



Do you know what really
matters to your talent?

Workforce Preference Study South African findings

March 2021

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Introduction

The ideal workplace does not look anything like it did a few years ago. The world is going through a fundamental transformation and the effects of digitalisation and globalisation can no longer be ignored.

The development of internet-based digital technologies and global interconnectedness have fundamentally changed the way we work as well as the labour market. Existing jobs have been transformed, new jobs and skills have been created, and new forms of employment are required. Work is now less bound by set time and space and the relationship between employers and employees is also changing. Elements like remote working and flexibility are becoming more important but can also bring along extra challenges such as maintaining a good work-life balance and providing a sense of belonging for employees.

These changes in the world of work will continue to speed up and are also influencing the preferences of jobseekers, especially the younger generation (i.e. the future workforce).

In order to keep up and stay relevant, organisations will need to reimagine their current attraction and retention strategies. Rather than building on common beliefs and traditional recruitment practices, organisations can benefit from getting to know the preferences of their (future) employees. Once they find out what the future and current workforce prefers, organisations can make data-based decisions and stay fit for the future.

The way we work is changing; automation and ‘thinking machines’ are replacing human tasks and changing the skills organisations need.

Increasingly, organisations must have talent that can ‘flexskill’ — the ability to adjust rapidly to new and varied skills and roles. Employees need to constantly learn and adapt. They find themselves in a new era of work, workplace and life.

With all this taking place, the critical question for employers is “Do we have the right skills in the right place? If not, how do we attract and retain that talent?”





Goals of the study

What factors shape the job decisions of the future workforce? What exactly is this younger generation looking for, especially amid rapidly evolving technologies and new work patterns? And to what employer brand messages do they actually respond? To help organisations with these challenges, PwC created a workforce preference survey and a database that provides insights and support for enhancing the attraction and retention of both young and experienced talent.

PwC's purpose is to build trust in society and solve important problems. By doing this unique workforce preference study, we want to help society by gaining and sharing insights about what the workforce of the future desires from their employers, thereby helping organisations to enhance their attraction and retention capabilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic made 2020 a year like no other and we still can't be sure what lies ahead. With the labour market and working conditions changing faster than ever, it is important for organisations to reimagine their workforce practices and working methods.

This is the biggest workforce preference database globally, with participants from 11 countries across Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) taking part... The results of the survey enable us to provide a full-scope preference list, which can be used to help organisations shape and deploy a bespoke employer value proposition strategy. As we can now share information more easily thanks to the innovation of internet-based digital technologies, is it possible that certain preferences of today's young people will be repeated across multiple regions and therefore be 'borderless'? Or is there still a chance that many preferences are still country specific? These are among the questions we set out to answer.

Workforce Preference Study

To find out what the workforce preferences of the future will be, PwC assessed the expectations of students and career starters of all educational levels (age 18–28) as well as current employees. We did this by means of an online survey that was conducted nationally during the final quarter of 2020.

The interactive, customised web-based survey, powered by TrueChoice Solutions Inc., made this assessment possible and provided algorithm based real-time analytics.

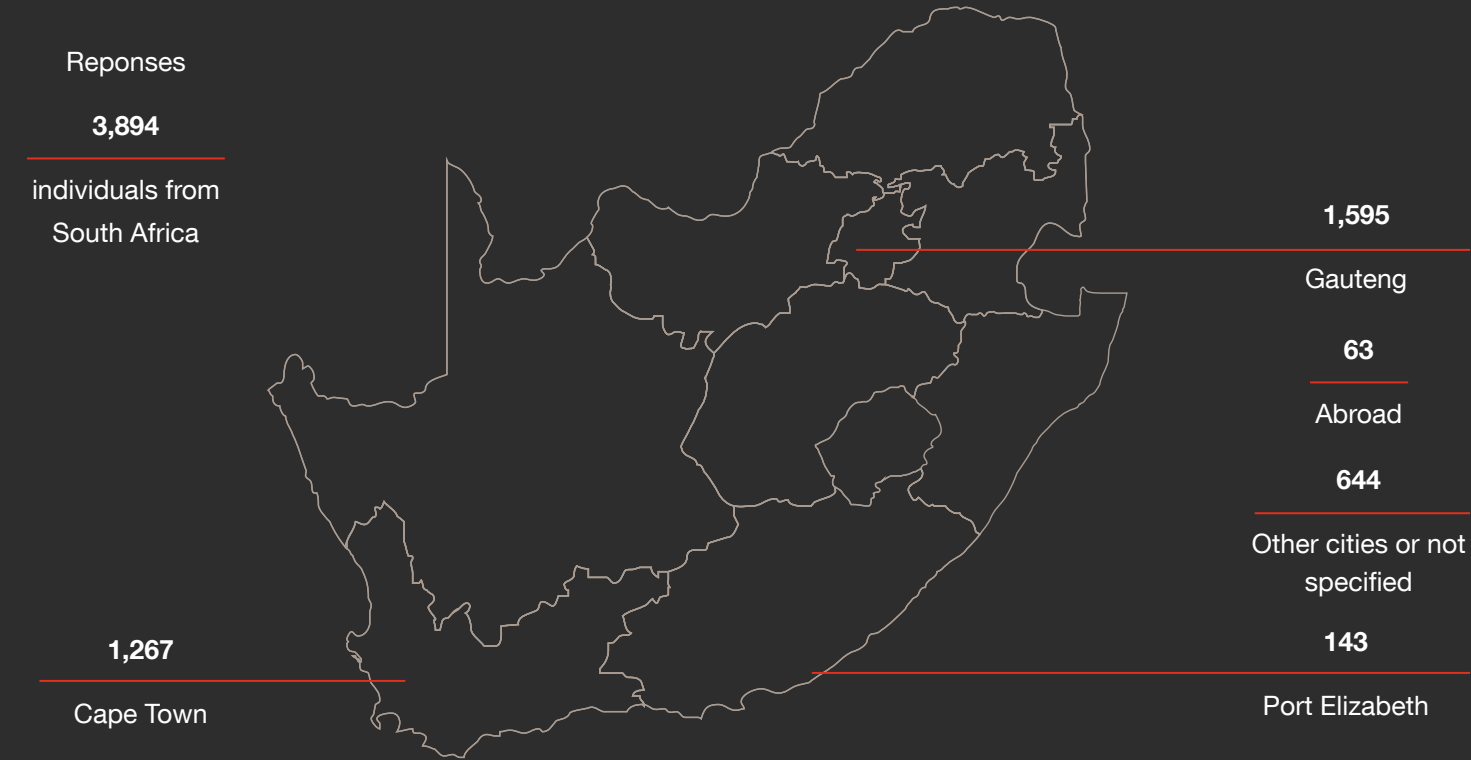
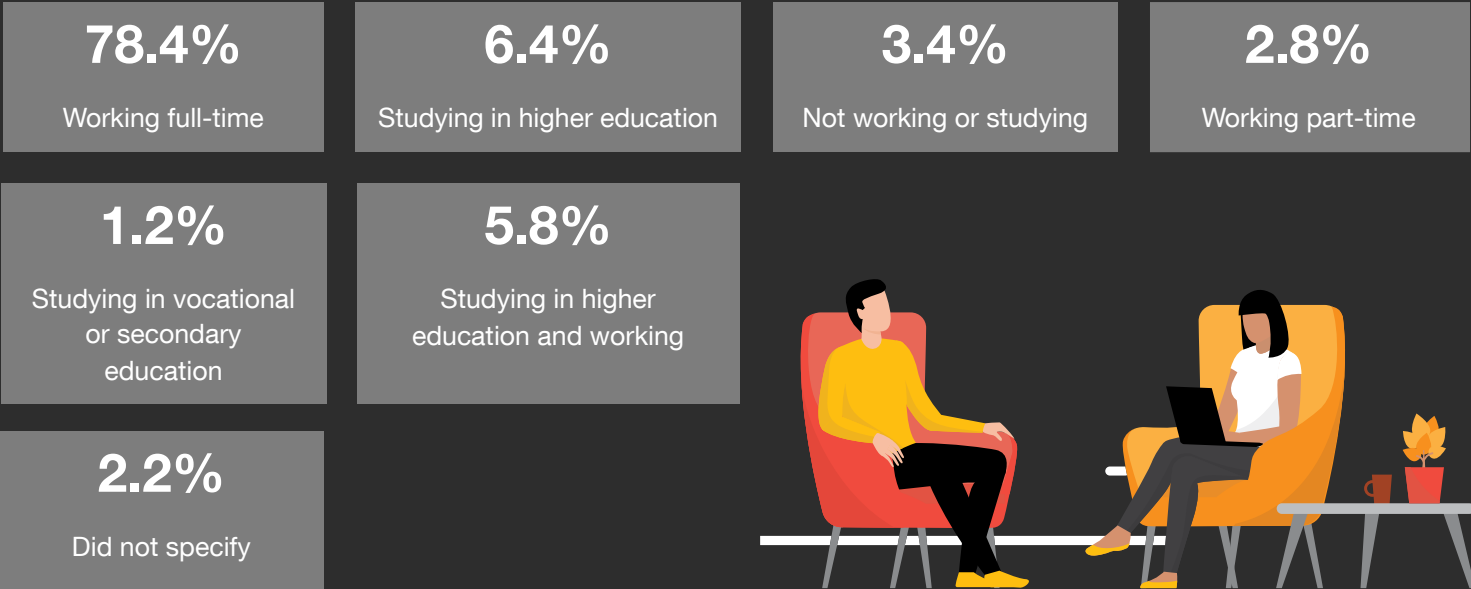
Powered by artificial intelligence the online questionnaire measured job preferences in a complex and smart way — determining the absolute and relative preferences of the respondents. By posing questions that require participants to make a series of trade-offs, the survey provided data of significantly higher quality than a conventional questionnaire.

In this study all areas of employee preferences that could be significant in their choice of a workplace, and could possibly shape the perceptions of the employer brand, were taken into account. We defined these areas based on current trends, motivation theories, components of employee experience and client feedback. The survey findings provide detailed insights into demographic and other data — enabling us to explore the differences in mindset of various segments.

The value you will find in this publication

What is the report about?

This report provides an overview of what young people are looking for from (future) employers in South Africa.



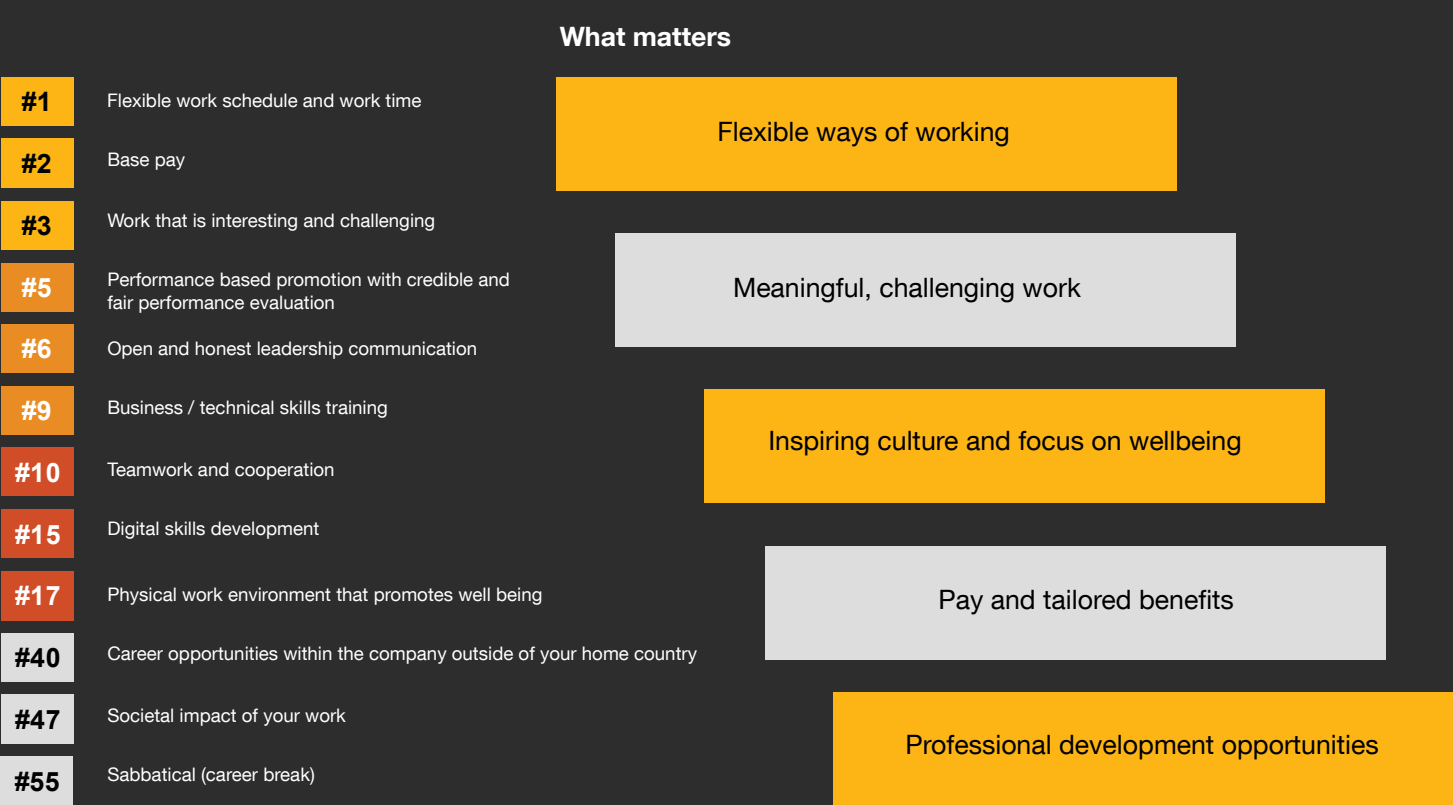
Content of the survey

The survey covered 12 main focus areas, which were divided over 55 work-related preference



Executive summary

Survey highlights: Relative preferences



Shared values

Transparency and fairness

Across the countries in which workplace preference studies have been conducted, young people scored unanimously high on preferring companies to be transparent and trustworthy in leadership and fair in promotion. Our findings in South Africa are no exception, where respondents also showed a preference for open and honest leadership communication.

As digital technologies offer constant access to immediate and internal insights and information is being shared in real time, people are more aware of what is going on in the world than ever before. In the eyes of younger generations, transparency has become a hygiene factor that needs to be ensured by employers. There is also an increased focus on ESG principles and younger employees are taking this into account when considering potential employers.

Flexibility

Having a flexible work schedule and ways of working is a highly desired factor across all countries surveyed, including South Africa. A workplace that promotes wellbeing is also highly preferred.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased the need for employers to offer flexibility as remote working came to the forefront. Contracting and gig employment as a preference is also growing in popularity.

Pay and benefits

There is still a clear preference for pay and benefits such as pension and healthcare benefits.

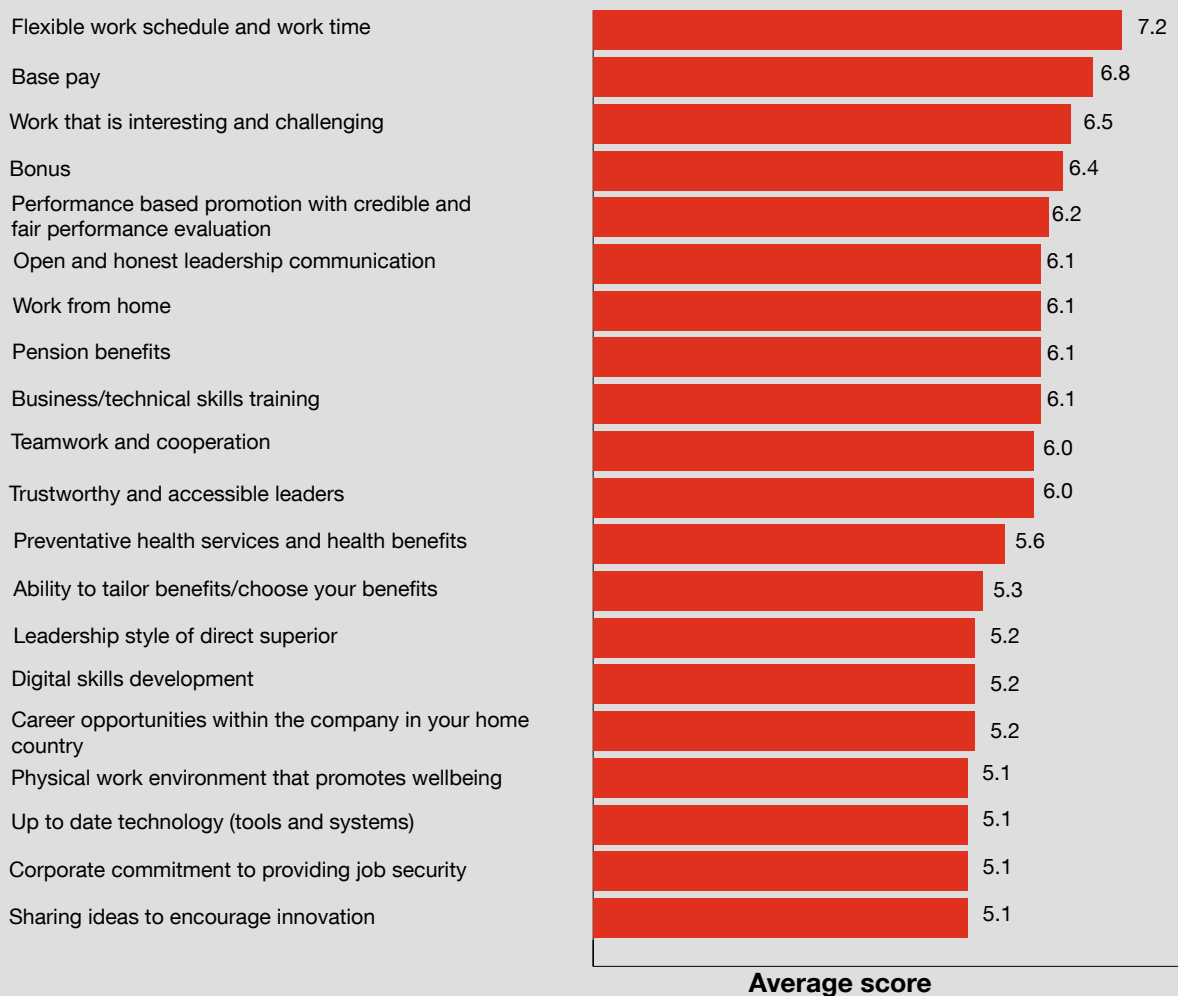
In the South African environment, pay still plays a major part in the overall attraction of an organisation to employees and potential employees. Greater transparency about pay levels and fair pay is key for employees.

Digital upskilling

Across South Africa there is a preference for interesting and challenging work, with digital skills development. Sharing and innovation are also a preferred working style.

The automation of jobs and digital transformation means that there will be a demand for new high-skilled labour that currently does not exist. Organisations have a social responsibility to upskill their workforce and potential workforce. This is also a requirement from employees.

Figure 1 Top 20 preference in South Africa



Borderless workforce

Disruptive technologies, easy and immediate access to vast sources of information and virtual interactive platforms are connecting people across borders. Young generations were born into this digital world and are borderless in how they interact, what challenges they face and what expectations they have. As a result, young jobseekers, or future employees, share a set of common values and job preferences around the world.

International mobility

Participation in training/events internationally, opportunities to work with people from different countries and career opportunities within the company outside of their home country scored relatively low for South African participants.

Borders lost their relevance as free or easy movement in the world is a hygiene factor that is expected by younger people. International mobility programmes allow them to travel smoothly and virtually as technologies allow them to keep connected wherever they are. As a result, South African youth are interested in international opportunities. The relative preference for opportunities to spend time working abroad is higher for those aged 30 and younger.

Figure 2 Plans to remain in home country

Q Are you planning on staying and working in your home country long term?

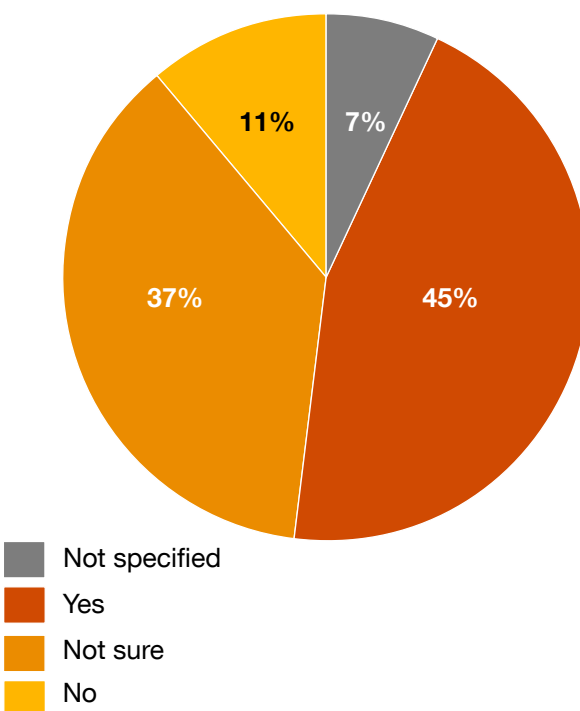
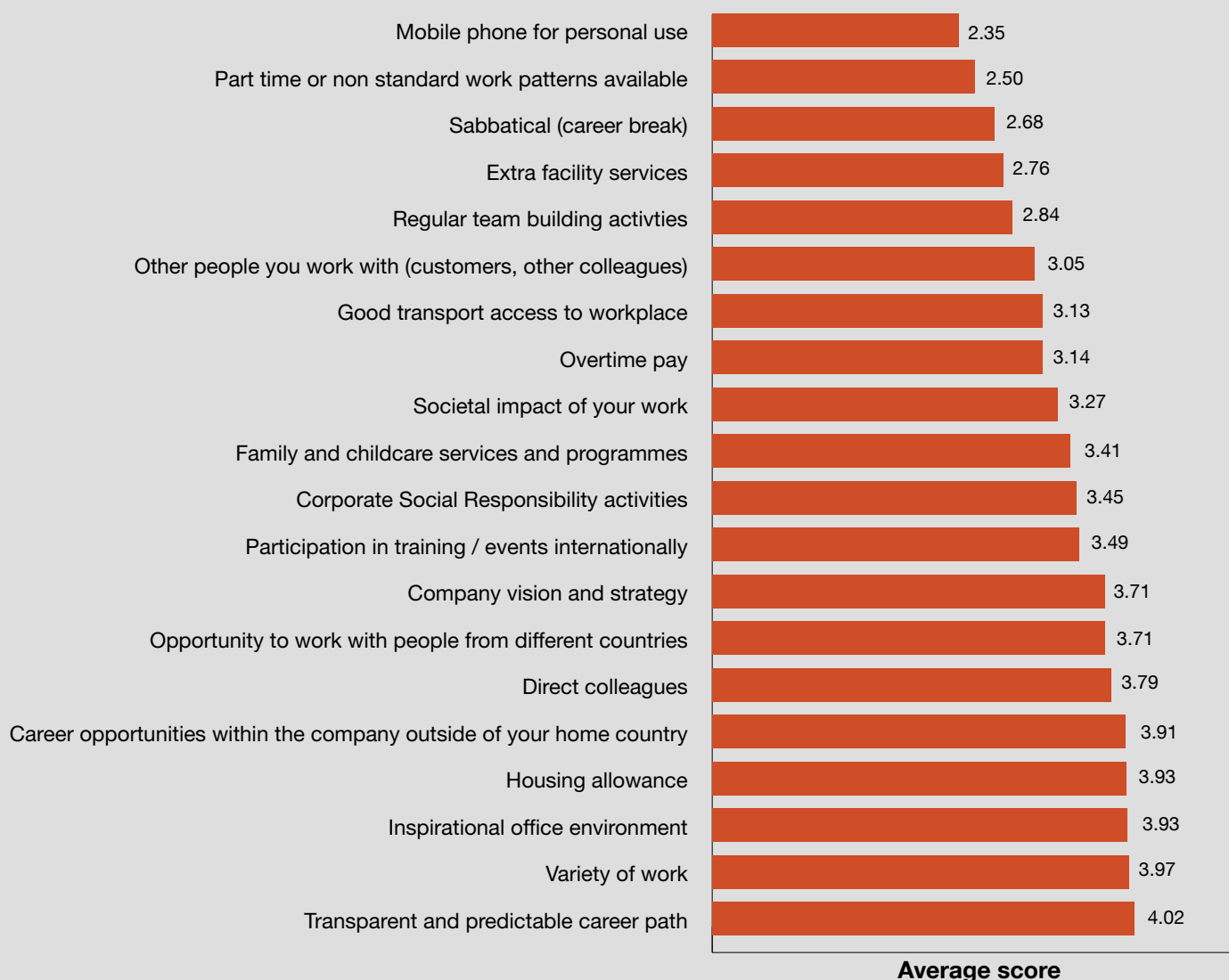


Figure 3 Bottom 20 SA Preferences

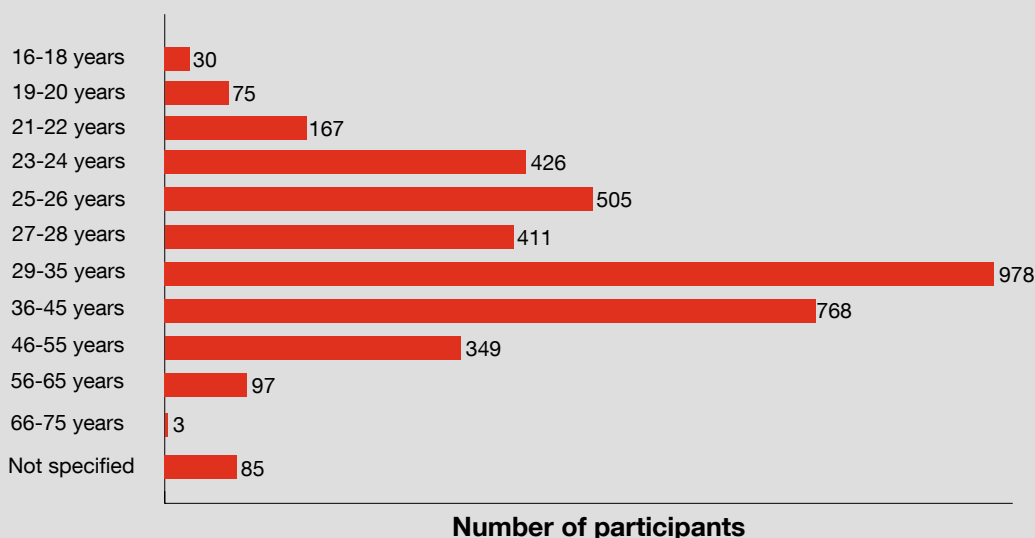


Generational characteristics

Differences between preferences based on age

- **Career:** All ages favour performance-based promotions with credible and fair performance evaluation.
- **Company culture:** All ages prefer teamwork and cooperation as well as sharing ideas to encourage innovation, with younger respondents showing a stronger preference for diversity and inclusion.
- **Daily work:** There is a clear bias across all ages towards work that is interesting and challenging.
- **Internationality:** Individuals below the age of 30 prefer opportunities to spend time working abroad
- **Pay and bonuses:** Bonuses are of high importance to older respondents
- **People at work:** While older respondents consider the leadership style of their direct superior high priority, younger ones assign higher priority to people they work with (customers and peers).
- **Physical work environment:** Younger individuals favour inspirational work environments.
- **Work-life balance:** While all age groups prefer flexible work schedules and work time, younger respondents also prefer work schedule predictability.
- **Personal and professional development:** Coaching and mentorship is preferred more by younger respondents, with older people preferring training and upskilling initiatives.

Figure 4 Age distribution of survey participants



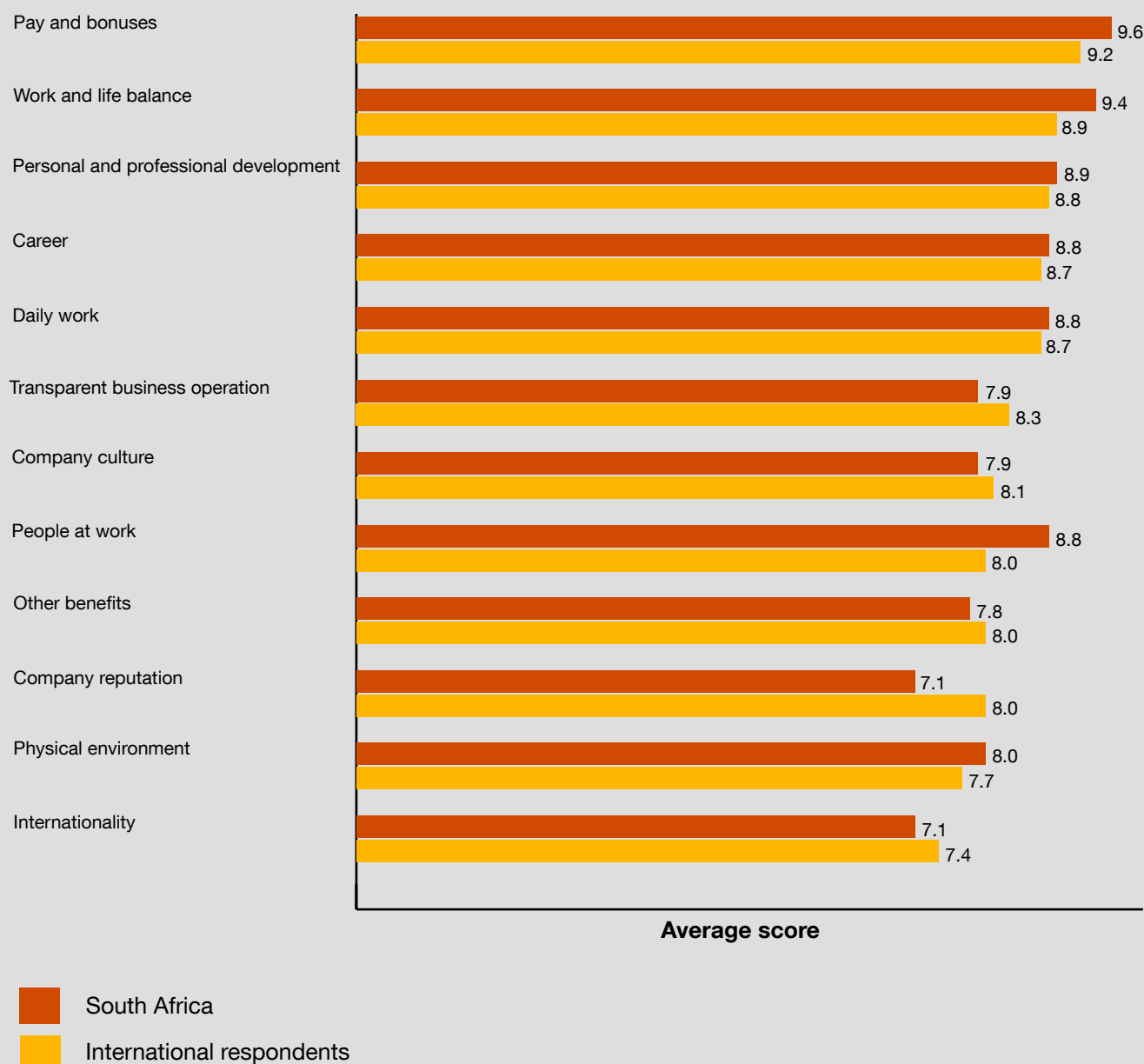
Other key insights

- Those pursuing vocational education have a clear preference for work that has a societal impact and sharing ideas to encourage innovation as well as further academic education.
- High school learners showed a high preference for gaining experience by spending time working abroad.
- Female respondents have a higher preference for pension and health benefits as well as overtime pay.
- Male participants showed a stronger preference for business/technical skills training and digital skills development.
- While males prefer a work environment that has up-to-date technology, females also favour a work environment that promotes wellbeing.

Comparison with other countries

- Individuals across the 11 countries surveyed are aligned on a number of preferences
- They want interesting and challenging work and prefer to have a flexible work schedule.
- They value pay and benefits with a strong emphasis on the ability to choose and tailor benefits.
- They want performance-based promotions with credible and fair performance evaluation.
- They value organisations with cultures that encourage collaboration, inclusivity and innovation.
- Individuals want personal and professional development opportunities, with survey participants in other countries showing a higher preference for soft skills development than those in South Africa.
- Respondents in other countries place more importance on the people they work with, particularly direct colleagues, than those in South Africa.

Figure 5 Preference comparison: South Africa vs International respondents



Industries of interest

Based on the participation profile by industries, finance and accounting was represented most in the study, followed by consulting services and other industries

Figure 6 Survey participant profile by industry

Q In which industry do you currently work?

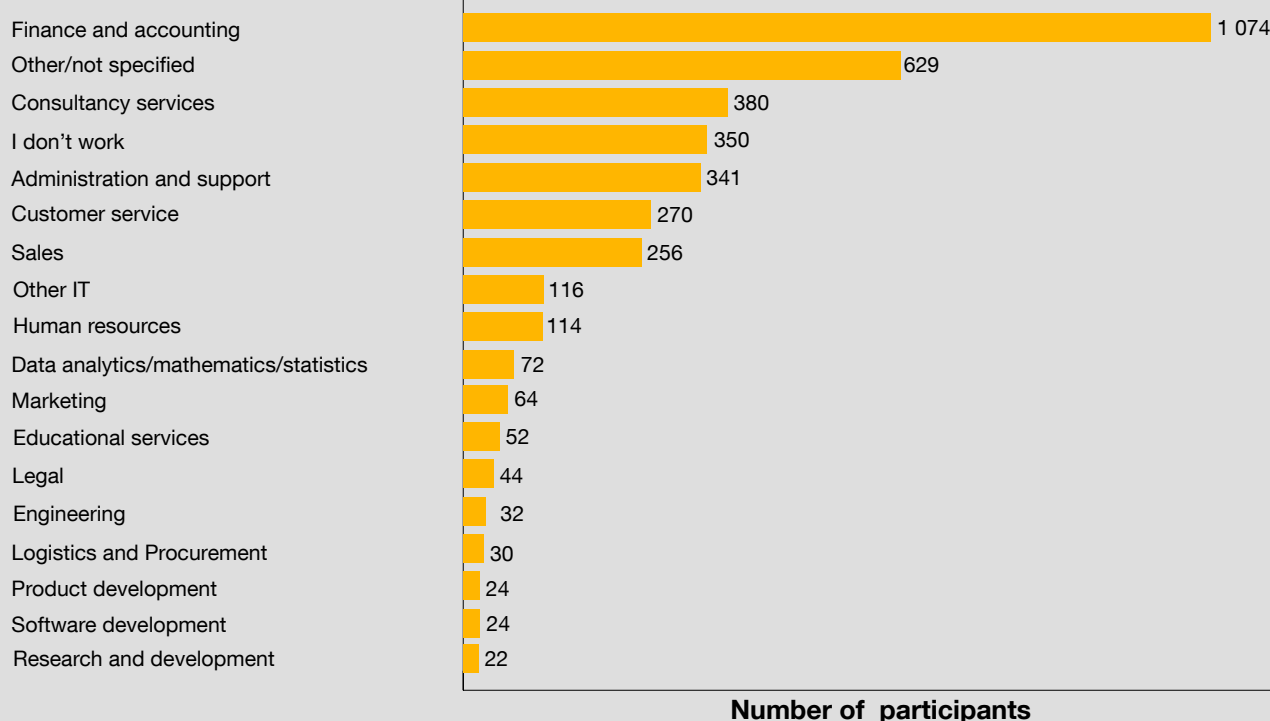
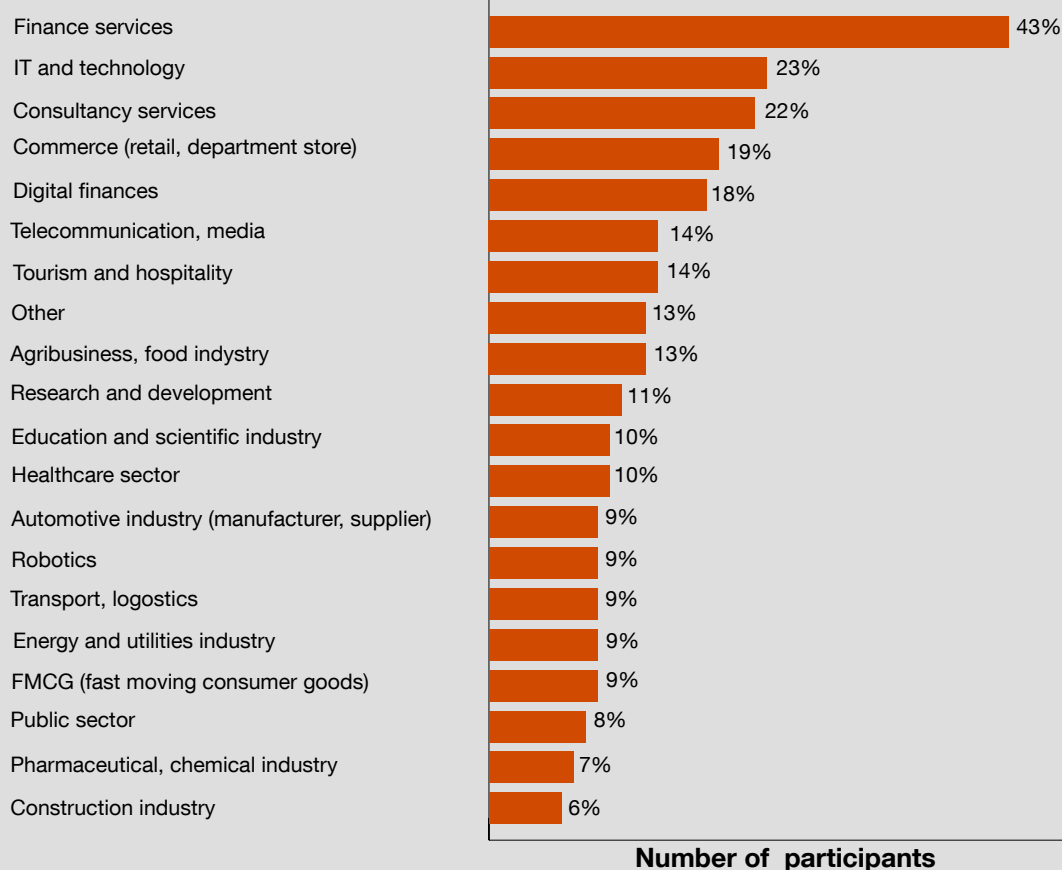


Figure 7 Top 20 preferred industries

Q In which industry would you like to work?



The financial services industry elicited the highest level of interest. This may be attributable to the fact that a number of respondents are already working in this industry.

A number of participants also showed interest in the IT, technology and digital sectors. Other industries that interest participants include retail, media, telecommunications and tourism.

What does this mean for you?

Data-based decision-making is a groundbreaking way to stay ahead of the competition and successfully recruit young talent. We live in a world that is changing faster than ever. Disruptive technologies and globalisation both offer vast information and opportunities to young talent. It is therefore extremely advantageous for organisations to build on reliable data when building up their external and internal employer brand.

The findings of this study highlight the need for more data-driven and customised employee value propositions. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach to employee value propositions is not going to attract and retain top talent.

Evolution/Future of the study

Much like the workforce and labour market, the workforce preference study is constantly evolving. Informed by our ongoing experiences, global trends and our clients' feedback, and recognising the potential and significance of this initiative, we are expanding it further across the globe and launching it in more countries and companies.

We will also be broadening the scope of the study by including employer brand perception as an area of research so that we can provide a more holistic and well-rounded picture of labour market realities. The upcoming years' survey campaigns will generate detailed data about how permanently, and in what ways, COVID-19 has changed workforce preferences.



Want to join our initiative or interested in the study findings' implications for your organisation?

We are continuously working on extending our study's reach and would be happy to support other partners and territories in joining this global initiative.

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