

Every job is a climate job

**Why corporate transformation
needs climate literacy**



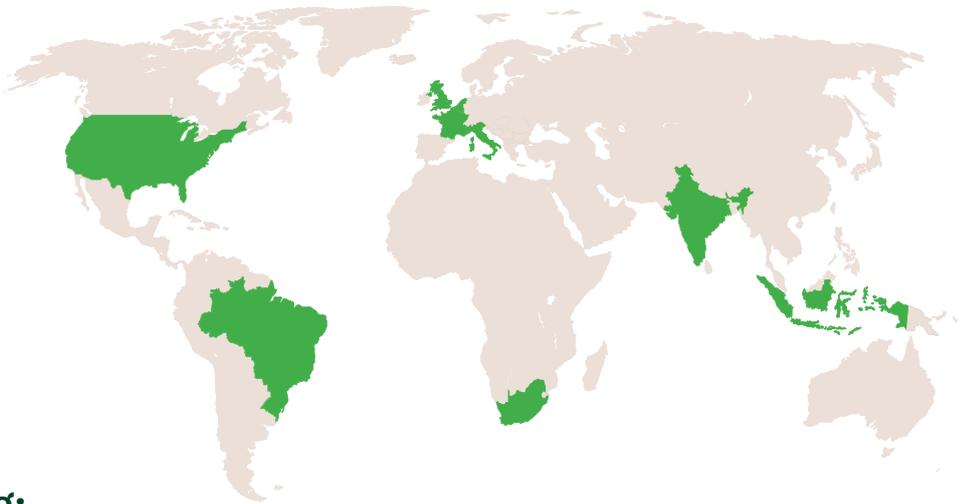
Executive summary

Sample:

7,134

employees of private sector companies

10 countries: Belgium, Brazil, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Netherlands, South Africa, the UK and US



Age range:



15 industries including:



Findings:

- **8 out of 10** employees are ready and willing to take action on climate change in their jobs
- **45%** are ready to go even further and become pioneers of climate action within their teams and functions
- **67%** agree that climate change could have a major negative impact on them or their loved ones within their lifetimes
- **70%** said they were 'very' or 'quite interested' in training related to climate action at work
- But fewer than half felt 'very' or 'quite able' to take action
- **70%** said that acting on climate change at work was important to their personal sense of motivation and wellbeing
- **15%** said that they had considered changing jobs in order to work more closely on climate-related issues within the last 12 months (rising to 20% amongst the most climate savvy employees)
- **55%** say their company has an important role to play in tackling the climate crisis, but only **34%** say they could confidently explain their company's climate commitments, with the figure dropping to **22%** among junior employees

Future climate champions exist in every company today. Businesses that rapidly upskill their talent to power the green transformation will thrive in the next decade.

Welcome to Kite Insights' first report on what we believe to be the next frontier of corporate climate action: employee engagement and climate readiness. This report demonstrates that unlocking the latent potential and willingness of employees is the key to achieving transformative action at scale.

This year, following an initial survey in 2020 of employees in the UK and France, we reached over 7,000 respondents (aged 18-65) from countries in the Americas, Europe and Asia (including UK, US, Brazil, and India), across 15 major industries, to assess employee knowledge of climate change and its impact on economies and society. The survey also gauged their willingness to take climate action at work, and their ability to do so today.

Our findings show that employees believe businesses have a moral responsibility to act on climate change, and are willing to partake in their companies' response to the crisis. But they also reveal a major gap between employees' willingness to act and their ability to act.

We believe that if companies do not bridge this gap and meaningfully engage their employees, the private sector's ability to meet their climate goals, and to address the crisis more broadly, will be compromised.



Foreword:



Dear Friends and Partners,

The climate crisis demands transformation. The business case for climate action has been stated and restated ad infinitum: we all *know* why we need to act now; and that shifting from the *knowing* to the *doing* should have happened yesterday.

The problem is, there's a **big knowledge gap**. Despite companies having made the necessary net-zero and sustainability commitments, we know, from talking to C-suite members of global corporations, that climate and sustainability knowledge is noticeably lacking among most employees. Our research now confirms that, even if employees wanted to contribute to their company's green solutions, they would lack crucial information and tools to act on climate in the context of their work.

I have always believed that a deep and nuanced understanding of challenges drives more thoughtful, lasting action, and helps build fairer and healthier societies. But if climate knowledge is largely

absent from our workforces, if the extensive impacts of climate change are not well understood, how can we hope to implement and accelerate systems change on a global scale, at the speed the climate crisis requires?

We can't wait for education and academia to catch up with the needs of our economies and industries. We can't wait for climate and sustainability expertise to trickle down into corporate and governance structures, nor for green skills to be gradually picked up by individuals and systemised over time. We need everyone to be able to act on climate now.

While we must recognise that businesses might not be able to reach every single one of their employees, their next step is clear: **they must bridge the climate knowledge gap to transform their value chains.**

If employees cannot make informed decisions in their professional roles and industries, or lack the conviction to do so, businesses will likely be unable to deliver on their climate commitments, let alone thrive in what will soon be a radically different economy.

In the same way that workers lacking basic technology skills have difficulty finding work in a fully digitalised era, employees without some degree of climate literacy will struggle to be employable in the green economy.

Beyond that, the professional context provides the 'so-what' for climate literacy that the personal one might not. The threat of change and skill gaps on the one hand, and the excitement of opportunity and career growth on the other, provide a double incentive for people to deepen their climate learning at work.

As companies strive to deliver on the 1.5 degree goal, **employee engagement will be one of the main indicators and predictors of business performance and resilience.** The companies whose employees are ready to embrace and pursue change, equipped with the knowledge and skills to lead the green transformation, will build a lasting competitive edge. Their brands will be respected by customers, they will attract and retain the best talent, be resilient in the face of an evolving regulatory landscape, and be able to innovate more successfully in our current climate.

Engaged and upskilled employees will be a secret weapon for businesses undertaking the challenges and opportunities ahead. It was people who got us into this mess, and it's people, therefore, who will get us out.

The transformation mindset starts and ends with them. So let's look to employees, and hand them the keys.

Sophie Lambin,
CEO, Kite Insights

Letter from leaders:

Dear Friends and Partners,

Corporate leaders have become the gatekeepers of swift societal transformation, if not the driving force, and they are facing the greatest test of their time.

But **how ready are we** to lead people into the fight for 1.5? **The depth of conviction, courage and collaboration we need is unprecedented.**

The research behind this report has revealed that while senior leaders claimed to know the most about climate change, they actually knew the *least* - which suggests that **the leadership transformation will have to be both global and personal** - starting with a process of deep self-questioning.

If we expect corporate workforces and societies to follow us in our mission to halve emissions by 2030, **we ourselves must embody the mindsets and behaviours of green transformation.**

So, **what leadership qualities does the climate crisis need?** What models could directly combat our current melting pot of passivity and disengagement, short-term political priorities, fear of reduced profit margins and short-term losses, and the widespread absence of knowledge and green skills in organisations required to effect change today?

The Climate School, powered by Kite Insights, has developed a model for employee engagement that can be applied to our future ability to lead: **Head, Heart, Hands.**

Only by equipping ourselves with **the knowledge of scientific facts, issues, and risks** (Head); by developing **an emotional connection to the problem** (Heart); and **collaborating beyond siloed networks** for diverse knowledge and experience-sharing, inclusive innovation, and complementary action (Hands) will leaders be able to transform their businesses successfully.

By harnessing these three aspects of leadership, we will be generating the **momentum the climate emergency calls for, and working to ensure a just transition.**

So let's look to our own heads, hearts and hands, and re-imagine how we, as leaders, are going to pull this off on behalf of our organisations, communities and industries.

Our planet doesn't just need action. It needs thoughtful and transformative leadership.

**Members of the Advisory Board,
The Climate School
Powered by Kite Insight**

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All We Can Save Project

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The Head, Heart, Hands

The context:

How ready are businesses to act on climate?

There has been a growing movement towards stakeholder capitalism.^{1,2}

Many companies have responded with public expressions of accountability - sustainability reports, sponsorship of environmental conferences, public commitments - with growing consensus and momentum around climate change in particular. Over one-fifth of the world's 2,000 largest publicly traded companies (with annual sales totalling \$14 trillion) have made net-zero commitments.³

But it has become increasingly clear that **this focus on external relations and public dialogue does not necessarily translate into meaningful action or transformation.** Research suggests, in fact, that most companies are falling short of their climate commitments^{4,5}; delayed, in part.

Climate change, albeit a major focus of business and governments, is just one of many planetary boundaries that regulate the stability and resilience of the planet.⁶ And while it provides a finish line and clear KPIs (the world must halve its GHG emissions every decade - 7% emissions reduction annually - to stay below 1.5°C by 2050⁷) **it doesn't prescribe a clear path for companies seeking to meet their commitments.** Between commitment and meaningful impact lies a journey of significant transformation for businesses - both internally and across their entire value chains.

In order to transform successfully and thrive in a new economy, business commitments must be accompanied by a revolution in mindset and daily decision-making; by the rethinking of business models; new (or ancient) solutions; and ultimately, by widespread systems transformation.⁸

Though private sector leaders are largely aware of the scale of change needed within their organisations⁹, our research has revealed that **while there is a will, there is not yet a way.** Most employees, including senior ones, don't know enough about climate or the demands of the green transformation to effect change in their professional roles.

This knowledge gap is, in our view, one of the biggest obstacles to corporate climate action, and an even bigger untapped opportunity for industry and systems transformation.

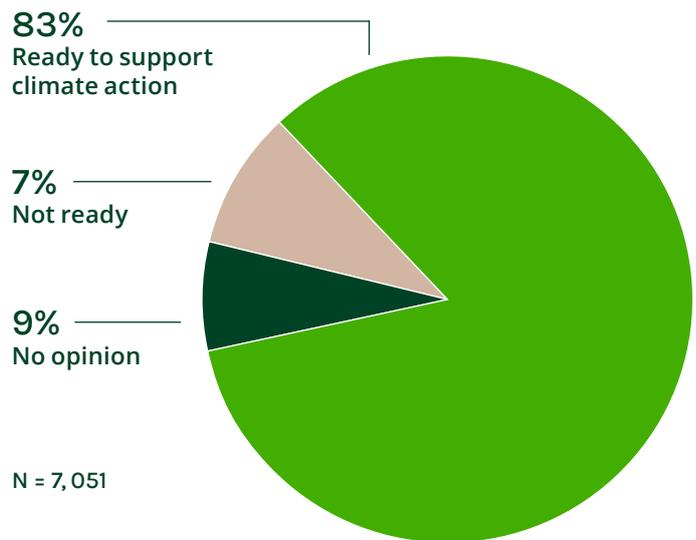
The facts:

People feel an urgent need to act

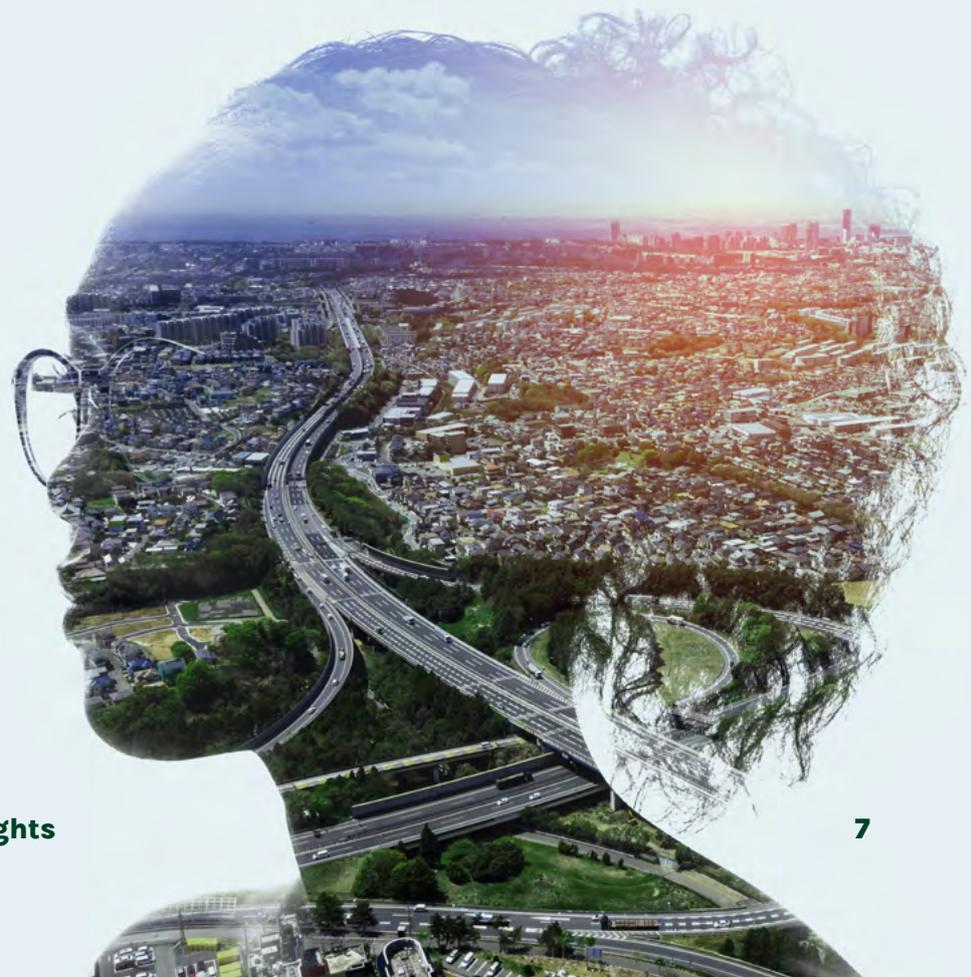
Respondents across demographics – age, gender, geography, seniority at work – are motivated to have a positive impact on climate within the context of their work.

In fact, **8 out of 10 respondents** said they were ready and willing to take action in their jobs. This is a slight increase from our 2020 survey in the UK and France, in which 76% of respondents reported the same.¹⁰ Nearly half, or 45% of respondents, are ready to go even further and become pioneers of climate action within their teams and functions.

83% of employees say they are ready and willing to support climate action in the context of their work.



8 out of 10 employees said they were ready and willing to take action in their jobs

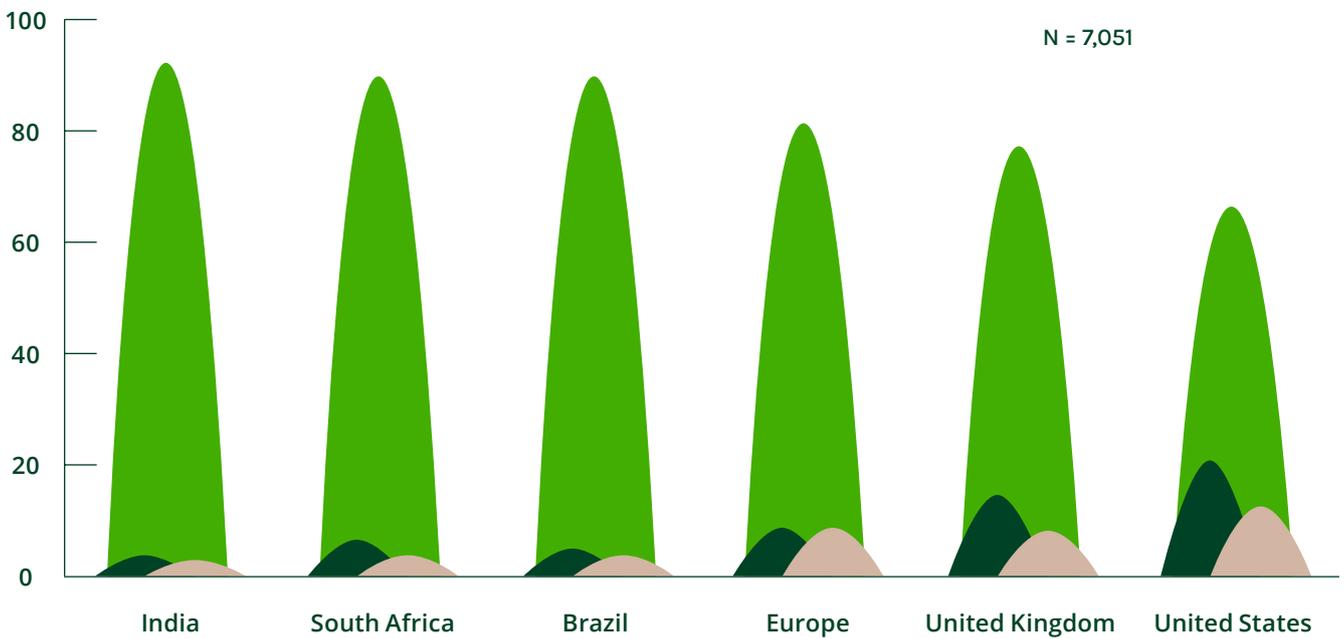


This willingness to act at work may be connected to respondents' personal feelings and experiences about the Earth's changing climate – 67% of respondents agree that climate change could have a major negative impact on them or their loved ones within their lifetimes. People in locations where climate change is already impacting livelihoods and access to natural resources feel more urgently about the need to act: 68% of respondents in Brazil said climate change was a fundamental threat to economies and societies compared to 50% and 44% in European countries and the United States, respectively.

Willingness to act is higher in Southern Hemisphere economies where climate change is already impacting livelihoods.

- Ready to take action on climate
- Not ready to take action on climate
- No opinion

N = 7,051

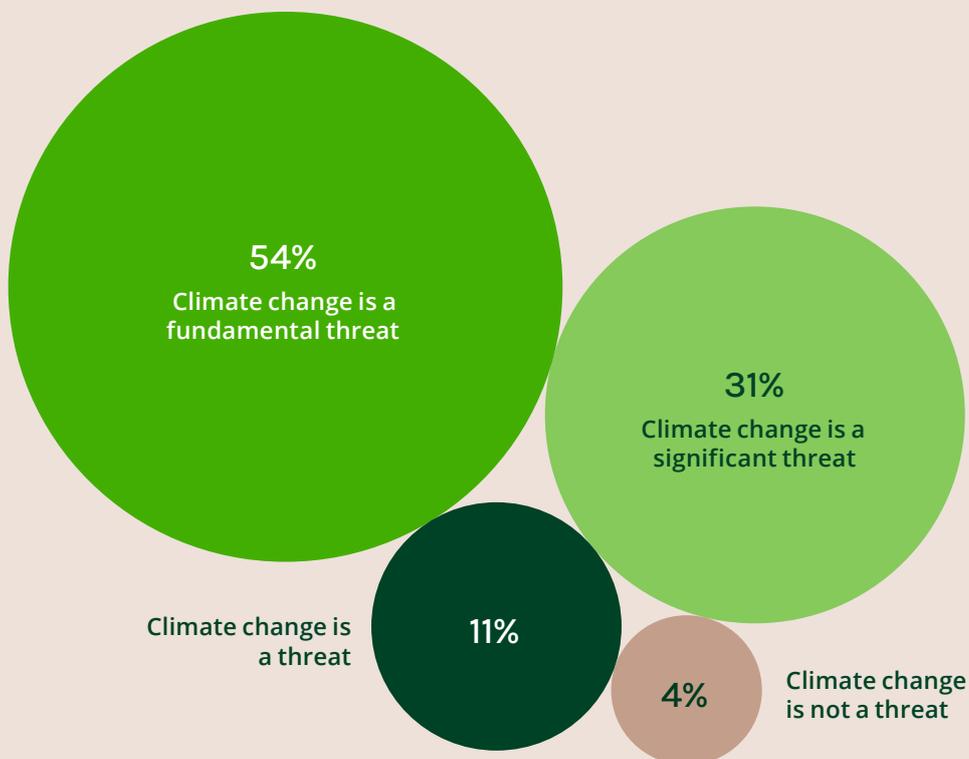


“Businesses, and therefore all employees, are in the midst of the climate crisis, and what happens over the coming few years, will determine the outcome both for the planet and for the competitive edge of companies.”

- JOHAN ROCKSTRÖM, DIRECTOR, POTSDAM INSTITUTE FOR CLIMATE IMPACT RESEARCH



54% of employees believe that climate change is a fundamental threat that will have catastrophic consequences for our economies and societies if we don't begin to make transformative changes to address it immediately.



N = 7,126

● **Climate change is a significant threat** that will have major negative consequences for our economies and societies if we do not make extensive changes to address it in the next 10 years.

● **Climate change is a threat** that will have negative consequences for our economies and societies if we do not make changes to address it before 2050.

● **Climate change is not a threat** to our economies and societies and does not require us to make changes in the coming decades.

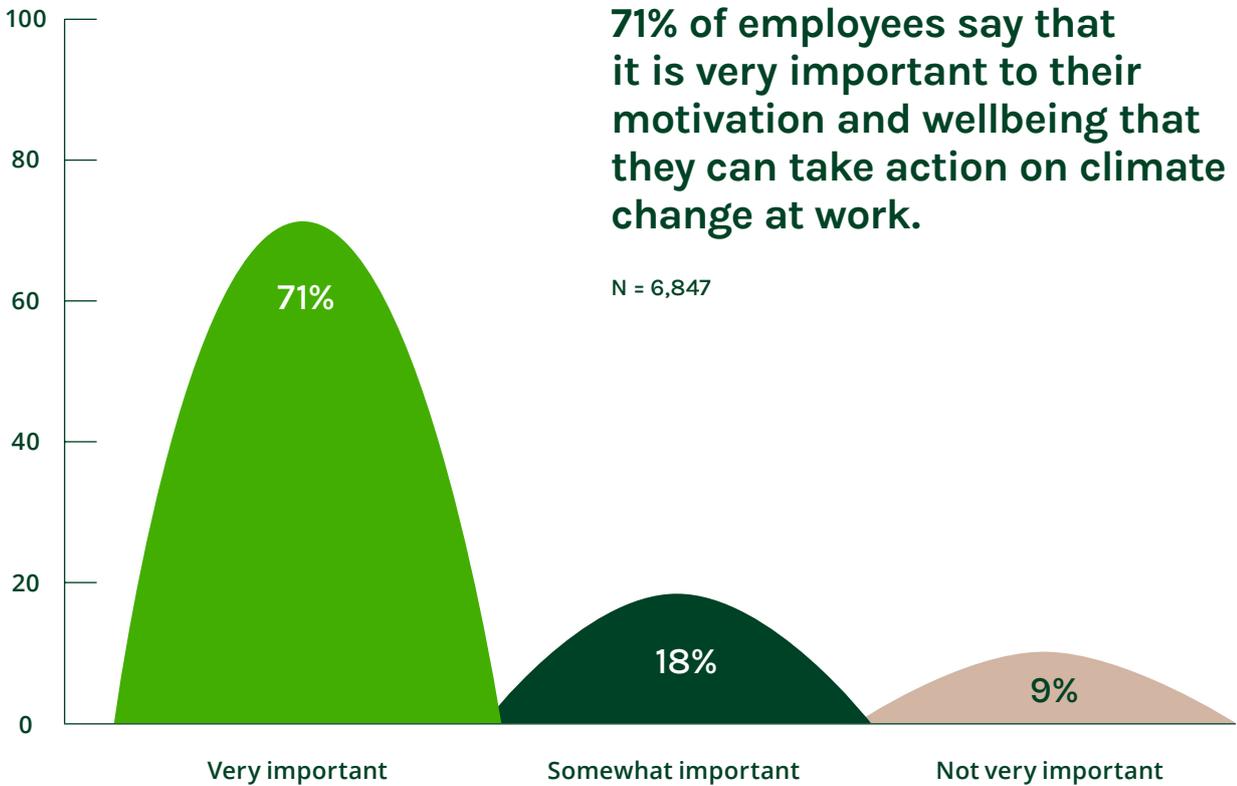
“With the renewable industry creating 38 million new jobs by 2030, there is an urgent need to equip people with the green skills they need to fill them, and to ensure that the energy system they are transforming is not only clean, but inclusive.”

- MARÍA MENDILUCE, CEO, WE MEAN BUSINESS COALITION

Every job is a climate job

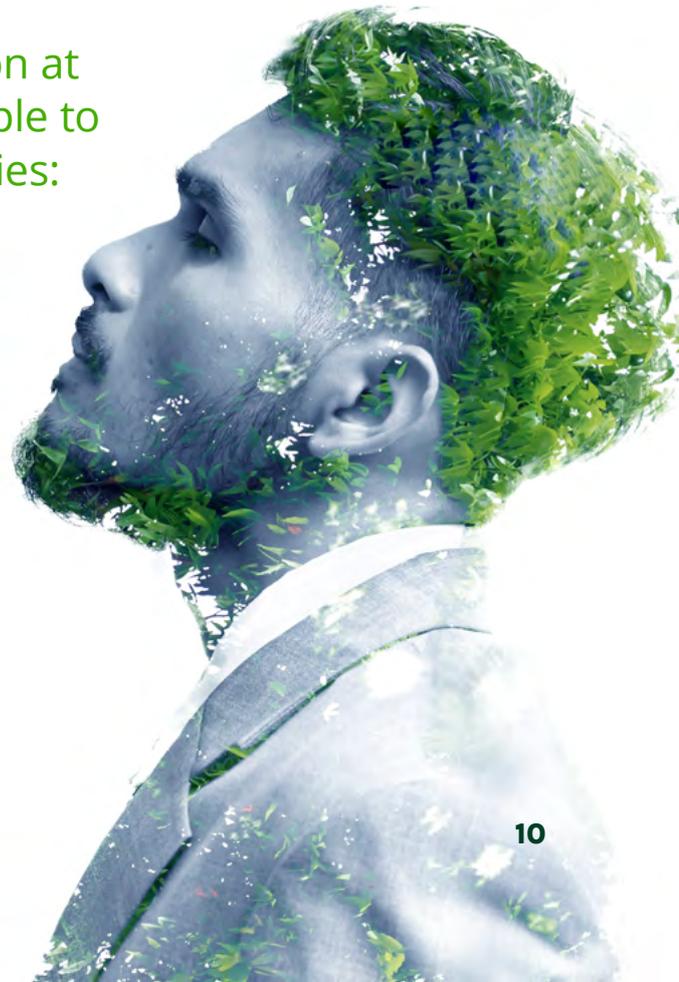


The ability to act on climate at work can drive employee motivation – 71% of respondents agreed that it was very or quite important to their personal sense of motivation and wellbeing. Moreover, 51% of people are taking action in their lives already through changes to their personal consumption, or taking part in political action for example.



The ability to contribute to climate action at work can be important enough for people to consider other employment opportunities:

15% of respondents said that they had considered changing jobs in order to work more closely on climate-related issues within the last 12 months. This figure rose to 20% amongst the most engaged employees (those who already had a relatively high degree of knowledge about climate change and who were already highly motivated act). With the labour market already competitive and still dealing with the repercussions of the Great Resignation, employers are under pressure to ensure that their employees are able to combine personal motivation with work opportunities; and climate action is no exception.



The facts unpacked:

Climate literacy challenges

1. Gaps between perceived knowledge and reality

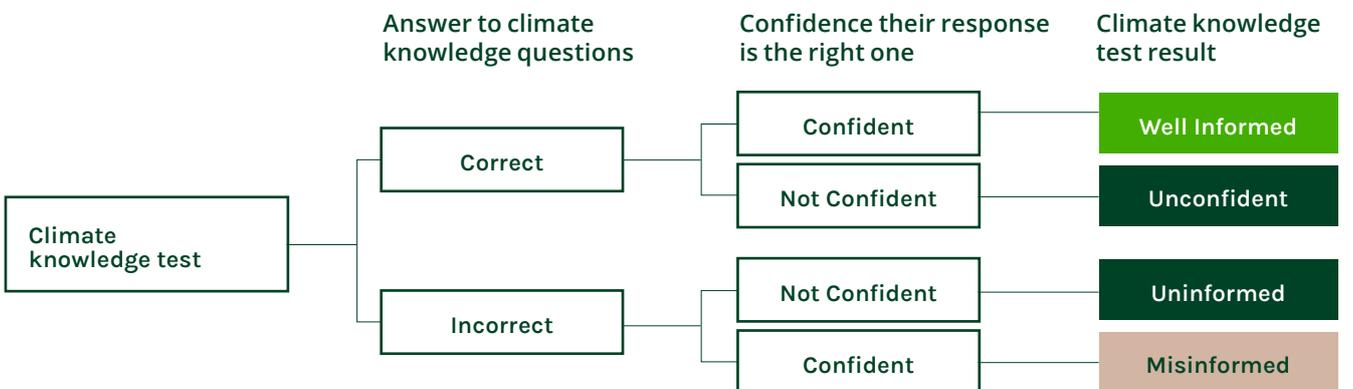
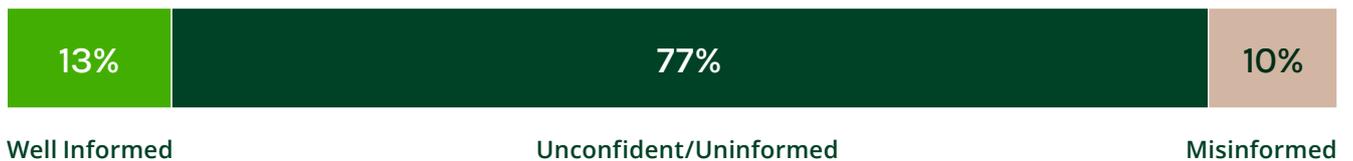
While most of our respondents are deeply motivated by the possibility of acting on climate change and are willing to do something about it in the context of their work, **our study suggests that they lack an understanding of what their companies are doing to mitigate and adapt to climate change**, and that they have only a limited understanding of its social and economic implications.

In general, respondents were not as knowledgeable as they thought they were about climate. Their knowledge scores

followed the general pattern of the Dunning-Kruger effect¹¹, where those who considered themselves highly knowledgeable – a greater proportion of whom were in senior positions – scored worse on our “true” knowledge test than those that rated themselves as less knowledgeable (*for more information on the knowledge test, see our methodology section*). The highest average knowledge scores came from people who ranked themselves only as ‘Somewhat knowledgeable’ and ‘Not very knowledgeable’. Junior level employees had the highest knowledge scores.

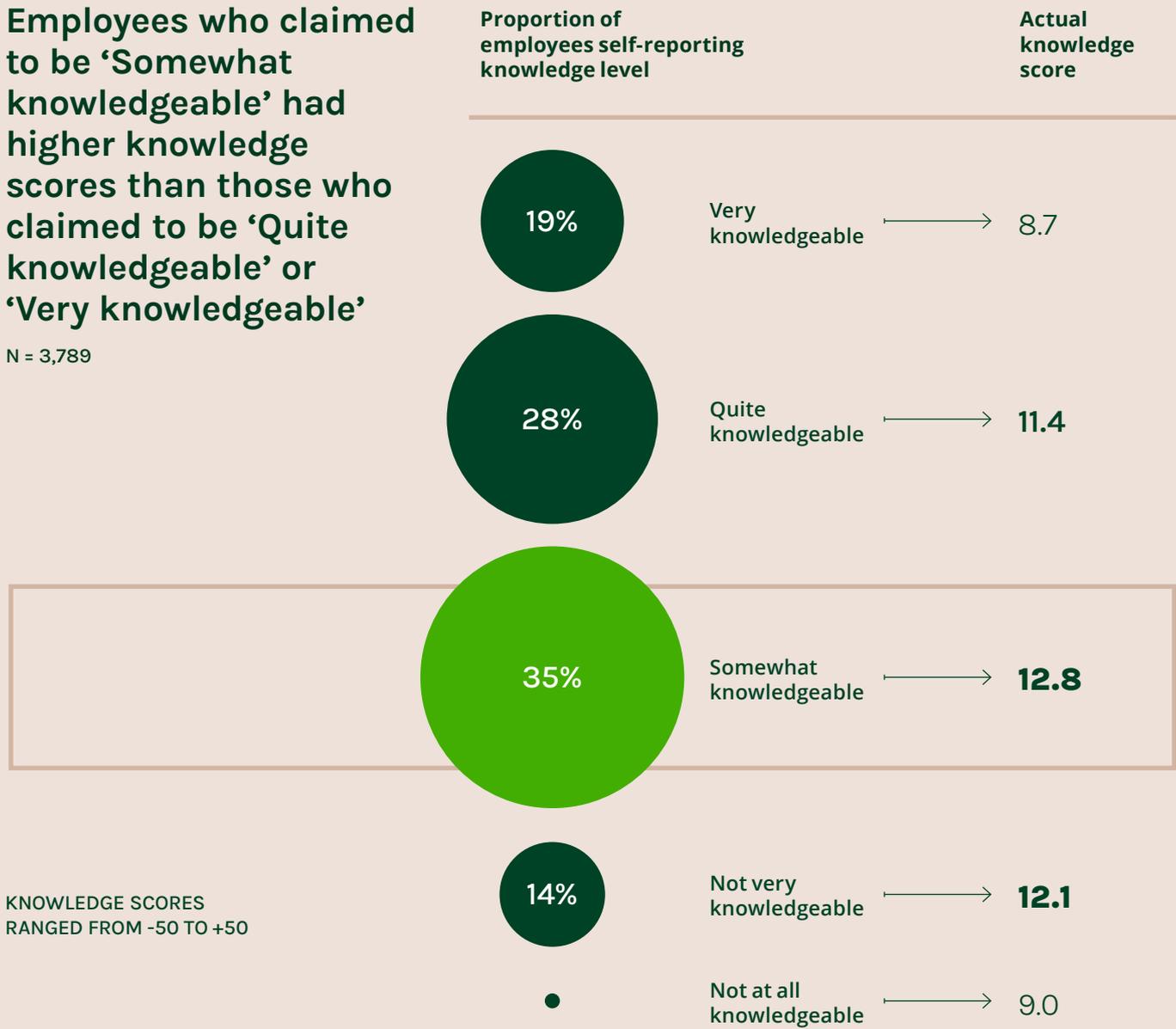
Climate knowledge test result

N = 3,789



Employees who claimed to be ‘Somewhat knowledgeable’ had higher knowledge scores than those who claimed to be ‘Quite knowledgeable’ or ‘Very knowledgeable’

N = 3,789

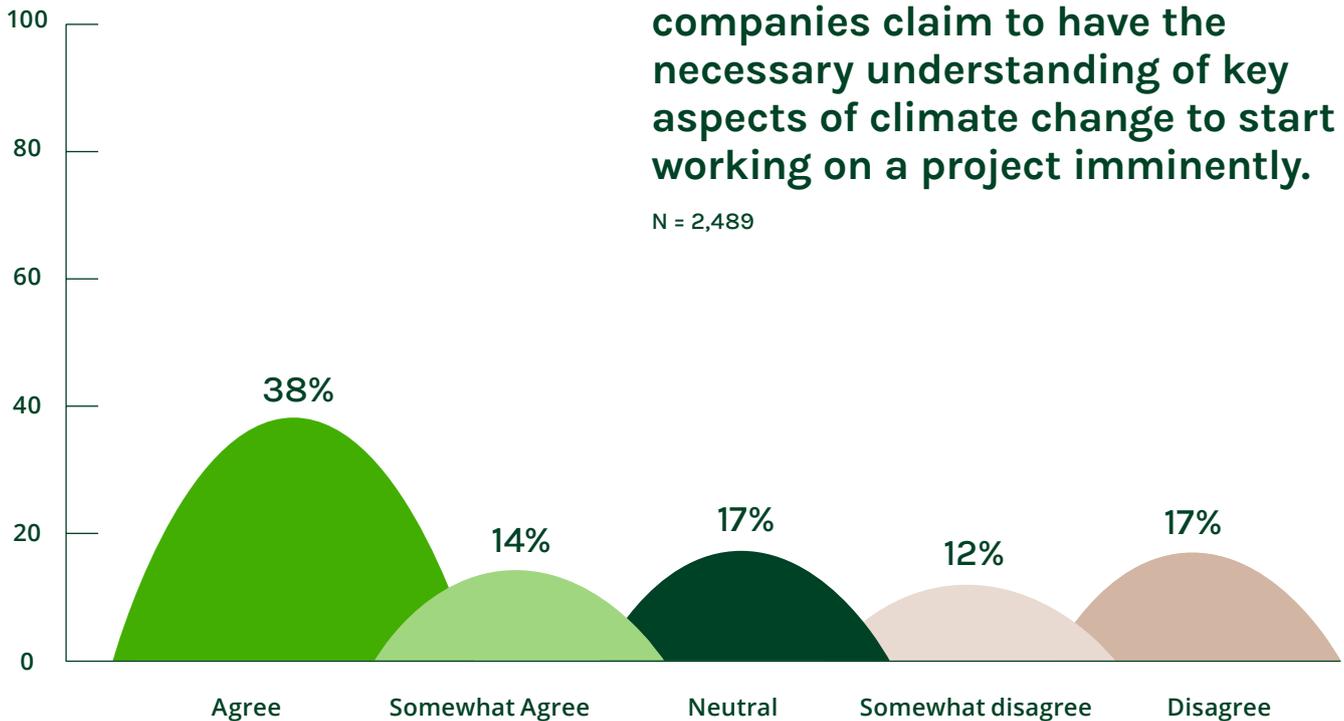


Knowledge gaps were especially present when it came to climate consequences on societies and the role of the private and public sectors in addressing mitigation efforts. More than half of respondents, for instance, said that current political commitments to climate action would meet the 2°C scenario by the end of the century and that climate change was recognised by the United Nations as a basis for refugee status. Interestingly, 71% of respondents believed private sector companies are required by international law to disclose how much carbon they emit and to set emissions-reduction targets. None of these statements are true.

Employees overestimating their understanding of key aspects of climate change and their ability to start working on a project imminently, may lead to ill-informed decisions and pose a risk to companies. Similarly, when employees don't recognise the economic opportunity of green transformation, or the scale of change required, they risk missing out on key opportunities and solutions, and we all risk missing out on the narrowing window of opportunity to change the course of our climate emergency.

38% of employees from large companies claim to have the necessary understanding of key aspects of climate change to start working on a project imminently.

N = 2,489



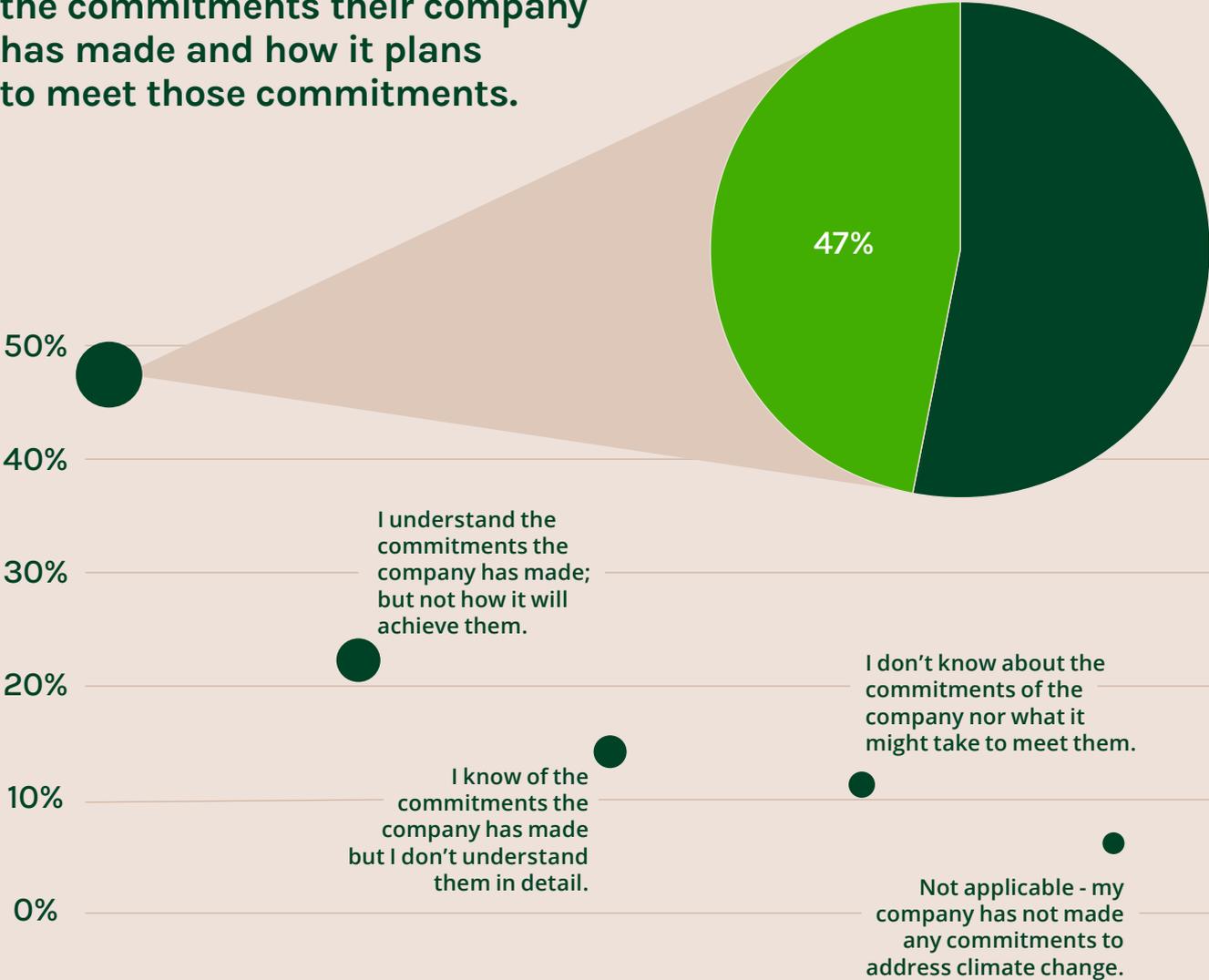
2. Gaps between company commitments and individual actions

Employees are also unclear about what climate actions their company is taking and, crucially, how they can be involved. Less than half of the respondents (47%) said they understood their company's commitment to climate action and how it planned to meet those commitments.

The more senior the respondents were, the more likely they were to report knowing and understanding their company's climate commitments. Although many large companies are making net-zero and other climate commitments public, the understanding of a single company's commitments did not vary significantly between large organisations and SMEs.



Less than half of employees (47%) said that they understand the commitments their company has made and how it plans to meet those commitments.



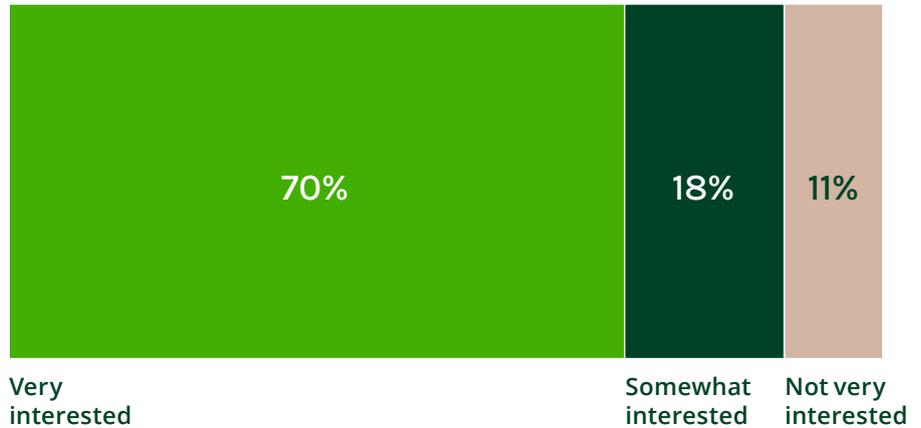
55% of our respondents agree that their company has an important role to play in addressing climate change. The same proportion say that their companies will have to make significant changes to current operations and practices in order to have a positive impact on climate change. However, only 34% of respondents reported being able to confidently explain the implications of their company's climate commitments on their specific role. For junior employees only, that figure drops to 22%.

Only 34% of employees reported being able to confidently explain the implications of their company's climate commitments on their specific role.

3. Gaps between the means and the mandate to act

70% of employees are very interested in undertaking training related to climate action in the context of their work.

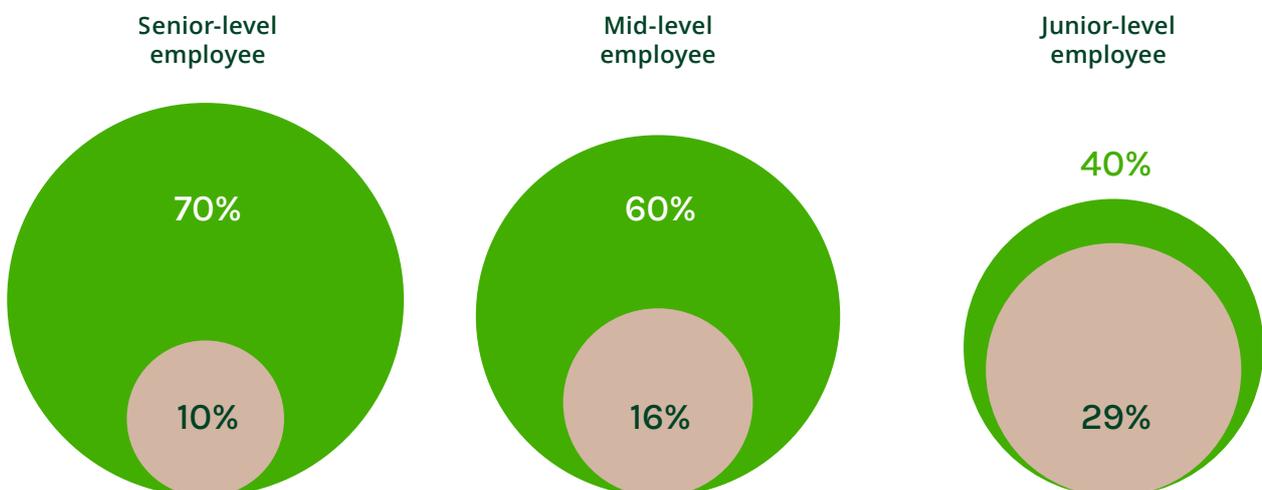
N = 6,845



Most employees are interested in engaging in climate training at work. This was especially true for more senior respondents, perhaps reflecting both their perceived level of climate knowledge and responsibility to their company's climate commitments. **But fewer than half felt 'very' or 'quite able' to take action.** Seniority matters here, too, with 70% of senior-level respondents reporting 'very' or 'quite able', versus 60% and 40% for middle- and junior-level employees respectively.

70% of senior-level employees say they are very able to take action on climate change in the context of their work, compared to 60% and 40% for middle- and junior-level employees, respectively.

● Very able to take action on climate ● Not very able to take action on climate N = 6,528



Large companies may have set climate goals, but most of them have not yet created the conditions for action to emerge and thrive internally.

While 24% of respondents from large companies strongly agreed (and a further 15% said they mostly agreed) with the statement “The culture at my organisation encourages me to speak up about climate change and take action to support our goals”, nearly half of them (45%) said that “spaces and opportunities for [them] and [their] colleagues to share suggestions, experiences and innovative ideas related to climate change” were either ‘Not at all present’, ‘A little present’ or ‘Somewhat present.’

Approximately 40% of employees from large companies agree that the culture at their organisation encourages them to speak up and take action on climate change and they feel they can have a positive impact on climate change through their role.

The culture at my organisation encourages me to speak up about climate change and take action to support our goals.

I feel that I can have a positive impact on climate change at work through my role.

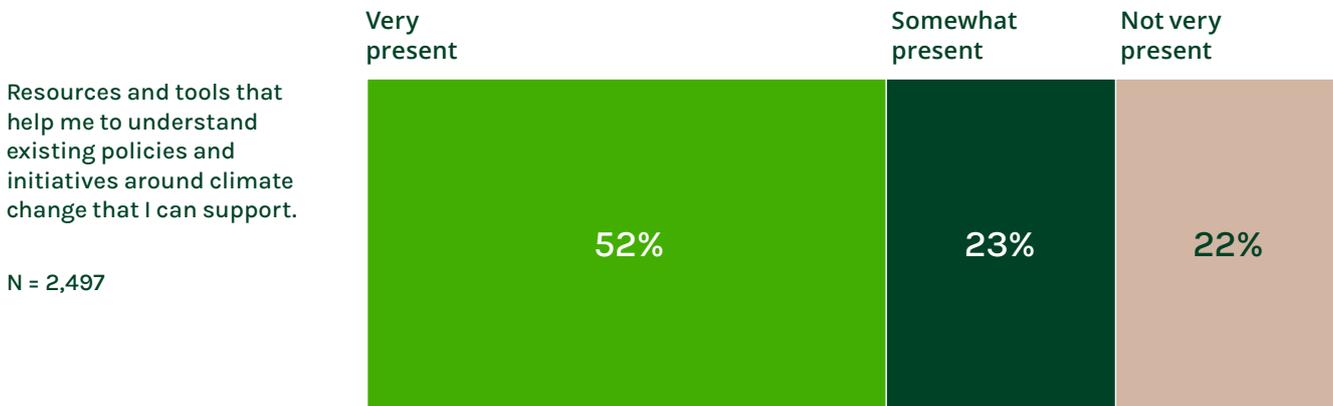


N = 2,499



N = 2,491

Approximately half of employees from large companies feel they have the tools and resources available to understand existing policies and initiatives around climate change and the space and opportunity to collaborate with their peers around innovative ideas.



Unsurprisingly, an employee’s industry may also impact how they perceive their ability to take climate action at work. In our survey, respondents from agriculture, forestry and mining (68%); healthcare (68%); life sciences (55%); and telecommunications and technology (55%) more frequently reported being ‘very’ or ‘quite able’ to take climate action in the context of their work, while less than half of the respondents in hospitality, food and leisure travel (48%); public service and social service (43%); and transportation and logistics (42%) reported the same.

Moreover, research suggests that green jobs are disproportionately represented across industries - with energy and water, sewage and waste accounting for 21% and 19% of their total advertised jobs. By contrast, education and human health/social work represent only 0.1% of all jobs advertised.¹²

The implications:

Climate champions are the future engines of transformation

Given that employees are engaging with climate knowledge at different starting points, upskilling entire value chains could overwhelm even the most mature corporate climate leaders. That is why tapping into employees with the greatest knowledge and motivation is so important. They will take ownership of the problem and help companies progress faster.

Within our research, we've identified 'climate champions' - **employees who have a strong understanding of climate change and the urgent need to act, but require tools and mandate to get started**. Climate champions represent just 7% of the total respondents, but have the potential to have an outsized impact on their organisations.

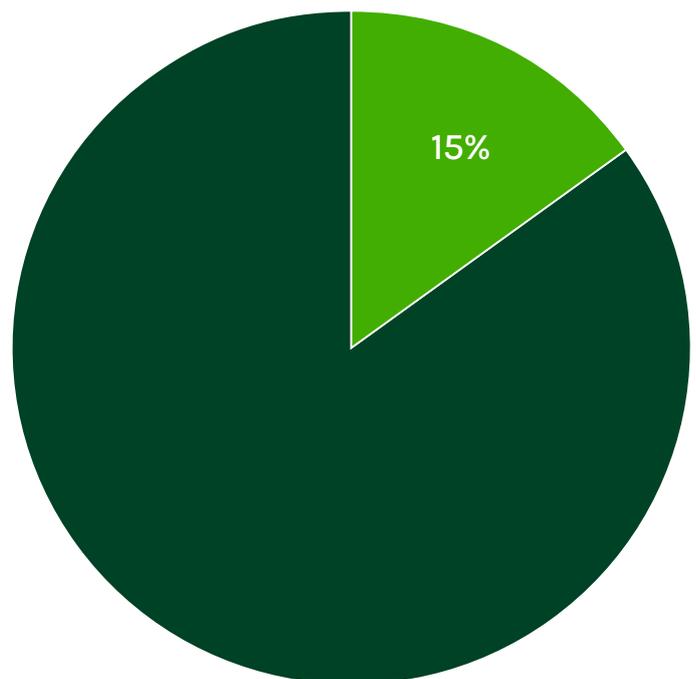
When it comes to climate action in the workplace, climate champions can be an early asset because they are highly motivated to act. **Over 96% of climate champions say that being able to act on climate at work is "very" or "quite" important to their personal motivation levels and wellbeing.**

15% of employees have considered moving jobs in order to work more closely on climate change and sustainability issues.

N = 6,838

Climate champions are likely already paying close attention to what their companies are doing to address the climate crisis and may be ready for more advanced knowledge or greater autonomy. Three in four climate champions understand the commitments their company has made and how it plans to meet those commitments. And nearly all - 97% - of climate champions feel at least 'somewhat able' to act on climate change in the context of their work.

But climate champions' enthusiasm needs to be harnessed: **20% of climate champions indicated that they have considered changing jobs** in order to have a more direct impact on climate change. Comparatively, 15% of respondents overall reported being willing to change their jobs, though this is an increase from 12% in our 2020 survey (UK and France only).



Businesses cannot afford to lose people who are **future engines of acceleration, implementation and innovation**. If these climate champions were given the means and mandate to act, they would unlock new sources of momentum and solution-building, potentially bringing entire teams of people with them.

The presence of current and future climate champions will affect decision-making

processes and solution-building in corporate value chains. The scale and speed that this crisis requires calls for **a more decentralised and immediate approach to climate leadership**, where solutions are developed and deployed at every level in different regions around the world.

What we need now is **bold and brave leadership from senior leaders** to start the transformation process.¹³

“With employees motivated and ready to act, we can accelerate our ambition and our journey as an Impact company and meet the challenge of the climate crisis.”

- XAVIER DENOLY, SVP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC



Every job is a climate job

Is your company #climateready?

A checklist:



BASIC FACTS

Does your average employee know basic facts about climate change, global warming, and other planetary issues?



COMMITMENTS

Does your company have net zero commitments and science-based targets, and have you measured your employees' understanding of them?



CONFIDENCE TO ACT

If your employees were given the tools to act on climate at work, would they do so with confidence?



UPSKILLING ON CLIMATE

Does your learning and development strategy include climate upskilling for employees?



TIPPING POINTS & RISKS

Do employees have a strong awareness of climate tipping points and the risks that climate change poses to their industry?



TAKING ACTION

If your employees participated in a series of climate learning modules, would they know where to go to learn more or start taking action within their role?



CULTURE

Does your company's work culture facilitate innovative thinking and solution-building across the organisation?



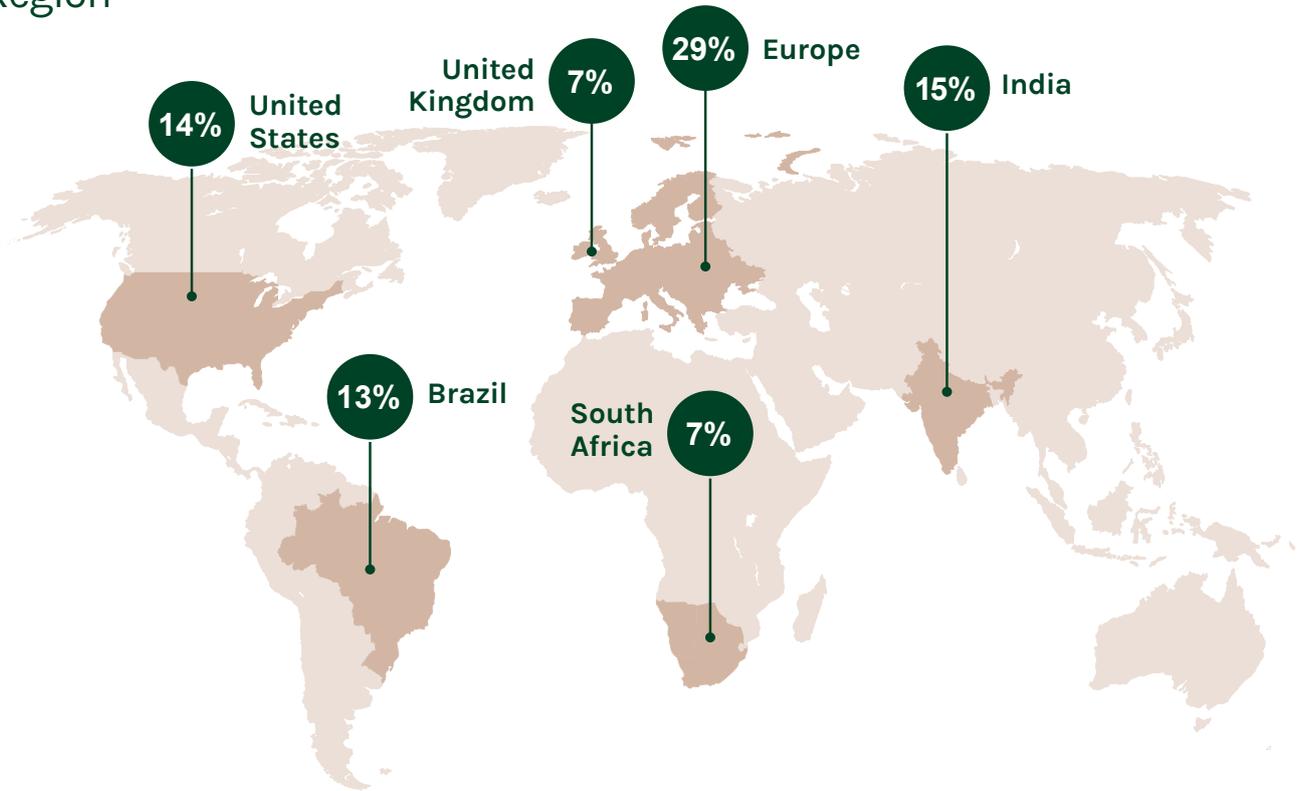
CHANNELLING CONVICTION

Is your company harnessing the motivation of its employees to act on climate in a way that benefits them and the organisation?

Survey demographics composition

N = 7,134

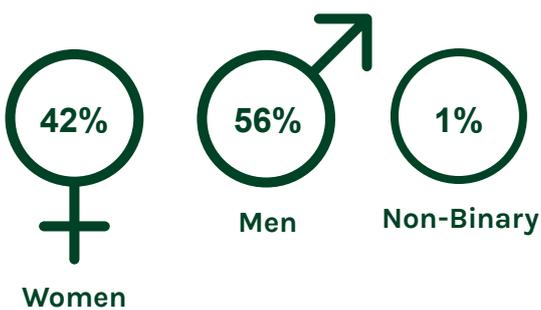
Region



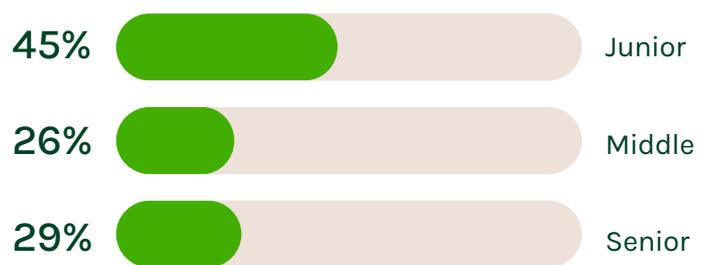
Major sectors



Gender



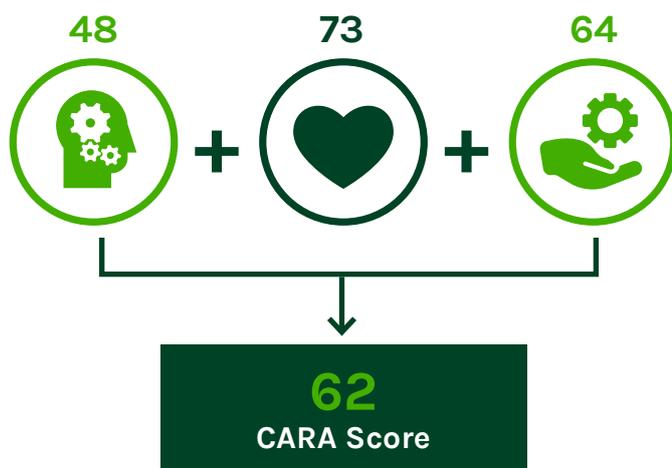
Level of seniority



The method:

The Head, Heart, Hands

Based on our Climate Action Readiness Assessment (CARA), this survey uses our **Head, Heart and Hands (HHH) framework** to assess employee engagement with climate action in a professional context.



The Head assesses respondents' perceived knowledge versus actual knowledge. Respondents score their level of knowledge across various climate-related topics and are further assessed on their awareness of the implications of key climate issues. This information is combined with a **knowledge test**, which assesses actual knowledge of climate facts using a combination of true/false questions and an associated confidence rating of each response. We then categorise people's ability to make decisions, as shown in the figure below.

The anatomy of decision-making is determined by two main components: correctness and level of confidence. The first step is to determine whether the person answered the question correctly. The next step is to judge the confidence of that person when answering the question. The combination of these two steps determines the usability of the knowledge. Ultimately, only a correct answer

About the survey :

This report is based on the Climate Readiness survey of 7,134 employees of various seniority within private sector companies. It was conducted via the Survey Mechanics platform polling respondents from 10 nations in their national language (Belgium, Brazil, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Netherlands, South Africa, UK and the USA).

The industry sectors represented include Energy/Utilities/Oil and Gas, Banking/Financial, Industrials and Construction, Consumer Electronics, Consumer Packaged Goods, Logistics/Distribution, Insurance, Automotive and Aviation, Agriculture/Fishing, Manufacturing, Transportation, IT/Telecommunications, Hospitality/Tourism and Fashion/Apparel. The sample includes respondents between the age range of 18-65. The target markets and sample sizes were selected based on size of economies and prevalence of large international companies in the markets, and the feasibility of sampling.

The sample used the following definitions for company size: Small companies have less than 1,000 employees; medium companies have between 1,001 - 10,000 employees; and large companies have more than 10,000 employees.

combined with strong confidence will make usable information and a well-informed decision-maker. It is this type of decision-maker that will have the know-how and the leadership skills to lead on climate action.

The Heart assesses an individual's interest and motivation to take action on climate change in the context of their role. The Heart score is based on questions about how climate impacts respondents' personal well-being and job satisfaction. The heart framework also asks respondents if they are willing to "champion climate" and take an active role in aiding climate initiatives at work.

The Hands framework determines a person's ability to act within their organisation. The score is based on respondents' perceptions of how able they are to participate in, or support, climate-related projects, as well as how much they believe their role and function can contribute to climate action.

We also asked employees about the enabling environment of their companies. This looks at the factors that facilitate and unlock climate knowledge, motivation and individual agency, such as the presence of the right incentives and management structures, and a shared vision of a company's future in a net-zero world.



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Endnotes

- 1 Stakeholder capitalism is a form of capitalism in which companies seek long-term value creation by taking into account the needs of all their stakeholders, and society at large. [Definition Accessed [here](#)].
- 2 Project Drawdown. Climate Solutions at Work. 2021. [Accessed [here](#)].
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- 4 BCG Gamma. Use AI to Measure Emissions—Exhaustively, Accurately, and Frequently. 2021. [Accessed [here](#)]
- 5 In this study, companies are defined to meet their ambition if they have realised more than 75% of their emission targets.
- 6 Steffen, W. et al. Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet. *Science*, 347(6223). 2015. [Accessed [here](#)]
- 7 Rockström, J. et al. A roadmap for rapid decarbonization. *Science*, 355(6331), 1269–1271. 2017. [Accessed [here](#)]
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- 10 Comparing France and UK only
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- 13 Johnson, A & Wilkinson, K. All We Can Save. 2020.



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