THE WORKPLACE DATA CENSUS

Helping you understand the data you capture in the workplace

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THE WORKPLACE EVENT

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In 2020 a study estimated that a single person generated 1.7mb of data per second. That's enough to fill up a DVD full of data every 45 minutes. It's this, and equally terrifying examples of the ubiquitous nature of digital information, that makes it a constant theme for any profession when considering their work today and in the future.

The workplace community are no different, and since the 1980s when the idea of Smart Buildings was first considered, the role of data in the everyday performance of buildings has never been far from the agenda.

But as we emerge from the pandemic, we find that people centric data and information generated by the software applications we use every day are of equal importance as we consider the rounded workplace experience of the workforce. The data tide appears to be swelling.

And whilst that is exciting, particularly for an organisation that specialises in workplace data, it comes with its own risks. The sheer scale of this can be both a threat and an opportunity as teams continue to innovate and grow their data libraries but often in an organic way and out of step with other parts of the business who are on their own digital information journey.

The collection, management and application of data needs to be deliberate. It needs to be designed. We need to understand what questions we're asking and what the best data is to provide the answer. And we need to be flexible with our approach because, as we learnt in 2020, things can change in an instant.

It's why we consider this project so important and are delighted to partner with The Workplace Event on its publication. By tracking approaches to workplace data over time we can consider how we can improve approaches, identify weak spots, spot emerging trends. We can use the findings as a framework to have a more informed, productive conversation as a community about how we embrace innovation and make the most of the vast quantities of data that now exists in every workplace across the UK and beyond.

We look forward to exploring these findings and continuing the conversation with the workplace sector as we embrace this evolving digital future.

Chris Low
Director
Real Estate & Facilities Management EMEA
Accruent

> " The collection, management and application of data needs to be deliberate. "

When The Workplace Event launched in late 2021 it aimed to become the new home of workplace and facilities innovation. Providing a platform for the industry to gather, discuss challenges and opportunities and to create the environment for thought leaders and practitioners to help shape the future.

From the outset, however, it was felt important that we also contributed to that conversation through industry insights. When this was put to our Advisory Council, a collection of leaders from the world of workplace and facilities management, workplace design and academia, a particular topic was pointed to consistently when considering what could add most value to the current industry debates. Data.

The availability, and application, of workplace data has been a hot topic for several years given the explosion of digital technology in recent times. But post pandemic this has taken on a particular level of importance as organisations face an uncertain landscape causing the thirst for relevant, actionable data to increase further.

With that increased focus will the sector face more of the same challenges that it has in the past with the availability, usefulness and accuracy of data? Do the skills exist to be able to translate data into evidence-based decisions? And how much value is placed on workplace data at an organisational level?

In order to navigate these questions and take the pulse of the sector today we launched The Workplace Data Census, an annual scan of how organisations are capturing and applying their data in today's workplace. By collecting this information annually, we intend to be able to track trends and map the developing relationship between organisations, workplace professionals and their impact on workplace experience.

Along with insight partners, Accruent, we hope that the findings in this report can not only provide you with an outline of that developing picture but also provide insights that might challenge your approach to workplace data in your organisation.

Tristan Norman
Group Director
The Workplace Event

> " The Workplace Data Census, an annual scan of how organisations are capturing and applying their data in today's workplace. "

METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENT PROFILE

In order to explore how workplace professionals were approaching data collection, management and application, a survey was designed that asked for both quantitative and qualitative responses against the following themes:

- **Broad workplace data types:** What do organisations collect from a range of data sources?

- **Tools to process data:** What systems and software are being used to collect, process and present data?

- **Drivers for data:** Why are organisations collecting data and how is that data used and viewed across the business?

- **Barriers to use:** What stops organisations from making the most of data?

- **Capabilities:** How able are practitioners in using data in order to drive business success?

The three overlapping components of workplace
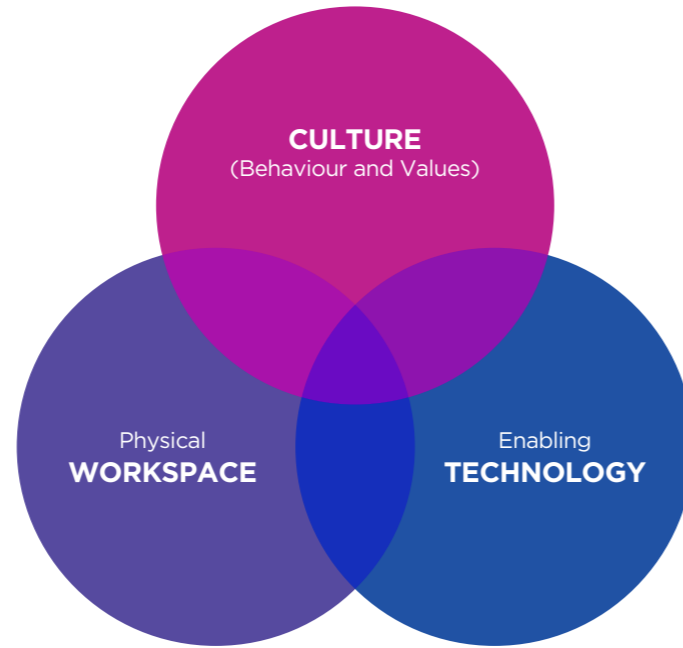
The Workplace Venn (Pinder and Ellison, 2019)

On average the survey took less than ten-minutes to complete and was shared via The Workplace Event database and social channels as well as through partners Accruent and Yo-Yo DESK.

Data types were categorised using the 'workplace Venn' which recognises workplace experience as being the intersection of the spaces where people work, the tools they use for their work and the communities that support that work. In organisational terms, Space – Technology (IT) – People

The survey received 124 responses with a relatively even split between buying organisations (private, public and third sector) and those providing services (inc. independent consultants). More than half (52%) worked for organisations with more than 250 employees. Almost half (44%) identified themselves as senior leaders.

This year's census report provides a series of themes although we have resisted excessive slicing of data into smaller sub-sets given the overall size of the data set. Instead, themes will be explored using high level insights from this year's data and combined with wider industry commentary and secondary data sources.
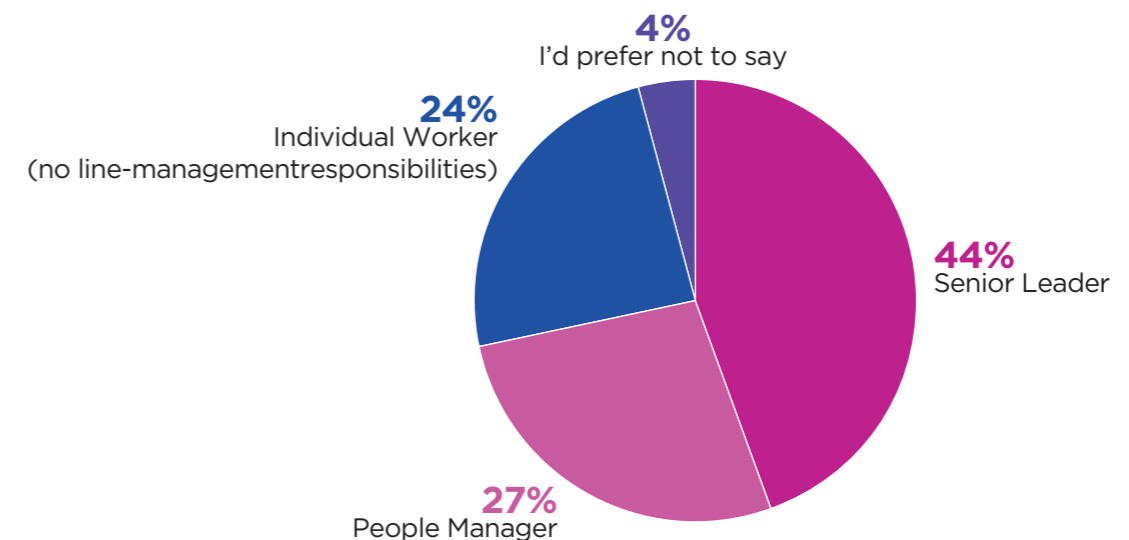
Which of the following best describes your organisation's position in relation to workplace
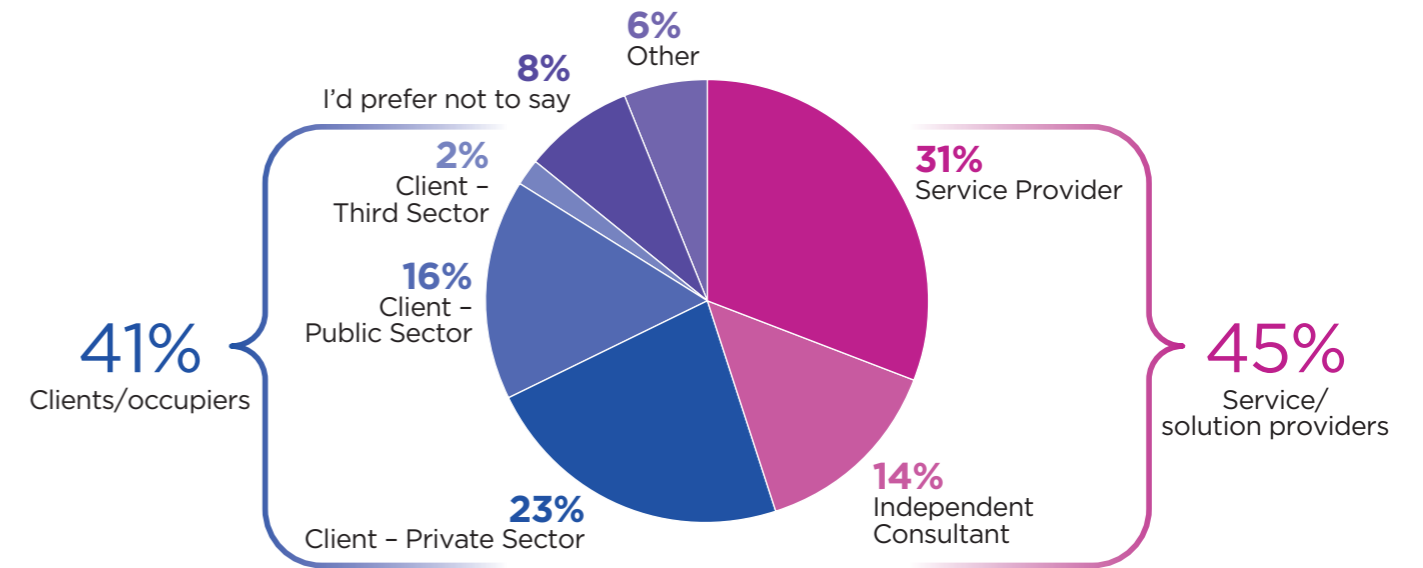
How many employees are in your organisation?
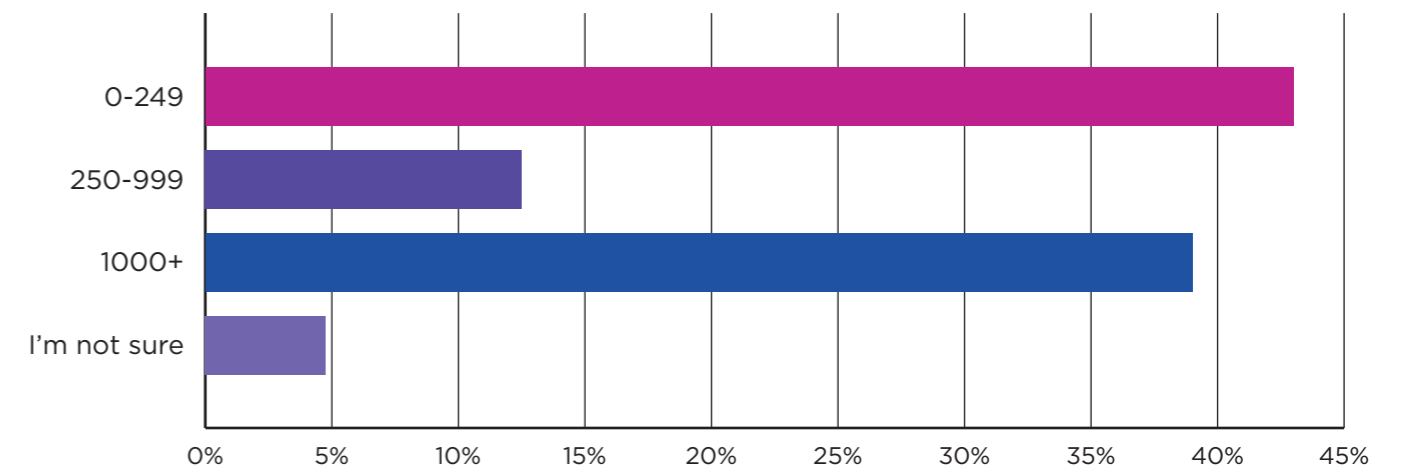
Which of the following best describes your role?

FINDINGS

1 – Workplace data is very important

▶ **Cost and employee engagement ranked as most important**

▶ **Benchmarking was the lowest ranking activity**

▶ **Evaluation of hybrid working less important than anticpated.**

In a somewhat obvious headline for this report, the responses show that workplace data is very important. However, the insight can be found in the type of workplace data activity that respondents flagged specifically as highly important (selected extremely or very important).

The highest-ranking data types by importance were employee engagement and cost management, both scoring 76%. It would be interesting to see a similar data set from five years ago to see whether employee engagement would feature so high in what is a predominantly a non-HR audience. The prominence of employee engagement data alongside cost management could be interpreted as the more traditional approach to workplace and facilities management (cost) now having to share centre stage with a more contemporary metric (employee experience). This could indicate a closer relationship between FM/Property and HR teams but may also be reflective of a professional tribe that struggles to get 'airtime' with employee surveys and therefore relies on much more established, and corporately recognised, methods of feedback capture.
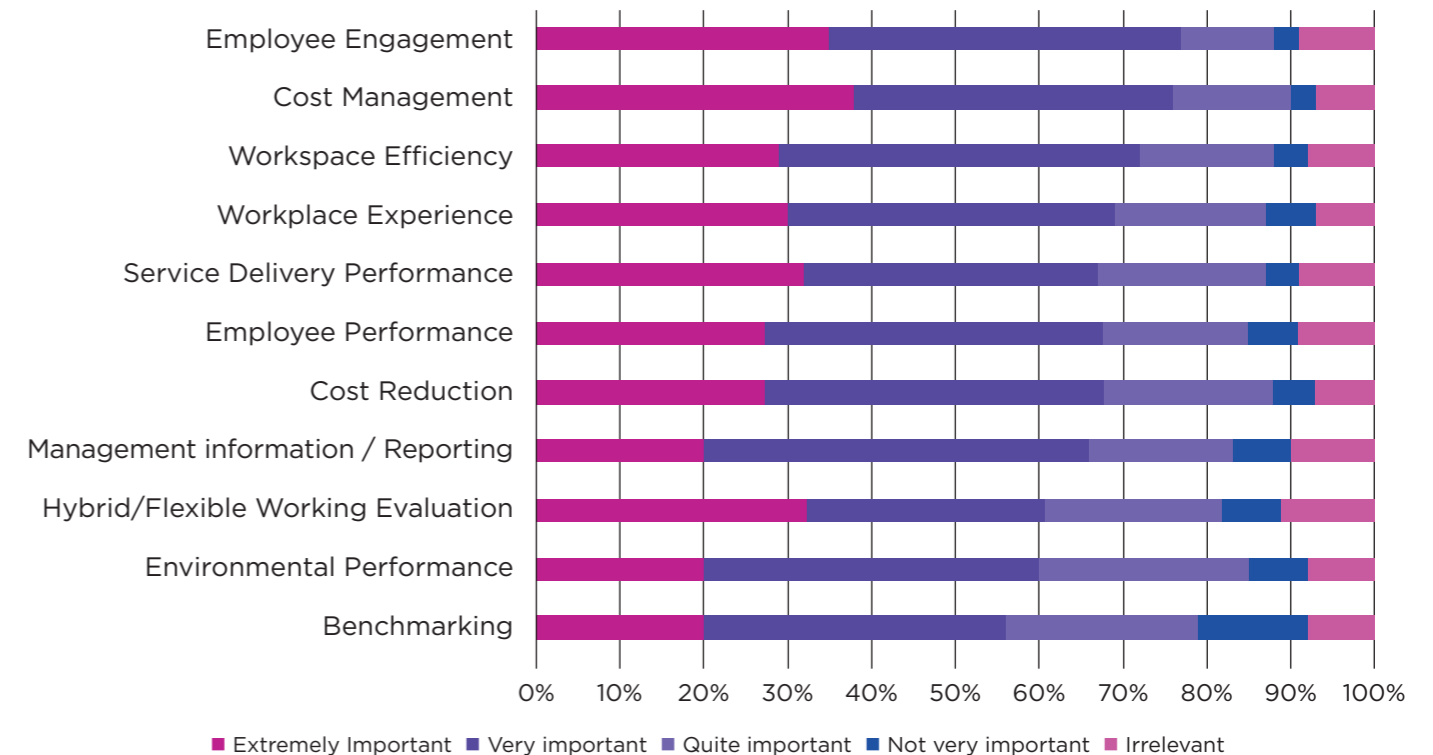
Whilst employee feedback appears to be important there is still a lingering focus on reducing cost, rather than simply managing it. Cost management data did rank more important than cost reduction data which is encouraging given the focus on cost reduction is often criticised within FM circles however it still saw more than two thirds (67%) place high importance on it.

In a continuation of that theme, there is an interesting dynamic between workplace experience and workplace efficiency with marginally more importance placed on the latter (72%) than the former (69%), again possibly highlighting the trade-off between providing employees with what they need whilst keeping a close eye on the cost of that experience. The performance of these two data points in future studies is something to keep an eye on.

The lowest ranking data type in terms of importance was benchmarking which to some may be surprising given that those from a property background have typically paid close attention to benchmarking building performance, for example. A fifth of respondents (21%) suggested that benchmarking was not very important or irrelevant, although it still saw more than half (56%) agree that is was highly important.

In another somewhat surprising finding, evaluation of hybrid/flexible working was the third lowest ranking activity (60%), although the number of people that said it was extremely important ranked alongside some of the highest-ranking activities in this list. Given all of the talk about hybrid/flexible work, it's surprising more organisations don't see evaluating it as important. It may be that it is too early for this to feature higher but given the huge focus or it may be that organisations feel that insights could be gleaned through already established data sets such as workplace experience and employee engagement.

How important are the following business activities and outcomes to the work you do?

Employee Engagement
Cost Management
Workspace Efficiency
Workplace Experience
Service Delivery Performance
Employee Performance
Cost Reduction
Management information / Reporting
Hybrid/Flexible Working Evaluation
Environmental Performance
Benchmarking

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Extremely Important ■ Very important ■ Quite important ■ Not very important ■ Irrelevant

2 – People data is highly valued by workplace professionals

▶ **Respondents place high importance on people related data**

▶ **No property data receives more than 50% importance rating**

▶ **Use of social media data (e.g. Glassdoor) a possible missed opportunity**

In the previous section we focused on general data types, but when look at the categories of data, i.e., people, space and tech, we see some patterns emerging. Three people-based data sources stood out as the majority of respondents flagged them as being highly important. These were people performance e.g. appraisals (56%), employee engagement surveys (56%) and human resource management data e.g. employee databases (52%). In comparison, only one technology data type saw agreement from the majority of respondents, hardware and systems performance (57%).

No space related data achieved this majority in agreement, perhaps reflective of the longer list that was presented to respondents (thus

spreading focus) or indicative of the wide variety of approaches one could take in this field. This variety challenge may be highlighted in the top two ranking data sources by importance, energy, and utilities (49%) and workspace experience (46%); two very different types of data.

The BIM result is interesting given the attention and focus that was placed on this technology, most notably by the UK Government who published their long-term BIM strategy in 2011. This effort appears to have had little influence on the wider sector given 54% of respondents went so far as to suggest that BIM was unimportant of irrelevant.

Perhaps BIM has only been a concern for those constructing new buildings and therefore the operational benefit is still poorly understood or not evident.

Please rate each of the following types of physical workspace data in terms of their important to the work you do.

Energy and utilities data
Workspace experience data (e.g. user surveys)
Building or workspace condition (e.g. BMS)
Workspace utilisation data (e.g. utilisation surveys)
Asset lifecycle data
Facilities helpdesk data
Building systems performance (e.g. BMS)
BIM (building information modelling) data

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Extremely Important ■ Very important ■ Quite important ■ Not very important ■ Irrelevant

Please rate each of the following types of people and cultural workplace data in terms of their importance to the work you do.

Employee engagement/voice data (e.g. pulse survey)
People performance data (e.g. annual performance reviews)
Human resource management data (e.g. staffing data)
People activity data (e.g. Microsoft Workplace Analytics)
Social media data (e.g. Glassdoor reviews)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Extremely Important ■ Very important ■ Quite important ■ Not very important ■ Irrelevant

Please rate each of the following types of workplace technology data in terms of their importance to the work you do.

Hardware/systems performance data
IT Helpdesk data
Network performance data
Software utilisation data
Vehicle tracking data (e.g. fleet movements)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Extremely Important ■ Very important ■ Quite important ■ Not very important ■ Irrelevant

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Shifting focus away from data types that achieve a majority agreement, and instead looking at people and technology data types by the number of respondents that ranked them as unimportant/irrelevant, also provides further food for thought. From a technology perspective it has already been identified that hardware/systems performance is considered the most important data type, but a third of respondents described software performance (32%), network performance (32%) and IT Helpdesk data (31%) as unimportant/irrelevant. Whilst the survey question asked about the importance of data in the work respondents do, therefore technology data may not be important for the 'day job', it feels remiss to ignore these other data types which, it could be argued, represent the lived experience of employees and their digital workplace experience, particularly in a more dispersed workforce.

The lowest ranking people data type was social media (e.g. Glassdoor reviews) which almost a half (43%) of respondents flagged as unimportant/irrelevant. The high importance on people data generally across the survey is an encouraging sign but it could be argued that what is driving this is the so-called 'war for talent' and if that's the case, should what past employees say about your business and their workplace experience rank fairly high as a feedback type, in the same way that marketers will assess product/service feedback on social media to help inform future strategies? Perhaps there is a maturity factor here

and the focus on people data that is easy to obtain and assess, derived from internal data collection, is a steppingstone to the more complicated, but arguably richer, data contained in third party, external data sets. Perhaps there is a view that something like Glassdoor is a 'lagging indicator', that is to say it is feedback from people who have already left, and the priority is placed on existing employees.

Finally, in the people data category, relatively low value was placed on people performance data derived from Microsoft Teams analytics, which 39% of respondents said was unimportant/irrelevant. Given the significant increase in employees doing most of their work through digital channels during, and after, the pandemic this could prove to be a treasure-trove of information. To emphasise that point Microsoft published the widely acclaimed New Future of Work report, much of which was drawn from aggregated, anonymised data from global usage of their products; this would surely have interesting implications at an organisational level.

Finally, half of respondents (52%) selected at least one data source as very important from each of the three data categories; another sign that teams are beginning to explore the combination of data from around the workplace experience landscape. Perhaps evidence that professional tribes are starting to look at data beyond their own remit or professional boundaries.
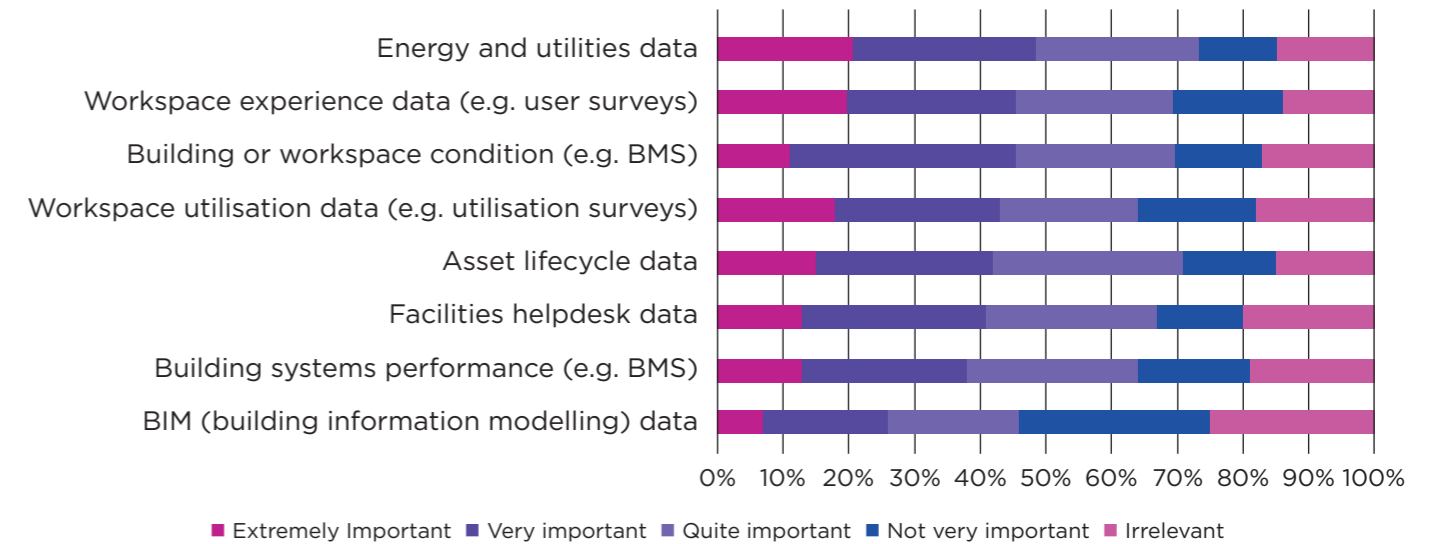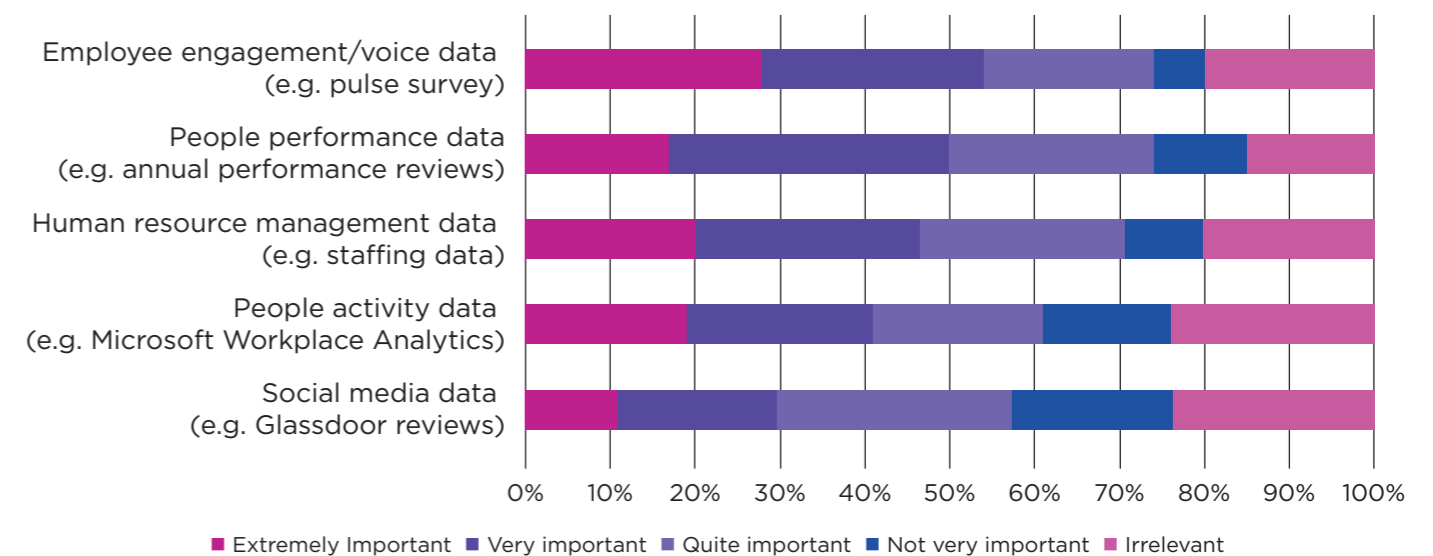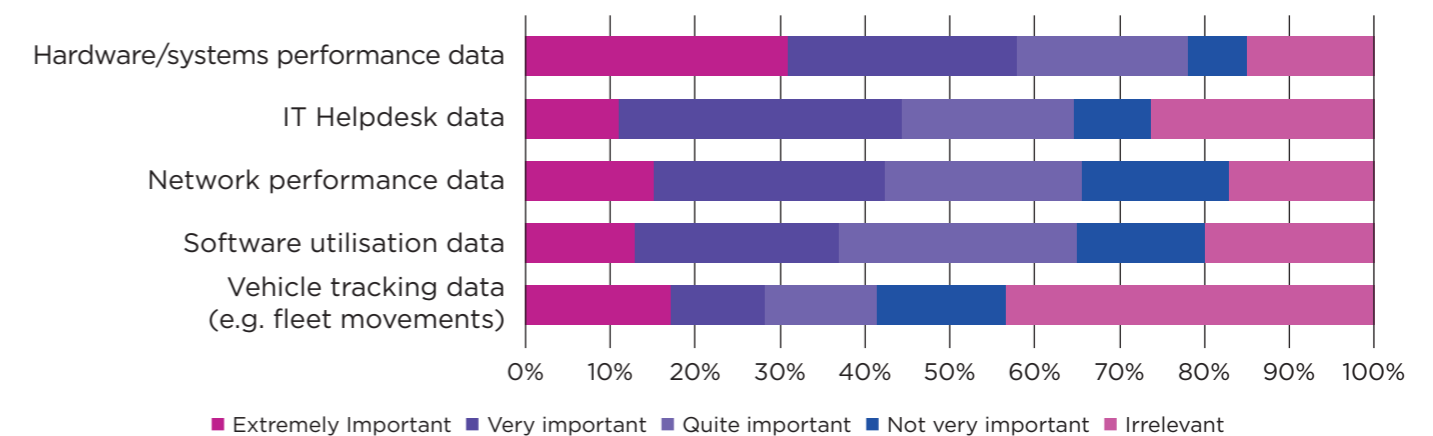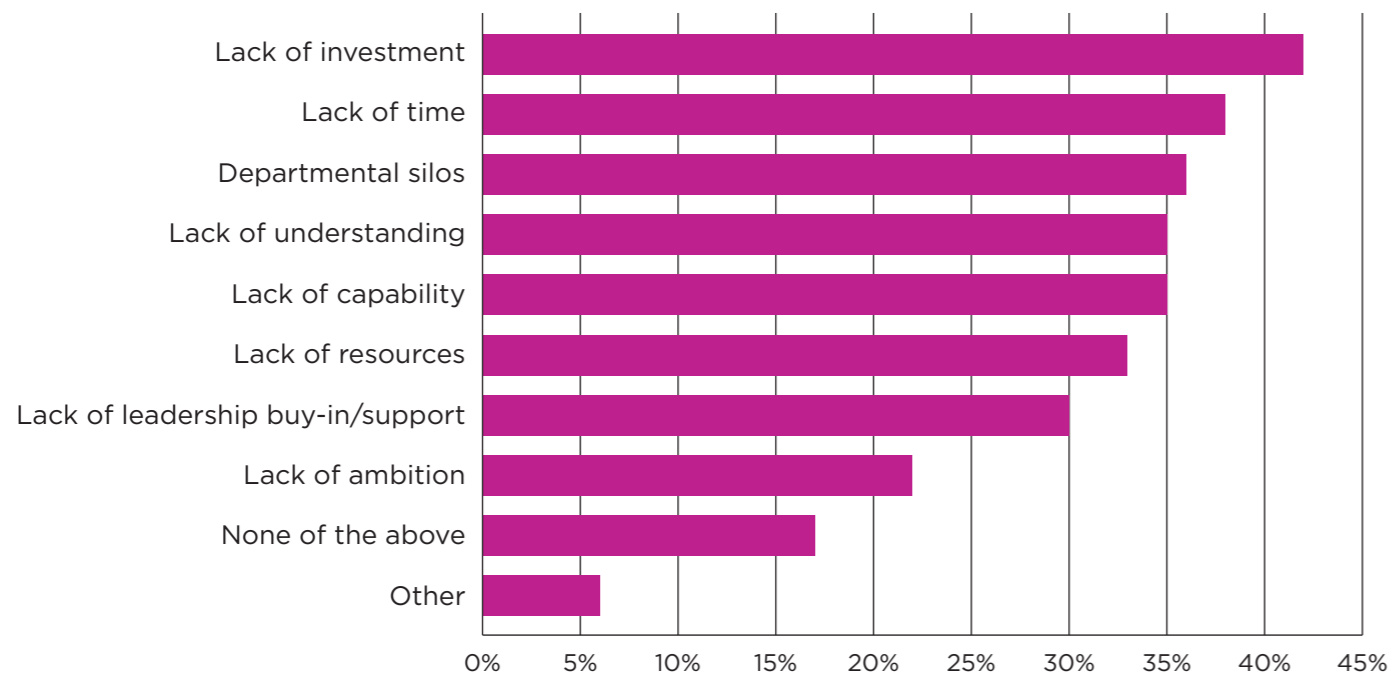
3 – Respondents trapped in a time/ resource loop

▶ **Time and investment highlighted as biggest barriers to unlocking workplace data**

▶ **Spreadsheets are the highest-ranking tool for processing data**

▶ **Combined, these two factors risk keeping workplace data insights hidden**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, lack of investment (42%) and lack of time (38%) rank highest when respondents were asked what the barriers were to making better use of workplace data. This would probably be reflected in most departments within the organisation, but it is likely to be particularly true of workplace teams over the past two years when they've had their attention justifiably elsewhere. The reluctance to invest though is a concern despite only 30% of respondents saying that leadership buy-in is a barrier. Understanding why that gap exists will be important. Perhaps business cases, something that are equally time-consuming, is preventing teams from making progress.

Over a third of respondents agreed (36%) that departmental silos are a barrier. The results have already shown us that workplace data is likely to come from different parts of the business e.g., HR, FM, IT but if departmental silos exist then pooling that data, never mind aligning the architecture and infrastructure to collect and house that data, is

likely to significantly impact its use. Looking at the previously mentioned 52% of people who value data from all three categories we can see that departmental silos is an increased challenge for them with 44% (+8% above average) citing it as a barrier to better use of workplace data.

One data point that may highlight the impact of the lack of time/investment comes when looking at the systems that teams are using to manage and process data. When asked what systems respondents use the number one ranking tool by a long way was spreadsheets (e.g. Excel, Google Sheets) at 68% with the second ranking system, HR systems, only seeing 31%.

Whilst spreadsheets contain significant processing power much of that power lies in complex formulas and analytics tools that the average professional is unlikely to have experience or expertise in. There are other potential challenges as well as teams may struggle to share information and create a 'single source of truth', it may encourage encourage 'data hoarding' and that's before we consider that these spreadsheets will not be purpose built for workplace data and could lack the data architecture to link data types.

If this inferred picture is accurate then it would not be surprising to hear workplace professionals complaining about a lack of time to get 'data houses' in order. Breaking out of that negative feedback loop is not an insignificant challenge but must be addressed if rounded, holistic insights are to be unlocked.

Which of the following are barriers to making better us of your workplace data?

Which of the following tools or systems do you use to manage your workplace data?
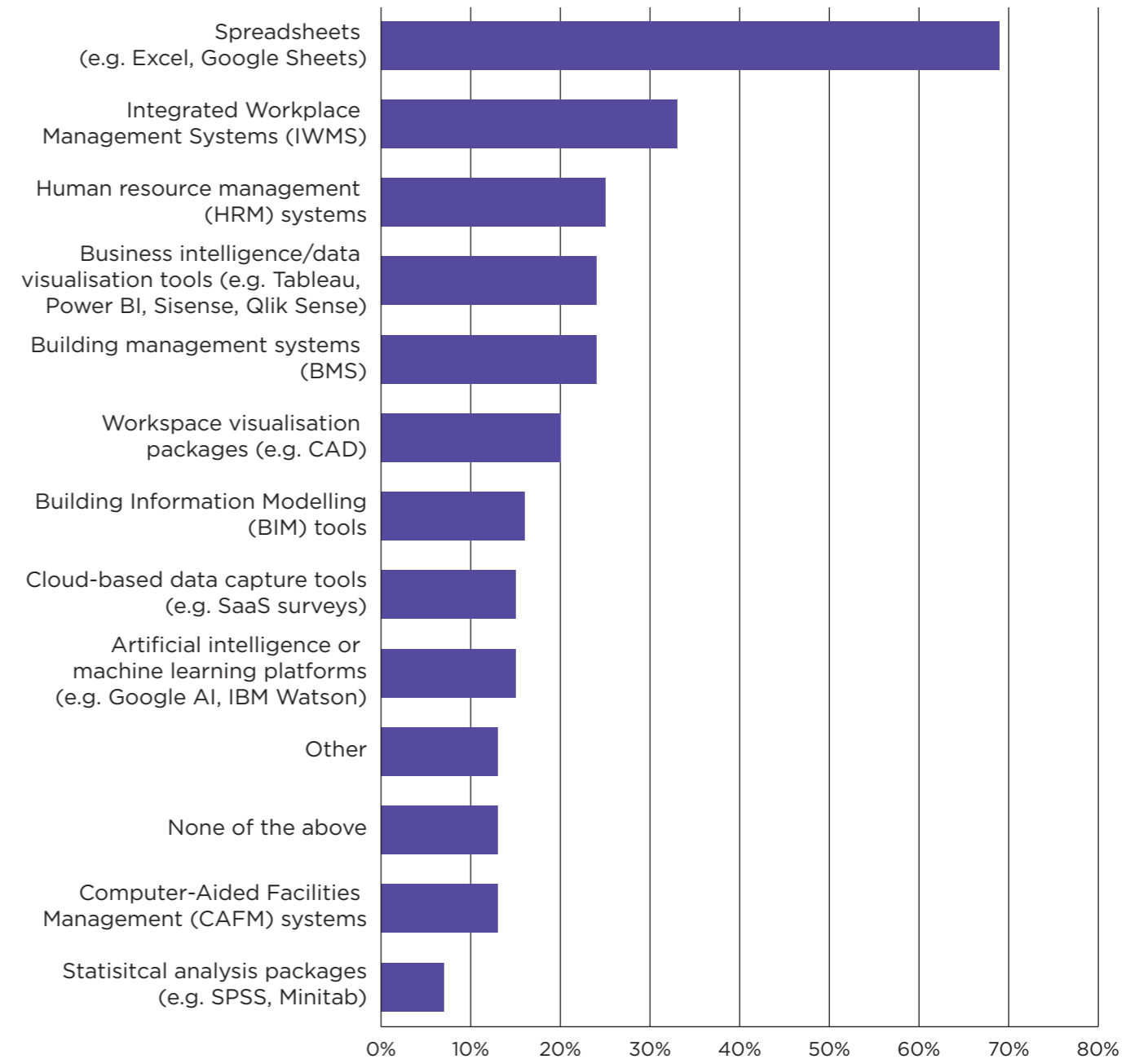
4 – Workplace data is making an impact

▶ **Workplace data seen as valuable by senior leaders and business stakeholders**

▶ **Outputs are crucial to supporting business cases**

▶ **Suppliers and consultants seem to be struggling to benefit from that positive trend**

Encouragingly it appears workplace data is starting to make a difference in helping to influence stakeholders outside of workplace teams.

Clients (public/private/third sector) agreed that workplace data was seen as valuable by senior leaders (63%) and key stakeholders across the business (62%) and that workplace data was being used to influence wider business decisions (57%). Three areas where traditionally FM teams have struggled to exert any form of influence.

However, there seemed to be less positivity amongst service providers and independent consultants where only 41% agreed that their customers understood workplace data. They were also less positive about the impact on key stakeholders (49%) and senior leaders (49%).
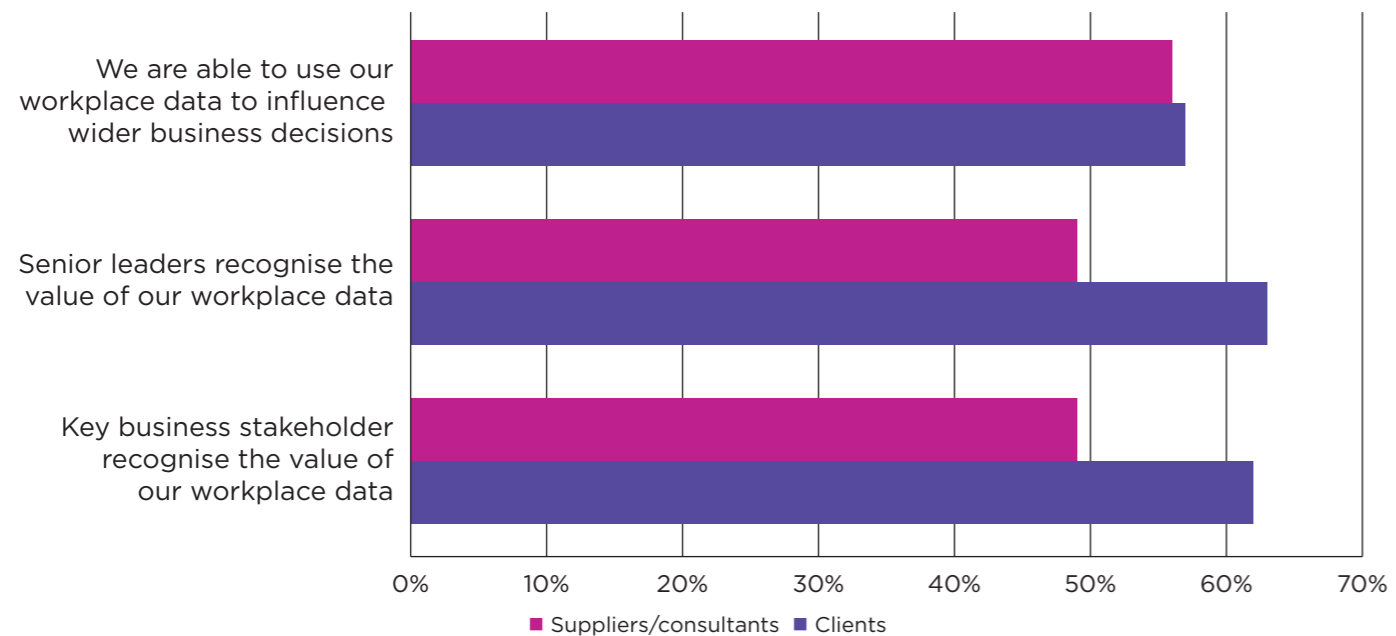
There could be several reasons for that, but it feels like there's a missed opportunity for service providers/consultants to support what appears to be a better data conversation internally within their client's businesses. Perhaps client/supplier relationships are still very transactional and focus on measuring KPI's rather than being built around data that can influence and advance workplace strategy.

One reason could be the previously mentioned 'spreadsheet' challenge. Service providers and consultants scored marginally higher (69%) when asked whether they are using spreadsheets with only 33% saying that they use Integrated Workplace Management Systems (IWMS). Is it fair to say that clients may expect more sophisticated approaches to the management of workplace data?
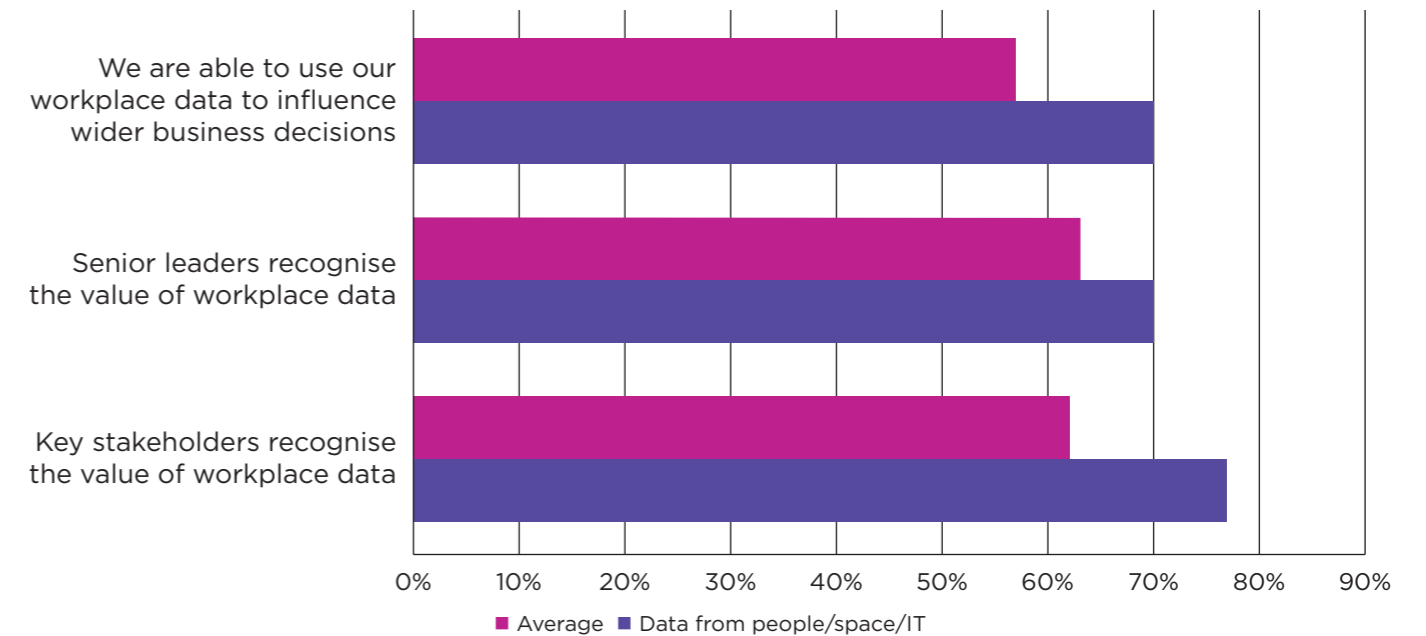
Back amongst those in client organisations we see the power of bringing a holistic data set together. Our 52% group, who selected at least one data type from all three categories, see significantly higher scores against the average for the impact with key stakeholders (+15%), senior leaders (+7%) and the ability to influence wider business decisions (+13%).

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about the impact of your workplace data on other business stakeholders. (All responses)

We are able to use our workplace data to influence wider business decisions	Suppliers/consultants ~56%, Clients ~57%
Senior leaders recognise the value of our workplace data	Suppliers/consultants ~49%, Clients ~63%
Key business stakeholder recognise the value of our workplace data	Suppliers/consultants ~49%, Clients ~62%

Scale: 0% – 70%

■ Suppliers/consultants ■ Clients

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about the impact of your workplace data on other business stakeholders. (Client responses)

We are able to use our workplace data to influence wider business decisions	Average ~57%, Data from people/space/IT ~70%
Senior leaders recognise the value of workplace data	Average ~63%, Data from people/space/IT ~70%
Key stakeholders recognise the value of workplace data	Average ~62%, Data from people/space/IT ~77%

Scale: 0% – 90%

■ Average ■ Data from people/space/IT

5 – The capability gap

▶ **Over two thirds of respondents know what workplace data they need but don't believe they have the capability to collect it.**

▶ **A focus on space data may be limiting wider ability to influence wider business areas**

▶ **Employee engagement is a key differentiator for wider impact**

In general skills do not appear to be a challenge for workplace teams with 59% of respondents agreeing that they have the skills to analyse workplace data effectively, with only 10% disagreeing.

However, getting hold of that data does seem to be a challenge. Teams agree that they know what workplace data they need (64%) but less agree that they have the capabilities to collect it (53%).

Only 42% of respondents agree that they have the capability to combine workplace data with other data points across the business to create further insights. This could be the difference between linking workplace outcomes to employee engagement, staff retention, talent acquisition and even customer experience. To emphasise that point we again look at our multiple data sources group (the 52%) and take those who

selected employee engagement as very important. In this data we can see some key differences on the previously mentioned impact scores. Amongst client-side organisations more than 8 in 10 respondents agreed that they are able to influence key stakeholders (81%) and use the data to influence wider business decisions (81%). Which is a 19- and 24-point against average scores respectively. When compared to the much smaller group of individuals who selected from all three categories but did not select employee engagement, we see significantly lower scores for influencing key stakeholders (67%), senior leaders (67%) and wider business decisions (33%).

Crucially perhaps, and there is a conversation to be had about causality here, those that select from three categories and focus on employee engagement are much more likely to agree, when compared to the average, that they are able to combine data from multiple sources (+18%), have the capability to get that data (+10%) and know what data they need to make the right decisions (+16%).

What this data may be suggesting is that it is not enough to get hold of data from all corners of the workplace experience map but getting the right data; in this case the employee engagement data appears the be a key differentiator in wider business impact.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about the impact of your workplace data on other business stakeholders. (Client responses)

Legend: ■ Average ■ Data from people/space/IT

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about the impact of your workplace data on other business stakeholders. (the '52%')

Legend: ■ Not high importance on employee engagement ■ High importance on Employee Engagement
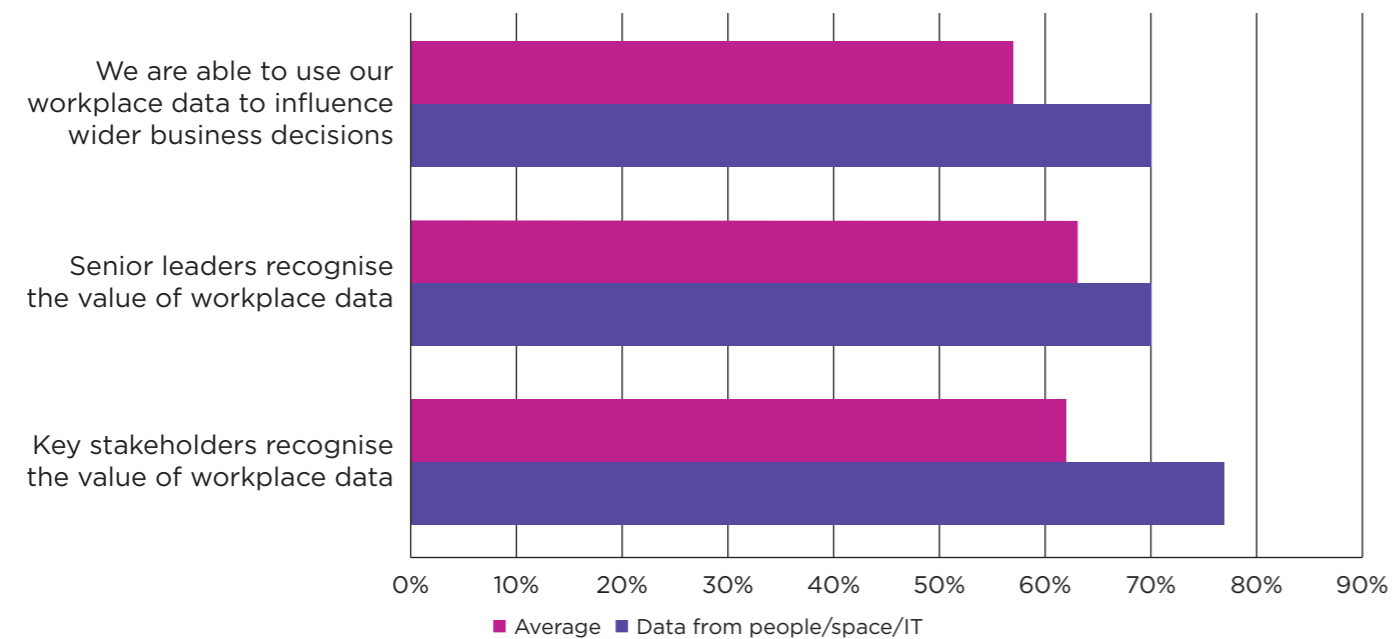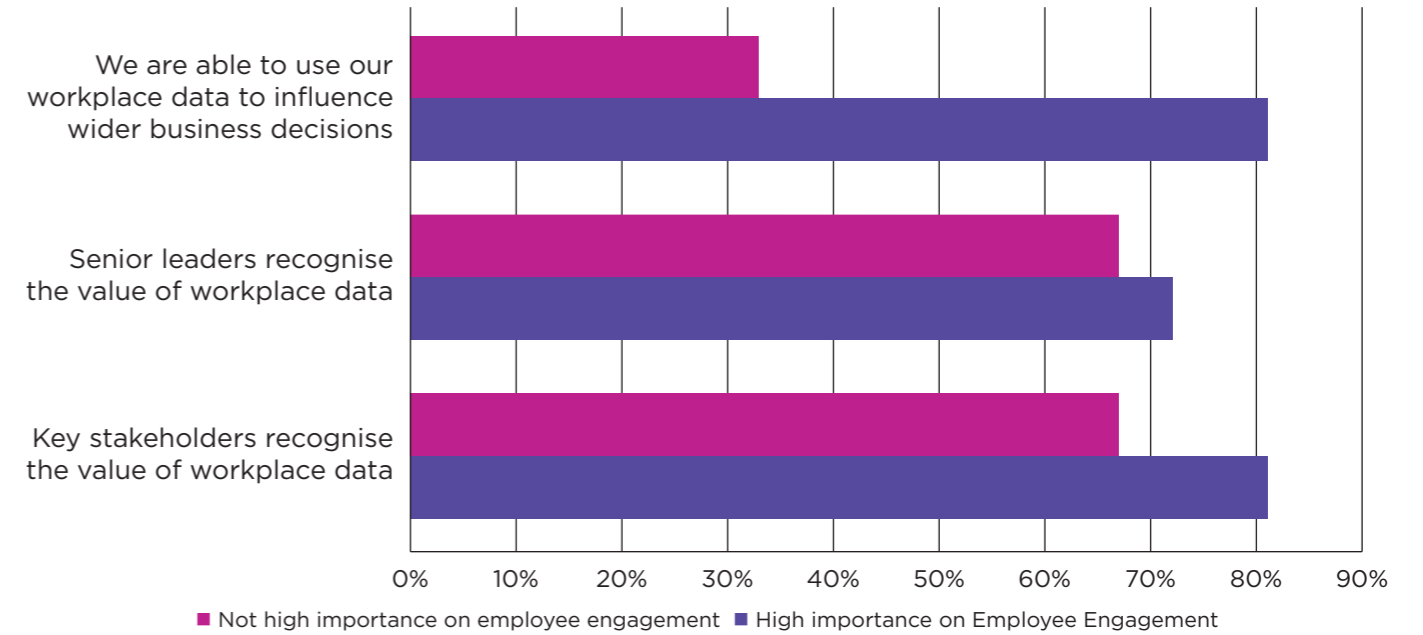
CONCLUSION

It would be difficult to argue with the importance of workplace data but what this report starts to show is that the type of data focused on, and crucially what other data it is combined with, is becoming increasingly important. This comes at a time when it is becoming easier to share and combine data as organisations undergo digital transformations and more and more data is moved to the cloud. Clearly, though, some organisations are further ahead than others.

There are some surprising findings that show traditional data types may be reducing in importance relative to more contemporary data types but again, it appears that it's the combination of these alongside more established business metrics that is bearing fruit when it comes to influencing key stakeholders across the business and, more crucially, senior leaders. Something that this community has coveted for some time.

The data appears to support the idea that those teams and practitioners that can consider workplace experience through a space/people/tech lens and find the right data sources to paint

those pictures are the ones that are experiencing the greater impact across their organisation.

We must, however, heed the warnings that this year's census has given us. There is more work required to increase the sophistication of the tools that are used to manage workplace data given that spreadsheets as the primary tool of choice does not feel particularly sustainable or likely to yield the greatest results.

The move away from spreadsheets will take time and investment and with these ranking one and two on the list of barriers this could be the most critical area of focus for workplace teams. Equally understanding why support from leaders is not translating into more investment.

With the pace of development in workplace data unlikely to slow down any time soon it is important that workplace teams get ahead of some of these challenges. It appears that getting a proper handle on this could hold the key to positioning them as a value adding function of the organisation rather than an overhead that needs close cost management.

References
Pinder, J. and Ellison, I. (2019) An introduction to workplace. Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management. An introduction to workplace.pdf

THE WORKPLACE EVENT

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The Workplace Event is the new home for workplace and facilities innovation. This forward focused event is the place where the industry meets to be inspired, share best practice and source leading suppliers to create more effective working environments, employee experience, and accelerate organisational performance.

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