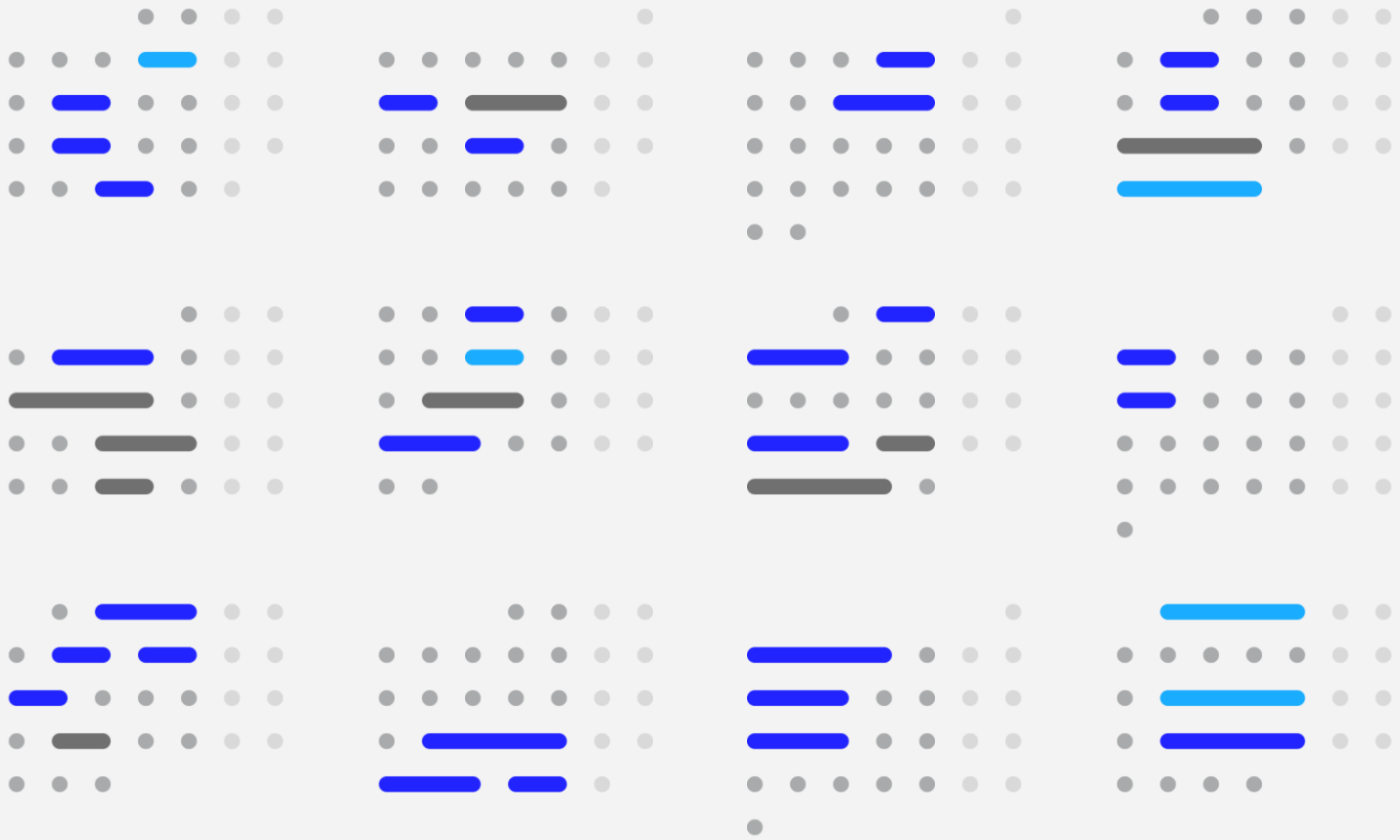
Morning Consult

The State of Work

And The Most Admired Employers

What workers want, where they most want to work, and how AI is shaping the landscape



October 2026

In this report

A Morning Consult read on what workers want, where they most want to work, and how AI is shaping the landscape. Each landscape. Each section opens with the headline finding, followed by the data behind it.

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Workers Supplement data retrieved October 12, 2026; additional Morning Consult data retrieved October 21–27, 2026. The Most Admired Employers rankings (pages 22–27) use Morning Consult Intelligence brand data; see page 21. Methodology by page: pages 28–29.

Key takeaways

1 Employer trust and job satisfaction are high and steady

86% of workers are satisfied with their jobs and 71% trust their employer. Trust has held between 69% and 73% every year since 2022.

2 Work-life balance matters as much as pay for Gen Z

Gen Z workers are as likely to name work-life balance (27%) as pay and benefits (27%) as their top priority for a next job. Overall, pay still leads, 31% to 23%.

3 Workers expect more rewards than a year ago

58% expect a bonus and 42% a promotion, each up 11 to 12 points from September 2025, while raise expectations rose from 61% to 66%.

4 Right-leaning workers are warming to corporate stances

Since early 2024, their support has risen on every issue tracked, including unionization (49% to 61%) and climate change (50% to 60%), narrowing the gap with left-leaning workers.

5 AI use has expanded, alongside a stronger sense that it is useful

49% use AI at work often or sometimes, up from 34% in September 2025, and 33% now call AI tools very useful, up from 19%.

6 7 in 10 tech workers expect AI to let work like theirs be done with fewer people

70% of technology workers say AI will make it easier to do work like theirs with fewer people in the next year, compared with 41% of all workers.

7 Google, Nike and Netflix are the Most Admired Employers

They lead the ranking among all working adults, and Google ranks first with every audience in the report.

What our data shows on major questions in this space

How is AI changing work?

Use is spreading quickly: 49% of workers now use AI at work often or sometimes, up from 34% a year earlier, with use highest among graduate-educated, higher-income workers and managers. Among users, majorities say they are learning new skills (63%) and working faster (58%), but 43% spend extra time fixing AI output. Accuracy (64%) leads workers' concerns about the technology.

What do workers want from employers right now?

Pay comes first: salary and benefits remain the top priority for a next job, though work-life balance is close among younger workers. Beyond pay, 77% say employees should have more protections and job security, a view shared by left- and right-leaning workers alike.

Which workers are most likely to leave?

Two groups stand out. Workers ages 18 to 25 are more satisfied than older colleagues (90% vs. 86%), yet 68% are interested in leaving, 29% are applying and only 61% trust their employer. By industry, technology and financial services workers are the most interested in leaving (58% and 56%), even though they are among the most likely to expect a raise, bonus and promotion.

Do workers still trust their employers?

Largely, yes. 71% of workers trust their employer, a level that has held between 69% and 73% since 2022 and sits well above trust in large corporations (51%) and business leaders (55%). That gap has narrowed as trust in big business has risen. Trust in one's employer is lowest among workers in households earning under $50,000 (64%) and those ages 18 to 25 (61%).

Are workers staying put, or getting ready to leave?

Most are staying, for now. 86% of workers are satisfied with their jobs and 48% say they are interested in leaving, but only 20% are actively applying elsewhere, a share that has barely moved since 2024. The gap is widest among Gen Z: 67% are interested in leaving, while 28% are applying. That pool of interested but waiting workers is the retention risk to watch if hiring picks up.

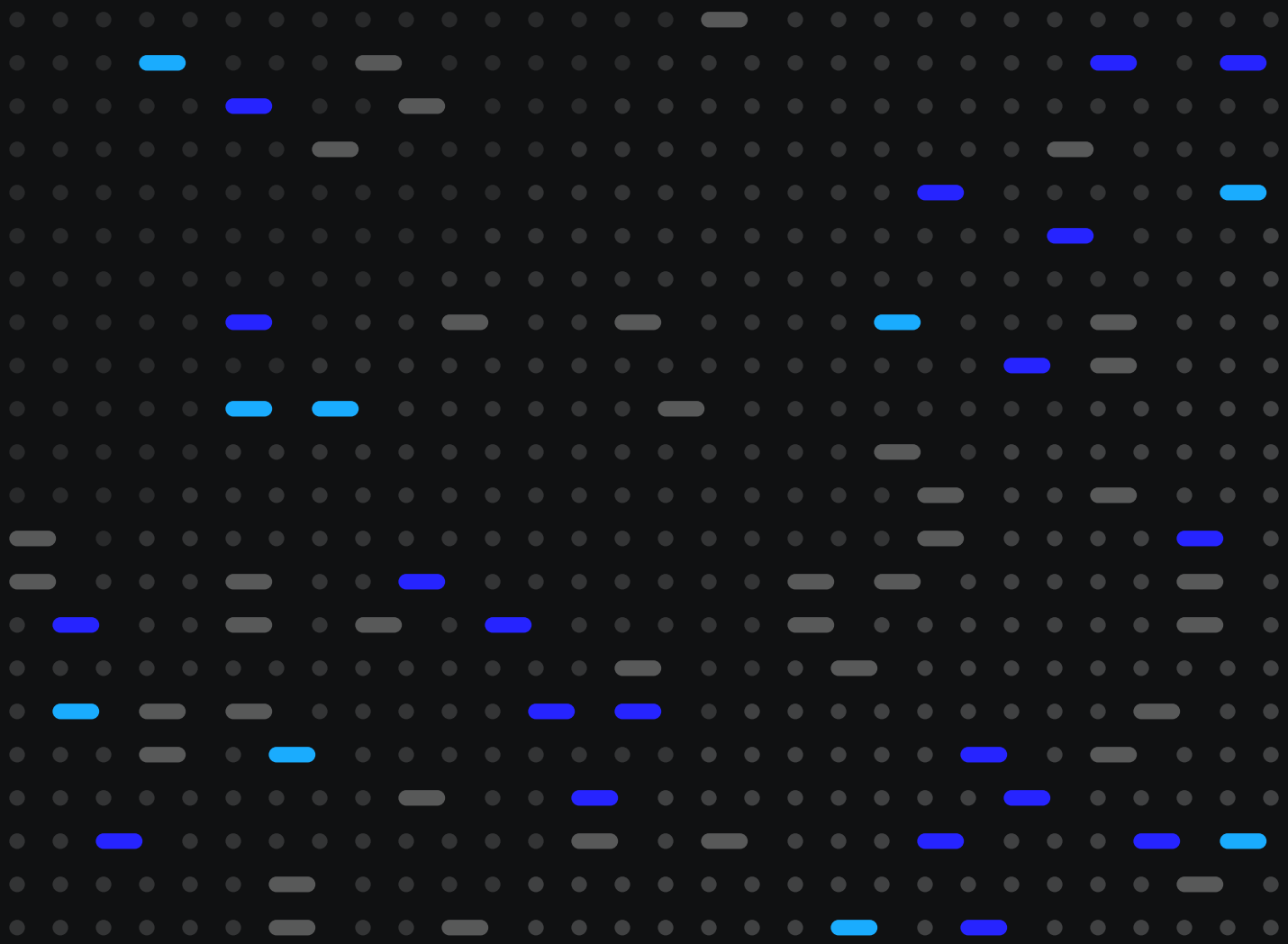
Will AI mean fewer jobs?

41% say AI will make it easier to do work like theirs with fewer people in the next year, rising to 70% in technology, 61% in financial services and 62% among directors.

PART 1

The State of the Workforce

Satisfaction, restlessness, pay and benefits, work location, and how much workers trust their employers

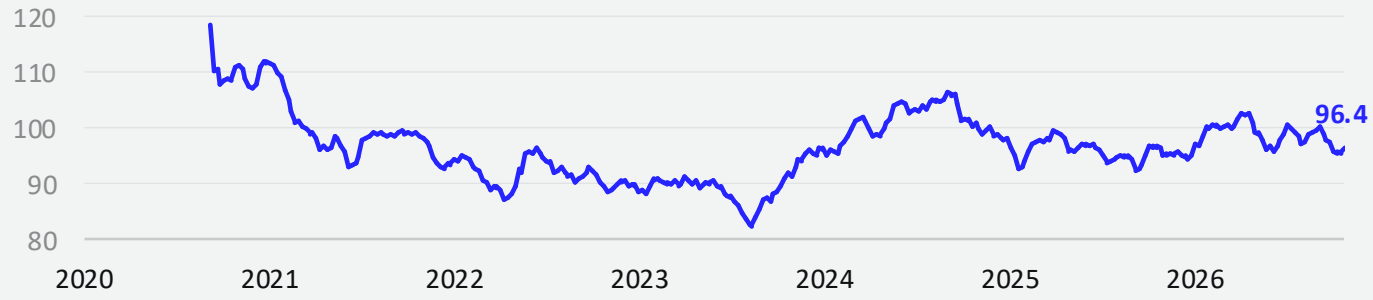


The labor market has held steady in 2026

- Morning Consult's Unemployment Index ended October at 96.4, almost exactly where it began the year (97.2) and where it stood a year earlier (96.5). It rose into the low 100s in March and April and has drifted back since.
- Job searching has also been flat all year: the share of U.S. adults actively applying for jobs has held between 22.5% and 23.5% on a four-week average, in line with 2025 and about a point and a half above 2023.
- The share of adults who lost pay or income in the past week started 2026 at about 13%, its highest level since mid-2021, and has eased since. October had the lowest reading of the year and matches the 2024 and 2025 averages.
- Official data tell the same story. The BLS unemployment rate has held between 4.1% and 4.3% since March, even as monthly payroll gains have swung from 133,000 in August (revised) to 29,000 in September. Beneath the steady headline, gains are uneven: our data shows that both higher- and middle-income adults have experienced more positive workplace events this year, while adults earning under $50,000 have held steady.

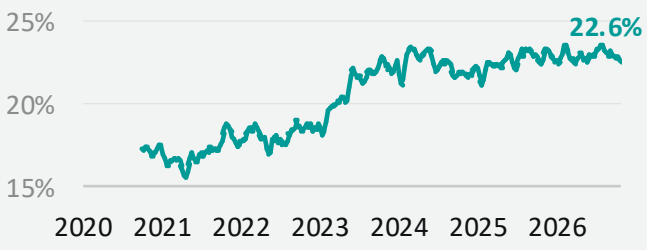
The Unemployment Index has largely held steady

Morning Consult's weekly, survey-based index of U.S. joblessness (seasonally adjusted, four-week average) rose into the low 100s this spring and has since settled back to where it began the year.



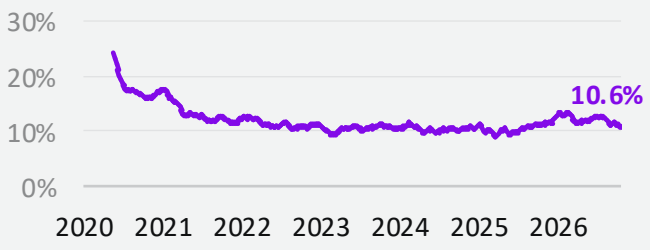
Job searching has also barely moved

Share of U.S. adults actively applying for jobs (four-week average) has held between 22.5% and 23.5% all year, in line with 2025.



Pay loss has eased slightly

Share of U.S. adults who lost pay or income in the past week (four-week average) began 2026 near 13% and has fallen to 10.6%.



Job satisfaction is high and the share looking to leave has remained steady in recent years

- Nearly 9 in 10 employed adults are satisfied with their job. At the same time, 50% say they are at least open to leaving
- Far fewer are acting on that interest. The share actively applying rose from 15% in late 2022 to about 19% by mid-2023 and has stayed between 18% and 20% every month since. The share open to leaving but not applying has slipped from 35% to 30%.
- The gap between interest and action is widest among younger workers: 67% of Gen Z are interested in leaving, but 28% are actively applying.

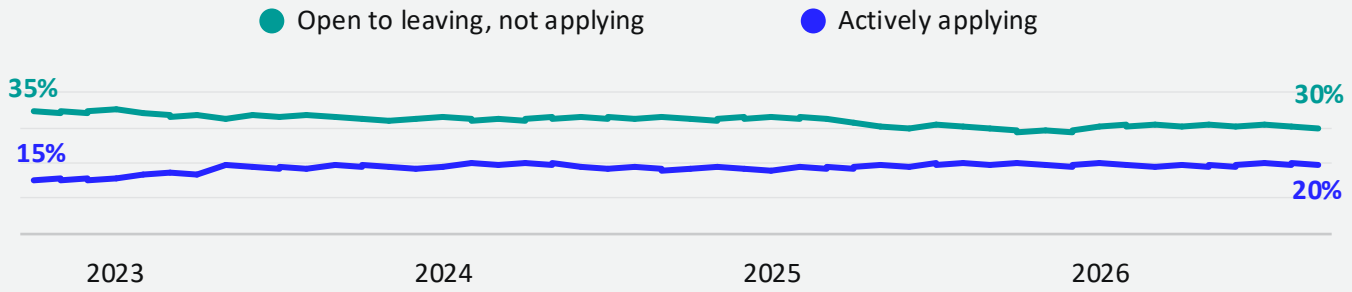
86%
Satisfied with their job

50%
Open to leaving or actively applying

20%
Actively applying for other jobs

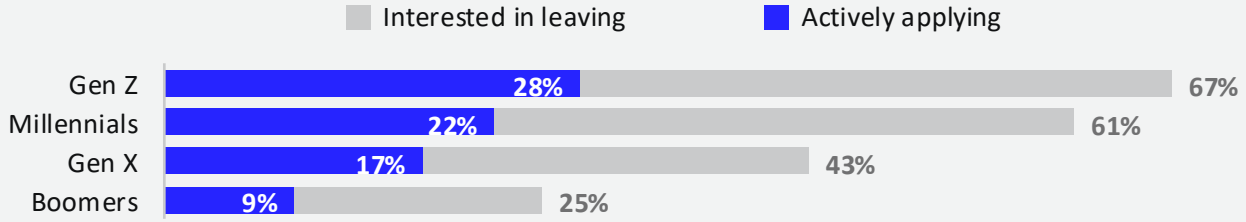
Active job searching has barely moved since mid-2023

Share of employed workers who say they are open to leaving or actively applying for other jobs



Interest far outpaces action, especially among younger workers

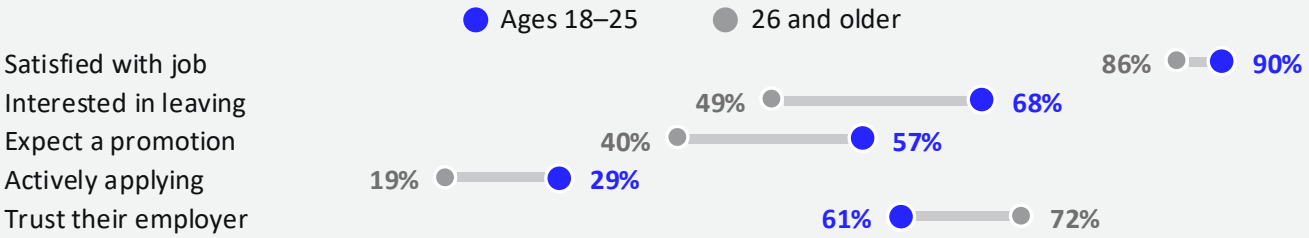
Share interested in leaving vs. share actively applying for other jobs



Most early-career workers are interested in leaving their job; 3 in 10 are actively applying

- Workers ages 18 to 25 are far more interested in leaving than older colleagues (68% vs. 49%), more likely to be actively applying (29% vs. 19%) and less trusting of their employer (61% vs. 72%).
- Broken down by industry, technology and financial services workers are the most interested in leaving (58% and 56%). They are also among the most likely to expect a raise, bonus and promotion.
- Food and beverage workers are the most likely to be actively applying elsewhere (28%) and they are also among the least satisfied (80%).

Early-career workers look quite different from older peers



Restlessness, satisfaction and expected rewards, industry by industry

Share of workers in each industry, January–September 2026; shading compares industries within each column

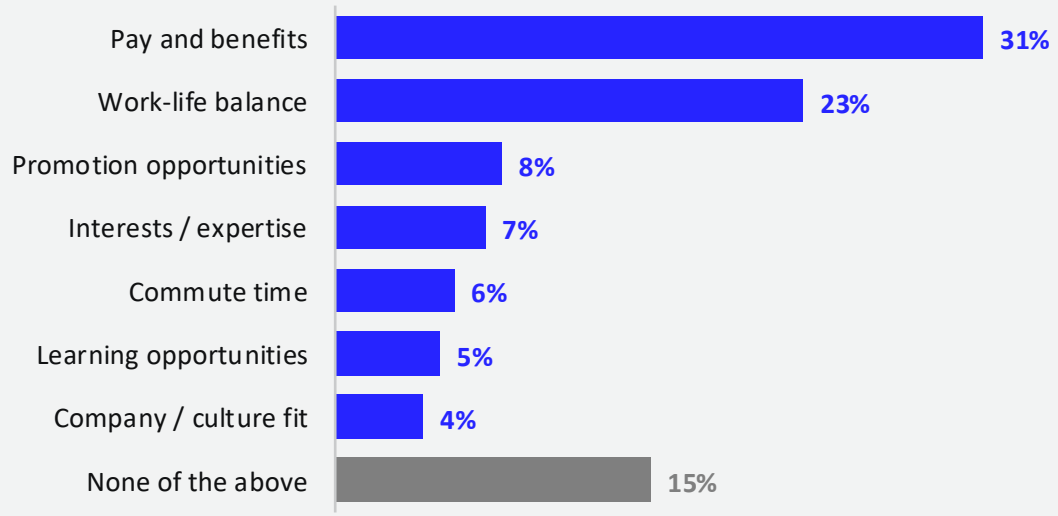
Industry	Actively applying	Interested in leaving	Satisfied with job	Expect a raise	Expect a bonus	Expect a promotion
All workers	**20%**	**49%**	**85%**	**65%**	**55%**	**39%**
Technology	22%	58%	92%	79%	79%	57%
Financial services	20%	56%	86%	71%	72%	58%
Transportation	20%	54%	81%	63%	49%	36%
Higher education	21%	53%	89%	64%	39%	41%
Construction	17%	49%	87%	66%	64%	43%
Manufacturing	16%	47%	87%	71%	64%	37%
K-12 education	17%	47%	88%	59%	42%	26%
Food & beverage	28%	47%	80%	68%	48%	37%
Retail	20%	46%	80%	62%	48%	31%
Health care	17%	44%	82%	69%	52%	32%
Leisure & hospitality	22%	44%	86%	69%	47%	30%
Media & entertainment	26%	41%	81%	52%	49%	28%
Professional & business services	16%	40%	90%	58%	60%	38%
Real estate	16%	34%	92%	48%	52%	33%
Insurance	16%	28%	79%	71%	73%	37%

Pay and work-life balance lead job priorities

- Salary and benefits remain the most common top priority for workers next job, at 31%, down from 41% in September 2025.
- Pay's lead over work-life balance has narrowed from 18 points to 9 points. While this is a shift in priorities, it's not necessarily evidence that workers would accept less pay.
- Among Gen Z and millennials, pay and work-life balance draw nearly equal shares. Gen X and boomers still put pay clearly ahead.
- Company and culture fit remains a rare first choice, at 4%.

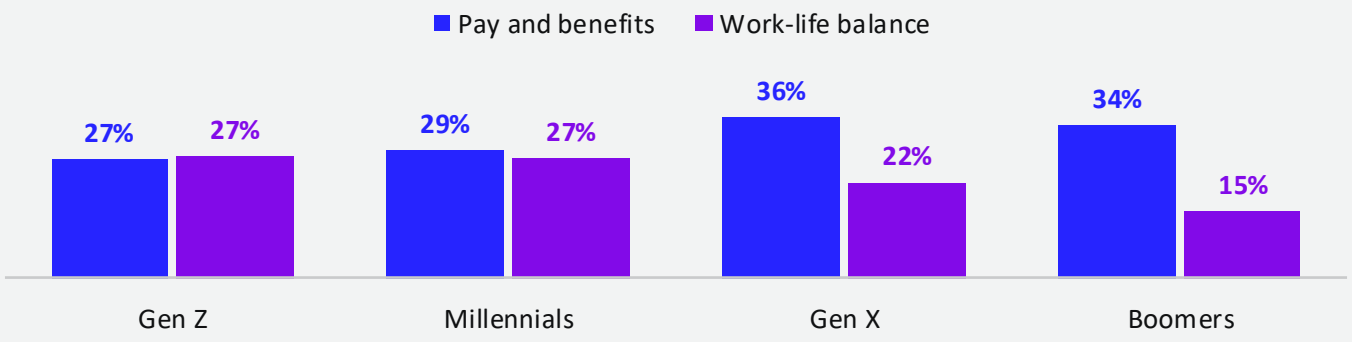
Compensation leads, but work-life balance isn't far behind

Top priority in the next job



Pay and work-life balance are close for younger workers

Top priority in the next job, by generation

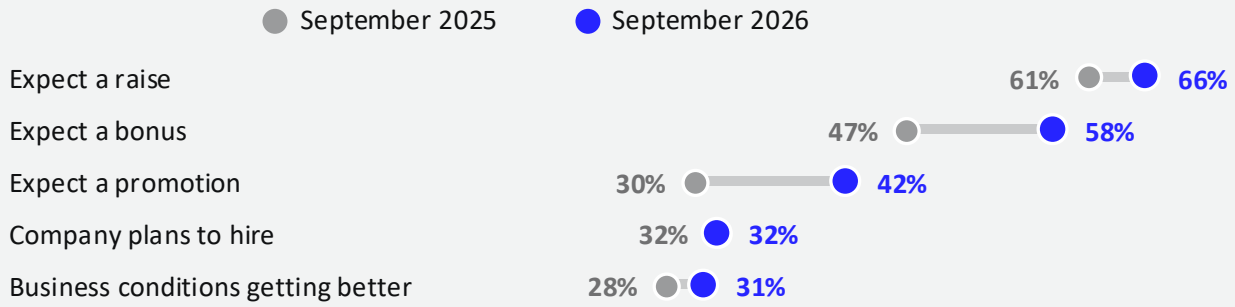


Workers expect more rewards than a year ago, and higher earners expect the most

- Expectations for bonuses and promotions each rose 11 to 12 points in a year: in September 2026, 58% expected a bonus and 42% a promotion. Raise expectations rose less, from 61% to 66%.
- Company hiring has not kept pace: 32% say their company plans to hire, unchanged from a year earlier.
- Workers in households earning $100,000 or more are 18 points more likely than those under $50,000 to expect a bonus (67% vs. 49%) and 9 points more likely to expect a raise (70% vs. 61%).
- Higher earners are also more satisfied (92% vs. 82%), but their interest in leaving (50%) is close to that of lower-income workers (53%).

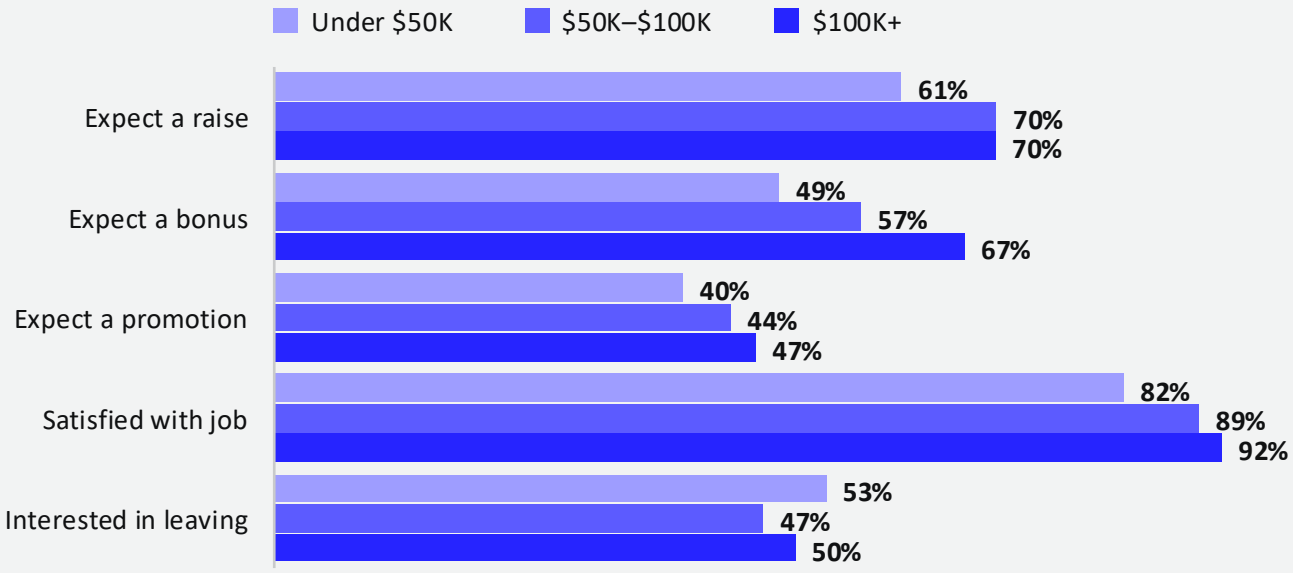
Reward expectations have risen faster than hiring

Share of workers who expect the following



Rewards and satisfaction rise with income; interest in leaving does not fall

Share of workers by household income

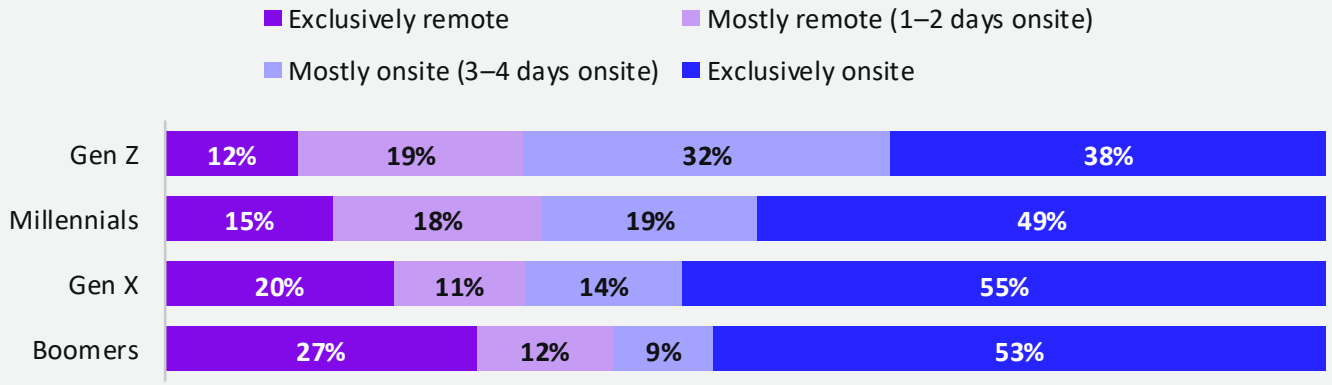


Younger workers want hybrid schedules, but most will tentatively accept in-person if required

- Gen Z is the generation most likely to prefer hybrid work: 51% choose a split between remote and onsite days, while only 12% prefer to work exclusively remotely.
- Within Gen Z's hybrid group, three to four days onsite (32%) is more popular than one to two (19%).
- Asked in September how they would respond if remote work ended, 68% of workers say they would definitely or probably stay, while just 13% say they would not.
- Commitment varies: 35% of Gen Z would definitely stay and 42% probably would, while millennials lean the other way (52% definitely, 27% probably).

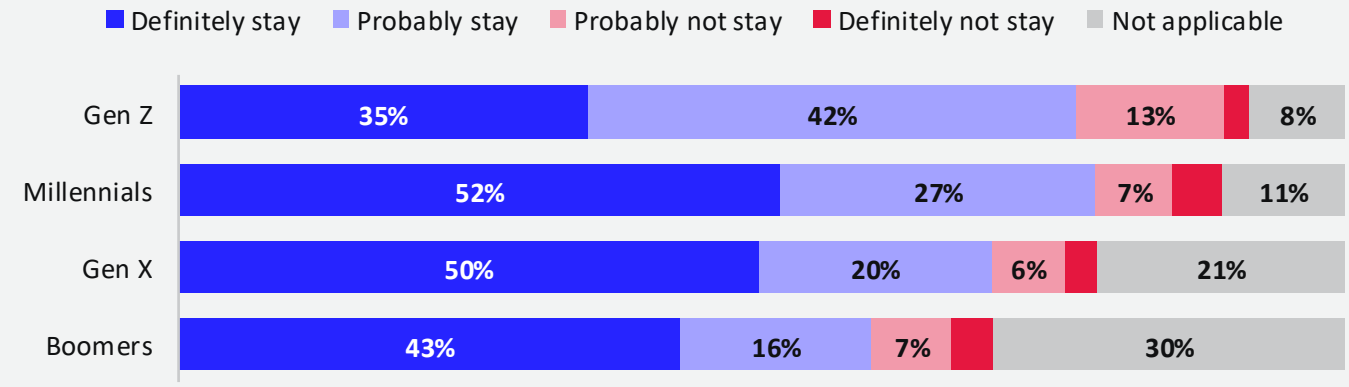
Most Gen Z workers prefer a mixture of remote and onsite days

Preferred work location arrangement



Gen Z would stay if remote work ended, but more tentatively

Response if remote work were discontinued

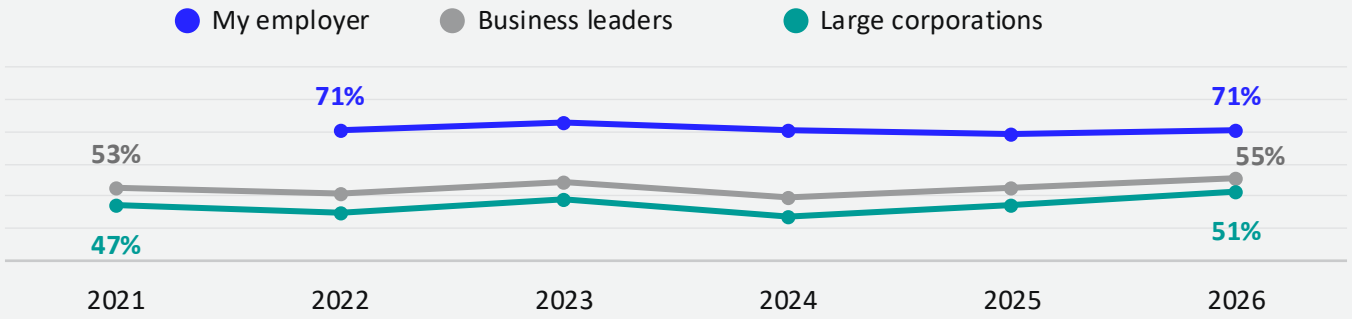


Workers trust their own employer far more than business in general, but corporate trust has ticked up

- Seven in 10 workers trust their employer, a level that has held between 69% and 73% every year since 2022.
- Trust in large corporations (51%) and business leaders (55%) is much lower, but both are at their highest since tracking began in 2021.
- As a result, the trust gap that ”my employer" holds over large corporations is its narrowest since 2022: 19 points in 2026, down from as high as 26 points in 2022.
- Trust in one’s employer is weakest among the lowest-income and youngest workers and strongest among higher-income, older and postgraduate-educated workers.

Employer trust is steady; trust in big business is catching up

Share who trust each a lot or some



Trust in employer is lowest among early-career and lower-income workers

Share who trust their employer a lot or some

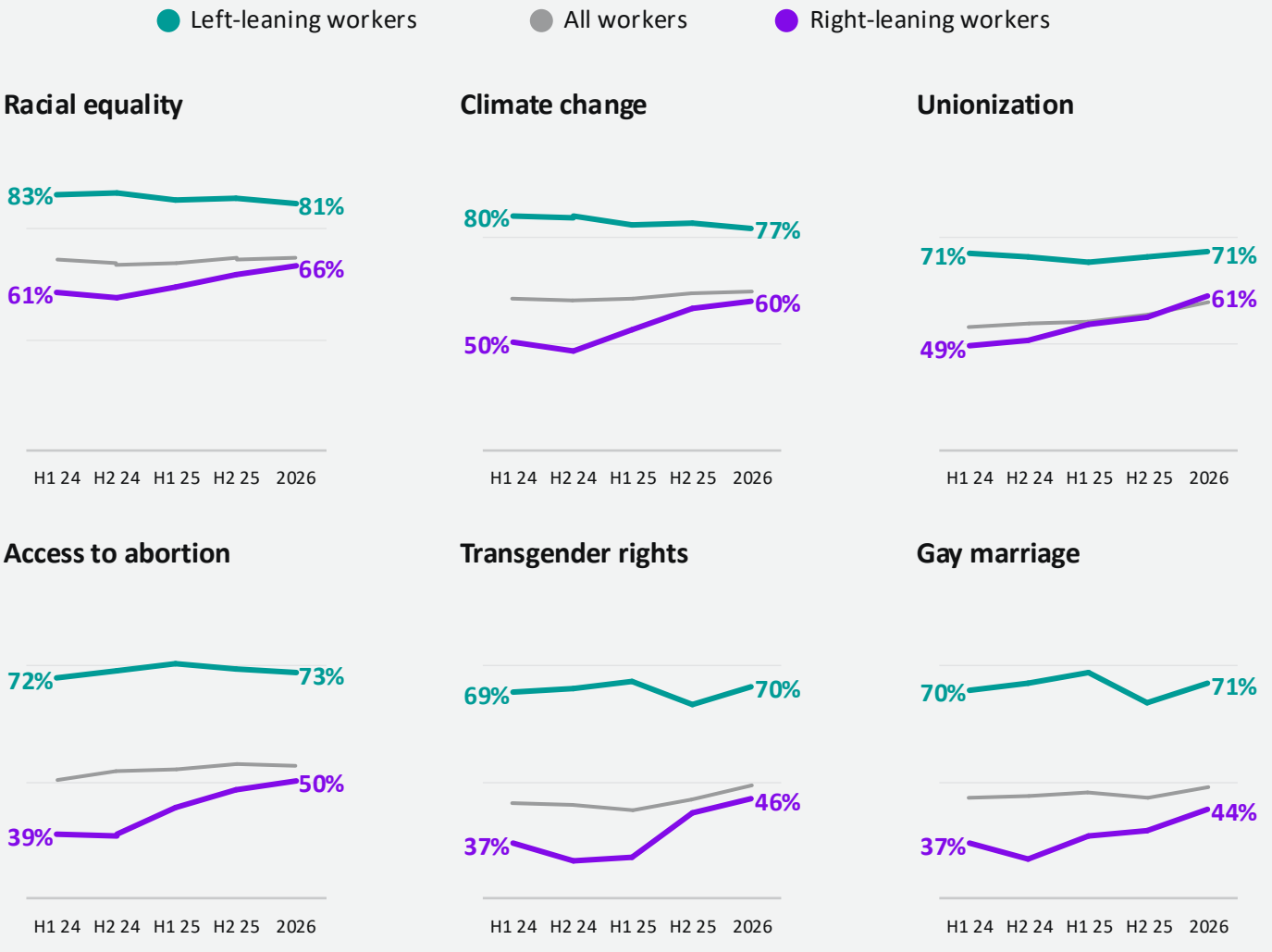


Workers want more protection, and right-leaning workers are warming to corporate stances

- 77% of workers say employees should have more protections such as safety and wage rules. That view has held since 2021 and is shared by left-leaning (84%) and right-leaning (82%) workers.
- Since early 2024, right-leaning workers have grown more supportive of companies taking a stance on every issue we track, while left-leaning workers' views have held roughly steady.
- The left-right gap has narrowed on every issue by 6 to 13 points. Racial equality, climate and unionization now draw majority support across the spectrum; abortion, gay marriage and transgender rights remain more divisive.
- Part of the shift reflects who identifies as right-leaning: the share of workers placing themselves on the right rose from 32% to 40% during this period.

The left-right gap has narrowed on support for companies taking stances

Share who support companies taking a stance on the following



PART 2

AI at Work

Adoption, unequal use and persistent concerns about the technology's consequences

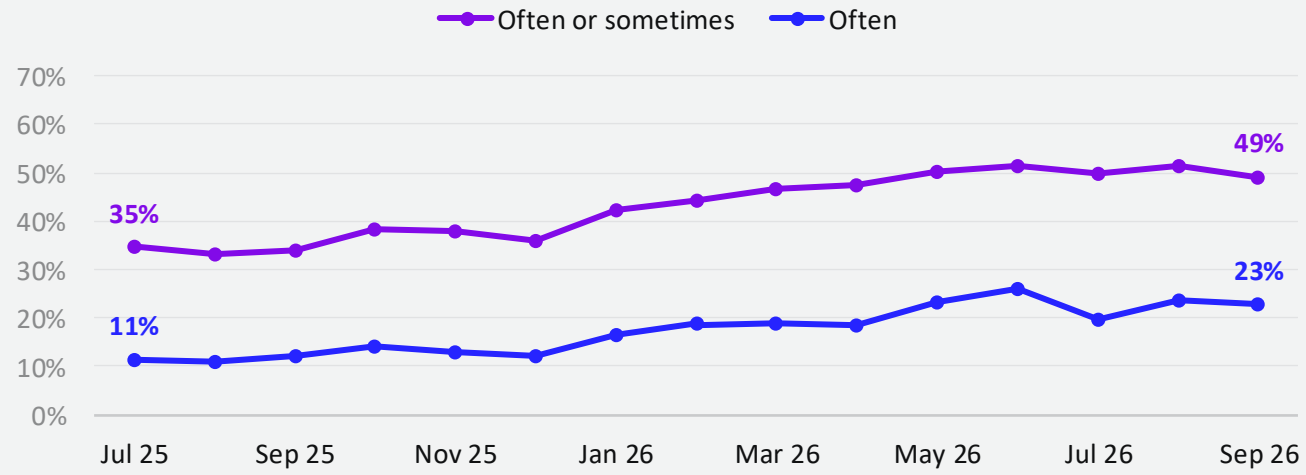


AI use has expanded, alongside a stronger sense that it is useful

- The share of workers who use AI at work often or sometimes rose from 34% in September 2025 to 49% in September 2026. Adoption on that broader measure has held around half since May.
- Frequent use nearly doubled, from 12% to 23%.
- Perceived usefulness moved the same way: 33% now rate AI very useful, up from 19%, while the share calling it not useful fell from 33% to 26%.
- That is a more favorable assessment of the tools, but neither measure establishes time saved, work quality or productivity.

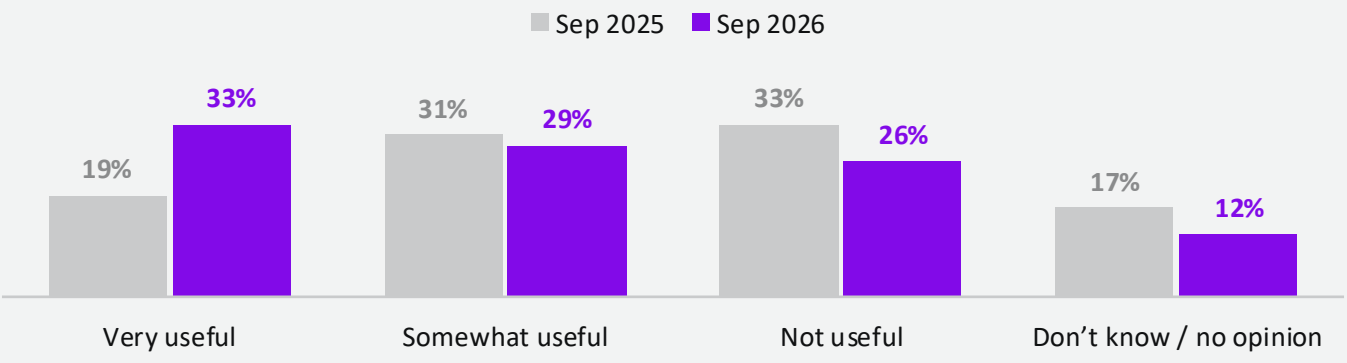
Nearly a quarter of workers use AI at work often

Share using AI at work



Workers increasingly describe AI as very useful

Usefulness of AI tools for work among all employed adults

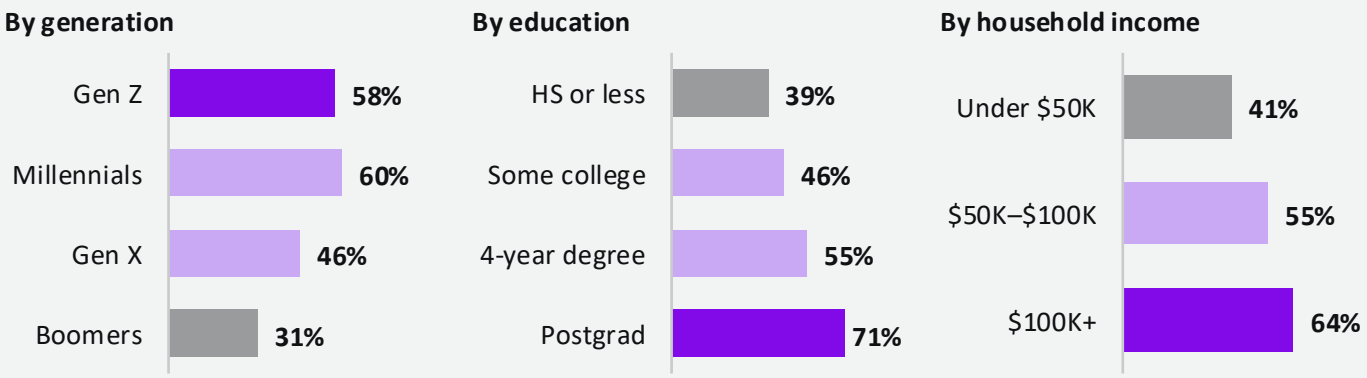


AI adoption gaps are growing by age and education

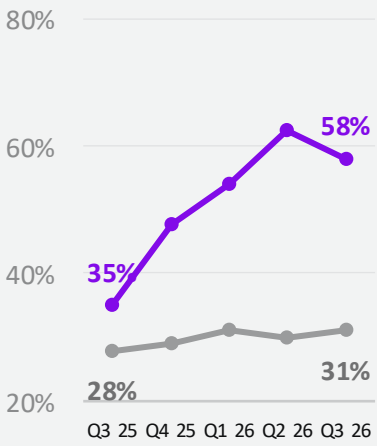
- AI use at work has risen among nearly every group over the past year, but not evenly. Millennials (60%) and Gen Z (58%) use it most and use climbs steadily with education and income as well.
- The generational gap has grown the most. Gen Z use rose from 35% to 58% between 2025 and 2026, while boomer use held near 30%, widening the gap from 7 to 27 points.
- The education gap widened modestly, from 28 to 32 points: 71% of workers with graduate degrees now use AI at work, compared with 39% of those with a high school education or less.
- By income, the gap has held at about 23 to 24 points, with use at 64% in $100K+ households and 41% in those under $50K.

AI use climbs with education and income, and is highest among younger workers

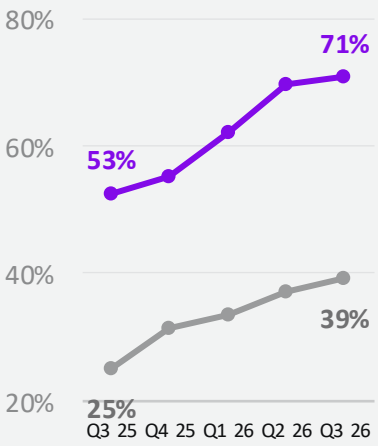
Share using AI at work often or sometimes, July–September 2026



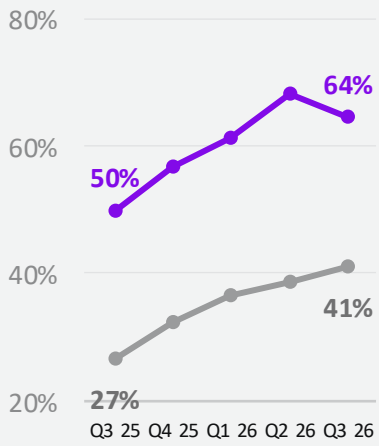
Gen Z vs. Boomers trend



Postgraduate vs. HS or less trend



$100K+ vs. Under $50K trend



AI is meaningfully changing work, and the gains come with new costs

- Among workers who use AI, majorities say it has them learning new skills (63%), working faster (58%) and producing higher-quality work (57%). But 43% spend extra time fixing or making sense of AI output, and 33% worry their own skills are getting weaker.
- The industries that use AI most report the most of both. In technology, 77% of AI users say they work faster and 63% spend extra time fixing output.
- Usage is not the whole story. Manufacturing workers report above-average speed gains (63%), professional services workers report less correction (38%), and financial services workers are the most likely to worry that their skills are weakening (48%).

How AI is playing out, industry by industry

Share of AI users who agree, past year (daily use: share of all workers); shading compares industries within each column

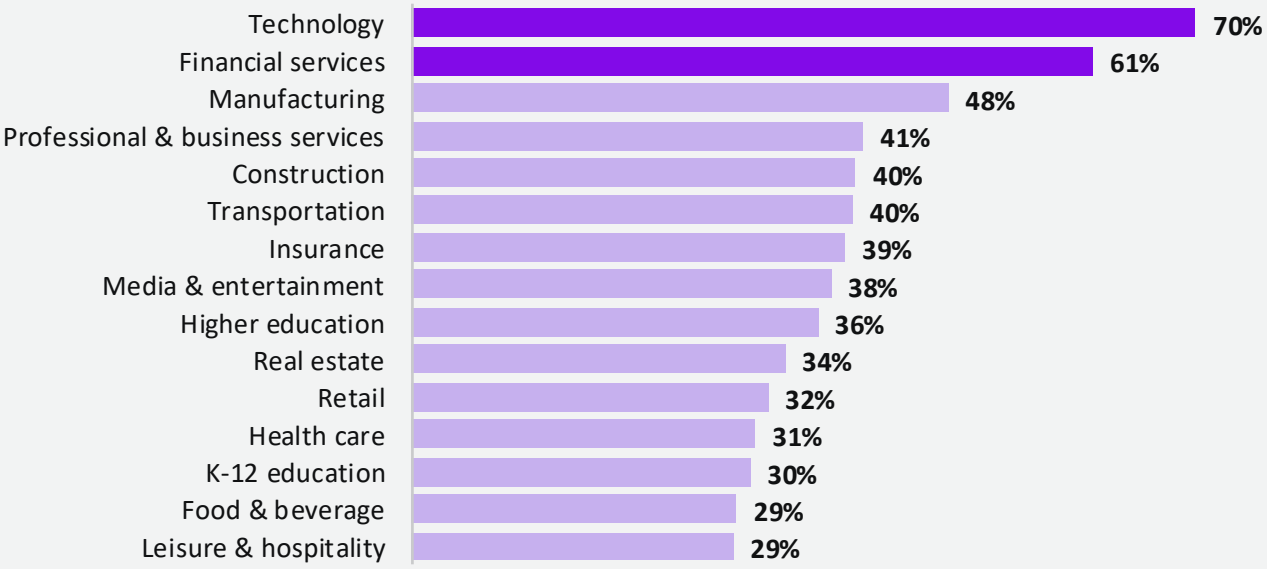
Industry	Use AI at work daily (all workers)	Learning new skills	Doing tasks faster	Higher-quality work	Extra time fixing AI output	Worry skills are getting weaker
All workers	**31%**	**63%**	**58%**	**57%**	**43%**	**33%**
Technology	63%	83%	77%	78%	63%	42%
Financial services	52%	77%	71%	68%	59%	48%
Manufacturing	34%	70%	63%	64%	44%	31%
Higher education	33%	57%	51%	46%	42%	35%
Professional & business services	32%	64%	59%	55%	38%	29%
Media & entertainment	30%	65%	56%	59%	44%	18%
Insurance	28%	54%	50%	47%	34%	31%
Construction	28%	64%	59%	58%	42%	34%
Transportation	26%	54%	48%	49%	40%	30%
Real estate	26%	58%	56%	52%	34%	25%
Health care	25%	55%	51%	52%	34%	27%
K-12 education	23%	58%	55%	53%	36%	32%
Retail	23%	54%	51%	49%	37%	30%
Leisure & hospitality	22%	53%	49%	48%	33%	25%
Food & beverage	16%	53%	52%	48%	39%	29%

Four in 10 workers expect AI will enable companies to do their work with fewer people

- 41% of workers agree that, over the next 12 months, AI will make it easier to complete work like theirs with fewer people.
- The expectation is strongest where AI use is heaviest: 70% in technology and 61% in financial services, compared with about three in 10 in health care, retail and hospitality.
- Expectations rise with seniority up to the director level: directors (62%) are twice as likely as associates (29%) to expect AI to shrink the work, which suggests leaders anticipate restructuring their own teams.

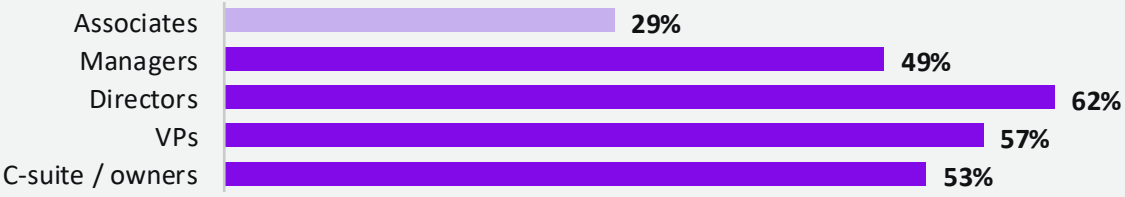
Tech and finance stand out on AI expectations

Share who agree AI will make their work doable with fewer people



Directors are twice as likely as associates to expect AI can manage human work

Share who agree AI will make their work doable with fewer people

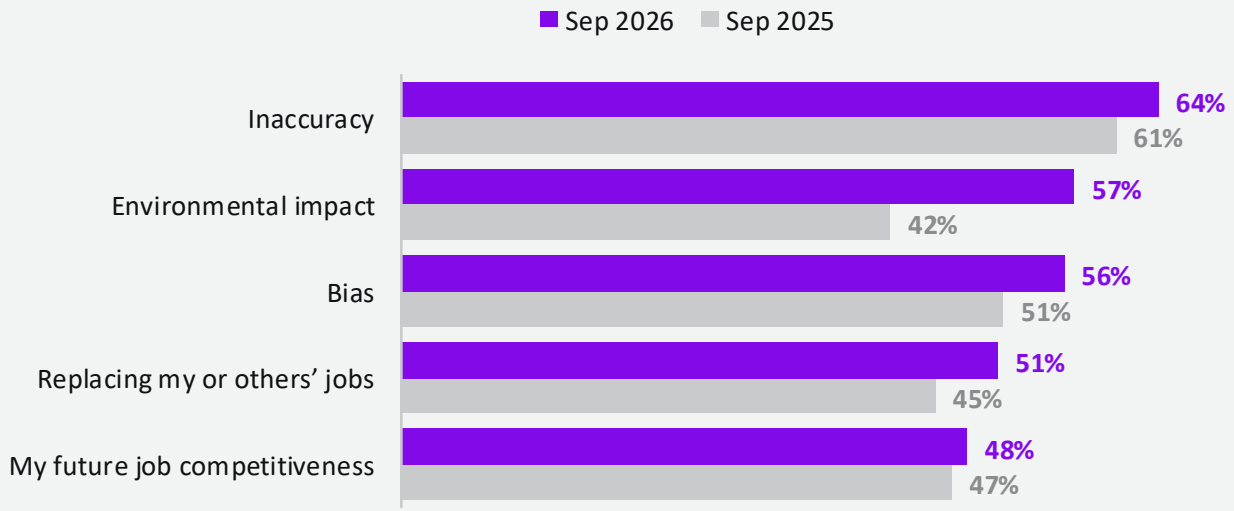


Workers' AI concerns are rising, but only a quarter expect an overall negative impact on the workforce

- Inaccuracy in output is the leading workplace AI concern tested, at 64%. Concern about bias (56%) and environmental impact (57%) each exceeds half.
- Environmental concern rose the most of the five items, from 42% to 57% over the year. Concern about AI replacing the respondent's or others' jobs also rose from 45% to 51%.
- Anxiety about becoming less competitive in a future job search changed less, from 47% to 48%.
- Optimism coexists with concern: 46% expect AI to have a positive impact on the workforce, versus 27% who expect a negative one. Employers have reason to address quality controls and workforce implications alongside the benefits of their tools.

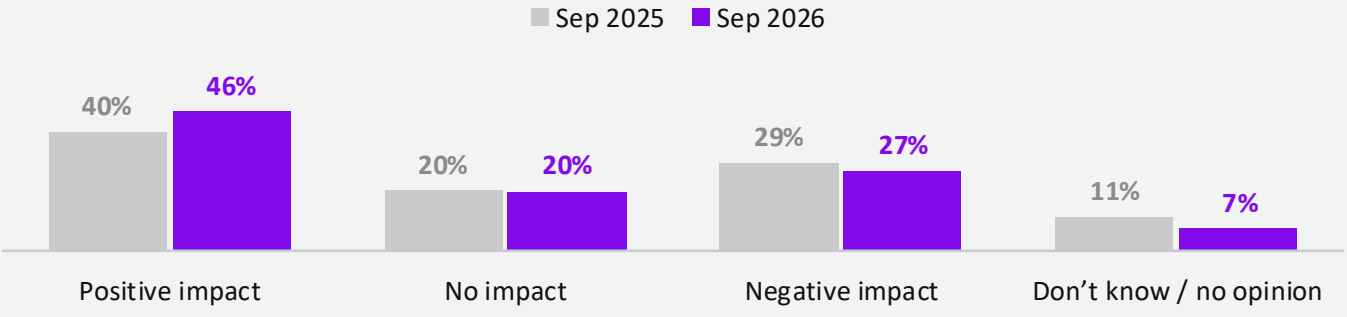
Accuracy is the top AI concern; environmental impact has risen the most

Share very or somewhat concerned about each issue



More workers expect a positive impact than a negative one

Expected impact of AI on the workforce



Part 3



Most Admired Employers 2026

Morning Consult

How the Most Admired Employers rankings rankings work

01 What is ranked

Each ranking shows the share of an audience that admires a company as an employer, using using Morning Consult Intelligence data collected July 1 through October 12, 2026. Admired reflects Admired reflects whether respondents would be proud to have a similar job at the company. The company. The year-over-year column compares the same window in 2025.

02 Which companies are included included

Only corporate companies are ranked. Products, apps and sub-brands such as YouTube or Gmail are tracked but left out, as are nonprofits, universities, military and government bodies, sports teams and leagues. When a company and its flagship brand share a name, such as Coca-Cola and The Coca-Cola Company, only the higher-ranked one appears. A company needs at least 300 responses in an audience to be ranked.

03 How to read the tables

Companies are ordered by share admired, rounded to one decimal. Ties share a rank, so a list can run past 25 companies. YoY is the change in percentage points from the same window in 2025; a dash means the 2025 base was too small to compare. A blue star marks a company that is not on the All Working Adults top 25.

Rank	Company	% admired	pp vs 2025
07	The Hershey Company	60.2	+3.7

Audiences covered

Audience	Who is included	Page
All working adults	Employed or actively looking for work, ages 18–66	22
College+ workers	Education: College+; employed or actively looking for work	23
Non-college workers	Education: Less than college; employed or actively looking for work	24
Male workers	Gender: Male; employed or actively looking for work	25
Female workers	Gender: Female; employed or actively looking for work	26
Students & recent grads	Age 18–25; current student or college graduate	27

The Most Admired Employers: All Working Adults

Share who admire the company as an employer (%) and year-over-year change (pp)

Rank	Brand	Admired	YoY
01	Google	66.6	−1.8
02	Nike	62.8	+2.3
03	Netflix	61.4	−0.4
04	Amazon	61.1	−2.5
05	PayPal	60.7	+1.0
06	Microsoft	60.5	+0.1
07	The Hershey Company	60.2	+3.7
08	The Coca-Cola Company	59.3	+0.6
09	Apple	58.3	−1.8
10	Sony	57.8	−2.5
11	Adidas	57.7	+0.1
12	Visa	57.4	−0.6
13	Disney	57.2	+1.6
14	Lego	57.0	+1.6
14	PepsiCo	57.0	−0.2
16	USPS	56.8	−1.4
17	Levi's	56.6	+4.2
18	FedEx	55.7	+1.6
19	Samsung	55.0	−3.3
20	Home Depot	54.8	+0.5
20	Walmart	54.8	−0.2
22	UPS	54.7	−1.0
23	Best Buy	54.1	+1.6
23	Nintendo	54.1	−4.2
25	Costco	54.0	−1.7

About this audience

All Working Adults

Age
18–66

Employment
Employed or actively looking for work

1.06m

surveys collected annually by Morning Consult Intelligence

The Most Admired Employers: College+ Workers

Highest share who admire the company as an employer among college+ workers

Rank	Brand	Admired	YoY
01	Google	67.0	−5.3
02	Microsoft	64.5	−3.7
03	Apple	63.0	−4.2
04	Amazon	61.0	−5.2
05	Nike	60.9	−0.7
06	Netflix	60.1	−4.9
07	PayPal	59.2	−5.3
08	Samsung	58.9	−3.7
09	Disney	58.5	+0.3
10	Adidas	58.1	−3.7
10	Visa	58.1	−4.8
12	Sony	57.7	−7.2
13	The Weather Channel ★	57.0	+8.2
14	The Coca-Cola Company	56.7	−0.1
15	Toyota Motor ★	55.4	−0.7
16	Costco	55.3	−2.5
17	Lego	55.2	−6.4
18	The Hershey Company	54.9	−0.1
19	PepsiCo	54.7	−1.4
20	HP ★	54.6	−3.4
21	Barnes & Noble ★	54.4	+10.8
22	Hilton ★	54.2	−0.3
23	Spotify ★	54.1	−4.3
24	Marriott ★	54.0	+1.0
25	Delta Air Lines ★	53.7	−1.0

★ = not on the All Working Adults ranking

About this audience

College+ Workers

Age	Education	Employment
18–66	College+	Employed or actively looking for work

405k

surveys collected annually by Morning Consult Intelligence

The Most Admired Employers: Non-College Workers

Highest share who admire the company as an employer among non-college workers

Rank	Brand	Admired	YoY
01	Google	64.8	−0.6
02	Nike	60.3	+2.4
03	Netflix	59.3	−0.2
04	PayPal	59.1	+1.3
05	Amazon	59.0	−2.2
06	The Hershey Company	58.2	+2.7
07	The Coca-Cola Company	57.7	+0.2
08	Microsoft	56.5	−0.2
09	USPS	56.4	−1.5
10	Adidas	55.5	−0.1
11	Disney	55.4	+1.2
12	PepsiCo	55.3	0.0
13	Apple	55.2	−1.7
14	Levi's	54.6	+2.7
14	Walmart	54.6	+0.6
16	Sony	54.5	−2.7
16	Visa	54.5	+0.7
18	Lego	54.3	+1.6
19	FedEx	54.1	+1.6
20	UPS	53.8	0.0
21	Home Depot	53.3	+0.9
21	Nintendo	53.3	−1.7
23	Best Buy	53.0	+2.7
24	PetSmart ★	52.5	+5.4
24	Samsung	52.5	−2.6

★ = not on the All Working Adults ranking

About this audience

Non-College Workers

Age	Education	Employment
18–66	Less than college	Employed or actively looking for work

657k

surveys collected annually by Morning Consult Intelligence

The Most Admired Employers: Male Workers

Highest share who admire the company as an employer among male workers

Rank	Brand	Admired	YoY
01	Google	67.6	−3.5
02	Nike	64.5	+1.5
03	Microsoft	63.7	−0.9
04	Amazon	62.0	−3.4
04	Sony	62.0	−3.5
06	PayPal	61.8	−0.7
07	The Coca-Cola Company	61.5	−0.3
08	Netflix	61.3	−2.8
09	Apple	60.5	−2.9
10	Adidas	60.0	−1.2
11	Levi's	59.3	+2.6
12	The Hershey Company	58.9	+2.8
13	PepsiCo	58.4	−1.9
14	FedEx	57.9	+2.4
15	Home Depot	57.4	−0.8
16	Visa	57.1	−2.0
17	Disney	56.7	+2.3
18	Samsung	56.6	−5.4
19	Best Buy	56.5	−0.4
19	Walmart	56.5	−0.6
21	Mastercard ★	56.2	−1.2
21	Nintendo	56.2	−5.3
23	Dell ★	56.0	−1.0
23	Lego	56.0	−1.3
25	Toyota Motor ★	55.7	+0.4

★ = not on the All Working Adults ranking

About this audience

Male Workers

Age	Gender	Employment
18–66	Male	Employed or actively looking for work

574k

surveys collected annually by Morning Consult Intelligence

The Most Admired Employers: Female Workers

Highest share who admire the company as an employer among female workers

Rank	Brand	Admired	YoY
01	Google	65.5	+0.3
02	The Hershey Company	61.6	+4.4
03	Netflix	61.5	+2.5
04	Bath & Body Works ★	61.4	+4.7
05	Nike	61.0	+3.4
06	Amazon	60.2	−1.4
07	PayPal	59.5	+3.1
08	USPS	58.2	−0.5
09	Disney	58.0	+0.8
10	Visa	57.9	+1.2
11	Lego	57.7	+4.6
12	The Coca-Cola Company	56.8	+1.8
12	Microsoft	56.8	+1.2
14	Apple	55.9	−0.6
15	Crayola ★	55.7	+1.7
16	Adidas	55.2	+1.8
16	PepsiCo	55.2	+1.7
18	L'Oréal ★	54.9	+5.2
19	CVS Health ★	54.3	+2.4
19	PetSmart ★	54.3	+2.6
21	Levi's	54.2	+6.7
22	ULTA Beauty ★	53.9	+4.2
23	UPS	53.5	−0.7
24	FedEx	53.4	+0.8
25	Cancer Treatment Centers of America ★	53.3	+5.8
25	The Weather Channel ★	53.3	+5.5

★ = not on the All Working Adults ranking

About this audience

Female Workers

Age	Gender	Employment
18–66	Female	Employed or actively looking for work

483k

surveys collected annually by Morning Consult Intelligence

The Most Admired Employers: Students & Recent Grads

Highest share who admire the company as an employer among students and recent grads

Rank	Brand	Admired	YoY
01	Google	66.5	−1.1
02	Apple	66.1	+3.3
03	Netflix	59.0	−3.0
04	Amazon	58.9	+7.2
05	Microsoft	58.8	−3.0
06	Nike	58.5	+2.1
07	Disney	56.8	+4.4
08	Spotify ★	56.2	+0.2
09	Visa	55.6	–
10	Target ★	54.8	+2.3
11	Costco	54.1	−1.0
12	Chick-fil-A ★	53.2	+7.0
13	The Coca-Cola Company	53.1	+3.3
14	Adidas	52.6	−0.9
15	Walmart	50.7	+3.6
16	PayPal	50.6	–
17	United Airlines ★	50.2	–
18	Pinterest ★	49.8	+0.8
19	PUMA ★	49.3	+13.5
19	T-Mobile ★	49.3	+6.0
21	Gucci ★	48.6	–
22	New York Times ★	48.2	+5.3
22	PepsiCo	48.2	+3.4
24	Domino's ★	47.6	–
25	Prada ★	47.4	–

★ = not on the All Working Adults ranking

About this audience

Students & Recent Grads

Age: 18–25

Education: Current student or college graduate

69k

surveys collected annually by Morning Consult Intelligence

Methodology by page (1 of 2)

Pages 3–4 summarize findings from the pages below. Sample sizes are weighted respondent counts. "Combined" responses are noted in parentheses.

Page	Population	Dates	Sample size	Question wording
6 Economic overview	All U.S. adults. BLS figures via MC econ notes (Sept. 8, Sept. 29, Oct. 6, 2026).	Weekly through Oct. 24, 2026; from May 2020 (pay loss), Sept. 2020 (index, job search). Four-week moving averages; index seasonally adjusted.	~7,300/week in 2026 (4,258–8,179).	**Job search:** "Were you actively looking for work… During the last 4 weeks" (examples: contacting employers, placing/answering ads). **Pay loss:** "Have any of the following happened to you in the past week? – Lost pay or income." Yes/No.
7 Satisfaction and retention	Employed adults.	Headline: Sept. 2026. Trend: monthly, Oct. 2022–Sept. 2026. Generation chart: July–Sept. 2026.	Sept. 2026: satisfaction 1,239; job search status 52,178. Generation chart: 563 / 1,466 / 1,254 / 586 (Gen Z / Millennials / Gen X / Boomers).	**Satisfaction:** "Thinking about your current role, how satisfied or unsatisfied are you with your job?" (very + somewhat). **Job search status:** "How would you describe your job search status?" Actively applying / Open to leaving / Not leaving; headline "open to leaving or applying" = first two. Generation chart uses the interest-in-leaving question as page 8.
8 Early-career, industries	Employed adults.	Industry table: Jan.–Sept. 2026. Age comparison: July–Sept. 2026; employer trust: Jan. 1–Aug. 27, 2026 (Business & Political Climate survey).	Jan.–Sept.: ages 18–25: 810; 26+: 10,618. Age comparison (July–Sept.): 317 vs. 3,566 (job search 18,480 vs. 150,126); trust 366 vs. 3,459. Industries: 119 (Media & ent.) to 1,230 (Health care); under 200: Media, Insurance, Real estate, Higher ed.	**Interest in leaving:** "How interested would you say you are in leaving your current job or place of employment?" (very + somewhat). **Rewards:** "Do you expect to receive the following in the next calendar year?… A raise / A bonus / A promotion."
9 Job priorities	Employed adults.	Sept. 2025 vs. Sept. 2026; generation chart July–Sept. 2026.	Sept. 2025: 847; Sept. 2026: 1,239.	"Which of the following will be your top priority when selecting your next job?" Salary / employee benefits; Work-life balance; Opportunities for promotion; Alignment with my interests / expertise; Commute time; Opportunities for learning; Company / culture fit; None of the above.
10 Reward expectations	Employed adults.	Sept. 2025 vs. Sept. 2026; income chart July–Sept. 2026.	Sept. 2025: 847; Sept. 2026: 1,239. Income: <$50K 1,586; $50–100K 1,278; $100K+ 806.	**Rewards:** as page 8. **Hiring:** "What best characterizes your place of work's outlook and hiring plans over the next 6 months?" ("Hiring employees"). **Conditions:** "Generally speaking, would you say business conditions for your company are getting better, getting worse, or are stable?"
11 Work arrangements	All employed adults (incl. non-remote).	July–Sept. 2026; "68% / 13%" text: Sept. 2026.	Preference: Gen Z 563, Millennials 1,466, Gen X 1,254, Boomers 586.	**Preference:** "In terms of office attendance, which of the following do you prefer for your work?" Exclusively remote / mostly remote (1–2 days onsite) / mostly onsite (3–4 days) / exclusively onsite. **If remote ended:** "If your company reduced or stopped allowing remote work and asked you to work in an office or company workplace, would you want to stay at your job or not?" Definitely / probably stay or not; not applicable.
12 Trust, employers and business	Employed adults (incl. self-employed).	Annual 2021–2026 (2026 through Aug. 27); employer trust from Sept. 28, 2022; demographic chart 2026.	Employer: 1,736 (Sept.–Dec. 2022); 3,827–5,542 (2023–26). Corporations, leaders: 4,724 (2021); 3,827–5,542 (2022–26).	"How much trust, if at all, would you say you have in each of the following… My employer / Large corporations / Business leaders" Trust a lot / some / just a little / not at all (a lot + some).

Methodology by page (2 of 2)

Page	Population	Dates	Sample size	Question wording
13 Protections, corporate stances	Employed adults (incl. self-employed). Viewpoint self-placed 1–7; left = 1–3, right = 5–7.	Stances: Jan. 2024–Aug. 2026 by half-year (2026 through Aug. 27). Protections: 2021–2026.	Stances by year: 5,349 (2024); 5,457 (2025); 3,827 (2026).	**Stances:** "Do you support or oppose companies taking a stance on each of the following?" Racial equality; Climate change; Unionization; Access to abortion; Transgender rights; Gay marriage (strongly + somewhat support). **Protections:** "…agree or disagree… Employees should have more protections (such as safety and wage regulations) and job security than they currently do."
15 AI use, usefulness	All employed adults, incl. non-users.	Use: monthly July 2025–Sept. 2026. Usefulness: Sept. 2025 vs. Sept. 2026.	Use: 650–1,807/month (Sept. 2026: 1,239). Usefulness: 847 (Sept. 2025); 1,239 (Sept. 2026).	**Use:** "At your current job, do you use any type of AI tools for your work?" Often / sometimes / rarely / never ("often or sometimes" excludes rarely). **Usefulness:** "How useful are AI tools in helping you do your job?" Very / somewhat / not useful.
16 AI adoption gaps	Employed adults.	Bars: July–Sept. 2026. Trends: quarterly Q3 2025–Q3 2026.	Gen Z 539, Millennials 1,381, Gen X 1,177, Boomers 559. Income: <$50K 1,586; $50–100K 1,278; $100K+ 806. Education: 395+ per group.	As page 15 use question; "often" or "sometimes."
17 How AI is changing work	Employed adults who use AI tools at work or for personal reasons (any frequency). "Daily" column = share of all employed adults.	Aug. 22–Oct. 3, 2026.	AI-tool users: 19,072 (higher-quality item: 17,800). Industries shown: 211–2,820.	"In what ways has AI affected your work over the past year? Please select all that apply." "I am learning new skills"; "I do the same tasks in less time"; "…at a higher quality"; "I spend extra time fixing or making sense of AI output"; "I worry my skills are getting weaker." Strongly + somewhat agree.
18 AI and headcount	Employed adults.	Aug. 22–Oct. 3, 2026.	24,365 employed; industry cells smaller.	**Fewer people:** "…how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the next 12 months? – In the next 12 months, AI will make it easier to complete work like mine with fewer people, or without people like me."
19 AI concerns, impact	Employed adults.	Sept. 2025 vs. Sept. 2026.	Sept. 2025: 847; Sept. 2026: 1,239.	**Concerns:** "How concerned are you, if at all, about the following?" AI being inaccurate / biased; impact on the environment; replacing my job or other jobs; making me less competitive in future job searches (very + somewhat). **Impact:** "Do you think the use of AI in the workplace by various industries will have a positive, negative, or no impact on the workforce?"
21–27 Most Admired Employers	Six audiences (page 21). All Working Adults: ages 18–66, employed (private, government, self-employed, student, other) or actively looked for work in past 4 weeks.	July 1–Oct. 12, 2026; YoY vs. same window 2025.	Minimum 300 responses per company per audience. Example: Google, All Working Adults, 7,337.	"Thinking about your current or most recent job, would you be proud to have a similar job at the following… [company]" Yes/No; admired = % Yes.