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The time for the quantified organization is now

Both workers and leaders see the potential

February 2024

Introduction

In recent years, organizations have been adopting a wide variety of tools to collect work and workforce data from sources ranging from email and calendars to biometrics and wearables.[1]

One estimate suggested that between the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and late 2022, the adoption of these tools among medium and large companies outpaced the steepest part of the adoption curve of smartphones in the U.S.[2] The predominant narrative often portrays the adoption of these tools as an adversarial battle between employers getting swept up by "productivity paranoia"[3] (an obsession with whether or not remote workers are being productive) and workers engaging in "productivity theatre"[4] (activities that give the appearance of being productive).

But our research suggests these data collection efforts, if done right, may be less contentious than headlines suggest and may provide significant value for both workers and organizations.

When we conducted a global survey[5] of 1,000 executives and 1,000 workers to explore their sentiments around the use of newly available work data collection technologies, we anticipated a wider gap than we found between executives and workers. The two groups had surprisingly similar views about how work data can improve business outcomes in ways that benefit the organization as well as the workforce.

Similarly, workers and executives had analogous perspectives about which types of data should be collected to inform strategy and decision-making while maintaining worker privacy. This broad agreement is creating a window of opportunity for organizations to use these new sources of data and analytics to create value for workers and the organization.

Over the last year, we've been examining how organizations can use these new tools and sources of work data to create shared value for workers, teams, organizations, and society. We refer to this new model as **the quantified organization**. A quantified organization takes a strategic approach to data collection—measuring what it should, not just what it can. It takes a responsible approach to using new sources of data and artificial intelligence to create value for stakeholders across the organization, improving workforce trust and driving the organization forward to new levels of financial, reputational, and operational performance.

In our study, we found that both executives and workers are ready to participate in this emerging way of working. For instance, nearly 70% of executives in our study agree that traditional methods of data collection and monitoring are no longer sufficient to understand and optimize the workforce and organization. In addition, 67% of workers report being open to their organization monitoring and collecting work and workforce data about them and their work, and a similar percentage agree that the use of work and workforce data will have a positive impact on employees, teams, the organization, and society. This may indicate that organizations are already investing in new technologies for data collection and that both workers and leaders are ready to embrace the potential of the quantified organization. Yet for such efforts to be successful, the data must be used responsibly and strategically, while maintaining worker autonomy as well as personal boundaries.

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A window of opportunity

Several factors suggest that this is a critical time to act to take advantage of the opportunities of the quantified organization.

These factors include shared perspectives between workers and leaders about the benefits of using new sources of work data, as well as similar understandings of which data sources can be used responsibly to inform strategy.

And while workers currently have high levels of trust in their organizations' data collection efforts, leaders tend to overestimate this trust, suggesting that these shared perspectives around data collection should not be taken for granted. In other words, the current window of opportunity may close unless organizations focus on building trust and shared value creation as part of larger data collection efforts.

Indeed, a predictive outcomes analysis of our survey data suggests that trust in the organization's approach to the management of worker data raises the probability of business growth by roughly **50 percentage points.**[6]

There are also potential opportunities to use emerging work and workforce data to improve activities such as worker experience, teaming, collaboration, process design and organizational strategy.[7]

In using these new sources of data about work and the workforce to inform higher-level strategic goals, organizations can move beyond a narrow lens of productivity tracking to create value for workers, teams, the organization, and society while strengthening trust along the way. **A successful quantified organization uses work data to unlock this cycle of shared value creation and trust-building.**

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Leaders and workers see results —and untapped potential

As work becomes increasingly digital, new sources of work and workforce data can be used to inform decision-making.

These include traditional tools such as worker surveys that workers actively contribute to as well as emerging sources of passively generated data, such as workplace communications tools or augmented reality headsets that generate data as a worker goes about their work.
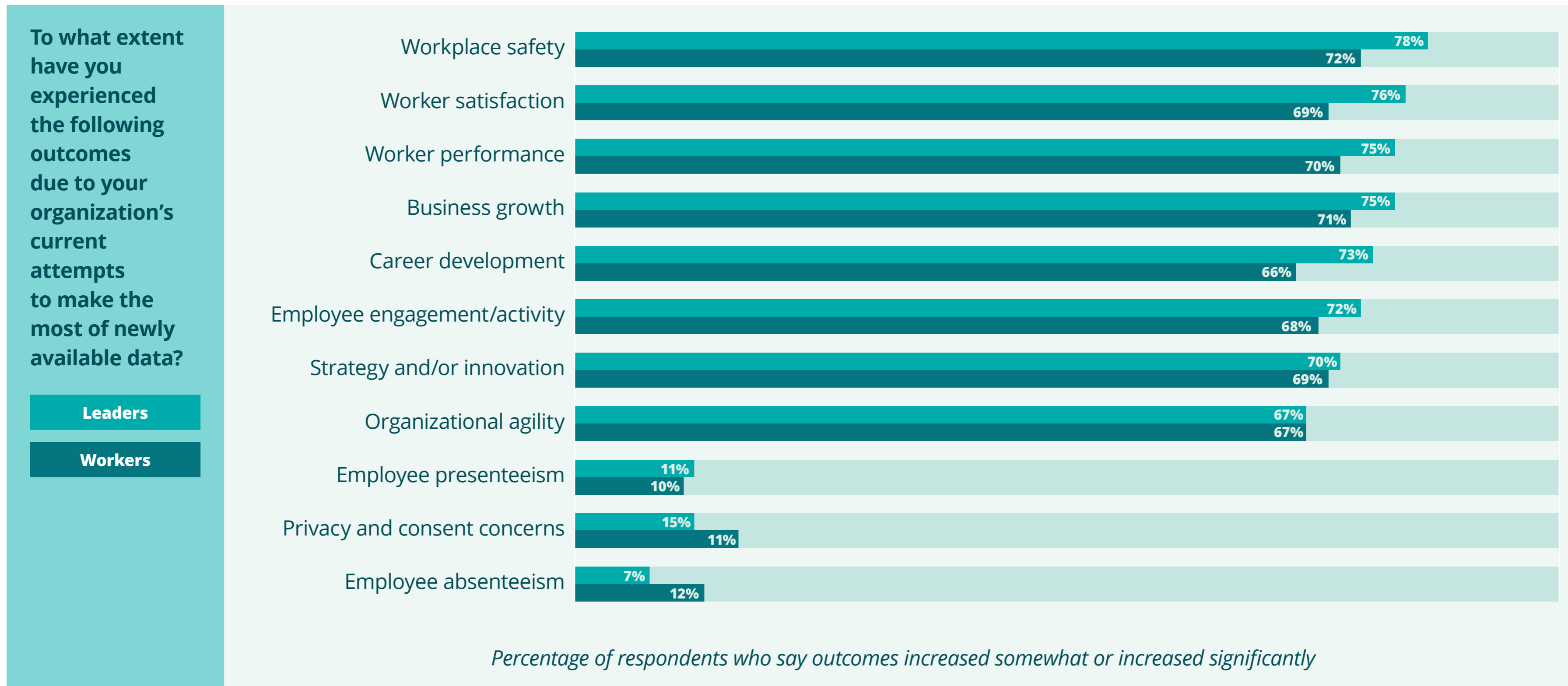
Both leaders and workers agree that new sources of work data have positively impacted a range of business and worker outcomes, from worker performance and job satisfaction to improved innovation and organizational agility (figure 1). Furthermore, over 70% of respondents agree that these benefits will continue to accumulate in the next three years, suggesting that these efforts are seen as contributing to future growth rather than being viewed as only contributing to short-term improvements.

While previous studies have indicated that data collection can result in presenteeism[8] (in response to pressures to be constantly available), absenteeism[9] (to protest close monitoring) or privacy concerns (due to irresponsible data collection and use), our results show that neither workers nor leaders saw data collection as contributing significantly to absenteeism, presenteeism or other negative work outcomes. In other words, workers and leaders may see substantial benefits and few downsides to potentially using new sources of data—if data is used to benefit both the workforce and the organization.

Figure 1: Workers and leaders see benefits to data collection

To what extent have you experienced the following outcomes due to your organization's current attempts to make the most of newly available data?

Leaders

Workers

Outcome	Leaders	Workers
Workplace safety	78%	72%
Worker satisfaction	76%	69%
Worker performance	75%	70%
Business growth	75%	71%
Career development	73%	66%
Employee engagement/activity	72%	68%
Strategy and/or innovation	70%	69%
Organizational agility	67%	67%
Employee presenteeism	11%	10%
Privacy and consent concerns	15%	11%
Employee absenteeism	7%	12%

Percentage of respondents who say outcomes increased somewhat or increased significantly

Shared understandings of collecting the right data via the right tools

Not only do workers and leaders have similar perspectives about potential improvements related to the quantified organization, but our survey suggests they share similar beliefs about which data sources an organization should use, and which they should avoid (figure 2).

The workers we surveyed seem to be comfortable with data collection from emails, calendars, and satisfaction surveys, yet this comfort decreases for sources such as mouse tracking, internal social collaboration sites, wearables, and location-tracking technologies. Leader estimates of these comfort levels are not far off. To be sure, the top five tools, apart from biometrics, are well known, and given their extensive use in most organizations, workers' comfort with these technologies may be expected to be relatively high.
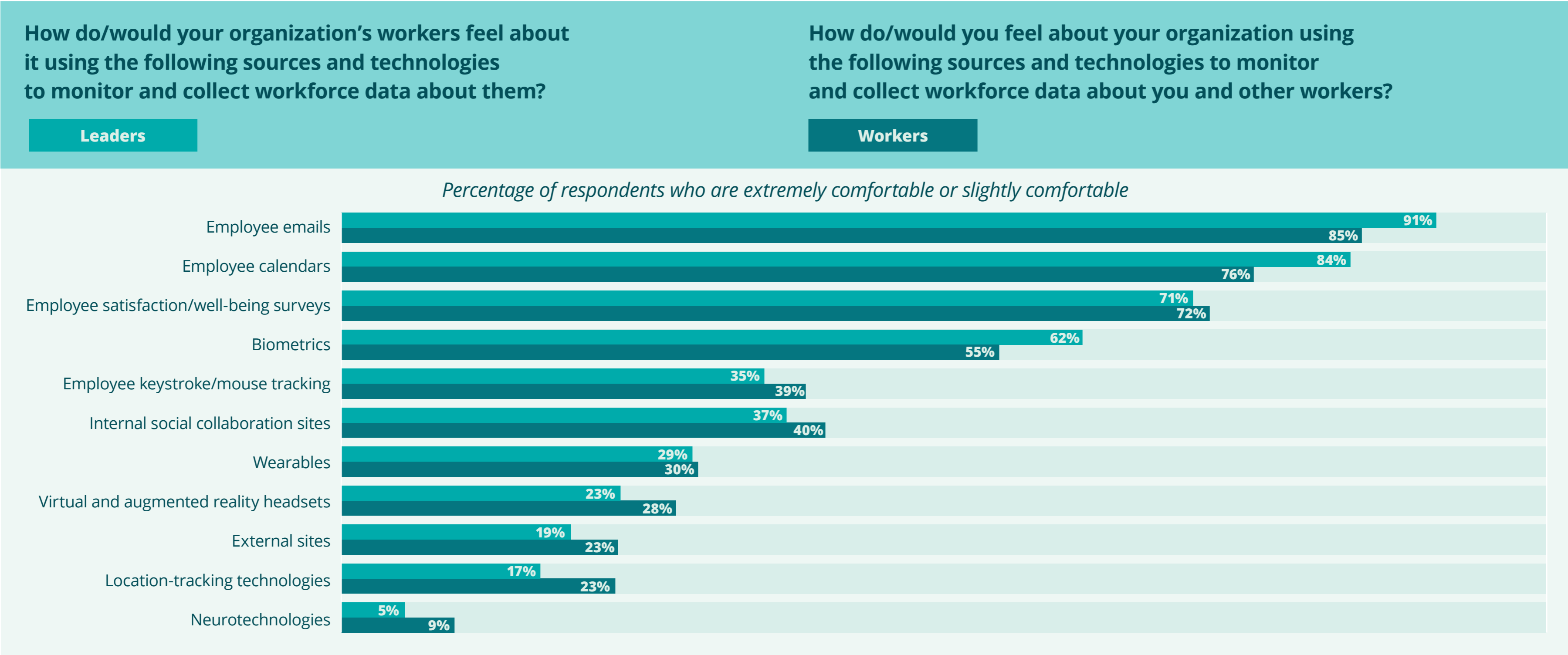
On the other hand, newer tools such as neurotechnologies—which use brain-computer interfaces to help understand the brain's processes—are not only less familiar but could trigger privacy and other concerns. More mature technologies that are not commonly used as part of work data sets such as monitoring information from external sites may also raise similar privacy concerns, as just 23% of workers are comfortable with the use of this data.

Likewise, efforts to track data through biometrics and location may undermine a worker's sense of autonomy in how they work, an important factor in maintaining motivation, well-being, and satisfaction with the work itself.[10]

Our survey also suggests that organizations should be mindful of a potential link between data collection and employee turnover. About 60% of workers agree that employee turnover has increased as a result of their organization's attempts to collect and use work data, which may indicate that some workers may oppose these practices to the point of choosing a different employer.

Figure 2:
Workers are comfortable with data collection from established technologies

How do/would your organization's workers feel about
it using the following sources and technologies
to monitor and collect workforce data about them?

Leaders

How do/would you feel about your organization using
the following sources and technologies to monitor
and collect workforce data about you and other workers?

Workers

Percentage of respondents who are extremely comfortable or slightly comfortable

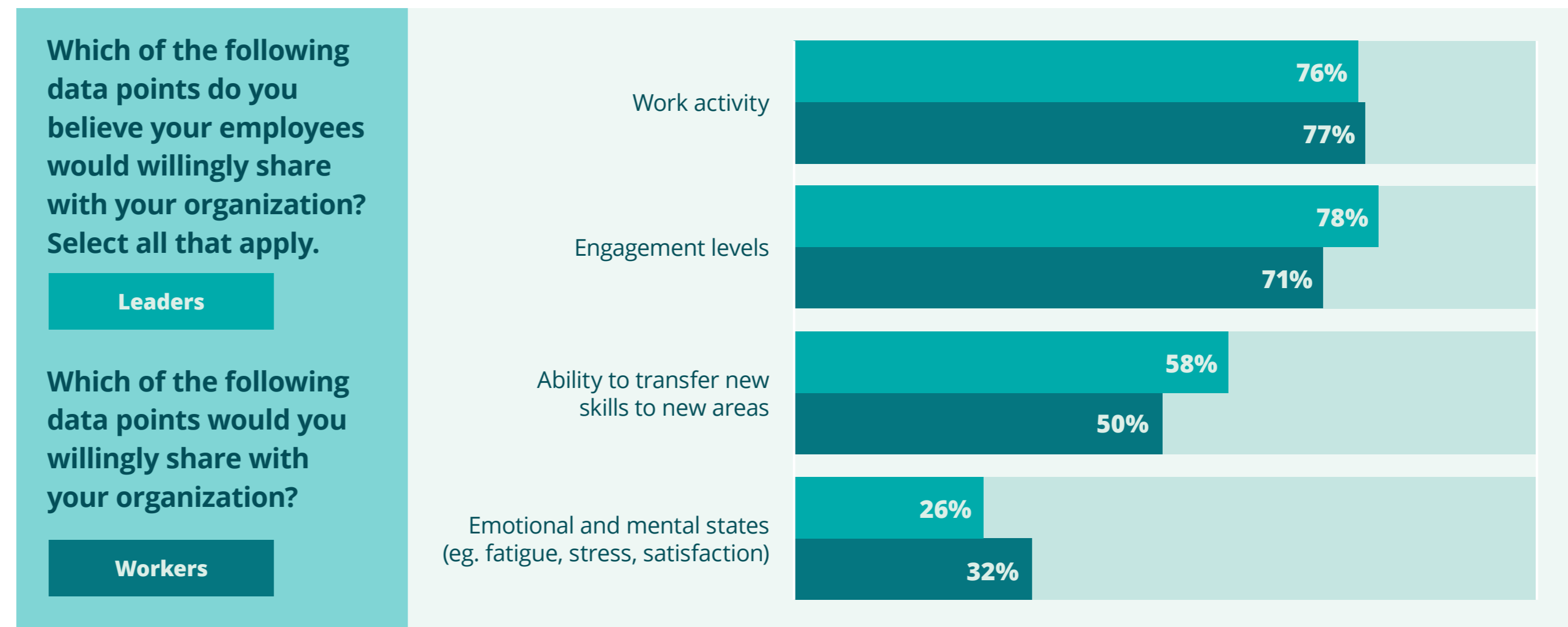| Technology	Leaders	Workers
Employee emails	91%	85%
Employee calendars	84%	76%
Employee satisfaction/well-being surveys	71%	72%
Biometrics	62%	55%
Employee keystroke/mouse tracking	35%	39%
Internal social collaboration sites	37%	40%
Wearables	29%	30%
Virtual and augmented reality headsets	23%	28%
External sites	19%	23%
Location-tracking technologies	17%	23%
Neurotechnologies	5%	9%

This may be the case especially when the organization engages in data collection activities with which workers do not feel comfortable. For example, our study shows that employee turnover was lower in organizations that used voluntary data sharing agreements—which allow workers to choose which data to share—suggesting that giving workers autonomy over what to share can contribute to reduced turnover.

This desire to maintain privacy is also reflected in the kinds of data that workers feel comfortable sharing with their organization (figure 3).

Figure 3:
Workers draw boundaries around sharing personal data

Which of the following data points do you believe your employees would willingly share with your organization? Select all that apply.

Leaders

Which of the following data points would you willingly share with your organization?

Workers

Work activity
76%
77%

Engagement levels
78%
71%

Ability to transfer new skills to new areas
58%
50%

Emotional and mental states (eg. fatigue, stress, satisfaction)
26%
32%

Leaders we surveyed have a relatively accurate sense of which kinds of data workers would be willing to share and which kinds of data workers would be less comfortable sharing, suggesting that both groups have similar perspectives about where to draw lines around private data.

Most workers report being ready to share their work activity (77%) and engagement levels (71%), but this willingness drops for sharing data related to the ability to transfer skills to new areas (50%) and emotional/mental states (32%), in line with what leaders estimate workers are willing to share.

While work activity and engagement could be seen as more generic data points, workers' ambivalence regarding skills sharing may be explained by a reluctance to disclose information that could have more immediate consequences (e.g., skills gaps leading to negative performance appraisals). It's also possible that workers in this survey were less willing to share skills data because they were unsure of the potential benefits. Prior Deloitte research, for instance, has found the majority of workers are willing to share skills data if they saw tangible benefits such as access to improved career opportunities.[11]

As for emotional and mental states, workers seem to be even less comfortable with sharing data that crosses the line between personal and professional. While activity levels, engagement and skills may all be related to their work, workers' emotions and feelings may be seen as too personal to be disclosed in a professional setting. What's interesting to see, however, is that compared to executives' estimates, workers are actually more likely to share their emotional and mental states with employers, a sign that they may want their leaders to know when they're experiencing difficulties such as increased stress or fatigue.
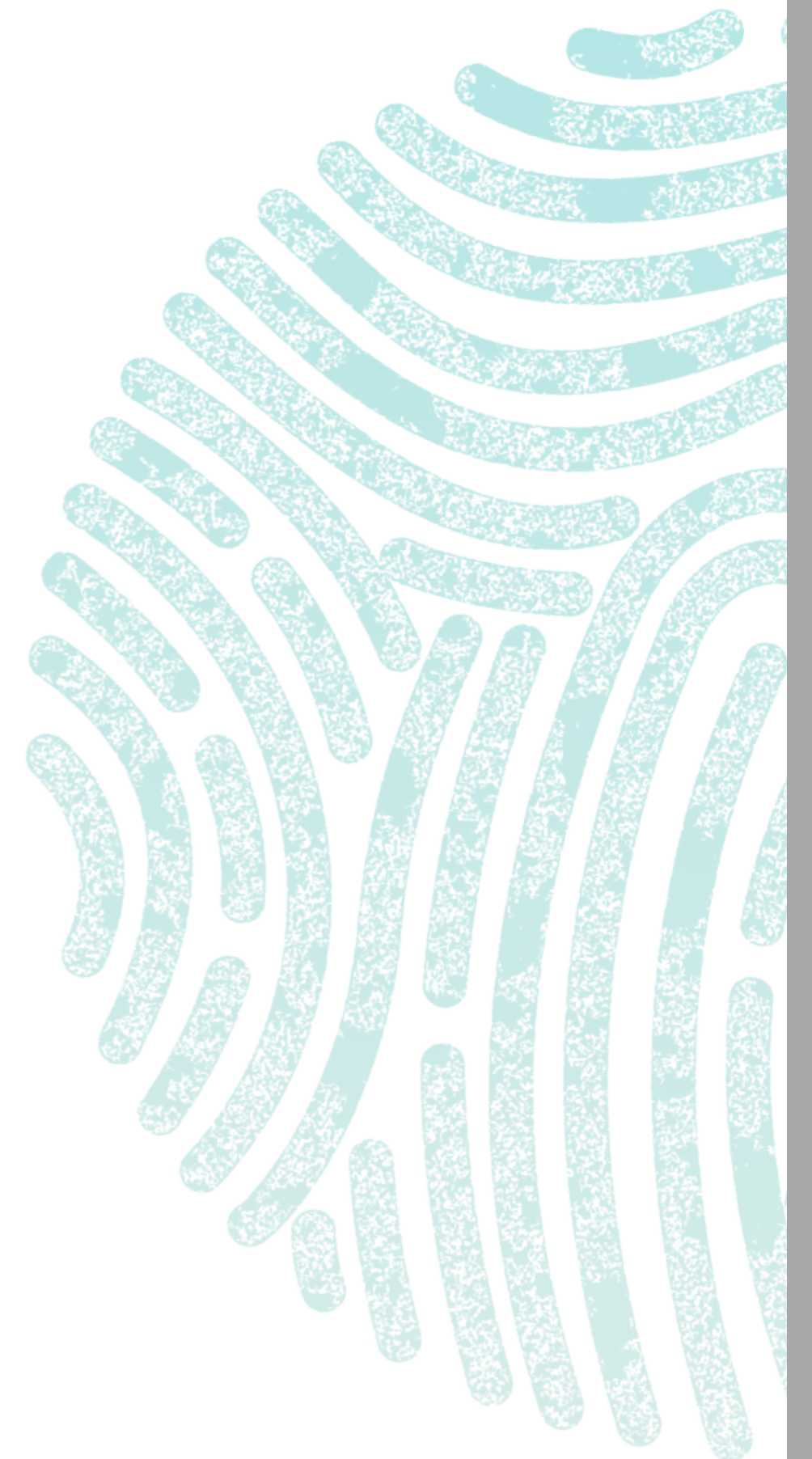
Trust is high, but at risk

Current levels of worker trust, and the way these may change in the future, are creating a narrow window of opportunity for employers to transition to a quantified organization. Deloitte defines trust as the foundation of any meaningful relationship between an entity and its stakeholders, including the relationship between an organization and its workers. At its core, trust involves demonstrating not only competence, but also the right intent, with factors such as capability, reliability, transparency, and humanity being critical components of trust.[12]

Organizational trust factors

Deloitte defines organizational trust as the meaningful relationship between an entity and its stakeholders at both individual and organizational levels. This trust is commonly built through actions that demonstrate a high degree of:

Capability:
possessing the means to meet expectations.

Reliability:
consistently and dependably delivering upon promises made.

Transparency:
openly sharing information, motives, and choices in plain language.

Humanity:
genuinely caring for the experience and well-being of others.

Source: Michael Bondar, Natasha Buckley, Roxana Corduneanu "Can you measure trust within your organization?" Deloitte Insights, February 9, 2022.

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Workers have relatively high levels of trust in data collection efforts, yet they are much less confident than leaders that the organization is using work and workforce data in a responsible way (70% workers vs. 93% executives). This gap suggests that it is critical to invest in strengthening trust in data collection efforts while this trust is relatively high. While stakeholder trust is built in incremental steps over time, the risk of inaction—or poor action—can be far more consequential,[13] and any current levels of comfort and shared perspectives may be lost if leaders fail to act now.

This is particularly important because in our study, a high level of worker trust is linked to a greater willingness to share data voluntarily as well as improved business outcomes from data collection efforts. **As we noted above, predictive model analyses show that trust in the organization's approach to data management raises the probability of business growth by about 50%.**

This analysis also suggests that trust in data management raises the probability of improved organizational agility by about 40%, while lowering the probability of privacy and consent concerns by approximately 60% and worker absenteeism by nearly 50%. These findings indicate that trust is not just nice to have but is critical to the success of the organization.

Worker and leader perspectives are consistent across regions

Despite substantial geographic variation in regulations around data collection, our survey suggests that there is surprisingly limited geographic variation regarding data collection practices across the regions surveyed, as well as the potential value to be gained from such efforts. For instance, respondents across the globe show the same preferences for sharing their work activity and engagement levels, as opposed to sharing information about their skills and emotional and mental states (figure 4).

Similarly, our analysis reveals that leaders and workers across Europe, North America and Asia Pacific (APAC) agree that new sources of work data can yield benefits including business growth, improved innovation, agility, and worker performance.
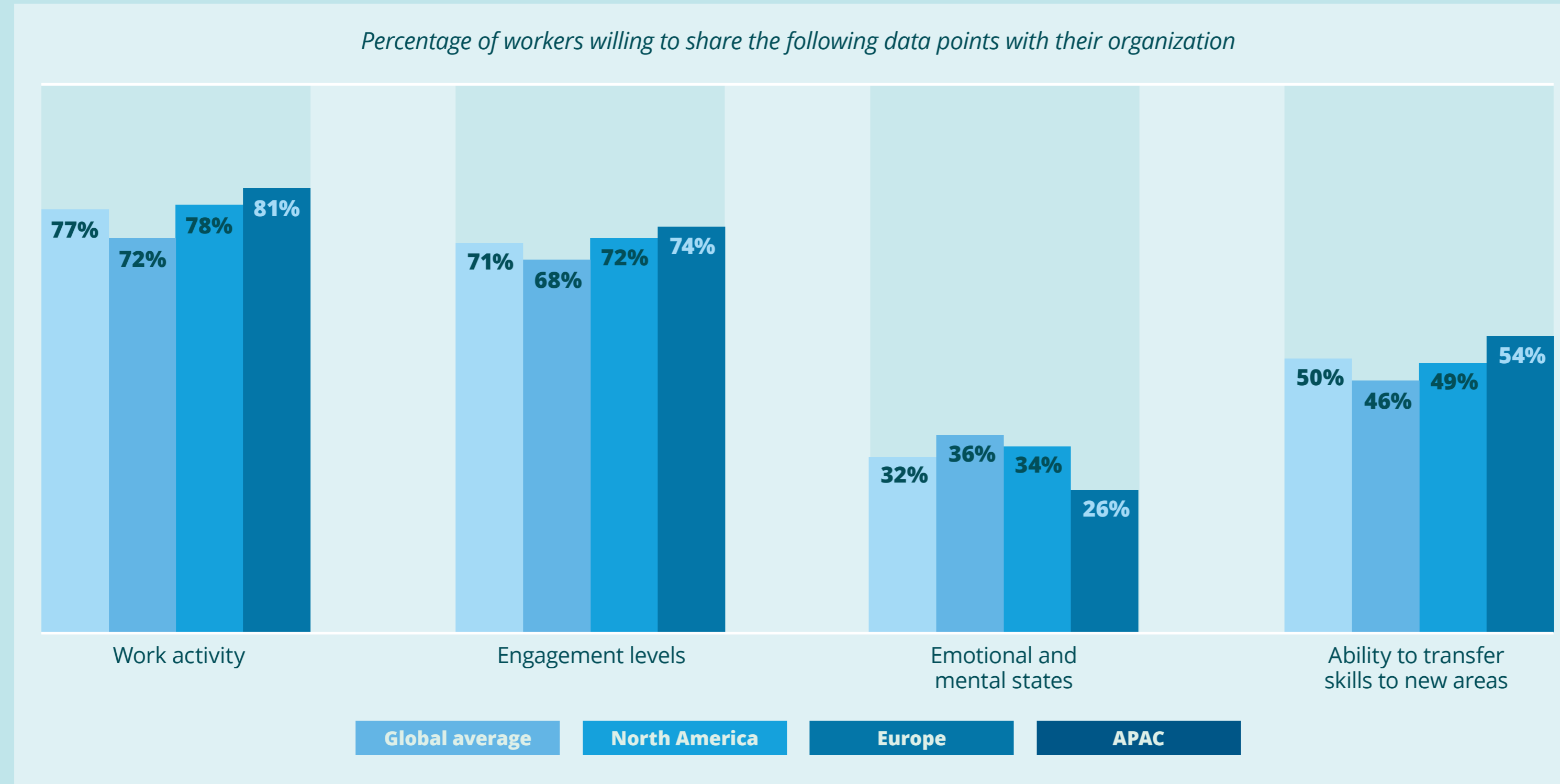
Confidence levels in responsible data use are also relatively similar across regions, with APAC showing slightly higher confidence levels (86%) compared to Europe (79%) and North America (77%).

The slight variation in results could potentially be explained by the fact that North American organizations also show a lower propensity to offer voluntary data sharing agreements, with only 61% of respondents in the region reporting that their organization offer such agreements, whereas these percentages are slightly higher in Europe (66%) and APAC (70%). However, except for these small differences, respondents hold similar perspectives across geographies.

Despite limited regional variation in how workers view the use of new sources of work data, it is important to note that the collection and use of workforce data is subject to local regulations and is increasingly being impacted by conflicting jurisdictions' regulatory requirements such as those of GDPR in Europe. This shifting regulatory landscape highlights the importance of working closely with legal and human resources teams to navigate ongoing compliance challenges.

Figure 4:
Workers across the globe show similar perspectives in their willingness to share data with organizations

Percentage of workers willing to share the following data points with their organization

	Work activity	Engagement levels	Emotional and mental states	Ability to transfer skills to new areas
Global average	77%	71%	32%	50%
North America	72%	68%	36%	46%
Europe	78%	72%	34%	49%
APAC	81%	74%	26%	54%

Global average   North America   Europe   APAC

Getting started: Keys to success and pitfalls to avoid

While leaders as well as workers are ready for the journey toward the quantified organization and recognize the value it brings, success—now and in the future—is not a given.

To unlock the potential of new sources of work data to create shared value at multiple levels in the organization, we recommend that organizations adopt a responsible approach to data use, acknowledge workers' needs for privacy and autonomy, and focus data collection efforts on clear, strategic initiatives rather than casting as wide a net as possible.

1. Adopt a responsible approach to data collection and use

Responsible data usage can strengthen worker trust in data collection efforts and, in the process, improve the value of this data to the organization.

Responsible data practices help workers control how their individual data is shared across an organization. Aggregating and anonymizing data, for example, can help maintain individual worker privacy. Getting input from workers in creating data privacy policies can also work to build trust in the organization's data collection and use (see Deloitte's framework for responsible AI: Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI)™).

Workers who are confident in their organization's efforts to use data responsibly are more comfortable having data about their work collected, likely due to assurances that the organization will maintain their privacy.

Responsible data use is also related to greater comfort with different data tracking technologies as well as an increased likelihood of reporting improved business and worker outcomes.

In other words, the more monitoring efforts are perceived as transparent and supportive of workers' development, safety, and performance (as opposed to mere control mechanisms), the greater the perceived benefits for both workers and the organization.
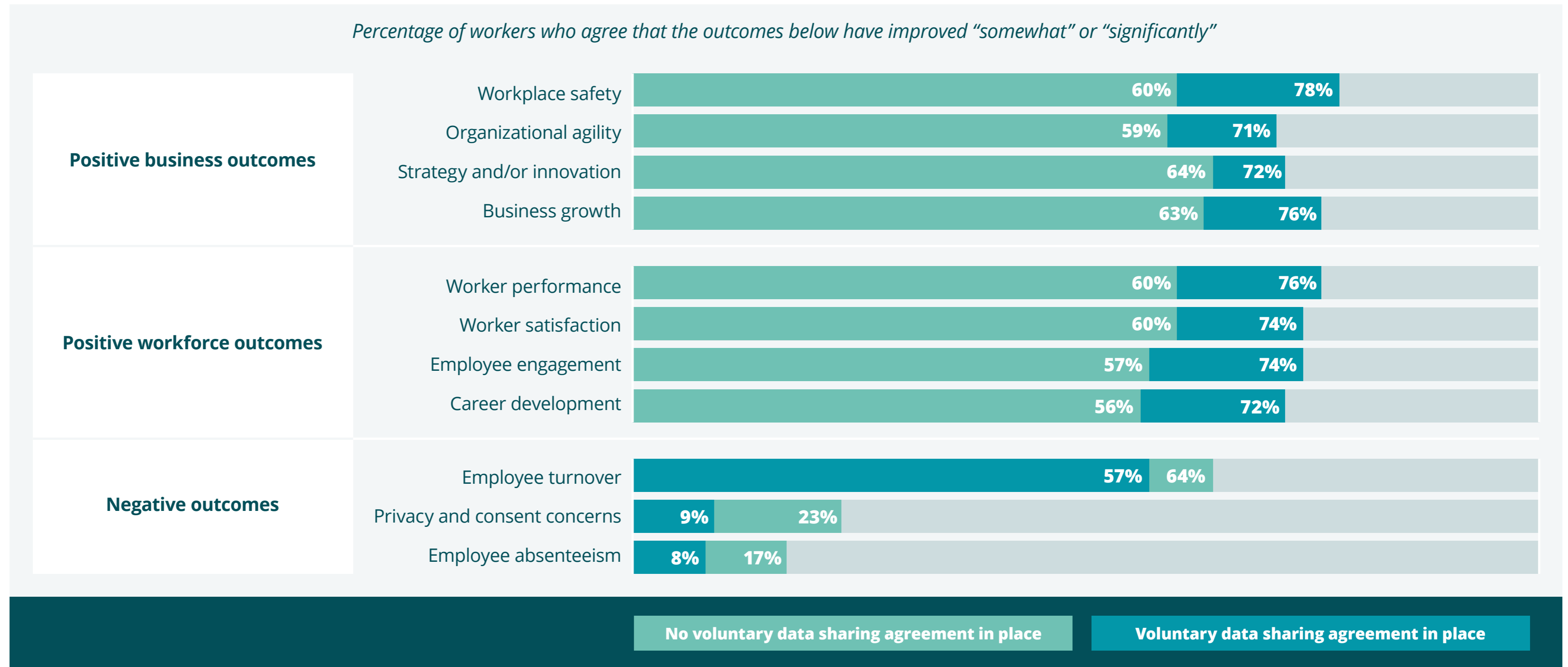
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Voluntary data sharing agreements—processes that enable workers to opt in or out of sharing optional data with their employer—offer one path to support responsible data use. Their use significantly improves worker trust in data collection efforts (figure 5) and is linked to a greater openness to data sharing. In addition, workers who have voluntary data sharing agreements are significantly more likely to report improved business outcomes as a result of data collection efforts, and less likely to report negative outcomes (figure 6).

Figure 5: Voluntary data sharing agreements improve workforce trust

In the context of your organization's approach to using workforce data, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

No voluntary data sharing agreement in place

Voluntary data sharing agreement in place

Percentage of workers who agree and strongly agree with the following statements:

I trust that my organization is transparent with the findings derived from work and workforce data
57%
74%

I trust that my organization uses the data collected on me and my work responsibly
54%
73%

I trust that my organization uses data collected about me and my work for my benefit
52%
75%

Figure 6: Voluntary data sharing agreements improve business and worker outcomes

Percentage of workers who agree that the outcomes below have improved "somewhat" or "significantly"

Positive business outcomes

Outcome	No agreement	Agreement
Workplace safety	60%	78%
Organizational agility	59%	71%
Strategy and/or innovation	64%	72%
Business growth	63%	76%

Positive workforce outcomes

Outcome	No agreement	Agreement
Worker performance	60%	76%
Worker satisfaction	60%	74%
Employee engagement	57%	74%
Career development	56%	72%

Negative outcomes

Outcome	No agreement	Agreement
Employee turnover	57%	64%
Privacy and consent concerns	9%	23%
Employee absenteeism	8%	17%

No voluntary data sharing agreement in place

Voluntary data sharing agreement in place

KEY ACTION POINT:

Invest in data transparency and responsible use:

Organizations can increase trust, as well as openness to sharing data and comfort levels with different technologies, by adopting responsible data use practices. These practices include showing increased transparency regarding which type of data is collected and why, respecting privacy and data integrity concerns, and seeking worker consent whenever possible.

Implementing voluntary data sharing agreements can allow organizations to demonstrate a responsible approach to data collection. Allowing workers to opt in and decide which data to share can serve to increase their openness to sharing more data about their work (see Deloitte's framework for Technology, Trust and Ethics[14]).

2. Deliver and communicate tangible benefits for the workforce

In addition to collecting and using data in responsible ways, organizations should also focus on delivering tangible benefits for the workforce that are informed by the use of new sources of data, and then communicate what those benefits are. For instance, sharing skills data across the organization could help improve performance conversations and career development, while sharing information about stress levels could help improve workers' well-being.

In our study, 59% of workers agree that new sources of work data would improve fairness in promotion and performance management. However, these numbers could be higher if organizations increase their transparency and share further information about the specific improvements to individual workers that such interventions can bring. As we have previously shown, workers are more likely to share data if this opens new opportunities for growth and development.[15] Organizations can also consider feeding data back to the workers themselves to enable them to spot patterns in their own work if they choose to do so.

KEY ACTION POINT:

Emphasize worker benefits and shared value creation:

When an organization uses the data they collect about the workforce to benefit everyone—individual workers, teams and groups, the organization, and society as a whole—we call that creating shared value.[16] Workers need to know how data monitoring will result in improved benefits for them, including not only their performance, but their well-being, their safety, and the adoption of a more inclusive workplace. These benefits do not simply improve the experience and satisfaction of the workforce, but can aggregate upward to improve outcomes for the larger organization.

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3. Acknowledge each worker as an individual

Organizations should focus on monitoring worker outcomes and accept that different workers will have slightly different schedules and behaviors that enable them to work best toward achieving those outcomes. The key is not to mandate that all workers should follow the same approach to structuring their daily tasks (and track deviations from the standard), but rather to give workers the flexibility to decide how to approach work in order to bring value to the organization.

Recent studies examining the impact of organizational efforts to increase flexibility and accommodate the unique needs of different workers (including neurodivergent workers and people with disabilities) have found that flexibility is related to increased engagement, well-being, and performance for both individual workers and the organization itself.[17] This is because such flexibility allows people to work with their strengths, supporting their work-life balance as well as their productivity.

KEY ACTION POINT

Focus on measuring outcomes, not the process of getting there:

Different workers have different approaches to work and respecting those approaches can improve outcomes for everyone. As such, leaders should avoid falling into the trap of measuring metrics, such as a worker's availability status on chat, just because they are easy to measure. These kinds of metrics can be unhelpful if they are not linked to outcomes and measuring them can risk undermining trust if workers cannot see a purpose in collecting them. Instead, organizations should focus on monitoring the outcomes of work, as opposed to ways of working.

Focusing on outcomes can foster trust, preserve workers' autonomy and motivation, and provide leaders with better insight into the metrics that truly matter to organizational performance.

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4. Be mindful of emerging tensions around new technologies

While the majority of workers we surveyed are comfortable with having their email, calendars and other more traditional sources of data monitored, they are far less comfortable with the use of data from wearables, XR headsets and other emerging technologies. Yet the majority of leaders we surveyed expect to increasingly use these technologies as part of data collection efforts in the next three years (figure 7) —suggesting that while workers and leaders are currently in relative agreement about the use of different data collection tools, they may find themselves at odds in the coming years.

KEY ACTION POINT

Maintain worker privacy and avoid crossing the line between professional and personal data monitoring:
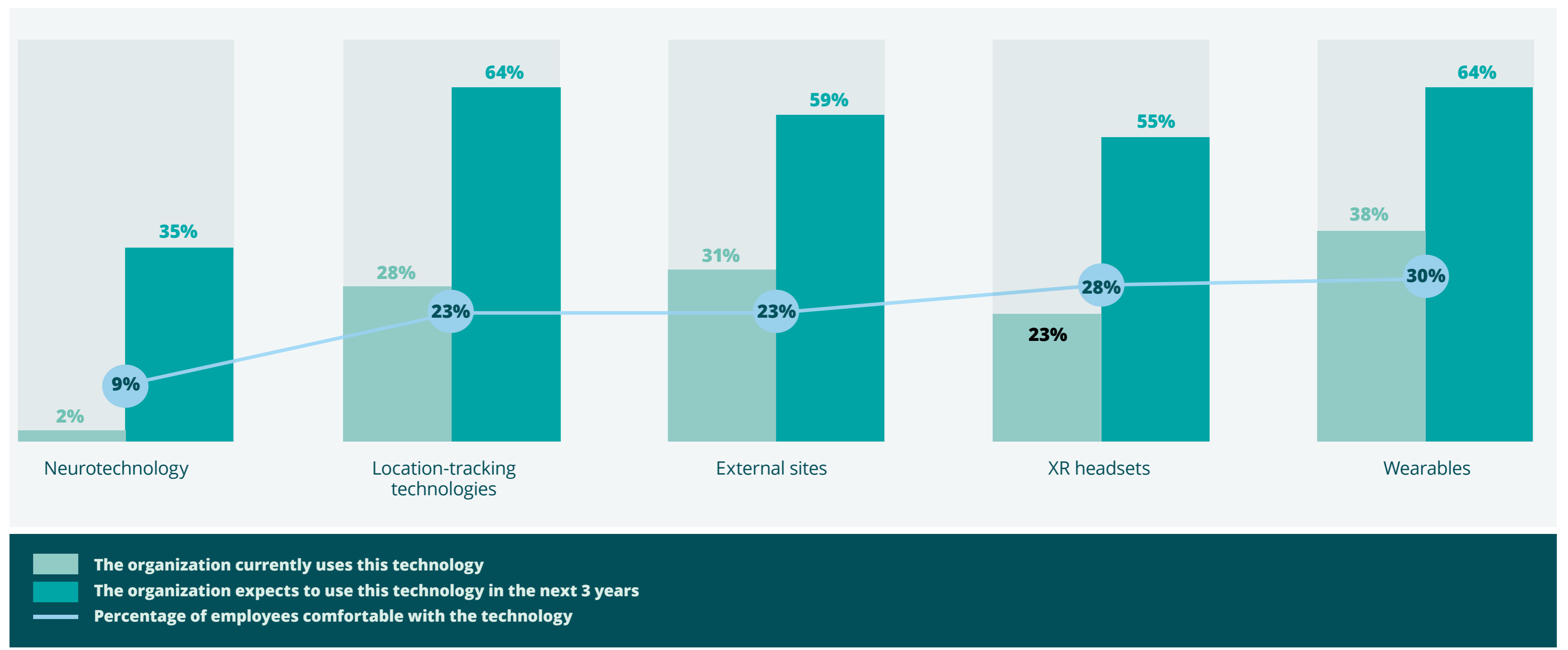
While emerging technologies may become more accessible (and thus tempting) for organizations to use in the next few years, leaders need to be mindful of worker concerns around data privacy. Restricting data collection efforts to professional rather than personal use cases could help alleviate some of these concerns. Likewise, organizations can avoid potential worker backlash by seeking worker consent when introducing these tools, especially in contexts where there may be ambiguity about whether data is personal or professional such as when workers are working from home. Showing greater transparency as to why such tools may be needed, the additional benefits they can bring, and the ways in which data will be used (e.g., aggregated and anonymized as opposed to monitoring individual workers) can also help instill a culture of trust in the organization and facilitate the adoption of new technologies.

Figure 7: Workers are less comfortable with data collected by emerging technologies, but leaders expect to use them more in the next three years

- 64% — Neurotechnology
- 35% — Neurotechnology (expects)
- 2% — Neurotechnology (currently)
- 9% — Neurotechnology (comfortable)

- 28% — Location-tracking technologies (currently)
- 64% — Location-tracking technologies (expects)
- 23% — Location-tracking technologies (comfortable)

- 31% — External sites (currently)
- 59% — External sites (expects)
- 23% — External sites (comfortable)

- 55% — XR headsets (expects)
- 23% — XR headsets (currently)
- 28% — XR headsets (comfortable)

- 38% — Wearables (currently)
- 64% — Wearables (expects)
- 30% — Wearables (comfortable)

Neurotechnology | Location-tracking technologies | External sites | XR headsets | Wearables

Legend:
- The organization currently uses this technology
- The organization expects to use this technology in the next 3 years
- Percentage of employees comfortable with the technology

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5. Have a clear rationale for what data you collect

Being unsure of relevant data sources to achieve strategic goals, a lack of experience in analyzing large volumes of data, and difficulties in collecting and using data responsibly are among the most common challenges reported by leaders.

A multiple correspondence analysis shows that some of these challenges are typically grouped together by respondents. Specifically, not having predetermined strategic goals for using workforce data is related to workers' lack of trust in the organizations' intentions to collect and use workforce data for their benefit, as well as the organization failing to make the necessary investments to collect and use the data effectively.

This suggests that having clear goals for data collection as part of a larger strategic plan (as opposed to the organization collecting data just because it can) is critical to gain workers' trust and make the right investments for collecting and using data effectively.

KEY ACTION POINT

Create clear goals for data collection as part of a larger strategic plan:

The emergence of new sources of data and collection tools may make it tempting to collect data simply because it is possible. But doing so without a clear, strategic goal that benefits workers and the organization can undermine worker trust in data collection efforts while overwhelming an organization's ability to make sense of the data they have collected.

In this sense, having clear goals for data collection efforts is critical to achieving better short-term outcomes while also strengthening workforce trust around data use over time.

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Conclusion: The time to act is now

As organizations continue to augment traditional data collection efforts with new sources of work data, they will increasingly be able to use this data to gain a holistic understanding of how work gets done, making visible what was previously invisible. This process could enable organizations to unlock value for workers, teams, organizations and greater society.

Indeed, these benefits are already starting to emerge. Our survey highlights that workers and leaders see opportunities to change how organizations collect data and agree that responsible data use has already contributed to a wide range of organizational and worker benefits such as improved workplace safety, increased workforce satisfaction, business growth, and more.

Leaders have a window of opportunity to act now to build on these successes and unlock the potential of the quantified organization.

To build a quantified organization, leaders should adopt a strategic approach to the types of data they collect, the investments they make in collection and analytic efforts, and the connection of data to relevant outcomes. Failure to do so could lead to challenges in collecting data, undermine trust, and perhaps most critically, cause organizations to miss opportunities presented by the emergence of the quantified organization.

Key Contacts

Art Mazor
Global Human Capital Leader
amazor@deloitte.com

Steve Hatfield
Global Future of Work Leader
sthatfield@deloitte.com

Nic Scoble-Williams
Global Work Growth Leader
nscoble-williams@tohmatsu.co.jp

Robin Jones
Human Capital Chief Marketing
& Research Officer
robijones@deloitte.com

Jonathan Pearce
US Human Capital
as a Service Leader
jrpearce@deloitte.com

Michael Griffiths
US Workforce
Transformation Leader
mgriffiths@deloitte.com

Authors

Steve Hatfield
Brad Kreit

Roxana Corduneanu
Sue Cantrell

Acknowledgements

Rebecca Greenberg
Corrie Commisso
Jordan Skowron
Angela Tatar
Brenna Sniderman
Siri Anderson

David Levin
Negina Rood
Monika Mahto
Saurabh Bansode
Shubham Oza
Stuart Kerr

Endnotes

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2. Christopher Mims, "More Bosses Are Spying on Quiet Quitters. It Could Backfire." Wall Street Journal, Sept 17, 2022.

3. Alex Christian, "The 'productivity paranoia' managers can't shake," BBC Worklife, October 18 2022.

4. Sawdah Bhaimiya, "US Workers Use 'Productivity Theater' to Look Busy", Business Insider, May 3, 2023.

5. Between May and July 2023, Deloitte surveyed 1,000 executives (C-Suite or President level, Vice-President, and Director-level) and 1,000 employees (senior managers and professional staff/employees) from global organizations across nine different countries. These were equally split between North America (Canada, US and Mexico), EMEA (UK, Germany, and France), and Asia Pacific (Australia, India, and Japan). Around 78% of respondents work for organizations that generated more than US$1 billion in annual revenues in the past year. The following industries were included in the sample: banking and financial services, technology, media and entertainment, consumer products and services, energy, resources, and industrials, and life sciences and health care. Analysis consisted of a combination of cross-tabs, regressions, predicted models and multiple correspondence analysis.

6. Deloitte engaged in a series of estimation/classification models based on logistic regression to better understand the effects of trust. Controlling for a number of demographic and work-related variables, respondents with the lowest levels of trust in the organization's approach to the management of worker data are nearly 50 percentage points (out of 100 percentage points) less likely than respondents with the highest levels of trust to agree that the company will experience increases or significant increases in business growth. The control variables included are the following: the respondent's organization's region of operations, primary industry, global revenue, number of full-time employees, that the organization offers a voluntary data-sharing agreement to employees and the respondent's doing the majority of work at a desk or a computer, their confidence that their organization is using work and workforce data in a highly responsible way, the percentage of types of personal information the respondent is willing to share, the percentage of types of quantified tracking technology the respondent is comfortable with.

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