Future of work and skills survey

Insight into government and public services organisations

pwc

Table of Contents

Foreword

The challenges that leaders face today are more significant and complex than they've been in generations. Global crises[1] such as increasing wealth disparity, massive technological disruption, demographic pressure and declining confidence in governing institutions all demand urgent action. At the same time, breakdown in global consensus with growing nationalism and populism has influenced the political agenda of many historical donor countries. This context has a direct impact on the capacity of government and public services organisations to get sustainable funding to respond to these global crises.

Our survey provides valuable insights into the specific challenges government and public services organisations face as they look to build, equip, and support tomorrow's workforce. Similar to organisations across all industries globally, the leaders of government and public services organisations face challenges around digitalisation, automation, workforce diversity equity and inclusion, culture and sustainability. These stumbling blocks highlight the importance of shoring up both the financial and the human capital elements of the equation.

At the same time, government and public services organisations face increased pressure from their staff and the general public to exhibit how they consistently live their values every day and "walk the talk" when it comes to workforce matters. Looking ahead, thriving organisations will need to understand how to unleash their people's full potential and develop and execute new dynamic people planning strategies.

In our Global 2021 Future of Work and Skills Survey, nearly 4,000 executives and HR leaders from around the world collectively identified the six "no-regrets" moves that are important to make their workforce strategy future-ready.

We hope that you find the insights in this report of significant value as we explore the six "no-regrets" moves that government and public services organisations leaders can make today to prepare for the future of work.

Adrian Jones
Partner

People & Organisation, PwC
Switzerland

Myriam Denk
Partner

People & Organisation, PwC
Switzerland

Tobias Sattler
Managing Director

People & Organisation, PwC
Switzerland

---

[1] https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/technology/pwc-adapt-five-urgent-global-issues-and-implications.pdf

Executive summary

About the survey

PwC's Future of Work and Skills survey draws upon the views of almost 4,000 business and HR leaders from 26 countries and regions and 28 industry sectors on current workforce challenges and what the future of work may look like for companies. In this report, we have summarised the relevant findings and conclusions based on the answers provided by respondents from the government and public services sector.

Key findings: the six "no-regrets" moves for the government and public services sector

Our Future of Work and Skills Survey identifies six "no-regrets" moves that are important to build a future-ready workforce strategy. Leaders can benefit from taking vigorous and prompt action to strengthen their organisation's capacity to meet today's pressing challenges and to prepare for the future of work.

1. **Anticipate and plan for the future**
   In an increasingly uncertain global environment, deliberate workforce planning is more important – and more difficult – than ever. Organisations can increase their agility and resilience by envisioning different scenarios of what the future could look like and draw conclusions on what it means for their people and their organisation, and subsequently feed these insights into their workforce strategy.

2. **Build trust in the organization**
   Building and maintaining trust between leadership and staff is essential to attract and retain talented workers. At the same time, organisations still struggle to establish and maintain a culture that reinforces trust at all levels and breaks down communication barriers.

3. **Optimise workforce productivity and performance**
   Accurately measuring workload is key to successfully managing the balance between workforce productivity and well-being. The organisations that have found a sustainable balance have reported higher levels of average performance. Thriving organisations tend to use the power of technology and data alongside their culture and values to engage with their people and develop sustainable solutions that foster workforce productivity and well-being simultaneously.

4. **Enable the skills of the future**
   Encouraging re-skilling and continuous learning is a growing priority for many leaders. Even so, using quality workforce analytics to predict skill gaps remains a challenge for many organisations. Without a clear view of what skills will be the most needed in the future, organisations have a limited capacity to plan accordingly. Investments in technology are becoming more critical to be able to plan and act today.

5. **Prepare for and deploy technology with humans in mind**
   Implementing new technology is more sustainable when conducted with people at the centre. Organisations can significantly improve the impact and value of their technology investments through people-centric communication and involving their workforce in the co-development and deployment of technology initiatives.

6. **Build ability to rapidly access and deploy talent**
   Building a resilient and agile workforce strategy is necessary to rapidly respond to changes impacting the world of work. Simultaneously, there's an opportunity to reduce the perception gap between HR and executives by working more closely together to develop, deploy and track a common workforce strategy that is fully integrated into the wider organisation strategy.

Detailed survey findings

Why are these findings important for government and public services organisations?

In the past two years, the world has gone through an unprecedented series of changes. Since the coronavirus began its spread across the world, the effects have been deeply felt across multiple layers of society. Coupled with the current geopolitical uncertainties and conflicts, the pandemic has accelerated many trends that impact the world of work.

From technological disruption to declining confidence in governing institutions and the heightened instability and unpredictable nature of the world around us, we can be certain that these dynamics will continue to profoundly shape government and public services organisations.

Here are six key takeaways to be considered specifically for government and public services organisations:

1. Anticipate and plan for the future

The capacity to anticipate and plan is seen as critically important by government and public services organisations.

Respondents indicated two elements as critically important for the future of their organisations: the ability to closely align workforce strategy to the wider organisation's strategy, and the capacity to develop strategic, financial, and people plans in a coordinated way.
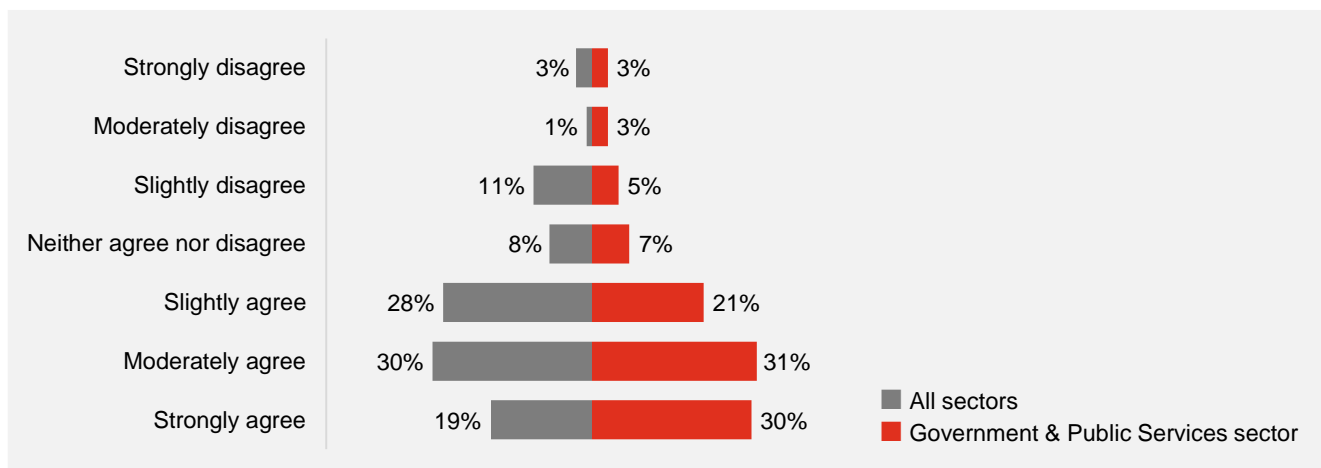
Across industries, only 30% of survey respondents strongly agree that they use scenario or dynamic planning to inform their workforce decisions. For government and public services organisations, this number dropped to only 19% for scenario planning and 16% for dynamic planning.

In the context of government and public services organisations, scenario and dynamic planning can help envisage fluctuating funding scenarios and anticipate impacts on workforce and programme needs.

Dynamic planning can be a strategic tool to accelerate organisational responsiveness and the deployment of workers and resources in field operations (e.g. in emergency settings or owing to diplomatic crises).

Thinking about your organisation today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?

We take a scenarios-based approach to plan for multiple possible futures.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	3%	3%
Moderately disagree	1%	3%
Slightly disagree	11%	5%
Neither agree nor disagree	8%	7%
Slightly agree	28%	21%
Moderately agree	30%	31%
Strongly agree	19%	30%

We plan in a dynamic way to maximise our responsiveness to changes in our market and performance.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	2%	1%
Moderately disagree	1%	2%
Slightly disagree	7%	3%
Neither agree nor disagree	9%	8%
Slightly agree	32%	22%
Moderately agree	34%	34%
Strongly agree	16%	30%
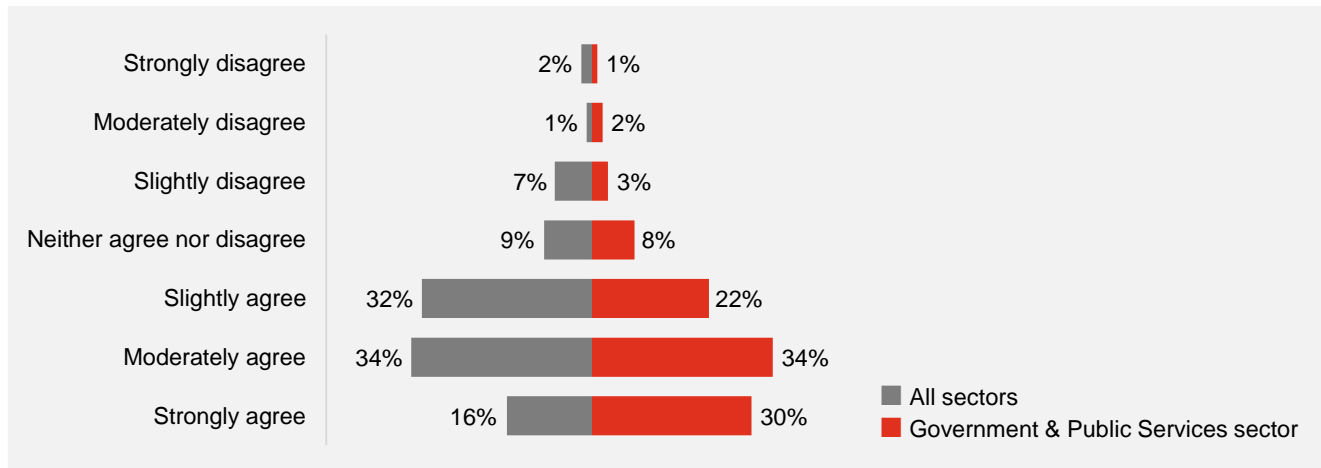
We use a wide variety of external data sources and viewpoints as we consider our workforce strategy.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	3%	1%
Moderately disagree	3%	2%
Slightly disagree	6%	3%
Neither agree nor disagree	12%	7%
Slightly agree	21%	19%
Moderately agree	28%	34%
Strongly agree	28%	34%

2. Build trust in the organisation

A lack of trust from the general public in governing institutions around the globe seems to be echoed by a lack of trust from workers in their organisations. Government and public services organisations survey results show that people see the trust between themselves and their direct supervisor as extremely important.

In a changing global environment, which is influenced by the uncertainty of political eruptions and pandemics, people want to trust their employer and have an increased need for certainty and transparency.

In this context, workers increasingly tend to be drawn to organisations that clearly articulate and live up to their purpose, values and culture. Our survey results show that clear communication of the organisation's purpose and values is especially important to workers and leaders, who can play a crucial role here by consistently "walking the talk".

Attracting and retaining talent continues to be challenging, especially for organisations that do not have a clearly defined cultural strategy. Creating an employee value proposition that clearly indicates how the organisation aligns it strategy with the needs of its people is key to attracting and retaining the right talent.

People want to be involved in their organisation's progress – and we see emerging trends, such as the Great Resignation, where workers tend to leave organisations more easily when organisations fail to continually engage and keep workers connected to the organisation's purpose.

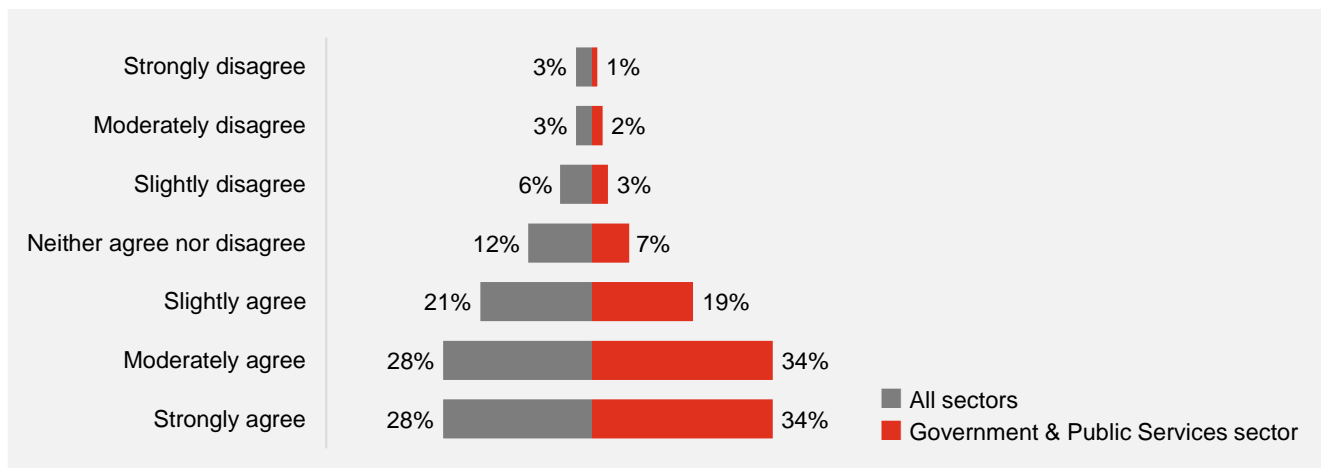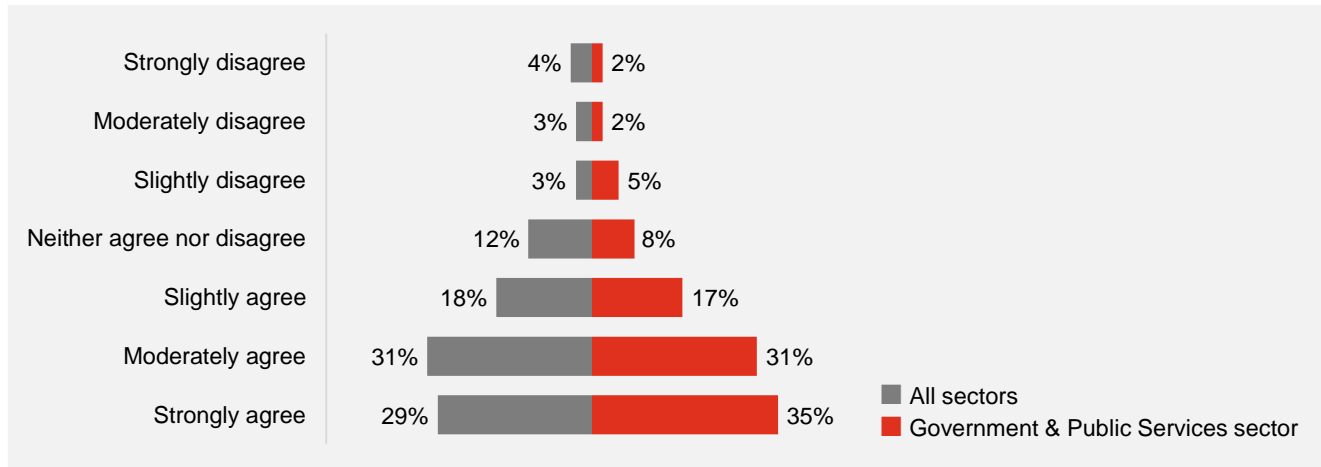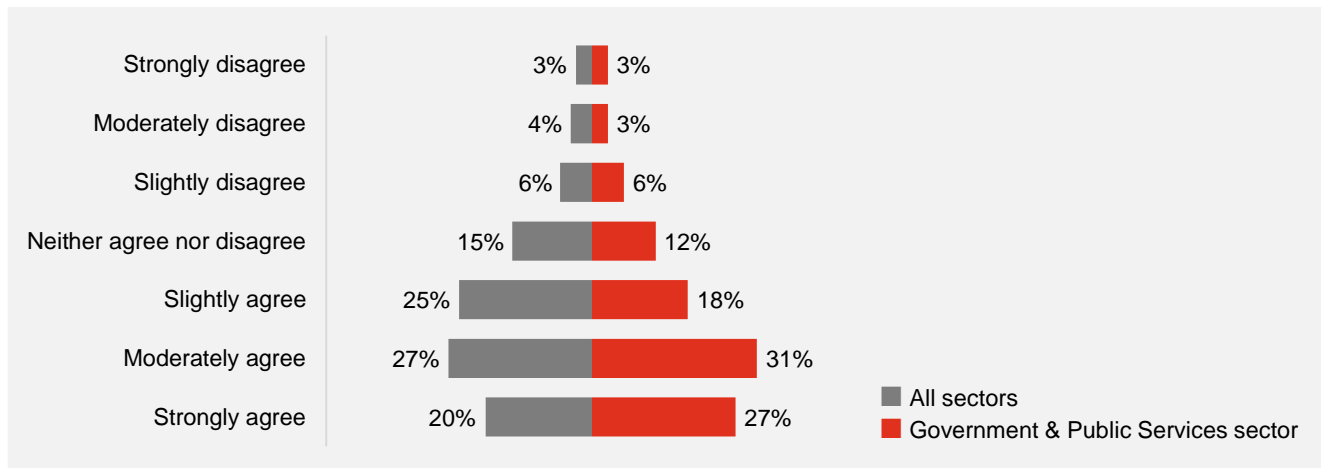**Thinking about your organisation today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?**

We build high levels of trust between workers and their direct superiors throughout the organisation.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	4%	2%
Moderately disagree	3%	2%
Slightly disagree	3%	5%
Neither agree nor disagree	12%	8%
Slightly agree	18%	17%
Moderately agree	31%	31%
Strongly agree	29%	35%

How important are the following to the future of your organisation?

Communicating a clearly defined purpose and set of values for the organisation

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	3%	3%
Moderately disagree	4%	3%
Slightly disagree	6%	6%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%	12%
Slightly agree	25%	18%
Moderately agree	27%	31%
Strongly agree	20%	27%

3. Optimise workforce productivity and performance

Only a minority of survey respondents (10%) strongly agree that they are able to determine their flexibility policy by considering what's best for both team and individual worker performance.
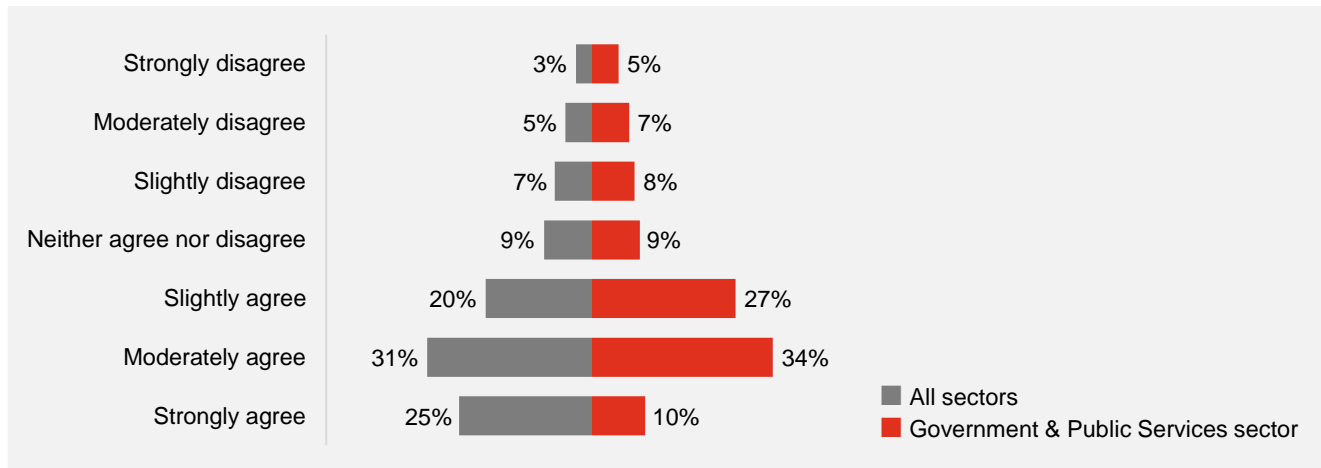
Leadership capability, specifically people management skills, is crucial to find and maintain the right balance between driving sustainable productivity and fostering well-being at a team and individual level.

The organisations that were able to regularly re-invent themselves were able to remain relevant and effective in an ever-changing global environment. By leveraging their culture to sustain transformation, they were able to reach and maintain a higher level of productivity and performance.
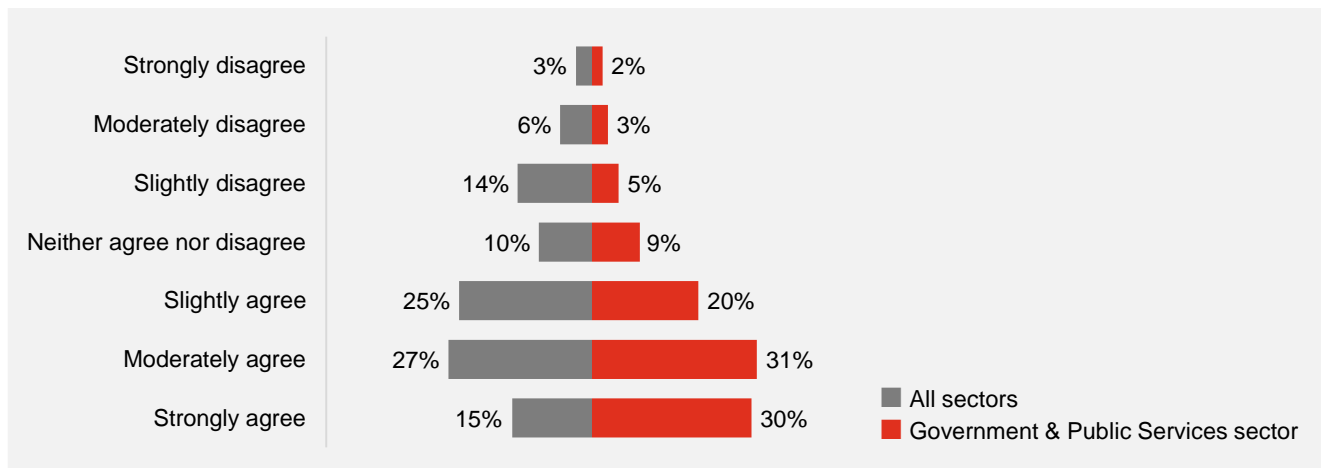
In addition, thriving organisations tend to use the power of technology and data alongside their culture and values to engage with their people and develop sustainable solutions that foster workforce productivity and well-being simultaneously.

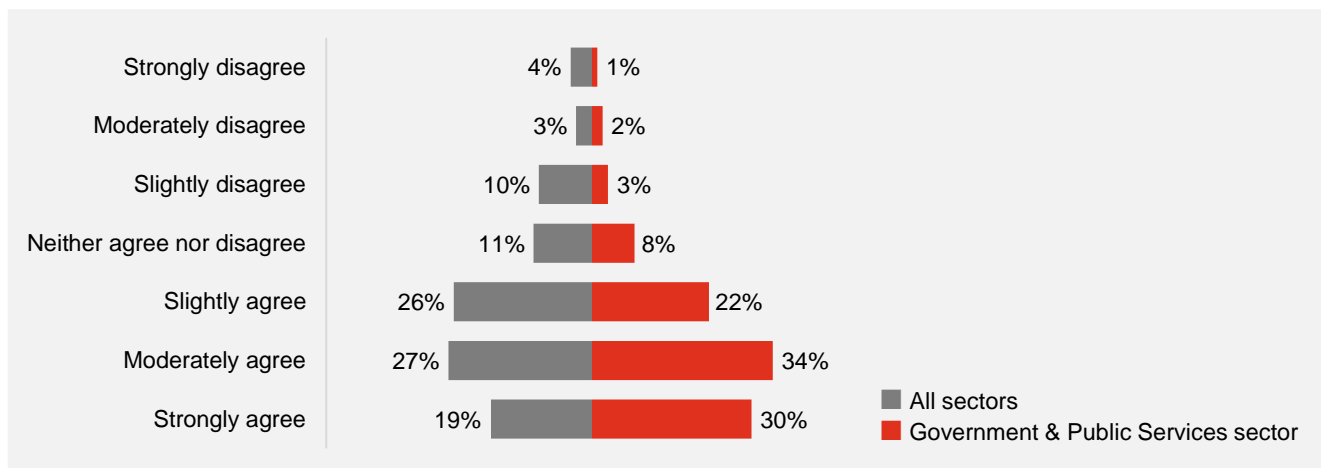**Thinking about your organisation today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?**

We determine our flexibility policy over hours and working locations by considering what's best for both team and individual worker performance.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	3%	5%
Moderately disagree	5%	7%
Slightly disagree	7%	8%
Neither agree nor disagree	9%	9%
Slightly agree	20%	27%
Moderately agree	31%	34%
Strongly agree	25%	10%

We are able to measure productivity and performance at an individual level.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	3%	2%
Moderately disagree	6%	3%
Slightly disagree	14%	5%
Neither agree nor disagree	10%	9%
Slightly agree	25%	20%
Moderately agree	27%	31%
Strongly agree	15%	30%

We are able to measure productivity and performance at a team level.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	4%	1%
Moderately disagree	3%	2%
Slightly disagree	10%	3%
Neither agree nor disagree	11%	8%
Slightly agree	26%	22%
Moderately agree	27%	34%
Strongly agree	19%	30%

4. Enable the skills of the future

Although predictions on the future of work remain hypothetical, it's safe to assume that the skills required in the coming years will continue to fluctuate and be massively disrupted by technology and innovation.

In this context, the highest priority that leaders have mentioned is to encourage continuous learning. In particular, upskilling and reskilling initiatives need to be fit for purpose, easy to monitor and continuously improved.

Nevertheless, survey respondents have mentioned the use of workforce analytics to predict skills gaps to be the most significant challenge they face in their upskilling efforts. Without a clear view of what skills will be the most needed in the future and which ones will be the most impacted by technology, organisations have a limited capacity to plan accordingly.

When asked about the current landscape of technology, only 13% of respondents strongly agree that their HR systems provide them with the right data to make effective workforce decisions. This limits the ability of organisations to rapidly reskill and redeploy staff across their operations.

Survey respondents have indicated that organisational culture and leadership capabilities are often part of the factors they see blocking the implementation of fitting programmes.
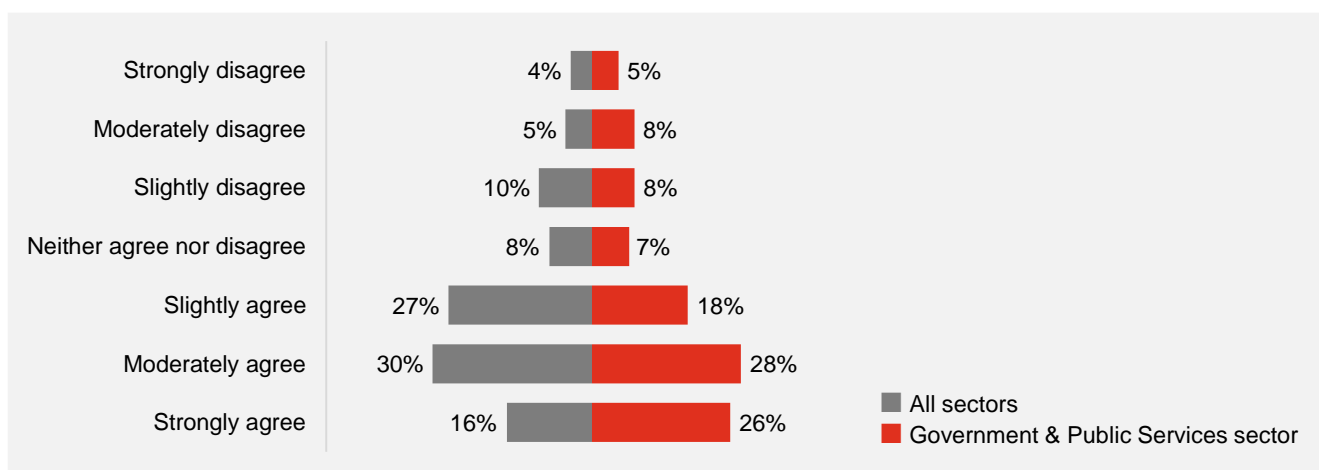
In addition, costs were also mentioned as part of the major barriers to change. However, spending on learning and development cannot bring the expected results if it is not targeted to the skills that are critical for the organisation.

To identify where to go next, it's imperative that leaders make investments in existing and new technology to maintain their organisation's skills inventory to allow the visualisation of any gaps between supply and demand for critical skills in the organisation.

HR leaders could also look into moving from performance-driven to potential-driven evaluation to create the space required for learning and growth, which are critical to enable the development of new skills that are fit for the future.

Thinking about your organisation today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?

We can identify the skills the organisation will need in the future due to technological change.

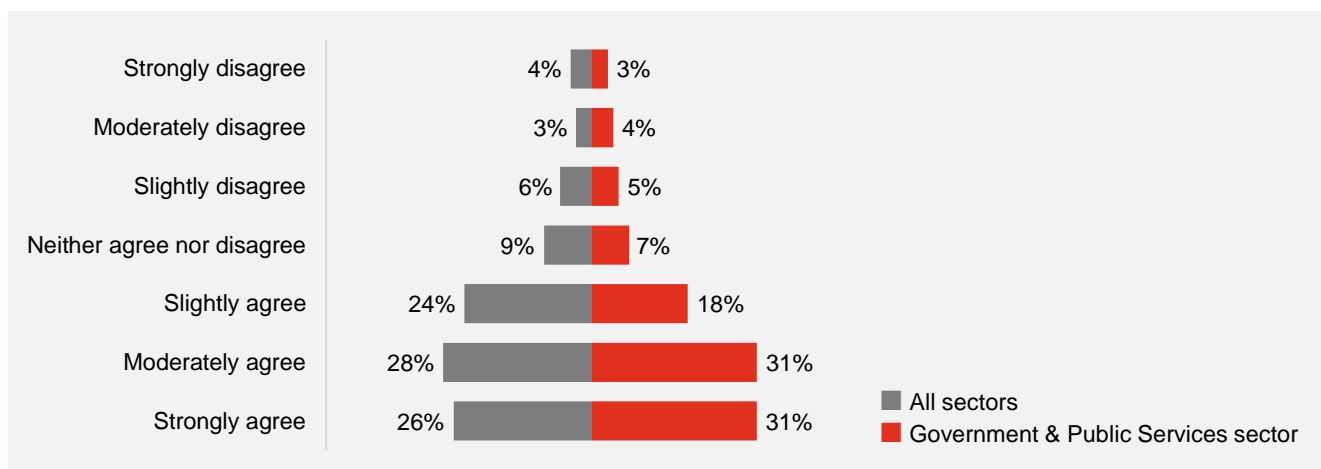|	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	4%	5%
Moderately disagree	5%	8%
Slightly disagree	10%	8%
Neither agree nor disagree	8%	7%
Slightly agree	27%	18%
Moderately agree	30%	28%
Strongly agree	16%	26%

Thinking about your organisation today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?

Our HR systems provide the right data to make effective workforce decisions.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	6%	3%
Moderately disagree	5%	4%
Slightly disagree	9%	7%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%	10%
Slightly agree	22%	19%
Moderately agree	30%	32%
Strongly agree	13%	25%
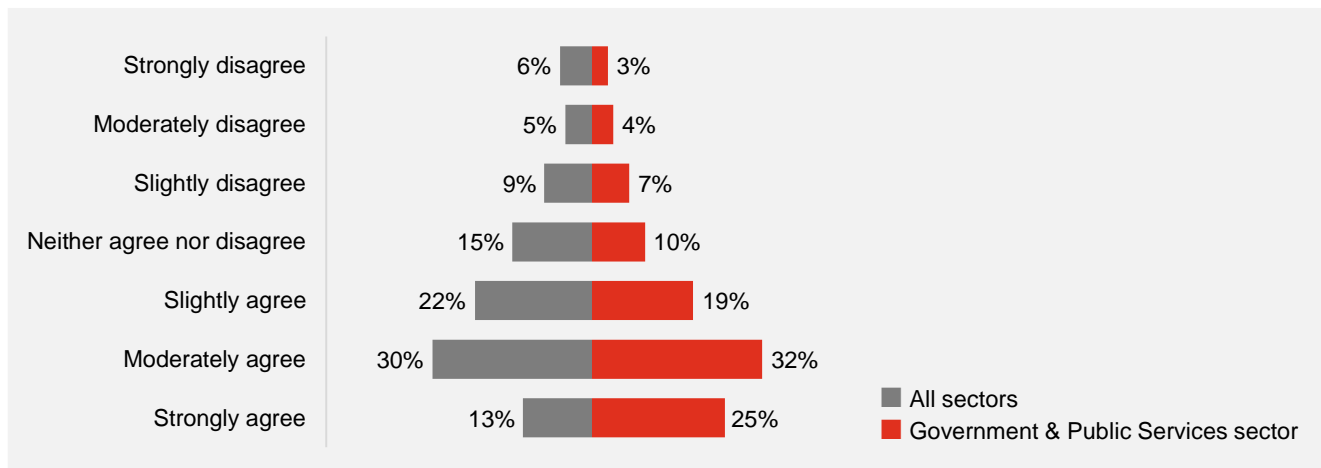
We encourage re-skilling and continuous learning to help workers remain employable.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	4%	3%
Moderately disagree	3%	4%
Slightly disagree	6%	5%
Neither agree nor disagree	9%	7%
Slightly agree	24%	18%
Moderately agree	28%	31%
Strongly agree	26%	31%

5. Prepare for and deploy technology with humans in mind

With a very diverse workforce, ranging from political officials to desk workers and field workers, government and public services organisations could improve the impact of their transformation initiatives by improving their change management capabilities.

Strategic communication is notably a way to better manage the complex stakeholder landscape and leverage the appropriate communication channels to maximise impact and adhesion with the various target audiences. This can include adapting the messaging to specific workforce segments and locations, better managing the narrative around digital transformation, etc.).

Survey respondents indicated that organisational culture and leadership capabilities are often part of the factors they see blocking communication on the expected impacts of technology on workers.

The responses show that for government and public services organisations in particular, it's crucial to harness workers' diverse ideas to improve the choice, implementation and adoption of technology and make the best use of their unique human skills in congruence with technology.
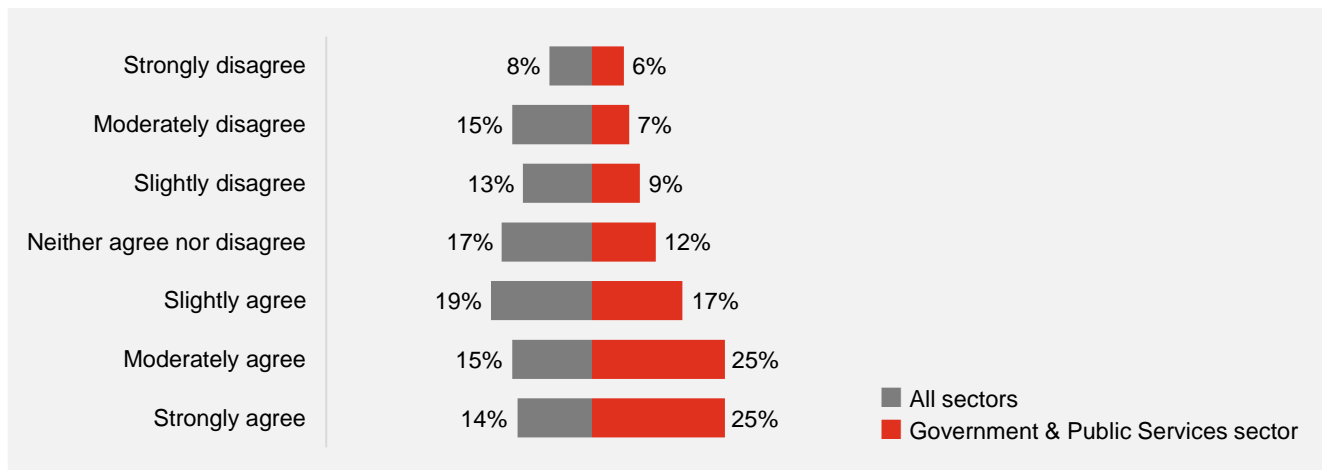
Leaders have, in this context, the opportunity to create a safe environment and culture where they can reassure employees that where technological solutions will be brought in, the impact on humans will not be as calamitous as they might fear or even present them as opportunities to grow and acquire new skills.

And when jobs will be affected, leaders must handle that, too, with transparency and humanity – not only for workers' sake, but also because anxiety affects performance negatively.
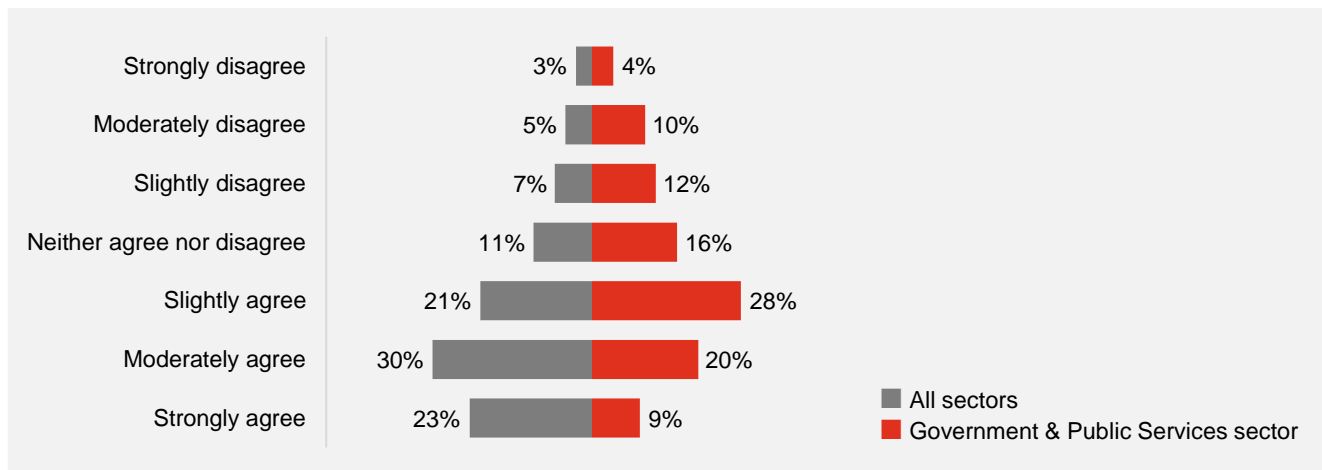
Adopting an approach where people are supported and treated even though jobs may be disrupted or disappear entirely is a good way to demonstrate how organisations embody the duty of care and contribute to a more trusting working environment.

Thinking about your organisation today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?

We communicate clearly and consistently to our employees and other stakeholders about the expected impacts of automation and AI on our future skills needs.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	8%	6%
Moderately disagree	15%	7%
Slightly disagree	13%	9%
Neither agree nor disagree	17%	12%
Slightly agree	19%	17%
Moderately agree	15%	25%
Strongly agree	14%	25%

Our workforce and technology strategies make the best use of uniquely human skills.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	3%	4%
Moderately disagree	5%	10%
Slightly disagree	7%	12%
Neither agree nor disagree	11%	16%
Slightly agree	21%	28%
Moderately agree	30%	20%
Strongly agree	23%	9%

6. Build ability to rapidly access and deploy talent

For government and public services organisations, the ability to access and deploy qualified workers rapidly is a critical factor that can help increase the responsiveness and overall effectiveness of the organisation. This also forms part of a more strategic operations plan and has become a vital requirement for all organisations that serve the public sector on a global scale.
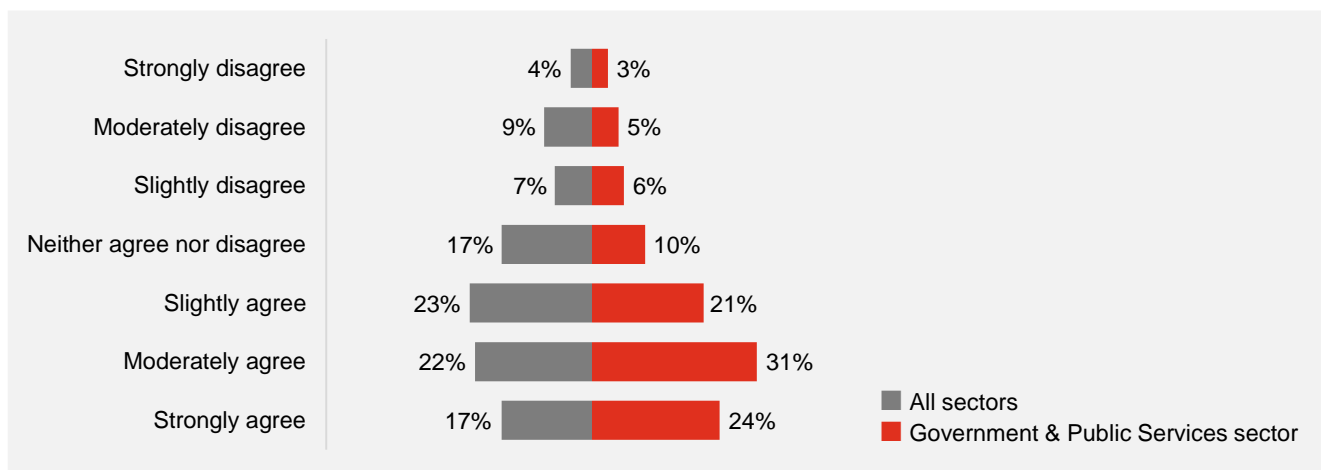
Despite this, only a minority of our survey respondents strongly agree that they can effectively and rapidly adjust their workforce strategy in response to changes in the market or global context.

Furthermore, our survey results indicate that executives are less confident than HR leaders regarding the HR function's capacity to develop and deliver their workforce strategy.
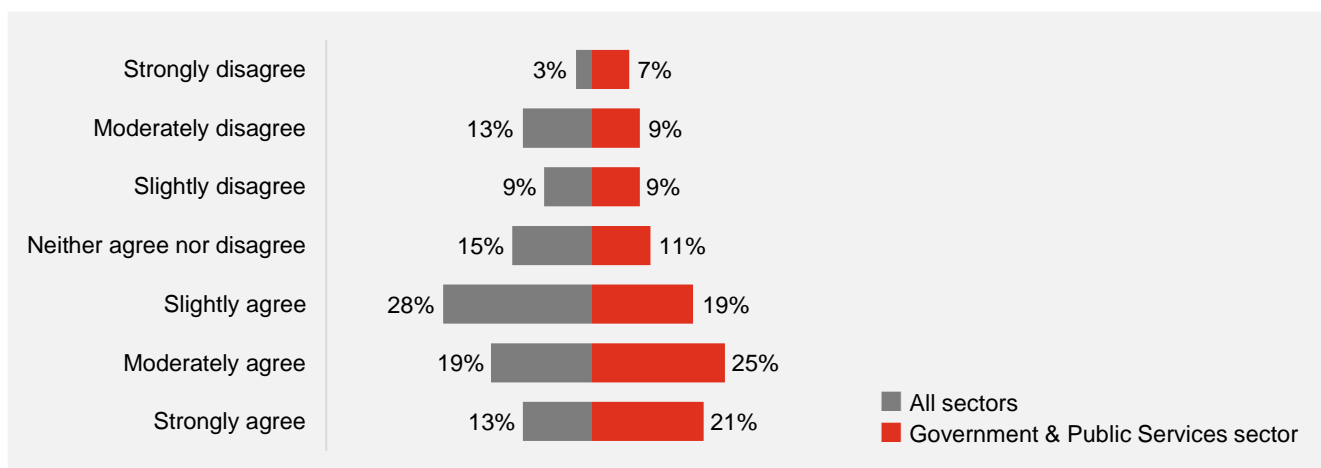
Building a resilient and agile workforce strategy is necessary to rapidly respond to changes impacting the world of work. Simultaneously, there's an opportunity to reduce the perception gap between HR and executives by working more closely together to develop, deploy and track a common workforce strategy that is fully integrated into the wider organisation strategy.

Thinking about your organisation today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?

We can rapidly adjust our workforce management processes and policies to adapt to changing business needs.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	4%	3%
Moderately disagree	9%	5%
Slightly disagree	7%	6%
Neither agree nor disagree	17%	10%
Slightly agree	23%	21%
Moderately agree	22%	31%
Strongly agree	17%	24%

We have identified the potential risks caused by decisions to replace human work with technology.

	All sectors	Government & Public Services sector
Strongly disagree	3%	7%
Moderately disagree	13%	9%
Slightly disagree	9%	9%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%	11%
Slightly agree	28%	19%
Moderately agree	19%	25%
Strongly agree	13%	21%

Moving forward: PwC's perspective

With the global geopolitical context also fluctuating, government and public services organisations need more than ever to constantly adapt and accelerate their level of responsiveness in the deployment of their resources and programmes across the world.

In this context, lukewarm agreement or action will not create the impact needed to address today's biggest workforce risks. Leaders can benefit from taking vigorous and prompt action to strengthen their organisation's capacity to meet today's pressing challenges and prepare for the future of work.
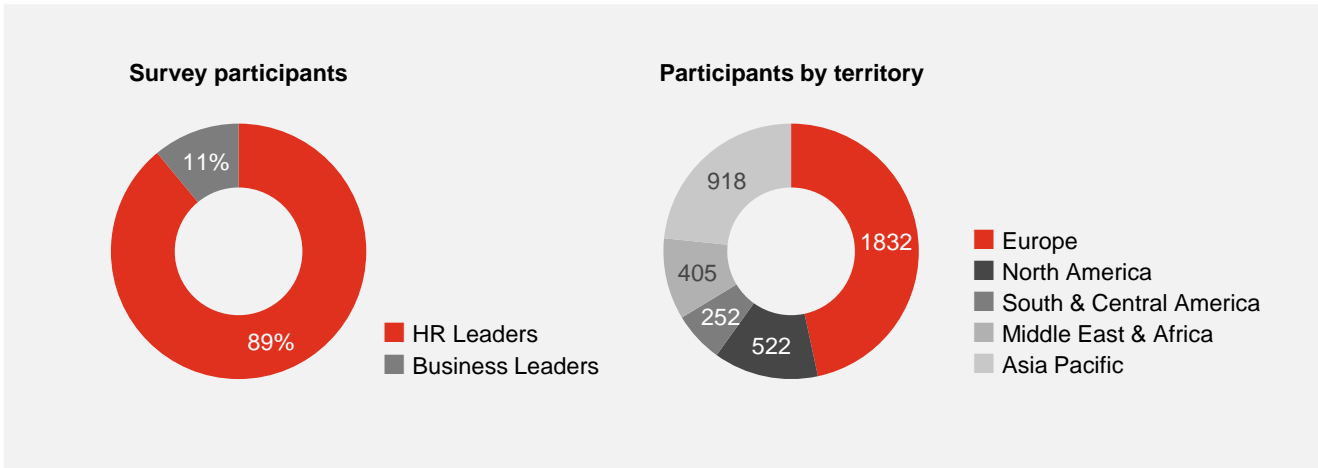
In doing so, they will need to consider and overcome the factors that tend to block such progress. When asked about them, leaders said that the most recurrent blockers to change when it comes to their future of work strategy include:

1. Organisational culture
2. Factors outside their control (e.g. legal or regulatory).
3. A lack of senior leadership capabilities

To overcome these blockers, leaders will need to engage with the wider workforce by initiating a conversation around the meaning of trust and by building an organisational culture that fosters security, growth, productivity and openness to technological changes. Factors that lie outside their control need to be predicted and whenever possible evaluated to make the best of the factors that can be controlled and worked with.

About the survey

PwC's Future of Work and Skills survey asked 3,937 business and HR leaders across 26 countries and regions during September 2021 about the importance of a range of workforce planning and workforce management activities to the future of their business – and whether they were taking action in those areas today. The survey also asked about each organisation's performance compared with its peer group and its own financial and workforce targets. In this summary we have compared the 116 responses from government and public services organisations with the cross-sector responses.

Survey participants

11%
89%

- HR Leaders
- Business Leaders

Participants by territory

918
405
252
522
1832

- Europe
- North America
- South & Central America
- Middle East & Africa
- Asia Pacific

Territory	
Australia	203
Brazil	211
Canada	219
China	203
Egypt	101
France	215
Germany	200
Greece	202
India	210
Italy	216
Japan	201

Territory	
Netherlands	204
Qatar	51
Saudi Arabia	102
Singapore	101
South Africa	101
Spain	234
Switzerland	204
UAE	50
UK	306
US	303
Other (less than 50)	92

Contacts

If you would like to participate in our next survey or discuss the results, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Adrian Jones
Partner

People & Organisation, PwC
Switzerland

adrian.jones@pwc.ch

Myriam Denk
Partner

People & Organisation, PwC
Switzerland

myriam.denk@pwc.ch

Tobias Sattler
Managing Director

People & Organisation, PwC
Switzerland

tobias.sattler@pwc.ch

Appendix

For additional insights, please refer to our [People and Organisations page](#)

- [Building tomorrow's workforce: Six no-regrets plays to make today](#)
- [Global Culture Survey 2021](#)
- [Culture and skills: some learnings from PwC's journey](#)
- [Workforce Strategy Diagnostic](#)
- [Upskilling hopes and fears 2021](#)