

2022 NATIONAL STUDY

# CHANGE AND EMOTION IN THE WORKPLACE

Research-Based Discoveries for  
Leaders Seeking to Create Lasting,  
High-Impact Change at Work

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# WELCOME FROM THE NATIONAL STUDY'S AUTHORS

Change is part of the workplace, but all too often the concept of change and the emotions it inspires are misunderstood or not understood at all. Maybe you've experienced firsthand the frustration of leading change at work and not creating the buy-in, enthusiasm, and results you knew were possible? Or maybe you were part of a change initiative someone else was leading and during that experience you felt the resistance, disappointment, and clear missed opportunity that a different approach to change could have delivered?

The importance of bridging the knowledge gap to effectively drive change that is embraced by stakeholders—peers, employees, team members, and your own bosses—has never been more important or urgent than right now. You probably already know that reading this Welcome Letter right now!

Leaders of all levels in all industries across the world are confronting the impact of change disrupting their business and their people, from the Covid pandemic to the Great Resignation—while at the same time knowing they must lead change that brings out the best in their people, teams, divisions, the overall organization, and themselves. In fact, you may feel (and rightly so) that the pace of change is only increasing, because it is!

The combination of external forces driving change in organizations and the need for leaders to inspire change within organizations more effectively has created tremendous challenges, frustrations, and setbacks, but at the same time creates an extraordinary opportunity for leaders that successfully understand and can lead change at work.

While much has been said about the concept and experience of change within the workplace, **very little statistically accurate research has been led to understand not only the best drivers of change but what keeps change from being embraced at both a behavioral and emotional level**—and even more rare to find are specific strategies and actions that can fuel growth through change that stakeholders and organizations need now more than ever. Is it truly more effective or productive to leave emotion at the door of business? It is high-time this myth is definitively debunked!

At this key moment in the evolution of business and all organizations, especially those determined to navigate effectively through the uncertainty of this time, it has never been more urgent, important, or valuable to gain and put into practice *statistically accurate research-based insights* about the experience of change in the workplace from the vantage point of workers across generations, gender, geography, titles, and more.

This is especially important given the rapid rise of remote and hybrid work as well as technology innovation and unexpected threats confronting both established global businesses as well as emerging enterprises in industries of all types. In order for organizations to perform at their highest level, and bring out the highest level of engagement, fulfillment, innovation, performance, trust, and enthusiasm in their workforce, effectively navigating change with an approach based on **national research** is absolutely critical.

Leaders have long wondered what would most inspire team members to be open to change and the opportunities it can present, get a change initiative to be well received, inspire team members to not only embrace but champion the change, and ultimately what will get the change to stick. These same leaders are striving to understand and deliver these concepts while avoiding burnout within themselves. All of these insights have been sought after but not available to leaders through statistically accurate data, *until now*.

The 2022 National Study of Change and Emotion in the Workforce was led to discover the missing data, insights, trends, and answers that leaders at all levels and their stakeholders are searching for today, such as:

- What do employees really think about and *feel* when it comes to change in the workforce?
- What causes employees to most resist change at work?
- What is the value of acknowledging emotions when executing change?
- What would motivate employees to overcome resistance and embrace change at work?
- What steps or actions can leaders implement to better lead change at work now?

At Change Enthusiasm Global, leading research that answers the key questions individuals face when it comes to the truth about change and emotion at work to lead to the greatest results is part of our mission to best serve those individuals of all types, leadership levels, backgrounds, and aspirations around the world. This first-of-its-kind national study on change and emotion in the workplace delivers the exact *missing data* leaders need to inform their strategy and both personal and professional growth to create must-achieve results for all stakeholders, including themselves.

Leaders today recognize they are in a critical period to lead change, navigate uncertainty, leverage trends, and accelerate growth through innovation. With the data-driven discoveries in this national study, all stakeholders in organizations—from new hires on their first day at work to the most seasoned executives—can better understand, lead, and get the results they need from change and change initiatives to fast-track self-actualized growth, teamwork, accountability, inspiration, and more!

Learn more about Change Enthusiasm Global's deep expertise in helping leaders of all backgrounds understand, strategize, lead, and fuel growth through change in the workforce at [ChangeEnthusiasmGlobal.com](https://ChangeEnthusiasmGlobal.com). To dive deeper into the research insights with our team, please visit [ChangeEnthusiasmGlobal.com/Contact](https://ChangeEnthusiasmGlobal.com/Contact). We are thrilled for you to benefit from the discoveries in the national study and lead the change that makes the difference.

Our best,

**Cassandra Worthy,**  
Founder on behalf of Change Enthusiasm Global, LLC



**What we've been getting wrong about change in the workplace is under-valuing the significance of acknowledging and embracing emotion. When we can better understand the emotional dynamics introduced by change through data-driven insights, we can empower individuals at every level of the organization to transform that emotional energy into fuel for successful change adoption and personal growth. Sustained change is made possible at the individual level, not organization level.**

— Cassandra Worthy, Founder and CEO





# NATIONAL STUDY INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Change, leading change, and being part of change is a natural component of work, whether you're leading the team, on the team, or you are the team! However, all too often change is met with resistance, lack of trust, failed initiatives, and missed opportunities. In fact, if you've been frustrated trying to lead change or felt all alone trying to execute change—know you are NOT alone! And the study proves it!

The study clearly shows that when change is led with the right data, insights, emotional awareness, experience, and process, the results can be extraordinary. Right now, leaders are looking for ways to better understand change, the role of change in organizations, how change is experienced at both a behavioral and emotional level, and what actually works (and what to avoid!) when leading and executing change in the workplace. Filling in the sought-after gaps about the truth when it comes to change and emotion at work has never been more important than it is right now to leaders in every industry, of every size organization, and with diverse responsibilities but one commonality: delivering results.

In these unique times where leaders not only confront unexpected competition, historically low unemployment, the Great Resignation, hybrid and remote work options, breakthrough technology, rising inflation, and so much more, one asset matters more than others in order to make informed decisions that drive results: ***statistically accurate data.***

This data is all too often missing when it comes to the power of the emotions of change, how to develop plans and strategies for change, and the right mindset and tools to empower each individual to implement and reinforce that change throughout organizations. The 2022 National Study of Change and Emotion in the Workforce was designed to be the missing resource with the take-action insights that leaders are searching for in order to bring to life the true nature of what works to lead and execute change.

This first-of-its-kind national study included 1,000 U.S. participants representing all of America ages 16 to 65 and an oversample of another 500 participants who are currently employed full-time, part-time, or self-employed. This unique snapshot of “Working America” and “all of America” is exactly the research sample leaders need to draw insights with high integrity and high accuracy to inform their thinking, strategy, actions, and plans for leading change. We are excited to bring these insights to you!

The national study uncovered dozens and dozens of surprising insights, actionable discoveries, and the all-important nuance that leads to emotional buy-in that leads to results whether a leader has a team of one or a company of 50,000 employees. The data revealed in this report delivers the missing insights into what most influences change, derails change, and can help the least experienced leader take actions that lead to the embracing of and enthusiasm for change within both themselves and an organization.

Here is a sample of the discoveries:

1. Leadership pulling in too many different directions leads to dysfunction and burnout at work
2. Employees strongly experience negative emotions significantly more than managers when going through change at work
3. Americans are most resistant to change at work because they are comfortable with the way things are now and worried that change won't make things better
4. Over 2/3 of American workers say that being able to express their emotions at work would improve their ability to navigate change at work

These are only a few of the findings from the national study, but two headline discoveries are clear:

1. **You are not alone when it comes to the challenge you and many employees are facing when leading, dealing with, and responding to change at work.** In fact, you are right where you are supposed to be: aware of the pros and cons of change and ready to take action to make the most of the potential for learning and growth change can provide!
2. **You need specific solutions and insights that you can act on right away,** whether you are a first-time leader or have decades of experience. These insights are the missing link to taking action now that shows the results you can deliver and in a way that everyone involved benefits

In this first-of-its-kind study, led by Change Enthusiasm Global in partnership with The Center for Generational Kinetics, the data reveals the missing answers that you need to lead change now but have not been able to get answered through a research-driven approach. This data and the helpful context provided are specifically designed for you to be able to immediately increase your understanding, confidence, and know-how to lead and execute change at work in this unique time.

The authors of this study are excited to reveal the discoveries with you and for you to share them with those you care about, perhaps those who are struggling with change in their work. The timing has never been better to raise your expertise in leading change as change only continues to accelerate. Let's dive into the findings!



# YOU ARE NOT ALONE. YOU'RE EXACTLY WHERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE.

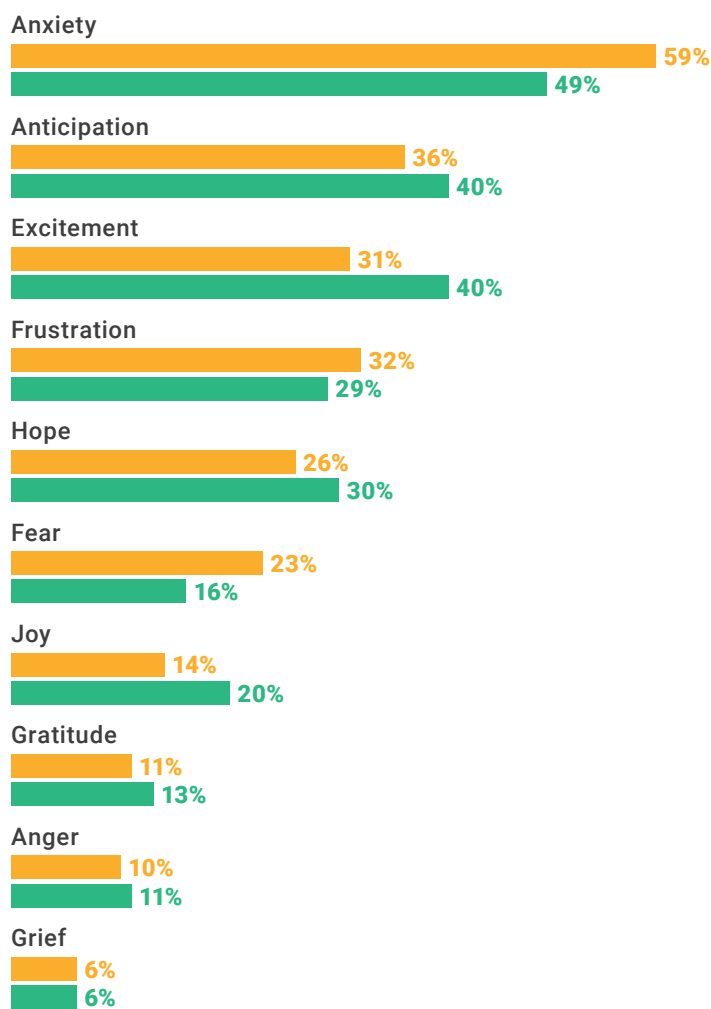
Do you feel anxiety when experiencing change at work? Do you think you're alone in feeling that emotion or feeling that emotion strongly? Well, the national study revealed you are not alone. In fact, the national study found not only are you not alone, but you are in the majority of Americans in the workforce today! That's right. **The national study found that a solid majority of Americans (56%) say they feel anxiety when experiencing change at work, by far the most of any emotion.** Feeling this emotion doesn't make you unprepared or above your abilities, but rather it makes you human and positions you to be ready to grow as a leader of change.

Going deeper into the data, anxiety is not the only emotion experienced. In the national study, we found that not only is anxiety experienced, but all the more difficult emotions we tested (including anger, frustration, and fear) were experienced significantly more by employees than by management. This is very important! This shows that while management feels the challenge of change, employees feel the most challenging emotions of it at a significantly heightened level compared to management.

Managers would be very wise to be extra empathetic, supportive, and patient as they lead change that affects their employees because employees are clearly feeling the difficult emotions of that change at a much more significant level than their managers. This disconnect of intensity in emotion is one of the key separations that leaders must understand and bridge in order to bring out the best in their employees when going through change.

Why are Americans resistant to change? What is driving their hesitancy, skepticism, fear, and even disbelief? What is motivating Americans to not get on the bandwagon of change and become enthusiastic supporters, advocates, and believers of change in the workplace? The study dug into this question in multiple ways and the results are both surprising and important. The national study found that Americans are most resistant to change at work because (drum roll, please...) they are 1) comfortable with the way things are now and 2) worried that the change won't make things better or even work at all.

**WHICH EMOTIONS DO YOU FEEL WHEN EXPERIENCING CHANGE AT WORK?**  
(BY JOB TITLE/LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY)



■ Employees (FT, PT, Associates, Staff, Interns, etc.)  
■ Management (C-Level, VPs, Directors, Managers, etc.)



Let's separate out these two drivers of resistance to change. The first is comfort with the ways things are now. In other words, Americans find safety, predictability, and comfort in the status quo. This shows up in them being resistant to change because it represents things such as moving into the unknown, which could mean having to learn, adapt, and "start over" with new processes, systems, behaviors, expectations, evaluations, tools, technology, and much more. All of these involve not only learning but the emotional discomfort that frequently goes with the beginning of the learning curve, particularly after having done something the same way for some time and feeling comfortable with that process. This is the true definition of change representing an invitation to individuals to be pushed outside their comfort zone. Within this opportunity, leaders must find ways to arm their workforce with the mindset and tools to transform their anxiety of the change into excitement and anticipation in the learning and growth that change can afford them. Because let's be honest, unrelenting disruption IS our new status quo!

The second blocker or barrier that creates resistance to change is a worry that the change won't make things better than it is currently or that the change will even work at all. This lack of belief, credibility, and trust in the benefits or payoff of the change leads to a lack of support and connection in the work, growth, and discomfort to get there.

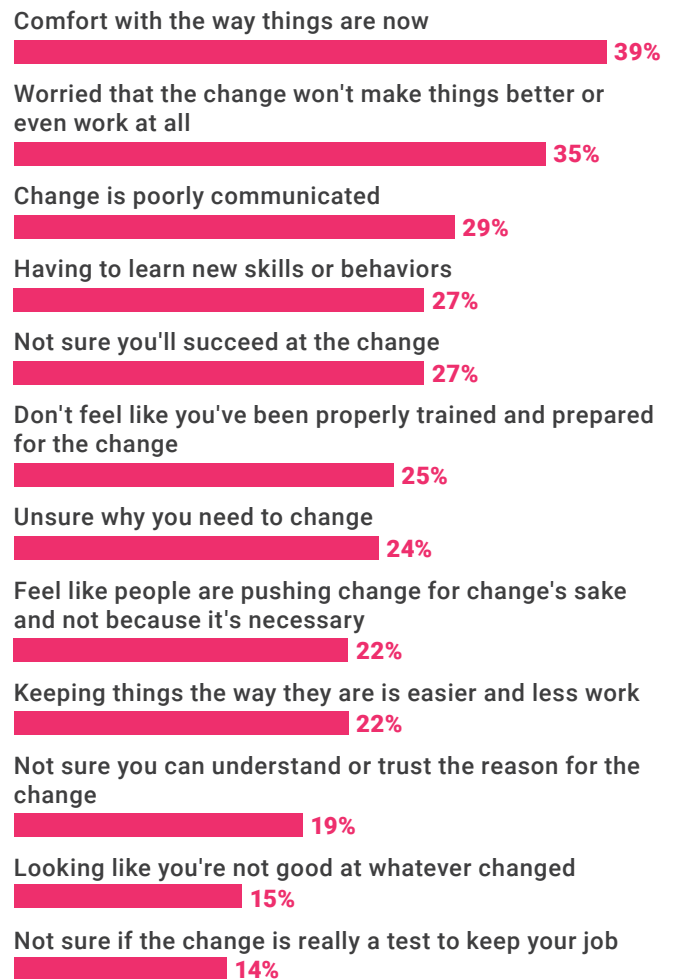
When people believe doing something new won't make things better or even work at all they are much less likely to be motivated to participate let alone go through the learning journey it requires for the change to be successful. Simply put, if you've had to lead change at work that has been resisted or gone through a change initiative that you yourself have not been fully bought into, you are not alone! In fact, the national study found that a majority of Americans feel powerless when change happens to them like there is nothing they can do about it.

**59%** of Americans feel powerless when change happens to them like there is nothing they can do about it.

To combat this, leaders must enroll and inspire individuals into the change journey by understanding and role modeling the belief(s) necessary to sustain the change. This begins by answering a critically important question: How does this change resonate with our shared values and purpose and ultimately make life better for my employees, partners, and/or customers?

What makes change even worse when leading, communicating, and being responsible for implementing it? The national study found that leadership pulling in too many directions at once and dysfunctional workplace dynamics are what most often drives burnout for Americans at work.

**WHAT MOST CONTRIBUTES TO YOUR RESISTANCE TO CHANGE AT WORK?**  
(BY TOTAL; RANKED #1/#2/#3)





In other words, change is already met with resistance by a majority of Americans. When leaders add to the complexity of that by pulling their team in too many directions and layering on dysfunctional workplace dynamics, then there is not only the original resistance to change but the added stress that ultimately leads to burnout at work.

So, what can be done? What are the actions that leaders can take right now to best lead change in an organization when employees or they themselves feel resistant to change at work? We dove into that exact line of questioning!

### WHAT MOST OFTEN DRIVES BURNOUT FOR YOU AT WORK? (BY TOTAL; RANKED #1/#2/#3)



# RESEARCH-BASED INSIGHTS AND SOLUTIONS FOR LEADING AND PARTICIPATING IN CHANGE AT WORK

In the national study, we tested several strategies to uncover exactly what would be most helpful to Working Americans to keep them doing their best when feeling resistant to change at work. We focused on helping Working Americans who feel resistant to change because that is where leaders need the most insight and also want practical solutions: leading change when people feel resistant.

The national study revealed that for a majority of Working Americans, there are five different strategies that would be helpful to keep them doing their best when feeling resistant to change. Here are all five strategies that proved very helpful or helpful for a majority of Working America:

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STRATEGY ONE: **76%** Being shown gratitude or appreciation by your manager for your effort and willingness to make the change happen successfully

STRATEGY TWO: **76%** Clear and regular communication from leadership on the status and progress of the change efforts and what to expect next

STRATEGY THREE: **75%** Time granted by management on a weekly basis for you and other employees to express what's working and what's not working regarding the change efforts

STRATEGY FOUR: **73%** Your manager listening to how you're managing the change and acting to support you as you request

STRATEGY FIVE: **57%** Hearing inspiring stories from others on how they overcame a challenging change

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The most exciting discovery, similarity, *and opportunity* of all five strategies are that none of them require paying employees more money or direct, out-of-pocket costs. Instead, these strategies can all be implemented by leaders to deliver priority change outcomes in any organization.

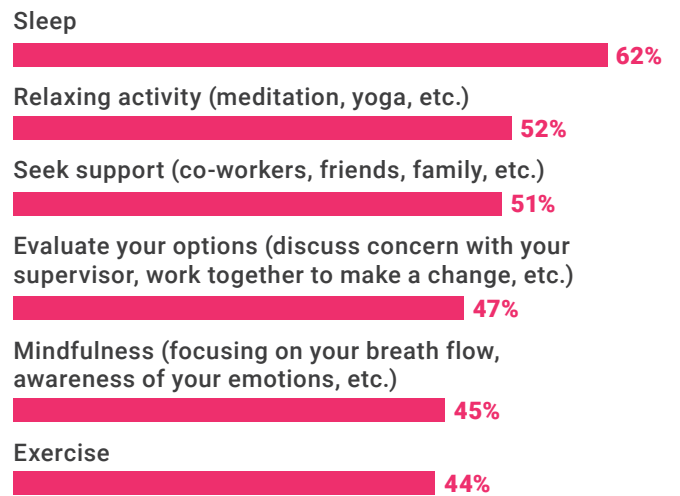
Beyond the five strategies that strongly show the results above, what else can leaders do or prioritize with their teams to continue to drive motivation, inspiration, and engagement in high-stakes times? The national study found that more than anything else tested in the survey, Americans believe that sleep is the most effective way to fight burnout at work. That's right. Sleep! So, if you've been considering granting that half-day off on Fridays to your entire workforce or granting more flexible work arrangements that allow employees to set a schedule that maximizes rest or taking those two weeks off for *yourself* to fully unplug...consider no more. Do it!

Now it's helpful to dive deeper into the emotional aspect of change at work. In the national study, it was uncovered that women believe significantly more than men that seeking support (co-workers, friends, family, etc.) is an effective way to fight burnout at work. This is important as the study also revealed that women are significantly more likely than men to feel anxiety (63%) and fear (24%) when experiencing change at work. Leaders charging the way in the advocacy for women in the workplace encourage stakeholders to establish and consistently sponsor these support networks or ally systems. This finding reinforces the importance and value of adequately funding these systems and networks. These peers, team members, and external resources are of huge value to navigating change and helping stakeholders at all levels to not feel alone, overwhelmed, or discouraged during the process of change, but rather stay inspired and focused.

But is not expressing or feeling uncomfortable sharing emotions at work a real problem when it comes to change at work? The data certainly says so. In the national study, over 2/3 of Americans (69%) say that being able to safely express their emotions at work would improve their ability to navigate change at work. In other words, if someone doesn't feel safe while expressing their emotions at work they won't be fully engaged, confident, and feel heard during the journey of change. The data is clear: emotion holds a very critical place in business, notably that business striving to remain agile and relevant.

Leaders must take responsibility for creating situations, culture, meetings, and communication exchanges that enable stakeholders to safely share their emotions at work. Rather than the myth that expressing emotions slows down or limits change, the national study reveals the exact opposite. Safely sharing emotions helps in the process of adopting and adapting to change!

**WHAT IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO FIGHT BURNOUT FOR YOU AT WORK?**  
(BY TOTAL; RANKED #1/#2/#3)



**HOW WOULD BEING ABLE TO SAFELY EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS AT WORK IMPACT YOUR ABILITY TO NAVIGATE CHANGE AT WORK?**  
(BY TOTAL)



■ Significantly improve   ■ Somewhat improve   ■ No impact   ■ Somewhat diminish   ■ Significantly diminish



In fact, communication is so vitally important during the process of change that one discovery jumps out from the study: 76% of Americans share that the most helpful strategy when navigating their emotions during change at work is clear and regular communication from leadership on the change efforts and progress. That’s right. Clear and regular communication makes the process of change and the sharing of emotions easier which leads to the progress sought through the change being led. This means that leaders need to be keenly aware of their communication cadence, content, platforms, and strategy. Leaders also need to ensure the communication is free to flow in both directions: down from and up to leadership.

If your organization is going through change right now and you’re not getting the clarity and consistency of communication you need, this research is the data-driven support that you should ask for it! You’re likely not alone in needing better communication, so be the catalyst required to help everyone on your team. Change is not only about embracing what could be but also about taking initiative right now to make the future happen.

**HOW HELPFUL WOULD EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES BE TO YOU  
WHEN NAVIGATING YOUR EMOTIONS DURING CHANGE AT WORK?  
(BY TOTAL)**

Clear and regular communication from leadership on the status and progress of the change efforts and what to expect next



An avenue or avenues to express your ideas on how to make change adoption better or more efficient



Training to help you recognize your emotions, communicate them effectively to others, and understand how they might fuel your growth



Time and attention granted from your management to express your emotions and what's inspiring them



Dedicated time on every 1-on-1 with your manager to express how you are managing the change and discuss any support needed



Hearing fresh, outside perspective from experts in the emotional intelligence and/or resilience thought space

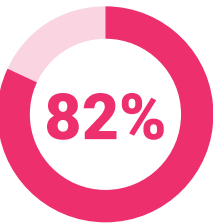





Hearing specific ways others have grown during times of stressful change



Very helpful      Helpful      Neutral      Not helpful      Not at all helpful

And four more discoveries to close the study's findings with...

- #1  82% of Americans accept that growth often requires feeling uncomfortable
- #2  80% of Americans feel more motivated to share their ideas when going through change when they feel safe being their best self
- #3  78% of Americans are more likely to adapt to change if they feel comfortable expressing their true emotions in the workplace
- #4  77% of Americans find more often than not after experiencing change at work that they learn at least one thing that helps them grow



# NATIONAL STUDY CONCLUSIONS

Leaders of all levels in all organizations realize that change is **essential** in today's workplace to remain relevant and competitive, but leading change can be hard, frustrating, and yet still must be done. But how? The results of the study show that if you're feeling like change is hard to understand and lead, you're not alone. In fact, you're exactly where you're supposed to be growing your knowledge of change so you can drive better results more consistently! At the same time, the study revealed that there are very clear actions that leaders can take to best create buy-in, enthusiasm, momentum, and results when it comes to leading and executing change.

The goal of this unique national study was to uncover the missing perspective, context, and behavioral insights that leaders need to know now in order to be the catalyst to new levels of change and the positive benefits of change in an organization. This first-of-its-kind study shows not only how Working America feels about change but also the actions leaders can take now.

The study highlighted that Working America knows all about change because they've lived it through their job and career. Change is hard to make stick, yet it has never been more important to embrace and grow from change than it is right now. The insights in this study, and their statistical accuracy across ages, genders, geographies, years of work experience, and much more highlights the critical importance of elevating the change conversation within organizations to become inclusive of the important role emotion plays throughout change. We truly need to create cultures of resilience and change-readiness, inspiring and empowering individual hearts and minds, if we are to create sustainable businesses while bringing forward the potential that every stakeholder brings to an organization through these periods of uncertainty.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Resilience or effective change navigation that evokes growth is a mindset and a skill set that can be learned, practiced, continuously improved, and embraced to create the present and the future that leaders need to deliver now. The vast majority of Working America, as shown in the study, know that change is important, accept that growth often means feeling uncomfortable, and know what would most help them to embrace and support change, and now you know, too. The study revealed you are not alone if you're unsure or struggling to lead or execute change and even if it is your greatest strength, the insights in this study will only add to your abilities. That is one of the greatest insights about change: it is something that not only benefits organizations but also benefits us as we go through life. A true win/win!

**“You can not experience growth without change. The two are inextricably linked. When we get better at navigating change, we get better at accelerating our personal evolution.”**

—Cassandra Worthy

The benefit and the risk around change and emotion at work are here to stay, but what has changed (pun intended) is that you now have the insights you need to start where you are today and take action to lead change in a way that makes people feel valued, seen, included, and energized.

If you still want more actions, strategies, and resources you can use right away, then you're in for a treat! We've listed five more actions you can take right now to continue developing your expertise around change...





# FOUR ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO STRENGTHEN YOUR MINDSET AND SKILLSET FOR CHANGE

1. Get your copy of Change Enthusiasm: [changeenthusiasmbook.com](https://changeenthusiasmbook.com)
2. Get inspired! Watch this video: [vimeo.com/651588352](https://vimeo.com/651588352)
3. Check out this LinkedIn Learning course by Founder and CEO Cassandra Worthy: [Using emotions to leverage and accelerate change – A guide for leaders](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/using-emotions-to-leverage-and-accelerate-change-a-guide-for-leaders)
4. Contact us to bring a powerful keynote message or training to your organization: [ChangeEnthusiasmGlobal.com/contact](https://ChangeEnthusiasmGlobal.com/contact)

**For more tools, resources, speaking information, and media inquiries visit: [ChangeEnthusiasmGlobal.com](https://ChangeEnthusiasmGlobal.com)**

# ABOUT THE REPORT'S AUTHORS



Change Enthusiasm Global is a well-respected Training & Leadership Development firm specializing in harnessing the power of emotion to enable the growth of your business through change, transformation, disruption, and transition.

They are not your typical Change Management firm. They do not deal in the standard blocking and tackling of change, eg processes and structure. Rather they focus on leadership development and employee engagement to inspire and motivate the individual employee at all levels subsequently enabling the following success metrics through the execution of any change, transition, or transformation:

1. Lower regrettable attrition
2. Faster time lines to successful change adoption
3. Higher transformation success rates
4. Increased engagement and productivity

Change Enthusiasm Global is the only firm of its kind. They have uniquely curated pragmatic and proven ways to harness the power of emotion, a resource in infinite supply, to instill enviable resilience and adaptability into organizations enabling embrace and acceleration of change and subsequent growth.

Learn more about our mission, services, and impact at: [ChangeEnthusiasmGlobal.com](https://ChangeEnthusiasmGlobal.com)



The Center for Generational Kinetics, LLC (CGK) is the leading research and speaking firm focused on key emerging trends, generational change, and behavioral insights.

CGK's team leads original research around the world to solve important consumer, investor, and workforce challenges. The firm uncovers new and unexpected, statistically accurate insights for innovative, market-leading clients. CGK's team has worked with over 700 companies around the world, from the biggest global CPG brands to governments, technology pioneers, financial services, retailers, banks, and automotive manufacturers. The firm's latest bestselling book is Zconomy: How Gen Z Will Change the Future of Business.

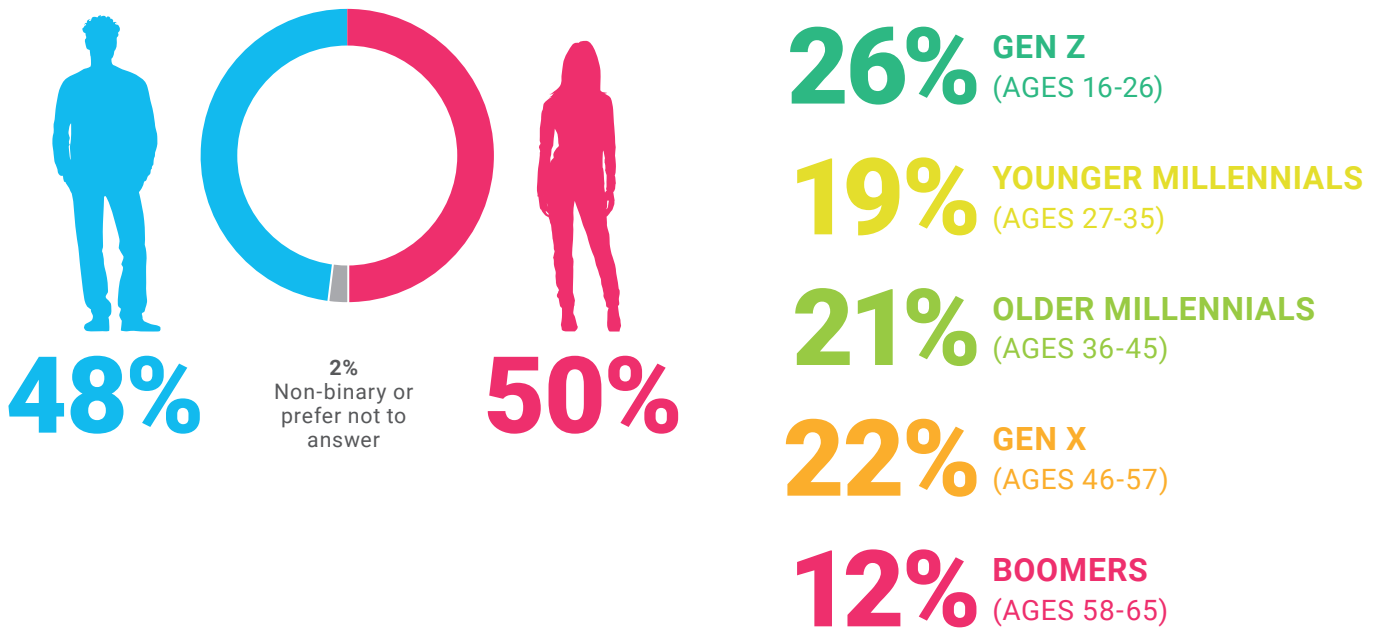
CGK's team and discoveries have been featured on more than 200 TV shows and hundreds more media outlets around the world. Learn more about CGK's pioneering insights at [GenHQ.com](https://GenHQ.com).

# NATIONAL STUDY METHODOLOGY

The national study included 1,000 U.S. participants ages 16-65 weighted to the 2020 U.S. Census for age, gender, geography, and ethnicity. In addition, the study included an oversample of 500 participants who are currently employed full-time, part-time, or self-employed. The margin of error is +/-2.53 percentage points.

The national study was conducted online from May 15, 2022, to May 25, 2022.

CUSTOM 25-QUESTION SURVEY COMPLETED BY **1,500** U.S. PARTICIPANTS (AGES 16-65)



**24%**  
WEST

**21%**  
MIDWEST

**38%**  
SOUTH

**17%**  
NORTHEAST



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