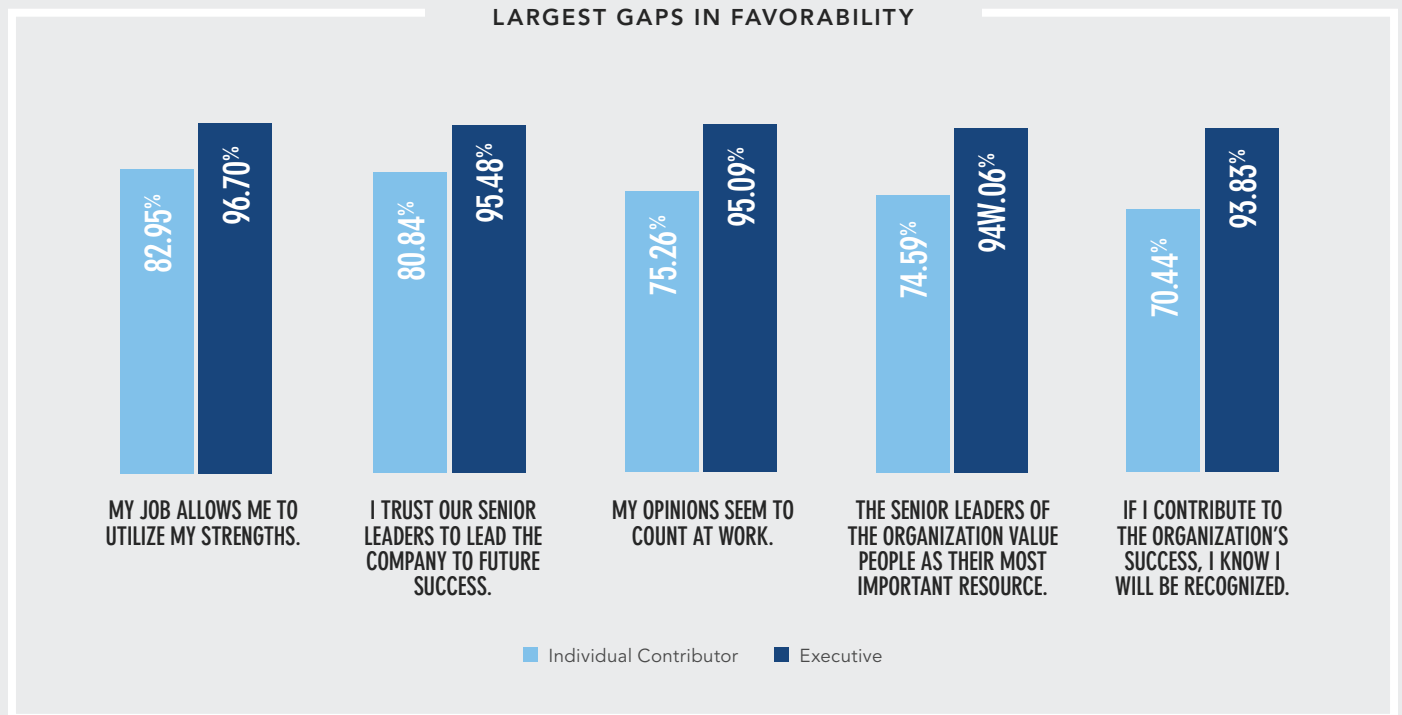


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Near Perfect Favorability in the C-Suite, Individual Contributors Lag Behind by as Much as 23%

Executives had greater favorability than individual contributors on every single item. Below are the biggest gaps between the two.

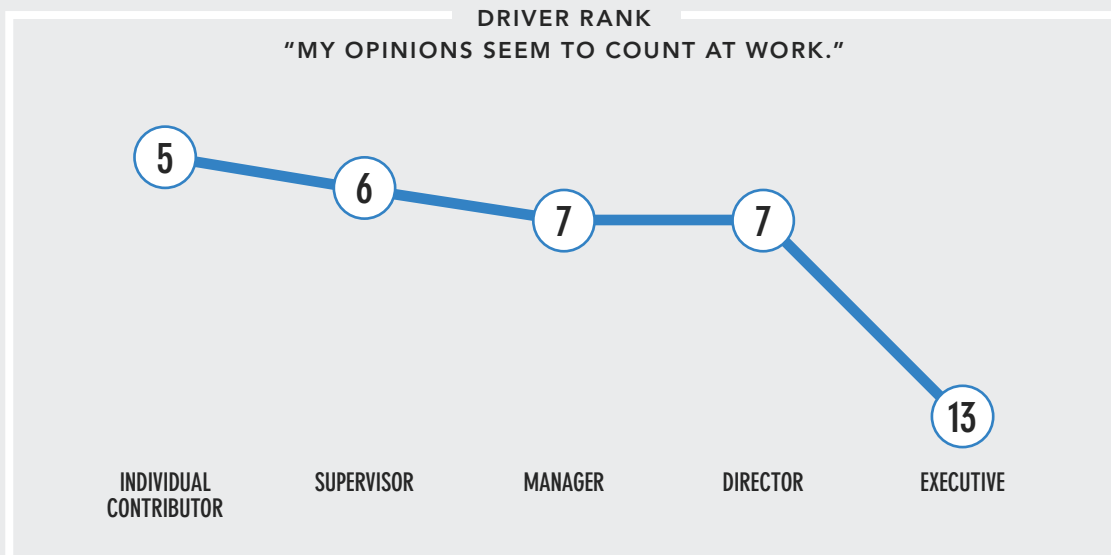
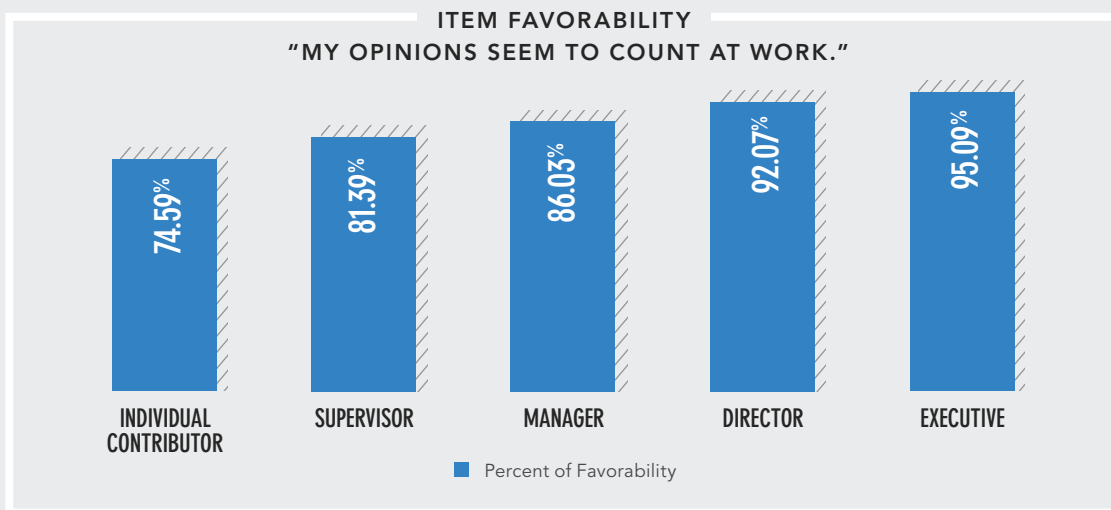


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Lower-Level Employees Need to Feel Heard

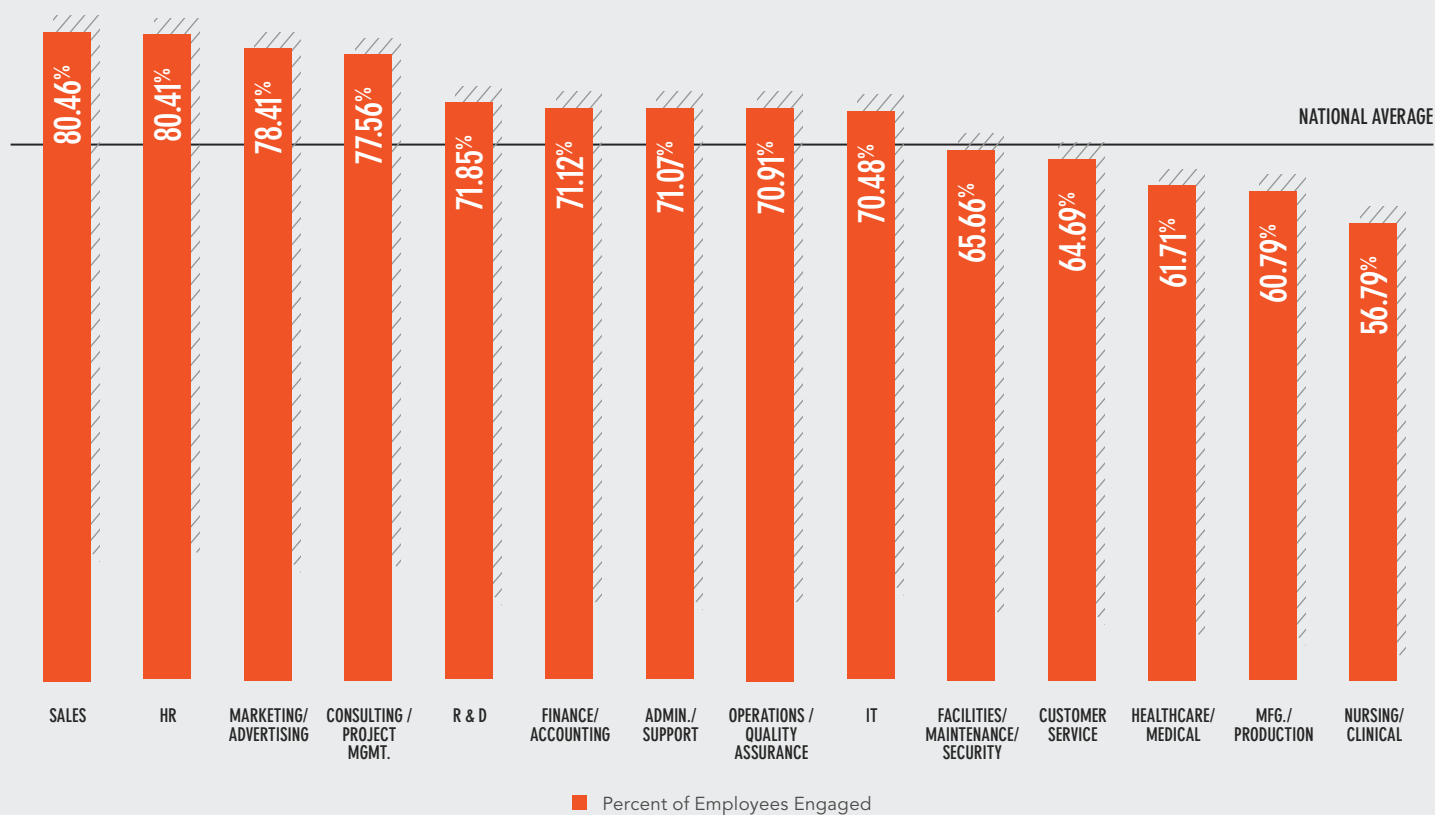
Individual contributors are the only group with the item, "My opinions seem to count at work," as a top five driver of engagement. However, we can also see that individual contributors have the lowest favorability toward that item.



DEPARTMENT/FUNCTION

Sales Department is Most Engaged for the Second Year in a Row

DEPARTMENT & ENGAGEMENT



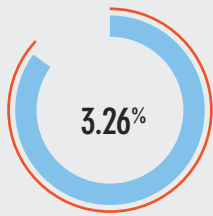
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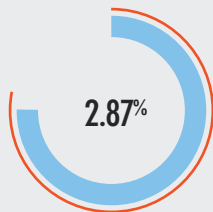
HR and Sales Neck-and-Neck, HR Can Still Catch Up

Though engagement in the human resources department grew almost 1 percent since 2015, there are still ways it lags behind sales. If they can master these items, HR might be the most engaged department in 2017.

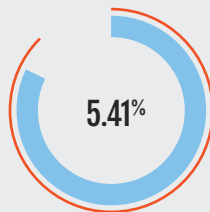
BIGGEST GAPS IN ITEM FAVORABILITY BETWEEN SALES & HUMAN RESOURCES



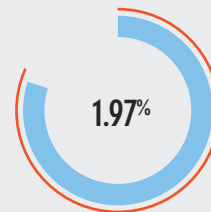
Goals and accountabilities are clear to everyone on my team.



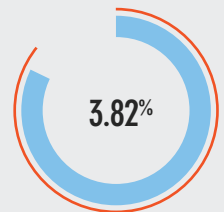
I am paid fairly.



I clearly understand how my performance is measured.



I see professional growth and career development opportunities for myself in this organization.

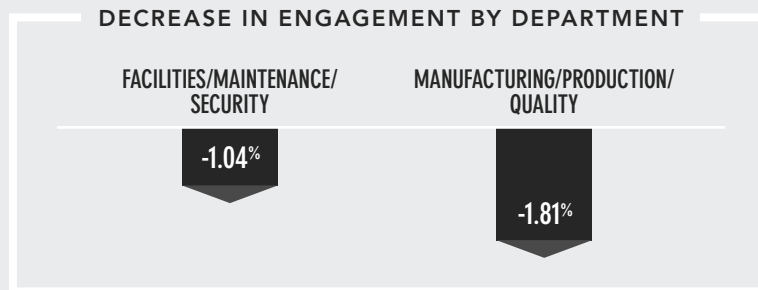


If I contribute to the organization's success, I know I will be recognized.

● Sales ● Human Resources

Manufacturing and Production See the Biggest Decline in Engagement

Only two departments saw decreases in employee engagement this year.



Team Dynamics Hurt Nurses' Engagement

For the second year in a row, the Nursing/Clinical department has the lowest levels of employee engagement – and the item favorability showed these big hits. Of the 30 items, nursing saw the biggest decreases in items relating to team dynamics.

TOP 5 ENGAGEMENT DRIVERS FOR NURSES

1. I believe this organization will be successful in the future.
2. My opinions seem to count at work.
3. I trust the senior leadership team to lead the company to future success.
4. My job allows me to utilize my strengths.
5. The people I work with most closely are committed to producing top quality work.

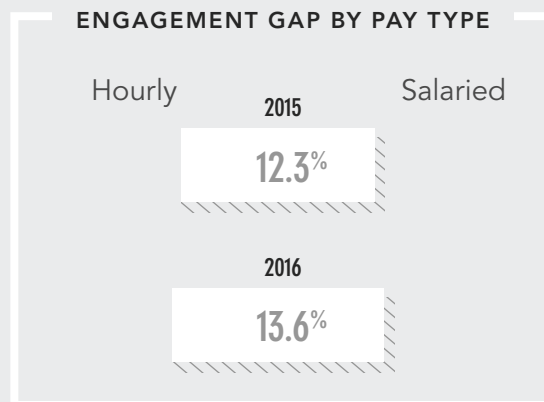
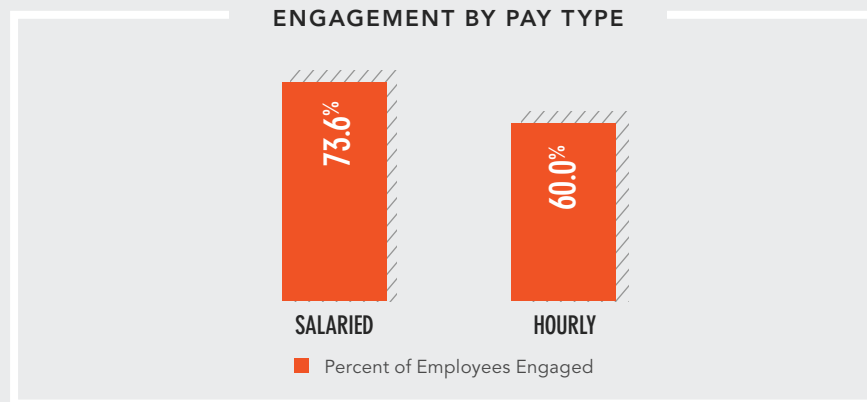


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Engagement Gap Grows Between Hourly and Salaried Employees

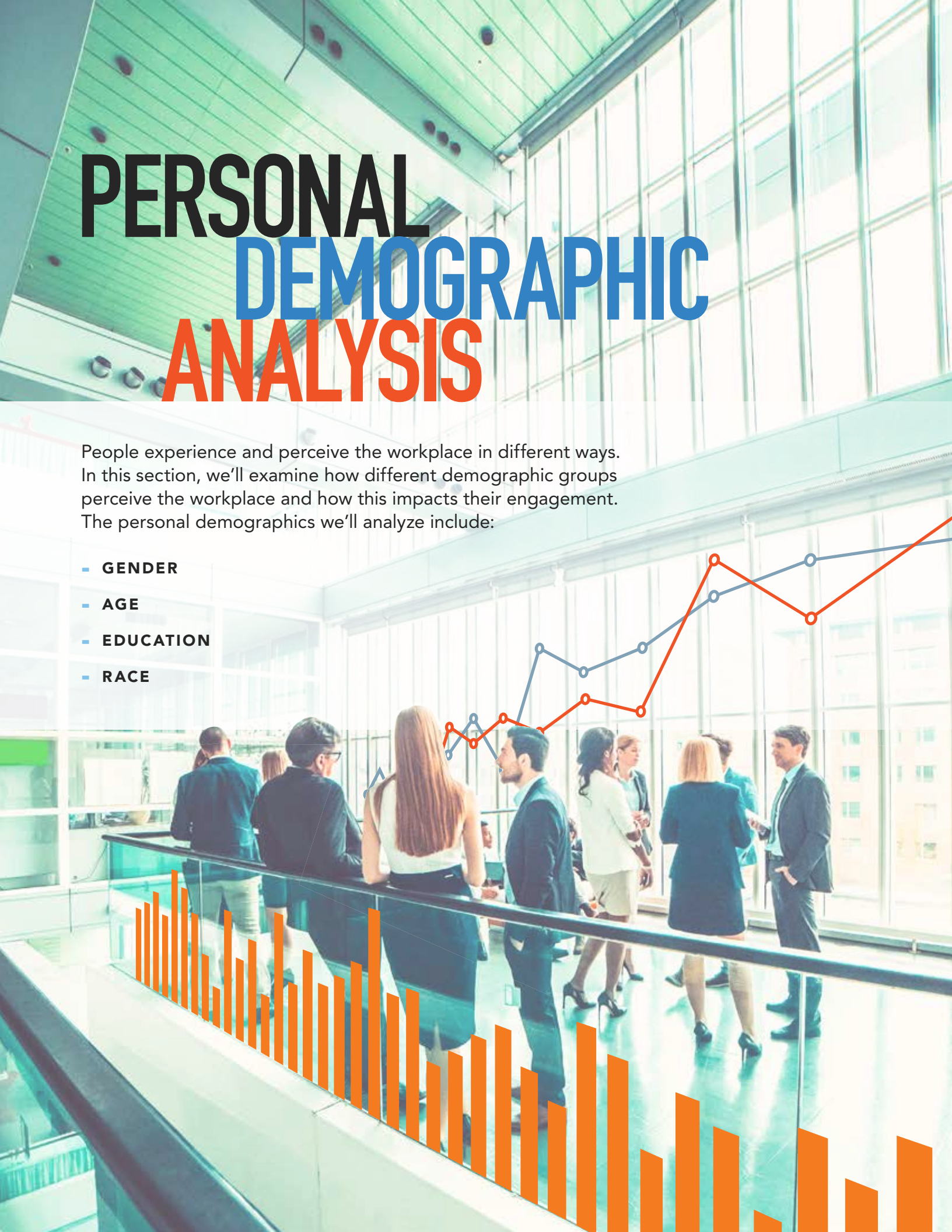
The gap between hourly and salaried employees has continued to grow. In 2016, hourly workers were 22.7% less engaged than salaried employees.



PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

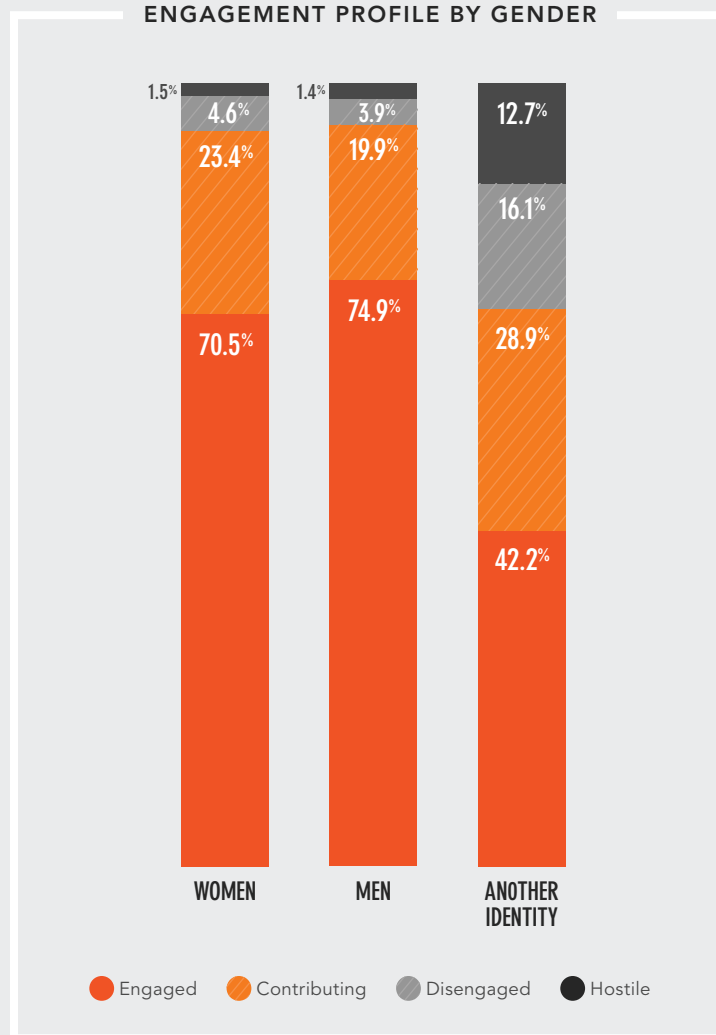
People experience and perceive the workplace in different ways. In this section, we'll examine how different demographic groups perceive the workplace and how this impacts their engagement. The personal demographics we'll analyze include:

- GENDER
- AGE
- EDUCATION
- RACE



GENDER

Engagement Increases among Genders, Women Increase Slightly Faster than Other Groups



↑ **MEN:**
increase 2.2%
from 2015

↑ **WOMEN:**
increase 2.6%
from 2015

↑ **ANOTHER IDENTITY:**
increase 1.2%
from 2015

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TOP 5 DRIVERS BY GENDER



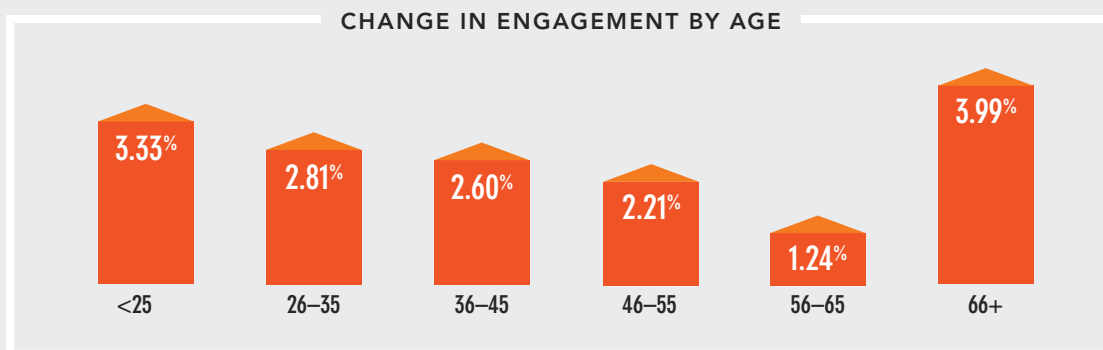
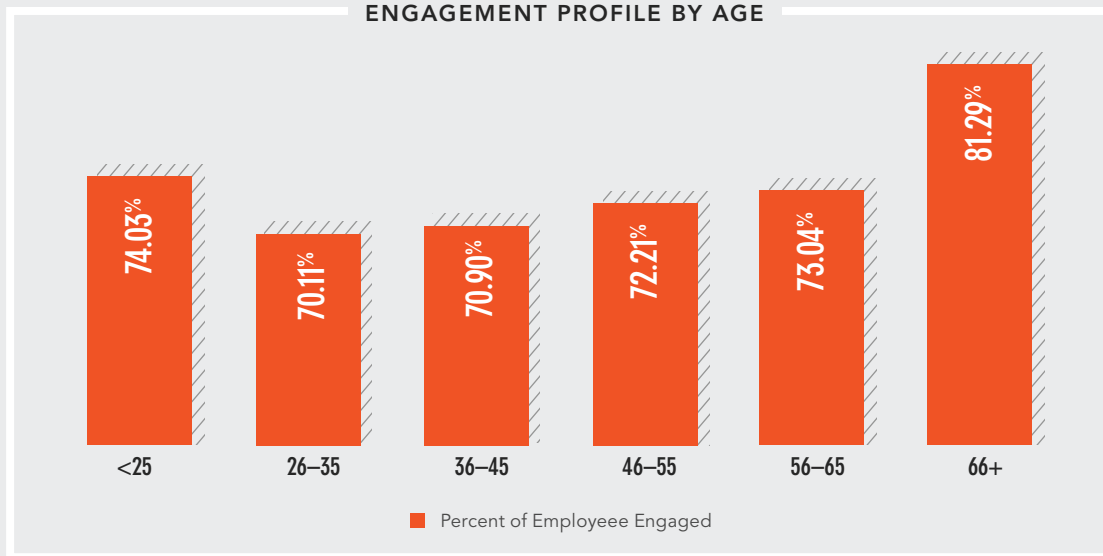
■ Consistent among Groups □ Inconsistent among Groups

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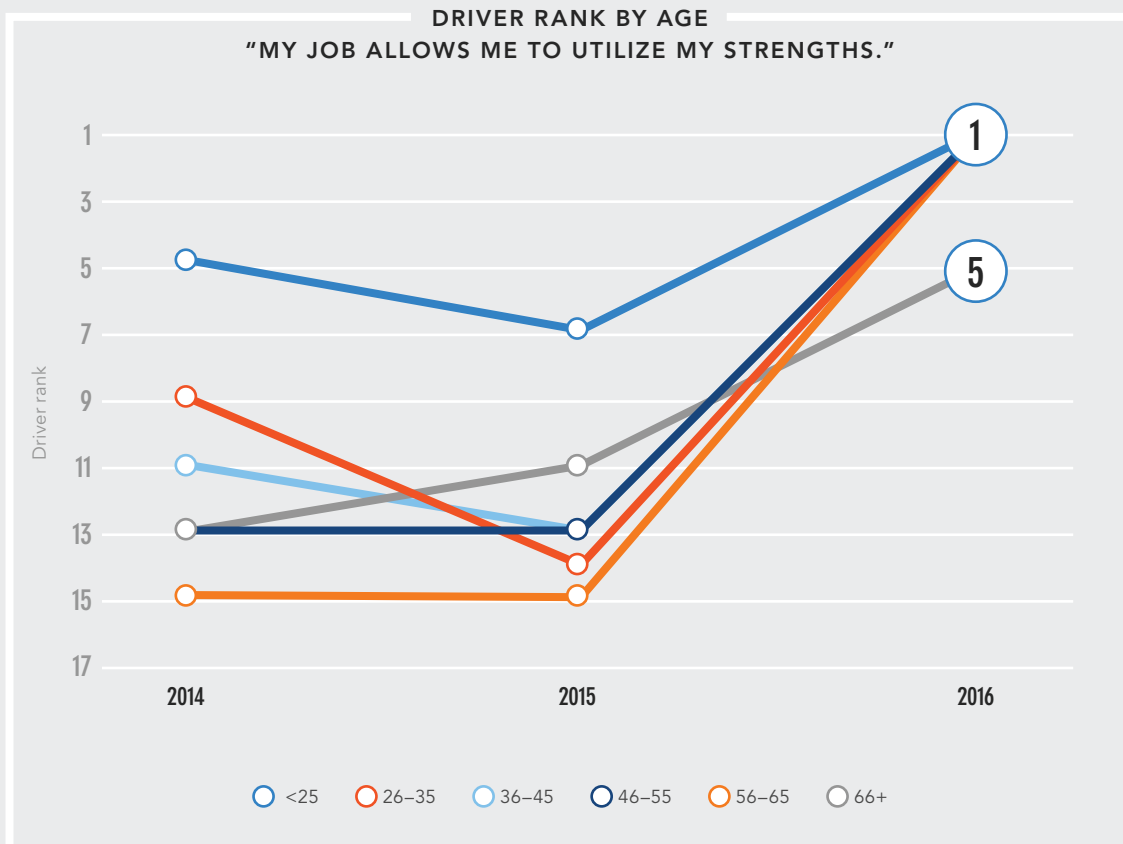
Baby Boomers: Still Most Engaged

Those aged 66+ outpaced all other age groups, with the biggest year-over-year growth in engagement.



Job Fit: Increasingly Important Across All Age Groups

The item, “My job allows me to utilize my strengths,” has become increasingly more important over the past two years, trending up to the number one driver for all but those employees 66+.

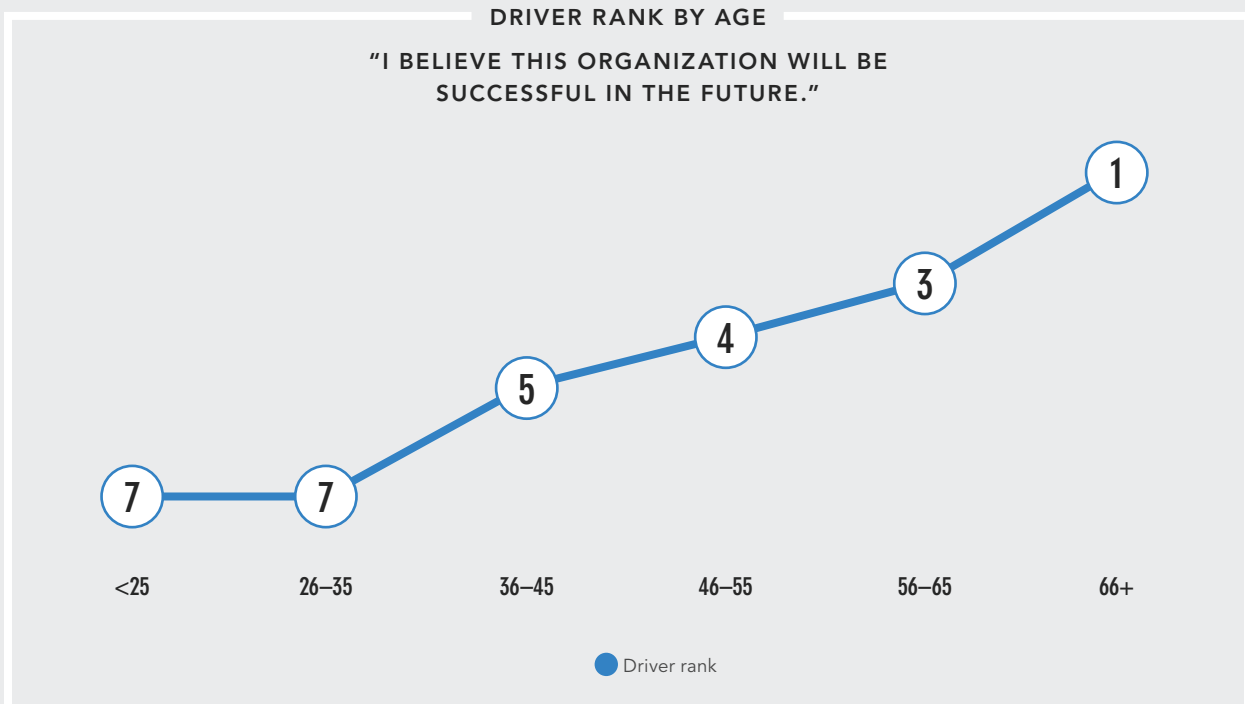


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Organization's Future Success is Important to Employees 66+

As employees get older, the item, "I believe this organization will be successful in the future," becomes more important to their engagement. And employers are making their baby boomers feel good about the direction the organization is headed. On this 2016 item, 94.3 percent of employees in the oldest age category answered favorably.

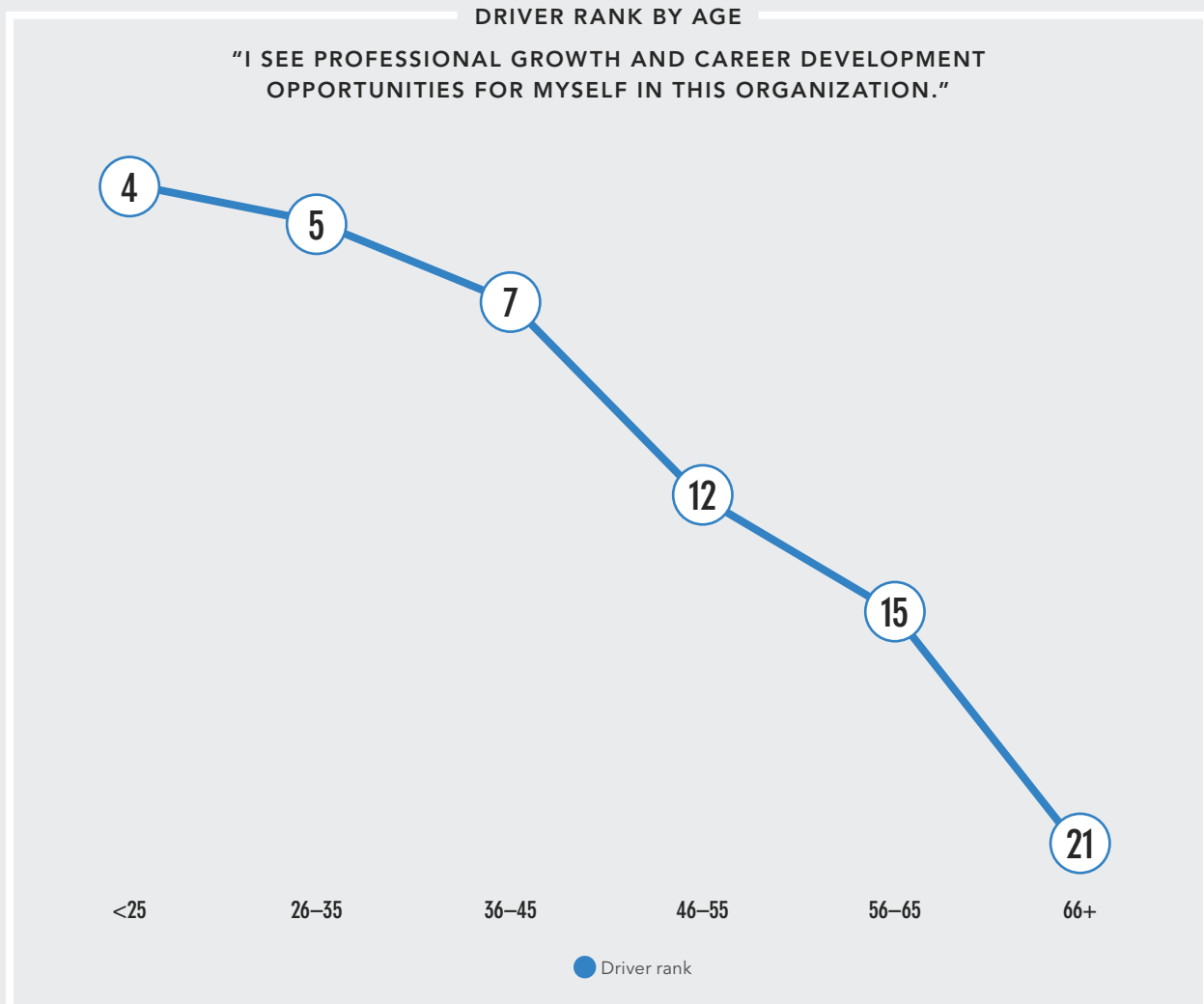


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Millennials Seek Growth and Development

Looking at the driver, "I see professional growth and career development opportunities for myself in this organization," shows that the item becomes less important across age. This may be caused by one of two things: Millennials may care more about growth and development than previous generations, or they may seek more of these opportunities just as any new-to-the-workforce demographic before them.



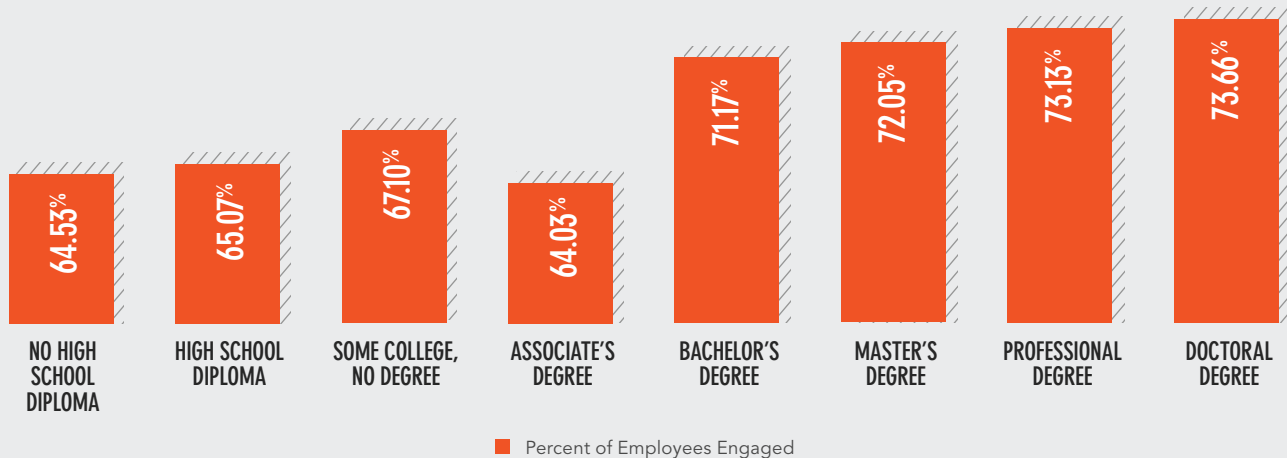
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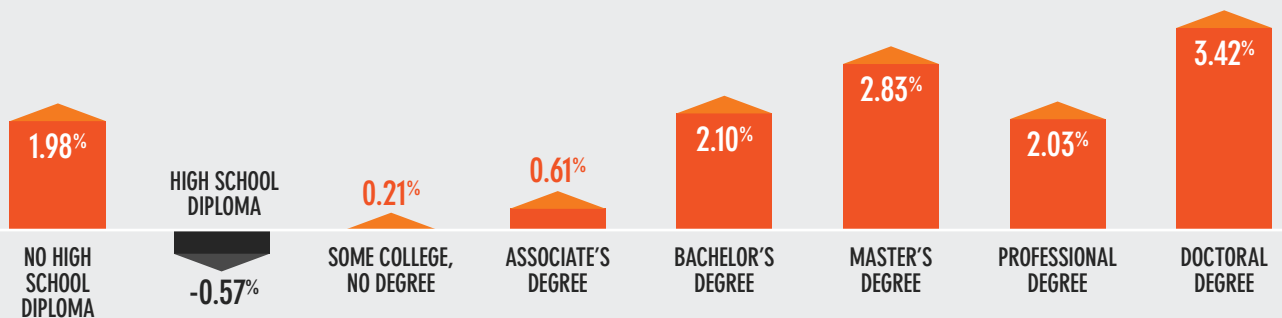
EDUCATION

Higher Education = Higher Engagement

ENGAGEMENT BY EDUCATION



CHANGE IN ENGAGEMENT BY EDUCATION LEVEL



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High School Graduates' Confidence in Future and Team Dynamics Take a Hit

Four items are responsible for the decline in engagement for those with a high school diploma.



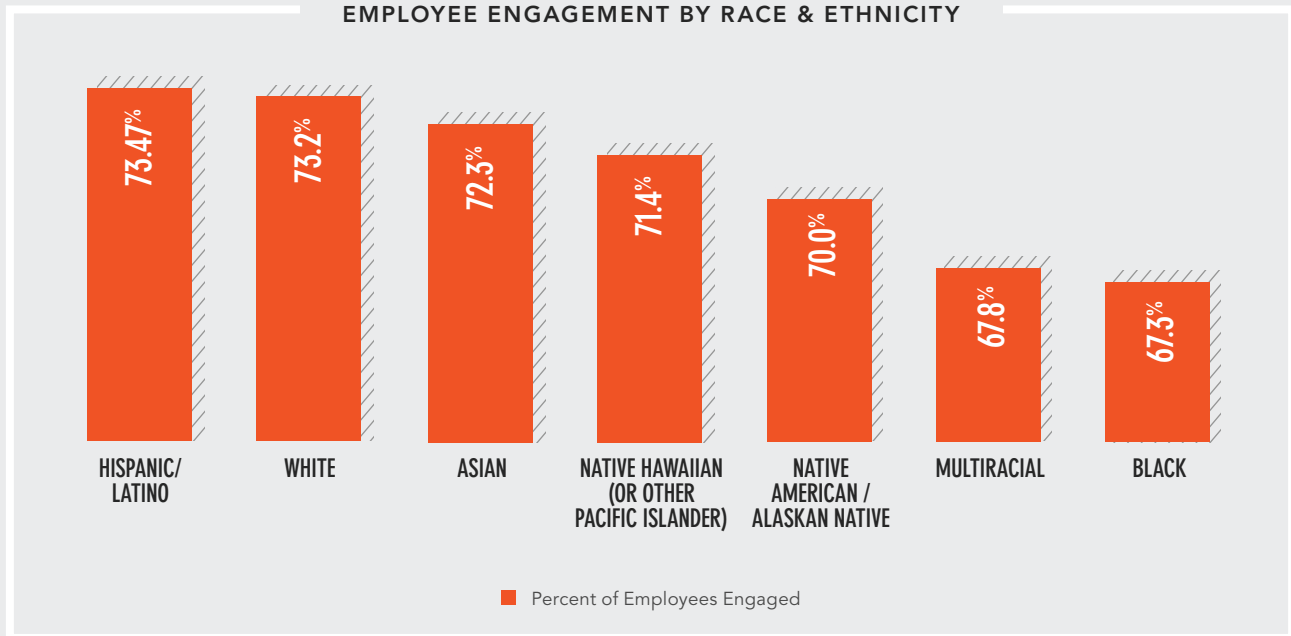
Ph.D. Engagement is Bumped by Attention to Drivers

Employees with doctorates saw the biggest engagement increase of any educational demographic in 2016, especially remarkable considering the same group had the biggest engagement decline in 2015. When diving further into the data, we see that top engagement drivers for this group increased in favorability.



RACE & ETHNICITY

Hispanic/Latino Employees Most Engaged, Black Employees Least Engaged



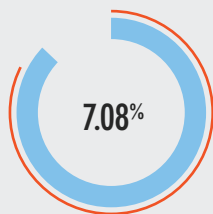
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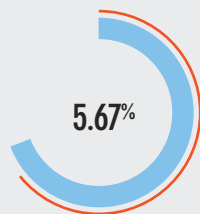
Black Employees Least Engaged at Overall and Item Level

Black employees had the lowest or next to lowest favorability on 18 of the 30 items. When comparing the most engaged group (Hispanic/Latino employees) to the least engaged (black employees), stark differences emerged.

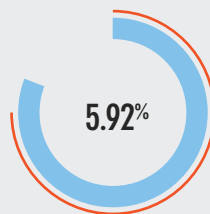
BIGGEST GAPS IN ITEM FAVORABILITY BETWEEN HISPANIC/LATINO & BLACK



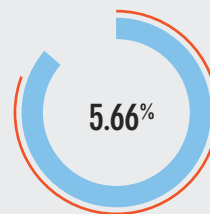
Everyone here is treated fairly regardless of race, gender, age, ethnic background, disability, sexual orientation, or other differences.



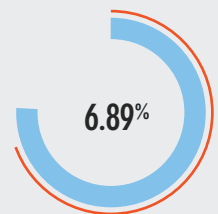
I am paid fairly.



It would take a lot to get me to leave this organization.



My job allows me to utilize my strengths.

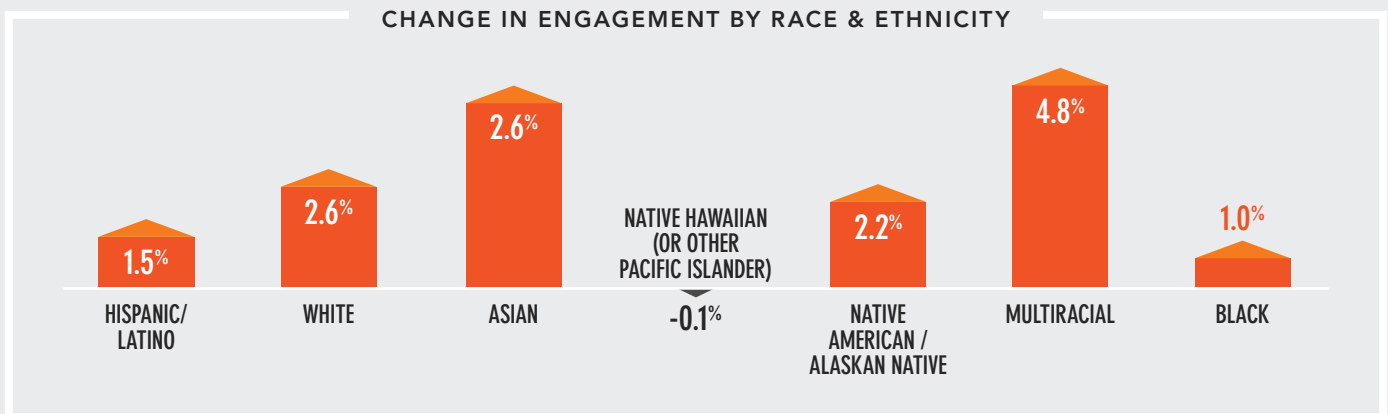


When the organization makes changes, I understand why.

● Black ● Hispanic/Latino

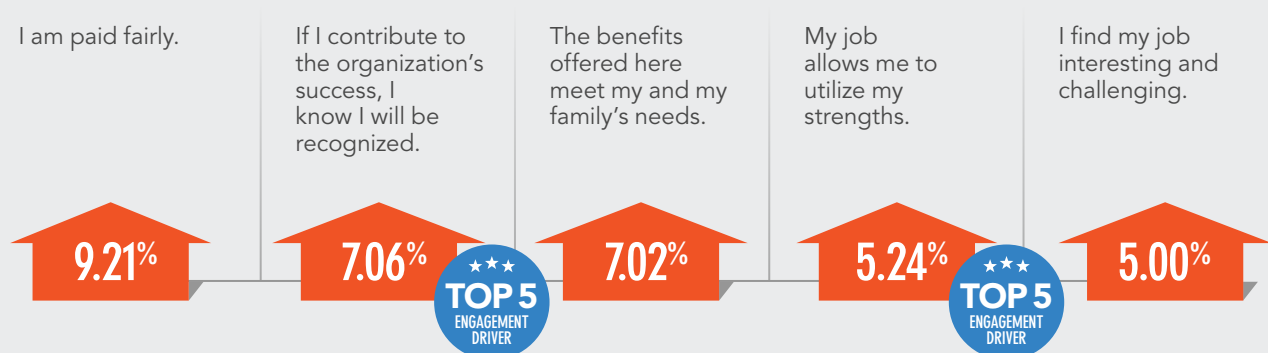
Jump in Asian and Multiracial Employee Engagement

Engagement increased across the races, with Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander seeing only a 0.1 percent decrease.



Critical Drivers Skyrocket for Multiracial Employees

2015 saw multiracial employees as the least engaged racial group. However, multiracial employees moved up in the rankings this year and also experienced the greatest increase in engagement.

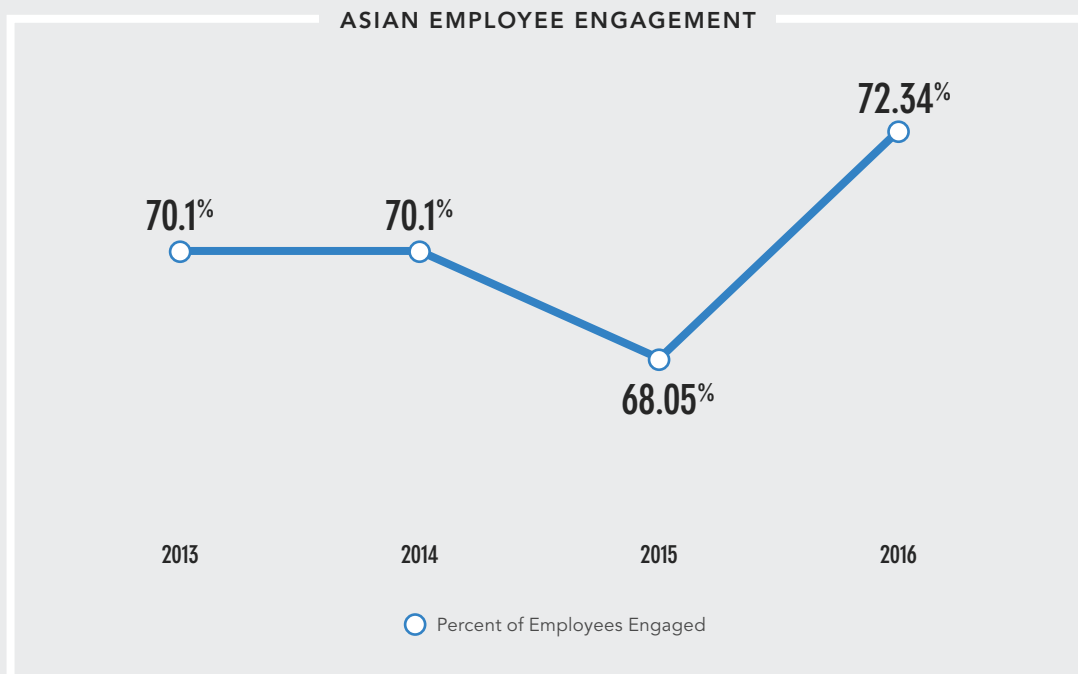


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Engagement of Asian Employees Recovers from 2015 Dip

After an almost 2 percent decrease in engagement in 2015, engagement of Asian employees rebounds, doubling the initial dip.



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What's Trending in Your Organization?

That's a wrap on this year's Employee Engagement Trends Report! Now that you've looked at engagement trends among America's Best Places to Work, it's time to get to work in your organization. Quantum Workplace can help:

- Empower employees and managers to impact engagement through customized reports and commitment planning
- Boost employee motivation and engagement with 24/7 peer-to-peer recognition
- Facilitate manager and employee one-on-one meetings to improve performance and communication
- Revitalize your performance management strategy with a four-part continuous feedback system
- Reduce turnover through exit surveys — gather and analyze exit and peer feedback and comments
- Conduct a linkage analysis between engagement and key business outcomes
- And more!

TALK TO ONE OF OUR EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK EXPERTS
TODAY TO RECEIVE A FREE CONSULTATION ON YOUR
EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE STRATEGY!

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Survey Instrument

Quantum Workplace developed the original Best Places to Work survey instrument in 2003, measuring employee engagement across 37 items using a six-point Likert scale. That instrument — the BPTW-37 — was used through 2015. A new set of 30 items — the BPTW-30 — was developed in 2015 and implemented in 2016.

The BPTW-30 model was developed by using a variety of distinct yet iterative processes. First, we interviewed a number of experts to gather input about topics of interest for an updated engagement survey; this feedback was used to shape new items and topics to explore. Second, literature reviews were conducted through business and HR resources that related to workplace trends and employee preferences. These reviews, coupled with insights gathered from the expert interviews, allowed us to develop a comprehensive model of the employee experience. Third, we distilled our employee experience model into core topics specifically related to outstanding workplaces, using those topics to identify strengths and opportunities in our previous BPTW item model.

After establishing a core set of topics, we generated dozens of items that reflected those topics, retained a number of items from the original BPTW-37, and collected dozens of client-generated items that have historically shown to perform strongly and generate meaningful insights. Upon further review and deliberation, we reduced the final set of candidate items to 80. Samples were then drawn from a nationally distributed panel of BPTW respondents to conduct more advanced statistical analyses.

After conducting those analyses, a final set of 30 items was created; 16 of those items were retained from the BPTW-37. These 16 items have been in use by the BPTW program for over a decade, with millions of employees having taken surveys comprised of these items. Additionally, most of the other 14 items were selected in part because of their usage frequency on surveys fielded by our clients, which indicates that those items are especially important to end-users.

Analysis Methods

DRIVERS ANALYSIS

One key analysis in this report is the drivers analysis. Quantum Workplace evaluated the relationship between the driver survey items and the diagnostic survey items to reveal which factors have the greatest correlation and effect on employee engagement.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PROFILES

Another analysis used in this report is employee engagement profiles. Employees were classified into four groups based on the average of their answers, without factoring in skipped questions. The four groups were engaged, contributing, disengaged, and hostile. Employees in the engaged group had an average score between 5.0-6.0 on a Likert-type rating scale. Contributing employees had an average score between 4.0-4.9. Disengaged employees had an average score between 3.0-3.9, and hostile employees had an average score between 1.0-2.9.

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

This analysis examines data collected through Best Places to Work over the course of the past 10 years. The 2016 data were collected from more than half a million employees from over 8,700 organizations that took the survey between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016.

ABOUT BEST PLACES TO WORK

Founded in 2004, Best Places to Work is the original contest created to honor companies where talent is valued and engaged. The contest is held annually in nearly 50 markets and garners participation from more than 8,700 organizations. Quantum Workplace partners with various local publications, professional organizations, and other sponsors to conduct the survey and recognize America's Best Places to Work.