COQUAL

Belonging Series, Parts 3 & 4

Belonging Matters Everywhere

An Examination of Workplace Cultures in the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, China, India, and Mexico

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Belonging Drivers

In workplaces that foster belonging, employees of all backgrounds feel seen, connected, supported, and proud. Across the six global markets in this study, employees in the highest quartile of belonging scores are far more likely than those in the lowest to tap into impressive career outcomes, such as engagement in Europe, loyalty in China, employer brand in India, and retention in Mexico. Belonging matters everywhere.

UK

Organizational drivers
1. Clear and fair succession planning
2. Senior leaders who are role models for me
3. Senior leaders with whom I have a lot in common

Senior leader drivers
1. Build diverse teams
2. Embody the organization's values
3. Model inclusive leadership

Manager drivers
1. Praise my work
2. Empower team members to make decisions
3. Ensure everyone gets heard

Colleague drivers
1. Praise my work
2. Thank me for my work
3. Celebrate birthdays and other important life events with me

Germany

Organizational drivers
1. Senior leaders who are role models for me
2. Senior leaders with whom I have a lot in common
3. Clear and fair succession planning

Senior leader drivers
1. Embody the organization's values
2. Build diverse teams
3. Model how to connect with colleagues

Manager drivers
1. Praise my work
2. Help me identify my strengths
3. Respond to my concerns

Colleague drivers
1. Thank me for my work
2. Communicate openly and honestly with me about our working relationship
3. Provide timely and honest feedback on my work

Poland

Organizational drivers
1. Senior leaders who are role models for me
2. Clear and fair succession planning
3. Short-term job rotations

Senior leader drivers
1. Seek to connect with employees across the organization
2. Embody the organization's values
3. Model how to connect with colleagues

Manager drivers
1. Ensure everyone gets heard
2. Praise my work
3. Publicly credit me for my contributions

Colleague drivers
1. Socialize with me outside of work
2. Trust that I will get my work done
3. Tell me that they enjoy working with me

While belonging is universal, we find, culture is not. Survey takers in each market selected programs and behaviors they experience at work today. By comparing what conditions individuals with the highest belonging scores are more likely to have than those with the lowest, we drew a market-specific picture of what drives a culture of belonging. Though some belonging drivers repeat, global leaders must understand cultural contexts to apply them well.

China

Organizational drivers
1. Organizational goals to promote/develop women
2. Requirements to consider diverse candidates when hiring
3. Regular communication about D&I

Senior leader drivers
1. Model how to connect with colleagues
2. Publicly support D&I initiatives
3. Attend office social events

Manager drivers
1. Make it safe to propose novel ideas
2. Help me identify my strengths
3. Publicly credit me for my contributions

Colleague drivers
1. Share personal stories
2. Praise my work
3. Offer to help with my work when I'm overwhelmed

India

Organizational drivers
1. Public support for D&I initiatives
2. Programs for allies
3. Public reporting on the number of women or people of color employed at the company

Senior leader drivers
1. Model inclusive leadership
2. Are transparent about their values
3. Embody the organization's values

Manager drivers
1. Promote my ideas to senior leaders
2. Give me ways to showcase my skills to leaders
3. Ask me about my career goals

Colleague drivers
1. Praise my work
2. Tell me that they enjoy working with me
3. Put the team's goals before their own

Mexico

Organizational drivers
1. Senior leaders with whom I have a lot in common
2. Organizational goals to promote/develop women
3. Senior leaders who are role models for me

Senior leader drivers
1. Are transparent about their values
2. Seek to connect with employees across the organization
3. Model inclusive leadership

Manager drivers
1. Ensure everyone gets heard
2. Share credit for team success
3. Thank me for my contributions

Colleague drivers
1. Tell me that they enjoy working with me
2. Provide timely and honest feedback on my work
3. Socialize with me outside of work

Belonging scores across markets

UK
Germany
Poland
China
India
Mexico

6.7 6.9 7.1 7.3 7.5 7.7 7.9 8.1 8.3 8.5 8.7
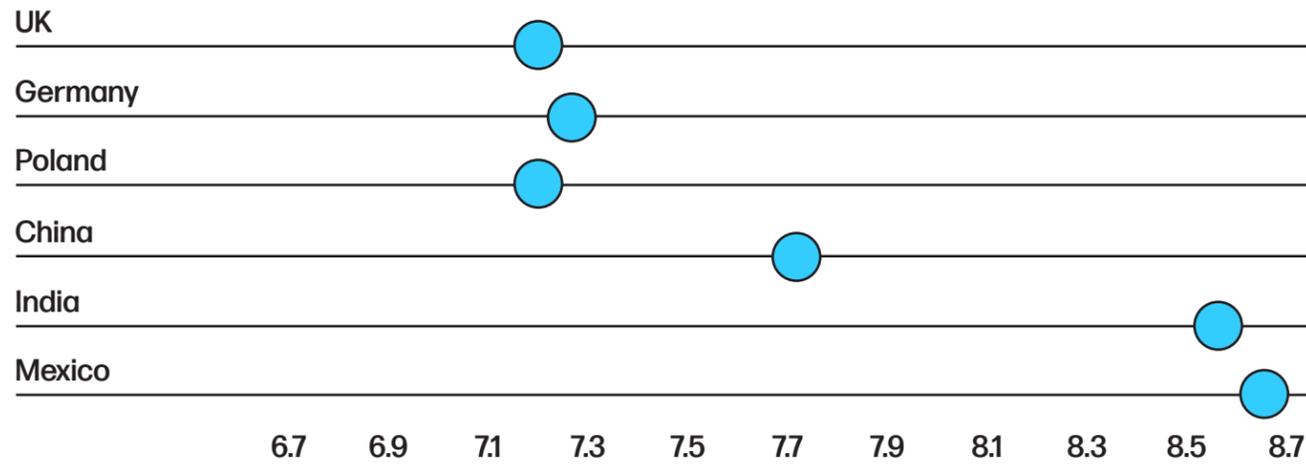
Key Insights in European Markets

The median belonging scores for employees in Germany, Poland, and the UK form a cluster. These countries share many organizational and senior leader belonging drivers, too, reflecting their geographical proximity and linked political history. At the one-on-one level of managers and peers, however, drivers diverge, highlighting cultural distinctions.

UK
In the UK, managers build belonging when they create a community where all employees trust their ideas will be welcomed. Yet politics are still taboo, UK employees told us: we find that those who see themselves as political outsiders at work are less likely than their counterparts to regularly feel respected (35% vs. 50%).

Germany
German professionals with high belonging scores, we find, have open lines of communication with their managers and peers. Unfortunately, professionals born outside of Germany have less access to "insider" status.[1] They are less likely than German-born professionals to trust their colleagues (60% vs. 78%) or managers (42% vs. 68%).

Poland
In top-down Polish work cultures, employees say strong social networks help them fit in. Given the predominance of Roman Catholicism in Poland's cultural and political life, Roman Catholics capture connection—while many LGBTQ professionals remain closeted.[2]

Groups othered in these markets

Mothers

Hukou

Differing political views

LGBTQ

Social style

Religion

Disability

Nonparents

Immigrants
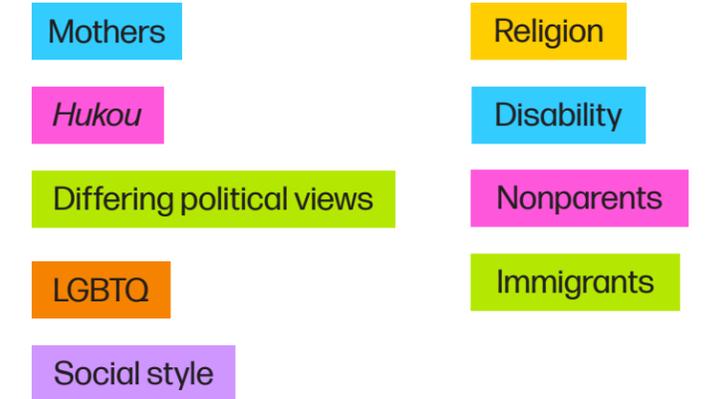
"In collectivist cultures, where the group is the core rather than the individual, a strong sense of belonging is critical."

– Sophie Guerin, Head of Diversity & Inclusion, Asia Pacific, Johnson & Johnson

Key Insights in Growth Markets

Professionals in growth markets score higher in belonging than employees in the other markets we studied, likely due to the interdependent nature of these societies.[3] Still, our research shows that within each of these markets, different identities impact a sense of belonging. There are insiders and outsiders—those who belong and who are othered—in every market.

China
Expectations of long working hours make personal connections with colleagues valuable.[4] Given the growing class of young, single women prioritizing career over family, it makes sense that diversity and inclusion efforts drive belonging.[5]

India
In India, employees with high belonging scores look to senior leaders to showcase business ethics and to managers for help standing out from competitors. Muslim professionals face exclusion: they are far more likely than Hindus to regularly feel alienated at work (20% vs 6%).

Mexico
Inclusive leadership and humility set leaders apart as belonging builders in Mexico's strongly hierarchical, relationship-driven culture.[6] Understandably, introverts have a harder time in this landscape. Introverts are more than three times as likely as their extroverted colleagues to regularly feel lonely at work (13% vs. 4%).

A Framework to Build Belonging

1 Learn

2 Partner
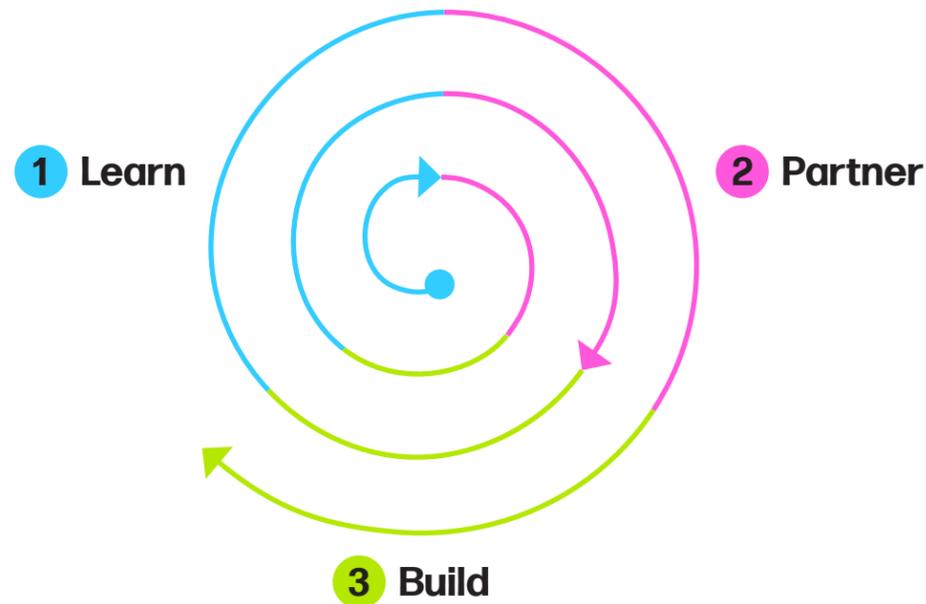
3 Build

What now? How can global diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) leaders incorporate the market-specific lists of belonging drivers into a robust belonging agenda? To accomplish this complex task, leaders need a framework to build belonging in any market.

We'll turn now to our nonlinear framework: learn, partner, build. You'll pass through each stage again and again as you engage in trial, error, and ongoing education to cascade belonging.

> "I've worked with leaders across regions. The best ones are not applying their own values, but rather asking, 'What are your values?' And then sharing what they learn with other leaders."
>
> – Female professional in India

1 Learn

The first stage in the framework requires an ongoing learning journey on broad country culture and unique organizational dynamics.

- **Check your perspective**
- **Study the culture**
- **Get familiar with the belonging drivers**
- **Uncover who is othered**
- **Establish a market's belonging baseline**

2 Partner

This stage cascades key learning to gain buy-in on belonging from stakeholders across the organization.

- **Establish expectations for global leaders**
- **Secure buy-in from local leaders and human resources business partners**
- **Upskill on cultural competency**
- **Collaborate with experts**

3 Build

Now, establish and iterate on a suite of programs and priorities to make your company a global beacon of belonging.

- **Bucket countries cautiously**
- **Get good at the vocabulary**
- **Reset when necessary**

> "It's important to recognize the unique cultural and historical nuances of diversity in each market. Who is 'othered' changes, but those groups all need help feeling a sense of belonging."
>
> – Karina Govindji, Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, EMEA, Google

> "The more I *think* I know, the less I *actually* know. Humility is hugely important."
>
> – Bill Proudman, Chief Executive Officer and Cofounder, White Men as Full Diversity Partners (WMFDP | FDP Global)

Methodology

The research consists of a survey; focus groups and *Insights In-Depth*® sessions (a proprietary web-based tool used to conduct voice-facilitated virtual focus groups) with 120 participants; and one-on-one interviews with more than 80 people in China, Germa-ny, India, Mexico, Poland, the UK, and the US.

The survey was conducted online in June 2020 among 3,001 respondents (500 each in China, Germany, India, Poland, and the UK, and 501 in Mexico) between the ages of 21 and 65 currently employed full time in white-collar occupations, with at least a bache-lor's degree. Data was weighted by gender using available benchmarks for each country. The base used for statistical testing was the effective base.

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago under the auspices of Coqual, a nonprofit research organi-zation. NORC was responsible for the data collection, while Coqual conducted the analysis. In the charts, percentages may not always add up to 100 because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple responses from respondents.

Endnotes

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