



2026 Human Progress Report

Speak the **new language** of adaptability

Paradox



Continuum



Mindset



Imperative



Preface



We are living through a period of sustained disruption. In conversations with leaders, educators, and workers around the world, what stands out to me is not uncertainty itself, but the determination to keep moving forward.

The 2026 ETS Human Progress Report reflects a workforce actively trying to regain traction in a fast-moving world. Skills matter more than ever, but so does the ability to update them, validate them, and apply them as work changes. As once-linear career paths give way to more dynamic ones, success increasingly depends on whether people can turn learning into forward momentum.

In earlier reports, we focused on the foundations of human progress: access to education, upward mobility, and lifelong learning. Those pillars remain essential. But this year's findings point to a deeper shift. Workers are not just asking what skills they need they are asking how to stay relevant as expectations keep changing. That question sits at the heart of this moment.

This is where adaptability emerges as a defining capability of our time. Not as a stand-alone trait, but as the connective tissue between learning, skills, and opportunity. Adaptability is what allows people to keep moving when roles change, technologies advance, and certainty fades. It turns disruption into direction.

Three signals from this year's research reinforced that reality for me:

- **Skills are now the primary currency of work**, but only when they can be refreshed, demonstrated, and trusted.
- **Confidence increasingly comes from access** to learning, to credentials, and to emerging technologies like AI.
- **Progress continues, but unevenly** reminding us that adaptability is shaped as much by systems as by individuals.

For the third year in a row, the data affirms that continuous learning is essential for success. But learning alone is not enough. People need visibility into their skills, confidence in their relevance, and support as expectations change. Measurement plays a critical role in this process by turning effort into opportunity and uncertainty into agency.

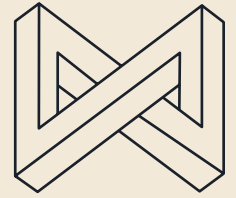
Success in 2026 belongs to those who can adapt, and to the institutions willing to help them do so.

I hope this report inspires action and collaboration as we work together to build systems that expand opportunity and enable people to shape what comes next.



**Letter from Amit Sevak,
Chief Executive Officer, ETS**

Introduction

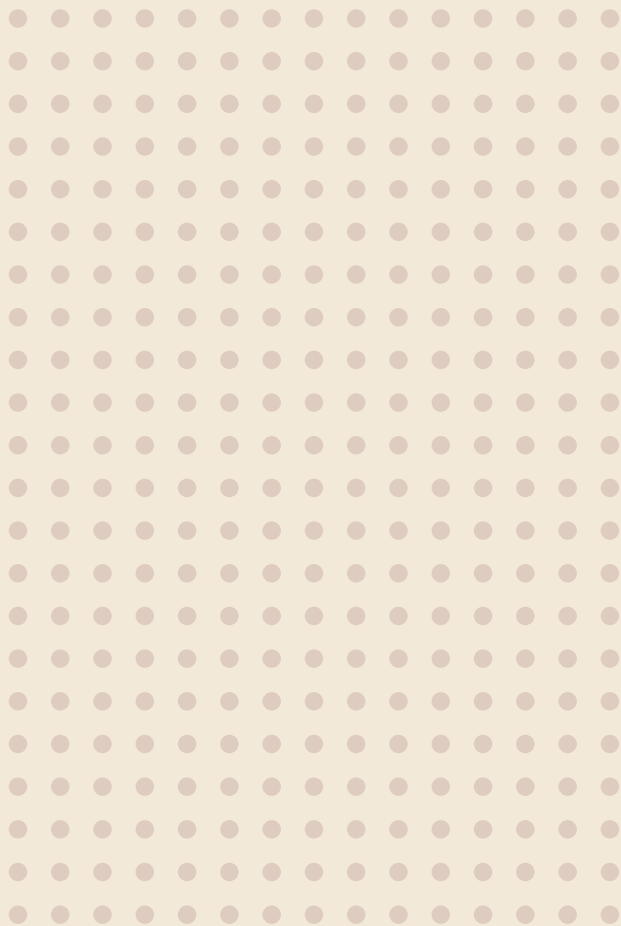


The world is now shaped by continuous disruption. For the last three years, the Human Progress Report has documented a global workforce under pressure from accelerating technological change, shifting job expectations and widespread uncertainty about the future of work. In 2026, this pressure has intensified. Tools change faster than people can master them.

Job roles evolve faster than organizations can define them. A growing share of workers can no longer see a clear path forward.

Amid these conditions, one idea has taken hold across economies and cultures. Adaptation is no longer an advantage; it is a requirement for survival.

Why this study matters now



The adaptation imperative: The defining characteristic of workforce resilience today is the ability to evolve continuously. The majority of workers report navigating frequent changes in tools, expectations and collaboration practices. Most are taking action to future-proof their careers. At the center of this shift is the rise of verifiable skills. Credentials have become the bridge between rapid change and individual stability, offering workers a way to document their progress and sharpen their ability.

The influence factor: The Human Progress Report continues to inform talent strategy for global employers, shape workforce development policies for governments and guide education innovation across 18 countries. This research provides a single, integrated view of workforce readiness, credential access and skill gaps in an AI-driven economy.

The human impact: In this year's edition, the report draws on over 32,000 respondents, providing the largest dataset since its inception. It captures the lived experiences of people who are striving to adapt, the barriers they face and the competencies they believe will define prosperity in the decade ahead.

The competitive edge: ETS doesn't just measure change. We are designing the infrastructure that elevates human potential in the AI age. As skills become the currency of opportunity, ETS is positioned to advance the science of assessment and credentialing best practices to support a more adaptable, global workforce.

Executive summary

This year's report captures a profound shift in how people around the world understand progress and are shifting toward perpetual adaptation. Workers are redefining what it means to hold job security, institutions are being pressured to modernize how they measure learning, and AI is reshaping expectations faster than ever. Across these changes, one theme is clear: proof of skills has become the stabilizing force that enables people to adapt, compete and thrive amid continuous transformation.



An adaptive mindset: 77% believe job security requires continuous evolution, with three-fourths actively developing new skills to future-proof their careers.

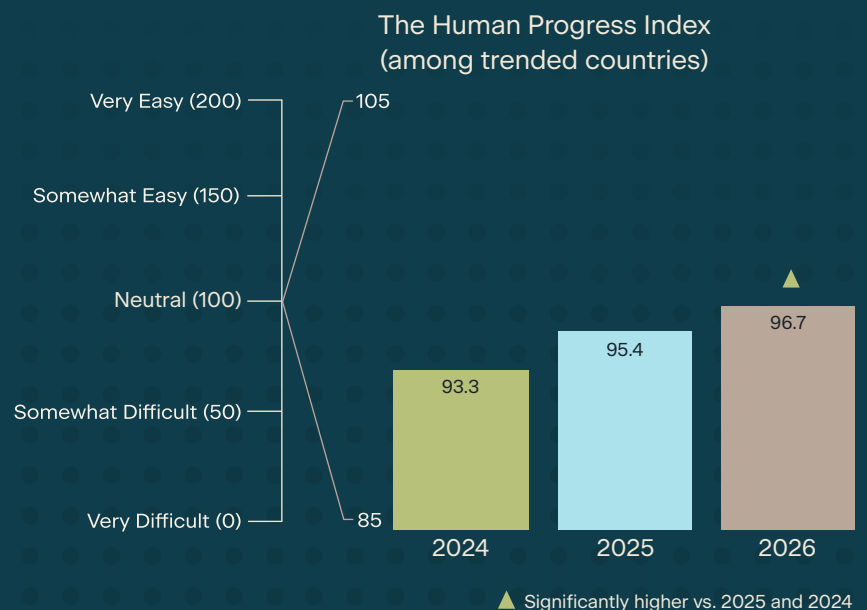
The credential revolution: 85% of workers say credentials — any formal proof of skills such as certifications, licenses, or badges — are now essential for career survival. However, while 73% are interested in a credentialing program, only 45% have access to one, whether because of cost, limited availability, or other structural hurdles. This gap represents more than one in three interested workers lacking access to a credentialing program, the defining challenge of workforce development.

A global skills emergency: Workers face critical gaps across all competencies, with the steepest deficit in AI literacy — a 19-point gap between perceived importance and proficiency.

Institutional disconnect: Although 88% of workers expect employer support for upskilling, only 71% receive it. Institutions are failing to provide support at the pace that workers need to adapt to remain competitive.

AI as the new constant: Employees predict half of all work will involve AI within two years. Workers with AI experience show dramatically higher optimism about career prospects, creating a new divide between the AI-ready and AI-anxious.

Human progress continues: Despite disruption, the Human Progress Index rose from 95.4 in 2025 to 96.7, driven by improved education access. However, women, older populations and rural populations still lag.



Part I:

The disruption crisis



In this section:

- 1.1** *Major disruption defines the modern workplace*
- 1.2** *The adaptability paradox*
- 1.3** *Shifting requirements and technologies create roadblocks*
- 1.4** *Learning in motion becomes the new normal*

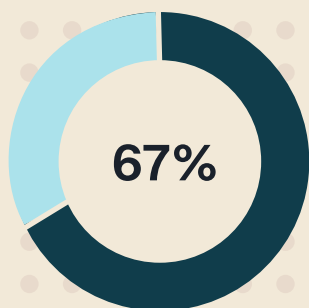
Key findings:

- Two-thirds of workers faced at least one major workplace disruption this past year, with the greatest disruption in middle-income countries and technical sectors.
- As fluctuating skill requirements and constant technological change create stacked barriers, workers increasingly learn on the move as change accelerates.
- A global workforce is trying to aim at an unclear future, reporting difficulty envisioning next generation jobs or preparing for them.

1.1 Major disruption defines the modern workplace

Workers everywhere are experiencing a workplace defined by constant change. The pace of disruption is no longer episodic. It is continuous, reshaping how people work, how they learn and how they plan for the future. This environment has produced a new psychological baseline marked by uncertainty and concern about long-term relevance.

Sixty-seven percent of workers report experiencing at least one major change in the past 12 months, ranging from shifts in tools and systems to evolving job expectations.



67% of workers

experienced at least one major change

75% Gen Z, 74% Millennials

74% College grads

80% Have a certification

79% Tech, 77% Financial Services

78% MIC vs. 55% HIC

86% India, 85% Kenya, 85% Vietnam,

83% Nigeria, 77% Indonesia, 76% Brazil



Past 12 Month Workplace Changes

% of workers experienced major change (8-10 on a 10-pt. scale)



Disruption is sharpest among those who already hold certifications (80%) — a specific type of credential, usually from an accredited body — Gen Z (75%) and Millennial workers (74%), and college graduates (74%), reflecting how quickly roles are evolving even in more advanced technical and high-skill industries.

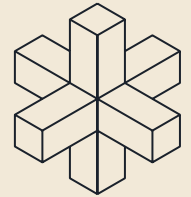
Middle-income countries display the highest levels of significant disruption, including India (86%), Kenya (85%), Vietnam (85%), Nigeria (83%), Indonesia (77%) and Brazil (76%).

Disruption also tends to cascade. Workers who saw significant changes in the technology or tools they use also experienced changes in role expectations (71%) and in how they collaborate (70%).

Technological change has far-reaching impact, from restructuring workflows to redefining business relationships.



1.2 The adaptability paradox



Workers are attempting to adapt to a future they cannot clearly see. Sixty-nine percent say they have no clear picture of what the next generation of jobs will look like in 2035, reflecting uncertainty about how AI and automation will reshape work.

Meanwhile, 77% of workers say they are proactively building diverse skills to protect their careers. This adaptability paradox results in nearly half (49%) still feeling unprepared for next generation roles.

49% of workers feel

Underprepared for the next generation of jobs

Underprepared (1-7 on a 10-pt. scale)

57% of Gen X

73% Rural

64% Non-College Grad

The reasons workers give are consistent across markets: they lack experience with emerging technologies such as AI, automation or data tools. Many also report limited hands-on exposure to innovative systems that are becoming central to modern work.

Reasons for not feeling prepared for next jobs:

“My current skill set is more traditional. While I have a strong foundation, I **lack experience with emerging technologies such as AI, data analytics, and automation.** Additionally, I haven’t had much hands-on exposure to innovative tools that are becoming essential in today’s workforce.”

– Gen Z, Kenya

“I feel not fully prepared because of technological advancements and **the demands of next generation jobs are moving very rapidly.** I still need to learn many new skills.”

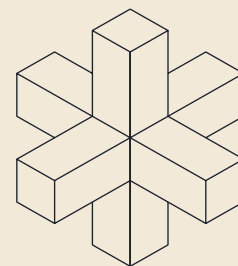
– Millennial, Indonesia

Workers feel that by the time they learn something new, the market may have already moved on, which makes it difficult to target their learning effectively.

1.3 Shifting requirements and technologies create roadblocks

Rapid shifts in skill requirements create structural barriers to success. Forty-four percent of workers say their job requirements shift faster than they can learn new skills. About the same share (42%) struggle to adjust to new technologies as they appear, and 37% are already preparing for future changes that have not yet materialized.

These pressures accumulate. A worker who is learning new tools must also adjust to new expectations, which creates a sense of always catching up. The fact that these adaptations are required on top of existing workloads intensifies the challenge.



Among workers, the top 3 barriers to professional success are:

44%

selected

Learning new skills when job requirements change

42%

selected

Adjusting to new technologies in the workplace

37%

selected

Preparing for future changes in your industry / sector

“I can’t predict what the next generation of jobs will consist of. Things are changing so quickly I feel if I learn a new skill, it may be obsolete before I am proficient enough to use it.”

– Boomer, Canada



1.4 Learning in motion becomes the new normal

These overlapping pressures explain why 93% of workers report at least one barrier to succeeding professionally. Barriers cluster around access to the right tools, continuous skill updating and the need to

anticipate industry changes before they arrive. For example, workers in IT are more likely than those in other fields to point to adjusting to new technologies in the workplace as a barrier to success.

93% of workers

experienced at least one barrier to professional success

97% MIC vs. 90% HIC
98% India, 98% Kenya

Barriers to Professional Success

% of workers selected



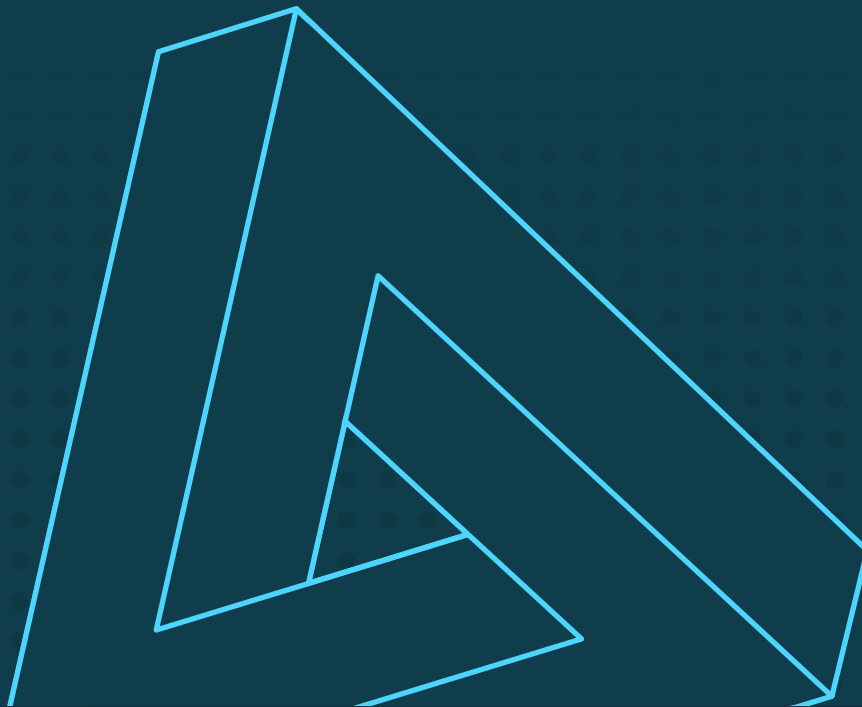
In the face of disruption, workers recognize the need to forge new, adaptive pathways.

Despite these challenges, workers are not disengaging. They are seeking ways to regain control and chart clearer pathways through volatility. Workers are adapting to the present while preparing for an ambiguous future, often with limited structured support. Instead of periodic training, workers must now build skills continuously while in the flow of work. This has triggered an adaptation imperative, where continuous evolution — or “learning in motion” — becomes the central requirement for job security and advancement.



Part II:

The imperative to adapt



In this section:

- 2.1** *Workers redefine job security as continuous evolution*
- 2.2** *Anxiety and fear of becoming obsolete (FOBO) intensify as disruption persists*
- 2.3** *Adaptation mindsets emerge*
- 2.4** *Future-proofing becomes an everyday practice*

Key findings:

- Workers increasingly view continuous skill and certification adaptation as the core requirement for job security.
- Three distinct adaptation mindsets are now shaping how workers navigate disruption.
- Fear of becoming obsolete (FOBO) remains a defining psychological response to rapid change.
- Workers are already adopting active strategies to future-proof their careers.

2.1 Workers redefine job security as continuous evolution

Worldwide, workers now believe that stability comes from the ability to evolve. Seventy-seven percent of those working for an employer say job security no longer exists if people do not continuously adapt.

Workers have shifted from seeing job security as a function of tenure to seeing it as a function of adaptability. Sixty-one percent agree they have shifted from seeking job security to obsessing over staying relevant. This sentiment is most strongly held in markets undergoing rapid technological

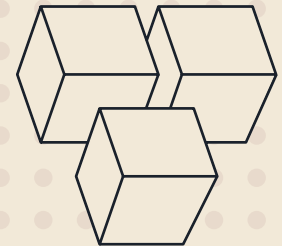
transformation, including China (76%), Indonesia (74%), India (72%), Saudi Arabia (71%), Vietnam (71%) and the UAE (69%).

At the same time, 79% of all employed respondents say they are actively thinking about how to future-proof their careers to stay relevant. This rises to 85% among Millennials, 83% among college graduates and at least nine in 10 in Indonesia, Vietnam, Kenya and Nigeria.

79%
of workers
agree:

“I am actively thinking about how to **future-proof my career** to stay relevant in the job market”

85% Millennial, 83% College Grad, 85% Have a certification
94% Indonesia, 92% Vietnam, 91% Kenya, 90% Nigeria, 88% India
86% Tech, 84% Financial Services



The mindset of always future-proofing

“I **constantly engage myself in training** and getting the right knowledge about different concepts that make me **thrive in any environment** I find myself.”

– Millennial, U.K.

2.2 Anxiety and FOBO intensify as disruption persists

More than six in ten of all workers (61%) say they are concerned their current job could be disrupted. Fifty-eight percent of those working specifically for an employer experience anxiety about becoming obsolete, a slight decline from the 60% reported in last year's Human Progress Report but still a widespread concern.

This fear of becoming obsolete, or FOBO, is most intense among younger workers. Sixty-three percent of Gen Z report anxiety about becoming obsolete, and country-specific fears are even higher in Vietnam (75%) and India (67%).

JOB DISRUPTION

61% of workers agree

I'm concerned that my current job could be disrupted

(e.g., become obsolete, have new skill requirements, etc.)

77% Vietnam, 69% India, 68% S. Korea, 66% Indonesia

FEAR OF BEING OBSOLETE

58% of workers agree

I experience anxiety about becoming obsolete in my field

(i.e., FOBO, fear of being obsolete)

63% of Gen Z
75% Vietnam, 67% India

Part of this anxiety appears to stem from confidence gaps. Just one in four workers (27%) are very confident they can spot changes in their industry before they occur. Only a third of workers feel highly confident in their ability to pivot as roles evolve, be it learning new skills (36%), using technology to assist with changes (35%), applying new information under stress (33%) or applying skills from one situation to a different context (32%).

The most confident skew younger and certified, often in analytically advanced fields or in countries engaged in a technological renaissance: Gen Z, Millennials, those with certifications and those working in financial services and technology.

Workers who do feel confident describe a mindset of always future-proofing. As one Nigerian Millennial puts it, "I have a balance of future-focused technical skills, evergreen human skills and the mindset to keep learning and adapting as the world changes."

Confidence in Ability to Adapt

% of workers selecting *very confident*



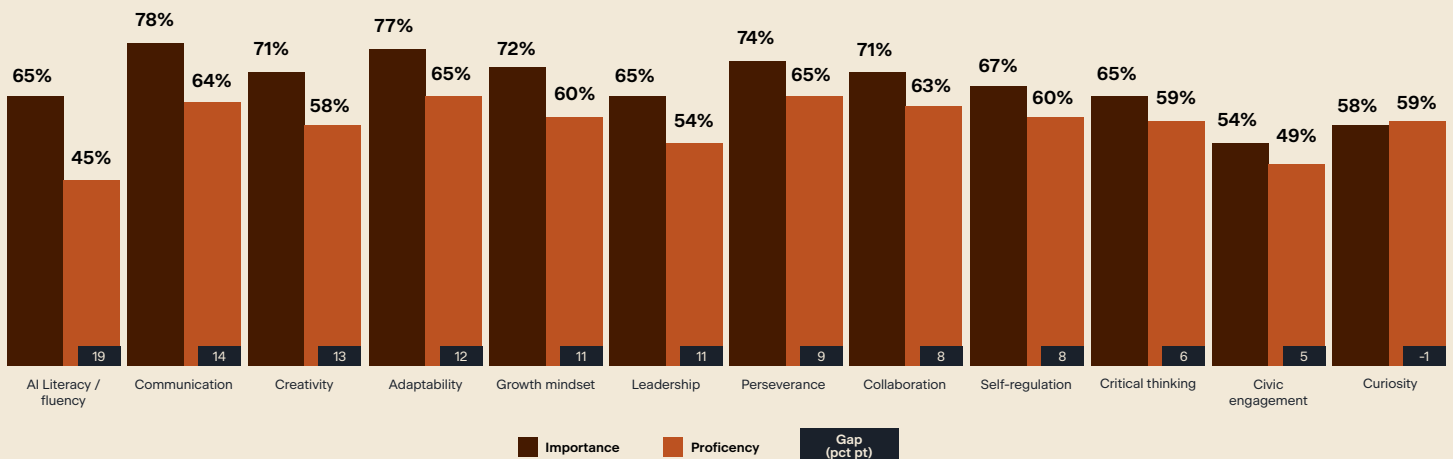
More likely to select “**very confident**” across all aspects of adaptability

- MIC
- Gen Z, Millennials
- College Grad
- Have a certification
- Financial Services, Tech

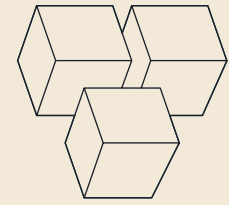
Respondent anxieties about preparedness map directly onto skills gaps. Although global proficiency has improved across next generation job skills over the past year, the perceived importance of skills has also increased, maintaining anxieties about preparedness. The largest gap appears in AI literacy, where those rating it with high importance exceed those who claim to be proficient by 19 points. Significant gaps also appear in communication (14% gap), creativity (13%), adaptability (12%), growth mindset (11%) and leadership (11%).

Next Gen Jobs Skills: Importance vs. Proficiency

% of all respondents who gave a high rating (8-10)



2.3 Adaptation mindsets emerge



Further exploration of attitudes among global workers reveals three distinct mindsets shaping how workers respond to disruption.

Adaptive Thrivers (41% of workers) experience the highest levels of workplace change but maintain strong confidence in their ability to adapt. They tend to seek out new challenges and report the highest sense of agency in choosing how they learn. They are found most often in urban areas and heavy industry (e.g., engineering, manufacturing, etc.), are certified more often than their counterparts, and most frequently located in Kenya, Nigeria, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, China and Mexico.

Anxious Learners (39%) recognize the need to evolve and are motivated to learn but struggle with deciding where to focus their efforts. They often feel overwhelmed by the volume of emerging tools and unclear skill priorities. These workers are more represented in media, entertainment and hospitality sectors and are most often located in Japan, France, Canada, South Korea and Vietnam.

Paralyzed Pessimists (20%) feel overwhelmed by the pace of change and report the lowest confidence in their ability to adapt. They are also the least engaged in upskilling, often because they feel excluded from opportunities to grow. Most often working in the media and entertainment sectors or in legal roles, they are most often found in Eastern Asia (South Korea, Japan and Vietnam) and Western Europe (Germany and France).

Adaptive Thrivers

Total global workers 41%

Adaptive Thrivers leverage change and emerging technology to accelerate new skill acquisition.

They face similar professional challenges as other mindsets and are more likely to experience changes in the workplace, but their ability to adapt makes them least susceptible to FOBO.

They are more likely to be urban area residents, have a certification, work in heavy industry, and located in middle income countries.

Anxious Learners

Total global workers 39%

Anxious Learners are motivated to adapt to the changing workplace but are overwhelmed by “where to start” and say lack of resources or guidance are barriers to upskilling. About two thirds have seen significant changes at work in the past year and report experiencing FOBO.

They skew high income countries and are more likely to work in media, entertainment, and hospitality.

Paralyzed Pessimists

Total global workers 20%

Similar to the other mindsets, Paralyzed Pessimists have experienced notable changes at work.

However, they are most likely to feel overwhelmed by the pace of change and report not being supported by their employer when navigating workplace shifts.

While only representing 20% of the workforce, 33% of South Korean workers are Paralyzed Pessimists. Those in media, entertainment, a legal role, Germany, Vietnam, and France also overindex as Paralyzed Pessimists.

Adaptive Thrivers	
Total global workers	41%
Over-indexing groups	
Region	
Urban	111
Have Certification	
Yes	113
Industry	
Heavy industry	111
Market	
Kenya	150
Nigeria	149
Indonesia	126
Saudi Arabia	118
Brazil	113
China	109
Mexico	109

Anxious Learners	
Total global workers	39%
Over-indexing groups	
Industry	
Media	122
Entertainment	112
Hospitality	111
Market	
Japan	141
France	118
Canada	118
S. Korea	114
Vietnam	111

Paralyzed Pessimists	
Total global workers	20%
Over-indexing groups	
Industry	
Media	125
Entertainment	124
Function	
Legal	119
Market	
S. Korea	165
Japan	140
Germany	122
Vietnam	120
France	118

There are no notable differences in the mindset distribution among the following vs. the global total: Across gender, age, college grad status | In India, Australia, UAE, Mexico, UK, US

Index values are the ratio of the incidence of each mindset within a subgroup to the global incidence, multiplied by 100. A score above 100 indicates the subgroup is more likely than the global average to fall into that mindset while a score below 100 indicates lower likelihood.

The key differentiator across these groups is perceived agency: whether workers feel they can influence their own future readiness or whether adaptation feels out of their control. This distinction increasingly shapes who thrives and who falls behind.

% agree	Adaptive Thrivers	Anxious Learners	Paralyzed Pessimists
I see technological change as an opportunity to expand my skills and advance my career	73%	50%	45%
I feel confident in my ability to adapt to new technologies and work processes	76%	46%	45%
I want to adapt to changes in my field, but I don't know where to start	21%	54%	43%
I have the motivation to learn but lack the resources or guidance to do it effectively	34%	57%	46%
I feel like the pace of change in my industry is too fast for me to keep up	17%	40%	64%
I feel systematically unsupported by my employer in preparing for future changes	23%	45%	58%

2.4 Future-proofing becomes an everyday practice

Despite uncertainty, people are already taking action. Eighty-six percent of all respondents agree upskilling and reskilling will become essential throughout

their careers, and 84% agree it will become the new standard for competing in today's job market.

86%

of all respondents agree

Upskilling or reskilling will become the **new standard** for people throughout their career

91% Have a certification

94% Indonesia, 94% Kenya

91% Tech

84%

of all respondents agree

Upskilling or reskilling isn't a choice; it's a **necessity to compete** in today's job market

89% Have a certification

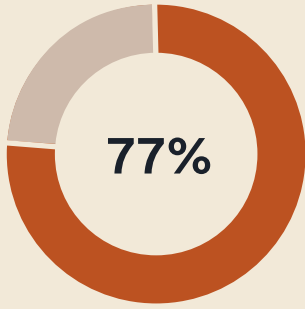
92% Brazil, 92% Indonesia

88% Tech

More than three-fourths of workers (77%) say they proactively develop diverse skills to safeguard their future. This rises to 92% in Indonesia, 90% in Vietnam and 89% in India and Brazil.

Workers cite three core strategies they currently use to prepare for future disruption:

1. Learning and keeping pace with new technologies (e.g., AI, digital, technical tools) (53%).
2. Engaging in on-the-job upskilling (43%).
3. Obtaining a skills credential to document their capabilities (36%). Skills credentials include any certification, license, micro-credential, badging, apprenticeship or other assessed learning opportunity beyond a two- or four-year college/university degree that formally indicates an individual has acquired specific skills or competencies.



77% of workers agree

I proactively develop new, diverse skills to safeguard against uncertainty in the future of jobs

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 92% Indonesia | 82% Millennials | 85% Financial Services |
| 90% Vietnam | 81% College Grads | 83% Tech |
| 89% India | 85% Have a certification | 84% R+D |
| 89% Brazil | | |
| 86% Nigeria | | |
| 85% Kenya | | |

The philosophy of continuous growth

“Through **continuous learning and progress**, personal abilities and skills can be improved little by little. Over time, little by little, they will add up to a lot. Then, you don’t have to worry about falling behind the times, nor do you have to worry about not being able to adapt to the new era.”

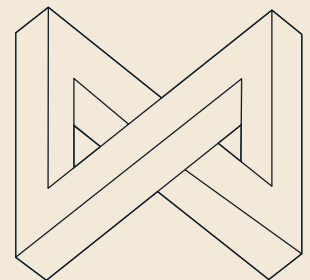
– Gen Z, China

Willingness to change

“I have the willingness and mindset to learn, I’m willing to make changes to the next generation of jobs coming up. And this can take a while, yes, but I’m willing to adapt.”

– Millennial, US

These actions reflect a broader shift: workers no longer wait for formal training cycles. They build skills continuously in response to evolving expectations. What workers need, then, is a way to validate their efforts at adapting.



Part III:

Proof of skills: breaking through anxiety with evidence

In this section:

- 3.1** *Credentials and assessments emerge as essential in an unpredictable job market*
- 3.2** *Integrating evidence of skill credentials strengthens workforce readiness*
- 3.3** *Workers know what they need but face a credential access crisis*
- 3.4** *Barriers slow credential adoption*
- 3.5** *Workers expect employers and governments to guide skill development*
- 3.6** *Trusted institutions shape the future of workforce readiness*

Key findings:

- Workers increasingly rely on evidence of skills as a stabilizing force in a volatile market.
- A significant gap exists between interest in skill credential programs and the ability to access them.
- Respondents believe academic transcripts should be paired with evidence of skill credentials.
- Institutions and employers are expected to play a central role in ensuring fair, reliable skill verification.

3.1 Credentials and assessments emerge as essential in an unpredictable job market

People around the world are navigating a job market where roles evolve rapidly and skill requirements shift without warning.

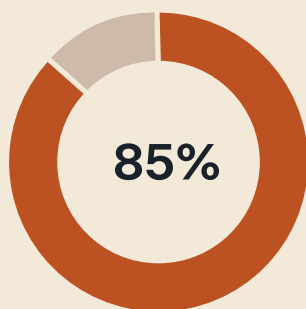


In this environment, credentials and assessments have become essential tools for establishing professional stability. People see them as the clearest way to validate proficiency in a landscape where traditional signals like tenure or job titles no longer guarantee relevance.

Eighty-five percent of all respondents say credentials are essential as skills rapidly evolve, signaling the shift toward evidence-based workforce readiness. The desire for proof is strongest among respondents who have already experienced rapid shifts in tools, responsibilities and industry standards: 90% of those with a certification, 93% of those in Indonesia and 92% of those in Kenya.

Most workers (74%) want to be able to benchmark their skills against their industry peers. This is especially true for Millennials (78%), those with a certification (80%), those living in Kenya (89%) and India (87%) and those working in financial services (80%), technology (80%) or heavy industry (79%).

However, 70% of workers worry they are missing the proof they need to show they have the right skills. This intensifies in markets where economic and technological shifts are rapid. Workers in Brazil (87%), Mexico (78%) and Vietnam (78%) as well as Millennials (74%) feel the pressure the most.



85%
of all respondents agree

As skills considered to be valuable rapidly evolve, **credentials are essential** for workers to stay relevant

90% Have a certification
93% Indonesia, 92% Kenya

3.2 Integrating evidence of skill credentials strengthens workforce readiness

Globally, all respondents see a future where proof of skills is embedded directly into the education experience.

People continue to believe that academic transcripts alone no longer provide a full picture of a learner's capabilities. What they want instead is clear evidence of skills credentials alongside traditional coursework. More specifically, they want universities and higher education programs to pair academic transcripts with skills credential transcripts, reports that verify an individual's skills and competencies, to demonstrate a graduate's full range of capabilities (87%). This approach is especially popular with those living in Nigeria (96%), Indonesia (96%) and Kenya (95%).

In fact, 86% of all respondents agree that university education would be more relevant to today's job market if students graduated with a skills credential transcript. About the same share (88%) also agree that a skills credential transcript would help match talent to the right jobs.

86%

of all respondents agree

A skills credential transcript would make university **education more relevant** to today's job market

90% Have a certification

94% Indonesia, 93% Nigeria, 92% India

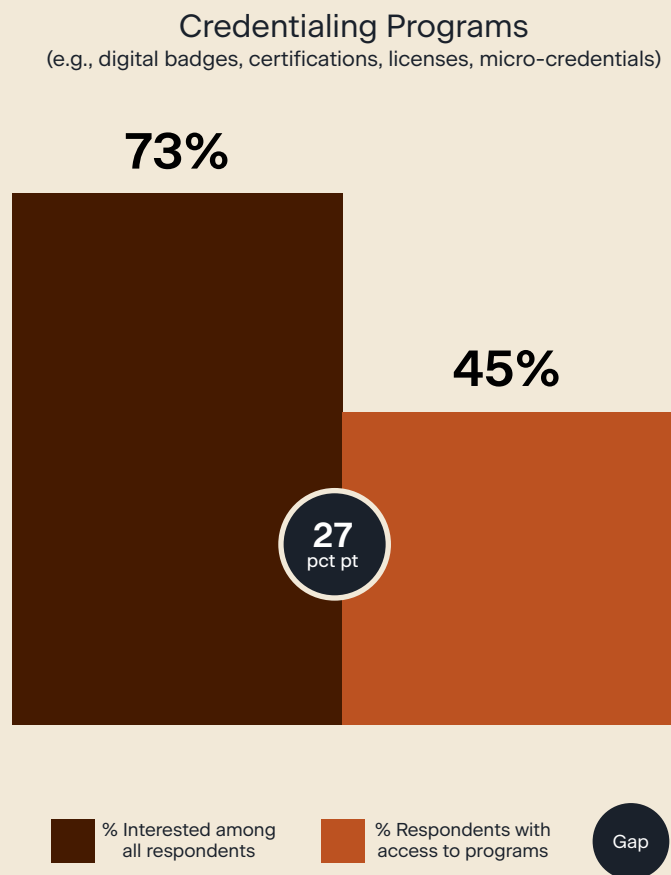
90% Tech

Overall, people view skills transcripts as a way to close the gap between what education provides and what employers need, especially in a market where tools and requirements are shifting quickly.

3.3 Workers know what they need but face a credential access crisis

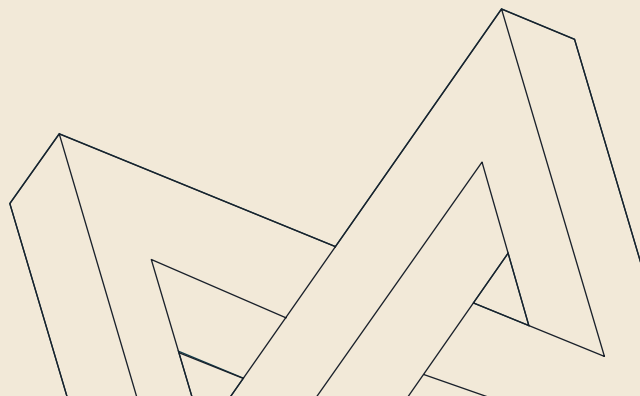
Interest in credentialing far exceeds access.

While 73% of all respondents are interested in credentialing programs, only 45% say they have access to them, a 27-point gap that defines today's workforce readiness challenge.



A lack of support also exacerbates access challenges. Nearly half (48%) of workers say accessing the certification or license they need to practice or work is difficult. This difficulty in access is most pronounced among Gen X (51%), Baby Boomers and older (56%), workers in rural areas (59%), non-college graduates (56%) and those without any certification (54%). Workers in France (69%), Mexico (65%), Brazil (63%) and Kenya (60%) also report particularly limited access, as do those in customer support (53%) and administrative roles (52%).

People understand that having access to credentialing is not optional. It shapes whether they can demonstrate skills, qualify for new roles and remain competitive. Lack of access widens the divide between those who can afford continuous adaptation and those who cannot.



3.4 Barriers slow credential adoption

Both those in and outside the workforce identify the primary barriers that prevent them from earning the credentials they need: cost, credibility and trusted providers.

ACCESS: AFFORDABILITY

75%

of all workers worry

Can I afford the training I need to stay competitive?

79% Gen Z, 80% Millennials

79% College Grad, 80% Have a credential

85% Vietnam, 85% Kenya, 84% UAE, 83% India, 82% Nigeria, 81% Saudi Arabia, 80% Indonesia

82% Tech

DETERMINING VALUED CREDENTIALS

70%

of all respondents agree

It's difficult to determine which credentials are recognized and valued by employers

78% Vietnam, 76% India, 76% Brazil, 75% Indonesia, 75% Australia

FINDING TRUSTED PROVIDERS

31%

of workers say

Finding trusted skills credentialing providers is a barrier to professional success

38% MIC vs. 25% HIC

37% Financial Services, 36% Business Services, 36% Tech, 40% Marketing

Cost is the most significant barrier. Seventy-five percent of all workers worry about whether they can afford the training necessary to stay competitive. This concern is especially strong among Gen Z (79%) and Millennials (80%), college graduates (79%), workers who already hold a credential (80%) and more than four in five of those living in Vietnam, Kenya, the UAE, India, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Workers in technology (82%) face similar concerns as skill requirements shift faster than personal budgets can accommodate.

Credibility is the second barrier due to a lack of clarity about which credentials employers value. Seventy percent of all respondents say it is difficult to determine which credentials are recognized and trusted in the job market. Those in Vietnam (78%), India (76%), Brazil (76%), Indonesia (75%) and

Australia (75%) report the greatest challenges. This credibility gap discourages workers from investing in programs when the return on that investment feels uncertain.

Among workers specifically, 31% say **finding trusted skills credentialing providers** is a barrier to their professional success. This issue is more pronounced in middle-income countries (38% vs. 25% in higher income countries) and among workers in fields such as finance (37%), business services (36%), marketing (40%) and technology (36%).

Together, these barriers create a bottleneck that slows credential adoption and constrains both current and potential employees from documenting their skill development at the pace required.

3.5 Workers expect employers and governments to guide skill development

Workers believe they should not have to navigate the complexity of credentialing alone. Nearly nine in ten expect employers to play an active role in helping them determine which credentials matter and how to obtain them.

88%

of all workers agree

Employers should work with employees to set goals to achieve relevant skills credentials throughout their careers

92% Have a certification

96% Kenya, 95% Nigeria, 94% Indonesia, 93% Brazil

However...

71%

of all workers agree

My employer gives me access to the certifications/licenses I need to progress

81% Have a certification, 76% College Grad

85% Vietnam, 85% India, 83% Indonesia

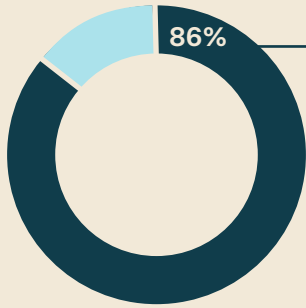
80% Tech, 80% Financial Services

However, just 71% of workers say their employer gives them access to the certifications and licenses they need to progress. In fact, a third (34%) say getting their employer to support them in obtaining certifications is a barrier, a challenge that is most acute in Kenya (53%), Nigeria (47%) and Mexico (44%).

Looking beyond employers, 86% of all respondents also expect governments to support skill development

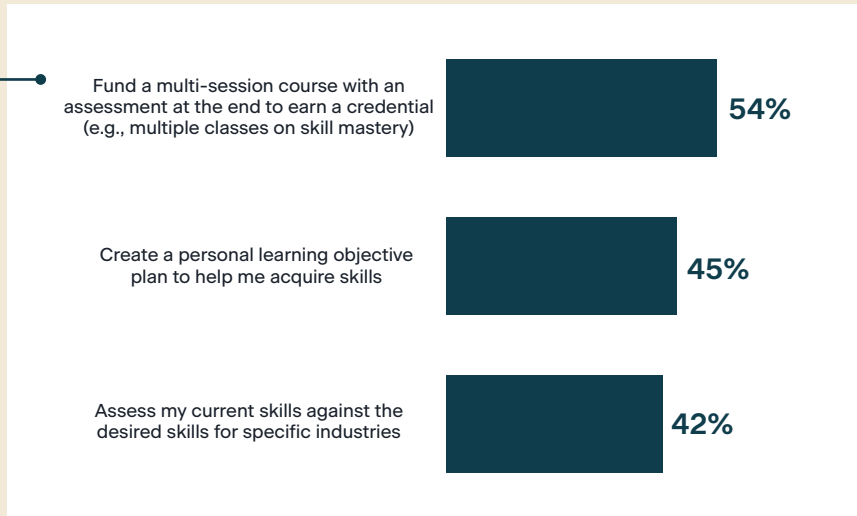
for a modern workforce by funding and personalizing workforce readiness pathways. Support is especially desired by Millennials and Gen Z (92%), college graduates (91%) and workers in technology focused industries (95%), as well as those in middle-income countries (95%). Virtually all of those in sub-Saharan Africa (98% Nigeria and Kenya) and Southern Asia (97% India, 96% Indonesia) support such efforts.

Desire Government Support for Workforce Readiness



92% Millennials, 92% Gen Z
 91% College Grad, 93% Have a certification
 95% MIC vs. 78% HIC
 98% Kenya, 98% Nigeria, 97% India,
 96% Indonesia, 96% UAE, 96% Vietnam
 95% Tech

Top 3 Types of Support Desired



The support these respondents want the most includes funding for multi-session courses with assessments at the end to earn credentials (54%), personalized

learning objective plans to help them acquire more skills (45%) and assessments of their current skillset against desired skills for specific industries (42%).

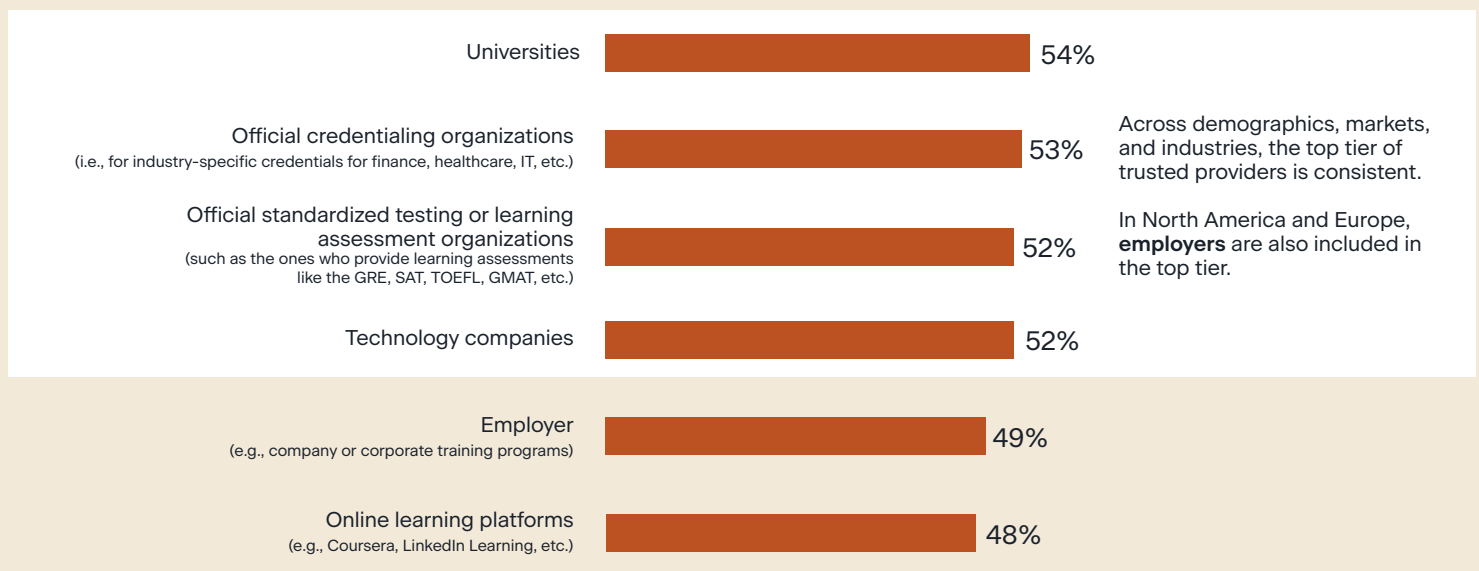


3.6 Trusted institutions shape the future of workforce readiness

When respondents are asked who they trust to measure workforce readiness, two groups remain at the top: universities (54%) and official credentialing organizations (53%). These institutions are seen as reliable sources because they apply consistent standards, validate performance objectively and maintain credibility across industries and regions.

Additionally, respondents in North America and Europe also include employers among the top tier of trusted assessors, reflecting the long-standing use of employer evaluations and internal training programs in these markets.

Workforce Readiness Assessment Provider Trust Rating
% of respondents selecting high trust (8-10)



This trust underscores the opportunity for academic institutions and assessment providers to lead in building the next generation of credentialing systems.

Workers want clear, comparable, portable credentials grounded in rigorous assessment, capable of traveling with them from role to role and across borders.

Part IV:

The AI factor

In this section:

- 4.1** *AI becomes a standard part of daily work*
- 4.2** *Rising pressure to adopt and manage AI*
- 4.3** *Growing demand for AI skill verification and standards*

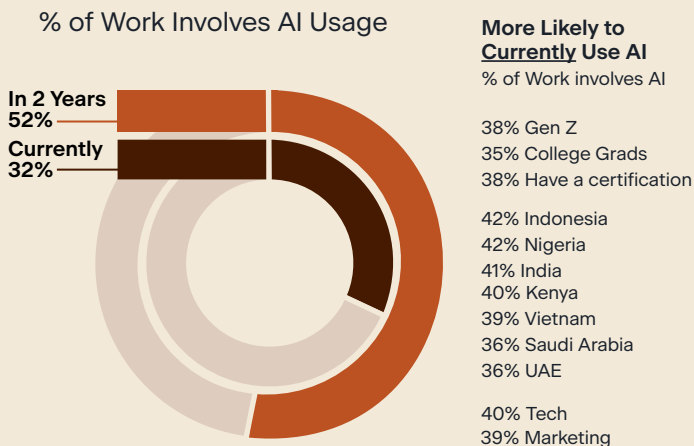
Key findings:

- AI has become a routine component of global work, with usage expected to rise sharply.
- Workers want standards and certifications to clarify what AI proficiency requires.
- Workers feel pressure to adopt AI even when they are uncertain about expectations.

4.1 AI becomes a standard part of daily work

Involved in nearly one-third of work today, AI has shifted from a cutting-edge tool to a routine part of everyday tasks.

Workers estimate that 32% of their tasks currently involve directing AI tools, with adoption rising to 38% among Gen Z, 35% among college graduates and 38% among workers with certifications. Countries such as Indonesia, Nigeria, India, Kenya and Vietnam report some of the highest levels of integration, ranging from 39% to 43%.



Workers expect their AI use to accelerate quickly. They predict that within two years 52% of their work will involve AI. This expected jump from one-third to more than half of all tasks underscores how embedded AI has become in global workplaces and how quickly its influence is accelerating.

“The trend of the times is starting to change, **AI is leading the trend**, any job in society has AI applications.

If one does not prepare mentally and **acquire knowledge and understanding** of this tool, it is easy to fall behind and be unable to progress further.”

– Gen Z, Vietnam

4.2 Rising pressure to adopt and manage AI

AI adoption brings opportunity, but it also creates pressure.

Sixty percent of workers say they feel pressure to adopt AI tools before they feel ready. Another 65% say they use AI primarily because they need to stay competitive. These concerns are especially pronounced in fast-changing markets, like Indonesia (80%), India (78%) or Vietnam (76%), where workers already anticipate AI-driven shifts in roles and expectations.

Many workers are worried about the next stage of AI integration. Fifty-eight percent say they are concerned they will not know how to manage AI agents or bots. At the same time, workers can see the direction of travel. Seventy-six percent imagine a future in which managing AI agents becomes a standard part of their role. This outlook is strongest in Kenya (92%), India (91%) and Nigeria (90%), and is especially common among Millennials (82%) and college graduates (82%).



4.3 Growing demand for AI skill verification and standards

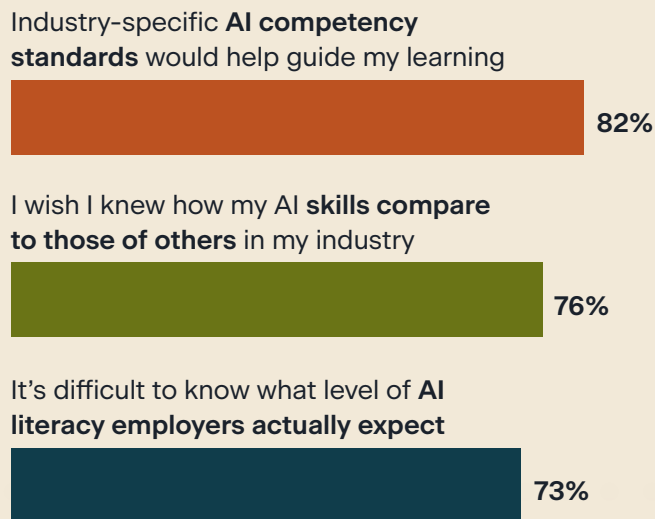
As AI becomes more central to work, workers want clearer ways to validate and benchmark their skills.

Eighty percent want a certification that verifies their AI skills, and demand increases in middle-income countries, where 89% support formal credentials. Finance (89%) and technology workers (88%) display especially strong interest in these certifications.

Workers also want more universal expectations. Nearly three-fourths (73%) say it is difficult to know what level of AI competency employers actually expect, reinforcing why standards and credentialing frameworks feel urgent. Eighty-two percent say industry-specific AI competency standards would help them understand which skills matter, and 76% wish they knew how their AI skills compared to others in their industry.

This desire for structure and clarity connects directly to how AI shapes worker confidence. The data show a clear optimism divide: workers who use AI more frequently are significantly more optimistic about both current and future job opportunities. These workers tend to believe AI enhances their ability to stay relevant and unlock new roles while those who rarely use AI report more uncertainty and concern. In this sense, AI experience acts as a stabilizing force, turning anxiety into confidence and reinforcing why workers want transparent skill expectations and reliable ways to demonstrate proficiency.

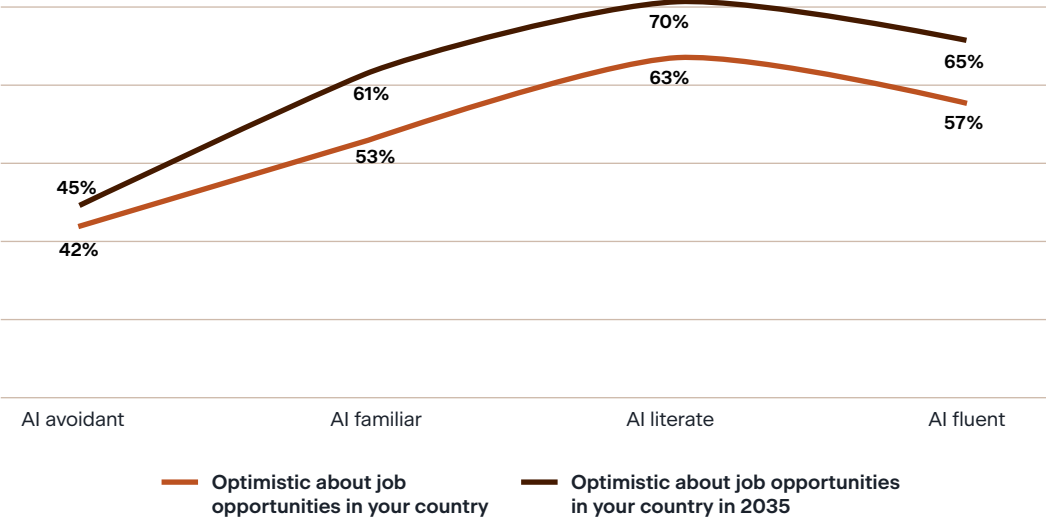
% of workers agree



AI User Group
 (% of work involves AI usage)

- AI avoidant (0%)
- AI familiar (1%-33%)
- AI literate (34%-67%)
- AI fluent (68%-100%)

Respondents were classified into user groups based on the percentage of their work that presently involves directing AI tools rather than executing tasks manually.



Together, these signals point to a more mature phase of the AI transition. Workers are no longer asking whether AI will reshape work; they are asking how to understand expectations and validate their readiness as AI becomes a defining skill across industries.

Part V:

A mandate on the future of education

In this section:

- 5.1** *Major gaps in how education measures learning*
- 5.2** *Prioritizing K-12 skills initiatives to strengthen workforce readiness*
- 5.3** *Education's missing link*

Key findings:

- People believe K-12 systems do not measure what students actually learn, affecting workforce readiness.
- There is overwhelming support for integrating practical skills measurement into primary and secondary education.
- People prioritize skills-focused K-12 reform over any other workforce readiness initiative.

5.1 Major gaps in how education measures learning

To accelerate workforce readiness, there is a shared sentiment that foundational skills beyond academics need to be fortified early on in education.

However, across global respondents, people express concern that K-12 systems are not capturing what students actually learn: 75% agree their country does not adequately measure student learning in primary and secondary education. This concern is especially high in Brazil (87%), Vietnam (84%) and Mexico (81%).

Seventy-one percent say parents do not have enough access to reliable information about their children's academic performance. Agreement rises to 81% in Mexico, 79% in India and 78% in Brazil, reflecting a widespread sense that families are navigating opaque systems without the data needed to guide student success.

More broadly, 71% agree that their country lacks sufficient educational assessment systems to track student progress, with the highest levels in Brazil (86%), Mexico (81%), India (79%), Vietnam (79%), Nigeria (78%) and Kenya (77%).

Together, these findings point to a central concern: people believe education systems cannot prepare students for future jobs if they cannot measure learning accurately today.

75%

of all respondents agree

Their country does not adequately measure student learning in primary and secondary education

71%

of all respondents agree

Parents do not have enough access to reliable information about their children's academic performance

71%

of all respondents agree

Their country lacks sufficient educational assessment systems to track student progress

5.2 Prioritizing K-12 skills initiatives to strengthen workforce readiness

When asked to choose one major change that would most improve workforce readiness, the most common change (28%) among all respondents was implementing comprehensive skills-focused programs in K-12.

#1

Top ranked initiative respondents would advocate for to improve workforce readiness:

Implementing comprehensive K-12 skills-focused programs

(e.g., skills assessments, AI-powered personalized learning pathways, etc.)

28% Total, 32% Millennials, 32% College Grads, 33% Have a certification

44% Kenya, 41% Nigeria, 38% Vietnam, 37% China, 37% India, 35% Brazil (36% MIC vs. 22% HIC)

This priority is even stronger among Millennials and college graduates (32%) and among workers who hold certifications (33%). Regionally, support is particularly strong in markets where economic growth and technology adoption are accelerating: 44% in Kenya, 41% in Nigeria, 38% in Vietnam, 37% in China, 37% in India and 35% in Brazil — underscoring a global desire to embed future-ready competencies early in the educational pipeline. Respondents view these programs not as optional enhancements but as foundational components of economic competitiveness.

5.3 Education's missing link

People believe the content and structure of K-12 schooling must change to match the demands of the future workforce.

Eighty-nine percent agree educational assessments should include both academic knowledge and practical skills. Equally strong majorities say the system needs more comprehensive measurements of skills beyond test scores (88%), better data on the skills students have when they graduate from high school (88%) and standardized ways to measure future job readiness across all schools (87%). Support is even higher in middle-income countries, where the need for workforce readiness is acute and education systems are rapidly evolving.

Taken together, these views establish a mandate for educational reform: people want K-12 systems that measure not just what students know but what they can do. They want earlier identification of skill gaps and clearer pathways to developing the competencies needed for future work.



Part VI:

Tracking progress

In this section:

- 6.1** *Human progress maintains upward momentum in 2026*
- 6.2** *Education access powers year-over-year gains across key markets*
- 6.3** *Where countries gained and lost ground*
- 6.4** *Upward mobility and education access: the pressures shaping progress*

Key findings:

- The Human Progress Index rises for the third consecutive year.
- Progress is uneven – several countries have advanced significantly while others have lost ground – with demographic disparities for groups like women, older workers and rural residents still clearly visible.
- Gains are driven primarily by easier access to education.

The Human Progress Index demonstrates how difficult or effortless it is to access the foundational factors of progress. To improve measurement ease moving forward, we have inverted the index scale for this year's and previous years' reporting. A score above

100 indicates that the task is generally easier for respondents, while a score below 100 indicates it is relatively difficult. The distance from 100 is indicative of the level of ease or difficulty.

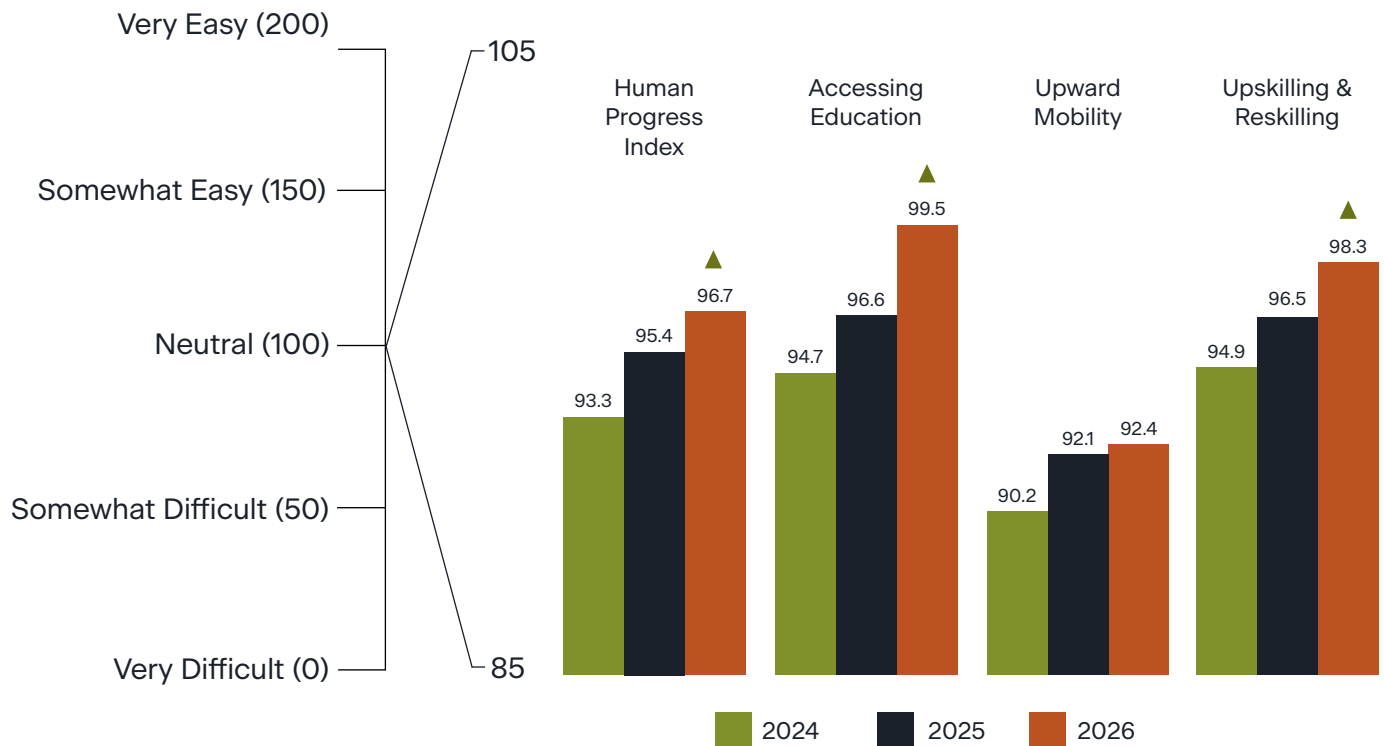
6.1 Human progress maintains upward momentum in 2026

This year's overall index performance shows continued improvement, rising to 96.7, up from 95.4 in 2025 and 93.3 in 2024.

This upward trajectory indicates that more people find it easier to access foundational conditions for advancement than in previous years. The most notable improvements appear in several dimensions of education access and in costs associated with upskilling and reskilling. Although the progress has been gradual, the consistency across three years of tracking signals structural improvement instead of short-term variation.



The Human Progress Index
(among trended countries)



Accessing Education (% easy to access)

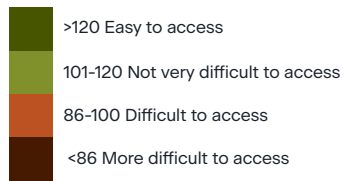
- Accessing education by people from a variety of social backgrounds ▲
- Accessing teachers that offer quality education ▲
- Finding the right educational institutions or programs for one's needs ▲
- Gaining admittance to institutions that offer quality education ▲
- Paying for the costs associated with education ▲
- Prioritizing quality education over other needs ▲

Upskilling & Reskilling (% easy to access)

- Paying the costs associated with pursuing upskilling/reskilling ▲

▲ Significantly higher vs. 2025 and 2024

Countries showing the largest year-over-year gains include Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Australia, Nigeria and Brazil while the US and France are experiencing significant declines.



- Significant Trends**
- ▲ Significantly higher vs. 2025 and 2024
 - ▲ Significantly higher vs. 2025
 - ▼ Significantly lower vs. 2025 and 2024
 - ▼ Significantly lower vs. 2025

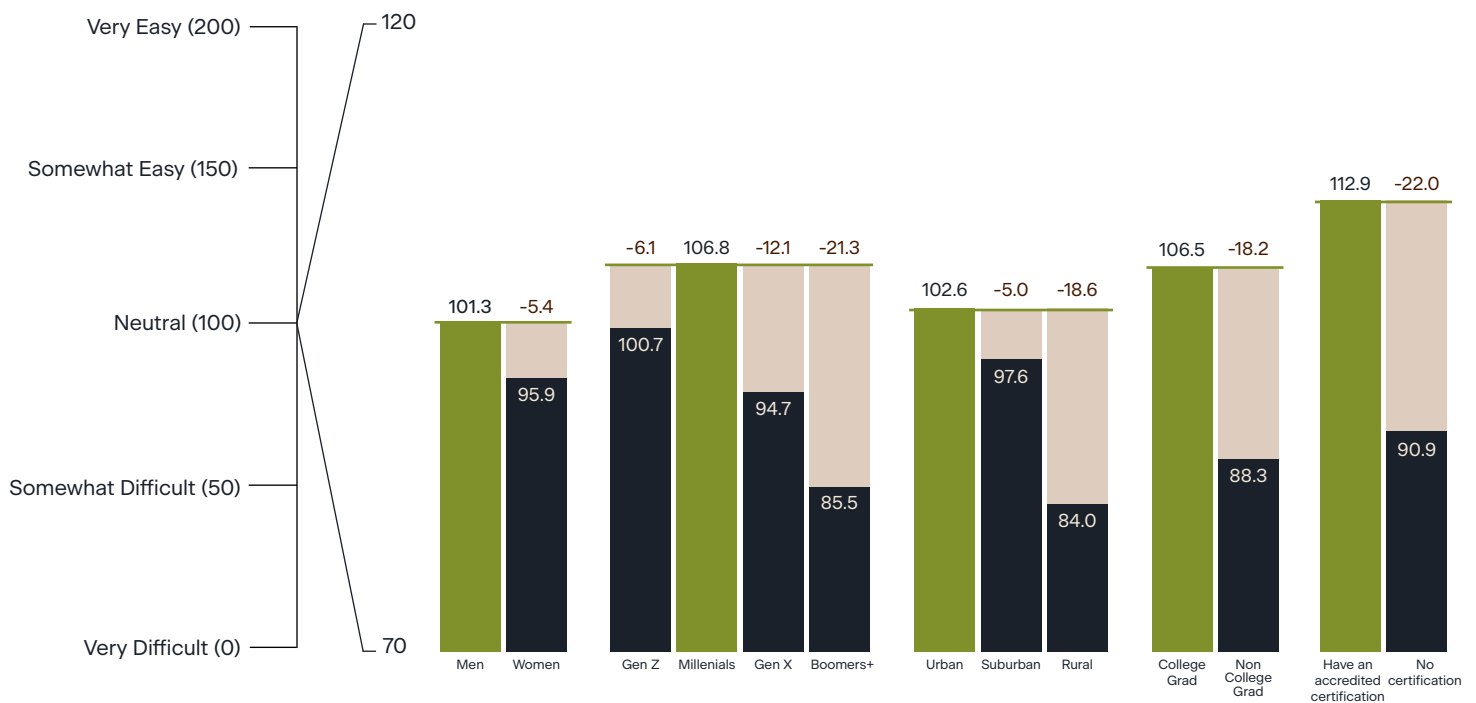
OVERALL INDEX	INDEX	YoY Change	Sig Trends
1. Saudi Arabia	131.4	8.5	▲
2. Vietnam	127.4	5.1	▲
3. UAE	121.7	5.3	
4. China	119.6	-3.0	
5. India	114.4	0.2	
6. Australia	101.4	7.4	▲
7. Indonesia	96.9	-3.5	
8. Nigeria	96.4	9.4	▲
9. Canada	93.8	1.9	
10. US	93.7	-5.0	▼
11. UK	92.3	-0.2	
12. Germany	91.2	-1.6	
13. Japan	86.3	2.7	
14. Kenya	85.1	2.6	
15. Mexico	82.3	-1.5	
16. South Korea	81.8	3.7	
17. Brazil	81.0	5.7	▲
18. France	79.3	-5.9	▼

Despite overall momentum, progress remains uneven. Women, older adults and rural residents report more difficulty accessing education and upskilling pathways. These disparities appear across multiple measures, from ease of paying for education to availability of programs that match learners' circumstances.

By contrast, men, Gen X and younger generations and college graduates all experienced modest improvements of roughly two points in their Human Progress Index scores compared with 2025.

Obtaining a college degree or any form of accredited certification continues to correlate strongly with higher Human Progress scores, reinforcing the role of documented skills in shaping opportunity.

Total Index



6.2 Education access powers year-over-year gains across key markets

Educational access continues to be the engine of global progress

The strongest factors influencing this year’s increase are significant improvements in access to education by people from a variety of social backgrounds, access to teachers that offer quality education, finding the right educational institution or program for one’s needs, gaining admission to institutions that offer quality education, paying for education costs, and prioritizing quality education over other needs.

Countries showing the largest year-over-year gains in overall Human Progress Index include Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Australia and Nigeria. These countries show progress in access to teachers, affordability of education and the availability of programs that match learner needs. Japan, South Korea and Brazil also continue to move forward in education access, adding to a global, positive multi-year trend.

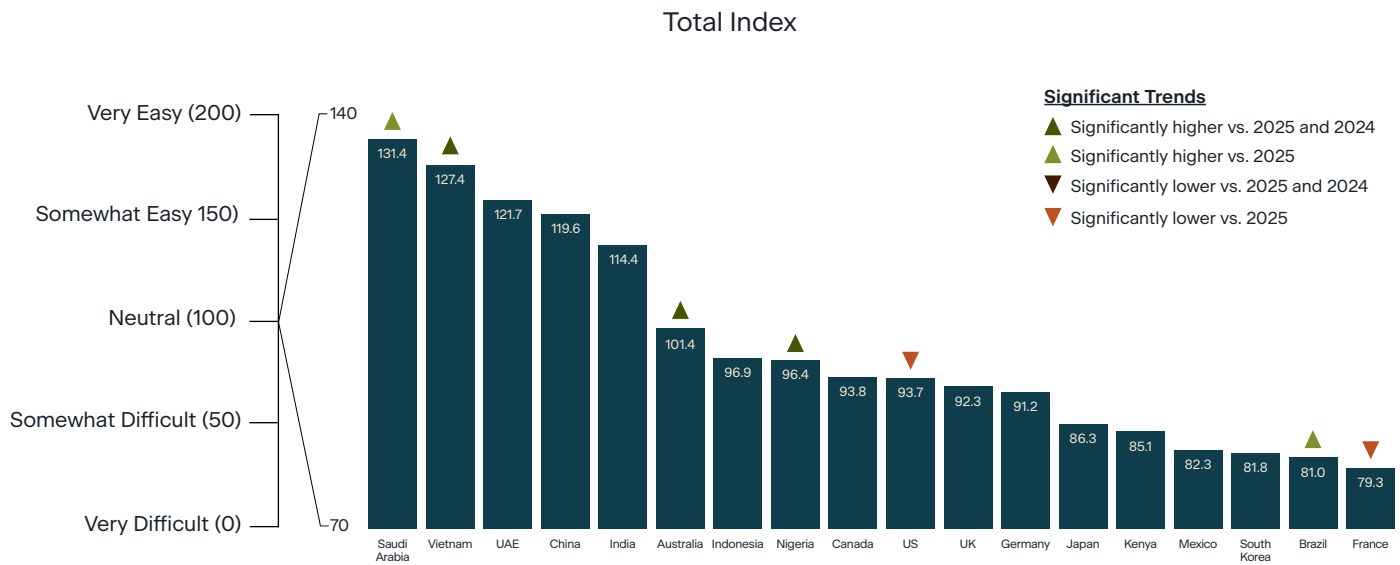
Significant Trends in Human Progress Index Components

ACCESS TO EDUCATION	INDEX		ACCESS TO UPWARD MOBILITY	INDEX		ACCESS TO UPSKILLING	INDEX	
Saudi Arabia	137.7	▲	Saudi Arabia	128.1	▲	Saudi Arabia	128.4	▲
Vietnam	131.4	▲	Australia	99.5	▲	Nigeria	104.9	▲
UAE	126.2	▲	US	93.2	▼	Australia	102.0	▲
Australia	102.7	▲	Indonesia	89.0	▼	Canada	95.1	▲
Nigeria	98.8	▲	Nigeria	85.7	▲	US	94.9	▼
Japan	90.3	▲	France	79.1	▼	France	77.9	▼
South Korea	90.1	▲	Brazil	77.9	▲	Significant Trends ▲ Significantly higher vs. 2025 and 2024 ▲ Significantly higher vs. 2025 ▼ Significantly lower vs. 2025 and 2024 ▼ Significantly lower vs. 2025		
Brazil	82.0	▲						

6.3 Where countries gained and lost ground

This year's trends show clear movement across countries. While some countries are rapidly improving access, others are encountering new structural headwinds. Saudi Arabia, Australia, Nigeria and Brazil report greater ease in upward mobility

compared with last year while the United States and France experience declines. South Korea and Kenya continue to face the greatest difficulty in achieving upward mobility.

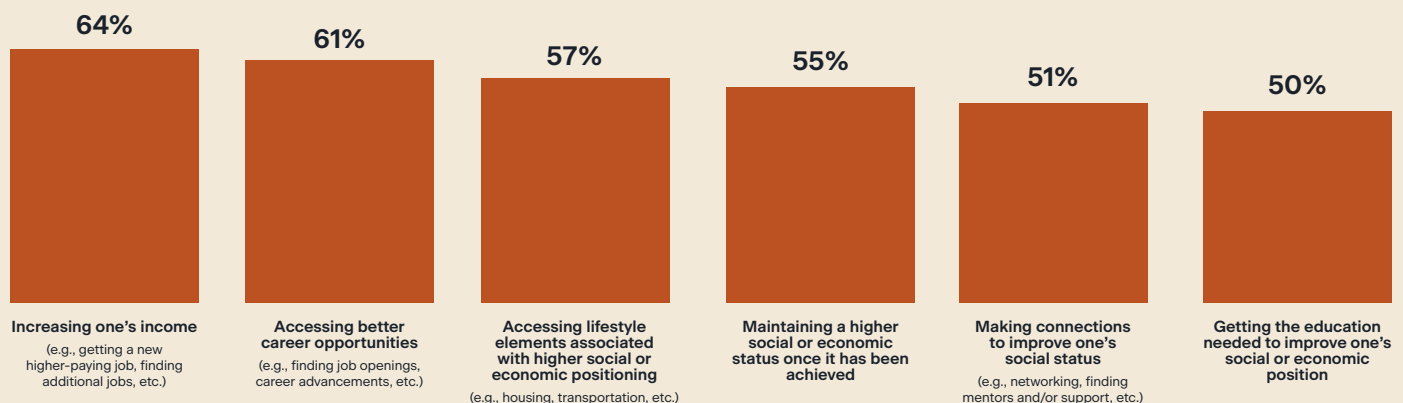


6.4 Upward mobility and education access: the pressures shaping progress

All respondents report that income constraints (64%) and aspects of career stagnation are among the most difficult barriers to overcome.

Forty-four percent say they feel pessimistic about achieving financial stability in their country, with higher levels of difficulty reported among Gen X and Boomers, rural residents, non-college graduates and those without certifications. Brazil, France, Kenya, Mexico and South Korea show some of the highest levels of perceived difficulty in upward mobility.

Challenges in **Upward Mobility**
% Somewhat / Very Difficult



More likely to face challenges:

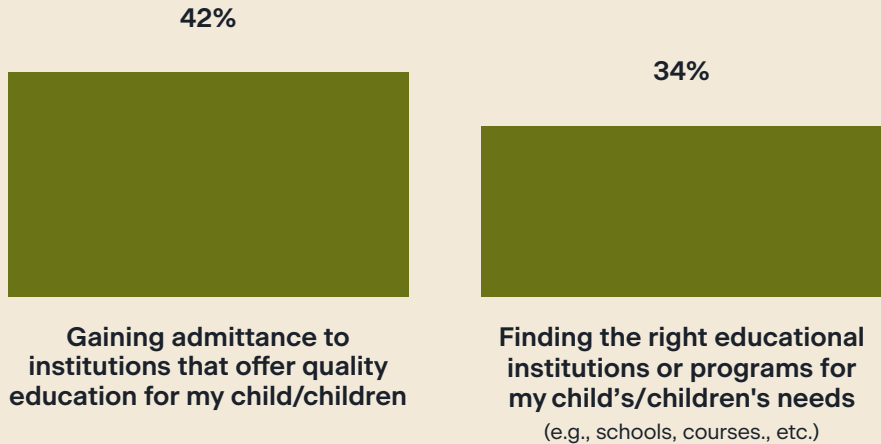
Gen X + Boomers, Rural
Non-College Grads, Do not have a certification
Brazil, France, Kenya, Mexico, S. Korea

In education access, difficulties cluster around costs, availability of quality teachers and access to programs that align with learners' goals.

Cost remains the strongest barrier to accessing high-quality education, especially in high-income countries such as the US, France and Germany. Parents in rural areas are particularly likely to say that accessing quality education for their children is difficult. These pressures shape both present opportunity and future potential.

Challenges in Accessing **Quality Education**

% Somewhat / Very Difficult
[among parents]



More likely to face challenges:

Rural, Non-College Grads, Do not have a certification
France, Mexico, Brazil, S. Korea, Japan, Kenya

Conclusion: The path forward



This year's findings reveal a global workforce navigating rapid change with growing clarity about what it needs to thrive.



Workers are not resisting disruption. They are responding to it by seeking validation of their skills, pursuing continuous adaptation and demanding systems that help them stay competitive.

As a result, three imperatives emerge for the future:

1. To obtain the increasingly skilled employees they desire, employers in both private and public sectors must play a vital role in closing the credential access gap that prevents workers from obtaining the proof they need to stay relevant.
2. Future-proofing must start before graduation. Educators must integrate skills assessment earlier in the learning journey so that students enter adulthood with evidence of job-ready competencies.
3. Workers must continue developing adaptive mindsets and diversifying their skills to keep pace with an environment where job requirements shift quickly.

Human progress continues, but its gains are not automatic. They depend on aligning educational institutions, workforce systems, employers and governments around a shared commitment to adaptability.

Learn more about how adaptability is driving human progress and explore our commitment toward equipping today's learners for tomorrow's workforce at ets.org.

Appendix

Survey methodology:

This research was conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of ETS (Educational Testing Service) from August 25, 2025, to September 10, 2025, among a total of 32,558 adults ages 18 or older across 18 countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, UAE, UK, US, Vietnam), with a minimum of n=1,000 respondents per country. This year, the US was oversampled to allow for additional state-level reporting.

This report references data from the 2025 report, whose survey was conducted during September 13-23, 2024, in the same 18 countries among 18,159 adults aged 18 years or older. This report also references data from the 2024 report, which included research conducted online during September 18-27, 2023, in 17 countries (all countries above, excluding Saudi Arabia) among 17,143 adults aged 18 years or older.

Data weighting was implemented to ensure demographic representation reflects the overall population within each country as well as equal representation across countries. Data for each country are weighted, using a raking (aka RIM weighting) procedure, where necessary to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Raking allows for weighting based on multiple variables to adjust each variable by as small an amount as possible.

Respondents were selected from those who agreed to participate in online Harris Poll surveys. The sampling precision of the online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the overall combined sample data (n=32,558) is accurate to be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest, including the following country-level intervals:

Australia (n=1,001), accurate to within 3.3 percentage points

Brazil (n=1,028), accurate to within 4.2 percentage points

Canada (n=1,001), accurate to within 4.1 percentage points

China (n=1,010), accurate to within 4.0 percentage points

France (n=1,005), accurate to within 4.0 percentage points

Germany (n=1,010), accurate to within 4.1 percentage points

India (n=1,010), accurate to within 3.9 percentage points

Indonesia (n=1,006), accurate to within 3.7 percentage points

Japan (n=1,011), accurate to within 3.6 percentage points

Kenya (n=1,009), accurate to within 3.7 percentage points

Mexico (n=1,046), accurate to within 4.2 percentage points

Nigeria (n=1,030), accurate to within 3.7 percentage points

Saudi Arabia (n=1,011), accurate to within 4.6 percentage points

South Korea (n=1,000), accurate to within 3.9 percentage points

UAE (n=1,009), accurate to within 4.3 percentage points

UK (n=1,005), accurate to within 3.7 percentage points

US (n=15,357), accurate to within 1.1 percentage points

Vietnam (n=1,009), accurate to within 4.0 percentage points

All surveys and polls, whether they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error that are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question-wording and response options and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Because large sample size tends to make small differences, including in trended data, statistically significant, country- and respondent-level data are specifically mentioned if values are significantly higher when compared to more than half of their comparison groups (if there are more than two comparison groups) and if values are greater than three percentage points from the global total.

Key terms used in their report:

For clarity and consistency in interpreting the findings, this report uses the following definitions.

Generational groups:

- Gen Z: ages 18 to 27
- Millennials: ages 28 to 43
- Gen X: ages 44 to 59
- Boomers+: ages 60 and older

A **credential** is an overarching term that refers to evidence of qualification, competence, or authority. It can include:

- Certifications
- Licenses
- Academic Degrees

A **certification** is a professional credential awarded by a third-party, typically non-governmental body, based on:

- Assessment of knowledge, skills, or competencies
- Validation against an industry or professional standard
- Typically requires ongoing maintenance e.g., Continuing Education (CE), Maintenance of Certification (MOC), retesting

Academic transcript: A traditional record of coursework showing the grades earned in each completed class.

Skills credential transcript: A record that lists verified skills and competencies an individual has demonstrated.

Country classifications:

Countries are referred to as high-income or middle-income as defined by World Bank definitions for the purposes of this report.

HIC: High-income country

Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, United Arab Emirates (UAE), United Kingdom (UK), United States (US)

MIC: Middle-income country

Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Vietnam

Worker mindset classification methodology:

Respondents were classified based on statements they agreed with most strongly. The question and statements are as follows:

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about change and growth in your work life?

1. I see technological change as an opportunity to expand my skills and advance my career
2. I feel confident in my ability to adapt to new technologies and work processes
3. I actively seek out learning opportunities to stay ahead of industry changes
4. I have a clear vision of where my career is heading despite technological disruption
5. I feel constantly pressured to learn new skills just to keep up with my job requirements
6. I worry that no matter how much I upskill, it won't be enough to stay competitive
7. I often feel like I'm running as fast as I can, but not making real progress in my career
8. I feel obligated to constantly grow in my career, driven by fear of being left behind
9. I want to adapt to changes in my field, but I don't know where to start
10. There are so many learning options available that I feel paralyzed about which to choose
11. I feel like the systems and support I need for learning are not available to me
12. I have the motivation to learn but lack the resources or guidance to do it effectively
13. I'm afraid that my current skills will become obsolete in the near future
14. I feel like the pace of change in my industry is too fast for me to keep up
15. I believe that no matter what I learn, technology will eventually replace me
16. I feel systematically unsupported by my employer in preparing for future changes

The ETS Human Progress Index methodology:

Respondents were surveyed on the perceived difficulty of related tasks, utilizing a nuanced 4-point scale ranging from 'Very difficult' to 'Very easy.' Each of these factors was composed of questions with high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = .873 for Accessing Education, .891 for Upward Mobility and .874 for Upskilling & Reskilling) and each question had an equal weight in that factor. Each factor was equally weighted into the ETS Human Progress Index.

This index demonstrates how difficult or effortless it is to access the foundational factors or progress. A score above 100 indicates that the task is generally easier for respondents, while a score below 100 indicates it is relatively difficult. The distance from 100 is indicative of the level of ease or difficulty.

Accessing Education

1. Finding the right educational institutions or programs for one's needs (e.g., schools, courses, etc.)
2. Paying for the costs associated with education (e.g., tuition, fees, materials, etc.)
3. Accessing education by people from a variety of social backgrounds (e.g., different levels of income, different parts of the country, ethnicity, social class/caste, etc.)
4. Prioritizing quality education over other needs (e.g., job commitments, family commitments, etc.)
5. Gaining admittance to institutions that offer quality education
6. Accessing teachers that offer quality education

Upward Mobility

1. Accessing better career opportunities (e.g., finding job openings, career advancements, etc.)
2. Increasing one's income (e.g., getting a new higher-paying job, finding additional jobs, etc.)
3. Making connections to improve one's social status (e.g., networking, finding mentors and/or support, etc.)
4. Getting the education needed to improve one's social or economic position
5. Accessing lifestyle elements associated with higher social or economic positioning (e.g., housing, transportation, etc.)
6. Maintaining a higher social or economic status once it has been achieved

Upskilling & Reskilling

1. Identifying the right skills or areas for upskilling/reskilling
2. Paying the costs associated with pursuing upskilling/reskilling (e.g., courses, materials, etc.)
3. Finding time to learn new skills while maintaining current workload
4. Getting employer support to upskill and/or reskill (e.g., help with new opportunities that align with new skills, time to focus on trainings, etc.)
5. Determining which upskilling/reskilling programs fit one's career goals
6. Determining which upskilling/reskilling programs fit one's personal strengths

This methodology formed the foundation for the ETS Human Progress Index, offering a gauge of global advancement and pinpointing gaps that require a heightened focus on closing. Designed to establish an annual baseline, this index not only serves as a tool to track the evolving landscape of human progress but invites collaboration and partnership to address global gaps in prosperity.

Contributors

- The Harris Poll