

# Today at Work



## JOB INSECURITY

Workers worldwide are anxious about their jobs, with real consequences for employees and employers alike.

### From timecards to TikTok

As five generations crowd into the workplace, age is driving big differences in worker sentiment.

### The high cost of free labor

Most employees work off the clock, and some do it a lot. This unpaid effort has downsides for both workers and employers.

### Also in this issue

AI use is on the rise, but workers aren't feeling more productive. We track worker engagement across the globe.



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**Inside**

About People at Work .....	4
Job insecurity .....	6
From timecards to TikTok .....	14
The high cost of free labor .....	26
AI use is on the rise .....	32
Worker engagement across the globe .....	36

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**LETTER FROM NELA**

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**T**his issue of Today at Work is dedicated to our annual People at Work report on global workforce sentiment, an examination of how people are navigating the complexities of a changing world. Advances in artificial intelligence, changing demographics, and economic uncertainty have set the labor market on an uncharted path and given rise to new challenges and new opportunities.

Workers are at the center of this change.

For the past three years, the world has enjoyed historically low unemployment and steady economic growth. Yet our data reveals a high level of worker unease. Only 22 percent of our survey respondents felt their jobs were safe in 2025. While the level of anxiety varied widely by market, gender, and work type, job insecurity inevitably affects not just work, but life outside of work. Even in times of economic stability, employers might want to consider ways to nurture a more confident workforce.

As we explored the issue of job insecurity, we landed on another trend that is quietly redefining the workforce. As the world's population ages, grandparents, grandchildren, and people of every generation in between now work side by side. Each age group brings a distinct perspective.

Young workers are more optimistic and engaged than their older colleagues, who are more cautious about their skills and career prospects. Within these divergent views lies an unprecedented opportunity for cross-generation mentorship. Older employees can share institutional knowledge and expertise; younger workers can transfer technological and digital know-how.

This exchange of soft and hard skills, expertise and enthusiasm, and longevity and fresh thinking might be just what the new world of work needs.

Which brings us to technology. AI's potential to improve productivity is the new workforce paradigm. But employers need to invest in skills, both technology- and people-based, to unlock AI's potential. Our findings show that investment in human capital is required to build and nurture trust, cultivate loyalty, and ignite and sustain productivity. By keeping employees at the center of change, employers can deliver on the promise of an AI-powered and fully engaged workforce.

And here's one last insight for employers. Our Global Workforce Survey, on which People at Work is based, has been tracking unpaid work around the world since 2020. Unpaid hours soared in 2021 amid widespread labor shortages and the rise of remote work. The labor

market has since stabilized, and people are putting in less unpaid work than they once did, but our data holds a lesson that remains pertinent: Free work comes at a cost. People who put in unpaid hours are more likely to feel unproductive and stressed. They're also more likely to quit.

People at Work captures the thoughts and feelings of the global workforce. As the world changes, understanding worker sentiment, in all its dimensions, will be essential for employers looking to maximize the productivity of people, and the benefits of technology. □

**DR. NELA RICHARDSON**  
Chief economist and ESG Officer,  
Head of ADP Research



# ABOUT PEOPLE AT WORK

Each year, our annual Global Workforce Survey asks people around the world how they think and feel about their jobs. In 2025, between July 21 and August 4, we collected responses from more than 39,000 adult workers in 36 markets, stratifying market-level samples by age and gender.

This large and rich data set provides a measure of worker sentiment that can tell us how people are responding to today's workplace challenges.

For a decade, we've used this survey and others to study [employee engagement](#), which we define as the feelings individuals have toward themselves, their jobs, and their coworkers. In 2022, we began gathering monthly survey data on [workplace stress](#) in the United States.

Our data has shown that highly engaged workers do their best work and do it in a way that they find fulfilling. It also has revealed strong ties between employee engagement, stress, resilience, productivity, retention, motivation, and commitment. Each year, we dig deeper into these connections to help employers and employees gain a better understanding of work. □



## DEFINING WORKER TYPE

Our survey gave workers three options for defining their roles.

**Knowledge worker**  
I have a level of freedom to use my expertise to create something new.

**Skilled task worker**  
I use a level of expertise to solve similar problems each day.

**Repetitive task worker**  
I do similar repetitive tasks each day.

## DEFINING STRESS

### Positive stress (eustress)

- When I have a great day at work, I feel refreshed and ready to begin again.
- I often lose track of time when working.
- I love my work so much that I cannot stop thinking about it.

### Negative stress (distress)

- When I leave work, I feel as if I have nothing else to give.
- My work is like a hamster wheel that never stops spinning.
- The stress I feel at work leaves me feeling drained.

## STRESS CLASSIFICATIONS

**Thriving workers** love their work and are refreshed and ready to begin again.

**Rattled workers** have some good days and some bad. They haven't mastered how to maximize eustress.

**Overloaded workers** are drained by stress. They feel as if they have nothing left to give.

## WHERE OUR SURVEY RESPONDENTS RESIDE

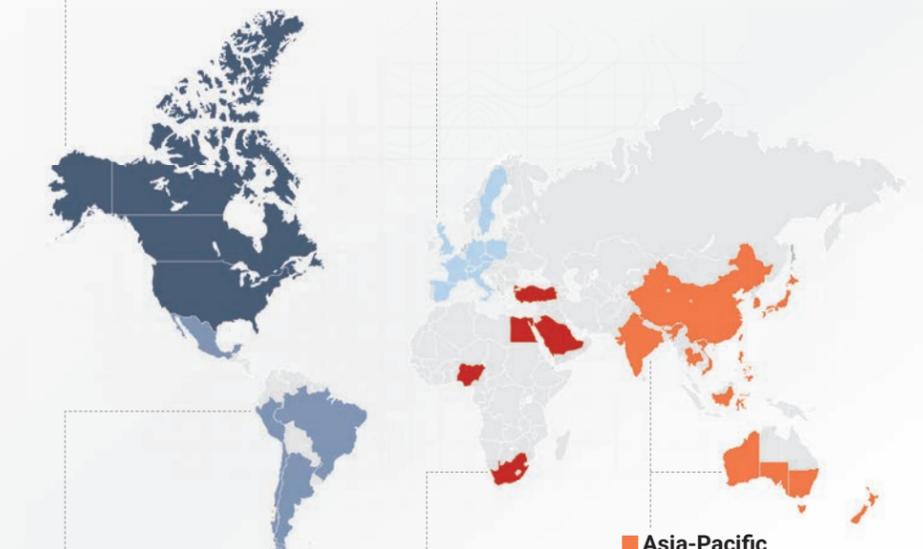
Survey responses from more than 39,000 adults worldwide allow us to analyze and showcase worker sentiment at the global, regional, and market level.

### North America

- Respondents: 2,116
- Canada
  - United States

### Europe

- Respondents: 11,943
- Austria
  - Czech Republic
  - France
  - Germany
  - Italy
  - Netherlands
  - Poland
  - Spain
  - Sweden
  - Switzerland
  - United Kingdom



### Latin America

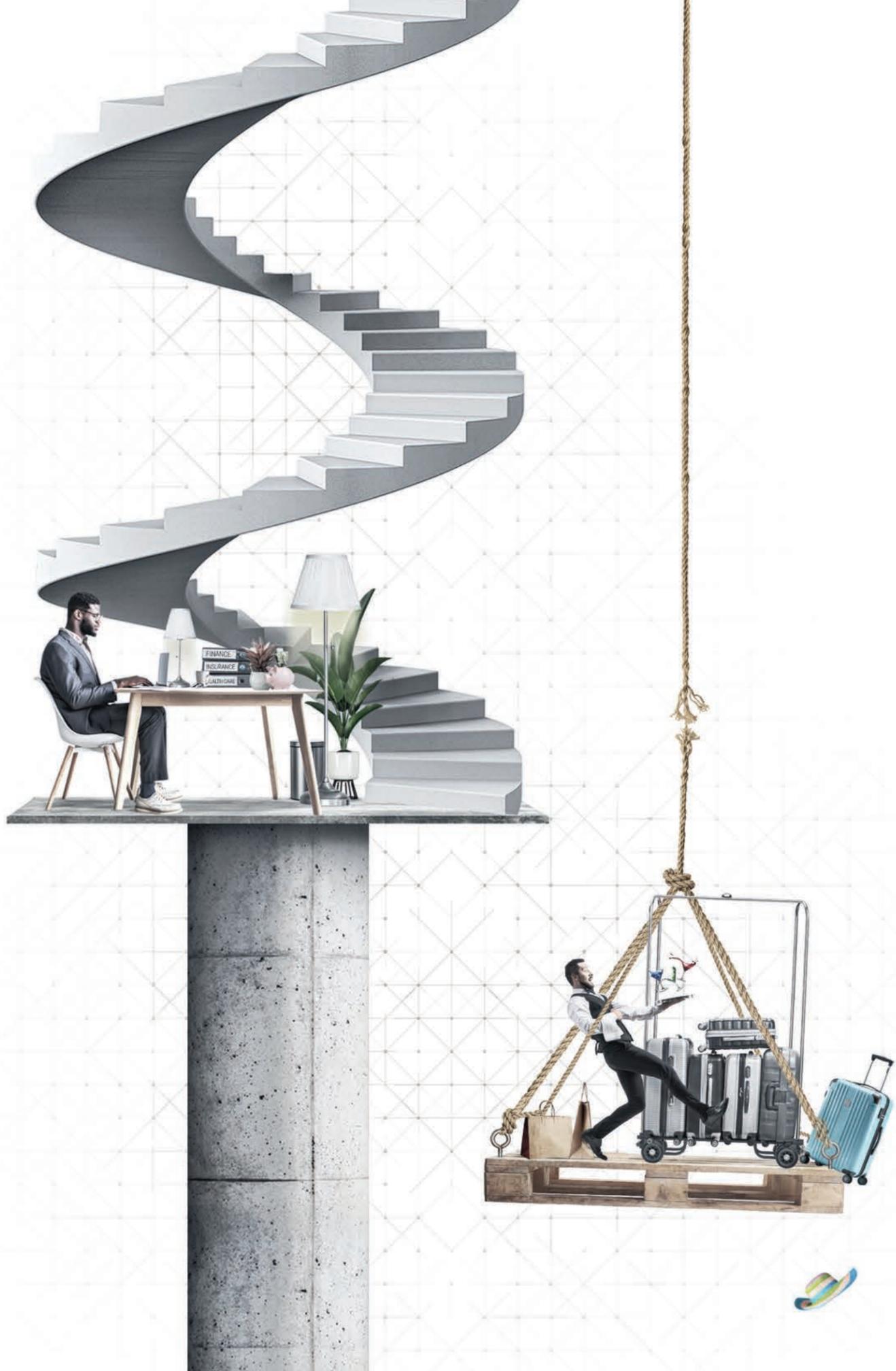
- Respondents: 5,365
- Argentina
  - Brazil
  - Chile
  - Mexico
  - Peru

### Middle East / Africa

- Respondents: 6,593
- Egypt
  - Nigeria
  - Saudi Arabia
  - South Africa
  - Turkey
  - United Arab Emirates

### Asia-Pacific

- Respondents: 13,136
- Australia
  - China
  - India
  - Indonesia
  - Japan
  - New Zealand
  - Philippines
  - Singapore
  - South Korea
  - Taiwan
  - Thailand
  - Vietnam



# JOB INSECURITY

Even with worldwide unemployment at its lowest level in decades, fewer than 1 in 4 workers feel confident their job is safe.

22%  
The percentage of global workers who strongly agreed that their job is safe from being eliminated in 2025.

**I**s your job safe? Even with worldwide unemployment at its lowest level in decades, fewer than 1 in 4 workers globally confidently say yes.

Among our Global Workforce Survey respondents, just 22 percent strongly agreed that their job was safe from elimination. Anxiety over job security was particularly acute among lower-paid repetitive task workers and people at the bottom of the employer hierarchy.

This insecurity has consequences for employees and employers alike. Our data shows that people who fear losing their jobs are less engaged at work, more stressed, less productive, and much more likely to be spending time and energy looking for work elsewhere.

Our data also revealed big differences by geography, gender, job level, sector, and work type.

**THE GEOGRAPHY GAP**

Nowhere did we find a majority of workers who said with confidence that their jobs were safe. And in only one market did the share of job-secure workers rise to more than a third. That was Nigeria, where 38 percent of survey respondents expressed confidence in their job security. In Japan, at the opposite end of the ranking, the figure was only 5 percent.

**THE GENDER GAP**

In the Middle East and Africa, women were slightly more confident in their job security than men (33 percent compared to 29 percent). The gender gap in this region was widest in Egypt, where 38 percent of women felt their jobs were secure compared to 31 percent of men.

In North America, this gender gap

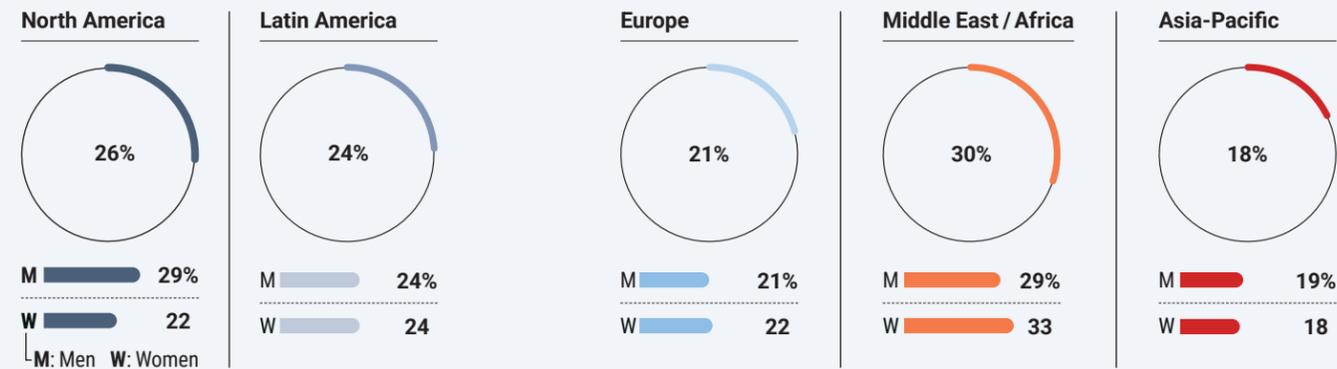
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Nowhere did we find a majority of workers who said with confidence that their jobs were safe.



**SHARE OF WORKERS WHO STRONGLY AGREE THEIR JOB IS SAFE FROM BEING ELIMINATED**

By region and gender



Share of workers who strongly agree their job is safe from being eliminated

By market

Market	%
<b>North America</b>	
Canada	24%
United States	28
<b>Latin America</b>	
Argentina	22%
Brazil	23
Chile	27
Mexico	27
Peru	20
<b>Europe</b>	
Austria	27%
Czech Republic	12
France	26
Germany	24
Italy	20
Netherlands	19
Poland	21
Spain	24
Sweden	18
Switzerland	20
United Kingdom	25
<b>Middle East / Africa</b>	
Egypt	32%
Nigeria	38
Saudi Arabia	29
South Africa	28
Turkey	29
United Arab Emirates	22
<b>Asia-Pacific</b>	
Australia	25%
China	20
India	30
Indonesia	20
Japan	5
New Zealand	19
Philippines	23
Singapore	15
South Korea	9
Taiwan	11
Thailand	24
Vietnam	18

Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey

Continued from page 8

was reversed. Men were significantly more likely than women to say with confidence that their jobs were safe (29 percent versus 22 percent). The divide was particularly stark in the United States, where 31 percent of men felt their jobs were secure compared to 23 percent of women.

**THE SECTOR AND WORK-TYPE GAP**

We found two other big differentiators when it came to job security: Work type and sector.

Thirty percent of knowledge workers said they felt their jobs were safe. This is almost double the share of skilled task workers (18 percent) and repetitive task workers (16 percent) who strongly agreed their jobs were safe from elimination.

These sentiment differences track with sectoral patterns. Survey respondents in finance and insurance, educational services, health care, and technology—sectors heavy with knowledge workers—were more likely to have confidence in their job security.

At the other end of the spectrum were workers in transportation and warehousing, agriculture, manufacturing, and accommodation and food services. These sectors tend to have a higher concentration of repetitive task workers.

**THE ORGANIZATIONAL GAP**

Confidence rises with seniority. C-suite executives and upper managers were far more likely than frontline managers or individual contributors to say their jobs were safe. This stands to reason, as senior leaders have more insight into the performance of their organization and greater

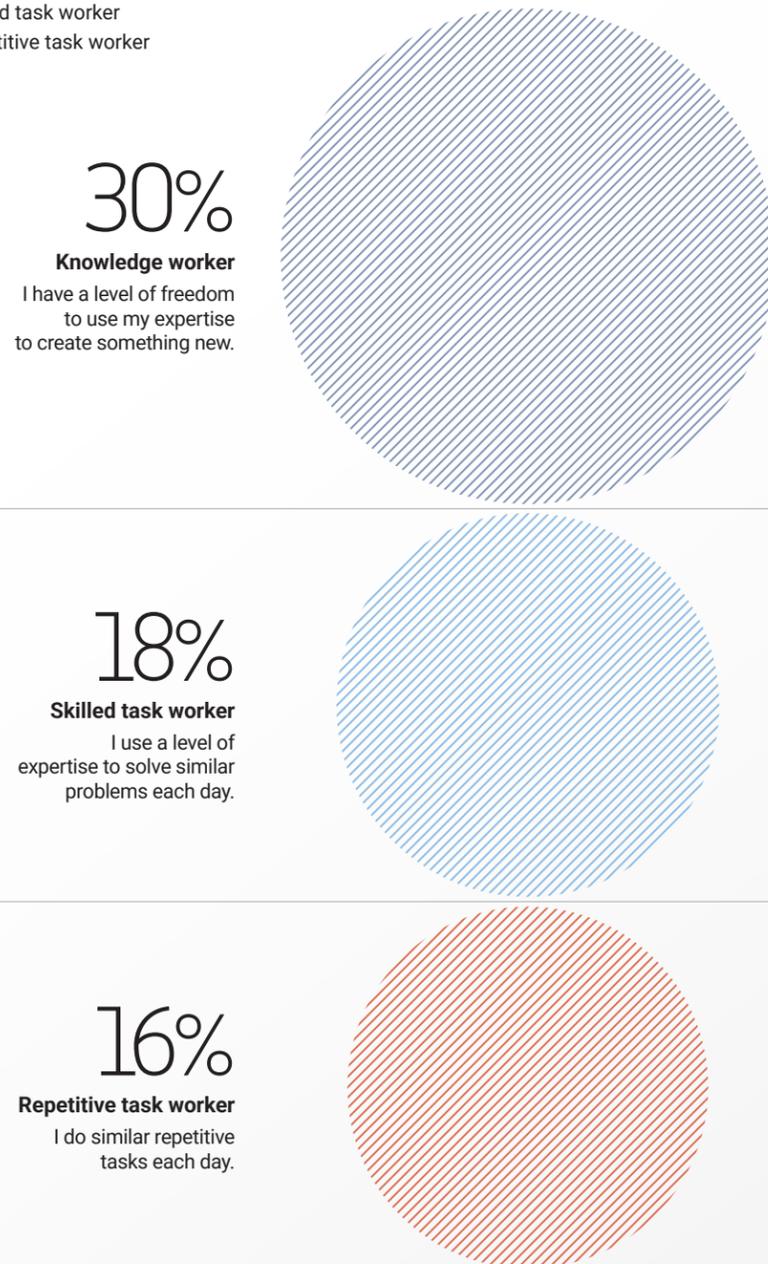
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**SHARE OF WORKERS WHO STRONGLY AGREE THEIR JOB IS SAFE FROM BEING ELIMINATED**

**By work type**

Respondents are asked to describe their type of work by choosing from three options:

- Knowledge worker
- Skilled task worker
- Repetitive task worker



Anxiety over job security was particularly acute among repetitive task workers and people at the bottom of the employer hierarchy.

Share of workers who strongly agree their job is safe from being eliminated

**By work type and sector**

Knowledge worker		Skilled task worker		Repetitive task worker	
Finance and insurance	39%	Public administration/service	24%	Educational services	23%
Health care and social assistance	35	Educational services	22	Health care and social assistance	22
Technology services	32	Health care and social assistance	21	Public administration/service	21
Educational services	32	Finance and insurance	20	Professional, scientific, and technical services	20
Information	29	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	19	Utilities	19
Other personal services	29	Other personal services	19	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	17
Retail/wholesale trade	29	Professional, scientific, and technical services	19	Finance and insurance	17
Manufacturing	28	Administrative/support services and waste management/remediation	18	Accommodation and food services	17
Construction and related trades	28	Real estate and rental and leasing	18	Transportation and warehousing	16
Real estate and rental and leasing	28	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	17	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	16
Utilities	27	Utilities	17	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	16
Transportation and warehousing	27	Information	17	Technology services	16
Administrative/support services and waste management/remediation	27	Transportation and warehousing	17	Other personal services	16
Professional, scientific, and technical services	26	Retail/wholesale trade	17	Construction and related trades	15
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	26	Construction and related trades	17	Administrative/support services and waste management/remediation	15
Accommodation and food services	26	Technology services	17	Real estate and rental and leasing	14
Public administration/service	25	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	15	Retail/wholesale trade	14
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	23	Manufacturing	15	Manufacturing	12
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	23	Accommodation and food services	14	Information	11

Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey

Continued from page 10

influence over staffing decisions than the people who report to them.

**WHY JOB SECURITY SENTIMENT MATTERS**

Feeling secure at work goes well beyond basic job satisfaction. Workers in our survey who strongly agreed that their jobs were safe were far more likely to feel good about their physical health and financial well-being.

While the direction of causality isn't clear, the relationship between job security, finances, and well-being was strong and consistent across all work types.

Our research has established that workers hit a sweet spot of productivity and retention when they're engaged, highly motivated, committed, and not overwhelmed by stress. □

**In 2025, workers who felt safe in their jobs met all these criteria. They were:**

**6x** more likely to be fully engaged on the job.

**6.3x** more likely to be highly motivated and committed.

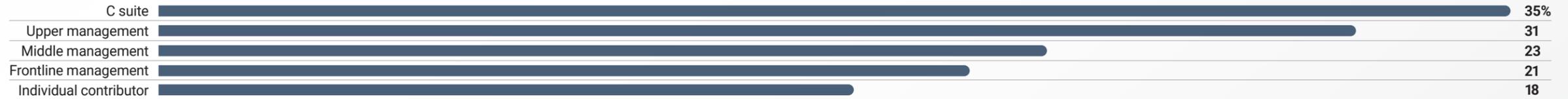
**3.3x** more likely to say they were highly productive at work.

**2x** more likely to say they have no intention of leaving.

**2.5x** less likely to feel overloaded or experience negative stress.

**SHARE OF WORKERS WHO STRONGLY AGREE THEIR JOB IS SAFE FROM BEING ELIMINATED**

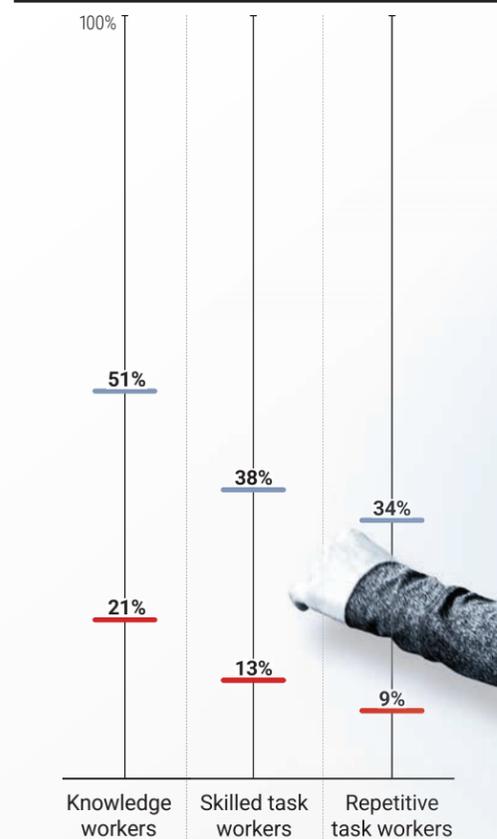
By job level within the organization



**WORKERS WHO FELT SECURE IN THEIR JOBS ALSO FELT GOOD ABOUT THEIR PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL HEALTH**

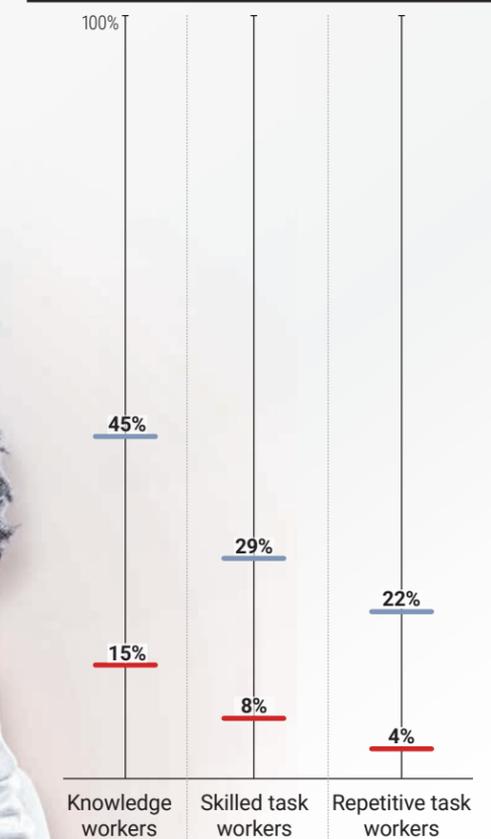
■ Strongly agree my job is safe from elimination  
 ■ Do not strongly agree my job is safe

Share who strongly agree that they feel good about their physical health:



■ Strongly agree my job is safe from elimination  
 ■ Do not strongly agree my job is safe

Share who strongly agree that they feel good about their financial health:



**THE TAKEAWAY**

In uncertain economic times, job security is top of mind for workers everywhere. And because job security affects worker performance and retention, employers must take heed.

Transparency matters. When jobs are safe, employers should say so. In the absence of clear information, workers fill the void themselves, often with worst-case assumptions.

Investment matters, too. Workers who strongly agreed that they had the skills needed to advance their careers were 5 times more likely to say their job was safe. Those who felt that their employer invested in their development were 5.3 times more likely to feel secure.

Upskilling isn't just a workforce strategy; it's a form of reassurance. Employers who provide clarity and demonstrate long-term commitment to their workers are likely to be rewarded with a more engaged, productive, less-stressed, and loyal organization.

Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey



# FROM TIMECARDS TO TIKTOK

For the first time in history, five generations are sharing the workplace. From teenagers to great-grandparents, these workers are presenting employers with new challenges and opportunities.

**In** 2025, global growth was steady and global employment was stable. Still, workers were living through change. Artificial intelligence entered the workplace, and more employers ordered people back to the office. So, even with a steady economic backdrop, workers were uneasy. Only 26 percent of people we surveyed worldwide were confident they have the skills needed to advance. Nearly half thought it was difficult or more difficult to change jobs than it was a year ago. Our survey also revealed high levels of stress related to pay, financial stability, and artificial intelligence.

Within this data, wide generational gaps abound. Never have five generations, spanning teenagers to great-grandparents, been active in the workforce at once.

And the share of older workers has been growing for decades as life expectancies rise and fertility rates fall. In 1995, people 55 and older represented 19 percent of the world's working-age population. By 2020, that share had grown to nearly 25 percent. Labor force participation for workers 55 to 64 also rose,

to 60 percent in 2022 from 53 percent in 1991, according to the [International Labour Organization](#).

Our survey findings highlight the differences in perception of work between older and younger employees. Older workers were more likely than other age cohorts to doubt their skills. They were the least likely to feel supported by their colleagues and employers. And they were more likely than other workers to feel financially insecure and unfairly paid. At the same time, older workers reported feeling less stressed in their jobs than their younger colleagues.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the world's youngest workers are living a completely different narrative. Adults 26 and younger, who made up 13 percent of the global workforce in 2022, were optimistic about their prospects and confident in the value of their training and skills.

In short, our data shows that work looks very different to people depending on their age. Employers can learn from and adapt to these differences to bring out the best in their teams.

■ Older workers, page 16 ■ Younger workers, page 22

# THE PREDICAMENT OF THE AGING WORKER

Older workers question their skills, pay, and opportunities. And they're growing in number. Employers have a golden opportunity to invest in these valuable team members.

The world's share of older workers has been growing for decades as life expectancies rise and fertility rates fall. In 2022, 21 percent of people in or near traditional retirement age were still employed, according to the International Labour Organization.

Work looks very different through the eyes of these older employees than it does to their younger colleagues. Our 2025 survey shows that people 55 and

older were more likely than all other age groups to doubt their job skills. They were the least likely to feel supported by colleagues and employers. And they were more likely to feel financially insecure and unfairly paid.

As these people remain in the labor market, employers could be missing out on opportunities to help them deliver their best.

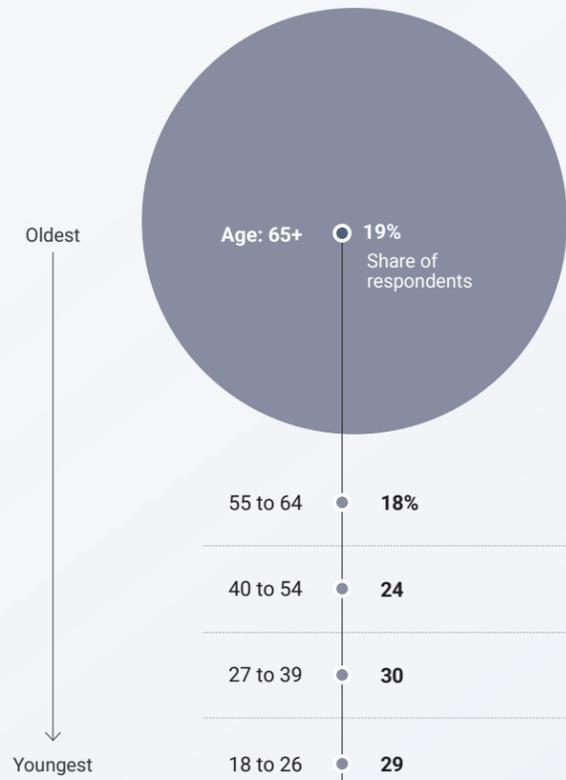
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## SKILLS CONFIDENCE, EMPLOYER INVESTMENT, AND ON-THE-JOB SUPPORT

By age group

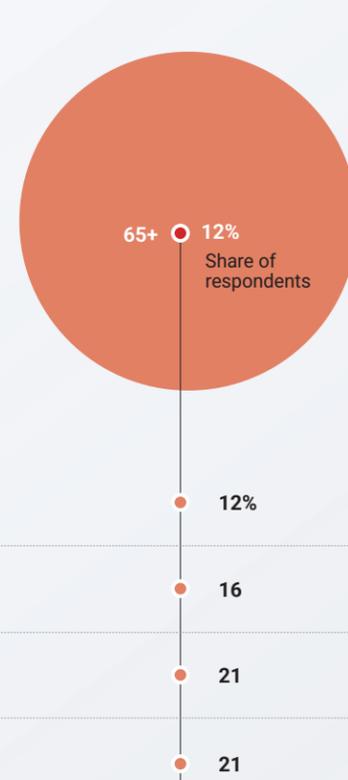
### Skills confidence

Share of workers who strongly agree: I have the skills needed to advance my career to the next job level in the next three years.



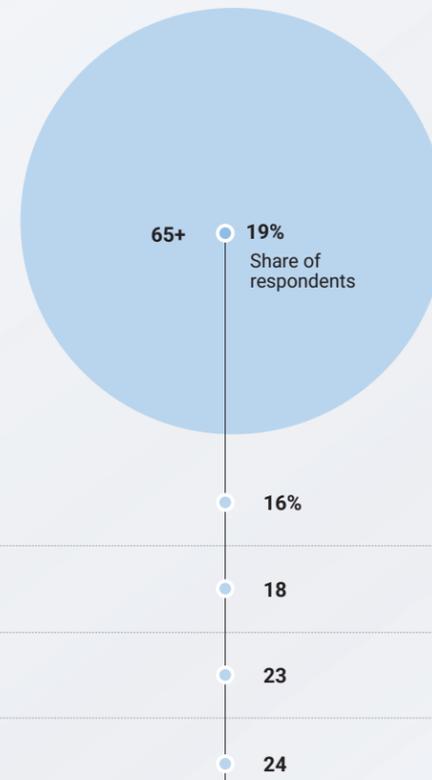
### Employer investment

Share of workers who strongly agree: I feel my employer invests in the skills I need for me to advance my career in the future.

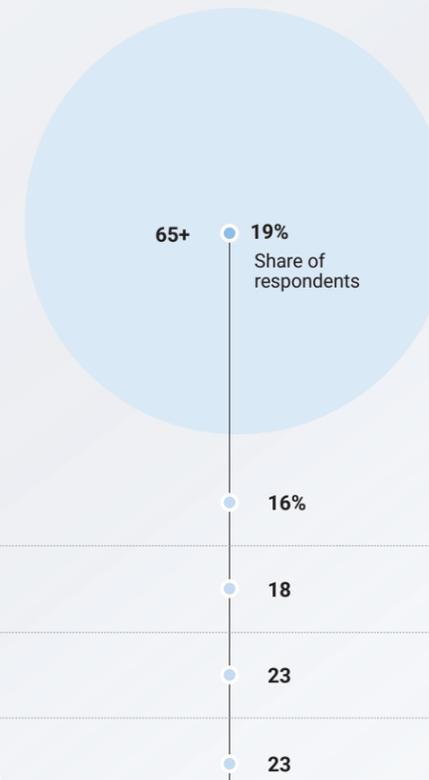


### On-the-job support

Share of workers who strongly agree: I receive all the support I need from my colleagues.



I receive all the support I need from my leader.

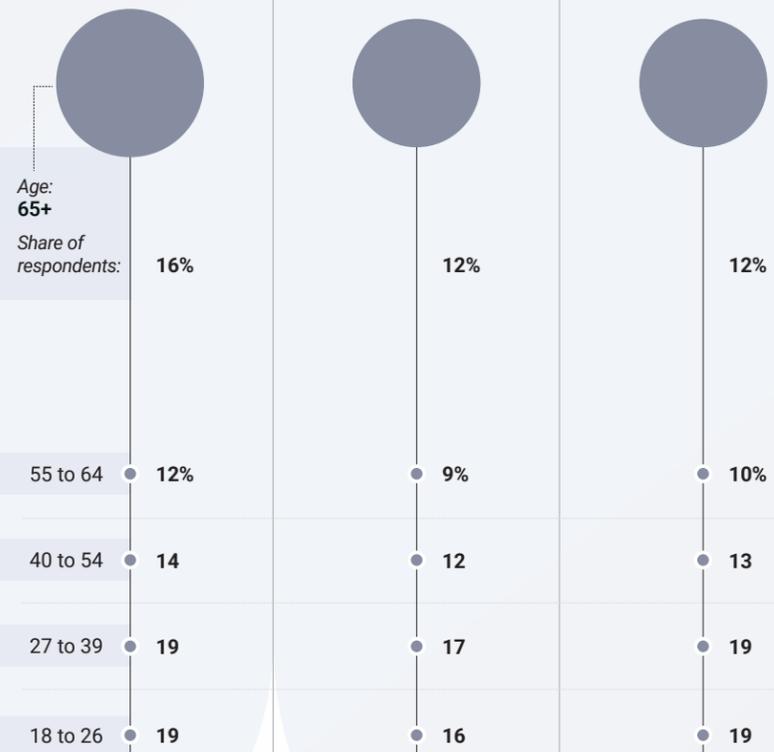


Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey

FINANCIAL SECURITY

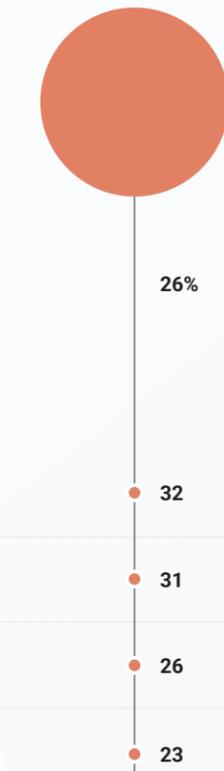
By age group  
Share of workers who strongly agree

I have enough money to buy the goods and services I need  
I have enough money to buy the goods and services I want  
I feel good about my financial health



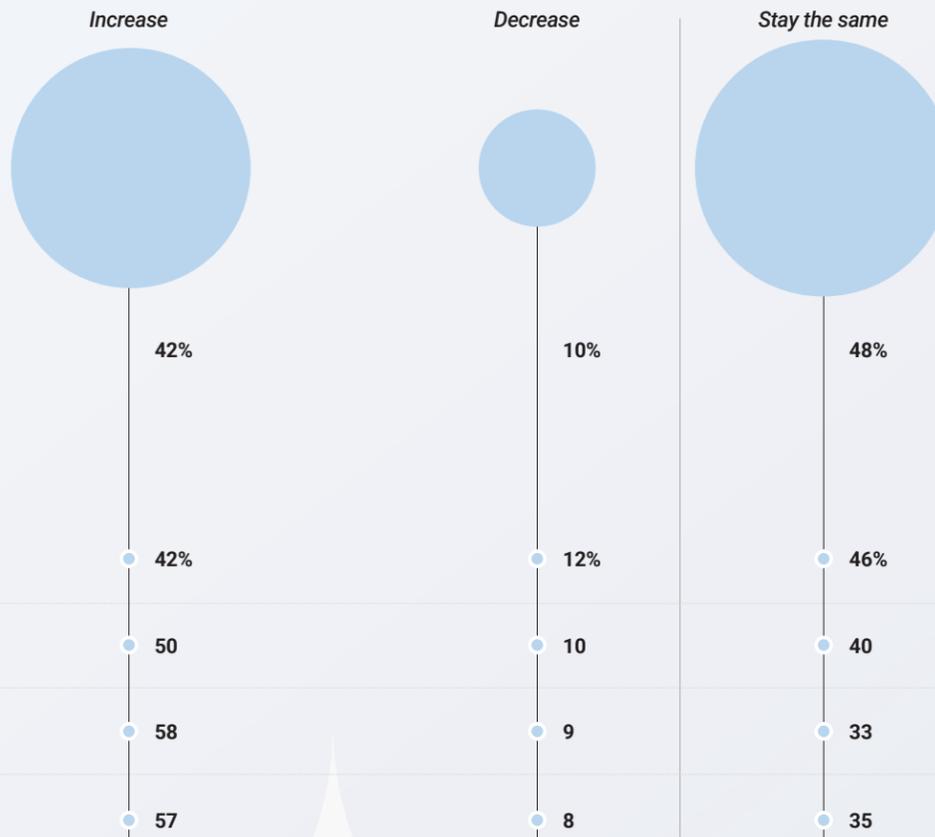
PAY FAIRNESS

Share of workers who said no, their pay is not fair

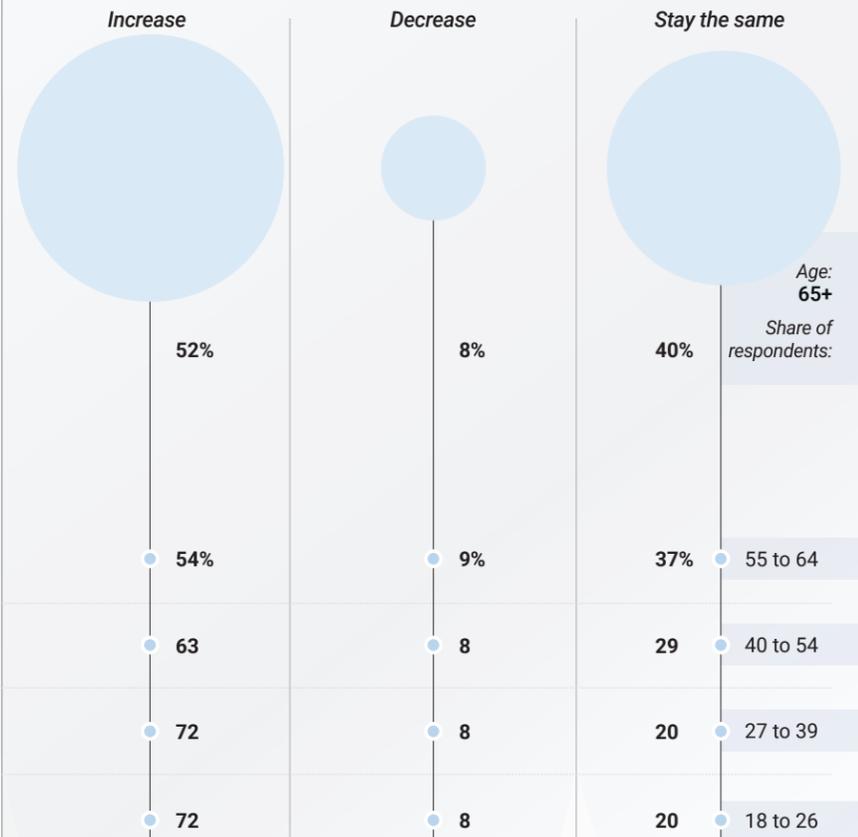


PAY

Did your wages increase, decrease, or stay the same in the last 12 months?



Thinking 12 months from now: What do you expect to happen to your earnings on this job, before taxes/deductions?



Continued from page 17

MEASURING OPPORTUNITY

Only 18 percent of workers 55 and older strongly agreed they have the skills needed to advance in their careers. Even fewer think their employer is investing in their development. These are the smallest shares across all age groups.

FINANCIAL SECURITY

Older workers were less likely than their younger colleagues to say they have the money to cover their needs and wants. In fact, they're less likely to feel good about their overall financial health.

One might think that people in their 40s, 50s, and 60s would have reached higher pay

brackets. But this group also might be worried about having enough money for retirement, a child's school tuition, or an elderly parent's care.

Although feelings of financial insecurity rise steadily with age, the pattern reverses slightly for workers 65 and older. It's possible that some people in this oldest group continue to

work because they want to, not because they need to.

Our oldest survey respondents were the least likely to report receiving a pay increase in the past year. And they're the least optimistic about getting one in the coming year.

Continued on page 20

**MEASURING STRESS**

Based on worker reactions to eustress or distress, we sort them into one of three categories:



**Thriving**

**Mostly positive stress**

These workers are more likely to experience work pressure as eustress. They're more engaged and resilient, more likely to feel productive, and less likely to quit their jobs.



**Rattled**

**A mix of positive and negative stress**

Rattled workers report a fairly even mix of good days and bad. They haven't mastered how to fill their days with more positive stress or minimize negative stress.



**Overloaded**

**Mostly negative stress**

Overloaded workers experience job pressure much more negatively and score lower in every category of worker well-being that we measure.

Continued from page 19

**A SILVER LINING**

There's one area where older workers had a distinct advantage. They were the least likely of all age groups to experience frequent negative stress on the job. Nearly a third of workers 55 to 64 and almost half of workers 65 and older said they experience negative stress at work less than once a month.

Our research has shown that some people experience work pressure as a positive (eustress) while others experience it as a negative (distress).

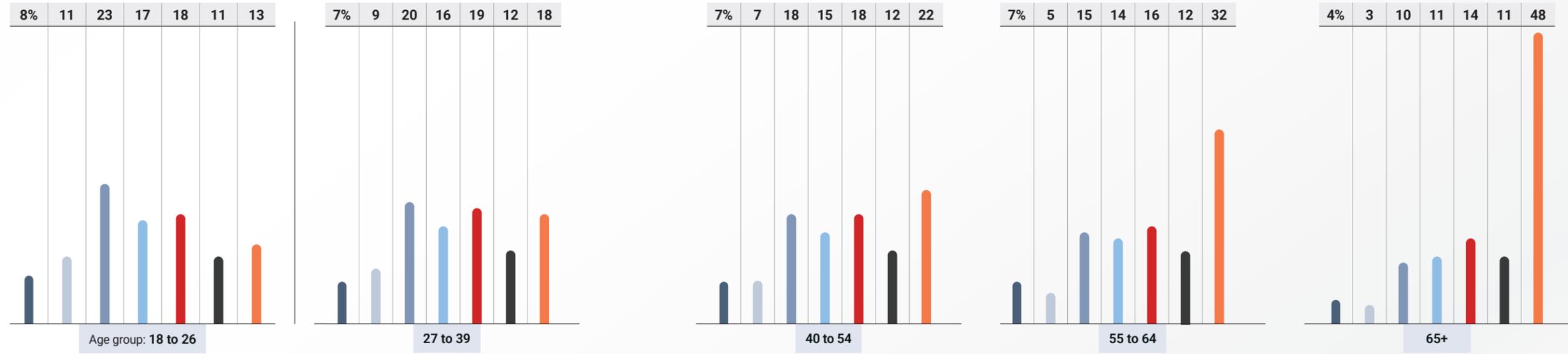
As workers get older, they're more likely to be thriving and less likely to be overloaded. □

**STRESS FREQUENCY, by age group**

We asked: **In the last year, how often have you experienced negative stress at work?**

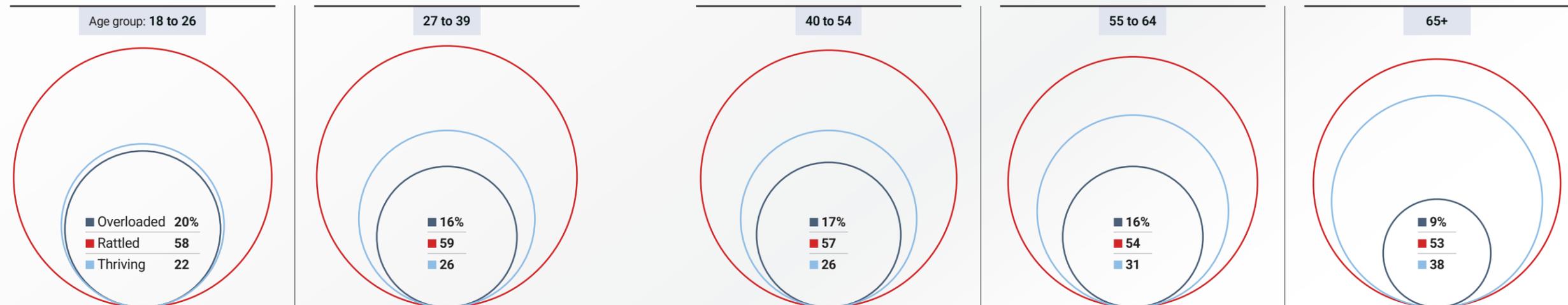
- Every day
- 4-6 times per week
- 2-3 times per week
- Once a week
- 2-3 times a month

- Once a month
- Less than once a month



**STRESS LEVEL, by age group**

Share of rattled/overloaded/thriving workers



Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey; Note: Shares might not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

# WITH YOUTH, OPTIMISM

Young adults are more upbeat about their job skills and prospects than their older counterparts.

As an increasing number of older workers are choosing to stay employed, there are now five generations navigating the workplace. Even without the added challenges of advancing technology and economic uncertainty, this demographic change has, on its own, created a uniquely complex workforce.

As a group, young workers are more likely than their seasoned colleagues to believe their skills and education will propel them along a career path. They're more confident in landing the next promotion.

This sunny outlook, however, is relative. While sentiment among 18- to 26-year-olds tends to be relatively upbeat, there's plenty of room for improvement. A big share of workers, young and old, told us it has become more difficult to change jobs, and too many people of all ages feel they lack the skills needed to advance.

### MEASURING OPPORTUNITY

When we asked workers if they thought it was harder or easier than it was a year ago to change jobs, 46 percent said it was harder. Only 21 percent said it was easier.

Continued on page 24

**46%**  
of workers thought it was harder than it was a year ago to change jobs.

**21%**  
of workers thought it was easier.

## JOB CHANGING, by age and education

We asked:  
**Compared to 12 months ago, do you think it's harder or easier for people to change jobs?**



Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey

Continued from page 22

But workers 26 and younger were less likely than older workers to say job-changing had grown more difficult. This sentiment was even stronger among young workers with a college degree or its equivalent.

Regardless of degree status, young workers also were much more likely to feel prepared to advance in their careers than older adults.

Among these young workers, 32 percent of college graduates said they had the skills needed to advance. For workers in this age cohort without a degree, the share was 24 percent. These young workers also were the most likely of all age groups to say their employer is investing in their development.

Workers 26 and younger, particularly those who hold a college degree, also reported the highest rate of recent promotions. They're also the most optimistic of any age group about receiving a promotion in the next year. Given that younger workers often start in entry-level positions, it's not surprising that they have more opportunities than older workers for advancement and higher pay, especially within job levels. □

**Among young workers**

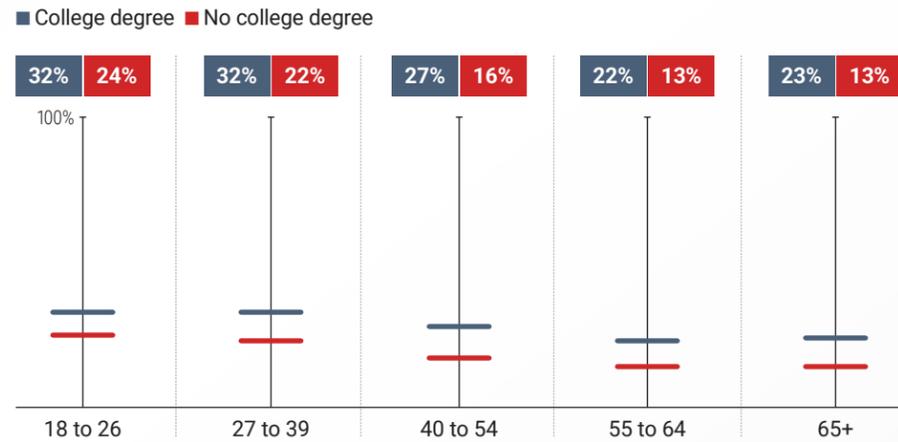
**32%**  
of college graduates said they had the skills needed to advance.

**24%**  
of non-college graduates said they had the skills needed to advance.

**CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTIONS**

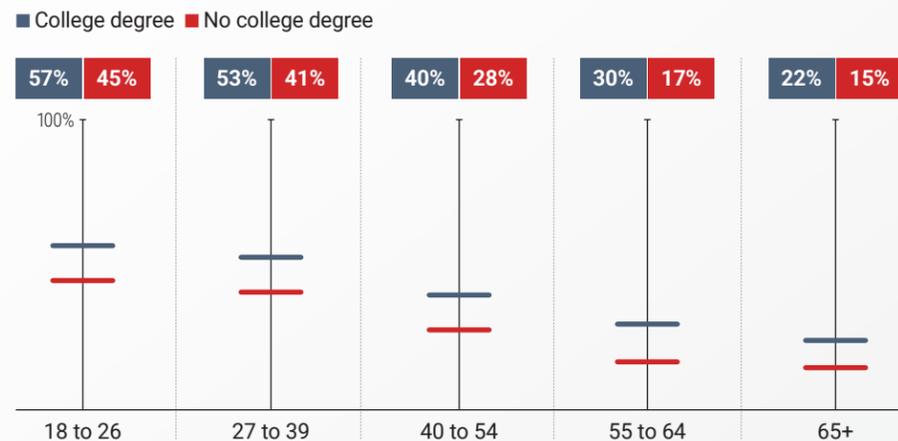
**SKILLS, by age group and education**

 Share of workers who strongly agree: **I have the skills needed to advance my career to the next job level in the next three years.**



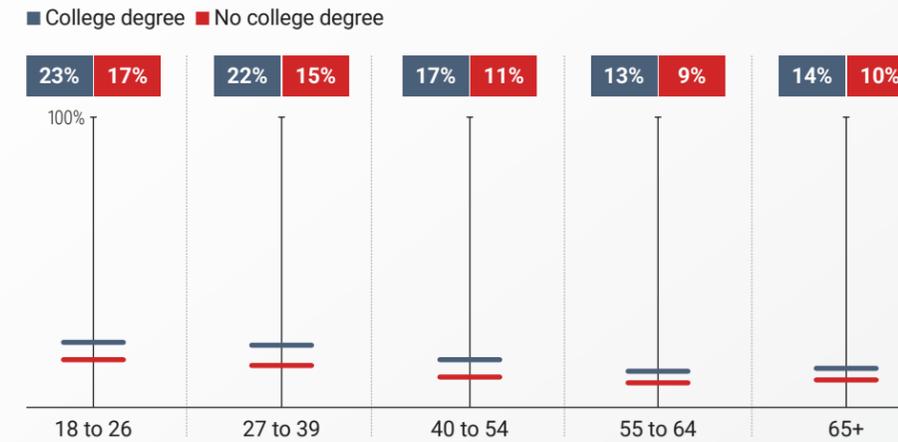
**ADVANCEMENT, by age and education**

 Share of workers recently promoted



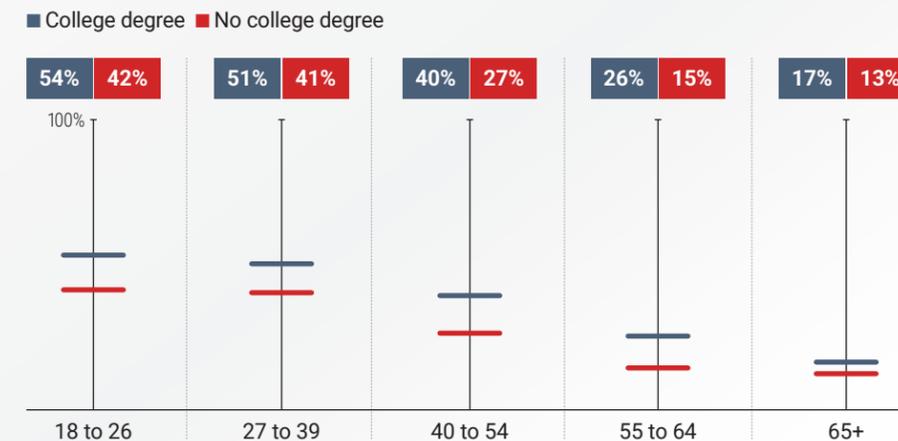
**EMPLOYER INVESTMENT, by age and education**

 Share of workers who strongly agree: **I feel my employer invests in the skills I need for me to advance my career in the future.**



**FUTURE ADVANCEMENT, by age and education**

 Share of workers expecting a promotion in the next year



**THE TAKEAWAY**

With five generations of people now in the workforce, HR professionals have an unprecedented opportunity to nurture mentorships across age groups. Whether it's younger workers bringing their older colleagues up to date on tech literacy, or more-seasoned employees offering support in soft skills, each generation brings its own expertise and experience.

For older workers, targeted investment could pay off for employers. Despite their poor sentiment when it comes to career development and on-the-job support, people 55 and older are just as likely as those in other age groups to find meaning in their work. They're just as likely to be fully engaged on the job. They're the least likely of any group, by far, with plans to quit.

As for young workers, there's room for improvement. Although they're more optimistic than their older colleagues, 45 percent still said it's difficult to change jobs, and only 29 percent strongly agree they have the skills needed to advance.

HR professionals confronted with an age-diverse workforce would do well to learn what drives each generational cohort. Rethink benefits and learning opportunities to make sure they serve employees of all ages. Younger workers might be an employer's future, but older workers have much to give back.

Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey

# FREE LABOR DOESN'T COME CHEAP

Most employees say they work off the clock, and some do it a lot. But all that unpaid effort can have downsides for both workers and their organizations.

**F**or most workers, it's normal to put in a few unpaid hours once in a while. People with a lot on their plate might toil through their lunch break on occasion or stay late to get caught up.

In fact, a large group—62 percent of workers worldwide—told us they put in up to five hours of unpaid work each week.

And that other 38 percent? Well, they're working off the clock, too. But they're doing it even more. A lot more. Twelve percent of respondents to our Global Workforce Survey said they work without pay for 16 or more hours a week.

Why do they do it? Our data suggests that many workers put in extra time because they want to, not out of a sense of obligation. People who claimed the greatest number of unpaid hours also showed higher on-

the-job engagement and were more likely to find meaning in their work.

But there were downsides, too, in the form of greater stress and a higher likelihood of turnover. The upshot? All that unpaid time isn't necessarily a win for employers.

## WHO'S WORKING OFF THE CLOCK?

While we found differences by age, geography, and work location, the biggest determinant of unpaid hours was job level.

We had expected individual contributors to claim that they sometimes worked without pay. But we found something else: Workers higher in the organizational hierarchy were more likely to report putting in unpaid hours.

The difference was dramatic.

Continued on page 28



**We asked workers:** On average, how many hours per week do you believe you work for free (i.e. hours worked over lunch breaks, staying late, etc.)?

Continued from page 26

Half of all upper managers and senior leaders said they put in at least six extra hours per week; 20 percent said they put in 16 hours or more.

People near the bottom of the organization were the least likely to report large blocks of unpaid work. Twenty-six percent of individual contributors said they put in six hours or more of free time a week, and only 9 percent said they worked off the clock for 16 hours or more.

The people who put in lots of hours off the clock might not mind doing it. While employee engagement dipped slightly among workers who claim to put in six to 15 unpaid hours a week, it rose to its highest level among those who clock 16

**UNPAID HOURS**

Workers were asked how many hours they put into their jobs without pay each week.

Each week	Share of workers
5 hours or less	62%
6 to 15 hours	26%
16 hours or more	12%

hours or more. This pattern held across all job levels.

People who said they put in 16 or more unpaid hours also were the most likely to say with confidence that they find meaning in the work they do.

It's possible that workers in the middle range of six to 15 unpaid hours see the time as an obligation or burden, while those who put in even more hours might be doing so simply because they want to. □

**THE DRAWBACKS TO UNPAID WORK**

**Lower productivity**

All those unpaid hours don't lead people to feel more productive, however. As the number of reported unpaid hours increased, so did the share of workers who said they didn't feel as productive as they could be. This sentiment was most dramatic among upper managers and C-suite executives.

**Higher turnover**

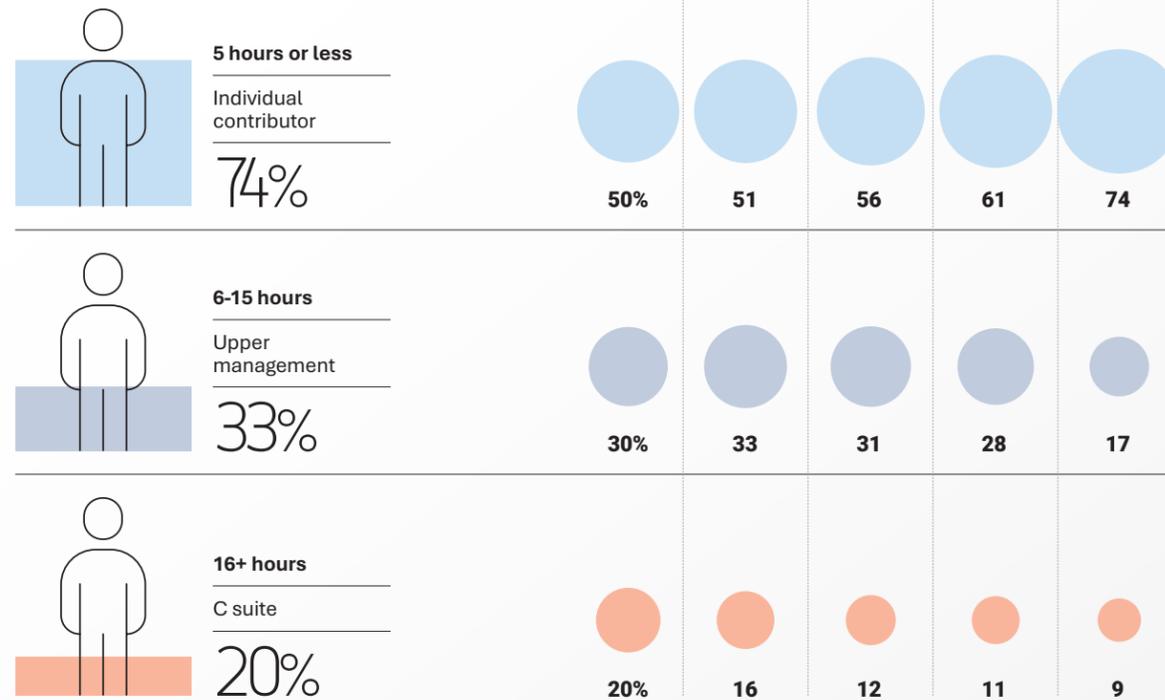
As noted above, people putting in the most unpaid hours were most likely to be fully engaged and finding meaning in their work. But they also were more likely to be looking for the next job. Again, this relationship was particularly prominent among executives and upper managers. While workers who put in a lot of unpaid time are more likely to be engaged, they're less likely to be thriving — that is, experiencing positive, energizing stress. This dynamic might be one reason workers report an intent to leave. Even people who are engaged can suffer from a buildup of stress.

**More stress**

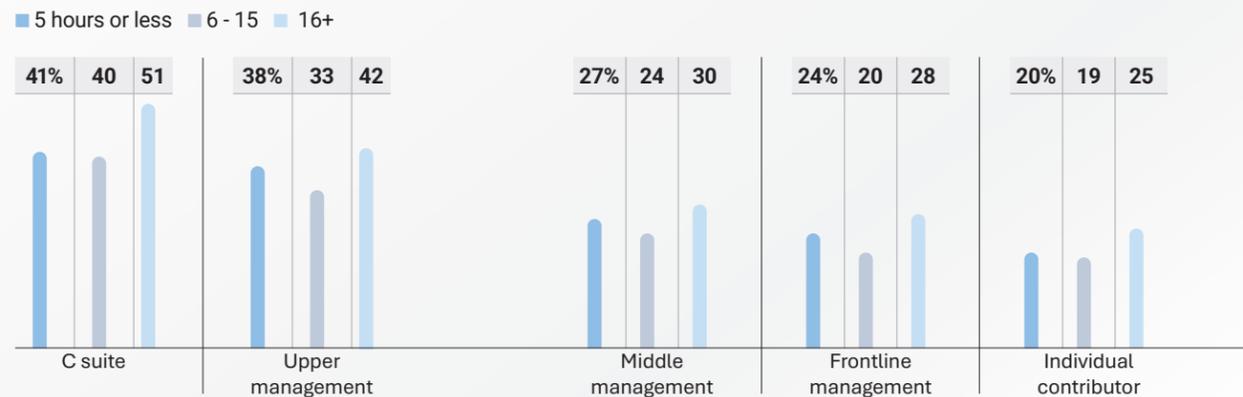
As workers put in more unpaid hours, they're more likely to feel stress and less likely to be thriving on the job. While this pattern held across all job levels, the difference by unpaid hours worked was most dramatic among C-suite executives and upper managers.

**WHO'S PUTTING IN UNPAID HOURS, by job level**

Unpaid time was more common among managers.



**SHARE OF WORKERS WHO FIND MEANING IN THEIR JOBS, by job level and unpaid hours worked**



■ 1-10% ■ 11-20 ■ 21-30 ■ 31+

**SHARE OF WORKERS WHO ARE THRIVING, by job level and unpaid hours worked**

	5 hours or less	6 - 15 hours	16+ hours
C suite	39%	21%	22%
Upper management	34	22	24
Middle management	31	21	25
Frontline management	29	20	23
Individual contributor	27	20	22

**WORKERS WHO ARE FULLY ENGAGED, by job level and unpaid hours worked**

	5 hours or less	6 - 15 hours	16+ hours
C suite	36%	30%	41%
Upper management	29	25	32
Middle management	21	16	23
Frontline management	17	12	18
Individual contributor	13	12	17

**HONESTLY, I AM NOT AS PRODUCTIVE AT WORK AS I COULD BE LATELY, by job level and unpaid hours**

Share of workers who strongly agree

	5 hours or less	6 - 15 hours	16+ hours
C suite	11%	19%	24%
Upper management	10	15	19
Middle management	7	12	13
Frontline management	6	9	11
Individual contributor	6	9	8

**SHARE OF WORKERS LOOKING TO LEAVE, by job level and unpaid hours**

Share of workers actively looking or interviewing for a new job

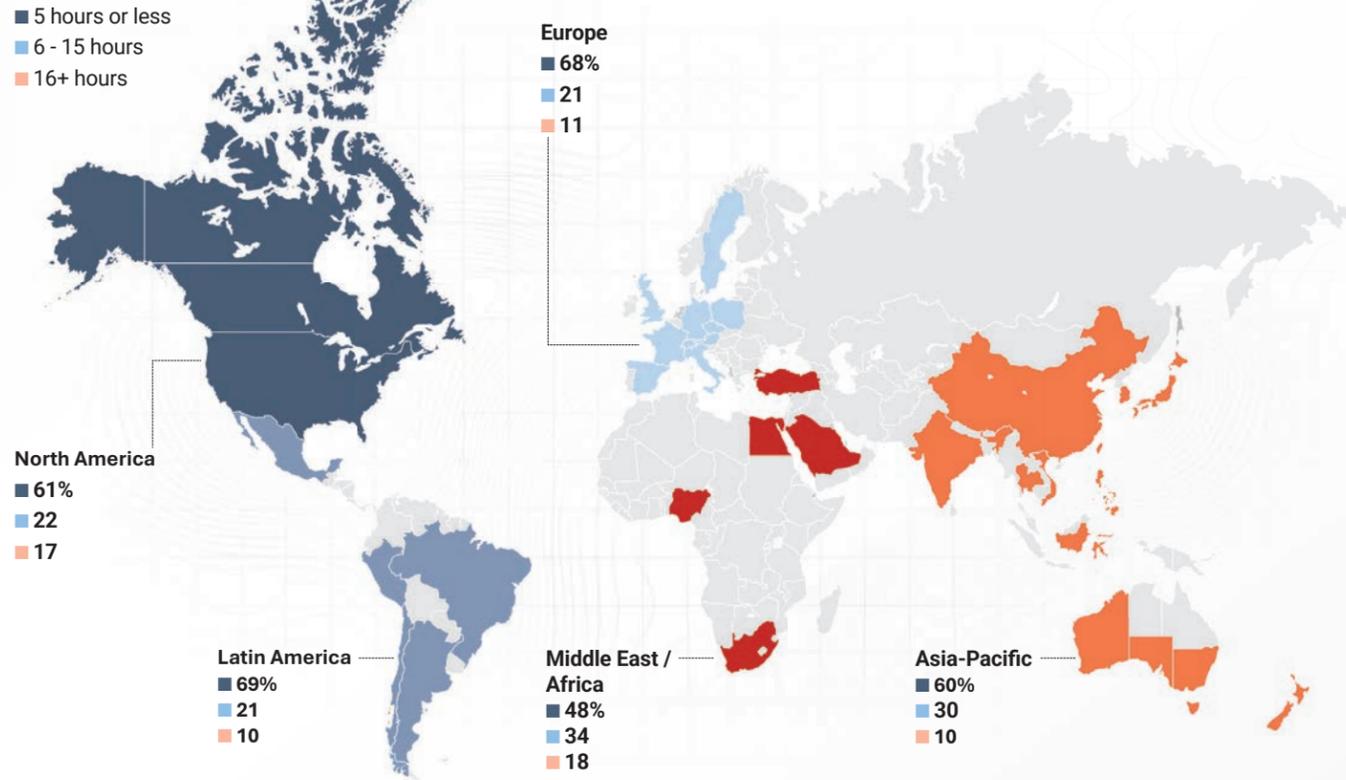
	5 hours or less	6 - 15 hours	16+ hours
C suite	12%	23%	26%
Upper management	12	23	25
Middle management	12	22	20
Frontline management	13	22	22
Individual contributor	13	22	18

Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey

### WHO'S WORKING UNPAID HOURS?

People in the Middle East/Africa were the most likely to say they worked unpaid hours in 2025. In India, 24 percent of workers put in 16 or more unpaid hours each week, the largest share of any market. In the Czech Republic, only 4 percent said they work 16 or more hours off the clock.

#### UNPAID HOURS, by market



#### UNPAID HOURS, by age

People younger than 40 were much more likely to say they work off the clock.

■ 1-10% ■ 11-20 ■ 21-30 ■ 31+

Age group	5 hours or less	6 - 15 hours	16+ hours
18 to 26	58%	31%	11%
27 to 39	59	29	12
40 to 54	62	25	13
55 to 64	70	18	12
65+	73	16	10

#### UNPAID HOURS, by work location

Remote workers were the most likely to report large blocks of unpaid hours.

■ 1-10% ■ 11-20 ■ 21-30 ■ 31+

Work location	5 hours or less	6 - 15 hours	16+ hours
Remote	52%	35%	13%
Hybrid	60	28	12
Office / on-site	64	24	12

#### UNPAID HOURS, by market

■ 1-10% ■ 11-20 ■ 21-30 ■ 31+

Market	6 - 15 hours	16+ hours
Argentina	21%	13%
Australia	26	12
Austria	21	21
Brazil	19	8
Canada	23	13
Chile	18	10
China	36	6
Czech Republic	18	4
Egypt	37	20
France	20	9
Germany	21	16
India	40	24
Indonesia	40	14
Italy	20	9
Japan	15	6
Mexico	23	8
Netherlands	18	8
New Zealand	21	12
Nigeria	36	14
Peru	24	9
Philippines	28	8
Poland	21	11
Saudi Arabia	32	14
Singapore	35	10
South Africa	30	17
South Korea	25	8
Spain	18	7
Sweden	17	8
Switzerland	26	17
Taiwan	31	6
Thailand	28	11
Turkey	28	23
United Arab Emirates	40	19
United Kingdom	29	14
United States	22	20
Vietnam	31	8

### THE TAKEAWAY

Employers might not be aware of how much their workers are toiling off the clock. But this free work might come at a cost.

While people who put in large numbers of unpaid hours were more engaged at work, they also reported feeling less productive, were less likely to be thriving, and were more likely to be looking for their next job.

Organizations might want to evaluate how much time their teams, especially their executives and managers, are putting in. There might be opportunities for employers to compensate for, say, off-hour meetings or travel to job sites. Or employers might simply want to reduce workloads.

The bottom line is this: Unpaid work doesn't necessarily benefit organizations.

**What employers can do.** Provide clear expectations. People who told us they put in five or fewer unpaid hours each week were more likely than heavy off-the-clock workers to say they clearly understand what's expected of them. When workers know what they need to accomplish, they might be more efficient and more productive.

**What workers can do.** Assess the value of your unpaid time. Explain what you do during your off-the-clock hours and work with managers to determine whether or how to incorporate this effort into the paid workday. It might be as simple as stopping work when you're not getting paid for it, or rebalancing workloads during times of high demand.

Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey

# AI POWERS INTO THE WORKPLACE

**G**enerative artificial intelligence burst onto the scene in 2022 with the launch of ChatGPT and other user-friendly tools. Less than four years later, adoption is widespread. Half of workers we surveyed globally said they use AI at least multiple times a week. One in 5 said they use it nearly every day.

As the effects of this rapid uptake ripple across workplaces, labor markets, and local economies, our 2025 Global Workforce Survey found some positive outcomes for workers, such as higher engagement and less stress.

But it also revealed a gap between an AI promise and reality: According to the global workforce, artificial intelligence so far hasn't delivered on one of its biggest expected benefits, increased productivity.

## WHO IS USING AI?

Young workers, men in particular, were the heaviest users of AI in 2025. But we found that attitudes toward the technology were shaped less by demographics than by familiarity.

Men, for example, were slightly more likely than women to believe that AI will improve their jobs, but this gender gap all but vanished among frequent users.

Similarly, while optimism about AI tended to decline with age, the difference narrowed sharply among daily users.

## HOW IS AI USE AFFECTING WORKERS?

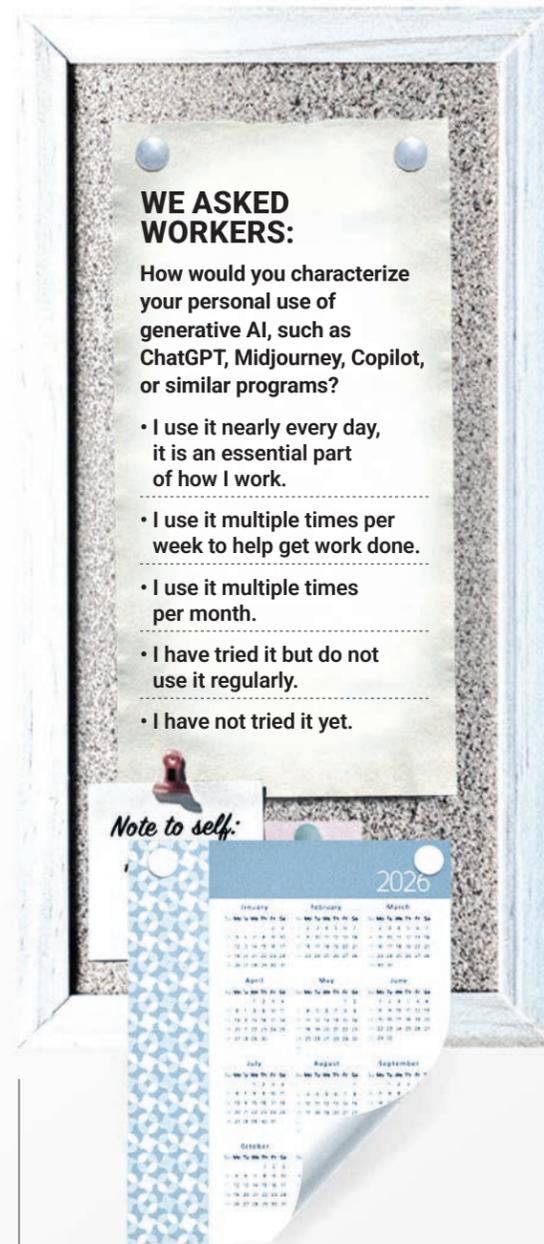
In our survey, frequent users of AI were more engaged, less stressed, and more positive about their teammates. But they don't report feeling more productive.

• **Engagement:** Among people who use AI tools every day, 30 percent were fully engaged at work. But for workers who never use AI, engagement was only 14 percent. Worldwide, 19 percent of workers were fully engaged in 2025.

• **Stress:** As AI use increased, fewer workers reported a high incidence of negative on-the-job stress. Only 11 percent of daily AI users were overloaded, compared to 23 percent of non-adopters.

• **Teams:** People who use AI more frequently were more likely to report being part of a work team. This is important, because our data has

Continued on page 34



Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey



Continued from page 32

shown a strong connection between team membership, higher engagement, and lower stress. What matters even more is feeling that you are on the best team. The more people use AI, the more likely they were to report being on the best team.

• **Productivity:** Our research has established that engagement, stress, and teams can influence productivity. But while heavy AI users showed higher engagement and less stress, they also said they felt less productive. In fact, daily users of AI were 4 times more likely than non-users of AI to say they were less productive than they could be.

We have no way of measuring the actual productivity of these workers. It's possible that the more people use AI to get their work done, the more it feels like they've accomplished less than they might have. Productivity might in fact have increased, but people might perceive that they are doing less of the work themselves.

**HOW WILL AI AFFECT JOBS AND JOB SECURITY?**

That's something we can't predict. What we can say is that as the frequency of AI use increased, workers were more likely to say with confidence that their jobs were safe from elimination.

Even so, young workers, including frequent users of AI, are less optimistic about their job security. This sentiment aligns with [Stanford Digital Economy Lab](#) research showing that the adoption of AI technology is in fact linked with slower job creation among young workers in more AI-exposed sectors. □

**AI USERS, by market**

How would you characterize your personal use of generative AI?

Market	I use AI nearly every day	I have not tried AI yet
Argentina	11%	14%
Australia	16	21
Austria	14	18
Brazil	31	10
Canada	13	22
Chile	12	16
China	26	2
Czech Republic	11	26
Egypt	34	5
France	11	29
Germany	14	21
<b>India</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>2</b>
Indonesia	29	6
Italy	12	22
<b>Japan</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>43</b>
Mexico	15	10
Netherlands	11	25
New Zealand	16	23
Nigeria	39	5
Peru	12	10
Philippines	22	8
Poland	12	21
Saudi Arabia	27	6
Singapore	23	8
South Africa	17	15
South Korea	12	15
Spain	15	17
Sweden	10	28
Switzerland	21	14
Taiwan	18	14
Thailand	27	9
Turkey	22	9
United Arab Emirates	30	3
United Kingdom	20	21
United States	19	23
Vietnam	36	4

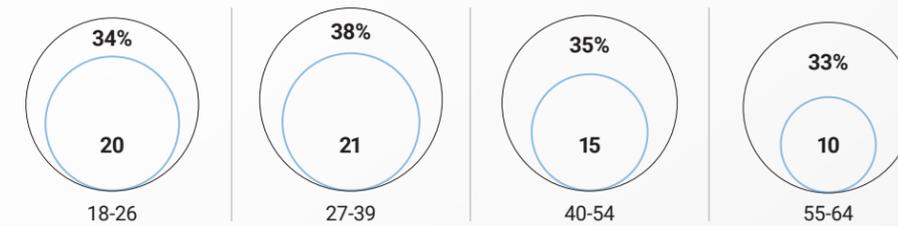
**41%**  
India had the largest share of people who said they use AI nearly every day.

**43%**  
Japan had the largest share of people who said they have not tried AI yet.

**I BELIEVE AI WILL POSITIVELY IMPACT MY JOB RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE NEXT YEAR**

Share of workers who strongly agree

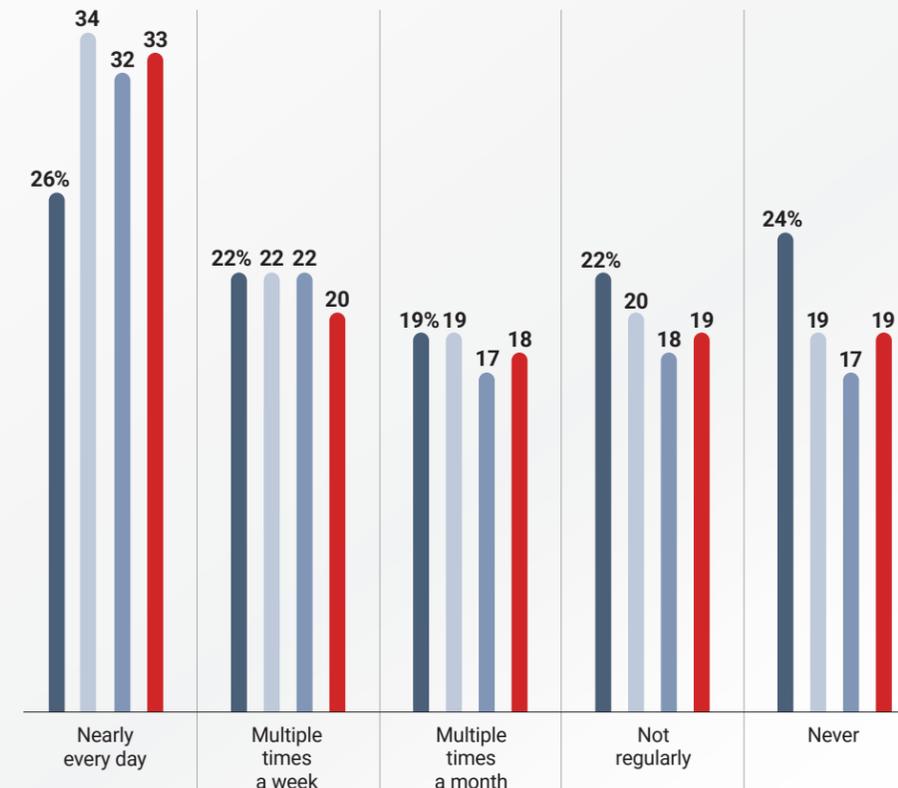
□ Share of all workers □ Share of daily AI users



**I KNOW MY JOB IS SAFE FROM BEING ELIMINATED, by age and AI use**

Share of workers who strongly agree

■ 18-26 ■ 27-39 ■ 40-54 ■ 55-64



**SPOTLIGHT ON NIGERIA**

Workers in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa had some of the highest levels of AI use in the world. One market in particular stands out: Nigeria.

Among workers in this populous West African market, 39 percent said they use AI every day, just behind India, home to the most-frequent users.

That's more than double the share of AI users in the United States, Taiwan, Australia, and Germany. It's more than three times the usage in South Korea.

**What's going on?** As Africa's largest economy, Nigeria is attracting technology investment from China, which has led to a rapid introduction of AI tools and digital infrastructure. Workers in Nigeria are gaining access to AI more quickly than in many other markets.

Still, Nigeria remains an emerging market. Given its infrastructure challenges, employers are leap-frogging last-generation technology and going straight to AI-powered solutions. In a competitive business environment, companies are keen to use AI to gain an edge.

Then there's Nigeria's workforce, which is large and young. People are comfortable with technology and eager to use AI to get work done more efficiently.

**THE TAKEAWAY**

As AI makes its way into the workplace, organizations could benefit by helping their employees become more familiar with the technology and encouraging its use, where applicable. Unknowns abound, but our data suggests that AI presents itself to many people as a teammate, one that might help workers feel more engaged and less stressed on the job.

Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey



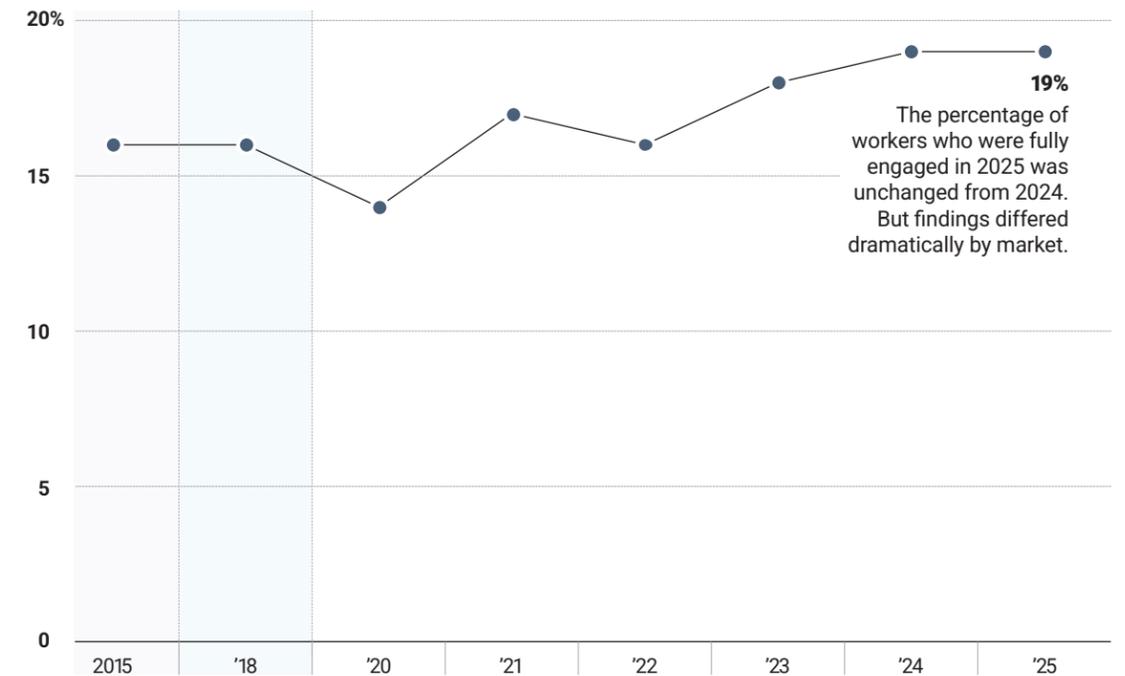
# HOW ENGAGED IS THE GLOBAL WORKFORCE?

Worker engagement has been improving since the coronavirus pandemic, but fewer than 1 in 5 people worldwide were fully engaged on the job in 2025. That means the vast majority of people – 80 percent – aren't giving it their all at work.

Each year, we ask workers dozens of questions about their jobs and employers, their levels of optimism, stress, and productivity, and their expectations and plans. We ask why they join employers, and why they stay.

From their answers, we determine how engaged people are at work, which can tell us a lot about how they think and feel about their jobs and their managers. Worker engagement, in turn, can tell employers something about productivity and retention.

**FULLY ENGAGED WORKERS, WORLDWIDE**



The percentage of workers who were fully engaged in 2025 was unchanged from 2024. But findings differed dramatically by market.

Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey

**MOST ENGAGED**  
**BRAZIL**

2025 engagement rate  
**29%**

Change from 2024  
**↑2pp**

**Notable:** Brazil's 2025 engagement tied with a record it set in 2023.

**What's going on in Brazil?** Young workers have brought elevated expectations to the workplace. They're looking for purpose, an alignment of values, clear expectations, improved feedback, recognition, and opportunities. And because employee experiences are highly visible on social media, these expectations have accelerated a change in leadership behavior. Employers increasingly treat engagement as a strategic priority, investing in employee experience, well-being, transparent communication, and cultural alignment.

**LEAST ENGAGED**  
**CHINA**

2025 engagement rate  
**11%**

Change from 2024  
**↓3pp**

**What's going on in China?** Since the pandemic, some companies have tightened budgets, frozen pay increases, and cut benefits. There's a failure to recognize high performers. Young workers want purpose and flexibility, but many employers still have seniority-based systems.

**BIG SWING**  
**SWITZERLAND**

2025 engagement rate  
**20%**

Change from 2024  
**↑4pp**

**What's going on?** Switzerland is a predictable, well-managed market, and many workers feel relatively secure in their jobs. Purchasing power has improved of late as real wage growth turned positive amid cooling inflation. And 2025 brought clearer rules on cross-border telework and taxation, which might have reduced day-to-day uncertainty and lifted employee engagement.



**MORE BIG SWINGS**

# MEXICO

2025 engagement rate | Change from 2024  
**18%** | **↓6pp**

**What's going on?** A convergence of leadership, organizational, and economic factors have eroded engagement. Mexico's cultural reliance on immediate leadership, combined with heavier managerial workloads and organizational complexity disproportionately affected engagement where leaders lack support. A softer economic outlook has dampened worker confidence. These challenges are compounded by a slow evolution in HR practices, particularly in employee development, feedback, and recognition.



# SOUTH AFRICA

2025 engagement rate | Change from 2024  
**27%** | **↓4pp**

**Notable:** South Africa led the world in 2024 but fell to second in 2025, just behind Brazil.

**What's going on?** High unemployment, inflation, and social unrest have created uncertainty. On the job, some people still are adjusting to hybrid and remote work, with some feeling a sense of isolation. Many employers are working on better ways to support their employees—be it through recognition, career growth, or mental health support—but these initiatives take time to get right. There's still a real need for skills development and growth opportunities to grow. When people lack a clear path forward, dedication to their work can suffer.



# INDIA

2025 engagement rate | Change from 2024  
**15%** | **↓4pp**

**Notable:** India has been sliding since a record engagement high of 23 percent in 2023.

**What's going on?** Workers in India put in long hours and complain of digital overload. Parliament is weighing a Right to Disconnect bill amid growing concern about work spilling into personal time. India's long and fragmented workdays drain worker energy, reduce focus, and make it harder to sustain enthusiasm at work. Wide skill gaps are contributing to reduced engagement.

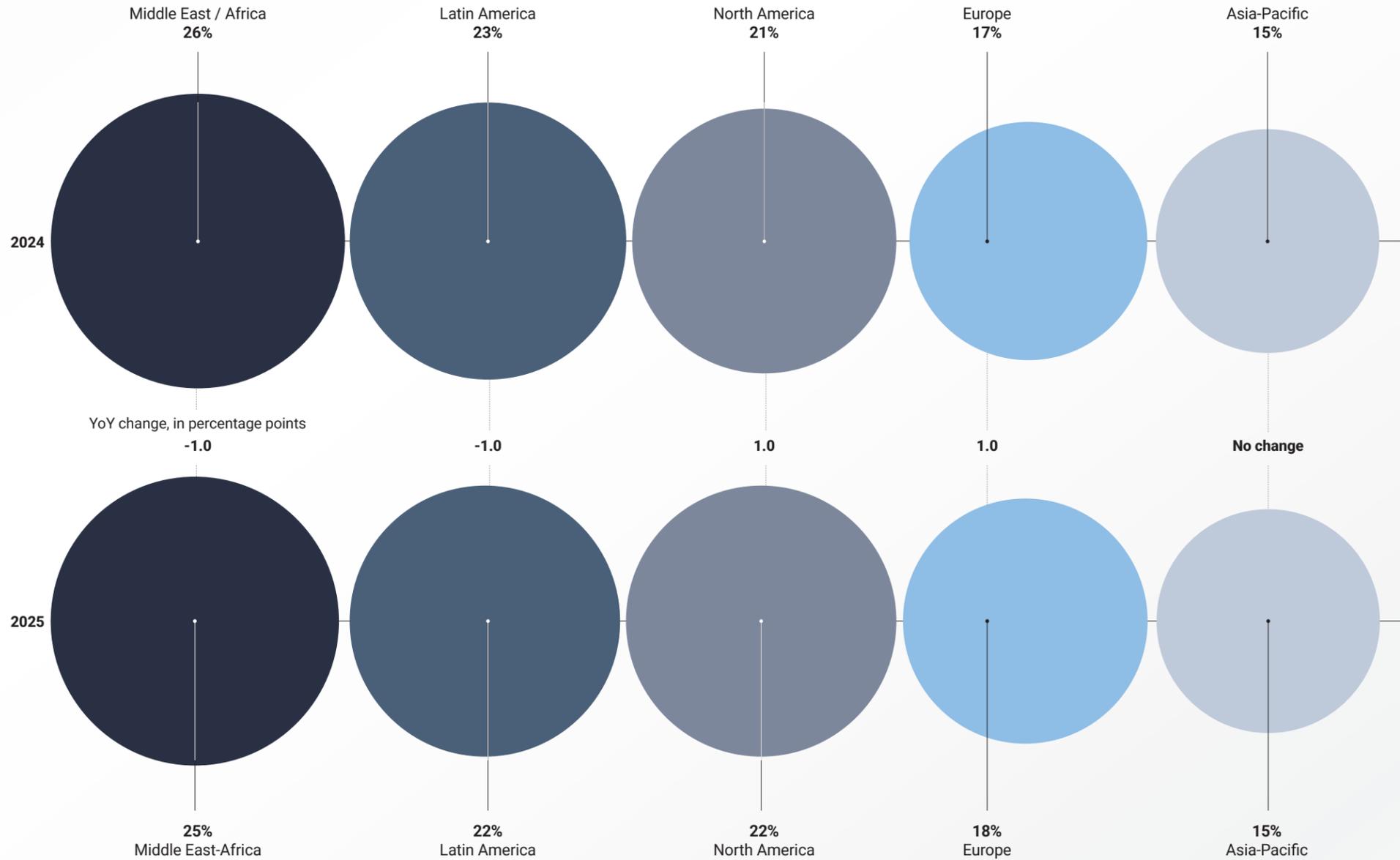
# SOUTH KOREA

2025 engagement rate | Change from 2024  
**14%** | **↑3pp**

**What's going on?** The South Korean government's "workation" and hybrid work models for civil servants are spreading to private employers, increasing productivity and job satisfaction. The largest employers have expanded benefits to include K-pop concert allowances, vehicle discounts, and extended vacations. A rise in unionization and a cultural shift that has young workers prioritizing work-life balance and meaningful jobs have prompted employers to adapt. Corporate leaders have begun to focus more on inspiring and empowering employees.



### FULLY ENGAGED WORKERS WORLDWIDE by region, 2024-'25



### FULLY ENGAGED WORKERS WORLDWIDE by market, 2024-'25

Market	2024	2025
Argentina	19%	19%
Australia	16	18
Austria	NA	17
Brazil	27	29
Canada	19	21
Chile	22	23
China	14	11
Czech Republic	13	15
Egypt	23	25
France	21	19
Germany	19	21
India	19	15
Indonesia	17	20
Italy	15	15
Japan	10	12
Mexico	24	18
Netherlands	17	17
New Zealand	16	15

Market	2024	2025
Nigeria	30%	22%
Peru	22	20
Philippines	24	25
Poland	15	16
Saudi Arabia	24	24
Singapore	12	12
South Africa	31	27
South Korea	11	14
Spain	17	16
Sweden	17	19
Switzerland	16	20
Taiwan	9	13
Thailand	15	13
Turkey	NA	23
United Arab Emirates	23	26
United Kingdom	21	24
United States	24	23
Vietnam	17	16

#### THE TAKEAWAY

Engagement has links to meaningful outcomes such as productivity, retention, and brand promotion. But finding the levers to increase worker engagement isn't always simple or straightforward. What can employers do?

- Invest in skills. Among workers who strongly agree that their employer is investing in them, 53 percent are fully engaged. When this support is lacking, the share of fully engaged workers falls to only 12 percent.
- Build trust. Engagement increases dramatically when workers trust their leaders.
- Help workers find purpose. Workers who find

meaning in their jobs are 12.5 times more likely to be fully engaged than workers who don't. This could be as simple as asking people where they find purpose and giving them opportunities that align.

- Minimize stress. People who report less-frequent stress are more likely to be fully engaged.

Source: ADP Research 2025 Global Workforce Survey

