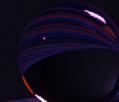


CERIDIAN

# 2023 Pulse of Talent

The rise of the flexible career experience



## Contents

Reimagining career paths for resilience and retention. . . . .	3
Understand career aspirations . . . . .	5
Embrace internal mobility . . . . .	8
Deliver effective and equitable training . . . . .	11
Support middle managers. . . . .	13

## Methodology

Hanover Research conducted Ceridian's *Pulse of Talent* research study online from August 19 to September 1, 2022. The study included 8,833 respondents aged 18+ who work at companies with at least 100 employees across Australia, Canada, Germany, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States.



## Reimagining career paths for resilience and retention

The world of work is abuzz with talk of flexibility. Employers have zeroed in on their own interpretation, implementing policies on when and where people work and providing greater autonomy over scheduling.

Ceridian's *2023 Pulse of Talent* survey of more than 8,800 workers from around the globe shows that flexibility holds sway over career decisions. Thirty-two percent of survey respondents looking for a new job cited wanting more flexibility. And 49% of survey respondents said flexibility/work-life balance is one of the most important attributes to them in a job.

Notably, respondents aged 18-24 rated flexibility as the job attribute they value most. At 44%, this was even higher than compensation (41%).

Despite gains in job flexibility, many workers still feel like they're missing out in their current roles. Ninety percent of our survey respondents said they have felt stuck in their role over the past year. One-third (33%) said they feel that way often or always.

And 70% of respondents are a flight risk – with 49% open to new opportunities and 21% actively looking. This means roughly half of employees are open to change but can still be retained.

# 90%

**of respondents have felt stuck in their job in the last year**

---

So how can employers help ensure their employees don't leave? [MIT Sloan Management Review](#) research shows that the opportunity to make a lateral career move was the most important predictor of employee retention – 2.5 times more important than pay and 12 times more effective than offering a promotion.

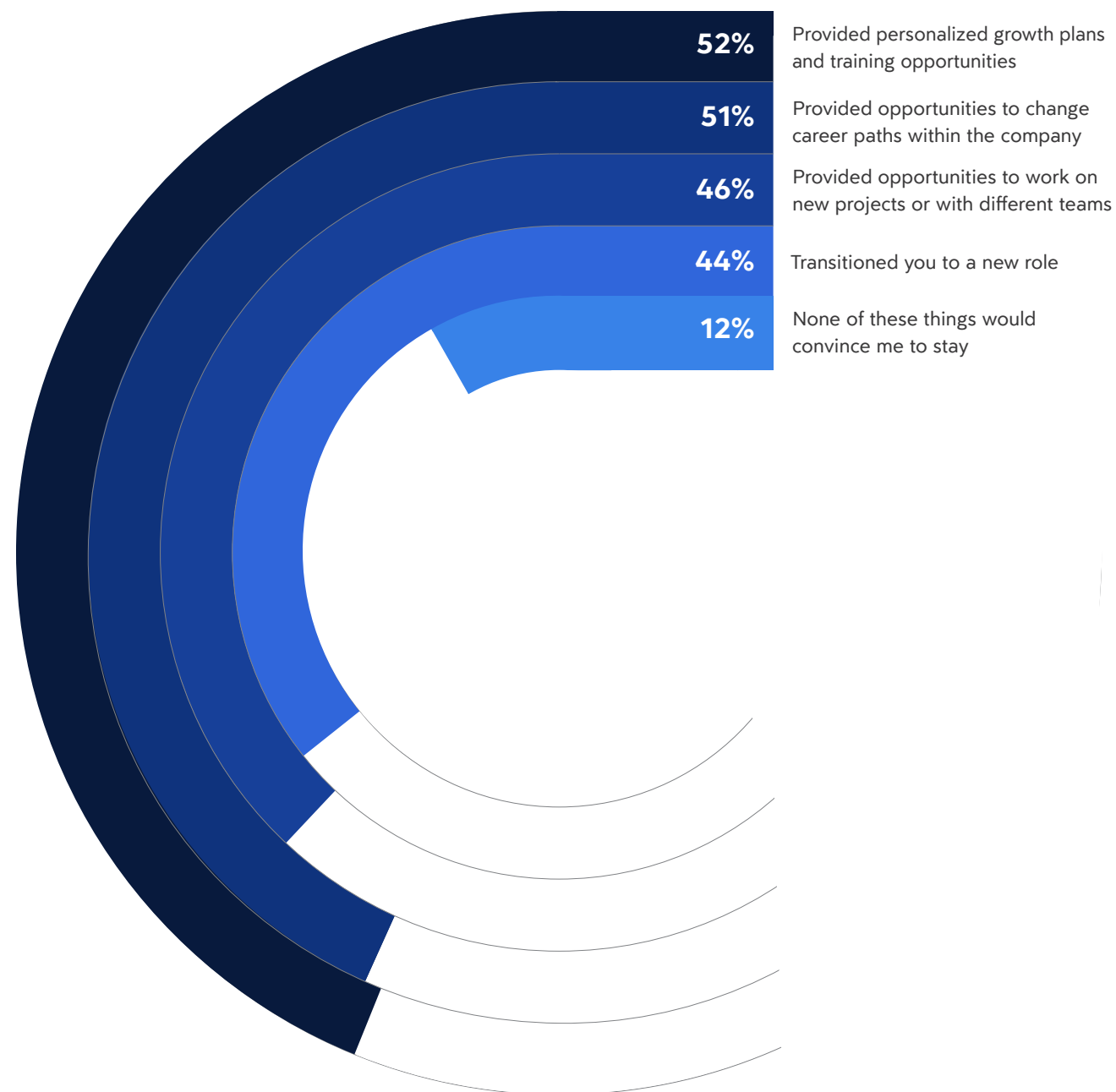
The linear career path is now largely a relic. Workers today don't just want flexible jobs – they want flexible careers.

Our *2023 Pulse of Talent* survey findings reveal big opportunities for employers that are willing to rethink traditional career paths. Employers can retain and empower employees by reimagining traditional career experiences, allowing organizations to move faster, work smarter, and build resilience. In this report, we'll explore what our data uncovered about what workers want in their careers and how organizations can meet those expectations with career flexibility.



Rather than leaving your current job, would you consider staying if your employer offered you the following?

(Select all that apply.)



“Employers have an opportunity to improve work life, boost engagement, and build organizational resilience by focusing on flexibility. This means not only giving employees greater control over where, when, and how their job gets done but also where their career will take them.”

SUSAN TOHYAMA, CHRO, CERIDIAN

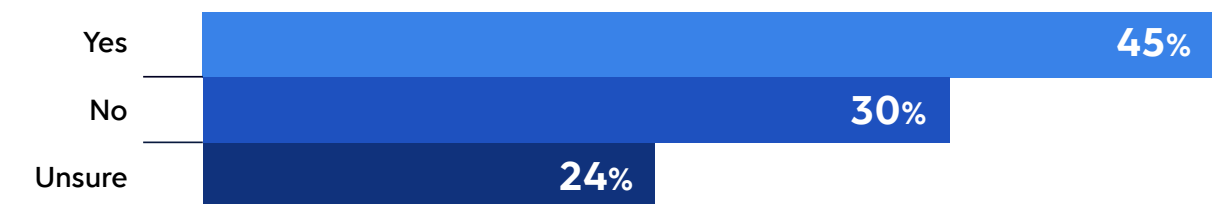


## Understand career aspirations

Today, the need to be attuned to employee ambitions is more critical than ever. In a recent [Gartner](#) survey, 65% of respondents said the pandemic made them rethink the place work should have in their life.

Yet only 45% of our *Pulse of Talent* respondents said their employer understands their career aspirations. U.S. respondents were most likely to say their employers understand their career aspirations, but only around half (54%) said so. This is particularly problematic because many organizations' promotion and career pathing structures assume people want to move up. Our study showed that is largely a myth.

Do you feel like your employer understands your career aspirations?



	AUS	CAN	GER	MYS	NZL	SGP	UKI	USA
Yes	43%	41%	41%	50%	43%	46%	43%	54%
No	31%	33%	32%	24%	31%	31%	34%	27%
Unsure	26%	26%	27%	26%	26%	23%	23%	19%



The traditional career path is a ladder, but today, not everyone wants to climb it. When asked about their highest career aspiration, only 17% of our survey respondents said they aspire to senior leadership. And only 14% said they want to become a people manager.

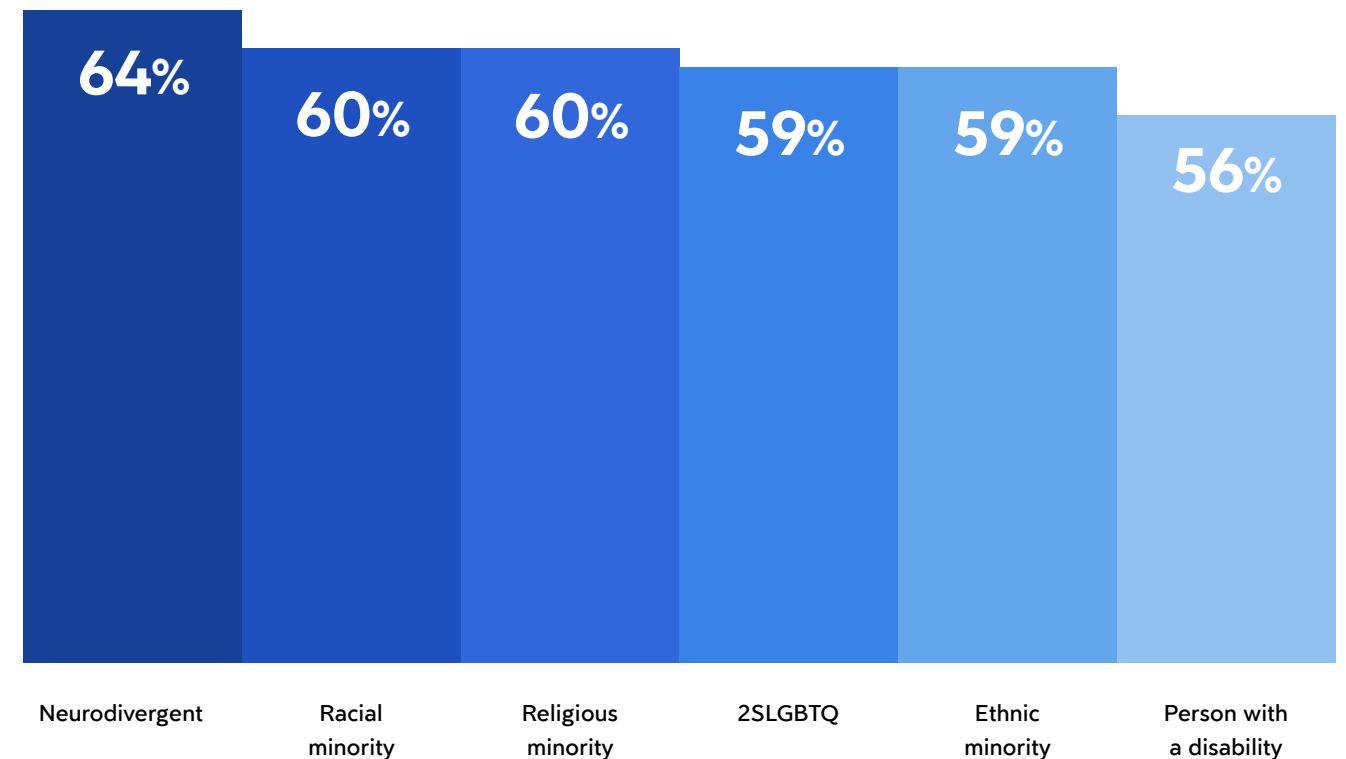
One potential reason for this lack of interest could be that rates of burnout are higher as you climb the corporate ladder. Eighty-seven percent of all survey respondents said they had experienced burnout in the last year, compared to 89% of middle managers and 92% of senior leaders.

**92%**  
of senior leaders and  
**89%**  
of middle managers  
experienced burnout  
in the last year

Representation also influences career aspirations. Well over half of *Pulse of Talent* respondents who identified as part of a minority or underrepresented group agreed or strongly agreed that a lack of leadership diversity at a company would stop them from pursuing leadership roles within that organization. Diversity in leadership is essential, particularly when organizations may struggle to find people who aspire to those roles.



To what degree do you agree with the following statement? “A lack of diversity among a company’s leadership would stop me from pursuing leadership roles within that organization.”  
(Showing “agree” or “strongly agree” for minority/underrepresented groups.)



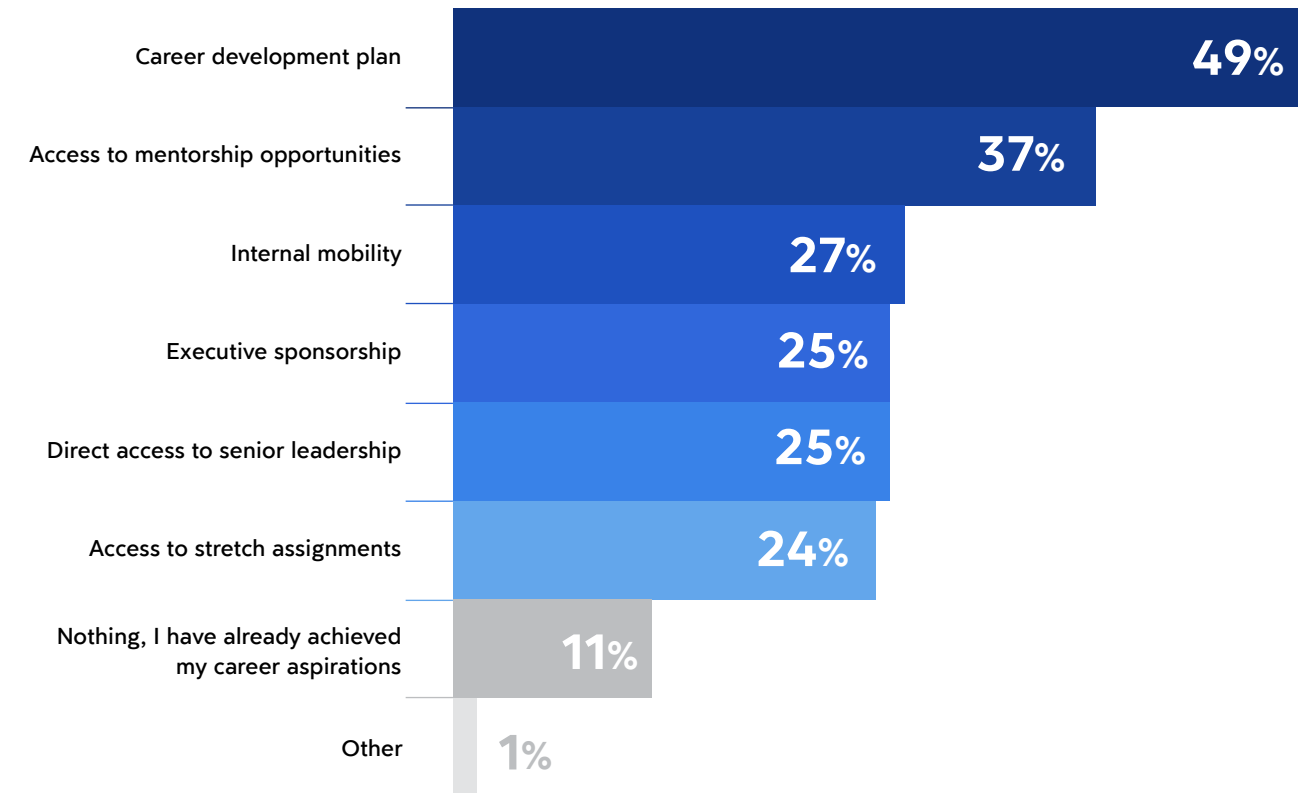


Our *Pulse of Talent* findings also offer insight into how employers can better support their employees' career goals. Globally, when asked what their employers could provide to help them achieve their aspirations, a desire for career development plans (49%) was the top response. A further 37% of survey respondents wanted mentorship opportunities, and 27% were interested in internal mobility.

There are also regional differences in how workers would like their employers to help them achieve their career aspirations. For example, in Germany, the top response was executive sponsorship (41%). And in Malaysia, the interest in career development plans rises to 59%.

For employees today, up isn't the only direction to go. Organizations that wish to become employers of choice will seek to uncover what their employees want from their careers and provide the support and flexibility for their workforce to grow in place.

**Which of the following could your employer offer that would help you better achieve your career aspirations?**

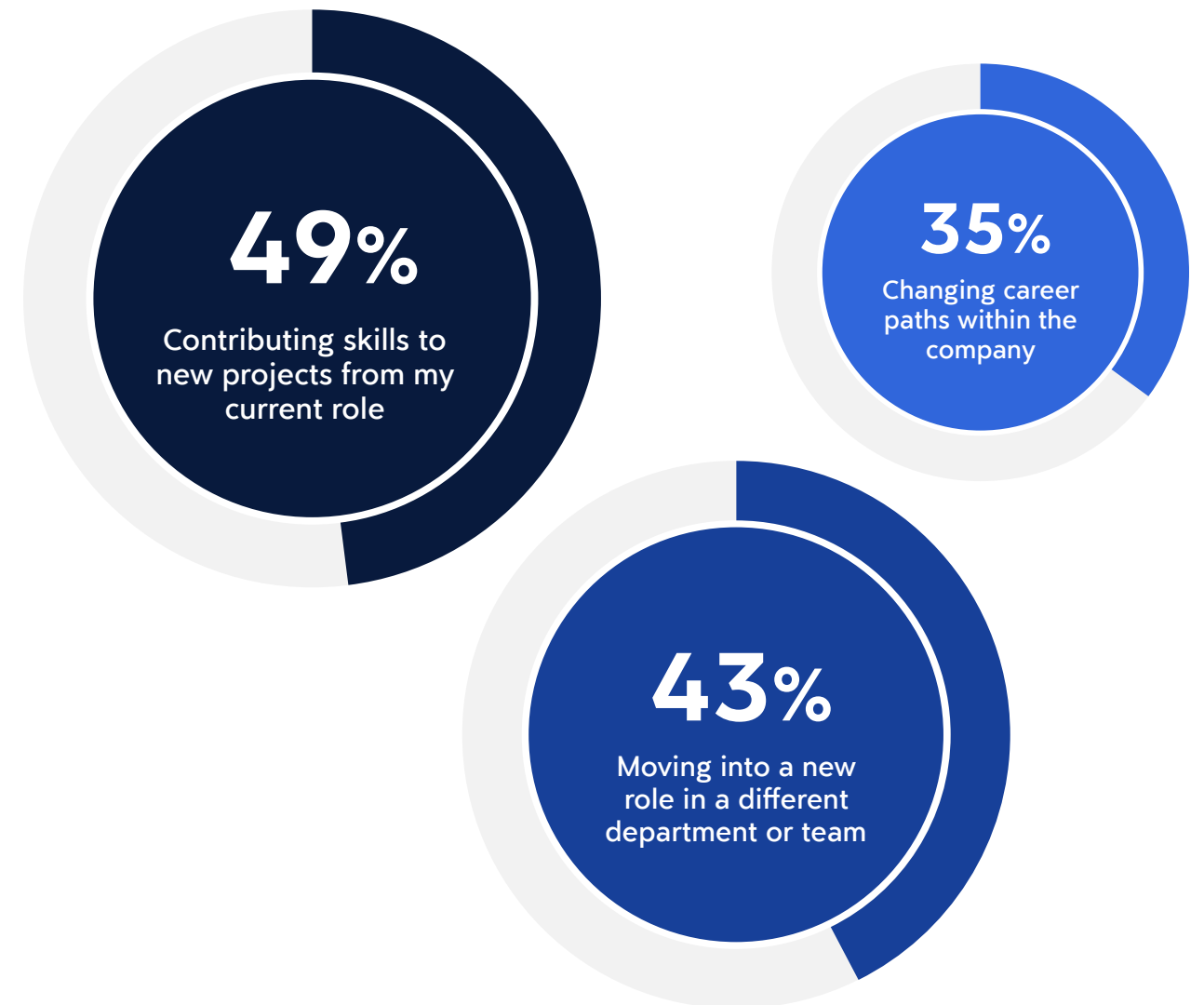


**Results by region**

	AUS	CAN	GER	MYS	NZL	SGP	UKI	USA
Career development plan	52%	46%	39%	59%	49%	53%	55%	44%
Access to mentorship opportunities	44%	37%	26%	42%	38%	40%	39%	36%
Internal mobility	23%	30%	24%	35%	20%	32%	24%	29%
Executive sponsorship	15%	21%	41%	32%	16%	32%	19%	26%
Direct access to senior leadership	23%	23%	20%	36%	20%	32%	24%	27%
Access to stretch assignments	17%	19%	37%	30%	20%	29%	19%	25%
Nothing, I have already achieved my career aspirations	13%	13%	9%	4%	18%	4%	11%	12%
Other	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	1%	2%	2%



**When it comes to internal career opportunities, which of the following appeals to you?**  
(Select all that apply. Top three responses shown.)



## Embrace internal mobility

The traditional career path has created internal boundaries that can hinder the movement of people between departments and teams. In a data sample from [McKinsey](#), more than 80% of role moves involved respondents moving to a new employer. But getting a new job shouldn't require an external move.

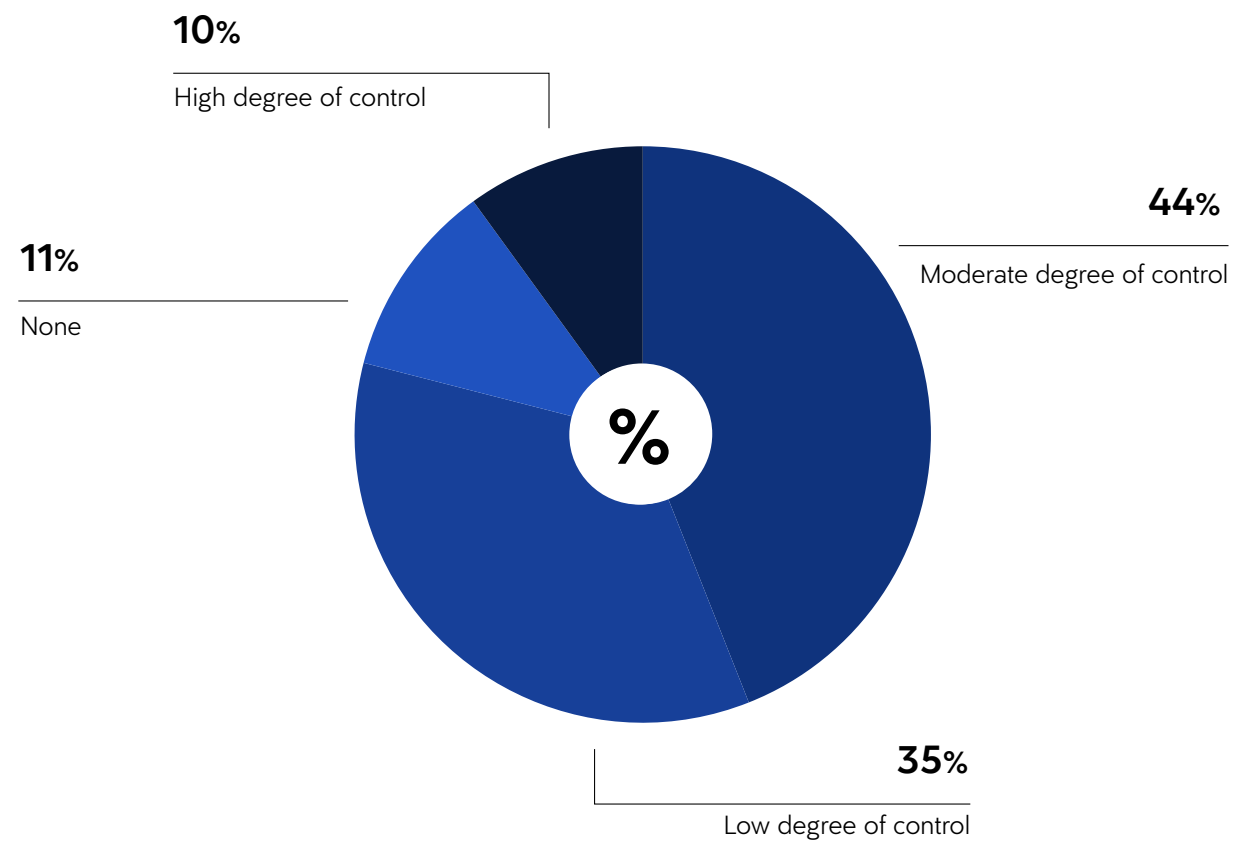
Our *Pulse of Talent* survey data shows that workers are interested in internal career opportunities. Nearly half (49%) of respondents said they want to contribute skills to new projects from within their current role. This is followed by 43% who are interested in moving into a new role in a different department or team. And 35% said they would like to change career paths within the company.

Despite this interest from employees, we see many barriers to career flexibility in our survey findings. One such barrier comes from career pathing. Less than half (47%) of respondents said they see clear career paths with their employers.

And workers don't feel like they have control over their career paths. Only 10% of our respondents globally said they have a high degree of control. Respondents in Germany and the UK were least likely to say they have a high degree of control over their career paths, at 6%.



## What degree of control do you feel you have over your career path with your current employer?



### Results by region

	AUS	CAN	GER	MYS	NZL	SGP	UKI	USA
High degree of control	9%	11%	6%	10%	9%	10%	6%	17%
Moderate degree of control	45%	42%	33%	55%	41%	48%	41%	47%
Low degree of control	36%	36%	41%	28%	39%	32%	41%	29%
None	10%	11%	20%	8%	11%	10%	12%	7%

“Workers today are looking at flexibility from multiple perspectives. It’s time for employers to meet those expectations with a more personalized and flexible approach to career pathing.”

SUSAN TOHYAMA, CHRO, CERIDIAN

# 84%

of respondents said having a clear career path makes them more loyal to their employer

---

But career paths are powerful drivers of retention. Eighty-four percent of respondents who have a clear career path said it makes them want to stay longer with their current employer.

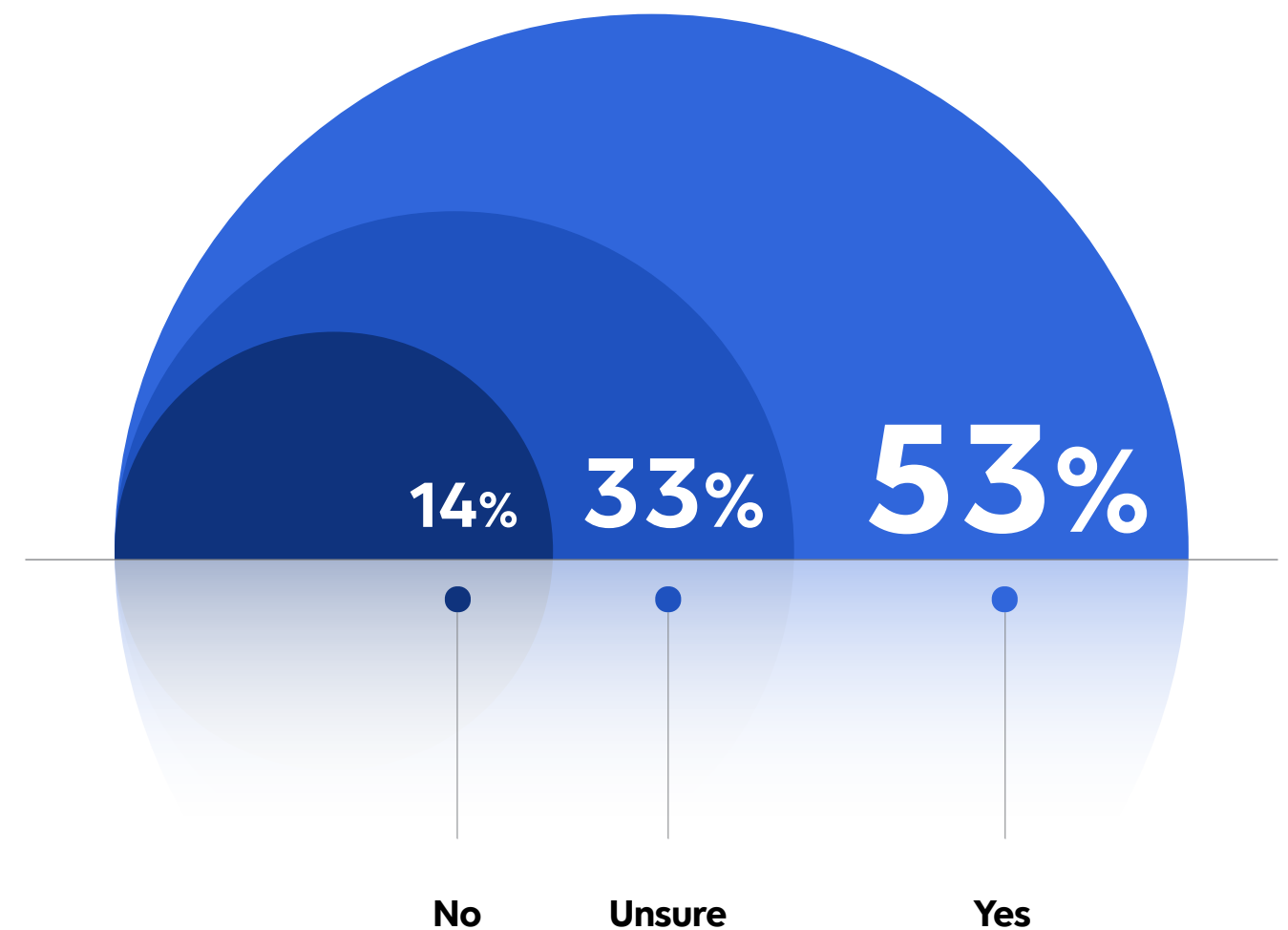
Internal hiring – or lack thereof – is another career-flexibility obstacle. Only 31% of respondents reported that employees often or very often move into roles on other teams. This may be because nearly half (47%) said it was difficult to find open roles in their organization that might suit them.



And manager support is also a potential hindrance to internal recruitment. When asked if their manager would support them moving into a new internal role, just over half (53%) of *Pulse of Talent* respondents said yes. Given middle managers' power over their direct reports' careers, organizations must coach people leaders to keep flexibility top of mind.

It's time for employers to reimagine internal mobility to give employees the flexible careers they want while building the flexible workforce organizations need. But organizations should act quickly because many employees have commitment issues. Only half (52%) of *Pulse of Talent* respondents feel committed to staying with their current employer for at least three to five years.

If you found a different role in your organization that interested you, would your manager support you moving into that role?



## Deliver effective and equitable training

Upskilling and reskilling have grabbed their fair share of headlines in recent years. But despite the conversation, skill development lags and the skills gap persists.

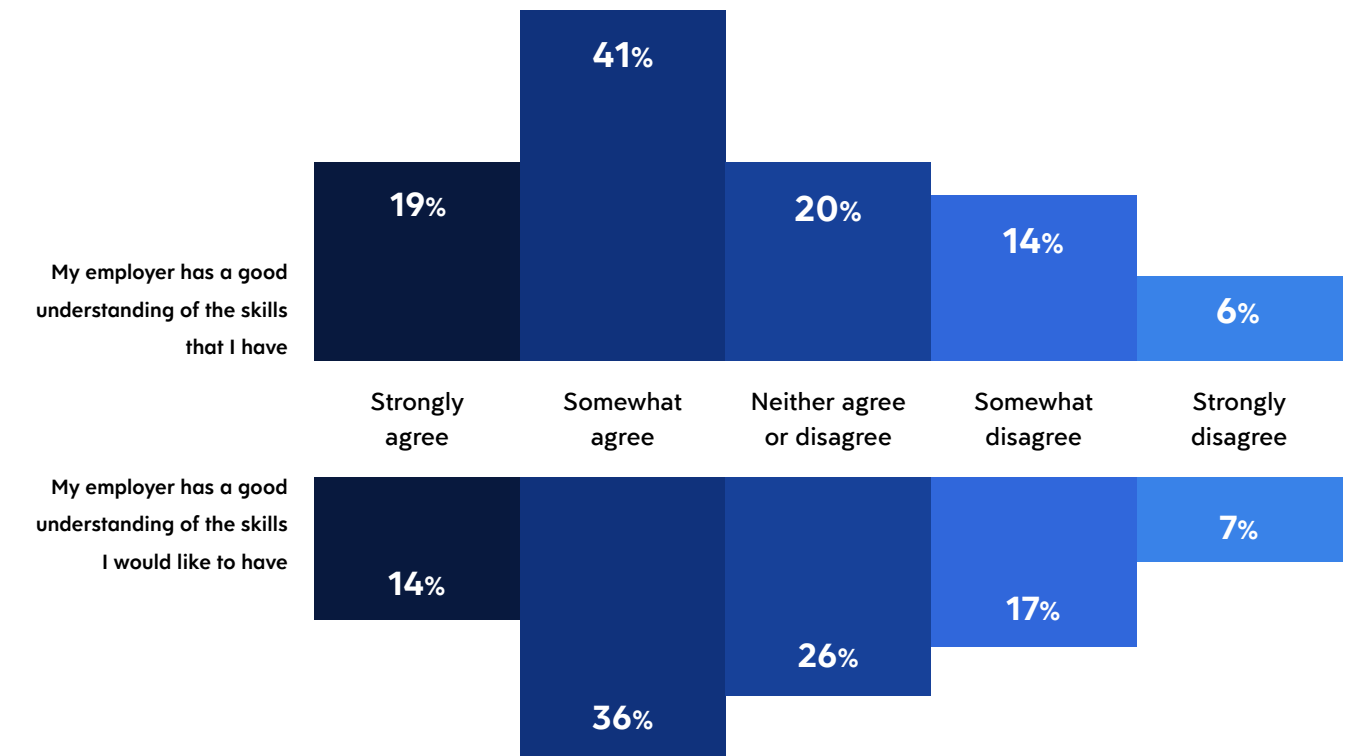
In research from [Monster](#), 91% of employers said they are struggling to fill positions because of a skills gap. Twenty-nine percent agreed that the skills gap has increased over the past year.

To be effective, employee skill development can't be a one-size-fits-all effort. Achieving workforce flexibility requires training that is thoughtfully catered to individuals.

But developing a personalized training program requires employer understanding of employee skills – both current and desired. Our *Pulse of Talent* results show that there is work to be done in this area.

Sixty percent of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that their employer has a good understanding of the skills they have. But only 49% said they strongly or somewhat agree that their employers have a good understanding of the skills they would like to have.

To what degree do you agree with the following statements about your employer?



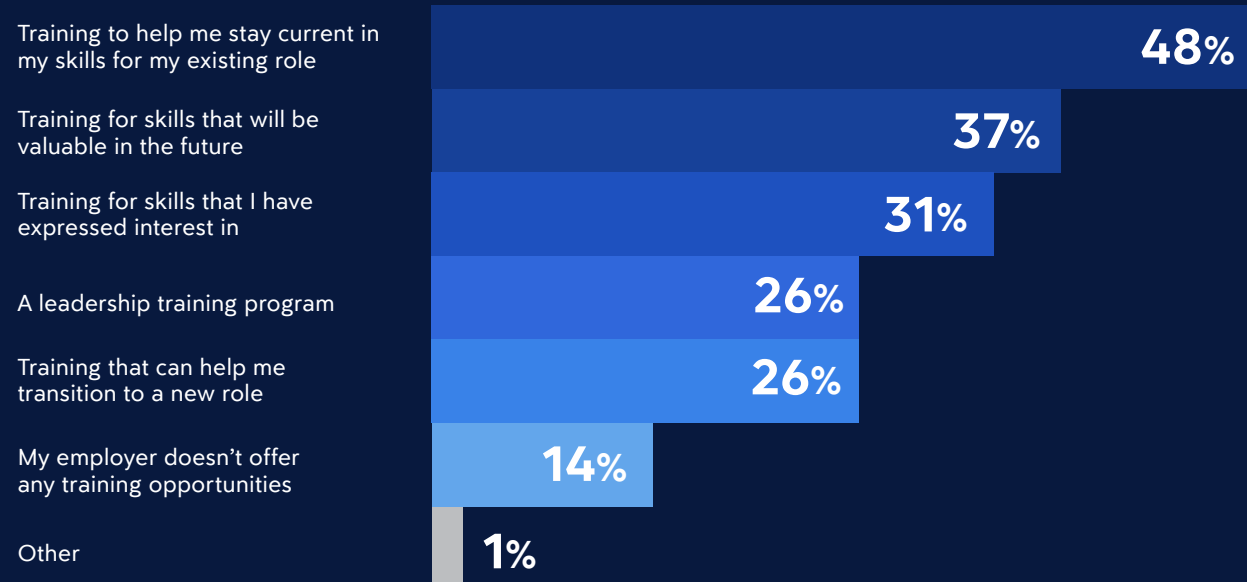
And the overall state of employee training doesn't lend itself to career and organizational flexibility. Less than half (48%) of respondents globally said their employer offers training to help them stay current in their skills for their current role. Thirty-seven percent reported receiving training for skills that will be valuable in the future.

The training offered also varies by region. The number of respondents who said they are offered training to keep their skills current is 42% Germany but rises to 52% in New Zealand and the UK. Malaysian employees were most likely to say they received training in skills that would be valuable in the future, at 47%.



### Which types of training does your employer offer?

(Select all that apply.)



### Results by region

	AUS	CAN	GER	MYS	NZL	SGP	UKI	USA
Training to help me stay current in my skills for my existing role	51%	43%	42%	49%	52%	43%	52%	48%
Training for skills that will be valuable in the future	37%	33%	33%	47%	35%	44%	37%	37%
Training for skills that I have expressed interest in	28%	28%	30%	36%	31%	36%	30%	32%
A leadership training program	24%	23%	26%	36%	20%	30%	25%	27%
Training that can help me transition to a new role	26%	25%	24%	30%	18%	29%	23%	31%
My employer doesn't offer any training opportunities	16%	18%	18%	10%	17%	12%	12%	12%
Other	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%

Looking at learning and development opportunities over the past year, we see even more obstacles to career flexibility and organizational resilience. When we asked about their learning and development over the past year, 31% of *Pulse of Talent* respondents said they haven't received any.

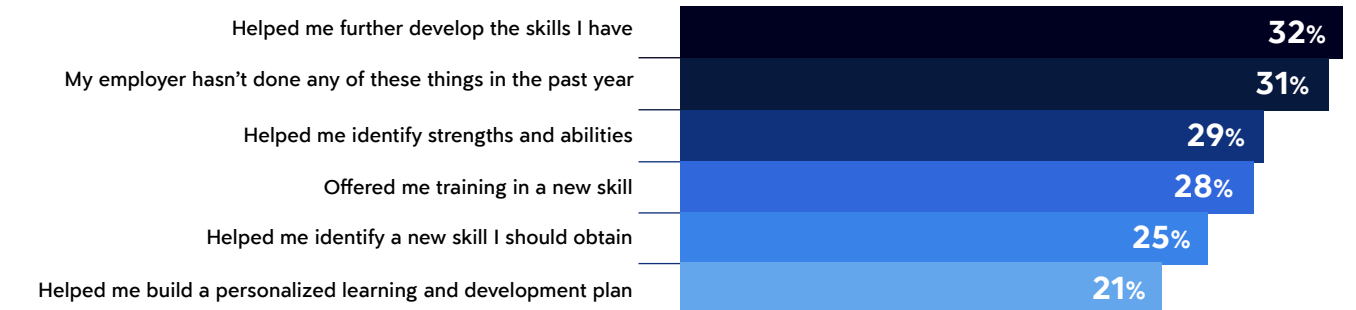
And as age increases, the likelihood of receiving development opportunities decreases. More than half (54%) of those 65+ said they didn't receive any such opportunities over the last year, along with 49% of those ages 55-64 and 41% of respondents ages 45-54.

# 54%

of respondents ages 65+ said they didn't receive any learning and development opportunities over the past year

### In the past year, has your employer done any of the following when it comes to learning and development?

(Select all that apply.)



And yet we see that flight risk significantly decreases as age increases. Organizations are prioritizing investments in younger employees and leaving out those who are likely to be more loyal.

Learning and development is a critical part of the new career path. It's up to employers to ensure that training isn't a check-the-box activity in their organization. Rather, it must be inclusive of all employees and help build the framework for career flexibility.

## Support middle managers

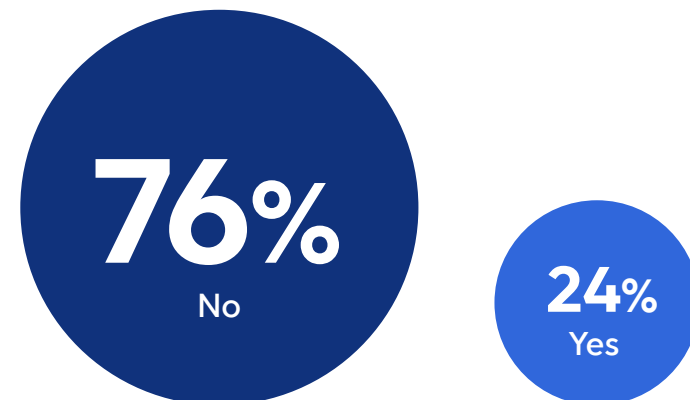
Employee career experiences and retention are heavily dependent on their managers. A study from [The Predictive Index](#) found that 63% of employees with a bad manager are thinking of leaving their employer in the next 12 months.

Employers can't have a more fluid workforce if they can't retain employees. This is due to the loss of institutional knowledge when employees depart and the time it takes

new employees to get up to speed. And for career flexibility to exist and succeed in an organization, supporting middle managers is imperative.

Middle managers have largely embraced their experiences as people managers – with 76% of our *Pulse of Talent* respondents saying they haven't ever regretted becoming a people manager. Malaysian middle managers are most accepting of their role, with 82% saying they haven't regretted it.

Have you ever regretted becoming a people manager?



### Results by region

	AUS	CAN	GER	MYS	NZL	SGP	UKI	USA
Yes	27%	25%	22%	18%	38%	22%	24%	25%
No	73%	75%	78%	82%	62%	78%	76%	75%

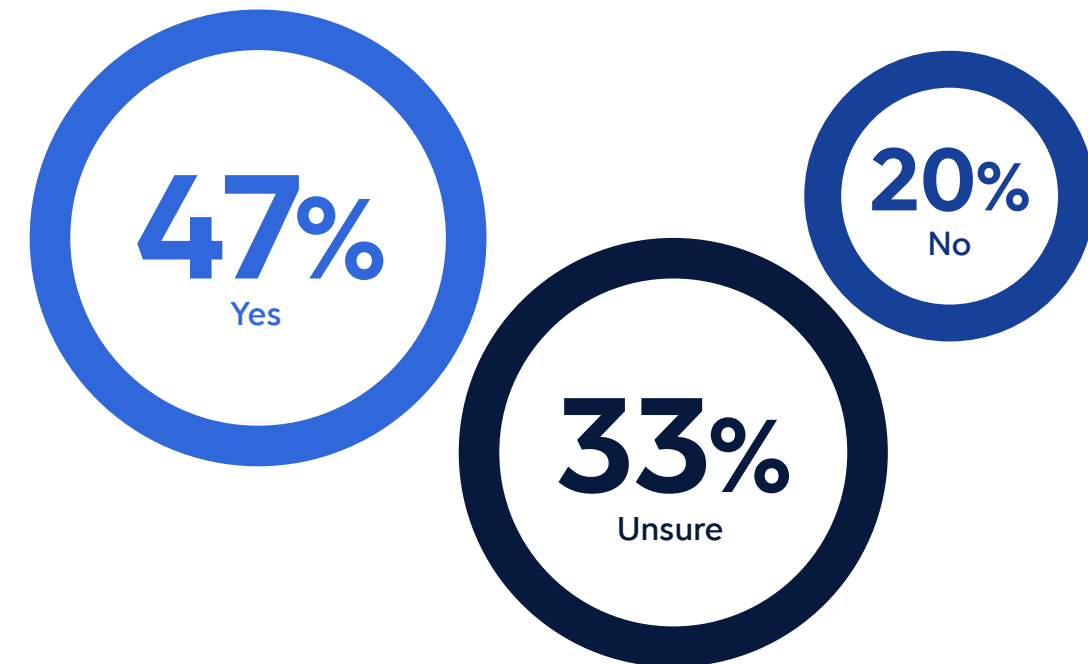


Only **29%**  
of middle managers  
surveyed said they feel  
very or extremely valued  
by their employer

But the lack of regret doesn't mean middle managers see themselves continuing in their role. Less than half (47%) of respondents see themselves being a people manager in three years. Among German middle managers, only 38% see themselves being in their role in three years. This is a big problem for employers, particularly when so few people aspire to fill those roles.

And it's little wonder that middle managers' commitment is waning. Only 29% of our middle manager survey respondents said they feel very or extremely valued by their organization.

Do you see yourself being a people manager in three years?



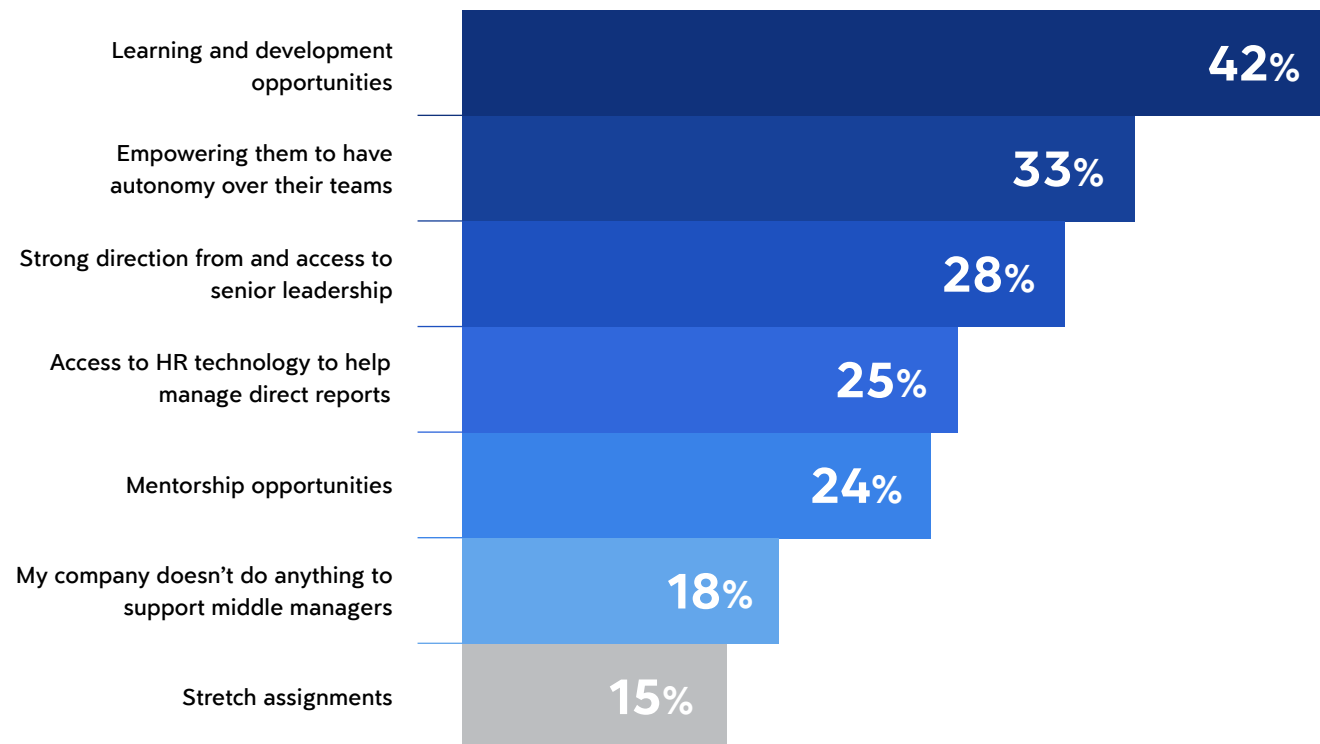
Results by region

	AUS	CAN	GER	MYS	NZL	SGP	UKI	USA
Yes	44%	47%	38%	46%	44%	52%	52%	50%
No	24%	23%	24%	13%	21%	13%	17%	21%
Unsure	32%	31%	37%	41%	35%	36%	31%	29%

We can see why they don't feel valued when we asked middle managers how their organizations support them so they can be successful in their roles. Less than half (42%) were receiving learning and development opportunities, which are critical to helping managers develop the skills they need to lead effectively. And there are barriers to middle manager efficiency and productivity. Only one-quarter (25%) of respondents said they had access to HR technology to help manage their direct reports.

Middle managers are the foundation upon which career flexibility is built. But people managers can't support their team members if they don't feel supported themselves. Organizations should consider what they can do to ensure the strength of this foundation.

**How does your organization support middle managers so they can be successful in their roles?**  
(Select all that apply.)



## The path forward

Gone are the days of diligently climbing the corporate ladder at one job for a lifetime and getting a gold watch at retirement. Employees today want to follow the new career path – one that provides exciting growth opportunities and where they can feel valued at any level. Creating this path is a powerful differentiator for employers.

Our *2023 Pulse of Talent* data shows that flexibility is the future of careers and workforces. Reimagining career experiences and removing internal obstacles helps empower employees and makes organizations more resilient. On the following pages, we outline how employers can get started.





## Unlock your people's potential

- 1** Increase employee engagement and retention with personalized career paths that align with their individual strengths and aspirations.
- 2** Motivate people by giving them control over their growth, development, and career path.
- 3** Make career progression inclusive and equitable, and inspire all employees to explore new internal roles or projects.



## Build a framework for internal mobility

- 1** Make internal opportunities available to those who seek new roles and those who want to experiment with a job rotation on another team – true career flexibility involves options.
- 2** Use technology to help employees identify open roles internally that are relevant to their skills and interests.
- 3** Set internal hiring goals, and use data-driven insights to help place the right people with the right skills in the right place within your organization.



## Prioritize learning and development

- 1 Provide a personalized, actionable plan for all employees to sharpen their current skills and acquire skills of interest.
- 2 Help employees understand how their skills could be utilized in other roles and teams.
- 3 Promote a culture of continual learning and development that makes learning a daily part of the employee experience.

## Foster diversity in leadership

- 1 Get insight into the extent employees feel they have advancement opportunities, so you can determine where DEI work needs to be done.
- 2 Ensure that underrepresented groups have access to stretch assignments, mentorship opportunities, and executive sponsorship to prepare them for leadership roles.
- 3 Be intentional in succession planning to maintain future diversity in leadership.



## Activate middle managers

- 1 Offer comprehensive, targeted, and ongoing leadership training and executive guidance for all middle managers.
- 2 Give middle managers the resources they need to deal with their own mental health and burnout.
- 3 Provide people managers with technology and workforce insights to help them be more efficient and empower their teams to be more self-sufficient.

The pandemic served as a giant reset button for people everywhere. Employers must now re-evaluate how they approach internal recruitment and career pathing to align with their employees' changed views of work. Flexibility is now a powerful motivator of who stays and who goes.

This year's *Pulse of Talent* data shows that employees' appetite for career flexibility surpasses what employers are providing. But by following the new career path, organizations have a tremendous opportunity to retain employees, fill skills gaps, build resilience, and be ready for what the future brings.

The traditional career success story typically involves climbing the ladder from front-line employee to the C-suite. But today, those stories are as varied as the people who live them. And with career flexibility, employers can help their employees write an exciting new chapter.

# CERIDIAN

At Ceridian, we create innovative technology that organizations around the world use to attract, develop, manage, and pay their people. Our award-winning Dayforce solution helps our customers manage compliance, make better decisions, build great teams, and drive engagement with their employees. Ceridian has solutions for organizations of all sizes.

[ceridian.com](https://ceridian.com)