The Current and Future State of ERGs: Survey Results

December 2025

CONTENT

ABOUT

- Korn Ferry partnered with Dr. Robert Rodriguez, president of DRR Advisors and author of *Employee Resource Group Excellence* to conduct a global ERG survey between August and September 2025.
- Participants included ERG leaders, sponsors, and managers from 250 organizations with established ERGs.
- Organizations spanned five regions and ten industries, and ranged from small to large. ERGs varied in maturity (new, emerging, long-established).
- The survey explored strategic alignment, disruption drivers, readiness for change, and ERG impact.

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SURVEY INSIGHTS

The role of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) is evolving rapidly. Organizations are focused on maintaining the powerful benefits these groups bring—connection, belonging, and engagement—while balancing broader business priorities such as growth, efficiency, innovation, technology, and risk management. Two elements continue to define the value ERGs bring to organizations: boosting employee engagement and being a proxy for the company's culture. ERGs remain a primary driver of engagement, with 78% of participants reporting increased engagement through their involvement. The majority of respondents (83%) view ERGs' greatest impact as enhancing employee satisfaction and strengthening workplace climate. Sixty-one percent cite improved retention and belonging as their top outcomes, while 57% believe ERGs strengthen the Employee Value Proposition (EVP)—including culture, reputation, and community relations. Eighty-two percent report that ERG participation increases their desire to stay with their company.

ERGs create measurable talent, culture, and business impact when positioned with a clear purpose and adequate organizational support. However, many organizations lack operational support and still rely heavily on volunteer energy with limited infrastructure or measurement. While 61% of ERG leaders feel supported by senior leadership, only 43% receive sufficient training, 42% report their companies doing periodic assessments to track impact and performance, and just 32% have formal metrics in place. Only 31% say they have adequate resources or infrastructure, underscoring a continued gap between strategic intent and operational support.

Strategic Alignment and Opportunity. ERGs continue to sustain engagement even amid external pressures and organizational gaps. Currently, their strongest strategic alignment lies in creating a company culture that is inclusive for all (52%), building community outreach and participating in events (39%), and contributing to professional development, providing skills to advance members in their careers (30%). However, only 8% of employee resource groups currently serve as a strategic resource to address business challenges—representing a significant opportunity to expand their role from talent and cultural advocates to business accelerators.

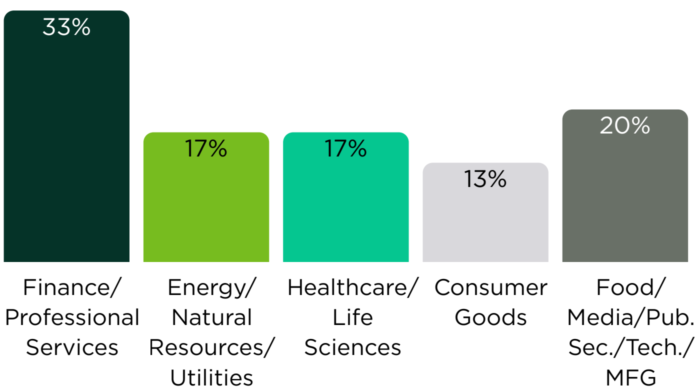
Responding to the Times and Readiness Gaps. Amid ongoing social and economic shifts, most organizations are opting for incremental adjustments rather than sweeping changes to their ERG strategies and structures. In 2025, 67% reported either not significant or only minor changes, though 63% are anticipating further evolution in 2026. Readiness levels remain mixed, and some may be overestimating their readiness for change: 22% feel underprepared, 54% feel only "somewhat" prepared, and just 13% feel highly prepared for what lies ahead.

Next Frontier and Future Support Needs. The vast majority (87%) of respondents seek benchmarking insights, while 83% desire guidance on integrating ERGs into broader talent and business priorities. Respondents also express interest in enhanced training, forums, and assessment tools to strengthen ERG maturity. Looking ahead, ERGs are well positioned to contribute to emerging enterprise priorities—such as Human + Technology Integration, industry-specific insights, and navigating through legislative and regulatory changes—further cementing their role as both cultural and strategic business partners.

This section profiles the participating companies*.

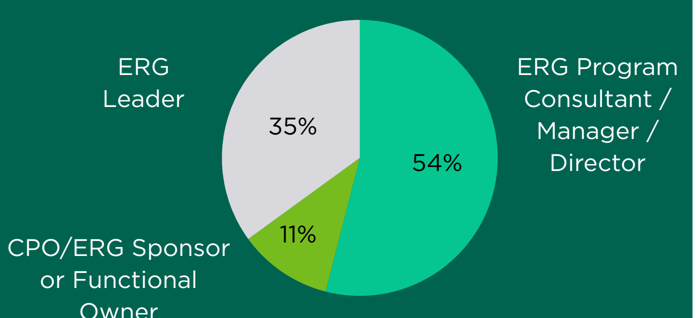
INDUSTRY

Finance/Professional Services represented the largest share of participating organizations (33%), followed by Energy/Natural Resources/Utilities and Healthcare/Life Sciences (each 17%), while Consumer Goods made up 13%. Those in Food, Media, Public Sector, Technology and Manufacturing collectively accounted for 20% of participating organizations.



ROLE OF RESPONDENT

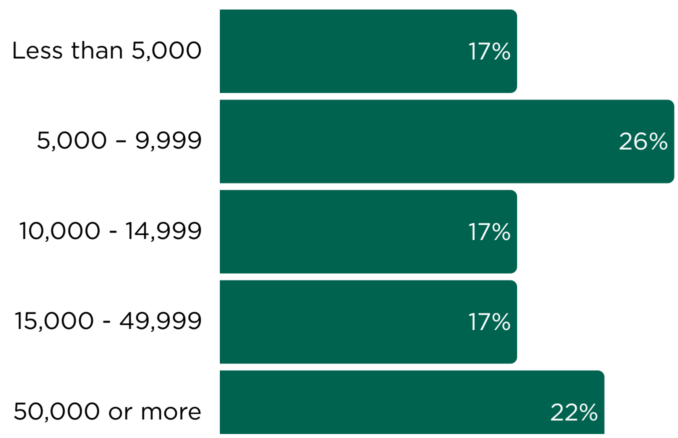
Survey respondents consisted primarily of ERG Program Consultants/Managers/ Directors (54%) and ERG Leaders (35%). Chief People Officers, the ERG Sponsor and the ERG Program Functional Owners accounted for 11% of respondents



*46 surveys were completed

COMPANY SIZE

Participating organizations ranged in size, with the largest share (26%) having 5,000 to 9,999 employees, followed by 50,000 or more (22%). Smaller firms (less than 5,000) and those with 10,000 to 14,999 and 15,000 to 49,999 each made up 17%.



COUNTRIES OF OPERATION

Survey participants indicated operating across a diverse set of regions, with the highest representation in North America (93%), followed by Europe (50%), Latin America and the Caribbean (43%), Asia-Pacific (41%), and Middle East and Africa (37%).

93%
North America

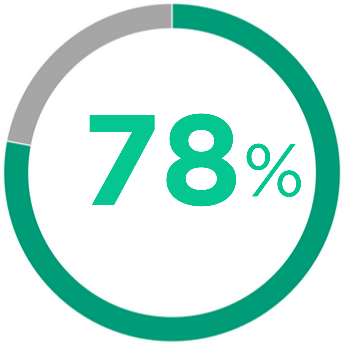
50%
Europe

43%
Latin America and the Caribbean

41%
Asia-Pacific

37%
Middle East and Africa

Participants shared that their involvement with their ERG has an impact on their overall engagement at work.



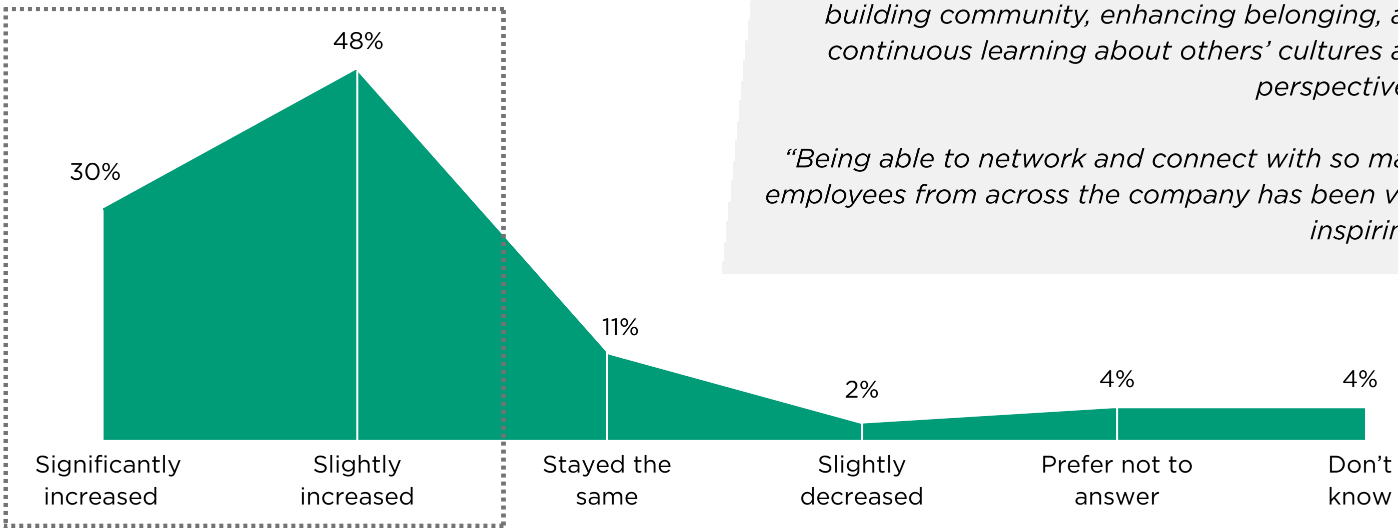
reported increased engagement

ENERGY BOOSTERS

Over three quarters of respondents (78%) reported an increase in engagement, with 30% saying it has significantly increased and 48% noting a slight increase. Only 11% reported no change, and decreases were rare (2%). These results suggest that ERG participation is strongly associated with improved engagement at work.

"ERG work grounds me in what is truly important—building community, enhancing belonging, and continuous learning about others' cultures and perspectives."

"Being able to network and connect with so many employees from across the company has been very inspiring."



Comments revealed that ERG participation generally boosts energy and engagement by creating purpose, connection, and belonging. Respondents described ERGs as opportunities to network across teams, build authentic relationships, and learn from diverse perspectives. Many noted that ERGs provide safe spaces and foster professional growth through leadership development and confidence building.

While most comments were positive, some highlighted challenges such as competing priorities and lack of organizational support, which has reduced energy levels. Overall, ERGs were seen as rewarding and impactful, enhancing engagement despite occasional resource constraints.

"Sense of purpose that you're bringing people together and hearing/helping with others' challenges."

"It's incredibly rewarding to make a positive difference for colleagues and contribute to a more cohesive workplace."

"It has been challenging to see the issues people are facing with little to no support from the business. This majorly reduces energy levels."

Participants shared their perceptions of the impact ERGs have on the organizational culture and business value.

PROXY FOR CULTURE

Survey results show that ERGs were perceived as having their greatest impact on enhancing employee engagement and strengthening workplace climate, with 83% of respondents selecting this as a top outcome. Improving employee retention and fostering a sense of belonging followed at 61%, while 57% highlighted ERGs' role in reinforcing the company's Employee Value Proposition through culture, reputation, and community relations.

Professional skill development and career navigation were also notable at 39%, though areas such as productivity improvement (13%), risk mitigation (13%), innovation (11%), talent pipeline expansion (11%), and driving business growth (9%) ranked significantly lower.

This suggests that while ERGs are perceived as highly effective in shaping culture and employee experience, there is a clear opportunity to extend their influence into business-facing outcomes. By leveraging ERG insights and networks to inform product innovation, market expansion, and talent strategies, organizations can unlock additional value and position ERGs as strategic drivers of growth rather than solely cultural contributors.

Enhancing employee engagement/satisfaction, strengthening workplace climate	83%
Improving employee retention and sense of belonging	61%
Enhancing the company's Employee Value Proposition (EVP), including culture, reputation, community relations	57%
Providing opportunities for professional skill development/ learning "unwritten rules" for success, career growth, navigation	39%
Improve levels of contribution/performance/productivity	13%
Reducing reputational, compliance, or financial risks	13%
Contributing to product innovation and improving product/service quality	11%
Expanding and improving the talent pipeline	11%
Driving business growth, including sales and market expansion	9%

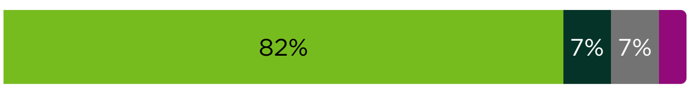
Participants shared their views on the value of ERGs, the current level of support the groups received, and the recognition ERG leaders get for the work they do.

ERGS CREATE VALUE DESPITE CONSTRAINTS

The vast majority (82%) of respondents reported that involvement in an ERG enhances their desire to remain at the company, underscoring ERGs' role in retention. Another 61% felt supported by senior leadership to drive activities forward. However, more than half (53%) did not believe their organization provides adequate training for ERG leaders and 48% reported that ERG leadership roles were not highly desired, appreciated, and valued.

Retention

My involvement in an ERG enhances my desire to remain at this company.



Leadership Support

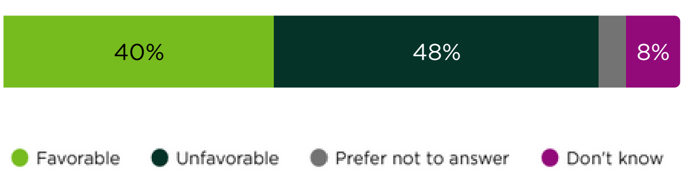
Currently, I feel supported by my organization's senior leadership team in my efforts to drive ERG activities forward.

Skill Training

My organization provides adequate training to ERG leaders to help nurture their success in the role.

Recognition and Role Value

ERG leadership roles at our organization are highly desired, appreciated, and valued.



OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE ERG VALUE IN THE FUTURE

Survey participants suggested the following opportunities to enhance the impact of ERGs for their organizations:

- Stronger integration with business priorities: policy reviews, product decisions, talent pipeline development, structured sponsorship
- Champion inclusion for all abilities and neurodiverse talent
- Build leadership capability and act as trusted voices in change management
- Scale globally, improve communication, and increase external visibility through networking
- Deliver measurable business value through cost-saving projects and previewing policies/marketing for inclusivity

"Partner with talent teams for pipeline development. Structured sponsorship. Positioned more as thought partners to leadership."

"Creating a workplace that is inclusive for employees of all abilities."

"Support a strategy that prepares us for hiring/finding talent in the ever-growing space of neuro-divergent people. The numbers are rising every year, and we are currently completely unprepared to leverage this amazing talent pool."

"Become a trusted source of employee voice and support change management initiatives."

"Bringing more people in, scaling globally, more groups beyond identity."

"Solutioning—we have had some very successful consulting projects. This has saved $$ for the company, provided exposure for ERG members and expanded their skill set."

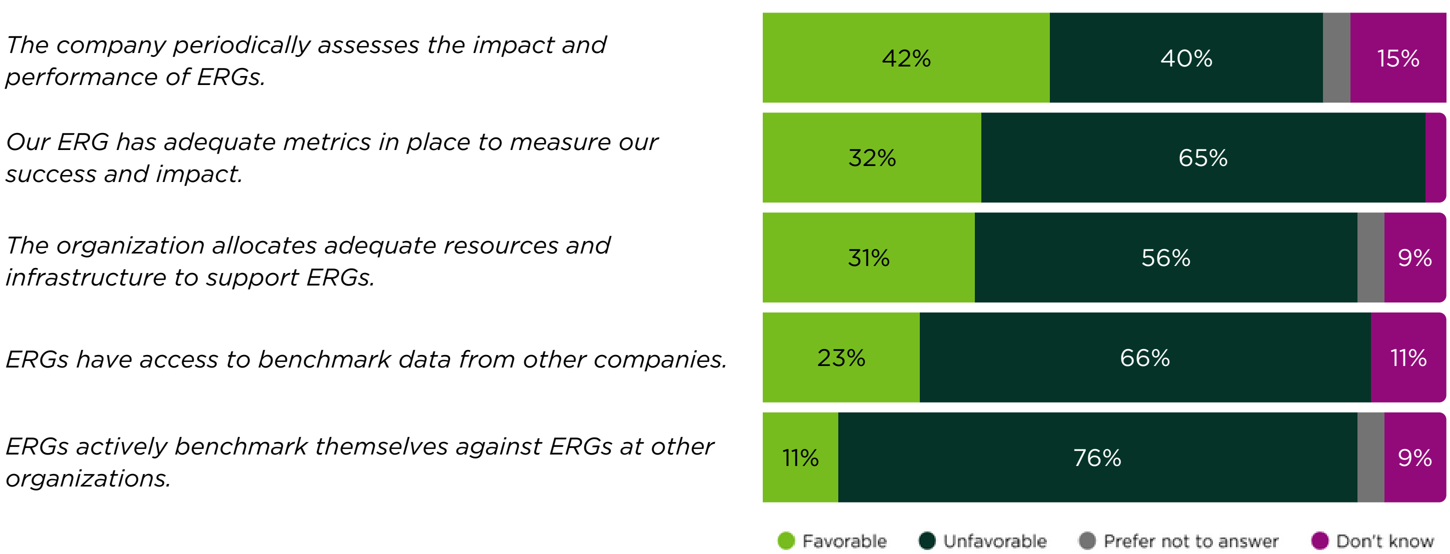
Participants shared their views on different elements related to metrics, assessing the impact and performance, having adequate resources & infrastructure, and getting access to benchmarking data or comparing to other groups.

WHAT GETS MEASURED...

Survey results show that ERG impact assessment and benchmarking practices remain inconsistent across organizations. While 42% of respondents reported their company periodically assesses ERG performance, only 32% agreed that their ERG has adequate metrics in place to measure success and impact. Resource allocation was a noted concern, with only 31% believing their organization provides adequate resources and infrastructure. Access to external benchmark data was limited—only 23% of ERGs reported such access—and active benchmarking was rare, with just 11% confirming this practice.

The findings underscore gaps in measurement, resourcing, and benchmarking, which could hinder ERGs from demonstrating value and driving strategic outcomes. Open-ended comments reinforced these findings. Companies that reported measuring ERG impact often relied on engagement metrics such as attendance, membership growth, and participation, along with employee surveys on belonging and inclusion. Some noted using structured tools like the 4C Assessment™ or Net Promoter Scores for events, while others tracked awareness in engagement surveys.

For best practices, organizations turned to external sources like Gartner, USC Center for Effective Organizations, Seramount, DRR Advisors, and DEI networks, as well as internal collaboration and community partnerships. However, many respondents noted that their companies do not formally assess ERG performance, leaving evaluation to ERG leaders and volunteers, often without dedicated resources or organizational support.



"We assess the impact of our ERGs and Inclusion Councils by capturing Net Promoter Scores for events and trainings and review these over time."

"We participate in the 4C assessment™; also we ask about ERG awareness as part of our internal engagement survey."

"My company is not interested in the impact or performance of my ERG. It's entirely run on goodwill and in the hope it is having a positive change."

"This is left entirely to those who are running the ERGs, so company is not assessing their impact at all."

Participants shared how their organizations collect employee sentiment data, and to what extent ERGs are involved in different organizational efforts and initiatives

GATHERING EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES

Most organizations use structured methods to gather employee perspectives on climate and sentiment, with employee surveys or pulse checks being the most common approach (67%). Half of respondents report leveraging feedback from ERG groups and one-on-one conversations between leaders and employees (50% each). Focus groups or listening sessions are also widely used (41%), while fewer organizations rely on confidential channels such as alert lines or ombuds programs (24%). Notably, 13% of organizations have no formal efforts in place to collect employee feedback, indicating room for improvement in engagement practices.

UNTAPPED OPPORTUNITY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL INSIGHTS

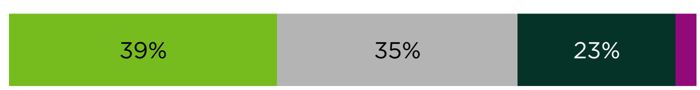
ERG involvement at the enterprise level varied across initiatives. The strongest area was company culture, where 52% of respondents reported favorable (high) involvement. Community outreach was also a common focus, with 39% favorable. Engagement in professional development was slightly less favorable at 30%, suggesting room for improvement in mentoring and career advancement efforts. The weakest area was providing business insights, where only 8% reported favorable involvement, and a significant 62% unfavorable, highlighting a gap in leveraging ERGs to support business priorities. Overall, the fairly large share of neutral responses indicates moderate involvement.

Company culture

Creating a company environment that is inclusive for all

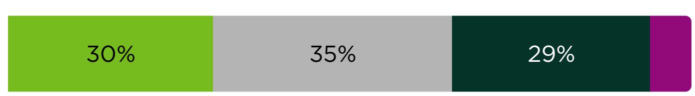
Community outreach efforts

Volunteerism, participating in community events, external engagement



Professional development

Mentoring, onboarding, helping people learn new skills to advance their career



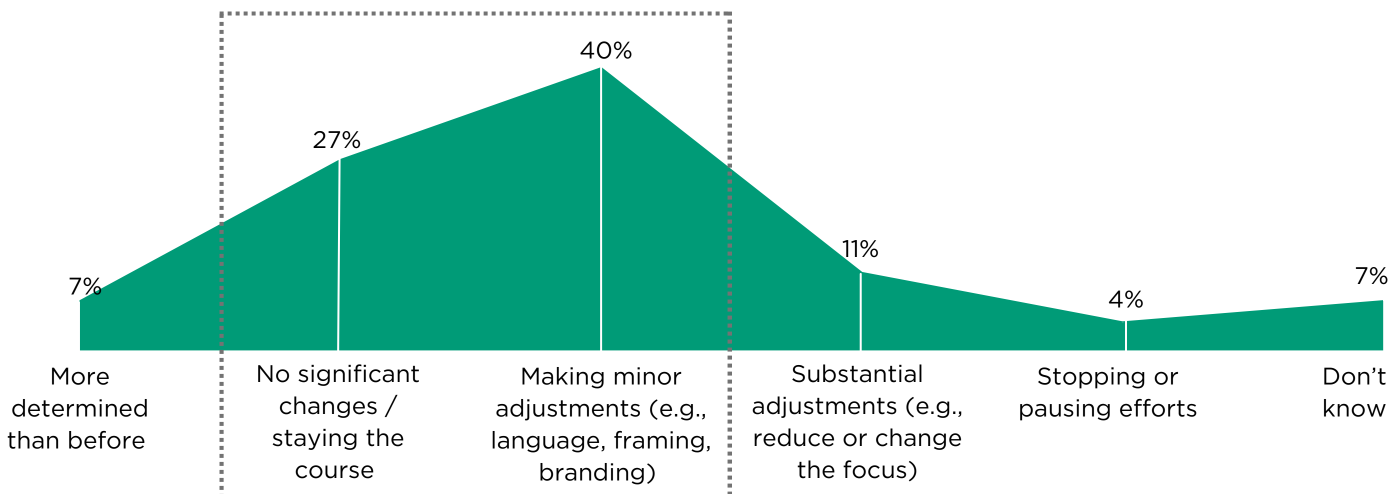
Providing business insights

Serving as a resource to help address business challenges and supporting company priorities.

This section outlines how participating organizations with a U.S. presence are responding to the evolving landscape, and how all participants—globally—anticipate and are preparing for changes to ERGs in 2026.

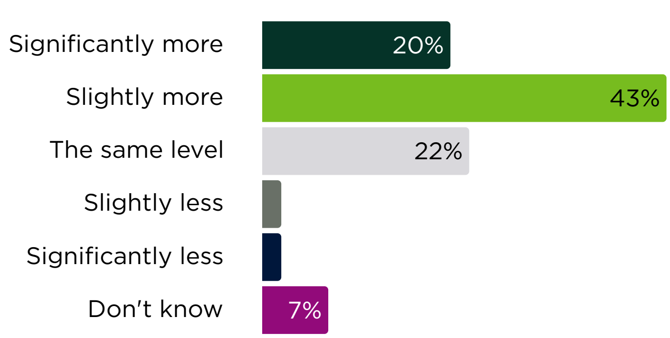
RESPONDING TO THE TIMES

In response to recent developments in the U.S., most organizations are opting for incremental changes rather than sweeping shifts in their ERG strategies. Forty percent reported making minor adjustments, such as refining language, framing, or branding, while 27% indicated they are staying the course without significant changes.



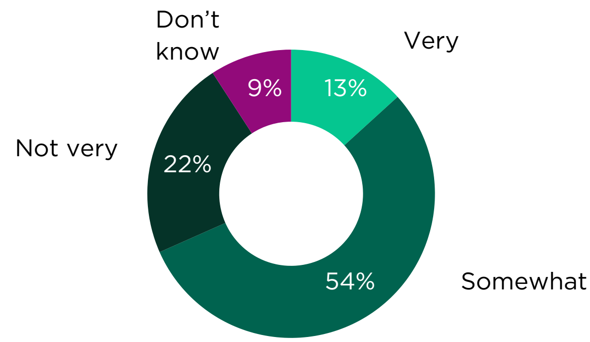
EXPECTED CHANGE

Expectations for ERG change in 2026 indicate a strong trend toward continued evolution. Nearly two-thirds of respondents anticipated more change, with 43% expecting slightly more and 20% predicting significantly more change compared to previous years. About 22% foresee the same level of change, while only 4% combined expect less.



CHANGE PREPAREDNESS

When asked about preparedness for change heading into 2026, most respondents reported moderate confidence. A majority (54%) said their ERG is somewhat prepared, while only 13% felt very prepared. Conversely, 22% admitted they are not very prepared, and none reported being completely unprepared.



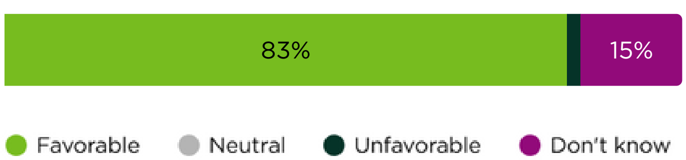
This section presents participant's interest as they prepare for the future, and specific requests for additional support, research, data, and benchmarks.

INTEREST IN GUIDANCE AND BENCHMARKING

Organizations showed strong interest in external insights and strategic guidance for ERGs. The vast majority (87%) of respondents expressed interest in benchmarking how peer organizations are navigating current changes. Similarly, 83% wanted additional guidance on integrating ERGs into broader talent and business priorities.

We are interested in benchmarking how peer organizations are navigating these changes with their ERGs

We are interested in receiving additional guidance on integrating ERGs into broader talent & business priorities



REQUESTED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT, RESEARCH, OR INSIGHTS

Participants suggested the following additional support, research, or insights would be helpful:

- Practical guidance and shared best practices on global governance, funding, and engaging middle management
- Benchmarking and metrics for engagement, retention, sentiment, and impact; clarity on what "good" looks like
- Research and guidance on integrating ERGs into business priorities, plus updates on legislation
- Industry-specific insights, networking opportunities, and continuous training for ERG leaders
- Adequate resources and budgets to sustain ERG activities

"Always interested in shared best practices — specifically global model and governance, funding, and engaging middle management."

"Getting quantitative insights on effectiveness of ERGs would help push this front and centre on corporate leadership."

"I think for us as ERG leaders to have a bit of a benchmark about what good does look like — this would help us influence more internally too."

"How to reposition ERGs as a value proposition that enhances company culture, retention, and professional development."

"Opportunities to improve how ERGs interact with business stakeholders to help drive more support from leadership."

"Larger Budget — Have seen budgets drop from $15K, to $12K, to now $6K in the last 6 years."

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