workmonitor



singapore workmonitor 2026:

the great workforce adaptation.

randstad

partner for talent.



key findings.



Singapore's 2026 Workmonitor reveals a workplace marked by economic strain on both talent and employers, and AI becoming increasingly embedded.

Talent are slightly more optimistic than their global peers in terms of business outlook and the impact of AI on productivity, but are also rethinking their careers in terms of what's important for them.

Based on local insights from 800 individuals and employers in Singapore, along with secondary insights from over 3 million global job postings, here are some of the standout findings from the research.

me and the world

from job displacement to task augmentation.

Talent are recalibrating what they expect from work as they rise to the challenge of an increasingly volatile world. As employers look to the future with optimism, they need to reflect talent's shifting focus in their recruitment and retention strategies to maintain a motivated workforce and support workers as they augment their skills through AI, while alleviating fears of job displacement.

facing pressure

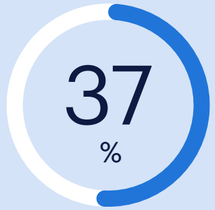
Amid rising cost pressures, 37% of Singaporean talent are planning to, or have already taken on a second job, while 31% have increased or intend to increase their working hours. Additionally, 25% also mentioned wanting a side-hustle on top of a full-time job for additional income.

AI embedded

56% of Singaporean employers state that they have invested in AI in the last 12 months, and this boost for AI has been noticeable for talent, too. 78% say more organisations encourage the use of AI, and over 7 out of 10 (74%) feel confident they can use the latest technology.

mismatched AI expectations

Over half of employees surveyed (51%) believe AI will benefit companies more than them. Demand for AI-related capabilities continue to surge, with job vacancies requiring "AI agent" skills rising by 1,587% globally. However, only 9% of local talent believe that their work will not be impacted by AI at all.



talent who have taken on or looking into a second job to help with the rising cost of living

56% employers who have invested in AI in the last 12 months

51% talent who believe AI will benefit their companies more than it will benefit them

me and my team

managers are key to stability.

Trust in the workplace is under pressure, yet work remains a balancing force in an increasingly volatile macro environment. Collaborative, inclusive teams remain critical to performance, with managers emerging as both stability anchors and trust builders.

the confidence gap

While 98% of employers express confidence in their business growth this year, sentiment among talent is more cautious, with only 53% sharing the same outlook.

At the same time, collaboration continues to face pressure, as both employers and employees acknowledge the challenges that remote and hybrid work arrangements can present.

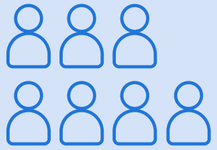
managers and AI are bridging gaps

74% of talent report a strong relationship with their manager (up 5 percentage points from 2025), and 71% feel more connected to them than to the company as a whole. Yet, 63% now use AI for work advice instead of consulting their manager.

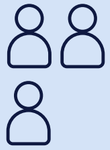
five generations at work

Employers are clear on the value of diversity: 98% believe multigenerational teams improve productivity. Talent agree, with 83% stating they are more productive when collaborating and embracing different viewpoints. Furthermore, almost 4 out of 5 talent (79%) rely on colleagues from different generations to broaden their perspectives and facilitate learning.

I seek more reassurance from my manager because of the current volatile macroeconomic environment

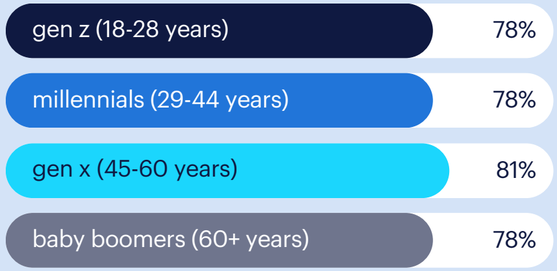


69% agree



31% disagree

I rely on colleagues from different generations to broaden my perspectives at work





88%

of employers say remote or hybrid work has made collaboration more challenging

me

the rise of self-defined success.

Economic volatility and a more difficult job market have led talent to be more cautious in how they navigate their careers. Even so, they are not retreating from what matters most to them. For employers, the challenge is balancing business needs with that for individual agency and autonomy.

career paths redefined

Employers value skills and experience over formal qualifications when hiring (94%), and feel that the traditional linear career path – one career or company with regular promotions – is outdated (84%). More than 2 in 5 talent (42%) agree, stating that they don't want a linear career but instead experience different types of jobs in different sectors.

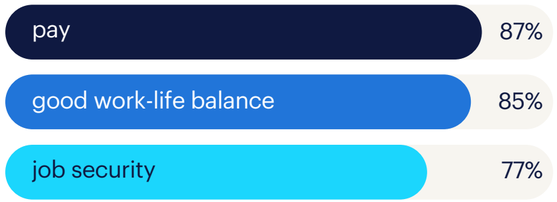
pay attracts, and work-life balance retains

87% of talent say that pay is the top factor when looking for a new job. Yet, work-life balance (46%) remains the main reason that talent stay in their current role, topping pay/benefits (26%) and job security (21%).

autonomy drives loyalty

Despite economic volatility, 39% quit a job incompatible with their personal life, up from 37% last year. Yet, while 92% of employers believe autonomy boosts engagement, productivity and retention, 16% of them still do not let their employees set their own schedules or working hours.

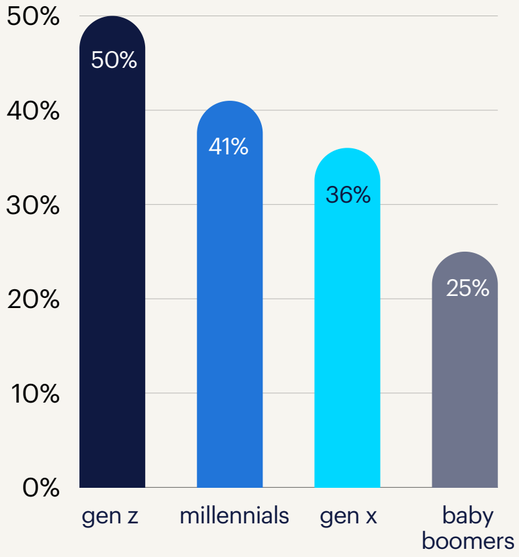
how important are these factors to you when thinking about your current job and/or potential future employment?



what is the main reason you would choose to stay at your current job?



I quit a job that didn't fit in with my personal life





global themes.

9 me and the world:
from job displacement to
task augmentation.

16 me and my team:
managers are key to stability.

23 me:
the rise of self-defined success.



theme 1:

me and the world: from job displacement to task augmentation.

AI, uncertainty and employability.

Talent are recalibrating what they expect from work as they rise to the challenge of an increasingly volatile world. Economic uncertainty, the rising cost of living and the impact of AI are just some of the factors shaping how talent think about their careers and future employability.

As employers look to the future with optimism, they need to reflect talent's shifting focus in their recruitment and retention strategies to maintain a motivated workforce.

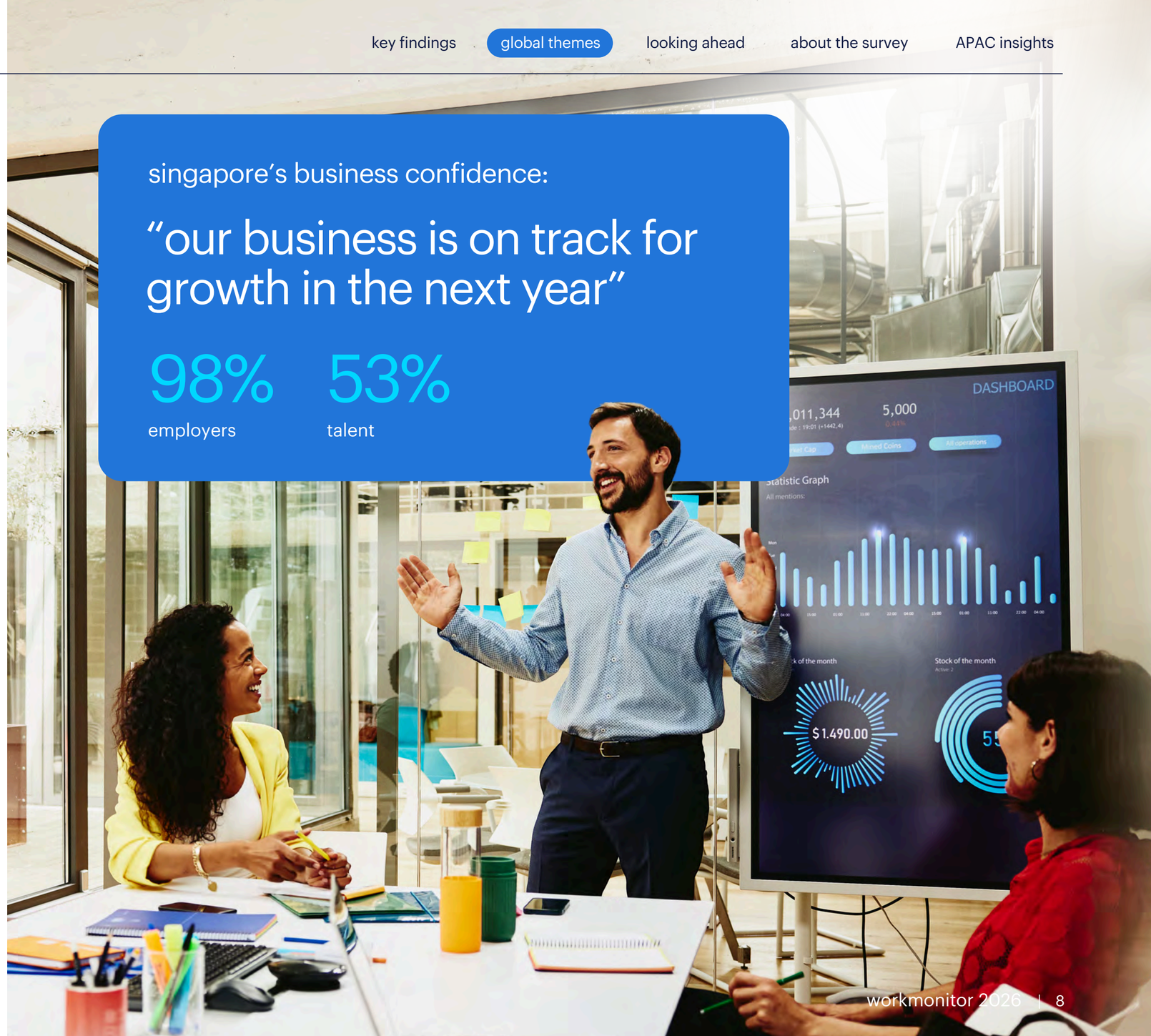
It's imperative to support workers as they augment their skills through AI and mitigate their fears of job displacement.

singapore's business confidence:

"our business is on track for growth in the next year"

98% employers

53% talent



me and the world

adapting under pressure.

With greater economic pressures on both businesses and talent, rigid traditional work formats and roles are becoming more fluid.

To help with the rising cost of living, 37% of talent state they have taken on, or are looking at taking on a second job, outpacing those who have preferred to increase their working hours (31%).

This shift is most notable among younger generations, with 29% of Gen Zers and millennials stating that they would prefer a “side-hustle” alongside their full-time role to provide additional income.

Confidence is high among the workforce, with 44% of talent being open to request for a pay increase when dissatisfied with their jobs – a figure that climbs to 53% among Gen Z.

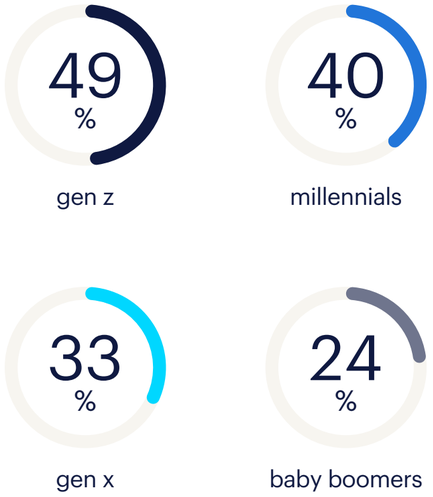
Fewer respondents (20%) say they have threatened to quit to negotiate better pay or working conditions. A feeling of not belonging — traditionally a strong driver for moving on — is also less motivation to consider leaving than in 2025, with a drop of 6%.

Over half (53%) worry about the impact of economic uncertainty on their job security.

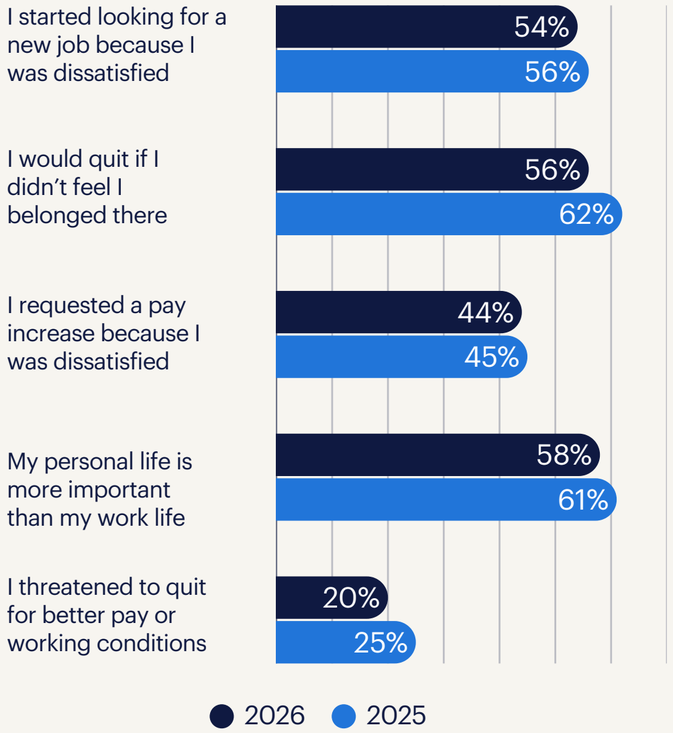
For employers, enabling more diversified ways of working could provide leverage for reassuring and, ultimately, retaining talent.

helping with the rising cost of living

I have taken on a second job to help with the rising cost of living



talent are more cautious to act



me and the world

AI becomes embedded.

Compared to last year, both talent and employers report that AI has evolved from the experimental stage to a core business tool.

Led by the technology and logistics sectors, 6 out of 10 of Singaporean employers state that they have invested in AI in the last 12 months.

Our data indicates that AI and automation are increasingly replacing low-complexity, transactional roles, potentially helping to address severe labour shortages across industries by boosting workforce productivity.

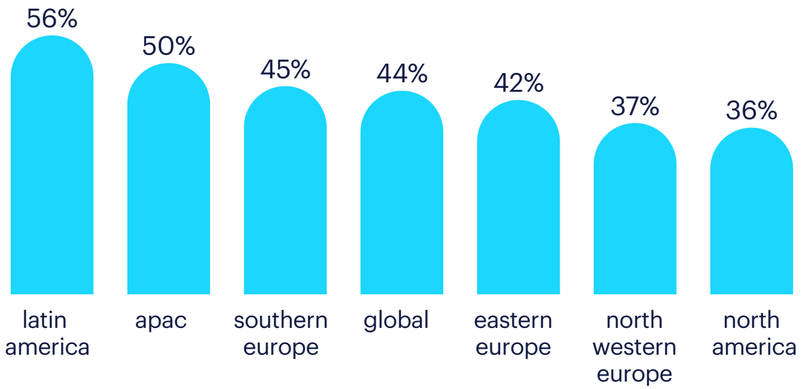
This boost has been noticeable for talent, too. 4 out of 5 of workers acknowledge AI's positive impact on their productivity (81%) — a sentiment echoed by 2 out of 5 of employers who say it has increased their company's productivity over the last year (46%).

AI continues to top the list of desired training — up from 51% to 58% in respondents' top three choices year-on-year, with 1 in 3 talent seeing a higher investment in AI from their employers (39%).

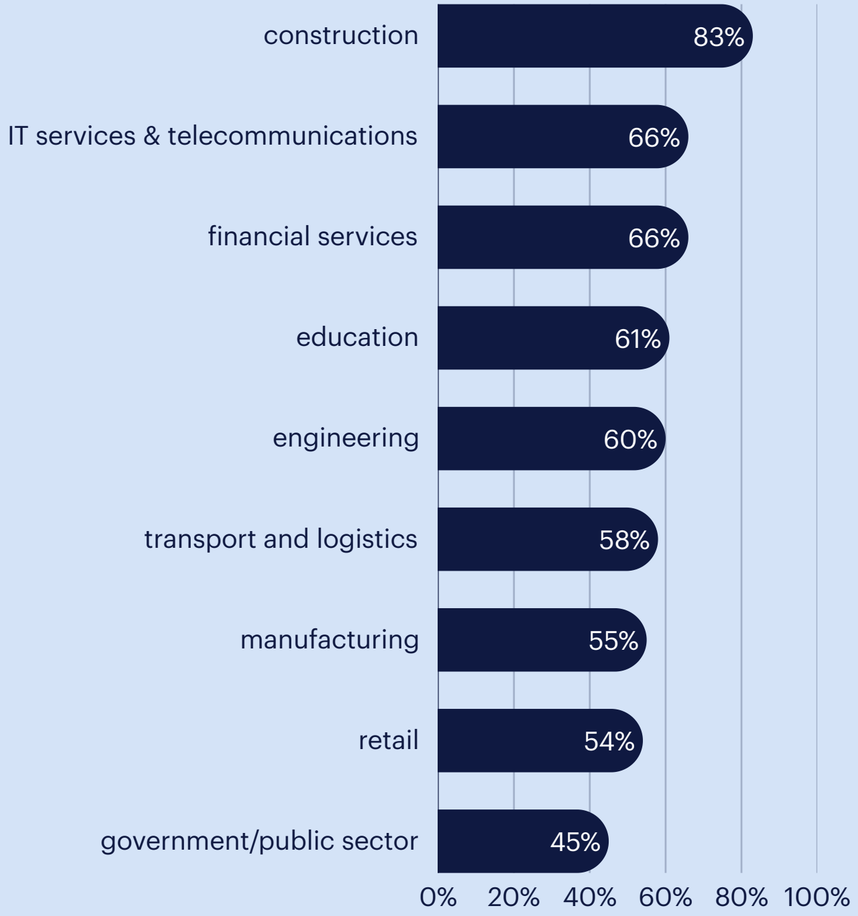
80% of talent also believe that they have the skills to leverage AI positively for their careers, while 74% feel confident they can use the latest technology.

This mindset establishes AI proficiency as a key differentiator, helping employees future-proof their careers and enabling employers to attract the top talent needed to build an AI-augmented workforce.

talent in each region who would like AI development opportunities



singaporean talent by sector who rank AI among their top three desired development opportunities from employers



me and the world

mismatched AI expectations.

Beneath these positive developments around AI, however, lies a layer of uncertainty, reinforcing the essential need for talent and employers to adapt.

Over half of talent surveyed (51%) believe AI will benefit companies more than employees.

43% are also concerned that their jobs will disappear within the next five years, with a slightly higher rate when it comes to entry-level jobs (45%).

Resistance and worry are highest amongst Gen Z talent (57%), contrasting with the higher self-assurance found in Gen X and Baby Boomers.

There is also a mismatch between the perceptions of employers and talent when it comes to the impact of AI on their tasks.

Employers see tasks as being more substantially impacted by AI than talent do.

While 9% of talent expect AI not to affect their work at all, a staggering 56% of employers expect AI to have a high impact on tasks in the next 2 years.

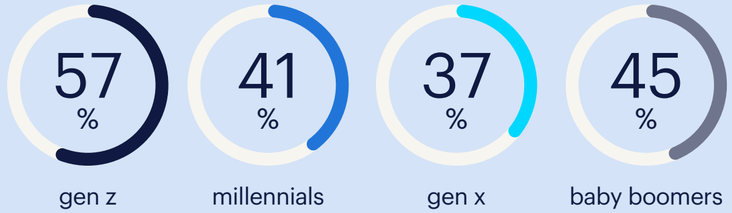
Although widespread awareness of AI as a 'transformative force' exists among the workforce, the lack of clarity regarding long-term structural implications is a concern.

To prevent a potential breach of trust and ensure successful upskilling, employers must bridge this gap through transparent AI roadmap communication.

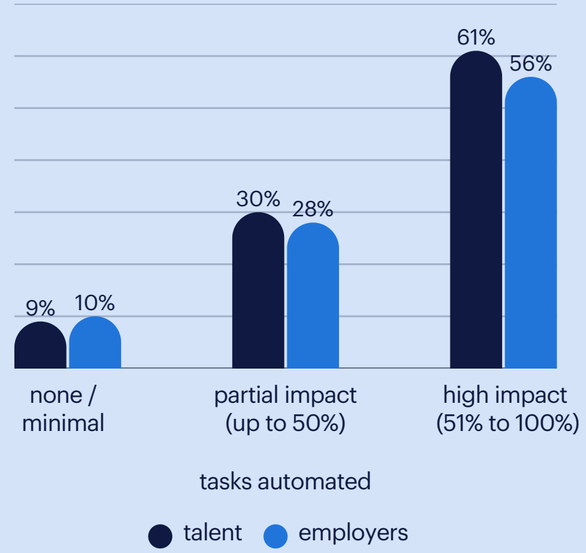
Employers need to help their teams see the benefits of AI both for their current roles and for long-term employability. This includes offering clear routes to augment their skills and using AI to their advantage, leveraging the opportunities it presents as job profiles shift. Organisations must invest in AI development where it matters most and in ways that talent feel, see and experience it in their routine work.

While talent are still deciphering the future of their roles, the market is already pivoting toward high-autonomy systems. Job postings for “AI agent” skills have surged by 1,587% globally, signaling a shift toward self-directed AI that will fundamentally reconfigure task delivery. In response, 1 in 2 of Singaporean talent are already seeking opportunities to future-proof their skills independently, taking control of their market relevance outside of formal employer programs.

generational concern that their jobs will disappear in the next five years



how high will AI’s impact be on work tasks?



me and the world

employer-talent gap analysis.

Employers and talent diverge in their perceptions of business growth and the impact of AI. To rebuild trust and bring talent along, organisations must invest in high-impact AI development and ensure their strategies are transparent.



AI and productivity



employers **46%** AI has increased my workforce's productivity in the last year

talent **81%** AI makes me more productive at work

investment in AI

employers who have invested in AI in the last 12 months

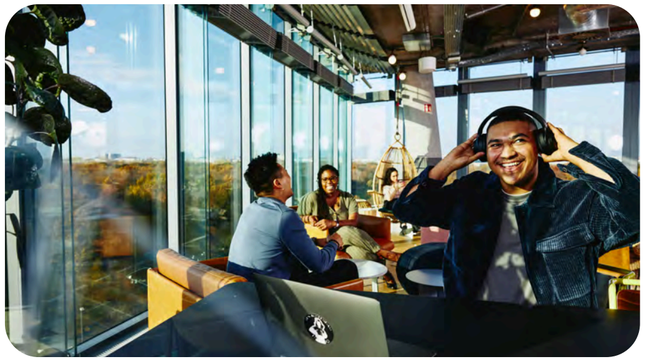
56%

talent who say their company's overall investment in AI has increased

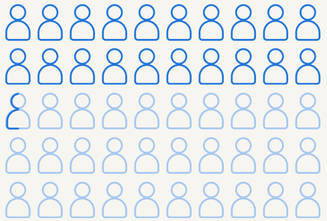
39%

talent who say their business could do more to invest in AI skills development

82%



the future of entry-level jobs



41%

of Gen Z talent believe their job security has increased in the last 12 months



employers

I am planning to hire fewer graduates this year compared to last year because of AI



talent

I worry that entry-level jobs will disappear in the next five years because of AI

me and the world

key learnings.

1.

belief needs to catch up with AI ambition

The data shows that while AI is deeply embedded in working practices for many talent and employers, significant gaps remain between their perceptions of its impact. To establish transparency, employers should communicate their AI vision and strategies across all levels. Creating opportunities to discuss expectations and realities will help build understanding across the entire workforce.

2.

enabling fluid AI adoption

Employers must identify the skill gaps arising from their strategies and train talent to fill these, providing reassurance and addressing shortages through in-house development. Talent, meanwhile, will need to commit to lifelong learning and adaptation to enhance their employability, with a particular opportunity to improve their command of AI to fill emerging job roles.

3.

agility as a retention lever

Both talent and employers are feeling the challenging business landscape. With significant percentages of the workforce taking on second jobs or additional hours to make ends meet, it is more important than ever for employers to show empathy for the pressures talent are under. Taking an agile approach to work formats and workflows will allow employers to create opportunities to support talent and build systems that allow them to meet the needs of a challenging economic environment.



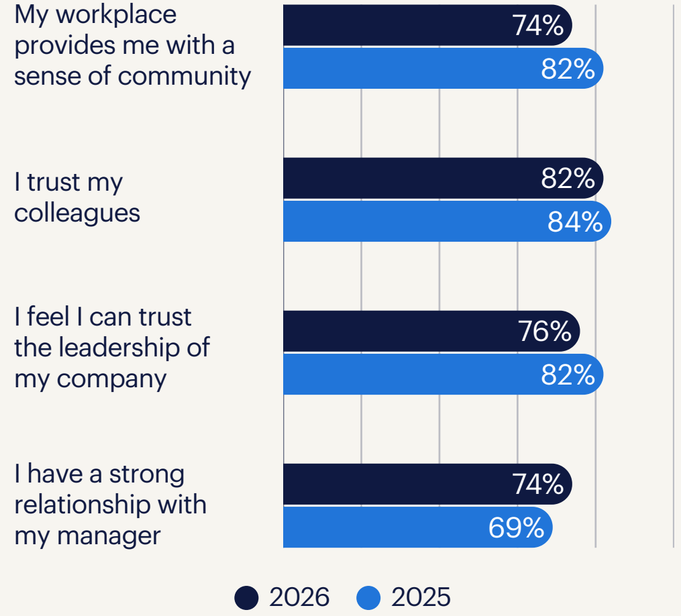
theme 2:

me and my team: managers are key to stability.

trust and collaboration.

Trust in the workplace is under pressure, yet work remains a balancing force in an increasingly volatile macro environment. Collaborative, inclusive teams remain critical to performance, with managers emerging as both stability anchors and trust builders for workforces made up of five generations for the first time in history.

the working relationship outlook





me and my team

rebuilding trust.

In an unpredictable world, workplaces continue to provide a sense of community and stability. Over 7 out of 10 talent (74%) still feel a sense of belonging at work, although this sentiment has softened since 2025 (82%).

A closer look at the data has revealed a gap, where trust in leadership among local talent has declined to 76% from 82% in 2025. In contrast, trust among colleagues remain resilient, holding steady at 82%.

Despite overwhelming optimism from leadership (98%), a significant confidence gap exists for business growth, with only 53% of talent sharing the same sentiment as their employers.

Workplace belonging is supported by a high level of openness, where 74% of talent stated that they feel comfortable sharing their viewpoints openly at work.

Authenticity is also on the rise, with 76% of talent reporting they can be their true selves at work — a sentiment most prevalent among Baby Boomers (87%). The percentage of employees who feel the need to hide aspects of their personality has also decreased, shifting from 73% in 2025 to 66%.

Despite a culture of authenticity, polarisation within broader society also affects how talent express themselves at work. 47% of respondents state that they actively avoid political discussions, while only 26% feel they now talk more about politics than five years ago.

In response, 40% of employers have responded to this development by putting in place formal policies or guidelines on what should be considered appropriate topics for conversation at work. This trend is most pronounced within larger organisation, where 41% of talent report that their employers have established such policies.

This underscores that people's continued need for the workplace to provide a socially accepting environment means refocusing retention strategies on maintaining and rebuilding trust. Our research tells us that there are two key factors for achieving this: strengthening collaboration across jobs and generations, and nurturing the role of managers.

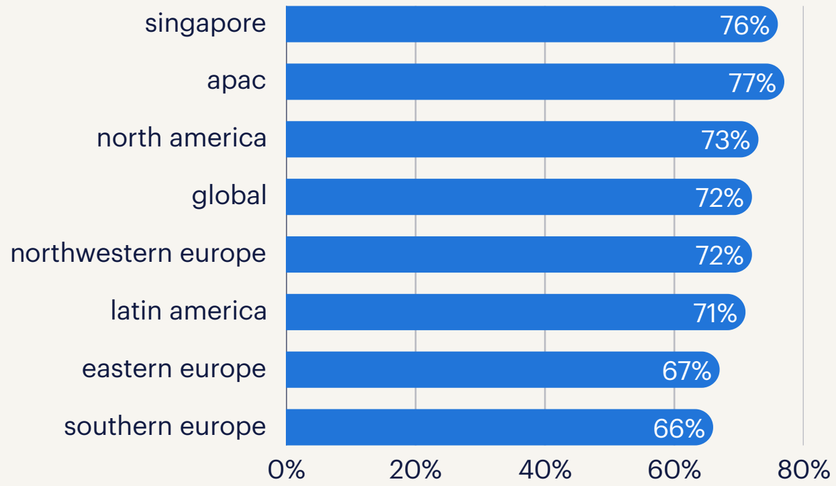
74%

I feel comfortable sharing my personal viewpoints at work without fear of discrimination

47%

I actively avoid discussing politics with colleagues

I feel I can trust the leadership team of my company



me and my team

managers and AI are bridging gaps.

With the workplace as an anchor in high tides, talent's relationship with managers becomes a renewed focus.

74% of talent say that they have a strong relationship with their manager, marking a 5% increase from 2025. Over two-thirds of them (70%) also said they felt more connected to their manager than to the company as a whole.

Against this backdrop, people are turning to their managers for reassurance and clarity.

In the face of market volatility, 69% of employees are looking to their managers as a source of stability. 75% believe that their manager has their best interests in mind, and 72% trust them with their career progression – surpassing the global averages of 71% and 69% respectively.

Yet, over 6 in 10 (63%) state that they use AI to seek work advice instead of asking their manager, with Gen Zers more likely to do so than any other age groups. This recourse to AI might be explained by the fact that job insecurity is preventing a similar share (67%) from raising issues with their manager.

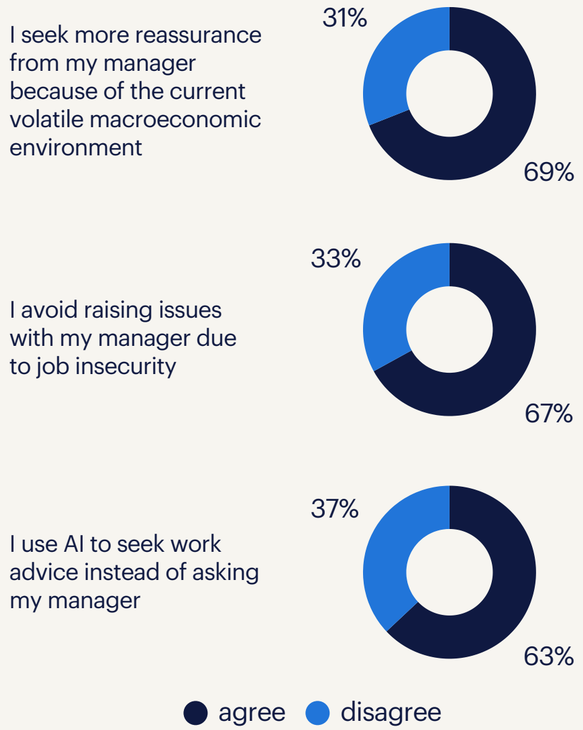
While employers need to be aware that AI is becoming a "go-to" for employees, the greatest opportunity lies in developing managers' roles as trust architects for the workforce.

Employers are already leveraging managers in their retention strategies, with 38% encouraging their managers to check in with talent more regularly to avert attrition. Nurturing managers to play their role as trust architects even more effectively could become vital to future talent strategies.

I have a strong relationship with my manager

transport & logistics	81%
financial services	80%
manufacturing	76%
engineering	72%
healthcare	70%
IT services & telecommunications	70%

reassurance, insecurity and AI advice



me and my team

collaboration as a productivity lever.

Another antidote to volatility in the world of work and beyond is a continued focus on collaboration among individuals, teams and five different generations at work.

Talent believe that they are more productive when collaborating and taking others' views on board (83%).

Multigenerational collaboration stands out in particular, with 79% of talent saying that they rely on colleagues from different generations to broaden their perspectives.

Employers also recognise the value of different generations teaching one another. 98% of employers highlight generational diversity as a productivity lever, and 94% want to see management spend more time improving team collaboration.

Failure to nurture collaboration also creates a retention risk. Nearly one third of talent (29%) have quit a job because of a lack of collaboration. Almost all employers (98%) also recognise a healthy workplace environment as a top retention factor.

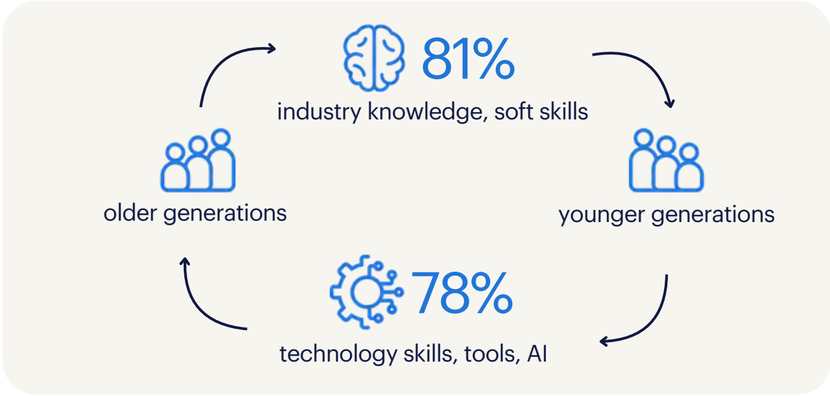
Despite ongoing debates about flexible work, the office still continues to serve as a hub for productivity. 54% of talent feel that working in the office with their team boosts their productivity, a finding that is highest among Baby Boomers (60%).

This value of real-life collaboration is also mirrored with employers, with 88% stating that remote or hybrid work has made collaboration more challenging.

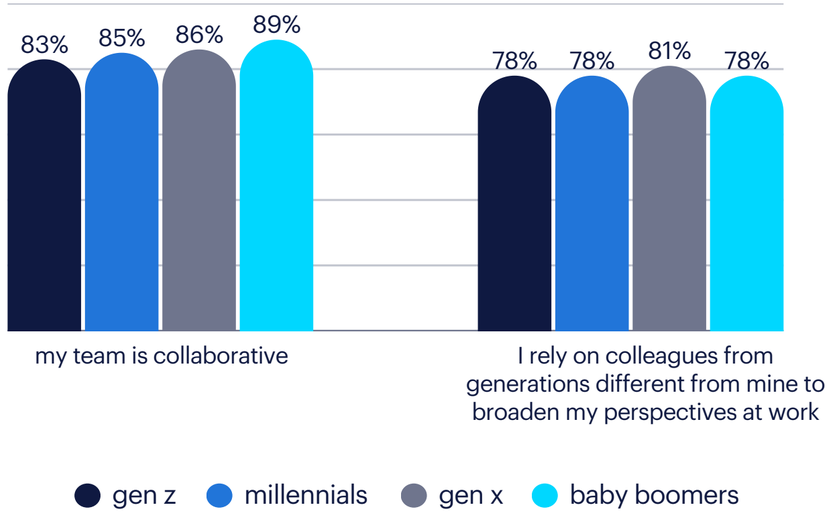
Encouragingly, most employees believe that their organisations have struck the right balance. 86% of talent describe their teams as collaborative, while 85% say the same for their organisation as a whole.

Beyond human connection, collaboration is becoming a technical necessity, with global demand for AI Trainers (+247%) and Prompt Engineers (+97%) surging and mobility in these roles reaching over 50% globally. The most effective AI teams are now operating as fluid networks rather than static silos.

generations teaching each other



the state of collaboration



me and my team

employer-talent gap analysis.

Despite volatile economic conditions and concerns over job security, collaborative, healthy workplaces continue to be a key retention factor.

managers as trust architects

I have encouraged managers to check in with employees more due to retention risks

38% employer

I seek more reassurance from my manager because of the volatile macroeconomic environment

69% talent

I avoid raising issues with my manager due to job insecurity

67% talent



recognising the benefits of working together

remote or hybrid work has made collaboration more challenging

88% employers

working in the office/workplace improves my productivity

54% talent

98% of employers believe that investing in a healthy workplace environment is a top retention factor

29% of talent quit a job because there wasn't a collaborative atmosphere



drawing on a mix of generations

83% talent stated that they are more productive when collaboration and differing perspectives are involved

98% of employers believe having a mix of generations working together boosts productivity

me and my team

key learnings.

1.

managers as stability anchors

Against a backdrop of disruption and economic challenges, trust between employers and talent remains a vital anchor for retention. However, a significant opportunity remains for employers to better understand align their strategies with their workforce's motivations. By capitalising on these anchors of stability, they can further solidify trust and boost loyalty.

2.

collaboration focus

While talent and employers are aligned on the benefits of collaboration, the stakes remain high: nearly one-third of talent (29%) have previously left their role due to a lack of teamwork. To mitigate this retention risk, employers must actively enhance links within and between teams. By fostering a supportive environment for multigenerational collaboration, organisations can turn teamwork into a primary driver for productivity and loyalty.

3.

cross-generational learning

With five generations working side by side, employers must be mindful of the sensitivities of each age group. However, there is also a great opportunity to develop talent by creating pathways that allow learning from one another, especially in industry knowledge, soft skills and technology. Managers should encourage talent to identify the skills they need to remain competitive, while also proactively sharing their expertise to support their colleagues' growth.



theme 3:

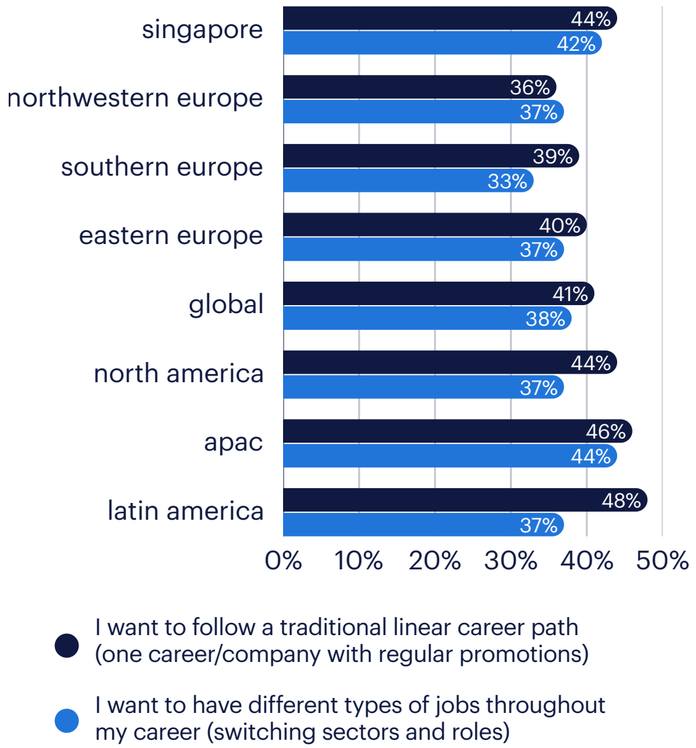
me: the rise of self-defined success.

recalibrating success.

Economic volatility and a tougher job market have made talent more cautious in navigating their careers. Still, they are not abandoning what truly matters to them; instead, they are redefining success in an increasingly unpredictable environment. This means prioritising personal goals, work styles and career paths — whether traditional and linear or more diverse.

For employers, the challenge is balancing business needs with the need for individual agency and autonomy.

global perspectives on career paths





me

charting their own course.

With work acting as a strong, anchoring community in these volatile times, people also continue their quest to be true to themselves and in control of their working lives.

Authenticity drives productivity and engagement for 53% of talent, yet a lack of inclusion remains a major flight risk. With 24% of respondents having resigned because they couldn't be themselves, employers who support authenticity must ensure their culture is inclusive enough to bridge this trust gap.

The search for authenticity in the workplace is also linked to how talent want to mold their careers. As traditional job roles become more fluid, talent are starting to prioritise careers that give them more autonomy, variety, and self-direction.

This sentiment is echoed by leadership, as 84% of employers now view traditional, linear career paths as outdated. At the same time, there is a significant shift toward skill-centric hiring, with 94% of employers prioritising experience and skills over formal qualifications.

However, employees' views of their career remain divided. While nearly 2 in 5 (42%) agree that a non-linear career across various sectors is preferable, a comparable share (44%) still finds security in a traditional path.

Talent are not only redefining career journeys but also questioning the traditional full-time role as the preferred way of working.

While 62% of talent currently hold full-time positions, only 30% identify a traditional, standalone full-time role as their ideal arrangement.

Instead, a new preference has emerged for "hybrid" employment, with 32% of talent seeking a full-time role supplemented by a side hustle or additional hours.

This shift, complemented by an interest in freelance or temporary work, signals a move toward diversified "portfolio" careers that prioritises both security and variety.

the rise of the side hustle

preferred working models
(top three preferences)

talent with a full-time role who say they prefer a:







talent with a part-time role who say they prefer a:







me

stay for work-life balance, leave for pay.

As they redefine their relationship with work, talent are increasingly prioritising autonomy and outcomes over the traditional 9-to-5 schedule.

Although currently constrained by market conditions, flexibility and work-life balance are essential to this new definition of work.

While pay attracts talent (87%) over and above other considerations, work-life balance (46%) is the main reason that talent stay in their current role, topping job security and pay/benefits (21% and 26% respectively).

The share of those who say their job offers a good work-life balance has declined slightly, from 80% in 2025 to 78%. However, Baby Boomers reported the highest satisfaction, with 89% expressing confidence in their current arrangement.

Unsurprisingly, requests for flexible working have risen slightly from 41% in 2025 to 44% this year.

Employees whose jobs provide flexibility in terms of working hours has also declined, from 70% in 2025 to 67% this year. Flexibility in location also saw a sharp decline, falling from 71% to 63%.

This aligns with a growing emphasis on in-person work, with 38% of talent agreeing that their employers have become stricter about office attendance. Gen Z talent in particular are feeling this scrutiny most acutely, with 51% reporting so.

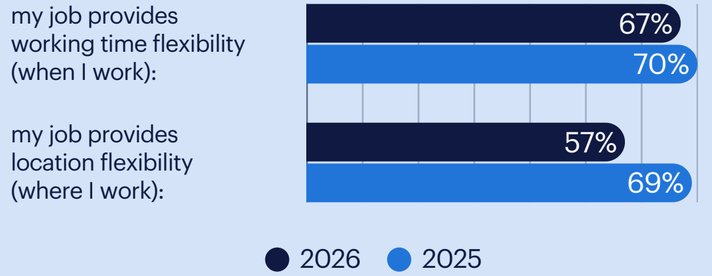
These return-to-office mandates are visibly affecting employees' location autonomy, with only 57% having flexibility in where they work.

However, flexible working is merely the tip of the iceberg. Talent now want a more 'total' form of autonomy, which is one that encompasses the management and execution of their roles.

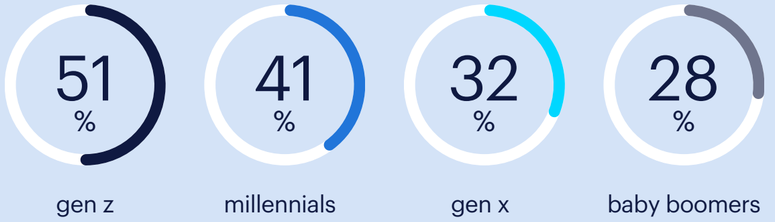
One example of this is having flexibility in the projects they choose, which more than half of talent (58%) report they are able to do. This is likely based on the strong relationships of trust that workers have with their managers and the leadership, leading to high levels of trust in independent productivity.

Yet, for employers, this quest for greater autonomy, while judged a positive, also poses new challenges in terms of facilitating greater independence.

the 'where' is tightening, but the 'when' remains flexible



recently, my employer has become stricter about making sure staff comes into the office



me

autonomy is the new loyalty pass.

Employers must start implementing strategies that align flexibility with organisational objectives, particularly as workplace autonomy evolves into a primary driver of engagement.

While 92% of employers agree that greater autonomy leads to higher engagement, productivity and retention, their attitudes to different types of autonomy vary.

12% of employers mention that their organisation still doesn't allow talent to set their own working location, and 16% doesn't allow talent to set their own working hours.

Majority of employers also agree (88%) that workers expect too much autonomy at work, and are cautious that greater autonomy could lead to challenges in collaboration and communication (90%).

Employers must bridge the gap between traditional control and employee autonomy, particularly because work-life balance and flexibility have become key drivers for talent retention.

Despite volatile economic conditions, 39% of respondents quit a job that didn't fit in with their personal lives.

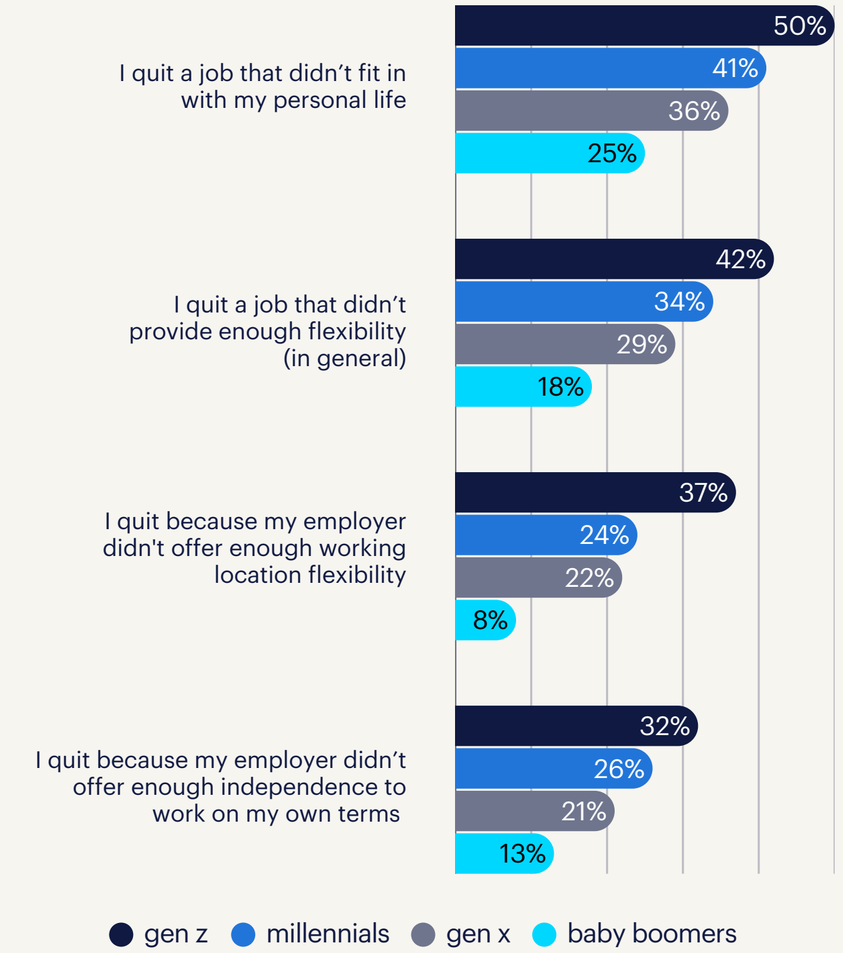
This demand for agency is also reflected in the number of talent (33%) who left their organisations because they did not agree with the viewpoints or stances of their leadership team, as well as in those who said they quit because they lack the independence to work on their own requirements (24%).

While compensation remains as the main driver for talent to switch jobs, nearly half of all professionals would decline a new role if it did not provide flexibility around their location (46%) or working hours (45%).

Organisations now have an opportunity to improve talent retention by acting on the connection between autonomy and agency that talent prioritise.

While employers often still view workplaces through the lens of established processes and roles, talent have a much more fluid perspective on their job. The solution is not to compromise, but to redesign work to keep leaders in charge while giving talent the freedom they need to excel, remain engaged and stay.

autonomy and retention across generations



me

employer-talent gap analysis.

Employers need to be responsive to talent's search for autonomy and self-defined ways of working and career paths. The goal is to develop new approaches that prioritise what matters most to talent but in ways that enable employers to retain control over outcomes.



autonomy has come a long way...

92% employers agree that greater autonomy leads to higher engagement, productivity and retention in their organisation

67% talent agree that their job provides flexibility in terms of working hours (I can control when I work)

57% talent agree that their job provides flexibility in terms of location (I can decide where I work from)



... but still remains a challenge for employers

autonomy can lead to challenges in collaboration and communication

- employers 90%

workers today expect too much autonomy

- employers 88%

solutions are needed to avoid talent turnover

23% talent

I quit a job because my employer didn't offer enough independence to work on my own terms

(e.g., set own agenda or decide own assignments/deadlines)



employers have to cater for different career journeys

94% value skills and experience over formal qualifications when hiring talent

84% agree that the traditional linear career path (one career/company with regular promotions to management roles) is outdated

44% of talent want to follow a traditional linear career path

42% of talent want to have different types of jobs throughout their careers

me

key learnings.

1.

crafting portfolio career paths

The ideal career path is no longer a one-size-fits-all model. While some still see the traditional linear career ladder and a full-time job as a reassuring guide, others are shifting towards more fluid, diverse careers. Employers who offer a broader range of pathways will better differentiate themselves in the market while fostering deeper mutual trust with their talent.

2.

pay attracts, work-life balance retains

Talent are more discerning with their demands, but work-life balance remains the biggest motivator for them to stay in a role. While compensation remains the main driver for talent to switch jobs, many will not move at the expense of losing flexibility. In an environment where it is not always feasible to match competitors' salary packages, employers can leverage on flexibility as a key differentiator.

3.

autonomy requires trust

What started as a demand for flexible working hours or location — such as working from home — is increasingly evolving into a much wider need for autonomy. This goes beyond the "where" and "when", to include aspects such as approaching work and delivering the desired outcomes on your own terms rather than working within rigid traditional frameworks. Granting this autonomy is a clear way for an employer to demonstrate they trust their people, and in turn, inspire loyalty. Trust will be vital on both sides to overcome employers' reservations, and this can be built by working on solutions together.



looking ahead.

the great workforce adaptation: closing the gap.

Our findings reveal that the business agenda for growth in 2026 is marked by a critical disconnect. While business leaders in Singapore are nearly unanimous in their growth expectations (98%), the talent powering that growth remains unconvinced, with only half (53%) sharing this optimism. This “confidence gap” is a structural risk.

It signals the need for a fundamental shift we call the Great Workforce Adaptation. As we navigate this new era, the priority must shift from simply managing talent to actively realigning with them.

The following insights offer a blueprint for closing this divide, transforming uncertainty into a shared engine for growth.

insight 1: overcome the AI reality gap through augmentation

A reality gap persists regarding technology: while employers increase their efficiency plans, employees may struggle to envision their place in a tech-centric future. This leaves talent vulnerable; success lies in pairing human strengths with machine efficiency, not job displacement.

opportunity for employers:
Shift the narrative from threat to task augmentation. Be transparent about AI’s impact, and empower employees to use AI to their advantage.

opportunity for talent:
Close the AI reality gap by proactively upskilling and focus on high-value areas of work that AI cannot reach.

insight 2: bridge the confidence gap to unlock growth

Trust is the key to stability in a volatile global economy. With trust in senior leadership dipping, the relationship with direct managers has become the organisation’s most critical asset. Growth can only be unlocked when businesses and talent align on their optimism for the future.

opportunity for employers:
Empower managers as trust architects to provide the reassurance talent needs to remain engaged amid uncertainty.

opportunity for talent:
Leverage the multigenerational advantage through a two-way mentorship model, where Gen Z provides tech fluency and older generations provide industry expertise and experience.

insight 3: support the rise of portfolio careers

The era of the traditional linear career trajectory has given way to more fluid, multidirectional growth models, with employees now prioritising portfolio careers that give them more variety and autonomy. While pay remains the primary attractor for talent, flexibility has emerged as the definitive retention driver.

opportunity for employers:
Prioritise balance and support a non-linear career path to secure loyalty from a workforce seeking security through flexibility.

opportunity for talent:
Build security through variety. Future-proof your employability by diversifying your experience rather than chasing a single, linear career path.

about the survey.

The Randstad Workmonitor, now in its 23rd year, explores the views of talent in 35 markets across Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Americas, providing an inside look at their attitudes, ambitions and expectations as the world of work continues to transform.

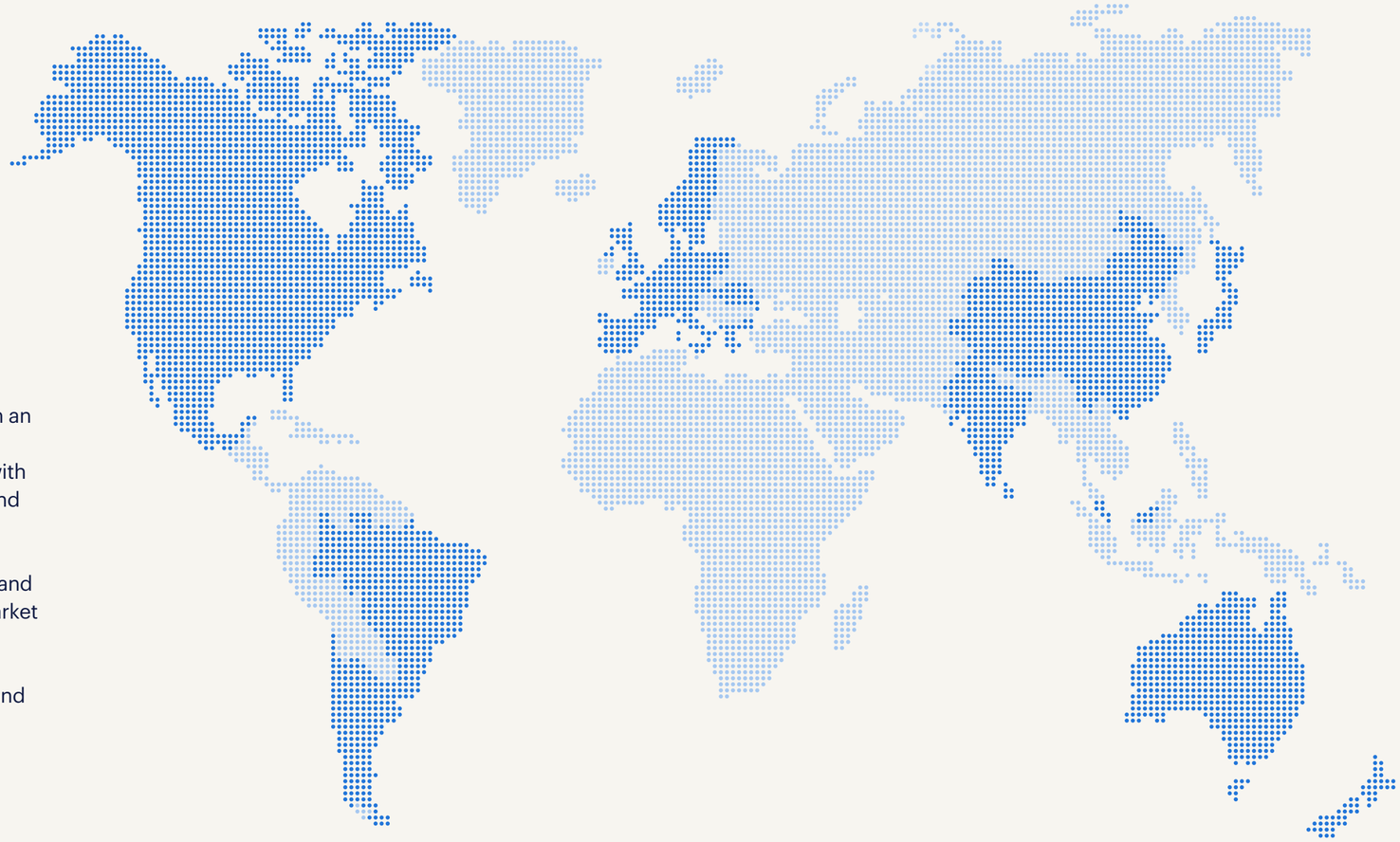
Through this comprehensive study, we seek to hear and amplify the voice of talent — specifically, what they want and expect from their employers and how willing they are to ask for it. To do this, we conceptualise and measure the gap between workforce realities and aspirations, tracking how this evolves over time. In parallel, the study captures the perspectives of employers, enabling a direct comparison between employer intent and talent expectations to identify where alignment exists and where gaps remain.

To capture the views of talent, the study was conducted online among workers aged 18-67 who are either employed for at least 24 hours per week, sole traders, or unemployed but considering looking for a job in the future, with a minimum and maximum sample size of 250 and 1,750 interviews per market.

Employer perspectives were captured through an online survey among C-suite and senior talent leaders at global and regional organisations, with a minimum and maximum sample size of 20 and 55 interviews per market.

Evalueserve was used for sampling purposes, and secondary data was compiled by Randstad Market Intelligence from over 3 million job postings.

The 2025 survey was conducted between 10 and 28 October 2025 among 27,062 workers, and between 9 and 30 October 2025 among 1,225 employers, across 35 markets including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong SAR, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States and Uruguay.



750
local talent surveyed

50
local employers surveyed

18
industries & sectors



market snapshot:

australia.

Talent in Australia are slightly more optimistic than their global peers when considering their organization's business outlook in 2026. While they hold slightly lower confidence in their abilities to use AI than global peers, they also enjoy strong workplace relationships, but are less inclined than the global average toward linear career paths.

me and the world: from job displacement to task augmentation.

A more fraught external environment and the impact of AI mean both talent and employers need to adapt traditional work formats and roles.

- 100% of employers are confident of growing next year, compared to 95% across the globe.
- 53% of talent surveyed share their optimism, slightly more than the global average (51%).
- To help with the rising cost of living, 36% of talent state they have taken on or are looking to take on a second job, compared to the global average of 40%.
- When considering AI:
  - 58% of talent feel that AI helps improve their productivity (global: 62%), as do 60% of employers (global: 54%).
  - 63% of talent feel confident that they can use the latest technology (global: 69%).
  - 68% of employers estimate AI will impact a high proportion of tasks (50-100%), with 45% of talent agreeing (global: 58% vs. 52%).
  - 47% of talent believe the adoption of AI in the workplace will mainly benefit companies, not them (global: 47%).

me and my team: managers are key to stability.

The workplace is under pressure, yet remains a balancing force in an increasingly unpredictable economic environment.

- 76% of talent trust the leadership of their company (global: 72%).
- 82% say that they trust their colleagues (global: 76%).
- 78% of talent say they have a strong relationship with their manager, compared to 72% of their global peers.
- 75% believe their manager has their best interests in mind (global: 71%).
- Collaboration across generations boosts productivity:
  - 82% of talent believe that they are more productive when collaborating and taking others' views on board (global: 78%).
  - 86% of employers say that remote or hybrid work has made collaboration more challenging (global: 81%).
  - 75% of talent say they rely on people from different generations to broaden their perspectives (global: 74%).
  - Almost all employers (98%) surveyed highlight generational diversity as a productivity lever (global: 95%), and 90% want to see management spend more time improving team collaboration (global: 90%).

me: the rise of self-defined success.

Talent have become more cautious navigating their careers, but still want to chart their own course and not abandon what matters to them.

- 33% of talent say they want to follow a traditional, linear career path (global: 41%), but 34% say they want to have a portfolio career, switching sectors and jobs throughout their career (global: 38%).
- While pay attracts talent (82% vs. 81% globally), work-life balance (50% vs. 46% globally) is the main reason for staying in the current role, topping job security (24%; global: 23%) and pay/benefits (20%; global: 23%).
- 66% of employers agree that greater autonomy leads to higher engagement, productivity and retention in their organization (vs. 72% globally).
- 36% of talent still say they quit jobs that didn't fit their personal lives (global: 39%).
- 22% left because they weren't given enough independence to work on their own terms (global: 25%):
  - 43% of talent would not consider accepting a new job if there was no flexibility around work location and 45% would not accept a role without working hours flexibility, compared to 43% each globally.



market snapshot:

china.

Talent in China are much more optimistic than their global peers regarding the world of work in 2026, showing positive views on AI and greater trust in colleagues at all levels of their organization. Consequently, they are more inclined to leave roles that don't fit their personal lives or offer independence.

me and the world: from job displacement to task augmentation.

A more fraught external environment and the impact of AI mean both talent and employers need to adapt traditional work formats and roles.

- 100% of employers are confident of growing next year, compared to 95% across the globe.
- 65% of talent surveyed share their optimism, more than the global average (51%).
- To help with the rising cost of living, 48% of talent state they have taken on or are looking to take on a second job, compared to the global average of 40%.
- When considering AI:
  - 84% of talent feel that AI helps improve their productivity (global: 62%), as do 50% of employers (global: 54%).
  - 81% of talent feel confident that they can use the latest technology (global: 69%).
  - 66% of employers estimate AI will impact a high proportion of tasks (50-100%), with 65% of talent agreeing (global: 58% vs. 52%).
  - 46% of talent believe the adoption of AI in the workplace will mainly benefit companies, not them (global: 47%).

me and my team: managers are key to stability.

The workplace is under pressure, yet remains a balancing force in an increasingly unpredictable economic environment.

- 83% of talent trust the leadership of their company (global: 72%).
- 83% say that they trust their colleagues (global: 76%).
- 74% of talent say they have a strong relationship with their manager, compared to 72% of their global peers.
- 69% believe their manager has their best interests in mind (global: 71%).
- Collaboration across generations boosts productivity:
  - 81% of talent believe that they are more productive when collaborating and taking others' views on board (global: 78%).
  - 100% of employers say that remote or hybrid work has made collaboration more challenging (global: 81%).
  - 78% of talent say they rely on people from different generations to broaden their perspectives (global: 74%).
  - Almost all employers (98%) surveyed highlight generational diversity as a productivity lever (global: 95%), and 96% want to see management spend more time improving team collaboration (global: 90%).

me: the rise of self-defined success.

Talent have become more cautious navigating their careers, but still want to chart their own course and not abandon what matters to them.

- 61% of talent say they want to follow a traditional, linear career path (global: 41%), but 61% say they want to have a portfolio career, switching sectors and jobs throughout their career (global: 38%).
- While pay attracts talent (80% vs. 81% globally), work-life balance (44% vs. 46% globally) is the main reason for staying in the current role, topping pay/benefits (27%; global: 23%) and job security (17%; global: 23%).
- 40% of employers agree that greater autonomy leads to higher engagement, productivity and retention in their organization (vs. 72% globally).
- 45% of talent still say they quit jobs that didn't fit their personal lives (global: 39%).
- 34% left because they weren't given enough independence to work on their own terms (global: 25%):
  - 53% of talent would not consider accepting a new job if there was no flexibility around work location and 52% would not accept a role without working hours flexibility, compared to 43% each globally.



market snapshot:

hong kong SAR.

Talent in Hong Kong SAR are more optimistic than their global peers when considering AI's impact on productivity and their confidence in using new technologies. They hold greater trust in colleagues and the leadership of their organizations, but are slightly more inclined to leave roles that don't fit their personal lives or offer independence.

me and the world: from job displacement to task augmentation.

A more fraught external environment and the impact of AI mean both talent and employers need to adapt traditional work formats and roles.

- 100% of employers are confident of growing next year, compared to 95% across the globe.
- 52% of talent surveyed share their optimism, slightly more than the global average (51%).
- To help with the rising cost of living, 41% of talent state they have taken on or are looking to take on a second job, compared to the global average of 40%.
- When considering AI:
  - 77% of talent feel that AI helps improve their productivity (global: 62%), as do 50% of employers (global: 54%).
  - 72% of talent feel confident that they can use the latest technology (global: 69%).
  - 60% of employers estimate AI will impact a high proportion of tasks (50-100%), with 47% of talent agreeing (global: 58% vs. 52%).
  - 43% of talent believe the adoption of AI in the workplace will mainly benefit companies, not them (global: 47%).

me and my team: managers are key to stability.

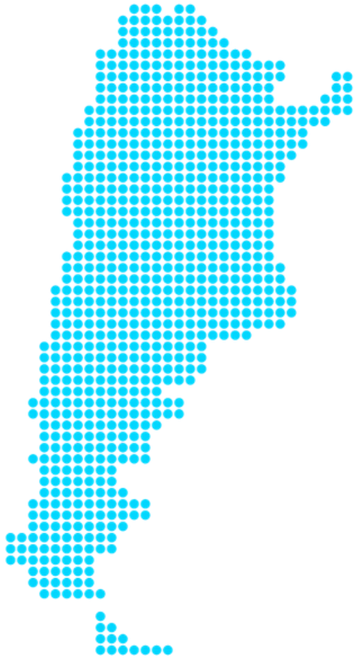
The workplace is under pressure, yet remains a balancing force in an increasingly unpredictable economic environment.

- 74% of talent trust the leadership of their company (global: 72%).
- 80% say that they trust their colleagues (global: 76%).
- 69% of talent say they have a strong relationship with their manager, compared to 72% of their global peers.
- 64% believe their manager has their best interests in mind (global: 71%).
- Collaboration across generations boosts productivity:
  - 77% of talent believe that they are more productive when collaborating and taking others' views on board (global: 78%).
  - 90% of employers say that remote or hybrid work has made collaboration more challenging (global: 81%).
  - 71% of talent say they rely on people from different generations to broaden their perspectives (global: 74%).
  - All employers (100%) surveyed highlight generational diversity as a productivity lever (global: 95%), and 95% want to see management spend more time improving team collaboration (global: 90%).

me: the rise of self-defined success.

Talent have become more cautious navigating their careers, but still want to chart their own course and not abandon what matters to them.

- 54% of talent say they want to follow a traditional, linear career path (global: 41%), but 51% say they want to have a portfolio career, switching sectors and jobs throughout their career (global: 38%).
- While pay attracts talent (87% vs. 81% globally), work-life balance (45% vs. 46% globally) is the main reason for staying in the current role, topping job security (27%; global: 23%) and pay/benefits (22%; global: 23%).
- 60% of employers agree that greater autonomy leads to higher engagement, productivity and retention in their organization (vs. 72% globally).
- 42% of talent still say they quit jobs that didn't fit their personal lives (global: 39%).
- 32% left because they weren't given enough independence to work on their own terms (global: 25%):
  - 54% of talent would not consider accepting a new job if there was no flexibility around work location and 51% would not accept a role without working hours flexibility, compared to 43% each globally.



market snapshot:

india.

Talent in India are much more optimistic than their global peers when considering their organization's business outlook in 2026, as well as when looking at AI's impact on productivity. They hold high levels of trust in leadership, colleagues and their managers, and are far more inclined to stay in roles that offer a good work-life balance compared to global averages.

me and the world: from job displacement to task augmentation.

A more fraught external environment and the impact of AI mean both talent and employers need to adapt traditional work formats and roles.

- 100% of employers are confident of growing next year, compared to 95% across the globe.
- 79% of talent surveyed share their optimism, significantly more than the global average (51%).
- To help with the rising cost of living, 58% of talent state they have taken on or are looking to take on a second job, compared to the global average of 40%.
- When considering AI:
  - 89% of talent feel that AI helps improve their productivity (global: 62%), as do 60% of employers (global: 54%).
  - 86% of talent feel confident that they can use the latest technology (global: 69%).
  - 55% of employers estimate AI will impact a high proportion of tasks (50-100%), with 84% of talent agreeing (global: 58% vs. 52%).
  - 59% of talent believe the adoption of AI in the workplace will mainly benefit companies, not them (global: 47%).

me and my team: managers are key to stability.

The workplace is under pressure, yet remains a balancing force in an increasingly unpredictable economic environment.

- 89% of talent trust the leadership of their company (global: 72%).
- 88% say that they trust their colleagues (global: 76%).
- 87% of talent say they have a strong relationship with their manager, compared to 72% of their global peers.
- 87% believe their manager has their best interests in mind (global: 71%).
- Collaboration across generations boosts productivity:
  - 87% of talent believe that they are more productive when collaborating and taking others' views on board (global: 78%).
  - 85% of employers say that remote or hybrid work has made collaboration more challenging (global: 81%).
  - 85% of talent say they rely on people from different generations to broaden their perspectives (global: 74%).
  - Almost all employers (98%) surveyed highlight generational diversity as a productivity lever (global: 95%), and 90% want to see management spend more time improving team collaboration (global: 90%).

me: the rise of self-defined success.

Talent have become more cautious navigating their careers, but still want to chart their own course and not abandon what matters to them.

- 67% of talent say they want to follow a traditional, linear career path (global: 41%), but 55% say they want to have a portfolio career, switching sectors and jobs throughout their career (global: 38%).
- While pay attracts talent (81% vs. 81% globally), work-life balance (57% vs. 46% globally) is the main reason for staying in the current role, topping pay/benefits (15%; global: 23%) and job security (14%; global: 23%).
- 63% of employers agree that greater autonomy leads to higher engagement, productivity and retention in their organization (vs. 72% globally).
- 52% of talent still say they quit jobs that didn't fit their personal lives (global: 39%).
- 43% left because they weren't given enough independence to work on their own terms (global: 25%):
  - 58% of talent would not consider accepting a new job if there was no flexibility around work location and 58% would not accept a role without working hours flexibility, compared to 43% each globally.



market snapshot:

japan.

Talent in Japan are much less optimistic than their global peers regarding their organization's business outlook in 2026 and their preparedness to use the latest technology. They hold lower trust in leadership, managers and colleagues, and are more focused on work-life balance than global averages when considering staying in their current role.

me and the world: from job displacement to task augmentation.

A more fraught external environment and the impact of AI mean both talent and employers need to adapt traditional work formats and roles.

- 100% of employers are confident of growing next year, compared to 95% across the globe.
- 21% of talent surveyed share their optimism, significantly less than the global average (51%).
- To help with the rising cost of living, 20% of talent state they have taken on or are looking to take on a second job, compared to the global average of 40%.
- When considering AI:
  - 46% of talent feel that AI helps improve their productivity (global: 62%), as do 63% of employers (global: 54%).
  - 41% of talent feel confident that they can use the latest technology (global: 69%).
  - 58% of employers estimate AI will impact a high proportion of tasks (50-100%), with 36% of talent agreeing (global: 58% vs. 52%).
  - 22% of talent believe the adoption of AI in the workplace will mainly benefit companies, not them (global: 47%).

me and my team: managers are key to stability.

The workplace is under pressure, yet remains a balancing force in an increasingly unpredictable economic environment.

- 54% of talent trust the leadership of their company (global: 72%).
- 66% say that they trust their colleagues (global: 76%).
- 42% of talent say they have a strong relationship with their manager, compared to 72% of their global peers.
- 45% believe their manager has their best interests in mind (global: 71%).
- Collaboration across generations boosts productivity:
  - 62% of talent believe that they are more productive when collaborating and taking others' views on board (global: 78%).
  - 88% of employers say that remote or hybrid work has made collaboration more challenging (global: 81%).
  - 52% of talent say they rely on people from different generations to broaden their perspectives (global: 74%).
  - 98% of employers surveyed highlight generational diversity as a productivity lever (global: 95%), and 93% want to see management spend more time improving team collaboration (global: 90%).

me: the rise of self-defined success.

Talent have become more cautious navigating their careers, but still want to chart their own course and not abandon what matters to them.

- 18% of talent say they want to follow a traditional, linear career path (global: 41%), but 22% say they want to have a portfolio career, switching sectors and jobs throughout their career (global: 38%).
- While pay attracts talent (72% vs. 81% globally), work-life balance (51% vs. 46% globally) is the main reason for staying in the current role, topping job security (36%; global: 23%) and pay/benefits (7%; global: 23%).
- 73% of employers agree that greater autonomy leads to higher engagement, productivity and retention in their organization (vs. 72% globally).
- 22% of talent still say they quit jobs that didn't fit their personal lives (global: 39%).
- 12% left because they weren't given enough independence to work on their own terms (global: 25%):
  - 25% of talent would not consider accepting a new job if there was no flexibility around work location and 23% would not accept a role without working hours flexibility, compared to 43% each globally.



market snapshot:

malaysia.

Talent in Malaysia are much more optimistic than their global peers when considering their organization's business outlook in 2026, as well as when looking at AI's impact on productivity. They hold high levels of trust in leadership, managers and colleagues, and are more focused on work-life balance when considering what keeps them in their current role compared to global averages.

me and the world: from job displacement to task augmentation.

A more fraught external environment and the impact of AI mean both talent and employers need to adapt traditional work formats and roles.

- 95% of employers are confident of growing next year, compared to 95% across the globe.
- 68% of talent surveyed share their optimism, more than the global average (51%).
- To help with the rising cost of living, 52% of talent state they have taken on or are looking to take on a second job, compared to the global average of 40%.
- When considering AI:
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  - 84% of talent feel confident that they can use the latest technology (global: 69%).
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  - 75% of talent say they rely on people from different generations to broaden their perspectives (global: 74%).
  - 95% of employers surveyed highlight generational diversity as a productivity lever (global: 95%), and 100% want to see management spend more time improving team collaboration (global: 90%).

me: the rise of self-defined success.

Talent have become more cautious navigating their careers, but still want to chart their own course and not abandon what matters to them.

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- 75% of employers agree that greater autonomy leads to higher engagement, productivity and retention in their organization (vs. 72% globally).
- 47% of talent still say they quit jobs that didn't fit their personal lives (global: 39%).
- 25% left because they weren't given enough independence to work on their own terms (global: 25%):
  - 47% of talent would not consider accepting a new job if there was no flexibility around work location and 45% would not accept a role without working hours flexibility, compared to 43% each globally.



randstad

data is just the start, let's discuss your next talent move.

connect with us:

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