



## Automotive employee engagement study

**Creating a culture of belonging and  
an engaging employee experience**

May 2025

# Dear reader,

The automotive industry is experiencing a tremendous amount of change. At the center of this evolution are the men and women that design, build, sell, and service the vehicles that enable the future of consumer mobility. In an environment characterized by a relentless pursuit of innovation and efficiency, automotive employees are having to adapt to a wide range of emerging trends, including software-defined vehicles, electrification, artificial intelligence, and an evolving regulatory and trade landscape.

As automotive companies work to keep pace with the amount of change happening around them, fundamental human capital considerations remain, including the need to create and nurture a strong company culture rooted in purpose and belonging. This contributes to a company's ability to attract and retain the best employees at a time when competition for talent is fierce. At the same time, new skills and collaborative processes are needed to align with the proliferation of artificial intelligence to unlock efficiencies across the enterprise.

Some automotive companies are also facing significant operational headwinds as they struggle to reduce manufacturing complexity in the face of rising input costs. As a result, some companies may be looking for collaboration opportunities to reduce the cost and risk of innovation, heralding a new era of strategic partnerships. Global trade tensions and tariffs are also shifting stakeholder strategies around supply chain optimization and manufacturing footprints, which may have a profound impact on the nature and composition of the automotive workforce going forward.

In an effort to help uncover areas for improvement and drive a conversation with stakeholders across the automotive value chain, we have developed this inaugural US Automotive employee engagement study. To support the study, we collaborated with Automotive News to field an online survey in April 2025, capturing the opinions of more than 300 individuals working in a variety of roles across the US automotive industry.

We have organized this report into three sections, presenting data-driven insights on the experience, culture, and sense of belonging among the people that keep the automotive sector moving forward.

We hope you find the insights contained in this report useful and informative.

Warm regards,



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# Key findings



**1 Enhance company culture by having senior leaders invest time in professional development to build soft skills that resonate with employees.**

Employees surveyed consider company culture to be very important, but only a third feel their organization is effective in attracting the top talent. Although respondents indicated that organizations are equipping them with the necessary tools and training, there remains room for improvement in areas like mentorship and sponsorship. Senior leaders can contribute to building and nurturing a strong company culture by focusing on interpersonal skills.

**2 Establish a sense of purpose among employees through an investment to develop strong leadership for the future.**

Employees feel issues such as the poor perception of the industry, lack of work/life balance, and existing organizational cultural norms are the top reasons causing people to leave the industry. Half of survey respondents also said they would discourage young people from pursuing a career in the auto industry. Supporting a culture of innovation and autonomy in decision-making while helping employees understand how their work contributes to purposeful goals (e.g., increasing access to mobility via self-driving technology) may address some of these issues and could improve employee retention.

**3 Assist employees in adapting to changes to reinforce their sense of belonging within the company.**

Most employees feel a sense of loyalty to their company, with 75% of respondents preferring to stay either in their present role or in a different role at their present company. However, less than one-third feel fully ready to adapt to changes occurring in the industry and are looking to better understand new technologies and company priorities such as the transformative impact of artificial intelligence and software-defined vehicles.



# 1 Experience and company culture



**Survey respondents from across the automotive value chain point to attractive salaries and company culture as the top two most important job criteria.**

**Most important job criteria (top three choices)**

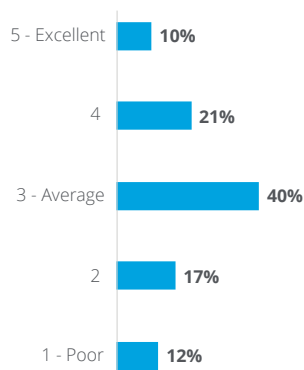
	Overall	Manufacturer/OEM	OEM supplier	Dealer/retailer
Attractive income/pay	1	1	2	1
Company culture	2	2	1	2
Work/life balance	3	3	5	3
Opportunities for challenging and interesting assignments	4	4	3	7
Working with high-caliber people	5	5	4	5
Career progression opportunities	6	7	6	4
Opportunity to work for a trusted brand	7	6	10	6
Attractive benefits	8	8	8	8
Learning and development opportunities	9	9	9	10
Flexible work location (e.g., telecommuting)	10	10	7	11
Flexible schedule	11	11	11	9

Q13. Which of the following are most important to you? Please rank your top 3 choices in order of importance, where 1 = most important and 3 = least important.

Sample size: n=312 [Overall], 55 [OEM supplier], 96 [Manufacturer/OEM], 71 [Dealer/Retailer]

**Only a third of survey respondents believe their company is above average when it comes to recruiting the best available employees. The top three most effective tactics for attracting and retaining employees involve having clear career progression plans, flexible work practices, and tailored career options.**

**Company's efforts in recruiting the best available employees**



**Programs and/or tactics most impactful when attracting and retaining employees (top choices)**

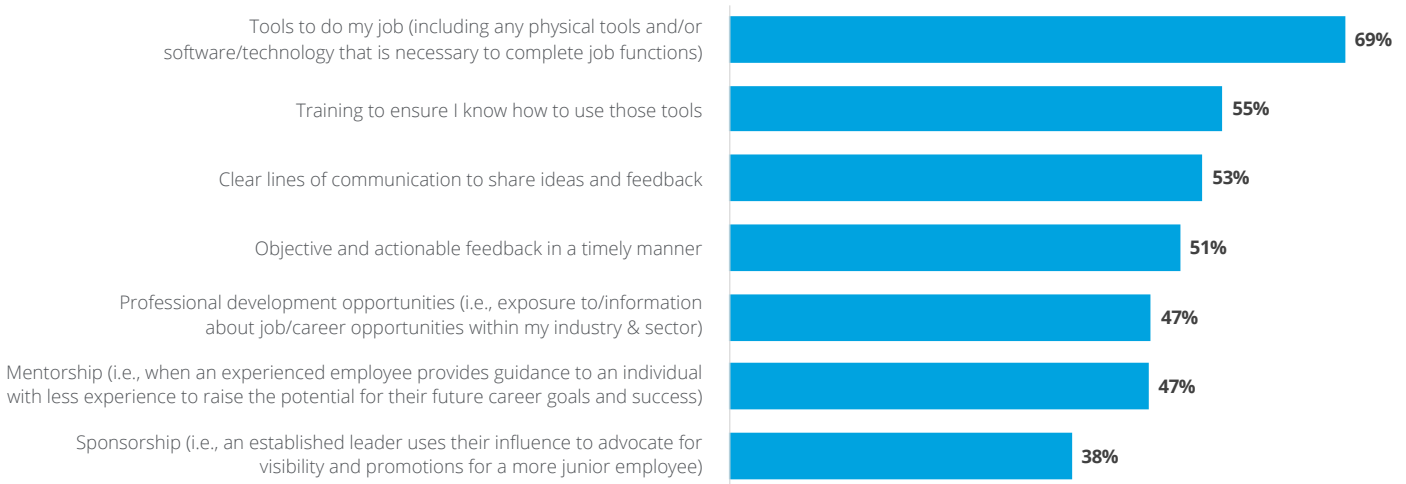
- Well-defined career progression steps
- Flexible work practices
- Customized and/or flexible career options
- Identifying key leaders who serve as role models for employees
- Formal and informal mentorship programs
- Customized learning and development programs
- Employee networks/communities
- Automotive community relationships
- Offering international mobility options
- Formal and informal sponsorship programs

Q16. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your company's efforts to recruit the best available employees? Q17. Which of the following programs and/or tactics do you believe are most impactful when attracting and retaining employees? Please rank your top 3 choices with 1 being most impactful.

Sample size: n=312 [Q16 and Q17]

**Respondents also believe that while their organization supplies the essential tools for their work, it is less successful in providing mentorship and sponsorship opportunities.**

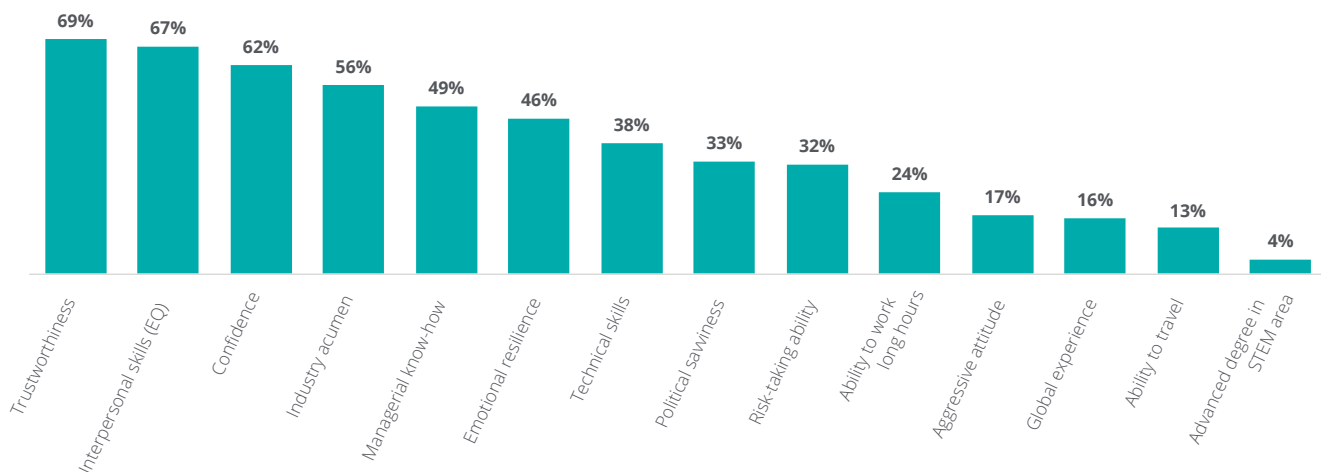
**Percentage of respondents who agree that their employer provides...**



Q18. Do you believe that your employer effectively provides you with the following...  
Sample size: n=312

**When it comes to attributes that make company leaders successful, survey respondents point to qualities such as trustworthiness, strong interpersonal skills, and confidence.**

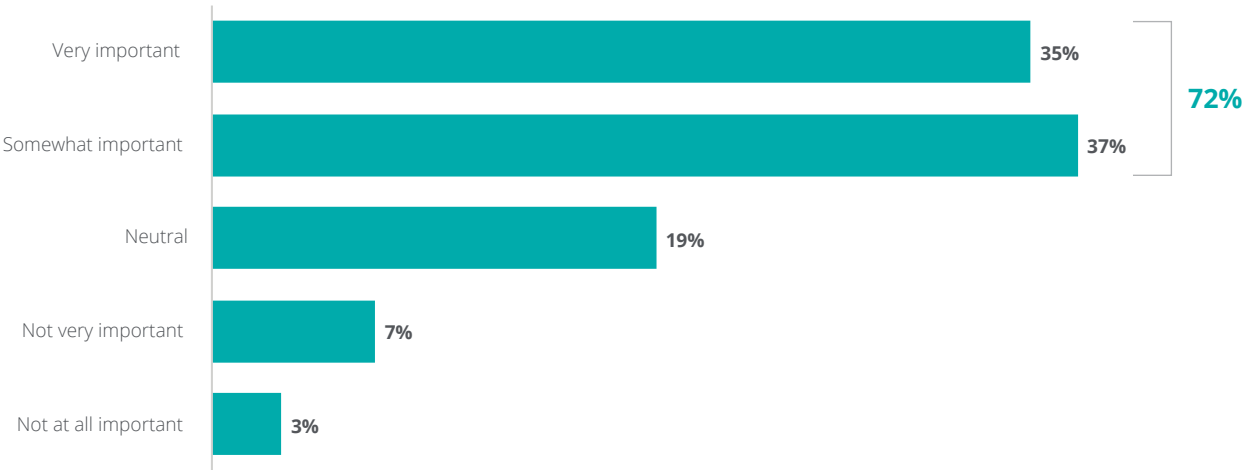
**Attributes that make a leader successful**



Q23. Which of the following attributes do you believe make a leader successful in your company? Please select all that apply.  
Sample size: n=312

Seven out of 10 respondents also believe it is important to have individuals with different lived experiences in leadership roles.

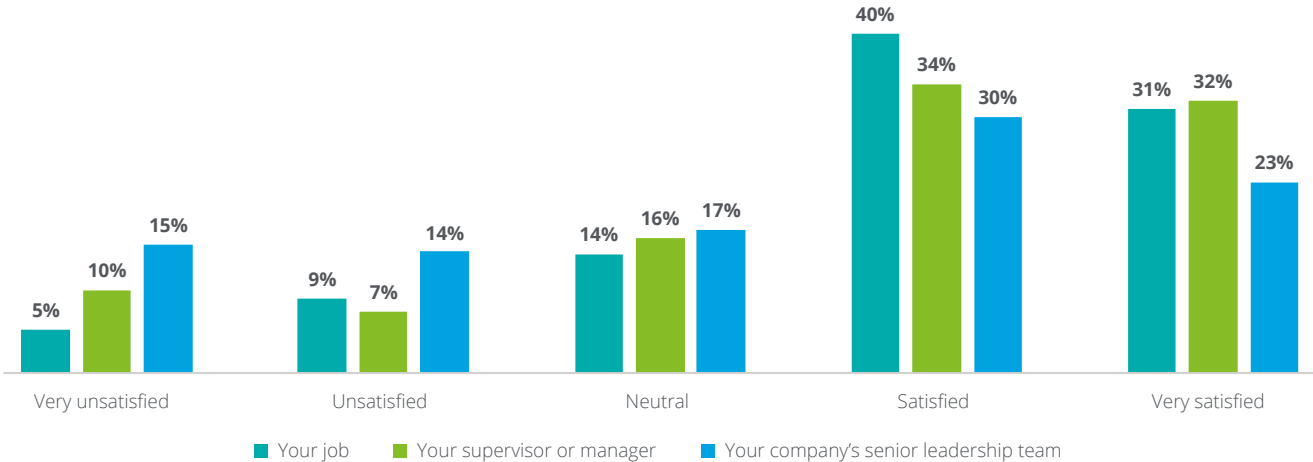
Importance of leaders with different lived experiences



Note: Sum of percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.  
Q22. Is it important to have people with different lived experiences on your company's leadership team?  
Sample size: n=312

Company culture is often established and nurtured by an organization's senior leaders, but only half of survey respondents said they are satisfied with their company's senior leadership team while two-thirds are satisfied with their immediate managers and 7 in 10 are satisfied with their job.

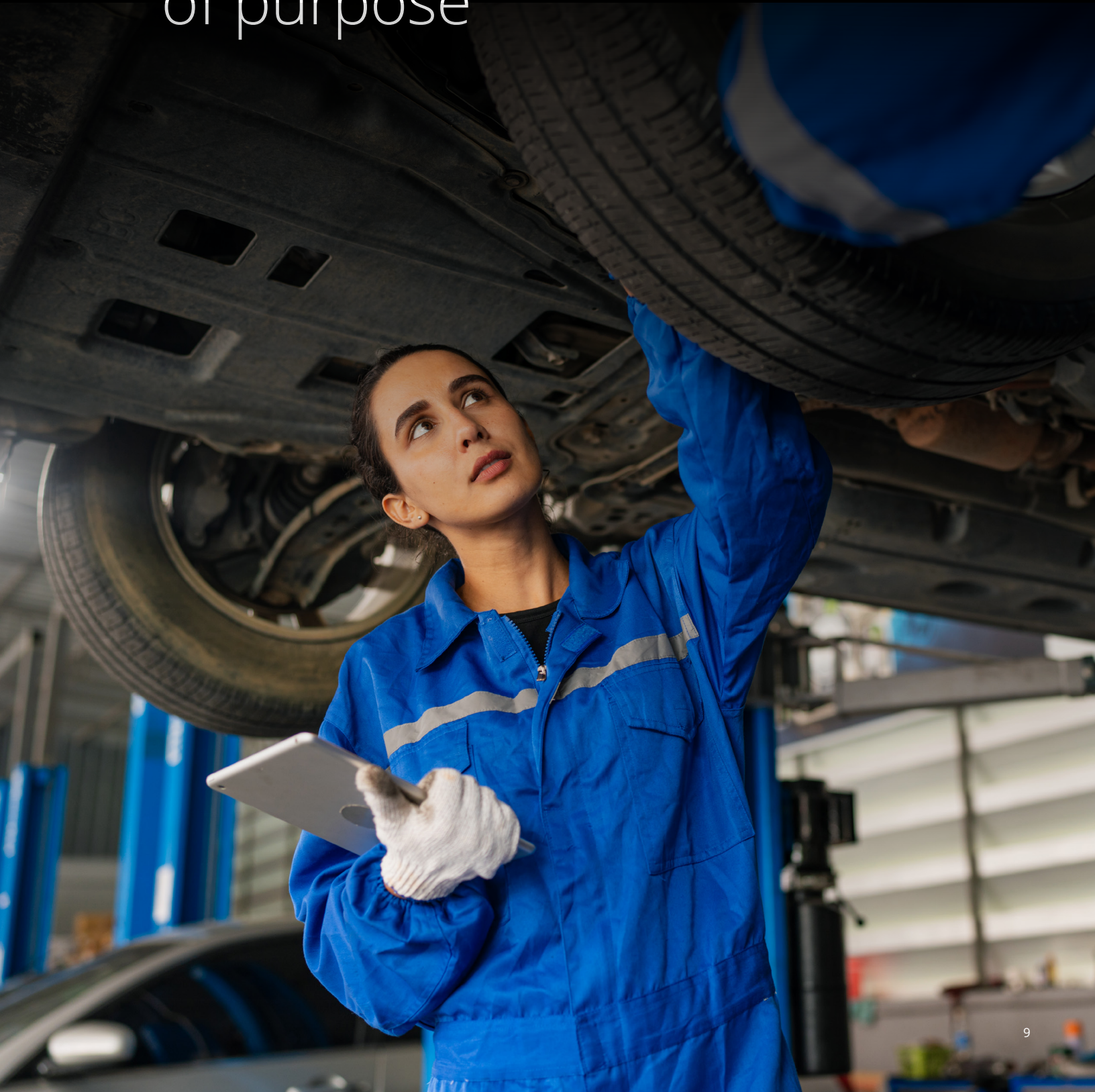
Satisfaction levels with job versus supervisor/manager versus senior leadership team



Q15. How satisfied are you with...  
Sample size: n=312

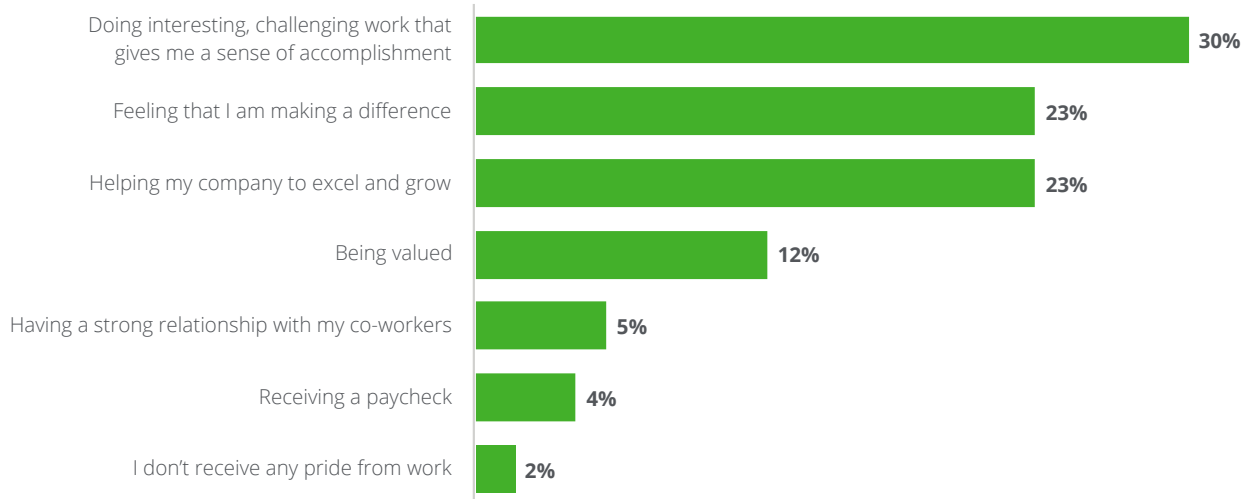


# 2 Creating a sense of purpose



**Survey respondents derive the most job satisfaction when they can engage in challenging assignments, make meaningful contributions to their organization, and aid in its growth and development.**

**Where do respondents working in the auto sector derive a sense of pride?**



Note: Sum of percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.  
Q14. I find the most pride at work from the following...  
Sample size: n=312

**Nearly 8 in 10 survey respondents feel the work they do is purposeful. However, only about 70% of respondents feel empowered to make decisions at work, and while employees feel respected and valued by their colleagues, more can be done to create collaborative working environments.**

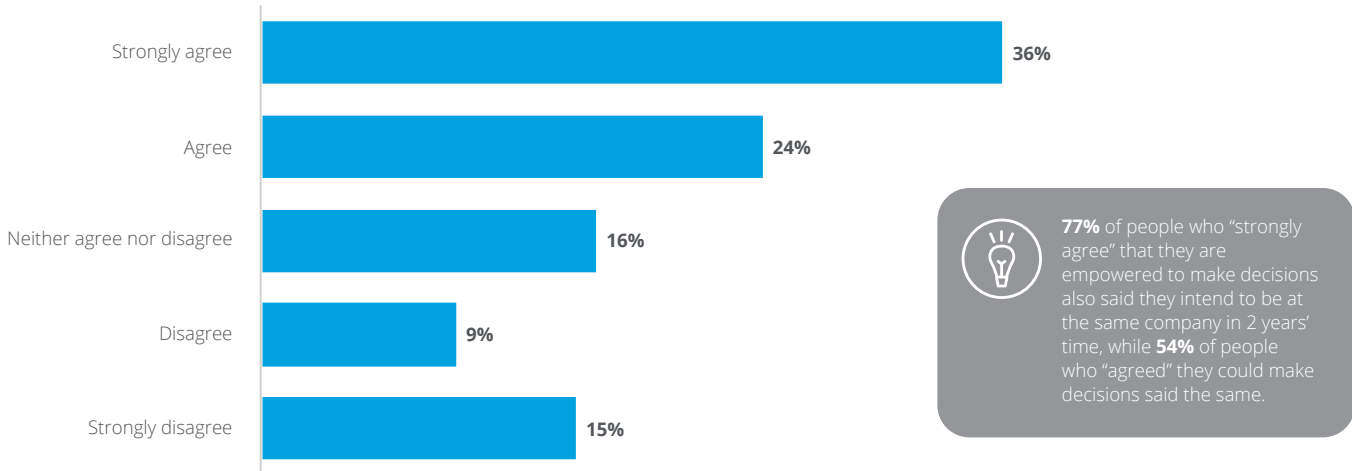
**Percentage of respondents who agree that...**



Q19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Sample size: n=312

**Creating a rewarding and purposeful work environment where employees are empowered to make decisions can contribute to employee retention. In fact, 60% of survey respondents intend to still be working at their current company in two years compared to only 24% who do not.**

### Percentage of those who see themselves working at their current company in two years' time



Q8. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement, "I see myself working at my current company in two years' time"?  
Sample size: n=312

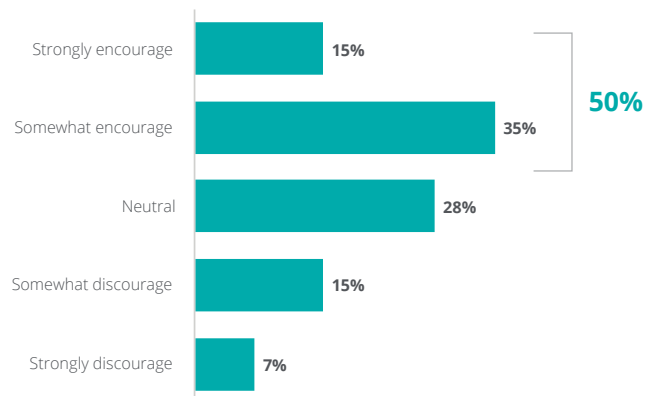
**However, half of survey respondents said they would choose another industry if they were starting their career today. Similarly, only half of respondents would encourage young people to pursue a career in the automotive sector.**

### Preference of industry if starting a career today



In 2020, 65% of survey respondents said they would choose to remain in the auto industry if they had a chance to start their careers again.

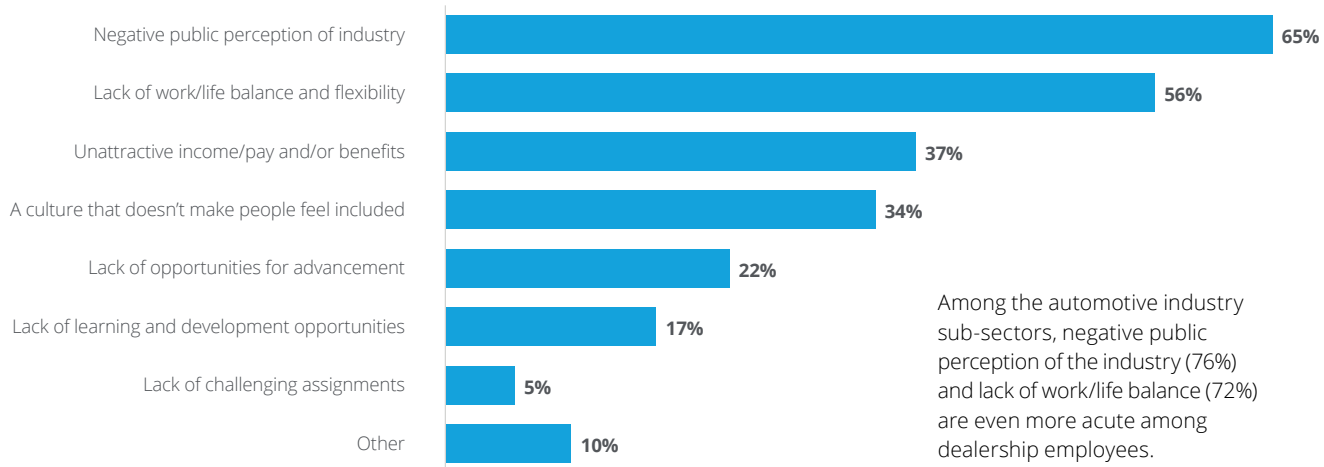
### Would respondents encourage young people to pursue a career in the auto sector?



Q11. If you were starting your career today, what would you choose to do? Q12. To what extent would you encourage young people starting out to pursue a career in the automotive industry?  
Sample size: n=312 [Q11 and Q12]

**Poor perception of the automotive industry and lack of work/life balance top the list of issues that respondents believe would prevent people from considering a career in the industry.**

**Top issues that may be preventing people from considering a career in the automotive industry**



Q10. What do you think are the top issues preventing people from considering a career in the automotive industry? Please select all that apply.  
Sample size: n=312

**The uncertain future of the industry, inadequate work/life balance, low salaries, and prevailing organizational cultural norms are the primary reasons for respondents to leave the automotive sector.**

**Top issues that would make respondents consider leaving the automotive industry**

	Overall	OEM supplier	Manufacturer/OEM	Dealer/retailer
Uncertain industry future	1	1	2	1
Poor work/life balance	2	5	1	2
Low income/pay	3	4	5	3
Another industry is more attractive	4	2	4	8
Organizational cultural norms	5	3	3	7
Poor working relationships	6	6	12	4
Lack of promotion opportunities	7	7	6	16
Lack of remote work location/telecommuting	8	11	7	9
Lack of competitive benefits	9	8	10	6
Lack of recognition/acknowledgment	10	9	9	13
Lack of flexible schedule options	11	12	11	5
Lack of challenging or interesting assignments	12	15	8	11
Lack of support from colleagues	13	12	13	10
Lack of learning and development opportunities	14	16	15	14
Lack of mentors and/or sponsors	15	10	16	12
Harassment	16	14	14	15

Q9. What are the top issues that would cause you to consider leaving the automotive industry? Please rank your top three choices.  
Sample size: n=312 [Overall], 55 [OEM supplier], 96 [Manufacturer/OEM], 71 [Dealer/Retailer]



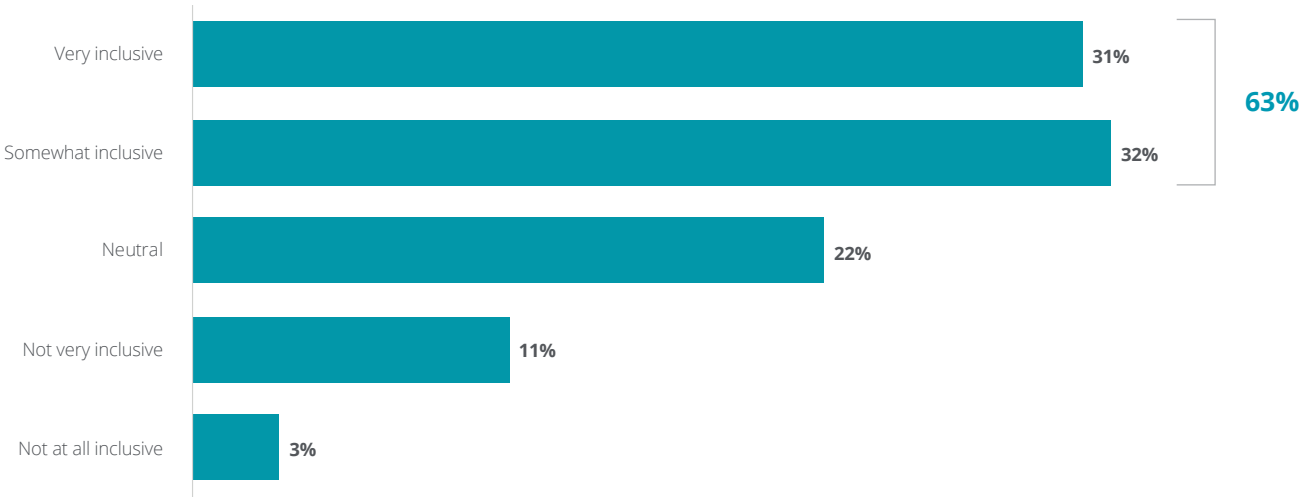
# 3 Belonging and adapting to change





Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents feel that their organization's culture is at least somewhat inclusive.

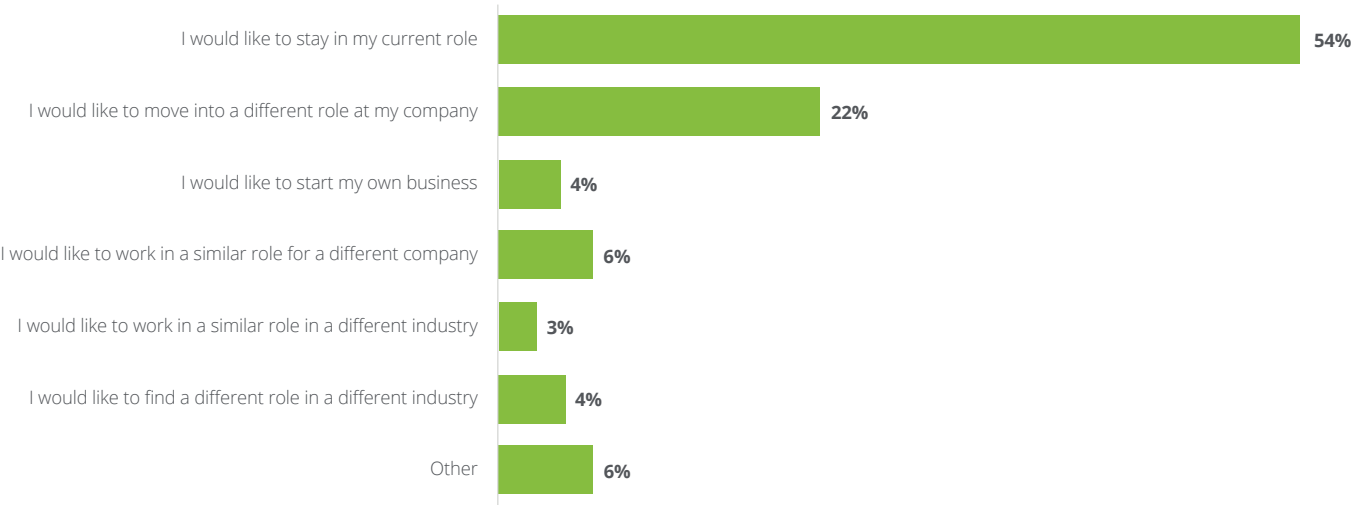
Inclusiveness of your company's culture



Note: Sum of percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.  
Q21. To what extent do you feel your company's culture is inclusive?  
Sample size: n=312

Over half of survey respondents (54%) would like to stay in their current role going forward, and a further 22% would like to move into a different role at their current company.

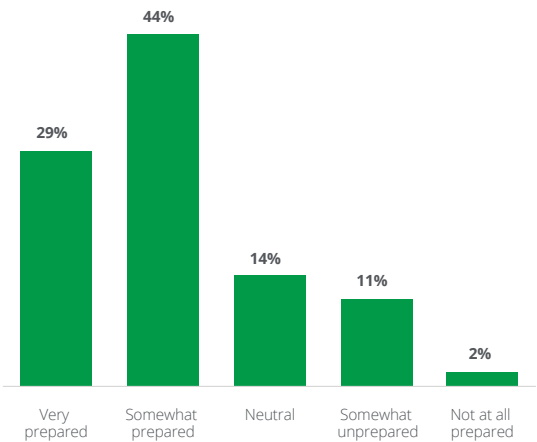
Plan for your career moving forward



Note: Sum of percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.  
Q7. What is your plan for your career moving forward?  
Sample size: n=312

However, less than a third of survey respondents feel fully prepared to adapt to the changes taking place in the automotive industry. Respondents feel they would benefit from a better view of new technologies, new skill requirements, and a better understanding of company priorities.

Do you feel prepared to adapt to changes taking place in the automotive industry?



What would help you feel more prepared? (Top 5)

- 1 A better view of new or changing technologies and the pace of change
- 2 A better understanding of new or changing roles and what skills are needed
- 3 Greater understanding of my company's strategy and priorities
- 4 Improving my current skills
- 5 Greater engagement with others in the industry also going through these changes

Q24. Do you feel prepared to adapt to changes taking place in the automotive industry? Q25. What would help you to feel more prepared? Please rank your top three from the following list.  
Sample size: n=312 [Q24]; 39 [Q25]

## Key takeaways and considerations

### 1 Next-generation leadership

Automotive companies should invest in **developing the next generation of strong leaders** to help guide the industry through this period of transformation. A focus on developing the **soft skills required for leadership success** that resonate with employees (e.g., trustworthiness, strong interpersonal relationships, and confidence) could have far-reaching benefits across the enterprise.

### 2 Mentorship/sponsorship matters

Although automotive employees surveyed feel their companies are successful in providing the tools and training required to do their job, **more emphasis could be placed on establishing effective mentorship and sponsorship programs** led by strong leaders to develop and advocate for the advancement of junior employees.

### 3 Importance of compelling company culture

A **positive company culture set by strong leadership** is one of the most important job criteria identified by employees surveyed across the automotive value chain. It can be the **differentiator for attracting the best talent** in an environment where competition is fierce. It can also contribute to **building a sense of purpose, pride, and job satisfaction among employees**.

### 4 Retention through empowerment

Creating an **environment that fosters a strong feeling of empowerment** to make decisions at work **can lead to increased employee retention**. However, fewer than **7 in 10 automotive employees surveyed currently feel empowered**, signaling an opportunity for improvement that may have a significant knock-on benefit.

### 5 Industry uncertainty persists

As the automotive industry continues to navigate a period of uncertainty, a **significant percentage of employees surveyed would have chosen a different industry if they had a chance to start their career over**. Further, only half of current employees would encourage young people to pursue a career in the auto sector, which represents a **challenge on the horizon for the industry**.



# 4 About the study

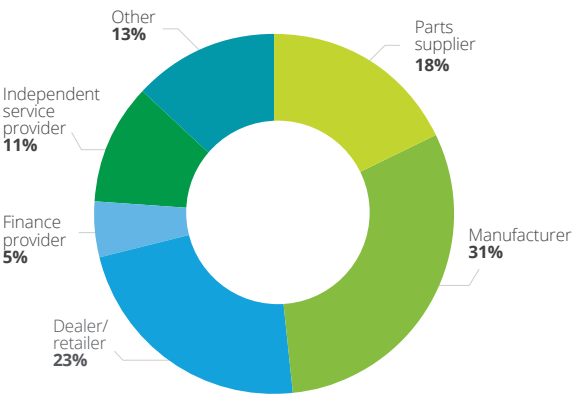




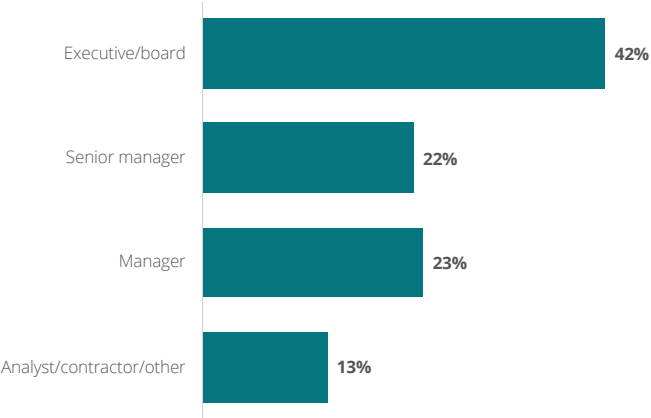
Study demographics

Invitations to attend the online survey were extended to *Automotive News* subscribers located in the United States. The survey was fielded between April 8 and April 18, 2025. Total sample size for the study is n=312.

Sub-sector representation



Function/role



Note: Sum of percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.  
Q4. To which of the following sectors does your company belong? Q3. Which of the following options most accurately describes your current role?  
Sample size: n=312



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