



Workplace Happiness Index: Malaysia

What makes Malaysian workers happy
and how employers can build a happier,
more productive workplace.

About Jobstreet by SEEK

Jobstreet is a leading employment marketplace, connecting the right people with the right work in Malaysia since 1997. Operated by SEEK, an Australian Securities Exchange-listed company, Jobstreet combines its deep local expertise with SEEK's world-class AI technology and platform to create relevant job and talent matches across Asia-Pacific.

SEEK's presence spans Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Additionally, SEEK has minority investments in employment marketplaces in China, South Korea and Bangladesh.

In 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, SEEK was recognised as one of Australia's Top Ten Places to Work in Technology in the AFR BOSS Best Places to Work awards.

About this report

The SEEK Workplace Happiness Index provides a comprehensive look at the happiness levels of workers in the markets we operate across Asia-Pacific, with this report focusing on the results for Malaysia. It delves into key research findings, highlighting the factors that contribute to happiness in and out of the workplace and offering practical tips for improving happiness in employees.

This research was conducted by market research agency Nature on behalf of SEEK between October and November 2025, via an online survey. Responses were gathered from 1,000 individuals currently in the employment market, aged 18 to 64, and living in Malaysia. To ensure accuracy, the data has been weighted to be geographically representative of the labour force for each market, based on age and gender.

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Foreword

The Workplace Happiness Index Report provides crucial insights into what truly drives employee satisfaction and engagement. This comprehensive research, drawn from the voices of Malaysian workers themselves, reveals both encouraging progress and important opportunities for improvement across industries, generations, and income levels.

Our findings show that 70% of workers in Malaysia feel happy at work, which is encouraging, but there's still a significant group who feel disengaged, burnt out, or unsupported. While salary remains important, what truly sustains happiness is purpose. When workers find meaning in their daily responsibilities and feel connected to what they do, they're not only happier, but more motivated and more likely to stay. At the same time, stress and burnout remain pressing concerns, with over one in three workers feeling exhausted or dreading work. This is a clear signal for employers to rethink workload expectations, prioritise flexibility, and create cultures where employees feel heard and valued.

Workplace happiness in Malaysia is a shared responsibility. When employers invest in purpose-driven roles, supportive cultures, and listen to the diverse needs of their workforce, the impact is tangible, translating to higher engagement, productivity, and retention. Ultimately, building happier workplaces isn't just good for workers, it's essential for long-term business success.

This report provides actionable insights to help make that happen, offering guidance on everything from fostering supportive cultures to recognising the unique needs of different generations and life stages. I invite you to explore these findings and consider how they might apply to your organisation. Together, we can create workplaces where Malaysians don't just earn a living but thrive with a deep sense of purpose and belonging.



Nicholas Lam
Managing Director, Malaysia
Jobstreet by SEEK



Happiness in APAC in 2025

To gain a nuanced understanding of workplace sentiment across Asia-Pacific, we surveyed workers in eight diverse markets, asking “How happy are you at work, generally?”

The findings shed light on significant variability across the region.

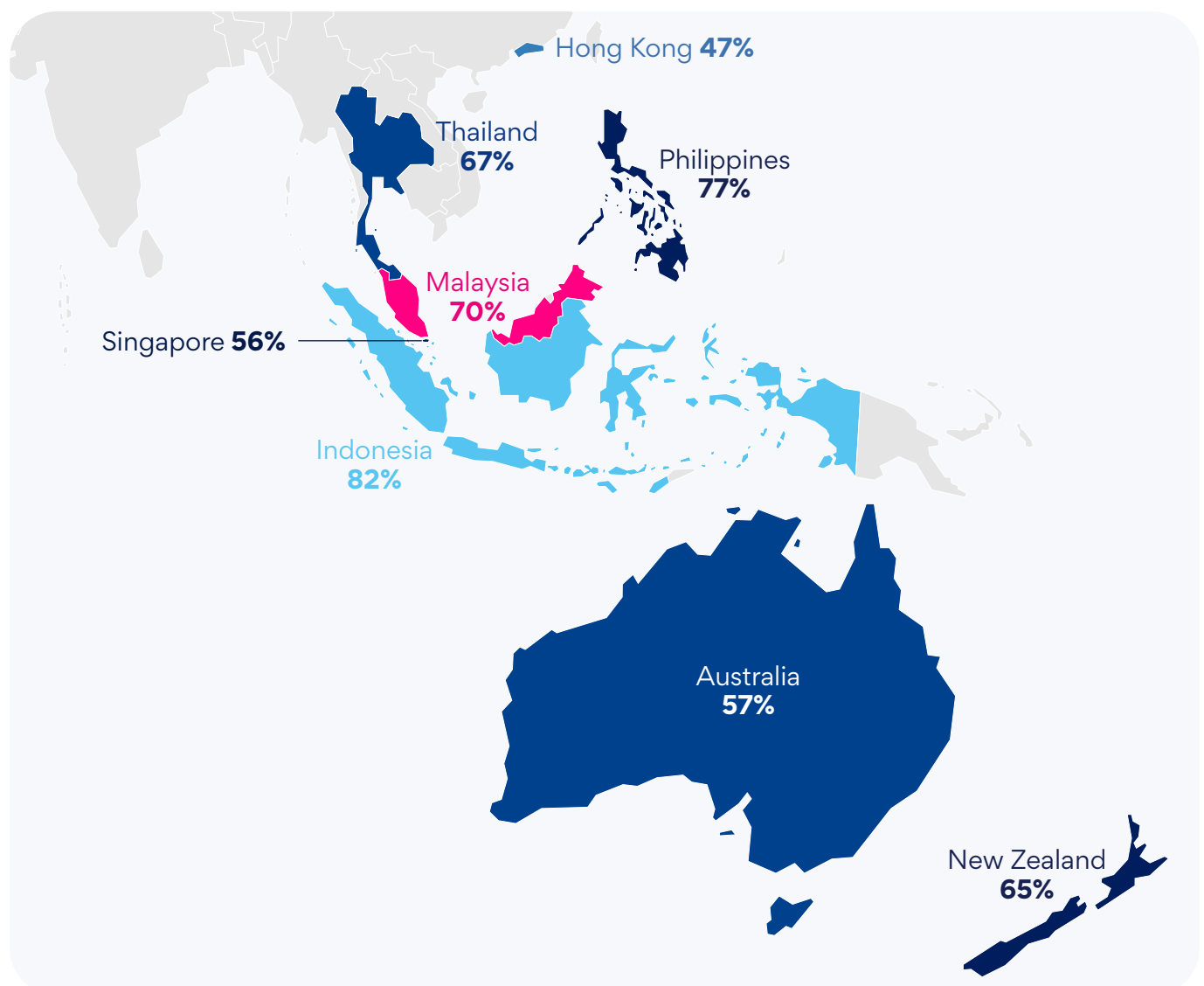


Workplace happiness in the APAC region

Indonesia leads in workplace happiness, with 82% of respondents reporting that they feel somewhat or extremely happy at work, closely followed by the Philippines at 77%. This may be reflective of a cultural tendency among Indonesians and Filipinos to answer more positively to surveys, however, these are still striking results.

At the other end of the spectrum, Hong Kong (47%), Singapore (56%), and Australia (57%) report the lowest rates of workplace happiness among the markets surveyed, underscoring the more competitive corporate culture and local cost of living pressures faced by workers in these locations.

These findings show that workplace experiences vary widely across APAC, influenced by differences in culture, economies, and organisational environments. It's clear that improving workplace happiness can't rely on a one-size-fits-all approach. Each market needs tailored strategies to genuinely support and engage its workforce.



The state of workplace happiness in Malaysia

To understand workplace happiness in Malaysia in more detail, we looked at how happy workers are in their jobs in general, and with specific aspects of their work. We also investigated which factors most influence workplace happiness.

This report provides an overview of workplace happiness and its key drivers overall, as well as highlighting nuances across different generations, industries and income levels.



KEY FINDING 1:

More than two thirds of workers in Malaysia are happy at work

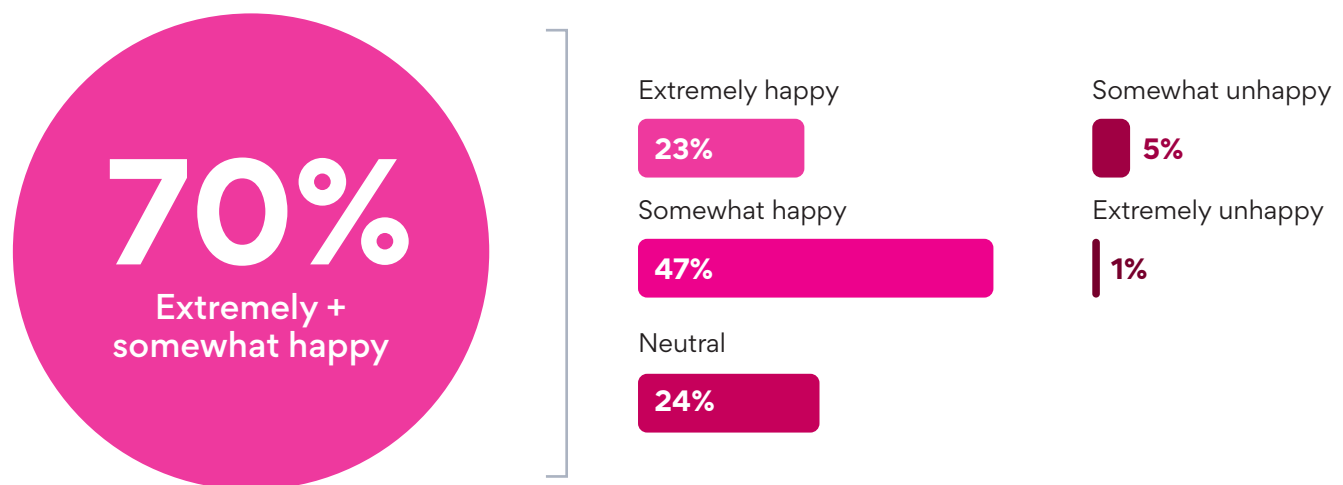
When asked about their overall happiness at work, 70% of workers in Malaysia said they feel somewhat or extremely happy. Interestingly, happiness at work is similar across the vast regions in Malaysia, suggesting that workers show common experiences, regardless of where they're based.

A similar majority said they felt valued at work and 68% found their job fulfilling - revealing widespread positivity and satisfaction within the workplace.

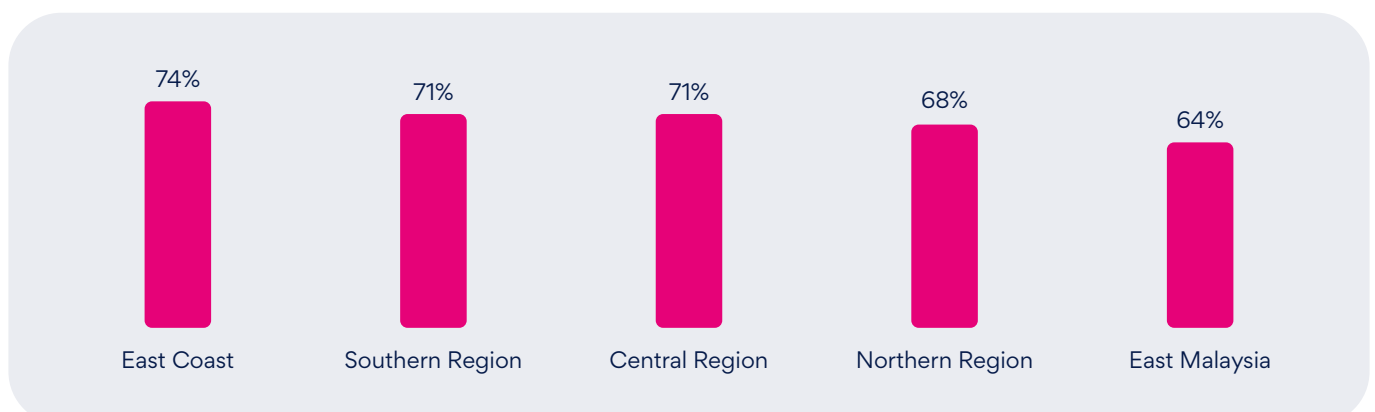
High workplace happiness is playing out against a backdrop of a strong labour market in Malaysia, with good job opportunities and low unemployment rates.

But there's still room to grow, with three in ten workers either actively unhappy or neutral. This indicates there are opportunities for leaders to help more people feel happier and supported at work.

Overall workplace happiness



Happiness by region



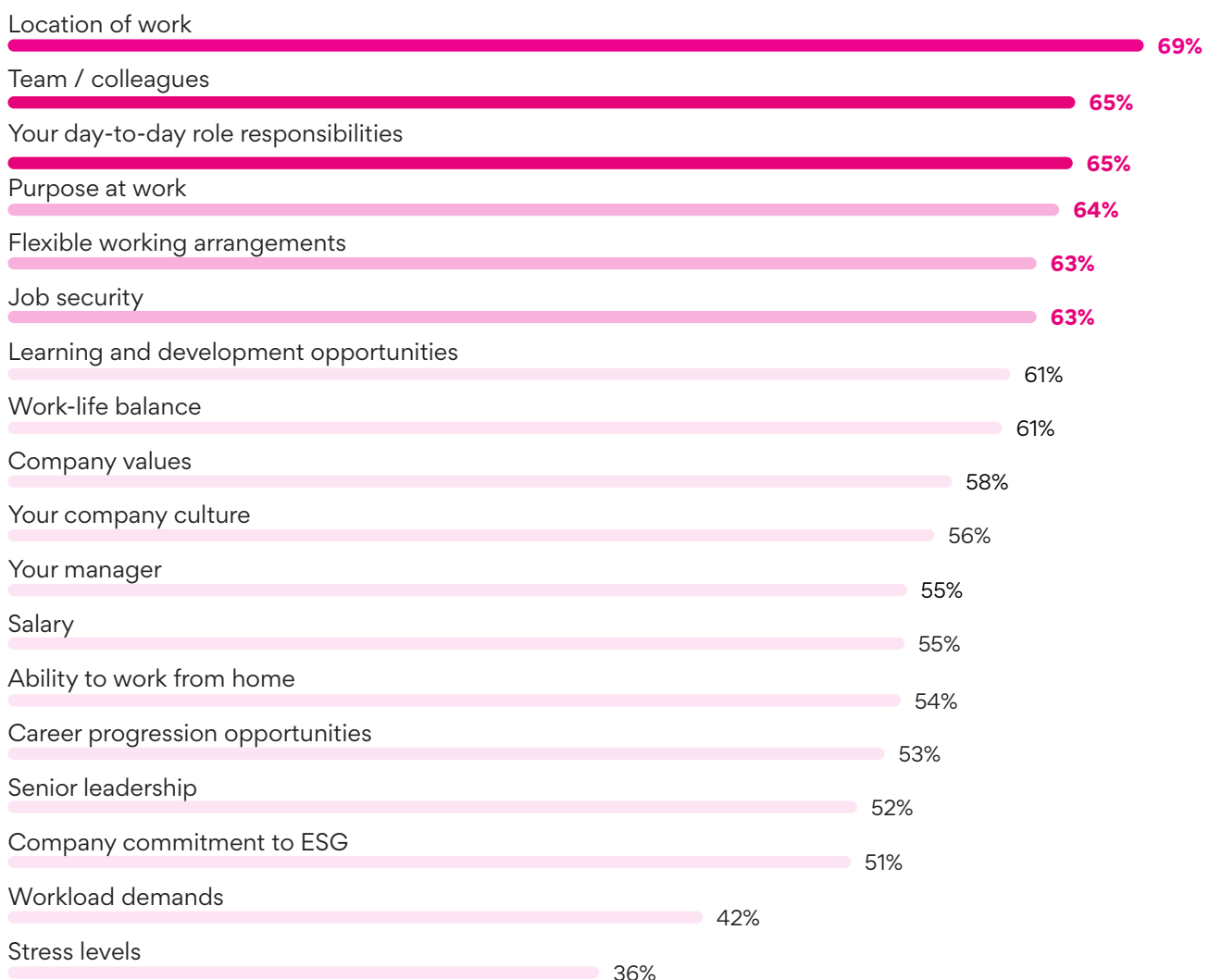
KEY FINDING 2:

Workers in Malaysia are most happy with their location of work, colleagues and daily responsibilities

When it comes to specific elements of their work, workers in Malaysia are happiest with where they work, who they work with and what they're doing on a day-to-day basis.

Higher satisfaction with location and duties likely stems from employees having agreed to these terms when accepting a role, giving them a stronger sense of control and ownership compared with other parts of the employee experience.

What workers are happiest to least happy with at work (Somewhat + extremely happy with each element)



KEY FINDING 3:

Two in three workers in Malaysia are unhappy with their stress levels

Most workers in Malaysia say they are happy at work, but stress is a significant concern with only 36% happy with their stress levels. Many are feeling burnt out or exhausted in their jobs, possibly shining a light on quiet struggles in Malaysia. Burnout is especially linked to workplace unhappiness: respondents who are unhappy at work were twice as likely to say they felt burnt out than those who are happy at work.

Workload strain is a key contributor, with only 42% happy with their current workload and

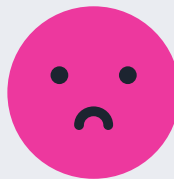
41% saying that a better work-life balance would improve their happiness at work - second only to a higher salary.

The findings highlight a pressing reality that workplace stress and burnout are significant challenges in Malaysia, impacting a substantial proportion of workers. With stress and burnout correlated to absenteeism and poor mental health outcomes, this underscores the critical need for proactive initiatives to improve workplace happiness levels.

Burnout at work

41%

Feel burnt out or exhausted by their job



Among those unhappy at work

71%



Among those happy at work

35%



“

If I could change one thing about my working life to make myself happier, I would have a better work-life balance so I can manage work responsibilities without feeling stressed and overwhelmed.

- Gen Z, Admin,
customer service & sales

KEY FINDING 4:

Happiness at work is a shared responsibility

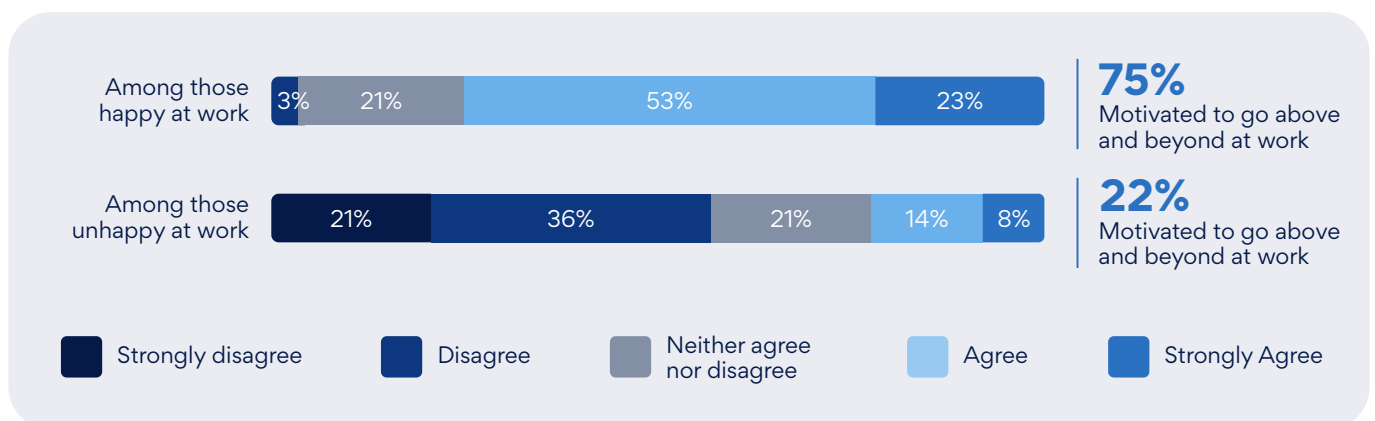
The role of employers is significant, as 87% of workers believe that workplace happiness is a shared responsibility between themselves and their employers.

When workers are happy, everyone benefits. In Malaysia, workers who feel happy in their roles are three times more likely to feel motivated to go above and beyond for their organisation.

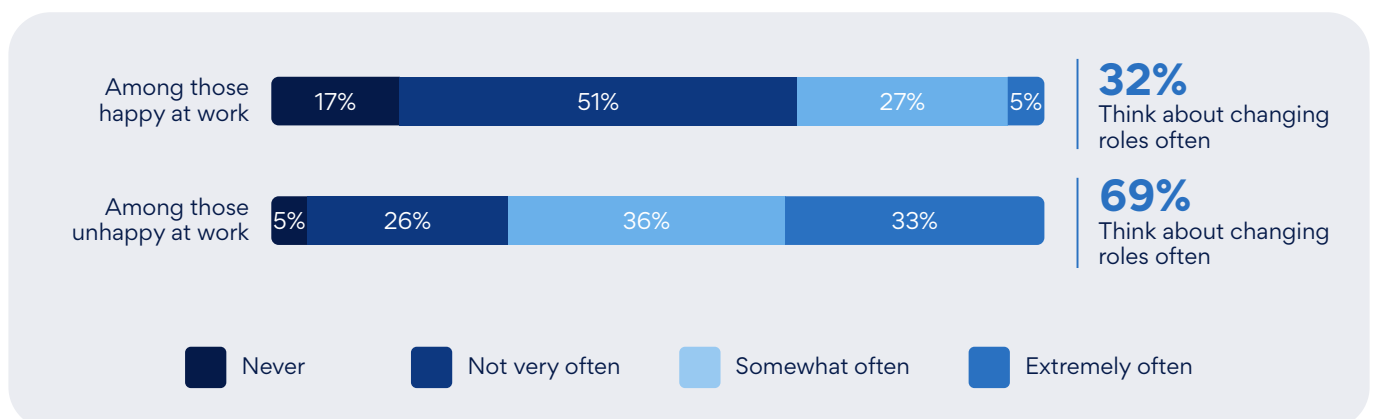
They are also 37% less likely to look for another job, showcasing more loyalty than unhappy workers.

What this reveals is that when businesses prioritise employee happiness, they are rewarded with greater engagement, productivity, and retention.

Motivation to go above and beyond at work



Likelihood of searching for a new job



These findings reinforce what we see every day in our organisations: happiness at work isn't something employees or employers can build alone. It thrives when both sides actively contribute.

For employers, this means creating an environment where people feel supported, trusted, and connected to something bigger than their daily tasks.

For employees, it's about taking ownership of their growth, being open about what they need, and engaging meaningfully with the organisation's goals.



Samantha Tan,
HR Business Partner,
Jobstreet by SEEK



“

Find a sense of purpose, only with purpose can you be content with where you are.

- Gen Z,
Industrial

KEY FINDING 5:

Beyond salary, having purpose is the lead driver of happiness at work

When we asked workers in Malaysia what would make them happier at work, most said a higher salary, with 57% placing it in their top five (out of 20 options). However, while salary sits in the top position overall, once we look more closely at the data, the story becomes more nuanced.

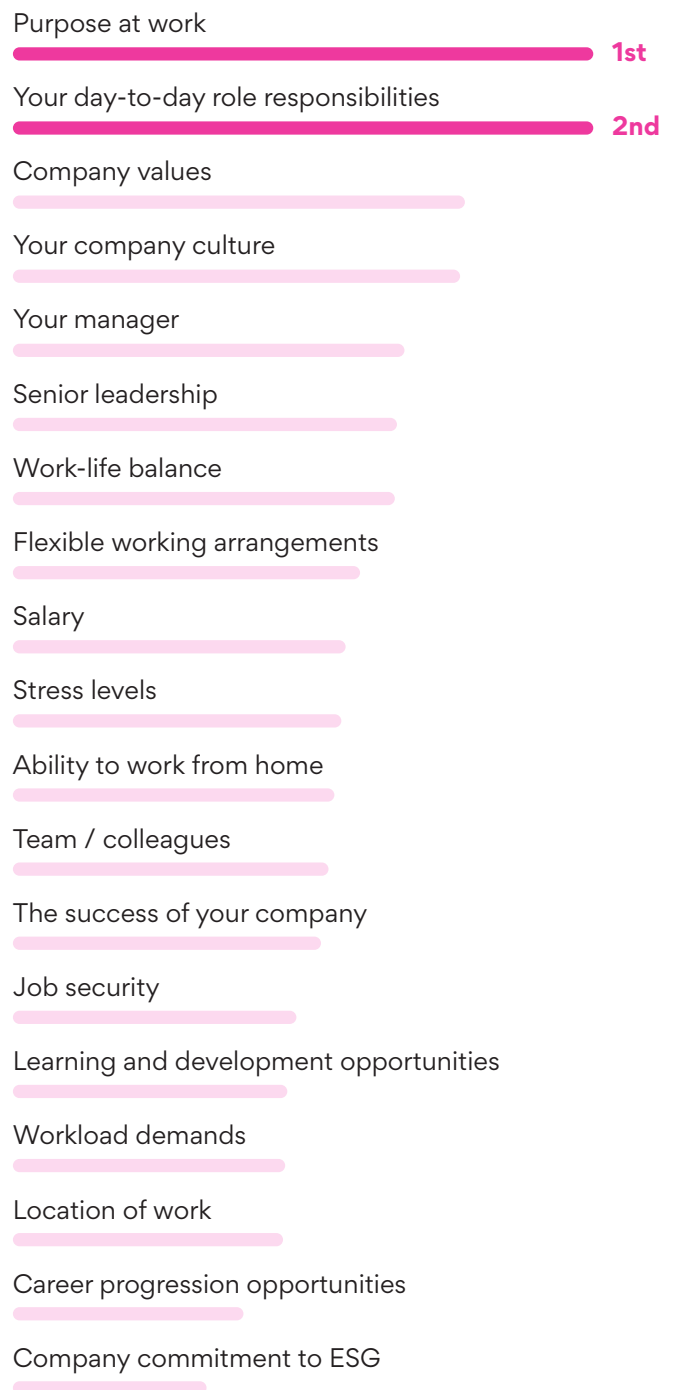
To uncover more detail about what impacts workplace happiness, we compared the relationship between workers' current happiness levels with various aspects at work against their overall happiness at work. The results reveal a common thread through all markets SEEK surveyed: a sense of purpose has the strongest impact on workplace happiness. For Malaysia, satisfaction with day-to-day responsibilities is also fundamental to driving happiness at work.

So, what is purpose at work? Purpose at work is defined as employees personally feeling their work has meaning. Going to work each day, connected to the mission and feeling their work contributes to the company's goals, regardless of their role or function in the organisation. It also includes a sense of personal meaning – where their work supports their own goals, values and aspirations.

What this means is that a competitive salary is important for attracting and retaining talent, but happiness is most likely to come when people feel their work is meaningful.

Most workers in Malaysia are feeling happy with their purpose at work and day-to-day responsibilities – more so than other parts of their job, underpinning why overall workplace happiness is strong. Nevertheless, there's still room to improve satisfaction with these core elements to further enhance employee experiences and support sustained high performance.

Drivers of happiness at work



KEY FINDING 6:

Company values and culture are also important in driving happiness at work

Whilst not quite as influential as purpose and daily duties, company values and culture still play an important role in promoting workplace happiness in Malaysia. However, employees feel less happy with these parts of their job than other areas.

This highlights a clear opportunity for employers: by focusing on building a positive, supportive culture and being mindful of how company values align with what employees care about, leaders can help boost happiness across their teams. A key part of this is creating a culture where employees' hard work is recognised and appreciated.

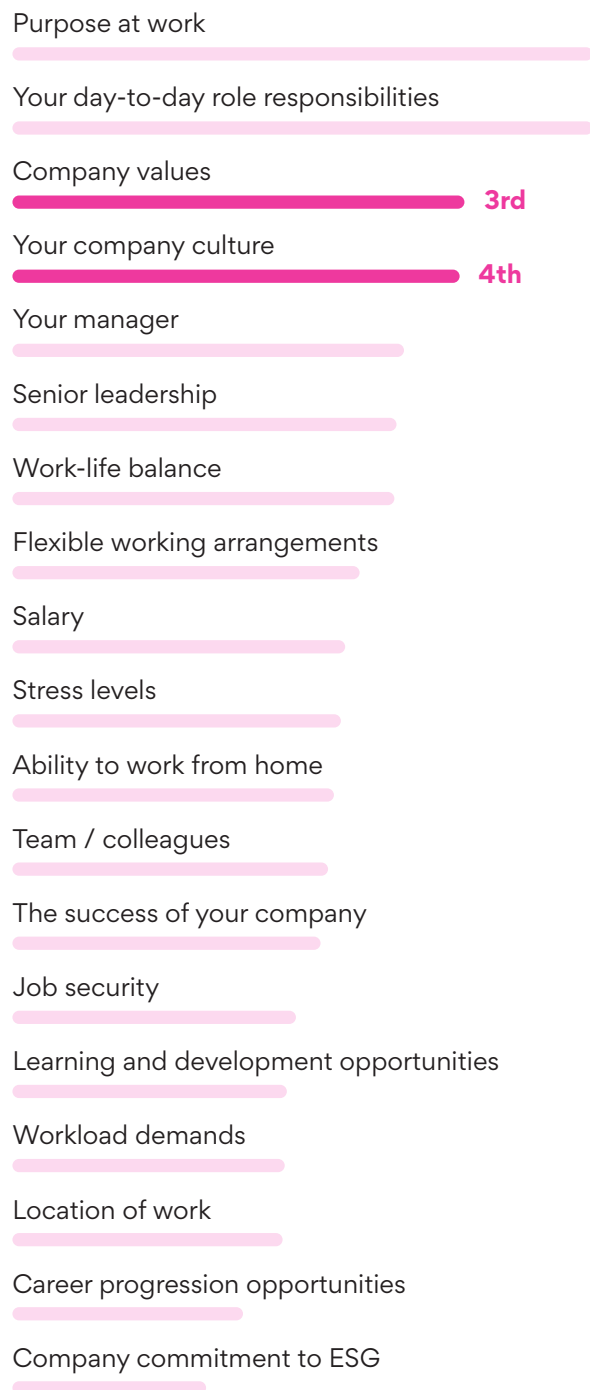


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I'd change the work environment to be more open and supportive. A positive and collaborative atmosphere would make every day at work more enjoyable.

- Millennial,
Technology

Drivers of happiness at work



KEY FINDING 7:

Job security is less important for happiness at work, as most feel confident about the future

For employees in Malaysia, job security is not a top driver of happiness at work, ranking 14th out of 19 possible drivers, reflecting Malaysia's low unemployment rate.

More broadly on job security, only a third of workers are very or extremely concerned about the impact of AI on their job, while most either have only slight or no concerns at all. This sense of confidence may be supported by the surging rates of AI adoption across Malaysian businesses.

The exception is those working in the Professional Services sector, where 47% are concerned about AI's impact on their job security.

Overall, these findings suggest that most employees feel secure and demonstrates openness to adapt to a future workplace with new technologies.



The happiness gap

Happiness in the workplace is not equal across workers in Malaysia. Instead, there are clear differences that encourage tailored strategies to support different groups of workers at various stages of their career. The following findings are focused on key differences across different generations, income brackets and sectors.



Happiness across generations

Our research looked closely at what drives happiness across different generations, helping to explain why the answers vary from one age group to another.

Overall, Gen Z employees report slightly weaker levels of workplace happiness.

They are also less likely to feel comfortable being themselves at work and are more likely to experience burnout as they juggle learning new skills. On top of this, they face distinct challenges around adapting to new environments and proving themselves early in their careers. Gen Z are more likely to say that lowering their stress levels would improve their workplace happiness (40%, compared to 35% of millennials and 27% Gen X).

This presents an opportunity for leaders to take an active role in supporting employee wellbeing, especially in nurturing Gen Z talent. By equipping younger employees with effective stress management resources and practical strategies to navigate workplace pressures, organisations can help them feel more confident and empowered as they build their careers.

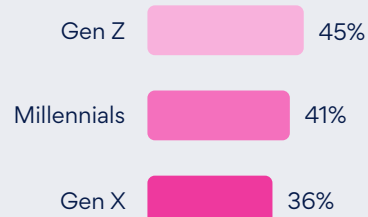
Our research will now look closely at what drives happiness across different generations.

Happiness by generation

Overall happiness



Feel burnt out or exhausted by their job



Can be themselves at work



* Analysis excludes baby boomers due to low sample size (a result of the retirement age in Malaysia)

Gen Z (18-29 years old)



“

I would improve my work-life balance. I've learned that giving myself enough rest, time to recharge, and space for personal growth actually makes me more productive and motivated.

— Gen Z,
Retail, hospitality and sports

Gen Z's workplace happiness is closely tied to their daily responsibilities and purpose at work. However, they also look beyond the day-to-day and prioritise holistic wellbeing, with work-life balance and company culture playing a pivotal role in how happy they feel in their job.

The majority of Gen Z workers are currently happy with these elements of their work, but there's still room for leaders to focus on these areas to better connect with this generation.

Specifically, leaders can focus on creating conditions that support an appropriate balance between work and personal lives, alongside fostering a culture where contributions, both big and small, are recognised. As Gen Z are at the early stages of their careers, there's a significant focus on learning and mastering their daily duties, but it's also important to help them connect those tasks to a greater purpose, so they feel happier and more fulfilled at work.

Top 4 drivers of happiness at work



Day to day responsibilities (61%)



Work-life balance (58%)



Company culture (61%)



Purpose at work (65%)

Satisfaction rates indicated in the bracket

Millennials (30-44 years old)



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Something my employer could do is offer flexible working hours, so I can better manage my personal life alongside work.

— Millennial,
Professional services

Millennials' workplace happiness is primarily shaped by flexibility, purpose and daily responsibilities.

Flexibility is more influential for millennials than other generations. Often nicknamed the 'sandwich generation' (along with Gen X), many are at a life stage where they are balancing work with caring for both children and parents, as well as other personal commitments.

Flexibility is therefore a key family and lifestyle enabler for millennials in Malaysia, particularly

for those in dual-income and multigenerational households, where flexible arrangements help them manage responsibilities and achieve a better work-life balance. The option to work from home is especially valuable, as it can significantly reduce stress for those facing long daily commutes and give them the time back to juggle their tasks.

There's a clear opportunity for leaders to work closely with millennials to build greater flexibility into their roles and improve their happiness at work.

Top 3 drivers of happiness at work



Flexible working arrangement (62%)



Purpose at work (64%)



Day to day responsibilities (65%)

Satisfaction rates indicated in the bracket

Gen X (45-59 years old)



“

Implement a good culture and do not allow work colleagues to become cliques at work. Even the bosses need to be scrutinised if they're making mistakes.

— Gen X,
Retail, hospitality and sports

A diverse range of factors influence Gen X's happiness at work, however immediate managers are the most important.

With only one in two Gen X employees happy with their direct manager currently, there's real value in supporting manager training to help them better understand and respond to the nuanced expectations and needs of employees at this later stage of their career.

Offering training programmes to support development should also be on the radar of managers, to help foster Gen X's interests and limit experience gaps.

Workplace happiness for this generation is also influenced by company values, senior leadership, team / colleagues, and purpose.

Top 3 drivers of happiness at work



Your manager (52%)



Company values (55%)



Senior leadership (49%)

Satisfaction rates indicated in the bracket

Happiness across different demographics

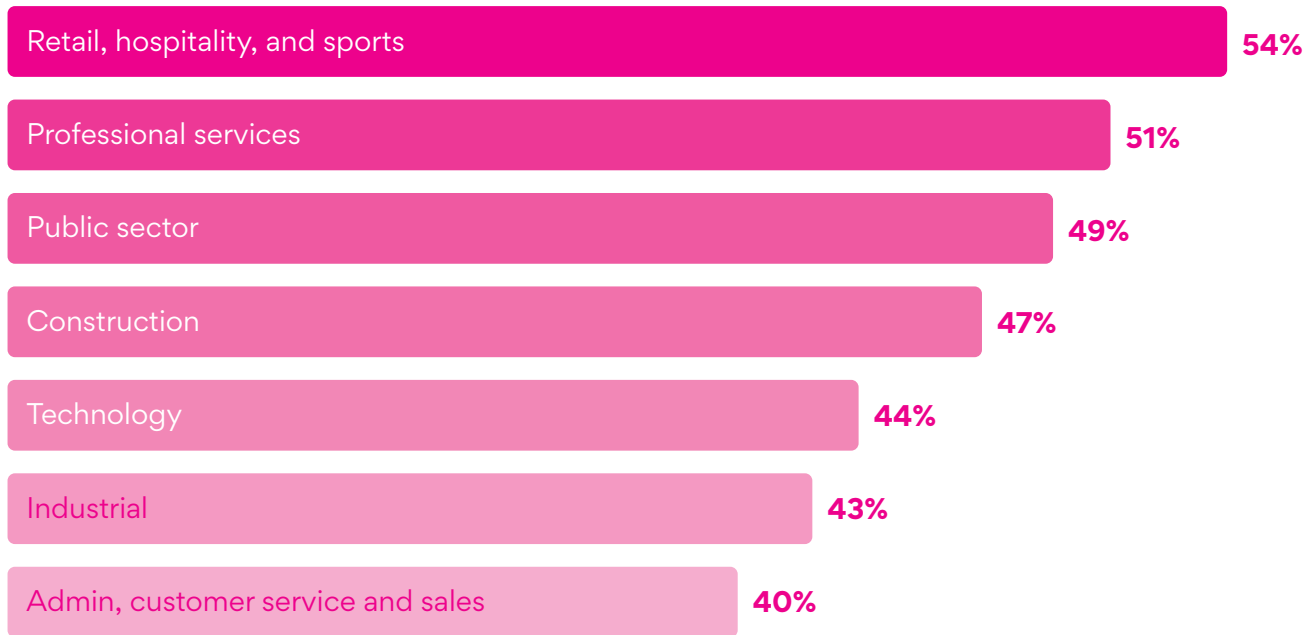


Industries

Professional services and construction are the leading sectors when it comes to being happy at work, while those in Public sector, industrial, and retail, hospitality and sports sectors are the least happy.

Happiness by industry

Extremely / Somewhat Happy



Workers in Professional services and Construction are happier with their purpose at work - a key driver of overall workplace happiness in Malaysia. They are also more positive about other parts of their job, such as their company's values.

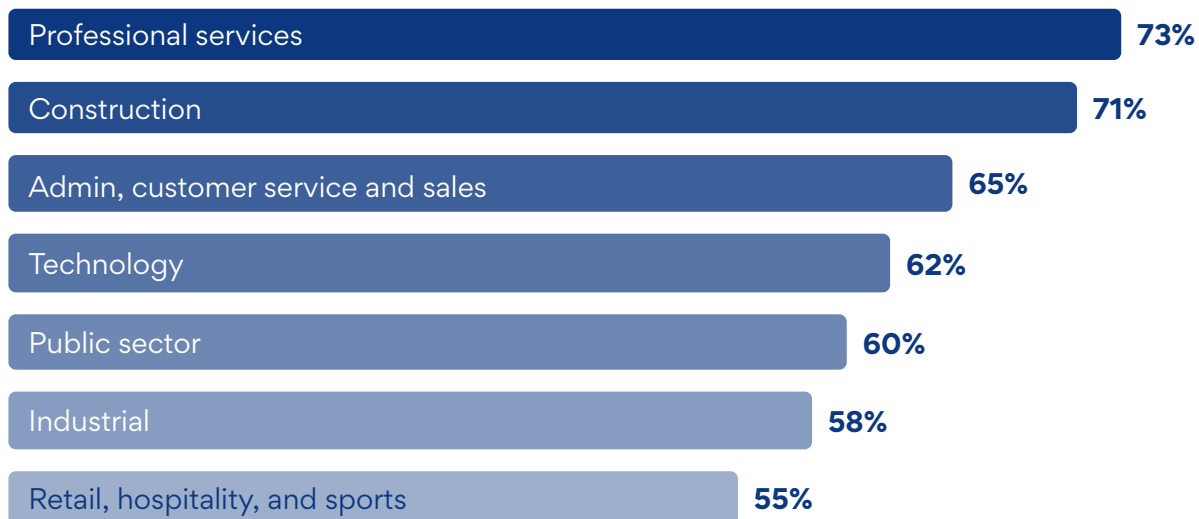
On top of this, people in Professional services and Construction report a stronger sense of

feeling valued for the work they do.

There's an opportunity for employers in the Public sector, Industrial and Retail, hospitality and sports sectors especially to close the gap here, by focusing on helping employees find greater meaning in their work as a priority.

Happiness with purpose and feeling valued

Feel happy with their purpose at work



Feel valued for the work they do



Income

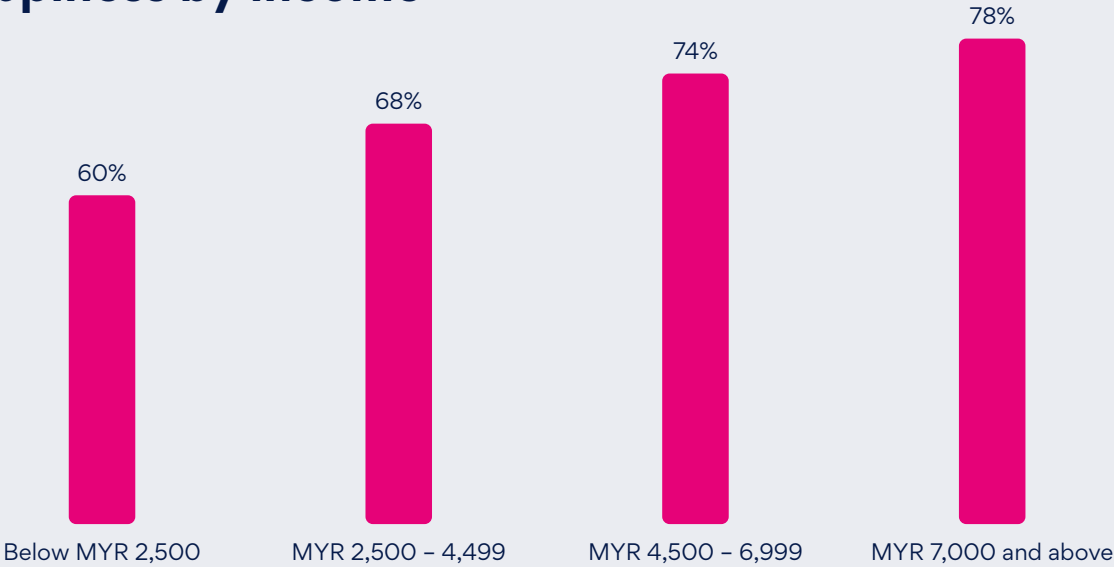
Not surprisingly, higher income workers are the happiest in their jobs, while lower income earners are less happy. Lower income workers also feel less valued for the work they do and are less likely to feel proud in telling people where they work.

It's not just salary that lower income earners aren't satisfied with – they are less happy across most aspects of the employee experience. It's therefore not the wage alone that's affecting

happiness, but the way it links to other aspects like feeling recognised and having a clear sense of purpose.

The relationship works both ways. For example, lower income earners are more likely to be in junior roles with limited input on key aspects of their work, such as day-to-day responsibilities (a top driver of workplace happiness in Malaysia). This can leave them with tasks they find less fulfilling, leaving them unhappy at work.

Happiness by income

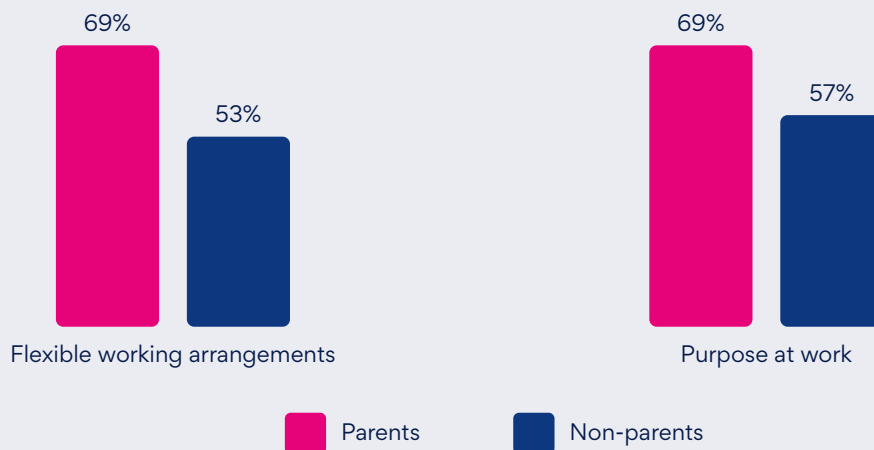


Parents

Parents are much happier in their jobs than non-parents (76% vs. 60%), driven by higher satisfaction across all aspects of their work. This includes stronger satisfaction with their sense of purpose at work – a top driver for workplace happiness in Malaysia. Having children may deepen one's sense of meaning in their jobs, contributing to parents' higher happiness at work overall.

Flexibility may also be playing a role. While parents are just as likely to say they have flexible working arrangements than non-parents, the impact on parents is greater as they rely on it to manage additional childcare demands.

Happiness with purpose and flexibility





TAKEAWAYS

- While 70% of workers in Malaysia feel happy at work, three in ten remain neutral or actively unhappy.
- Workers are happiest with the location of their work (69%) and their colleagues (65%) and least happy with their stress levels (36%) and their workload demands (42%).
- Stress and burnout are widespread, affecting more than one in three workers, with those who are unhappy twice as likely to feel burnt out compared to happy workers.
- While salary tops the wish list for workplace happiness, purpose emerges as the strongest actual driver, followed closely by day-to-day role responsibilities.
- Happy workers are 3x more motivated to go above and beyond and 37% less likely to look for another job.
- Parents report higher workplace happiness than non-parents (76% vs 60%), driven by stronger satisfaction with purpose and flexible working arrangements.



“

Sentiasa berfikiran positif di tempat kerja, jangan putus asa dalam apa jua masalah yang dihadapi, bersikap tenang dan terbuka. Usaha tidak akan mengkhianati hasil.

- Millennial,
Construction

Playbook for employers



What this means for leaders

Happiness at work benefits everyone. It translates to a productive and loyal workforce, reduced staff turnover and employees who feel motivated to go above and beyond. Happy employees foster positivity in the workplace and help build a supportive culture, creating a positive feedback loop.

Based on the findings of SEEK's Workplace Happiness Index, here is a summary of practical actions leaders can take to help improve employee happiness.

1. Create a sense of purpose and link to daily duties

Leaders can more clearly connect their workers' daily responsibilities to the broader mission and values of the organisation.

ACTION POINTS

- **Match roles with individuals' skill sets and passions:** Roles and responsibilities that play to people's strengths (and their own interests) are often more engaging. Consider offering opportunities for people to engage in projects that resonate with their personal values and foster professional growth.
- **Empower employees:** Establish regular check-ins and encourage feedback from the onboarding stage to create a culture where employees feel valued. Team members should have formal opportunities to provide feedback on their duties, empowering them to play a part in their day-to-day responsibilities and career progression.
- **Create growth pathways:** Work with employees to create personalised career development plans that align with their values.
- **Be transparent and realistic about what you can offer:** Create clarity by providing employees with a development and action plan to get them to their desired goal within an agreed upon timeframe. Acknowledge the limits of the company and be honest about your ability to meet employees' expectations.
- **Make sure employees see how their daily contributions help the business:** Draw a clear connection between an employee's role and the company's objectives and success.



2. Build a positive and motivating workplace culture

Company values and culture are secondary but important factors that influence how happy people are at work. To tap into these areas, there's opportunity for leaders in the business to create a culture that helps alleviate stress and burnout, and in turn supports more motivation among employees.

ACTION POINTS

- **Keep communication lines open:** Create safe channels for employees to share their challenges and concerns.
- **Lead by example:** Consider additional training for managers and leaders to encourage a supportive company culture that comes from the top down.
- **Institutionalise appreciation:** Create a work recognition and appreciation system, so team members know their work is seen and valued.
- **Promote team bonding:** Hold regular team-building activities, create peer-support networks, and plan offsite company outings to strengthen workplace relationships, foster culture, and create a sense of belonging.
- **Address stress and burnout:** Equip leaders to recognise signs of burnout. Support employee wellbeing, whether through flexible work options, benefits such as free / subsidised gym membership, or a monthly wellbeing allowance – in addition to an Employee Assistance Program that provides confidential short-term counselling.
- **Ideas sessions:** Create opportunities for team members to share new ideas at work, relating to their roles at work or to the organisation as a whole. Implement the best ideas, empowering and inspiring employees to stay engaged with their duties and with the company.

You can also find more information about specific employee perks in our 2025 Hiring, Compensation and Benefits Report (download the report [here](#)).

3. Listen to unique generational needs

While there are key aspects of work that are universally important to employees across life and career stages, there are unique differences by generation that require a more tailored approach to improving happiness.

When leaders take the time to understand what is influential to each group, they can adapt the approach to effectively improve workplace happiness overall.

ACTION POINTS

- **Tailor support to the workplace:** Different demographics have different happiness drivers, so it's important to address the specific needs and drivers of the generations within the organisation – and then of the individual employee.
- **Ask employees directly how you can support them:** While there are trends and generalisations that emerged in this report, it is important not to assume what employees need. Leaders should listen to individual teams' and employees' concerns and not take a one-size-fits-all approach.
- **Establish regular audits for workplace happiness:** Leaders can schedule regular company-wide audits that allow employees to directly provide feedback.

Audits can be done through:

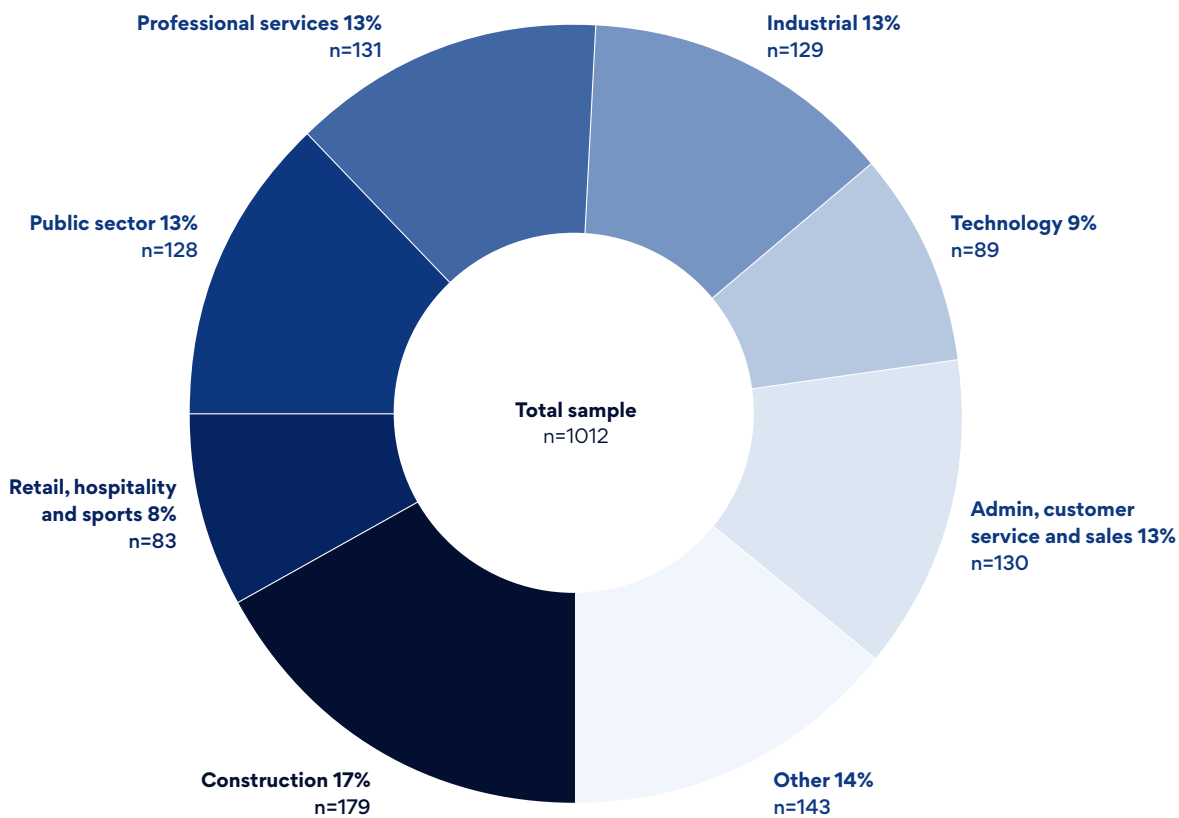
- Anonymous 'pulse' surveys
- Yearly 360-degree review
- Regular 1:1 check-ins
- Looking at absentee rates
- Calculate your Employee Net Promoter Score

Appendix

Industry groupings

Public sector	Industrial	Retail, hospitality and sports	Construction	Technology	Professional services	Admin, customer service and sales
Education & training (47%) Healthcare & medical (32%) Government & defence (19%) Community services & development (3%)	Manufacturing, transport & logistics (79%) Farming, animals & conservation (9%) Resources & energy (12%)	Retail & consumer products (65%) Hospitality & tourism (27%) Sport & recreation (7%)	Trades & services (10%) Construction (45%) Engineering (37%) Design & architecture (8%)	Information & communication technology (88%) Science & technology (12%)	Accounting (27%) Banking & financial services (28%) Consulting & strategy (8%) Advertising, arts & media (6%) Legal (8%) Marketing & communication (8%) Insurance & superannuation (3%) Human resources & recruitment (11%)	Administration & office support (48%) Call centre & customer service (18%) Sales & business development (18%) Real estate & property (15%)

Industry sample size



This study is part of SEEK's Voice of the Customer program. Through our research work we listen and empathise, we synthesise and share, and we influence and act.

By distilling our candidate and hirer insights we can tell a story about what's most important to our customers, empowering us to make a meaningful impact.

LEARN MORE

Contact your account manager or reach out to our local representatives at customerservice-my@seek.com if you're interested in a Workplace Happiness Index industry deep dive or for more information.