

# Employee engagement and experience in Singapore 2022

How the COVID-19  
pandemic has reshaped  
what people want at work



# Foreword

At Mercer, we believe passionately in listening to employees and that by responding to the voice of the employee, organizations can make directed change to improve the employee experience and other crucial business outcomes.

This has never been more important than during the past few years, when all of us around the globe were faced with uncertainty, anxiety and a constantly changing environment.

Many of our clients have asked us what impact COVID-19 has had on the employee experience, and, in this report, we highlight our key observations from the Singapore market. We explore the levels of engagement in Singapore and probe into other important factors that make up the employee experience.

We trust that you'll find the insights in this report useful for highlighting the key themes here in Singapore and as a point of comparison for your own survey scores. We hope to provide you with food for thought on what you need to focus on to drive a positive employee experience in your organization.

The Mercer Singapore team would be glad to discuss these findings with you or explore how we can support you in your employee listening journey.



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# The three C's of engagement

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Mercer assesses employee engagement by measuring levels of employee *commitment*, *contribution* and how *captivated* employees feel.

In essence, engagement is a measure of how much energy people feel at work and the extent to which they feel passionate about what the organization stands for, along with their willingness to drive success.



**Committed**

**Wanting to stay with the organization and feeling passionate about its mission**

**Contributing**

**Motivated to help the organization succeed**

**Captivated**

**Feeling energized and looking forward to coming to work**

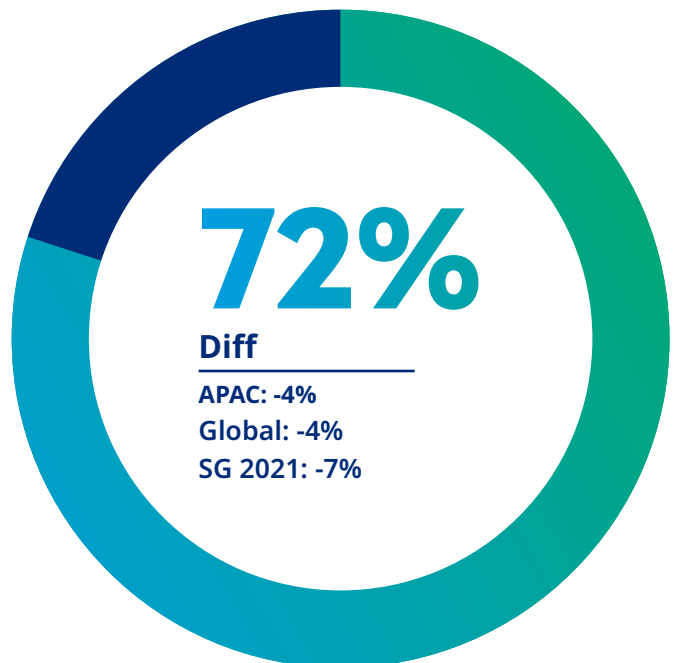
# Engagement levels in Singapore: 2022



Our analysis reveals that **72%** of employees in Singapore are engaged at work, 4 points lower than the global and APAC averages of **76%**.

This 2022 score is also **7 points** lower than in the preceding year.

Although Singapore did better compared to Hong Kong, Korea and Japan, the overall engagement level still lags behind other countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

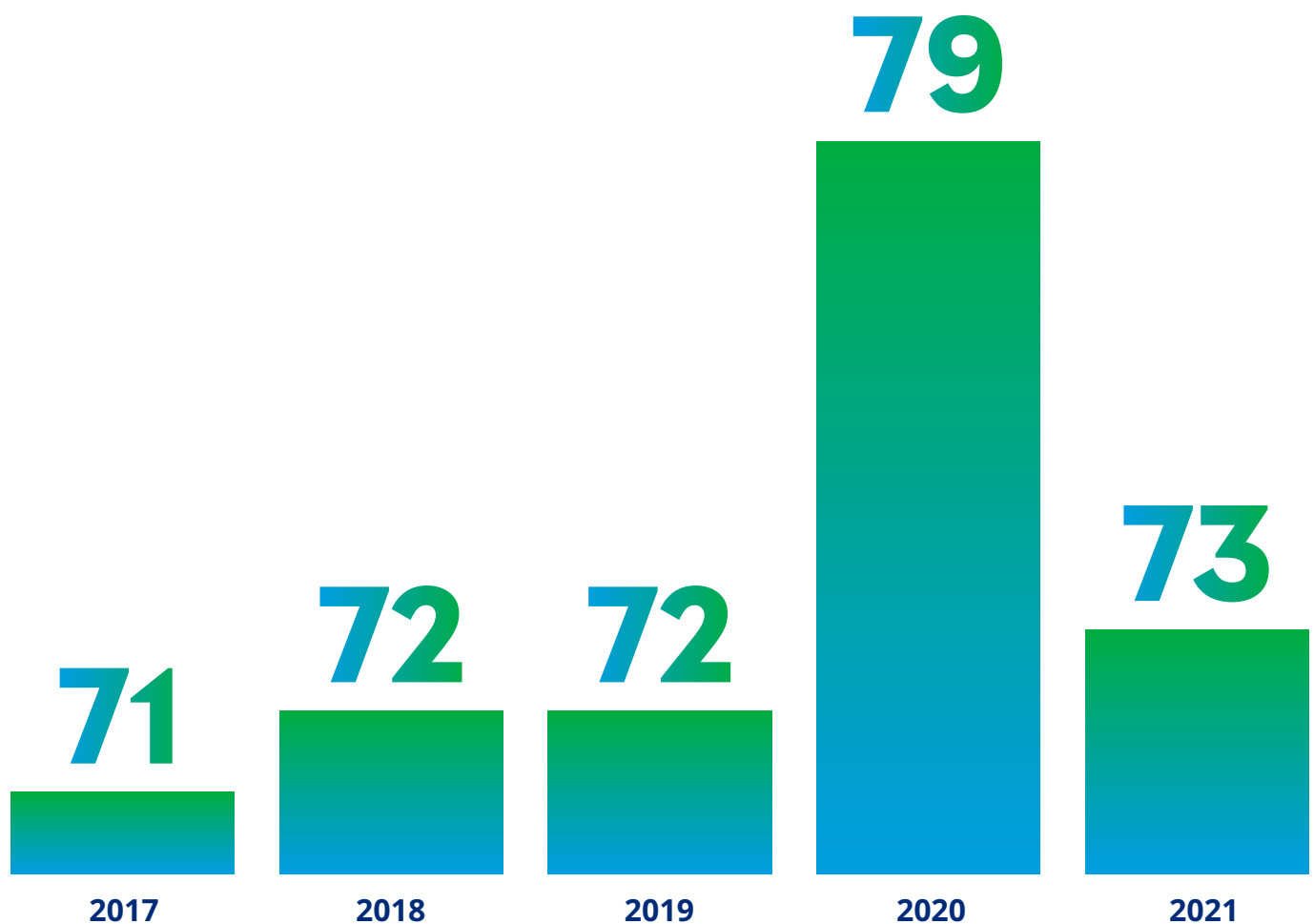


# The impact of COVID-19 on engagement

We see that engagement levels have dropped sharply since 2020, but it's important to take note of the steep spike we saw in engagement during the first year in which COVID-19 really impacted Singapore: 2020. Now we see engagement settling back to pre-COVID levels.

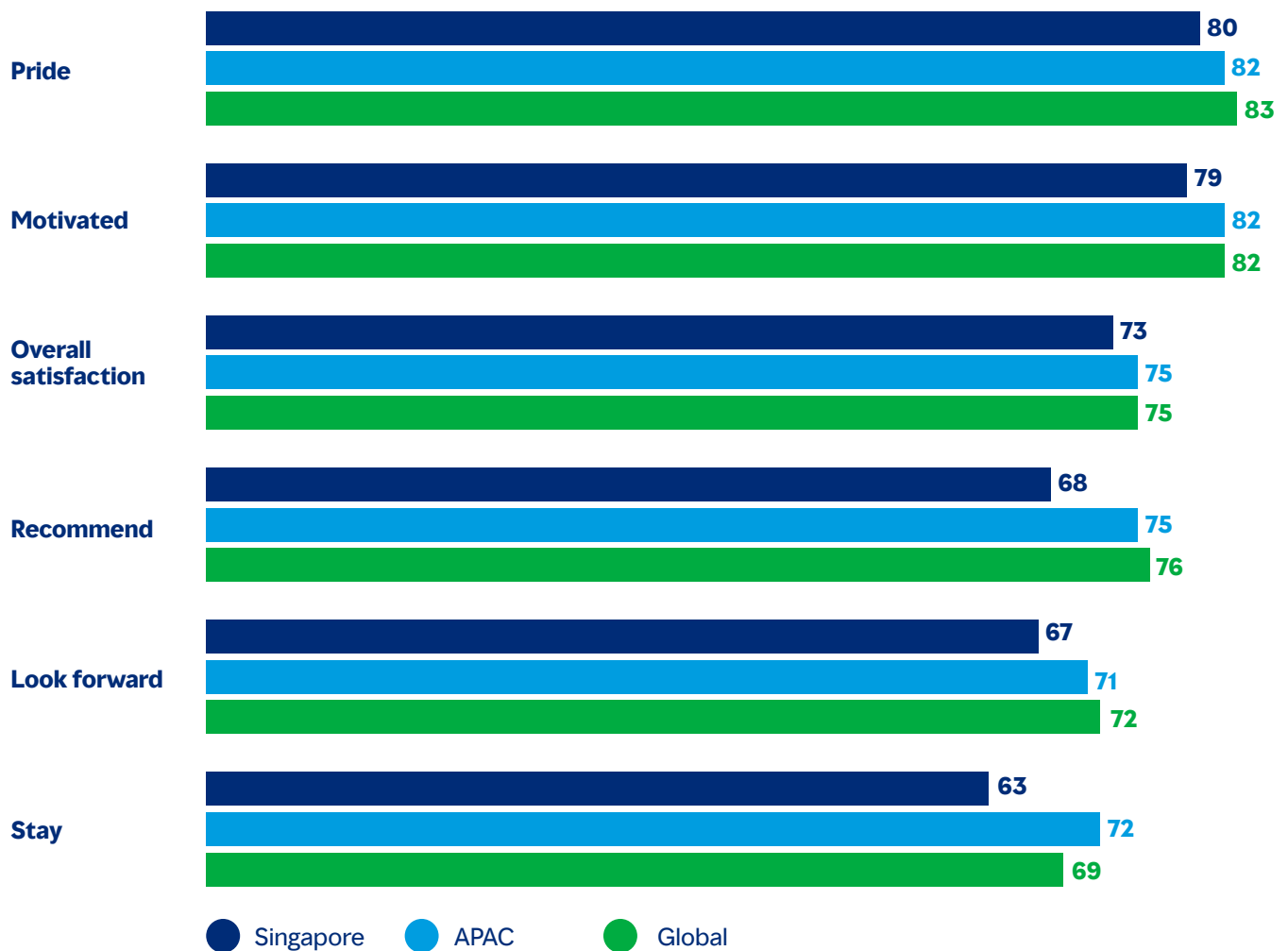
Of the components that make up engagement, the 2020 spike was largely led by increased levels of **satisfaction** and **recommending** working for the organization.

## Engagement levels in Singapore over a five-year period



# Identifying the gaps between regional and global engagement levels

We have already observed that Singapore's engagement score lags slightly behind APAC and global. The biggest gaps in these benchmarks are when it comes to the idea of looking forward to coming to work, the intention to stay with the company and the willingness to recommend the company as a place to work.



# Understanding what drives engagement

Beyond measuring engagement, it's important to understand the specific elements of the employee's working life that drive it. This is critical information for an organization because these drivers can act as "levers" to help boost engagement levels.

We observe that employees in Singapore share some similar engagement drivers when compared to the APAC and global data; that is, being able to **reach their full potential** and **feeling valued** in the company are consistently important.

In keeping with the ability to **reach full potential**, we see further emphasis here in Singapore specifically, with the number-two driver focused on **career goals being met** at the company.

This tells us that organizations will need to have robust people strategies that actively look at how employees can grow and achieve their career goals with their companies.

Also specific to Singapore is the fact that having **confidence in the future** of the company and seeing **effective senior leadership** are both among the most important drivers of engagement. By contrast, in the region and globally, we see **excitement about the company's future** as the top driver, which is perhaps a somewhat more exuberant version of the "confidence in the future" question that emerges in Singapore.

The table below shows the top five drivers of engagement for Singapore, the APAC region and globally.

	Singapore	APAC	Global
I feel I can reach my full potential at my company.	1	3	2
I feel that my career goals can be met at my company.	2	-	-
I feel valued as an employee at my company.	3	4	3
I have confidence in the future of my company.	4	-	-
My company has effective senior leadership (i.e., senior leadership that knows what it wants to do, inspires confidence).	5	-	-
I am excited about my company's future.	-	1	1
Management is interested in my ideas on how operations can be improved.	-	2	-
I believe I have a long-term future with my company.	-	-	4
My job gives me a sense of meaning and purpose.	-	5	-
Personally, I feel that I am treated fairly at my company.	-	-	5

# How employees' views in Singapore have changed over time

Looking more broadly across the employee experience, the past two years have seen companies in Singapore struggling to manage the disruptions caused by the pandemic, but their efforts are making a positive difference in the employee experience.

Employees in Singapore admire how their companies became more innovative in order to pivot the business. They appreciate regular and timely communication on business updates and the rationale for any changes. They also value the teamwork and cooperation between business units and how their companies' operating models enable them to meet customer needs.

However, the emphasis on managing disruptions may have compromised engagement at the individual level, as we observed fewer employees would recommend their companies as great workplaces. Employees also report feeling less optimistic about realizing their career potential, less energy and enthusiasm in their roles, and a lack of empowerment at work. In addition, fewer employees report that the workplace is free from harassment and discrimination. All these may have caused additional stress for employees at work, leading to fatigue and potential burnout.





# Singapore's bright spots and hot spots

Diving deeper into the employee experience in Singapore and comparing these to views in the region reveals positive "bright spots" and less favorable "hot spots" in the employee experience.

Let's start with the good news: Employees in Singapore have a positive outlook on two key areas.

## Bright spots

Employees feel positive about the flow of communication:

**84%**

feel their companies keep employees informed as to the state of the business. (+6)

**84%**

find their immediate managers/supervisors encourage two-way communication. (+6)

And about their relationships with their managers:

**81%**

say their managers treat them fairly. (+3)

**88%**

feel their managers treat them with respect and dignity. (+3)

**88%**

say their managers are accessible to them when needed. (+3)

## Hot spots

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However, compared to their APAC peers, fewer employees in Singapore agree that they have visibility into career paths and opportunities and the ability to reach their full potential within their companies. Given that these are key drivers of engagement, this reinforces the need to focus on employees' learning and development and ensure we understand employee career aspirations in order to maximize their full potential in the firm.

**53%**

**of employees have a good understanding of the possible career paths for someone like them at their companies. (-19)**

**51%**

**agree that they have the opportunity for advancement at their companies. (-12)**

**51%**

**feel they can reach their full potential at their companies. (-10)**

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More can be done to support a healthy lifestyle and support employees in meeting customer needs. Only 54% report that their companies support a healthy lifestyle, and this is 19% behind the Asia-Pacific region. The ability to respond to customers' needs and having processes and procedures that allow employees to work effectively are also lower compared to the rest of the region.

**54%**

**of employees feel their companies create an environment that supports a healthy lifestyle. (-19)**

**68%**

**feel they are able to respond quickly to the needs of their customers. (-14)**

**58%**

**agree that processes and procedures allow them to effectively meet their customers' needs. (-15)**

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# About the Mercer benchmarks

Analysis from this report is derived from the Mercer database of responses from client surveys. These responses are collected as part of employee survey programs that measure employee engagement along with other strategic areas that impact overall business performance.

The average survey uses 37 of the more than 600 items we track; these items fall into 30 areas, including:

					
<b>Job challenge/ use of skills</b>	<b>Training/ performance development</b>	<b>Career development</b>	<b>Teamwork</b>	<b>Rewards and recognition</b>	<b>Employee engagement</b>
					
<b>Work environment/ safety</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Workload</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Diversity, equity and inclusion</b>	<b>Customer focus</b>
					
<b>Vision/ direction</b>	<b>Culture and values</b>	<b>Innovation</b>	<b>Risk management</b>	<b>Organizational change</b>	<b>Business performance</b>



2022 norm	Companies	Projects	Employees
Singapore	80	137	41,147
APAC	224	357	1,011,794
Global	611	974	7,700,000

Unless stated otherwise, the data presented in this report are aggregated from company responses to multiple surveys over the past five years (2017–2021). Hence, comparison of data from previous years' index reports should be approached with the knowledge that scores in each specific year are moving averages of data over the past five years.

# Taking a multi-method approach to listening

What’s the best way to listen to our employees? Organizations often assume the best way to listen to their workforce is through a pulse survey, but that’s not always the case. Surveys are effective for measuring attitudes to well-known topics that are empirically established. But for new, emergent or ambiguous events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, exploratory research techniques using qualitative methods often generate better insights. Considering the complexity of current events, we think the best way to listen to your employees is to take a multi-method approach. Contact us to explore.

Listening approach	Full-census survey	Pulse surveys	Digital focus group	Total rewards/ EVP research	360 assessment
Description	Robust continuous listening to understand employee experiences and perceptions.	Agile, targeted continuous listening combined with strategic employee research programs.	Crowdsourcing people insights in a live, collective conversation.	Used to understand what issues and rewards/ benefits are most pressing and/or preferred by your workforce.	Part of a leadership development program to assess behaviors and competency areas.
Recommended application and timing	Every year or 18 months for an organization-wide snapshot and to reset priorities.	Quarterly to track priorities and/or on demand for on-boarding, exit, role transition, etc.	Periodically, as needed, to deep dive on a specific challenge.	Every 12 to 24 months or as major shifts take place in the work environment. Redefining rewards/EVP.	Every 12 to 24 months to help leaders identify development focus areas and track progress.

This report has been prepared by members of the Mercer Regional Employee Engagement Solutions Center of Excellence team, Marieke van Raaij, Amanda Yap and Derek Teo, together with Lewis Garrad and Hannah Lennon of the Mercer Singapore Career team.

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