



## **EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACROSS BORDERS: A GALLUP-BASED ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL WORKFORCE**

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### **Abstract**

Employee engagement, which concept has garnered substantial scholarly attention in recent decades and has been defined in various ways, with no single leading definition, can be basically described as an employees' emotional and cognitive connection to their work, workplace and its goals. Engaged employees fulfill their job responsibilities and actively participate in the development of the organization, feel a sense of belonging and see meaning in their work, positively influencing organizational performance. Nowadays labor market, where uncertainty, remote work and generational diversity and competition between companies and organizations are increasing, employee engagement plays a vital role in the successful operation of organizations. Literature highlights employee engagement as one of the most important factors that positively impacts employees' work performance. The benefits from engaged employees are discovered in multiple levels - individual, organizational, customer. At the individual level, employee engagement is associated with improved work performance, as mentioned before, higher employee productivity, loyalty and retention, also employee innovative behavior, initiative and creativity. At the organizational level, engagement contributes to enhanced organizational performance, operational effectiveness and innovation. At the customer level, employee engagement drives better customer experience and satisfaction. Recent research indicates that employee engagement is not only an outcome influencing various factors and performance indicators, but also a construct shaped by multiple antecedent factors that serve to foster and sustain it human resource management practices, job satisfaction, work environment and also individual state of mind as mindfulness. The empirical part of the article about global employee engagement trends is developed by secondary data from Gallup's State of the Global Workplace report (2025). Analyzed data indicates a positive trend with periodic fluctuations during the period from 2009 to 2024, but last year has been decline in employee engagement metrics, highlighting challenges in organizational human resource management practices. Globally, only 21% of employees are engaged. The situation is particularly critical among managers, where engagement is declining, with young managers (under 35) and female managers experiencing the greatest decline. A strong trend towards a higher proportion of not engaged employees has persisted and prevailed in the analyzed period, while the engaged and actively disengaged has been in similar rates. Regional analysis reveals pronounced disparities in employee engagement levels. Within the European region, employee engagement remains at its lowest (13%), accompanied by elevated stress levels and diminished emotional well-being among employees. The data of Europe show a paradox: economically stronger countries demonstrate lower levels of employee engagement, while less developed countries or countries undergoing economic change show relatively higher levels of employee engagement. From the perspective of economic analysis in region of Europe, this distribution confirms that employee engagement does not directly depend on a country's gross domestic product or level of welfare. Conversely, the highest levels of employee engagement are observed in the US, Canada and Latin America and the Caribbean (31%), and this proportion remains relatively low in absolute terms.

Keywords: employee engagement, global workforce, human resource management, employee engagement survey, Gallup.

JEL classification: J24, M54, O15

### **Introduction**

In the era of globalization, human resources play a crucial role in ensuring the competitiveness of organizations. It is the way in which organizations employ and engage their employees that becomes a strategic advantage that determines the ability to adapt to changing market demands, innovate and maintain sustainable growth.

The concept of employee engagement has garnered substantial scholarly attention in recent decades and has been defined in various ways, with no single leading definition.

The aim of this article is to summarize the various definitions of employee engagement, analyze it and the latest studies about the factors influencing employee engagement and the factors influenced by employee engagement, and to summarize employee engagement trends at the global and regional levels, based on secondary data from Gallup (2025), and to identify connections with the literature.

Research object of the scientific article is employee engagement. The subject of the study is global employee engagement indicators.

According to the research object and subject, the scientific article is guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the concept of employee engagement defined in academic literature?
2. What are the global employee engagement indicators?
3. How does employee engagement vary across regions?

### **Theoretical background**

The first definition of employee engagement is developed by Kahn (1990) and published in the journal article "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work" of Academy of Management, where employee engagement is defined as "...harnessing of organization member's selves to their work roles: in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally and mentally during role performances. Individual disengagement as the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or

emotionally during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, 694). According to Kahn, it is a state of “psychological presence” in which employed people bring their full selves, both physically and cognitively, to their work roles and is influenced by meaningfulness (work elements), security (social elements, together with management style, process and institutional norms) and accessibility (individual distractions) (Kahn, 1990).

After Kahn other definitions of employee engagement are developed. Buckingham and Coffman added the right individuals in the right role with the right leaders drives employee engagement (Buckingham, Coffman, 1999). Maslach et al. (2001) defined employee engagement as “a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption”. In this definition vigor refers to high levels of energy and resilience and the employee’s willingness to invest effort in job, the ability to not be easily fatigued, also the persistence in the face of difficulties, meanwhile dedication refers to a strong employees involvement in work, accompanied by feelings of enthusiasm and significance, and by a sense of pride and inspiration. Within this definition, absorption refers a pleasant state of total immersion in work of employee, which is characterized by fast passage of time and an inability to detach from the task (Maslach et al., 2001). Drawing on similarities with the definition of Maslach et al. (2001), Schaufeli et al. (2002) described engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by energy, dedication, and immersion and conceptualize engagement as a permanent, static construct (Schaufeli et al., 2002), and it slightly differs from the concept defined by Khan (1990) of employee engagement as a changing construct. As stated by Gallup (2002), which is the only major global measure of employee engagement today, engaged workers are like a builder who time after time endeavor to offer quality when it comes to discharging their responsibilities, and there are three engagement levels: engaged workers, disengaged workers and actively disengaged workers (Gallup, 2002).

Similar to Kahn’s (1990) definition, Saks (2006) stated the engagement consists of “cognitive, emotional and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance”, but Saks differentiated employee engagement as follows: 1) job engagement, which is related to performing the specific task role; 2) organizational engagement, which is related to performing the role as a member of the organization) (Saks, 2006). Fleming and Asplund (2007) explained employee engagement as employer responsibility - the capability to arrest the heads, hearts, and souls of your employees to infuse an intrinsic desire and enthusiasm for excellence (Fleming, Asplund, 2006). Czarnowsky (2008) stated that “employees who are mentally and emotionally invested in their work and in contributing to their employer’s success” are defined as engaged (Czarnowsky, 2008, 6). Shuck and Wollard (2010) defined the concept of employee engagement as “an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational

outcomes.” (Shuck, Wollard, 2010, 103). The main idea of the definition of engagement is very similar to Kahn (1990) and Saks (2006). Balakrishnan and Masthan (2013) argued that employee engagement is related to an employee’s emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization. Engaged employees speak positively about their organization and strive to do more than the minimum requirements for their organization and they are more likely to be retained in the organization (Balakrishnan, Masthan, 2013). “Engaged employees are not just committed but passionate about their work” (Balakrishnan, Masthan, 2013, 2). One year later, employee engagement is defined as a positive attitude held by employees towards the organization (Bhuvanaiah, Raya, 2014). In a recent report, Gallup (2025) stated that “employee engagement reflects the involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work and workplace” (Gallup, 2025, 138). According to Gallup, the engagement state can be achieved when employees’ basic needs are met and they have the opportunity to contribute at workplace, learn and grow and have a sense of belonging (Gallup, 2025).

Summarizing these definitions, the employee engagement is most often associated with positive state of mind (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2002) and disposition (Balakrishnan, Masthan, 2013; Bhuvanaiah, Raya, 2014) towards the organization, enthusiasm (Maslach et al., 2001; Fleming, Asplund, 2006; Gallup, 2025) and involvement in work (Maslach et al., 2001; Gallup, 2025), cognitive contribution (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006; Shuck, Wollard, 2010), and also mental (Kahn, 1990; Czarnowsky, 2008), which includes both intellectual (Balakrishnan, Masthan, 2013) and emotional (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006; Czarnowsky, 2008; Shuck, Wollard, 2010; Balakrishnan, Masthan, 2013) input to the workplace.

Drawing upon the reviewed definitions, employee engagement can be described as employees’ positive attitude, interest and enthusiasm to invest individual resources as time, energy and abilities in their workplace.

Numerous studies have demonstrated a growing scholarly interest in the topic of employee engagement from 90’s to nowadays. In recent years, employee engagement and it’s role, impact, influential factors, correlation with other aspects has been studied in various sectors: banking (Nguyen, 2021; Zeeshan et al., 2021; Abdullahi et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2022; Ngobeni et al., 2022; Mandira, 2023; Alzoraiki, 2024; Bešić et al., 2025; Hamid et al., 2025; Thomas et al., 2025), education (Bailey, 2022; Ooi et al., 2022; Shirina et al., 2022; Agyei et al., 2023; Nguyen, Ha, 2023; Davis, Southey, 2024; Gede, Huluka, 2024; Mehta, Kaur, 2024; Tiwari et al., 2024; Akanmu et al., 2025; Alenezi et al., 2025), manufacturing (Siswanto et al., 2021; Hurtienne et al., 2022; Zahoor et al., 2022; Abeje, Luo, 2023; Burawat, 2023; Ghani et al., 2023; Kumprang, Suriyankietkaew, 2024; Tortorella, 2024); hospitality (Bhardwaj, Kalia, 2021; Hassanein, Özgüt, 2022; Liu et al., 2022; Arwab et al., 2023; Rabiul et al., 2023; Naveed, Qamar Zia, 2024), healthcare (Quek et al., 2021; Scott et al., 2022;

Giallourous et al., 2024; Jose et al., 2024; Kwarteng et al., 2024) and others.

In the above-mentioned studies, employee engagement is analyzed in the context of communication (Nguyen et al., 2023), job satisfaction (Hamid et al., 2025), leadership style (Giallourous et al., 2024; Quek et al., 2021; Zeeshan et al., 2021), employee performance (Alenezi et al., 2025; Naveed, Qamar Zia, 2024; Arwab et al., 2023; Abdullahi et al., 2022; Bhardwaj, Kalia, 2021; Siswanto et al., 2021), employee loyalty (Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2023), motivation (Siswanto et al., 2021), talent management (Zahoor, 2022; Hassanein, Özgüt, 2022), job resources (Giallourous et al., 2024; Naveed, Qamar, 2024), human resource management practices (Ooi et al., 2022; Rabiul et al., 2023; Jose et al., 2024) and other factors.

The findings of the latest studies suggested that employee engagement is positively influenced by human resource management practices directly (Jose et al., 2024; Ooi et al., 2022) or indirectly (Rabiul et al., 2023). Furthermore, other studies highlight the importance of specific human resource management functions in promoting employee engagement - strategic recruitment and hiring practices (Alzoraiki, 2024) and training opportunities and financial rewards (Akanmu et al., 2025).

According to studies, the employee engagement is positively influenced by employee job satisfaction (Hamid et al., 2025; Shirina et al., 2022), leadership factors (Giallourous et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2022; Shirina et al., 2022), as servant leadership (Zeeshan et al., 2021) and distributed leadership in other study (Quek et al., 2021), internal communication (Nguyen, Ha, 2023), workplaces corporate social responsibility (Ahmad et al., 2022), organizational support (Mehta, Kaur, 2024), collaborative work environment (Hurtienne et al., 2022; Shirina et al., 2022), whereas other study added that supportive work environment reduces employee disengagement (Mehta, Kaur, 2024).

Other study noted that important role has a psychological contract (Ngoben et al., 2022), that represents the mutual beliefs, perceptions, expectations and informal obligations between an employer and an employee (Saurombe, Barkhuizen, 2020).

The empirical study in the banking sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2025) showed that banks strengthened employee engagement through fostering community and leveraging their company culture through care provision and communication by keeping their employees informed (Bešić et al., 2025), and other analyzed study of 306 Cambodian bank employees and 37 direct supervisors showed the importance of competitive psychological climate paired with contingent reward, that encourages exploratory learning, which boosts employee engagement (Lee et al., 2022).

There are employee's engagement influenceable internal individual factors found, as individual conscientiousness (Mandira, 2023) and cultivation of mindfulness (Kumprang, Suriyankietkaew, 2024). One of the studies showed that an individual's perception of rewards and recognition, distributive justice and

procedural justice significantly affected employee engagement (Liu et al., 2022).

Prior studies provide strong evidence that the employee engagement positive impact to performance – firstly, employee work performance (Akanmu et al., 2025; Jindain, Gilitwala, 2024; Hendrik et al., 2021; Obuobisa-Darko, 2020; Liu et al., 2022; Mustaqim et al., 2022), also specific contextual performance (Bhardwaj, Kalia, 2021), secondly, organizational performance directly (Gede, Huluka, 2024; Liu et al., 2022) and indirectly through employee performance (Mustaqim et al., 2022). The latest studies highlighted that employee engagement promotes innovation directly (Deepalakshmi et al., 2024; Shkurti, Mustafa, 2024; Ghani et al., 2023), innovational employee behavior directly (Alateeg, Alhammadi, 2024; Amin et al., 2024; Ghani et al., 2023), indirectly (Lee et al., 2024), through mediation of human capital (Ali Ababneh, 2025) and supervisor's practices (recognition, empowerment and development) (Almazrouei, Hilmi, 2024).

Also, employee engagement has a positive influence on productivity (Celestin et al., 2024; Deepalakshmi et al., 2024; Kwarteng et al., 2024; Abdelwahed et al., 2023; Abdulrahman et al., 2022; Vogel et al., 2022), loyalty (Hamid et al., 2025; Nguyen, Ha, 2023) and retention (Hamid et al., 2025; Deepalakshmi et al., 2024). Other research results showed that employee engagement is positively related to employee initiative (Hassanein, Özgüt, 2022) and creativity (Gonlepa et al., 2023; Joo et al., 2022), whereas it plays a mediating role in the relationship between organizational engagement and creativity (Kang et al., 2021). Specific studies founded employee engagement influence on operational effectiveness (Juma et al., 2022; Zahoor et al., 2022), customers experience (Hassanein, Özgüt, 2022) and their satisfaction (Alabi et al., 2024; Deepalakshmi et al., 2024; Kwaya, Yang, 2022).

In summary, employee engagement is shaped by a range of factors who can directly or indirectly affect it, furthermore, the level of employee engagement can be contingent upon the employee's sociodemographic profile.

At the same time, employee engagement exerted positive effects at multiple levels - individual, organizational, customer. At the individual level, employee engagement is associated with improved work performance, higher employee productivity, loyalty and retention, also employee innovative behavior, initiative and creativity. At the organizational level, engagement contributes to enhanced organizational performance, operational effectiveness and innovation. Finally, at the customer level, engagement has been linked to better customer experience and satisfaction.

Recent scientific publications lack comprehensive global data analyses that substantiates the novelty of the present study.

## Research methodology

The theoretical part of the study synthesizes insights from 74 scientific articles. The empirical study is based on secondary data, and sufficient information has been provided to ensure transparency. The data is conducted by Gallup, the largest global measure of employee engagement, published on the report “State of the Global Workplace. Understanding Employees, Informing Leaders” (2025), and ensure both academic rigor and practical relevance. Gallup identifies three levels of employee engagement: 1) engaged; 2) not engaged; 3) actively disengaged (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Employee engagement levels by Gallup

| Engagement level    | Explanation                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| engaged             | - employees are highly involved and enthusiastic about their work and workplace. Psychologically acts as an owner, drives performance, innovation and fosters organizational development.                              |
| not engaged         | - employees are psychologically unattached to their work and company. As their engagement needs are not fully met, they are doing work duties by investing time, not passion and energy.                               |
| actively disengaged | - unhappy and resentful employees, because their needs are not being met, acting out their unhappiness and influence others. They “potentially undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish” (Gallup, 2025, 138). |

The relationship between the results of the study and employee engagement level is measurable through 12 basic statements, known as Gallup's Q12, developed by Gallup scientists, based on more than 30 years of accumulated quantitative and qualitative research (Harter et al., 2024).

The Gallup's Q12 survey begins with general question (0) about overall satisfaction at work - How satisfied are you with your company as a place to work? Respondents provide their rating on a 5-point scale, where 5 means extremely satisfied and 1 means extremely dissatisfied. Following the response to the general question, the survey statements are presented:

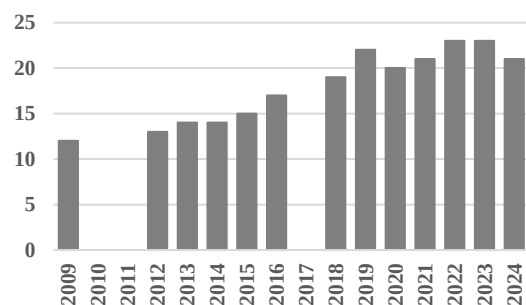
1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.
7. At work, my opinions seem to count.
8. The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
9. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best friend at work.
11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

In the survey respondents rate the Q12 statements using six response options, from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree, and the sixth response option — don't know/does not apply — is unscored (Gallup, 2025).

According to Gallup (2025), the total number of global employed respondents included in the full trend of data for this report (2009 through 2024) is 5,490,517; for the 2024 data, the total is 227,347. 2024 data included in this report were obtained from April 2024 to December 2024. Typically, the number of respondents is 1,000 in each country or area using a standard set of core questions. These questions are translated into the respective country's major languages (Gallup, 2025)

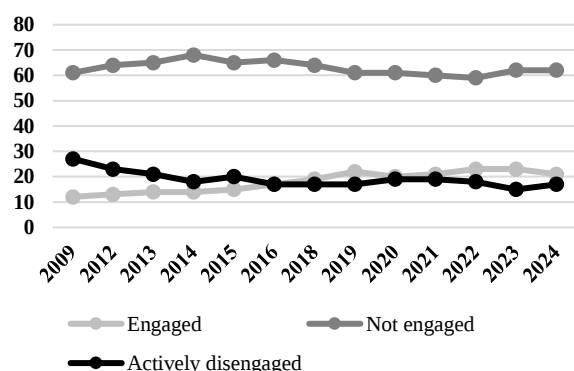
## Results

Secondary data from Gallup shows a positive trend – percentage of engagement employees globally has increased from 12% in 2009 to 21% in 2024 (see Fig. 1). There was a slow increase in the period from 2009 to 2012, while there was a gradual and sustained growth from 2012 to 2019. There was a sharp decline in 2020, which could be related to external economic factors (e.g. the Covid-19 crisis), followed by a recovery in 2021–2023 and the indicators returned to a higher level (23%). However, a slight decline is observed again in 2024. Overall, the data dynamics can be described as an upward long-term trend with periodic fluctuations.



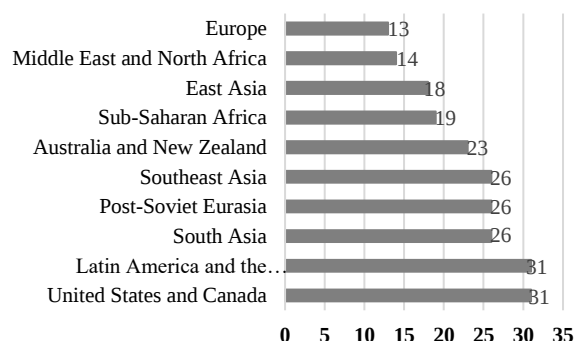
**Fig. 1.** Engaged employees (%): Global data by Gallup

Analyzing the structure of employee engagement levels, it is identified that the proportion of disengaged employees fluctuates over time in a relatively narrow range — 61% in 2009, the peak - 68% (2014), the lowest point - 59% (2022). The last two years the proportion of disengaged employees is 62%. The proportion of actively disengaged employees has decreased from 27% in 2009 to 15% in 2023, but in 2024 it increased to 17%, which indicates a slight reversal. Overall, there is a convergence of proportions, where the polarization between engaged and actively disengaged has decreased. A strong proportional trend of disengaged employees persisted and dominated during the period (See Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Trends of the employee engagement level proportions (%): Global data by Gallup

Regional data of employee engagement shows that the highest levels of employee engagement (31%) are in United States and Canada, Latin America and Caribbean. The lowest levels of employee engagement are found in Europe (13%) and the Middle East and North Africa (14%). These figures potentially indicate deeper challenges in the workplace and human resource management practices, such as a limited employee autonomy or insufficient recognition for work that requires improvement, also a low trust in management. The data both highlighted regional differences and the necessity for contextually tailored approaches to foster employee engagement.



**Fig. 3.** Engaged employees (%): Regional data by Gallup

Analyzing the indicators (see Table 2) of engaged employees in European countries, it is identified in countries with relatively lower income levels and experience of transformation economies, such as Romania (35%), Albania (29%) and Kosovo (25%), the level of employee engagement is higher than in many more economically developed countries. This trend can potentially be explained by the relatively greater motivation of employees to maintain employment.

Meanwhile, in Western European countries, where the labor market is mature and employee rights are strengthened, employee engagement is significantly lower. For example, in Germany and Italy it reaches only 10%, and in the United Kingdom – 9%. In this context, there is a potential for a “saturation effect”, that is, the

higher level of well-being and quality of life of employees has reduced engagement.

The Baltic countries deserve special attention. In Estonia, the level of employee engagement reaches 24%, in Latvia – 22%, while in Lithuania – 19%. These indicators exceed the level of several Western European countries, which can be interpreted as a consequence of the active transformation of the labor market, in which employees still have the motivation to prove their relevance and adapt to changing economic conditions.

Overall, the data show a paradoxical situation: economically stronger countries demonstrate lower levels of employee engagement, while less developed countries or countries undergoing economic change show relatively higher levels of employee engagement. From the perspective of economic analysis, this distribution confirms that employee engagement does not directly depend on a country's gross domestic product or level of welfare.

Europe is the region with the lowest employee engagement rate; however, eight countries (Romania, Albania, Kosovo, Sweden, Iceland, Estonia, Malta, Latvia) exceeded the global average, and Romania (35%) exceeded the highest regional rates (31%) - of the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean employees.

**Table 2.** Engaged employees: Europe data by Gallup

| Country         | %  | Country                | %  | Country        | %  |
|-----------------|----|------------------------|----|----------------|----|
| Romania         | 35 | Portugal               | 18 | Germany        | 10 |
| Albania         | 29 | Cyprus                 | 17 | Italy          | 10 |
| Kosovo          | 25 | Bosnia and Herzegovina | 17 | Belgium        | 10 |
| Sweden          | 24 | Slovenia               | 17 | United Kingdom | 9  |
| Iceland         | 24 | Bulgaria               | 17 | Austria        | 9  |
| Estonia         | 24 | Serbia                 | 16 | Ireland        | 9  |
| Malta           | 22 | Montenegro             | 16 | Spain          | 9  |
| Latvia          | 22 | Czech Republic         | 16 | Luxemburg      | 8  |
| Norway          | 21 | Netherlands            | 15 | Poland         | 8  |
| Denmark         | 21 | Finland                | 14 | France         | 8  |
| Hungary         | 20 | Northern Cyprus        | 14 | Switzerland    | 8  |
| North Macedonia | 20 | Slovakia               | 13 | Croatia        | 7  |
| Lithuania       | 19 | Greece                 | 12 |                |    |

According to Gallup's 2025 State of the Global Workplace report, the situation is particularly critical among managers - employee engagement level is declining, with the biggest declines being seen among young managers (under 35) and female managers. From 2023 to 2024, engagement among young managers (under 35) has decreased by five percentage points; engagement

among female managers has decreased by seven percentage points. Gallup and reviewed literature highlight the importance of leadership and its influence on employee engagement, indicating the risk of a snowball effect affecting the subordinate employee engagement level.

According to Gallup estimates, global employee engagement declined last year, costing the global economy \$438 billion in lost productivity (Gallup, 2025), which confirms that employee engagement influences productivity, as mentioned in the section of literature review (Celestin et al., 2024; Deepalakshmi et al., 2024; Kwarteng et al., 2024; Abdelwahed et al., 2023; Abdulrahman et al., 2022; Vogel et al., 2022).

## Conclusions

During the period from 2009 to 2024, the most substantial proportion each year has been made up of not engaged employees, who are not psychologically attached to their job and company, while the proportion of engaged and actively disengaged employees has been similar. The proportion of globally engaged employees is low almost a fifth (21%) of employees have been engaged in 2024, and the indicator has decreased by 2 percentage points over the year.

Assessing regional indicators, the top regions with the highest indicators in 2024 - USA, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean - have a less than a third (31%).

These data indicate the need to implement human resource management practices focused on promotion of employee engagement, as literature and Gallup empirical studies confirm its importance in individual and institutional levels, that potentially influences the rates nationally, regionally and globally.

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