



Creating meaningful workplaces

# Meaningfulness at Work 2024

Voluntās



## Meaningfulness at Work 2024

Voluntās was created from the fundamental belief that all human beings have the inherent right to live a meaningful life. That is why we exist: To realize human potential in all corridors of life – making every workplace, community, and country on the planet full of hope and dignity.

Every year, we study how employees feel organizations perform when it comes to fostering a meaningful workplace - a place where there is a strong sense of purpose, leadership, belonging, and personal growth. Meaningful workplaces ensure the best possible conditions for realizing human potential.

To have like-minded partners join in pursuing our impact of making more lives more meaningful, we are honored to this year have partnered with the DI Federation of Danish Professional Service Firms.

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FOUNDER'S FOREWORD BY MORTEN ALBÆK

# Measuring meaningfulness – a never-ending quest

Although a well-known saying claims that 'time is money,' time is something entirely different. Time is life. And no number on a payslip will ever be large enough to compensate for time spent carrying out work that feels utterly meaningless. But while many still call their salary 'compensation,' like the money that an insurance company disburses in exchange for something that has been broken, stolen, or otherwise lost, we should never accept nor regard work as something that erodes and exhausts us mentally and physically. Instead, we should work just as systematically to create meaning in our organizations as we work to achieve other, existentially far less critical, KPIs.

Experiencing meaning in one's work is crucial for two reasons: existential and economic. Existentially, and given that work is an integrated part of life, we humans must demand that we also experience meaning in that corridor of our lives. And we largely do. The study in this report shows that, on average, a whopping 49% of the meaning people feel in their lives can be explained by the meaning they find in their work. 49%! - A definitive *coup de grace* for the Anglo-Saxon leadership concept of 'work-life balance,' which suggests that work should be an activity completely detached from life or even life's antithesis, which is obviously absurd.

When this report shows a strong correlation, on average, between meaning at work and meaning in life, it means that it is existentially crucial to find a job that you find meaningful. Because if you do, the sum of meaning in your life as a whole will be greater. While meaningfulness yields significant existential rewards, meaning is also a multiplier economically, as those organizations succeeding in creating a high sense of meaning among their employees will also experience how meaning is pure rocket fuel in terms of productivity, innovation and retention. Parameters that, not surprisingly, affect the bottom line positively. And although meaning might figuratively be rocket fuel, the argument for meaning is by no means rocket science: People who feel good perform well,

benefitting colleagues, clients and cash flow alike. It's a win-win-win situation.

We human beings tend to be wisest in hindsight. Therefore, it is no wonder that some of the most profound realizations about 'the human condition' are to be found among people lying on the brink of death, contemplating the life they have lived. Several psychological studies conducted among hospice patients have independently shown that people on the threshold of death share several regrets. Among these is the regret of having worked too much. However, it is not the work per se that we human beings tend to regret, but the meaninglessness that work may have generated in our body and mind. Fortunately, and as this report supports, work is for many a considerable part of the meaning in life, a reason to get up in the morning, and a feeling of being valued, of developing, and of being part of a social and professional community working towards the same goal.

I founded Voluntās nine years ago, and this is the fifth edition of the Meaningfulness at Work Report. A Report that represents my own and Voluntās' never-ending quest to explore what constitutes meaningfulness in our lives in general and at work in particular. For this reason, it's also only natural that we want, in the years to come, to increase the number of respondents and countries and that we want to constantly challenge, improve, and sophisticate our methodology to fulfill our aim of creating a genuinely global report that yields unique insights on how the sense of meaning is evolving on the international labor market. While we are humble enough to acknowledge that our Meaningfulness at Work Report 2024 isn't completely global yet and that our method, of course, will be strengthened for each report we publish, then we are equally proud that we, with this report, publish what is unquestionably one of the most extensive studies ever done on the anatomy of meaning at work. We invite even more academic research partners, as well as private-public collaborations, foundations, think tanks, etc., to join in on our pursuit of understanding, measuring, and increasing meaningfulness at work – because feeling meaning in the work you do is a vital part of living a meaningful life.

**49%** *of the meaning people feel in their lives can be explained by the meaning they find in their work.*



*"I founded Voluntās nine years ago, and this is the fifth edition of the Meaningfulness at Work Report. A report that represents my own and Voluntās' never-ending quest to explore what constitutes meaningfulness in our lives in general and at work in particular. "*

**Morten Albæk**

Founder & CEO

METHODOLOGY

# Creating this report

Since 2015, Voluntās has carried out surveys with 100.000+ professionals across cultures to help capture the essence of what constitutes meaning in a workplace setting – from multinational corporations and private foundations to NGOs and public agencies. This research has enabled us to measure meaningfulness at work and identify the four primary drivers of meaning in organizations: Purpose, Leadership, Belonging, and Personal Growth.

Each driver score is determined by the simple average of three statements per driver, resulting in a total of twelve statements. The individual's Meaningful Work Quotient (MWQ) is then calculated as the average of the four drivers' scores weighted by the importance that each respondent associates with the given driver.

This method accounts for individual perspectives of the importance of the four drivers allowing for subjectivity in the perception of meaningfulness at work, without imposing a preconceived formula.

### Data collection

The data collection took place between February and April 2024. The survey was translated into Danish, German, Hindi, Norwegian, Ukranian and Spanish, in addition to the base language of English. The survey has been distributed online. Our data collection partner, RIWI, utilizes web intercept technology to access a diverse sample of respondents through online polling, including in hard-to-reach contexts. Web users who access incorrect or outdated web domains purchased by RIWI were invited to complete our survey voluntarily. This form of sampling reduces self-selection bias, social desirability bias, acquiescence bias, and coverage bias, and research shows that all internet users have a roughly equal likelihood of being reached by this method. However, this online method can only reach members of the population with access to computers and the internet.

## Respondents

5.840












### Age

15-24	14%
25-34	24%
35-44	22%
45-54	17%
55-64	15%
65+	8%

### Gender

Male	50.3%
Female	49.5%
Nonbinary	0.2%
Prefer to self describe	0.0%

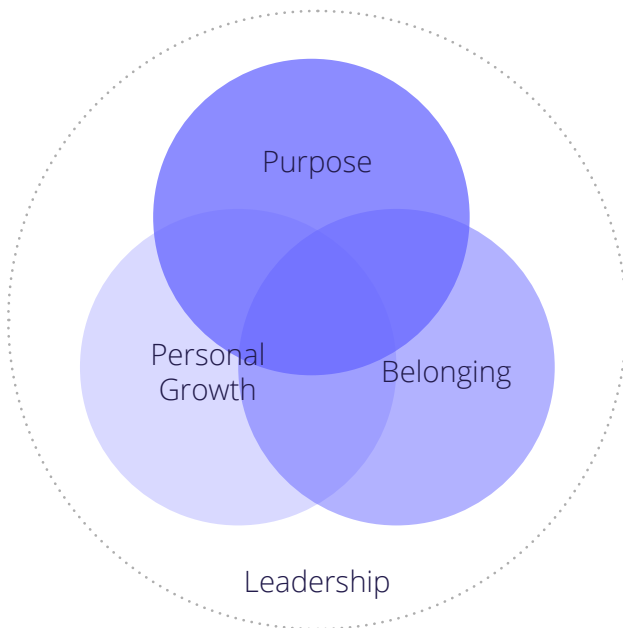
### Nationality

 Denmark	44%
 Ukraine	7%
 Norway	7%
 Mexico	6%
 United Kingdom	6%
 Germany	6%
 Australia	6%
 India	6%
 New Zealand	5%
 United States	4%
 Kenya	2%

Note: To calculate the national index, the individual MWQ is weighted for national age & gender distributions; to calculate the global indexes, the people who answered 'non binary' and 'prefer to self describe' were excluded in the analysis due to the absence of weights from the World Bank Population Data that need to be applied during the demographic weighting process; to calculate the global indexes, the national indexes are weighted according to their respective country's population.

## MWQ DEFINITION

# The four drivers of meaning



The Meaningful Work Quotient is based on three primary drivers of meaningfulness: Purpose, Belonging, and Personal Growth. A fourth driver, Leadership, acts as an important facilitator for all three primary drivers.

At Voluntās, we have consumed and analyzed extensive research and empirical industry data to understand what makes work meaningful.

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### Purpose

You feel a clear direction and tangible impact in your work, and you think that the company's purpose aligns with your own moral compass and resonates with what you find important in life.

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### Belonging

You feel a sense of community, inclusion, and team-spirit, and, in general, have strong social ties with your colleagues whom you miss a little when you are not together at work.

## Dēlphi

Dēlphi is an online platform that shows the meaningfulness measurements of your workplace in a cost-effective and time-efficient manner. Dēlphi offers detailed measurements of the employee's experience of going to work, and provides an informed picture of how you as an organization can increase the employee's experience of meaning.

Visit [delphi.voluntas.com](https://delphi.voluntas.com)

We have conducted surveys on meaningfulness in more than 25 industries across 66 geographies with the survey being adapted to 30 different languages. The respondents vary across hierarchy levels, functions, employment type, age groups and genders.

These findings are rigorously tested and condensed into three primary drivers of meaning; Purpose, Belonging and Personal Growth and one facilitating driver; Leadership.

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### Personal Growth

You become a little bit more aware of who you are and who you are not, as well as increasingly more able to understand what you want to become and what you do not want to become while being given the feedback to develop accordingly.

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### Leadership

You feel guided in your daily work, and it is clear what your daily objectives and priorities are and what you need to achieve.

SUMMARY

# The four primary insights

## 1. Globally, meaningfulness at work determines 49% of meaning in life.

Meaningfulness at work accounts for 49% of the overall sense of meaning in life globally. However, this varies by country; in India, work is a strong predictor of meaning in life (76%), whereas in Ukraine, work contributes less (18%) to overall meaning in life.

## 2. Leadership is the least important driver and also the lowest-performing driver.

Leadership is the least important driver of meaningfulness at work, with only 7% of respondents worldwide considering it the most important. It is also the lowest-performing driver, primarily due to leaders' inability to inspire employees to reflect on the organization's purpose.

## 3. Youngest generations experience the lowest sense of meaning.

Young professionals under 25 experience the least meaning at work, continuing a trend from 2023. They feel significantly less safe to speak their minds, feel less challenged in their jobs, and struggle to understand the importance of their role within their organizations.

## 4. The employee who experiences the most meaning is more than 65 years old and works in Mexico or India as a full-time HR professional within financial services.

The employee who experiences the least meaning is 24 years old and works in Australia or UK as a part-time supply chain worker within chemicals.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

# How to become a meaningful organization

### **1. As a leader, you are not the bearer of meaning, but a facilitator of it.**

This requires a general reshaping of the leader's role – and a reset of most leader's self-awareness. Why should anyone be led by you? How can you facilitate purpose, belonging and personal growth for your team? Training leaders in the ladder of self-respect leads to higher self-awareness, which on average leads to a 9% better leadership performance.

### **2. To retain (young) talent, learn how to genuinely create psychological safety.**

The youngest generation on the labor market feels significantly less safe to speak their mind and struggles to understand how they play an important role in their place of work. By training leaders and engaging the full organization, you can move from inclusion safety, to learner safety, to contributor safety, and – ultimately – to challenger safety. Employees in teams with high psychological safety are 36% more likely to stay for +2 years.

### **3. Meaning is subjective – assess if it is compatible to the organization's culture.**

This year, we truly learned that meaning is highly subjective. The four drivers of meaning vary significantly from person to person, from industry to industry, and from country to country. Assessing whether you can realize a candidate's human potential is (too) often left to professional gut feeling. Together with our clients, we at Voluntās, we have collaborated with our clients to develop and test a recruitment tool that assesses the alignment of a candidate's preferences with the organizational culture. This has in one case improved retention by 70%, saving an estimated ~USD 714.000 in yearly replacement costs.

SENSE OF MEANINGFULNESS

# Insights

At Voluntās, we want to investigate the emergence and nuances of meaningfulness from all angles, advocating for meaningful progress globally as well as a human-centered capitalism.

MEANINGFULNESS AT WORK GLOBALLY

# Meaningfulness at work continues to increase

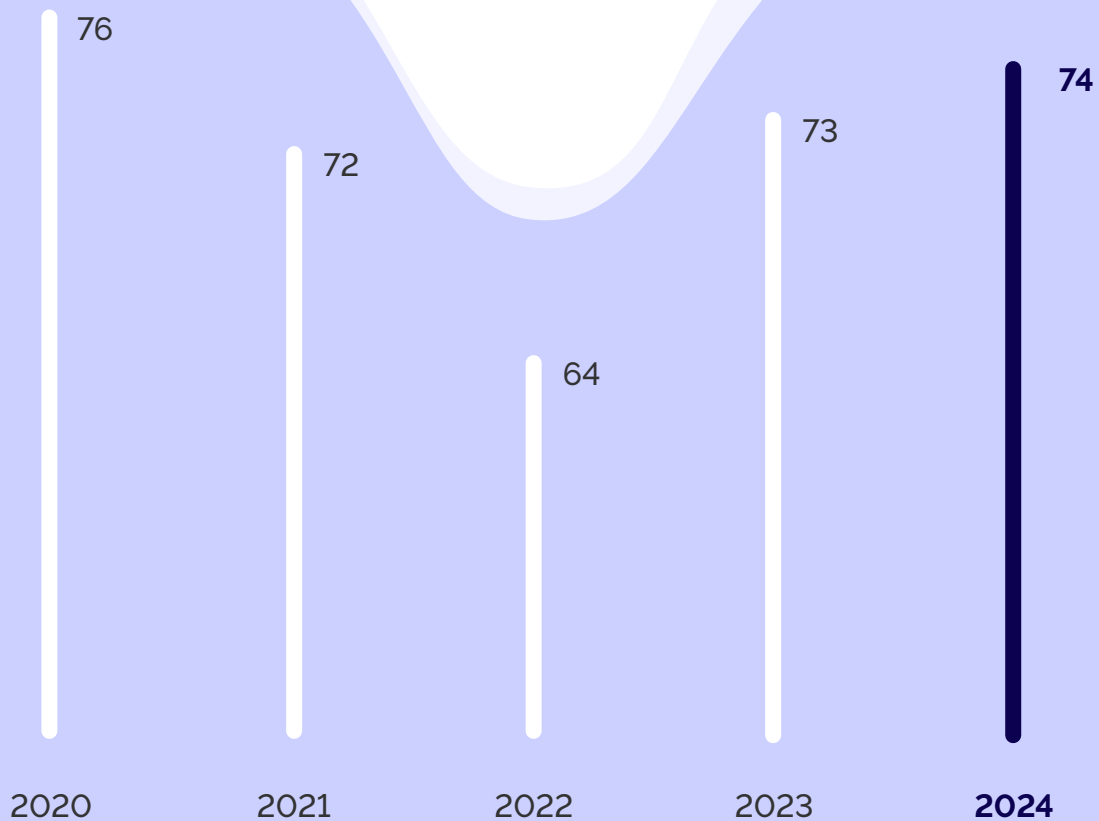
**Globally, the meaning derived from work continues to increase. In 2024, meaningfulness level is back to 74 out of 100 following a decline in meaning during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The trajectory of global meaningfulness at work reveals a significant rebound in the years following the pandemic. In 2022, meaningfulness dipped, largely influenced by the lingering impacts of COVID-19 on workplace dynamics and employee sentiment. By 2023, there was a notable surge, bringing the MWQ score up 73. By 2024, the score has stabilized at 74, indicating a new equilibrium in workplace meaningfulness.

As the immediate effects of the pandemic have stabilized, employees are once again finding increased value and meaningfulness in their work.

The increase in meaningfulness from 2023 to 2024 can largely be attributed to incremental improvements in Leadership and Belonging within organizations, while Purpose is slightly decreasing. However, Purpose remains the strongest influence on meaningfulness at work.

## Meaningfulness at Work Quotient (MWQ)



## IMPORTANCE OF THE DRIVERS OF MEANING

# Leadership has **least direct influence** on meaning

**In assessing the importance of the drivers of meaning, individuals perceive Purpose, Belonging, and Personal Growth as almost equally important contributors to meaningfulness. Leadership trails, with significantly fewer individuals identifying it as a primary contributor.**

Personal Growth and Belonging are nearly tied as the most valued drivers, suggesting that both personal development and social connections play critical roles in individuals' perceptions of meaningfulness. Purpose is also highly regarded, albeit slightly less than Personal Growth and Belonging. This implies that understanding and aligning with the mission and impact of one's organization or work is crucial but slightly less pivotal than personal development and social connections.

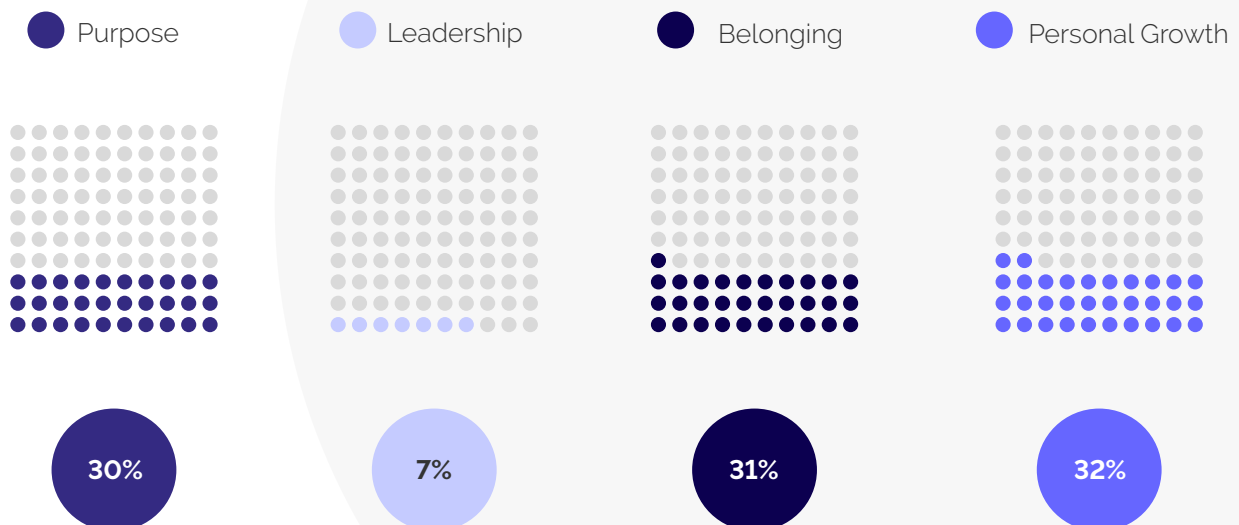
Whether Purpose, Belonging, or Personal Growth is the primary driver of meaning varies significantly between different nations, demographics, functions, etc. Notably, however, Leadership does not emerge as the primary driver in any category.

The relatively lower importance placed on Leadership suggests that its primary role may be seen as supportive or facilitative rather than as a direct source of meaningfulness. This points to potential areas for leaders to enhance their impact by supporting the other drivers more explicitly and effectively.

Asking individuals how they prioritize the different drivers of meaningfulness helps capture the diversity in individual perceptions of what makes work meaningful. It acknowledges that the experience of what makes life meaningful can vary greatly among individuals. While our academic and data-driven research can propose certain drivers as universally important, the reality is that individuals may prioritize these elements differently based on their personal values, experiences, and current life circumstances.

By identifying which drivers are perceived as most impactful on meaningfulness, organizations can better allocate resources and design interventions that align with what their employees value most. For instance, if Personal Growth is highly valued, organizations might invest more in learning and development programs.

## Percentage of respondents who chose driver as most important



MEANINGFULNESS ACROSS DRIVERS

# Continued trend: Purpose highest, Leadership lowest

**In 2024, the sense of meaning employees derive from their work is predominantly fueled by a strong alignment and motivation related to their organization’s purpose and their individual roles within it.**

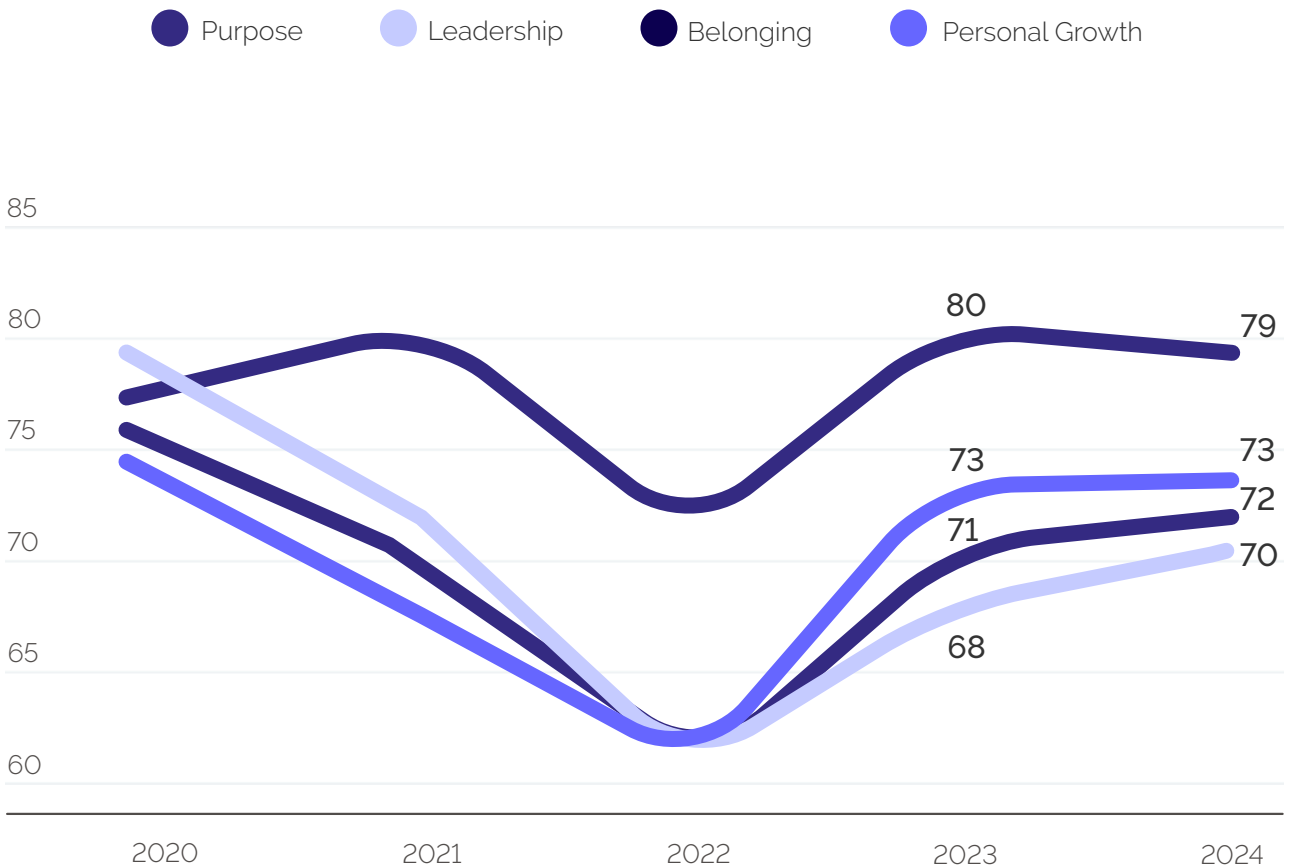
This is contrasted by leaders’ lack of ability to inspire to reflect on the organization’s purpose being the one of the most significant detractors of meaningfulness.

Generally, the scores indicate that while leadership positively influences some employees’ perceptions, there is room for improvement in how leaders inspire reflection on purpose, foster belonging, and support personal growth. The Leadership score is the lowest among the four drivers, highlighting potential areas for leadership development.

When examining Personal Growth, the overall score remains at 73, unchanged from 2023. Employees still feel sufficiently challenged in their roles, however, the stagnant score is largely due to the lack of valuable feedback they receive. There is room for improvement, both from direct leaders and the organization as a whole. To address this, organizations need to foster a culture of feedback and active listening. By ensuring a robust feedback culture, we can improve the Personal Growth score and, consequently, enhance the overall sense of meaning at work.

The slight increase in Belonging is due to employees enjoying spending time with their colleagues and feeling safe to express their opinions at work.

## MWQ across drivers of meaning



## MEANINGFULNESS ACROSS COUNTRIES

# Mexico & India inspire with high meaning at work

**Examining the overall MWQ across countries, Mexico and India score the highest, above 80, followed by Kenya. Workforces in Mexico and Kenya experience the highest degree of Purpose, while for those in India the sense of meaning at work is derived almost equally from all drivers of meaning.**

All three countries have comparably high leadership scores, pointing to the potential of meaningful Leadership to influence the overall sense of meaning at work. Mexico and India stand out for fostering a collaborative environment.

Both countries score highly in the following areas: employees enjoy spending time with their colleagues, actively receive constructive feedback, and engage in open discussions about mistakes for collective learning. This suggests that such collaborative cultures contribute significantly to the overall sense of meaningfulness at work, emphasizing the positive impact of leadership that supports open communication and professional growth.

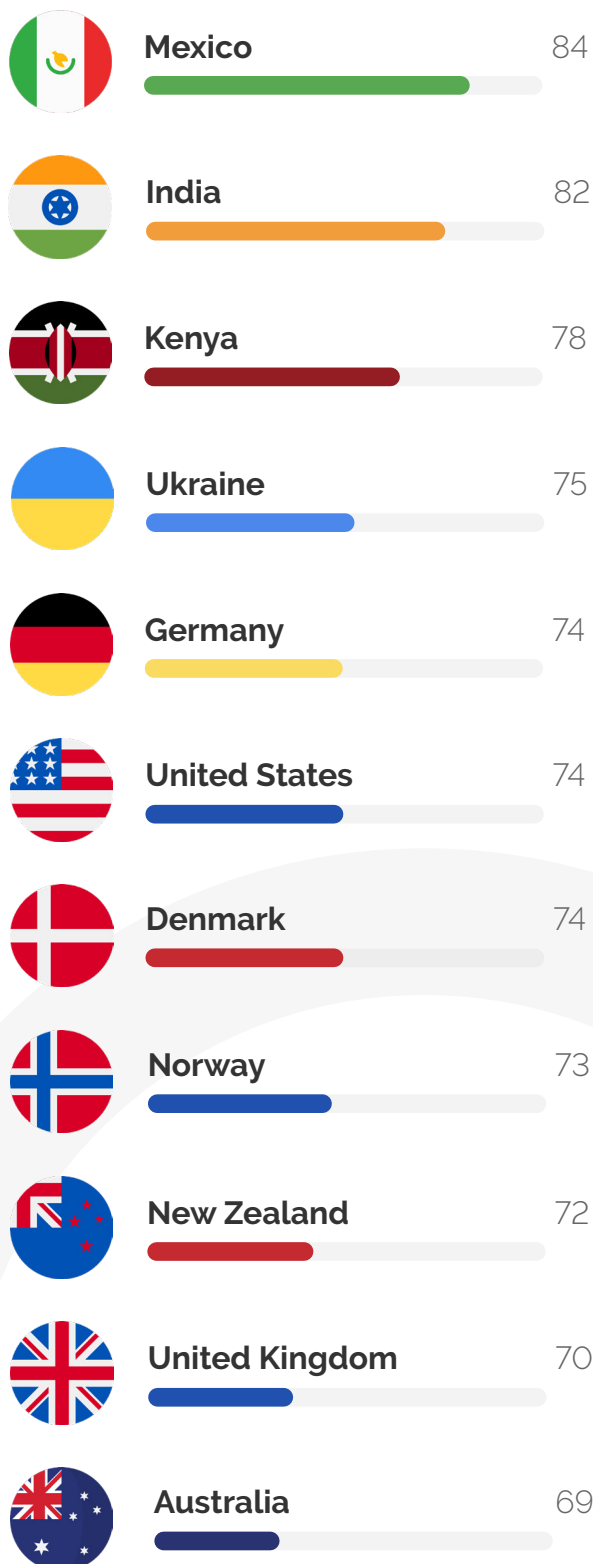
Workforces in Australia, the UK and New Zealand – the bottom three when it comes to the experience of meaning at work – are all characterized by especially low levels of meaningful Leadership as well as a low sense of Belonging. Employees of all three countries experience Purpose as the biggest influence on their sense of meaning – both in performance and importance.

### MWQ among women and men



Note: To calculate the global indexes, the people who answered 'non binary' and 'prefer to self describe' were excluded in the analysis due to the absence of weights from the World Bank Population Data that need to be applied during the demographic weighting process.

### MWQ across countries



MEANINGFULNESS IN LIFE

# Half of the meaning in people's lives comes from work

**Globally, meaningfulness at work determines 49% of meaning in life.**

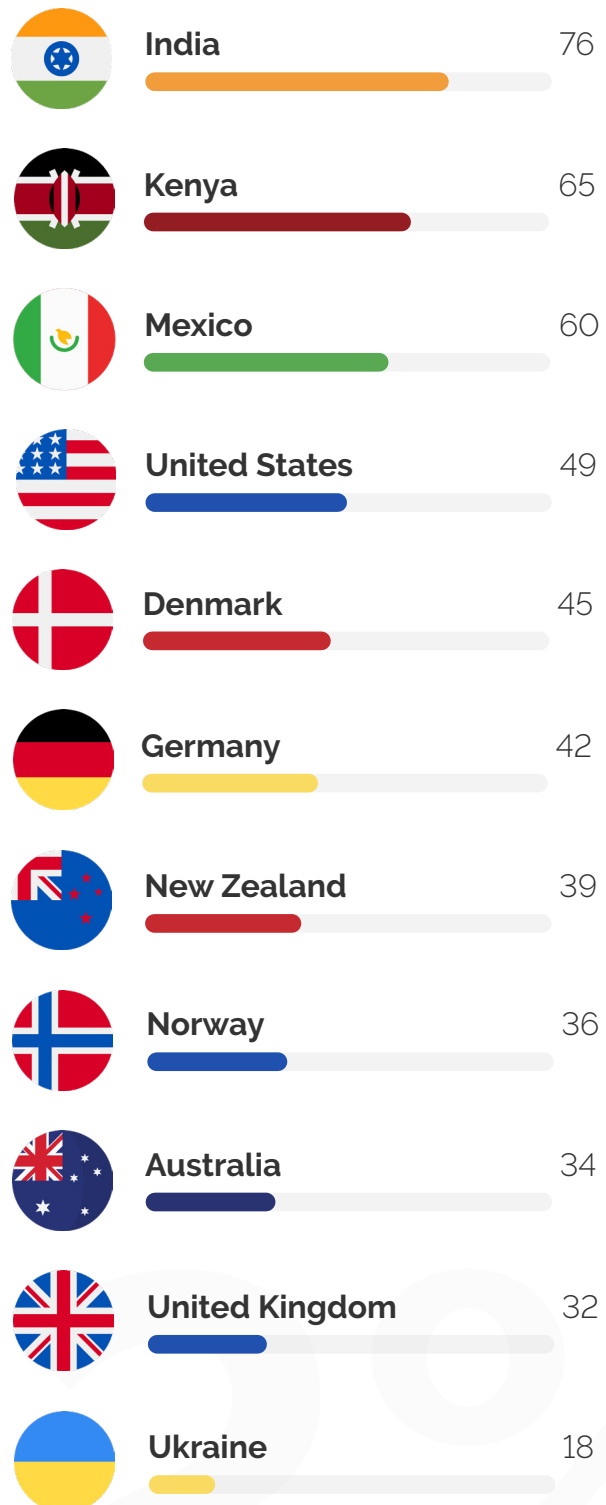
Across geographies, however, there are variations in the extent to which work contributes to individuals' overall sense of meaning in life. In addition to experiencing the highest levels of meaning at work, work is also an important contributor to meaning in life for individuals in India (76), Kenya (65), and Mexico (60).

This suggests that in cultures where meaningful work is highly valued, there tends to be a stronger emphasis on leadership qualities and collaborative cultures that support personal growth and openness. Additionally, in countries with higher employment uncertainties, meaningful work might be more crucial to overall meaning in life.

The significance of the workplace on individuals' overall sense of meaning in life across almost all countries of this sample places a substantial role and responsibility on employers. As such, employers have a responsibility to recognize that work is not just a transactional relationship where employees exchange time for payment, but a critical component of their personal well-being.

Understanding that meaningful work is not universally valued to the same extent is especially crucial for multinational organizations, as understanding cultural differences can help tailor strategies to enhance employees' experience of meaningfulness in different regional offices. A nuanced approach to enhancing the meaningfulness of work in countries placing lower importance on meaning at work must consider both the macroeconomic and cultural contexts that shape how work is perceived in relation to overall meaning in life.

## The importance of meaning at work for meaning in life



## MEANINGFULNESS ACROSS AGE GROUPS

# Needs of the youngest generation **are yet to be met on the labor market**

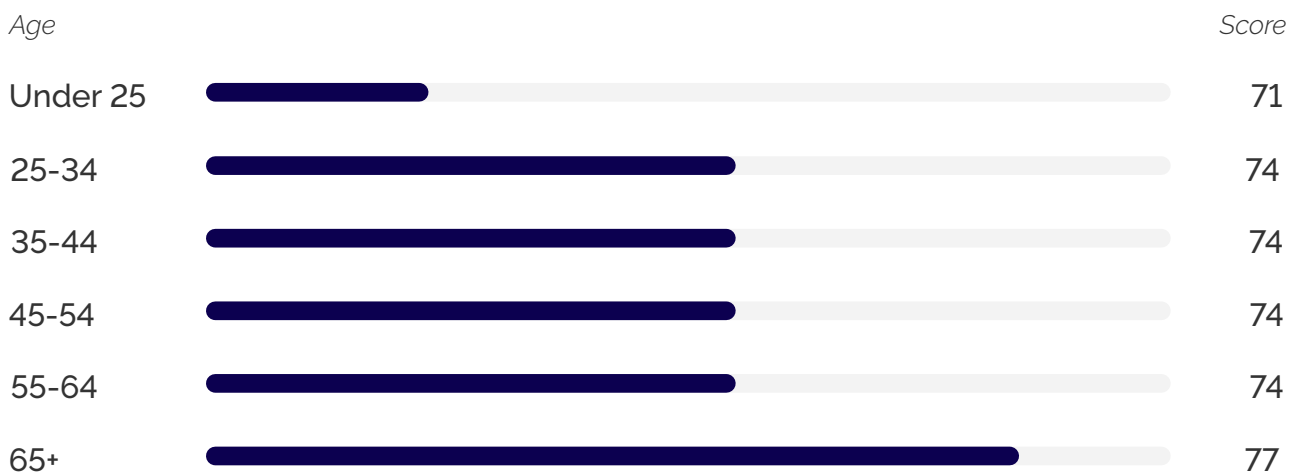
Those in the 65+ age group experience the highest level of meaningfulness at work, with an average MWQ score of 77. This is driven by a high sense of Purpose, with a score of 82, making this group the most purposeful across the entire data set.

While Purpose is the strongest driver of meaning across all age groups, its relative importance as a driver seems to decrease with age. By contrast, Belonging emerges as the most important driver of meaning for those over 55 years old. This aligns with findings that suggest older generations find meaning in job stability and loyalty to their employer and colleagues.

Meanwhile, young professionals under 25 experience the least meaning at work, continuing the trend seen in 2023, with an average MWQ score of 71. This youngest generation in the labor market feels significantly less safe to speak their mind, less challenged in their jobs, and struggles to understand the roles they play in their workplaces.

These insights contrast starkly with observations of Generation Z (1995-2012), a workforce that looks for professional intimacy, demonstrates impatience regarding personal and professional aspirations, and values their contribution over fixed working hours. These demands of a new generation of employees challenge norms and expectations embedded in the labor market while at the same time highlighting the untapped potential for employers to future-proof the labor market for upcoming generations.

### MWQ across age groups





## MEANINGFULNESS ACROSS EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS

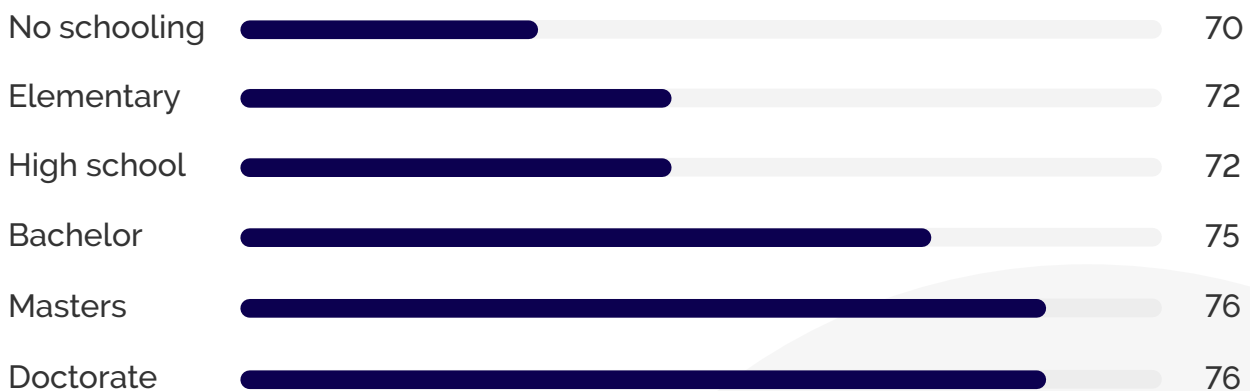
# Having no education is a barrier to experiencing meaning at work

### Meaning at work is highest for those with university degrees.

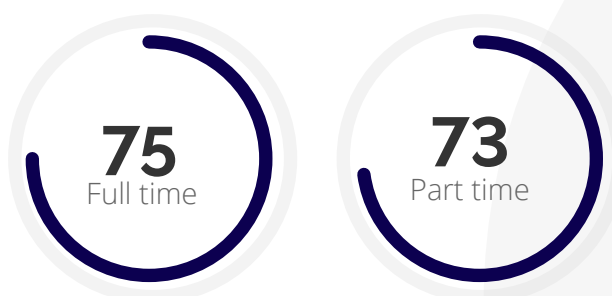
On the other hand, professionals without formal education experience the lowest degree of meaning, with an MWQ score of 70 out of 100. This is driven by a low sense of Belonging, which is the lowest performing driver but simultaneously the most important for those in this demographic.

In contrast to individuals with formal education, who often derive meaning from a defined sense of Purpose, professionals lacking formal education tend to experience a heightened sense of Personal Growth, indicating a different path to finding meaning in their work.

### MWQ across level of education



### MWQ based on employment



Additionally, working full-time is positively correlated with a higher degree of meaning. Employees with part-time working arrangements have an MWQ of 73 compared to 75 for those who work full-time.

This difference is noticeable across all drivers, but particularly areas including feeling sufficiently challenged in one's job, understanding the overall organizational purpose, and one's own contribution. This highlights a need for employers and leaders alike to ensure a personal impact is clear and noticeable beyond full-time employees.

## MEANINGFULNESS ACROSS INDUSTRIES

# Meaningfulness **significantly varies across industries**

**The degree of meaningfulness experienced at work demonstrates notable variability across industries.**

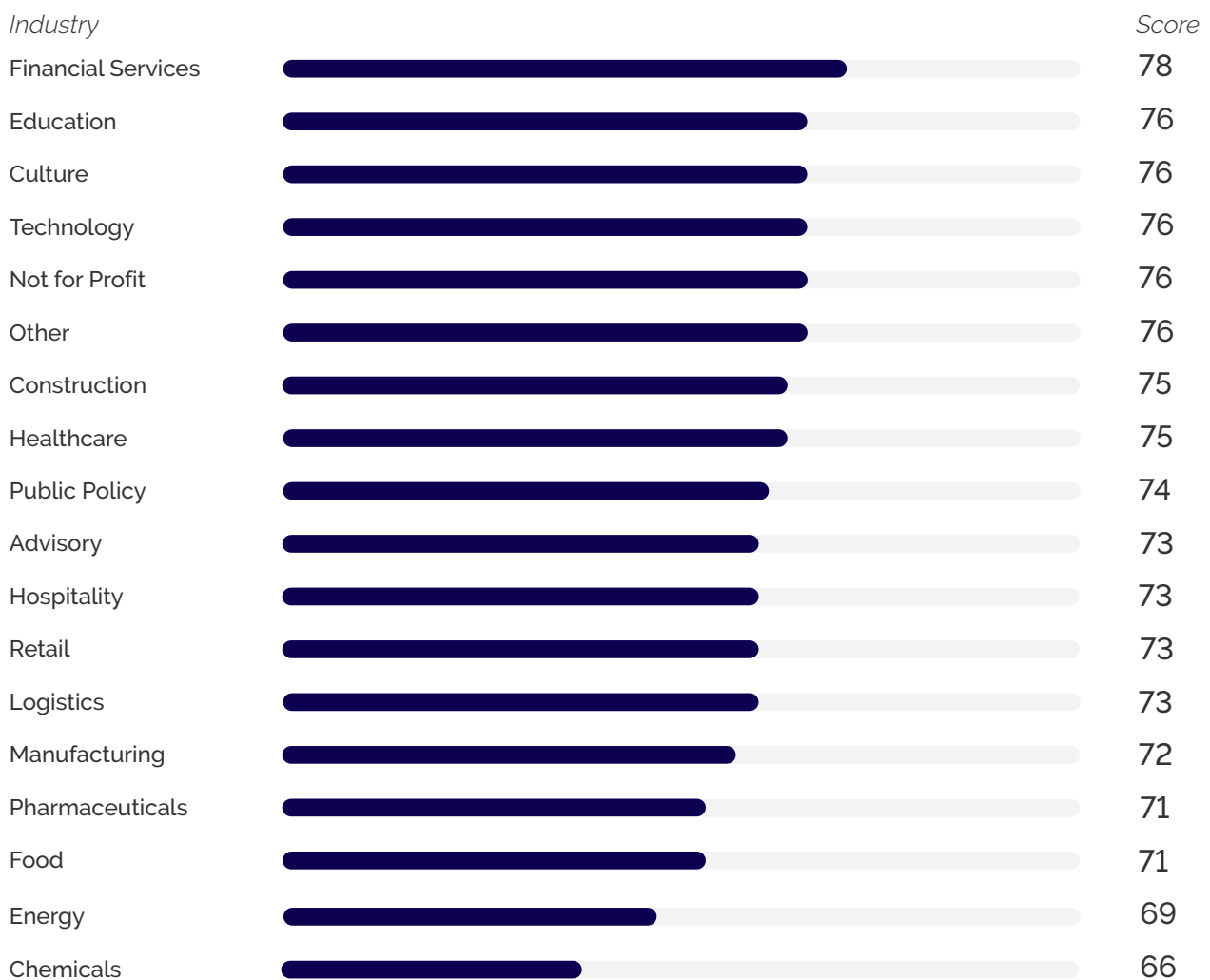
Financial Services is ranked first, with a Meaningful Work Quotient (MWQ) score of 78, emphasizing a strong sense of Purpose in the workplace.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Chemicals industry records the lowest score at 66, driven by particularly low levels of Belonging.

Both Leadership and Personal Growth peak in Financial Services, Education leads within the sense of Purpose and the Culture industry in facilitating a strong sense of Belonging.

Looking at meaning across the different industries, there is a noticeable trend that industries with strong leadership often provide environments beneficial for personal growth.

### MWQ across industries



## MEANINGFULNESS ACROSS FUNCTIONS

# Impact of leadership more noticeable **in operational functions**

**The perceived meaningfulness at work not only varies across industries but also across professional functions.**

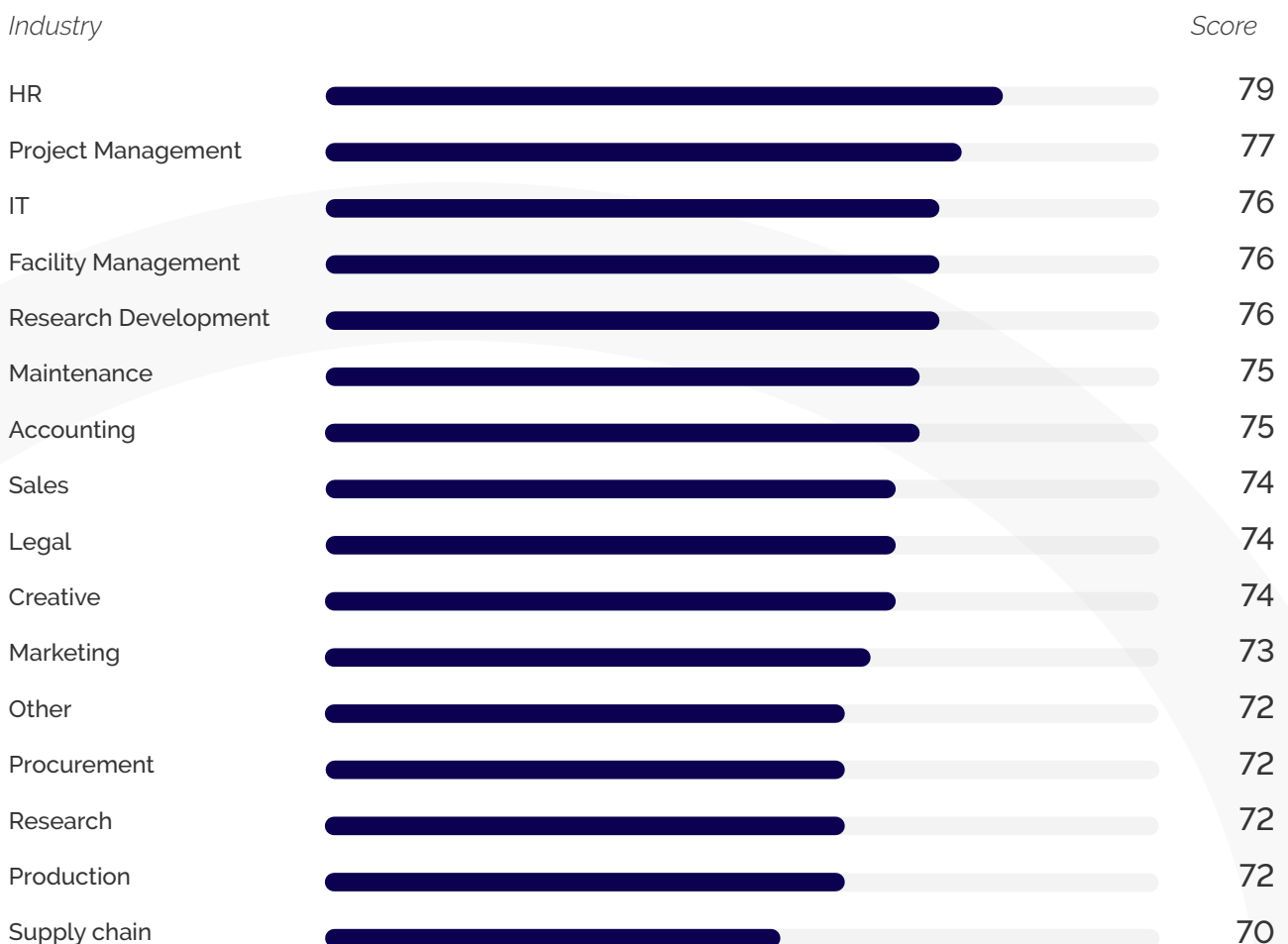
HR professionals (79) and project managers (77) experience the highest levels of meaning in their work. Both score high across all drivers of meaning, indicating strong overall performance in providing a meaningful work environment.

The lowest scores across almost all metrics of meaningfulness appear in the Supply Chain function (70). Having the lowest scores across all

four drivers of meaning, Supply Chain employees are especially missing leader's support for growth and enjoyment of time spent with colleagues, which could indicate issues in team dynamics or leadership effectiveness in this area.

Some overarching themes across functions for leaders to focus on should include inspiring on the purpose and highlighting the positive impact of the organization as a whole as well as supporting a feedback culture in which everyone feels safe to share and learn from mistakes.

### MWQ across functions



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CLIENT CASE

# How to create a meaningful place to work **during extreme growth?**



**FUJIFILM**  
**Diosynth**  
biotechnologies

**Lars Petersen**  
President & CEO

TRANSFORMING LIFE SCIENCES BY HUMANIZING CULTURE & LEADERSHIP

# Meaning in Madness?

**Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies (FDB), a subsidiary of Fujifilm, and a global contract manufacturer in the life sciences sector, is undergoing a multifold transformation. Challenging the norms of the industry, FDB wants to demonstrate that the best way to control their rapid expansion is not by installing rigorous systems, it is by installing trust between humans.**

## Manufacturing with a Purpose

From DNA sequencing to the final medication product packaged and delivered into the hands of patients, FDB is an end-to-end contract drug manufacturer. From early stage to large-scale production, they support the full lifecycle of biologics development by scaling the manufacturing process.

As this year's Meaningfulness at Work study revealed, both manufacturing (72) and pharmaceuticals (71) are industries facing challenges in meaningfulness at work, scoring below the average (74).

With FDB being an end-to-end manufacturer of pharmaceuticals, they find themselves in a place where they need to make an extra effort to create meaningfulness at work among employees.

According to President & CEO Lars Petersen, the purpose potential is clear:

*"What especially gets me up in the morning is the transformation I believe is so fundamental. I actually do believe that we are a big part of transforming the entire industry where the cost of drugs needs to be lower and where the speed of getting drugs to patients needs to be faster. This requires that we move beyond a contractual, transactional model and instead prove ourselves as a trusted partner to our customers, becoming an integral part of the ecosystem. A partner for life with unprecedented delivery."*

**Founded**  
1923

**Yearly Oxygen**  
USD\$ 1.3 (2023)

**Human beings**  
4.400

**Vision**  
To be the leading and most trusted global Contract Development and Manufacturing Organization in the biopharmaceutical industry.

Voluntās

**FUJIFILM**  
**Diosynth**  
biotechnologies

## SCALING CULTURE

# Being A 'People First' Company

In the midst of an \$8 billion investment plan, FDB is aiming to quadrupling their revenue by 2030 – from 6 large-scale bioreactors to 36. In a world that is renowned for process engineering, tight controlling, and clear chains of command, it would naturally also permeate the governance, organization, and culture of the company. Meticulously cascading targets. Calibrating bonuses with individual performance reviews. Documenting standard decision-making processes. Instead, FDB has made a conscious effort to get rid of all such measures to pave the way for limitless trust, empowerment, and ownership.

*"We are trying to keep systems and processes to an efficient minimum to make sure people are the center in everything we do,"* Lars Petersen explains.

*"Some say that we are building a 'hippie' culture. But this is simply about creating a culture of trust, where transparency, being yourself and having psychological safety enables people to speak up at any given moment and be okay with making mistakes as long as we learn from them. Being in a way where people can take ownership, because you know you are trusted and empowered if you do so."*

While production processes and quality assurance as a drug manufacturer is naturally managed with extreme rigor, the underlying assumption is that the human potential of the organization – the people – is best realized by systematically minimizing processes, rules, and bureaucracy.

This philosophy is written into 9 People Fundamentals, which sets the tone and direction for how everyone is expected to show up, interact, and lead. *"We lead people – and manage processes", as one of them reads, continued by "We bring our full selves to work"*. The People Fundamentals, however, are not implemented through an extensive roadmap or follow-up system. There are activities and tools, yes, but the primary objective is to create a continuous conversation and mindset around how the right growth can be balanced with the right culture.

Not as opposites, as either-or, but constantly weaving them together to never settle for the ordinary, allowing a touch of madness in pursuing something unprecedented, but without decaying into chaos or anarchy. Always balancing the meaningful and the meaningless.



## REIMAGINING LEADERSHIP

# Followership above Force

This balancing act requires training. Training in some of the muscles that are often overlooked or under-stimulated in the traditional leadership gym. When the philosophy is about trust, ownership, and empowerment, the mastery required rhymes more with active listening, human sensibility, and emotional intelligence than any other managerial disciplines. To create meaning for people in their work, leadership in itself is the least important driver. In other words, it is not how you as an individual leader perform that creates a meaningful working environment – it is how you as a leader can facilitate a strong sense of purpose, belonging, and personal growth. This, however, breaks with some of the truths many leaders who come to FDB are born and raised to believe in.

*“Don't come in here with the typical mindset of a leader saying, 'I will deliver in 100 days.' Forget about delivery. Try to relate to people, try to understand the culture before you even think about delivering anything. And to be honest, eight out of ten of our leaders are going through quite a journey to reconfigure. We even have leaders saying that they had to be broken down completely and rebuilt before they really understood what was going on. We invest that much in our journey, and we are fully aware that this might not be for everyone,”* Lars Petersen says.

*“We try to deconstruct some of these myths and false truths about leadership to champion a culture where leaders serve not just the business objectives but the human spirit in the organization. This sometimes also entails eradicating inflated egos to foster an environment of true team spirit as opposed to solo climbing the career ladder.”*

To manifest this focus, FDB in February brought together more than 100 leaders from across the

globe. The full event was dedicated to talking exclusively about strategy, leadership, and culture – not least which habits, norms, or systems the leadership community needs to say goodbye to in order to take the next quantum leap.

*“We spent 75% of our time discussing our cultural DNA and how to cultivate trust among our leaders and teams. We asked our leaders upfront to submit all their hopes and concerns to facilitate an open dialogue about what excites us about our growth journey, but also what makes us worried. This is fundamental to build trust,”* Petersen shares.

Did the leaders then embrace this focus? Or did they leave thinking it was a complete waste of time? Looking at the impact, the numbers tell a quite convincing story. After the event, FDB were able to track an improvement of 9% in how much the leaders believe in the strategic direction with both their hearts and minds, while improving the level of optimism around FDB's future by 10% – short-term as well as long-term. Further, the level of trust in the organization at large increased by 8%. The event itself was rated 9.17 on a 10-point scale – a testament to the appreciation of having time to reflect and connect on how to humanize the culture and leadership.

## Will FDB succeed in the dual view on culture and growth?

There is no doubt that Lars Petersen and the rest of the organization are flying close to the sun on their mission to prove it possible. But, as the Irish poet Oscar Wilde famously put it,

*“Never regret thy fall, O Icarus of the fearless flight,  
For the greatest tragedy of them all, is never to feel the  
burning light.”*

## Nine People Fundamentals at Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies

We foster psychological safety

We assume trust & expect ownership

We lead people & manage processes

We bring our full selves to work

We value teams over hierarchy

We lead through purpose & meaning

We seek attitude when we hire & promote

We support individual growth through empowerment

We lead for the future

WHO WE ARE

# About Voluntās

Voluntās was created from the fundamental belief that all human beings have the inherent right to live a meaningful life. That is why we exist: To realize human potential in all corridors of life – making every workplace, community, and country on the planet full of hope and dignity.

Founded in Denmark in 2015, Voluntās is the first company in the world to systematically explore and measure meaningfulness. For us, the value of money and impact depends on how it is earned and achieved. We strive to pave the way for a humanistic capitalism where every economic, societal, or technological gain equals greater freedom for humans to pursue their potential. To democratize this philosophy, we want to build a new, human-centered metric. A global meaningfulness baseline to constantly challenge the truths about what constitutes a good life and a viable civilization.

Philosophers by heart and advisors by profession, we use our insights to provide evidence-based inspiration, tools, and recommendations for our partners around the world. We advise international organizations, companies, investors, foundations, and NGOs on how to drive a meaningful change in societies and organizations. We study social cohesion and peacebuilding in fragile states. We assess leadership and ethics in modern corporations. We facilitate private-public partnerships and collaboration in every sector. All to understand humans and what drives meaning in their lives.

In our laboratory for applied philosophy, we want to unite all our people and disciplines in one beautiful mosaic of cultures. A living fabric that constantly seeks to make sense of how we make more lives more meaningful. Finding the good in all contexts to reproduce it. Finding the limitations to remove them. Together in this pursuit, we are guided by our four fundamental virtues:

**Self-awareness above Self-confidence:**

For us, believing in yourself is only half as powerful as knowing yourself.

**Aspirations and Hard Work above Good Intentions:**

Everything starts with a dream, but we believe in diligence and determination to make a beautiful impact.

**Honesty above Compassion:**

We pursue professional intimacy in every relation based on truthfulness and integrity, leaving no false truth uncontested.

**Facts above Assumptions:**

We are powered by passion, but we believe in evidence and expertise to steward our decisions.

Together with world-leading organizations, entrepreneurs, researchers, and policymakers, we are charting a path towards a humanistic capitalism. An economic system that in its goals, means, and justification puts a demand not just on what we do, but how and why we do it. In Voluntas, we want to give a voice to everyone we touch, whether they are facing barriers in the form of poor leadership, unhealthy culture, or in the form of conflict, poverty, climate change, or dysfunctional governance. For this, we hold ourselves accountable.

In all our interactions, we aspire to nurture self-awareness, remind people of their worth, and unlock their self-respect. This is a precondition for leading a life filled with dignity and hope. Ultimately, we want to assist every heroic attempt to realize human potential – also when it requires being a little Icarus. We do this for the colleagues in organizations, the citizens in societies, and for all us children of our blue planet.



WHO WE ARE

# Voluntās in numbers

~90  
Human  
beings

23  
Nationalities

8  
Offices  
Beirut, Copenhagen,  
Kyiv, Nairobi, Mumbai  
Münich, Oslo & Tunis



## MORE MEANINGFUL ORGANIZATIONS

# About Dēlphi

At Voluntās, we put meaning at the center of the human experience, and have been measuring meaningfulness at work for almost a decade. That effort is now being moved to our platform, Dēlphi.

Dēlphi allows organizations to measure the level of meaning their employees experience, providing a simple interface with productive data that sparks change across hierarchies. In other words, it is a place where organizations can get to know themselves and create an even more meaningful environment. But measuring is only half the job. With Dēlphi, we have designed a platform that fosters meaningful change. Whether through customized recommendations for teams or through individual growth, Dēlphi supports the realization of human potential.

Visit [www.delphi.voluntas.com](http://www.delphi.voluntas.com) to learn more.

### Why is it called Dēlphi?

Considered the centre of the world by the ancient Greeks, Dēlphi was home to the Temple of Apollo. The Oracle of Dēlphi resided at the temple, and she was known for her prophecies guiding heroes of ancient Greece towards their destiny. Inscribed on a column outside the temple were the letters “gnothi seauton”, meaning “Know thyself”.

Just as the oracle gave advice and sparring to foster self-awareness and realize potential, our modern version of Dēlphi seeks to do the same at an organizational level.



*"In creating Dēlphi, the digital team at Voluntās wanted to take the philosophical approach that characterizes our consulting services and make them easily accessible in an online environment. I look forward to presenting the results of this effort and to discuss how it can create a meaningful impact for your employees."*

### Kristoffer Geer

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## METHODOLOGY

# The score

The Meaningfulness at Work score is calculated through a multi-step approach.

### Individual level

Firstly, the score for each of the four drivers is calculated through the average of responses to their three underlying questions (scale from 1 to 10). Then the individual respondents' MWQ score is computed using a weighted average of the four drivers' scores with weights determined by the respective driver's importance ranking according to each respondent. This method ensures to account for individual perspectives of the importance of the four drivers allowing for subjectivity in the perception of meaningfulness at work, without imposing a preconceived formula for it.

### National level

Then to calculate the national MWQ scores, the individual MWQ scores of respondents in each country were weighted based on national demographic quotas (by the national gender and age group distributions). This ensures representativity at the national level.

### Global level

Finally, to obtain the global MWQ scores, the national scores are averaged with the same weights. Therefore, as an example, even if respondents in Denmark constitute 44% of the sample, responses of Denmark have the same weight of all other countries.

### Data collection partners

For all countries (except for Ukraine) data was collected by our partner, RIWI: a company specializing in real-time sentiment research across the globe. In Ukraine, the data was collected by our partner Info Sapiens: a research agency specializing in conducting public opinion surveys and behavioral measurements.

We are grateful to our partners for their valuable support and collaboration on this research. This year, 5,840 respondents participated from 11 countries worldwide.

### Score conversion

For each statement in the survey, respondents answered on a scale from 1-10. In this report, the results are converted to a scale from 10-100.

### Comparison to previous years

In previous years, our approach to calculating the MWQ score differed from the current methodology.

In particular, we used the agreeability score: for each of the 12 meaningfulness at work questions, instead of considering the answer as a score on a scale of 1 to 10, a dummy score was calculated as 1 if the answer was 6 or above as agreement, and as 0 otherwise. The new methodology allows for a more nuanced view than agreeability, as we see the world on a scale of greys instead of black and white.

Moreover, we did not consider how important each driver is for each respondent, but we assumed that all drivers had equal importance for Meaningfulness at Work. The new methodology accounts for individual perspectives of the importance of the four drivers allowing for subjectivity in the perception of meaningfulness at work, without imposing a preconceived formula for it. Moreover, in previous years we considered demographics weighting (gender and age group distributions within a country) to calculate the national scores, but we did not consider the different weights of the countries' national populations when calculating the global score. The new methodology ensures representativity not only at the country level but also at the global level considering the countries covered by the research where data has been collected.

The change in methodology comes with humbleness, self-awareness, and honesty from a realization of the need to better reflect the subjective and nuanced perspective of each human being who shared their view on meaningfulness at work with us.

## METHODOLOGY

# Key Limitations

We strive to measure meaningfulness at work and in the five years since conducting the meaningfulness at work report, we have made significant progress in the definition of it but still allowing for personal perspectives and nuance.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognize and be self-aware of the limitations of the survey and methodology.

### **Online survey**

The survey has been conducted online to reach as many human beings as possible. This entails that the survey can only be completed by people with access to the internet and therefore a share of the population in each country is inherently excluded.

### **Partial countries coverage**

We have the ambition to be able to measure meaningfulness at work in all countries of the world. While we get there, in 2024 we were able to collect data for measuring the Meaningfulness at Work in 10 countries. It is important to note that global scores represent these countries and their relative population and not the entire world (yet).

### **Comparability**

For the Meaningfulness at Work 2024 report the methodology has been improved as detailed in the report and more countries included in the data collection compared to the previous years. The change in methodology and additional countries will not make it a 1:1 comparison on the global scores.

institutions

societies

strategies

brands

relations

moments

cultures

jobs

countries **Making more**

**lives more meaningful**

organizations

regions

initiatives

policies

communities

neighborhoods

foundations

dialogues

careers

boards

connections

**Voluntās**

Realizing Human Potential