North American Communication Monitor

2023-2024

**Exploring Generative AI and CommTech,
diversity and empathic leadership in communications.**

Results of a survey of 1,055 communication professionals
in the United States and Canada.

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Foreword

We have all experienced major disruption and transformation over the last few years. With the continued rapid changes in technology, it is safe to assume we can expect more of the same for the foreseeable future, especially when it comes to public relations and communications.

Public relations is not new to change, of course. The practice has always adapted as technologies emerged that impacted the way we communicate. The difference today is the accelerated urgency with which public relations is expected to embrace technology. If you search for "public relations trends in 2024," the use of AI will be on every list.

In addition to the use of AI, PRLab's Matias Rodsevich includes on his list of trends: a more humankind approach to communication, the need for practitioners to "upskill," and a shift to data-driven approaches. The 2023-24 North American Communication Monitor (NACM) provides a look at what communications professionals in Canada and the United States think about each of these trends. It explores the various dimensions of empathic leadership and its effects on mental health, commitment, and wellbeing; considers how comfortable practitioners are personally with "CommTech"; and evaluates the challenges of introducing AI technologies into public relations at the individual and organizational levels.

As with the earlier editions of the NACM, the study also asked about the most pressing strategic issues facing practitioners today. Building and maintaining trust has been cited as the most important strategic issue for communication management since the first NACM in 2018-19, but the percentage of professionals citing trust as the most important issue dropped considerably this year from a high of 49.6% in 2018-19 to just 33.5%.

Interestingly, given the interest in AI technologies, supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion replaced "coping with the digital evolution and the social web" this year as the second most important issue. The third most pressing issue for U.S. practitioners was strengthening the role of communicators in organizational decision-making. Canadian professionals, on the other hand, ranked that fifth.

Understanding where we are currently with respect to these issues and concerns is vital to our ability to lead responsibly in our role as communicators. We have to know where we stand in order to move forward. That approximately 33% of U.S. respondents believe our decision-making role within organizations needs to be strengthened is troubling. And feels like a step backward. But that finding reflects the importance of this study. To lead for the future, we need to know the present.

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations is proud to sponsor the NACM. The authors of the 2023-24 edition are leaders in the study of public relations leadership and are uniquely positioned to provide us with the insights to inspire and empower the leadership required today.

Dr. Karla K. Gower
Director

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations

Introduction

The 2023-2024 North American Communication Monitor (NACM) is the third edition of a comprehensive survey focusing on strategic communication issues, practices, and roles in organizations in Canada and the United States. The NACM is part of the Global Communication Monitor series that includes similar surveys in Europe, Latin America, and Asia-Pacific—more than 80 countries in total. It is the largest global study of the profession based on sound empirical standards and diversity of researchers. The goal is to stimulate and promote the knowledge and practice of excellent communication in practice worldwide.

This NACM includes insights from 1,055 communication professionals in North America (258 in Canada and 797 in the U.S.). The questionnaire included 36 questions around six topics, and here are just a few highlights from the rich findings. The study tracked current communication challenges like Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the role of digital technology in supporting communication practice. Most professionals (66.1%) agreed that Generative AI is a heavily discussed topic, and seven of ten respondents predicted that the Generative AI technology will substantially change the communication profession as it progresses. Similarly, the majority (60%) of communication professionals view digital technologies as an issue of importance and they believe the benefits of using CommTech outweigh the possible drawbacks and risks across multiple areas.

Regarding the practice of empathic leadership in communication during times of crisis such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, more than two-thirds of respondents noted that their communication leaders have increased levels of empathy when communicating with colleagues (71.2%). Positively associated with the practice of empathic leadership, communication professionals reported a strong sense of belonging, attachment, and personal meaning to their current organization. They also reported being enthused about their job and immersed in their work. Such results further document the importance of being an empathic leader who demonstrates the true understanding of what followers are thinking and feeling.

On the topic of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as a continued challenge for the profession, approximately two-thirds of communication professionals (65.2%) reported closely following global trends and debates about DEI. However, results show that DEI is still most commonly considered in terms of ethnicity (62.6%) and age (59.5%) and less in dimensions such as religious and spiritual beliefs, gender identity, or socioeconomic status. Our results also showed that communication departments and agencies are most heavily involved in celebrating DEI, creating and implementing organizational DEI policies, and developing plans for communications about DEI.

Consistent with the findings related to DEI, the three top strategic issues professionals named were building and maintaining trust, supporting DEI, and strengthening the role of the communication function in supporting top-management decision making. However, the percentage of those communication departments deemed "excellent" by the Comparative Excellence Framework decreased from 43.6% in the 2020-2021 NACM to 35.1% in this edition. Meanwhile, excellent departments continue emphasizing their efforts in advancing DEI and demonstrating the application of empathic leadership in communication.

On behalf of the NACM research team, I thank the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations at the University of Alabama for sponsoring and supporting this important study. I also want to recognize our European research colleagues for their invaluable guidance and advice. We are proud to be part of this global research project and its distinguished team of international scholars and professionals.

Dr. Juan Meng
Board Member
Lead Researcher of NACM

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations

Research design

The North American Communication Monitor (NACM) 2023-2024 explores current practices and future developments of strategic communication in public companies, private companies, nonprofits, governmental organizations and other communication sectors in the United States and Canada. It is the third edition of a survey that focuses on the strategic communication practices in this region, sponsored and organized by The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations at the University of Alabama.

The NACM is an academic study fulfilling high quality standards of social science research. The study is designed and executed by a team of renowned scholars and professors representing different institutions in the region. The NACM is part of the Global Communication Monitor series. It is complemented by other surveys covering five continents and more than 80 countries together. The involvement of a wider board of professors and international collaborators in the Global Communication Monitor series ensures the quality of the study and diversity of the contributions globally.

This edition of NACM is based on responses from 1,055 communication professionals from the U.S. and Canada. They answered a comprehensive online questionnaire that collects a variety of independent and dependent variables in a unique research framework (see page 10): personal characteristics of communication professionals; features of the organization; attributes of the excellence communication departments; the salary spectrum in the industry; as well as the current situation regarding the communication professional and his/her organization.

The study explores several key constructs. First, the personal characteristics of communication professionals in the field are identified by investigating some key demographic variables, their job and professional status, the digital transformation of communications, as well as the structure and culture of their organization. Questions on these topics from the previous NACM survey (see Meng et al., 2019;

Meng et al., 2021) and the European Communication Monitor (ECM) surveys (Zerfass et al., 2023, 2022, & 2021) were repeated to build the possibility for longitudinal and global comparisons. Secondly, the discussion of diversity, equality and inclusion continues as an ongoing challenge for the profession by comparing the results between the United States and Canada.

Thirdly, a selection of current challenges in the field are empirically tested. The NACM 2023-2024 explores the impact of the Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology on communication practice (Lim et al., 2021) and how communication professionals adapt quickly to practice in new environments and manage professional tasks by increased flexibility. Professionals also reported some notable organizational barriers when introducing Generative AI to their communication units. Not surprisingly, the Generative AI technology brings concerns about data privacy and ethical implications. Professionals believe that the responsibility to advance the application of Generative AI technology lies within the professional communities who share best practices and increase the transparency of the applications.

Another area of investigation is empathic leadership and its effects on mental health, commitment, and well-being. This NACM identifies more than two-thirds of communication professionals report that their communication leaders have increased levels of empathy during the last year by paying attention and listening well, identifying employees' strengths and limitations, caring about the personal well-being of others, and showing sensitivity and understanding. Lastly, excellent communication departments are identified in the sample (Tench et al., 2017) to indicate the differences excellence in communication can make. Overall, our research design investigates a broad range of trendy topics in today's communication practice and contributes to the body of knowledge of strategic communication.

Methodology and demographics

The online questionnaire of the NACM 2023-2024 is largely derived from the European Communication Monitor 2022 to ensure consistency and build the capacity for global comparisons. The questionnaire consisted of 36 questions reflecting six topic-based sections. Five of these questions were only presented to professionals working in communication departments. Instruments used dichotomous, nominal and ordinal response scales. They were based on research questions and hypotheses derived from previous research and literature. The survey was pretested by using a small group of communication professionals (n = 30). Amendments were made where appropriate to update the setting of question validation and skip logic, as well as improve the survey flow to enhance users' experience. The online survey was active for about two months, from mid-May to late July in 2023.

A stratified sampling strategy was used to recruit qualified respondents from Qualtrics, a leading online survey research platform. In total, we had more than 10,000 valid clicks to start the survey. We designed a series of filter and qualification questions at the beginning of the online survey to ensure the quality and diversity of our sample. Answers from participants who did not meet the sampling criteria were removed from the database. The strict selection of respondents is a distinct feature of the NACM, and it ensures the relevance and reliability of the results.

The results presented in this report are based on 1,055 complete responses. The final sample consisted of 797 communication professionals in the United States (75.5%) and 258 in Canada (24.5%). The average age across the entire sample is 37.1 years. Our sample includes 519 women (49.2%) and 536 men (50.4%). A vast majority (85.9%) of respondents work in communication departments in different types of organizations (public organizations, 19.5%; private companies, 44.0%; governmental organizations, 15.4%; and nonprofit organizations, 7.0%), while 14.1% are communication professionals working for agencies or as independent consultants. Of the professionals surveyed, 35.4% have a Bachelor's degree and 25.8% a Master's degree. As for ethnicity, the sample consisted of 68.0% White/Caucasian professionals, 13.3% Black/African Americans, 7.4% Hispanics, 5.9% Asian/Asian Americans, and 5.5% other minorities.

The demographics show that one out of three respondents are communication leaders: 30.4% hold a top leadership position as head of communication or as CEO of a communication agency; 50.5% are unit leaders or in charge of a single communication team or division in an organization. Of the professionals surveyed, 48.9% have more than ten years of experience in public relations and communication management, followed by 26.8% who have 6-10 years of professional experience. This reveals the high quality of the sample, which is dominated by senior professionals with sound qualifications and medium-to-long tenure in the field.

Research framework and questions

Person (communication professional)

Demographics	Education	Job status	Professional status
Age, Q42 Gender, Q44 Ethnicity, Q51 Income, Q49	Academic qualification, Q46	Leadership position, Q35 Practice (areas of work), Q41	Years of experience, Q45 Membership in professional associations, Q47 Knowledge about CommTech, Q7a Knowledge about DEI, Q12a Knowledge about Generative AI and personal use, Q 29a/b

Organization

Structure/culture	Country
Type of organization, Q34 Alignment of the top communication manager, Q36 Gender of direct leader, Q43 Number of employees, Q50	Geographic location, Q48

Communication department

Excellence

Influence	Performance
Advisory influence, Q37 Executive influence, Q38	Success, Q39 Quality & Ability, Q40

Situation

Digitalisation and CommTech in the organization, Q9, Q10

Diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) in communications, Q12

Impact of DEI on communications, Q13 (items 5–6)

Considering diversity in stakeholder communications, Q14

Responsibility of communications for DEI initiatives, Q15

Considering diversity in organizational policies and actions, Q16, Q17

Empathy in (communication) leadership, Q18, Q19, Q19a, Q21, Q22, Q23

Empathic communication and employee engagement, Q20

Flexible working and digital collaboration tools, Q24, Q25

Generative AI in the organization, Q31, Q 32a/b

Perception

CommTech and the digitalization of communications, Q6, Q7

Impact of CommTech, Q8

Improving the digital transformation of communications, Q11

Impact of DEI on communications, Q13 (items 1–4)

Strategic Issues, Q26

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in communications, Q27, Q28

Impact of generative AI, Q30

Improving the application of generative AI, Q33

Demographic background of participants

Job experience	
More than 10 years	**48.9%**
6 to 10 years	**26.8%**
Up to 5 years	**24.3%**

Position	
Head of communication / Agency CEO	**30.4%**
Unit leader / Team leader	**50.5%**
Team member / Consultant / Other	**19.0%**

Ethnicity	
White, Caucasian	**68.0%**
Black, African American, African descent	**13.3%**
Asian, Asian American	**5.9%**
Hispanic, Latino, Spanish descent	**7.4%**
Other minorities	**5.5%**

Organization

Communication/ public relations agency, communication consultancy, freelance consultant **14.1%**

Non-profit organization or association **7.0%**

Government-owned, public sector or political organization **15.4%**

Private company **44.0%**

Publicly-held company **19.5%**
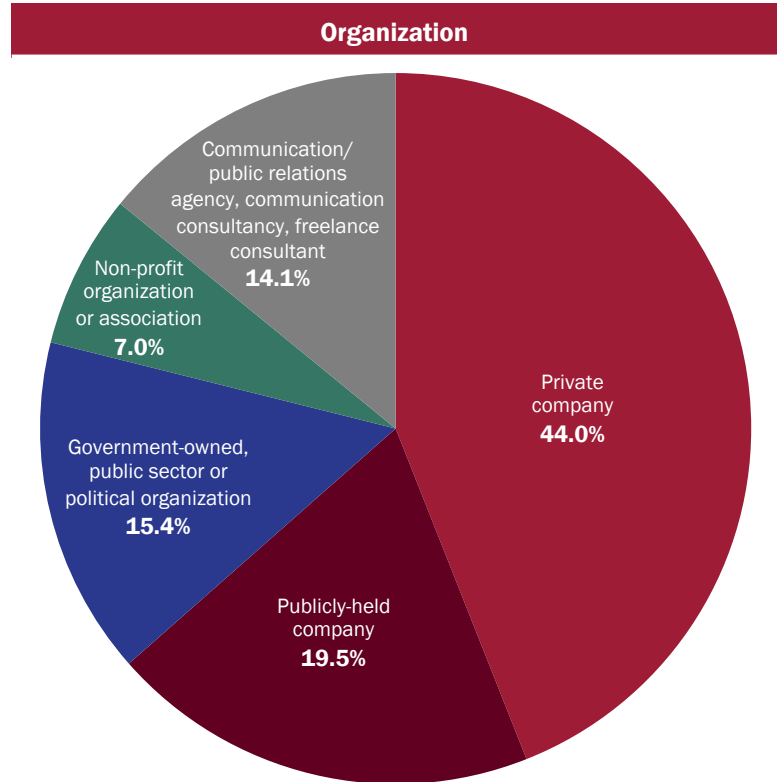
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q34: Where do you work? Q35: What is your position? Q45: How many years of experience do you have in communication and/or public relations? Q51: Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?

Demographic background of participants

Gender and country		
	United States of America (n = 797)	Canada (n = 258)
Women	49.3%	48.8%
Men	50.2%	51.2%

Gender, age and leadership position				
	Overall (n = 1,055)	CCO / Agency CEO (n = 321)	Team / Unit leader (n = 533)	Team member / Consultant / Other (n = 201)
Women	49.2%	34.9%	51.6%	65.7%
Men	50.4%	65.1%	47.8%	33.8%
Age (average)	37.1 years	37.1 years	37.4 years	36.4 years

Highest educational qualification	
Doctoral degree (Ph.D., J.D., etc.)	6.6%
Master's degree (M.A., M.S., MBA, etc.)	25.8%
Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)	35.4%
Associate Bachelor's degree	13.7%
High school graduation or equivalent	17.0%

Membership in professional association	
Joined one professional association	49.7%
Joined more than one professional association	17.5%
No membership in any professional association	32.8%

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q42: How old are you? Q44: What is your gender? Q46: Please state the highest academic/educational qualification you hold. Q47: Are you a member of a professional association? Q48: In which country are you currently based?

Top 10 areas of work of participants

Area	Percentage
Online communication, social media	19.8%
Overall communication (generalist)	19.6%
Marketing, brand, consumer communication	18.3%
Strategy and coordination of communication function	16.9%
Internal communication, change management	15.0%
Community relations	14.4%
Monitoring, measurement, evaluation	14.4%
Corporate social responsibility, sustainability	12.7%
Consultancy, advising, coaching, key account	11.5%
Financial communication, investor relations	10.8%

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q41: What are the primary areas of your work in communication? Please select up to three choices.

1

Generative AI impacting strategic communication

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a category of artificial intelligence that utilizes deep learning models to generate content like what a human would produce in response to sophisticated and varied prompts such as languages, instructions, and questions (Lim et al., 2023). The generative content can be in the form of imagery, text, audio, and others. Recent advances in Generative AI models developed by major tech companies like OpenAI (Metz, 2023) show potential to revolutionize some traditional functions of the communication profession such as copywriting, mass personalization, and creative inspiration. In this NACM, we evaluate the transformative challenges of introducing Generative AI technology within the industry from the perspective of communication professionals – at both the individual and organizational levels.

Based on our survey, a majority (66.1%) of professionals agree that Generative AI is a hot topic heavily discussed in the communications profession, and nearly seven out of ten (68.1%) of those professionals closely follow conversations about Generative AI. Although only slightly less than half of professionals (47.9%) currently use Generative AI tools frequently, over 70% of the industry anticipates it will alter the communications profession as it progresses. They also report it will substantially change their own department or agency (66.9%) and the way they personally work (63.9%). However, more than a third (36.1%) of the professionals indicate that Generative AI will not significantly change the way they personally work.

According to Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory (1962), the adoption rate of new technology such as Generative AI, will vary from one communication department or agency to another, divided among innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, latecomers, and outsiders. Four out of ten professionals across North America claimed that their communication unit falls into the "advanced Generative AI tools usage" category, namely "Early adopters" (20%), or "above average Generative AI tools usage" category, namely "Early majority" (18.9%). Only 14% claimed the "Latecomers'" status with below-average Generative AI tools usage.

The implications of Generative AI tools on the practice are generally seen in a positive light by communication professionals, with increased flexibility and autonomy in managing professional tasks at work being viewed as the most significant impact – endorsed by seven out of ten (65.3%) professionals. However, over two-thirds of professionals (63.9%) acknowledged concerns about data privacy and the ethical implications of Generative AI.

According to the surveyed professionals, the most notable organizational barriers to introducing Generative AI to their communication units are imperfect technological infrastructure-related issues such as high data and bandwidth/cloud requirements (49.2%). In regard to this barrier, professionals working in private organizations are the least concerned. Professionals working in public companies, consultancies, and agencies are more concerned about the high cost of implementation and training required. Government organizations are most concerned with the lack of support from the technology departments, while nonprofits are most concerned with inflexible organization set-up and culture.

More than half of the professionals (52%) believe that the responsibility to advance the application of Generative AI tools in the communication industry lies with the macro-level professional communities who share best practices and create market transparency for Generative AI.

Most communication professionals agree that Generative AI is a "hot topic" in North America

68.1%
agreement

I have followed the conversations about Generative AI closely

66.1%
agreement

Generative AI is heavily discussed in the communications profession in my country

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q27: Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a type of Artificial Intelligence that uses deep learning models to generate content that is similar to what a human would produce in response to sophisticated and varied prompts such as languages, instructions, and questions, in order to generate new content in the form of images, text, and audio. Some widely discussed examples of the Generative AI tools include ChatGPT, DALL-E 2, Bing AI, MidJourney & Jasper. Industry practitioners have started to discuss 'Generative AI' and its application in the communication process, addressing both the benefits and challenges. Given that AI can become one of the core technologies in digital transformation, understanding the challenges in introducing Generative AI technologies within communication departments and agencies is important. Please rate the following statements based on your overall impression of Generative AI tools. Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Most professionals anticipate higher relevance and change in the communications profession in relation to their own working environment and personal levels

73.3%
agreement

Generative AI will enormously change the **communications profession** in my country

66.9%
agreement

Generative AI will substantially change **my communication department or agency**

63.9%
agreement

Generative AI will significantly change **the way I personally work**
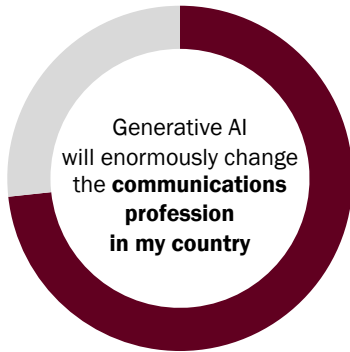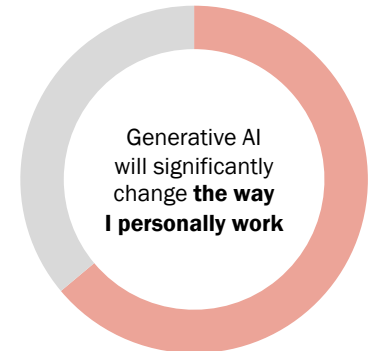
64.1% rate their knowledge about Generative AI tools as "good" or "excellent".
47.9% use Generative AI tools frequently in their line of work.

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q28: Please rate the following statements based on your overall impression on Generative AI tools. Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5. Q29a: Please rate the following statement. Scale 1 (Terrible) – 5 (Excellent). Q29b: Please rate the following statement. Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequency based on scale points 4–5.

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Communication professionals in Canada and the United States share similar perceptions on topic awareness, where the majority closely follow conversations concerning Generative AI

	I have followed the conversations about Generative AI closely	Generative AI is heavily discussed in the communications profession in my country
United States	**69.7%**	**67.2%**
Canada	**62.8%**	**61.6%**

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q27: Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a type of Artificial Intelligence that uses deep learning models to generate content that is similar to what a human would produce in response to sophisticated and varied prompts such as languages, instructions, and questions, in order to generate new content in the form of images, text, and audio. Some widely discussed examples of the Generative AI tools include ChatGPT, DALL-E 2, Bing AI, MidJourney & Jasper. Industry practitioners have started to discuss 'Generative AI' and its application in the communication process, addressing both the benefits and challenges. Given that AI can become one of the core technologies in digital transformation, understanding the challenges in introducing Generative AI technologies within communication departments and agencies is important. Please rate the following statements based on your overall impression of Generative AI tools. Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Impact of Generative AI: Increased flexibility and autonomy in managing tasks at work is the most significant factor; data privacy and the ethical implications of Generative AI are a top concern

Generative AI tools …

Statement	Value
provide more flexibility and autonomy to manage tasks and work	65.3%
raise concerns over data privacy and ethical conduct	63.9%
free communication professionals from the mundane tasks so they can focus more on advanced tasks such as innovation and strategy	62.6%
raise concern over credibility due to lack of ownership and content control	60.7%
may cause a higher level of anxiety about job insecurity as they require less human intervention in the working processes	59.5%
may cause a higher level of stress and information overload because of the excessive use of technology	53.4%

Legend: ■ Advantages ■ Disadvantages

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q30: Considering the functions of those Generative AI tools, how do you think Generative AI tools will affect the following activities for communication professionals? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Twenty percent of professionals across North America claimed that their units are "Early adopters" in their use of advanced Generative AI, while 14% claimed "Latecomers" status with below average usage

Degree of Generative AI tools use in communication units across North America

★★★★★ **13.1%** **Innovators**
Highly advanced Generative AI tools usage; all core activities

★★★★☆ **20.0%** **Early adopters**
Advanced Generative AI tools usage; almost every core activity

★★★☆☆ **18.9%** **Early majority**
Above average Generative AI tools usage; many core activities

★★☆☆☆ **17.3%** **Late majority**
Average Generative AI tools usage; some core activities

★☆☆☆☆ **14.0%** **Latecomers**
Below average Generative AI tools usage; a few core activities

☆☆☆☆☆ **16.7%** **Outsiders**
Almost no Generative AI tools usage; barely any core activities

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q31: Previous studies have shown that the extent of digital transformation is quite different in various communication departments and agencies. How would you describe your department or agency in terms of digitalization and the use of Generative AI tools; which of the following categories does it fit into? Please select only one category.

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Infrastructure issues related to high data and bandwidth/cloud requirements are the most notable organizational barriers to introducing Generative AI

Organizational challenges of introducing Generative AI

Challenge	Percentage
High data requirement	49.2%
High bandwidth / cloud requirement	49.2%
Output accuracy levels	45.8%
High cost of implementation / training	45.5%
Missing support by IT departments	44.3%
Underperforming software / AI models	43.7%
Outdated computer hardware	42.8%
Inflexible organization set-up and culture	42.2%
Low levels of communication industry relevance in current AI models	39.8%

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q32a: To what extent do you consider each of the following as organizational challenges when it comes to introducing Generative AI in your company? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (A great extent). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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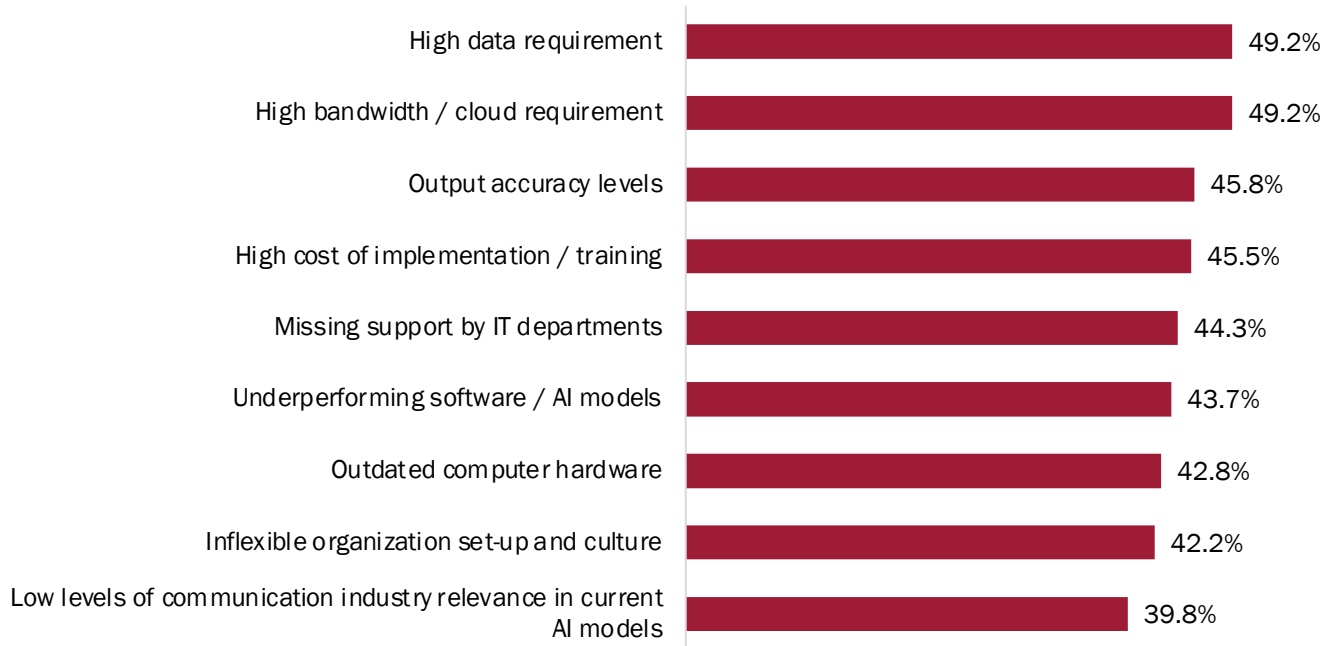
Professionals who work for private companies are the least concerned about technological barriers

Organizational challenges of introducing Generative AI

High data requirement *
- Non-profit: 3.19
- Private: 3.28
- Public: 3.46
- Governmental: 3.48
- Consultancies: 3.54

High bandwidth / cloud requirement
- Private: 3.23
- Governmental: 3.37
- Non-profit: 3.26
- Consultancies: 3.42

Output accuracy levels
- Non-profit: 3.20
- Public: 3.33
- Private: 3.24
- Consultancies: 3.40
- Governmental: 3.37

High cost of implementation / training
- Private: 3.23
- Governmental: 3.31
- Consultancies: 3.42
- Public: 3.44
- Non-profit: 3.38

Missing support by IT departments **
- Private: 3.07
- Non-profit: 3.18
- Public: 3.25
- Consultancies: 3.31
- Governmental: 3.48

Underperforming software / AI models
- Private: 3.09
- Private: 3.21
- Non-profit: 3.30
- Governmental: 3.37
- Consultancies: 3.34

Outdated computer hardware
- Public: 3.17
- Private: 3.05
- Non-profit: 3.19
- Governmental: 3.25
- Consultancies: 3.36

Inflexible organization set-up and culture **
- Private: 3.05
- Public: 3.26
- Non-profit: 3.32
- Governmental: 3.37
- Governmental: 3.36

Low levels of communication industry relevance in current AI models
- Private: 3.08
- Private: 3.09
- Public: 3.12
- Governmental: 3.27
- Consultancies: 3.29

Legend:
- Public companies
- Private companies
- Governmental organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Consultancies & Agencies

(1) Not at all   (3)   A great extent (5)

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q32a: To what extent do you consider each of the following as organizational challenges when it comes to introducing Generative AI in your company? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (A great extent). Mean values. ** Highly significant differences (ANOVA, $p \leq 0.01$). * Significant differences (ANOVA, $p \leq 0.05$).

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At the individual level, half of the professionals listed understanding of human emotions and nuance (51%) and ethical concerns about data privacy (50%) as the primary challenges of introducing Generative AI

Individual challenges of introducing Generative AI

Challenge	Percentage
Understanding human emotions / nuances	51.0%
Ethical concerns (data privacy)	50.0%
Strong need for human interaction in the creative process	48.5%
Lack of AI mindset of employees	48.1%
High cost in training staff / skill upgradation	47.9%
Lack of knowledge	45.6%
Job insecurities affecting performance	45.6%
Increased stress	45.1%
Lack of ownership / credibility	43.8%
Lack of interdisciplinary knowledge (communication & tech)	42.7%
Lack of workflow documentation-standard operating process	40.2%

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q32b: To what extent do you consider each of the following as individual challenges when it comes to introducing Generative AI in your company? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (A great extent). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Senior leaders are particularly concerned about the organizational challenges they face when introducing Generative AI

Organizational challenges of introducing Generative AI

Challenge	Team member / Consultant	Team leader / Unit leader	Head of communication / Agency CEO
Understanding human emotions / nuances **	3.40	3.36	3.63
Ethical concerns (data privacy)	3.32	3.36	3.43
Strong need for human interaction in the creative process **	3.29	3.30	3.55
Lack of AI mindset of employees	3.24	3.26	3.42
High cost in training staff / skill upgradation **	3.28	3.24	3.54
Lack of knowledge **	3.18	3.20	3.49
Job insecurities affecting performance *	3.18	3.22	3.45
Increased stress *	3.16	3.21	3.41
Lack of ownership / credibility **	3.11	3.17	3.47
Lack of interdisciplinary knowledge (communication & tech) *	3.16	3.12	3.34
Lack of workflow documentation-standard operating process **	3.03	3.05	3.32

(1) Not at all (3) A great extent (5)

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q32a: To what extent do you consider each of the following as organizational challenges when it comes to introducing Generative AI in your company? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (A great extent). Mean values. ** Highly significant differences (ANOVA, p ≤ 0.01). * Significant differences (ANOVA, p ≤ 0.05).

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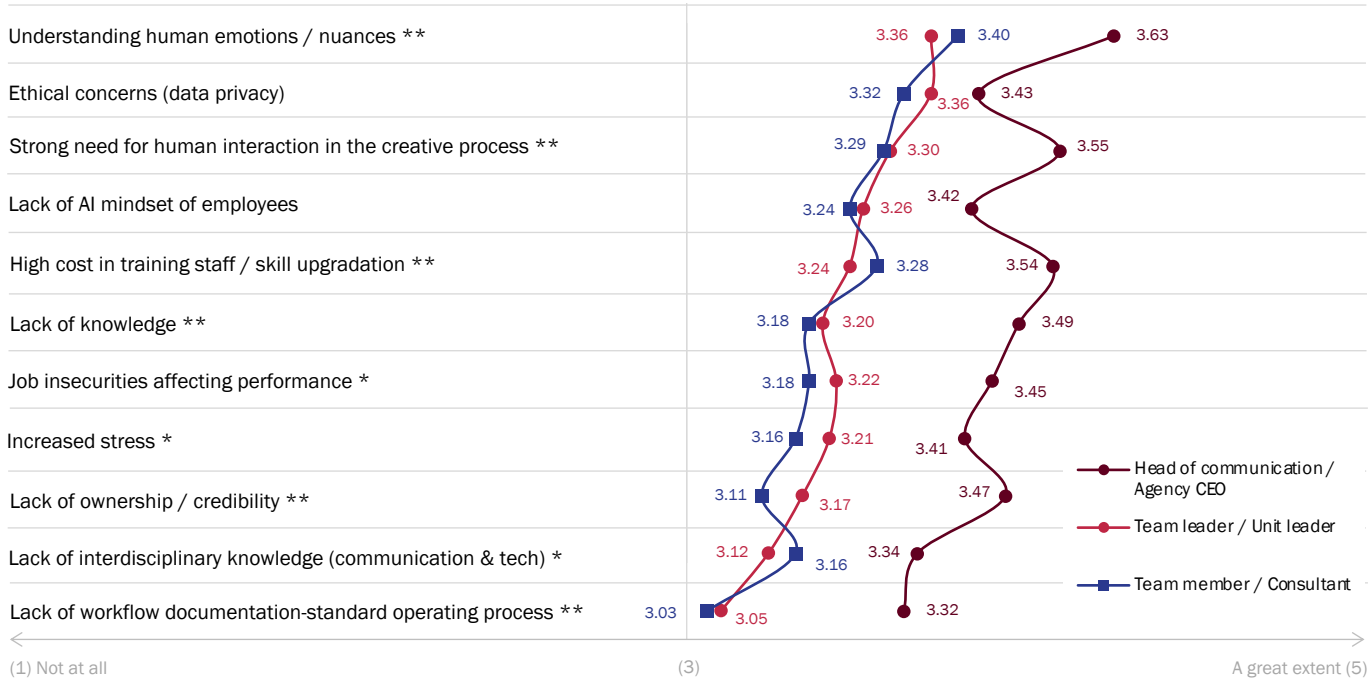
Most professionals (52%) believe that the responsibility to advance the application of Generative AI tools in the communication profession lies within the macro-level professional communities

Importance of different actors in the field

Communication professionals who experiment bottom-up with Generative AI in their own area of responsibility — 50.8%

Communication departments and agencies who invest systematically in Generative AI processes and structures — 50.8%

Professional communities who share best practices and create market transparency for Generative AI — 52.6%
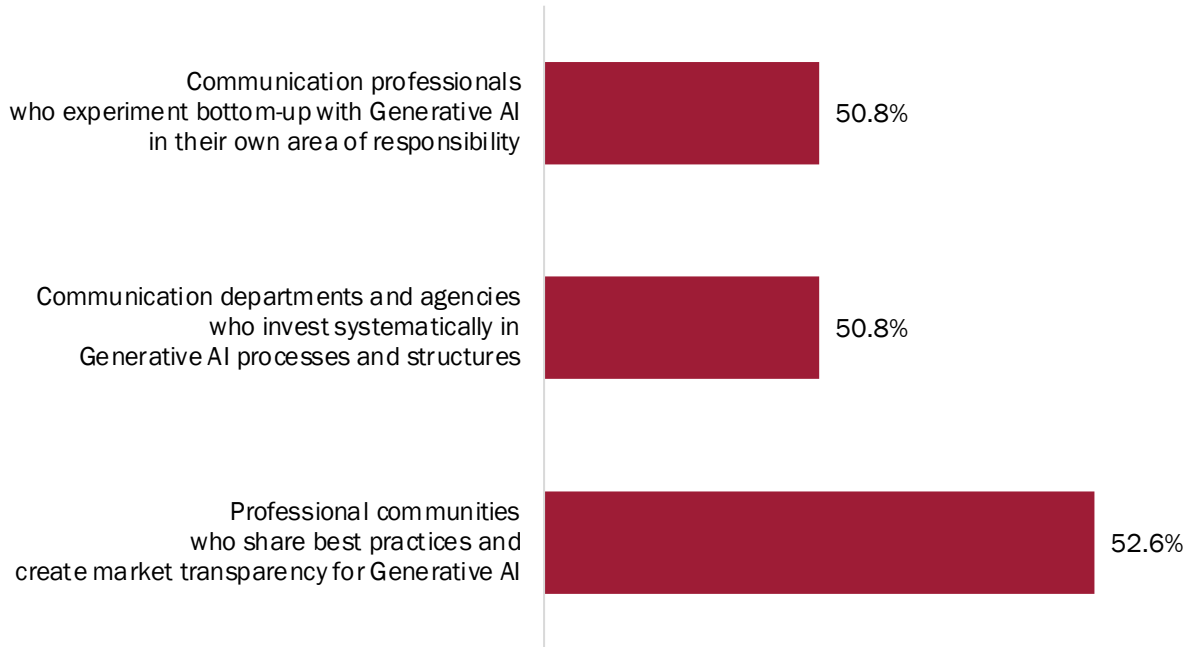
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q33: How important are each of the following when it comes to taking the responsibility to advance the application of Generative AI tools? Scale 1 (Not important) – 5 (Very important). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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2

Diversity, equality and inclusion as challenge for the profession

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) influence organizational policies and communications worldwide. While debates about diversity have been around for quite some time, in recent years, discussions have expanded to include putting in place practices, policies and processes to ensure "the fair and just treatment of diverse individuals" (equity) and building a culture of being seen, heard, and valued (inclusion) (Bardhan & Gower, 2023; Bendl et al., 2014; Mor Barak, 2022; Vertovec, 2015). There is also an increasing discussion about the role DEI should play in communications and vice versa (Mundy, 2016). The PR Coalition (2005), a group of 28 associations in the communication profession, stated that public relations had a role in championing diversity in organizations and communities. Other professional bodies have also enlarged and enriched the debate in the last few years (ICCO, 2022b; IPR, 2021; Spector & Spector, 2018).

This NACM explores whether and how this rather normative and conceptual debate resonates in communication management in Canada and the United States. Results show that approximately two-thirds of communication professionals report closely following global trends and debates about DEI (65.2%). About the same percentage of respondents confirm that the topic is heavily discussed in their country (67%), with minor differences (< 3%) between American and Canadian respondents. In North America, public and private companies are leading the way in discussions related to DEI, with such conversations most heavily concentrated among those higher up the communication hierarchy. While communicators report DEI as having a variety of impacts on their internal and external communications, this is more common among practitioners in public companies compared to practitioners in other types of organizations.

Looking at typical dimensions of diversity, our surveyed professionals reported that DEI is still most commonly considered in terms of ethnicity (62.6%) and age (59.5%) and least in terms of religious and spiritual beliefs (49.5%) in communication initiatives of organizations. However, what it means to embrace DEI in communications varies across different organizations.

In terms of specific DEI actions, communication departments and agencies are most heavily involved in celebrating diversity (63.4%), as well as creating (63.2%) and implementing (62.6%) DEI policies, and less involved in informing external audiences about DEI-related matters (56.2%). Nevertheless, involvement varies by organization type. Practitioners in public companies are generally more engaged in all forms of DEI activities, while those in non-profits are typically less involved in those same activities.

Ethnicity and/or nationality (66.7%) is the most considered dimension of diversity in organizational policies and actions, while diversity in thinking is less thought of (57.6%). While organizations promote internal and external policies related to inclusion, most focus on career development and promotion (70.9%). On the other hand, fewer policies focus on initiatives to include external stakeholders from specific populations (58.9%).

The business case for diversity argues that the more diverse organizations are, the more creative and inclusive thinking, competitive edge in business, a heightened social license, and overall marketplace success (Herring, 2009). The results reported here show North American communication professionals are actively attempting to achieve these benefits.

Two-thirds of communication professionals in North America report following global trends and debates about DEI closely, with similar percentages confirming the relevance of the topic in their country

65.2% agreement

I have followed the global trends and debates about DEI in organizations closely

67.0% agreement

DEI is heavily discussed in the communications profession in my country
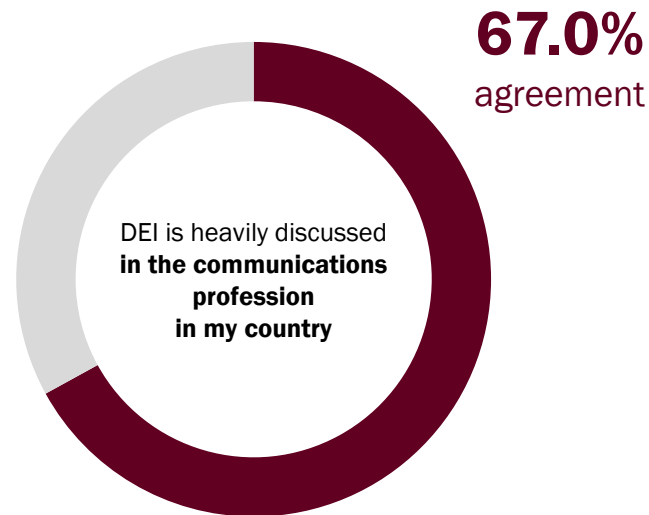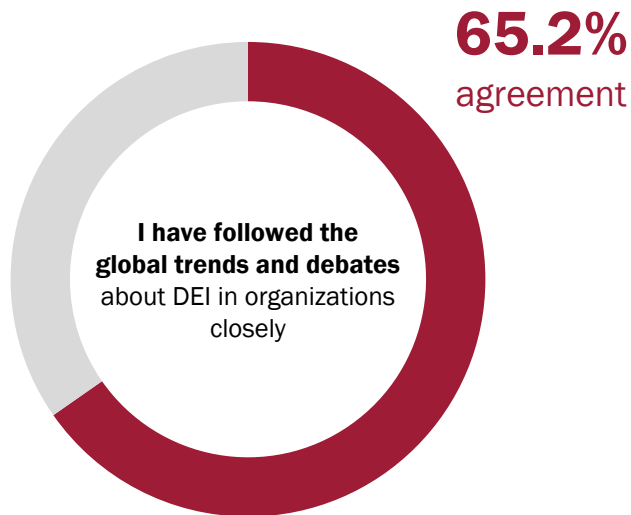
72.7% rate their knowledge about diversity, equity, and inclusion as "good" or "excellent".

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q12: Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are concepts influencing organizational policies and communication activities worldwide. The debate on diversity has grown to include more than gender, race, ethnicity, or physical disabilities. Broader issues such as sometimes invisible differences of people regarding age, social background, sexual orientation, or gender identity are also discussed today. Moreover, the debate on diversity has been expanded to fair treatment of everybody (equity) and building a culture of being seen, heard, and valued (inclusion). To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5. Q12a: Please rate the following statement. My knowledge about diversity, equity, and inclusion is: ... Scale 1 (Terrible) – 5 (Excellent).

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Little difference is reported between the United States and Canada regarding the importance of DEI within the communications profession

	I have followed the global trends and debates about DEI in organizations closely	DEI is heavily discussed in the communications profession in my country
United States	**65.9%**	**67.0%**
Canada	**63.2%**	**67.1%**

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q12: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Public and private companies in North America outpace governmental organizations, nonprofits, and consultancies/agencies in DEI-related discussions
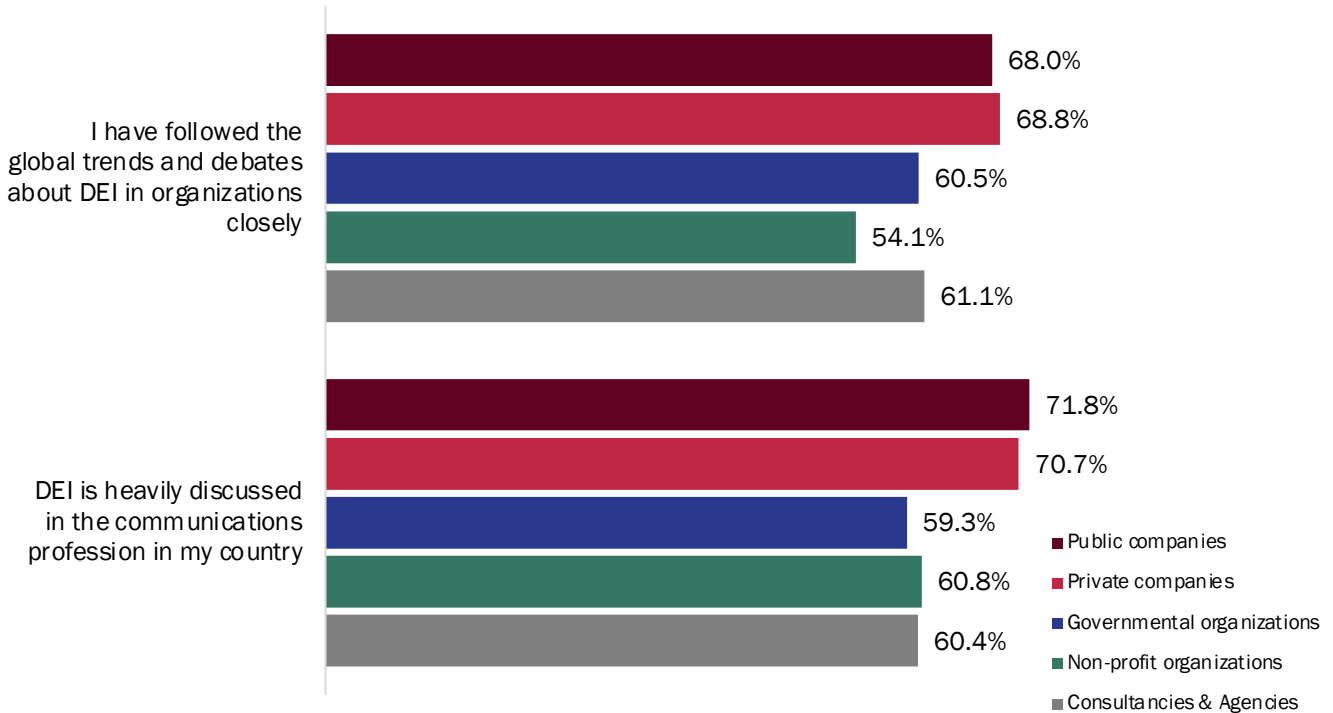
I have followed the global trends and debates about DEI in organizations closely
- 68.0%
- 68.8%
- 60.5%
- 54.1%
- 61.1%

DEI is heavily discussed in the communications profession in my country
- 71.8%
- 70.7%
- 59.3%
- 60.8%
- 60.4%

Legend:
- Public companies
- Private companies
- Governmental organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Consultancies & Agencies

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q12: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Senior-level communicators pay more attention to and report hearing more discussion about DEI than mid- to entry-level communicators

I have followed the global trends and debates about DEI in organizations closely
- 73.5%
- 65.7%
- 49.4%

■ Head of communication / Agency CEO
■ Unit leader / Team leader
■ Team member / Consultant

DEI is heavily discussed in the communications profession in my country
- 72.9%
- 65.7%
- 59.4%
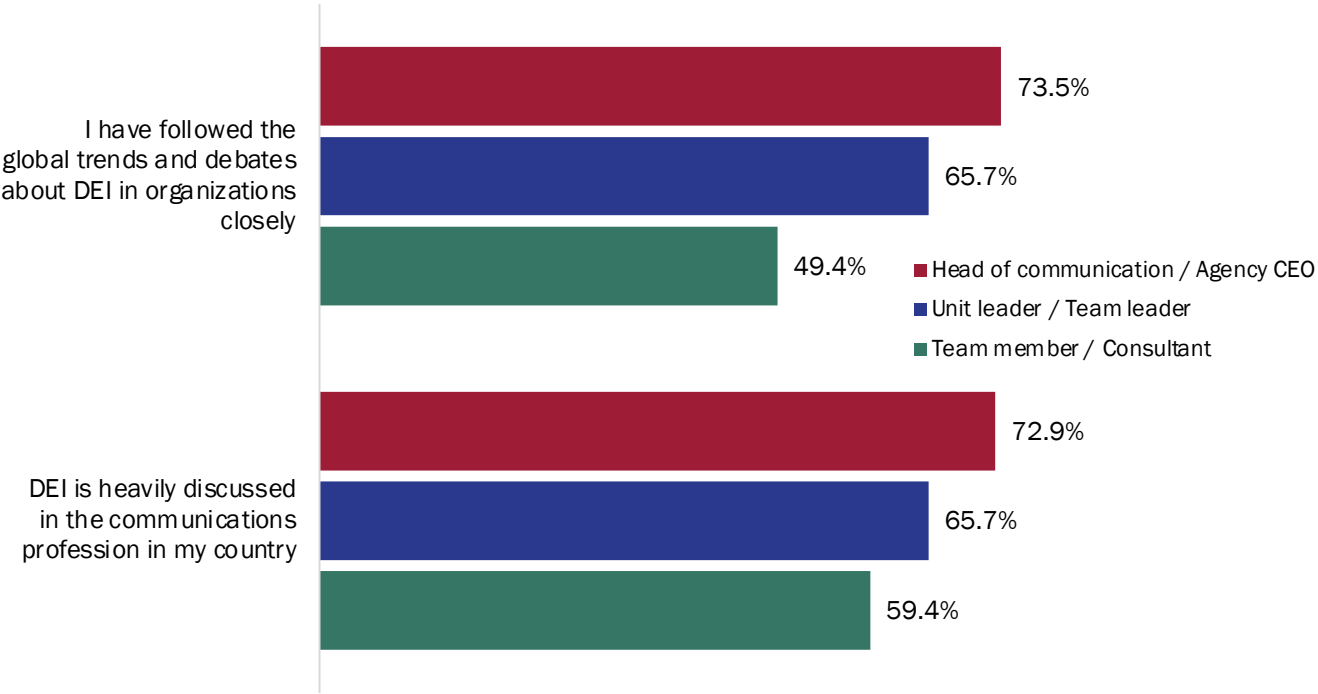
Note: n = 1,024 communication professionals. Q12: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Communicators report a variety of impacts of DEI on their communications, with a mixture of impacts on both internal and external communications

Impact of diversity, equality and inclusion on communications

Statement	Percentage
I carefully consider DEI factors when developing verbal and visual content for my organization or clients	68.2%
The communication department(s) or professionals work closely with other departments, like human resources, on DEI initiatives in my organization	67.7%
If what we communicate about DEI does not match what we do about DEI, the risk of losing the trust of external stakeholders increases	64.7%
The communication department(s) or professionals are primarily responsible for DEI initiatives in my organization	64.4%
DEI will substantially impact the composition of teams in my communication department or consultancy in the next three years	63.6%
If what we communicate about DEI does not match what we do about DEI, the risk of losing the trust of internal stakeholders increases	62.8%

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q13: The debate on diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizations and society might influence communications in different ways. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Professionals in public companies report generally strong and consistent impacts of DEI on communications relative to practitioners in other organizations

Impact of diversity, equality and inclusion on communications

I carefully consider DEI factors when developing verbal and visual content for my organization or clients

The communication department(s) or professionals work closely with other departments, like human resources, on DEI initiatives in my organization

If what we communicate about DEI does not match what we do about DEI, the risk of losing the trust of external stakeholders increases

The communication department(s) or professionals are primarily responsible for DEI initiatives in my organization

DEI will substantially impact the composition of teams in my communication department or consultancy in the next three years

If what we communicate about DEI does not match what we do about DEI, the risk of losing the trust of internal stakeholders increases

Legend:
- Public companies
- Private companies
- Governmental organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Consultancies & Agencies

(1) Strongly disagree   (3)   Strongly agree (5)

Data labels:
- 3.65, 3.77, 3.86, 3.88, 3.93
- 3.66, 3.66, 3.85, 3.86, 3.86
- 3.68, 3.73, 3.70, 3.76, 3.85
- 3.62, 3.64, 3.76, 3.76, 3.83
- 3.61, 3.71, 3.72, 3.82, 3.80
- 3.55, 3.69, 3.72, 3.74, 3.74
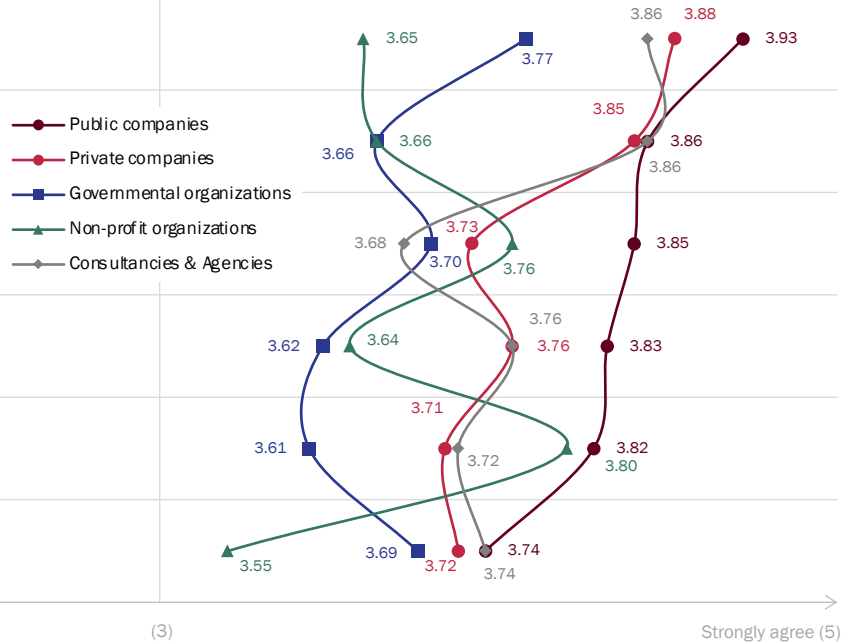
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q13: The debate on diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizations and society might influence communications in different ways. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Mean values.

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The DEI dimensions of ethnicity, age, and physical and mental abilities are considered more often than religious and spiritual beliefs

*Dimensions of diversity considered in **communication initiatives of organizations***

Dimension	%
Ethnicity and nationality	62.6%
Generation / age	59.5%
Physical and mental abilities and disabilities (e.g., speech impediment, attention deficits, autism)	58.7%
Worldviews and political opinions	56.0%
Socioeconomic status (education, status/class, marital status, parental status, etc.)	55.7%
Gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, LGBTQ+	54.1%
Religious and spiritual beliefs	49.5%
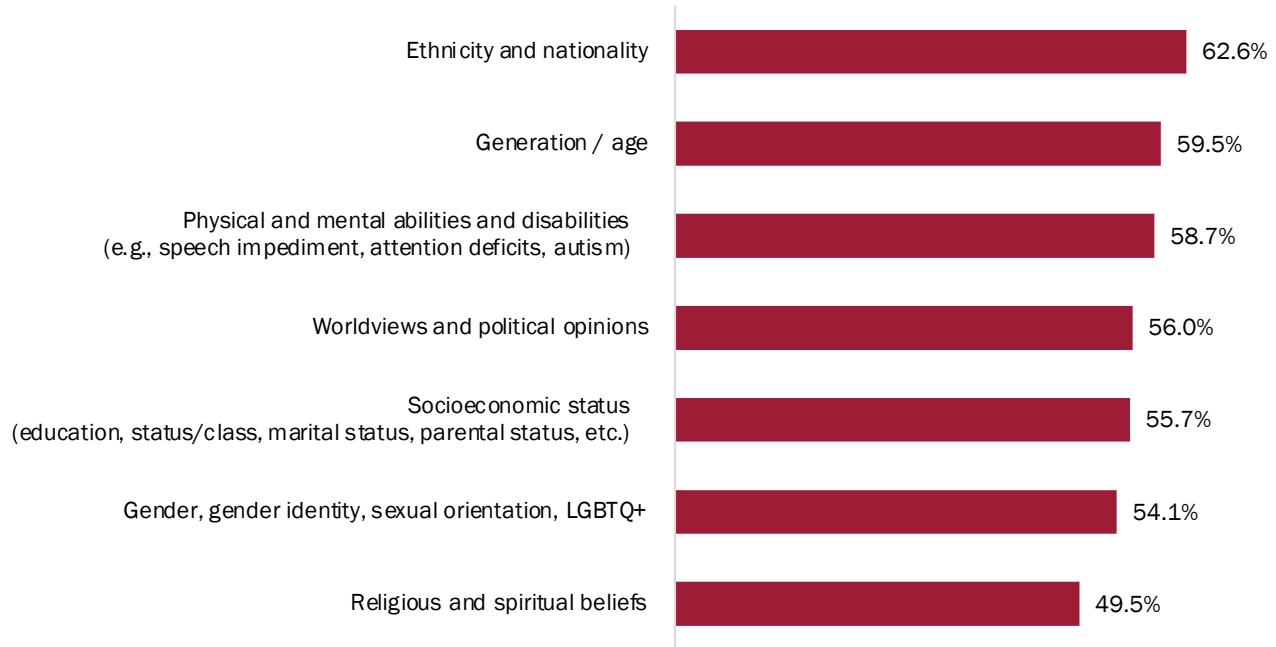
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q14: Taking care of diversity might impact content creation as well as the selection of channels and platforms in organizational and corporate communications. To what extent are the following dimensions of diversity considered in the communication initiatives of your organization? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Embracing DEI in communications translates differently depending on the organization

*Dimensions of diversity considered in **communication initiatives of organizations***

Legend:
- Public companies
- Private companies
- Governmental organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Consultancies & Agencies

Dimension	Public companies	Private companies	Governmental organizations	Non-profit organizations	Consultancies & Agencies
Ethnicity and nationality	3.83	3.67	3.57	3.64	3.75
Generation / age	3.70	3.58	3.58	3.61	3.66
Physical and mental abilities and disabilities (e.g., speech impediment, attention deficits, autism)	3.69	3.56	3.59	3.50	3.50
Worldviews and political opinions	3.61	3.50	3.54	3.35	3.46
Socioeconomic status (education, status/class, marital status, parental status, etc.)	3.54	3.49	3.52	3.34	3.46
Gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, LGBTQ+	3.65	3.43	3.45	3.32	3.40
Religious and spiritual beliefs	3.40	3.34	3.38	3.26	3.46

(1) Not at all　　　　　　　　　　(3)　　　　　　　　　　To a great extent (5)

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q14: To what extent are the following dimensions of diversity considered in the communication initiatives of your organization? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). Mean values.

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Communication departments and agencies are most heavily involved in celebrating DEI, as well as creating and implementing policies, and less involved in informing external audiences about DEI-related matters

Responsibilities of communication units for DEI initiatives
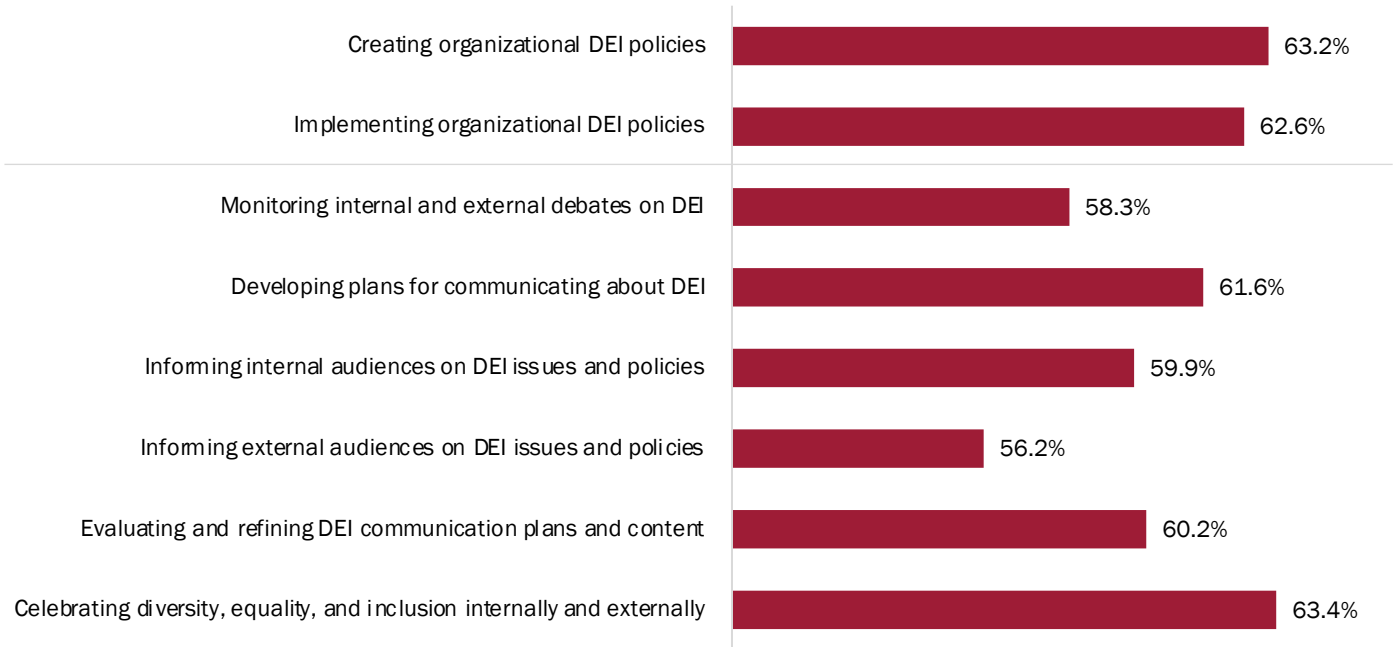
Responsibility	Percentage
Creating organizational DEI policies	63.2%
Implementing organizational DEI policies	62.6%
Monitoring internal and external debates on DEI	58.3%
Developing plans for communicating about DEI	61.6%
Informing internal audiences on DEI issues and policies	59.9%
Informing external audiences on DEI issues and policies	56.2%
Evaluating and refining DEI communication plans and content	60.2%
Celebrating diversity, equality, and inclusion internally and externally	63.4%

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q15: To what extent does your department or agency actively engage in establishing or communicating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies for your organization or clients in the following ways? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Communication professionals in public companies are more involved in all forms of DEI activities as compared to colleagues in other organizations

Responsibilities of communication units for DEI initiatives

Legend:
- Public companies
- Private companies
- Governmental organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Consultancies & Agencies

Categories (top to bottom):
- Creating organizational DEI policies
- Implementing organizational DEI policies *
- Monitoring internal and external debates on DEI *
- Developing plans for communicating about DEI **
- Informing internal audiences on DEI issues and policies **
- Informing external audiences on DEI issues and policies *
- Evaluating and refining DEI communication plans and content **
- Celebrating diversity, equality, and inclusion internally and externally *

Data values:

Creating organizational DEI policies: 3.36 (Non-profit), 3.67 (Consultancies), 3.70 (Private), 3.75 (Governmental), 3.76 (Public)

Implementing organizational DEI policies *: 3.43, 3.66, 3.70, 3.75, 3.86

Monitoring internal and external debates on DEI *: 3.32, 3.53, 3.60, 3.70, 3.76

Developing plans for communicating about DEI **: 3.47, 3.60, 3.63, 3.60, 3.75

Informing internal audiences on DEI issues and policies **: 3.31, 3.52, 3.61, 3.63, 3.83

Informing external audiences on DEI issues and policies *: 3.22, 3.44, 3.53, 3.59, 3.66

Evaluating and refining DEI communication plans and content **: 3.32, 3.38, 3.63, 3.64, 3.83

Celebrating diversity, equality, and inclusion internally and externally *: 3.57, 3.63, 3.70, 3.74, 3.93

Scale: (1) Not at all — (3) — To a great extent (5)

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q15: To what extent does your department or agency actively engage in establishing or communicating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies for your organization or clients in the following ways? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). Mean values. ** Highly significant differences (ANOVA, p ≤ 0.01). * Significant differences (ANOVA, p ≤ 0.05).

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Ethnicity and nationality are the most commonly considered dimension of diversity in organizational policies and actions

*Dimensions of diversity considered in **organizational policies and actions***

Dimension	Percentage
Ethnicity and nationality	66.7%
Physical and mental abilities and disabilities (e.g., speech impediment, attention deficits, autism)	65.9%
Generation / age	62.8%
Sex and gender identity	62.6%
Sexual orientation or identity, LGBTQ+	60.8%
Socioeconomic status (education, status/class, marital status, parental status, etc.)	60.3%
Religious, spiritual beliefs, and worldviews (diversity of thoughts)	57.6%
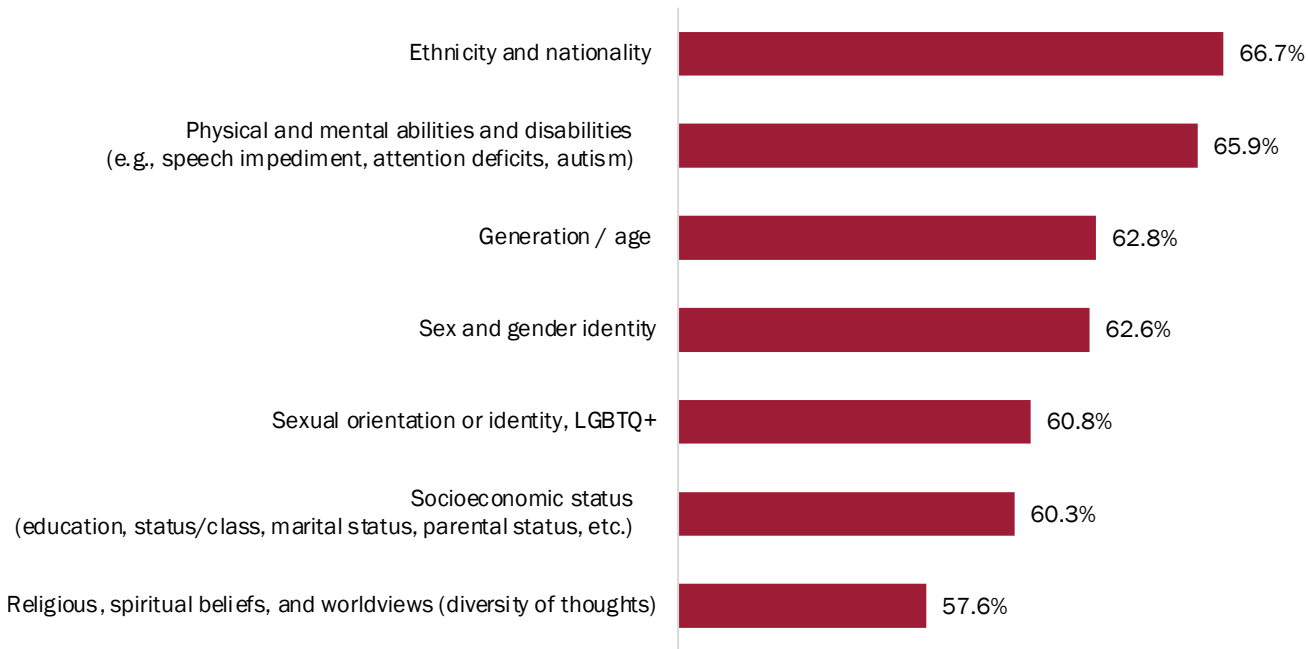
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q16: Diversity can be understood quite differently in organizations. The concept can include more or less socially meaningful categorizations that reflect the variety of distinctive groups of a society with a range. If you think of your organization: How important, if at all, are each of the following dimensions of diversity in terms of organizational policies and actions? Scale 1 (Not important) – 5 (Very important). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Organizations are involved in promoting internal and external policies of inclusion; most focus on career development and promotion, and fewer focus on initiatives to include external stakeholders

Policies of inclusion communicated internally and externally by the organization

Category	%
Career development and promotion	70.9%
Flexible labor conditions (e.g, working hours, home office)	69.2%
Organizational statements promoting inclusion in society	68.1%
Personnel recruitment and hiring	67.9%
Board and management gender composition	63.6%
Community well-being programs with an emphasis on special populations (e.g., mental health, disabilities, HIV/AIDS)	63.2%
Employee well-being programs with an emphasis on special populations (e.g., mental health, disabilities, HIV/AIDS)	63.0%
Employee integration programs for special populations (e.g., migrants, disabled persons)	61.4%
Initiatives to include external stakeholders from specific populations (e.g, customers/clients or suppliers with handicaps or from minorities)	58.9%

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q17: Successful diversity initiatives lead to inclusion practices in which distinctive groups are empowered and opportunities for their participation are embedded in policies, decisions, and actions. To what extent are the following policies of inclusion communicated internally and externally by your organization? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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3

Empathic leadership
in communication teams

During times of crisis, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, it has been argued that leaders of organizations must communicate with greater empathy. Is this also true for communication leaders in other situations? In this edition of the NACM, we researched various dimensions of empathic leadership and its effects on mental health, commitment, and well-being.

Scholars suggest that the ability to have and display empathy is a critical part of effective and servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970; Spears, 2002). Empathy refers to "standing in the shoes" of another person and attempting to see the world from their point of view. Empathic leaders demonstrate that they truly understand what followers are thinking and feeling. Empathy enables leaders to show individualized levels of consideration to followers (e.g., Avolio & Bass, 1995), to recognize emotion in others (Rubin et al., 2005), and to be aware both of themselves and of the context within which they are communicating (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Results show that more than two-thirds of communication professionals in North America report that their communication leaders have increased levels of empathy during the last year (67.9%) and are generally empathic when communicating with colleagues (71.2%). Further, approximately three-quarters believe their organization's senior leadership conveys empathy.
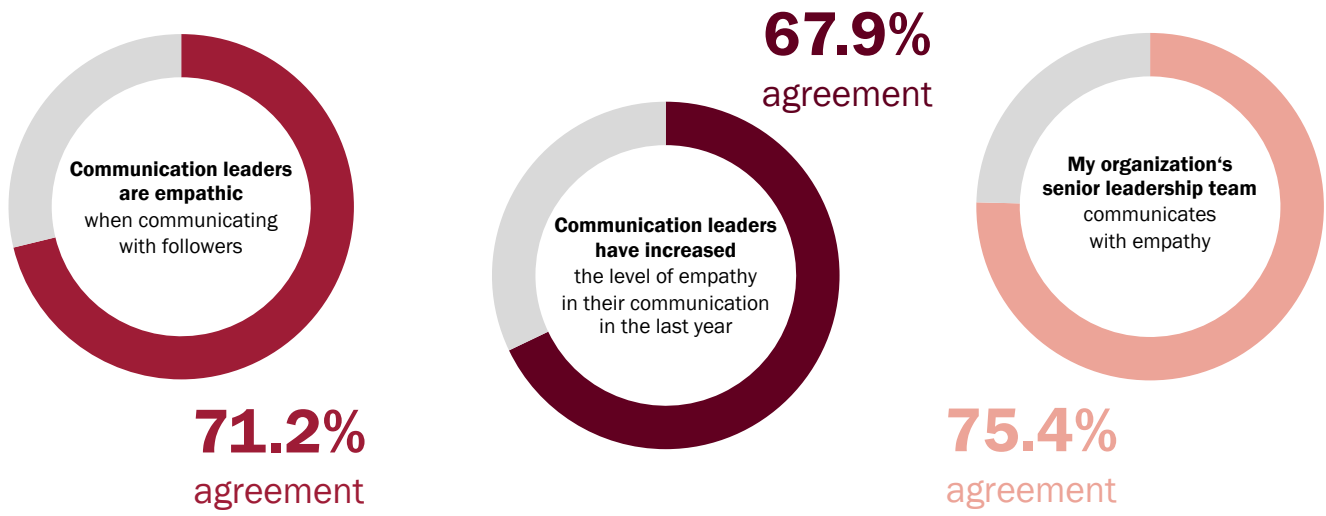
The top four ways leaders show empathy are: 1) paying attention and listening well (74.9%), 2) identifying other team member's strengths and limitations (72.8%), 3) always asking questions to be sure they understand others (71.8%), and 4) caring about the personal well-being of others and showing sensitivity and understanding (71.4%). Nevertheless, there are noticeable differences in empathic leadership across organization types. Generally, private companies tend to lead the way in displaying empathy, while governmental organizations are susceptible to lag.

The findings also show that, overall, communicators are committed to the organization that they work for, with nearly seven out of ten reporting a sense of belonging, attachment, and personal meaning to their current organization. Similarly, most of the surveyed communication professionals report being both enthused about their job (72.6%) and immersed in their work (69.6%). However, their reported energy levels are slightly lower (61.4%).

When considering the dimension of mental health (van Dierendonk et al., 2001), there is evidence that many communicators feel used up at the end of their workday (46.1%), even while the vast majority feel capable of effectively solving problems that arise (76.9%). However, more than one-third of communication professionals intend to change jobs during the coming year. When broken down by gender, the results showed that men and women reported similar mental health issue levels. A similar analysis focusing on age found younger communication professionals are less satisfied with their work and post the highest turnover intentions. Issues of mental health and turnover also varied across organization types.

Among the most important takeaways is that empathic leadership plays a role in workplace satisfaction. Unsurprisingly, those working for empathic leaders reported higher organization commitment, work engagement, positive mental health, and lower turnover intentions. This is a strong argument for developing leadership competencies and team culture. The good news is that more than two-thirds of communication professionals believe that their organization and its senior leaders are committed to empathic leadership and transparency.

More than two-thirds of communication professionals in North America report that their communication leaders have increased empathy during the last year and are empathic when communicating with colleagues

67.9% agreement

Communication leaders are empathic when communicating with followers

71.2% agreement

Communication leaders have increased the level of empathy in their communication in the last year

My organization's senior leadership team communicates with empathy

75.4% agreement

44.5% report to a female and 51.2% to a male leader.
4.4% are top communicator / agency head or owner themselves.

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q18: During the COVID-19 pandemic and additionally in response to new demands from younger generations, many leaders in organizations have changed their communication styles and humanized the way they interact. Also, many heads of communication departments and agencies show empathy when connecting to their teams, i.e. by trying to understand other people's feelings and emotions, and by putting themselves in someone else's shoes and taking an active interest in their concerns. When thinking of your own organization: How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Top communicators who do not report to a leader were asked for a self-assessment. Frequencies based on scale points 4–5. Q19a: Please rate the following statement: … Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequency based on scale points 4–5. Q43: What is the gender of your direct communication leader / supervisor?

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Three-quarters of professionals report that their communication leader shows empathy by paying attention and listening well; just two-third report that their leader accurately reads moods, feelings, or nonverbal cues

The communication leader …
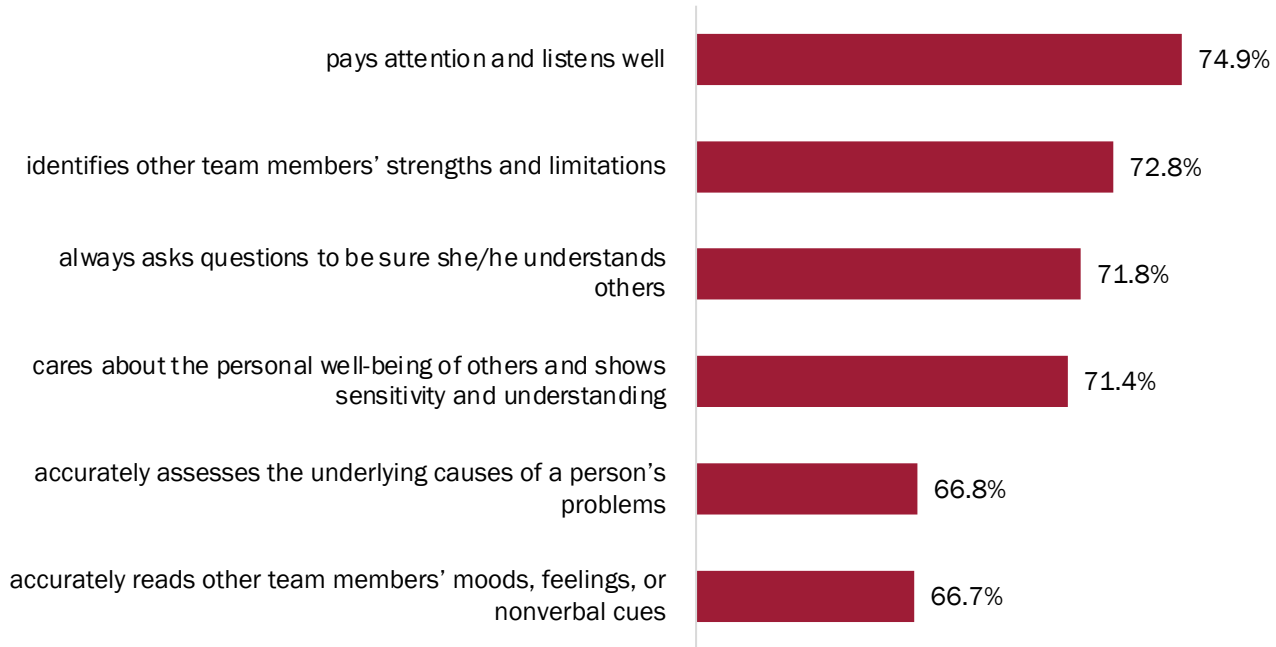
pays attention and listens well	74.9%
identifies other team members' strengths and limitations	72.8%
always asks questions to be sure she/he understands others	71.8%
cares about the personal well-being of others and shows sensitivity and understanding	71.4%
accurately assesses the underlying causes of a person's problems	66.8%
accurately reads other team members' moods, feelings, or nonverbal cues	66.7%

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q19: How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Top communicators who do not report to a leader were asked for a self-assessment. Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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There are striking differences in empathic leadership across organization types, with private companies generally leading the way and governmental organizations most likely to be lagging

The communication leader …

pays attention and listens well **

identifies other team members' strengths and limitations **

always asks questions to be sure she/he understands others *

cares about the personal well-being of others and shows sensitivity and understanding **

accurately assesses the underlying causes of a person's problems **

accurately reads other team members' moods, feelings, or nonverbal cues **

Legend:
- Public companies
- Private companies
- Governmental organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Consultancies & Agencies

Values:
pays attention and listens well: 3.64, 3.80, 3.95, 4.07, 4.07
identifies other team members' strengths and limitations: 3.81, 3.85, 3.82, 3.82, 4.06
always asks questions: 3.70, 3.77, 3.88, 3.88, 4.00
cares about personal well-being: 3.67, 3.87, 3.84, 3.84, 4.03
accurately assesses underlying causes: 3.58, 3.61, 3.79, 3.88, 3.86
accurately reads moods: 3.56, 3.62, 3.84, 3.85, 3.91

(1) Strongly disagree   (3)   Strongly agree (5)

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q19: How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Top communicators who do not report to a leader were asked for a self-assessment. Mean values. ** Highly significant differences (ANOVA, $p \leq 0.01$). * Significant differences (ANOVA, $p \leq 0.05$).

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Nearly 70% of communication professionals report strong loyalty to their organization

Organizational commitment, measured with three items

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I have a strong sense of belonging to my organization	9.6%	20.9%	69.8%
I feel personally attached to my organization	9.3%	20.9%	69.7%
Working at my organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me	9.4%	22.7%	68.0%

0%   100%

■ Disagee   ■ Neutral   ■ Agree
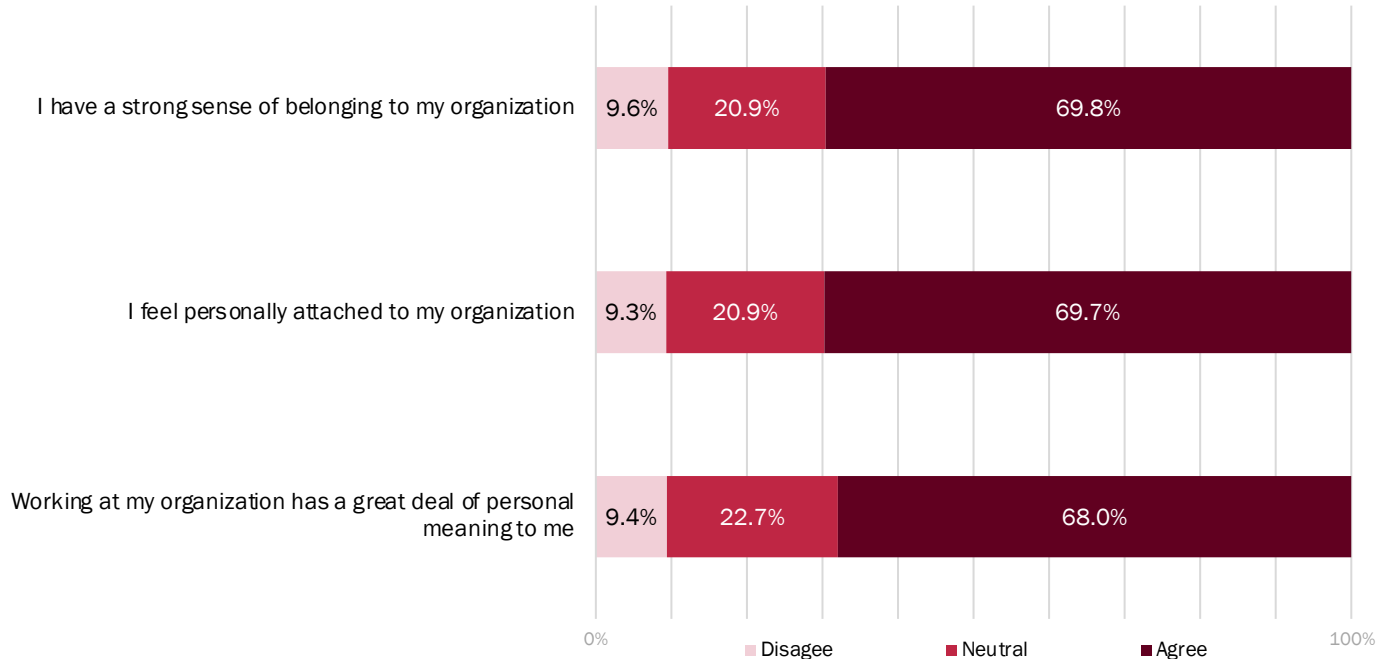
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q20 (items 8–10): The working environment of communication professionals may change as empathy in communication becomes more prevalent. Thinking of your daily work as a communication professional, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Disagree: scale points 1–2; neutral: scale point 3; agree: scale points 4–5.

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Communication professionals generally report being both enthused and immersed in their work

Work engagement, *measured with three items*

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
At my work, I feel bursting with energy	13.0%	25.6%	61.4%
I am enthusiastic about my job	9.1%	18.2%	72.6%
I am immersed in my work	8.3%	22.2%	69.6%

0%   100%

■ Disagee   ■ Neutral   ■ Agree
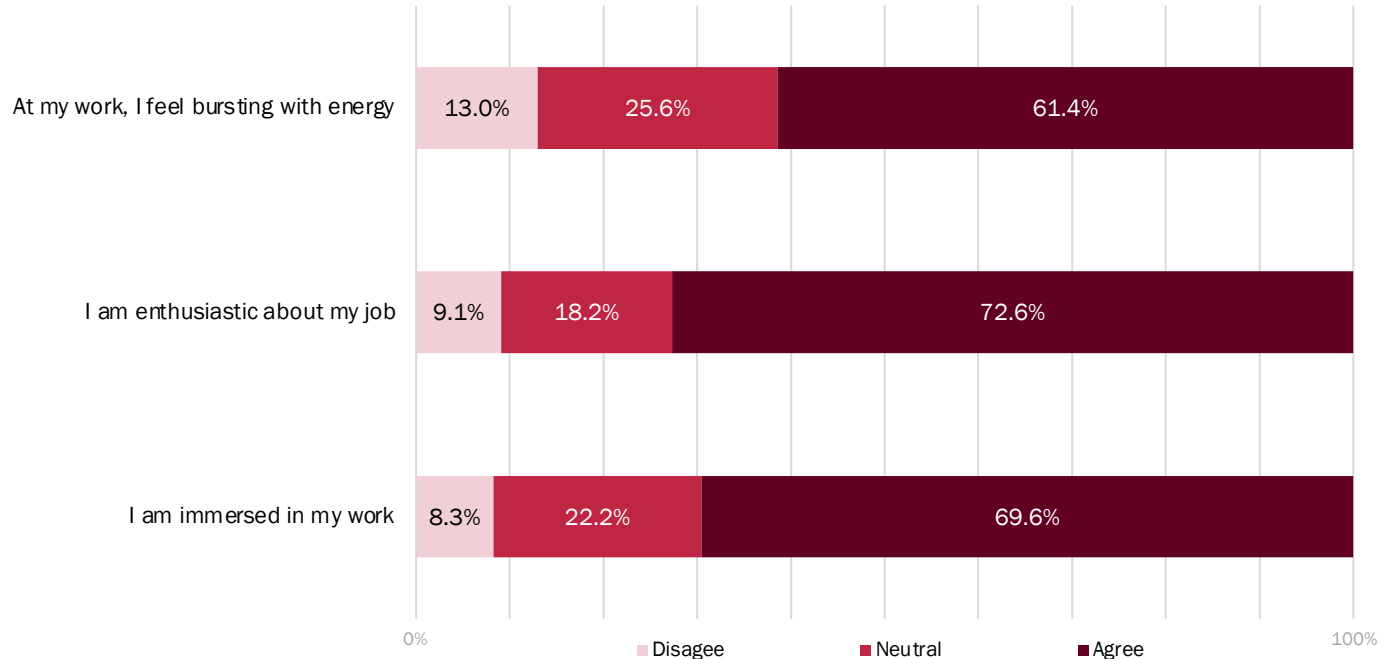
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q20 (items 1–3): The working environment of communication professionals may change as empathy in communication becomes more prevalent. Thinking of your daily work as a communication professional, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Disagree: scale points 1–2; neutral: scale point 3; agree: scale points 4–5.

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FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Communication professionals report they can solve the problems that arise in their work, but three in ten also report feeling "used up" at the end of a workday; more than one-third doubt the significance of their work

Mental health, measured with three items

I do not feel used up at the end of a work day
- Disagree: 46.1%
- Neutral: 23.4%
- Agree: 30.5%

I do not doubt the significance of my work
- Disagree: 37.5%
- Neutral: 19.0%
- Agree: 43.6%

I can effectively solve the problems that arise in my work
- Disagree: 5.7%
- Neutral: 17.3%
- Agree: 76.9%

1% (n = 12) of all communicators are at **risk of burnout** as they disagree with all three statements

0%   100%

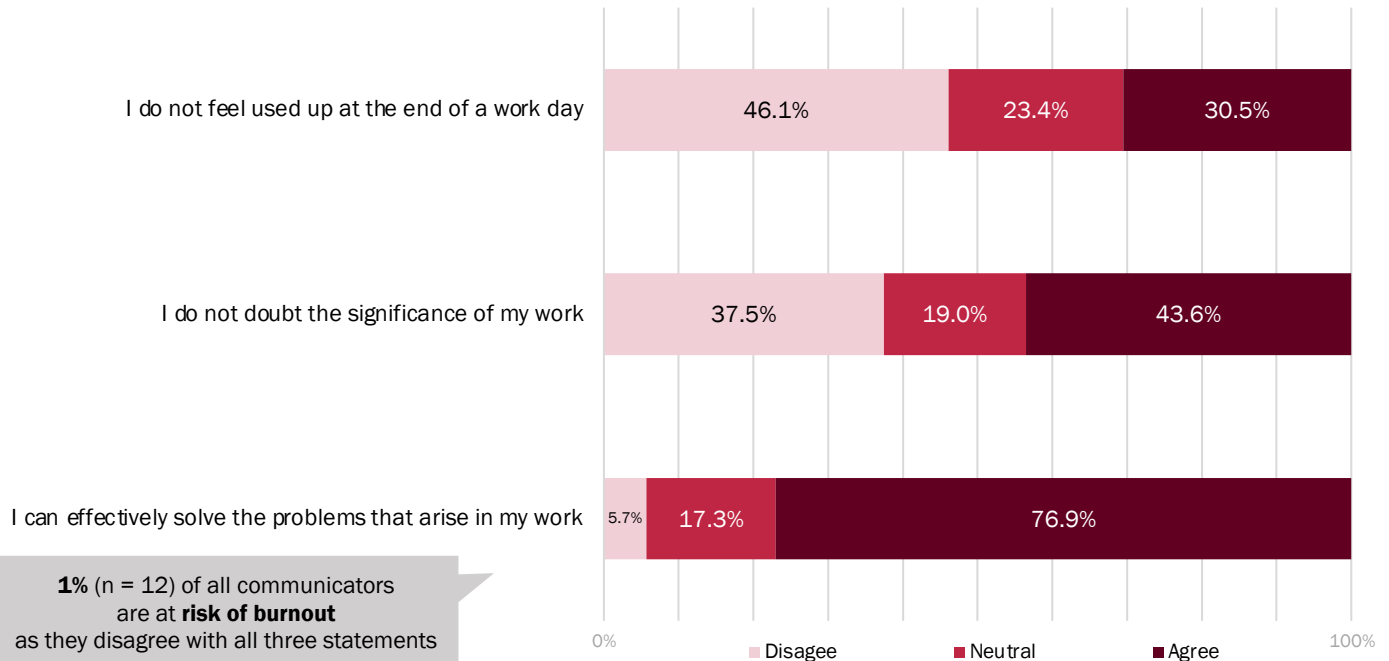■ Disagee   ■ Neutral   ■ Agree

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q20 (items 4–6): The working environment of communication professionals may change as empathy in communication becomes more prevalent. Thinking of your daily work as a communication professional, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Disagree: scale points 1–2; neutral: scale point 3; agree: scale points 4–5.

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Communicators on the move?
More than one-third of communication professionals intend to change jobs in the coming year, with an additional 20% neutral on where they will be

Turnover intention

42.1%
disagreement

37.1%
agreement

I intend to **change jobs** during the next year.

20.8%
neutral
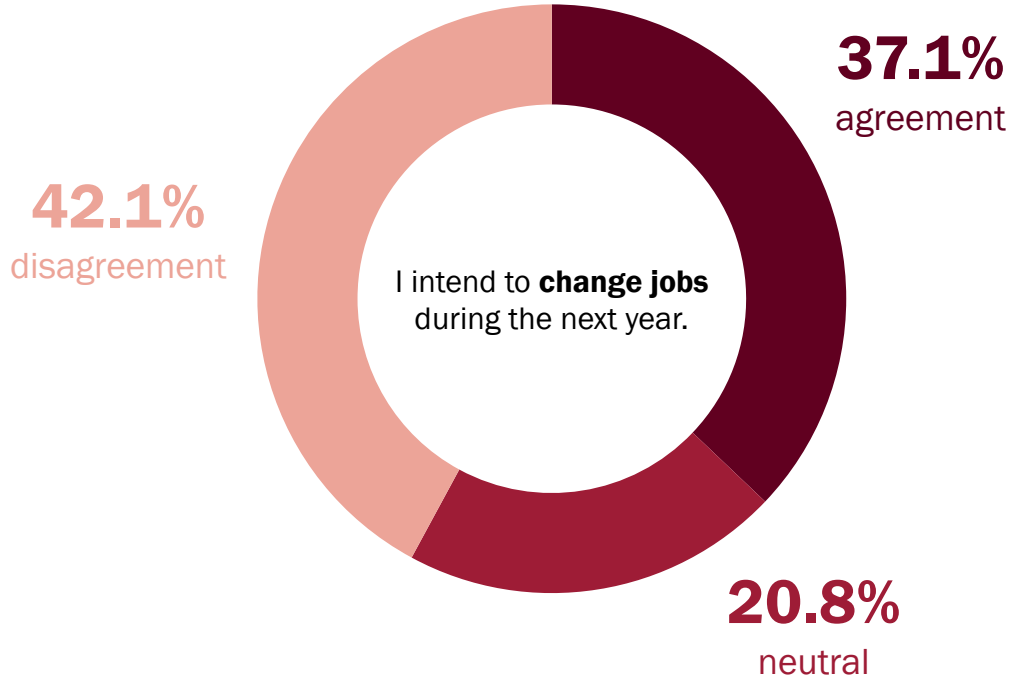
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q20 (item 9): The working environment of communication professionals may change as empathy in communication becomes more prevalent. Thinking of your daily work as a communication professional, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Disagree: scale points 1–2; neutral: scale point 3; agree: scale points 4–5.
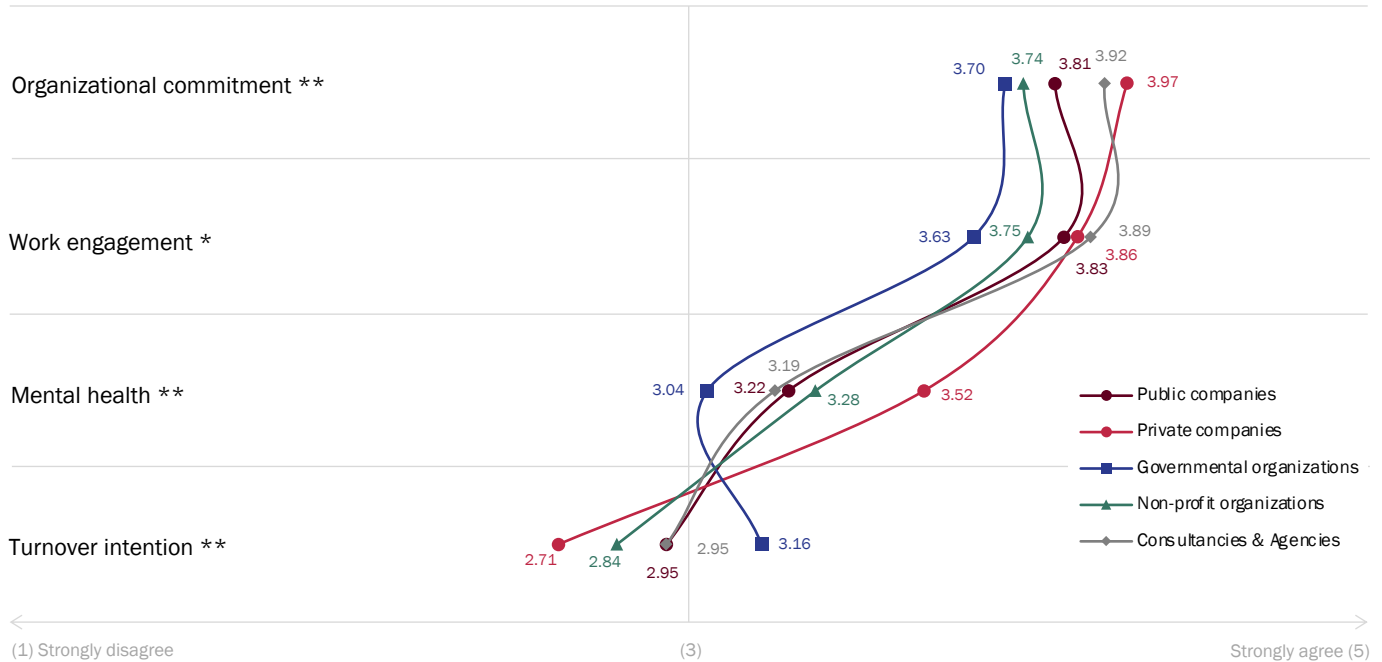
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FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Communication professionals in private companies and consultancies report higher commitment, work engagement, and mental health; those in governmental organizations report the lowest levels of mental health

Organizational commitment **

3.70 3.74 3.81 3.92
3.97

Work engagement *

3.63 3.75 3.89
3.83 3.86

Mental health **

3.04 3.22 3.19
3.28
3.52

Turnover intention **

2.71 2.84 2.95 2.95
3.16

- ● Public companies
- ● Private companies
- ■ Governmental organizations
- ▲ Non-profit organizations
- ◆ Consultancies & Agencies
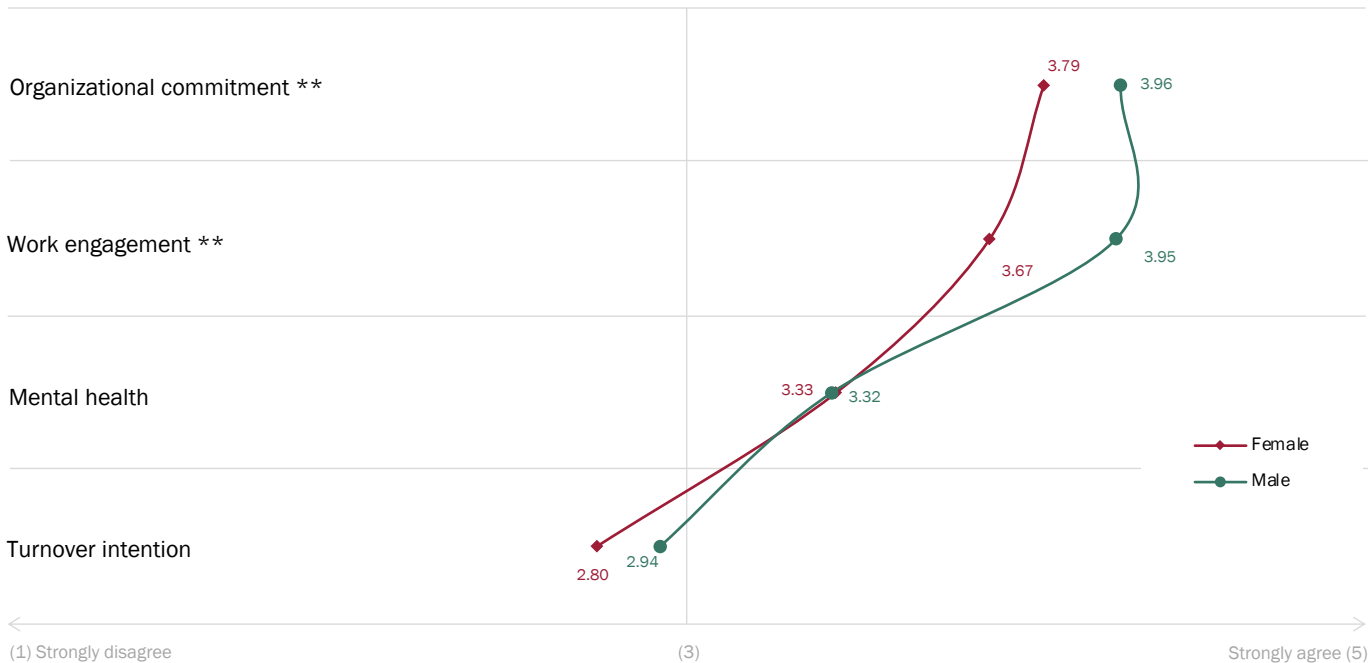
(1) Strongly disagree   (3)   Strongly agree (5)

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q20: The working environment of communication professionals may change as empathy in communication becomes more prevalent. Thinking of your daily work as a communication professional, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Mean values of indices. ** Highly significant differences (ANOVA, p ≤ 0.01). * Significant differences (ANOVA, p ≤ 0.05).

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While men and women do not differ in reported mental health problems, women report lower levels of organizational commitment, work engagement, and turnover intentions

Organizational commitment **   3.79   3.96

Work engagement **   3.67   3.95

Mental health   3.33   3.32

Turnover intention   2.80   2.94

— Female
— Male

(1) Strongly disagree   (3)   Strongly agree (5)

Note: n = 1,051 communication professionals. Q20: The working environment of communication professionals may change as empathy in communication becomes more prevalent. Thinking of your daily work as a communication professional, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Mean values of indices. ** Highly significant differences (ANOVA, p ≤ 0.01).

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FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Younger communication professionals appear less satisfied; they report lower commitment, engagement, mental health, and the highest turnover intentions

Organizational commitment **
- 3.54 (29 or younger)
- 3.93 (30–39)
- 4.00 (60 or older)
- 4.00 (50–59)
- 4.07 (40–49)

Work engagement **
- 3.61 (29 or younger)
- 3.84 (30–39)
- 3.85 (50–59)
- 3.92 (60 or older)
- 3.95 (40–49)

Mental health **
- 3.06 (29 or younger)
- 3.29 (30–39)
- 3.45 (40–49)
- 3.59 (50–59)
- 3.88 (60 or older)

Turnover intention **
- 1.90 (60 or older)
- 2.58 (50–59)
- 2.83 (40–49)
- 2.95 (30–39)
- 3.05 (29 or younger)

Legend:
- 29 or younger
- 30–39
- 40–49
- 50–59
- 60 or older

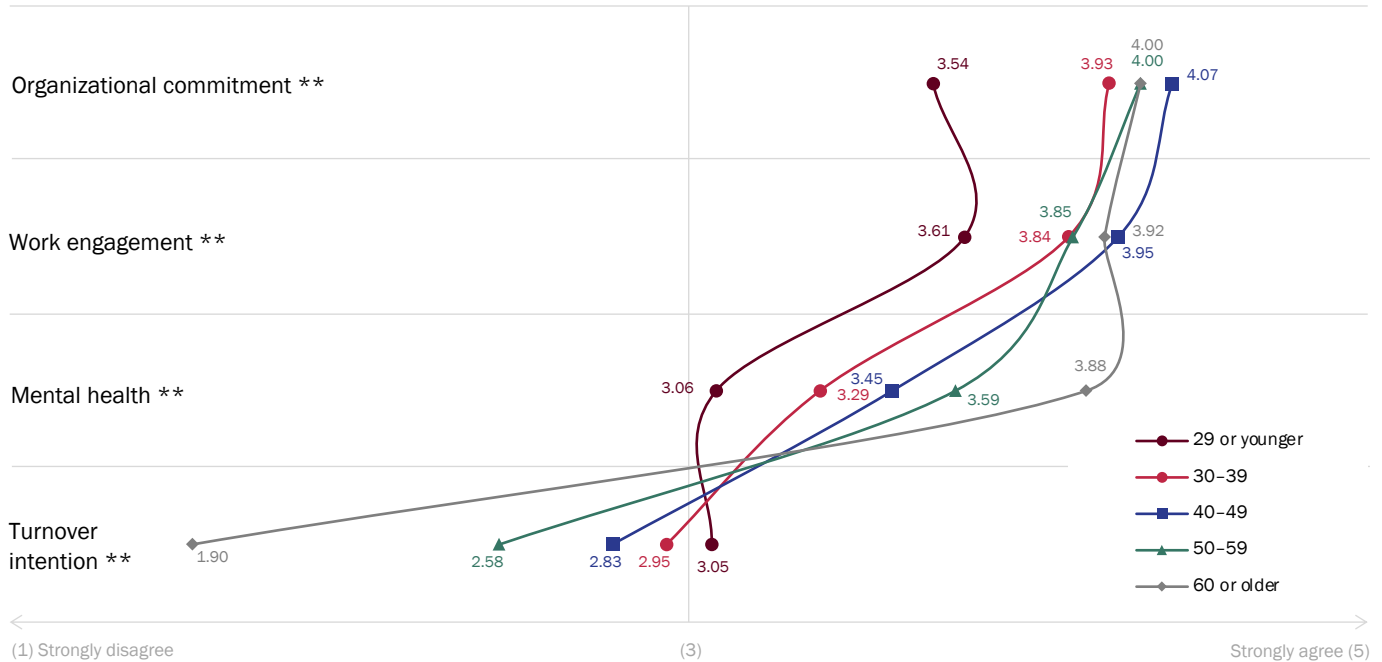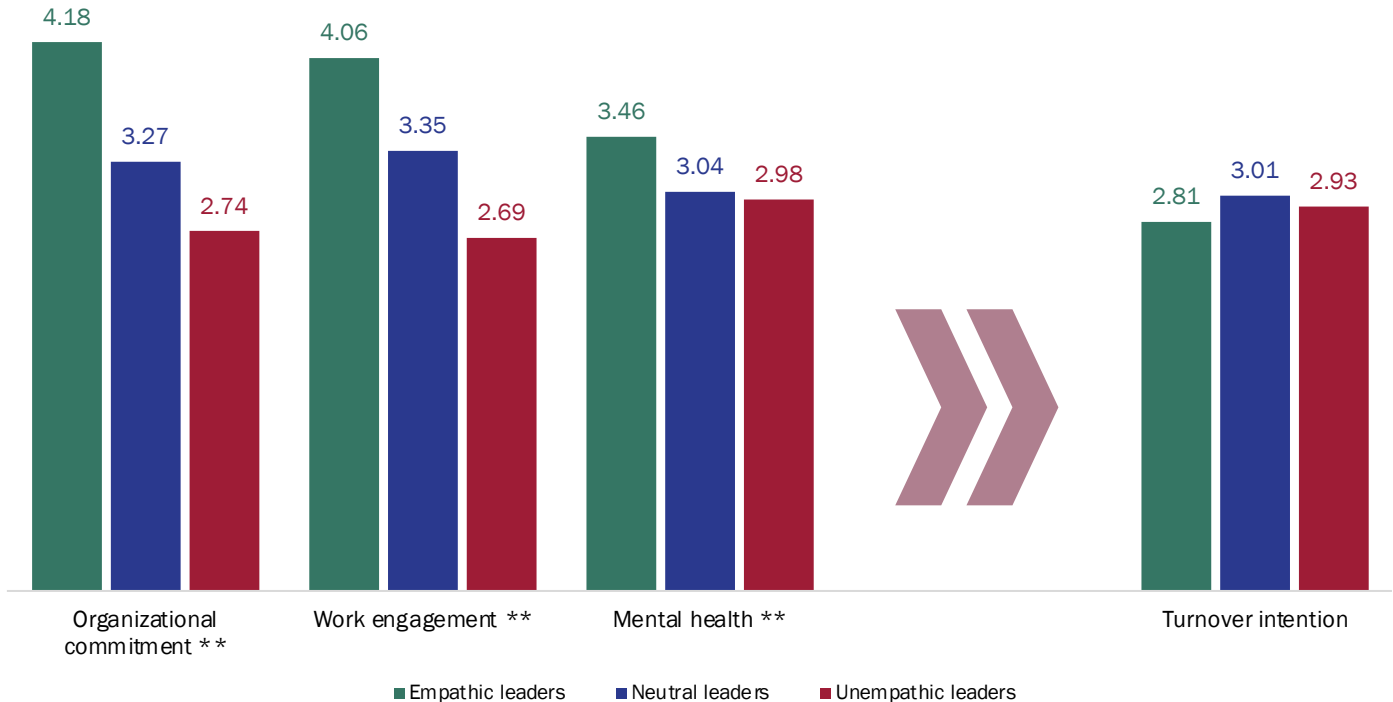(1) Strongly disagree (3) Strongly agree (5)

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q20: The working environment of communication professionals may change as empathy in communication becomes more prevalent. Thinking of your daily work as a communication professional, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Mean values of indices. ** Highly significant differences (ANOVA, p ≤ 0.01).

The Plank Center
FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Communication professionals working for empathic leaders report higher organizational commitment, work engagement, mental health, and lower turnover intentions

Organizational commitment **
- Empathic leaders: 4.18
- Neutral leaders: 3.27
- Unempathic leaders: 2.74

Work engagement **
- Empathic leaders: 4.06
- Neutral leaders: 3.35
- Unempathic leaders: 2.69

Mental health **
- Empathic leaders: 3.46
- Neutral leaders: 3.04
- Unempathic leaders: 2.98

Turnover intention
- Empathic leaders: 2.81
- Neutral leaders: 3.01
- Unempathic leaders: 2.93

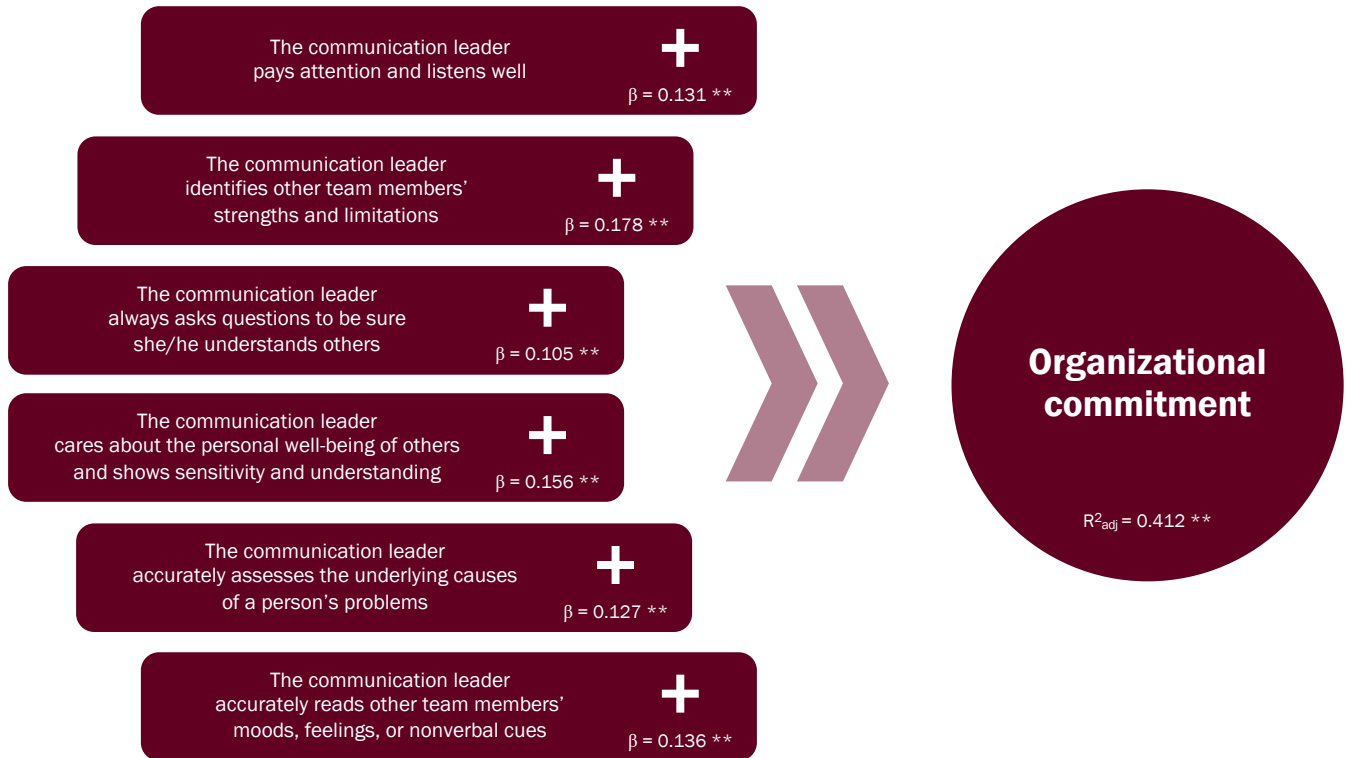■ Empathic leaders ■ Neutral leaders ■ Unempathic leaders

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q20: The working environment of communication professionals may change as empathy in communication becomes more prevalent. Thinking of your daily work as a communication professional, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Mean values of indices. Sample split in professionals with empathic, neutral and unempathic leaders based on index of all items in Q19 (index value > 3.50 = empathic leader; 3.50 ≥ index value ≥ 2.50 = neutral leader; index value < 2.50 = unempathic leader). ** Highly significant differences (ANOVA, p ≤ 0.01).

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Committed and empathic communication leaders strengthen the bond of their team members

The communication leader pays attention and listens well **+** $\beta = 0.131$ **

The communication leader identifies other team members' strengths and limitations **+** $\beta = 0.178$ **

The communication leader always asks questions to be sure she/he understands others **+** $\beta = 0.105$ **

The communication leader cares about the personal well-being of others and shows sensitivity and understanding **+** $\beta = 0.156$ **

The communication leader accurately assesses the underlying causes of a person's problems **+** $\beta = 0.127$ **

The communication leader accurately reads other team members' moods, feelings, or nonverbal cues **+** $\beta = 0.136$ **

Organizational commitment

$R^2_{adj} = 0.412$ **

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q19: How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Q20 (items 8–10): The working environment of communication professionals may change as empathy in communication becomes more prevalent. Thinking of your daily work as a communication professional, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). ** Model / predictor highly significant ($p \leq 0.01$).

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FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Engaged and empathic communication leaders heighten workplace engagement among their team members

The communication leader pays attention and listens well

+ $\beta = 0.138$ **

The communication leader identifies other team members' strengths and limitations

+ $\beta = 0.118$ **

The communication leader always asks questions to be sure she/he understands others

+ $\beta = 0.108$ **

The communication leader cares about the personal well-being of others and shows sensitivity and understanding

+ $\beta = 0.133$ **

The communication leader accurately assesses the underlying causes of a person's problems

+ $\beta = 0.119$ **

The communication leader accurately reads other team members' moods, feelings, or nonverbal cues

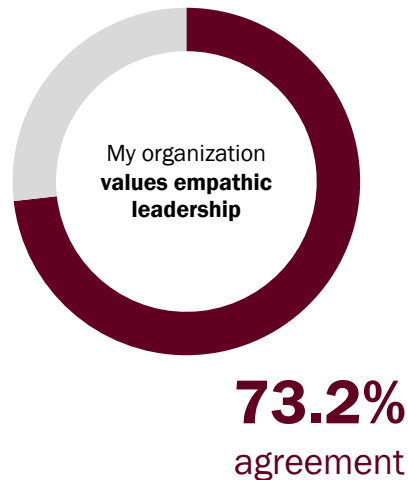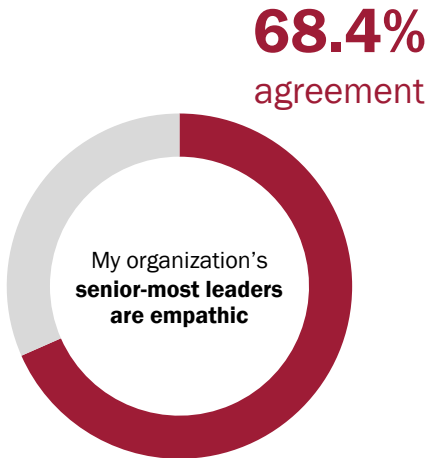**+** $\beta = 0.122$ **

Work engagement

$R^2_{adj} = 0.323$ **

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q19: How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Q20 (items 1–3): The working environment of communication professionals may change as empathy in communication becomes more prevalent. Thinking of your daily work a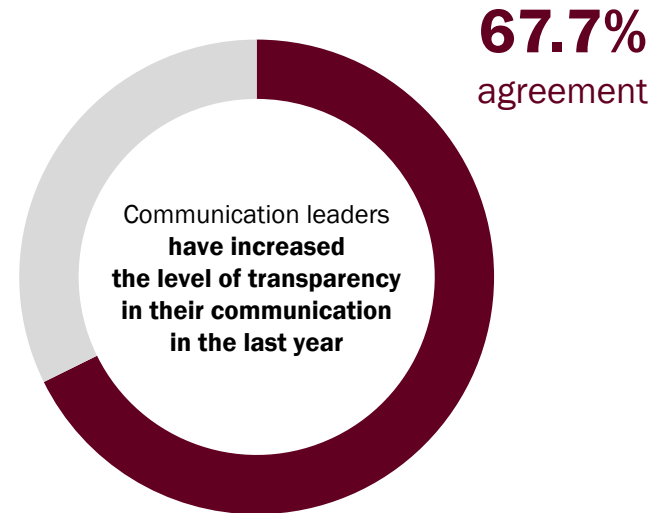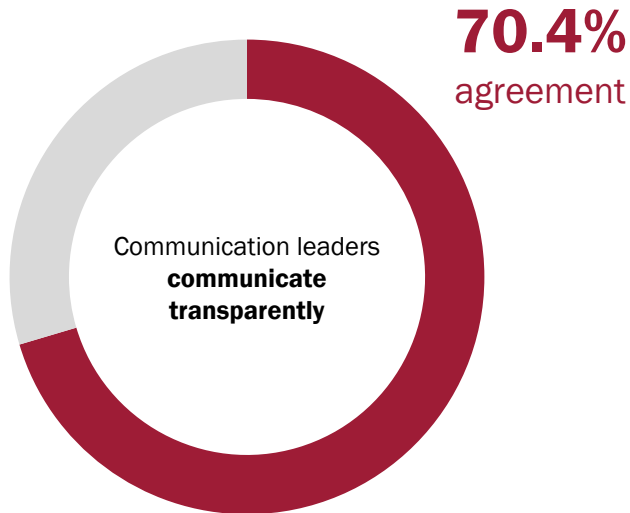s a communication professional, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). ** Model / predictor highly significant (p ≤ 0.01).

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FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

More than two-thirds of communication professionals report that their organization and its senior leaders are committed to empathic leadership

68.4% agreement

My organization's **senior-most leaders are empathic**

My organization **values empathic leadership**

73.2% agreement

67.5% agreement

My organization **provides coaching to help leaders demonstrate empathy**

The Plank Center
FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

More than two-thirds of communication professionals report transparency among their communication leaders

70.4%
agreement

Communication leaders **communicate transparently**

67.7%
agreement

Communication leaders **have increased the level of transparency in their communication in the last year**

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q22: During times of change or crisis many people look for leaders that combine a human communication style with transparency in communications, meaning that a leader listens, follows, makes recommendations, and takes action exhibiting open communication. To what extent do you agree with the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Top communicators who do not report to a leader were asked for a self-assessment. Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

The Plank Center
FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Communication leaders commonly request and act upon feedback from their team members but are least likely to react when feedback appears as criticism

The communication leader …

The communication leader …	Percentage
asks for ideas and suggestions	75.6%
follows up on suggestions	75.1%
listens to complaints	74.7%
follows up on complaints	72.6%
asks for personal opinions	73.8%
acts on criticism	63.9%
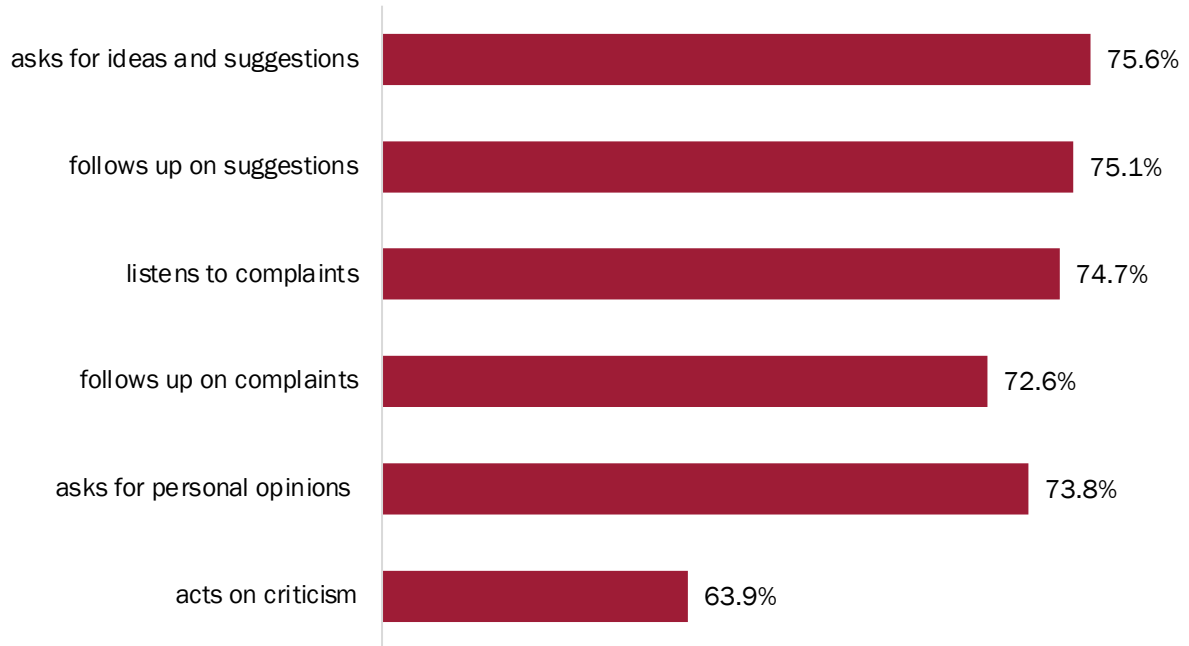
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q23: To what extent do you agree with the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Top communicators who do not report to a leader were asked for a self-assessment. Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

The Plank Center
FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

4

**CommTech and the
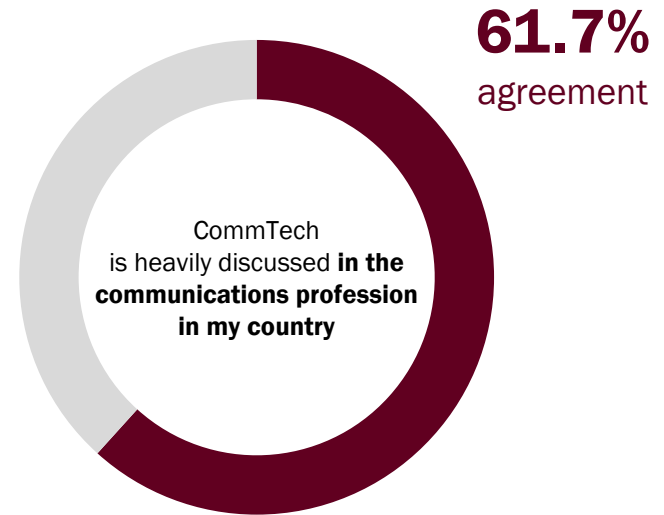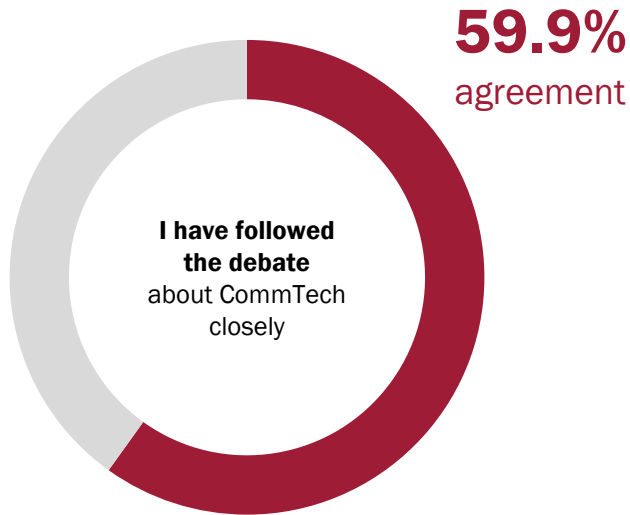digital transformation**
of communications

Digitalization is at the heart of rapid transformation in communication departments, consultancies, and agencies (Luoma-Aho & Badham, 2023). Unsurprisingly, the topic has become the subject of intense international discussion in the profession and academia. Many practitioners can feel overwhelmed by the abundance of new digital tools that bring promises of eased workloads and more efficient use of time. Chief among these are developments in artificial intelligence (AI) (Buhmann & White, 2022; Moore & Hübscher, 2022; Zerfass et al., 2020). Related disciplines like marketing have already begun exploring challenges and opportunities of digitization under the concept of "MarTech" (Brinker, 2022). A similar debate on "CommTech" has been initiated by practitioners (Arthur W. Page Society, 2021; Weiner, 2021) and researchers (Zerfass et al., 2021).

Digital technologies can be used in communication units for core activities. These can include stakeholder communication via social media, chatbots, and avatars and advising internal and external clients based on results identified through big data or supporting functional workflows (e.g., digital asset management). Generic workflows like team collaboration use cross-functional solutions (Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.) (Zerfass & Brockhaus, 2023). Nevertheless, empirical studies show that the communications profession is immature in all dimensions (Brockhaus et al., 2022). We wanted to find the reasons for this lack of development, assess the current status quo, and identify next steps. First, a majority (60%) of communication professionals in both the United States and Canada view CommTech as an issue of importance, with a similar percentage expecting CommTech to fundamentally change the profession in their country. Among those surveyed, a majority believe that the benefits of using CommTech outweigh the possible drawbacks and risks across multiple areas.

We asked respondents about the degree of digitalization within their communication unit and found that 15.4% believed themselves to be "Innovators" (digitalized across all core activities and highly advanced in CommTech use). At the same time, 18.5% described their unit as "Early adopters" (digitalized across almost every core activity and advanced CommTech use). The largest category was the "Early majority" at 22.8% (digitalized in many core activities with above average CommTech use), followed by the "Late majority" (16.9%; digitalized across some core activities with average CommTech use), the "Latecomers" (14.6%; digitalized across only a few core activities with below average CommTech use), and finally, the "Outsiders" (11.8%; almost no digitalization or CommTech use). Overall, public and private companies, as well as consultancies, are at the forefront of CommTech use, while government organizations and nonprofits lag behind.

The biggest challenges to adopting CommTech are not technological issues (35.8%), such as inadequate software or outdated computers, but factors that point to deficits within a given organization, such as tasks and processes not being prepared for digitalization (39.8%) and underqualified people (38.7%). Nevertheless, private companies and consultancies face fewer barriers when implementing CommTech than other organizations. Surprisingly, communication professionals in the United States cited considerable challenges when implementing CommTech compared to their counterparts in Canada. A deeper analysis of the data revealed that the barriers to introducing CommTech are generally linked, although finding qualified personnel represents a unique challenge. Finally, a majority of communication professionals think that they themselves (53.3%), their organizations (51.4%), and professional communities (53.2%) must act to maximize potential in CommTech. Creative ideas, convincing cases of application, and strategies to motivate team members and clients to accelerate digitalization are urgently needed.

Most communication professionals (60%) in the United States and Canada view CommTech as an issue of importance

59.9%
agreement

I have followed the debate about CommTech closely

61.7%
agreement

CommTech is heavily discussed **in the communications profession in my country**

54.7% rate their knowledge about CommTech as "good" or "excellent".

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q6: The digital transformation of communication departments and agencies seems to be a hot topic in the industry today. Industry magazines and practitioners have started to discuss "CommTech" to address benefits and challenges. CommTech includes digital technologies for managing and executing core activities (communicating with stakeholders; advising decision-makers) and for internal workflows in communication units. Please rate the following statements based on your overall impression on CommTech. Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5. Q7a: Please rate the following statement. My knowledge about CommTech is: … Scale 1 (Terrible) – 5 (Excellent).

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More than six in ten communication professionals expect CommTech to alter the profession in their country

62.6%
agreement

CommTech will enormously change the **communications profession in my country**

62.1%
agreement

CommTech will substantially change **my communication department or agency**

62.1%
agreement

CommTech will significantly change **the way I personally work**
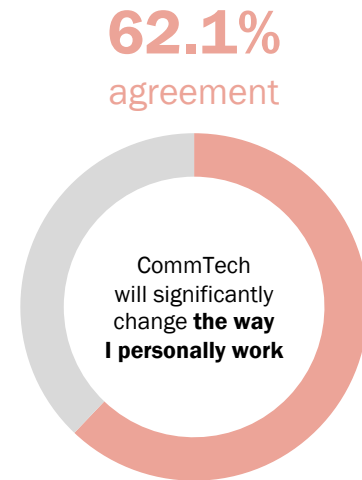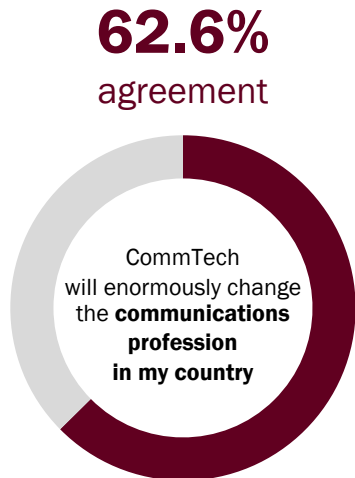
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q7: Please rate the following statements based on your overall impression on CommTech. Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

These is little difference in the levels of attention paid to CommTech between practitioners in the United States and Canada

	I have followed the debate about CommTech closely	CommTech is heavily discussed in the communications profession in my country
United States	**60.5%**	**61.5%**
Canada	**58.1%**	**62.0%**

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q6: The digital transformation of communication departments and agencies seems to be a hot topic in the industry today. Industry magazines and practitioners have started to discuss "CommTech" to address benefits and challenges. CommTech includes digital technologies for managing and executing core activities (communicating with stakeholders; advising decision-makers) and for internal workflows in communication units. Please rate the following statements based on your overall impression on CommTech. Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Generally, communicators believe that the benefits of using CommTech outweigh the possible drawbacks and risks

CommTech has advantages / disadvantages …
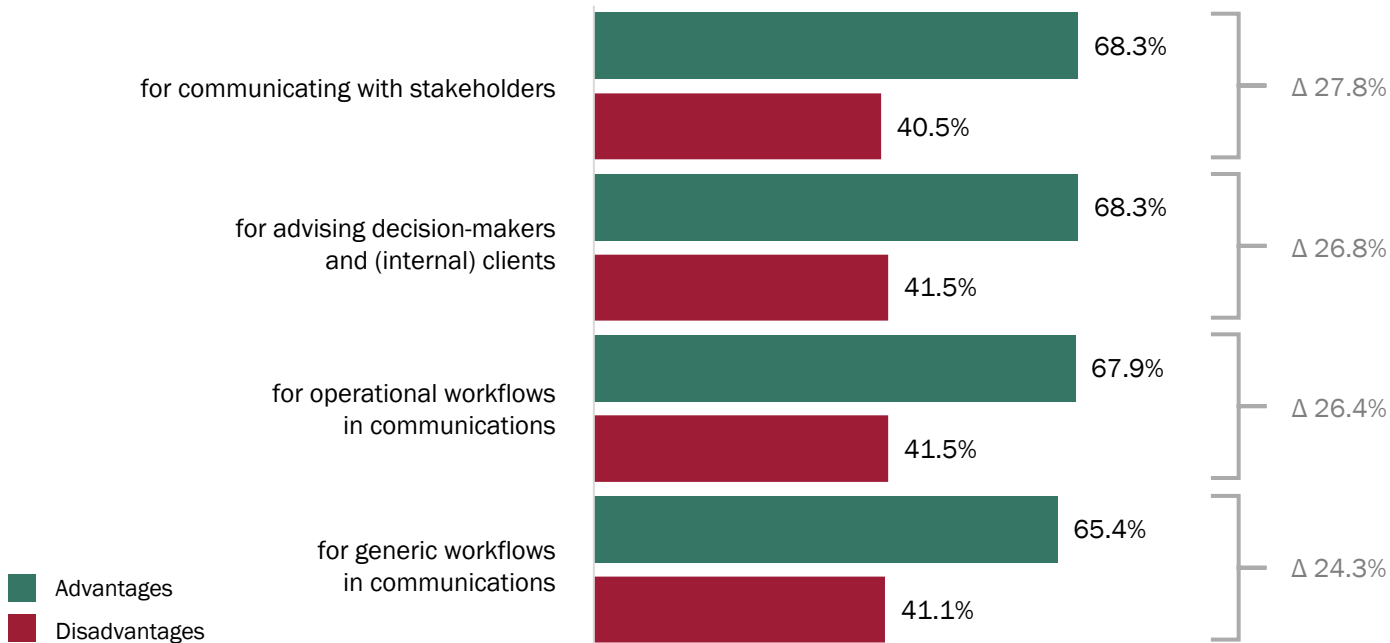
for communicating with stakeholders
- 68.3%
- 40.5%

Δ 27.8%

for advising decision-makers and (internal) clients
- 68.3%
- 41.5%

Δ 26.8%

for operational workflows in communications
- 67.9%
- 41.5%

Δ 26.4%

for generic workflows in communications
- 65.4%
- 41.1%

Δ 24.3%

■ Advantages
■ Disadvantages

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q8: Digital technologies offer many opportunities for communication departments and agencies. But there are also disadvantages and risks. In your opinion, how will CommTech affect the following activities? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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While overall quite similar, communication professionals in Canada are slightly more optimistic about CommTech than communication professionals in the United States

CommTech has advantages / disadvantages …
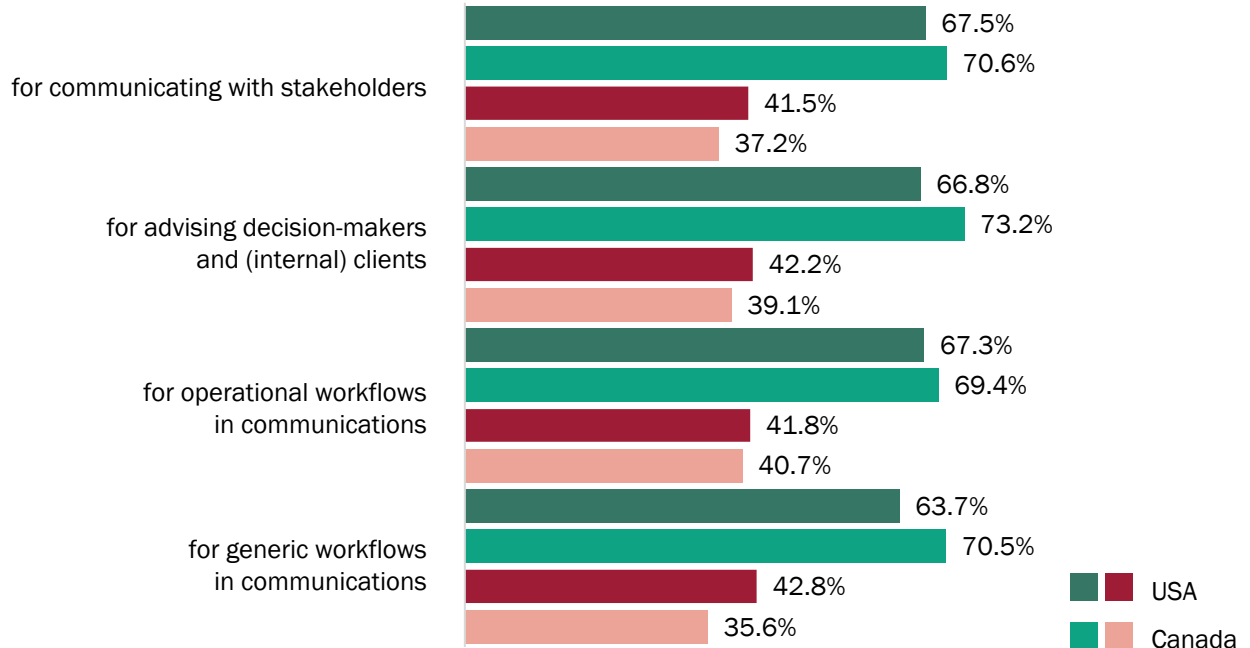
for communicating with stakeholders
- 67.5%
- 70.6%
- 41.5%
- 37.2%

for advising decision-makers and (internal) clients
- 66.8%
- 73.2%
- 42.2%
- 39.1%

for operational workflows in communications
- 67.3%
- 69.4%
- 41.8%
- 40.7%

for generic workflows in communications
- 63.7%
- 70.5%
- 42.8%
- 35.6%

Legend:
- ■ USA
- ■ Canada

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q8: Digital technologies offer many opportunities for communication departments and agencies. But there are also disadvantages and risks. In your opinion, how will CommTech affect the following activities? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Communication professionals are most likely to see their organization in the "Early majority" category of CommTech, followed by the "Early adopters" category

Degree of digitalization and CommTech use in communication units across North America
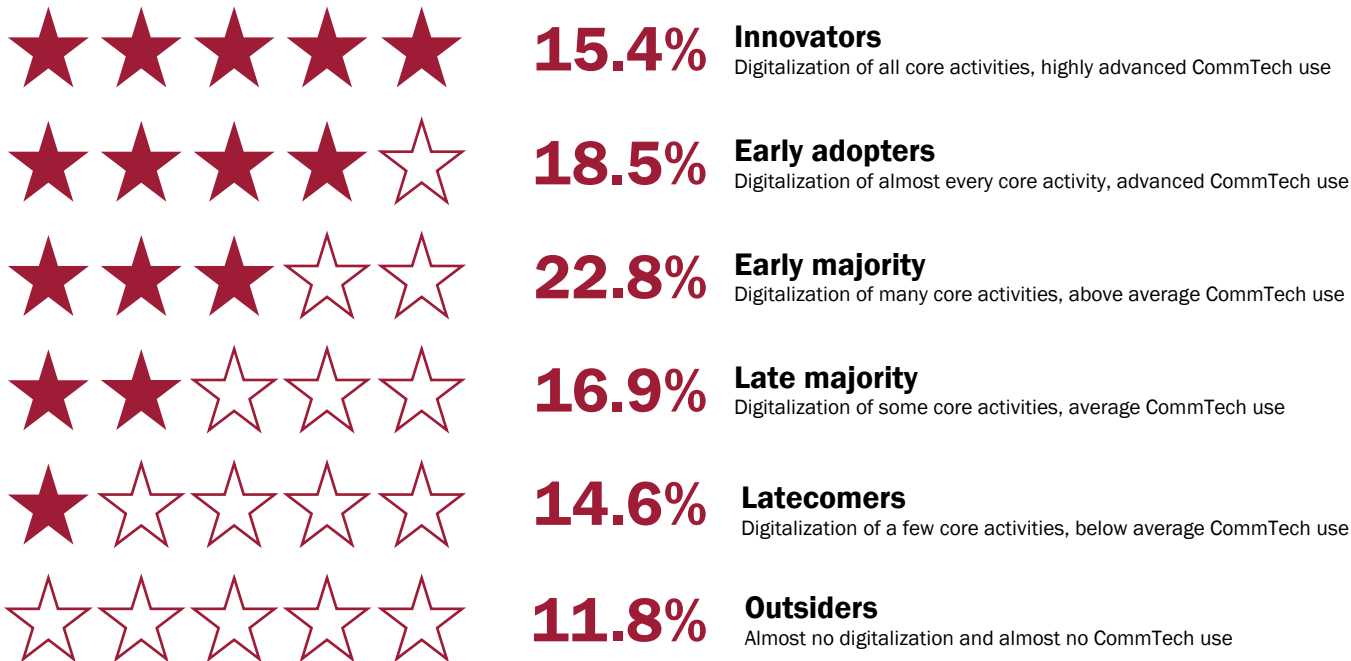
★★★★★   **15.4**%   **Innovators**
Digitalization of all core activities, highly advanced CommTech use

★★★★☆   **18.5**%   **Early adopters**
Digitalization of almost every core activity, advanced CommTech use

★★★☆☆   **22.8**%   **Early majority**
Digitalization of many core activities, above average CommTech use

★★☆☆☆   **16.9**%   **Late majority**
Digitalization of some core activities, average CommTech use

★☆☆☆☆   **14.6**%   **Latecomers**
Digitalization of a few core activities, below average CommTech use

☆☆☆☆☆   **11.8**%   **Outsiders**
Almost no digitalization and almost no CommTech use

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q9: Previous studies have shown that the extent of digital transformation is quite different in various communication departments and agencies. How would you describe your department or agency in terms of digitalization and the use of CommTech; which of the following categories does your department or agency fit into? Please select only one category. I consider my department/agency is a/an: …

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Public and private companies and consultancies are at the forefront of CommTech use, while governmental organizations and nonprofits generally lag behind

Degree of digitalization and CommTech use in communication units across North America
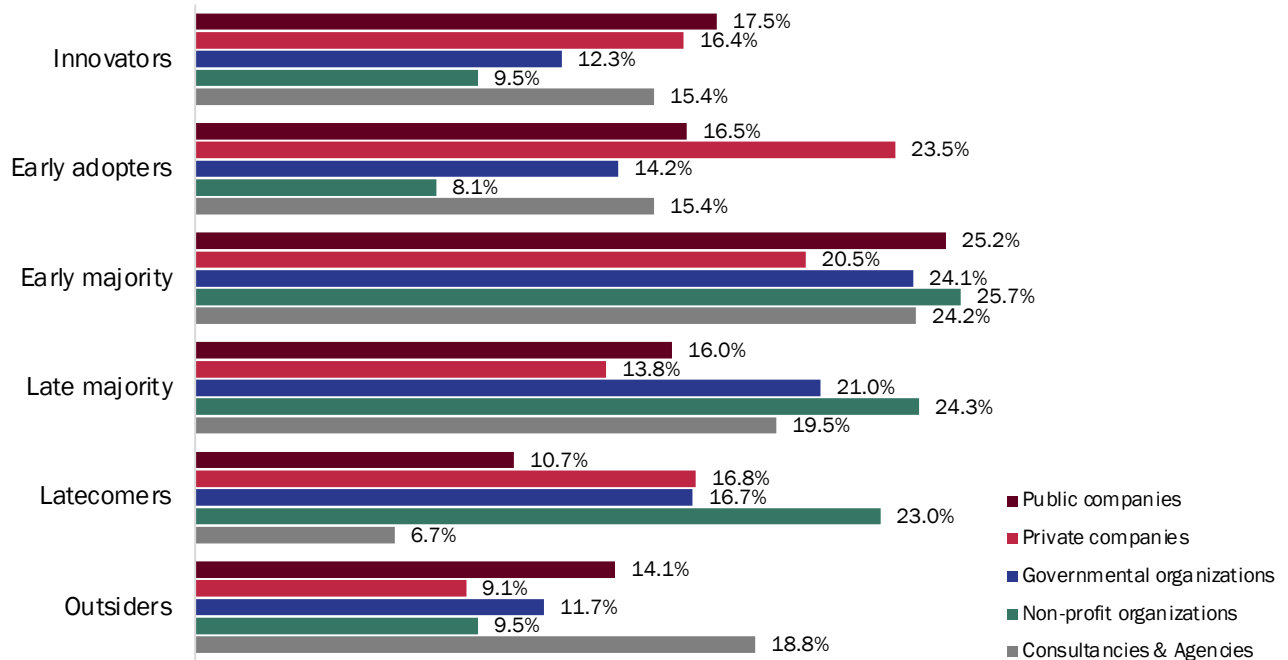
	Public companies	Private companies	Governmental organizations	Non-profit organizations	Consultancies & Agencies
Innovators	17.5%	16.4%	12.3%	9.5%	15.4%
Early adopters	16.5%	23.5%	14.2%	8.1%	15.4%
Early majority	25.2%	20.5%	24.1%	25.7%	24.2%
Late majority	16.0%	13.8%	21.0%	24.3%	19.5%
Latecomers	10.7%	16.8%	16.7%	23.0%	6.7%
Outsiders	14.1%	9.1%	11.7%	9.5%	18.8%

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q9: Previous studies have shown that the extent of digital transformation is quite different in various communication departments and agencies. How would you describe your department or agency in terms of digitalization and the use of CommTech; which of the following categories does your department or agency fit into? Please select only one category. I consider my department/agency is a/an: …

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Imperfect technology is a minor barrier to CommTech implementation

Challenges of introducing CommTech in communication units
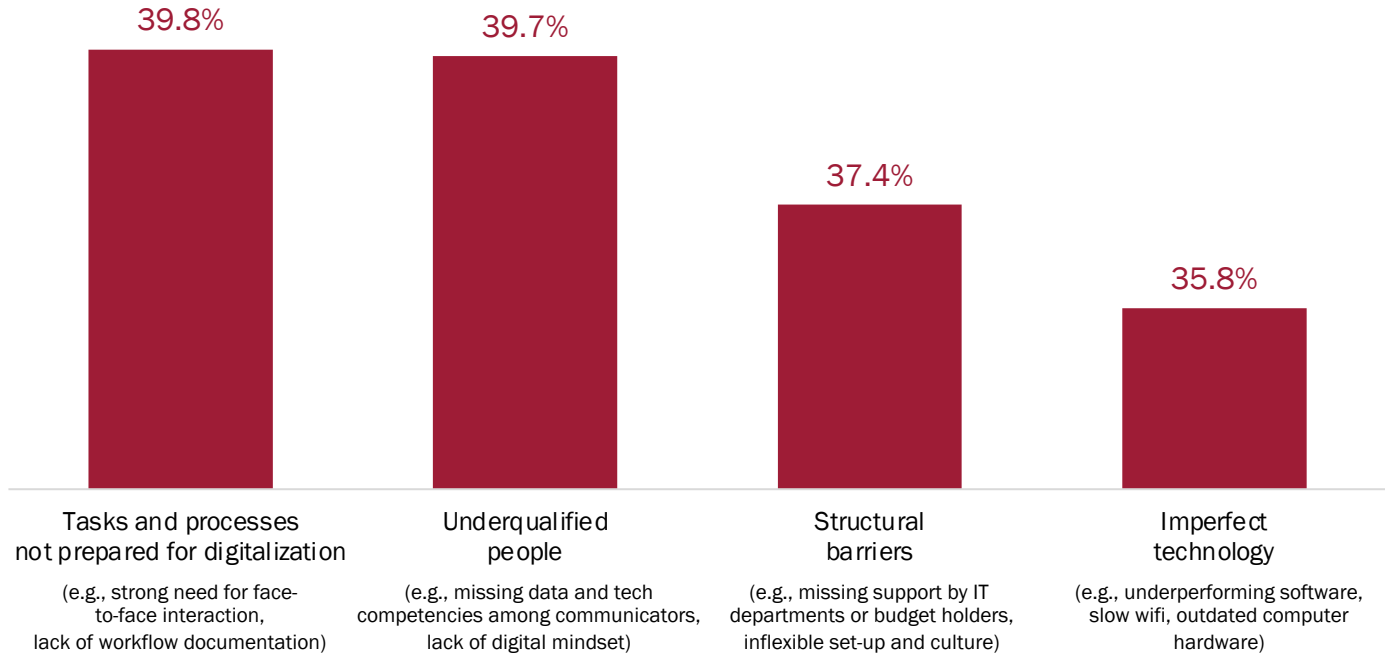
39.8%	39.7%	37.4%	35.8%

Tasks and processes not prepared for digitalization

(e.g., strong need for face-to-face interaction, lack of workflow documentation)

Underqualified people

(e.g., missing data and tech competencies among communicators, lack of digital mindset)

Structural barriers

(e.g., missing support by IT departments or budget holders, inflexible set-up and culture)

Imperfect technology

(e.g., underperforming software, slow wifi, outdated computer hardware)

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q10: To what extent do you consider each of the following as challenges for introducing CommTech in your organization? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Private companies and consultancies face lower barriers to CommTech implementation than other organizations

Challenges of introducing CommTech in communication units

Tasks and processes not prepared for digitalization
- 3.09 (Private companies)
- 3.12 (Consultancies & Agencies)
- 3.21 (Public companies)
- 3.27 (Governmental organizations)
- 3.34 (Non-profit organizations)

Underqualified people
- 3.03 (Private companies)
- 3.03 (Consultancies & Agencies)
- 3.09 (Non-profit organizations)
- 3.18 (Public companies)
- 3.23 (Governmental organizations)

Structural barriers *
- 2.92 (Private companies)
- 3.03 (Consultancies & Agencies)
- 3.17 (Public companies)
- 3.22 (Governmental organizations)
- 3.31 (Non-profit organizations)

Imperfect technology *
- 2.97 (Private companies)
- 3.01 (Consultancies & Agencies)
- 3.08 (Public companies)
- 3.26 (Non-profit organizations)
- 3.28 (Governmental organizations)

Legend:
- Public companies
- Private companies
- Governmental organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Consultancies & Agencies

(1) Not at all   (3)   To a great extent (5)

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q10: To what extent do you consider each of the following as challenges for introducing CommTech in your organization? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). ** Highly significant differences (ANOVA, $p \leq 0.01$). * Significant differences (ANOVA, $p \leq 0.05$).

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Across the board, communication professionals in the United States cite significant challenges to implementing CommTech compared to communication professionals in Canada

Challenges of introducing CommTech in communication units

	Tasks and processes not prepared for digitalization	Underqualified people	Structural barriers	Imperfect technology
United States	**41.6%**	**40.7%**	**38.8%**	**38.1%**
Canada	**34.5%**	**36.9%**	**33.3%**	**29.1%**

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q10: To what extent do you consider each of the following as challenges for introducing CommTech in your organization? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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The barriers to introducing CommTech are generally linked to each other, although finding qualified personnel represents a unique challenge

How challenges of introducing CommTech in communication units are linked to eachother
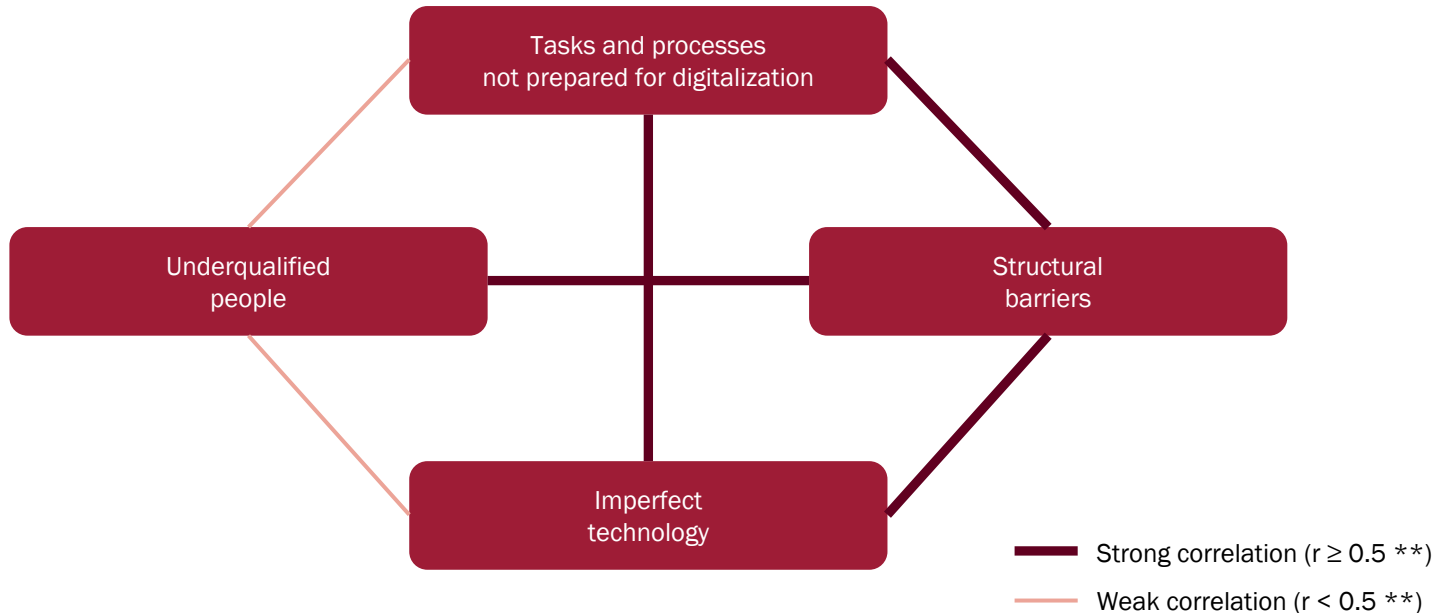
Tasks and processes
not prepared for digitalization

Underqualified
people

Structural
barriers

Imperfect
technology

Strong correlation (r ≥ 0.5 **)

Weak correlation (r < 0.5 **)

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q10: To what extent do you consider each of the following as challenges for introducing CommTech in your organization? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). ** Highly significant (Pearson correlation, p ≤ 0.01).

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A majority of communication professionals think that they themselves, their organizations, and the profession as a whole must take action to unlock the potential of CommTech

Importance of different actors in the field

Communication professionals who experiment bottom-up with CommTech in their own area of responsibility	53.3%
Communication departments and agencies who invest systematically in CommTech processes and structures	51.4%
Professional communities who share best practices and create market transparency for CommTech	53.2%
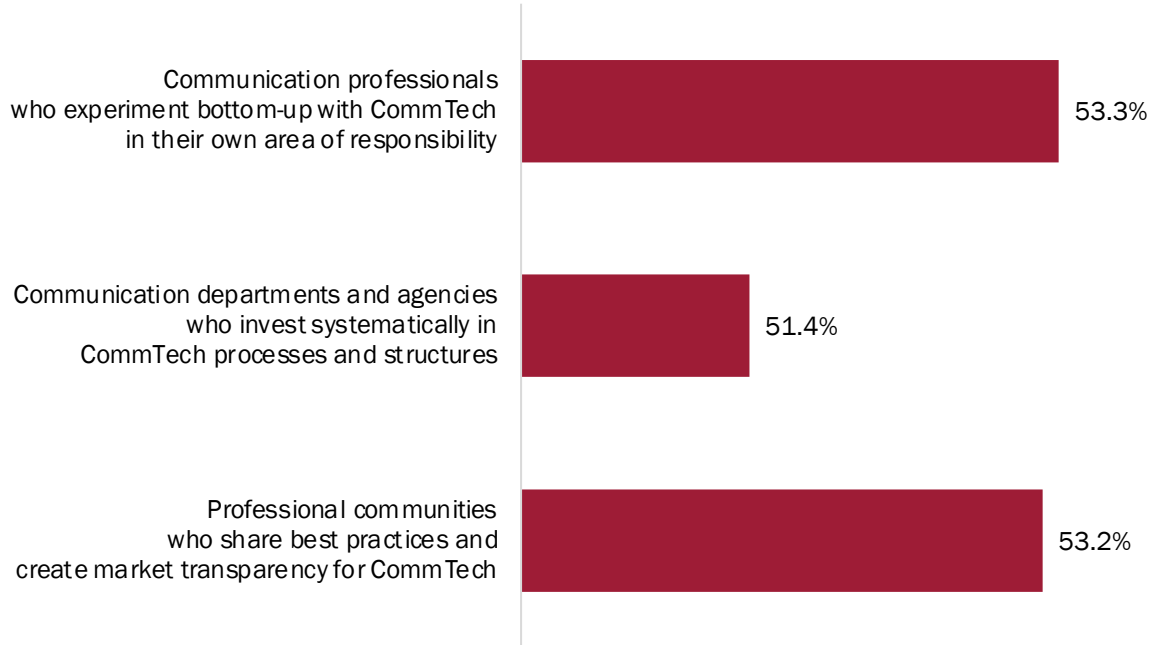
Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q11: How important are each of the following when it comes to taking the responsibility to advance CommTech? Scale 1 (Not important) – 5 (Very important). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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5

Strategic issues and work practices in the profession

Since the first North America Communication Monitor in 2018-2019, building and maintaining trust has been considered the most important strategic issue for communication management in this geographic region. But the percentage of public relations professionals who said trust was the most important issue has dropped remarkably: 49.6% of respondents cited trust as the top strategic issue in 2018-2019 (Meng et al., 2019); 34.5% cited trust in 2020-2021 (Meng et al., 2021); 33.5% cited it in 2022-2023 (Meng et al., 2023). Furthermore, the distance between the top issue and the second issue has tightened. In 2023, 32.0% of respondents said supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion was the second most important communication issue. In 2019, 38.4 percent cited coping with the digital evolution and the social web as the second most important issue – a 10% difference between the first and second most important issues in 2019.

Some notable differences in strategic issues appeared between respondents from Canada and the United States. Canadian respondents reported a higher percentage (35.7%) of the importance of building and maintaining trust as a challenging strategic issue than respondents in the United States (32.7%). Likewise, 39.5% of Canadian professionals identified DEI support as a chief strategic communication issue; 29.6% of U.S. professionals ranked DEI second among strategic communication issues. Strengthening communicators in organizational decision-making was ranked the third most important strategic issue by U.S. professionals (32.9%), whereas it was ranked fifth among Canadian professionals (26.7%).

Response differences were observed among organizations (i.e., public companies, private companies, government, nonprofits, and consultancies/agencies). Nonprofits frequently appeared as outliers when asked about the importance of different strategic issues. Roughly four in ten respondents working in nonprofits cited building and maintaining trust as an important issue. Among other classifications, nearly one-third of respondents said building trust was an important strategic issue.

Nonprofit communicators were also the most frequent in identifying and exploring new ways to create and distribute content (32.4%) and establish flexible and remote working opportunities (31.1%) as notable strategic issues. Respondents from governmental organizations were tops in identifying supporting DEI (34.6%), strengthening communication in organizational decision-making (35.2%), dealing with sustainable development and social responsibility (29.6%), and digitalizing communication processes (27.8%) in their list of important strategic issues in communication.

Two-thirds of North American respondents said that flexible or remote work is fully supported in their organizations. Nearly half of all respondents said their personal experience included working remotely (45.3% very often or always), using video-conferencing software daily (56.0%), using instant messaging software daily (61.8%), and using online whiteboards daily (45.0%).

Trust, DEI, and decision-making roles are the most important strategic issues for communication management until 2025

Issue	%
Building and maintaining trust	33.5%
Supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion	32.0%
Strengthening the role of the communication function in supporting top-management decision making	31.4%
Exploring new ways of creating and distributing content	28.5%
Matching the need to address more audiences and channels with limited resources	27.8%
Linking business strategy and communication	26.4%
Dealing with sustainable development and social responsibility	25.6%
Dealing with the speed and volume of information flow	25.2%
Establishing flexible and remote work in communications	25.2%
Digitalize communication processes with internal and external stakeholders	23.0%
Using big data and/or algorithms for communication	21.3%

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q26: Which issues will be most important for PR / communication management within the next three years from your point of view? Please pick exactly 3 items. Frequency based on selection as Top-3 issue.

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Most important strategic issues for communication management until 2025 by country

Issue	USA	Canada
Building and maintaining trust	32.7%	35.7%
Supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion	29.6%	39.5%
Strengthening the role of the communication function in supporting top-management decision making	32.9%	26.7%
Exploring new ways of creating and distributing content	28.9%	27.5%
Matching the need to address more audiences and channels with limited resources	29.4%	22.9%
Linking business strategy and communication	25.5%	29.5%
Dealing with sustainable development and social responsibility	26.5%	22.9%
Dealing with the speed and volume of information flow	25.0%	26.0%
Establishing flexible and remote work in communications	25.2%	25.2%
Digitalize communication processes with internal and external stakeholders	23.3%	22.1%
Using big data and/or algorithms for communication	21.1%	22.1%

■ USA
■ Canada

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q26: Which issues will be most important for PR / communication management within the next three years from your point of view? Please pick exactly 3 items. Frequency based on selection as Top-3 issue.

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The relevance of strategic issues differs among types of organizations: Companies focus on trust, and nonprofits emphasize decision-making roles

Building and maintaining trust
- 32.0%
- 33.8%
- 32.1%
- 39.2%
- 32.9%

Supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion
- 28.6%
- 33.6%
- 34.6%
- 31.1%
- 29.5%

Strengthening the role of the communication function in supporting top-management decision making
- 32.0%
- 29.3%
- 35.2%
- 29.7%
- 33.6%

Exploring new ways of creating and distributing content
- 29.6%
- 29.1%
- 25.3%
- 32.4%
- 26.8%

Matching the need to address more audiences and channels with limited resources
- 31.1%
- 23.9%
- 29.0%
- 32.4%
- 31.5%

Linking business strategy and communication
- 26.2%
- 30.2%
- 18.5%
- 23.0%
- 25.5%

Dealing with sustainable development and social responsibility
- 24.8%
- 26.7%
- 29.6%
- 20.3%
- 21.5%

Dealing with the speed and volume of information flow
- 26.7%
- 27.2%
- 21.6%
- 21.6%
- 22.8%

Establishing flexible and remote work in communications
- 21.8%
- 25.0%
- 25.9%
- 31.1%
- 26.8%

Digitalize communication processes with internal and external stakeholders
- 24.8%
- 19.0%
- 27.8%
- 27.0%
- 26.2%

Using big data and/or algorithms for communication
- 22.3%
- 22.2%
- 20.4%
- 12.2%
- 22.8%

Legend:
- Public companies
- Private companies
- Governmental organizations
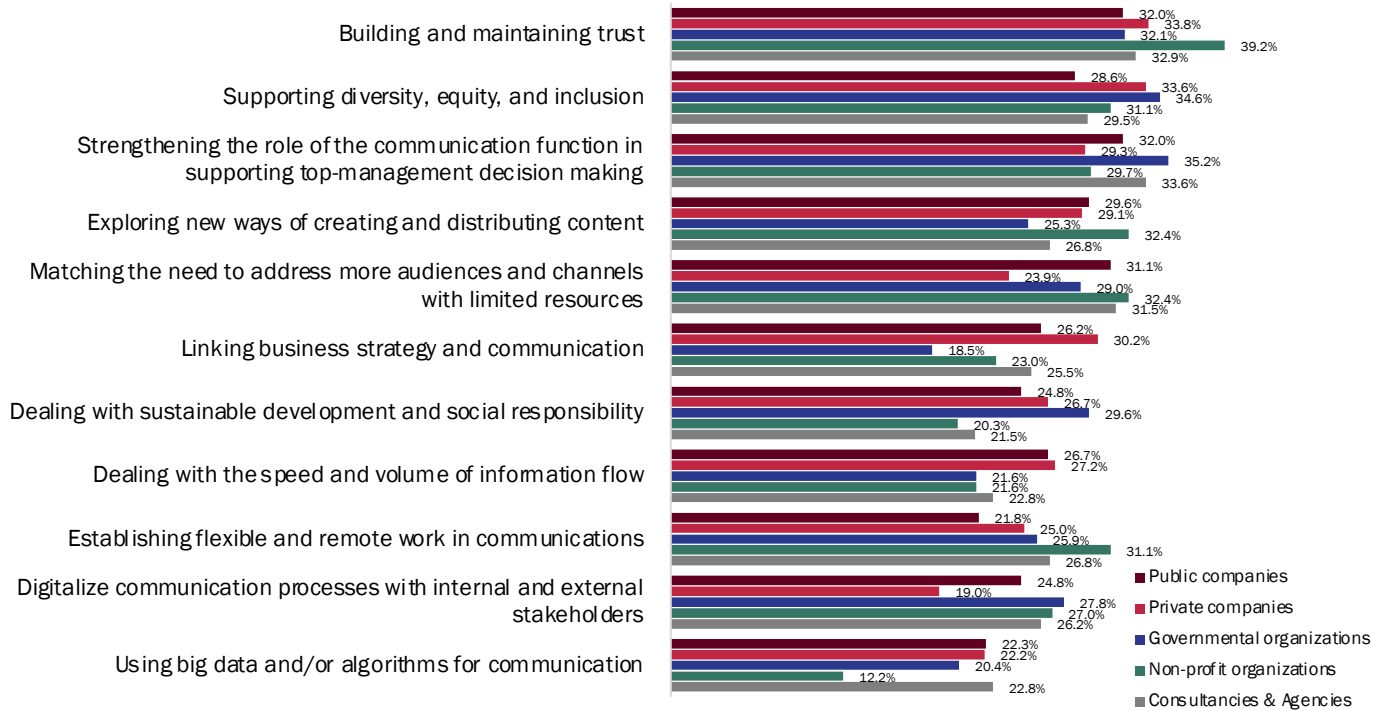- Non-profit organizations
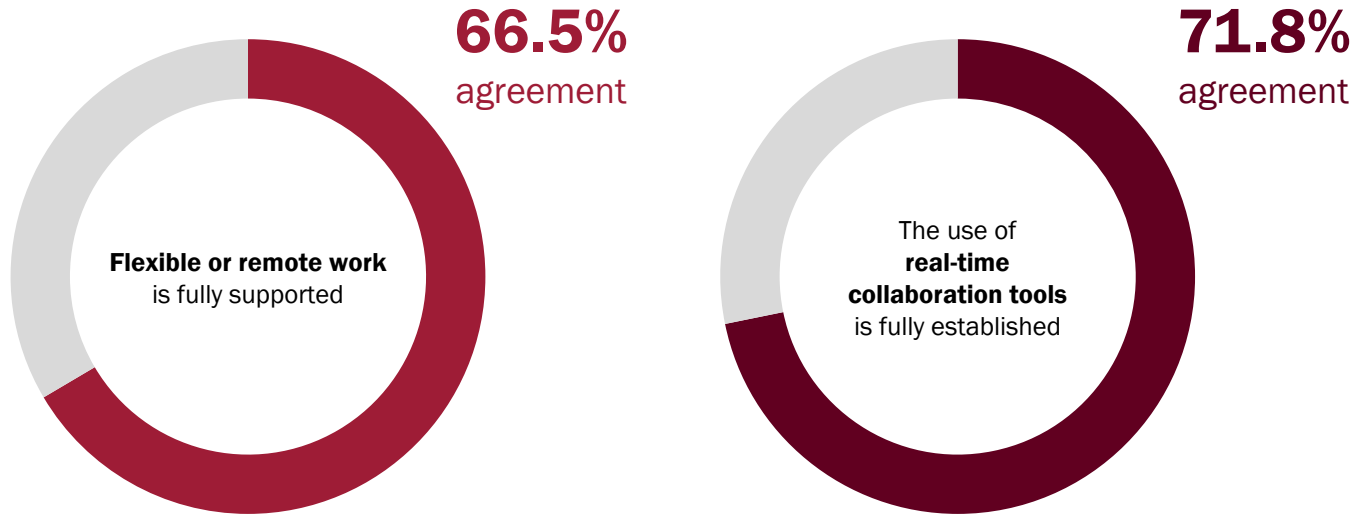- Consultancies & Agencies

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q26: Which issues will be most important for PR / communication management within the next three years from your point of view? Please pick exactly 3 items. Frequency based on selection as Top-3 issue.

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A clear majority of professionals agree that flexible work approaches are common, and they can collaborate online and in real-time

66.5%
agreement

Flexible or remote work
is fully supported

71.8%
agreement

The use of
real-time collaboration tools
is fully established

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q24: Many communication departments and agencies now encourage flexible work (either in the office or from another place) or remote work (e.g., from home). This has increased the use of real-time collaboration tools like video conferencing or instant messaging for team interaction and for connecting with internal and external stakeholders. In terms of your own department or agency, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following two statements? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Almost half of communicators work remotely; for those who do, most use video-conferencing and instant messaging daily; digital whiteboards are less common

Personal work situation of communication practitioners in North America

	Never or rarely	Sometimes	Very often or always
Working remotely instead of going to the office	26.6%	28.1%	45.3%
Using video-conferencing software on a typical workday	16.7%	27.2%	56.0%
Using instant messaging software for work on a typical workday	15.0%	23.2%	61.8%
Using online whiteboards on a typical workday	25.6%	29.4%	45.0%

e.g., MS Teams, Skype, Zoom, Facetime, Google Meet/Hangouts, WebEx, GoToMeeting; company-specific solutions

e.g., WhatsApp, WeChat, Telegram, TencentQC, Slack, iMessage, Facebook Messenger; company-specific solutions

e.g., Invision, Miro, Mural, MS Whiteboard, Padlet; company-specific solutions

0%   100%

■ Never or rarely ■ Sometimes ■ Very often or always

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q25: Please tell us about your personal work situation when offices are open (i.e., if there are no closures due to a pandemic, extreme weather, etc.). Scale 1 (Never) – 5 (Always).

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Work practices in the communication profession differ modestly between Canada and the United States

Personal work situation of communication practitioners in North America

	Working remotely instead of going to the office	Using video-conferencing software on a typical workday	Using instant messaging software for work on a typical workday	Using online whiteboards on a typical workday
United States	**44.2%**	**56.2%**	**60.5%**	**45.3%**
Canada	**48.8%**	**55.4%**	**65.9%**	**44.2%**

Note: n = 1,055 communication professionals. Q25: Please tell us about your personal work situation when offices are open (i.e., if there are no closures due to a pandemic, extreme weather, etc.). Scale 1 (Never) – 5 (Always). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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6

Salaries

In 2022/23, a nearly equal percentage of respondents said their salaries fell within the minimum (less than $30,000) and maximum (more than $200,000) categories. Among surveyed professionals, 5.7% said their salaries were more than $200,000; 5.9% said theirs were under $30,000. The highest percentage of respondents (19.4%) said they made between $50,001 and $70,000. While not precise, the PRWeek Salary Surveys noted that the median salary for public relations practitioners was $113,500 in 2023 and $105,000 in 2022 (Daniels, 2023).
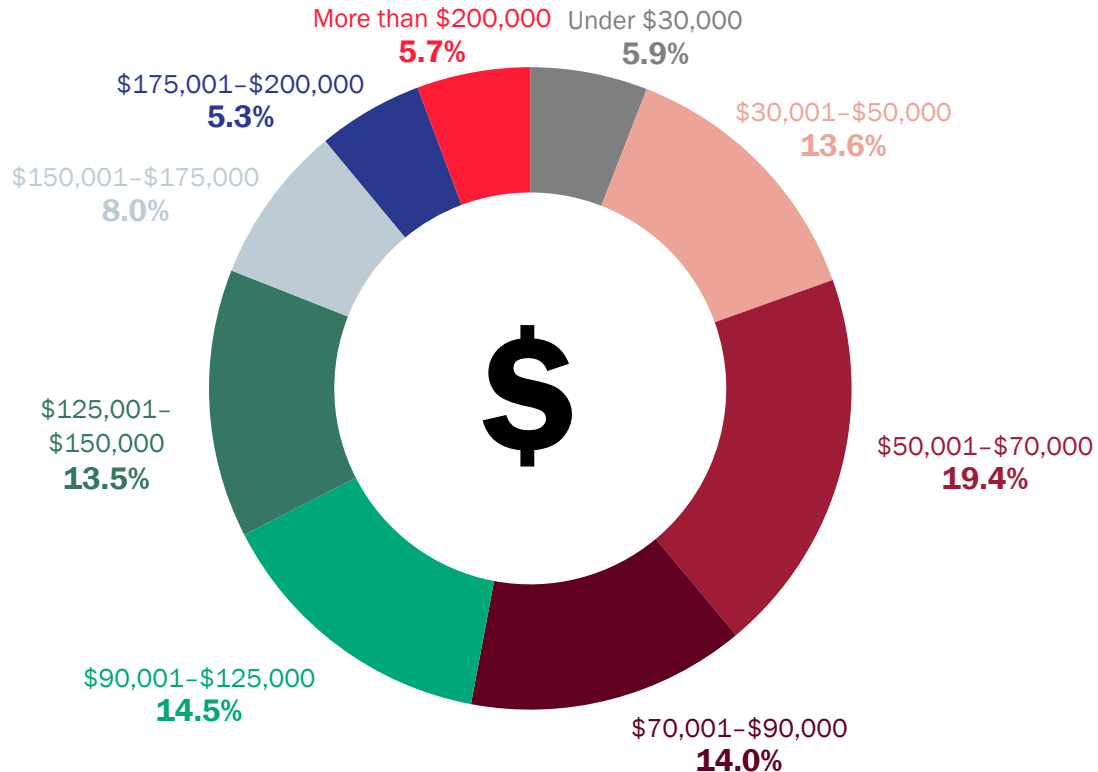
Both the highest and lowest salaries were reported by U.S. respondents. Canadian respondents dominated the mid-range salaries. The top percentage of U.S. professionals (19.7%) said they earn between $50,001 and $70,000. The highest percentage of Canadian professionals (20.2%) reported earning between $125,001 and $150,000. More than one in five U.S. respondents said they earn above $150,000; only 12.5% of Canadian respondents fell into the above $150,000 salary category.

In 2022/23, a salary disparity between men and women continued. Nearly half (48.4%) of women reported earning $70,000 or less, while less than one-third (29.1%) of men said their salaries fell into that category. On the other end of the salary spectrum, more than one-quarter of men said they earn more than $150,000; only 11.9% of women reported earning more than $150,000. PRNews' Senior Editor Nicole Schuman wrote in 2022 that although women make up 72.8% of the public relations workforce in the United States, pay inequity continues. Katherine Verducci, co-founder of 1903 Public Relations, told Schuman, "Traditionally [companies] value people who are aggressive and go-getters. But if you limit who gets a raise to who is aggressive enough to ask for it, that is typically a masculine [trait]." Salary transparency, creating safe spaces for salary conversations, and organizational commitments to increasing female leadership are ways that the public relations gender pay gap could begin to close (Schuman, 2022).

A pay difference is also apparent by organization type. About 20% of respondents working in private companies, nonprofits, and consultancies/agencies reported earning between $50,001 and $70,000. Nearly one in ten respondents in nonprofits and consultancies/agencies reported earning under $30,000. A similar percentage in those organization types reported earning more than $200,000. While corporate public relations might be stereotyped to have the highest salaries, only 5.4% of respondents from public companies and 5.7% of those from private companies said they earned more than $200,000.

A comparison of the responses in three North American Communication Monitors shows that the percentage of lower salaries has dropped substantially between 2018/19 and 2022/23. For example, the percentage of respondents earning between $30,001 and $50,000 in 2018/19 was 17.8%. In 2022/23, 13.3% reported earning salaries in that dollar category. Even fewer reported earning the lowest during the 2020/21 COVID-19 pandemic. On the upper end of the salary spectrum, only 3.6% of respondents in 2018/19 reported earning between $150,001 and $175,000; in 2022/23, 8% of professionals reported salaries in that range.

Basic annual salary of communication professionals in North America in 2022/23

More than $200,000
5.7%

Under $30,000
5.9%

$175,001–$200,000
5.3%

$30,001–$50,000
13.6%

$150,001–$175,000
8.0%

$125,001–$150,000
13.5%

$50,001–$70,000
19.4%

$90,001–$125,000
14.5%

$70,001–$90,000
14.0%

Note: n = 1,047 communication professionals. Q49: In which of the following range categories does your basic annual salary fall? Please state pre-tax income, adjusted to a full-time position. Answers will be analyzed in aggregated form only.

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Basic annual salary of communication professionals:
United States vs. Canada
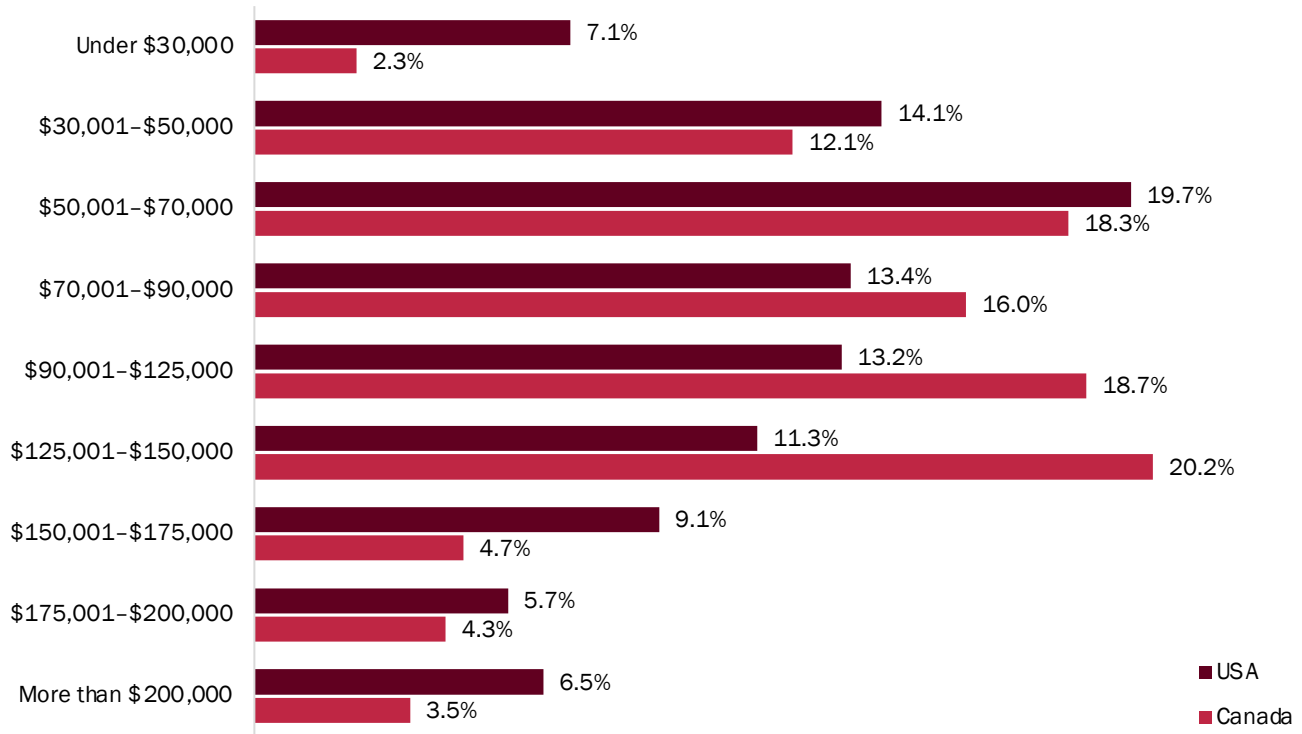
Salary Range	USA	Canada
Under $30,000	7.1%	2.3%
$30,001–$50,000	14.1%	12.1%
$50,001–$70,000	19.7%	18.3%
$70,001–$90,000	13.4%	16.0%
$90,001–$125,000	13.2%	18.7%
$125,001–$150,000	11.3%	20.2%
$150,001–$175,000	9.1%	4.7%
$175,001–$200,000	5.7%	4.3%
More than $200,000	6.5%	3.5%

Note: n = 1,047 communication professionals. Q49: In which of the following range categories does your basic annual salary fall? Please state pre-tax income, adjusted to a full-time position. Answers will be analyzed in aggregated form only.

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Basic annual salary of communication professionals:
Female vs. male practitioners

Salary Range	Female	Male
Under $30,000	8.0%	4.0%
$30,001–$50,000	16.5%	10.2%
$50,001–$70,000	23.9%	14.9%
$70,001–$90,000	13.8%	14.4%
$90,001–$125,000	15.8%	13.4%
$125,001–$150,000	10.1%	16.8%
$150,001–$175,000	3.9%	12.1%
$175,001–$200,000	4.7%	6.0%
More than $200,000	3.3%	8.1%

Higher share of **female practitioners** in these salary levels

Equal share of **female and male practitioners** in these salary levels

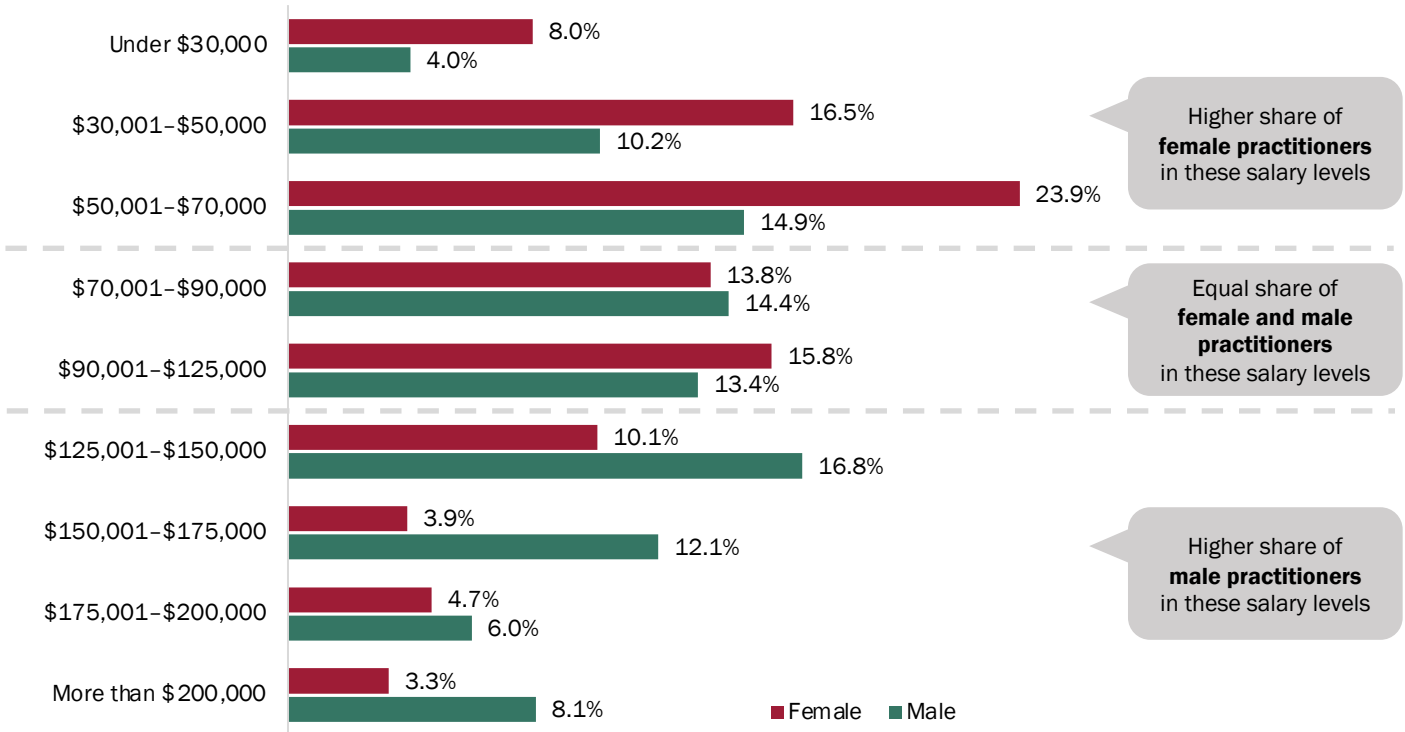Higher share of **male practitioners** in these salary levels

■ Female ■ Male

Note: n = 1,043 communication professionals. Q49: In which of the following range categories does your basic annual salary fall? Please state pre-tax income, adjusted to a full-time position. Answers will be analyzed in aggregated form only.

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Basic annual salary of communication professionals
along the leadership hierarchical levels

Head of communication / Agency CEO

| 3.4% | 6.9% | 15.7% | 9.7% | 12.9% | 17.6% | 12.2% | 9.4% | 12.2% |

Team leader / Unit leader

| 6.2% | 13.8% | 19.5% | 16.1% | 15.9% | 13.6% | 6.8% | 4.3% | 3.8% |

Team member / Consultant

0.6%

| 9.5% | 21.9% | 24.3% | 17.2% | 14.2% | 5.9% | 4.7% | |

1.8%

0%   100%

- Under $30,000
- $30,001–$50,000
- $50,001–$70,000
- $70,001–$90,000
- $90,001–$125,000
- $125,001–$150,000
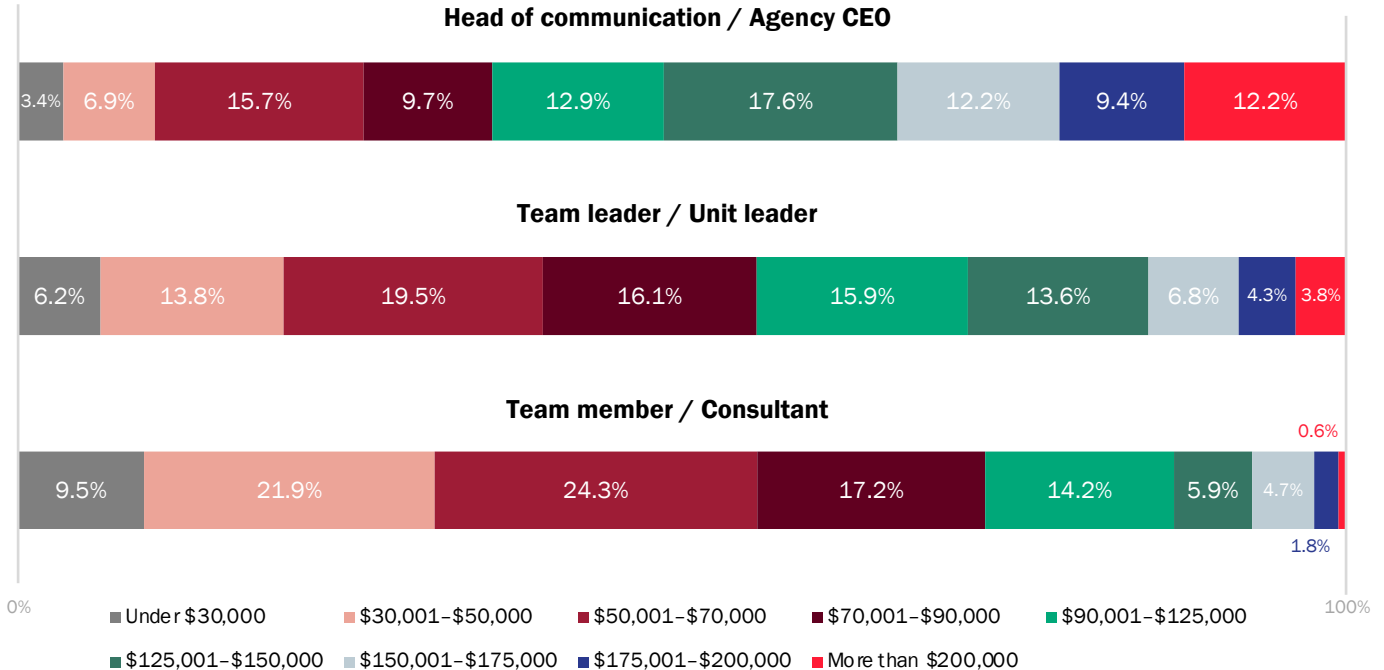- $150,001–$175,000
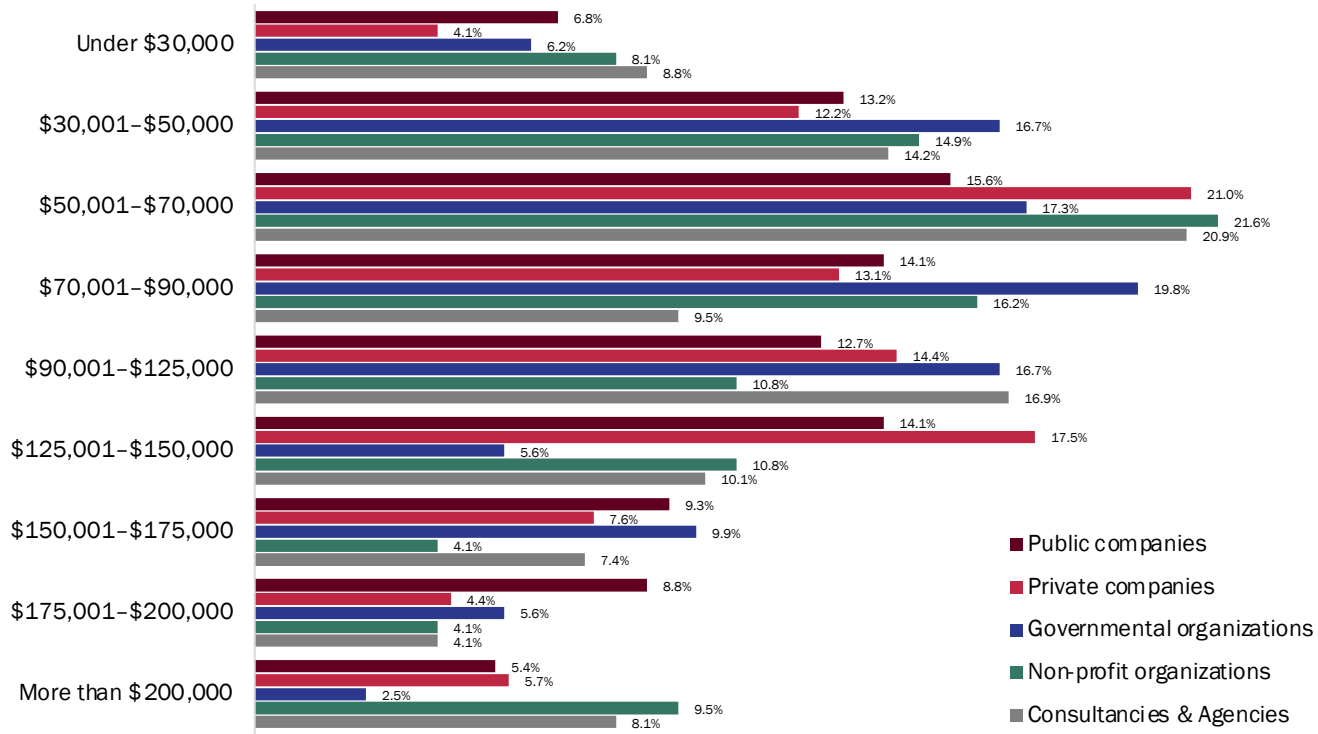- $175,001–$200,000
- More than $200,000

Note: n = 1,017 communication professionals. Q49: In which of the following range categories does your basic annual salary fall? Please state pre-tax income, adjusted to a full-time position. Answers will be analyzed in aggregated form only.

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Basic annual salary of communication professionals
in different types of organizations

Under $30,000
- Public companies: 6.8%
- Private companies: 4.1%
- Governmental organizations: 6.2%
- Non-profit organizations: 8.1%
- Consultancies & Agencies: 8.8%

$30,001–$50,000
- Public companies: 13.2%
- Private companies: 12.2%
- Governmental organizations: 16.7%
- Non-profit organizations: 14.9%
- Consultancies & Agencies: 14.2%

$50,001–$70,000
- Public companies: 15.6%
- Private companies: 21.0%
- Governmental organizations: 17.3%
- Non-profit organizations: 21.6%
- Consultancies & Agencies: 20.9%

$70,001–$90,000
- Public companies: 14.1%
- Private companies: 13.1%
- Governmental organizations: 19.8%
- Non-profit organizations: 16.2%
- Consultancies & Agencies: 9.5%

$90,001–$125,000
- Public companies: 12.7%
- Private companies: 14.4%
- Governmental organizations: 16.7%
- Non-profit organizations: 10.8%
- Consultancies & Agencies: 16.9%

$125,001–$150,000
- Public companies: 14.1%
- Private companies: 17.5%
- Governmental organizations: 5.6%
- Non-profit organizations: 10.8%
- Consultancies & Agencies: 10.1%

$150,001–$175,000
- Public companies: 9.3%
- Private companies: 7.6%
- Governmental organizations: 9.9%
- Non-profit organizations: 4.1%
- Consultancies & Agencies: 7.4%

$175,001–$200,000
- Public companies: 8.8%
- Private companies: 4.4%
- Governmental organizations: 5.6%
- Non-profit organizations: 4.1%
- Consultancies & Agencies: 4.1%

More than $200,000
- Public companies: 5.4%
- Private companies: 5.7%
- Governmental organizations: 2.5%
- Non-profit organizations: 9.5%
- Consultancies & Agencies: 8.1%

Legend:
- Public companies
- Private companies
- Governmental organizations
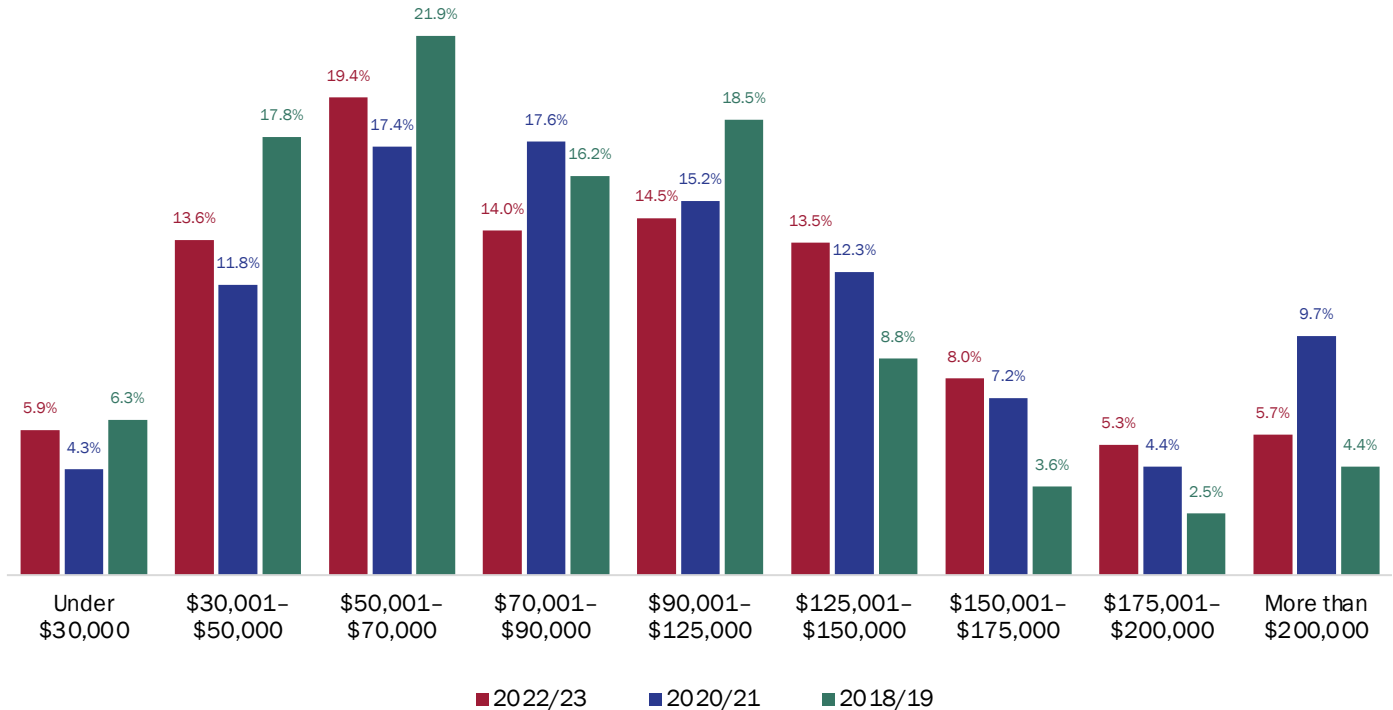- Non-profit organizations
- Consultancies & Agencies

Note: n = 1,047 communication professionals. Q49: In which of the following range categories does your basic annual salary fall? Please state pre-tax income, adjusted to a full-time position. Answers will be analyzed in aggregated form only.

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Basic annual salary of communication professionals:
Longitudinal tracking 2022/23 vs. 2020/21 vs. 2018/19

	Under $30,000	$30,001–$50,000	$50,001–$70,000	$70,001–$90,000	$90,001–$125,000	$125,001–$150,000	$150,001–$175,000	$175,001–$200,000	More than $200,000
2022/23	5.9%	13.6%	19.4%	14.0%	14.5%	13.5%	8.0%	5.3%	5.7%
2020/21	4.3%	11.8%	17.4%	17.6%	15.2%	12.3%	7.2%	4.4%	9.7%
2018/19	6.3%	17.8%	21.9%	16.2%	18.5%	8.8%	3.6%	2.5%	4.4%

■ 2022/23 ■ 2020/21 ■ 2018/19

Note: n = 1,047 communication professionals. Q49: In which of the following range categories does your basic annual salary fall? Please state pre-tax income, adjusted to a full-time position. Answers will be analyzed in aggregated form only. 2020/21: n = 1,015 (Q36); Meng et al., 2021. 2018/19: n = 968 (Q38); Meng et al., 2019. Results might be influenced by varying numbers and regional/hierarchical background of respondents in our biennial surveys.

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7

Characteristics of
**excellent communication
departments**

A unique feature of the global communication monitor series (i.e., Asia-Pacific Communication Monitor, European Communication Monitor, Latin American Communication Monitor, North American Communication Monitor) is the identification of high-performing communication departments and their attributes. To this end, the Comparative Excellence Framework for Communication Management (CEF), inspired by business excellence models (Tench et al., 2017; Vercic & Zerfass, 2016), is applicable.

Statistical analyses are used to differentiate excellent from non-excellent communication departments. After identifying the two groups, differences in characteristics are analyzed. Excellence is conceptually based on the internal standing of the communication department within the organization (i.e., influence) and external results of the department's activities as well as its basic qualifications (i.e., performance). Each of these components is calculated based on four dimensions (advisory influence, executive influence, success, and competence). Organizations that outperform in all four dimensions are considered "excellent". This year's data show that more than one-third (35.1%) of communication departments can be deemed excellent, while the majority (64.9%) do not fall into this category. This finding is consistent with other global communication monitor data.

Among the four dimensions in 2022/23, 40.9% of excellent companies identified as having advisory influence. Differences in responses of professionals from excellent departments and other departments are manifold. Professionals in excellent departments are more likely to follow conversations about Generative AI (83.3%) than professionals in other departments (59.4%). Responses from excellent departments were significantly higher than those from other departments regarding the challenges of introducing Generative AI into communication practice. Overall, excellent departments observed more challenges to introducing evolving technology compared to other departments.

Specifically, excellent departments were statistically more concerned about the high costs of implementation and training related to introducing Generative AI than were other departments.

Excellent departments are highly involved in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Professionals in excellent departments (85.2%) focused more on DEI factors when developing content than did those in other departments (59.9%). In each of eight scenarios, responses from those in excellent departments were statistically significant, and respondents were more likely to work in a department that actively established or communicated organizational DEI policies.

North American communicators in excellent departments agree substantially more that the leaders to whom they report are empathic compared to communicators in other departments. For example, 86.8% of respondents from excellent departments were on the "strongly agree" end of the spectrum when asked whether their leaders "accurately read other team members' moods, feelings, or nonverbal cues", compared to only 55.4% of respondents in other departments.

Finally, excellent departments exhibit more support for employees. When asked whether flexible or remote work is fully supported in their department, 87.4% of respondents in excellent departments responded on the "strongly agree" end of the scale compared to 55.5% of respondents from other departments. The recognition of the communication value and function was shown in salaries. Almost half (47.7%) of communication professionals in excellent departments earned more than $125,000 annually compared to 37.8% of communicators in other departments.
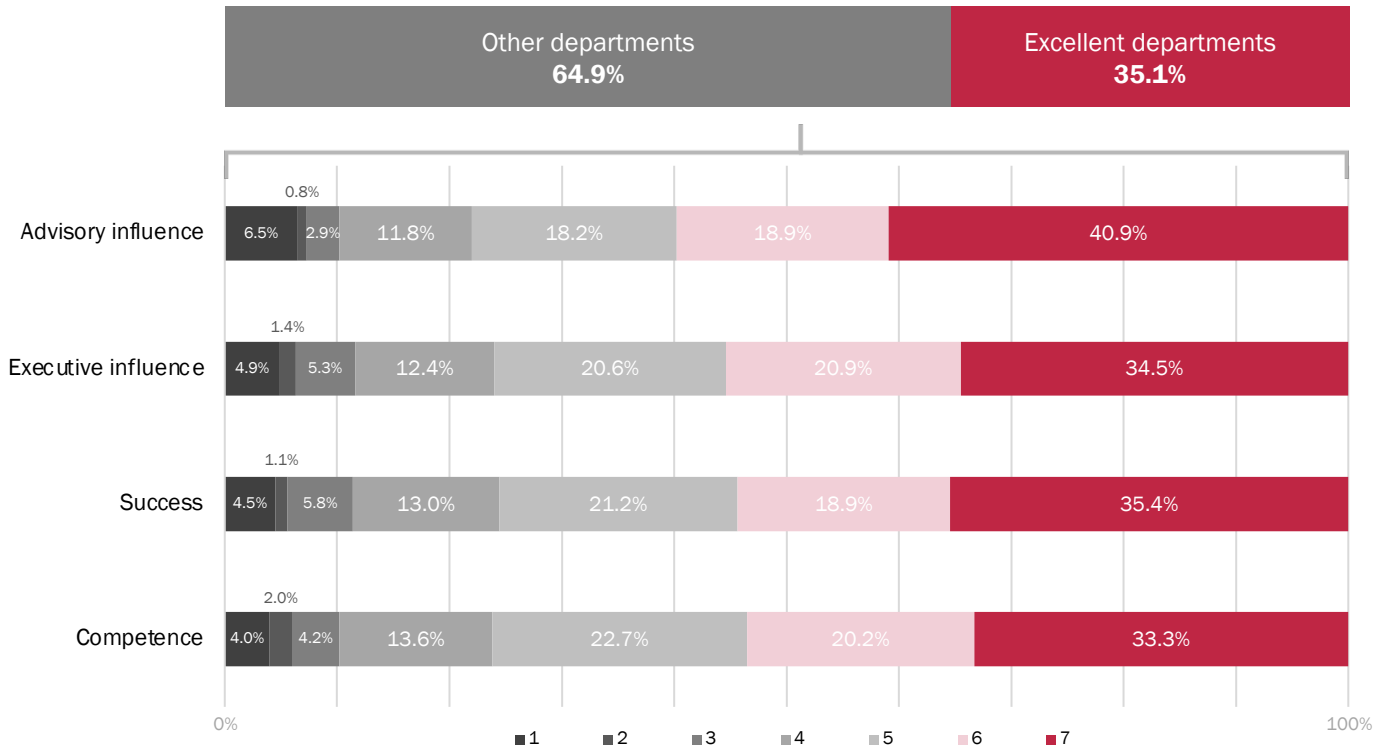
Identifying **excellent communication departments**

The Comparative Excellence Framework uses statistical analyses to identify outperforming organizations, based on benchmarking and self-assessments known from quality management.

Excellence

Communication departments in organizations that outperform others in the field

Influence

Internal standing of the communication department within the organization

Performance

External results of the communication department's activities and its basic qualifications

Advisory influence

Senior managers take recommendations of the communication function (very) seriously

(Q37; scale points 6–7)

Executive influence

Communication will (very) likely be involved in senior-level meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning

(Q38; scale points 6–7)

Success

The communication of the organization in general is (very) successful

(Q39; scale points 6–7)

Competence

The quality and ability of the communication function is (much) better compared to those of competing organizations

(Q40; scale points 6–7)

Note: Only organizations outperforming in all four dimensions (scale points 6–7 on a 7-point-scale) will be considered as "excellent" in the benchmark exercise comparing distribution and characteristics of organizations, departments and communication professionals. For a description of the framework and method see Tench et al. (2017).
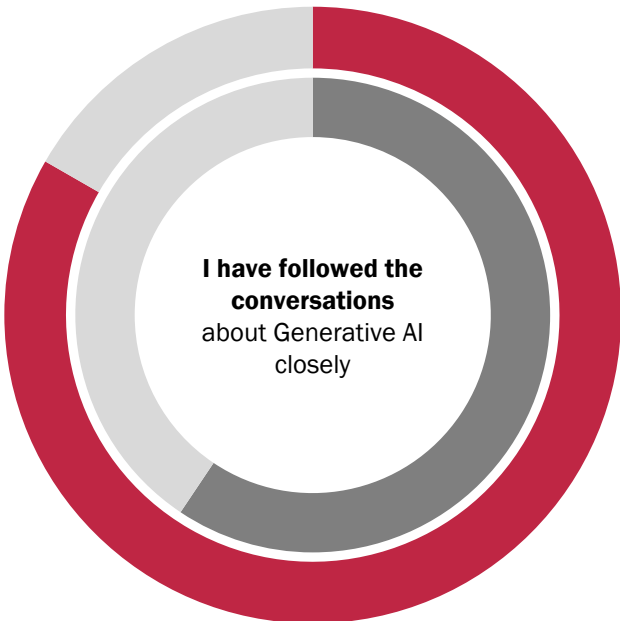
Identifying excellent communication departments **in the sample**

| Other departments **64.9%** | Excellent departments **35.1%** |

Advisory influence
0.8%
6.5% | 2.9% | 11.8% | 18.2% | 18.9% | 40.9%

Executive influence
1.4%
4.9% | 5.3% | 12.4% | 20.6% | 20.9% | 34.5%

Success
1.1%
4.5% | 5.8% | 13.0% | 21.2% | 18.9% | 35.4%

Competence
2.0%
4.0% | 4.2% | 13.6% | 22.7% | 20.2% | 33.3%

0%   ■1   ■2   ■3   ■4   ■5   ■6   ■7   100%

Note: n= 906 communication professionals in communication departments. Advisory influence, Q37: In your organization, how seriously do senior managers take the recommendations of the communication function? Scale 1 (Not seriously at all) – 7 (Very seriously). Executive influence, Q38: How likely is it, within your organization, that communication would be invited to senior-level meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning? Scale 1 (Never) – 7 (Always). Success, Q39: In your opinion, how successful is the communication of your organization compared to competitors? Scale 1 (Not successful at all) – 7 (Very successful). Competence, Q40: How would you estimate the quality and ability of the communication function in your organization compared to those of competitors? Scale 1 (Much worse) – 7 (Much better). Percentages: Excellent communication departments based on scale points 6-7 for each item.
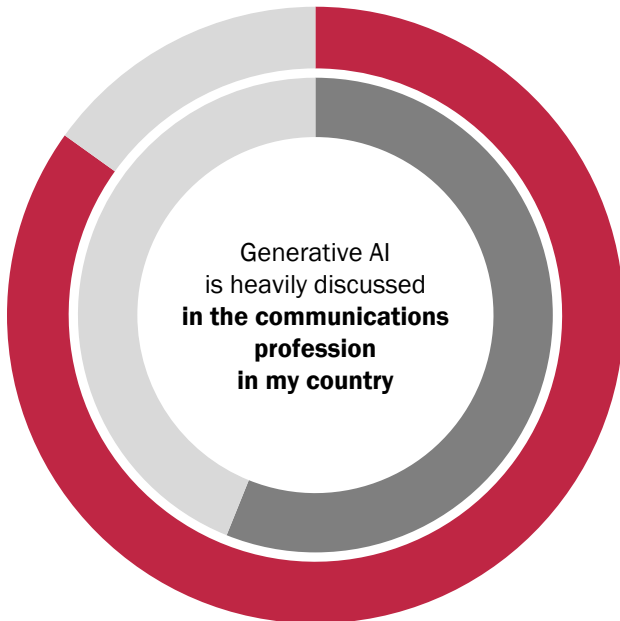
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Discussion of Generative AI is the strongest in excellent departments

Excellent departments: 83.3%

I have followed the conversations about Generative AI closely

Other departments: 59.4%

Excellent departments: 84.9%

Generative AI is heavily discussed in the communications profession in my country

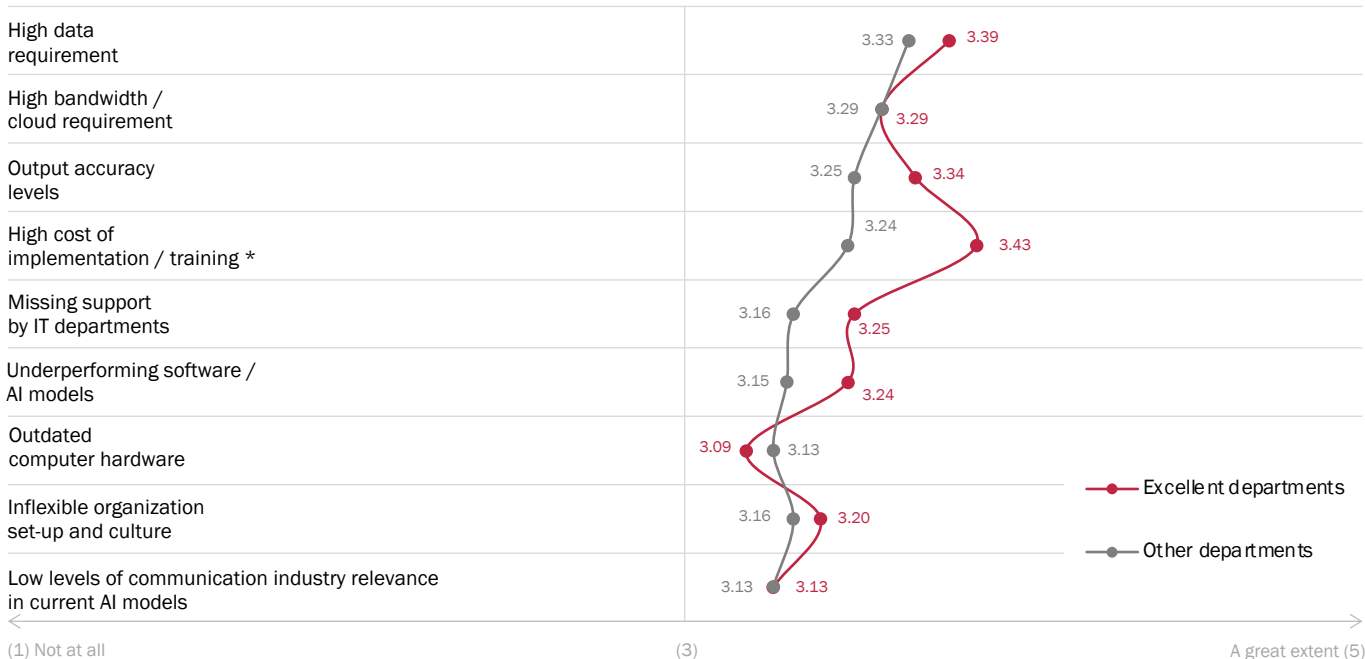**Other departments: 56.1%**

Note: n = 906 communication professionals in communication departments. Q27: ... Please rate the following statements based on your overall impression of Generative AI tools. Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Excellent departments see more challenges in introducing Generative AI in their workplace

Organizational challenges of introducing Generative AI

	Other departments	Excellent departments
High data requirement	3.33	3.39
High bandwidth / cloud requirement	3.29	3.29
Output accuracy levels	3.25	3.34
High cost of implementation / training *	3.24	3.43
Missing support by IT departments	3.16	3.25
Underperforming software / AI models	3.15	3.24
Outdated computer hardware	3.13	3.09
Inflexible organization set-up and culture	3.16	3.20
Low levels of communication industry relevance in current AI models	3.13	3.13

(1) Not at all   (3)   A great extent (5)

●——● Excellent departments

●——● Other departments

Note: n = 906 communication professionals in communication departments. Q32a: To what extent do you consider each of the following as organizational challenges when it comes to introducing Generative AI in your company? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (A great extent). Mean values. * Significant differences (ANOVA, p ≤ 0.05).

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Diversity, equity, and inclusion are more of a focus in excellent departments

Impact of diversity, equality and inclusion on communications

I carefully consider DEI factors when developing verbal and visual content for my organization or clients
- Excellent departments: 85.2%
- Other departments: 59.9%

The communication department(s) or professionals work closely with other departments, like human resources, on DEI initiatives in my organization
- Excellent departments: 82.7%
- Other departments: 60.2%

If what we communicate about DEI does not match what we do about DEI, the risk of losing the trust of external stakeholders increases
- Excellent departments: 75.4%
- Other departments: 60.2%

The communication department(s) or professionals are primarily responsible for DEI initiatives in my organization
- Excellent departments: 79.2%
- Other departments: 57.0%

DEI will substantially impact the composition of teams in my communication department or consultancy in the next three years
- Excellent departments: 78.9%
- Other departments: 56.0%

If what we communicate about DEI does not match what we do about DEI, the risk of losing the trust of internal stakeholders increases
- Excellent departments: 73.0%
- Other departments: 57.1%

■ Excellent departments
■ Other departments

Note: n = 906 communication professionals in communication departments. Q13: The debate on diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizations and society might influence communications in different ways. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Communication professionals in excellent departments are more involved in all DEI activities compared to colleagues in other departments

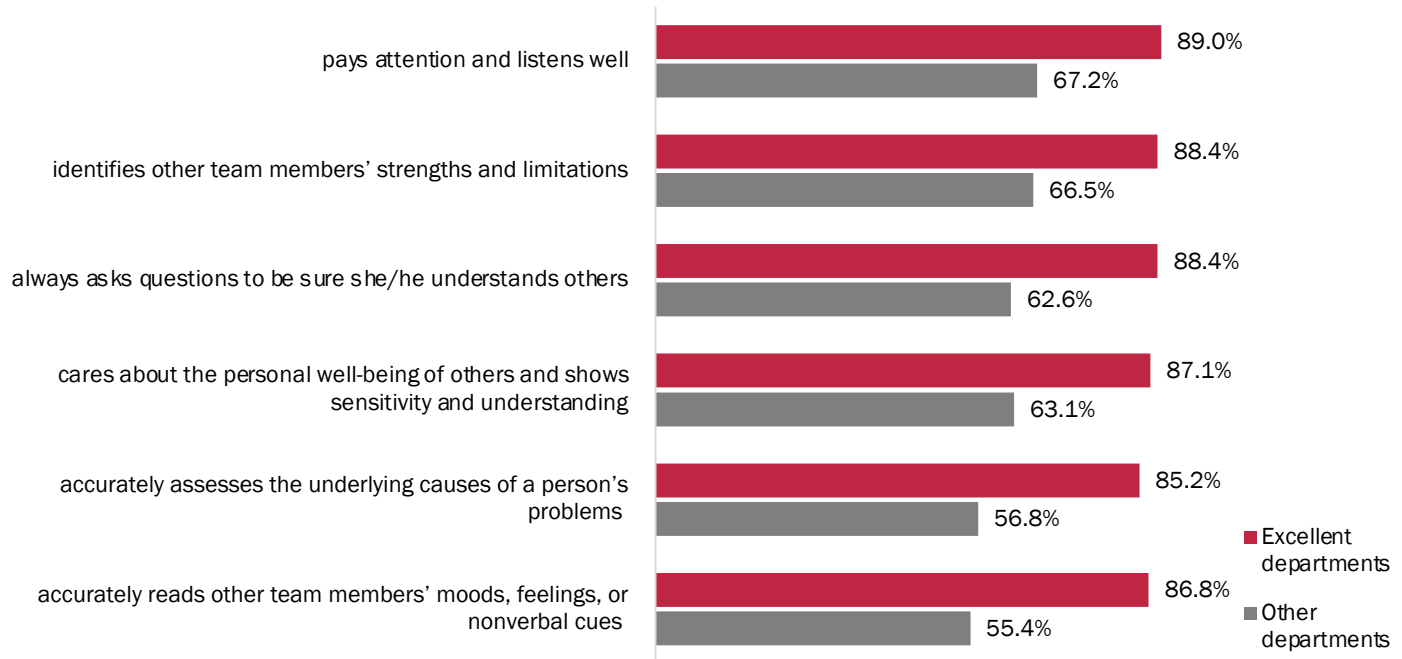## *Responsibilities of communication units for DEI initiatives*

	Excellent departments	Other departments
Creating organizational DEI policies **	4.10	3.47
Implementing organizational DEI policies **	4.12	3.47
Monitoring internal and external debates on DEI **	4.00	3.39
Developing plans for communicating about DEI **	4.01	3.44
Informing internal audiences on DEI issues and policies **	4.04	3.40
Informing external audiences on DEI issues and policies **	3.92	3.30
Evaluating and refining DEI communication plans and content **	3.98	3.40
Celebrating diversity, equality, and inclusion internally and externally **	4.10	3.53

(1) Not at all   (3)   To a great extent (5)

Note: n = 906 communication professionals in communication departments. Q15: To what extent does your department or agency actively engage in establishing or communicating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies for your organization or clients in the following ways? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). Mean values.
** Highly significant differences (ANOVA, $p \leq 0.01$).

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Leaders of excellent departments are better in showing empathy towards their team members

The communication leader ...

	Excellent departments	Other departments
pays attention and listens well	89.0%	67.2%
identifies other team members' strengths and limitations	88.4%	66.5%
always asks questions to be sure she/he understands others	88.4%	62.6%
cares about the personal well-being of others and shows sensitivity and understanding	87.1%	63.1%
accurately assesses the underlying causes of a person's problems	85.2%	56.8%
accurately reads other team members' moods, feelings, or nonverbal cues	86.8%	55.4%

Note: n = 906 communication professionals in communication departments. Q19: How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Top communicators who do not report to a leader were asked for a self-assessment. Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Excellent departments face more challenges in adopting CommTech compared to other departments

Challenges of introducing CommTech in communication units

Tasks and processes
not prepared for digitalization — 3.14 (grey), 3.23 (red)

Underqualified
people — 3.11 (red), 3.11 (grey)

Structural
barriers — 3.01 (grey), 3.15 (red)

Imperfect
technology * — 3.01 (grey), 3.19 (red)

Excellent departments

Other departments

(1) Not at all   (3)   To a great extent (5)
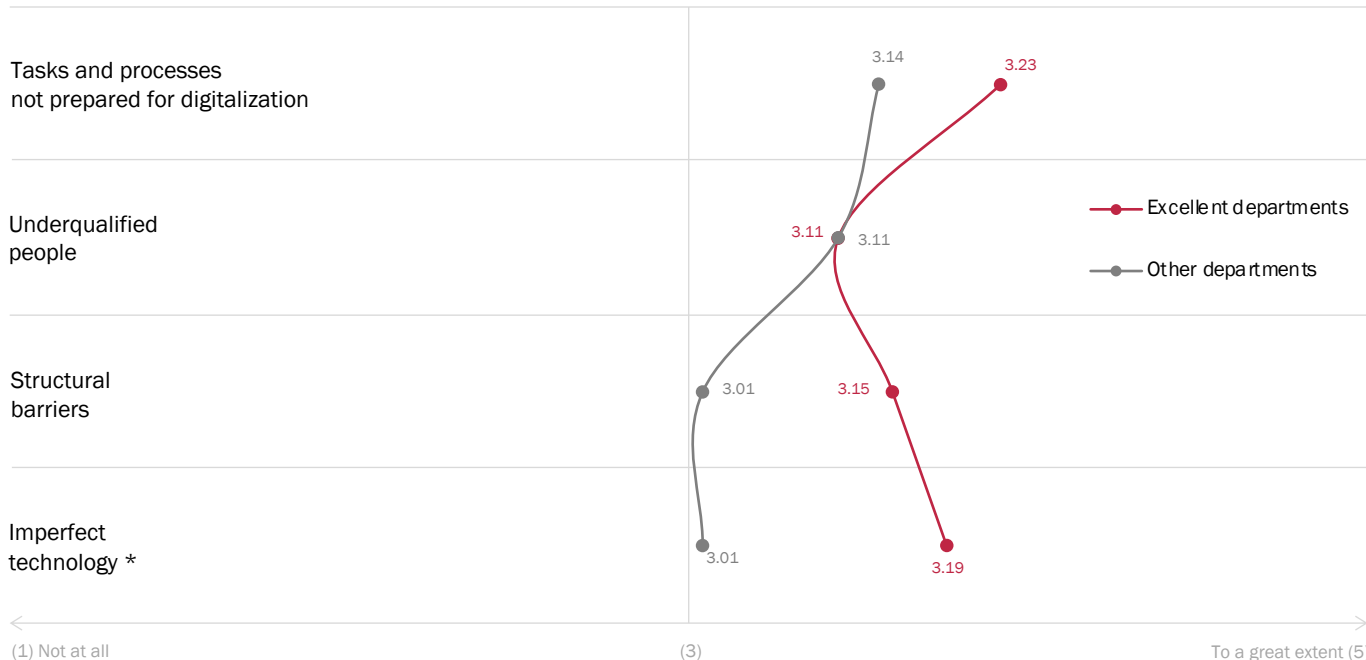
Note: n = 906 communication professionals in communication departments. Q10: To what extent do you consider each of the following as challenges for introducing CommTech in your organization? Scale 1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a great extent). * Significant differences (ANOVA, $p \leq 0.05$).

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Excellent departments support flexible/remote work and fully use collaboration tools

Excellent departments: **87.4%**

Excellent departments: **88.7%**

Flexible or remote work
is fully supported

The use of
real-time
collaboration tools
is fully established
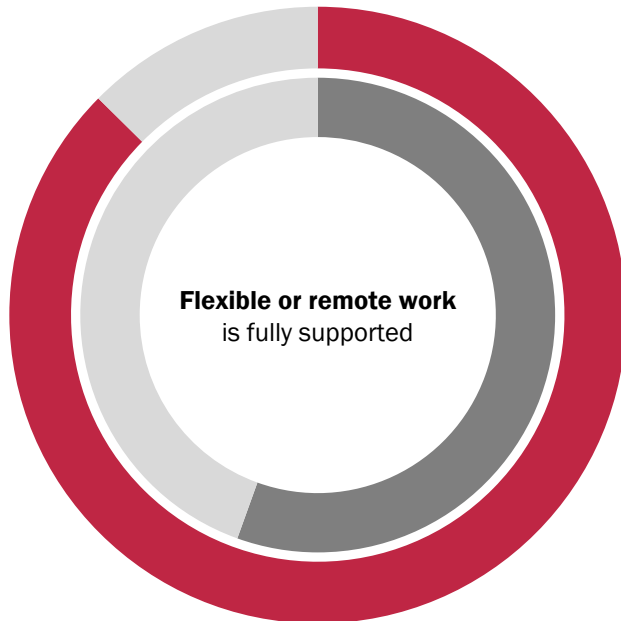
Other departments: **55.5%**
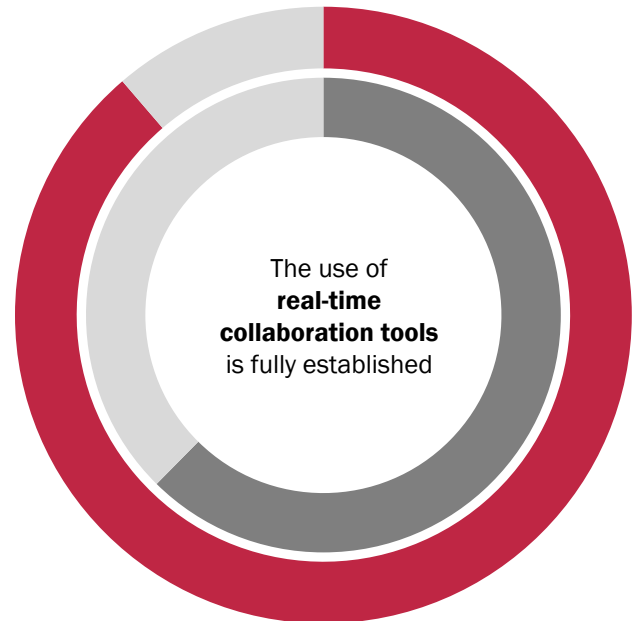
Other departments: **62.4%**

Note: n = 906 communication professionals in communication departments. Q24: … In terms of your own department or agency, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following two statements? Scale 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree). Frequencies based on scale points 4–5.

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Excellent departments pay more compared to other departments

Salary Range	Excellent departments	Other departments
Under $30,000	3.5%	6.5%
$30,001–$50,000	10.5%	15.0%
$50,001–$70,000	14.7%	21.5%
$70,001–$90,000	10.8%	16.9%
$90,001–$125,000	12.7%	14.9%
$125,001–$150,000	17.2%	12.3%
$150,001–$175,000	12.4%	5.8%
$175,001–$200,000	7.6%	4.4%
More than $200,000	10.5%	2.6%

■ Excellent departments
■ Other departments
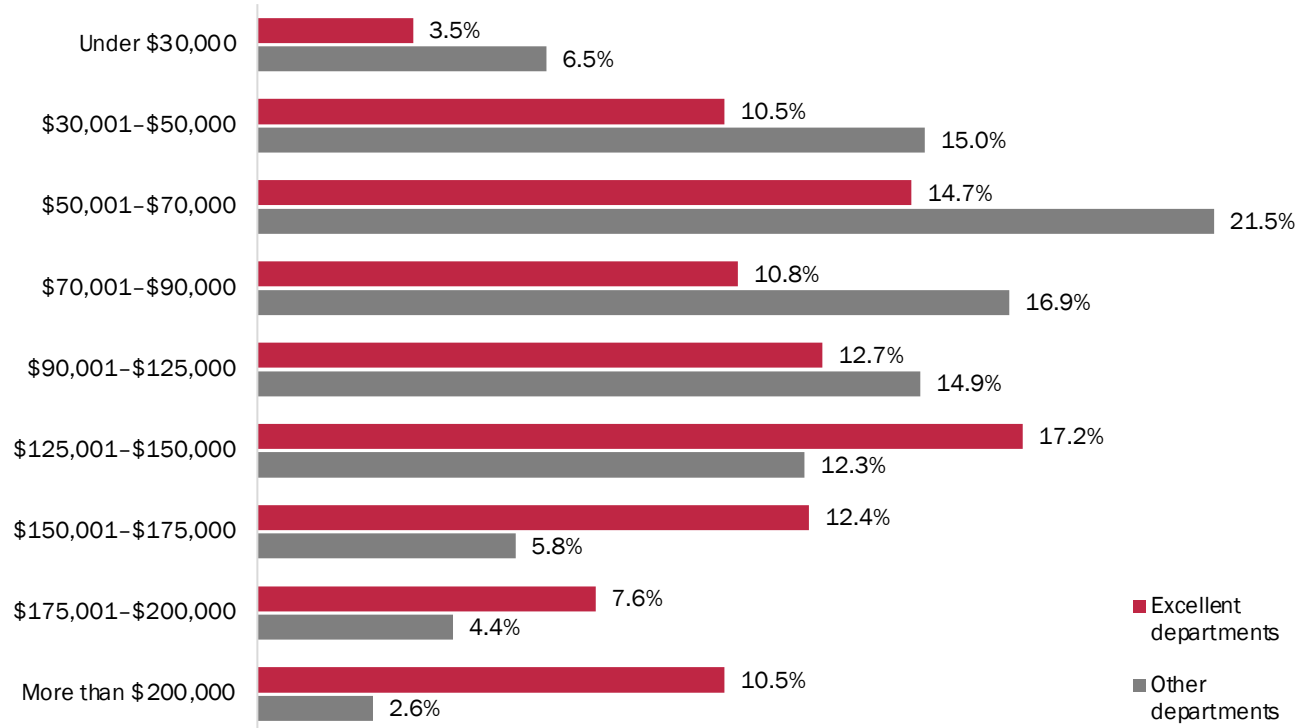
Note: n = 899 communication professionals in communication departments. Q49: In which of the following range categories does your basic annual salary fall? Please state pre-tax income, adjusted to a full-time position. Answers will be analyzed in aggregated form only.

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