



Research report

Culture of mediocrity in the Dutch workplace

Leadership: what are you doing now?

Integral leadership and transparent decision-making

A culture of looking away or speaking up?

Psychological safety in the workplace

Get rid of the R&D department

Engaging and appreciating employees

Working conditions are not a lure

Cultural conditions for attracting talent



Work culture in the Netherlands

A 5.8. That is the grade that working Dutch people give to their employer.

This figure emerges from the research results of the Trust Index™ survey among more than 850 respondents in the Netherlands. 58% of the respondents responded positively to the 60 statements about the amount of trust, pride and fun in their organization.

In this research report you'll discover four striking insights (including tips), all research results and the do's and don'ts for building a safe work culture.

01

Introduction

02

4 striking insights

03

All research results

04

Do's en don'ts

05

About the report

No more than a C for Dutch work culture

"For me, psychological safety in the workplace is one of the most important tasks of an employer. This means that everyone in the organization can speak freely, regardless of color, gender or role, and contribute to the success of the organization. This requires brave leaders who dare to be vulnerable and are in it for the long run.

At Great Place To Work, we see many great organizations come along that are great employers for their employees. We also notice that many organizations still struggle with this, which we hear in the media and see in practice.

The basis is so simple: interact with each other in a way of trust. In practice, this often turns out to be difficult. The need is enormous: strikes, image loss and vacancies. Every organization must make their organizational culture a priority. In this report you will discover how to do this."

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Wencke Ester-Lorber

Commercial director at Great Place To Work

 [Connectie on LinkedIn](#)

4 striking insights

The research data show four striking insights:

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1 in 3 employees has
little to no confidence
in leadership

Leadership: what are you doing now?

How much confidence do you have that top management makes the right decisions? 1 in 3 Dutch employees experience little or no confidence in this.

Integral leadership is a requirement for a safe work culture. This is about doing what you say and acting honestly.

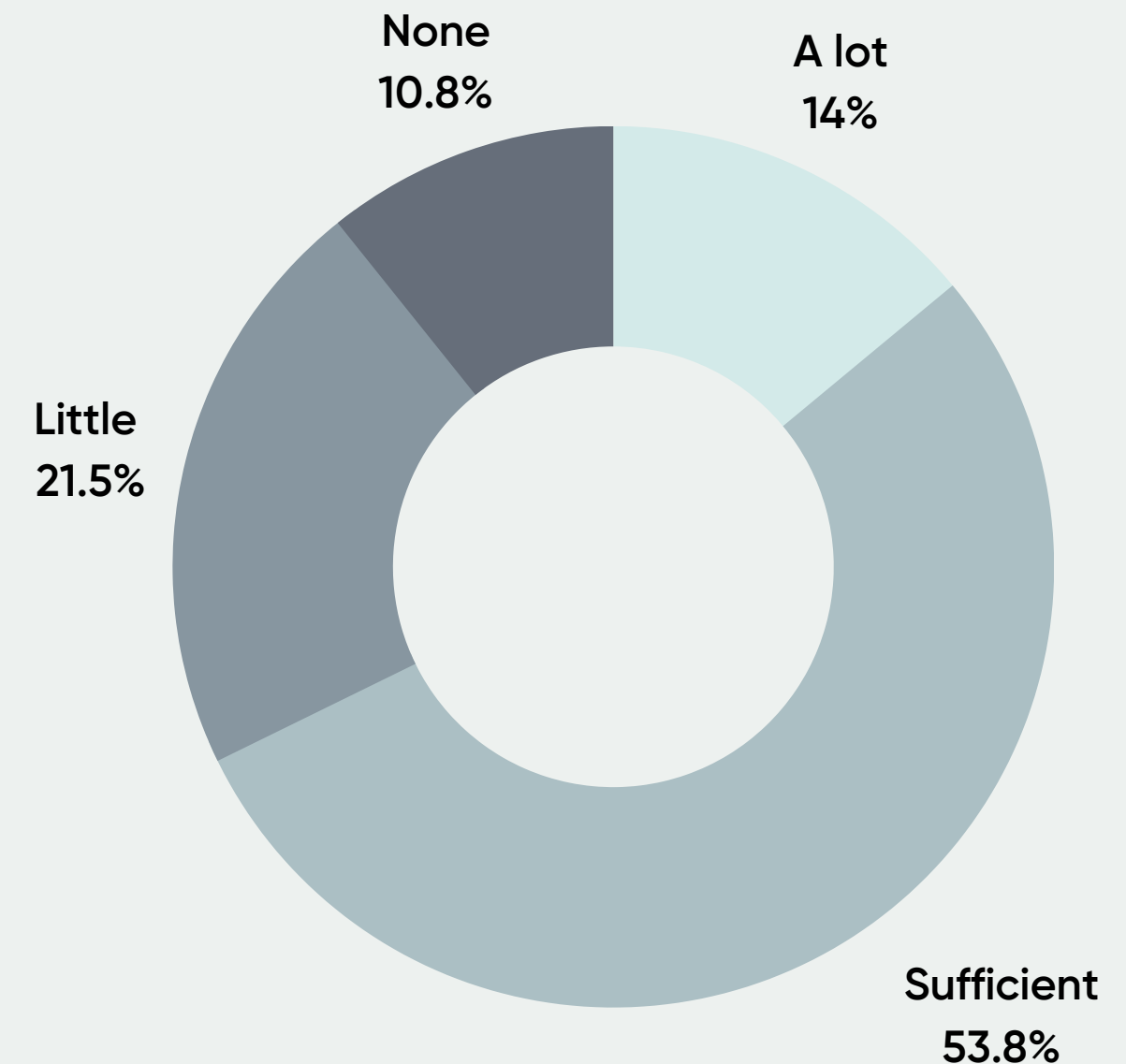
In the context of decision making, transparency and communication are essential. The lack of information and reasons that certain decisions are made often makes employees feel less positive about this issue.

People are professionals and also understand that certain things cannot be done. A feeling of unfairness arises when decisions are made in an impure way.

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How much confidence do you have that top management is making the right decisions?



Integral leadership and transparent decision-making

The statement "Management is honest and ethical in its business practices" ranks first among the biggest differences between this national benchmark and certified organizations*. A difference of no less than 52 percentage points (38% versus 90%).

Getting started with integrity leadership is therefore essential. This is about awareness, reflection and behavior.

How do you tackle this? Discover the tips to the right.

*Great Place To Work-Certified™ organizations score 70% or higher on the Trust Index.

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01

Gain insight into how employees perceive leadership. Don't use this as an assessment of individual managers, but see leadership as a collective understanding of everyone in a leadership role.

02

Not every manager is a good leader. Ask yourself: are managers in the right place? Or are colleagues automatically given leadership roles from their years of experience, without fitting them?

03

Start with leadership coaching for everyone. Because everyone has a leadership role, including employees. How do you address your own leadership? How do you communicate with others? And what effect does your behavior have?

04

Make sure core values are worked out in behavior. How do you put this into practice? Does "commitment" mean working nonstop? Or can you also just check out of work?

05

Integral leadership starts with upper management. If there is distrust in this group, it affects the entire organization. Start team coaching in this group.

06

As a leader, you have a role model to play. Do you scold people? Do people get fired just like that? Or don't you say hello to anyone? That affects how your employees experience culture. Reflect on this.

1 in 4 employees has
**experienced unacceptable
behavior**

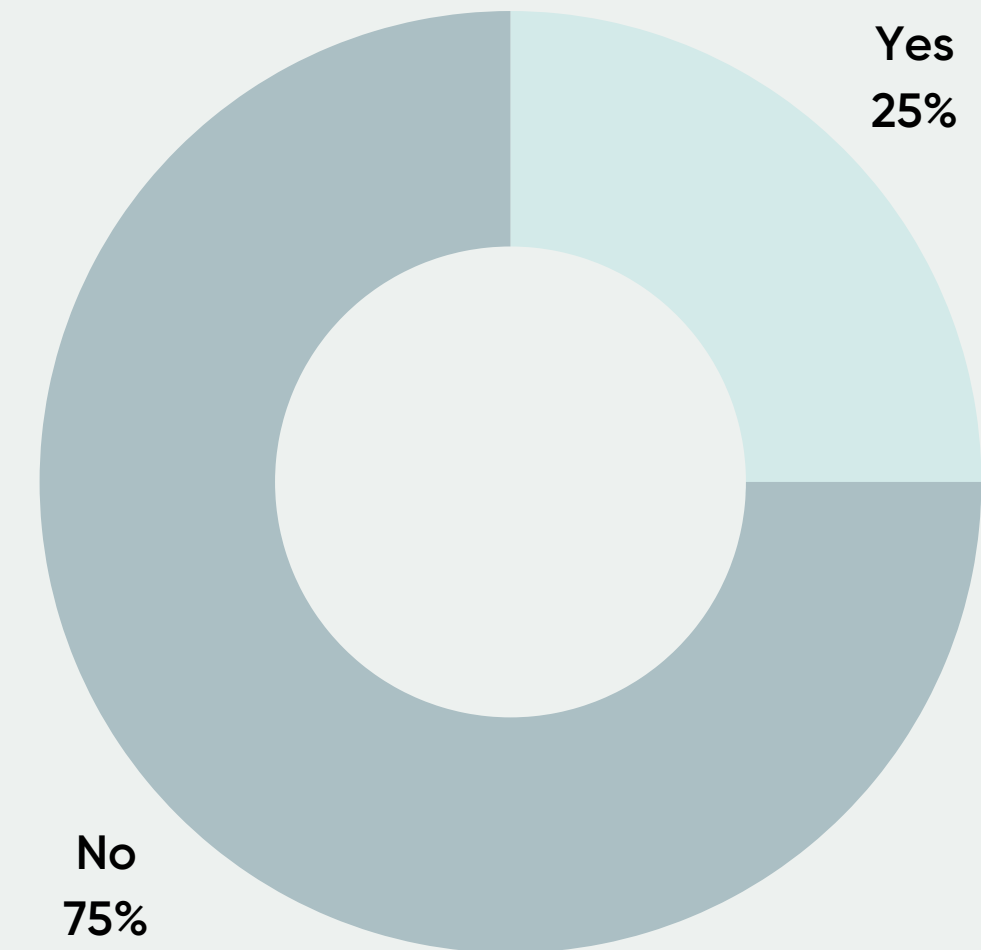
A culture of looking away or speaking up?

Unacceptable behavior is one of the most discussed topics of 2022. Our research shows that 1 in 4 employees have experienced this behavior in the Dutch workplace.

The statement "If I am treated unfairly, I believe I'll be given a fair shake if I appeal" shows a big difference between this national benchmark and the certified organizations (50% versus 86%).

As a result, there are two issues to address: countering transgressive behavior and encouraging a culture of speaking up. People do not speak out when they feel unsafe. An anonymous survey then offers a solution. Openness in the follow-up of such an inquiry by leaders is essential.

Have you ever experienced unacceptable behavior?



Psychological safety

Psychological safety is the most important factor in the workplace. This means that people feel free to be themselves, speak up and dare to make mistakes.

The low score (53%) on the statement "People here are treated fairly, regardless of their sexual orientation" is striking. The other statements around fair treatment score higher: age (66%), ethnicity (76%) and gender (74%).

How do you tackle this topic and determine what behavior is appropriate? Discover our tips to the right.

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01

As a leader and HR, you have a role model to play. How you treat people affects how people perceive culture. As a leader, are you open about your sexual orientation? If so, employees are also more likely to open up.

02

Connect behavior to your core values. Is inclusion a core value, but is someone looked at funny when he or she does not join you for Friday afternoon drinks? Determine how you want to treat each other so you can hold each other accountable.

03

You want to know what's going on and whether people feel psychologically and physically safe. In a culture of fear, people are reluctant to speak out about this. An anonymous survey can be a solution for this.

04

Good onboarding is crucial when it comes to employee experience. First impressions count and usually the leadership and culture determines whether someone wants to stay with the organization after 90 days.

05

How leaders interact with employees has a big impact on feelings of psychological safety. As an employee, are you allowed to give feedback, ask questions and raise inappropriate situations?

06

Engage in conversations about topics such as mental health, equal opportunities, LGBTQIA+ and neurodiversity. The Great Conversations card game can help you do this (see page 37).

**1 in 2 employees are
not allowed to try
(almost) anything new**

Get rid of the R&D department

The days of a separate R&D department are over. In times of rapid change, people need to try out new things themselves. Think of internal work processes, but also new products or services for customers.

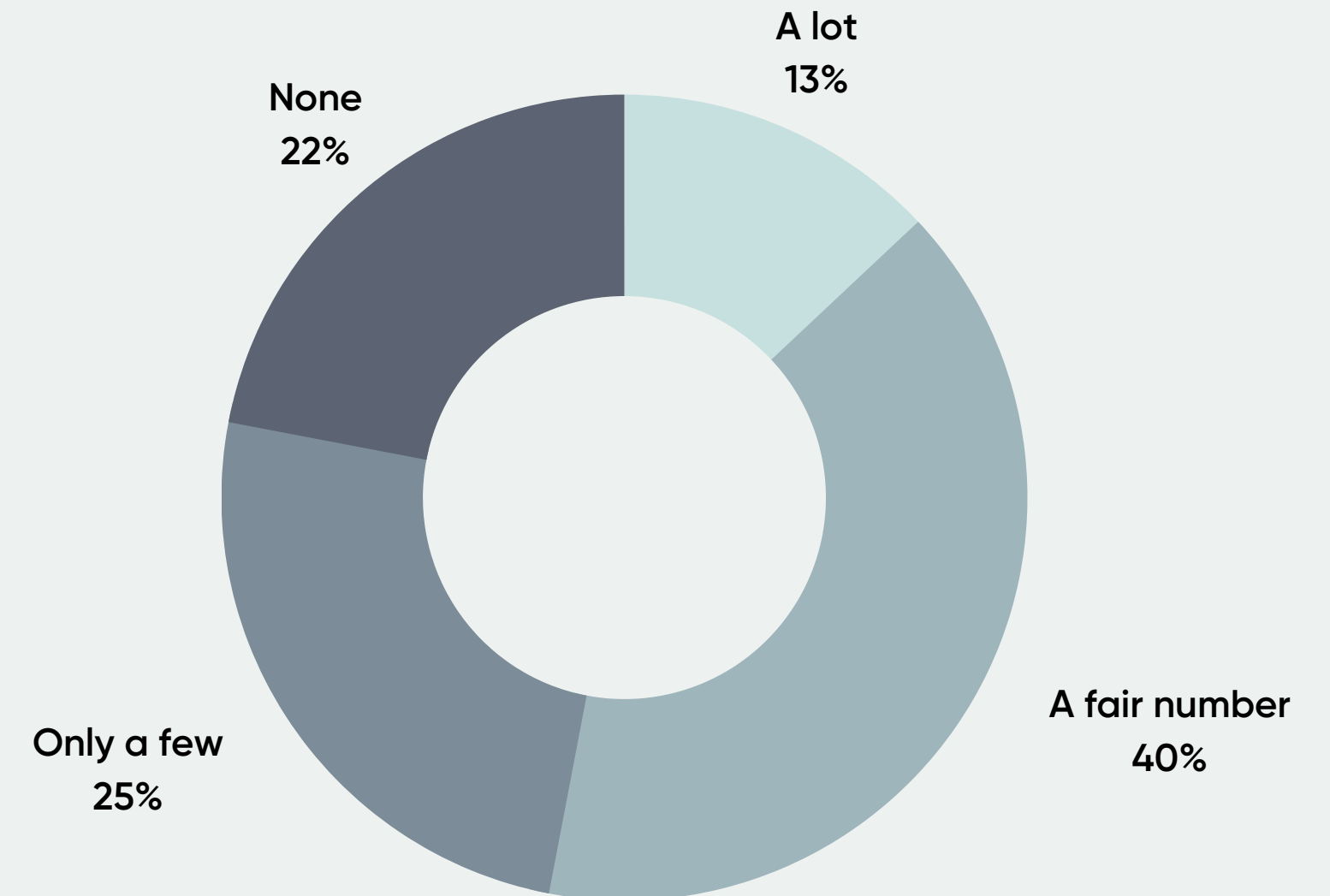
Professionals themselves know best what works. No leader is needed for that. The leader is there to facilitate and coach people. It's also essential that people get appreciation for the work they do and are given the freedom to learn from mistakes.

Micromanaging and punishment is disastrous for a safe work culture. This doesn't mean allowing people to make unlimited mistakes. It means having a different conversation about them. How can we help? Are you in the right place? And what do you need?

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How many relevant opportunities have you had in the past year to innovate and improve your work?



Involving and appreciating colleagues

To foster such a culture of innovation from the workplace, it is necessary that expectations are clear. Who gets to participate in what? How is input collected? And how will this be reported back? Clarity and transparency are essential here.

And it's all about appreciation. Appreciation is fuel for a motivated employee. As a leader, do not take credit, but give credit to the people themselves. Show appreciation in words and deeds.

01

Listen to your employees. They know exactly what is going well and what could be improved. Take your time and sincerely listen to what they say.

02

Nothing is more annoying than not knowing who gets to decide what. Make it clear whether people are allowed to think or decide. Put the power of decision as low as possible in the organization.

03

A pat on the back, a thank you and (in a group) a compliment is conducive to a healthy work culture. Don't do this only in case of success and not exclusively in certain groups, but also when another department has tried something new.

04

Do you dare to let go? And do you trust people to do their work with the best intention? Reflect on this as a colleague and as a leader and adjust your behavior if necessary.

05

A team does all the work and the leader of gets away with the credits. This is counterproductive to an employee's motivation. This means that as a leader you need to step back and give credit for the work to the other person.

06

Organize "fuck-up" moments. Share what didn't go well, what you learned from and how you fixed it. This puts performance pressure into perspective and creates a culture of speaking up. In such a culture, people put in more effort, which in turn leads to innovation.

**1 in 10 employees is
motivated by working
conditions**

Working conditions are not a lure

In this tight labor market, we see all kinds of lures from employers to bring in new employees. They range from Netflix nights to yoga classes and from get-togethers on Fridays to ski trips.

Our research shows that only 9% of respondents choose an employer because of the working conditions.

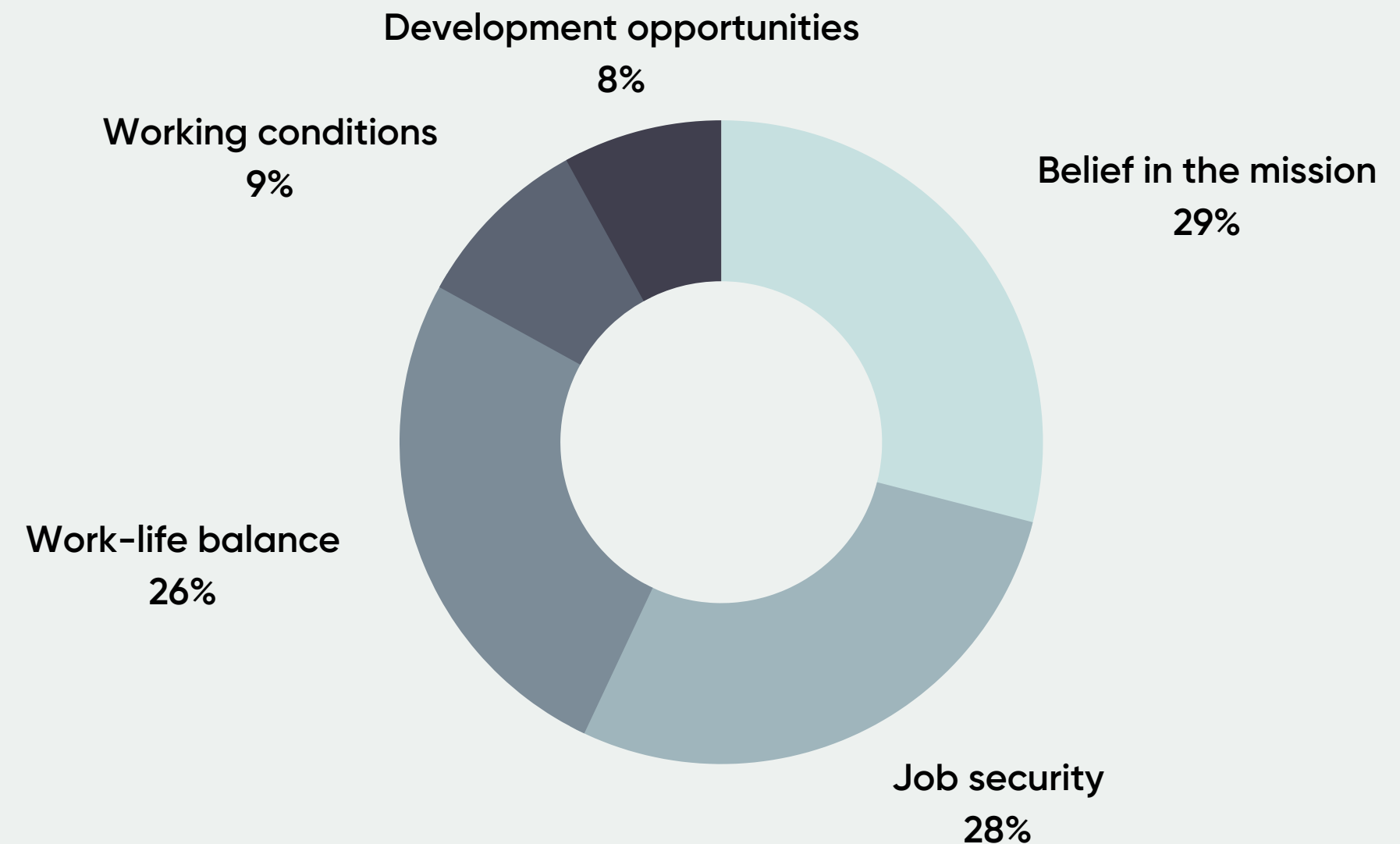
The majority is motivated by belief in the mission, job security and a good work-life balance.

These insights show that, as an employer, you need to focus primarily on what you stand for, offer security and guarantee flexibility.

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What motivates you the most to work for this organization?



Cultural conditions for attracting talent

If you can't win (in the long run) with working conditions, how can you? We introduce "culture conditions". Work-seekers are looking for a place where they can be themselves, where there is flexibility and where they work toward a mission.

Include these aspects in your recruitment, and more importantly, make sure this matches reality.

Of course salary and conditions are important. These are hygiene factors and, above all, they should be fair. You make the real difference with culture.

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01

Employees are your most important ambassadors. So don't forget them when attracting new talent. You don't want existing talent to disappear through the back door. Use colleagues to recruit, and more importantly, make sure they experience the culture positively so they can share it too.

02

"What is the most important motivator for working for your organization?" The answers to this question provide insight into how employees are motivated. You can also use this in your recruitment.

03

What is the mission of your organization? People do not want to work for products or services, but rather to provide the best care, give children a future or promote transparency, for example.

04

Translate your mission into everyone's own work. Consider the famous example of the cleaner at NASA: "I'm working to send someone to the moon," rather than: "I'm here vacuuming."

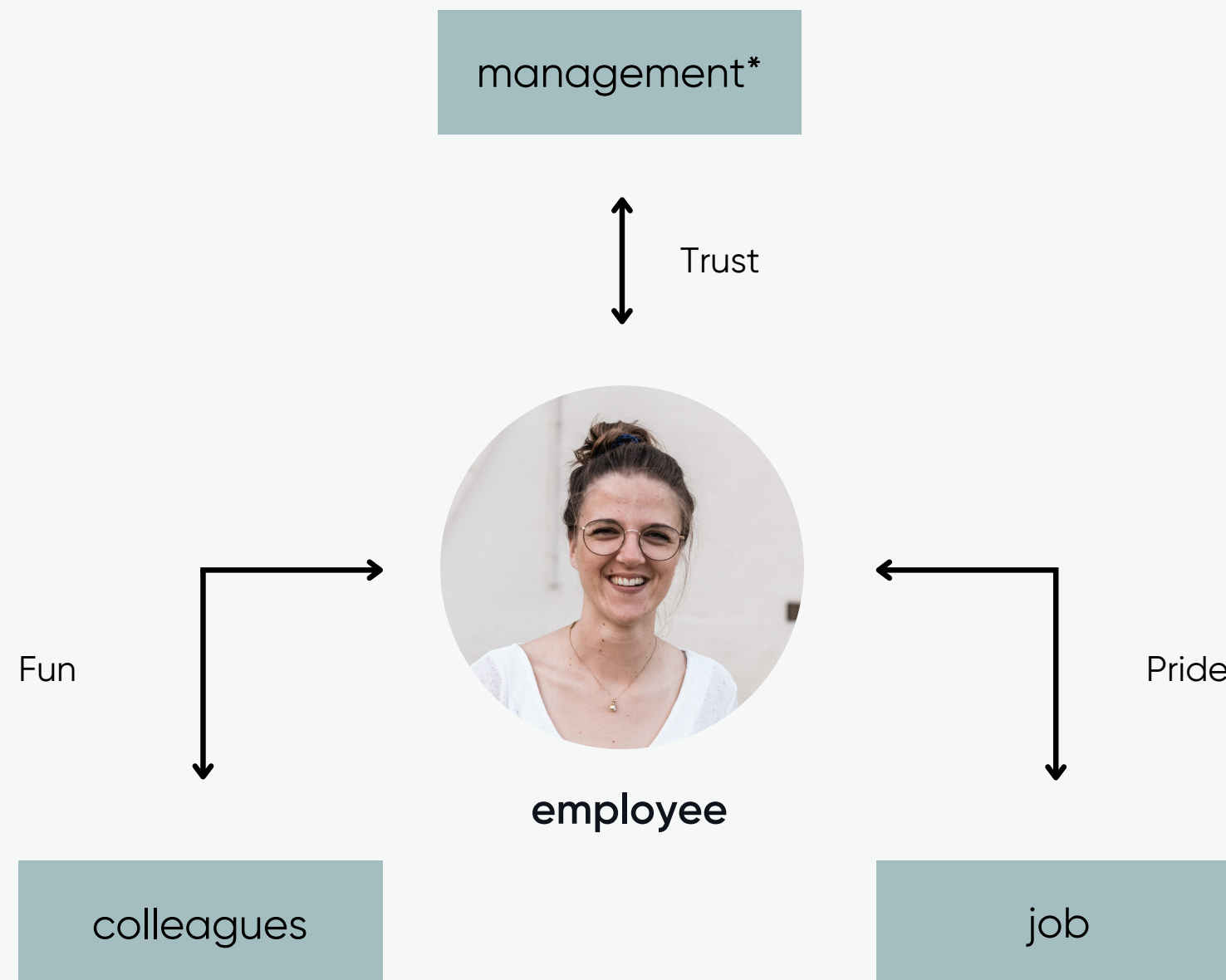
05

The pandemic has taught that people need job security and flexibility. Working from home has boomed. Include these two aspects in your recruitment.

06

Also pay attention to cultural conditions, not just material and financial ones. How can people develop? And how do you treat each other?

Research results



*Management means everyone with a leadership role

About the survey

The Trust Index employee survey reveals how employees perceive and feel about their work (environment).

From the employee perspective, a great place to work is an organization where employees:

- trust the people they work for and with;
- are proud of what they do; and
- have fun with their colleagues.

The Trust Index employee survey measures trust, pride and fun in organizations. The survey consists of 60 statements about 5 universal values: credibility, respect, honesty, pride and camaraderie. In addition to the 60 statements, the survey consists of 2 open-ended questions, 5 demographic questions and 3 multiple-choice questions.

For more than 30 years, this survey has been conducted annually in 10,000 organizations worldwide. Because the survey measures universal values, it's applicable in every culture and sector.



About Great Place To Work-Certified™

An organization is certified when it scores 70% or higher on the Trust Index. In addition, an organization must provide the Culture Brief™ and achieve the required response rate (based on number of employees). The Culture Brief is a document in which we ask for quantitative data about an organization.

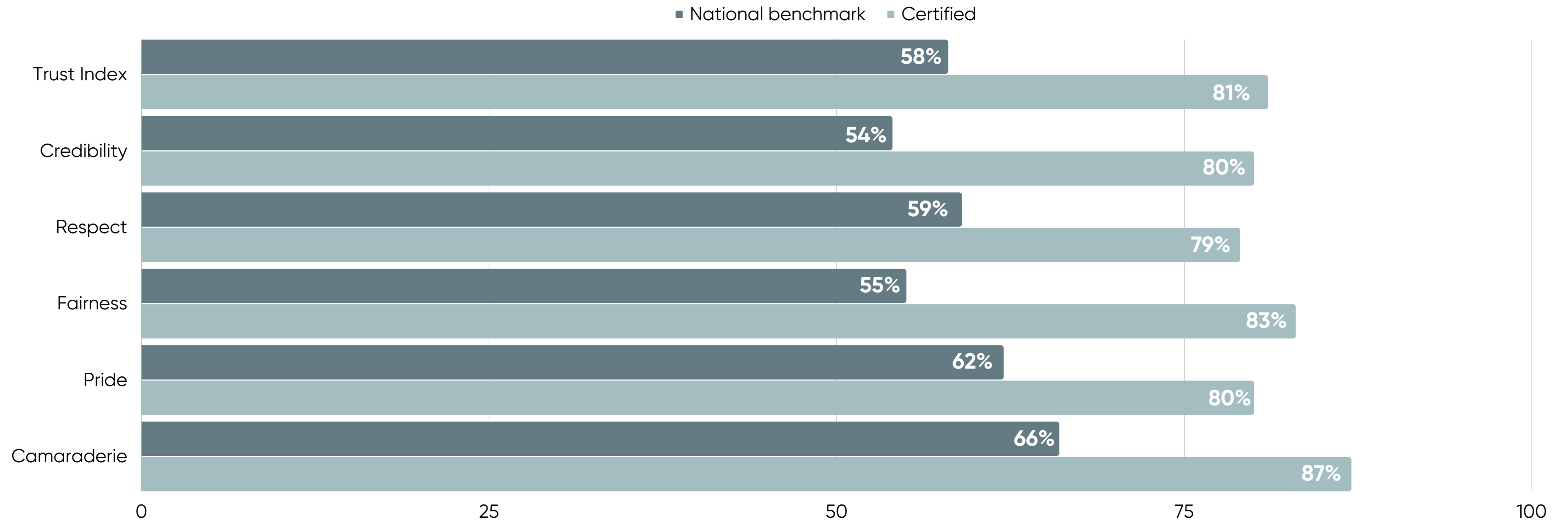
Between March 2021 and April 2022, 180 organizations were certified in the Netherlands. The data from their surveys are based on 33,000 respondents.

When we refer to the scores of the certified organizations, we mean the average results of these 33,000 respondents.



Trust Index-scores

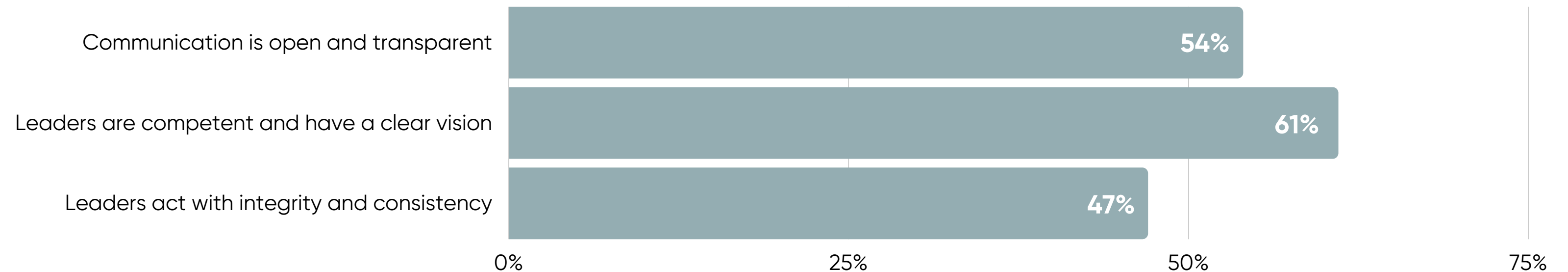
The overview below shows the scores on the Trust Index and the underlying five values. For the Netherlands on average, the greatest potential for improvement lies in the values of fairness and credibility.



Credibility

Credibility means that leaders communicate goals, vision and plans regularly and transparently and are accessible to employees with questions or feedback. In addition, employees are given a lot of responsibility and there is room to shape their own work.

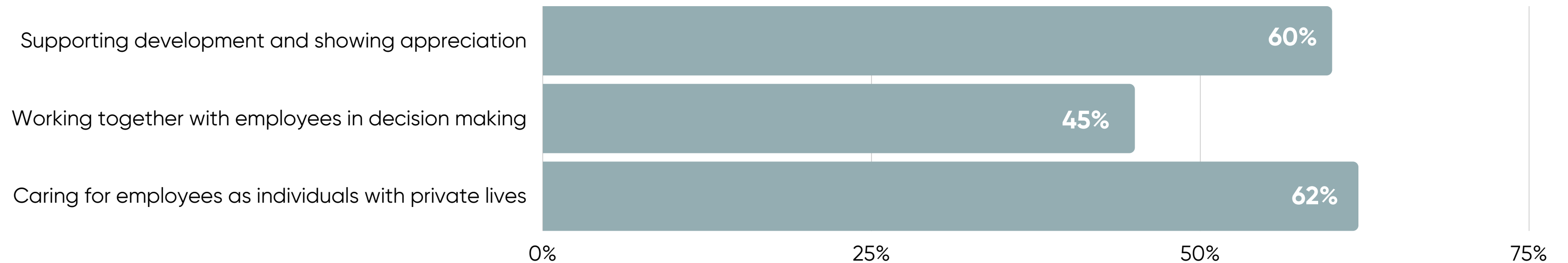
Credibility is also about creating acting with integrity as a benchmark. To be trustworthy, leaders must do what they say and promise. The theme of credibility consists of three subthemes with a total of 15 statements.



Respect

Respect means that the organization supports employees in carrying out their work, both in terms of development and in terms of resources and facilities needed. It also means involving employees in decisions and allowing their ideas and suggestions to be heard. Furthermore, respect means a safe working environment that includes a good work-life balance and that people are seen as individuals, not as numbers.

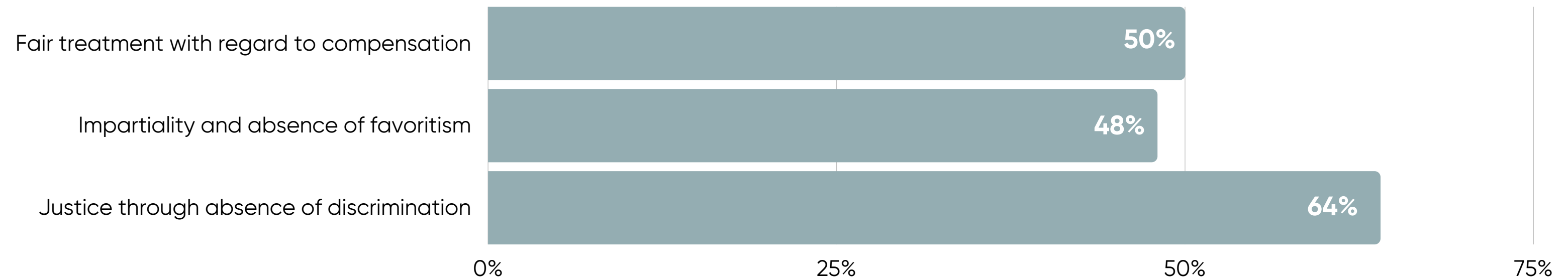
The theme of respect consists of three sub-themes with a total of 14 statements.



Fairness

In a fair organization, people are paid fairly for the work they do and (economic) success is distributed transparently. Also, everyone has the opportunity to gain recognition, promotions are awarded fairly and there is no preemption. Furthermore, discrimination based on origin, gender, sexual orientation and age is countered and this is supported by clear processes for raising this within the organization.

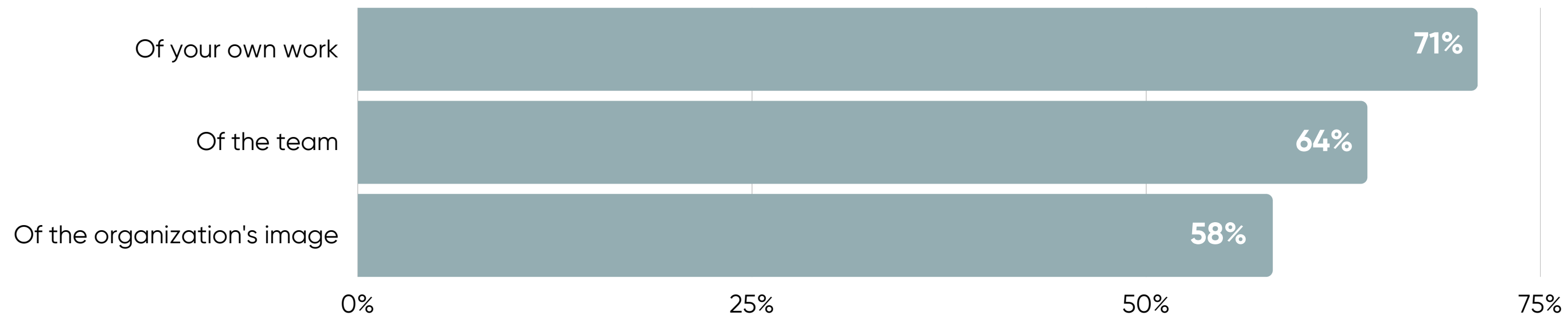
The theme of fairness consists of three sub-themes with a total of 12 statements.



Pride

Pride is about the feeling people experience on their own contribution, their team and the organization. People feel pride when they see that their work has meaning and that they can make a difference in the organization. Often, pride also comes from the feeling that people can count on each other and that they achieve certain goals together as a team. In addition, people can feel proud of the organization, for example because of its social contribution. They also carry this out to other people.

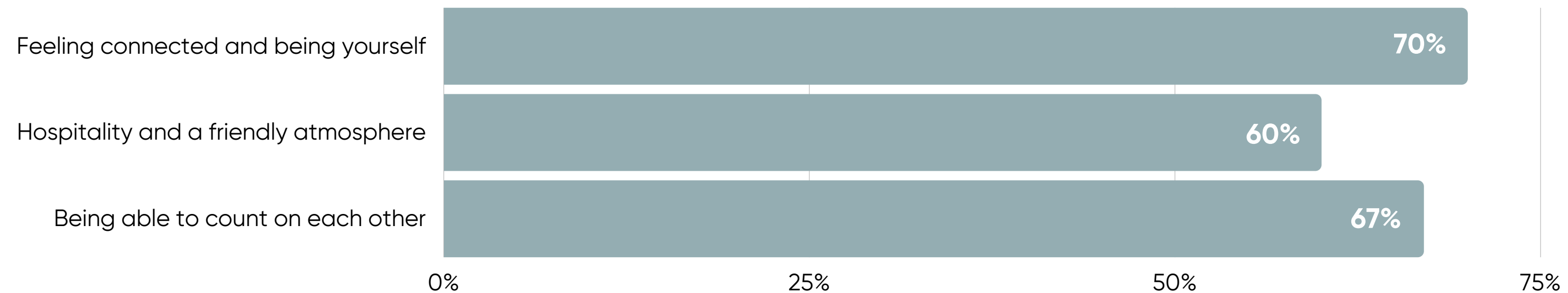
The theme of pride consists of three sub-themes with a total of 11 statements.



Camaraderie

Employees experience camaraderie when they feel connected to each other and when they can be themselves in the organization. Camaraderie is supported by the level of hospitality that employees experience at work, for example when they are hired. A friendly and inviting atmosphere is also important. The feeling of being part of a greater whole and of standing for something together determines whether there is a team spirit.

The theme of camaraderie consists of three sub-themes with a total of 7 statements.



5 highest scoring statements

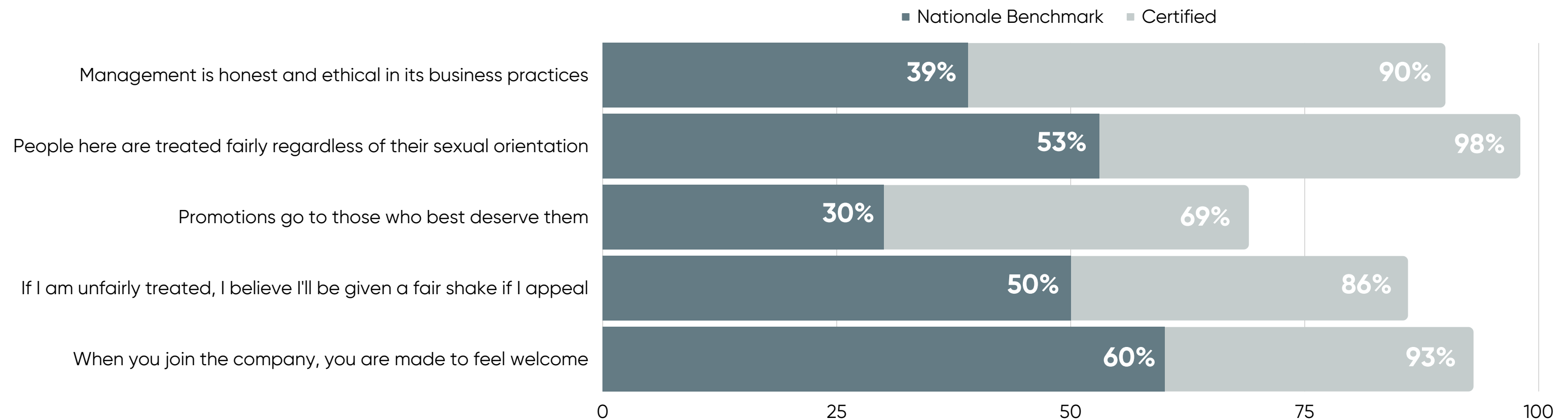
- 80% Management is competent at running the business
- 76% People here are treated fairly regardless of their race
- 76% This is a physically safe place to work
- 74% People here are treated fairly regardless of their gender
- 74% People here are given a lot of responsibility

5 lowest scoring statements

- 26% I feel I receive a fair share of the profits made by this organization
- 30% Promotions go to those who best deserve them
- 38% Management is honest and ethical in its business practices
- 42% Management involves people in decisions that affect their jobs or work environment
- 44% Management does a good job of assigning and coordinating people

The 5 points of focus for Dutch employers

What can the average Dutch employer learn from certified organizations? Based on the 60 statements, the statements below show the biggest difference. The first four statements are about fair treatment by leadership and being given a fair chance when dishonesty is discussed. The fifth statement shows opportunities when it comes to welcoming new employees.



eNPS

It's one of the most asked questions on a Dutch birthday party: "What do you do for a living?" In times of tight labor markets, you want your employees to talk positively about your organization, both to potential customers and job applicants.

The eNPS score (in the study the statement "I would highly recommend our organization to friends and family as a great place to work") is an indicator of this.

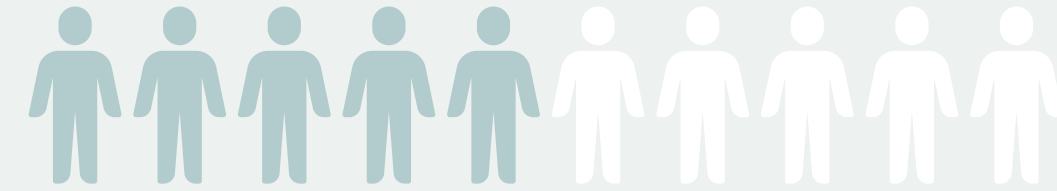
In the national benchmark, 5 in 10 employees say they would recommend their employer to friends and family. This compares to as many as 8 in 10 at certified organizations.

This makes trust a big factor in how far your employees are ambassadors of your organization.

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I would highly recommend our organization to friends and family as a great place to work



5 in 10 employees at the average Dutch employer recommend their employer to family and friends.



8 in 10 employees at certified organizations recommend their employer to family and friends.

Gender

The survey allows people to indicate whether they identify as female, male or other*. In terms of the average Trust Index, women score slightly lower than men.

These are the biggest differences at statement level:

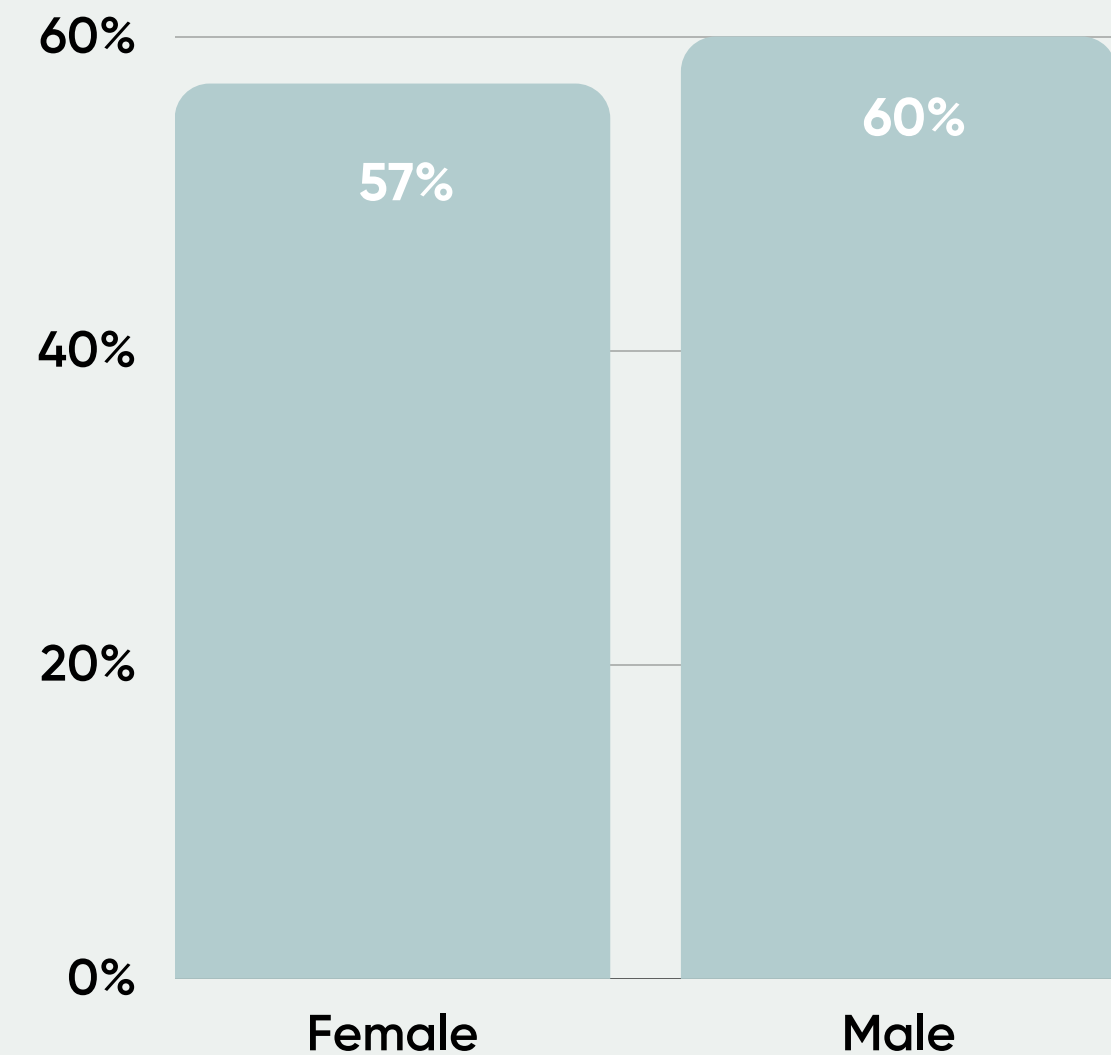
- I feel I make a difference here
(female: 74% versus male: 64%)
- If I am unfairly treated, I believe I'll be given a fair shake if I appeal
(female: 46% versus male: 55%)
- Management delivers on its promises
(female: 49% versus male: 58%)

*In the survey, there were too few respondents who identified as "other" to provide results on this.

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Trust Index score
(average of 60 statements)



Age

In the survey, people can indicate which age group they belong to. In terms of average Trust Index, the 35-44 age group scores the highest and 25 or younger scores the lowest.

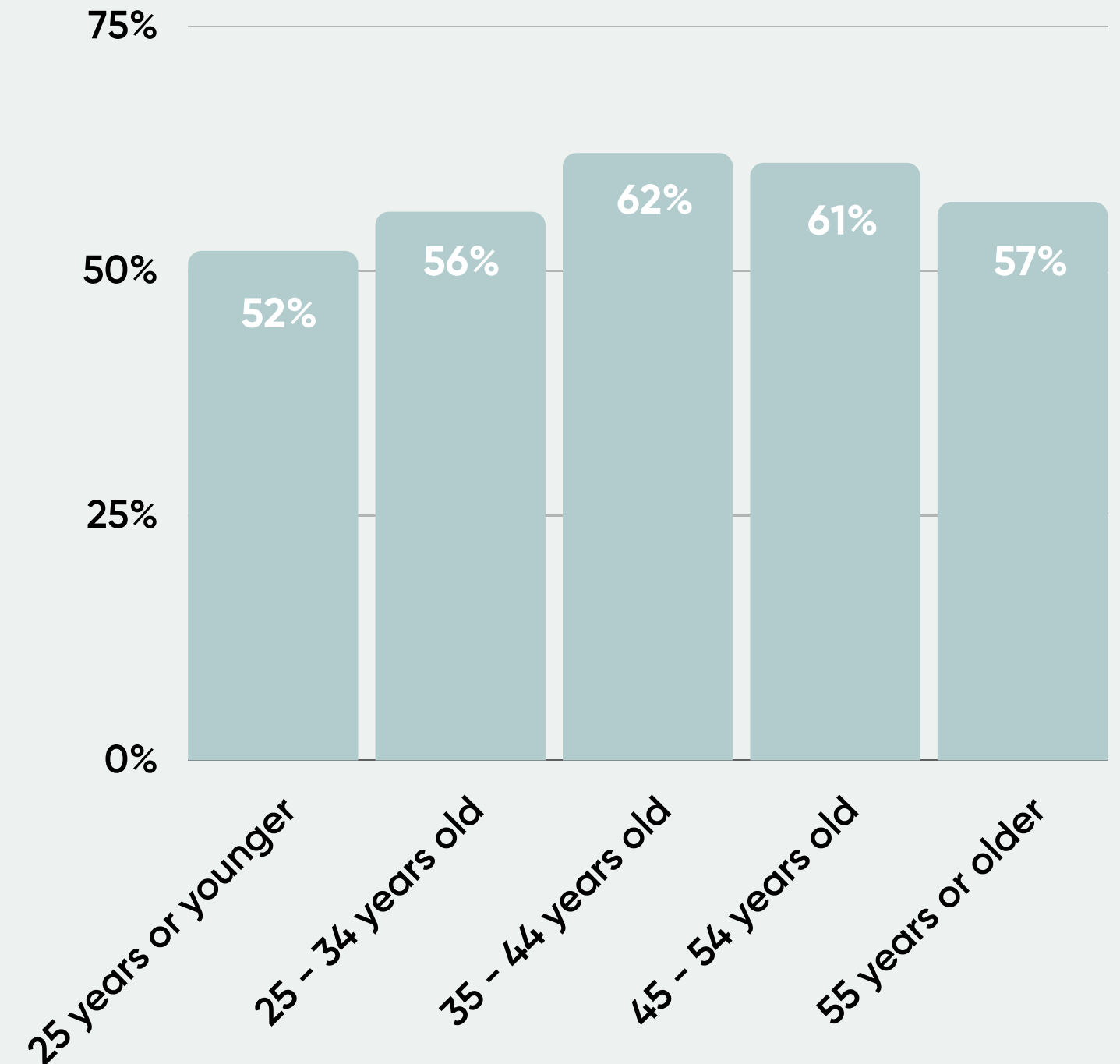
These are the biggest differences at statement level between the oldest and youngest age groups:

- Management is honest and ethical in its business practices
(25 years or younger: 71% versus 55 years or older: 37%)
- I am offered training or development to further myself professionally
(25 years or younger: 29% versus 55 years or older: 61%)
- My work has special meaning: this is not just a job
(25 years or younger: 43% versus 55 years or older: 76%)

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Trust Index score
(average of 60 statements)



Employment

The survey allows people to indicate how long they have been employed by the organization. In terms of average Trust Index, the group less than 2 years of employment scores the highest and 11 to 15 years of employment scores the lowest.

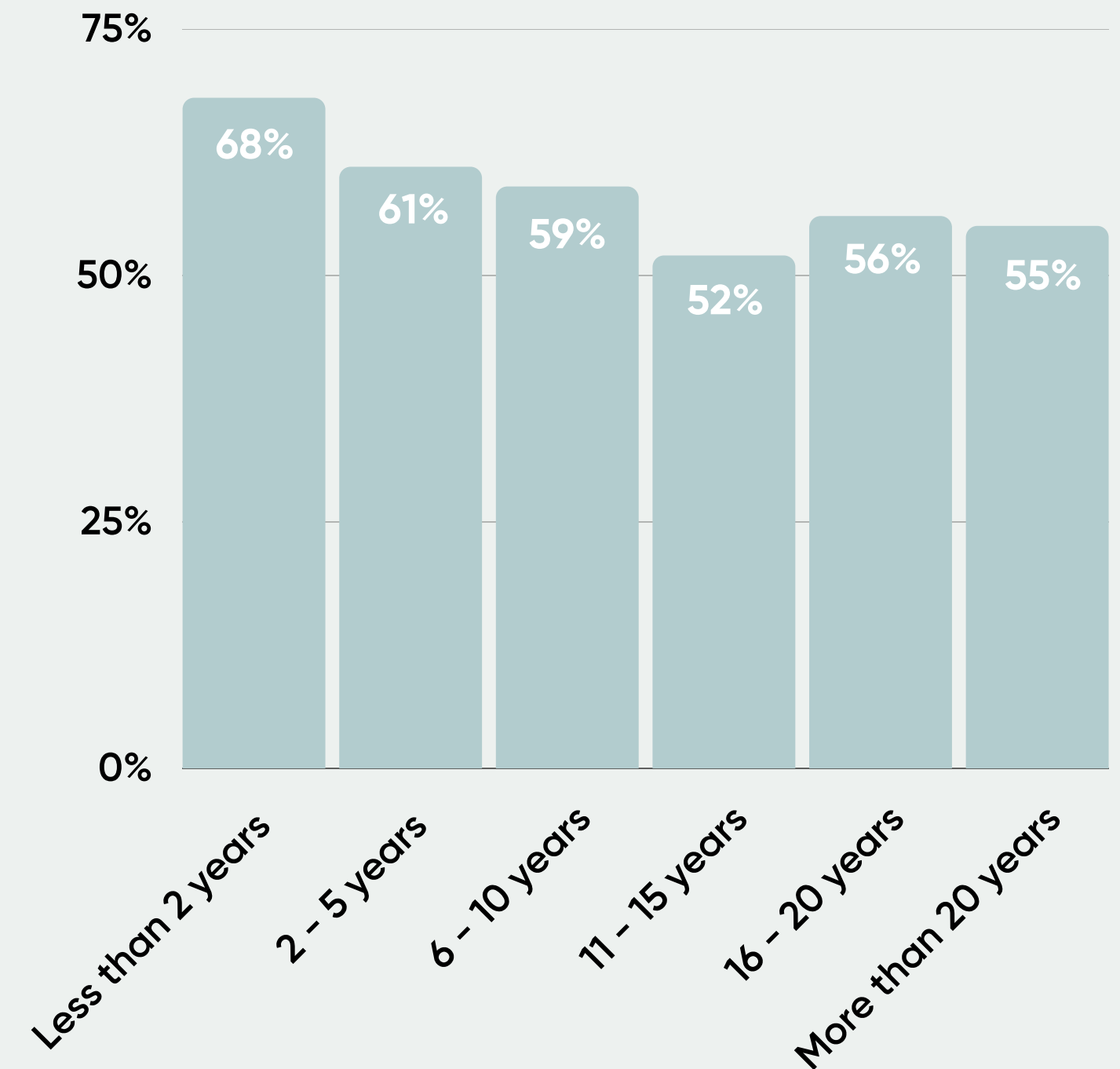
These are the largest differences at statement level between these two groups:

- Managers avoid playing favorites
(less than 2 years: 68% versus 11-15 years: 36%)
- Management hires people who fit in well here
(less than 2 years: 71% versus 11-15 years: 41%)
- Management shows appreciation for good work and extra effort
(less than 2 years: 65% versus 11-15 years: 39%)

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Trust Index score
(average of 60 statements)



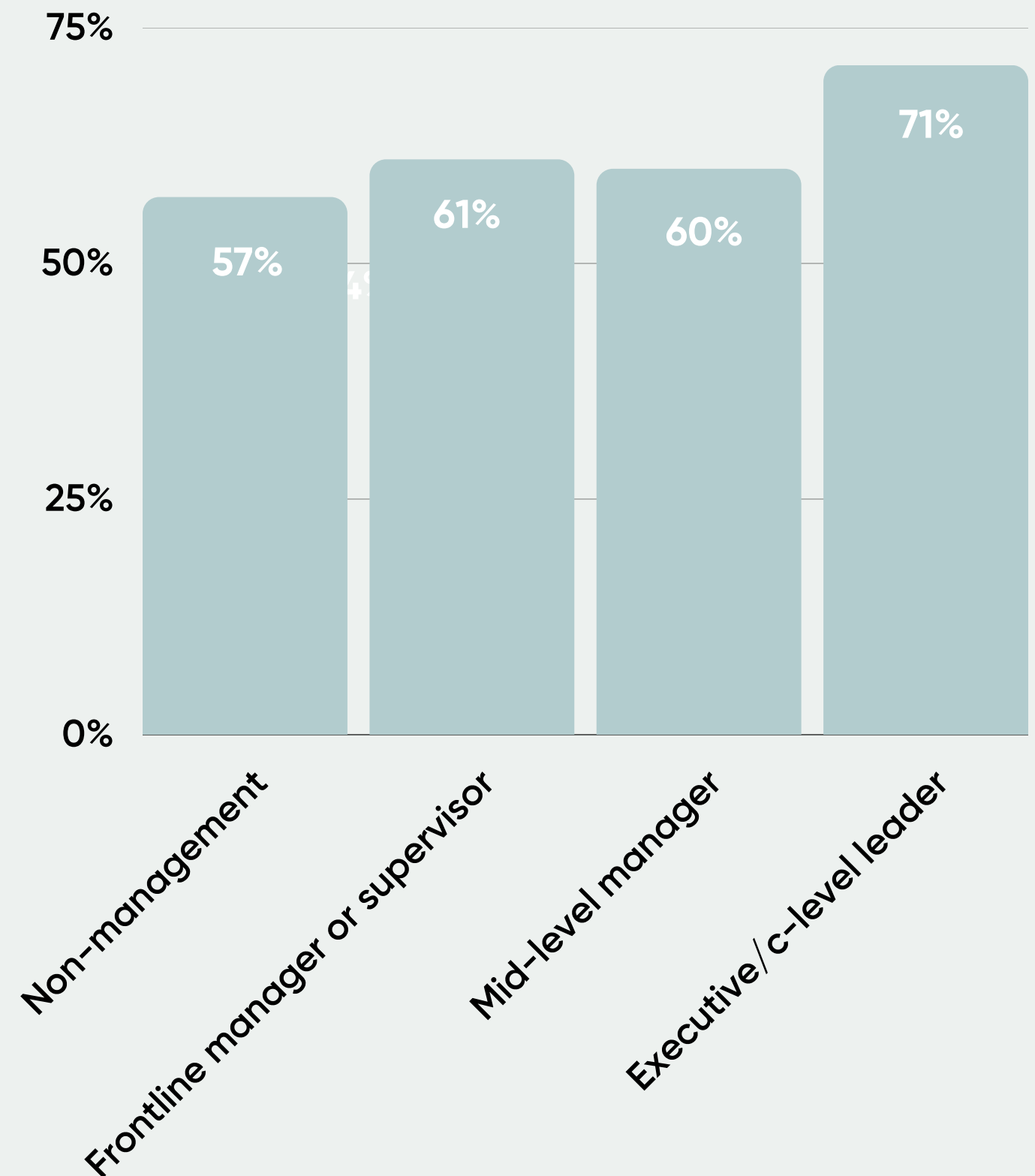
Managerial level

In the survey, people can indicate to which managerial level they belong. In terms of average Trust Index, executive/c-level scores the highest and non-management the lowest.

These are the biggest differences at statement level between these two groups:

- Promotions go to those who best deserve them (non-management: 29% versus executive: 57%)
- Management hires people who fit in well here (non-management: 49% versus executive: 74%)
- Management involves people in decisions that affect their jobs or work environment (non-management: 40% versus executive: 63%)

Trust Index score
(average of 60 statements)



Calculation of scores

The statements can be answered with one of the following response options:

1. Almost always not true
2. Often not true
3. Sometimes true/sometimes not true
4. Often true
5. Almost always true
6. No answer

The results show a percentage. This is the percentage of respondents to answer options 4 'often true' and 5 'almost always true,' relative to all answer options, excluding the 'no answer' option.

For example, if the score on a statement is 70%, that means 70% of the respondents filled in 'often true' or 'almost always true'.

Interpretation of scores

The Trust Index score is the average of the 60 statements. These are the statements that fall under the dimensions and the feeling indicator. The feeling indicator is the statement: 'Overall, I think our organization is a great place to work.' Thus, the score is not the average of the five dimensions.

The scores on the dimensions are not the average of the underlying statements. Each value is calculated separately and has a certain weighting in the total according to the number of people who answered that statement.

If someone chooses 'no answer', this does not weigh in. Thus, one statement may count more often than another.

This makes the calculation of the average pure.

Do's en don'ts

Building a culture of trust

What can you do to build a culture of trust? Trust is created daily in every (inter)action. It takes a while to build, but a small action can break it down again.

In essence, this is all about behavior. How do you deal with the other person? From our philosophy, leadership, giving freedom, exemplary behavior and transparency are important themes in this.

Discover the 6 'do's' that have a positive effect on building trust.

01

Trust requires letting go within the boundaries you have agreed with each other. This means that you do not need to know every minute what someone is doing, but that you hold each other accountable for the result.

02

Example behavior is essential. Are you always working very late, snapping at colleagues or never telling anyone about your private life? Then others will copy this behavior. Show exemplary behavior, not only in words, but especially in deeds.

03

How do we treat each other? Make sure you have clear guidelines for behavior linked to your core values. This allows you to call each other to account.

04

Show genuine appreciation for your employees. A thank you or a pat on the back: you build trust with these interactions.

05

See mistakes as learning moments. Dare to let people experiment. Do not punish immediately if something does not go well. You don't teach a child to ride a bike all at once. Do you encourage a child to try again or send them home?

06

Who gets to decide what and how are decisions made? Much mistrust arises with unfair treatment and gossip in the corridors. Build a transparent decision-making process.

Breaking down trust

How do you break down trust? As mentioned earlier, it's all about behavior. An initial awareness on how do I actually treat the other person can already be a big step. As a leader and HR, you have a role model to play in this. Take the example of the CEO who said he was going to the doctor when he was actually picking up his children. If you don't have the courage to say this, your employees won't feel the freedom to do so either.

It's also about the words you use. Are you talking about staff and human capital? Or are you talking about colleagues, co-workers or a self-devised nickname, such as Incentronauts.

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01

Saying, but not acting. "We think our people are very important," but at the first crisis, people fly out first. In many organizations, nice words are spoken, but action is different. Make sure you do what you say.

02

Micromanaging. Being on top of everything and wanting to check off lists. This is destructive to someone's motivation. Be clear about what you expect from someone and leave them free.

03

Most ideas come from the work floor itself. Often we see that these are "hijacked" by leaders and managers. Be aware of this, take a step back and give credit to those who deserve it.

04

Everyone is a human being. And you stay away from someone's "being". You can always address people on behavior or results, but not on being someone. Statements like "you are worthless" are a no go.

05

Punishment. Is someone fired immediately if something goes wrong? And is that person rebuffed in front of his or her colleagues? This is destructive to trust. Have a conversation with each other and be open to a different voice.

06

A "one-size-fits-all" approach doesn't work. Everyone is different. It's focusing on the person behind the employees that makes you build trust.



Engage in conversations

Talking about sensitive topics can be tricky. How do you start the conversation? And what questions do you ask? That's why we created a deck of cards with 35 questions to spark meaningful conversations.

The questions cover the topics of equal opportunities, LGBTQIA+, neurodiversity, mental health and gender equality.

The card game is free (a maximum of one per organization) and available in Dutch or English.

→ [Request the deck of cards](#)



About us

Great Place To Work helps your organization create a culture of trust. We do this using the Trust Index™, the employee survey that measure trust, pride and joy.

We believe that trust is the foundation for better individual performance, better team performance and better business results. Growth and innovation then follow naturally.

Our philosophy is based on more than 30 years of experience in 60 different countries. Every year, more than 10,000 organizations worldwide participate in the Trust Index employee survey.

We are your guide to a successful organizational culture. Click the button below and schedule an online introductory meeting.

[Let's meet!](#)

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Contact

www.greatplacetowork.nl

+31 020 260 0694

N_info@greatplacetowork.com

Address

Gonnetstraat 26

2011 KA Haarlem

Netherlands



Great Place To Work®

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