

IIC INDEX 2026



The reality check

**How internal communication can rebuild
trust, confidence and clarity to lead the way**

Institute of Internal Communication



Great internal communication unlocks organisational success.

The Institute of Internal Communication is the Professional Association for Internal Communication, with over 75 years of history and more than 2,800 members worldwide. We are the authoritative voice for the profession.

We believe great internal communication unlocks organisational success. When people are aligned, informed and inspired, organisations perform. Internal communication connects vision to action, builds trust, fosters collaboration and turns individual effort into organisational impact.

Through Inspire, Connect and Empower – our three values – we equip internal communication professionals with the evidence, insight and peer community to strengthen their practice and drive the profession forward.

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We've been trusted advisors to some of the biggest and best names for nearly 20 years, helping to create environments where people and businesses thrive by giving people a better voice at work.

With vast expertise in both internal communication and employee engagement, we support clients with our trusted advisory, cutting-edge insight and expert storytelling, to help them drive engagement and power performance.

Our team of consultants, data scientists and creatives shares a wealth of experience and offers end-to-end expertise. Each programme we co-create with our clients is as unique as the organisation and people within.

Together, we're driven by our belief that giving people a voice transforms organisational outcomes.



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Introduction







Louise Breed

Chief Executive, Ipsos Karian and Box UK





The world of work has changed. Change itself has become relentless, and for many employees the pressure to adapt, absorb and deliver has never been greater. New technologies are forcing serious questions about the future of work and employees' roles in it as humans. Uncertainty is no longer a temporary state. For many organisations, it has become the operating environment.

Against that backdrop, the declining advocacy and trust scores in this report are not a surprise. They are a signal.

In this context, internal communicators and leaders have a more difficult – but more important – task than ever before. For employees to be engaged, productive and capable of innovation in this new world of work is a big ask, and one that is only achieved through:

-  Clear, authentic leadership
-  Informed and equipped managers
-  Transparent two-way communication (no spinning messages or hiding from the truth)
-  Boldly facing threats and opportunities head on

And the reality check this report delivers is stark. Our data indicates that:

-  Many leaders are failing to align employees to their strategic vision, risking achievement of organisational goals and performance
-  Many leaders are out of touch with employees' perspectives and many employees don't feel able to share their views
-  Many managers aren't helping employees make sense of what things mean for them
-  Most organisations are failing to build knowledge, understanding and belief around a future in which humans and AI work together effectively



Jennifer Sproul

Chief Executive, Institute of Internal Communication

The stakes have never been higher. Organisations are navigating uncertainty, managing risk and working harder than ever to hold their people together through change. Internal communication is critical to how they do that. It builds the trust that makes difficult conversations possible, shapes cultures that help people thrive, and connects leadership intent to the everyday reality of employees.

Internal communication professionals need to be bold in ensuring leaders understand and are positioned to tackle these challenges. We need to surface difficult conversations, become the internal intelligence that informs decisions, and collaborate to find the right solutions.

We can enable leaders to communicate with clarity, candour and compassion. We can create a communications ecosystem that listens and responds. We can drive effective change by connecting an organisation's big ambitions to the people essential to achieving them.

When we focus on these things, internal communication determines whether organisations achieve their goals, manage risk and thrive.

Our fourth year of research together

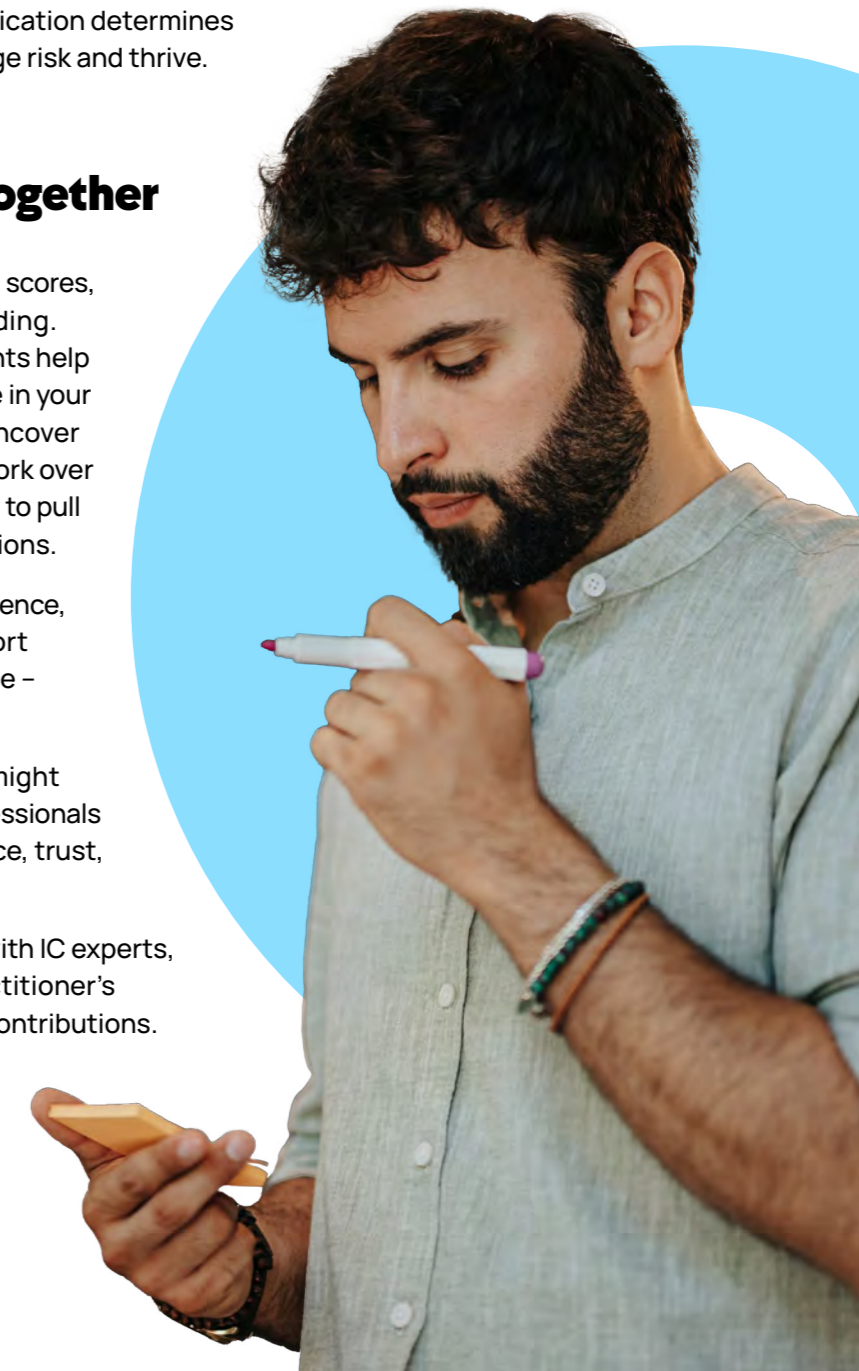
This year's results show significant shifts in several scores, some of which may make for uncomfortable reading. But that discomfort matters. We hope these insights help you focus on what will make the biggest difference in your organisation. We keep pushing the research to uncover new and important insights – building a body of work over the years that can help you identify the right levers to pull to help your organisations achieve their big ambitions.

Whether you want to build advocacy, create confidence, communicate change more effectively, or support leaders and managers to connect with their people – we have data to support your strategies.

And we dive deeper into the specific areas that might be keeping many leaders and communication professionals up at night – change adoption, artificial intelligence, trust, psychological safety.

To help us explore the data, we held a workshop with IC experts, who lent their reflections and ideas to add a practitioner's perspective – we're grateful for their thoughtful contributions.

We hope this year's report provides something for everyone, whatever your role, type of organisation, and whatever your goals are.



About this report

In this report, we're painting a comprehensive picture by approaching the data in three ways.

i In this section, we give you the commentary which reflects and supports the data you can see in the charts on each spread.

Q What the data says



i In this section, you get the professional perspectives of the authoring teams at Ipsos Karian and Box and the Institute of Internal Communication.

💡 What we think



i A trusted group of experts have reviewed early insights and provided their perspective on the findings. You'll find their point of view reflected as quotes throughout the report.

W Expert's view



The numbers in summary

We conducted an online survey with a representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers (in organisations with 500 or more employees) aged 18-75 between 15 and 29 January 2026.

On pages 68-71, you can find the full methodology. This includes respondent breakdowns across a few key aspects, including gender, age and employment status. We're also outlining manager status, manager level, digital connection and insight around the types of organisations respondents work for.

The percentages in the report have been rebased to exclude people who answered "I don't know", so the total number of respondents to each individual question is indicated on the chart (n=).

While the panel survey captured data on ethnicity and other protected characteristics, we do not report on all of these due to small sample sizes.

Throughout the report, we refer to the following groupings, defined as below:

- **Positive:** those who selected "Strongly agree" or "Agree"
- **Neutral:** those who selected "Neither agree nor disagree"
- **Negative:** those who selected "Disagree" or "Strongly disagree"



Key insights

01

More change, less clarity

- The volume of organisational change is increasing, but less than half of employees agree the reasons behind change are clearly communicated. Even fewer agree their organisation is good at helping them adapt to change.
- Most employees don't feel their organisation is honest about the impacts of change or that their organisation listens to their views on change.

02

Trust in leaders has fallen

- Trust in all levels of leadership has declined in the last year, with senior leadership teams taking the brunt.
- Half of employees don't trust their CEO or senior leaders. Older employees are less likely to trust.

03

Leaders are out of touch

- Leaders are overestimating how well important topics have been communicated.
- The majority of them feel that the strategy has been made clear, and that they have explained how AI will be used, but the data shows that other levels of employee do not feel the same.

04

Confidence is complex

- Confidence in the future is driven by honest communication and clarity about the strategy – but not in isolation.
- Current work processes, the approach to AI and connections between teams are also vital to employees feeling confident about the future of their organisation.



05

Communications often fail the frontline

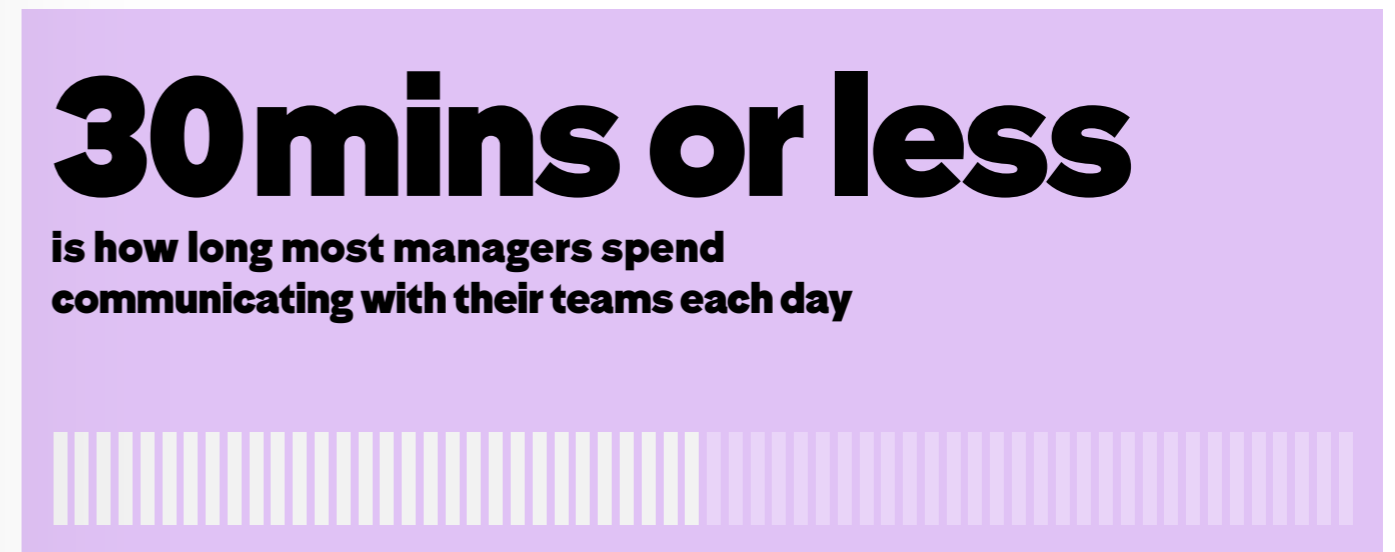
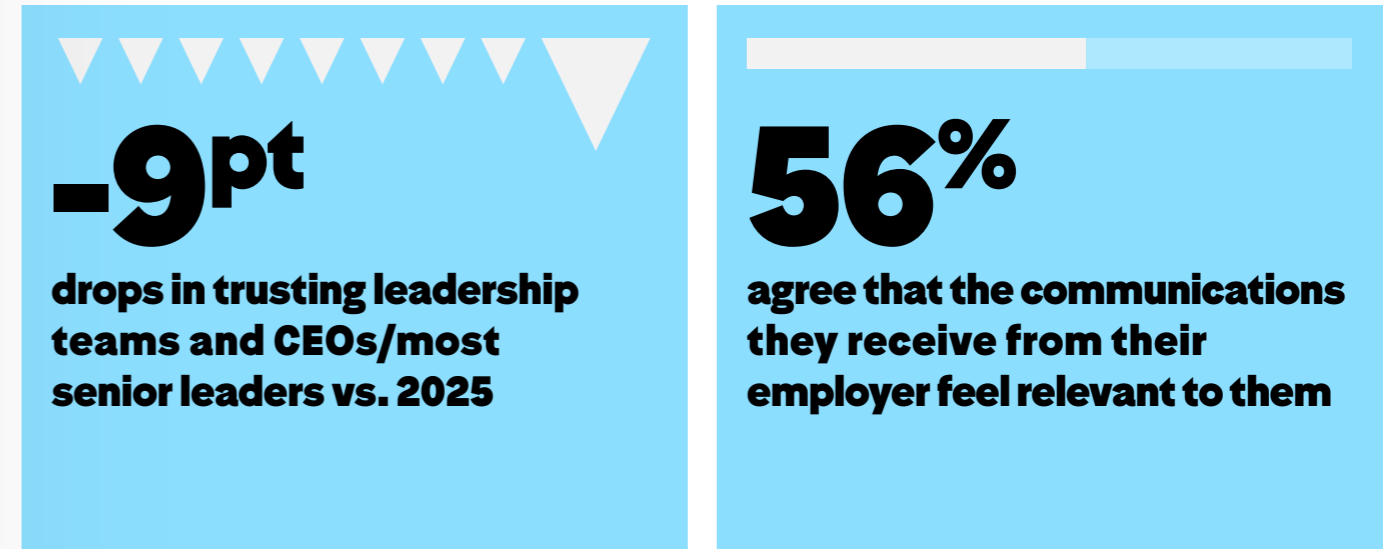
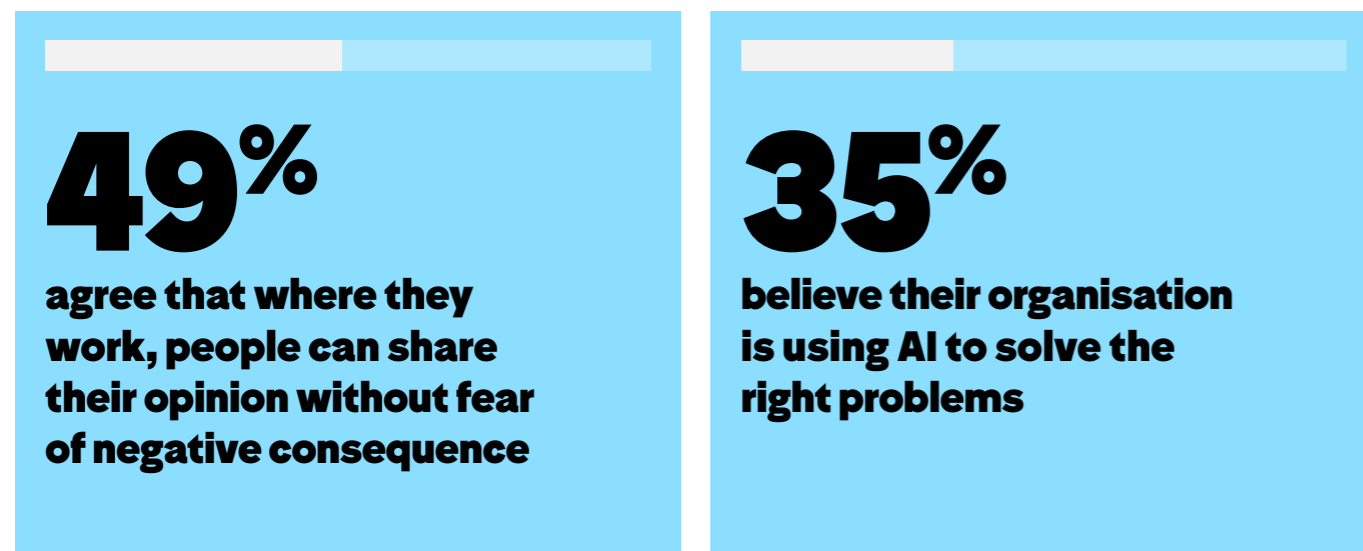
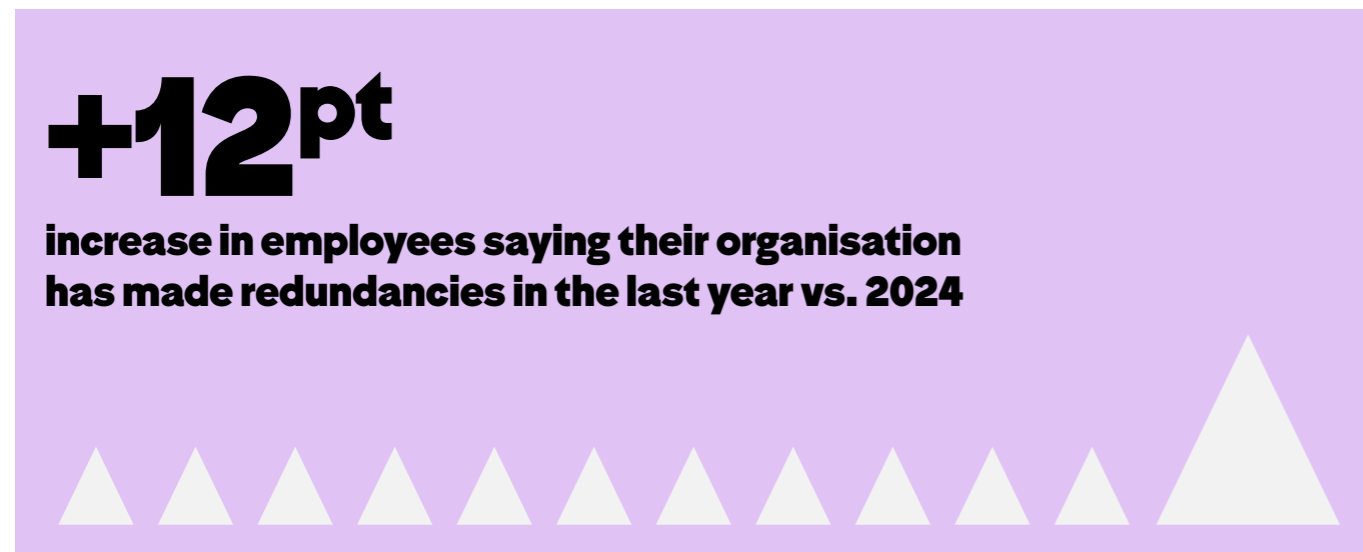
- Employees who are in jobs where they aren't at a computer are more likely to hear about big changes through word of mouth than they are to hear it from their leaders.
- They are less positive across a range of topics, including levels of trust and feeling able to share opinions without fear.

06

People are even shorter on time

- Most people have ten minutes or less a day to engage with communication and one in five say they have no or hardly any time.
- But 'nice-to-know' still matters. Poor communication of good news damages advocacy more than poor communication of bad news.

The story in numbers



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".



Section one

Communicating in a tough world

Fewer employees rate communication as 'excellent' this year

What the data says

The proportion of employees rating their organisation's communication as 'excellent' has declined 9pts since last year.

18-24-year-olds are the only age group to have seen an increase in giving communication 7 or more out of 10. This uplift means that the proportion of employees giving an 'excellent' rating now declines with age until it levels out at 50% of up to 64-year-olds.

Advocacy is down 6pts compared to 2025, with 56% of employees agreeing they would recommend their employer. Employees who rate communication highly are more likely to be advocates. The biggest uplift happens between a 6 and a 7 rating. Just 47% of those who rate communication as 6 out of 10 would recommend their employer, compared to 70% of those who rate communication as 7.

What we think

We don't believe that internal communicators are getting worse at their jobs, but that the challenge for the profession has accelerated and continues to do so.

Given that the operating context is unlikely to get any easier in the next few years, communicators need to rise to this challenge and ensure communication is still viewed positively by employees, even when the message itself might be difficult.

We saw last year that the organisations with the highest ratings are the ones where leaders are visible, open, show empathy, and listen to and act on feedback. In these times, these are the things that will ultimately protect an organisation, enabling employees to remain engaged advocates, even during the most difficult periods.

Expert's view



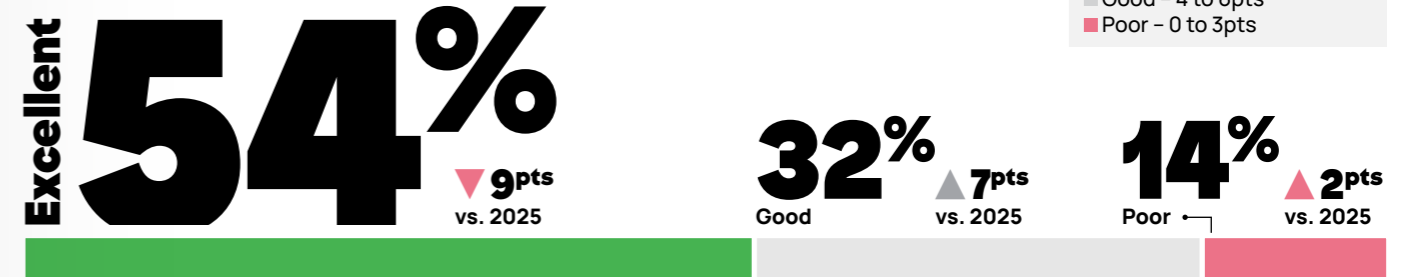
Jody Lewis

Internal, Digital and Creative Communications Director, Centrica

For internal communicators, the overall downward trend in employee perception of communication presents both a challenge for us to improve and an opportunity to influence those we partner. This data provides a valuable benchmark to show how we compare across organisations and sectors that we can use with leaders and drive actions that will make things better."

How would you rate how your organisation communicates with you overall?

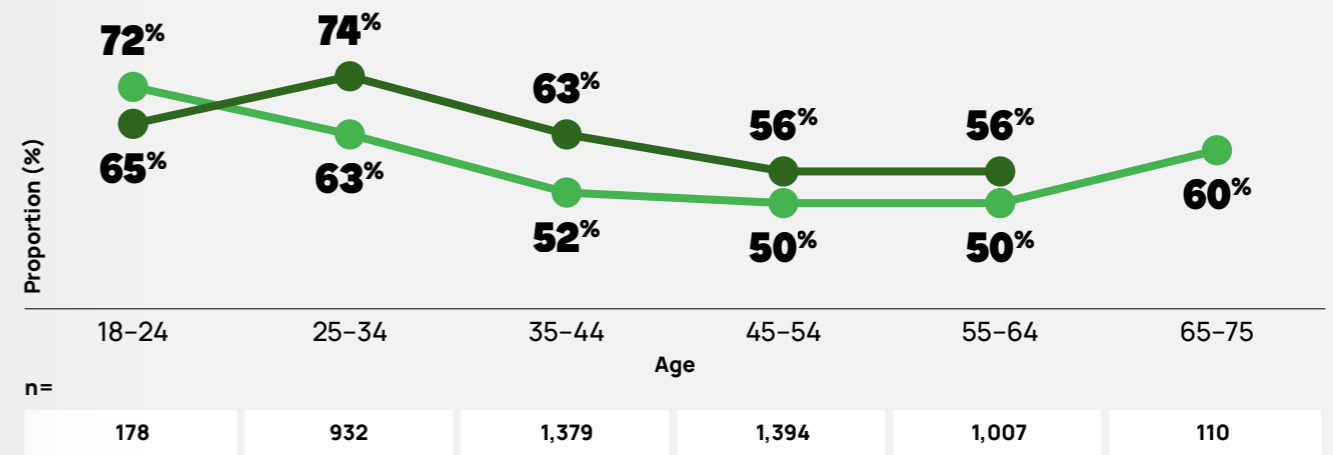
n=5,000



Most ages have lower proportions giving excellent ratings, except 18-24-year-olds

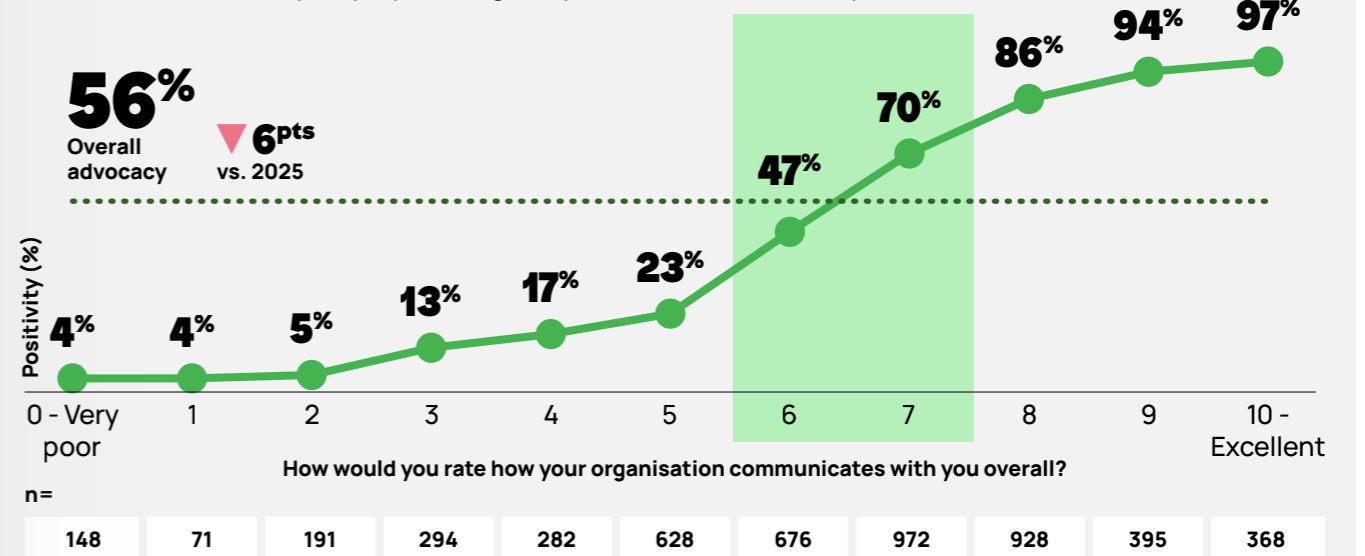
How would you rate how your organisation communicates with you overall?

● 7-10 rating in 2026 ● 7-10 rating in 2025



Biggest uplift in advocacy between six and seven ratings

I would recommend my employer as a great place to work (advocacy)



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Employees say restructures and redundancies are becoming more common

What the data says

Since we last asked employees about what kinds of change have happened in their organisation, restructures and redundancies have become more common.

More than half of employees now say that a restructure has taken place in the last 12 months, up 12pts from 2024. Over a third report that there have been redundancies, up 12pts since the 2024 survey.

Most other types of changes are broadly in line with previous levels.

Employees in organisations that have performed below financial targets, had negative news coverage or experienced industrial action have the lowest levels of trust and advocacy.

What we think

Change is one of the biggest investments an organisation makes and one of the most significant risks it takes. Get the communication wrong and trust erodes, people disengage and lives are disrupted.

Get it right and organisations move through change with greater confidence and less lasting damage to the people within them. Internal communicators need to be in the room early, advising on strategy before decisions are made, not after. We bring the real employee perspective to decision-makers, help manage the volume and sequencing of change, and ensure leaders understand the risks of getting communication wrong.

The IC Index in 2024 demonstrated how excellent communication helps protect trust even through the most difficult change. This data is clear that negative news coverage can directly hit trust and advocacy, making alignment with external communication colleagues essential, not optional.

Internal communication is a critical part of change risk management. Organisations that treat it that way are better positioned to protect trust, maintain culture and deliver success.

Expert's view



Susanna Holten
Principal Consultant,
Ipsos Karian and Box

Internal communicators often have the best insight into how employees may react to potential organisational changes. We know the questions they are likely to have, and the damage that can be done if their concerns aren't anticipated and addressed. The ripples of poorly-managed change can last a very long time, to the extent of becoming oral histories that can impact culture for many years. With significant changes now being so common, communication must not be an afterthought but truly embedded into how change is managed from the outset."

More than half of employees say there has been a restructure in the last year

n=4,665

Which of the following are you aware have happened in/to your organisation in the last 12 months? (Select all that apply)

	Proportion (%)	vs. 2024 (pts)	Trust*	Advocacy**
			58%	56%
			Overall	
Restructured some or all of the organisation	52%	▲ 12	55%	54%
Made redundancies	34%	▲ 12	52%	48%
Mandated that some employees spend a certain number of days in the office	29%	▲ 3	60%	59%
Implemented significant change or business transformation	27%	▲ 2	59%	57%
Made news headlines for negative reasons	26%	▲ 2	47%	46%
Paid a bonus or given other performance related rewards to employees	25%	▶ 0	70%	69%
Made news headlines for positive reasons	23%	▲ 3	70%	72%
Had a change in CEO	21%	▲ 2	53%	53%
Exceeded our financial targets	20%	▲ 2	72%	73%
Performed below our financial targets	17%	N/A	49%	44%
Acquired another company	10%	▲ 2	66%	63%
Industrial action	9%	▼ 4	48%	46%
Been acquired by another company	4%	▶ 0	58%	52%
None of the above	11%	▼ 6	59%	57%

Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

* See p39 for Trust Index data.

**Advocacy scores reflect positivity to the question 'I would recommend my employer as a great place to work'.

Less than half say reasons behind changes are clearly communicated

What the data says

Just 49% of employees agree that the reasons behind changes are clearly communicated, down 7pts compared to 2023. Hearing from the CEO or most senior leader is the method of communication that correlates with higher levels of trust and people feeling that the reasons behind changes are clearly communicated.

14% of employees say they typically hear about change through word of mouth from other colleagues, and this is associated with low levels of trust and feeling that reasons are clearly communicated.

Non-digitally connected employees are more likely to hear about big changes through word of mouth, than they are to hear it from the senior leadership team, the CEO or their departmental leader.

What we think

Less than half of employees agree the rationale behind change is clearly communicated to them. That is a situation that cannot continue. Human nature demands that we understand why, particularly when something affects us personally. Without that, confidence erodes and resistance builds.

Internal communicators need to be unrelenting in their pursuit of clarity. Whether change is driven by growth ambitions, cost pressures, customer needs or operational improvement, honest and jargon-free communication is not a nice to have. It is what makes change land.

Managers are critical to that. Our role is to equip them not just to deliver messages but to hold meaningful conversations, manage uncertainty and own their part in the process.

And we need to be close enough to senior leaders to ensure their communication reflects the reality employees are living. That proximity is what keeps leaders grounded and organisations coherent.

Expert's view



Candy Hall
Senior Internal Communications and Engagement Manager, TUI UK&I

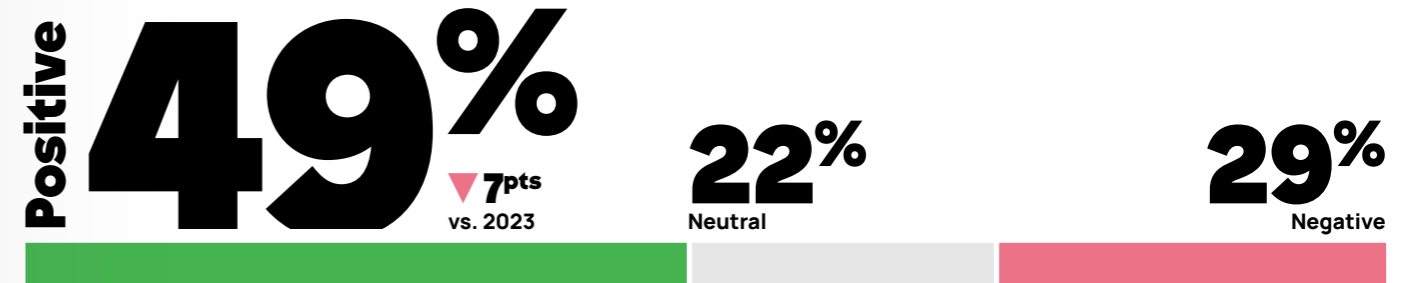
As communicators, we don't have control over the big organisational changes happening around us. A redundancy programme is rarely going to be well received. But we do have a role in influencing in how it's communicated, ensuring it's done in the right way, and making sure people feel seen and heard. It's our job to give them the best possible chance to understand what's happening and why.

For me, it's about continually encouraging leaders to think about the people behind the change – and helping them see that taking that approach doesn't just feel right, it leads to better outcomes for the organisation in the long run."

Fewer employees agree with this statement than in 2023

n=4,813

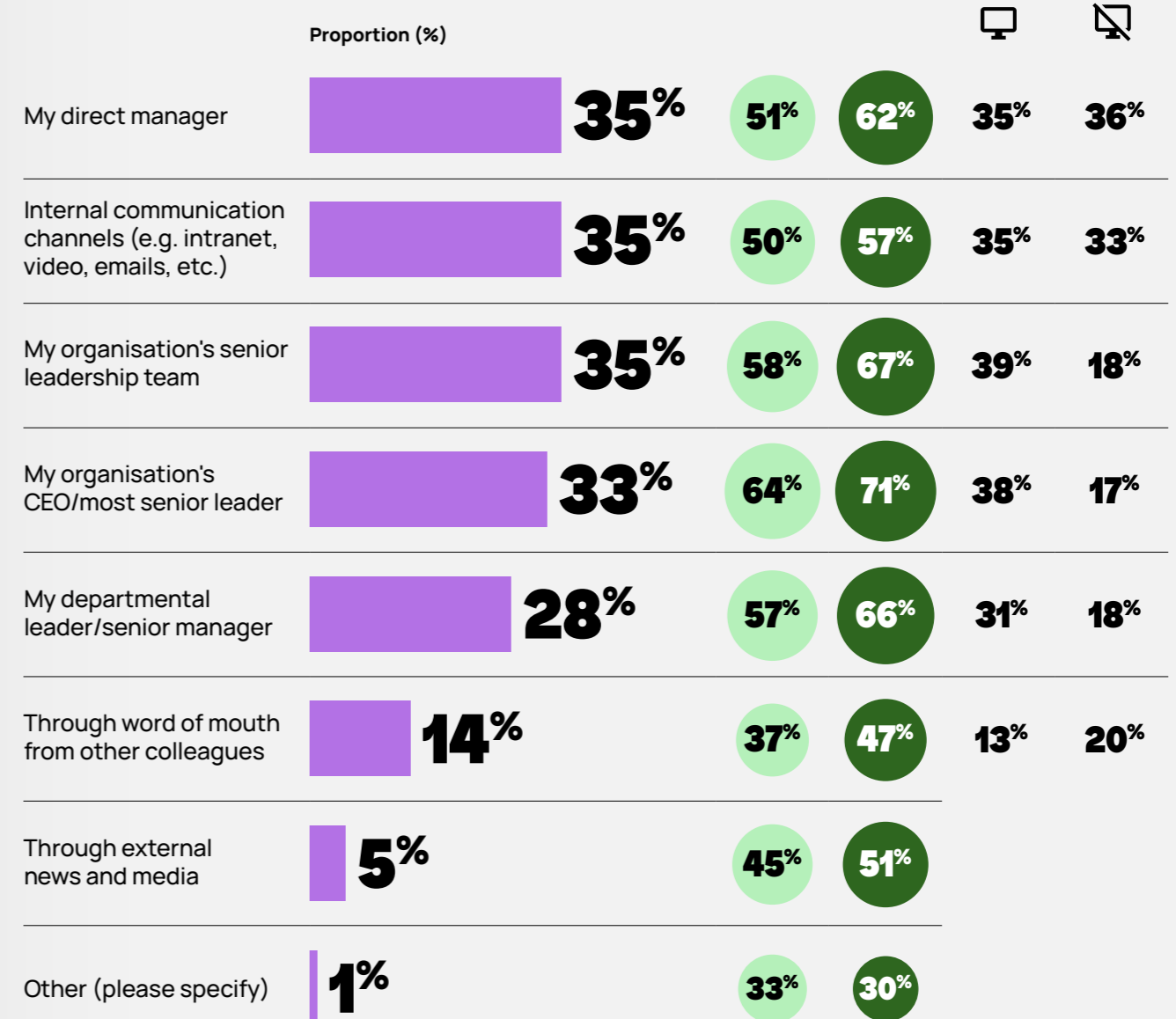
The reasons behind changes taking place in my organisation are clearly communicated to employees



How do you typically hear about big changes (e.g. restructures, mergers, redundancies, etc) in your organisation?

n=5,000

- The reasons behind changes taking place in my organisation are clearly communicated to employees – Positivity (%)
- Trust Index* – Positivity (%)
- 📺 Digitally connected (n=3,873)
- 📺 Not digitally connected (n=1,127)



5% selected 'I don't receive any communications about my employer's business priorities'.

Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18–75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

* See p39 for Trust Index data.

Many feel unsupported to adapt to change

What the data says

Just 42% of people agree that their organisation is good at helping employees adapt to change. 31% of employees actively disagree.

When it comes to what tends to happen during change, less than half say that details about planned changes are shared. The next most common responses are regular updates on progress and honesty about the impacts of the change, with around three in ten employees saying this happens.

The actions that correlate with higher positivity about helping adapt to change are: providing the skills needed, clarity about what to do differently, being honest about the impacts of the change and listening to employees about their views on the change.

Employees who experience none of these actions have the lowest levels of trust and positivity, and are the least likely to feel supported to adapt to change.

What we think

With less than half of organisations sharing what is happening and when, it is no wonder that most employees don't feel supported to adapt to change.

The expectations are not unreasonable: clarity, regular updates, honesty, listening and upskilling. When employees are being asked to do things differently, these are the minimum.

Yet for too many organisations they remain the exception rather than the norm. Not all of these activities sit directly within internal communication teams' remit. But honesty and listening are both strongly linked to employees feeling supported through change, and that is squarely where we operate. The line between our work and successful change outcomes is direct and evidenced.

Internal communication is not just essential to messages landing well. It is essential to change actually succeeding. There is no change if employees don't do things differently.

Expert's view



Paul Diggins

Transformation Communications
Director, Imperial Brands PLC

My feeling is the days of big change programmes are gone. It used to be one focus for three or four months with a beginning, a middle and an end – but now change genuinely is a constant and across multiple levels and areas of organisations. This is much harder for us to manage and resource, and harder for employees to comprehend. Managers are having to take more of the responsibility and we can see in the data that isn't working very well. Senior leaders need to own the overall narrative into which individual changes fit – and there has to be a clear line between where the organisation says it wants to go and the changes being made – when these don't align it completely erodes trust."

Just over two in five agree their organisation is good at helping employees adapt

My organisation is good at helping employees adapt to change

n=4,795



During organisational change where you work, which, if any, of the following tend to happen? (Select all that apply)

n=4,196

● My organisation is good at helping employees adapt to change – Positivity (%) ● Trust Index* – Positivity (%)

	Proportion (%)	My organisation is good at helping employees adapt to change – Positivity (%)	Trust Index* – Positivity (%)
Details about planned changes are shared (what is happening and/or when)	48%	55%	70%
There's regular updates on progress	31%	59%	73%
The organisation is honest about the impacts of the change	28%	70%	81%
Employees are provided with the technology or equipment necessary to operate effectively after the change	26%	68%	77%
Employees are provided with the skills they need to operate effectively after the change	25%	78%	83%
The organisation listens to employees about their views on the change	25%	70%	81%
There's clarity about the reasons behind change	25%	68%	79%
There are easy routes for employees to ask questions and get answers about the change	24%	64%	77%
There's communication early in the process of change	24%	61%	74%
There's clarity about what I am supposed to do differently as a result of change	16%	73%	80%
The organisation does not do any of these things during organisational change	15%	6%	27%
There has not been organisational change in the organisation within which I work	5%	37%	50%
Other, please specify	1%	8%	28%

Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18–75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

* See p39 for Trust Index data.

Psychological safety low and uneven

What the data says

Around half agree that where they work, people can share their opinion without fear of negative consequence. Just over a quarter disagree with this statement and a similar proportion are not sure.

Those who work in a setting where they're not connected to a computer frequently are less likely to say that people can share their opinion without fear of negative consequence.

For those working in a digitally connected environment, time spent in the office also makes a difference. Scores are highest for those who spend 60–80% of their time in the office, and lowest for those who always work remotely or spend 100% of their time in the office.

What we think

When there is continuous change and a need for innovation to help drive organisational outcomes, employees need to be able to share views and ideas without fear.

If people don't feel safe to speak, problems go unreported, ideas stay unshared and the intelligence that could drive better decisions never reaches the people who need it. But in a psychologically safe environment, organisations can think differently, identify problems earlier and deliver solutions faster. Co-creation becomes possible. Talent thrives. Intelligence flows.

Internal communication helps create the conditions where that happens. The language used, stories told and behaviours celebrated all signal whether openness is genuinely valued. Internal communicators can coach leaders, normalise sharing failures and lessons learnt, and ensure frontline and remote workers are reached through a considered channel mix and strong manager support.

In a world of continuous change, that is not a peripheral contribution. It is one of the most valuable things we can do.

Expert's view



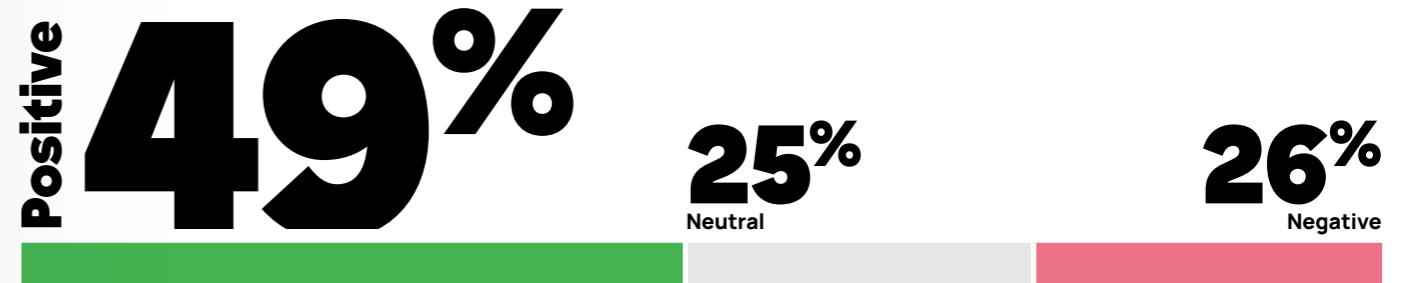
Kate Waters

Internal Communication and Culture Consultant

Organisations need to create an environment where employees feel able to navigate change. That means they feel psychologically safe to speak up, and that when they do, leaders are actively listening. We can't just focus on communicating individual change programmes anymore, we need to create an entire culture where change is a part of the norm – where people don't see change as a threat, because they trust leaders and feel safe to try new ways of working."

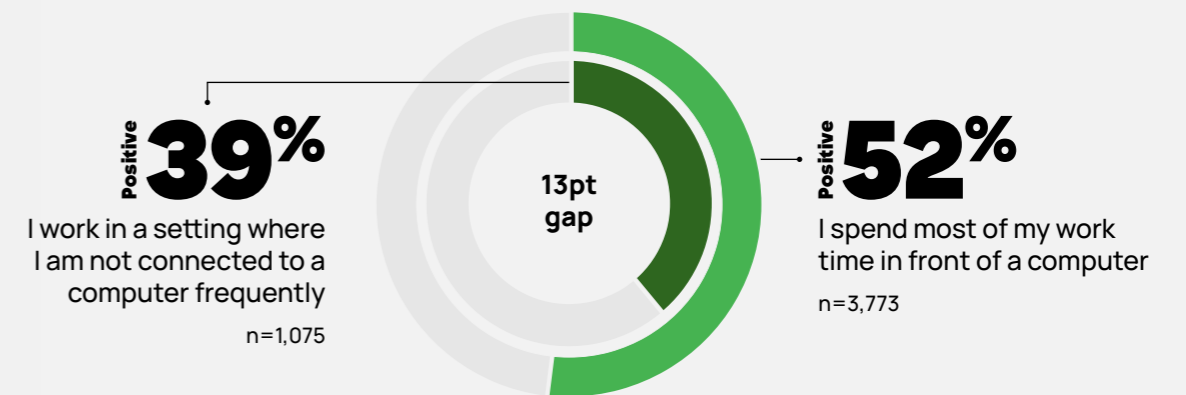
Where I work, people can share their opinion without fear of negative consequence

n=4,848



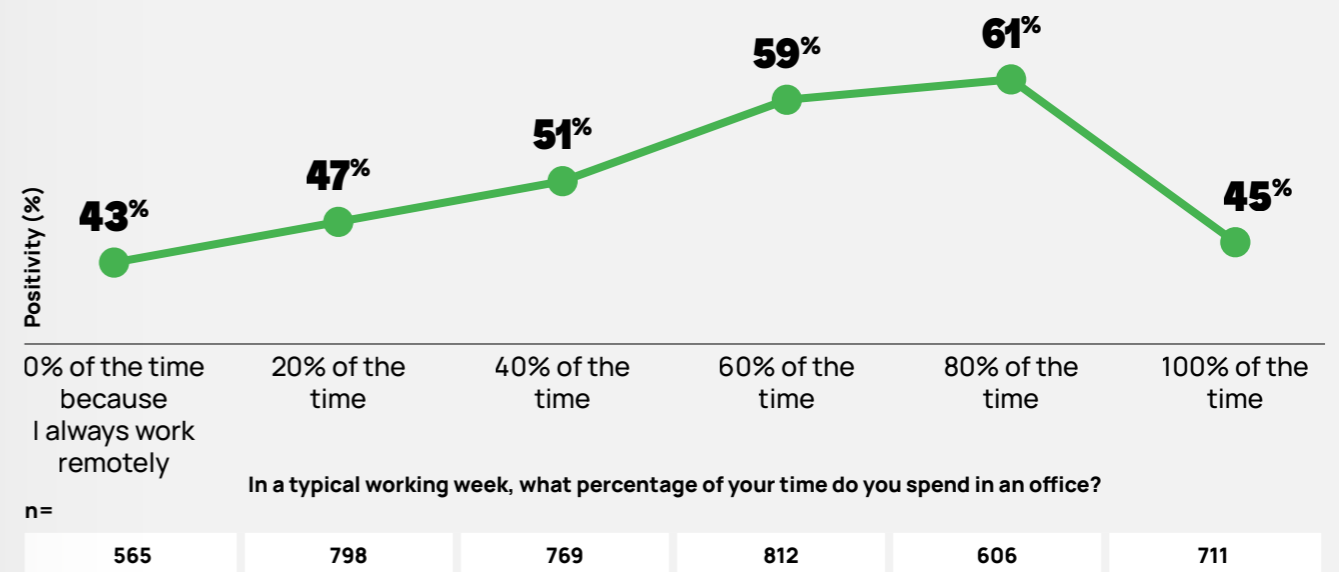
By digital connection

Where I work, people can share their opinion without fear of negative consequence



By time spent in office

Where I work, people can share their opinion without fear of negative consequence



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18–75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".



Section two

The confidence equation

What drives confidence in the future?

What the data says

Just under three in five employees agree they are confident about the future of their organisation. One in five actively disagree.

Our analysis shows that the strongest driver of confidence is that work processes allow employees to work efficiently, something which only half of UK employees say is true about their organisation. Believing that communication is open and honest is the second-strongest driver, which 56% of employees experience.

Being clear about the organisation's strategy and business priorities is the next most important driver; just under two thirds of UK employees agree their organisation has done this. Believing that your employer is using AI to solve the right problems in your organisation is next most important, something which only 35% of people believe.

The fifth strongest driver is that people agree they are connected to people at work beyond their immediate team, which 64% of UK employees agree is true for them.

What we think

When employees feel leadership is being transparent, when they understand the direction and the reasoning behind it, and when they feel connected to others, confidence follows. When those things are absent, neutrality and doubt fill the space.

Building confidence is an area that organisations can struggle with and it rarely gets the strategic attention it deserves. Work processes emerge as the top driver of confidence, yet only half of employees agree processes allow them to work efficiently. Internal communication cannot fix broken systems, but we can surface employee experience issues, bring them to the right stakeholders across the business and work collaboratively to help find solutions.

And nowhere is honest, strategic communication more critical right now than AI. Shaping a clear and credible narrative about how AI will or will not be integrated is one of the defining communication challenges of our time. Internal communication professionals have a critical role to play in shaping that narrative, working with stakeholders across the business to ensure it is honest, understood and aligned to the organisation's direction of travel.

Expert's view



Rebecca Crosby

Innovation and Thought Leadership Director, Ipsos Karian and Box

Communicators can't fix broken processes, but they can't ignore them either. Employees are judging the future based on how work feels today. The role of internal communication is to make that reality visible, push for honesty, and create a clear narrative about where the organisation is heading, particularly on issues like AI where confidence is still forming."

Just under three in five employees feel confident about the future of their organisation

n=4,869

I feel confident about the future of my organisation



Top five drivers of confidence in the future

n=3,436

Strong driver ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Strongest driver

i Percentages show the proportion of respondents who agree with these statements.

I am connected to people at work beyond my immediate team
64%

The work processes in my organisation allow employees to work efficiently
50%

I believe we're using AI to solve the right problems in my organisation
35%

I feel confident about the future of my organisation

I believe communication from my employer is open and honest
56%

My employer has been clear on the organisation's strategy and business priorities (for example, the long-term plans and operational goals)
64%

Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Leaders are overestimating how well the strategy has been communicated

What the data says

The proportion of employees who agree their organisation has been clear on its strategy and business priorities has declined 5pts over the last two years.

Employees are also less likely to know how they can personally contribute to the strategy than in 2024, currently sitting at 62%.

Clarity about how the organisation is performing against its strategy and business priorities is down 4pts compared to last year.

Employees' levels of belief that their organisation's strategy is the right one for success is now 52%, down 6pts compared to 2025.

Positivity varies significantly by seniority. Senior leaders are consistently more likely to agree, with at least 8 in 10 employees at this level being positive to each question. The proportion agreeing is lower for middle managers and first-line managers and is lowest for those who are not managers. Just 44% of those not in a management role believe their organisation's strategy is the right one for success.

What we think

Declines in positivity around strategy are a signal the profession cannot afford to ignore. Clarity, belief and understanding are all moving in the wrong direction. These are not isolated findings. They represent a widening gap between what leaders know and what employees experience.

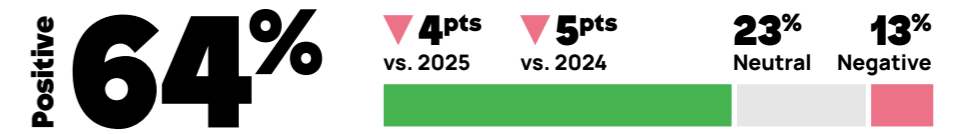
The seniority data makes that gap impossible to overlook. Employees furthest from the leadership conversation are the least informed, the least convinced and the most dependent on their managers to make strategy meaningful. Internal communication professionals have a responsibility to ensure leaders are not assuming the job is done when fewer than three in five employees know what the plan is, how it is going or what role they play in it.

That is where our role becomes critical and specific. Not just in crafting the strategic narrative but in equipping leaders and managers to understand it deeply enough to articulate it with conviction, answer questions with clarity and connect it directly to the work their teams do every day. Strategy does not land through a single message. It lands through consistent, informed conversations at every level of the organisation.

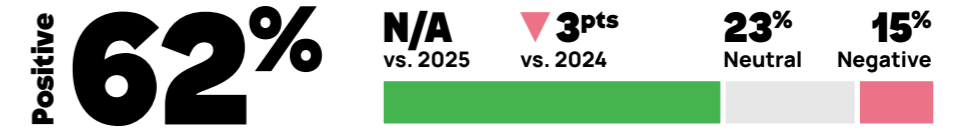
Simplicity is not a compromise. It is the strategy. Employees need a clear picture of where the organisation is heading, an honest account of progress and a direct line between that future vision and their work today. Building that story block by block, keeping leaders informed and managers confident, is what turns strategy from something leadership owns into something every employee understands and believes in.

Strategy clarity and belief have declined

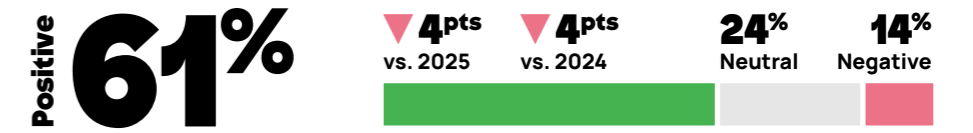
My employer has been clear on the organisation's strategy and business priorities (for example, the long-term plans and operational goals)
n=5,000



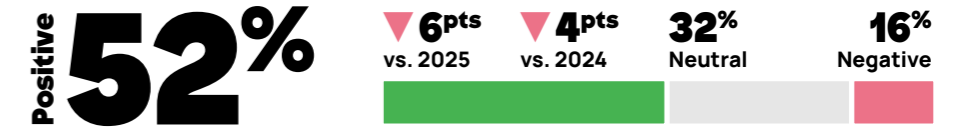
I know how I can personally contribute to achieving the organisation's strategy and business priorities
n=4,852



My employer has been clear on how the organisation is performing against its strategy and business priorities
n=4,836



I believe our organisation's strategy is the right one for success
n=5,000



By management level

■ I am a senior leader of my organisation ■ I manage people who lead teams
■ I manage a team or individual ■ No, I am not a manager

Statement	Senior leader	Lead teams	Manage team	No manager	n=
My employer has been clear on the organisation's strategy and business priorities (for example, the long-term plans and operational goals)	87%	72%	69%	57%	338, 374, 1,418, 2,870
I know how I can personally contribute to achieving the organisation's strategy and business priorities	87%	75%	69%	54%	335, 373, 1,395, 2,749
My employer has been clear on how the organisation is performing against its strategy and business priorities	80%	68%	68%	54%	337, 368, 1,396, 2,735
I believe our organisation's strategy is the right one for success	80%	62%	57%	44%	338, 374, 1,418, 2,870

Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Majority don't believe their organisation is using AI to solve the right problems

What the data says

Just 35% of employees agree that AI is being used to solve the right problems in their organisation.

Less than one in three employees agree their employer has clearly communicated how they are expected to use AI as part of their job, down slightly since last year. 36% agree that leaders have explained clearly how AI will be used in their organisation.

Across the three AI-related questions, positivity is lower among employees of organisations that operate solely in the UK - 14-15pts lower compared to employees of international and global organisations.

Senior leaders are far more likely to respond positively. Non-managers are the least positive, with just 27% agreeing leaders have been clear about how AI will be used, 23% agreeing their employer has been clear about how they are expected to use AI as a part of their job, and 25% saying they believe AI is being used to solve the right problems in their organisation.

What we think

AI is placing internal communication under new pressures. For many organisations, investment is being made while implementation is still evolving and the implications for people, roles and processes are still being worked through.

This creates an ethical dilemma. We're being asked to build confidence in something organisations are still learning. Communicating with unwarranted certainty risks credibility. Too much uncertainty risks undermining the investment. Navigating that tension honestly, whilst bringing polarised views into a more considered consensus, is one of the most complex challenges the profession has faced.

Working out loud and being transparent is the foundation for confident adoption. We need to communicate the guardrails, support the upskilling that turns policy into practice and bring the employee perspective into governance conversations. Leaders need a reality check. They believe they have been clear when employees feel very differently. Managers need role-specific clarity to have confident conversations with their teams. Closing that gap is work that sits squarely with internal communication.

Expert's view

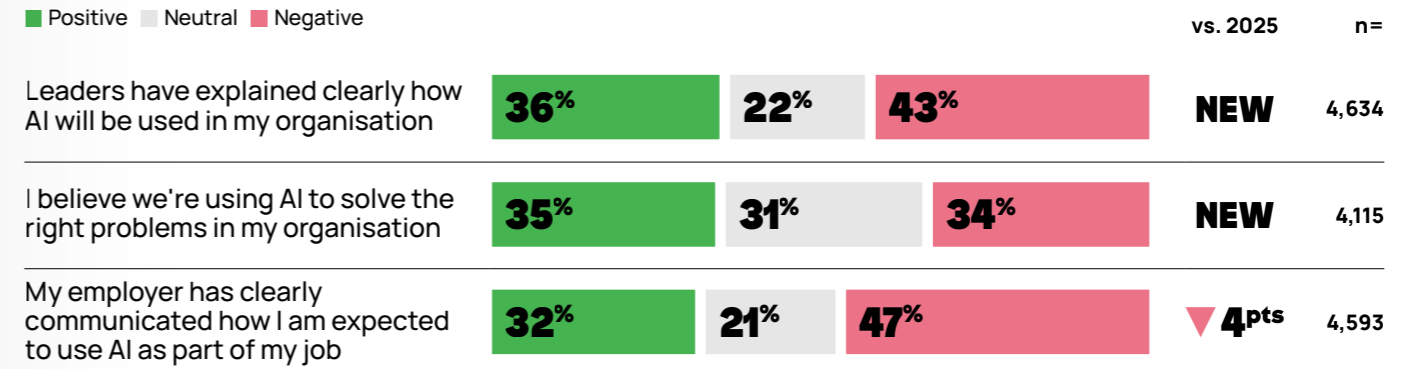


Jennifer Sproul

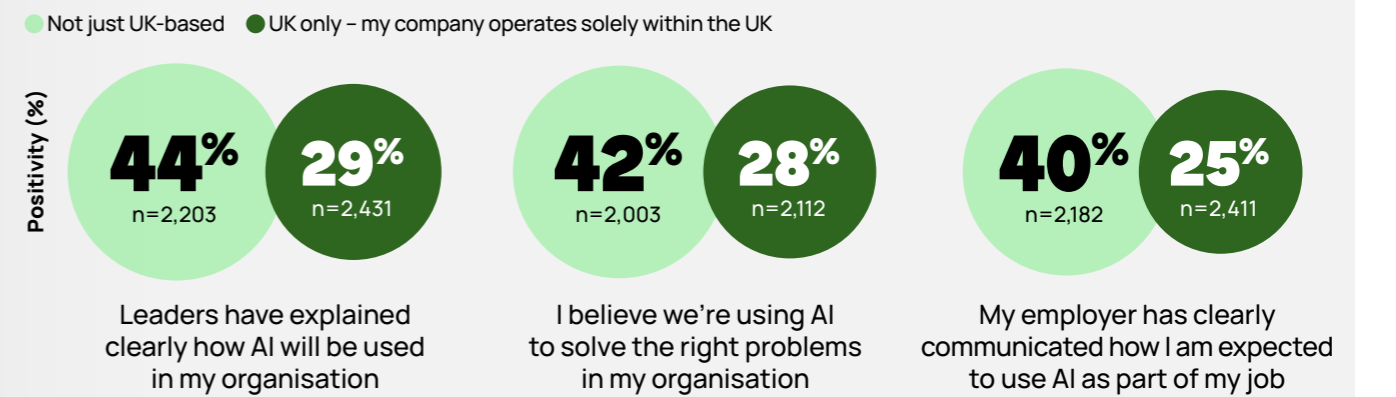
Chief Executive, Institute of Internal Communication

"I think some leaders have been so focused on not appearing to be left behind on AI, that they're ploughing head-long into surface-level engagement with it. They're talking about it a lot, encouraging employees to use it, rolling out prompt training, but haven't really wrestled with the bigger questions of how it should or could be transformative, in the right way, for their organisation."

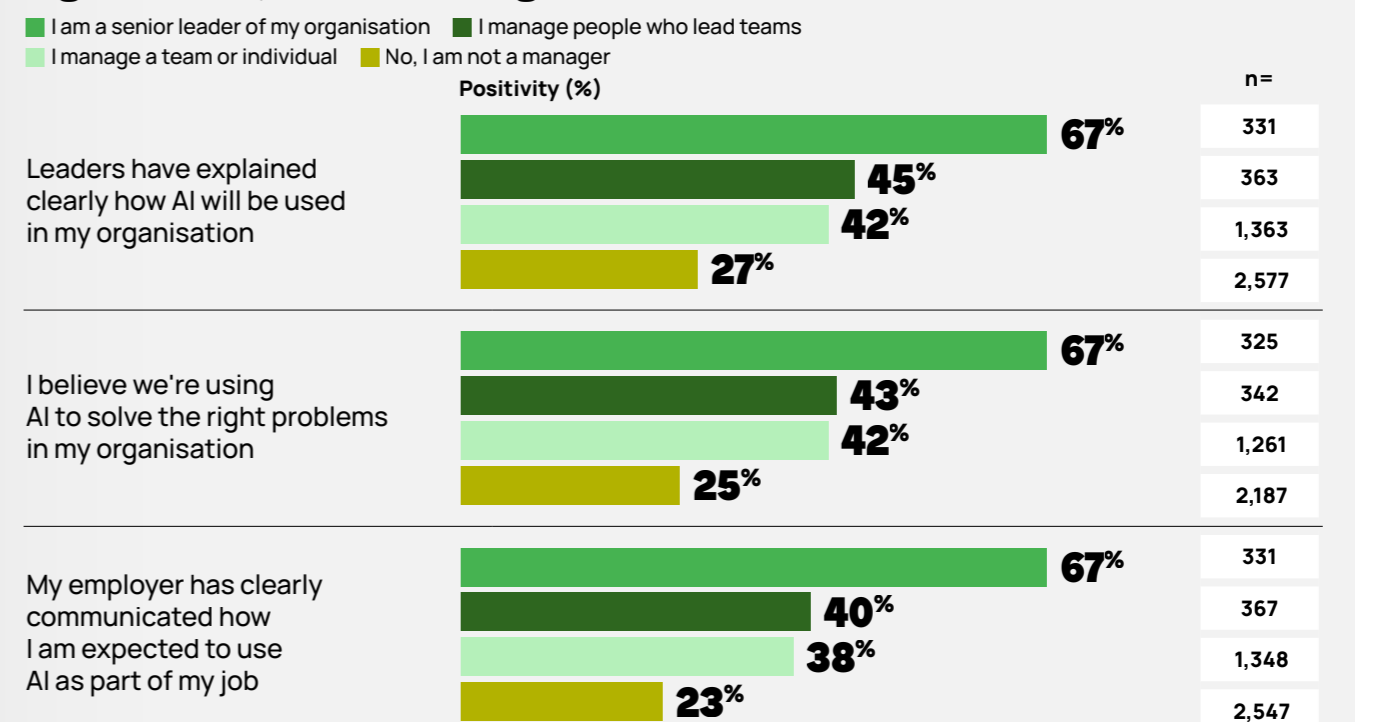
Less than a third agree their employer has clearly communicated how they are expected to use AI as part of their job



UK employees less clear on how AI will be used in their organisations and how they are expected to use it in their job



Senior leaders are clearest on how AI is to be used in their organisations, non-line managers least clear



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Connection matters and IC teams help to create it

What the data says

Overall, 64% of employees agree that they are connected to people at work beyond their immediate team.

Managers are more likely to agree with this statement, with 78% positivity, compared to 53% positivity for non-managers.

Those who work in an organisation with a dedicated internal communications team are more likely to feel connected than those who work in an organisation without one.

Employees who agree that they are connected to people beyond their team are more likely to recommend their employer as a great place to work.

What we think

In a world where relationships are more fractured and miscommunication can so easily take hold, the ability to help people feel genuinely connected to each other and to the organisation they work for has never mattered more.

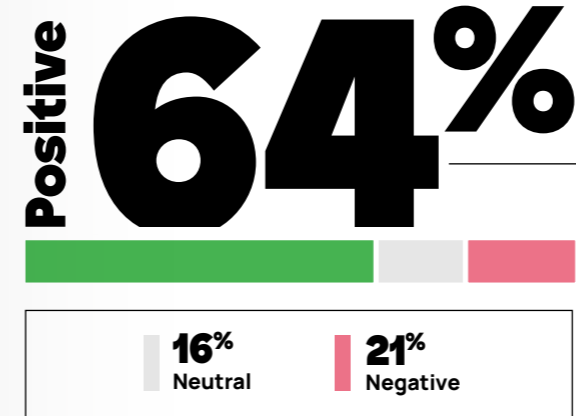
Internal communication professionals are uniquely placed to create those conditions. Not just through channels and content, but through the deliberate design of environments where natural conversation happens, relationships form and people develop a real sense of how their work connects to the wider whole.

Visibility and presence matter. So does role modelling. When leaders and managers are visible, accessible and genuinely curious about the people around them, connection follows. Through storytelling, events, employee networks and the deliberate creation of cross-organisational conversation, we give employees a window into areas of the organisation they would otherwise never see. We can develop programmes that embed those behaviours, create the moments that make connection possible and encourage managers to pass their broader organisational understanding on to their teams.

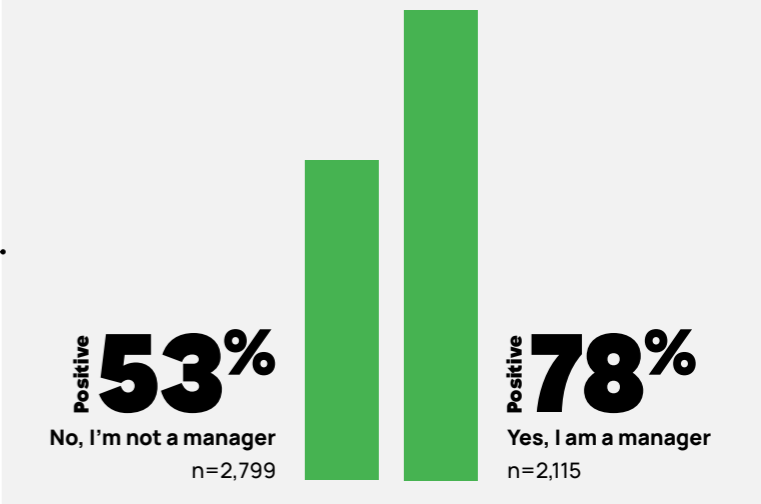
The impact is tangible. Dedicated internal communication teams have a measurable influence on how connected employees feel. That is not a soft outcome. It is a strategic one.

One in five don't feel connected to people outside of their immediate team n=4,914

I am connected to people at work beyond my immediate team

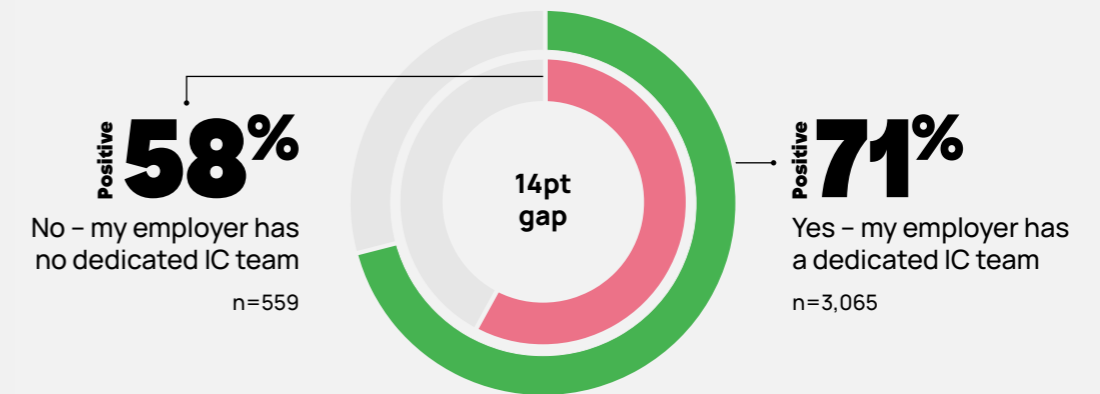


Managers are far more likely to feel connected beyond their immediate team



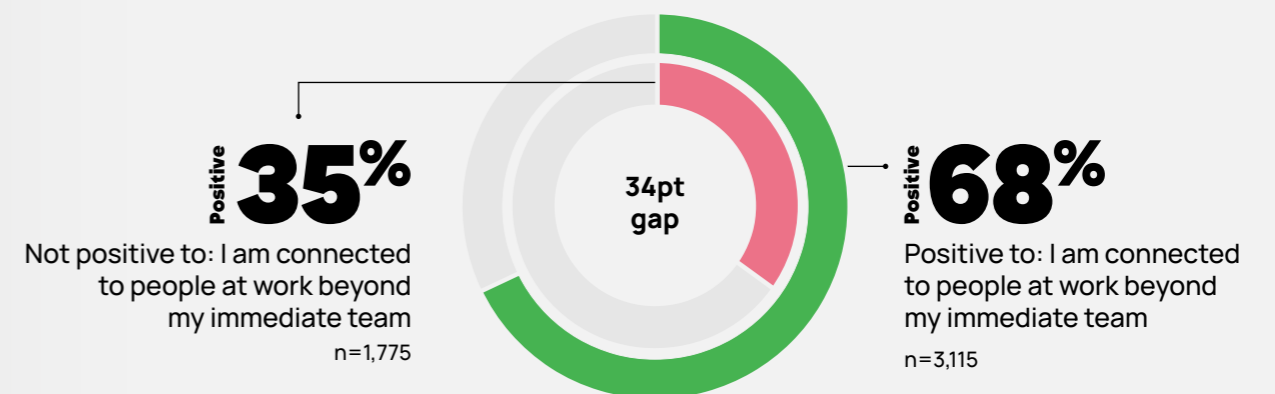
Employees in organisations with an internal communications team are more likely to feel connected

I am connected to people at work beyond my immediate team



Impact being connected has on advocacy

I would recommend my employer as a great place to work



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".



Section three
Leaders,
managers
and a growing
trust gap

Only half of employees trust their leaders

What the data says

Our Trust Index has declined 7pts compared to last year and now sits at 58%. The Index reflects the average positivity to the three questions about trust in different levels of leader.

While employees' levels of trust in direct managers has declined by 3pts this year, trust in organisations' leadership teams and CEOs/most senior leaders has dropped by 9pts in that same timeframe. Just half of UK employees now agree they trust their leaders.

Trust in managers and leaders is highest for younger employees. Levels of trust in leadership teams and CEOs/most senior leaders particularly declines sharply for employees over the age of 34.

The kind of role an employee has also impacts levels of trust. Those who work in a setting where they are not connected to a computer frequently are less likely to trust their leaders. The difference is particularly pronounced when it comes to trusting the organisation's most senior individual – just 35% of those in roles where they aren't frequently on a computer agree they trust the CEO or most senior leader.

What we think

It is tough to be a leader today. The data paints a picture of increasing change and uncertainty, and not all leaders will navigate it without losing the confidence of their people.

Our Trust Issue in 2024 revealed four key drivers of trust in CEOs: open and honest communication, belief the organisation operates in the best interests of employees, belief in the strategy, and leaders understanding the challenges employees face.

As restructures and redundancies increase, employees are less likely to feel their interests are protected or that leaders truly understand what they are living through. Strategies become harder to achieve or need to evolve, which can erode faith in leadership ability.

Open and honest communication is a powerful lever for preserving trust, but this alone is not enough. Leaders need visibility, character and capability. We can play a critical role in helping leaders develop, coaching them to show up with authenticity, to be seen and understood.

We must help leaders take the more courageous path and be frank with people, even when the message is hard. Or they risk losing trust, which is far harder to rebuild than it is to protect.

Expert's view



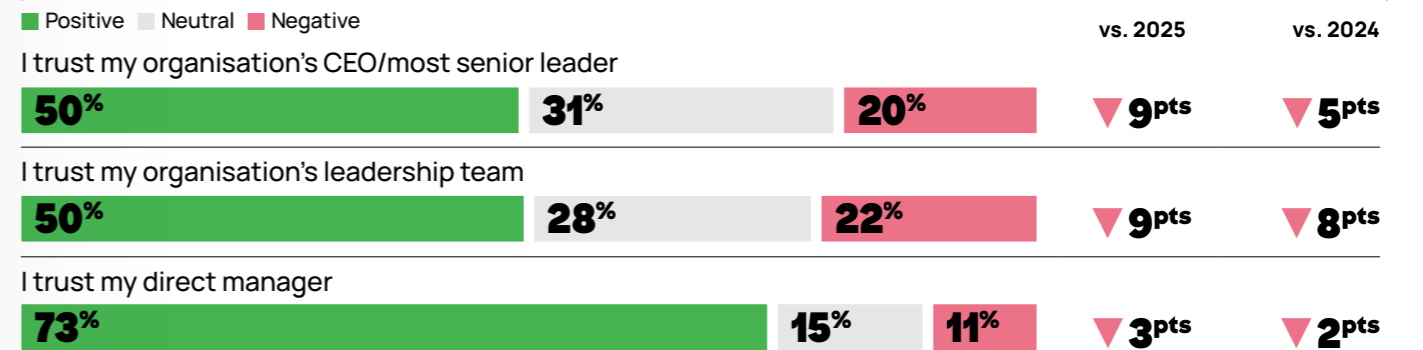
Alli Cary
Head of Internal & External Communication, Voyage Care

Whatever is happening within an organisation, you can't overestimate the impact of leaders being visible, really listening to people and demonstrating that they understand their challenges and points of view. Building trust takes time and consistency, so it won't happen overnight, but it won't ever happen if leaders aren't doing these things. As communicators, our role is to influence and support leaders to do this well, even when it doesn't come naturally to them."

58% Trust Index

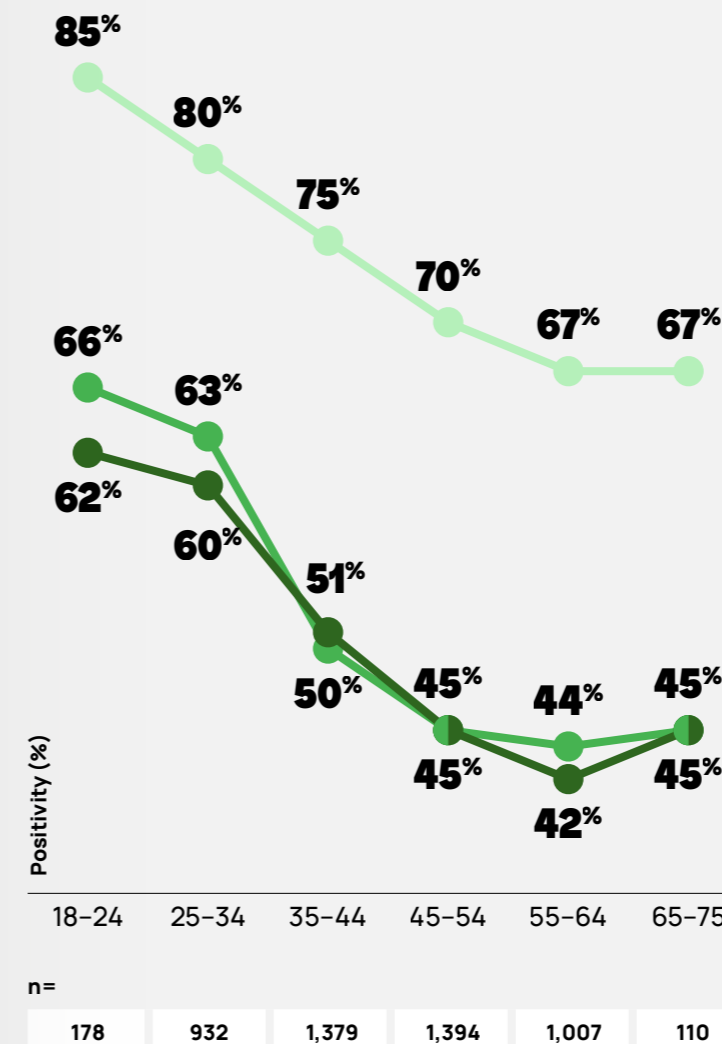
i Trust Index is an average of positivity to the three trust-focused questions below.

▼ 7pts vs. 2025 ▼ 5pts vs. 2024 n=5,000



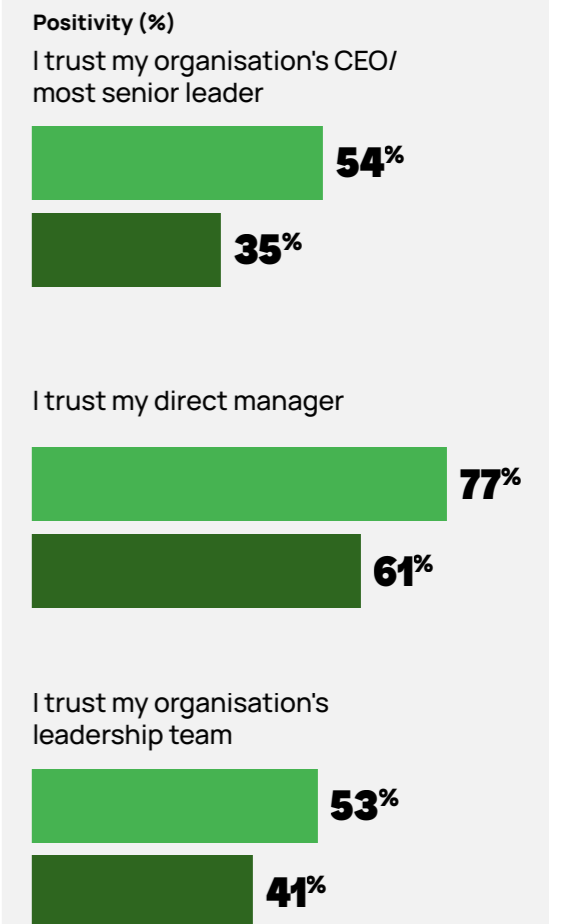
By age

- I trust my direct manager
- I trust my organisation's leadership team
- I trust my organisation's CEO/most senior leader



By digital connection

- I spend most of my work time in front of a computer (n=3,873)
- I work in a setting where I am not connected to a computer frequently (for example in a store, distribution or logistics role) (n=1,127)



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Town halls growing in popularity

What the data says

Email is the most preferred channel for employees to hear from their CEO or most senior leader. For hearing from departmental leaders/senior managers, most employees prefer face-to-face interactions such as briefings or town halls - this has risen 11pts since 2023.

Preference for hearing from CEOs/most senior leaders through virtual briefings or town halls has also risen significantly in this time.

Fewer employees want to hear from their departmental leaders/senior managers through the intranet, pre-recorded video, internal social media and external media compared to 2023.

What we think

While the CEO has a vital role to play in visible leadership from the top, employees are specifically seeking more face-to-face interaction with the leaders closest to their part of the organisation.

Meeting that expectation requires more than planning the right channel. It requires a deep understanding of the leaders we work with.

Our role is to help leaders understand which approach is needed based on the subject matter, their audience and their own communication style and capability. Every leader is different. Their confidence, their appetite for visibility and their understanding of what good communication delivers will all vary. We need to understand what drives them and how to make the case for approaches that will have the greatest impact, whether that means leading with data or connecting communication outcomes to the metrics a leader cares most about.

The negotiating and influencing skills of internal communication professionals are as important as the craft skills. Knowing how to bring a leader with you and make the case with clarity and evidence is what separates a trusted adviser from an order taker.

Expert's view



Heather Armond

Head of Internal Communications, Allianz Commercial

In times of change, people want to hear from, and speak to, those who are closest to them and who they trust. The logistical challenges of getting leaders in front of employees can be significant, but this data shows just how essential it is. Communicators need to use every stat and tool at their disposal to ensure leaders see how integral their communication is to organisational success."

Comparing how employees want to see or hear from different levels of leader

n=5,000

vs. 2023 (pts)	...organisation's CEO or most senior leader?	How do you prefer to see or hear from your... (Select up to three) - Proportion (%)	...departmental leader / senior manager?	vs. 2023 (pts)
▼ 1	59%	Email	53%	▼ 2
▲ 2	29%	Face-to-face interactions such as briefings or Town Halls	58%	▲ 11
▲ 9	27%	Virtual interactions such as briefings or Town Halls	21%	▲ 2
▼ 1	21%	Our intranet	10%	▼ 8
▼ 3	14%	Pre-recorded video	4%	▼ 9
NEW	8%	Open door / listening sessions	16%	NEW
▲ 3	8%	I don't want to hear from them	5%	▲ 2
▼ 6	6%	Internal social media (such as Viva Engage)	4%	▼ 6
▼ 3	2%	External media e.g. newspapers, TV news and websites	1%	▼ 5
▼ 2	2%	External company social media channels (such as LinkedIn)	1%	▼ 2
▲ 1	1%	Other (please specify)	1%	▲ 1

Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Most managers say they spend 30 minutes or less a day on communicating

What the data says

More than half of managers typically spend 30 minutes or less communicating with their team each day - within that, 14% spend less than 15 minutes a day, and 39% spend between 15 and 30 minutes. Spending less than 15 minutes a day is more prevalent among first-line managers than among more senior managers.

Three in ten managers spend between 30 and 60 minutes a day, and 16% spend over an hour a day.

Managers who spend most of their time working on a computer tend to dedicate more time to communicating with their team(s) than those who are in roles where they're not regularly accessing a computer. Around one in four of 'disconnected' managers spend less than 15 minutes a day communicating with their team, compared to just 13% of digitally connected managers.

What we think

Managers are the primary sense-making channel for most employees. The fact that the vast majority dedicate regular time to communicating with their teams gives internal communication professionals a powerful route to reach people with the information that matters most, shaped and contextualised for the realities of their roles.

But that reach is not uniform. Employees in frontline roles, not regularly connected to a computer, remain harder to reach through conventional approaches. Where information travels through word of mouth rather than planned communication, accuracy suffers, rumour fills the gap and trust erodes at precisely the moments it matters most.

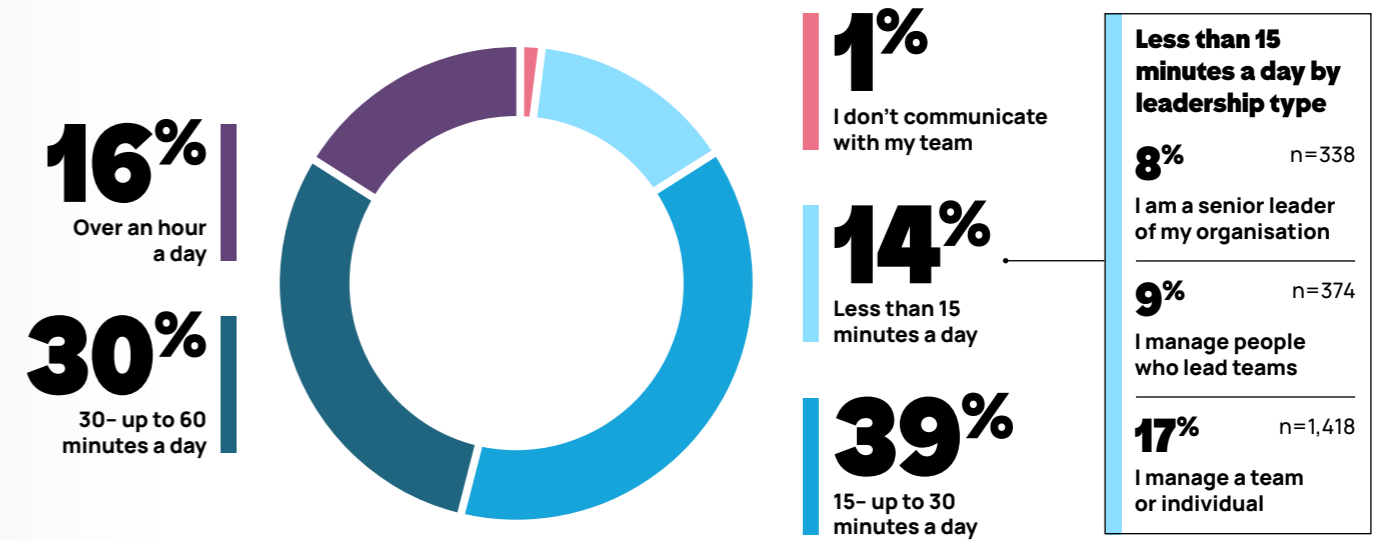
Internal communication professionals need to be connected into the reality of working life for all their audiences, not just those most visible or most accessible. Working with local leaders to understand their area, co-design communication solutions that meet local needs alongside organisation-wide ones, and build the relationships that make sustainable implementation possible is where the difference is made.

Reaching everyone is not a logistics challenge. It is a professional responsibility.

How much time do you typically dedicate to communicating with your team(s) in any given week?

n=2,130

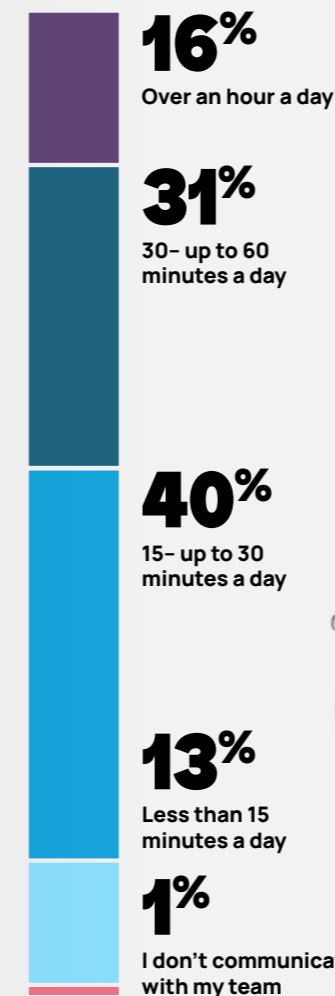
(This may include time to prepare, team meetings and/or 1-2-1s) - asked to managers only



By digital connection

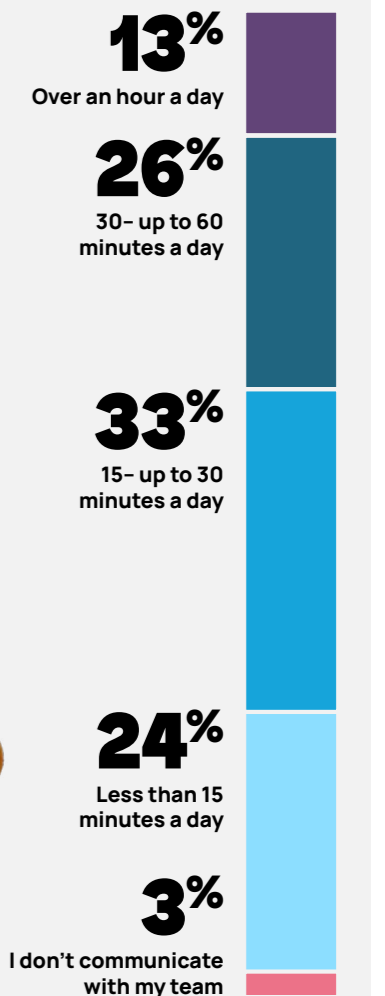
I spend most of my work time in front of a computer

n=1,908



I work in a setting where I am not connected to a computer frequently

n=222



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Most managers are supported by emails and briefings

What the data says

More than three quarters of managers agree that they feel equipped to lead a conversation with their team about what's happening across their business, this is down 4pts versus last year.

The most common forms of support provided to managers are ad hoc email briefings, regular briefing calls and regular email briefings.

Positivity about feeling equipped is highest among those who are given dedicated time to prepare for team communication, those who are given training in communication, as well as those who are given other support that didn't feature in our list of options.

The 14% of managers who receive no support feel the least equipped.

What we think

The slight downward trend in feeling equipped may be a sign that managers are starting to need more support to fulfil their communication role. And that is a challenge internal communication professionals are uniquely placed to address.

The data is clear that managers who receive any kind of support feel far more equipped than those who do not. The method matters less than the commitment to providing it. But dedicated communication time and training have the greatest impact, and that is where the profession should be pushing for investment.

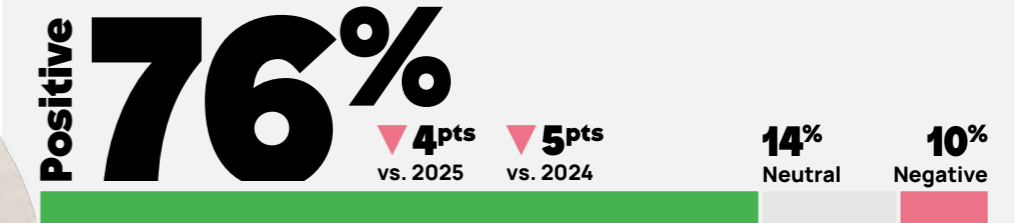
Our role extends beyond the immediate. By working within management development and future leader programmes, we can help build communication and conversation skills from the earliest stages of a leadership career. Giving managers the practical tools, the confidence and the contextual understanding to know what needs to be communicated, and why, is how organisations build a management population that enables rather than blocks delivery.

To design support that works, we need to understand the reality of our manager audiences, their schedules, their pressures and the expectations placed on them. That insight is what turns generic guidance into something managers will actually use.



I feel equipped to lead a conversation with my team(s) on what's happening across the business

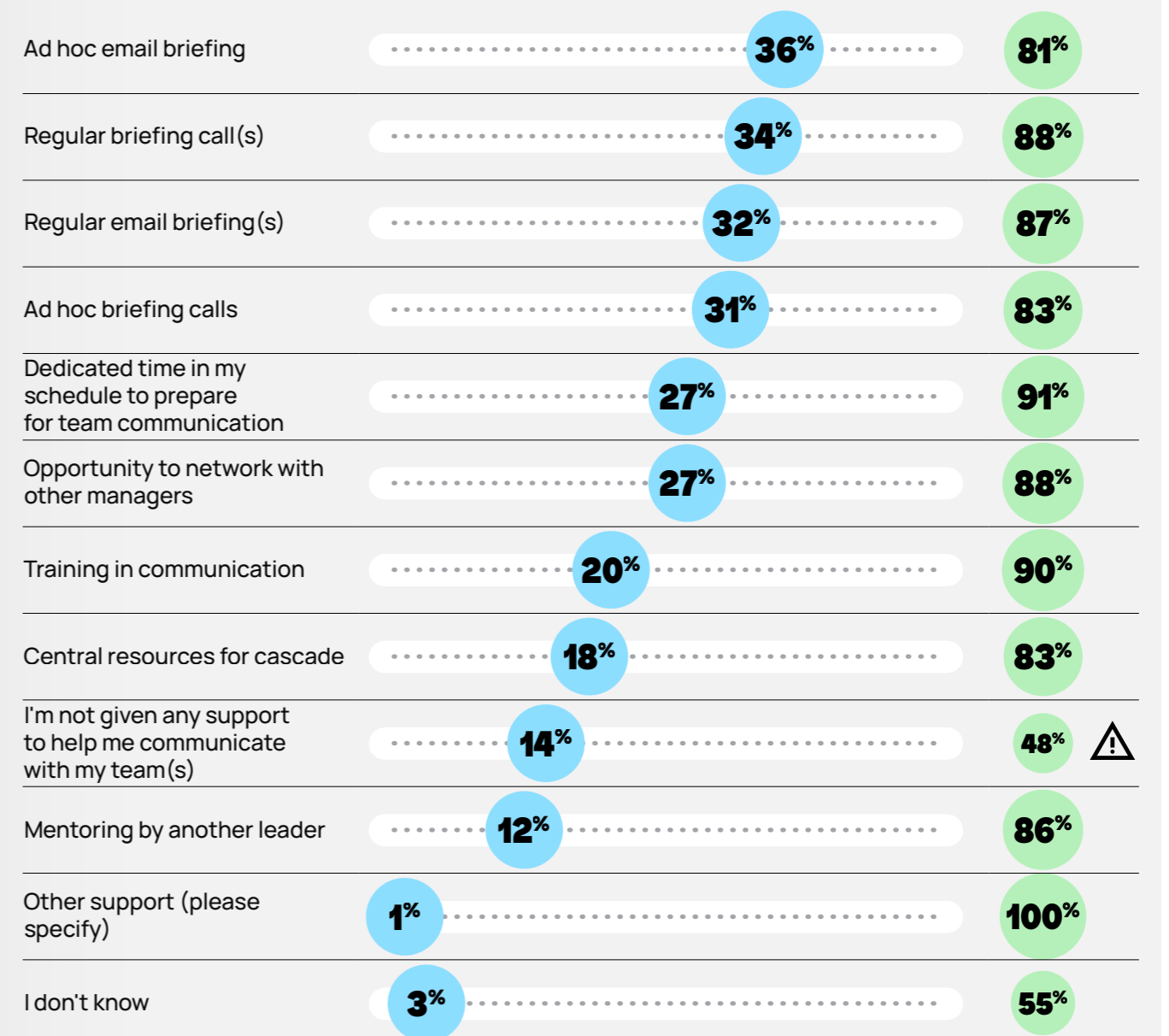
n=2,130



All forms of communication support have an impact on managers feeling equipped

n=2,130

● As a manager, what support, if any, are you given to help you communicate with your team(s)? - Proportion (%)
 ● I feel equipped to lead a conversation with my team(s) on what's happening across the business - Positivity (%)



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know". The questions on this page were only displayed for respondents with management responsibilities.

Managers adapting communication has a massive impact

What the data says

Just under two thirds of employees agree that their manager does a good job of adapting communication to their team's context.

Employees from smaller organisations are more likely to agree than those in larger organisations.

Those who work in a role where they are not connected to a computer frequently are less positive than those who spend most of their working time on a computer.

Employees whose managers adapt communications are much more positive about the relevance of communication. They are also more likely to give an 'excellent' rating for communication and to be advocates for their employer.

What we think

Managers consistently say they feel equipped to discuss what is happening in the business. This year we asked employees whether they agree.

The results are broadly positive, but the experience is not uniform, and once again it is those without regular computer access who are most likely to be left behind.

Reaching all employees is not an aspiration. It is the standard. Internal communication professionals need to understand the barriers that make some audiences harder to reach and design solutions that work for them, not just the majority.

Empowering managers to adapt communication for their teams whilst keeping the core message consistent is critical. Clear guidance, practical training and ongoing support give managers the confidence to get that balance right. Getting it right is worth it. Employee advocacy, perception of communication and perceived relevance all increase significantly when managers adapt communication effectively.

Balancing consistency with adaptation is a challenge for IC teams. Our role as communicators in helping employees connect with each other and the organisation is no longer a 'nice to have'. While consistent, high-level messaging provides a clear path on the vision, managers are an essential link in adapting messages so individuals, especially non-desk colleagues, know how they personally contribute and are motivated to play their part.

Think 'equip and empower'. Provide adaptable toolkits, core frameworks, and coaching, rather than rigid scripts. This ensures managers have the confidence to deliver compelling, team-specific messaging that drives pride, creates advocacy, and builds commitment."

Expert's view

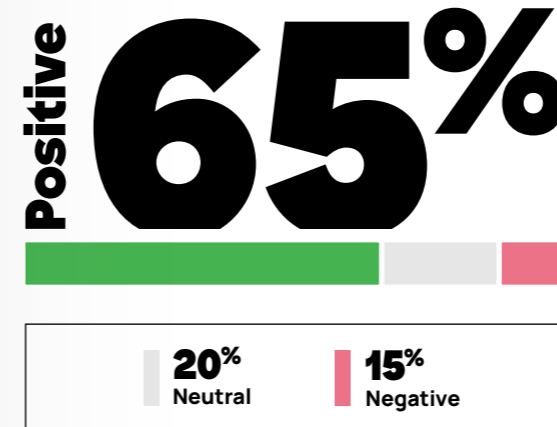


Joe Salmon
Director, Corporate Communications,
Iron Mountain

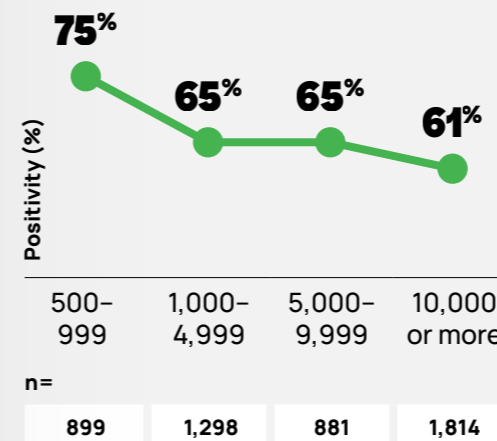
Almost two thirds agree their manager does a good job adapting communication

n=4,892

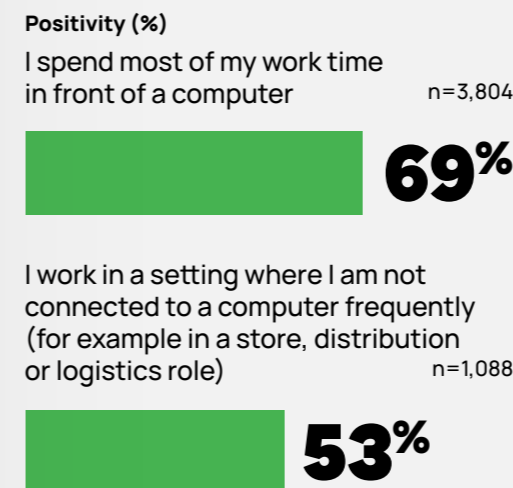
My manager does a good job at adapting communication to our team's context



By organisation size



By digital connection

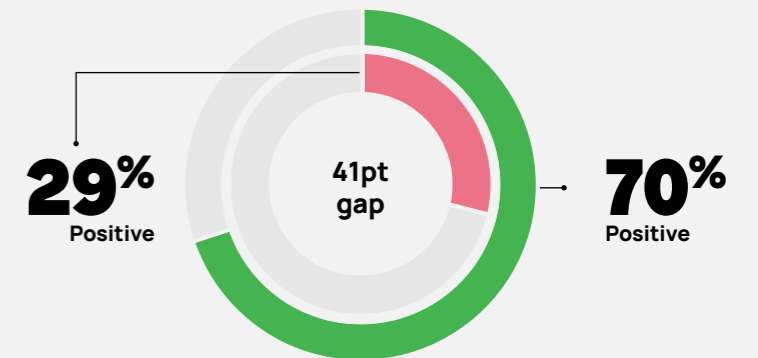


The impact of adapted communication from managers

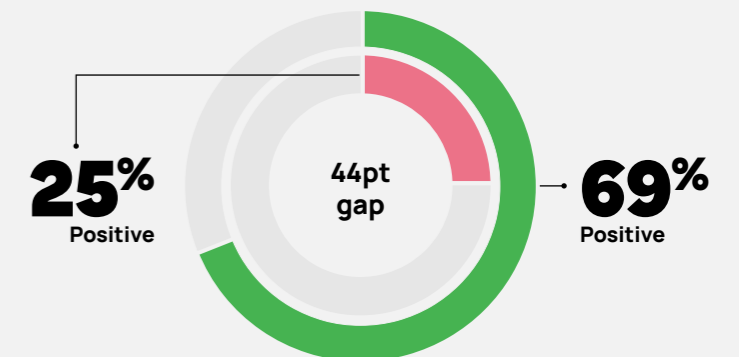
Not positive to: My manager does a good job at adapting communication to our team's context (n=1,696)

Positive to: My manager does a good job at adapting communication to our team's context (n=3,196)

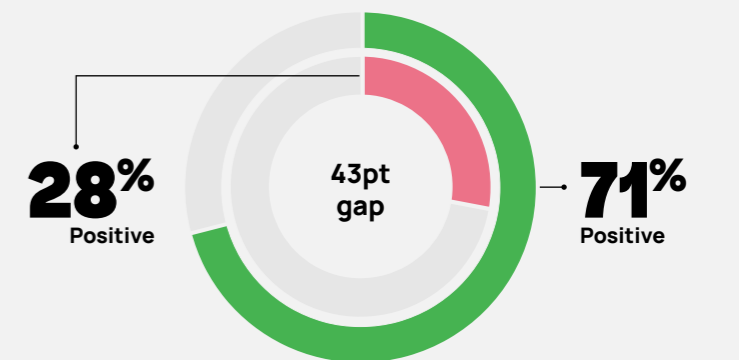
The communications I receive from my employer feel relevant to me



'Excellent' comms rating



I would recommend my employer as a great place to work

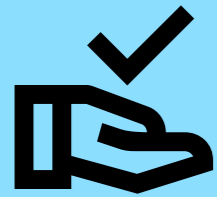


Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Introducing the UK manager personas

Through segmentation analysis, the Ipsos Karian and Box team have found six distinct subgroups across managers in the data set, based on their experiences and approach to communication.

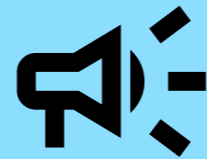
We have given each of the groups a descriptive name, having analysed their responses to the following questions:



As a manager, what support, if any, are you given to help you communicate with your team(s)?



How much time do you typically dedicate to communicating with your team(s) in any given week?



I feel equipped to lead a conversation with my team(s) on what's happening across the business

We've created illustrative quotes of the kinds of things we feel these personas would say, to help bring their perspectives to life. We've also looked at what characteristics managers in these groups tend to share, in terms of their employer, seniority, work environment, and demographic. You can learn more about them all on the next page.

Expert's view



Chris Broome

Data Science Lead,
Ipsos Karian and Box

As leaders and communicators have ever increasing demands on their time and attention, segmentation is becoming vital to creating bespoke, impactful communication and engagement strategies at pace. Through our analysis we have shown the value for organisations in tailoring their approach to support the distinct needs of their manager groups. Being able to tailor your messaging is important in building a culture of transparency and trust, but if your leaders do not feel able to deliver that message it may simply never get through."

Why segmentation analysis?

The manager segmentation analysis helps us understand one of the evergreen challenges for internal communicators: how we better can support managers to communicate with their teams.

You will likely recognise some of the personas from within your organisation and can start thinking about how you might approach line manager support differently through your internal communications function.

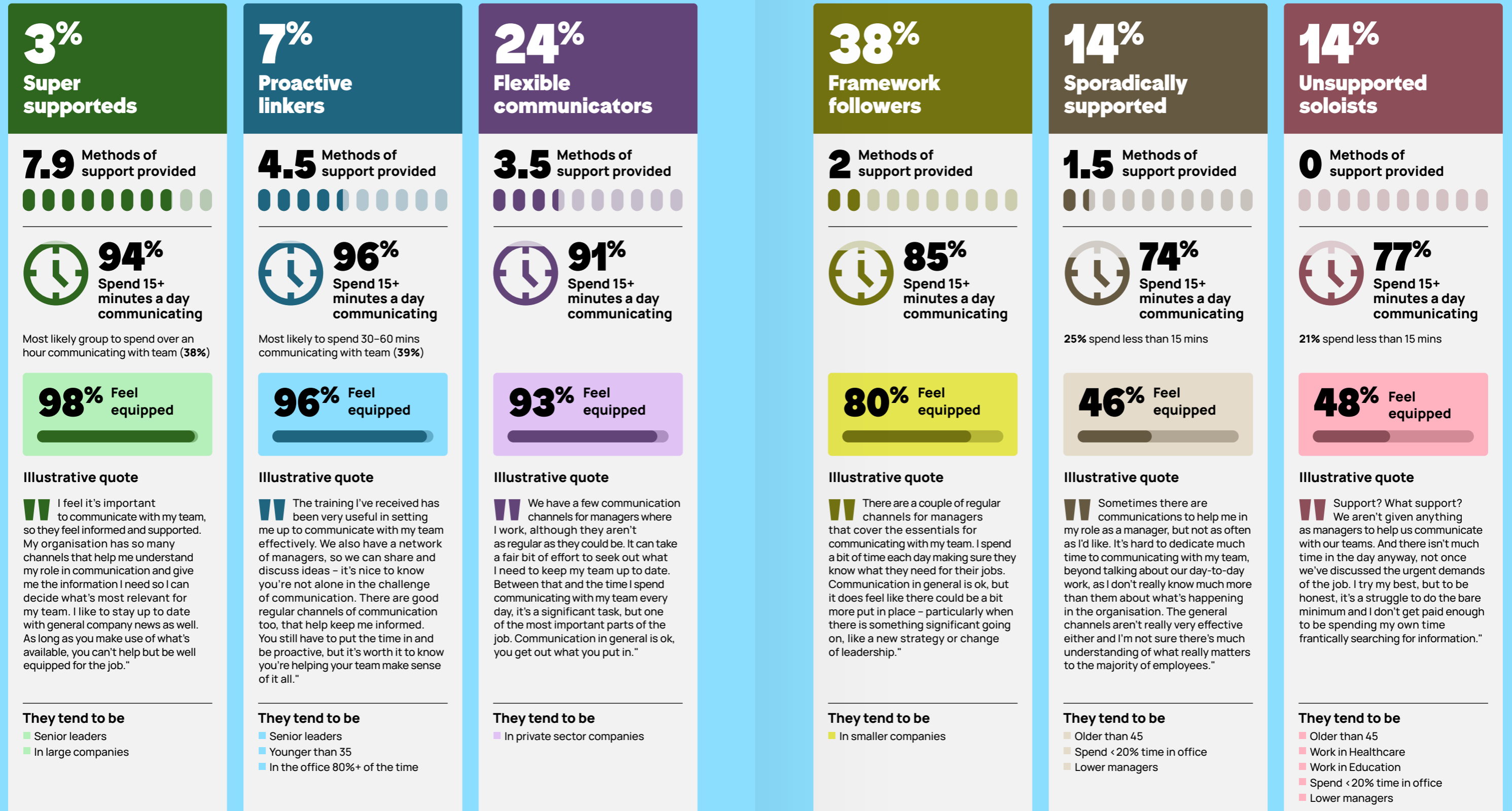
Are you looking to run segmentation analysis on your internal audiences? Here are our top tips:

- 1 Define clear objectives.** Make sure you know what challenges or goals you're looking to address before you start.
- 2 Focus on the why.** The best outcomes of audience personas come from focusing on what people in your organisation do, and why. It gives your team another strategic thinking tool and is a great way to show leaders how a new initiative might land.
- 3 Be clear on what you can (and can't!) do with the audience personas.** Demographic profiles can be helpful from a targeting perspective, but less interesting if you're looking to stress-test messaging.
- 4 Iterate and validate.** Behaviour and sentiment change over time, so make sure you update your personas to keep them current.



Meet the many managers of the UK workforce

n=2,117



Most likely group to spend over an hour communicating with team (38%)

Most likely to spend 30-60 mins communicating with team (39%)

Illustrative quote

W I feel it's important to communicate with my team, so they feel informed and supported. My organisation has so many channels that help me understand my role in communication and give me the information I need so I can decide what's most relevant for my team. I like to stay up to date with general company news as well. As long as you make use of what's available, you can't help but be well equipped for the job."

They tend to be

- Senior leaders
- In large companies

Illustrative quote

W The training I've received has been very useful in setting me up to communicate with my team effectively. We also have a network of managers, so we can share and discuss ideas - it's nice to know you're not alone in the challenge of communication. There are good regular channels of communication too, that help keep me informed. You still have to put the time in and be proactive, but it's worth it to know you're helping your team make sense of it all."

They tend to be

- Senior leaders
- Younger than 35
- In the office 80%+ of the time

Illustrative quote

W We have a few communication channels for managers where I work, although they aren't as regular as they could be. It can take a fair bit of effort to seek out what I need to keep my team up to date. Between that and the time I spend communicating with my team every day, it's a significant task, but one of the most important parts of the job. Communication in general is ok, you get out what you put in."

They tend to be

- In private sector companies

Illustrative quote

W There are a couple of regular channels for managers that cover the essentials for communicating with my team. I spend a bit of time each day making sure they know what they need for their jobs. Communication in general is ok, but it does feel like there could be a bit more put in place - particularly when there is something significant going on, like a new strategy or change of leadership."

They tend to be

- In smaller companies

Illustrative quote

W Sometimes there are communications to help me in my role as a manager, but not as often as I'd like. It's hard to dedicate much time to communicating with my team, beyond talking about our day-to-day work, as I don't really know much more than them about what's happening in the organisation. The general channels aren't really very effective either and I'm not sure there's much understanding of what really matters to the majority of employees."

They tend to be

- Older than 45
- Spend <20% time in office
- Lower managers

Illustrative quote

W Support? What support? We aren't given anything as managers to help us communicate with our teams. And there isn't much time in the day anyway, not once we've discussed the urgent demands of the job. I try my best, but to be honest, it's a struggle to do the bare minimum and I don't get paid enough to be spending my own time frantically searching for information."

They tend to be

- Older than 45
- Work in Healthcare
- Work in Education
- Spend <20% time in office
- Lower managers



Section four

**Is communication
landing and
resonating?**

Employees are very short on time but what they receive doesn't feel relevant

What the data says

Just over one in five employees say that they spend no or hardly any time reading updates from their employer each day. Our analysis found that employees who aren't frequently connected to a computer are more than twice as likely to choose this option.

Almost three in ten employees spend up to five minutes a day and a quarter spend 5-10 minutes. Less than three in ten spend more than 10 minutes a day engaging with communication.

Just 56% of employees agree that the communications they receive from their employer feel relevant to them. Employees who can opt in or out of communications based on their preferences have higher levels of positivity about relevance. More than three quarters of this group agree communications feel relevant, compared to just over half of those who aren't able to opt in or out.

What we think

In 2023, we revealed that most employees (68%) were spending up to 15 minutes a day digesting internal communications. This year, the picture has changed. We have tightened the answer options to better understand what up to 15 minutes means, and five minutes a day is now the most common response.

It is a finding that reflects a wider reality. Employees are navigating an unprecedented volume of information across their personal and professional lives. The competition for attention is intense, cognitive load is real and internal communication is operating in that environment, whether organisations acknowledge it or not.

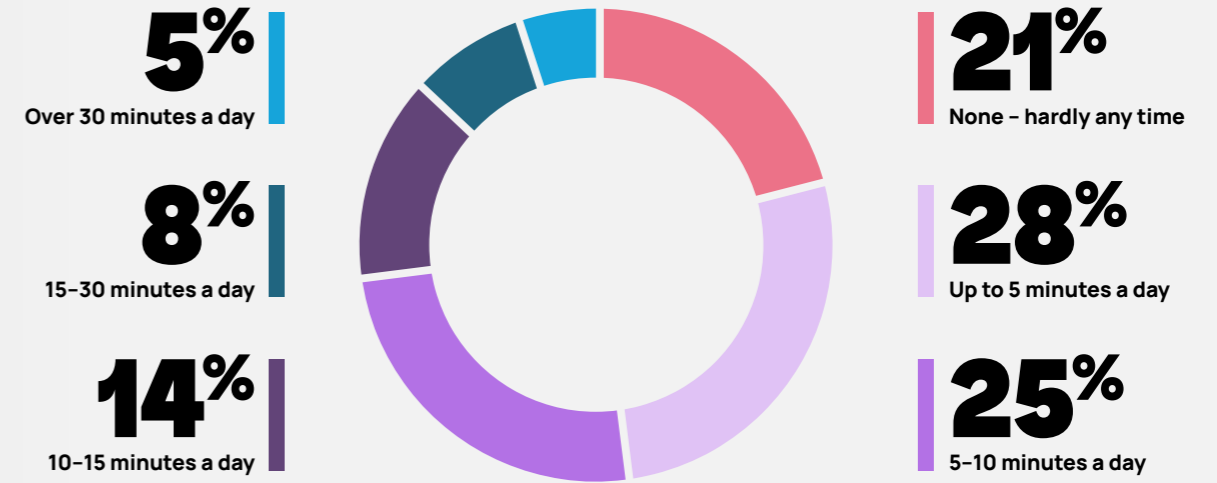
With such a small window of attention, relevance is everything. Yet for many employees, what they receive does not feel relevant to them. Whether the issue is that communication genuinely misses the mark or that its relevance is simply not made clear, the data cannot tell us. But the outcome is the same.

Personalisation is the response, but it is only achievable with quality data, genuine audience understanding and meaningful segmentation behind it. Without those foundations, it remains an aspiration rather than a practice.

The ability to opt in or out increases perceptions of relevance, but raises a more strategic question. Are employees curating what they receive, or simply reducing it? That question should be at the heart of every channel strategy, measurement framework and segmentation decision internal communication professionals make.

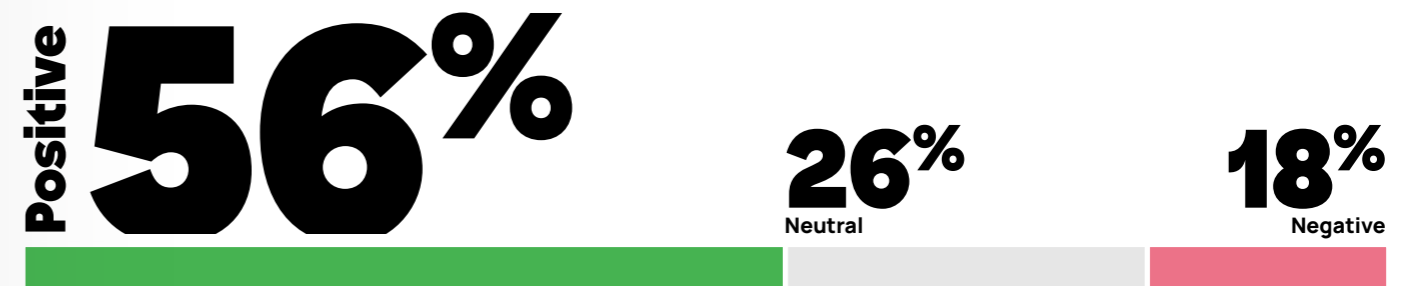
Majority of employees have less than ten minutes a day to engage n=5,000

Thinking about most work days, how much time do you spend reading / viewing news and updates from your employer about the organisation and its priorities?



More than one in four aren't sure if communication is relevant n=4,966

The communications I receive from my employer feel relevant to me



Ability to opt in or out of communication supports feeling of relevance n=5,000

Which of the following statements apply to how you personally can opt in or out of communications from your employer on specific topics (based on your preference)?

The communications I receive from my employer feel relevant to me - Positivity (%)

63%

I can't opt in or opt out of communications from my employer

51%

21%

I can opt in or opt out of communications from my employer

76%

16%

I don't know

46%

Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Don't forget to communicate the good news

What the data says

67% agree their organisation effectively communicates good news to employees. Only 46% say the same about bad news. Just over a quarter of people disagree that their organisation does a good job of sharing bad news, and 29% sit on the fence on this question.

Effective communication of good news has a higher impact on employee advocacy and rating of communication than effective communication of bad news.

Those who spend most of their work time in front of a computer are 14pts more likely to agree their organisation effectively communicates good news to employees than non-digitally connected employees.

For effective communication of bad news, the experience is almost the same for digitally connected and disconnected employees.

What we think

It is harder to communicate bad news than good news, and most professional communicators would recognise that instinctively.

What the data reveals is more surprising. Poor communication of good news has a greater impact on advocacy and perceptions of communication than mishandling bad news. Employees, it seems, have higher expectations that organisations will get the easier moments right.

But this is about more than communication craft. In a world where pressure, uncertainty and change are constant, people need to hear that things go well. Good news is not a distraction from reality. It is part of it. Sharing success, progress and moments of genuine achievement gives employees the hope, motivation and optimism they need to stay committed and to advocate for the organisations they work for. The psychological impact of that should not be underestimated.

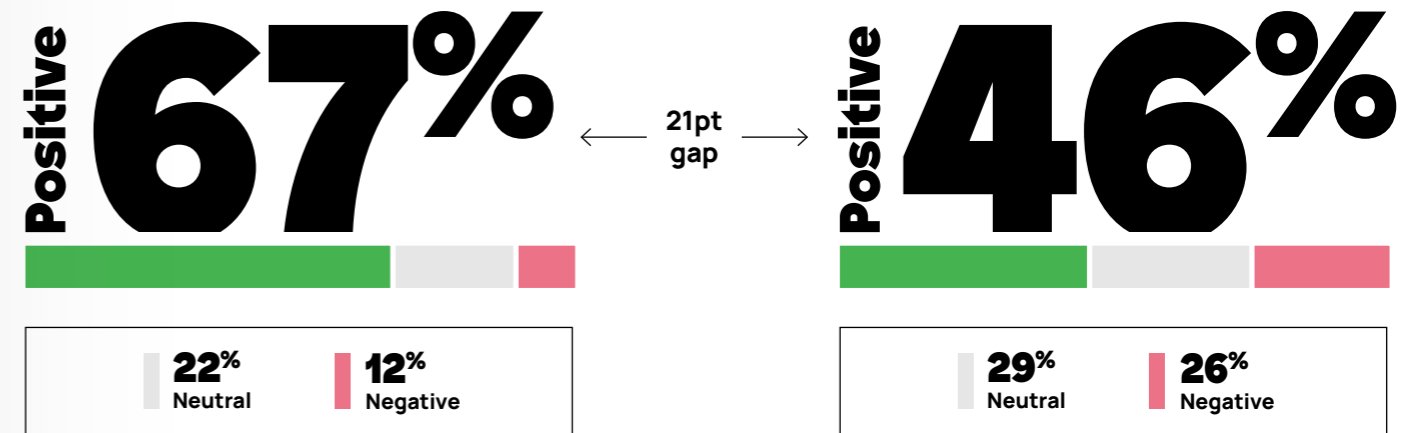
The opportunity is not being taken equally across all audiences. Employees without regular computer access are less likely to receive good news communication, and we consistently see lower levels of positivity and advocacy among these groups as a result. Whether the barrier is channel access, a frontline communication culture focused purely on operational practicalities, or both, the effect is the same.

Reaching every employee with communication that connects them to the wider picture, including what is working and why it matters, is not a nice to have. It is one of the most powerful things internal communication professionals can do.

Organisations are better at communicating good news

My organisation effectively communicates good news to employees
n=4,899

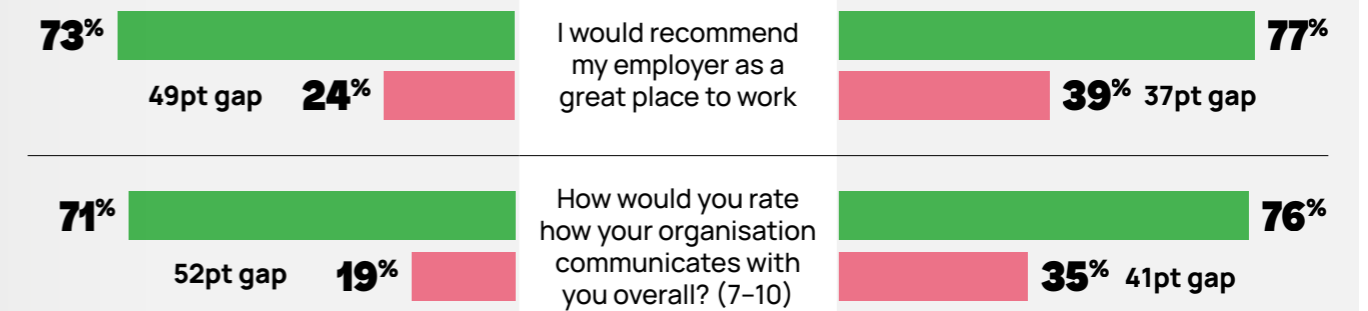
My organisation effectively communicates bad news to employees
n=4,815



Effective communication of good news has more impact on advocacy and rating of communications

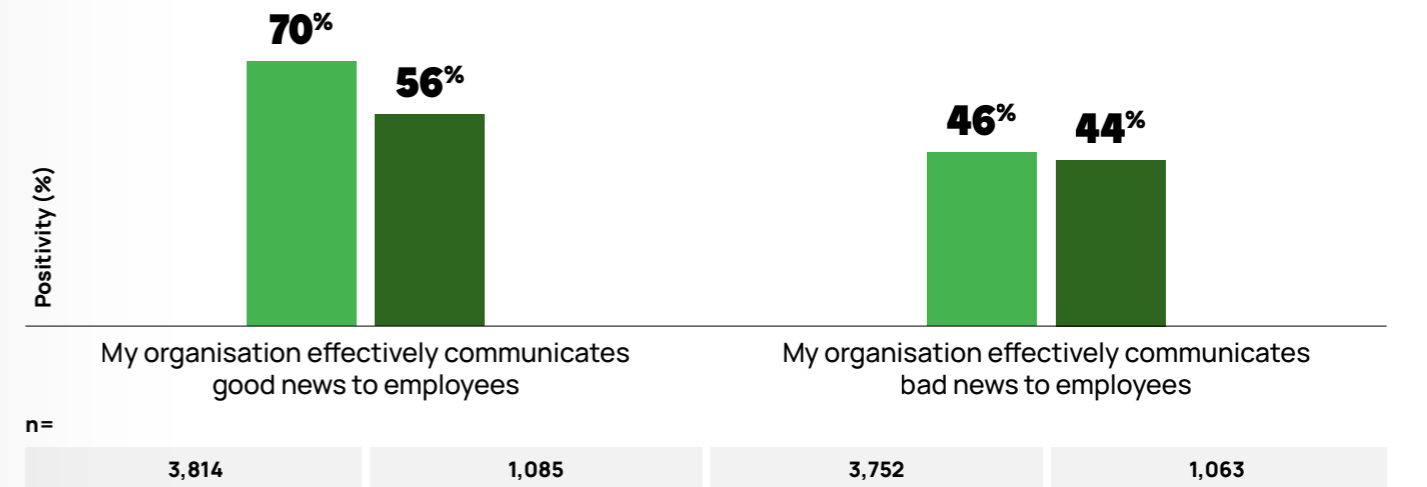
My organisation effectively communicates good news to employees:
Positive (n=3,271) Negative (n=1,628)

My organisation effectively communicates bad news to employees:
Positive (n=2,191) Negative (n=2,624)



Digitally connected employees more likely to agree employers communicate good news effectively

I spend most of my work time in front of a computer | I work in a setting where I am not connected to a computer frequently



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Two-way communication matters more when sharing bad news

What the data says

Whether the news shared is good or bad, three practices come out as most important: communicating as soon as possible, being clear about what's happening, and that the person delivering the message is well informed on the topic.

While overall the priorities are closely aligned regardless of whether news is good or bad, there are a couple of key differences.

Answering questions honestly and giving time to ask questions is more important when communicating bad news, and trust in the person delivering the news is slightly less important.

What we think

Employees surprised us. When we explored what they want from communication about good and bad news, we expected to find very different answers. The similarities were striking.

The principles of effective communication do not change based on the nature of the message. What employees need when receiving difficult news are the same things they value when the news is positive. If anything, when news is personally significant, those needs become more acute.

This reinforces something internal communication professionals know but organisations do not always act on. Conversation is where meaning is made and understanding takes hold. Not the cascade, not the all-employee email, not the town hall broadcast. The moments where employees can ask, challenge, clarify and be heard are the moments where communication actually lands.

Communication that creates space for genuine conversation does more than inform. It builds the understanding, the commitment and the conditions for people to act.

Expert's view



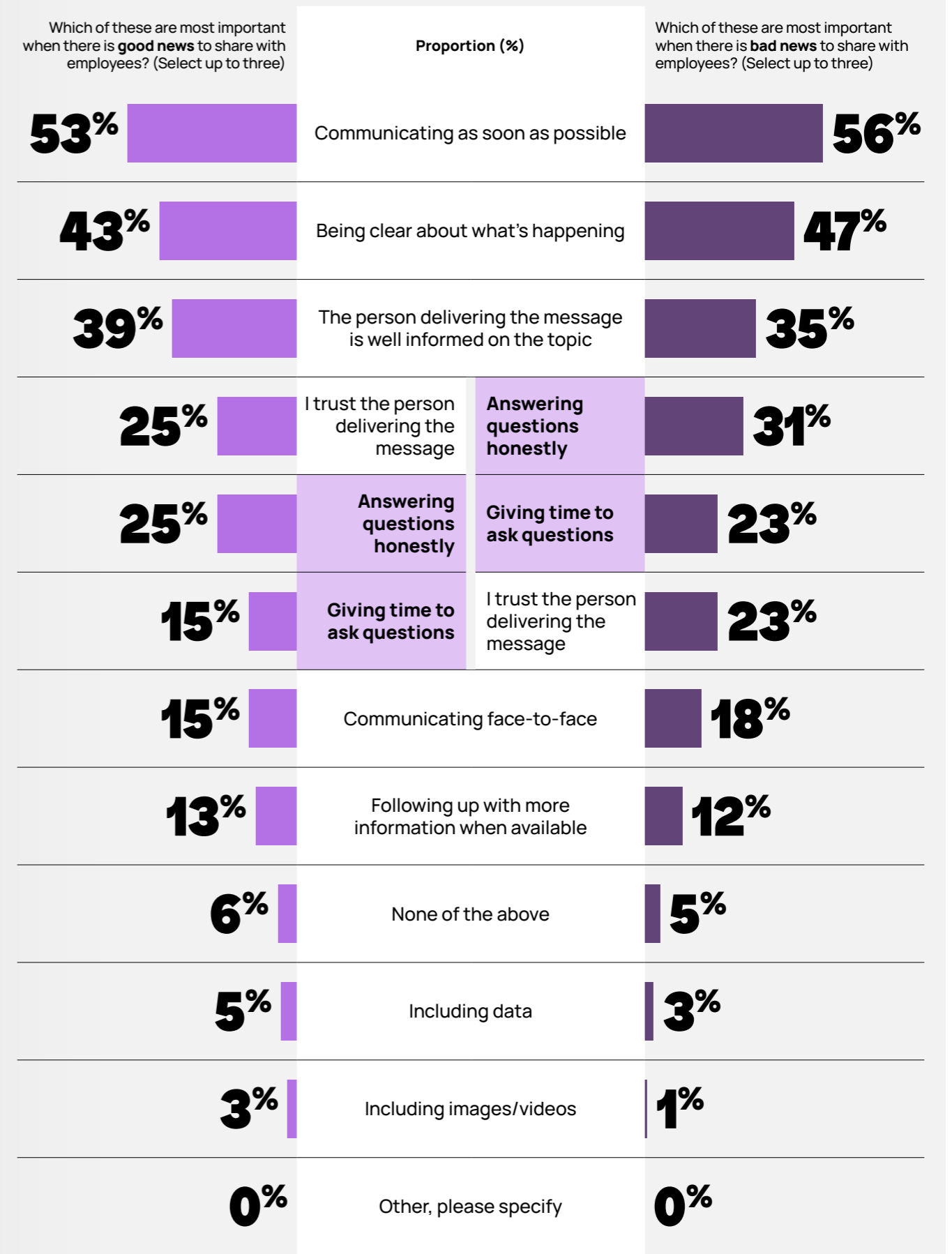
Shalini Gupta

Head of Internal Communications - UKIMEA, Arup

"I've seen difficult messages land best when leaders communicate with courage and empathy. They give plenty of space for questions, they answer honestly, and are aware of the impact on their people. No corporate speak, or stilted script-reading, it connects - anything else simply doesn't."

Similar requirements whether good or bad news is being shared

n=5,000



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

Those who feel represented are more likely to be advocates

What the data says

Just over four in ten employees agree that they see stories about people like them featured in internal communications. More than a third disagree and 23% neither agree nor disagree.

Positivity to this statement is higher among employees under the age of 35. The proportion of those agreeing declines as age increases – for those over 55 years old, just 30% agree.

Both advocacy and trust are much higher among those who agree that they see stories about people like them featured in internal communications.

What we think

Representation matters. With more than a third of employees saying they do not see people like them in communication, there is a clear professional responsibility to act.

When time is short and priorities compete, it is easy to default to the stories that come to us rather than seeking out the ones that do not. But there are always parts of the organisation whose people, perspectives and achievements go unrecognised. And when that happens consistently, whole groups of employees simply do not feel seen.

We need to build the networks and create the conditions that surface those stories. Employee support groups, communication champions, business partners, leaders and managers all have a role to play. Making it easy and rewarding for people to share, whether through peer recognition, internal communities or direct storytelling, extends our reach into parts of the organisation we would otherwise miss.

But the most important step is also the simplest. Being mindful, paying attention and thinking inclusively about every piece of communication we produce. Who is represented here? Whose story is missing? Asking those questions consistently is what shifts representation from an aspiration to a practice.

And it matters. Not just as a professional standard, but because of what it does for people. Feeling seen in the place where you spend most of your time makes a real difference to how people feel about working somewhere.

Less than half of employees see stories about people like them

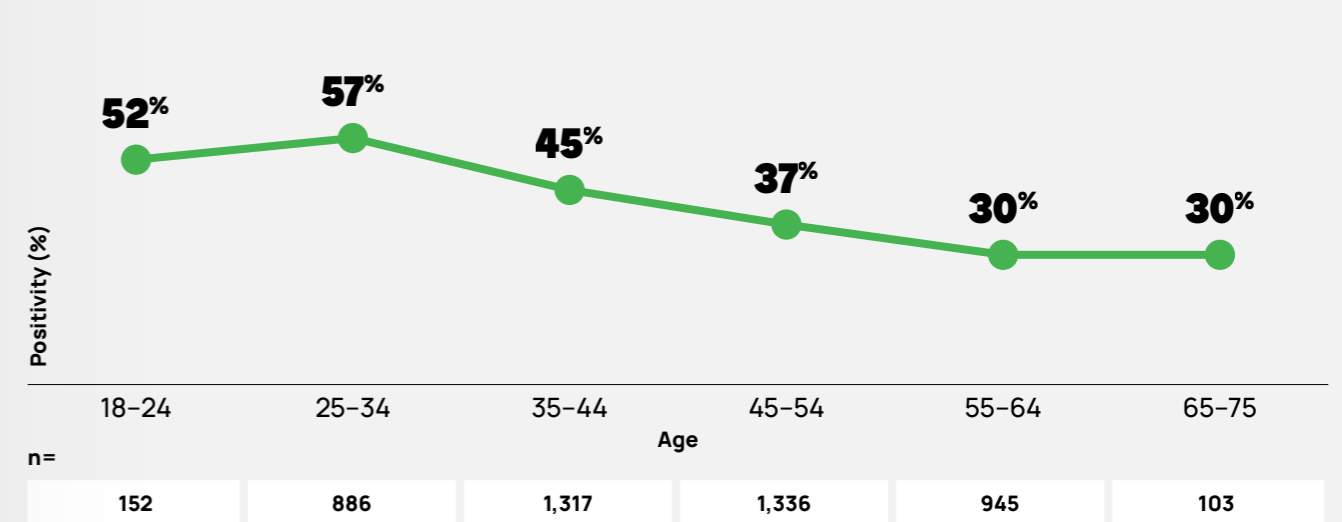
n=4,739

I see stories about people like me featured in our internal communications



Employees of 34 years old and younger are more likely to see themselves featured in internal communications

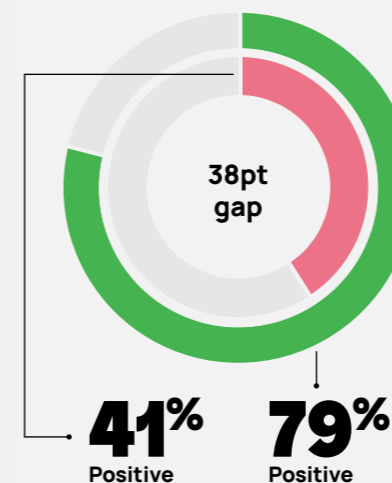
I see stories about people like me featured in our internal communications



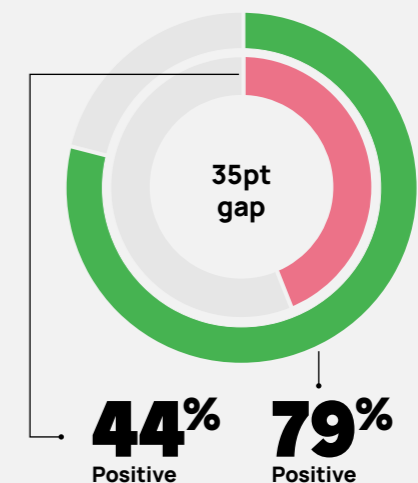
Link between seeing stories about people like me and advocacy and trust

■ **Positive to:** I see stories about people like me featured in our internal communications (n=1,979)
 ■ **Not positive to:** I see stories about people like me featured in our internal communications (n=2,760)

I would recommend my employer as a great place to work



Trust Index



Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".

In conclusion: Internal Communication has never been more critical

The opportunity has never been greater. And the evidence in this report makes the case with clarity.

Organisations with dedicated internal communication teams see stronger strategic alignment, greater advocacy and employees who feel better informed and represented. These conditions will help organisations navigate change more successfully, build the trust that holds people together through uncertainty and create the conditions for innovation as AI transforms the way work is done.

We believe great internal communication unlocks organisational success. Organisations become more successful when people are aligned, informed

and inspired. Internal communication connects vision to action, fosters collaboration and turns individual efforts into organisational impact.

Yes, some key metrics are trending downwards. But that is not a reason for doubt. It is the business case. The more trust is tested, the more change accelerates and the more organisations struggle to bring their people with them, the more critical internal communication becomes.

The profession that is needed most is the one that steps forward now. That is the opportunity. And it is ours to take.

Awareness of IC teams has declined

Are you aware whether your employer has a dedicated 'internal communications' (IC) team?



Expert's view



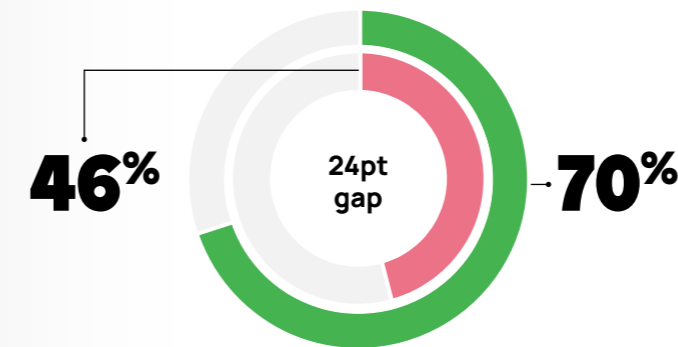
Dominic Walters

President, Institute of Internal Communication

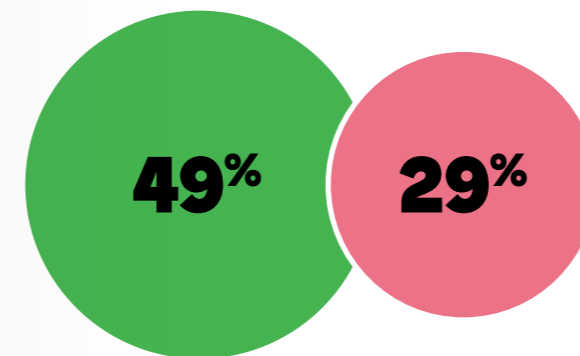
The IC Index is proving to be a great way to demonstrate our profession's impact, but many leaders will also want insight specific to their organisation if they are to see their IC teams more strategically. We have to demonstrate how we are enabling the organisation to perform better and how our advice and expertise is helping achieve its most important outcomes. It's an area in which we need to strengthen our ability, but doing so will demonstrate our value and reinforce that internal communication is uniquely placed to assist organisations in dealing with the challenges of the future."

Top impacts of having a dedicated IC team

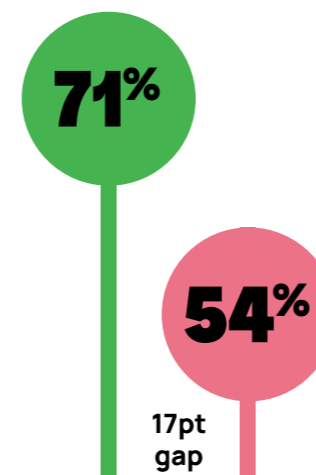
■ My employer has a dedicated IC team (n=3,079) ■ My employer has no dedicated IC team (n=569)



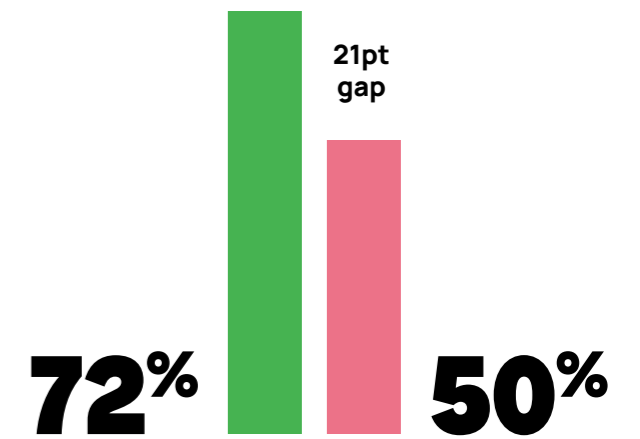
I receive timely internal communication from my organisation



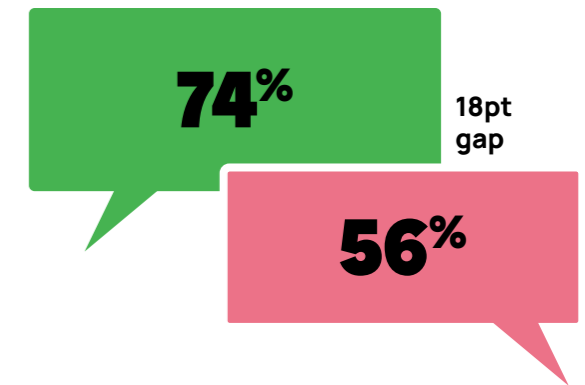
I see stories about people like me featured in our internal communications



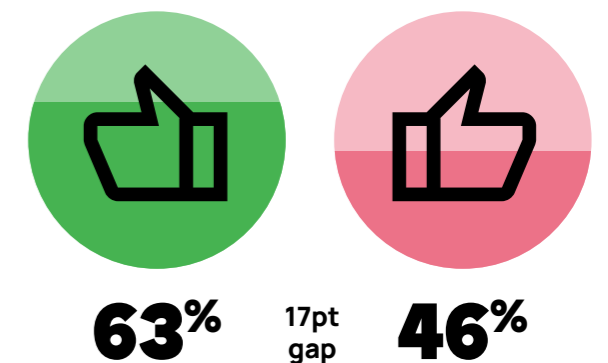
My manager does a good job at adapting communication to our team's context



My employer has been clear on the organisation's strategy and business priorities (for example, the long-term plans and operational goals)



My organisation effectively communicates good news to employees



I would recommend my employer as a great place to work

Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18-75 in the UK were surveyed online between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude "I don't know".



Appendix

Tracking scores

	2026 score	2025 score	2024 score	2023 score
Employees rating communication as 7–10 out of 10*	54%	63%	61%	61%
Employees rating communication as 4–6 out of 10*	32%	25%	29%	31%
Employees rating communication as 0–3 out of 10*	14%	12%	10%	8%
I feel equipped to lead a conversation with my team(s) on what’s happening across the business	76%	80%	81%	71%
I trust my direct manager	73%	76%	75%	65%
My employer has been clear on the organisation’s strategy and business priorities (for example, the long-term plans and operational goals)	64%	67%	69%	57%
I know how I can personally contribute to achieving the organisation’s strategy and business priorities	62%	N/A	65%	N/A
My employer has been clear on how the organisation is performing against its strategy and business priorities	61%	66%	65%	N/A
Right now, I feel motivated by my organisation to do the best job I can	59%	65%	54%	52%
I believe communication from my employer is open and honest	56%	64%	69%	54%
I would recommend my employer as a great place to work	56%	62%	53%	54%
I feel valued by my organisation	52%	59%	48%	49%
I believe our organisation’s strategy is the right one for success	52%	58%	56%	63%
My organisation welcomes open and honest feedback on them as an employer	52%	60%	57%	53%

* Full question: How would you rate how your organisation communicates with you overall? (0 Very poor – 10 Excellent)
 Base: A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18–75 in the UK were surveyed between 15 and 29 January 2026. Percentages have been rebased to exclude “I don’t know”.



IC Index 2025 research:

A representative quota sample of 4,939 UK workers aged 18–64 in the UK were surveyed online by Ipsos IIS team between 21 March – 4 April 2025.

IC Index 2024 research:

A representative quota sample of 4,000 workers aged 18–64 in the UK were surveyed online by Ipsos IIS team between 6–20 March 2024.

IC Index 2023 research:

A representative quota sample of 3,000 workers aged 18–64 in the UK were surveyed online by Cint between 6–20 March 2023.

For full methodology and demographic details, see:

<https://ipsoskarianandbox.com/report/ic-index-2025>

<https://ipsoskarianandbox.com/report/ic-index-2024>

<https://ipsoskarianandbox.com/report/ic-index-2023>

	2026 score	2025 score	2024 score	2023 score
I trust my organisation's leadership team	50%	59%	58%	50%
I trust my organisation's CEO/most senior leader	50%	58%	55%	54%
The reasons behind changes taking place in my organisation are clearly communicated to employees	49%	N/A	N/A	56%
I believe my organisation operates in the best interests of employees	47%	N/A	43%	N/A
Difficult changes affecting people (such as restructures or redundancies) are communicated with care in my organisation	47%	56%	N/A	N/A
My organisation is good at showing how colleague feedback is used to help inform decisions and actions	44%	53%	47%	45%
My employer has clearly communicated how I am expected to use AI as part of my job	32%	36%	N/A	N/A



Methodology

About the research

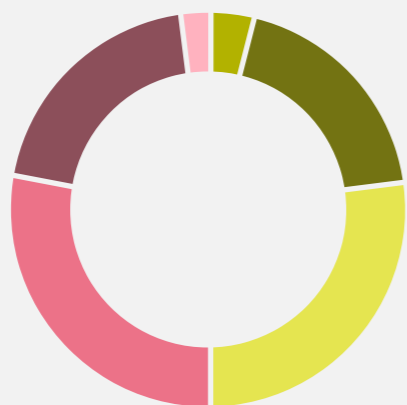
- The IC Index 2026 question set was developed by Ipsos Karian and Box in collaboration with the IOIC to help identify the key challenges and opportunities facing the IC profession.
- A representative quota sample of 5,000 UK workers aged 18–75 in the UK were surveyed online by Ipsos IIS team between 15 and 29 January 2026. The sample obtained is representative of the population with quotas on gender, age, company size, education and employment status to ensure the ability to dive deeper into results and themes. The sample covered only employees working in large organisations with over 500 employees to increase the likelihood of their organisation having a dedicated internal communication function in place.
- The 2026 sample was extended to include workers aged 65–75, a cohort not captured in the 2023, 2024 or 2025 studies. To ensure comparability with prior research, a sensitivity analysis was conducted by re-running all key metrics on a matched age base (18–64). This analysis confirmed that the inclusion of respondents aged 65–75 (representing approximately 2% of the sample) does not materially affect the results or the direction of reported trends. All statistically significant shifts and commentary presented in this report are consistent when analysed on a like-for-like basis, indicating that observed changes reflect genuine movement in sentiment rather than differences in sample composition.
- Throughout the report, where “employees” or “workers” are referred to, reported results are based only on those providing an affirmative answer to the question; results have been rebased to remove “I don’t know” responses.

Gender



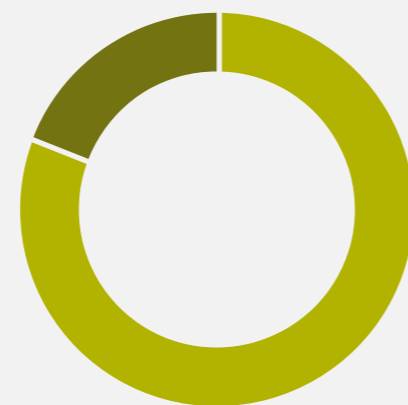
52%	Woman
47%	Man
<1%	Non-binary
<1%	My gender is not listed
<1%	Prefer not to say

Age



4%	18–24
19%	25–34
28%	35–44
28%	45–54
20%	55–64
2%	65–75

Employment status



81%	Full-time employee
19%	Part-time employee

Throughout the report, where we have referred to the following groups, these have been defined as below.

Management level

In response to: 'Which of these best describes your level of management?'

Senior leaders: selected 'I am a senior leader of my organisation'

Middle managers: selected 'I manage people who lead teams'

First-line managers: selected 'I manage a team or individual'

Scope of organisation's operations

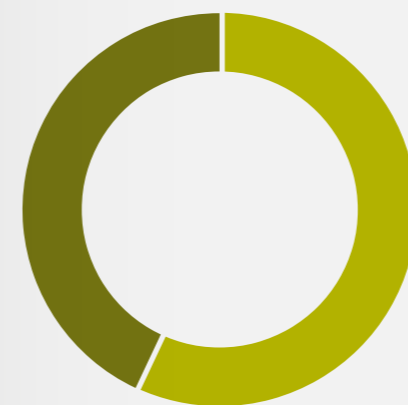
In response to 'Which of these best describes your organisation?'

Employees of global organisations: selected 'Global – operating across continents outside of Europe'.

Employees of international organisations: selected 'International – operating within Europe'.

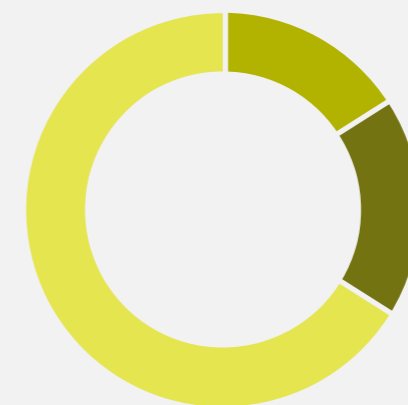
Employees of UK-only organisations: selected 'Domestic – operating within the UK'.

Manager status



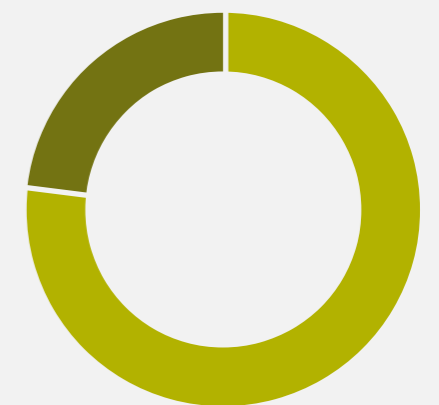
57%	No, I am not a manager
43%	Yes, I am a manager

Manager level



16%	Senior leaders
18%	Middle managers
67%	First-line managers

Digital connection

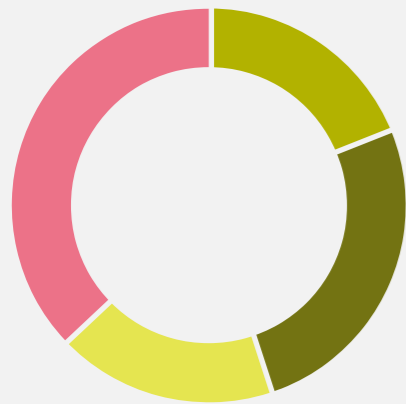


77%	I spend most of my work time in front of a computer
23%	I work in a setting where I am not connected to a computer frequently (for example in a store, distribution or logistics role)

Methodology (cont.)

Organisation size

Total headcount



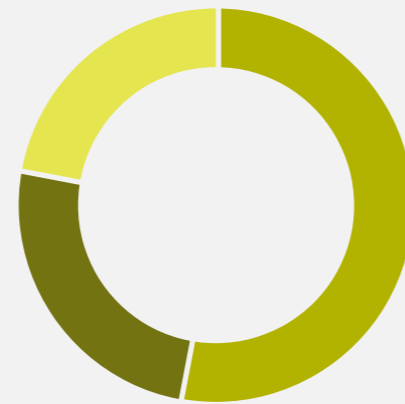
- 19% 500-999
- 26% 1,000-4,999
- 18% 5,000-9,999
- 37% 10,000 or more

Sector



- 53% Private sector
- 46% Public sector
- 2% Voluntary sector

Scope of organisation's operations

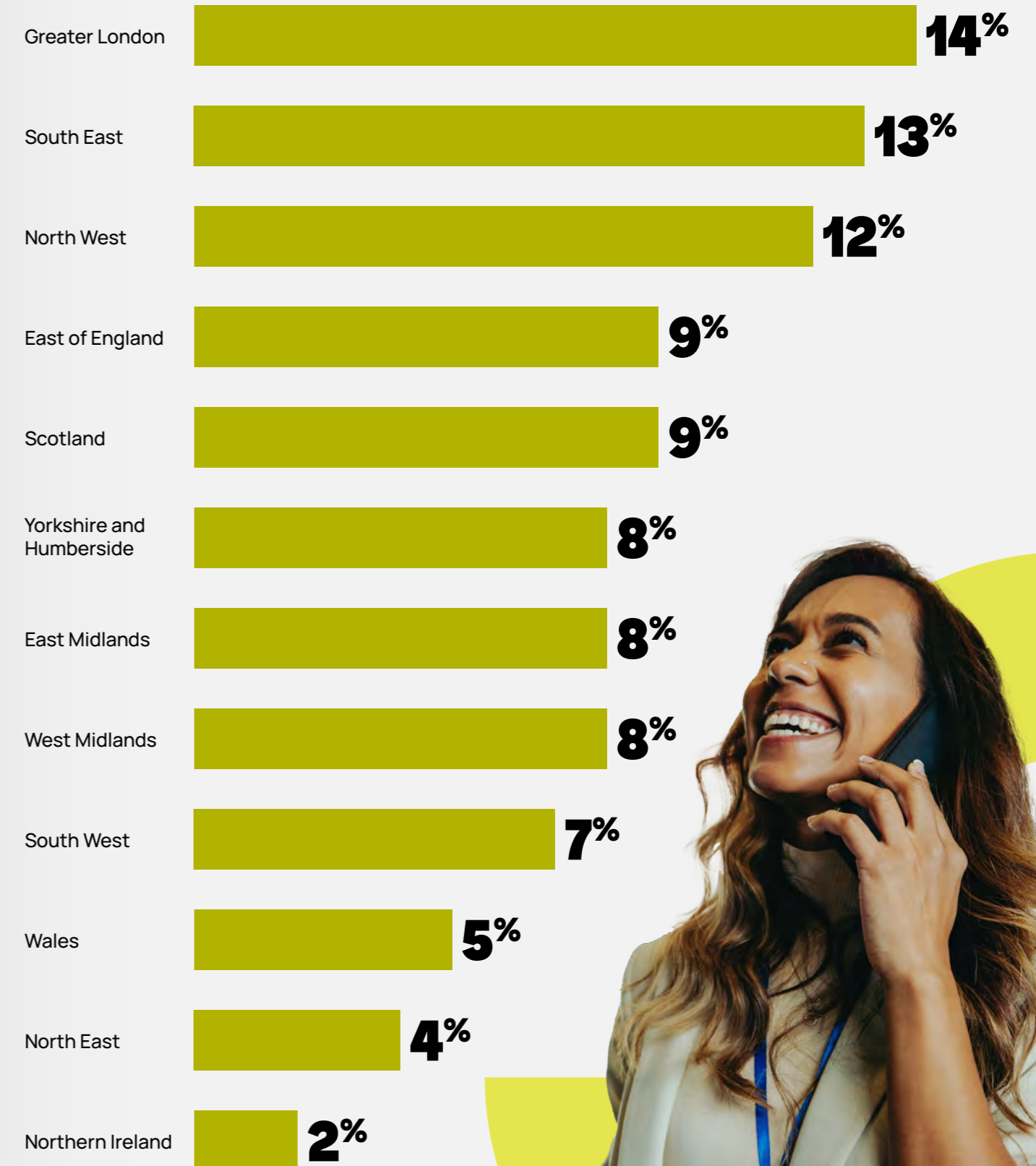


- 53% UK-only organisations
- 24% International organisations
- 22% Global organisations

Industry

15%	Healthcare/ Medical	2%	Non-profit	1%	Research/ Science
12%	Government/ Military	1%	Construction/ Home Improvement	<1%	Marketing/ Market Research/ Public Relations
11%	IT	1%	Telecommunications	<1%	Real Estate
9%	Education	1%	Hospitality	<1%	Entertainment/ Recreation
8%	Finance/ Banking/ Insurance	1%	Legal	<1%	Wholesales
7%	Retail	1%	Utilities (Electric, Gas, Sanitary Services)	<1%	Agriculture/ Forestry/ Fishing
4%	Transportation/ Distribution	1%	Accounting	<1%	Biotechnology
4%	Manufacturing	1%	Pharmaceutical/ Chemical	<1%	Advertising
2%	Engineering/ Architecture	1%	Food Service	<1%	Mining
2%	Business/ Professional Services	1%	Media/ Printing/ Publishing	9%	Other
2%	Aerospace/ Aviation/ Automotive	1%	Consulting		

Employee region



The research behind this report was conducted by Ipsos Karian and Box on behalf of the Institute of Internal Communication.

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 [Ipsos Karian and Box](#)